

**ADMIRAL NIMITZ NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE PACIFIC WAR**
Fredericksburg, Texas

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

Interview with Mr. W. G. (Bill) Campbell
US Army- 24th Division 52nd Field Artillery
New Guinea, Leyte, Mindanao
1944-1945

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Interviewer: Floyd C. Cox

INTERVIEW
of
Mr. W.G. (Bill) Campbell

Mr. Cox: Today, is April 21, 2000. My name is Floyd Cox and I am a volunteer at the Admiral Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Today we are in San Antonio talking with Mr. W. G (Bill) Campbell.

Mr. Campbell, thank you for giving us the opportunity to record for posterity the experiences that you underwent during World War II in the Pacific. As a matter of a little background, Mr. Campbell, could you tell you tell me a little about your biographical back ground; where you were born and so on?

Mr. Campbell: I was born here in San Antonio. In fact I grew up on the old family place. My great-grandfather bought this piece of property where my house is now in 1858 and so it has been in the family a good while. I grew up here in San Antonio went to high school in San Antonio. Our grade school was the old Campbell school that was built in 1874. My grandmother was the first teacher. It was at one time, I remember, there were 23 of us in the whole 7 grades. So we didn't have enough for a ball team. But we had a wonderful time there and after the 7th grade we had to go to the city schools. So I went to old Main Avenue and I finished Jefferson the second year it was built. My first military was four years of ROTC in high school. I went to Texas A & M then in 1934 and finished A & M with a degree in Agriculture in 1938. I only did two years of ROTC so I didn't do the full officers training program. I had a job there at 30cents an hour and didn't feel I had too much military time left. I went to the lower country. Got a job immediately at Hebronville (Texas) because I could read, write and speak Spanish fairly fluently. There all of my office work in the department of agriculture there was done that way (in Spanish).

I met my wife, Lola Patrick in her first year of teaching, while I was there. We were married in 1939 and we are just about to have our 61st anniversary.

Mr. Cox: Well congratulations. That's wonderful.

Mr. Campbell: Another couple of months and we'll make it. I tell you it's really great when you can have a caretaker, a wife, a lover and a friend all in one package.

Mr. Cox: You are right there.

Mr. Campbell: Anyway after we were there for a short time then we went on down to Rio Grande City (Texas) in Starr County as county Agricultural agent. We had a good time there.

I was inducted in April of 1943 and waited for my turn, then went on to Ft Sill (Oklahoma) for 3 months of basic. A couple of months at Ft Ord, California then and then overseas. Then went to Australia, in the fall of 1943. The 24th Division was part of the old Hawaiian Division. They were staging there before they started toward the islands. They were quite short of personnel. They made two divisions out of one, I think. And we, a bunch of us went in there as replacements to bring them up to strength. My first day in Brisbane (Australia) we went down to the dock, to keep us busy, to help them unload a freighter (ship). The introduction to the load there really startled me. It was a boatload of white crosses for the cemeteries to come. Oh, Boy! Anyway we got over it.

An amusing thing. The Australian dockworkers, the Aussies, had their tea at 10 o'clock in the morning, wherever they were. The docks were thick wooden docks and they would build a little fire right on top of the wooden dock and boil their billy of tea. And then pour what was left of the tea on the fire to put it out and left a hole on the dock. But they had their tea.

I caught a narrow rail train after a week in Brisbane. The camp in Brisbane was in Ascot Town. It is a beautiful racecourse that they made into a tent city during the war. We caught the narrow gage rail 400 miles north to Rock

Hampton. Trucks met us there and took us out about 25 miles in the country where the Division was encamped.

Mr. Campbell: We got assigned to our different areas there. They put me into the survey section in the Field Artillery and we had a good time there for a couple of months while we were getting things organized. One of the most pleasant things that happened there: the farmers close by, brought melons and things like that to camp and sold them to us. I got acquainted with some of them and got to helping some of them on their farms. It was kind of relaxation as there was not much to do, especially on weekends.

They had a Christmas Party; we were there at Christmas. The Christmas party was in a little two-room school and the neighbors all gathered. Grandma, the kids, everybody had tea, sandwiches, ham and everything you could imagine. They had a good long Christmas party that four or five of us were invited to. It was a real party at home.

Mr. Cox: They, made you feel at home didn't they?

Mr. Campbell: The Australians are a beautiful people. We loved them, as they treated us well and we enjoyed them. They are so happy.

