

National Park Service (NPS)

Mariana Islands Wartime Experience through Oral Histories Fellowship
(WAPA 4170)
Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellowship Program



Frank Brown
July 19, 1994

Interview conducted by Steven Hower
Transcribed by Plowshares Media
Coordinated by Dr Jennifer Craig
Reviewed by Guampedia Foundation, Inc
508 compliant version by Michael Faist

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Interview content has not been altered.

The original digital transcript is preserved in the NPS WAPA Collections and NPSGallery.

This digitization was made possible through the National Park Service by a grant from the National Park Foundation through generous support from the Mellon Foundation.

The release form for this interview is on file at the NPS WAPA Collections.

WAPA Collections
War in the Pacific NHP
135 Murray Boulevard, Suite 100
Hagåtña, GU 96910
wapa_interpretation@nps.gov

Interviewee: Frank Brown

Military Rank: Company A, 3rd Marines, 13th Battalion, USMC

Interviewer: Steven Hower

Guam Hilton Hotel

Date: July 19th, 1994

--00:00:03 AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Narrator: Frank Brown is a Caucasian-American man with glasses, wearing a white button-up shirt with a blue collar. Sitting on a wicker chair with a beige wall and a lamp.

Technician: .. It's recording...

--00:00:25

Q: My name is Steven Hower and I'm here at the Hilton Hotel in Guam on July 19th about 3:30 pm to record an oral history interview with Mr. Frank D. Brown, who served in Company A 3rd Marines tank-

Brown: -3rd Tank Battalion-

Q: -3rd tank Battalion during World War II. This interview is being made by the National Parks Service War in the Pacific National Historical Park in conjunction with KGFT television. Now, Mr. Brown, 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?

--00:01:05 AUDIO DESCRIPTION

Brown: That's correct. [Laughs] That's correct.

Q: Well, thank you very much for chatting with us today, we appreciate you coming in and taking the time to tell us about your experiences. Uh-for the record, would you just spell out your full name?

Brown: Frank D. Brown. B-R-O-W-N

Q: Common spelling. Common spelling. Where were you born?

Brown: I was born in Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1923. April the 8th.

Q: Did you grow up in Cheyenne?

Brown: Yes. I grew up-I graduated from high school, joined the Marine Corps from Cheyenne and then got out of the Marine Corps and went through school; I lived in Cheyenne for about a year and then began my travels to uh-Oregon and then Illinois where I presently-presently live.

Q: How was growing-what kind of family did you have?

Brown: Well, I was one of 17. We had 17 single children. There were a maximum of 13 living at home at the same time. So we had a full house...

Q: I'll bet. [Laughs]

Brown: ... a happy house, I think.

Q: Did you live in town? Or in the...

--00:02:22

Brown: Yes, most of the time we lived in town. There were times we lived outside, but most of the time it was in town. In the city of Cheyenne.

Q: Where were you-what was your place in among the 17?

Brown: I was about the middle. About, I think, number seventh.

Q: Great-great, so um-did you tell me you joined the service in uh-Cheyenne-

Brown: -In Cheyenne, correct-

Q: ... and what motivated you to join?

Brown: Ohhh. Of course the war, it had happened, it started December 31st, I joined July 11th 1942 and I had always thought the Marine Corps was the only thing to be and so I joined the Marines.

--00:03:05

Q: Then you got to boot camp and did you still feel that way? [Laughs]

Brown: Oh yeah, I mean, they were hard on you, but they were trying to teach you discipline, they were trying to teach that the orders were the important things, which I believe very sincerely. That is-that is the thing. You've got to follow orders or it's chaos. And that is what they taught us. [Laughs] They taught us-funny thing, we kind of felt that we were more scared of the DI or the sergeant than we were of the enemy. It was... [some muttering]... We would do anything to keep from making the sergeant mad or the drill instructor.

Q: Do you remember your DI's name?

Brown: Uh-I can't remember right now, but I could think of it any other time, except of course now. [Laughs]

--00:03:55

Q: Was he sort of a distinctive kind of character?

Brown: Yeah, he was a very...uh-tall, well built-he was in good-good physical condition and uh-he was tough but he was fair. He made sure that you, uh-when they said move, you said, "What direction?" That was all you asked. You didn't ask why or how, it was, let's go.

Q: Where were you at boot?

Brown: I went to boot through boot camp in San Diego, Marine Corps base San Diego.

--00:04:31

Q: Now...how did you end up in tanks? How were you selected or...?

