

Interviewer: Alright sir would you please just for the interview let us know what your name was rank, unit and your service.

Lombardi: You want it all now or when I first started.

Interviewer: When you first started.

Lombardi: Yeah my name is actually that's kind of funny my name is not Arthur P Lombardi my real name is Artilio P Lombardi. But when I grew up and I first started us five children in the schools in Ohio why the school teachers Americanized all our names. And I don't know how they got Arthur out of Artilio but they did and but my birth certificate really is Artilio. But my name officially is Arthur Paul Lombardi. And so born in Canton Ohio on December 8, 1923 and that's where I grew up in Ohio. And I'm not going to cover anything up in Ohio because I don't know if that would be although it's interesting I don't know whether that's germane or not.

Interviewer: I'm going off the assumption that that's already been attested on so.

Lombardi: Anyway I guess let's start here at I think a good point probably let's start with combat.

Interviewer: Let's start off with your first experience.

Lombardi: Okay 11th airborne division deployed to the South Pacific in 1944 from Camp McCall North Carolina. And at that time I was a buck sergeant and we arrived in New Guinea and after about three months there this is kind of interesting. The battery commander called me up one day and he said you're gonna be my first sergeant only 20 years old. And in those days they could do that you didn't have to go up one step at a time. So he said you're gonna my first sergeant and I said well if that's the way it's gonna be that's the way it's gonna be. And incidentally he's a great guy he's an author he's a retired lieutenant general his name is Flannigan he writes he writes military history. He's written the history of the 11th airborne division the history of the 101st he's written the history of the Rakkasans lives in Buford South Carolina. But he was a West Pointer class of 1943 January and those they took some of the classes at West Point during the war and because there was an urgent need for officers they graduated some of them ahead of time. So he was scheduled to graduate in June but they graduated him in January of 43. He came to the 11th he was a first lieutenant when he made me his first sergeant and like I always like to tell him I said I don't know how we ever got through that war. I was 20 and he was like 22 or 23 and said it must have been a terrible not that much experience between the two of us but we got through it alright. But anyway on New Guinea he made me his first sergeant and.

Interviewer: Now did he have veterans in the company?

Lombardi: There was not there was only one regular army guy in my whole battery. And he was a PFC and he stayed a PFC he didn't want anything he had been in a horse outfit someplace name was Patterson. And he was the only one an old timer in those days was somebody that had maybe like a cadre. The cadre in my battery they probably had maybe two at the most three years in the army at the most. These were the old timers they didn't have that much experience either. Especially in the airborne outfits because they were building up the airborne forces so quickly. We didn't have any airborne forces and all of a sudden by the end of the war we had like five divisions. And so anybody that was in an airborne unit if he was half way you know half way tried you could go up the ladder real quick which happened. So it was not people nowadays say gee 20 years old and first sergeant you did something.

Well during World War II I don't say it was the norm but it's not anything that was outlandish either. Recognizing it to work there weren't the guys to fill the slots.

Interviewer: But these were good soldiers in the airborne unit.

Lombardi: Yes they were good soldiers they my World War II outfit we still meet every two year there aren't many of us left but we still meet. They were good soldiers they had all volunteered they were all volunteers with the airborne business. And so they were good they fought courageously I mean they didn't take a backseat for anybody they were good soldiers. But at the same time very few of them ever made I think of the battery I was in I can only think of one, two only two of them ever made the army their career. Both of them and of course the battery commander he was a West Pointer he stayed on. But that was it and myself. But we made the parachuters all we went to Laity our first actual real fight was on the island of Laity in the Philippines. Terrible time of the year monsoon worst weather they had had in 40 years rain wise. And we got we got battle tested there pretty good in those mountains.

Interviewer: Was that an airborne operation on Laity?

Lombardi: No it was an amphibious operation. But actually we didn't hit the beach like they did what happened is General MacArthur and the commanding general of our division had a little something in common and that was the chief of staff in the army during World War I was a guy named Payton Marsh. And Payton Marsh's daughter was married to the division commander of the 11th airborne division General Joe Sway. And during World War I Payton Marsh being the chief of staff and MacArthur being colonel and a young brigadier and MacArthur's father too you know was a lieutenant general as you may know. An old army guy not a West Pointer but an old army guy. But anyway there was that so they had known each other and so MacArthur had asked for the 11th he wanted an airborne division in the Pacific he didn't have it he had the 503rd RCT but no airborne divisions. So he asked for the 11th and I'm sure because Swing commanded him I think. Although Swing disvalued that when I talked to him about that he's dead now. But at any rate the 11th proved themselves very well on Laity and then we got the word that we were going to make the invasion of Luzon.

Interviewer: Prior to getting off Laity of that subject.

Lombardi: Yeah

Interviewer: You landed on Laity and you have 75 millimeter Howitzers the airborne gun.

Lombardi: Yes we had 75 millimeter Howitzers you're right we had 75 millimeter pack Howitzers.

Interviewer: And when you went into action once you landed did you go immediately into battery or did you

Lombardi: What happened is that we went in at a place called close to Tacklobin and as soon as we got there why they found they had to commit us and they did. And the 511th infantry regiment and the 587th and the 188th two of them were glider regiments the 511th was the only parachute infantry regiment. Went into action right away as a matter of fact during that period it was the only time that the Japanese tried an airborne assault during the entire war. They dropped they dropped a force on the beach their idea was in talking to the Japanese afterwards this Japanese assault this Japanese elite unit was supposed to take over and then there was a link up operation from the mountains down. But it never

worked because they you know we destroyed the airborne assault force. It wasn't very hard for us but destroyed them and of course then they couldn't come down the mountains because the 511th and the infantry the 11th airborne units were doing so well there.

Interviewer: What type missions did you fire there were those close support counter battery?

Lombardi: Yeah most of them were indirect fire you know as a matter of fact and I'll tell you the story tongue and cheek because I don't want you to think it was any great. But this guy Flannigan and myself one time we went up to ___ to see as a forward observe party and we got into a fire fight with the Japanese. It was just at dusk and we took some losses and oh you know I was there and I it's kind of funny how fate is. One of my the sergeant that was in our party got hit in the stomach and was lying on this hillside. And as our force withdrew to kind of get together to mount an assault even though it was late in the afternoon my guy was out there. So I said when I found out hell he was yelling so I crawled out there and grabbed him and pulled him in. But me and the infantry company first sergeant was with me and we got to him and he was lying there with a stomach wound. And I grabbed his feet because we had to stay low in the sheet of all this fire and he grabbed his shoulders. And he said I can't budge him and I said well let's switch you take his feet and I'll take his shoulders. So we scurried around and the minute we did that the minute we got ready to pull he took one right through the head killed him right there on the spot. And so I drug him back but anyway.

Interviewer: What on that same thing we've got two first sergeants from an FO Company an FO detachment in and infantry company running out to medevac a soldier ahead of enemy lines.

Lombardi: Right

Interviewer: That's taking care of your men I understand that I'm just curious what was you thinking? That's my guy I've got to get him?

Lombardi: Well see the FO party only had four people in it. And this was my guy you know so I had a thing and this infantry guy you know God Bless him God bless is soul you know he figured I said I'm gonna go out and get him he said I'll go with you. So that's the way it happened and he paid the price for it. But there were other things about it you know before that and I don't want to get into that too much. But anyway the funny part of it was when they battery commander finally wrote me up for an award and it got to General Swing and he said I am not going to approve this. He said that is no place for a first sergeant. He downgraded the damn thing later on when I talked to him about it I mean years later here at Fort Campbell. I talked to him about it and he said well he said you shouldn't have been there and I said and you shouldn't have been where you were either.

Interviewer: I think they tend to forget about that.

Lombardi: Yeah he got the DSC you know for being where the hell he wasn't supposed to be. But yeah we got back and regrouped made the parachute assault on Luzon and.

Interviewer: Was that a good experience I mean I know it's combat but you had previously a noncombat tested company as a first sergeant you went into Laity and then you had to make this operation Luzon. Did the lessons you guys learned on Laity were you able to put those together and use them constructively were you that challenged for the most part were the guys?

Lombardi: Well you know the thing about it Stephen you know the guys knew what they had to do as far as field artillery was concerned. They knew their job and so it wasn't that great a thing and what we learned on Laity we carried over to. I think probably more than anything what hardened them for Luzon was probably more psychologically I mean they were ready to go you know ready to. I mean combat is combat and you never get used to it completely but they knew they could do it and they did a super job on Laity and they did a super job on Luzon. But it was and like you say I mean you're talking about an airborne unit you know how those guys are they're gun hoe. And so it was no big thing. But we got to Luzon and this was in February.

Interviewer: And that was an airborne operation.

Lombardi: Oh yeah parachute assault.

Interviewer: Now keep in mind I know what you're talking about.

Lombardi: Yeah I know.

Interviewer: Now could you describe maybe the infield and what led up to it the planning you know at the marshaling site can you talk me through the marshaling site.

Lombardi: Yeah what happened is we staged we flew from Tack Logan and Laity on Laity to the island of ____ another island in the Philippine chain. And there is where we had C46s and C47s and that's where we rigged everything for the parachute assault. Put the Howitzers in the they come in six loads in the belly that you hang like from hangers. They had three in the door and daisy chains.

