

Ray Brownfield

Interviewer: First of all sir if for the sake of the interview if you could state your name.

Mr. Brownfield: Yes Ray B. Brownfield.

Interviewer: What branch of the service were you in?

Mr. Brownfield: I was in the 111<sup>th</sup> infantry.

Interviewer: Involved with the Navy?

Mr. Brownfield: No this was the Army. And the Cadre that trained us had made up the old Philadelphia National Guard. Of course our past induction was.

Interviewer: What year were you born sir?

Mr. Brownfield: 1915

Interviewer: So that would be by the time the conflict started in the 40s.

Mr. Brownfield: 39 maybe let's see Hitler was trying to capture Europe in I believe it started in 39.

Interviewer: Okay so you grew up during the great depression right?

Mr. Brownfield: Oh yeh I grew up on a farm.

Interviewer: What city did you grow up in?

Mr. Brownfield: Paden?

Interviewer: What city did you grow up in?

Mr. Brownfield: I grew up in Kentucky.

Interviewer: A near by city or somewhere farther?

Mr. Brownfield: Buffalo was just kind of little wide place in the road and about 60 miles from the city of Louisville south of Louisville.

Interviewer: So you said both of your parents were farmers?

Mr. Brownfield: Yes

Interviewer: What recollections do you have of the great depression or how did it impact you and your family?

Mr. Brownfield: Well of course it was kind of a hard way of life. Difficult to make a living we didn't have any money but we grew everything needed to for our own use there on the farm. And my parents were

good farmers' good workers they didn't mind working hard. We had hogs and sheep and dairy cattle and beef cattle, horses, mules, chickens I guess that was about all that.

Interviewer: So did the market affect did the hit to the market affect your parents at all?

Mr. Brownfield: Very definitely during depression times it was hard to find enough to eat. You had to you know just try to get by.

Interviewer: What about the ration did your parents did you?

Mr. Brownfield: Oh yeh we not back in those days but in WWII when there was rationing.

Interviewer: Did you have a job before the war?

Mr. Brownfield: Before the war?

Interviewer: Yeh let's see you would have graduated high school in

Mr. Brownfield: 1932 and I worked on the farm then for about three years and in 1935 I had a good friend who took an interest in me and took me and helped me get enrolled at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Kentucky.

Interviewer: UK what degree did you get there?

Mr. Brownfield: Yeh, well I got a B.S. degree and after the war I went back to get a Master Degree and I got all the class work done that I needed to do but I got a job opportunity and I never did go back and finish up to get my master degree I just neglected to do that.

Interviewer: Well do you on December 7, 1941 the big day when the Japanese came over and slipped us a few nice packages did you do you remember where you were?

Mr. Brownfield: Yes I do.

Interviewer: What were you doing?

Mr. Brownfield: I was living here we were married I came out of the First Baptist Church you know where First Baptist Church.

Interviewer: Yeh that's where I was married.

Mr. Brownfield: Well okay I walked out towards the court square and someone told me that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Pearl Harbor didn't mean anything to me I had never heard of Pearl Harbor I didn't know where it was. So Janevea's parents who we lived with at that time lived close by and we went to their house and checked to find out what Pearl Harbor was in Hawaii and we did so that's how we learned maybe where I would be going when I was called. Now I was on the draft board I saw the name of Joe Berry and A. Carman who was a teacher at Murray State and then Joe Berry was an insurance salesman and Mrs. Christy Hammons was clerk of the draft board. And their all gone now but I

served on the draft board with those people for a while before I had to go and I sent helped send all of the young men unmarried men that were available to go from this area. And that's what that picture shows there they are a bunch of them right there. Most of them are gone I could point out the ones left still living on there.

Interviewer: Living in this area?

Mr. Brownfield: They were scattered their all from Callaway County but not many of them are left today.

Interviewer: Mr. Marvin Harris was he one of those in that picture?

Mr. Brownfield: Let's see if Marvin is in this picture.

Interviewer: Well let me ask you sir did you or what was your impression how seriously did you take the threat of the Japanese and the Germans before the invasion did you think that they would actually attack the United States?

Mr. Brownfield: Well it was quit a surprise to us of course I did not know about what was going on in Europe all this time. The man came out of church and told us that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor I had no idea where that was and that was quit a surprise. So I just had to go find out where Pearl Harbor was.