Brown: I went through radio school at uh-San Diego and the-they gave us a choice of the various branches we could get into and tanks sounded like a real good thing to me. So I went into uh 3r... tanks – I was selected tanks and was-and was assigned there.

--00:04:55

Q: So where did your travels lead you at that point?

Brown: Uh-we went to Camp Elliot and I was in Company D 3rd tanks and then uh-we went to Pendleton and staged the – the full battalion staged, got ready to load and then we went to New Zealand, we loa-went down to San Diego and loaded and then went to New Zealand, north of Auckland, we stationed there and trained there. Then north to uh-Guadalcanal, we stayed there until we got ready to go to Bougainville.

Q: Where did you pick up your tanks? Your first combat was in Bougainville, so where did you pick up the-in Guadalcanal that you picked up the tanks that you took into combat or that was back...

Brown: No we had the-the tank we went into combat with, was the same one we had in uh-Camp um-Elliot. We just took the same tanks all the way through.

--00:05:49

Q: Now you mentioned to me, you guys got to develop a certain attachment-can you go into that a little bit?

Brown: Well, it's-it's like owning a car or anything like this. You find out what the little quirks and things about the car are and I think the drivers of the tank, especially the-they

crews were very close knit and the drivers of course, they found out what the machine would do and uh—... that's what they wanted to use.

Q: These machines that were assigned to D Company...

Brown: Yeah

Q: ... at the time, these were light tanks?

Brown: Light tanks, yeah... I kept saying M4A2's, I may have been wrong, but I kept- I thought they were M4A2s.

--00:06:34

Q: In any case, these were light tanks.

Brown: These were lights, 37-millimeter cannon and a 50...30-caliber machine gun, alongside the 37, and of course the 30-caliber belly gun which the radio man operated. I was the radio man.

Q: So you were the Radio man and that... so where did you sit in the tank?

Brown: I was on the right hand side, down below. The driver side on the left hand side and I was on the right hand side. And our tank had a flame-thrower, so we could use that if we needed it. And it was fully loaded and operational.

Q: Was it-and the flame-thrower on these tanks were not mounted?

Brown: No-no...

Q: How did it operate?

Brown: It operated the same as a machine gun. You take the machine gun out and you flip

the flame thrower through the machine gun port and the tanks were behind you, on the uh-floor behind you on-in a rack. And you pulled the trigger and that would make the mix of the napalm and the um...other – I mean, would mix the napalm and ignite it. We didn't use it in Bougainville, but we did have-it was available, we did have it with us.

Q: Did your tank have a name? Did you guys name your tanks?

Brown: Uh-yeah, but I can't remember what it was. [Laughs] I can't-I really can't.

--00:07:51

Q: Fair Enough. So why don't you tell me about the Bougainville campaign?

Brown: Uh...we-went ashore in Bougainville, I think we were about the 3rd or 4th day and then we were called upon to move up to the Peava Forest.

Q: How did... Excuse me for interrupting. [Clears Throat]

How did that tank get to Bougainville? Was it in a landing craft...

Brown: Oh! It was a landing craft tank, yeah, LCT. LST – landing ship tank.

Q: LST. Yeah.

Brown: They dropped the thing and we went on into the beach.

Q: K.

Brown: And we stood there and waited till they got in, just the driver in the tank. [Laughs] Didn't have anybody else with him, just in case. Safety.

Q: Was there any special waterproofing arrangements made?

Brown: Uh-no-not on these lights. Because we knew we were going to land at a place that was-would be very little water. The beaches, the slope from the shore was good enough for those LCT's so they could go right next to the shore and then drop the ramps. There would be maybe a foot of water, but that would be as far as it would go. So we didn't have to worry about too much water proofing.

Q: Got it.

Brown: And up the trail through the mud and the only water we had from then on was mud and we had lots of that.

Q: Well, it doesn't sound like it was ideal tank country.

Brown: Uh-No... but I would-I would rather be in the tanks than I would the infantry. It was... we were protected. We got-about November the 19th, that is when we had the little battle at Peava Forks and uh-we got hit, they put shells through the side of our tank, behind-came through the wall behind me. I was torn up in the back and my driver got some shrapnel in his lungs. They carried me out, so I was through with combat at that time. Until uh-I volunteered back with the tanks from uh- the hospital in New Caledonia, came back to the outfit and was reconnaissance.