Interviewer: So you actually got all the Howitzers and the battery on one aircraft or did you put

Lombardi: Just one

Interviewer: One Howitzer

Lombardi: One Howitzer per plane.

Interviewer: Okay did the crew load with their Howitzer or

Lombardi: Yeah

Interviewer: Or was all they could carry was one okay

Lombardi: No the crew the way it worked was the crew and the Howitzer went in one plane one entire crew. And they had six belly loads and three in the door and they've got miscellaneous people too you know you've got the wire section and the radio section. And the C46 or 47 can carry more than just the gun crew so you had a smattering of those guys in each plane. And three of the four Howitzers made it when we did the drop. We took off from Bandura early in the morning and dropped on a place called Tagaytay Ridge.

Interviewer: And what was the name of the drop zone did you have a code name for it do you remember?

Lombardi: No I can't remember there might have been one but I can't remember. All I know is that it was a ridge there was a ridge now two of the infantry regiments the 187th and 188th had made an amphibious operation at ___ which is in the southern part of Luzon. And the idea is like airborne operations are supposed to work we dropped and there was supposed to be a link up. And what happened the Japanese weren't too swift about it. We dropped and we had no sooner hit the ground and assembled our guns and the 511th in position here comes the 187th and 188th. It's just the Japanese had miscalculated about it and you had an entire division small division. Bear in mind an airborne division on those days only consisted of about less than 10,000 people so it was a small division.

Interviewer: There were no engineers and

Lombardi: Yeah we had engineers but they were reduced numbers you know small detachments. We had a little medic we had medical units and a signal unit and but they were small everything was reduced it was small. And the as a matter of fact the infantry battalions outside of the 511th they only had two the other two regiments only had two battalions to a regiment rather than three the 511th had three.

Interviewer: Was that a manning problem just couldn't get enough forces assembled fast enough?

Lombardi: Oh that's the way the ___ organized.

Interviewer: It was

Lombardi: Yeah they wanted small a small unit and even at that not like a kind of there's a side to that. The airborne division concept was under serious attack in the United States earlier. As a matter of fact as a result of the Sicily operation where it was a disaster General Marshal and Eisenhower both said hey we better rethink this division airborne division concept. We think maybe we ought to go back to battalion side units and forget about the division airborne. But with that in late 1944 it was late 1943 late 1943 they ordered an exercise at Camp McCall North Carolina where they were going to demonstrate the validity of the airborne division concept. The 11th General Swing was given the mission of we had all kinds of people coming down secretary of war was there came down to witness that thing.

Interviewer: Now this was a center for all airborne research at that time doctor and improving ground.

Lombardi: Right and he carried it out so successfully that they said oh yeah we better stay with the airborne division concept. And that had serious implication to the airborne community because they if the 11th had screwed that up you know the 101st the 82nd the 17th and the 13th you know the 101st would have had no rondavue with destiny because they wouldn't have been. So it was it's something that us airborne guys have to remember that Swing pulled that off the way he did and it worked so good that the secretary of war was impressed and so was Marshal. And so they kept it on.

Interviewer: And while we're still on tactic I know we jumped from Luzon doctrine just as an artillery man an airborne artillery man now I know the 101st had glider regiments and it had glider regiments and airborne infantry regiments.

Lombardi: Yeah we did the same.

Interviewer: Were you as an artillery man were you guys capable actually of going by glider or by going by airborne infiltration or did you specialize in one parachute or glider.

Lombardi: That's a very good question I'll tell you why because there was an evolution that took place. Originally the parachute guys were strictly parachute and the gliders strictly a glider. Later on about the time we hit Luzon General Swing said hey you know everybody ought to do everything. Let's make the glider men paratroopers too and let's make the paratroopers glider men too. And I remember that when I received my battlefield commission they transferred me because General Swift didn't think that anybody that got a battlefield commission ought to remain with the unit he was with. So they transferred me to the 674 glider in combat the glider artillery battalion. And when I got there in ___ the first thing the battalion commander told me he said I know you're a paratrooper but you have to be qualified as a glider. So I had to go to glider school at ___ this was after the I mean the ___ were just about over on Luzon. But I'm a qualified glider so I had to go to glider school. Then what they did they changed it and at the same time General Swing told that battalion commander he said okay you've got a glider outfit but you've got to go to parachute school. And he had to become a paratrooper at ___ because we had wherever we went we set up a jump school whether it was Camp Polk whether it was New Guinea we didn't want to have one on Laity but on Luzon we had one and of course in Japan they had one.

Interviewer: Probably a good thing for artillery seems like it would be a lot

Lombardi: Well you know

Interviewer: I mean that's a heavy platform and sometimes

Lombardi: Yeah

Interviewer: I guess we ought to probably I got you going in a different direction. Let me bring you back to the assembly area at Luzon.

Lombardi: Yeah Luzon yeah we did jump we had a hell of a fight there. We did alright going up to gates of Rinella. When we got to Rinella it was just tough. They did the _____ which I wasn't involved in and you may have heard about the _____ which was a as a matter of fact the guy that lead that company on that jump John Ringler lives in Dover Tennessee. He's an old fellow now but.

Interviewer: I know Dover so maybe I'll look him up.

Lombardi: Yeah John Ringler is his name he's a retired colonel and he lead that company on that assault that liberated those 2700 internees. Didn't hear much about that raid although you know they teach it at Leavenworth. But it was carried out the division G3 was a guy name Doug Quan that was in 1937 brilliant guy. He ginned that thing up so quickly and he did it so well that when he carried it off it was the same day the marines planned to start a march on Mount Serbatchi. So they got the and if you look someone said I never bothered to do it but they got a copy of the Las Angelus Times the New York Times or something and went back to that date and way on the back page was just a small little thing where the front page you know. But that was General Swings fault and he admitted it later on. He said he made two mistakes when he commanded the 11th airborne division he acknowledged this to me years later. He said the first mistake was he didn't allow the press into the 11th area. He just there were no area piles in the 11th he just had a reversion about it. And as a result you don't get coverage. And the second thing

he regretted was he said I was too stingy with awards. Well hell you had to win a DCS to get the Bronze Star in the 11th. He just wouldn't give them out he we had two Medal of Honor winners during World War II of all the great things that were done and they both were post _____. Presser was one and the other was Fryer Fryer Field out at Fort Campbell named after him. But those were the only two that and he as a matter of fact in both cases they were not recommended for the Medal of Honor. It was only when he went up the road and people read that thing and said hey these guys deserve more than a Silver Star. But that's the way he was but he regretted that he said it wasn't fair I didn't do it right I realize that people ought to be awarded medals if they did things right. But that's the way it was.

Interviewer: How many Japanese were on Luzon? Did you know before you went into Luzon or did they do things sort of the way they do now with the operations orders and all of that? Was everyone involved in the planning for or was that a centralized thing and you as the first sergeant didn't find out.

Lombardi: Of course you've got to reamer Stephen I was just a first sergeant and second lieutenant I mean I wasn't in on the big seal. I'm sure that the order battle of Luzon was well known by the people that were gonna get in there. I think in reading since that time in reading history and the Japanese side as well as the American side where the Japanese miscalculated tactically. They did things wrong and which allowed the American forces to do pretty good. And then too that's good example of Luzon is a good example of and we're facing the same problems in Iraq now. You know the thing about is when you've got the people wanting to be liberated and joining in on the fight like the Phillipinos did the guerillas and all of that. Then you're gonna win. And when you don't have that like we didn't have it in Vietnam and we certainly don't have it in Iraq yet. These guys are willing to you know to step up to the plate and do their part you're gonna have problems. And that's what we're experiencing over there in my view. The Pilipino gorillas were good fighters they did very well.

Interviewer: Did you do joint operations with any Pilipino gorillas or?

Lombardi: The only exposure that I had to Pilipino gorillas was that when I was a forward observer after I got my battlefield commission. They were not integrated with us but we dealt with them like you know in sectors you do this and they always did their part.

Interviewer: Now you were able to keep up with their positions and where they were operating?

Lombardi: We had liaison officers they had pretty good communications always was not it's not like today where you've got this great communications. In those days frequencies were a problem you know radio. So it was a problem I know it's a thing that the United States today it's a different world when it comes to communication. I remember as a forward observer as an example in those days a forward observer not only directed his artillery fire the also directed naval gun fire if it was available and brought in air strikes. But he couldn't talk to the pilot like they do today. What you did was a you had a system of relays and I would have to call that relay station. Most of it was preplanned and I would say okay you know it was looking mark when the planes were and a lot of them were navy fighters ____ or whatever P38s or 47s. What I'd is I'd mark the infantry front line with smoke grenade smoke and then I'd fire a round of white phosphorus artillery to mark the target. And that's it go ahead that's the way it worked.

Interviewer: So from yours that's what you typically did as a first sergeant you worked probably in FDC or as an FO is that what you would describe it? While the battery was in action?

Lombardi: Well I only became an FO after I got commissioned. Prior to that time I was strictly a gun guy strictly on the guns.

Interviewer: But you weren't a gun chief you were the first sergeant where were you normally in battle I mean?