From the staging there, we went up to Goodenough Island; I guess it is about as marshy and nasty a place as you will find in the world; for staging before we went on to New Guinea. But anyway, we slipped through that for a couple of months and in the process I think one of the most amusing things, well not amusing really but something you would never dream of now, happened there. DDT was the thing to use for everything then. We took a great big sack of DDT and several bars of GI soap and put them into a barrel and made a real thick mushy soup out of it. You would then dip your clothes in and then put them on and wear them with that DDT on it. Because they had what they call "the scrub typhus mite" in the grass there which would cause an almost deadly infection if you got it. So the DDT was to help prevent you from getting a tick or mite bite. But we still survived it, DDT and all, so I guess it wasn't all bad and it did a lot of good.

We went from Goodenough Island to make the Hollandia invasion

in Dutch New Guinea. We hit them from two points. At my point we bombarded, that is Naval bombardment, about four hours of the heaviest shelling, you can imagine, on that beach. We got ashore and we found one goat with a broken leg. (laughter)

Mr. Cox: There were no enemy troops there?

Mr. Campbell: They had gone back into the woods. It was a little confined beach there. Not a bad place to camp. But to the airstrip they was the muddiest mucky trail you ever saw. No way of getting a vehicle over it. We carried packs of goods and supplies over that trail knee deep in mud for the longest time. While we were there we had several things occur. We had a pretty good camp there but we didn't have enough of rations. Somehow, we learned later what to put onto the trucks. The manual calls for certain things to be put on the trucks so we followed the book getting ready for that first operation. After that, we knew that if we were going to make that operation we would put some of those things aside and make sure we had a good supply of flour, dried fruit, canned goods and what ever we could stow in there in the way of food so we wouldn't get hungry. I got down to a weight of 115 pounds on that operation and I thought I should never have sent a picture home looking like that.

You know, I don't know how I ever made it. We learned how to go down those nets along side the ship to get into the landing craft for the landings. I got over the side of the ship and started climbing down to that little old landing boat. I was loaded down with a Tommy gun, the Thompson, 200 rounds of ammunition, full pack and a (surveyors) transit. I don't know, if I had of miss-stepped I would have gone down and never stopped sinking. It was really a chore.

Anyway, we finally got over to the airstrip and above lake Santani, and camped there for a bit. It was quite a nice place, upon the side of a hill. It was very mountainous. The airstrip was down in the big broad valley. One time we went across the lake in a tracked amphibious vehicle, called an alligator, on a scouting tour across the lake, which was about 1 ½ miles wide. We made a trip there and up into the mountains on the far side and on the way back about halfway across the lake the alligator conked out on us. There we were afloat in the middle of that lake.

Mr. Campbell: Now we had some experience with the “Fuzzy Wuzzies” but not much. They came out, in their little outrigger canoes. A whole tribe of them.

Mr. Cox: You say “Fuzzy Wuzzies”. Were these natives?

Mr. Campbell: The natives. That is what we called them, at that time. Anyway, they were real good. They were going to take us back to the shore. But, their little old canoes were only 8 or 10 inches wide and there was no way any of us could sit in those things or even get his feet into it. Finally, they pulled up side by side. We had some packing crates on board, so we put a board between the two canoes and put a foot in each canoe and sat on the board and they paddled in to shore. Talk about a tedious ride! It was fun, but it was tedious.

Mr. Cox: Let me ask you. At this time, was there combat going on in this area?

Mr. Campbell: Yes, there was. There were Japanese back in the hills and they were trying to get through from.... Well see, Hollandia bypassed a lot of the Japanese troops further south in Abuja; therefore they were trying to come up that way to by pass us. We had bypassed them and cut them off down there, when we made that jump into Dutch New Guinea. So that was the reason scouting runs were made frequently along with spotter planes. We didn't have any action once we got there and took the airstrip. The airstrip was pretty well decimated by our planes. The place was cluttered with Japanese aircraft that were caught on the ground. Our planes had slipped up on them and pretty well cleaned them up from the air.

Mr. Cox: Now, did the C B's come in and redo the runways and get them operational at that time?

Mr. Campbell: No, the runways and all were in pretty good shape. They really didn't have too much to do. Of course we had our own dozer and things. We used them to pull the weapons and things. It didn't take too much work to have the runways manageable. Our planes started flying out of there almost at the time we got in there. So it's one case where we didn't have to do any substantial repairs to speak of. We did have to fly in a lot of material from Australia to construct more elaborate camps and things like that.

Mr. Campbell: (General) Mac Arthur established a home up on a hill there and a lot of the material came in to build the building so he would be closer and he would not have to oversee his command from Australia and in doing so it put him halfway in the middle of the area of his Command.