Interviewer: Did you and your family agree with how FRD was handling the situation?

Mr. Brownfield: Absolutely

Interviewer: Now you said you were on the board on the draft board did you think at that time that you were going to be drafted?

Mr. Brownfield: Well I was hoping I would not I was hoping it would be over before that time came. And I have a brother that's just 14 months older than I am and he had to see me go and him not have to go. But he never did have to go.

Interviewer: And so what year was it that you were drafted?

Mr. Brownfield: I was drafted I was selected in December of 1942. And we went to Evansville, Indiana to see if we would pass the induction and we did, did pass.

Interviewer: What did they do in that induction center?

Mr. Brownfield: Well they checked everything about your body you know we had to strip and expose ourselves to an officer there that check us everyway and listened to our heartbeat and everything about us it was sort of embarrassing really.

Interviewer: Did you take any IQ tests wheel you were there?

Mr. Brownfield: No

Interviewer: How did you find out what type of job you would acquire?

Mr. Brownfield: In the service?

Interviewer: Yes

Mr. Brownfield: After we had basic training and I went from the induction center was actually in Indianapolis, Indiana they put us on a train and took us to a little army camp in Pocomo City, Virginia. And I had in college I had had two years of ROTC it was offered there at the college of course a lot of the fellows went ahead and took four years and were commissioned but I didn't I didn't think about it. I went in the army as a buck private just as low as you could go. But in this little town of Pocomo City they had set up of course a temporary camp there but it was large enough to train a lot of men and I was married and there was a nice Baptist Church there in the Pocono City so I started going into church there and met a family by the name of Appleton and they had a son and a daughter about the same age I was and they had already been called to some branch of the service. So when they said they announced in the church service that they would like to have some of the service men come and stay at their house while they were in camp there. So after the church was over I went and talked to them and told them my situation and that I was just from walking distance of where the camp was. So I would go to church with them and then they'd take us home and feed us after church and then sometimes well most of the time he would take us back into camp.

Interviewer: That's nice. Well where did you do your basic training?

Mr. Brownfield: I did it at camp up there.

Interviewer: So you were 26 at the time 27.

Mr. Brownfield: Yeh I was well let's see 15 from 42 leaves about I believe I was about 27.

Interviewer: So what was your impression of the other troops the other candidates coming in for basic training?

Mr. Brownfield: Well you had those old Calvary from the Pennsylvania National Guard knew everything that they had to teach us. And they were hard on us and if you did something contrary to rules and regulations you might have to stand guard all night after your day was over with. And we went on lots of 20 mile hikes carrying all of our gear.

Interviewer: Was it difficult you were 27 at the time so it probably wasn't difficult for you to be away from home.

Mr. Brownfield: Well it was, I would have rather been at home.

Interviewer: How do you think the other soldiers your troops handled being away from home the first time?

Mr. Brownfield: Well some of them ran off and did various things trying to avoid being confined there and having to take the training they were supposed to. While we were there at this Camp Pendleton my wife of course was still back home but in 1941 her father, she had just finished college, her father had helped her buy a new 1942 Chevrolet well I would come home and see on furlough and see them occasionally and finally I talked her and another lady whose husband was in the same outfit that I was to come to where we were and we'd try to find them a place to live. And my wife was a home make major she had been with first aid this other lady I believe she taught German. They looked for jobs there close to camp Camp Pendleton. They had trouble finding a place to stay because there were a lot of service men there any kind of living quarters were hard to come by. But they finally found a lady that would tolerate them I think she put them up in here attic that she had in her home. And they started looking around for a job because they thought they were going to be there for awhile. So they went to the country school superintendant and told him who they were and what they were qualified to do and he says you mean you've been living here in site of me all this time and you are now come to me with the kind of work that I need you to do and he hired them on the spot. So they stayed there and worked while I was in Camp Pendleton. And after we finished basic training then they put us on well we did a lot of maneuvers we did a lot of maneuvers getting ready for the service we were going to do in actual combat. We walked three mile banks we sat down in all kinds of weather and there's a place in North Caroline called Bismel Swamp and we walked up and down the road and sat in that thing and it was so rough you couldn't understand.

Interviewer: How they have these the Louisiana maneuvers they had these maneuvers in the states did you ever participate in any of those?

Mr. Brownfield: Louisiana maneuvers?