Lombardi: In battle as a first sergeant of course you know you've got the way that's set up is you've got your four guns that what we were authorized. And you've got chief of guns who was a staff sergeant in those days and then three buck sergeants for chief of section. I was chief of section when I went when I deployed to New Guinea and then I became a first sergeant. So you know that so you ran the battery but as a first sergeant you also had chief of detail because you had survey and you had your communications guys and you had your machine gun section. Those guys were all under you to you as first sergeant you had to deal with them.

Interviewer: You were typically moving around from section to section?

Lombardi: Yeah you kind of you had a lot of power when you were first sergeant during World War I. Maybe you do today too I don't know. But in those days you had a lot of clout you know with the you kind of ran the whole outfit the first sergeant did. The battery commander was there but it was kind of throwback maybe a little bit before World War II. And if you read what's the name of that book we have that Frank Sinatra the one Jones wrote Hawaii you know.

Interviewer: Oh From here to Eternity?

Lombardi: Yeah From here to Eternity. Like that first sergeant that's kind of the way you were. You know you ran everything the battery commander I always had I always signed the morning report with his name Edward M Flannigan. I still remember it I made the report he never saw it. Of course he had a lot of confidence in me I'm sure if he didn't he wouldn't have allowed me to do that. But I wasn't going to bother him in the morning doing that morning report you know. Of course you kept the duty rosters all of that stuff when you were in World War II.

Interviewer: But you kept the guns firing I mean when the missions were going on where were you? Where did you want to be as a first sergeant when there was a firing mission?

Lombardi: Well you know we used to fire around the clock and the battery CP in those days you've got the FDC and right next to it you've got the battery CP. Your right close together you're not like a long you're not far away physically your right close there you're right there so it's close.

Interviewer: Did you ever chew anybody's butt out while the gun line was hot or

Lombardi: Not with that outfit with later outfits yes but not with that outfit. Nobody ever bugged out of that outfit.

Interviewer: What were the men the guys there you knew them for quite some time and there was a lot of respect or were they friends?

Lombardi: They were privates with me and must say it was difficult for me not too difficult. But when he made me first sergeant bear in mind we still had the old cadre there guys that had been in the army two

or three years. So I had to call them in when he made me first sergeant. I sat them all down and I told them I said hey I'm the first sergeant now you guys and you've been here long that I have but I'm the first sergeant. If you've got any disagreement with this I wasn't to know right now. I noticed one buck sergeant had a quizzative look on his face when I mentioned that his name was Ginch. I said Ginch this guy had a problem he just couldn't get up in the morning is the way I think NCOS ought to get up. I didn't and I got on him pretty bad after that pretty good. But the thing is I had to assert they had to respect me for being a first sergeant. Now having said that what I did on Laity a couple of things I did on there you know border on good leadership example whether it was pulling this guys out shoulders down the L or whether it was saving some guy on an amphibious landing. And that kind you know when I'm d of got at least the guys later on I'm talking about at reunions or whatever nowadays have told me personally they said you know we've never had any problem with you being the first sergeant we knew you were the top guy. We didn't have a problem we knew we could go to you. And I remember one time some one of the soldiers had a brother that was in the 503rd parachute infantry regiment this was on New Guiney. And he wanted to go see him for the weekend well the only way you could do that in New Guiney was catch a flight you know an army C46 or 47 going back and forth. I says well Frankie I says you know we don't get passes in New Guiney. But he said well I'd sure like to see him. And I said okay if you can find a hop you do it. I didn't discuss it with the battery commander at all he was supposed to be gone three days. Well four days five days he wasn't back six days he wasn't back finally the battery clerk says hey Tom he says what are you going to do about _____. You know he said he's been gone now for five or six days? Cool it sure enough a day or two later he showed up of course he was all apologetic he couldn't get a flight back I don't know whether it was true or not. But the point is and the thing that really made me feel good about was not good his brother got killed on the drop on Karigador. And I've always said and he said he himself was seriously wounded on Luzon became a paraplegic Frankie did from the waist down all his life. But he told me he's dead now but he told me many times he said boy he says you'll never know how much I appreciate seeing my brother before he got killed. You know you do what's right and I always thought I did the right thing about that. It could have been if maybe he hadn't come back or something would have happened to him maybe I would have had to pay the price for it. So what you know you have to take a chance now and then.

Interviewer: So as first sergeant you had a lot of _____ you were

Lombardi: I had no problems I had no problems.

Interviewer: Who did you typically when you weren't fighting when you weren't firing fire missions or moving or doing your job when you went back maybe to take a break who did you usually hang out with the NCOs or the commander? Who were you closer to? Did you ever think about that?

Lombardi: Yeah see when they transferred me after I got my battlefield commission and it was a new life I didn't know any of those fellows the enlisted men. So it was just the lieutenants you know but I'll tell you I back at McCall when I was a buck sergeant and all of that you know I would go on a pass with my friends you know whether it was to Charlotte or whatever. But

Interviewer: Charlotte was probably closer than Fayetteville at that time wasn't it? From Camp McCall.

Lombardi: Yeah Charlotte, Southern Pines (Mr. Lombardi excused himself and the tape was turned off).

Interviewer: Okay so just let's touch on again like I said Luzon and from the assemble area or not necessarily from the assembly area but let's go to day one how did you start the day what happened on

that day? You know what I mean is did you stand to in your unit did you go get chow for the men or did they eat the things that were in their rough sacks?

Lombardi: Well in Luzon during the initial stages of Luzon of course we were on what we called the k-ration. Which is just like a cracker jack back and it had a little insert at the top that had cheese in it or some ham or whatever a couple of crackers and that was it. We also had what was called d-bars they were very concentrated chocolate that helped dysentery quite a bit because they would clog you up. They were very nutritious but we never had enough food you know we were always little guys and with the physical things we were going through. I know Laity it was so bad they cut the rations even the k-rations out so you were always hungry. But so we didn't have anybody to cook now later on they came in with the canned rations and they called them the six in ones and the ten in ones I think. And they had and that was a feast for us I think today probably they would turn their noses at them but you know we thought that was great. We didn't live off the land in that much although when we got to Luzon I will say that we were able to get bananas you know small bananas and that was a treat for us from the natives. But typically you know you'd fix your own ration.

Interviewer: How many a day I'm just curious one a day or?

Lombardi: Well you'd get three a day you get three k-rations a day. And you'd fix your own rations at your own convenience. You know you just there was no big deal about that.

Interviewer: Now I know for today when you're out in combat the way they teach you is you know you pull stand too then you wake up and then you check the weapons and they you're allowed to eat and then do personal hygiene. How did you do it then?

Lombardi: Well then we just expected we never we just expected every soldiers to we had the folding carbam which was the standard issue for airborne field artillery and parachute field artillery battalions the old folding stock carbam is what it was except for the officers who had 45s. And so we just expected them they had been taught to clean their weapons keep them straight but we didn't have to go through a daily inspection I never did that.

Interviewer: Did you go around and check the positions as first sergeant in the morning or was that kind of something to come?

Lombardi: Well I always made it a point to visit the men but mostly it was not because these guys were pros. I mean you didn't have much reason to find fault with what they were doing. Mostly what I wanted to find out was how they were you know anybody sick or you know or maybe I would get on somebody if you know their shoes weren't laced up because you know they'd get a little bit sloppy sometimes. And you don't want that and I always insisted that they shave you know I said

Interviewer: Every day or just

Lombardi: Well shave every day when they could there were days of course when you couldn't do it. But for the most part I tried to make them because I felt that if hygiene and that's part of it if they could keep themselves it's good for you it's good moral. It's good for you personally to feel clean so I maybe I was a little bit too tough in that area I don't know but I don't think so.

Interviewer: Well first sergeants usually have their all of them have their own little _____. That must have been yours.

Lombardi: Maybe that was mine but anyway. But I always tried to and then of course you know when we went after the action was over and we set up. We never had a mess sergeant they were always consolidated and we never had a the battery never had a mess sergeant. The battalion did and so later on when we'd go into a ___ or say or a reserve or whatever we'd get a hot meal of course I always ate last because that's the way you're supposed to do it. I made sure you know your soldiers eat first. And I never had a now the officers used to have a little now I will say this when I was an officer and we were in combat I always ate last too. I just that was just something in the field now at Garrison that's a different thing but in the field you always eat last you take care of your people first. And if there's nothing left when it's all over with then you get on the mess sergeant for not having enough food.

Interviewer: Now the mess sergeant he was just a was he a cook or was he an infantry man or somebody that was appointed to be the mess sergeant?

Lombardi: They had the mess sergeants who were I will say the paratroopers probably had the worst cooks in the world because nobody wanted to be a cook.

Interviewer: Right

Lombardi: To a paratrooper so some of that stuff that came out of the mess hall was just terrible. But when you're hungry you eat anything.

Interviewer: No hot meals in the bush then you didn't do it. Is that what you're saying?

Lombardi: What

Interviewer: You didn't eat any hot meals when you were out in the field then?

Lombardi: No hot meals during World War II while we were fighting.

Interviewer: Nothing like on TV where they're cooking their coffee in a helmet or anything like that?

