

Interviewer: Okay today is the 20th of October 2001 and.

Brown: Isn't today the 21st?

Interviewer: Yeah you're right let's start all over I wasn't prepared for what I was going to say.

Brown: Today is October 1st of 19 2001 my name is William Robert Brown I make my home in Gallatin Tennessee here on the lake. I was born May 5, 1922 graduated from Clarksville High School in 39. Left Clarksville High School took some government training in different things equal to about two years of college. At which time I enlisted in the US Army Air Core and became a cadet. I was inducted into the service on April the 25st 1944 at Fort Oberthroe Georgia. I moved from there to Keesler field where we began training for the 20th air force we were supposed to be combat pilots. After the advance stage of flying they broke us out of cadet training and put us in B29s which is a new super fortress being built. We were introduced to it at Lincoln Nebraska also at Oklahoma City Tinker Field. They moved us to Albakerky New Mexico for training to get approximately ten hours in all positions except AC which is airplane commander. After this training we were moved overseas to the island of Tinian. There we met Curtis Lemay General of the army and we began practicing everything that we would probably need to know to do to bomb Japan. Let's just stop here just a minute.

Interviewer: Okay you tell us something about before you went into the army air force. Did you go to Austin Peay for a while?

Brown: Yes I went to Austin Peay State University took navigation theory of flying took some mechanical training and took theory of flight in two different stages about the aircraft. Learned all about the operation of the aircraft.

Interviewer: Did you you said something about Captain Outlaw

Brown: Captain Outlaw was a friend of mine I had an aunt there where the Outlaw airport is now and he used to bring his little yellow and blue army plane in there was a model plane there. And we would let him land I had a cousin there we liked to land them so we helped him land.

Interviewer: Tell me you said something about that he would get you on the airplane and

Brown: Yeah he would taxi us up and down the field there. I believe they call that I said a model plane two wings is a biplane. And he'd taxi us run us up and down the field there in the meadow but he couldn't take us off so we had a big time at that. And he was instrumental in getting me into the air core because I think he signed my papers when I went into the air core.

Interviewer: Okay so how did you enlist or become a cadet in the air core and what time was it?

Brown: Well I was accepted and before I was brought into the air core I went to Glenn L Martin because I had gotten some extensive training in aircraft. And while there at Glenn L Martin I learned some of the skills and things of B26s and after that I came back down to Nashville and I worked out at Vultee on the 831 which was a British stick a Stuka dive bombers. And we practiced trying to taxi those things and get them in position to take off but they were very heavy and we had some strut problems on them so we worked that out. And then they sent Valfour was forming there and they sent me up to Louisville Kentucky and while there they brought in 25 B25s to be stripped down to get them as light as they

could. Of course we didn't know that these were the aircraft that Jimmy Doolittle was going to fly off of that aircraft carrier. The last thing we did to them was to pull the stress plates up and took the tanks out and sprayed a substance in there where it would hold gas. And as they left we took the brakes off of them just left the wheels there. So those aircraft were expendable but I had no idea that they was going to be used to bomb Tokyo for the first time.

Interviewer: How much later was it that they actually bombed Tokyo because this was back

Brown: Well it was probably two or three months about maybe a couple of months at the most before they bombed them. Combay got them on the aircraft carrier and go them in position to go and where they wanted to take off from they took off 600 and something miles from Tokyo. So I knew then that's what they were and I realized that I'd played a little part in history that I didn't even know about. But right after that I came back down to Clarksville and they told me that I had to be inducted in the army that there wasn't any I had been deferred up until then working on these different army deals. But I was connected to the US army air force and but I wasn't in uniform. In fact I got called 4F three or four different times when I was actually working at the base on these aircraft to strip them down. But after that they brought me right back and I went into Fort Oberthorpe Georgia and I became cadet. And I moved on down to Keesler Field in Biloxi Mississippi. And there we started our training and it wasn't long before we were in classes and we were getting our instructions from instructors and all this led to us finishing and finding out that we needed to go to gunnery. So they sent us down to Fort Myers Florida for gunnery. And once we got in gunnery they decided that they would wash us out as cadets and put us in B29s. So we went to Lincoln Nebraska and was introduced to the B29.