--00:10:09

Q: So how did that uh-how did that particular engagement go? Do you recall any more details about that engagement?

Brown: No it was... we... evidently beat it, won it- but it's just uh-that my part, I was done.

Q: Did the round that hit and knocked you out come as a surprise, or did you know you were coming under fire?

Brown: Uh-no, we knew... didn't realize they had any anti-tank guns out there.

Q: Uh-hmmm.

Brown: We found out.

Q: I guess.

Brown:[Laughs]

Q: It must have been-I guess I'm trying to grapple with a sense of how it was to be inside one of these tanks and what it was like to work and communicate under battlefield conditions.

Brown: Well, really I didn't have any-there was no fear or anything like that, it was just you uh-get your radios and you are able to communicate between each one of the members. The tank commander, the uh-gunner and the driver. You are able to talk to each other with the radios inside the tank. So there is a lots of noise. But uh-it's a little exciting. Really it's-it's more excitement than anything else.

Q: Uh-hmm.

Brown: And uh...when we were hit, you just felt like somebody doubled a fist and hit me in the middle of the back and uh-there was no pain at the time, but like they told me, you are bleeding to death, lie down. So they got me down on the stretcher. But uh...

--00:11:43

Q: Were you able to get out yourself? Or did...

Brown: No, they had to pull me out because my arm wasn't-I wasn't able to use my arm, it sliced that long tendon back there. And they had me wrap a machine gun belt underneath my arms and then the tank commander reached down and pulled me up.

Q: I see. I see.

Brown: But uh-I just couldn't use the arm.

Q: So you were evacuated by uh- stretcher to an aid station?

Brown: Right down to the beach and then sent to Choiseul and they did some more work on us and through Guadalcanal and then from there, they sent us to New Caledonia. Sent me down to New Caledonia.

Q: I see.

Brown: At that hospital there, I finally got to the point where I couldn't stand it, [laughs] and-so I requested duty back to the company.

Q: Why kind of duty did you get when you returned?

Brown: I got light duty, was not able to do too much, so they gave me light duty and I was – Man- I could act as reconnaissance, do those sorts of things.

I could not load the 75 – the radio man in the tank has to load the 75 and reaching back for the 75 shells, they are big shells and into the breach, well, I couldn't operate it. I couldn't operate it because it was on that side. And um...but I could do the reconnaissance.

--00:13:04

Q: So at this point your outfit is back on Guadalcanal. The 3rd tanks have been re-equip with Sherman's.

Brown: With the Sherman's, right.

Q: And you are assigned reconnaissance.

Brown: Right.

Q: And what-are you still attached to -

Brown: I'm still...

Q: A company?

Brown: I was-I was-I was...

Q: You said you were in D Company.

Q: I was in D company- they uh-disbanded D Company on New Zealand and it went into A, B, and C and I went into B Company and then I was- after I was hit, I was reassigned to A Company when I came back to the in the-to the battalion and I was a reconnaissance, worked in the reconnaissance with the-the A Company, 3rd tanks.

Q: Did you get any special training while you were on Guadalcanal or get a chance to do any field maneuvers in a role?

Brown: We did a lot of field maneuvers and we did get a chance to uh-practice what we were supposed to be doing.

Q: So ideally, what were you supposed to be doing?

Brown: My primary function was the reconnaissance and the others [unintelligible] in between the tanks and the infantry regiments and I got a chance to find out how to contact to-get a hold of the people in the infantry and find out what they needed and get the information back to the uh-tank company.

--00:14:28

Q: So how did you go about making this contact, radio – [tape cuts]

Q: Ok so I gotta ask you... so how did you go about contact radio for whatever?

[Tape recording starts again, some talk amongst the crew]

Q: So we were talking about the role of a reconnaissance in a tank battalion and how you were expected to go about doing your job as a liaison and the kind of equipment you used and that sort of thing. Would you go into that with us?

Brown: Yeah, we were assigned a hand-held radio, just the little push button type like they would use around here for-uh...you know, remote radios.

--00:15:15

Q: Some people call those "walkie talkies".

Brown. Walkie-talkies.

Q: Did you call them "walkie talkies?"

Brown: We called them walkie-talkies also. And they were used-they weren't as good as the ones we have now, but we trained with those and we learned how to contact the tank company, how to utilize it, get information to the tanks. That is what our primary function was.

Q: So you would be speaking from uh... where-directly to a tank-to a commander?