Lombardi: Well I will retract from that on that we had the ten in ones now as far as heating up they used to give you a powdered chocolate and coffee. They would take their mess kits and heat that up the best they could you know with a little fire or something nobody wants to drink cold coffee. But in the airborne you know you just that old metal canteen cup that we used to have you just pour it in there you know put the water in it put the sugar in the thing in there and heat it up and drink it.

Interviewer: Most people don't realize what you do with a canteen cup. You do everything with it.

Lombardi: Oh a canteen cup and that helmet. That helmet you know you use to wash in it cook in it that steel pot was. I've still got mine in there.

Interviewer: You shave in it. I shaved in my canteen cup and I'd drink coffee in it later. Most people would think that was pretty gross.

Lombardi: Yeah well

Interviewer: But when you're out in combat nobody really you don't give it that much thought. You need your coffee

Lombardi: No you don't you'd be surprised what you. But you know all you have to do is look at like when I although we didn't support the Las Venus raid artillery wise although we didn't have to use it. But you did get the chance to see the internees when they came out of there and I'll tell you what. You know you could count ribs you know you talk about guys that are really hurting.

Interviewer: What did that do as far as you know people thought the Japanese were pretty cruel at that point anyway. How did you feel about them prior to seeing these interns?

Lombardi: Well I'll tell you what I kind of think that there's propaganda on both sides I've got to be honest about this. And we said you know the Japanese were and you see the old movies where they butcher people and that kind of thing. And I found out that maybe there were some like that but the Americans too. I remember up on Luzon onetime no Laity one time a P39 shot down a Japanese Zero. And the pilot jumped out in a parachute and he landed on the beach and by the time we got there you know the guys were they and they were trying to lob off his ear and all that stuff. I says hey what the hell are you guys doing. They said oh I want his ear I want his tooth I said no you leave that Guy don't do that.

Interviewer: So there was would you say there was hate there was hate there?

Lombardi: Yeah definitely they thought every Japanese was lore and one shock was when we did make the invasion of Japan and you found out they weren't that way at all all of them. I mean you're going to find Americans you've got the mild eye people and you've got the people that do that.

Interviewer: During the war it was probably a good thing I would imagine. Were you able to harness that hate?

Lombardi: It is because it's difficult like you say you go through a banzai attack and these guys are coming up the hill at you at two o'clock in the morning hell bent for _____. And there you are and I'll tell you what.

Interviewer: So you did defend from the banzai attack.

Lombardi: Yeah when I was an FO infantry.

Interviewer: Can you tell me tell me about that night? Can you talk me through that banzai attack maybe tell people?

Lombardi: Yeah well in my experience with banzai attacks is this they don't happen during the daytime. They happen in the early hours of the morning at nighttime is when they happen. And you can hear them down there you know getting all getting all charged up and then they come. They don't know exactly where you're at because you do camouflage you do that and you put out and we always put out boobie traps you know. And things like that because we did perimeters that's what we did. Three hundred around because you didn't know which direction they were coming from. Usually if you were

on a hill or a mountain you would know you've got your back protected you know they're gonna come up this way. And then they start coming they start shooting and we you know it was not unusual after a banzai attack after it was all over with and you've had your day and you go down there and you find Japanese with one or two tunicates. Where they've been up there took it and then went back down. And there's a lot of talk about and I don't know whether it's true or not but I suppose there might be some truth to it. Where they used to charge them up with Saki or drugs you know to get them all charged up that way. But the way they used to come and of course when you fight an enemy who thinks he's going to go to heaven by dying that's a great thing it's tough. And I guess they're experiencing that in the Middle East now. So that's the way it is with these guys.

Interviewer: But their bayonets, samurai swords it wasn't it wasn't probably something you would think was a rational act was it?

Lombardi: Oh it's not rational and but I will say this when we captured Japanese we didn't capture that many of them because they were prone to take their lives. But when we did capture a Japanese person I found that they were very weak you know. You get this film industry version of a guy having a hand grenade ready to blow you and him up and that happened sometimes. But usually the ones that I had anything to do with once you captured them and they'd squat down you know and you know they were not they didn't spit or they weren't belligerent they were very humble and if you gave them a cigarette they were great. Which I always tried to I didn't smoke a cigarette or something you were okay. But it was important that you do that because these guys are going to go to the back and they're going to use them to interrogate them and it's part of it.

Interviewer: Did during the banzai charges did they last all night or was this something that usually could be stopped?

Lombardi: No what happened they came in rushes David. They would rush.

Interviewer: Battalion size or what

Lombardi: Well I wouldn't say they were battalion size they might have had battalion size but I've never. But usually I would say more like platoon maybe company at the most. Platoon probably mostly platoon size.

Interviewer: Were they focused at one point in the line or did was this across.

Lombardi: Well they came up half hazardly they very stupid on their part the way they came up.

Interviewer: A waste of troops.

Lombardi: Yeah just charge up there yelling you know and banzai banzai banzai and some of them you know would get pretty close to you before you would do them in. But it wasn't very difficult I would say I don't know I hesitate to put a figure on it I would say that. You know when you're in a defensive position you've prepared everything properly the way you should and you've got everything. You've got your small arms you've got your hand grenades you've got the artillery fire that you can call on indirect fire that is registered the night before you can call on that. And they make an attack like that it's fool hearted.

Interviewer: Did you normally have a light up when they were doing this or did you tend to keep it dark so they didn't see you?

Lombardi: We used illumination but you've got to remember that 75 pack Howitzer that round is only I mean there it is right there see it over in the corner. It don't put out very much light. It's not like there days I saw on TV where they could light up half a mile now but not in those days. It's very very small.

Interviewer: They weren't a threat then they were probably more of a nuisance.

Lombardi: Yeah I never in my in the whole 11th airborne division history that I've read or what I experienced no Banzai attack was ever effective. That's not to say they didn't kill anybody you know. We took loses too but they never they never took the position never took the high ground.

Interviewer: Is that typically what that was when you were in the infantry you told me you would repulse the Banzai. You didn't experience that as a field artillery NCO? That wasn't something you normally had to worry about or?

Lombardi: Well the guys they field artillery of course as you know if you've got and bear in mind we were more of linear concept in those days than they are today. But you always have the artillery behind the infantry. And so the possibility of the Japanese infiltrating the infantry lines and getting back to the artillery was remote. But having said that what the artillery did also was they did the perimeter concept. I mean they put the never had to do it use it but they had a round for the artillery that was it's like a shotgun shell. It had for frontal attacks. And so they would dispose their Howitzers so that if the no matter where the attack came from they could and then they would put out the boobie traps and all that good stuff. But the rule was in combat in the pacific is when you button up for the night nobody moved. You didn't get up and go any place because the rule was if you see anybody move you shoot them.

Interviewer: So you dug in at every chance too right?

Lombardi: If you had to go to the bathroom you did it right in that foxhole. You didn't get up and go out and that and as a matter of fact on Laity we had a I think two brothers were in the same foxhole and one had dysentery. And he got up and got out and he got somebody shot him. But that's the rule you don't move you stay there.

Interviewer: So typically you just said that you kept the guns oriented to where you could fire the antipersonnel rounds if you needed to. Did you do that every night or is that just the way you laid the gun during the day to where you could do that?

Lombardi: What you did is usually when you found out what the now the forward observed and the battalion liaison would say okay here's what the infantry is going to do today here's our objective today. With that in mind then the artillery would lay their weapons to support that attack okay. Now come nighttime what would happen is that you would keep some of the guns maybe one or two oriented in that direction bear in mind a 75 pack is not that difficult to move. So what you'd is you'd have a couple of weapons prepared to support the infantry if they needed it and the ones you'd move one or two around so that you could cover your perimeter. That's the way it worked it was no problem at all.

Interviewer: So but I mean most people don't realize what goes into laying in a gun and surveying a gun and setting up space and all of that. You didn't have to worry about that with a 75 or?

Lombardi: No and what we did mostly with 75s in the jungle now in Korea we always had a survey. But in the in the jungles more when you do a wrap on occupation position what happened is the FO gets out there he know where the guns are he's got there co-ordinance. He knows where is he knows where the target is so he gives the guns a co-ordinance and he says fire a round out there. And so it might be way the hell off well he adjust s back until it's where we're supposed to be. So you really don't need survey in that situation that much.

Interviewer: Is that direct lay the same thing?

Lombardi: That's indirect fire yeah. Well you lay the battery by ___ the direction that you are going to fire that's the _____. But usually you've got you know we used to occupy position and as a battery executive officer I knew where I was and I knew where the infantry was I just point there and take a compass reading take a compass ready so okay I'm gonna lay the battery on that ___ and then we go from there. We take one gun register it and then the rest of them could follow suit.

Interviewer: How long did it take you to get a battery laid in the airborne guys?

Lombardi: Now long at all I mean you'd go in position in and the gunner gets on the sight and the exec puts up the instrument corporal puts up the enemy circle and he just takes a reading and he's got it. And they go back and forth twice maybe and that's it.

Interviewer: Just a few minutes then right?

Lombardi: Huh

Interviewer: Just a few minutes?