Interviewer: What did you think of the B29 when you first saw it?

Brown: Well the thing was monstrous. I mean you were thinking about flying a fighter and you could get some instrument flying and practicing turning and climbing and following the instructions of an instructor sitting back there telling you what to do or whether you was doing it good or not. I couldn't see flying hurting me I didn't want to be in that B29 but after we got used to is they sent us to Albakerky New Mexico but then again I was sent back down to Fort Myers Florida for nine day delay in route when I got married. And during those nine days and I got armors rating for magnetic mines I learned all about magnetic mines. And I came back to Albakerky New Mexico and finished our training there. And we got approximately without flying with an AC and AC is an airplane commander and they had to be west pointers. They knew all about the aircraft although I thought some of them didn't know how to get in it. But we did take all the positions and the B29 became very familiar to us and once we had that training we were ready to go overseas. I found myself on Tinian Island in the 20th air force direct orders of Curtis Lemay who had said he wanted the cream puff of cadets for the B29s and that's where he got us. So there we were and after being there probably three or four days I was assigned as a replacement. First crew I went on was a crew the AC airplane commander was Soult and he had ditched and they lost I think five out of the crew. And so they assigned me for replacement and that's what I did I replaced whoever was killed whatever they were doing.

Interviewer: What was your first flight on the B29 what did you do on the plane?

Brown: The first thing on the B29 which I had never been in that position at all. They had had a tail gunner killed so they asked me to go back and I knew the gunnery so I went back and flew as tail gunner back there on first mission. But whatever we had to do we did it and I have several missions there that I

the first one was in ____ the second one was a raid on Tokyo on May the 23rd which we set them on fire. I think there was about I believe they said about 15 square miles.

Interviewer: Was this the first night time raid the flight you went on?

Brown: No they had bombed Tokyo twice before. Now Curtis Lemay wanted to really get them because they were having a typhoon so we were up there May the 25th. And as we came off our target we had number four engine that was hit and destroyed just about and so we pumped our gas out of that area of the wing and we proceeded to go to Ewagema only to find out about 300 miles from Ewagema they was having a typhoon we couldn't land. So we threw everything out of the plane that we could get. Some 26 hours it was we were the last plane to get in we finally made it to Tinian. For this mission our crew was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. I was on the crew I got the award the only thing about it I did not receive the medal part of the award I did get a letter of appreciation from Harry Truman President one from H.H. Arnold a letter of appreciation. The other crews that got the medal didn't get the letters but I did but I had 19 combat missions and our group is the one that minded all the Japanese harbors. The 484th 482nd, 3rd, and 4th squadrons did all the land mining of I mean magnetic mining of the Japanese harbors. And in approximately three months we sank 88% of the Japanese merchant men.

Interviewer: That was one of your specialties or your specialty.

Brown: Yeah

Interviewer: Tell us what you had to do to set a mine.

Brown: Well you set the mine to go after certain tonnage. Most of the mines that we had we took nine mines. They were what you call long mines they were around 4,000 pounds or more. And we dropped the mine with a shoot and about four or five minutes after it's in the salt water it denigrates. It comes up on about 15, 20 foot anchor when the right tonnage comes along a magnetic mine will go to the target. The boat is either negative or positive whatever comes up with on the mine if it's negative the mine will go positive and it will go forward like a magnet it draws it to it. It can take all the evasive action it wants it will sink it it will blow it out of the water. And that's what we did.

Interviewer: So there was Lemay tell us about Curtis Lemay and what your impression of him was and how he changed the war.