Brown: We would talk to the company commander and he's the one we would go through, we wouldn't go through the tanks themselves. We would get the information back, the needs of the regiment. Whatever-whatever it was that they had, that they needed, we would get it back to them. Back to the tank, I mean.

Q: So generally speaking was your battle post then at a regimental command post?

Brown: Right-through Guam, that is true, we were pretty much tied to the 9th Marines regimental.

--00:16:20

Q: Did you know um-you practice for a particular campaign obviously when you are in Guadalcanal, did you-when did you get into the big picture about just where you were going?

Brown: We didn't get that until we got aboard ship and we were out to sea probably 30 days before they finally told us where we were gonna go.

Q: 30 days.

Brown: We were on board ship 52 days-we did have a short break at Kwajalein, trying to get off and I read something about the beer we got-we got a can of beer. [Laughs] We got to stretch our legs.

Q: I imagine they needed stretching.

Brown: Oh yeah, well after that length of time. I played much hearts and much pinochle. I can do a lot of things with cards. [Laughs] So, I stayed away from poker, I didn't have any money.

Q: What kind of ship were you on?

Brown: I was on a transport. I wasn't on the LST. They had the-the tanks were on the LSTs and they were taken up to Guam and uh-I was on the transport with the 9th Marines. So really I kind of stayed with the 9th Marines through the whole thing.

--00:17:34

Q: I see. Well why don't you take us back to reveille on the morning of the assault, what happened to you?

Brown: Well, we were awake because we knew we were going in and we weren't too sleepy. You knew what was going to happen. So you got up, got yourself dressed and ready and then down to eats. They had a good-the Navy had a good meal. I can't remember what it was, but I know it was a good meal to eat. Then they told us, stand by, so we went back and got our gear together and waited until-waited by the... on the starboard side, until they told us to get ready and so then down the nets into the alligators.

Q: So-you loaded directly into an alligator?

Brown: Well, we loaded directly into it.

Q: Do you remember the name of the transport?

Brown: No I don't – I have no – I can't remember what that was.

Q: What kind of gear were you carrying?

Brown: Well, I had a med pack and uh-a couple of day's supply of food, plus a change of clothes. My um-poncho and a blanket, wrapped together. I carried the radio of course and a carbine.

Q: Was this a, walkie-talkie?

Brown: The walkie-talkie, yes. We checked it out before we left the ship, [laughs] of course.

Q: About how heavy do you think was your load?

Brown: Umm-gosh, I have no idea. It was-it really wasn't that heavy, I didn't think. Of course the ammunition for the carbine and a couple of hand grenades.

Q: So you got in the alligator -

Brown: Got in the alligator and then we rolled around and waited till the Navy got down with their bombardment and then uh-first wave took off, second wave, kind of stretched out in the middle, we took off, hit the shore on the fifth wave. Land and rolled up across the reef at 13 Asan Point, near Asan Point, I should say. And uh-right up to the bank and they said, "Get out," and we jumped out of the alligator...

Q: Was it...

Brown: Uh-hmm?

Q: Excuse me.

Brown: Go ahead.

Q: Was it that kind that you had to jump over the side?

Brown: Right, right.

Q: Ok... what did you see-what greeted you?

--00:19:54

Brown: Well, really uh-the only thing we saw you know-was the beach and we heard a lot of action and much shooting going on. Mortars were coming and-but-but... it was just noisy. Really, I guess you could say that. And we jumped off and they said, "Get off the beach, get going! So we went in the direction we had planned to originally. Then checked with people in the area. While we were there, of course the mortars cut loose and we hit the deck and just happened to luck out.

The uh-one mortar hit on one side of the hill, there was a Marine laying there. He took the shot, we called a corpsman and got him to it and then we came on back to find out where the regimental headquarters were.

Q: Where was the regimental headquarters?

Brown: It was back closer to the beach. [Laughs] We had gone a long way before we – nobody knew where it was when we jumped off.

Q: So what kind of terrain did they choose to – paint a picture of what the regimental command post looked like?

Brown: Well all it was, they merely had a tarp up-so to shield it from the sun, because they knew we weren't going to be there too long. It was along the flats, if you look at just off Asan Point, it's a nice flat area. And they were right there. And so we kinda scratched out a place to uh-protect us until the next round of mortars came in and we decided we had better get deeper.

