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Cyril O'Brien
July 19, 1994

Interview conducted by Steven Hower
Transcribed by Plowshares Media
Coordinated by Dr Jennifer Craig
Reviewed by Guampedia Foundation, Inc
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WAPA Collections
War in the Pacific NHP
135 Murray Boulevard, Suite 100
Hagåtña, GU 96910
wapa_interpretation@nps.gov

Interviewee: Cyril O'Brien

Military Rank: Marine Corps, Combat Correspondent

Interviewer: Steven Hower Guam Hilton Hotel

Date: July 19th, 1994

AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Cyrill O'Brien is a Caucasian American man with a pin and shell necklace, wearing a polo shirt with multi-colored pastel stripes. He is sitting on a wicker chair with a lamp and beige wall background.

Q: My name is Steven Hower and I'm here at the Hilton Hotel in Guam on July 19th 1994 and it's 4:30 pm and we are here to record an oral history interview with Mr. Cyril J. O'Brien, who served in US Marine Corps as a combat correspondent. This interview is being made by the National Parks Service War in the Pacific National Historical Park in conjunction with KGFT television. Cy, I understand that the National Park Service has your permission to make this recording and through obtaining all literary and property rights deriving from it. Is that correct?

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O'Brien: Yes, they do.

Q: Thanks, I know you have been a pretty busy man today and I really do appreciate you taking the time to talk with us today.

O'Brien: Pleasure.

Q: Just for the record, could you just spell out your full name for us?

O'Brien: My first name is Cyril CYRIL, middle initial is J for John, last name is O'Brien.

Q: What is your date and place of birth?

O'Brien: January 30, 1919 in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.

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Q: That is sort of interesting; do you remember much about that?

O'Brien: I remember nothing about St. Johns, but I left Newfoundland, when I was seven or eight and I do remember [unintelligible] seas and the gray coast and the rocks and the sea breaking over the rocks and my father going out in the motor boat to sea as a fishman. And the long tales of my father, as a boy, as a young man at 18, sailing the canvas ships before the turn of the century, going to Australia from San Francisco to Melbourne, I think nearly three months across the doldrums. Romantically fascinating and I never was much for tattoos, but I always recall he had an anchor right here on his arm. I don't know, it was just –

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The whole thought, it was such a romantic thing.

Q: Do you remember the names of any of ships that your father was on?

O'Brien: No, I don't remember the ships because all I know, he was on Swedish ships. I was with him one day in New York when I was a boy, and this big Swedish fella threw his arms around him and he had the big arms and the big accent and my father had known him some place in Sweden, on the port. And then they talked how they were ship – not shipwrecked, what is the word? They were without a ship. The ship went off on them and they were left alone in [name], Chili and how they had to fend for themselves and get food and it was just a fascinating thing.

But it was fascinating; he used to sing some old sea songs. And he would hum these songs.

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And it was just fascinating to hear him sing, hum those old songs. He was a very romantic type. He wasn't romantic himself, he was very low key, but it was fascinating.

Q: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

O'Brien: I have one sister, her name is Mary, she lives in Philadelphia.

Q: Did you grow up in Newfoundland?

O'Brien: No, I didn't. I came to Massachusetts, lived in a little town called Maynard, a year, and then by 1930 I moved to Camden, New Jersey where I grew up, went to grade school, high school and went to college in Philadelphia at St. Joseph's College at Jesuits. And then when I came to Washington, I went to the American University, where I got a master's degree in journalism.

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Q: That was after the war though?

O'Brien: Oh yeah, that was 1965, yeah.

Q: Were you involved in journalism in school?

O'Brien: Oh no, they had no college paper, but I was always interested in journalism and I must have been 14 and I wrote to the paper in Newfoundland, maybe I was 17, I wasn't out of high

school yet. Wrote to the paper in Newfoundland, and told them, it was the Telegram, good paper, still going. Said, look, you have a lot of Newfoundland people here, how about me doing some feature stories? And I used to write feature stories about Newfoundland people, what they were doing in the States and sell it to The Telegram and I did it regularly and I made a couple dollars. But I didn't do it for the dollars.

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Although dollars were very important to me in 1930 because I gave it to my mother anyhow. But the important thing was, was the experience of doing it. Then I went to work on a newspaper as a copy boy. The Courier Post in Camden. And then they made me a cover reporter and then before I could make much use of journalism, I joined the Marine Corps.

Q: What kind of beat did you cover in Camden?

O'Brien: Oh, what they always give you in the beginning. Police. But they don't give you the police in the city, where there are veteran reporters, they gave you beats out in little country towns where nothing ever happens and if something does happen, the police don't tell you anyhow. So that is the kind of – but that is not unusual. If there is a murder, they would say, "No, nothing happened here!" They covered up the books and everything. Fascinating, but that was journalism. It was a lovely age of journalism, when the journalists still wore hats on the copy desk and the old romantic era, it was wonderful.

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The composing room and the click – the [unintelligible] type machines was almost near the click of the typewriter – fascinating.

Q: You paint a really interesting picture. When did you join the Marine Corps?

O’Brien: When I was in college, a portable recruiting group came over for officers. And so I wanted to join the Marine Corps, then I wasn’t particularly interested in the service, but I like the Marines. And I went down and they said, no sir, you can’t do it. You are less than a half inch too short. I said, you aren’t going to let me get into the Marine Corps for an half an inch? Yes sir! So I went down and complained to a colonel. I knew nobody. And there was a colonel, he said, I will tell you what to do, son. He said, why don’t you just go down and show him and sign up as an enlisted man? So I went down and signed up as an enlisted man, although I had a college degree. I went to Parris Island and I was only at Parris Island a week and along came a runner from the headquarters and said, O’Brien! They don’t call you Mr. in boot camp.

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You got a college degree? They want you over to headquarters. I went over and they said, you know you can put in for officer’s school? And I said, yes of course I knew that, I said, but you turned me down, I was less than a half inch too short. He says, that doesn’t mean a damn thing now, he says, you are in the Marine Corps. Which means, I was already in. But to make a long story short, with all of the fangling and the fandling back and forth, typical governmental, God bless you, of course you are government, but anyway – they delayed and delayed, they lost papers.

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Meanwhile, I was training. So I went to the West Coast. And I was in – near San Diego. The papers came through and said, you are going back to OCS. Isn’t that interesting? However, at the same time, we were informed we were going overseas. I had been training with these guys for a year and I was whisked away from them to go to OCS? I said, bull. So I said, nope, I would rather go overseas. Forget the officer’s school. So I went overseas and got a campaign in. Said, now I will put in for officer’s school. I had already been in combat in Bougainville, this is great,

I will put in for officer's school and I will have a leg up. It's wonderful. So you would think I would go right to office's school, wouldn't you? But I didn't. Do you know why? Because I went down the company street and I met a man who was a combat correspondent on Guadalcanal. He was a newspaper man name Bill Brunette, who worked formally for The Baltimore Sun. And he said, O'Brien, we are going into Guam, we need a combat correspondent, you were a newspaper man. So I went back to the Marines and I said, forget officer's school, I would rather be a correspondent. Remember, there was 127 or 150 correspondents and there were millions of officers.