Brown: Well Curtis Lemay was a fine gentleman he had a good vocabulary of curse words he chewed a cigar which he very seldom lit. When he came into briefing he was all business he made his mind up what he was gonna do he told you what he wanted done. And one time we're bombing we'd be up around 35000 and come down on the target we were not hitting our targets the best we wanted so he started bringing us down as low as 8,000 feet to drop the bomb. That's when we'd come in sometimes with the thermal from the bomb setting fire. We came back one time with tin on the end of the wing. But we got them on the target and he didn't have any Tom Foolery about him at all he'd say I hope half of you are living tomorrow. And he'd say you are smart guys take care of yourself. I even had one guy that I flew with some that flew his aircraft by the clock. He figured how long it took a Jap to track us how long it took the shell to get up there so ever so many minutes until we got into bomb run he was changing his position. But I want to say one thing war is hell. They killed four out of five of us in our squadron and I just hope not many people ever have to get into it. I'm referring to this 22th were the buildings were hit by those airplanes and those guys above probably the 60th floor didn't have any

chance to know anything except they were going to die. And when I flew missions it's horrible to be in that death position but I at least knew I probably could come out of it and those people didn't. So today when they say they know something about horror you don't really know too much about horror until you experience it. But you will never forget it it will stay with you the rest of your life.

Interviewer: Well can you tell us about some of the missions as far as if you are down that low doesn't that mean you're exposed to the were exposed to the shelling from the Japanese?

Brown: When he brought us in that low we hadn't bombed that low except over Tokyo and we were bombing the outlying area of Tokyo. And they were already on fire when we came back the second night and the flack was minimum. They didn't have the guns in position to take care of the fire they had on the ground. I imagine there's no telling how many thousands of people died down there. But the second night we came back it was just fire bombs and big clusters 500 banded together and had some frag bombs in them so when they hit a few minutes after there the frags would go off. And if there was anybody trying to put fires out it would probably kill them.

Interviewer: You were saying something about that you came in low and you could see the actual Japanese airfields when you were bombing the airfields you could see them running.

Brown: Well when I was talking about that we were talking about the POWs after the war was over with. I flew up to POW camps and we dropped them supplies and we were around five or six hundred feet and you could really see how thin those guys were running out of the buildings and trying to get those supplies. And we decided by dropping it we were going to hit too many of the POWs so we came back to the building they had run out of and started dropping them through the roof. So evidently they got most of that but to cover all of this in one time it's sort of hard to make someone understand.

Interviewer: You had a chance to you got 19 missions but what did you react when they offered you to fly the 20th mission?

Brown: Well I didn't see any need of me flying one more chance to get killed. And I had never been on a mission that they didn't shoot at us so it would just be my luck for a little medal I didn't particularly want it. I didn't know I was gonna get a personal letter from Truman and I didn't know what I was gonna get from H.H. Arnold which I have framed under glass at my home. And I got some letters from congress and some of the rest of them. Evidently they mentioned my name that I had done these things so I got these letters. Whereas the ones that got the medal for the Distinguished Flying Cross didn't get the letters. I talked to the AC and he said you could get that medal if you wanted it I believe if you wrote the right division you could get the medal. Said we all got the medal and you were in there with us but there's only four of us living now you know Brown and I'm not in too good a shape. The Frank Sault who was the AC of the aircraft on this night of May the 25th that we bombed Tokyo and took us 26 hours to get back has had a heart attack operation he had a clot in his leg he was so distressed after the war of what we had done that he became a medical doctor and spent most of his life in Africa as a missionary. Now he contracted a disease that gives him terminal life. And he was saying of all the crew that I had on there you are in the best shape of all of us. There is only four of us living now.

Interviewer: Do you know the names of the other people?

Brown: I'll have to get them Benjamin and I'll have to get those. But Benjamin Townsend was one of them.

Interviewer: Okay do you know where you were when okay tell me about what you saw of Nolan Gay who was parked on Tinian Island.