Lombardi: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Did you guys I know that gun crews usually drill do gun drills a lot. When you weren't in combat did you drill your men? When you weren't firing missions did you continue to

Lombardi: When we did our training you know when we did our training we and there was always competition because what the exec would do is he would lay the battery and he's give the gunner a reading. And then he'd set it on the sight and in the meantime he's giving reading to the other guns the other sights. And you know whoever could do it the fastest that's whoevers laid first and that's always kind of a plum. It was always a big competition thing to try to get in training to get it done right and fast.

Interviewer: But when you weren't shooting did you do that? Did you have the men practice continue to drill?

Lombardi: Well once you got it set Steven once you practiced like in training and your gunner corporals and your chief executives know what it's all about you know it's just like you do that pen there. It's just like a second nature you don't have to go back to the basic principles that often.

Tape stops and then begins again.

Lombardi: Alright where were we?

Interviewer: I guess we had been talking about basically your artillery gun drills and how you worked out some of your gunnery. I don't think we need to get too much into that because the average person they're probably not understanding a word we're saying. So I guess probably what we need to in brief can you kind you I know we never really covered Luzon and then on. Let's cover the rest of your experience in World War II and from Luzon. Well let's gets go on your unit after the end of Luzon casualties were they heavy or did you get by with light casualties or?

Lombardi: Yeah the casualties for the 11th airborne division the artillery division was not that heavy really. We lost people most of them were in the info parties that we lost. We lost a lot of people because not dead but because Dinyg Fever, Malaria, and things like that. As a matter of fact I came down with malaria at Luzon. So you get that but you know one is too many but then you kind of live with that. You asked earlier how the death you know of a buddy affect you. Well what can you say soldiers are soldiers you know. If he's a close guy and he's been your buddy and he's the guy that you went on pass with and you've been to his house and visited him. It probably had a greater affect than just a common guy that you see. It's regrettable and of course you feel bad it but you know it's gonna happen. You're prepared for your prepared for it at least I always was. And I wasn't callused about it but you learn you know as a soldier it's something that you live with. Now later on in Korea where I saw much more of it you never get used to it but you know you don't like to see your friends wounded or killed. But it never it never affect my ability to continue to perform or to function it never did that.

Interviewer: Did when you arrived on the islands that you fought on was there did you see enemy dead? Was there American casualties? Did they try and get them off the battlefield as soon as possible was that something you had to

Lombardi: Oh our troops I'm talking World War II now with the 11th airborne division. We didn't leave any of our guys out there ever ever. We brought them all back now the Korean War was a different matter but not during World War II.

Interviewer: That was a rule then you didn't leave men on the battle field.

Lombardi: We never did that.

Interviewer: That kind of goes along with how the man one sergeant on ___ you said was shot in the stomach you I mean you would go above and beyond and get a man.

Lombardi: You know I say that and then again I remember I told you the story about this first sergeant and I switching places and he got killed and I had to take care of that wounded soldier myself. He was left on out there because it was dark and I had to go back and get reinforcements. And you had to do it on foot you didn't have communications. But anyway a day or two later we went back this battery commander and I to retrieve his body. And his boots were gone the Japanese had taken his boots. And we buried him there and we what you did in those days we had what called grave registrations in the division you marked the spot. And then they would come up send the body take it back. So that's what happened in that case. But for the most part I think that was unique that was unreal. I can't think of any other time where we left anybody. And that was not because they didn't want to go up to get him. I

wasn't there they didn't know where he was and so when they came back as soon as it was practical afterwards they did go up and get that guy.

Interviewer: But the rule you didn't leave a guy.

Lombardi: No

Interviewer: What I guess that had a positive affect too because you got the men buried and you got them away from the other soldiers. Is that the reason you did it to keep them away from the other soldiers? So that the young soldiers didn't see the casualties or was that just out of respect?

Lombardi: Yeah it was out of respect I don't think that was a factor I don't think so because the soldiers in that particular unit wouldn't have gone to pieces because they saw some of this. They were to

Interviewer: Paratroopers

Lombardi: They were too hardened for that.

Interviewer: Enemy dead did you see many enemy dead?

Lombardi: Oh lots and lots Steven lots of enemy dead.

Interviewer: And you didn't when did they bury them? Did they just leave them there and come back weeks later and bury them?

Lombardi: We just left them there on the mountainside you know what could we do. We never buried the enemy I mean.

Interviewer: The smell must have been pretty bad in an island where you had.

Lombardi: Well yeah unfortunately in the heat of the jungles those bodies ripen real quick.

Interviewer: You got used to the smell?

Lombardi: Well you never get used to it. Unfortunately dead people and dead rats smell the same that's the way they smell. Rotten flesh is rotten flesh and that's the way it is. Somebody get the idea that a dead person that's bloated that's ripe smells differently than any animal is wrong. It's the same smell and I don't like that smell but.

Interviewer: Well I imagine you've got an island that's rather small.

Lombardi: What they usually did we didn't you know you don't like to pilfer a body you don't like to do that. But for intelligence purposes well you know. And I'll tell you what it is it shakes you up when you go through an enemy's killed body and you find a photograph of him and his wife and his kid you know. It touches you it did me you know and I because you've got to think well you know this guy was or his mother and dad you know. Now some soldiers didn't they didn't feel that way away about it. If we had to go through it they wouldn't mind pulling it out you know they would take it. But I never liked that I didn't think that was right but they did it.

Interviewer: Would you base that what was that caused by? You think that may have been hate maybe racism?

Lombardi: It's an individual thing Steven I guess. I don't know you know it's just takes in different forms. But I always tried to

Interviewer: You as a leader probably tried to stop I mean I can imagine.

Lombardi: It's just the way I was and it was difficult I guess because in a way because you know you get this propaganda going around that every Japanese is a son of a bitch and he don't care about anything. And then on the other hand the dignity of the body and the dignity of a human being. You know that kind of reason a little bit too. But you know this guy that's charging up the hill wanting to kill you and kill your buddies I can understand why people you know once it's all over with not having any compassion for them. Say this guy tried to kill me you know an hour ago why should I have any compassion for him.

Interviewer: And then moving away from the enemy kind of go towards civilians. As an artillery man you fire a round and you don't know where it comes down I mean did you ever have any problems with civilian casualties? It's inevitable when you have civilians missed in with enemy did you have anything like that?

Lombardi: Well I usually now we're talking World War II now and we're talking Luzon. And usually those areas where the Japanese were and we were fighting them there were no civilians.

Interviewer: So they had been evacuated.

Lombardi: If there was they were people who were conspirators but not so were strictly you going after him. I would be very reluctant as an artillery man to fire on a building that or a little patched roof house if I knew there were civilians in it.

Interviewer: And then you move Manila you said it got tough in Manila.

Lombardi: What

Interviewer: You said it got tough when you got to Manila.

Lombardi: Oh yeah very tough very tough.

Interviewer: Now were obviously well I think it was very unlikely that they had evacuated all the citizens and civilians from Manila. Was Manila a different story was that a place where they couldn't avoid the death of civilians? I mean maybe you had to fire rounds at the

Lombardi: Well of course they wanted to make it an open city but of course it never went that way. So they had it was destroyed you know mostly with artillery fire and bombers or whatever. And so well I don't think let me tell you something about people that are being that are subject to war. They will get out some way or another if they can you know they will leave they won't stay back. In Korea was a good example of it Vietnam was a good example of it the Philippines was no different. So usually you know they would unless the enemy tried to keep them there which was almost difficult when you talk about

they're gonna go to the kills too they're gonna get the hell out of there. So they're left there to defend by themselves as a rule.

Interviewer: So fortunately for Manila probably most of the inhabitants had been able to escape.

Lombardi: Oh yeah now that's not to say that a lot of them were not killed there because of the bombing and stuff like that. Just like happened in Europe you know a lot of them went down the drain that way. But as far as attacking you know and killing no.

Interviewer: It's a war I mean that happens. One thing I'm curious to hear about most people even in the military today haven't experienced what naval gun fire is like.

Lombardi: Naval gun fire

Interviewer: You probably being an FO you said you had coordinated naval gun fire.

Lombardi: Yeah naval gun fire naval gun fire is good but very difficult to adjust because it's a flat projector weapon. They are used to their not used to going like this like a Howitzer or a mortar does it's this way. So when you adjust naval gun fire and I'm talking about bog guns now you're talking about 80 inch whatever. And you adjust on this point here if you raise just a couple of mills the next round is going to because it's so flat projector it don't come down this way it over shoots. So it's very difficult and you better not be on the gun target line. Because if you are on the gun target line so I always made it a point as a forward observer where in the hell is that cruiser at or destroyer so I'm not on the gun target line.

Interviewer: That was pretty much ___ between for people that don't know what we're talking about.

Lombardi: Most of the ___ artillery is you know this way not this way. And so if you're not on the gun target line you've got a good chance. If you're on the gun target line be careful.

Interviewer: Ever have one or ever know of one to fall short?

Lombardi: You mean naval gun fire?

Interviewer: Uh huh

Lombardi: By design short yeah.

Interviewer: I mean one on accident that may have fell in friendly positions.

Lombardi: Oh no that might of happened but I never seen it happen.

Interviewer: Which brings up another good point is ___ what was the rate of was ___ common or uncommon in World War II with the operations you were on? Was that something you really had to worry about?