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So I turned down officer's candidates' school and I became a combat correspondent. And remember about the combat correspondents -

Q: Yeah, I want to hear a little bit more about how these people worked and -

O'Brien: Okay, most of them selected out of Washington DC. But they kept us all enlisted men. These were college graduates, Duke Marin had the international desk, I believe, of AP in New York one of the biggest newspaper jobs you can have. He was a buck sergeant. Why they didn't want to make us officers is because we wouldn't have the rapport with the men. If you go to the enlisted men, they say, yes sir, yes sir! Bull you are not going to get a story out of 'em. But I remember I would come over and they would see me and say, hey, Obie, get your ass over! Excuse the words. Come over here, I want to tell you something. And they would tell me. Or they would pull a clipping out of their pocket that their mother sent me that I wrote about a story in Peoria.

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And they would show me that and the wonderful feeling one of the biggest compliments I get –

there we had the civilian correspondents and we were the combat correspondents and someone made this quote that, what the correspondents are writing, people will read now. What you are writing will be in family bibles and the family bible for generations. And that is true. I got a clipping a week ago or so from a young man that I wrote in 1943 and he showed me, he gave me a copy of the clipping. It was a wonderful thing. I mean, officers school is no comparison to being a combat correspondent. But they commissioned us later, after the war, they commissioned us anyhow. And became a captain.

Q: This is really interesting, so you are saying that the Marine Corps – I guess I'm trying to get at the overall motivation of the Marine Corps in setting up – do you have an insight to what their goals were? Was it purely public relations? Was it a historical kind of unit?

O'Brien: They never told me but I could – but the perspective I had on it was, one, appreciation. The man felt that he was appreciated that he was part of the Marine Corps, that he was part of the war.

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There were stories about General Macarthur and General Turnage, God bless him, he was a lovely man, but here was a case where the individual was praised and the Marine Corps was sending it's dispatch to praise up this private or PFC for the thing that he did. That was one. The second thing about it, no doubt, his buddies back home read it. And obviously they were interested in favor of the Marine Corps. And what was the – the other one was what?

Q: Well, the goals -

O'Brien: And of course, that gave Marine Corps publicity too, I'm sure. But the Marine Corps then didn't have [unintelligible] struggle to get recruits, everybody does, but they were flocking into the Marine Corps like the Marine Corps was turning them down, it wasn't necessarily a recruiting – you know a recruiting tool at all.

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Q: So you are beginning to answer the question, but let me just ask it specifically – where your work – how your work was used? Was it published in Leatherneck Magazine?

O'Brien: Nope, nope.

Q: How was your work disseminated?

O'Brien: We wrote – most of us, all of us were newspaper men, so we knew the process. And we had a process, just the same as any newspaper did. We brought it in and it was edited, by editors, [inaudible] press tent at Division. If they decided it should go, they sent it back to the States. I don't know what the message was, but it surely wasn't faxed. And sent it back to the States and then in the United States, in the Office of the Marine Corps at the Marine Corps annex in Arlington, this is where our headquarters was, all the copy came in and that's where they decided it should go. I had many stories and I'm flattered to be able to tell you this, and I don't have the modest to cover it up.

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Q: Don't be, this is not the time to be modest.

O'Brien: I'm only kidding; I have never been modest in my life. But the stories would go to AP, UPI, International news Service and sometimes a specialist story would go to maybe Mechanic Magazine or any place. But most of the material went to radio networks and it was used. I had an AP story which I – typical story – I went on a patrol, which I liked to go on patrol. They were always worth a story. A patrol would go out before morning and they would have to cover an area to see what the enemy was doing or was there any enemy there at all? What activity they

could bump in.

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Usually they were reconnaissance patrol, maybe 15 men, 20 men, no big hundred men patrol, no combat patrol, just snoopers. And you would go out with them. You would go out and then occasionally you would run into action, you would have a little fire fight, but you would bump into a small number of Japanese, only your own size or less. And then what you would do is tell the story of what happened. Then you write a story and you put who found the Japanese, who fired, who fired back, who may have gotten hit. And all the story and what they said and you remember the quotes and you put it all down and then you take the story and you write the whole pace of the patrol, as it went. And then at night, you usually stopped and set up an ambush. And then at night, the enemy would try to come through and there would be another firefight at night and then when that was done, you would go back.

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And you would tell that whole story and it was great. Those news stories were great. Some of them were a little risky, but not – usually I had [unintelligible] not a bit concerned at all, because – but I was with real professionals, these Marines were, my God, I felt like I was in my mother's arms, they were so safe. These were really professionally skillful men. What I was amazed at though, of how combat becomes so matter of fact. I was interviewing Captain Moore. Captain Moore was the commanding officer on Chonito Ridge, one of the worst battles on Guam. And this was after the battle, I forget, anyway, I was interviewing him. And while I was talking to him, there was fire, some fire, some rounds coming around. And Captain Moore said that, he said, Leon! Leon Saliciner [sp?] his name was, he is still living and he's in New Jersey. And he said, Leon! What is that automatic weapon over there? He says, I don't know. He says, there is a Japanese automatic weapon. Go over and see what that is. And so, that was it.

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So that was it. It was just like saying, hey Ed, in the plumbing group, will you go fix that pipe, the water is leaking? He says, all right sir. He went over, there was a bang, bang, bang, you hear a lot of firing. And they come back and he said, Captain – what was it? He says, it was an [unintelligible] he is a sniper. Okay. And he said, okay, Captain, all done? Yes sir. He said, can we go to town now? Yeah, we can go to town now. Okay bye. What I meant to say, if you listen to that, it was a matter of fact job. Go over and do that. This was life and death, people were killed, yet, it was carried on as if someone went to fix a roof on a shed. You comprehend that? You know?

Q: I get your point. Maybe also this is a good time for me interject and share with you that – I was reading some of your stuff. I was trying to do my homework. In a book that published, the name was *Sempre Fidelis,* there is a piece by you about Chonito Ridge. And it starts, "Half my old company lies dead on the slopes of Chonito Ridge." Well, I have to tell you that, that was the point that I realized that as much as I enjoy my work and I'm going to look forward to talking with people out here in Guam, that I'm not talking about a picnic.

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O'Brien: No.

Q: And that this is pretty serious business. And it wasn't going to be fun and games.

O'Brien: I'm glad that you brought that up, it's a dramatic thing I haven't talked much about. Not because I didn't want to, I don't think I have ever been asked. I was in a line company. Easy Company, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Marines. And this was on Guadalcanal, where we were preparing to go to Guam. It was at that time that I met Bill Burnett, the correspondent, and who was, at that time, immediately previous to going to Guam, that I became a correspondent. Therefore, I was

pulled out of Easy Company. I was on the fire team. There was young man named. There names are not necessary, but two or three people who I was with.