Brown: Yeah when it see I was down on the line when it came in and it was a new B29 I just noticed it had no insignia on the tale which told us what group it was. It was on Tinian Island I was from circle W didn't have nothing I was just looking at it land over there and it stopped so quick and I found out later that it had reversible pitch props which the B29s had before. But they had built some kind of elevator up out of the ground that would push an object up in the Bombay that B29. And I didn't know what it was probably a tank or they was always sending us on a weather mission. And we usually put an extra tank on in the Bombay and they just jacked it up in there and strapped it in. But I thought this was some better way to do it and they was gonna have a more modern aircraft to do our weather missions. Now we used to go out and check a tornado I mean a hurricane that was coming in and they're rough. But in flying we didn't just fly missions we were busy all the time. It took three of us to test top a B29 you had to be qualified even though you wasn't an airplane commander you had to be qualified to really take over the position. I could fly copilot but to take over the AC it had to be one that was approved for them. It took three of us to fly them fly them all the time. And there's nothing to it everybody is doing it all the crew member are divided up into three or four and we're test topping those things or we're flying a weather mission or we're going out what they call a Dumbo. And that's to check the weather to see what it is and it's a long ways and it's all kinds of storms out there.

Interviewer: Tell us about the video that you showed us earlier that explains the air war tell us briefly about that.

Brown: Well Curtis Lemay had become obese and he came to Norfolk Virginia and they didn't think he was going to make it there but he did. And Norfolk Virginia is where General McArthur is buried and all his memorabilia is there. And Norfolk Virginia played host to the 20th air force and to our squadron. Our three squadrons that did they mining the played host to us. Anything you wanted to eat or anywhere you wanted to go was free. And General Lemay wanted to give us something for our efforts because as I said four out of five of our squad had been killed. And so he had a VCR made he calls it from Tokyo from Hawaii to Tokyo it's basically what he was saying. And in that he tells what he wanted he wanted to get the cream of the crop where he wouldn't have to put a foot soldier on Japan at all. In so doing he starts off with the bombing of Hawaii and he goes through with his men that he had under him and where he took over and was running the whole show. And then he tells of bringing in the P51s which we were glad to get for protection but the B29 had a computerized gunnery on it. And the Jap planes if they came in close to us we'd shoot them down. So they were very leery of us and those P51s before those Japs could try to ram us they got to where they would try to fly right into us. Well they'd run them around to the back end of the B29 we'd shoot them down as well as the P51 was shooting them down.

Interviewer: Can you tell us a little more about the computerized gunner because that was quite unique wasn't it?

Brown: Yeah it was the first time a bomber had ever been computerized the bomber. You just had a scope you looked into and you picked out your plane. The necessary information regarding your target out there was entered into the computer and your air speed. And once you put the computer scoped him in and got the point on him you could shoot him down.

Interviewer: Yeah that's amazing. The tape that you showed us had incredible footage you know battle footage with all sorts of attacks with airplane on Japan and it was incredible.

Brown: Yeah you actually saw the bomb they were actually army pictures that were taken. And I have quite about of memorabilia about the pictures I used to shoot pictures out of the camera hatch of actually the bombing going on. Set the camera up and it would take pictures and I'd get a copy of them. There's more to just being the war part of it is homesick being away from home. Basically you don't really amount to anything because there is so many dying. One thing struck me was the Japanese prisoners were digging graves for us all the time the whole time I was there. I'd take off and see them over there digging those graves and they was filling them up. So a lot of men lost fire was one thing that you had pictures of showing the landing in the B29. But one thing I can always say is that I felt proud to be member of the combat team. I never went on a mission and came back that there wasn't a whole line of people waving.

Interviewer: You told us about when you first flew into Saipan that there were marines on both sides of the runway to welcome the B29s.

Brown: Yeah the marines were there to just curiosity they had never seen a B29 a lot of them hadn't seen a B29. When the B29s first came they were in China off of bases in China. But then they went into India and they called what they call they flew the hump. But by the time you tried to fly the hump and get to Japan you spent all your time burning the gas up. You didn't have much gas left to get back to anywhere. So they had to move closer and they did. That's when we took Tinian and built those big runways on Tinian. Now what you hear about is Saipan bays and Guam bays B29s hit Japan targets. They very seldom said anything about Tinian who had four big runways and was putting 80 percent of the B29s over the target. Because when I was on Tainan there was times that those Japs had some aircraft carriers laying off out there and they'd send up eight or ten planes and try to bomb us over there. And we had some black widows what we called black widows P38 and you can't get out of them there's no way to bail out of them. And they'd take I call them night fighters but they'd go out and go get them.