That in essence, is the story up to that time. We had a time (before the next operation) so we rested there.. And the only earthquake I ever felt was there. We had a little shaker but it didn't do any damage but it did have things a little disturbed for a while.

Bob Hope and his troop, the Andrews sisters and different ones came to entertain the troops while we were there.. I didn't get to see any of them. But they all came to entertain there. Evidently they put them up in pretty good quarters while they were there.

Mr. Cox: Let me ask you, backing up a little bit. How old were you at this point in time?

Mr. Campbell: I was one of the old men. We had,..... going back quite a little bit, there were nine of us at Ft Sill, kind of a cluster of us. Of course the place was full of boys. But, I was the old man, as I was 26. The other 8 boys were right out of high school. They were 18 and 19 years old. So they kind of followed me around, I guess, sort of like my little herd.

Mr. Cox: You were the old man of the herd.

Mr. Campbell: I was the old man of the bunch. Cal Inman and I (who lives in San Antonio) got together this week.. He was one of the boys. We get together so often and have a cold one and taco and talk things over. Two and a half years ago Dick Emerson was down from Indiana visiting, so we had him with us. Dick died, last year so Cal and I and maybe one other one are the only survivors of that little cluster that I know of.

Mr. Cox: What was your rank at this point in time?

Mr. Campbell: I was a Private. I got in with an old bunch that had all their strips a long time. Many were from Hawaii and had been at Schofield Barracks at the time the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. So that took care of the rank for along time. So about this time though those boys began have things happen that got

them on the road home (wounds, sickness etc.) and some of them got promoted. I didn't get promoted and kept my privacy (referring to being a private) for quite a long time. (laughter)

Mr. Cox: So you were a private in the United States Army in the Artillery?

Mr. Campbell: I was in the 52 Field Artillery, 24th Division. We had got that position when we got to Australia and got into the outfit there.

We had good rations in Australia as they had no market for their meat, hides etc., outside the country as they were pretty well bottled up. So we country boys could go buy a big fat steer, a four or five-year-old steer, for fifteen bucks. We could butcher it and have steak and roast along with the best of them. And they (the Aussies) appreciated us buying them. We would just take up a collection and go buy a good one

You know, you talk about those paydays; I got \$30.00 per month and they cut me to \$10.00 as Pat got a \$20.00 allotment, which the Government supplemented so she got \$50.00 per month allotment. So the pay wasn't too great, but there wasn't any place you could spend it anyway, so it didn't make difference if you got paid or not. We didn't get a pay raise for a good long while.

We had a lot of preparation there. Finally we loaded on the ships to head for the Philippines. Time came to go north. I don't know if there was ever such a gathering of ships anywhere as there was to make that first invasion of Leyte, in the Philippines.

The way the landings went. We had two points we hit. The First Calvary went in, farther North to the airstrip. It was not well defended. The 24th went plus went in on the beach close to Palu to cut through the island. It was a hot one. It was a mean one.

The navy bombarded there, but the fire from the shore was pretty hot. I saw a number of things going on there that never leave your memory. We were pinned down on the beach there, in the sand for quite a little bit. In fact it was about three days before we could really get out and do a survey to lay a base line for our artillery, which we had to do as a

survey crew. We had get out and do a survey and lay a baseline so they could set up their firing data and have firing opportunities..

There on the beach, that first day, there was a young medic that had two boys, one of them was badly wounded, and the other was his buddy. They were stretched out behind a little sand dune and he had rigged up a direct transfusion from the arm of one to the other. I don't know if the wounded guy survived or not.

Mr. Cox: That was right on the beach?

Mr. Campbell: Right on the beach. Right in the sand and everything. He had rigged that up. Those boys (the Medics) were good and they were tireless. The Medics. They should get all the credit that they can because things like that they were doing all the time.

While we were on the beach the Navy planes were doing the strafing. They would come in and try to hit as close to us as they could. Forty or fifty yards in front of us, which is pretty close. They were right on you. You would be sure you wore your helmet Because those cartridges from their machine guns would come tumbling down and they could cut a pretty good gash if they hit you in the head. They would come ringing down on your helmet, ding!

Mr. Cox: When you hit the beach, what type of landing craft were you in?

Mr. Campbell: I was in one of those small boats, with the ramp in front.(Higgins boat) They had those circling. Again, we went over the side of the ship, down a net. We went a little lighter than before, just a pack. Just what it took, the rations and.....not too much. Just what was needed to take the place.

We landed with those. Some of them got blown out of the water on the way in. Seeing them out there makes you think. We made a safe landing; however and went on in. They dropped the ramp and we went on in to the beach. The first thing you do when you hit the beach is start digging. Dig a hole. If you move from one place to another, you dig another.