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Able Company – when the battle of Chonito Ridge took place, I was no longer with them. I was a correspondent then. And my job was to cover them and the 1st Battalion and the 2nd Battalion. Many other troops. So the – one company went up the front and Easy Company went up the flank or the back, to attack the top of this hill.

Q: Chonito Ridge.

O'Brien: Chonito Ridge. I, the next day, I knew they had a battle and I went back. And there are the people that I had been with. The very people I would have been with. I would have made that attack. I would have been with them and they were all dead. Strung up the side of the hill. Some with their hand, their feet in the ground as if they are ready to move again. Nobody in any grotesque movements of death. Quietly as if they were just sleeping there. It was the most – I would say it was the most quiet – the quietest looking situation I have seen.

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Then I went over to the side of the hill and right over where they were, I went to where the Japanese machine gunner was. The Japanese machine gunner who killed them. I went over, looked at him, he was dead, obviously, and I looked right down the sites of his machine gun, right where these fellows were. In other words, I could review the whole thing in detail and it just grasps me that for the grace of God and Bill Burnett, I suppose, I would have been on that hill.

Q: Pretty chilling thought. I remember a couple of incidents that you recalled in that piece and I

guess people can go read it, a couple things struck my mind and stuck in my mind and one is that you said, that it appeared that the hill was so steep, that these guys had to use -

O'Brien: They did. It was very steep. They couldn't simply run up it, no. They had to grasp tufts of grass to pull themselves up. The forward motion had to be helped by their hands, which of course didn't give them complete control of their weapons. And but of course, they were getting fire from both sides, from the top of the hill and from this flank – this Japanese who killed him, was a flanking, machine gun on their flanks.

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Q: Yeah, so here I am thinking, here are these guys and they are not shooting back and they are still advancing.

O'Brien: They are still advancing. Yeah they – most of them could just move only a few – only a few yards. They had been pulled back. Some of them had been killed closer to cover than that, they had been killed and pulled back. But these – these are men who had just gotten up further. They probably had been – I don't think, obviously they weren't killed in one splash, they were killed singularly. One group would go and would group would go and fall and so forth and so on.

Q: And other thing you said, there was one fellow who liked flowers, do you remember that?

O'Brien: Yeah, that was [unintelligible] and his hand was on a flower. Another one had his – I noticed the stitches on his back, on his dungarees were torn by bullets that – you know, we had stenciled across our back and I remember that. Yeah, it was –

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Q: In Guam, tell me about the landing at Guam and what did you cover? You said you went over

at Chonito Ridge [cross talk]

O'Brien: The landing, our landing was the 3rd wave and it was with the assault troops and I remember there was a big, friendly corpsman with a gigantic moustache and he said, I will see you Obie, we will see you at shore! He was very friendly. And he never got ashore. The shell went right into the amtrack right beside us. I don't know what happened to the amtrack, but they were all – I know he was killed. Anyhow, the amtrack was a luxury compared to these poor fellows who came in with Higgins Boats. This amtrack took me right up on the beach. You heard firing. There wasn't firing immediately in front of me, but you heard rat-a-tat –tat and the boom, boom and [unintelligible] going on and then a big thump here and a big thump there, but you didn't know where they were coming, but you know, you know sure as hell it was a dangerous place to be.

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But in those days, they didn't have a ramp in the front, you had to climb up out of the side and jump down and the thought was, my god, if there is any mine out there I'm – then a friend of mine, only at this meeting, told me he had one man that jumped out and jumped right on a mine. This was not the case with me. I jumped out and – I jumped out and ran for shore. The first thing I wanted to do, my heavens it looked a long way before there was any green for cover. But there was, by the grace of God, there was a big shell hole and I jumped right down in the shell hole and I waited and waited – remember I was a correspondent and I had a typewriter, I had a double pack. I had a typewriter in the bottom pack and my goods in the front. Everybody else had a whole pack for everything else, I had this pack. So along came a man named McCulla. He was something like a traffic controller. He was a fatherly type of guy, who went to people like me and says, okay Obie, you can move up there now, don't worry. And run over here and – on the beach, just moving around casually, telling people what to do. And what a dangerous thing. He was casually walking around when I was running.

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And so he said, O'Brien, leave your pack in the shell hole, he says, nobody is going to steal it. So funny thing was though, obviously he was too casual because a Jap shot him right – hit him right in the head and killed him. Because – someone saw him from up there, realized that he was a person in some kind of authority, I supposed. And anyhow, so I went up and moved in on the side of the hill and I remember the intelligence officer was Lieutenant Kay. And I was with him. And I was fortunate, he said, this is a good place to be, Obie. And we got up to the side of the hill, and instead of digging down, I dug in partially sideways. And I felt that was much safer.

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And then they plastered the hill that night. The plastered the beach, boom-boom-boom, all night, with mortars and so forth. But honest to God, I wasn't completely concerned, I just felt very safe, I don't know why.

Q: I guess that kind of shelter also would have been -

O'Brien: That kind of shelter made me feel better, yeah, yeah. Well, the next day -

Q: Well where were you anyway, do you recall [tape cuts briefly]

O'Brien: What a din! I mean, it's hard to – remember now, I am a correspondent, keep that in mind. But another thing to remember, I'm armed with a typewriter. I had a pistol or a carbine. Remember now, we as correspondents weren't heroes, we were there looking for heroes.

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We were trying to find heroes. Do you know what we were in many cases? Unpersons. We were

observers, watching the war. We are the people who are not really – we are participants, because the Marine Corps insists that no matter what your specialty is, you have to be trained as an infantryman. And so therefore, we could fit in any – they could have said to me, O'Brien, fill in the line, and I was trained to do so. I had to – in boot camp I had to qualify on – I think an 03 I had first and then the [unintelligible]. Anyhow, so the next morning, I awoke – my god, I said, I'm said, I'm still alive! And then you hear the thump and the thump of the battle. And then the battle then was right there on Chonito Ridge. It hadn't moved anywhere; it was still – just a few hundred yards, right around me. And for the person who might be hearing this, to understand what a battle is like, the noise is a din. It was almost like coming into a room that was full of jack hammers – bang, bang, bang, bang, bang! So I remember there was a man, one of the people who helped us lead the charge – not the charge, the attacks, it wasn't a charge, on Chonito Ridge. Able Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Marines, under the command of Major Aplington of Warner, New York.

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No, Warner, New Hampshire. They were making this attack and this officer came down to me, he said, he hadn't gotten up there yet, this is before he got tied down. He said, O'Brien – he knew I was a correspondent, he said, look what happened to me! And I could hardly hear him; I had to move in behind some rocks, the din was so loud. What had occurred was, he had a missal, a prayer book, over his pocket. And a bullet had hit it and ricocheted. Now obviously – it was a metal covered book, a prayer book. Obviously a prayer book is not going to stop a bullet, but a helmet won't stop a bullet either, direct. But what occurred – it deflected it. However his skin and flesh wouldn't have deflected it, so it probably did save his life and he was telling me that story, and I remember I could hardly hear it because the din was so.