Interviewer: Can you tell us about when you took off from Tinian fully loaded with fuel 7,000 gallons and bombs and you'd have to go down and skim the ocean.

Brown: Our runway was somewhere close to 6,000 feet up we flew off. Instead of pulling back to climb and get altitude you'd push forward and dive and grab about 2,000 feet and then try to come off the floor without splashing. There was a lot of the guys particularly with Tinian would sitting watching and plenty of the B29s fully loaded splashed. And there's no hope for anything like that except a big boom if it blows up if it doesn't it sinks. But ditching long miles long ways to the target.

Interviewer: How in the world did you go that long you had to go to the bathroom you had to eat you had to sleep?

Brown: We had facilities on there for going to the bathroom. And we had a kit that had lamb, spam or ham in it a can and that would be our rations. We would have some kind of a hard cake or candy bar and that's what we'd eat and we had water.

Interviewer: You told me about one mission where everybody went to sleep and you were on autopilot.

Brown: Yeah we were we got our automatic pilot and there was supposed to be some member of the crew all times up front awake. And one night I called up there just to check on them every 15 or 20 minutes nobody answered. And I called again and nobody answered so I went up front and they were all asleep and she's sitting on automatic pilot. So I woke the pilot up and we had to check where we were

and we were just passing over Japan headed towards China. We certainly wouldn't have enough fuel to get back to our base and get to Ewagema the only place we could go was base in China a secret airfield there. So we checked and found out where it was but just before we got there we had one chance to have an auxiliary bombing target on the far side of Japan next to China. So our co-ordination was good enough that we could fly over it so we just went over it and dropped everything we had. We hit a bump depot there that they had been trying to find for some time like to blowed us out of the sky. So we got credit for that then we went on in and found the base in China which we had no landing lights or anything else you had to make a count to land. And we made our count and came back and landed and there was a major there that seemed to be awful upset after landed that I wasn't listening to him. He was hollering something I had the fuel line in the tank pumping fuel and he was awful upset about something and finally he pulled the jeep up where he could get up on the wing and he jumped up and came up there. And we flew without any rank we never paid any attention to rank but this was sort of amusing because he was dressed in his full major had his leaf in his collar and everything. And he was awful upset that I didn't jump up and salute him and so I stopped and jumped up and said yes sir yes sir I see you're a major what about it major what are you talking about? Well he said the fuel is being pumped through a screen and the screen is clogged it's showing too much pressure and I want you just to flip it off and flip the screen in. I knew how to do that so they had some extra clean screens I just flipped it in and put it back down. And he was still upset that I had asked him I really asked him I'll tell you what I said I said what the hell do you want. And he was still upset about my discourtesy to him. And flying in a war and doing that so we had had a one star general on the plane and I signaled to I come out of the pilot's window onto the wing and so I just signaled one of the guys who was in there just to run our colors up. Of course I didn't know I knew we had several flags in there I knew we had something better than a major we could have had a lieutenant colonel or anything else. But we had a one star general and he set that up there and the major got awful upset that he had been so rude to me he was saluting me and said you so young you air guys come out so young. And it tickled the fire out of me but of course I'd have been court marshaled had I probably shouldn't be saying anything about it now but long years.

Interviewer: Nobody's going to tell.

Brown: Huh

Interviewer: Nobody's going to tell.

Brown: They can't tell much about it now but there was some amusing times.

Interviewer: Well I'm sure the comradely with your fellow flyers was strong. I mean what did you do when you weren't flying?

Brown: Well we were on the island it rained every afternoon there was some Gooks up the other end of the island. They were all up behind fences there wasn't a whole lot to do they kept us busy flying missions and checking weather. I went out on some weather missions some hurricanes and things to learn how to fly in a hurricane and.

Interviewer: Yeah tell us about that.