Mr. Cox: At this point in time were you getting fire from the Japanese?

Artillery, machineguns?

Mr. Campbell: Oh, yes. It was heavy. Mortars, machine guns, rifles, snipers.... they were everywhere. They would let you go by. They would have their little hole covered with turf and they would let you go buy and jump up and shoot you.

Mr. Cox: They call that a Spider hole if I remember correctly.

Mr. Campbell: Yes, I believe so. They were past masters of that type of operation. They were real efficient. They would get in a coconut tree or Palm and hide themselves better than any squirrel you ever saw. They were really good. Give them due credit. I never liked them but you have to give them credit for everything they did there.

Mr. Campbell: We finally got in, after a few days, three days I believe. We got into Palu a few miles off the beach. There was a big church there; you have probably talked to some that have seen it. It was made into a hospital. It was a really busy place. They had a number of casualties and some of the Filipinos were working along with everybody else, the medics and surgeons, in that hospital operation. It was very very busy.

We underwent some counter attacks there. One especially, one night. They wanted to take the place back, bad. From what I have read since then and understood since then. The Japanese high command had decided that they had lost the war if they lost that island. They had lost the war if they lost Leyte, so they poured everything they had into it. Troops and everything. So they had their high level combat divisions.

There on the beach one day about 12 Japanese bombers came over quite high. We stood out and watched them because they weren't coming after us. Out of the clouds above them, five American fighters dived down upon them and knocked down five of them during the first pass. Other than that we had very little problem with Japanese from the air, on Leyte especially. I don't know what happened to the other seven, as they went on out of sight.

Mr. Cox: I imagine that group of you that were watching that air combat were really cheering our fighters on.

Mr. Campbell: You bet. Those fighters really came into it.

The little experience we had with the Japanese planes bombing us was at night. More of harassment. One would come over, putt-putt to keep you awake and sometimes drop a bomb or two. If it was only one they usually wouldn't even open up the anti-aircraft batteries. If it was more than one then they would. Of course, even one bomb is enough to scare you. It has a sound. It has a sound before it gets to the ground.

Mr. Cox: After you got off the beach what did you do, continue on inland?

Mr. Campbell: We went all the way across the whole valley across the to the West Coast, to Carigara Bay on the west coast of Leyte. It was slow going as we had stiff opposition all the way. We had no front line anywhere. It sort of just fades back and forth. It's like walking in a puddle of water. There is no line there. My brother was in the Engineers. He had gone into Leyte earlier than I.

Mr. Campbell: Tom told me later that he had landed with the 1st Calvary and they had taken the airstrip. He got hold of a jeep and he thought he would come on down and get to see me in Karigario on the West Coast. Well, he got down to Karigario and the town was real quiet. He asked one of the Filipinos where the outfit (24th Divn) was and he told him that they hadn't gotten there yet. He told him that the Japanese they were down in the valley fighting the Americans. The town was still in Japanese hands! (laughter) So Tom got in his jeep and went back to where he had come from. He had gotten to Karigario before we did.

We finally made it across. We set up a four pole hospital in the mud. It seemed like we never went anywhere except in the rainy season. I got into the hospital one night as I had a severe case of Jungle Rot. The cross bars (of the bed frame) on the cots were up to the cross bars in mud. I saw such a terrible situation going on there; I decided that they didn't need me there with just a skin infection. They had another little tent to one side where the surgeons were working with amputations and all kinds of wounds and injuries. They were working day and night they were so busy. At night they were working under lanterns. After being treated, I went on back to my outfit.

Later, we started down the West coast and got down to Pendonton (spelling) Point. That was an experience too. I was a good place. I don't know why or where they got turkeys for us for Thanksgiving dinner. But we had turkeys and everybody ate and ate. That

afternoon we received the worst shelling. The Japanese had zeroed in on us and they started shelling us and out of 400 of us we had 84 casualties, in just a few hours. There weren't any deaths but plenty of wounded. We enjoyed that little Thanksgiving foray.

We had several experiences up and down the coast like that. The boys would bring the ammunition across the bay in those amphibious vehicles and we would offer to help them unload and they would tell us "No, just get out of our way" and they would have it off and be gone. They didn't want to hang around in case we received more shelling.

I got a bad infection there. Now they had a hospital set up in the school in Carigara. To get to the hospital, you didn't have transportation..... They had these tags like you would find on feed sacks tied to you and they would put your identity and what ever medical problem you had on the tag and point the way and send you walking down the road to the hospital. You would walk on down and find the hospital. (laughter) I stayed there, over

Christmas, for a few days. When I started back, I decided to try to find my outfit. Nobody seemed to know where it was. It took me two days and walking around, eating in different kitchens, before I found my own outfit.