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So anyhow, then we found out that this Able Company, 100 yards or less – from here to where

those trees are – the length of 20 automobiles, up – they had to get up over that hill to take it. The Japanese were on the top. And the difficulty was to get up there. So I realized what was happening and I had a photographer for [unintelligible]. His name was Herb Ball from California. I said, Herb, you know, we've got a hell of a good story. Lets get up there with that company that is pined down and we can observe them on the spot. Interview them and you can take pictures. I said, if we can get out of there alive, we are going to have really something, good coverage. He says, I'm for it, let's go. But how the hell can we get up there? We didn't have any experience. Along came a wire team. They are courageous people, never really got their credit. They were stringing wire up to this besieged company. So we said, can we go up the hill with you? They said, sure O'Brien, you can come up. We started to go up and when we did, a Japanese machine gunner opened up. Now, wait a minute, didn't open at us, but it started to clip. The bullets were clipping in the tree right above our head – bup, bup, bup! You could see it clicking and hitting and shaking the trees.

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Then, there was a heavy thud. Theirs was a lighter sound and ours was a heavy – I could tell it was a heavy water-cooled 30. Do you know what was happening? The Japanese machine gun and the Marine machine gun were carrying a duel over our heads. So then, I thought I saw some dust, I thought I saw some smoke coming out of the brush. It couldn't have been, because we would be dead. But anyhow, this young wireman with a puny, little carbine, no bigger than an air rifle – he stood up and started to fire at them. I said, my God, I'm dead, I'm dead. He started to fire up over where the machine gun was. And there is – then I said to Herb Ball, the hell with this, Herb, let's get the hell out of here. So Herb and I ran down the hill. And when I ran down the hill, I met – coming down the hill, I sez, my God, look! They were having chow down on the beach. Hot chow, all the time.

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Oh my God, and I'm– I went down and got some chow. And Major Foley was there and he said, O'Brien, he said, I was gonna put you in for missing in action, I haven't heard from you in two days. But that was just – that was nothing, that was only because I was very occupied. So that was that. This is the story about – I'm telling you from a journalist now, remember. So anyhow, I'm just tell you different stories.

Q: Go ahead.

O'Brien: Then I wanted to take a little trip – unfortunately, as a journalist, I had freedom, which the troopers didn't have. I could here or I could go there. I tried to take a shortcut and you know what happened? I ran into a little gully where the Japanese, preparatory to our landing, were setting up land mines. Do you know what, there was a narrow path down the middle and land mines all over the side, honest to God. They weren't dangerous land mines, they weren't even armed, they were in the process of being used.

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So anyhow, I went over and I saw some Marines firing up to the top of the hill and I started [unintelligible] and one of the Marines said, his name was – Hennessey, and he was from Georgia. He said, Obie, don't come across there! There was a space, an open space between big rocks as wide as that door. As wide as that door? About the length from the tip of my toe to my chest. He said, don't come across there O'Brien! That's a fire lane! So I ran back and jumped and when I jumped, boom-boom! Two shots. If I had walked through there, it would have been all over. I was a quick figure, like that. They don't get you. So anyhow, then I realized, oh the drama came. I wanted to write a story of the landing. So I had a little Hermes typewriter and I put it on my knees, with the guys firing around me, I wanted to write my story and I started to write it. And I'll be damned, the Japs at the time – the Japanese at the time, decided to throw in mortars. And if that wasn't – you know, you are not worried about getting killed, you are worrying about doing the damn story.

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And the mortars are starting to fall, so I said, oh, the hell with that. It was just like getting mad at the rain. There was a friend of mine and I said, can I use your foxhole? I didn't have time to dig a foxhole. So I jumped in the foxhole with him and he said okay. So I came back again, no mortars, and I started to type again because I wanted to get this thing back to division to send out the story. And mortars came in again, pretty soon he said, O'Brien, he said you have to bring your own damn foxhole. So anyhow, but so anyhow, the next day, oh a lot of things happened. But then, as the fighting advanced and we took part of that hill – oh no, let me tell you, I went up to the hill then, then we took the hill. It was a sight. I went up to the top of the hill, Chonito Ridge where the Japanese – where Able Company were there. It was partially flat of course, they had to defend it. There were spider trenches all around, about the height of a man, where you could crawl, see. And it was a sad thing, there were two young Japanese lads, you know, really – they were hugging, holding each other, hugging each other, as if they support, one could give the other, would have shielded themselves from the terrible – the terrible fragments of 81 mortars. What got them were 81 mortars that were falling in on them. There was a Japanese there – if my memory is right, but I swear that there was a part of a man's thigh, a Japanese thigh, and it looked like it had been seared by a hot piece of metal.

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Apparently a shell or something had just cut – and it was cut so neat, it was almost like a razor blade, it cut it. So anyhow, it was very awful. So anyhow, when I finished that – then the lines moved. It was a big open field, there was gully and there was a lot of brush in the gully and I could tell from the firing that our – we had moved over onto the other side. That was where the front was, and I wanted to get over to that front. Well, I'll be damned if I was going to go down that gully and walk all the hell over there, when there was a big field. Guess what? Oh, I was so bright. I went across the field. Which was very stupid, because it was what they would have

called “no mans land” in World War I. I started to go across the field, and then I got the feeling and I know what it was, the feeling as if my hair was all ready to stand up. I knew someone was looking at me. The feeling, I got the feeling. And just as soon it was, bang- bang! It was a sniper. So I fell down on my belly and I thought, gee, if I get up – I knew if was lying down, it’s hard to get someone lying down, but I knew if I moved, they could get me.

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But then I realized, oh, from only a here to that roof, the cliff ended. I got up and I ran like hell. Tumbled down over the cliff. I tell you, I went the hard way up through the gully to join those guys. But that is what a correspondent does. Remember, I’m not giving you stories of people coming at me with bayonets or mowing them down, I’m telling you what a correspondent does, to survive, get where he does and write the story. Like the mortars coming in and interrupting with my story.

Q: You are painting an extremely vivid picture of the battle and I think that is really worthwhile to hear. Did you have any experiences during the night of the big banzai charge?

O’Brien: I was blessed. They came down – oh, I heard them. They didn’t touch me. Come down through our area. There was a gully between me and the remnants or what was the 1st Battalion, they came streaming down and they were attacking everybody, they didn’t come down my way at all. I heard them. I heard the shooting and I heard the hollering, but only in the morning did I find out what it was. No. I never got any – I’ll bet I’m one of ten people on that Guam attack that never survived it. That was something though. That was something. They had broken through again another time, and I had gone back to division and I was with a friend, another correspondent. Oh I felt so safe back there in Division.

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Then all of a sudden some Japanese had gotten through and they started to fire through the tents and we decided not – they had foxholes some of them built there and we jumped right in them. No, no, no I wasn't – I didn't – that banzai attack didn't – I was there, I was aware of it, I saw it and I heard it, but I was not – they didn't come down the hill that I was.