Brown: Well a hurricane you pick out a hurricane it's laying off the coast maybe three or four hundred miles. We want to see what it's going to do we go in at eleven o'clock dip our wing into it. It's going

counter clockwise we come out about two o'clock. You're in the eye of the storm it's almost eerie and its beautiful the sea is as blue as can be and the sky is above you looks pretty good. Then when you come back out get your wind velocities and all the stuff in the hurricane you come back out and dip your wing in counter clockwise at two o'clock. And when you come out you'll fly just about at eleven o'clock where you went in then you come home. Every now and then we'd get some beer had no way to cool it we'd take a load of beer and put it on a B29 we'd take it up about 35,000 feet we'd stay up there up there about 25 – 30 minutes at 25,000 feet and then we'd come flying back down and land and everybody had beer.

Interviewer: Cold beer

Brown: Cold beer yeah

Interviewer: That's an expensive beer cooler isn't it?

Brown: Yeah I never did try I never did care anything about beer but I liked co-colas and I didn't care anything about cigarettes and I'd swap it for something else. I'd swap it for candy bars or some other thing. One thing you don't want to do you try not to become friends with anybody. You know the guys last name you have your crew you're on that's close enough. But I had one fellow that I had just met once and he asked me if something happened to him he asked me if I would right home and tell them if something happened to him. And he gave me an address and he was he was killed he was shot up in the airplane came home dead so I wrote his family. And they the whole time I was there I got letters from the family and they wanted to know was he smiling or was he happy or. I knew the fellow probably one day so in my diary I just have his name in there. But that's one reason that they wouldn't get close to you because it's a heartache to know somebody that gets killed. And I never did try to find out if he had brothers or sisters or anything else. Another thing you want to watch for is be in your area at night because the Japs were still in the caves and they were starving to death and if they'd catch anyone out they'd slit your throat. Several of them got there throats cut took their clothes and everything else off. Of course you had a side arm you had to carry a side arm at all times.

Interviewer: Okay could you tell me what your reaction where were you actually you were flying even after the atomic bomb was dropped is that right?

Brown: Yeah flew up the next day and looked where it had gone burned

Interviewer: At Hiroshima?

Brown: Hiroshima, Nagasaki was the next one.

Interviewer: What did you see what did you see?

Brown: You couldn't see anything but just scorched ground. It looked like a bunch of chimneys out there. There was nothing there just burned just like looked like a forest with a bunch of trees burnt down to the ground and just left part of the trunk standing.

Interviewer: You were taking pictures right?

Brown: Yeah I took pictures of it.

Interviewer: You said what did you say about Nagasaki?

Brown: Hiroshima Nagasaki was the second one and Nagasaki we went up there about two or three days later but it wasn't the area that the first bomb hit. I don't think the second bomb was near as powerful as the first bomb they had.

Interviewer: When the Japanese surrendered what was the feeling among the soldiers and airmen?

Brown: Oh it was elated the A bomb stopped them it stopped them dead in their tracks. I was so leery of flying I had a prime seat to be on an airplane and fly over Tokyo during the surrender. But I want to tell you I've seen so much death so much that I didn't want to fly any more than I had to any time. Every time you take a chance like that you're taking a chance on getting killed and I just wanted to stay away from it.

Interviewer: Well did that feeling get stronger as you got closer to 20 missions? I've read that that the closer you get to it the

Brown: Yeah actually I didn't know how they counted the missions. I didn't realize that I only had 19 missions that counted because I had been on Dumbo missions I had been out weather missions I thought they counted all the missions. We had one mission that we flew that we blew a cylinder head on and we had to turn around and come back. But we were not too far from the target when we did so we had an auxiliary target and we dropped it. Whether it went in or whether we dropped it in the ocean or what we did with it but had they counted that mission I would have had 20 missions. But I was a replacement the guys I've trained with none of them got close to the kind of missions I had. They started flying me just as soon as I got in there.

Interviewer: What is a Dumbo mission I see it mentioned twice?

Brown: Well a Dumbo mission is a mission that you're flying you either get a weather report or maybe fly to the edge of the target and see how much flack is coming up at you. The Japanese got where that if it's just one aircraft up there they didn't hardly shoot at you.