Mr. Cox: What year was this?

Mr. Campbell: It was 1944.

We landed on the 20th of October of 1944, on Leyte. By Christmas, we hadn't made but about 25 miles. Our going was impeded, as they say. We were handicapped.

The outfit got on down to Armach. The headquarters and guns were set up there. One day I was on some little detail.... the General had flown in. He loved to fly a little L-5 (observation plane)

Mr. Cox: General? General MacArthur?

Mr. Campbell: No. It was General Gruber.

Mr. Campbell: Irving Resnick (a buddy of mine) and I had been on this little patrol. When, we got back, that evening, the Major said go down there and check on the (General's) airplane and see if it is alright, then find you a place out of the weather and go to sleep. He (the General) was going to stay all night. A squall came up during the night and blew

that thing.....he had anchored it.....it (the plane) was on floats.....he had anchored it with a little jeep generator ofall things. During the night, it had washed up on a rock pier and tore the fuselage up and wrecked one pontoon. There was no way he could fly back with that thing. We went up and told them what happened. The Major said "Well, get you some breakfast and we'll see what happens." We ate a little breakfast, and here comes the General and a member of his staff. He is shaking his fist and yelling, he was fit to be tied. He had us sitting down in front of the company clerk. Now the clerk wasn't typing up the reports fast enough for him so he (the General) took over the typewriter himself. About this time, the Major came over to me and said, "Your pack and your Tommy gun are over there by that tree. Now is a good time for you go up on the ridge with the boys as forward observer." (laughter) So I picked up my gear and went upon the ridge. I don't know what happened from then on. (laughter) I don't know how he got back. He was a little wild anyway. I suppose they had to be.

We had some heroes too. Down in that same area, Breakneck Ridge, we were getting lots of casualties. One of the boys from the motor pool, named Hibbing, took a jeep and took the forward observer and the radio and things up there. The casualties, wounded and so on were stacking up.

As they had little or no attention. He had them load all they could (on the jeep), four or five of them.....they were just stacked up on the jeep.....there was no way you could treat them gently..... they just wanted to get them out of there. He came on down, and there was an open space where the Japanese really opened up on them (with gunfire) and they shot that jeep up pretty badly as he went by with those kids. Well he got that load off at the aid station and he went back and got another load (of wounded) and they shot him up again. He made three trips. The third trip, the jeep just barely made it into the aid station. He (Hibbing) never did get hit, but that jeep was a total sieve. Just a real mess. He (Hibbing) was awarded the Silver Star for that. He should have gotten two.

Some of the boys did tremendous things like that.

Mr. Cox: Nobody had to tell them; they just did them on their own didn't they?

Mr. Campbell: Yes. You know, when I think of the heroes, I think of the heroes really being, like my wife and my mother. We knew where we were. They had no idea where we were, what we were into and what was going on. Mail was so slow and a lot of the times we weren't able to

get any. So, they were always worried I'm sure, about us. Like I said, we knew where we were and they didn't.

We pulled back. We went on down toward Armach. I think we were in constant combat some 80 odd days on Leyte. It was pretty well secured.

Part of the Division went on up to Luzon and the rest of us went to Mindoro. After we pulled back and got us some fresh clothes and took a bath in the creek and things like that.

Mr. Cox: You just had a few days off, before they put you back in. (to combat)?

Mr. Campbell: Just a few days off. Then they put us onto a boat and we went over to Mindoro. We took it without any real trouble. Really it was almost like a vacation compared to what we had faced before. We just had a little shooting, but it was really not defended much. We stayed there for a few days. From there, we were getting ready to go to Mindanao. We got on the boats and were staging. It takes a few days to get everything loaded and ready to go. You kill time in the harbor, the bay or the gulf. We were on board ship when (President) Roosevelt died and Truman took over.

We went down to Mindanao and landed on the West coast. The Japanese always expected the landing to be on Davao on the East coast.. Davalo was the Japanese greater prosperity area.

Mr. Campbell: Speaking of Davao, you might be interested in a little background. When I finished college, I had an offer of a job with the Angor Cattle Company, which was a large Japanese cattle company on Mindanao.

Mr. Cox: That was after you got discharged?

Mr. Campbell: No, that when I finished college, before the war. But I didn't want to go to the Philippines at that time. So I didn't. I also had an offer to go to Panama with a banana company. I didn't want to go there either.