[Both Laughing]

So we did. And we stayed there until that night, they moved the regimental on up to the hill and we stayed there overnight. And they-of course the Japs threw a bunch of mortars in that night too. I heard one hit close to my head and the next morning I looking up and there is a nice chunk of steel sitting there-brass, I should say. Then we left there and went on around the point, across, down the road along...[pause]... let's see-ok-Asan Point has this hill and then there is a road that goes between this hill where Asan Point is, and then it goes along the coast, fairly close to the coastline.

--00:22:30

Q: So off to the right, to the south.

Brown: It was-it the old road.

Q: Yeah

Brown: And we were-we went down that. Uhh-one thing we did see while we were still on

the beach, the Japs had an-had an artillery piece that they ran out on a track and they would pull it out, fire a shot on the-on the end of the landing craft, stuff coming in, and then back in. We saw it, got a hold of a tank, and showed them exactly where it was coming out. When it came out the next time, the tank was ready for him, and he disabled the gun with the AG, so he-destroyed that piece of artillery.

Q: Great. Was uh-that particular Japanese weapon um-on Asan Point? Right on Asan Point?

Brown: Yes, in fact I looked for it.

Q: Have you visited it?

Brown: We went there yesterday and I looked for it and the only place I could figure out – I didn't go up on it, we didn't have time, but I figured out pretty closely where it was.

--00:23:37

Q: Was it facing the landing beaches then-or had you gone beyond and it was to the south?

Brown: Oh, we had already gone beyond it...

Q: So south facing?

Brown:... and it was still facing the beaches

Q: I see.

Brown: And like I said-we got in there. He should have known we were there, but I guess he just wanted to get his shots off.

Q: Allright, so clarify again, so this Japanese artillery [unintelligible] was facing north, facing the land?

Brown: He was facing the beaches, yeah.

Q: Yeah, interesting.

Brown: Then we went-like I said, we stayed with the infantry all the way around. We went on around and then down along the... Orote Peninsula, the water of the bay there.

Q: Yeah.

Brown: We went down there. I saw an incident there that really-it was just real sad. The guys were cleaning their weapons and one of them-the carbine... uh, released the spring and there was a round in his chamber, I don't know how it could have been there, because I saw him empty the thing, I saw him work the thing to make sure there was nothing in there. And when it went home, a round was fired and split the spine of the guy next to him.

And um-ytat was one thing, I was torn up. I often wondered what he felt like. What this Marine felt like and how he lived through that.

--00:25:11

Q: Funny you should mention that, it's interesting to hear some of these pieces of the grand puzzle; I guess that was this battle, fit together from different directions. One of...an earlier interview I had was with Dr. Sam Etheridge and he was attached to the 9th Marines and he said the two saddest injuries he had to treat at that time were self-inflicted wounds that happened when Marines were cleaning their weapons and shot themselves by accident and he described the spinal injury and it makes me wonder if you are not talking about the same thing, from a different angle.

Brown: It might have been because I was standing back and I saw it happen. I was... devastated. That poor guy, the one whose rifle went off. I know he went through hell.

Q: Well-what were you during these busy days, did you stay in the CP or did you get to get

out on the scouts?

Brown: We stayed close to regimental and just-when we had to go back in contact, one of us did it, either Louis Scopel he was the other man with me, there were two of us that were assigned to it, and it was either he or I that went back to the company to tell them what was needed from the 9th Marines. We just kept close tabs between the tanks and the infantry.

--00:26:43

Q: Scopel is spelled how?

Brown: S-C-O-P-E-L.

Q: K.

Brown: He was from Michigan. Bringer Inn, Leslie, Michigan [unitelligible] Something Michigan.

Q: Because you were at a CP, did you feel that you had a better sense of what the big picture was, then the usual soldier or were things happening so fast?

Brown: Things were happening fast, really you-just kind of stayed in your own zone, your own sphere and you didn't worry about the rest of it. You just hoped they were taking care of their part. And we knew they were, you had full faith in them, because-well, you had to. But you didn't have any idea of what was happening. You knew you were advancing, you knew we were-we were doing it. We were completing the job. Because we were moving ahead, we were constantly moving. And so we knew that it was going well for us. Then finally we got up to the-we went through the center of the island, the 9th Marines swung around and the 77th Army Division came up and joined the next two and then we just pushed up through the middle of the island as the 9th Marines and I stayed with them all the way up.

I'm not sure how far up we went, but finally they pretty well secured the need for the liaison between the tanks and the infantry and they sent us back to our um-the 3rd tank battalion where they were-they were set up on the island, temporarily at least.