Lombardi: It wasn't a big concern of mine. I never saw it being anything. It was

Interviewer: I know that's a big focus today. The Military they just want to eliminate ___ because you know the military had a high rate of ___ preventable ___. I was wondering without the communications that you had then without the radios and the ability to talk to each other and units that were adjacent to each other if that was something that happened or if that was just something because you didn't have to worry about that I mean it just didn't happen.

Lombardi: Didn't happen that much Steven that I can recall.

Interviewer: So maybe your lack of radios may have been a good thing at that point. So were you I guess from your position were you able to view the effects of some of that naval gun fire?

Lombardi: Oh of course that's what you do that for. When you bring it in there you want to put it on the target. I remember the later stages of the Luzon Campaign I had some naval gun fire. And what happened was the we were getting close for the Japanese to you know they were really taking it in the air. And there was this mountain ___ and what happened you know the Japanese they're smart too. And so I'm putting all this fire on the forward slopes but the Japanese are not on the forward slopes. They are on the river slopes like any smart guy would do. You can't put it high enough to get down on them but the naval gun fire we had was on the opposite side. And so I said you know I said this is a good target for the navy because they can hit the reverse slip on that with those big guns. So we did that we adjusted that artillery and that naval gun fire on the mountain and it worked pretty good because boy they came out and came over the top you got them on the other side with your own artillery.

Interviewer: Was this counter battery fire or was this?

Lombardi: It was just observe fire you know it just you have again you have to have a system of relays and it talked to the ship exactly. And that's kind of consuming it's not like it is today I don't think. But in those days you just kind of and it took a little while but once you did the adjustment and you got them in there and then you open up on them with ___ and worked alright.

Interviewer: Were those large guns small guns or?

Lombardi: Oh they were large guns 8 inch and higher.

Interviewer: So naval gun fire I imagine was pretty devastating this is a huge round.

Lombardi: Yeah oh yeah when they get on target and they hit they put on a even a hard rock it sends up a big boom. It shakes the ground.

Interviewer: And that's four how many guns are on a battleship? There are on a battleship.

Lombardi: I don't know I don't remember those figures at all.

Interviewer: But there are a lot of guns firing at one time at the same target I imagine.

Lombardi: I never remember having a battleship a cruiser is what I had. But they've got big guns too I think they've got 12 inchers 8 and 12 I can't remember that either.

Interviewer: Still there's nothing that big in the ___ today. People don't realize that the small I mean we don't have battleships anymore so.

Lombardi: No all you've got now I don't know I think all you've got now is 105s and 155a you don't even have 8 inchers.

Interviewer: The 8 inchers are retired or the National Guard.

Lombardi: The biggest things you've got is a 155 the ammunition is more lethal but still now as an old field artillery man I don't know if that's a good move. But I guess they know what they're doing.

Interviewer: Now in artillery tactics did the Japanese have good artillery or did they even use it on Laity or were you able to eliminate it pretty fast?

Lombardi: They had artillery but they what we had the problem with on Luzon was their mortars. They had a mortar if you go into the museum at Fort Campbell and go to the 11th airborne division exhibit you'll see a mortar casing that's about that big around. It was captured on Luzon and that thing really made a big hole in the ground. But they weren't very effective with it. Mortars were their big thing they weren't good with or they didn't have it one or the two artillery on Luzon. So they weren't organized artillery wise the way the U.S. was. The U.S. the U.S. was the premier artillery organizers in the whole world during World War II I've got to say that. I say that without reservation I don't care if you're talking about the French the Germans we had we were organized the best artillery wise. Even and the Germans had good artillery I'm not down playing it but those artillery guys that were the architects in World War II artillery know what to do. We could mass our firing better during World War II than any other nation in the world. They were just that good they could do that.

Interviewer: When you talk about mass in fires how many on the Luzon operation how many gun tubes probably?

Lombardi: Well at one time as a forward observer I had the entire there's a lieutenant forward observer on this particular morning on this particular attack. I had all the division artillery which meant well you're not talking much but you're talking three battalions of ours and I had a 155 battalion two 155 battalions. Then I had the naval gun fire all on one mass and that's a lot but there are examples of more than that you know. I know when I had the core artillery at Fort Bragg we did a we did a demonstration there for General Tulsan the Core Commander and we had my entire core artillery which as two 155 battalions an 8H battalion and a 105 battalion. We had the entire 82nd divartie which was 3 battalions we had the marines who were they for training for the summer. They had three battalions and we had the reserves there with two battalions. And we had an honest John pattern all firing on the target at the time.

Interviewer: Most people don't that was 175 millimeter Howitzer?

Lombardi: No we didn't have the 175 there now you're talking about the nuclear weapon.

Interviewer: Yeah

Lombardi: We didn't have that we had the 8 inch. But the 8 inch was nuclear capable so was the 155.

Interviewer: Now just knowing the Japanese infantry man was probably a pretty good infantry man an American infantry man if a very good infantry man. Now you were an artillery man do you think that is I mean when a man's dug in a foxhole and another man's coming at him there usually that's a pretty equal fight. You think the artillery is probably an ability to mass the fires like you said could that is that what was that decisive you think?

Lombardi: Well you know I think this Steven I think that is you're subjected to heavy artillery fire areal air strikes nay bomb and all of that day after day it's got to bother you it's got to affect you on either side. And since we were able to do that but the Japanese weren't able to do that it had to have an effect on them. Because you know these guys they're human beings too they can take so much of it. And you're gonna get that one guy that's going to die for the emperor but you're gonna get people who are gonna raise the white flag too.

Interviewer: So when our infantry rolled up in the area you'd been massing your fires into

Lombardi: And that's the purpose of the artillery.

Interviewer: So the queen of

Lombardi: The purpose of the artillery is so that that grunt when he climbs when he heads for that objective the purpose of it is for minimal loss of life and injury. That's why you're there to support that guy. Sometimes artillery men forget that because they become pre-madams. But they've got to you've always got to remember your role that your job is to support that unit that's heading up that hill so that they lose less people and they're not hurt as much. Now I did tours in there for a lieutenant colonel in Vietnam as a deputy senior advisor of the airborne division. So I've been on both sides and I understand that but it always bothers me when artillery men become parochial about it you know and say you know I not down playing they are important. They save a lot of lives and that's what they're supposed to do. So that's the way I've always thought about it.

Interviewer: It's kind of maximum artillery concurs you say that's dead on.

Lombardi: Yeah I've always preached that I've always preached that you know that's what we're there for. No matter where the infantry goes that field artillery has got the obligation to follow them and to support them. I don't care if it's by helicopter I don't care if it's by whether it's armored whether it's towed. Their responsibility is to follow and to support and to be there when the infantry needs them.

Interviewer: Now when you were on Luzon and you did have to move how did you move your Howitzers?

Lombardi: Well initially a field artillery an airborne field artillery was authorized four 75 packs no vehicles. Two motor scooters is all you had one for the first sergeant one for the ___ and then they weren't very good because they dropped them and smashed them. So I never you know but you had your slings that you had to pull it. Now when we got to when we got to Luzon they gave us four jeeps to pull the four packs so that's what we pulled them by. OH we thought we were in heaven.

Interviewer: It seems like in the jungle there it would have been even difficult to get them in with the jeeps. Did you have to just get them there to a certain point and then push them off on line?

Lombardi: Yeah you could man handle those things pretty good and even break them down if necessary. You could break them things down see. But it's hard when you break them down you know because if you look at the weights like a tube alone weighs 221 pounds the front trail weighs 235 pounds the ___ block 121 pounds the I still remember the weights. The wheels 65 pounds apiece so you know you have to break those down in bundles and then because that's what happens on a parachute drop. They come down in these pair crates and when they land then what you do you open those pair of crates and take the piece out and usually disassemble around the heaviest piece which is the front which is the front trail which weighs 235 pounds. But you've still got that guy with the 221 pounds lugging that tube over that.

Interviewer: How did all of that go on Luzon when you jumped in on?

Lombardi: On Luzon we lost one gun. We lost one gun because the pilot what happened was the mechanism didn't work the what they've got is they've got six toggle switches right at the exit door. And then there's one master switch and what happened is when you hit the drop zone up push those toggle switches and that releases the sloughs in the belly then you push out the door load which is three buttons. Then you hit the master one that was the third. What happened is it didn't work on this one gun. All the guys went out and three loads went out but the ones in the belly stayed with the gun so he dropped them in the ocean so we only had three instead of four. But in answer to your question it took us a good couple three hours to get those Howitzers assembled because like I said we dropped on this ridge Tiger Tie Ridge and it fell off. So you had guys but the Philipinos came and helped us believe it or not. So they came out of the woodwork and they helped us put those guns together.

Interviewer: It seems like in training even in training assembling on a drop zone is still a pretty chaotic process.

Lombardi: Oh it's tough I'll tell you what they don't do that anymore now but I'll tell you what that was the two requirements for an airborne field artillery man there in World War II. Number one you had to have a little bit of a mathematical I should say arithmetic background so he could add and subtract when it came to gunnery. And the second thing that he had to have was that he had to be physically capable of doing just what we were talking about putting that gun together and manhandling that gun by hand and all of that. They made it a point to try to get the biggest guys the toughest guys to do that. Not that I'm lotting myself I you know I don't think they picked me on that. I remember when I went before that major to be interviewed at Camp Tacoma Georgia I didn't know what the hell he was interviewing me for. And he asked me what a third of a third was and I kind looked at him and I said I think it's a ninth. The next thing I know I was assigned to the parachute field artillery battalion.