We had a fast move across there. It's about 160 miles from the West coast to Davao. It was well defended as we got over close to it. The thing about it was, they expected a landing on the East coast and we had landed on the West. There was some opposition. The bridges were burned and wrecked, but it didn't take our engineers very long to throw them up. They weren't the Sea Bee's, they were the Army engineers. They had those repaired and we were going across them pretty fast, until we got close to Davao. Then we ran into well-placed machine guns and other types of weapons, which impeded any

advancement until you cleaned them up. The nature of the country was something else. On the West coast, when we camped there, along about dusk, the bats would down out of the hills looking for insects. Those bats had a wingspan, about like a turkey buzzard; they were almost scary seeing big clouds of those rascals coming down. They were harmless of course, but they were weird looking. It would scare you when you put your binoculars on them.

Mr. Cox: I imagine so. That is a big bat.

Mr. Campbell: I forgot to tell you. After we were about halfway through capturing Leyte, I finally got two strips.

Mr. Cox: Now you were a Corporal.

Mr. Campbell: As I told you when you got here, you are talking to one of the most ordinary soldiers you will ever interview.

We got onto West Mindanao on this trip and we had many rivers to cross. Most of these were slow moving rivers and they had many crocodiles in them. Sometimes those rascals were huge.

We were in the Moro country. We would see those Moro's along the side of the road with those big old knives which were about two feet long hanging down from their waists and you knew you didn't want to tangle with those guys. They were tough. We were warned not to mess with them. I suppose that was good advice. They (Moro's) feel like they are doing a Christian a favor if they cut his head off, I have always heard.

Mr. Cox: They didn't like anybody, did they?

Mr. Campbell: No, they didn't like anybody. Pat's (Mrs. Campbell) father was in the Spanish American War in the Philippines and he commented about the Moro's being so tough then. I think that is when the military adapted the 45 Caliber weapon, so they could stop the Moro's better. I don't know that for sure but I have heard that. I don't know if that is true or not.

As we got close to Davao, a lot of resistance popped up. Along the road, as we drove along we had to be very careful. They (Japanese) would bury a 500-pound bomb in the middle of a rut and cover it with a half of a coconut shell and things like that. They would bury one and have a trip wire running out in the brush where they would hide and pull that wire as you passed by. We lost several vehicles that way. They even would act as bombs themselves. One night we

lost a Caterpillar bulldozer. One Japanese fellow had dynamite strapped to him and he crawled up to the dozer and blew it and himself up.

At night, we had to make a circle and be in our slit trenches side by side, as they were fanatical in making night attacks on us. They would make lots of noise and occasionally they would make attacks with bayonets strapped to the end of long bamboo poles. Other times, there would be explosives of some type or grenades. We had to be aware of the fact that they could and would use anything.

We went on into Davao. The Japanese had pretty well cleared out and moved what they could up into the hills. We pursued them on up Mt. Apo. It took about two months to clean that up. We had aerial photos to go by and not much else. We understood, when we landed on Mindanao that the only maps we had were National Geographic maps that showed the shoreline and the rest was unexplored territory. So we had to make our own maps as we went, mainly from aerial photos which were pretty good. They (Photo Recon units) did an excellent job taking those photos for us.

We would then make surveys for our ground controls and firing lanes maps from those maps.

I was back in the valley one time, and my brother, who was in the engineers came by, he had flown in from Australia...and the maps I was working on were there and the photos were some he had taken before we had made our landings. So we had a little family relationship there. Tom had been on a fighter plane, riding piggy-back (cramped into the cockpit) and taken the photographs that way. They were very good. We ran a ground control and came up with good firing lanes and so forth.

I have some clippings that show a tour group going up Mt. Apo. They were doing a backpack trip. Four days up and two days down.

Mr. Cox: That was a recent trip?

Mr. Campbell: That was in the 1980's. After they had opened it up to tourists. In 1944, it took us, two month to make the trip up.

When the war was over, after the bombs (Atomic) were dropped, you never saw some much excitement in your life. We wasted more ammunition at time than anytime during the war, I expect. The had all the ships in the harbor, all the artillery, all the machine guns,

every type of weapon firing tracers. You have never seen anything like it. It was quite a sight.

We finished up in Mindanao with a tremendous amount of prisoners and a lot of casualties. Our Division loaded up on the ships and went onto Japan. I had been working on firing charts for our Artillery around the Kauri Naval Base.

Mr. Cox: You refer to firing chart. Could you explain, basically what a firing chart is?

Mr. Campbell: Yes, actually a chart is, without going into to many details: you have survey lines, which are directional lines. You have a base line on which you place your guns. Then you have that chart showing the different targets showing the distances and direction so the guns can be moved certain degrees to go from one target to another.