Interviewer: Is that the reason that Nula Gay went in without any escort it was just one plane?

Brown: Yeah they didn't just one plane by itself they hardly would bother it they didn't know what was waiting for them.

Interviewer: That's the first time I've ever heard that before but it makes sense.

Brown: Yeah they didn't know what they didn't have any plane flew with them at all they just went in by themselves.

Interviewer: Yeah

Brown: That's what they told me when they wanted me to take an extra mission so I'd have 20 to count. They were just going up for a little run and drop a bomb or two somewhere and be right back there wouldn't be anything to it. But you still had to fly about 1600 miles up and 1600 miles back and you're gonna do that for a little piece of metal? I'm not I didn't.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what you did after the war once you got out? In other words how did you get out of the service what did you do then?

Brown: Well I came home to first thing was I didn't want to fly back because all the airplanes were crashing they didn't have regular maintenance on them. The aircraft I was going to come back on they had me assigned to crashed at Midway and killed nine. So I stayed on Tinian Island and they moved me over to Saipan and the SS Breckinridge which is a ship comparable to the Queen Mary was supposed to come in and it had 10,000 blacks on it troops. And they diverted it to come by Saipan to pick me up which a pretty nice thing to do the general had them do that. But when they got there the seas were so heavy that they couldn't bring it into port. And she was bouncing 50 to 60 feet in and out of the water. So they sent me out on a launch and they dropped Jacob's ladder over and when the launch was close enough got me to grab the Jacob's ladder I did. And I was about 40 or 50 feet up in the air on that Jacob's ladder as soon as it bounced back up in the air. I climbed that Jacob's ladder and got over I had no security on me other than just climbing it I climbed it and got over there. The captain brought me up since I was highly ranked noncommissioned officer he brought me in and thanked me for being aboard and told me that I was great to be in shape enough to climb that Jacob's ladder. And so he fed me dinner and we talked and he put me in charge of all the men.

Interviewer: Wow

Brown: So I immediately got me two or three officers to help me and we laid out work details that evening of what they were going to do. And the next morning I thought from flying combat from flying so long I wasn't sick they were all in the head sick but after I raised up I was sick. If one of them hadn't had moved over I'd have had a fit you know just getting in there. But we came home and I'll get this little thing in, there was a bunch of guys on there wouldn't show up for work wouldn't show up for duty. And we'd call them and they wouldn't appear well when we got into San Francisco I made a list of all of their names up and it was something like 80 guys. And we called them off first they answered and came I had them put in the stockade they had to stay there two weeks and clean up the ship. They threatened to kill me and everything else but there is a way to find out you know you have to use your head to come out of this thing.

Interviewer: There's one thing I forgot to ask you is you told about an unusual incident that you were on the plane and your next door neighbor came up to bring you dinner.

Brown: Oh yeah when we went over we had a brand new B29 and we landed on Guam and before we landed they were telling instructors that there was a dip in the runway and before marker such and such you'll want to be down you'll want to fly over to marker such and such to touch down because the dip will knock the struts out of the plane. Well we had just landed and pulled into an area and it was a requirement someone had to stay on the aircraft and I was elected to stay there. And I was getting the charts and everything lines up from the flight getting the flight number and so forth posted. And they said they'd bring me mess out or bring me some food out. And this came up and said sir I have your dinner for you. I said thank you and I looked over and it was a next door neighbor I'd grown up with there Billy Wall brought my food in to me. There you go I'm a neighbor we've been neighbors for years he couldn't believe it was me and I couldn't believe it was him. But he was an assistant to the Chaplin there on Guam. And I was glad to see him but it was somewhat of a miracle that you go 10,000 miles to see your neighbor come up but that's just how fate works.

Interviewer: Well Dr. William Wall that delivered our daughter and so I had special feeling for him.

Brown: Yeah nice guy he was undecided for a long time as to really what he wanted to get into. And I knew I thought he was gonna make a preacher really when I left home I would have set a deal he would have been a preacher. But he became a medical doctor and so as you say he was your doctor family doctor and he's a fine guy.