Q: So you have been talking a lot about working with the infantry, did you get to visit or talk to or see in action some of the other kind of outfits like the artillery or the 12th Marines or tankers or -?

O'Brien: Yep. Couple of things. You would see them, these big long Toms, whatever they were, 155s, firing and firing and firing. So one night I decided to give myself a nice break, I'm not going to stay anywhere near the front and get a nice, good sleep. So I went back and I picked nice level, beautiful, green field. I did a nice little foxhole you should ever want. And I'm telling you, it was almost as good as this Hilton here. It was just so lovely. Even had running water in it. And you know what happened? It was about dusk. I never knew they moved artillery at dusk. They moved 155s and 105s right down in the field with me and they kept firing.

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I was off the ground half the night. They were firing – these big guns were firing and the ground was shaking. Honest to God. You know, one case, I was prowling – the supervision is good and not supervision is bad, but you do things that are risky. One time, I remember we – I was alone and I came out of the brush and there were these two or three Japanese tanks. There was a young Japanese leaning out of the turret of one of them and he was dead. And all the tanks had been battered and they were all smoking – one or two were smoking. And I didn't know what the hell had happened. Hadn't any idea. But later, I find out that they were – we caught them in an artillery barrage.

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And they were Japanese tanks. And we had a tank attack one time, there was a young Japanese – there was a small Japanese tank, came into our lines and I don't know, he was berserk, why he came through. Came right through when we were attacking. And – I don't even realize if he did any damage. He fired, but then one of our tanks came and just followed him and blew him to pieces. No match for him. I think the poor devil just wanted to get – you know, they had the attitude of death. Didn't want to surrender. It's a hell of a job to kill yourself, so I think it's much better in many cases to do something where the enemy is gonna blow you up and it saves you the pain of doing it yourself. I don't know, that's just conjecture.

Q: What is your assessment of the Japanese as a fighting man?

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O'Brien: Beyond brave. Brave – beyond brave. Nobody ever said – I don't know anybody who ever found a cowardly Japanese. However, we got not to admire it, because it was beyond brave. Why – I will tell you why. On that banzai attack you talked about, the 21st Marines was right down the way and I went down to the 21st Marines and I looked out in front of me. There, I saw in the field, perhaps 300, maybe more, bodies. Japanese bodies, lying all out there. The thought couldn't help but come to your mind – what a waste. Even then, what a waste of life. These weren't 4F's, these weren't people who tried – these were patriotic men in good condition who were fighting for their country. I'm speaking of the Japanese now. And their life was thrown away. There was one Japanese officer who was – I went up, they told me, I wasn't there, I saw his body. He – set off 11 grenades to kill himself before he got one and blew himself up. He was so insistent in killing himself. What did I think? I think they were very brave, but I think that the [unintelligible] threw away lives of perfectly good men. They weren't all that way; it's a very interesting thing. One day, Major Foley said, Obie, he said, I want you to take this prisoner back to the stockade.

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Back to the lines of division. So I had an interpreter with me, and we got a Jeep and we were going down the road and going way down the road and suddenly out comes a couple of Marines, one guy bleeding profusely and all shot up. So they took our Jeep to take him to the aid station. But you know what that meant? That left me all alone in the jungle with a Japanese. And I thought, gee if anybody sees him first – so along came a truck, a Marine Corps truck, and I hitchhiked and jumped in the back and the Jap jumped in the back too. And they said, who is your buddy, O'Brien? But he was a young fellow from Tokyo. We gave him a cigarette. He tried to surrender. He didn't for that [unintelligible] he just wanted to get the war over. So everybody wasn't – but some of them, a lot of them were. I read that previous, that before those banzai attacks, you could hear the Japanese laughing and joking and drinking. And many of them realizing that they were going to their deaths uselessly. Tore up the pictures of their families and tore up pictures and cried.

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You have to understand, we are dealing with human beings, which I'm sure you do. But these were people. I never had any – I never developed hatred because I realize that, except for the fanaticism and the cruelty, the unnecessary cruelty that they would exert – that bothers you. But for the average Japanese GI, he was a soldier like anybody else.

Q: Speaking of soldiers, our soldiers, often you hear about units, or sometimes I hear stories about units, outfits having a particular identity, a particular personality, a particular reputation maybe. These kinds of things you don't often see in the official history and I'm wondering, maybe if you can offer us, if you have an insights into -

O'Brien: Yes, I bumped into the Raiders when I was in Bougainville, I didn't meet them on Guam. The Raiders on Bougainville. They were uh, yeah, you got the impression from them that

they were a step above, a step – not a step above, a step away, I would say, from us. And some of them got a little bizarre and would cut their hair in strange ways and that type of thing. And they considered themselves superior and I believe, but the Marine Corps eventually didn't like the idea. The Marine Corps felt we were all superior, so let's not make superior superiors. And so the Marine Corps kept us all – there were no elites among the elite.

Q: How about the 3rd Division in general?

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O'Brien: The 3rd Division – I was there under a very kindly man. General Alan H. Turnage from Pitt County, North Carolina. The quintessence of a southern gentleman whose concern was for his troops. He wanted to take [unintelligible] but he was always worried what it would cost. He was never the kind - I get in there, [unintelligible] he wasn't that way. He was kind of a benevolent, if you want to use that for a General. And we had a warm relationship. It was a brotherly – the 3rd Division in those days has a brotherly relationship. It wasn't – I would never associate it with a Spartan attitude to get in there in kill and [unintelligible] your lions and – and spill your blood. No. We had a job to do and we did it and we did it to take care of each other and protect your own people and protect your buddy and – do the best – and fight and win. No, you have to understand, the feeling I had was protection. When I was with those guys, I always felt we couldn't lose. I was worried about the Japanese overrunning us, I just never – I guess that night of the Japanese, when they came down that hill – they were right over – from me. Remember, this was like a torrent, a deluge of humanity, over-running the hills, over-running the gullies, screaming, slashing swords.

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Pointing bayonets, screaming and it was a last – it was a kind of thing where if people weren't – if they weren't brave, as the Marine Corps are, I'm sure the Army got the same thing; I'm not

going to give us exclusivity on courage. But the Japanese felt, I'm sure, that screaming and hollering and overwhelming, we will just throw them into the sea. But they didn't realize they were coming up against very brave men who saw them and didn't shatter. Whose nerves didn't break. They just saw people coming at them and just picked them off and nobody was running – you can understand how they might have felt that seeing this hoard of humanity go tumbling into the sea, but no. We just tumbled them into the ground. Some of them got through, but – it has been estimated that there were some 5,000 people who tried – remember, 5,000, my God, there is hardly a bit of ground that they wouldn't cover.

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Masses of people come running at you like that. But they didn't get through and that was the end. But the shame about it was they blew it all. For them. They couldn't do it again.

Q: You talk about feeling protected by your brothers in the Marine Corps, yet you must have had some awfully close calls. What was your closest shave you ever had in the war?