Interviewer: Or any of the maneuvers they had state side?

Mr. Brownfield: No

Interviewer: How good do you think your training was? I mean did you feel that you were really prepared to go into combat and fight in a combat situation?

Mr. Brownfield: Well having had those two years experience while I was in college I thought I was pretty well prepared for whatever might happen. I just hoped that I would be able to get back.

Interviewer: Where did you serve right after basic training? First of all where did you go for your advanced individualized training?

Mr. Brownfield: Pardon

Interviewer: Where did you go for the advanced training you said you were in the infantry where did you go for infantry school?

Mr. Brownfield: There at that camp in Pocomo City.

Interviewer: Once you left your advanced training where did you go from there?

Mr. Brownfield: Well after we finished our basic training and getting ready for combat they put us on a troop train and we went from Camp Pendleton to California.

Interviewer: And what were you going to do in California?

Mr. Brownfield: Well that was where we were going to stay for just a few days and then get sent off to the Pacific ready to engage in combat.

Interviewer: At this point did they tell you what your duty description was going to be?

Mr. Brownfield: No

Interviewer: You had no idea what you were

Mr. Brownfield: No idea.

Interviewer: Did you travel as a unit together?

Mr. Brownfield: Yes

Interviewer: What was your housing like back then?

Mr. Brownfield: You mean as we reached California? Well they put us up in big ole tents just something temporary cause it was just improvised for a short while while we were there. On morning we went to breakfast and one fellow who did not want to go to service stayed back and while we were gone he took the rifle and shot the lead out between his big toe and the one next to it. That was all it took to put him in the hospital when we left he stayed there.

Interviewer: What did all the other guys think about this man then?

Mr. Brownfield: Well of course they thought it was unfair and that was a mean thing to do to try to avoid combat when all of the rest of us were going to have to go.

Interviewer: I could see why. Were you allowed to contact your friends and family back home at this point? Or did they keep you guys under raps?

Mr. Brownfield: We worked a secret code my wife and I did that was never discovered. I was always able to tell her where I was and they never figured out what it was.

Interviewer: Really

Mr. Brownfield: It's a little too difficult to tell you what it how it works. But we took the books of the bible like Geniuses, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy and so forth so when I wanted to tell her that we knew what number they were in the bible so when I wanted to tell her where I was I'd say I've been reading so and so in the bible and she knew what number that book was and she'd got over there and figure out from what I told her of those letters in the bible just where I was.

Interviewer: Interesting. You never got caught?

Mr. Brownfield: Never got caught.

Interviewer: Did she ever come up for a visit?

Mr. Brownfield: Do what?

Interviewer: Did you ever get a chance for her to come up for a visit?

Mr. Brownfield: Not at all but in basic training I did but not after that.

Interviewer: So I know that before the conflict from what I've read they had a certain number of active duty officers' noncommissioned officers' but as the started there was a big push to get the numbers to increase. So in order to do that they had to incorporate 90 day wonder programs for the officers and so in your unit did you have a lot of people who were prior service or active duty already did you have a lot of 90 day wonder officers?

Mr. Brownfield: We had quit a few active men that were veteran army men they came out there to lead us and try to take care of us and keep us from getting killed in all that we did.

Interviewer: How many officers did you have?

Mr. Brownfield: Well some of them we didn't think much of but we couldn't say anything about that.

Interviewer: What kind of equipment did you train with?

Mr. Brownfield: Well they gave us an M31 rifle to start out with and I was in Company D of the heavy weapons Company. And in that company they had what you call an 88 mm mortar. And it had a basic deck that sat on the ground and a barrel that came up like this with a tripod under it to hold that barrel in place and to shoot the thing all you had to do was drop a shell in there and let it hit that point in the barrel and boom that was all.

Interviewer: What kind of rifle did you carry?

Mr. Brownfield: Well I had an M31 revolver but they those old things were so heavy especially when we had to walk on those 20 mile hikes they were so heavy. But later they gave us what they call a carbine that was a lighter rifle and easier to carry.

Interviewer: Collapsible?

Mr. Brownfield: Collapsible yeh no I don't believe it was collapsible but it was so much lighter it was easier to carry.

Interviewer: So after California how long were you in California?

Mr. Brownfield: A week.

Interviewer: A week and where did you go on to after that?

Mr. Brownfield: They put us on a troop ship and took us straight to Hawaii.