Interviewer: That he was and he was surprised to see you right?

Brown: Yeah he had a sister Martha and had Mary Tom was the little girl and Catherine he had three sisters so he was the only boy.

Interviewer: Is it okay tell me briefly about what you did after the war.

Brown: Well I came out of the service and I planned to go ahead and get two more years of college and get that behind me. But I could get a good job I was married and I could get a good job.

Interviewer: Tell us about your marriage because I missed that earlier I skipped it.

Brown: Well I had married a young girl which was a little young and we've been married now 57 years. I've got a little kidding because she was a teenager but she's always treated me like a king and I try to treat her like a queen. So coming home it was sort of funny to look at someone it had been nearly two years since you had seen. But we were married and so we had a happy life we have two daughters and four grandchildren and fairly good success in life in business. I've worked for myself from the time I was 50 on but I was working more or less commission before that so as we do this interview here tonight I'm still not retired. I'll be 80 next May I'm getting to the point but it's been a fabulous life and I'm lucky to have lived to have come through this whole thing.

Interviewer: Tell me about your wife's maiden name and about how her mother didn't want her to get married and about that and where she lived.

Brown: Well yeah she lived in Nashville and I called her mother and asked if I could speak to Peggy and she said yes where are you? And I said well I'm on my way to Fort Myers Florida for armor training and I have nine days of laying around and I wanted to ask her something. So I asked Peggy came on the phone I asked her if she would marry me I'd come in and stay the nine days. And so she said yes and her mother said well she didn't know whether to let her do it or not but she was mature for her age she knew she loved me she never asked for anything particular and she was gonna let her marry me. And on her death bed her mother said that beyond her imagination she never expected us to be as happy as we have been. So that is a great tribute to Peggy for putting up with me. But we're still happy.

Interviewer: Oh yeah I could tell that y'all have a wonderful home and obviously very happy. Is there anything else you'd like to say? I've enjoyed interviewing you.

Brown: I appreciate very much that you have this I hope that degree constructive. I know that getting back to your side of the family Dorothy Head who is your aunt and your wife is my first cousin that a lot of years have been lost somewhere or another. Early on in life there was some not misunderstanding it was just family life came along and I never was real close to. I loved my grandfather very much but Dorothy was at a different age than I was. So she was going to college and doing things when I was just a young boy and so I didn't know too much about her. I tell you what I'm not gonna be that long getting together again because we've missed out on a lot.

Interviewer: Can you tell me something about your remembrances of C.C. Brown Christopher Columbus Brown.

Brown: Yeah my grandfather made an impression on me he always dressed nice he was always kind. My daddy's mother had died when he was eight and he knew very little of love and tenderness and so grandfather had it. And one day I went by the bank and I was dirty and nasty and Mr. Wall there who was Billy Wall's daddy told me that I'll take you around to the back where your grandfather is. So he did and grandfather told me well when I was not cleaned up or anything just come around to the back knock on the door and he'd let me come in. So I got to where I'd do things like that I would come up there and he'd bring me in.

Interviewer: What bank was this now?

Brown: That was First Trust and Saving Bank and Billy Wall was standing he dressed like his daddy did he was head teller his daddy was he had a little bow tie a white shirt and little rubber bands on his arm. And he'd ask me why I came up there so dirty and nasty. I said we'll I've been playing I just came by to see my grandfather and he said well you shouldn't be coming up there. About that time his daddy Mr. Wall grabbed him and pulled him out in the hall. He said why chastise someone that you might work for one day. And I got tickled because I didn't know what chastise meant. I went home and asked my mother and she said well you just sort of butted somebody or making them feel uncomfortable. And so I've always remembered that no matter where you go in life don't make small of anybody because if you can fly on that flagpole and be up there on the high somebody helped get you up there. And you don't ever want to forget where you came from because you could lose it.

Interviewer: That's right there's a lot of truth to that. Listen thank you so much. What is this picture (looking at a book of photos).

Brown: This is North Field it's got the

Interviewer: Full runway

Brown: Uh huh

Tape ended