Q: Uh-hmm.

Brown: And coming back, the most beautiful sight I saw, we came out of a wooded area and Division had set up their headquarters and there was Old Glory. [Pauses]

The most beautiful sight.

--00:28:44

Q: There were a few instances I know, during the battle of Guam when there were some tank versus tank engagements, do you recall any?

Brown: I wasn't involved in those. I heard about them later. I uh- I didn't get the full story on it, but I did hear about the tank versus tank, in fact they said there was one tank battle fought, but uh-I didn't get any details on it. I just heard about it.

Q: Hmm. Anything else about the Guam campaign that's memorable?

Brown: Uhh...after we had pretty well secured the island, the Japanese soldiers were coming in, they hit the Chamorro villages and take food, because they didn't have any stores and we pretty well wiped out their stores. They were coming in and getting food from the natives.

And one time we were in camp and all of a sudden this young Chamorro boy, he must have been eight or nine years old, he came running up the hill, the village was right below where we were camped. He came running up and said, there is four Japanese soldiers in our village. So everybody grabbed their weapons and down the hill. Well, three got away, because they could move, but the fourth one only had one leg and he crawled in between two buildings and they pointed him out to us. So we went over and got him. And

uh-stripped him down to make sure he wasn't carrying any grenades or anything. And uh-then they notified headquarters to come down and bring a truck down so that we could take him up as a prisoner. And this one little Chamorro boy, like I said, he was about nine or ten, [laughs] as we were going up the hill, I was on the truck with the Japanese soldier and I would ask a question and he would interpret because he could speak Japanese and I couldn't.

And I noticed the questions were always a little longer when he said them, then when I said them. We got rid of the-we turned the Japanese soldier turned over the MPs and I asked him, I said, what were adding to the questions I was saying? He said, well, I was just gonna tell him I was going to push him off the truck. [Laughs] If he didn't tell him, he was going to push him off the truck. [Laughing].

I will never forget that boy, he was something.

--00:31:12

Q: Gosh, How did your...at the end of the Guam campaign, you guys went into camp and you stayed there for a while.

Brown: Right.

Q: How did the accommodation compare with Guadalcanal?

Brown: Oh, it was much nicer! Well, Guadalcanal was a sub-tropic. I mean, it was wet and-umm...Guam, after that, was heaven. We in-in fact, I fell in love with Guam, and I still feel that way.

Q: Did you have some continual contact with the people of Guam?

Brown: No, I didn't, I had no contact at all, it was just-I knew I wanted to get back some time.

Q: Yeah. Is this your first time back?

Brown: Yes it is.

Q: What do you think about the changes that you see?

Brown: Oh my gosh, I can't believe it, they had ground zero, they had nothing. Those people were wiped out. They didn't have-you know, no jobs; their homes were devastated and destroyed. The city of Agana was in ruins and these people had nothing. And I look at it now and I think, my God if anybody didn't deserve the best, they should. They deserved it-they deserved everything. They deserved the greatest-because they started from nothing. And built themselves back up. What a people.

--00:32:41

Q: Well that's good to see that some-some good feelings can come out of something like the war.

Brown: I sure have that, for them.

Q: That's great. can you tell us a little bit about your subsequent combat career after Guam?

Brown: Well, okay, we finished, completed Guam and went into training for Iwo Jima and we loaded on Iwo Jima, we were on the LST, went into uh-Iwo Jima and we were waiting for the... 4th and 5th Divisions, to see if we were going to be needed. While we were there, our LST took a kamikaze forward to the forward of the elevator.. The plane went into the LST and of course you saw the wing cartwheel off. The pilot was killed and we lost I think, three Marines and six or seven sailors were killed in that- when the kamikaze hit. But then we went into shore afterwards, we-

--00:33:55

Q: Immediately afterward, the same day?

Brown: No, it wasn't the same day, I think it was the next day we finally-they needed the tanks, so they did their darneest to get the tanks in the hold, in working order. They had one that wouldn't run, so they had to push it aside.

Q: As a result of the kamikaze?

Brown: [Answering] The kamikaze, right. And then we went into shore and had to back off and wrap a prop screw around our anchor cable, [Laughing] so we were stuck out for a day or two. And during that time, we saw the flag go up on Iwo Jima, on Suribachi. What a sight. But Iwo Jima was-you did it by inches and it was-there was more fire power shown there by the Japanese and by our people. They had a rocket that used to go off like-it sounded like a house going overhead and you never knew where it was going to land, I don't think they did either. They just knew it was going to be down there some place.