This is the age of electronics so I don't know that our primitive methods (would work now) we worked with a logbook and a slide rule. I don't think many people can work a logbook or slide rule anymore, even if they could find one. It would probably be museum piece if you found one now. That's what we had then and we thought it was real modern.

Everything is now electronic. I even see people working a surveyor's transit with little old buttons on top of their transits. It doesn't look like a transit to me.

Mr. Cox: A transit being a survey tool.

Mr. Campbell: That's correct. A survey tool. You run your angles and you base line. You measure a short base and then you take your angles and from that you compute distance and other angles from the base line you have actually have measured the distance on. You may measure the distance of 200 yards and stake those out and you have the directions on that from your compass and your transit. Then you pick you a point out in front for your other and you run a short base or wide base for triangulation on your targets.

I don't know how well I could do one now. But that is the way we did it then. Often, we would have to get quite a distance in front of things (the skirmish line) to get that line and that chart in.

Mr. Cox: That's what I was thinking. Sometimes you would be out there in the jungle ahead of everybody else trying to do one.

Mr. Campbell: One night, Smitty (a buddy) and I were trying to do one on Leyte. Smitty took the pole with a little slit with a flash in it and evidently he exposed that thing. He came back in a hurry as he drew some fire from the Japanese. (laughter)

Smitty, was my boy. He hailed from Mankato, Minnesota. We were my slit trench buddies. He died 3 years ago. We were slit trench buddies all the way and I guess we saved each other a time or two. We were very close.

But, talking about that incident on Leyte. We took cover real quick. when we tried to shoot that one. Our mission was not to draw any fire or get engage in any combat if we could avoid it, but to get that survey in there. So the artillery could work. That was our mission in the survey section.

We had a commendation for everybody in our group. About one-third of the way up Mt. Apo there was a river crossing and it was there where they were bogged down badly. The artillery couldn't work, as they didn't have any basis to fire from nor did the mortar crews. We were able to get in there with the air photos and prepare a grid on the photos, putting them together, so they could use that instead of waiting for a map to be produced. It worked real well. They were able to use that to clean up the crossing (wipe out the opposition) and get on up the mountain.

Mr. Cox: How big were the guns were these artillery pieces you worked with.

Mr. Campbell: I was in the 105 Howitzer outfit. In our Division we had one battalion of 155's and the other three battalions were 105's. They were four guns to the battery. So we had pretty good firepower. We lost several guns on Leyte and we replaced them before we went on to Mindanao.

We had one problem with them, as we got further along with the war. They developed what they called the vicinitive target shell. A VT shell. It was sensitive to an approach to the ground and would explode in the air. It was a good air anti-personnel, over troops and that sort of thing. Well, we got into one valley there and we needed the firepower of the artillery very much, but on that occasion there happened to be swarms of locusts. The swarms of locusts were just like big clouds. The VT shells would get into these clouds of locusts and the shells would hit enough of the locusts that they would explode in the air. So we found ourselves getting big masses of grasshoppers instead of Japanese. We had to go back to the old high

explosive shells until the locust masses passed. The locust just came down the valley in swarms just cleaning everything

Mr. Cox: Right in the middle of combat, here comes the locust.

Mr. Campbell: Yeah. Of all things.

Mr. Cox: You got to the river. What took place after that?

Mr. Campbell: Well, after we got the air photos girded so they could use them for fire direction, they cleaned up the opposition and went on across the river and we went on up the mountain. It went pretty well. There again, there was no front line. You would go down the trail and it would close in on each side.

I don't know how many thousands of Japanese casualties there were on Mindanao. But it was a large number. Then we had something like 80,000 came out of the hills at the end of the war. Some never did. We lost a pilot on Mindanao. He flew the L-5 observation plane. When the war was over, he disappeared. One of his buddies said that he told him he wasn't going home because he liked it there and he was going to stay. He still may be there. But he never did show up.

Mr. Cox: Ok, where did you proceed to from there?

Mr. Campbell: From there we went to Japan. We landed at Kauri Naval Base for which I had been making the fire charts. It was mountainous rugged terrain. We could never have made a safe landing there without losing many many troops. They would have been annihilated on attempting a landing. So it was wonderful for us and the Japanese too that the war was over. We went into a camp there and it was there that an amusing incident occurred. It was funny after it was over but scary when it happened.