Interviewer: Straight there how long was the voyage?

Mr. Brownfield: About seven days.

Interviewer: Seven days what was that like?

Mr. Brownfield: Well of course I'd never been on water you know it was an occasion to be on anything that made you sea sick. And well the first three days I never did miss a meal but I would go eat and then go get back in my bunk so I wouldn't get sick. But I saw fellows that got so sick they were hanging over the rail had this nearly turned green getting ride of everything that they had absorbed.

Interviewer: Did you share bunks?

Mr. Brownfield: No

Interviewer: How many people passengers were on these

Mr. Brownfield: Oh mercy well the things was the ship it's self seems like it was about 800 and something feet long great big long thing they could put latterly hundreds of men on the things.

Interviewer: So there was no danger or being attacked.

Mr. Brownfield: No well there was some danger of course because you never knew what the Japs were going to do we didn't encounter any danger on the way out there to Hawaii.

Interviewer: Okay let me stop for a minute and see how long this tape is and maybe we can change tapes here. Okay so where did you go from Hawaii first of all how long were you in Hawaii?

Mr. Brownfield: We pulled into harbor at Hawaii and got off and they put us on a little train oh it was probably as long as from here to the university great big long thing. With just big open box cars and they just stood us up in that thing with all of our gear and took us to what was called Skolfield Barracks.

Interviewer: It's still there.

Mr. Brownfield: Still there. And we pulled into Skolfield Barracks and they had us to go get a bunk take our gear in pick out a bed and prepare to spend some time there. And I got my bunk and was all settled in and I head somebody say hello Brownfield and I looked around and it was a fellow by the name of Hindon that ran a service station down here that I bought my gasoline from ever since I lived in Murray. And those beds were old metal beds with a little thin mattress on them and very uncomfortable. And some of them had bed bugs you know bed bugs?

Interviewer: No I'm not sure.

Mr. Brownfield: Well I hope you never have an experience with bed bugs they latterly eat you up they just get all over you and big ole sores and some of the soldiers got bed bugs they itch and they scratch and just terrible. Well I was fortunate that I did have any bed bugs so I came through that without any problem of bed bugs.

Interviewer: What year was this? What month and year was this?

Mr. Brownfield: Let's see it was this would have been in February of 1942. Let me just show you this I was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July I think maybe I told you that.

Interviewer: Oh no

Mr. Brownfield: Independence Day and there's the menu we had on the ship and the name of the ship is on the front of it there.

Interviewer: USS Intrepid

Mr. Brownfield: That's right

Interviewer: 1944 Independence Day wow. Interesting

Mr. Brownfield: Menu doesn't sound bad does it?

Interviewer: No it doesn't.

Mr. Brownfield: You go ahead and ask questions if you will. I'll try to help advise you if I can.

Interviewer: Okay well see you were there in Skolfield Barracks February 1943 and what did you how long did you stay there what did you do while you were there?

Mr. Brownfield: Was a big member of the Baptist church I started looking for a church on the outside of the camp to go to and I found one that was close by there and went in and got acquainted with the pastor of the church. And he had laid stage to go to China as a missionary when the war broke out they wouldn't let him go to China they brought him back and he established this little church there close to our camp in Hawaii. And I started going to church and got acquainted with him. Back at that time they had what you call BYPU Baptist Young Peoples Union. Did you ever hear of that? We had that was very strong and he had a nice wife and family and I'd go a lot on Sunday night a lot of times and he would invite us home to stay a while after church we had to be back at camp at 10 o'clock. But he took us to his house and feed us and we'd have fellowship there.

Interviewer: Yeh you told me about that. So how many months did you stay at Skolfield?

Mr. Brownfield: Oh we didn't stay but about seven days there. But we still did some more basic training preparing for service. You know I told you about this mortar without a barrel well on one of the training sessions that we were on they took us out on kind of a rough intersection there was a big ravine down here and they had set up you know what a rail fence is they had set up a rail fence out there about I don't know maybe 500 yards away on one hill we set up our mortar on this side and they the company

officer that was directing us had to give orders on how to set the thing and how far we had to shoot and when it was all ready he said fire. And when we fired our mortar shell fit right in the middle of that railed fence. He said you can go home after that.

Interviewer: No longer needed out there. Okay so you stayed there seven days then where did you did you stay with the Intrepid?