Q: Uh-hmm... I heard when the flag went up on Suribachi, there was cheering on the beach?

Brown: Oh yes, it was spontaneous, all of a sudden the guys would look up and see it, hey, it was up there and I tell you, they cheered, it was beau-great. I know we did on the ship. And we heard the beach guys starting to cheer when we saw the flag up there.

Q: Were you doing the same kind of work or duties on Iwo Jima?

Brown: Yeah, except Iwo Jima is a little bit different because we stayed with the company commander and he was with us all the way through, because we were in a lot tighter area and you were pretty much in visible contact with the infantry as well as the-with tanks.

--00:35:47

Q: So you were with a company commander, you said.

Brown: Yes, we walked up to where we were needed to contact the infantry and then we

radioed back to the tanks to give them the information and the orders.

Q: So you must have seen considerably more action, front line –

Brown: There was a lot more, yeah, there was a lot more action, there was a lot more shell fire.

Q: Anything of uh-particular memory...

Brown: I found I can side jump a considerable distance with a radio in my hand. I can make a-I think I made eight feet that one time. [Laughs]

Q: To get out of the way -?

Brown: Yeah, I saw the machine gun kicking up the dirt, about a foot high and I moved to the side. And another-we came under shell fire the-the 5th Division, they had the wrong coordinates or something, because we were under fire from them and the Japs at the same time-one time. We stayed in a hole and just prayed. I said the 23rd Psalm, [Laughs] must have been 20 times during that period of time.

Q: Were you attached to the 9th Marines at that time also?

Brown: Umm... I believe we were attached at the 21st at that time. We were right in the middle, really didn't make much difference at that time, we just – whoever needed us, that is where we – we weren't definitely attached to anybody, it was more as needed. And the 9th and 21st were so close that we were used by both.

Q: Uh-hmm. Were you able to get through the Iwo Jima campaign without getting hurt?

Brown: Without being hit, yes. The only thing I had, I-after one particular trying day or week, I just sat down and cried for about a half hour. But other than that, I made it through all right.

--00:37:56

Q: I imagine you had a lot of tension that needed relieving.

Brown: Yes-yes, if I hadn't cried, I might have-there is no telling what would have happened.

Q: What happened at that point after Iwo?

Brown: I returned-I was tested on Iwo Jima for V12 and I passed it and they sent me back from Iwo Jima to Guam and for the next-first transport back to the States.

Q: For the uninitiated, will you explain what the V12 program is?

Brown: Well, the V12 program was an officers candidate program and it -- they wanted to make sure that they had people who were college graduates, ready for officers training and they selected a few from the combat units and they called me in and asked me if I would test for it and I said I would be happy to. And I tested and passed. And went back to Guam, got cleaned up finally.

And then there was a aircraft carrier, one of the light, the small ones, I can't remember what the classification was. A CV something. It was -

Q: [unintelligible answer]

Brown: Yeah, an escort carrier. And one of them was going back and had uh-engine trouble, so we took the slow train back to uh-San Diego and then from San Diego went to Cherry Point, North Carolina and, then we selected our school and I got [unintelligible] college at Colorado Springs and I went to V12 there. Then after I was discharged in the Marine Corps, at the end of my enlistment, I came back and went to school at Colorado A&M, Fort Collins.

--00:39:45

Q: One thing, I may have neglected to ask you to run through was when you were in Bougainville, what was your rank?

Brown: Umm.-Bougainville I came out as a corporal.

Q: And on Guam?

Brown: Uh, finally made sergeant, I was sergeant through Iwo Jima.

Q: I see. Ok. So the war ended and you were at Colorado...

Brown: Colorado College. And then July 11th '48, my enlistment ran out and I was at Great Lakes Naval training station and then was discharged out July 28th, '46. And There I went to Colorado State University.

--00:40:27

Q: What kind of career did you make after the war?

Brown: Civil Engineering. I got into Civil Engineering and became a highway engineer and worked for the Oregon State Highway Department, Wyoming Highway Department and then the Oregon State Highway Department and then I went to work for the Illinois Department of transportation.

Q: From your personal perspective, how would um-you assess the Guam campaign compared with what you saw before or after?