There were five of us a lieutenant and four of us enlisted men got on a train and went up to Okieoma on a train. I don't know how far it was. It was a few hours by a fast train. Okieoma was a pretty good size town and they (Japanese) had induction and discharge center there. A post. We got off the train and walked about a mile out to the post and we walked through the gate. A Japanese officer came out, yelled some orders the guard, must have been a full platoon or more, came out, rifles and everything and lined up. We didn't know if we had had it or not. But, he gave another order and they all placed their arms down in the street. He gave another order and they turned around marched out. They were going home. They left the five of us

with the whole cotton-picking post. (Laughter) In a few days the rest of the outfit came on up. But it was spooky there for a day or two.

Mr. Cox: This was shortly after the surrender?

Mr. Campbell: Yes, it was in the fall. The outfit came on up. I left the Division, December 7, 1945 to start home. I caught the train to Nagoya and waited there for a boat. I had to wait about ten days for a ship to pick me up. We came into Seattle. I was a real pleasant journey for me.

Mr. Cox: You got discharged shortly after that?

Mr. Campbell: Yes. I went on to.....they gave us a bus ride over to Vancouver barracks across from Seattle. We got on a cattle train. A Boxcar really. We had a G.I. kitchen and stove in that boxcar. We rode to El Paso in it. (laughter) We got off in El Paso and I got my discharge in El Paso. They gave me a ticket to San Antonio. I got to San Antonio and there my wife was. She had rented a room at the Plaza hotel, which was a nice hotel at that time. We stayed there a couple of days. We ate well and we roamed the town. I got me a suit and some clothes and things. The total hotel bill was \$14.40. Can you imagine that? It was a first class room.

I guess I had about as good a rehab program as a person could have. I never did get a traumatic experience out of the war. I never did get too excited about it. All I wanted to do is get done, get it over with and get home. While we were in Japan, I passed up an offer to go to Australia for OCS (officers candidate school) instead of going home. I passed that up and came on home.

I got a job, after I got out of Brook General Hospital with Malaria, with the Luling Foundation. The Luling Foundation had a three county set up and it was a real nice situation. The County superintendents of the three counties involved were the board. One lived in Gonzales and another in Caldwell County and one in Bexar County. For the G.I.'s, returning, who wanted to study, they had to have a farm or ranch or some other agricultural operation. I had that experience as well as a degree and so did the others that they hired. I taught there for nearly seven years. We had a rigid school I thought. I was dealing with a bunch of guys who were just like I was. They needed to get out into the fresh air and get the war out of their systems. It was an ideal way to get back to earth.

We got together. Ex-G.I.'s can do a lot together when they put their minds to it. In two days they built themselves a classroom and shop.

We got some lumber from the old barracks at the Bastrop base. They tore some of those barracks down and brought the lumber to Gonzales. We got it equipped. We had one shop class a week. They spent a day in the shop and had two night classes a week. The rest of the time I worked on a one to one basis with them on their farms. Some of them were crop farms, some worked with livestock, some were in the poultry business. I worked with them one to one and made many good friends there. I had a good time doing it. They and their young wives were anxious to do things together so on the last Friday of every month we would go to the river bottom and have a barbeque and call it our nature class. Two of the boys would butcher the mutton while two would go to Shiner, Texas for the beer. The girls would prepare all the other things and bring that. One of the students, Leroy Egger, had been a G.I. cook. He had an ice cream recipe we used all the time. It called for twelve dozen eggs. We cut it down to fit our small group and it was delicious ice cream. We all laughed about Leroy's twelve dozen-egg ice cream.

I was always grateful for that first job. After that I went to teaching in the Public Schools.

Mr. Cox: I imagine you were grateful you returned home without any difficulties.

Mr. Campbell: Yeah. No scratches, no purple heart. None of those things you are supposed to have. I did have everything you could catch. Jungle Rot, Malaria, Dengue and that sort of stuff. I didn't have a wound at all. I was grateful for that.

Do you have any questions you would like to go back to?

Mr. Cox: No I don't. I really appreciate the time you have taken to give us this information. As I told you previously, your Oral History is going into the research library of the Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War and we will make it available to any scholars and historians. You can bet that someday in the future some young person will be sitting down and listening to your story. I am sure it will help them form their opinion of what the youngsters of your generation did for the youngsters of this generation. Thank you very much.

Mr. Campbell: I appreciate your time. We don't talk about this stuff very much, as there are not many listeners. It's not a matter of holding back. Some people may feel that way about it. I don't. But I don't like to talk when nobody wants to listen. So that's the story.

Mr. Cox: Well, we listened and we recorded. Your story is now part of the Center for Pacific War Studies, Nimitz National Museum of the Pacific War.

Thank you.

Transcribed by: Floyd C. Cox