O'Brien: Oh, there were – numbers of them. One, I couldn't believe it. Mortars were about the closest things I ever had. We were attacking up a hill and there was a Japanese machine gun that was firing, but fortunately it was firing over our heads and I thought, all this guy has to do is lower his sights and it's all over. That was one. Another time, there was a number of times when the mortars came in, they – oh my God, they would be so close and I would realize, these were pieces of steel that would slash you open.

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And I had seen those Japanese with their legs cut off and these mortars falling, falling all around like that. When you realize what it could do, it chills you. Another time, I will never forget, I was on a – we were on a patrol and we got ambushed. And there was a – and you don't like to be the

individual target of one rifle. And I was down, but then I realized there was a Japanese trying to get me. The bullet would hit here and then he got closer to me, his rounds got closer, but fortunately – know what happened? There was a – for cooking, I was near a Japanese house and they had all these logs. And fortunately he couldn't get his rifle down enough to get me and he kept hitting the logs and the logs were jumping up. They kept jumping up and jumping up, but he couldn't get – eventually he gave up. There were enumerable other cases like that, but -

Q: I enjoyed your description of General Turnage. You also mentioned, another time we were chatting, you had a chance to meet Ernie Pyle. I guess I'm curious, a lot of people would like to know, did you get to know – there are some pretty famous combat correspondents out there – Ernie Pyle, Jim Lucas, [crosstalk]

O'Brien: Oh, I knew Jim Lucas very well.

Q: Rosenthal – did you know any of these guys?

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O'Brien: And Ted Link, I knew, yeah. [tape cuts briefly] Okay, correspondents. Yes, many of them came through our headquarters or [unintelligible]. The man in charge, first we had Pat [name], he was – I didn't know him too long but he was the one who brought me in. A very nice guy, very professional. And then along came Ray Henry. And he was an interesting guy with a little moustache, looked a little bit like Jerry Colona, but I'm not knocking him, he was an attractive man. And he had an interesting scar on his cheek that made him like a – a saber scar, very romantic looking. Anyhow, the officials used to come in occasionally, the correspondents. One time, I will never forget, a correspondent from one of the other newspapers, Ray Henry, said to me, look, he said, Obie, you are coving the front up there, he said, do you want to take this AP man up? And I said, sure! So I went to wait for him, but the AP man never came up. Now, I'm not saying they are all like that, I think because most of the correspondents, because I know they

certainly covered – they were on Iwo Jima and every place else and there were the same risks we did.

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Yes, I met Ernie Pyle, he was a little guy, gray haired or salt and pepper headed, and he was a little, skinny little guy, and I met him in the tent. He came to our press tent and I was introduced to him and I talked to him and something to the effect of, well, I see you are getting over here in the Pacific now. And he said something to the effect that the GIs are GIs. When he said "GIs", he meant Marines. We weren't GI's, we were Marines. But he referred to GI's, that they were the same over there, was over here. Of course he was mostly Army oriented anyhow and even when he was killed, he was with the Army 77th Division. And so he called us all GI's. But he said to the effect that, GI's are GIs, the same in Europe as they are in the Pacific and he's traveling with basically the same people he had with before. It was a different kind of a war here though. I wrote a piece about that recently.

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Q: Tell me about that. I have always been interested in the differences.

O'Brien: In Europe, in Bastogne – Bastogne and Normandy and Saint-Lo, they were fighting against soldiers like themselves. We were fighting against people whom there was no quarter. No quarter was asked, no quarter was given, quarter was despised. Victory was it. They didn't – they would rather die than have defeat. The Germans were the same as we were. Basically if things got too tough and they realized they weren't going to make it, they put their hands up, of course. But the Japanese, no. We were – and there was a completely different concept. We also had a bad memory of the Japanese and it came down to us from Guadalcanal and all of us were aware of it now. And Guadalcanal, a Marine would go up and see a dying - a poor Japanese dying in pain and out of humanity, would want to help him. Because I don't care what war is, he's another

human being. He would reach down to help him and he would kill you, blow you up with a grenade.

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And so what did they do, they set a pattern from then on – after three or four experiences like that, when you see a Japanese suffering, bang-bang-bang, they would stop him suffering by shooting him. That's – but that was the one thing they brought on themselves. I am sure that in Europe when they came upon a wounded German soldier, that he was another human being and they tried to help. And I think that is the difference. They didn't have mass suicide attacks in Europe either. There was an elite corps – the Nazi's had, of course, that might have been that way, but the average German soldier, they were German GI's, that is all they were. So there was – we fought a different battle than they fought at Saint Lo and Bastogne.

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Josephy, I always liked Josephy, I always admired him, I thought he was a real professional and he had an arty touch to things he did. He had an arty touch and I always like Al. And the – Jim Lucas was the newspaper man's newsman type of guy. And I knew Jim Lucas very well and he was the kind of guy that got a story out fast and it was a good news piece. Joe Rosenthal, very nice guy whom – modest, very modest fellow who never at all – you would never know that he went down in history as one of the boys. Incidentally, I might speak at the same time; I had a very close friend, Lou Lowry. Louis R. Lowry lived in Virginia. Lou took the first Iwo Jima picture about 10:30 in the morning when he went up on the combat patrol on Suribachi and took the flag raising. And in the afternoon, Joe Rosenthal went up with the combat patrol. There was nothing phony or fake about it, they just decided to put up a bigger flag and Joe went up and took a picture. It was perfect above board, everything. I saw that flag go up.

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Q: You did?

O'Brien: Yeah. I was on a ship. An interesting thing. My regiment did not go ashore on Iwo Jima. I went ashore though; I got special orders and went in with the 9th Marines. I was at the 3rd and we were close enough to see fire teams fighting. I was on the rail and someone bumped me and he said, Obie, look! I looked up on Suribachi and I saw the flag go up. It was thrilling to see that flag go up there. It was and I realized, just as they say, I knew the Marine Corps could live a thousand years.

Q: They say there was spontaneous cheering on the beach?

O'Brien: Oh yeah, yeah, oh yes, absolutely. It was like winning the ballgame. But remember, that was only the beginning of the war and – beginning of the battle and a few of those people, most of those people were killed who put the flag up, you know?

Q: Yeah, as I recall of them who weren't, sort of met a tough end too. I guess the battle takes it's toll in many ways. You mentioned, you talked about your writing about your thoughts on the difference between the European theatre and the Pacific. Can you get into more of a bibliographic kind of conversation? You have written a lot about your experiences with the battle first hand, with colorful descriptions. I would like to discuss your writings a little bit. Maybe you can name where we would find some of the writings, the titles.

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O'Brien: In *Leatherneck*. I wrote several pieces in *Leatherneck* magazine, but most of the work I have done was in newspapers. I wrote many stories for the *Trentonian* in Trenton, New Jersey. For *The Times Journal* in [unintelligible], New Jersey. I wrote some for *The Long Island Press*. And my stories as a combat correspondent went to – I know they were published in Minneapolis

– God knows, everywhere. You would have to check the Associated Press files on those. Most - very recently I was fortunate; I edited a book called *Two Score and Ten*. We collected for over two years, all of the experiences that people wanted to send in, of the 3rd Division. And here you have a smorgasbord of – from generals to privates, what they remembered, the most interesting thing. And I edited the whole book. Hundreds and hundreds of anecdotes and stories and reminiscences. And we published 'em and it is the history of the 3rd Division and I think it's one of the things I'm most proud of.