Brown: Guam was tough, but it wasn't-it was a whole different thing. Bougainville was jungles, and mud and slop. It was smelly from the time we got there till the time we got out. Guam was cleaner. We did have flies you wouldn't believe, but we got them cleaned up. Iwo Jima was sand and it was hell. There was-it was hot and it was on top of a volcano. If you wanted to have food, hot food, and I did this many times, you dig a hole in the side of the bank, put your cans of food in there and take them out later and you had hot food

Q: No kidding.

Brown: You laid your blanket down and left it down one time and that was the only time you ever did that. The heat would build up underneath that blanket so much, you couldn't sleep. [Laughs] You had to get up and dig another hole.

Q: So where did you sleep?

Brown: Oh, you mean after that? You dug a hole and slept next to it, slept on the place next to it. Then you didn't leave a blanket down from then on. [Laughs] You picked her up. Oh, that island was something else. And Guam-it was cleaner...[pause]....It was just a beautiful place.

--00:42:19

Q: I'm sorry if I had asked you before [laughs]. Had you been back before...

Brown: No... No, I left here in '45, around June of '45 and hadn't been back since. I had been promising myself that I was going to come back and I finally got the opportunity.

Q: In the years since the war, did you keep up with some of your buddies or is this all -

Brown: I tried to, but we just lost contact. I tried to keep contact. But you-if you don't see them and don't run around with them, I think you kind of lose contact.

--00:42:54

Q: So how does it feel seeing some of these guys?

Brown: The only thing is, I don't know any of them. [Laughs] None of them were in my outfit. The ones I would like to see, I have not seen or heard from since-I know I wrote to some shortly-you know, after I got back. And I haven't heard from any of them. Except Will. I will take it back, one guy. He's from near Torrington, Wyoming and I hear from him every Christmas. But the rest of them, no.

Q: Have you had a chance to visit the National Parks Service Visitor's Center here on Guam?

Brown: Which one... We...

Q: War in the Pacific National Park.

Brown: Yeah, we were there. Right. Great. Fantastic, fantastic.

Q: Do you have any constructive criticism or anything you would like to see there that you think we could -

Brown: There is so much to see there now. It's so much to absorb now. I know-I saw the one with the light tanks and I thought, that is the wrong place, because-this should be Bougainville, but I see what you are saying, the Army did have some lights. I didn't realize that.

--00:44:14

Q: Make that point again, at that time the Marine Corps tank battalion at that time did not have any light tanks.

Brown: Not at that, no. We had all mediums.

Q: Well, it's 50 years after World War II, um-what do you think the legacy of that time should be for people now, people in the future, if you have to say something about-about the war, what would you tell us?

Technician: We can pause it...

Q: You can think about that for a second. [Brief Pause]

Q: So it's 50 years after World War II, um- you're a veteran. If you want to tell people, my generation, or future generations something about World War II and what it ought to mean to them. What would you say?

--00:45:03

Brown: Uh-the total thought on World War II and war in general is it's stupid. If you look at World War II, the Japanese came in, they-militarily took these islands. And we had to go back and take them back from them. And there were so many men, so many people that died. I say men, there were so many people that died needlessly. Because look, today, the Japanese are investing in every facet of life. In Guam, in Hawaii, United States. War is stupid. We-you should never have to fight. Men should never have to-or women, should never have to go into combat against each other. Kill each other for any reason. They could be-if they will stay in and talk-its like a marriage. Marriage is successful if you correspond with each other, if you talk to each other.

"Talk to me." That's what my wife kept saying to me. Talk to me, talk to me. And we have been married 47 years. Uh-nations don't need to fight. Talk. That's why I think the human is a great, great thing, because you are forced to talk.

Legacy, to me, is war is stupid. It's unnecessary. If you can get by without it, any way-get by without it. Oh-we were brave. Hey-we got out there and did our job, we did it, but it was so stupid. You look at all those dead- you know, the deaths. Well, among the civilian population, the deaths there. That was so unnecessary.

[Brief pause].

--00:47:23

Q: Well, Mr. Brown, anything else you would like to say?

Brown: I can't think of a thing, I think I've pretty well said it all. [Laughs] I think I've talked out about the way I feel about it.

Q: I'm glad you had a chance to get talked out. I have enjoyed speaking with you and I want to thank you very much for the time that you take to be with us and also the openness that you shared with us today.

Brown: Thank you very much for having me.

Q: You are very welcome.

Brown: Giving me the opportunity.

--01:47:38

Q: Thank you

--00:47:57

[END OF SESSION]

AUDIO DESCRIPTION ENDS