Interviewer: So I guess what I really got I think we just killed Luzon here. Let's talk about the battlefield commissioning.

Lombardi: Alright

Interviewer: How did that happen?

Lombardi: Well what happened was on Laity this guy my battery commander says I want you to go to OCS. They had and OCS in Australia and they had set up an artillery and infantry OCS in Australia. HE said I want you to go to and I said I don't want to go. I said I'm first sergeant I like my job I'm not gonna stay in the army. And I said if I go there they are going to put me in the pipeline I won't come back to the 11th airborne division and for that reason I don't want to go. He said is that your final answer and I said

yeah that's my final answer I don't want to go. Well we got on Luzon one day in the position area I was down there with the first sergeant. He came down there with his brigadier who was the departing commander in those days departing commanders were commanded by brigadiers a guy named Ferrell he later commanded the 82nd. He says first sergeant he said we want you to take a medal to the commission and I said you know I says I really don't want a battlefield commission I'm happy with what I'm doing. He said well I know you are but you've got to consider the needs. We need we're losing a lot of officers and would you I said to myself what's the loss of first sergeants verses second lieutenants. But anyway the battery commander who was a hell of good guy. He says you know you really ought to take that. I said what does it mean what do I have to do? They said all you have to do is just say yes. And I said okay I'll be a second lieutenant so the next morning I go by jeep down to the rear area this is on Luzon. I go in there nobody wore rank in combat. I walk in there raise my right hand discharge me as a first sergeant and made me a second lieutenant and I went back to the unit. That was that I don't think the guys knew what the hell happened even.

Interviewer: You're now a second lieutenant.

Lombardi: But I hadn't been there a week and the other things I said when I accepted it. I said I'll take it but I don't want to leave the battery. I said I was able to go from private to first sergeant in this battery and I sure as hell can be a lieutenant here because the first sergeant carries a hell of a lot more weight than the second lieutenant. And that for about a week and then one day old Fly called me Flannigan and he said I've already got some bad news for you. I said what's that? He said General Swing you just made a decision and there was only about six of us who got battlefield commission in the whole division. And I think only two of us were field artillery men. He said the old man made the decision that a few of the battlefield commissioned guys he wants them to move to other units because he don't think it's good to be with the people they were with. I said bullshit but you know major generals have a way of getting their way so they transferred me to the 674 which like I mentioned was another field artillery battalion about to become parachute.

Interviewer: But now your second lieutenant what's the first job they stick you in?

Lombardi: Well the first job I did when I got there even as a second lieutenant I had more experience when I got to the 674 than most of the officers in the battery because they were they had not been some of them had been replacements. There was one or two that had about the same amount. But they had but none of them had as much experience as me on the guns. I mean I had been a you know a gunner corporal a chief of section the whole time on the guns. I knew those guns from A to Z and it didn't take that battery commander long to realize. He says you know better make this guy my executive officer battery exec. And so that's what happened they made me the battery executive officer of the 674. For a while well I should say this when I first reported to them when I first reported to the 647 they weren't in a combat mode. So they didn't know me they had no way of looking at my record they didn't where in the hell I came from except they had a second lieutenant that was assigned to them. So the first job I got was as an FO they just said here there's your radio operator there's your NCO go to it. So right away I was you know I was an FO for a while until they found they looked up my record and found out they needed the battery commander said well I want this guy as my executive. But the I was doing a pretty good job as an FO too because I had done that on Luzon and so the infantry kind of complained about it a little bit. So they didn't want to fight with them so they kept me as an FO for a while which I didn't mind it was alright with me. Until we got back into a reserve mode they put the 647 the artillery never goes in reserve but infantry support was in reserve. And that's when the battery commander said well you're gonna be my exec whether you like it or not. That was it.

Interviewer: Which that's quite a bit of responsibility. You technically as the XO you're kind of like a first sergeant as far as officers go aren't you? I mean XO does a lot of he's kind of a behind the scenes guy with the company commander.

Lombardi: The battery exec in the artillery is always the guys the handles the guns and the problem I didn't have a problem with it but I was the junior officer in the battery. The RO of the reconnaissance and the survey officer was a first lieutenant and the let's see the assistant exec was I think he was senior to me too. They had the battery commander so when he made me executive officer why but I didn't have any problems with the guys they were all you know they.

Interviewer: They understood the situation and it was okay with them.

Lombardi: Yeah

Interviewer: They were all paratroopers too.

Lombardi: They were all they were all about to become paratroopers. I think one of them was airborne and the other guys was had to become a paratrooper because they were converting from glider to parachute for the invasion of Japan which never took place.

Interviewer: So were they the same quality as the old unit you said that you had come from or were they not up to that same speed? Which how would you classify the two was this one better was this one maybe worse?

Lombardi: I really evaluated them they were able to do their job they were able to do their jobs they were good about it. I will say that the enlisted men were kind of I had no trouble with them at all. When they learned about my background in fact I've been enlisted the fact that I had been a first sergeant I think these guys right away there was no problem no credibility problem at all. I could tell them to do anything they'd bust their ass doing it that's the way they were. So that's part of it you know a guy comes in he's wet behind the ears and all of a sudden you know he's never commanded anything and all of a sudden he's gonna rule because he's the guy on a white horse. You know that doesn't work with these guys you don't screw around they know what's going on.

Interviewer: Even though these guys were gliders glider troops and these guys were paratroopers you said the quality because of the even though they were gliders troops they were just as good as the troops that you had worked with before then.

?

Lombardi: Well I wouldn't say that.

Interviewer: Okay

Lombardi: I wouldn't say that. I would say that the unit I came from across the board were well let's put it this way these guys I was with were alright okay. And I would go to war with them any day but the guys I came with that I came from it's hard to beat those guys.

Interviewer: What do you attribute that to though?

Lombardi: Well first of all they were all paratroopers they all volunteered to begin with. They had all been together since the day that they were activated at Camp McCall. So there was that there wasn't anything any of them wouldn't do for you know one another. We had culled out the ones that weren't worth a crap and they are gone. So it got you talk about a band of brothers I mean you've got guys that have really. And the proof in the pudding now here you know I'm talking 60 years ago over 60 years ago. And yet every two years now this didn't happen until about 20 maybe 30 years ago when they started. But that unit every two years what's left of us and there is only 7 or 8 of us left. Get together I mean initially it was they all came. I mean their wives and everything they were that close nit. And it's the old unit that I know of and I've been in a lot of them that were that close. Not the Korean guys not the Vietnam guys so they really were. Like I say none of them made the army their careers but they really looked back and that carried on into their the way they felt about it I guess. It's a wonderful thing to have to be in a unit like that.

Interviewer: And you started it correct? You were the first guys there right I mean you started that battery I mean were you the first people. I guess what I'm saying is being the original soldiers there.

Lombardi: Yeah like I say we were all original none of us were replacements.

Interviewer: There was not battery this before you guys were there.

Lombardi: Oh no that's right that was the first time it was the first one right. And so there was a lot of yeah that's kind of unique in a way because usually you come in and the units been there and another unit so. Because all you have to do is look and

Interviewer: You were just filling a spot in the unit on the in toe where as I guess basically you were the in toe I mean you created it. I mean you didn't create it but you were the people I mean you knew each other and it must have been quite a feeling. But did you try to whip that unit into shape as the XO? Did you do anything or did you?

Lombardi: Well it was in good I don't want to give you the impression that it was in bad shape. It was alright but what I'm saying is I had no problem with being accepted the way I should have been in the most gratifying way. I mean I could tell these to do anything and they were willing to do it. So it was a great thing for me and I finished the war with them you know went over to Japan with them. And was in occupation with them there until November of 45. So but they all too were all and that unit don't get together see that's a big difference.

Interviewer: Now you said the unit went into reserve that's when you really kind of took over the job of XO or was it?

Lombardi: Yeah what happened was when the I took over as XO after I'd been an FO for well I'd say maybe a month six weeks maybe two months I don't know I can't remember exactly. And then we got we got the unit the infantry unit that we were supporting and I don't know whether it was the 97th or 188th. Went into reserve and when that happens they take the artillery and since you don't have a direct support role anymore they put you in general support. In other words if any of the other artilleries need you you can you're in a position to help but your kind of setback.

Interviewer: But you're still laid in ready to fight.

Lombardi: Oh yeah except that you don't have your FOs aren't out there or anything like that. So they're back because you know they're back with the artillery division at that time with their infantry division incase they're committed you have to go with them but in the meantime they're not committed. So different artillery units have different ways different things. Some artillery units will say ok when an infantry unit goes in reserve you guys come back to the artillery battalion and stay with us until it's recommitted. Other artillery units will so no you don't come back to us you stay with infantry so you're move responsive. But in this case why this battalion wanted the FOs back with them not with the infantry and so that's when the battery commander said you'll be my exec.

Interviewer: So your reserve was that on Luzon or was that on a different island?