Mr. Brownfield: We stayed with the Intrepid but we left there to go to Marshall Island.

Interviewer: Marshall Island. And this was March?

Mr. Brownfield: Yeh

Interviewer: What did you do at Marshall Islands?

Mr. Brownfield: Well of course the Japs invaded Hawaii and on December 7<sup>th</sup> and just literally destroyed Hawaii it was just in shambles. So there were literally thousands this was one of their basic stopping places between Japan and the United States was the Marshall Islands. And they had airports and runways there for planes to come and go and they were coming and going all hours of the night.

Interviewer: Now it was Japanese control at this time?

Mr. Brownfield: Yes yes yes so we pull up and the battleships had the big guns the airplanes were flying over head and the marines were ready to go and they bombarded that island they had the nig guns set up about a mile away from that island and they were throwing them big ole shells at em just constantly. And so they finally got the thing subdued until they felt like it was safe for us to go in well where those shells had hit there were they had left hole in the ground that were maybe 8 feet deep and 12 feet across just a big ole round hole you know slopping banks. And when we got in that hole using that as protection from any that might still be there took all of our gear and laid it on the side of the banks because we didn't want to still carry it. And directly somebody's backpack started sliding down that gravel bank and one of the fellows turned around and filled that thing full of shells he didn't know it was dark and he thought that was somebody coming in. And he shot that thing full of holes.

Interviewer: So did you any resistance on the island?

Mr. Brownfield: Oh mercy we had lots of resistance on the island. They claimed that they had all of the service weapons and means in destroying the Japs were in use they claim that we killed 150 thousand Japanese and we lost 150 men. And they had those they had palm trees on the island and they claimed up in a palm tree and tried to shoot the troops as the came marching by. It wasn't long until in fact they found that fellow just right away when we got there. They shot him out of that tree and he laid there on the ground and they just left him just left him laying there. Every time we would go by they would shoot him full of holes. And by this time about all that was left on the island was just a handful of the Japanese and they had places that they thought would protect them that they could get in made out of concrete and they had one of those slits that they could see out of see anybody coming they tried to shoot through those slits if they would see anybody coming. Well we had flame throwers and they'd

come out of there they were all drunk they had they called it Sackie that was there alcohol they were all drunk on Sackie and they come out there and attack those well they had these big ole what do you call them that move on tracks you know tanks they would come out there and attack those things with their riffles. But they'd flame thrower in there and destroy every one of them.

Interviewer: This was your first experience with combat?

Mr. Brownfield: That's right.

Interviewer: Were you shot at at all on Marshall Islands?

Mr. Brownfield: No not at Marshall Islands I wasn't shot at. We saw we saw one of our own planes that was just flying around the island to see what damage was being done and he got caught in the line of fire and they shot him down one of our own reporters shot him down right there.

Interviewer: He died?

Mr. Brownfield: He died.

Interviewer: Well so you began at Marshall Islands so where did you actually leave the threate?

Mr. Brownfield: Well after the Marshall Islands campaign was completed we came back to Honolulu for a short while. And did some more training.

Interviewer: I was curious about something you mentioned the Marines went into

Mr. Brownfield: Oh there was every branch of the service there was Marines and Navy and the Army and the Air Force and all of them were out there.

Interviewer: How did that work in the Mars all Islands and in general how did it work having them join operation like that?

Mr. Brownfield: Of course there were none of our troops on there at that time and they just turned loose with everything they had trying to destroy that island. It didn't make any difference who shot first or last or who was being all connective they just all turned loose at one time.

Interviewer: Did you leave any contingent on the island or did you leave the island vacant? How was the island left?

Mr. Brownfield: Actually the outfit that I was in was considered an occupational force and we didn't stay on the Island at Quaduman but they put us in small boats and took us to another adjacent island not too far from the one that we were on. And it had not been occupied at all and we had to go in there and take that machetes and axes and anything we had that was available to chop a path to an area that was on let's see it was on the east side of this little island. So we carried out a camping spot there and set up of course we set up pup tents for most of for a good while after we got there.

Interviewer: Now this was in this was in 43.

Mr. Brownfield: This was in 42. I believe.

Interviewer: You joined in 42?

Mr. Brownfield: Yeh this was still in 42.