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Q: Who published that book?

O'Brien: Turner Publishing Company in Paducah, Kentucky.

Q: And that is in print?

O'Brien: It's in print, been in print for a year, yeah. If you wanted to get a copy, I got my own copy, but you can get it through the 3rd Marine Division Association, if you wanted to see if it's a good book. Now, I had several stories published in the FW Magazine. I published several in The Baltimore Sun in the Sunday supplements. I didn't sit down and do books, mostly my work – I was a newsman, and I wrote newspaper stories, and they are very ephemeral, I hate to say.

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Q: There is a *Sempre Fidalis*, I will just mention that.

O'Brien: Oh yeah, *Sempre Fidalis*, I forgot that.

Q: Which is a great compendium of combat correspondent's writing. It's 1948. I can't remember

the publisher, but it was like, Marine Corps Association or something?

O'Brien: No, no. It's a regular, some other publisher like Prentiss Hall or some big -

Q: Probably out of print but for the sake of a park ranger that might be listening, I know our Western Regional Library has a copy.

O'Brien: And I have a copy.

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Q: That's where I read your piece about Chonito Cliff. Now, you also mentioned something recent that you have written? Is this the same [crosstalk]

O'Brien: Right now we are going to send 3,000 copies here. I wrote *The Marine Corps Monograph*. I don't know what a monograph is, really, but that is what they call it. The Marine Corps did one after the battle, after World War II and now they asked to do another one of the anniversary, concurrent with the anniversary. And this was a book that I'm very proud of. It wasn't a soft cover by the way. But what I'm proud of it is this. Many books are written from sources – just historical texts and so forth and [unintelligible] forget the authors' names now, but Samuel Morrison and that type of thing. However, I was very fortunate in that although I had to read – to skeletonize the battle, from historical text and from material, but the detail of it was given to me by the people who actually fought it. And then I might say, maybe Morrison or some of the other text might say, "Then they took hill so-and-so". Then I would say, Company A, 2nd Battalion, got the fire, they were shot by this group and lucky enough, PFC so-and-so was able to get up with a BAR. Now, that is the kind of thing I was able to bring into it and I'm very proud of that because most books you read, you can find the same thing in other books.

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You won't find, in my text, much of it you won't find anywhere else. The description of the battle of Fonte Ridge, I don't think you will find anywhere else because I got it from the people that led the battle. Frasier West, who is hear right now.

Q: Who I interviewed.

O'Brien: Oh, you did Frasier West! Well, Frasier West was one of the guys who told me what the battle was like. And I was able to get him and I think that is probably the first time it's been published. Now I have [unintelligible] General Wilson. And O'Bannon, you interviewed him? And I got him too. And other battles. And then Bougainville – oh, there is one on Bougainville coming out too that I did.

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Q: What is the title of this Guam one?

O'Brien: The Guam one is *Liberation of Guam*.

Q: What is the title of the Bougainville?

O'Brien: I don't know what the title is, but it will probably be Bougainville, Solomon Islands.

Q: Same series?

O'Brien: Same series, yeah.

Q: So tell me about the Bougainville stories.

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O'Brien: Same kind of a thing, where I interviewed commanding officers. And then I had a wonderful opportunity – I am a member of the 3rd Marine Division Association. So I would read through the books and then it would say, "Then General Turnage set up a road block on the Peava Trail, and they were attacked on the night of November the 7th, by Japanese. It was held by the Raiders." What I would do is get the directory of the Marine Corps, of that division and I would look under, where somebody identified themselves as a Raider and I would find that this guy lives in Duluth, Mississippi. I pick up the phone, right where I'm working, call him on the phone and interview him. Right on the phone. While I'm writing and put it right in. And then he would say, "Hey, Obie, I tell you what I did; I was thinking about that about two years ago, I wrote it all down for my kids." And he would send it to me. And that is the kind of text I was able to use when filling the story and I'm very proud of that book. I think it's –

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Q: What was the name of the Guam book again?

O'Brien: *Liberation of Guam*.

Q: Did you ever consider making any attempt to discuss the Japanese side of things? I know there is not a lot of Japanese around, but uh -

O'Brien: Yes, I wanted to. But I never had the facilities or never had – I went to the Library of Congress and they have wonderful books there. Written about the Japanese side. All in Japanese. Then I said, this is desperate, so then I went down to the Marine Corps archives and I found the names of a prisoner of war, his name was Itoh. ITOH. And I checked his name and address; I had a friend who was Japanese. His mother was. And she wrote a letter to him in Japanese.

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And he lived in the old, beautiful old temple city of Kyoto. I wrote to him and I got the warmest letter back from this man, who was in real estate. He sent me pictures of his children, it was wonderful. And then it turned out, here is what he did. I said, tell me about the battle of Chonito Ridge. He was a lieutenant. He was the one who set up the machine cross fire against us. And I was able to get his quotes, what he thought of Marines coming up the hill, what he thought of the whole battle. And I think it was a real coo to get him.

Q: To look at the Japanese side, in English and easily available stuff for people who want to know, is so limited. In Tolland's book *The Rising Sun*, I can't really think of anything else.

O'Brien: Yes, a very good book, but mostly about the sea. Captain Hara. The skipper whose destroyer cut [unintelligible] PT boat in half. I found his name only because – and I wrote to Captain Hara and he was very articulate in English and Captain Hara wrote me a letter. He was on Bougainville. On Bougainville, we were attacked – no, we attacked Bougainville.

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The word got to Ribald where Admiral McCowa was there, he heard about this, we landed and he immediately sent out an angry fleet to destroy the beach head. We knew they were coming and we had a fleet; prominent among them was Commodore Arleigh Burke. That is where he got his title, "31 knot" Burke. And he went out and intercepted them. And do you know that the troops on the beach saw the flashes and heard the thunder and do you know what they thought it was? Summer lightening. It was a naval battle. So Captain Hara was in that battle, so I talked to Captain – I wrote to Captain Hara and he said, very fine, I don't think it was sour grapes. He said, you did fine and you won. He said, but, you didn't do it all. He said, you came back and all you did then was come out, knock off the crippled ships. He said, my God, you could have chased us with your strong fleet and you would have knocked the hell out of all of us and you

would have done something.

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But just the same, you have to understand, that's very fine to say in hindsight. Why didn't the union troops go down and decimate Robert E. Lee after Gettysburg? He could have done – my God, we could have ended the war, you know that. I wasn't at Gettysburg, so I can't quote that. So that's it. I have to add something to it. I have a real admiration for American boys. We were in a fight and we killed these Jap men, Japanese. Went up to the cave and there was nobody in the cave, but five or six women, Japanese women. So we took them and brought them with us. And we brought them back to the stockade. And what I liked was, we had to cross a stream and do you what these Marines did? They picked up these little Japanese women and carried them across the stream so they wouldn't have to walk in the water. Now, wait a minute.