Lombardi: Luzon

Interviewer: Okay Luzon's taken where did you go from there?

Lombardi: Went from there the war they dropped the bombs on Nagasaki and Hiroshima and.

Interviewer: And how did y'all fill I mean how did soldiers feel about?

Lombardi: I think it surprised us it was a shock. As a matter of fact I was in the hospital at that time with malaria in Manila. The war was you know the campaign was all done on Luzon. We were getting ready for starting to get ready for the Japanese invasion. They dropped the bomb on Nagasaki and Hiroshima the next thing you know the war was over. I was still in the hospital.

Interviewer: I mean did it even did it take a minute to set in when you found out the war was over? Or did it just all of a sudden?

Lombardi: Steven I really can't remember how I reacted to that to be absolutely honest with you. I knew that I was happy the war was over but I don't remember jumping up and down or anything like that you know maybe because I was laid up. But I what they did is they took the 11th they were going to be the first troops in Japan so they brought in aircraft all kinds of aircraft. C54s civilian whatever and flew them to the island of Okinawa and from Okinawa they stayed there for a little while not too long ready for the occupation of Japan. And I remember I didn't go with my unit I was in the hospital but they were giving me this atarene it's call it makes you yellow. But it doesn't cure malaria but it suppresses it. And so they had given me this atarene and I was suppressed I told them said I've got to get back to my unit. And he said well you've got to stay here for a while.

Interviewer: Well when you did get to you did go to Germany or to Japan with them is where you eventually.

Lombardi: Well I got up one morning put on my uniform went to Clark Field and said whose going to Okinawa? There were plenty going so I just jumped on the airplane and got there. I'll never forget it was raining like hell it was sloshy all over and I was trying to find this damn unit A battery the 674. Where the hell's A battery 674 sloshing up and down the hill. Finally found them and fortunately stayed there with them for them they flew us by C54 to ___ in Japan. And from there they moved the 11th up north and stayed there until it came time for me to leave.

Interviewer: Was it pretty comfortable there in Japan or was there? There wasn't a whole lot of problems there with the Japanese. They were pretty calm.

Lombardi: The Japanese were very docile thanks to McArthur and the way he did things you know he didn't really. And I've got to say this you know after being over there knowing the Japanese the way I think I came to know them. It would have been very costly for us to go in there very costly. I think the Japanese with civilians not caring about dying and not knowing any different. So McArthur played it right and when he did it he treated the Japanese with dignity and he didn't crucify the emperor. And so the Japanese were very cooperative when we got there they _____ too damn much. But the first thing we did when we got there they wanted us to go we came in by C54s and they brought jeeps in along with us. So they gave me I think 10 jeeps and soldiers. And what they wanted us to do was to travel through the cities and expose the Japanese to American soldiers and make sure that they weren't barbarians. And it was very eerie to begin with because you go through a section of the city and there wouldn't be a damn soul that you could see. Not a soul I mean everything was and I remember one case we were driving through a city and there was this little toddler out there and all of a sudden somebody flew out of those houses and grabbed that kid and back into the house. But that didn't last very long maybe a couple days. And when the GI gives away a stick of gum a chocolate bar or something all of a sudden you know. Oh they were very reserved about it but I got to like the Japanese very much. I did another tour in Japan like I said in 1949. I got to appreciate them even more I liked the Japanese people. I think they are good people. We had this one case with this one Japanese KP who was with the 24th infantry division went over there and got captured. And he didn't admit that he was Japanese he played like he was a GI. He was this good friend of mine who was captured with him lives up in Gig Harbor in _____ Washington. He got he stayed that whole the whole time he was a POW he was hired by the American government to be a KP then went over there and got captured in the initial stages of the Korean War. The whole time they thought he was an American GI because he spoke a little bit of English and they have no way of knowing who could speak good or bad you know the Koreans yeah the Koreans. And finally all of the POWs when he was released the POWs all got together and brought them to the United States went to North Carolina then went to work for the state department. As a matter of fact they tried to get testimonial from me because what he what he wanted see they didn't recognize him the United States didn't recognize him as being a prisoner of war for the US. And because you know the guy did he took a hell of and this guy who was later was a POW good friend of mine later after he was released he became a dentist and retired as a full colonel his name was Peppy. He told me he said boy he says he might have took a hell of a lot of beatings over there for us and never complained a bit.

Interviewer: I don't think we're gonna get to Korea much because I'm about to run out of tape on this thing.

Lombardi: Right good

Interviewer: I think you're done talking. I'm sorry

Lombardi: That's alright.

Interviewer: Just I guess let's go one last thing. I would you compare that just briefly to Korea to your experience in World War II?

Lombardi: Different as day and night when it comes to troops. And that's what I want to talk about troops the troops that I had to go to war with in Korea were not the troops that I was familiar with. As a

matter of fact when they assigned me to the 24th infantry division from the United States in 1949 and I got to Camp ___ Japan which is on the island of ___ and I got done with that field artillery battalion I was assigned to I was appalled. I just couldn't believe what I was seeing. There was no PT there was no training it's true they had been on occupation duty and were now transforming into a combat division but no sense of urgency. The equipment was all screwed up World War II stuff deteriorated guns in limited storage. And like I say having seen in a strike outfit you know that's up to speed even that glider outfit. And then these guys I couldn't believe it and then we only fired twice I think during the entire year that I was with that outfit the artillery unit. And when the war broke out on the 25th of June 1950 and they committed the 24th infantry division I couldn't believe it. We had to fill up because we were short and they brought in all kinds of people to us that weren't artilleryman. Had to make them canonators and ammunition carriers. And there you have it.

Interviewer: Going into war you're just the leader

Lombardi: Going in to war ill equipped, ill-trained, short of people psychologically not set for and you go and then of course you got over there and people were surprised when they didn't fight the way they ought to the way you'd expect them to fight.

Interviewer: So that's kind of like I guess in a way that's what you'd call leadership challenge? How did you deal with that in a combat situation?

Lombardi: It was very difficult it was very difficult. And I'll tell you what really bothered the hell out of me. Like on the 14th of July 1950 when I was the only guy the only officer that survived that the North Korean decimation of that battalion you know you say what the hell could I have done to prevent this. And the answer is given the situation given the circumstances given the rank I couldn't do a damn thing. As a matter of fact the guy who wrote on my efficiency report the battery commander when I voiced my complaints he said we were talking one time I said you know we it's terrible this outfit. I says god damn we couldn't do anything. He said oh you worry too much. And he put that on my efficiency report this officer tend to worry too much. Well a year later he got killed he died over there. If he hadn't had that attitude of course he hadn't been in World War II being an instructor at Fort Seal. The officers were all none of them had experienced combat they hadn't in the battery I was in. So I'll tell you Steven when they say no more Koreas there's no more Koreas right no more task force men that's right. But don't lay it only on the fact that the defense cut its dollars. Don't lay it on that all together lay it on the fact that the guys that were in the damn army didn't do what they were supposed to because we didn't have the right leadership.

Interviewer: So you're saying it would have been the NCOs or the officers or the NCOs and the officers?

Lombardi: The whole structure the whole time I was at camp ___ with the 24th infantry division nobody from the general's headquarters McArthur's headquarters ever visited that post. Now you tell me how a headquarters is going to commit the first unit to fight the enemy when they don't know whether they're good or bad. They don't know anything about us and that's what they did.

Interviewer: So you're actually in a unique position to actually possibly criticize McArthur. Having been under him in Korea and then in World War II a lot of people he was the American hero wasn't he?

Lombardi: Well I had a lot of respect for McArthur I think as a strategist he's great. Maybe what was lacking well the buck has to fall with him. But maybe his staff wasn't tough doing what they were

supposed to be doing. But he should you know having been around as long as he had been at that time he should have had the ___ to say hey what kind of outfit is this 24th infantry division that I'm committing. I mean just assume that a division is there it's got a number and you should assume well the 24th division infantry division they ought to fight as a division they ought to be good. Well

Interviewer: Was he reverting in World War II he had some good divisions and he I mean that's your training at what level does training fall at though? I know

Lombardi: Well you know I think he's a great general I think he was a great strategist his strategy in the pacific was second to none. His island isolating these pockets and letting them die on the vine was great saved a lot of lives. What he did in Japan as the you know the military guy there I mean nobody could have done it any better. I mean to take that country and do what he did to it equal rights for women and bringing up the economy up and doing what he did. I mean you can't sell the guy short on that on that decision to commit the 24th and nobody has ever I've never gotten anybody to really talk about that or admit that one way or another that that was the wrong thing to do. They had four divisions in Japan at the time and the only reason I can think of for committing the 24th was for its proximity being on the island of ___ where we were stationed we were the closest one to Korea. And that's a poor reason to committee a because you're closer. The others ones weren't that far off you're not talking about being you know 3,000 miles away they were just up the road the 25th the first cad and the 7th.

Interviewer: I mean do you think he did that because when McArthur needed time did he buy his time with the 24th?

Lombardi: Yes he did I mean you know he bought his time and of course you know the consensus was what they thought was that once the North Koreans recognized that the United States was involved that they would back off and go across back across the 38th parallel. But it didn't work that way.

Tape ended