Interviewer: So when you when you were the Pacific in 43 when you were in Marshall did you I know that the emphases that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had with Churchill and Stalin was to take care of the Germans first then we'll keep Japan at bay and we'll attack but we'll throw all of our forces on it as soon as we take over the east. How did you had stated in the Pacific theatre before the flood has switched to the Pacific.

Mr. Brownfield: It was nearly over in European theatre when the Japanese attacked the Marshall Islands and we thought that those fellows had finished their job over there and many of them would come help us in the Pacific and many of them did. Came on out there and fought.

Interviewer: So what did you do after Honolulu after your unit had taken the Marshall Islands? You went back to Honolulu for R&R what did you do from there?

Mr. Brownfield: Well this we just took some more basic training. Now being a Baptist and being a deacon and married and being in the church all my life as we traveled from east to west going from Pocomo City to California there was not a Protestant Chaplin on the training well my wife had come to had come up there to stay to visit me awhile and I would preach and direct the singing and she had some knowledge of music and would play the piano and we would sing there in those services. So on the way to California then we stopped in Northern Texas for just some rest and to refuel and there was a Catholic Chaplin on the train and he knew we were going to stop and he knew I conducted some of these services back there in Pocomo City. So he came to me and he said would you take the Protestant people when we stop refilling and I'll take the Catholics'. So this announcement was made and the Catholic people all went over in one area and the Protestants went into another area and we all got off the train. And I stood on the front bumper of an automobile and preached a sermon to those fellows. And tried to encourage them not to be afraid and to depend on the lord to take care of them and get them back safely and had just a wonderful experience. So we got back on the train went on to California.

Interviewer: Did that take place was this after the Marshall Islands?

Mr. Brownfield: No on the way from the states to California.

Interviewer: What was your when you landed on the Marshall Islands and you knew you were going into combat what was your what went through your mind at that time?

Mr. Brownfield: Well of course I wanted to be sure and not get killed. And they made me squad leader and they had me a squad leader and let's see 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 of us in a squad and they made us a squad leader and I was responsible for trying to take care of those men and keep them from getting shot. And this was what I did I was there in the Marshall Islands and I left there in a week and went to another

island close by there and I still wanted to conduct a worship service and there was no Chaplin so one of the fellows in the company took the some of the crates that the big ole shells had come in that we managed to get a hold of and took them and made church benches and made a little pulpit and made a place there were we carried out on the east side of that island for us to have a church service. And we would have a church service on Sunday morning and everybody that was on the island would come I mean they all came. And then we would have another service on Wednesday night of course there were no lights you couldn't have any lights you know back there in those days. But we didn't have to have any lights we'd and there were I don't know 22, 23 hundred men on that island.

Interviewer: What were your fellow soldiers what how did they respond to the first taste of combat the first experience with combat? How did they respond were they scared?

Mr. Brownfield: They were scared I recon. On this other little island where we had set up to live for a little while before we went back to Hawaii we cut out a base there and finally a Chaplin from Ewan, Oklahoma came and he came up there and stayed with us on the island for a while. Of course being a Chaplin he had a Captains he was a Captain in the Army. By this time we were not living in the little pup tents anymore we managed to get a hold of enough lumber and material to build little living quarters with a tent over it and eight cots inside this little thing that we built there. And Chaplin instead of going to stay with the other officers he'd get him a bunk out of the supply room and come and put it there in our little ten beside of me.

Interviewer: Well where did you go after you went back to Marshall Island after your time your R&R where did you go after that?

Mr. Brownfield: Let's see after when we finished what we had to do in Marshall Islands we just come back to Hawaii for a short while. But this was just for more basic training and preparing us for positional combat. So when they were ready for us to go on in further and we got they had these ships of all sizes and shapes and kinds lined up and zigzagging back and forth you know trying to keep from being in a straight line. And I was on what they call a LCI and we had mounted my mortar on the deck of this thing and had to have a big sand box to set the base in cause when that shim went off it created a lot of pressure and we had that sand to take care of that pressure. And we went on to the Solomon Islands and zigzagged back and forth and of course we just had to get out and dive in the ocean it might have been two or three miles deep. We would dive off of that ship into that water there and anybody that could swim would swim around and get back on and that was when we got back on the ship. We went then to the Solomon Islands across the equator and that's where I had the experience with the barrel of garbage. I had to take off everything but my shorts jump down in that up to my chin and go through a paddle line and they busted our bottoms with that paddle.