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Can't you see the respect for women that those Marines had? They didn't say, get over there, you wench! They didn't say that. They were women. They thought of their mothers and their sisters. Now I was thoroughly impressed to see these Marines picking up these Japanese women and carrying them across the stream so that they wouldn't get their feet wet. Doesn't that evoke a feeling of real um, respect for women that they had?

Q: It seems almost as if it is from another era. You were just talking about Gettysburg and Robert E Lee and it sort of sounds like the courtly nature of [unintelligible].

O'Brien: I always remembered that, yeah.

Q: Well, it's 50 years after World War II. This stuff is history and eventually I would hope that people would look at this tape or think about these events, just like somebody now a days is

thinking about Gettysburg. This is going to be the case.

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O'Brien: And remember, you young fellows looking at this, remember, I was young too and 50 years, the fields were young, the trees were young and they all got older and I got older. And you will get older.

Q: What are the lessons of World War II for people who weren't in it. Or for people who were in it, for that matter. What do you want to tell us 50 years later?

O'Brien: I had been told that the people who strive most for peace are the military. That seems paradoxical, but it is so. The people who know war are the ones who don't want it. Because you fight war, doesn't mean you want the war. Because a policeman fights crime, doesn't mean he wants crime. Am I coming through clear?

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I still feel war is a shame. I feel just the same as I remember, those 300 young Japanese lying out in front of us, dead. I think it is a horrible waste and God, there should be some other way, but the way things are, it doesn't look like – I don't know what we are ever going to do to waste lives the way – we've got to stop. But then again, unfortunately, I still feel strong enough, that we still have to defend ourselves and you still have to be prepared. You always have to have a police force, unfortunately, until we all become angels and I don't know if that is going to happen in my lifetime.

Q: Have you visited the Park Services Center here at Guam?

O'Brien: Yes, I have. Yes. I was very impressed by it. I haven't seen the new one now. I saw it,

this is the one I saw a year ago. I hear it's new and I'm looking forward to it very much.

Q: We have been working pretty hard to get some new exhibits. I guess, perhaps it's just a different angle on the same question, but I would like to hear your thoughts on what we, as educators, we have an opportunity as park service people to educate the public about the things that you went through first hand. And maybe it's just asking the same question, but what should we be telling people?

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O'Brien: I don't think you should shield people from the gruesome facts of war. I think the bitterness of it and I think the casualties should be known, because – if you can do anything to make people feel that there shouldn't be war, I think that message should be known. I still at the same time feel there should be a message of patriotism. I think if your country has to – if your country asks you to defend it, I think you should go and I think you should defend your country. But I think we should try to make those times as few as possible and I hope it will never happen at all. You did a beautiful job down in Fredericksburg. That is one of the nicest – very simple and inexpensive. You know what it is, don't you?

Q: A friend of mine is the superintendent.

O'Brien: It's beautiful; I'm always impressed by it. You push the button and you've got the battle – are we doing that around - ?

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Q: Well, I don't think we are going to be, in the short run at least, quite as high tech, but if you come down and see what we have done, I think you will like it.

O'Brien: Listen, I have to compliment the Park Service. I think you are all the ones preserving all of this. The fact that you are talking to me. The fact that you talk to Charlie Moore. The fact that you talked to O'Bannon, the fact that you talked to Frasier West. These were people who not only saw the battle, in their hearts today, they still have the feeling of it and they are still – and they are still young enough to be able to convey not only the facts, but the feelings and the sediments of war. And I think by having that, the message of what war is, will very well be portrayed and revealed.

Q: I agree with you, it's quite an experience for me to talk with you gentlemen first hand. I'm learning a lot about your feelings and I'm hoping I will be able to pass this stuff on in 1/10th the kind of sincerity that you show. Is there anything else you want to tell us, we've got you on tape here. Anything we missed or that you want to tell us?

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O'Brien: No, I think you have covered it well. I still probably one to clarify one thing again about the Japanese. I was once asked, on a Japanese show, something like this, one of the young moderators said, wasn't it a shame, wasn't it awful that they threw away their lives like that? And I said, because I knew mothers and – this was in 1949. I knew mothers and sisters were listening. I said, no, I said, no man has thrown away his life if he has offered it for his country. And I sincerely mean this. I hope the Japanese do not throw out the heroism of all their brave soldiers as fanaticism. I think they should be credited with the heroism that they portrayed and they were brave men and any Marine will tell you that the Japanese were brave. However, at the same time, I think no spirit, no creed, should so imbue a man with an irrational desire to die, where his life, which is so precious, becomes futile and useless to his country.

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Basically saying again, I suppose, we should draw a fine line between heroism and fanaticism.

Q: We have gone on for quite some time, you might be quite tired, but can you bring us up to date what you did post war?

O'Brien: Oh, I got home and I worked on Capitol Hill. I worked for a number of newspapers around just to get my feet wet. Worked at the *Stroudsburg Record* in Pennsylvania, worked for the Long Island Press. Had a stint for AP in Philadelphia, but I wasn't one to settle down yet. Then I was offered a job with the news service in Washington. And we covered – I covered many papers in Ohio and places else. And I thoroughly enjoyed covered the Hill and I kept the papers. But then I took a job with the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory in Science and it was – every place I have gone, it's fascinating. It was a fascinating job interpreting science. I knew nothing about science. I didn't even know why water boiled when it got hot.

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I knew nothing about science. But I found science so fascinating that [tape cuts briefly] Fortunately, Johns Hopkins – I went to Hopkins when they were just getting into the space age. They developed the satellite navigation system and so forth and it was fascinating to be able to come to Cape Canaveral and write to the press. Hold press conferences and bring in newspaper men and television people and introduce them and bring scientists up before them and tell them what was happening and it was thrilling. A very thrilling job. For a man, remember, who was not a scientist. One of the most interesting things about science though is, remember, you have to understand the scientist, if he tells the public, he looses them because he becomes too esoteric, right? So therefore, you have to have a middleman who doesn't understand science. If I understood science, I understand it too quickly. I had to not understand it quickly. To make a long story short, I became the middleman for the public and it becomes very interesting. And so therefore, the dimmer you can appear [unintelligible] I found science fascinating and a wonderful place to work.

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Q: You have certainly done an excellent job of conveying the sound and the feelings of the battle to us. I imagine you did a great job conveying science to people also. I just want to thank you very much, for a really great interview.

O'Brien: Oh, I feel very flattered, I really do, that I was able to talk about Guam. Particularly. I love the people here. Marines, who came back here and fought on Iwo Jima, don't even care if they go to Iwo Jima, but they want to come back to Guam. Other places were battlefields, just battlefields alone. This is where people were, Americans were, they were warm wonderful people. Guam is always our favorite battleground. Thank you.

Q: Thank you, Cy.

[END OF SESSION]