Interviewer: What did that qualify you to do?

Mr. Brownfield: Well actually that made us actually what they called a shell bag. That's when I became a shell bag.

Interviewer: So what did you do at the Solomon Islands?

Mr. Brownfield: We didn't do anything there but refuel we just touched base there long enough to refuel. We got off and talked to the natives there but for a little bit but we just spend a night or so there long enough to refuel all these boats.

Interviewer: And where to from there?

Mr. Brownfield: Then we headed on to Palou, the Palou Islands. And there were some terrible storms sometimes on that little ship we would see we would look up and see the waves and they splashed on that boat and you would think they were going to sink us. And we pulled into a little area onetime to get out of danger of these high waves and it was just a little ole narrow passage way there when we entered it and I was sitting up on the front end of the boat and these Japanese had a big ole bomb that was nearly as big a round as a barrel and it had fingers on it and they had tied that thing to an anchor and had it anchored just below the surface of the water hoping that a ship would hit it you know and just go to bits. Well sitting up on the front end of that thing I saw it before the sip got there. And I hollered to the Captain put it in reverse put it in reverse and he did and then we pulled up beside this thing you know where we were a safe distance from the thing and then the out company commander said let's destroy the thing. So those little ole fingers that stood out on the thing were the explosion points on it so we took our rifles and started shooting and I got credit for hitting one of those points and making that thing explode.

Interviewer: Pretty big explosion.

Mr. Brownfield: It would have destroyed us if we hadn't got it stopped.

Interviewer: Well what was probably we have a few minutes left here. What was probably the most intense combat situation that you were involved in?

Mr. Brownfield: The most intense combat situation I was ever of course it was as bad as the Marshall Islands. But Dwain's when we got there the Japanese were shooting at us and we were headed in we were headed into this island and you could see the bullets tracing the water coming in. And I saw that happen and the manager of this little ole ship saw them coming too and he got excited and quit giving orders and let the boat turn sideways. And I saw those things coming and I stepped inside a door a metal door and those bullets same right up beside of that thing and hit a tire up there and one bullet bounced off and hit a fellow right in the billfold and that's all it ever did.

Interviewer: So was that the only time you were shot at?

Mr. Brownfield: Yeh I believe it was. No I won't say it was the only time I was ever shot at but I will say it's the closest call I ever had.

Interviewer: Were you ever wounded in combat?

Mr. Brownfield: No

Interviewer: Did you ever have a chance to return fire on the Japanese?

Mr. Brownfield: No, not really. But I don't want to take up too much time but when we got stationed there on Pilli Island again we were just living in little ole huts. And an old boy got up one morning and was sitting on the side of his bed with a cigarette and he saw a Jap coming down that path headed to our food dock you know trying to steal some food. And he shot at him but he got away and the next day the island was probably a half a mile wide and two miles long they lined up enough men that we were close enough together that we could touch with our hands and we marched from one end of that island to the other. Of course they had hidden in caves we went all the way through and I think that we killed about seven of them. But that was all that happened.

Interviewer: So you stayed on Pilli the remainder of your time there?

Mr. Brownfield: Well when the war was over you know Harry Truman was President. They dropped the atomic bomb on Japan and destroyed their ability to do anything so the war was over. And we had had an aircraft carrier that had been out there close to Japan and they had double propellers on them and an underground shell had knocked out one of those propellers and they were crippled on their way back to Hawaii. Well the war was over and they said get home anyway you can. Well of course we were anxious to get home. In fact I had gone and talked to the commanding officer about.

Interviewer: Now you were on the aircraft carrier at this time?

Mr. Brownfield: No I wasn't yet but I had gone to talk to the commanding officer to see if he would let me go back to the states and become a commissioned officer. He said well your just after an excuse said you don't need to do that said it's going to be over in a few days. So they put us on this aircraft carrier and we could see them coming in you know how they have that loop that will catch that rope and stop them. And sometimes it would miss and go off the end of the thing and it's a wonderful experience on that aircraft carrier.

Interviewer: We you promoted during your time there?

Mr. Brownfield: Yes having been a buck private when the war was over I was ready to be made first sergeant of our company. But when it was over the advancement never did come. And I came home with a well with the next rank before you get to be a master sergeant.

Interviewer: Sergeant first class?

Mr. Brownfield: Right