

*Admiral Nimitz Historic Site
National Museum of the Pacific War*

Center for Pacific War Studies

Fredericksburg, Texas

Interview with

*Mr. Robert. A. Brown, Army Air Corp
Served: Bataan Death March
Hospital Service Manchuria*

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Interview with Mr. Robert A. Brown

Mr. Koehn: My name is James Koehn and I am interviewing Robert A. Brown from Challenge, California. It is the 15th day of May, 2002. We are at the Omni Hotel at the convention of the American Defenders of Bataan, and Corregidor Association. Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown: Well, I was sworn into the Army Air Corps on the 2nd of October, 1940. I quit High School at the start of my sophomore year. I wanted to get into the military because after all, the draft was starting on 1 October of 1940 and while all the war was going on in Europe. My brother was already in the Army Air Corp at Hamilton Field, California and my best friend, a fellow named Bob Barrie was going to enlist in the Army Air Corp. And I had nobody else around as a good buddy, and I wasn't doing that good in school. I didn't think I was and we worked all summer picking peaches and what have you. And so any way, I coerced my parents into saying I was 18. I was sworn in on 2nd of October, 1940, and went to Hamilton Field and the only way to get to Hamilton Field was to go into the medical department. And the recruiter said that I could get a transfer after I got there. But that turned out to be a big lie. He even gave me a card saying I wanted a transfer and the Master Sergeant Dean, he about run me out of his office. And he said you aren't going anywhere. You are staying here. So anyway I was trained as a medic and in March of '41, I was transferred to the 34th Pursuit Squadron as a medical technician. We had a dispensary on the flight line and I lived with the guys in the squadron, in the barracks and I was the only medic there. And we pulled three maneuvers with the 34th Pursuit Squadron. One to Chico, California, one to Clear Lake and one to a place called Novato which was right outside Hamilton Field between San Raphael and Petaluma. And then in October of '41 all of a sudden we were told we were pulling out and going overseas. So we went to Angel Island, Fort McDowell, down on San Francisco

Bay, I believe it was 27th of October, 1941 and that was for quarantine, because if you had a temperature or something like that, they would yank you off. They wouldn't send you on a ship if you became sick. And a lot of guys would use the old trick. They would put soap in the bottom of their sock and their shoe and it would make you run a temperature. Some tricks of the trade. But I was not aware of anything like that at that point, but I wouldn't pull that anyway. But on the 1st of November of '41, they took us by boat over to San Francisco and put us on board the USS President Coolidge. And we sailed on 1 November, '41 under the Golden Gate Bridge. We made it to Honolulu where they gave us eight hours shore leave, I think it was the 7th of November, '41 and on the 8th of November we set sail and by this time we had learned that our code word was Plum. Plum to hell is where we went, but anyway we were bound for Manila. We figured that out pretty quick. But out of Honolulu, we picked another ship up, the USS Pearce, it was also loaded with troops, out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, with the 200th Coast Artillery and the 515th Anti Aircraft Unit. And between these two ships I'm sure there were over seven thousand men. If those two ships hadn't arrived in the Philippine Islands, there wouldn't have been a Bataan, because we all wound up on Bataan. And we were escorted from Honolulu by the heavy cruiser the USS Louisville under blackout conditions, no smoking on the promenade deck, no garbage overboard, just like we were in a war situation. Okay we arrived in the Philippines on the 20th of November, 1941. And we were at Nichols Field, which was an air strip right outside of Manila, where the air base is, I guess now, that's the Manila Airport. I'm not sure, but anyway, we stayed there until the 30th of November and at night we were put on trucks and taken, under blackout conditions again, up to a place called Del Carmen. It's about fifteen or eighteen miles west of Clark Air Base against the river and the mountains over there, and the engineers were just completing the runway for us and revetments for airplanes. We put our tents and everything up, and the next day our pilots flew 17 of these old P-35s into our base. Now our pilots had never flown a P-35, but rank has it's privileges and since our group was at sea, the Headquarters 35th Pursuit Group were enroute to join us and had left Pearl Harbor.

Two days later the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, so they diverted them to Australia, instead of coming to the Philippines. And as a result we were attached to the 24th Pursuit Group which was at Clark Air Base. So I went on the 8th of December, 1941 from Del Carmen where we were, over to Clark Air Base to have a temporary filling fixed in my tooth. And was sitting in the dental chair at Stotsenberg, which was adjacent to Clark Air Base. And I said my God this is a busy place. Airplanes were landing, B-17s of the 19th Bomb Group had just gotten there and P-40s were landing. And I said boy this is a busy place. I got out of the dental chair and headed back over to the hangar where our radio operator was, because we were attached to the 24th Pursuit Group. And somebody come up to me and said they bombed Pearl Harbor. I said who bombed Pearl Harbor. They said the Japanese. Well, we had no idea the damage that was done at Pearl Harbor, but we did know that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and we were at war. And in the hangar there was this Major Grover, who was commander of the 24th Pursuit Group. McArthur had issued an order that all aircraft were grounded and we were not to fire until fired upon. Well he was on the radio and on the phone to McArthur's headquarters asking him to please let me put my planes in the God damn air, and the answer was no. You are grounded.

So it was almost noon time and I had gone into the post office and sent a message home to my parents because I hadn't written any letters yet as we had just gotten to the Philippines. It costs me seven pesos and four centavos to send a message home that never got there. About thirty minutes after I sent that message, there was no post office because the Japs bombed it. 54 bombers bombed Clark Air Base, and the post office was one of those that were hit. I was laying in a ditch out behind the three little hangars they had at Clark and as soon as those bombers got over, we jumped in our recon car and headed back to our runway. Because we could see after we left Clark, that the Jap fighters were strafing the base then. And if we'd stayed there, we would probably have been hit by the straffers. I almost got hit by the bombs, but that's the luck of the draw. We got back to our base and we hadn't been touched. They didn't even know we were there. So Lt. Merritt on the 10th of December, our squadron commanders name was First

Lieutenant Samuel H. Merritt, he took himself and five of these P-35s and went up to a place called Vegan, on the west coast of Luzon, where the Japanese had a big armada of ships. They were making amphibious landings up there and they were flying at twelve thousand feet and he picked out a tanker and he said that's what we're going after. So they peeled off and went all the way down to sea level and were putting bullets in that tanker, and when he pulled up to go over it, the ship blew up, and it took his wings off. So we lost our squadron commander. We got the other aircraft back on the ground and about nine Japanese zeros followed them in and they strafed us from one end to the other just taking turns. And out of seventeen airplanes there were five that we were able to patch up and cannibalize and make flyable. We radioed for help. All we had for ground defense were three thirty caliber air-cool Lewis machine guns from World War I. And of course our guys burned those up immediately because you don't fire aircool without having a break and let that barrel cool down. So we radioed for help and there was a P-40 in the air, a First Lieutenant Powell of the 17th Pursuit Squadron. And he came over to our base and got right in line with the Japanese straffers and when the last one pulled up he nailed him and parked him at the end of our runway. And that was a real thrill and a half. The most wonderful part of this whole operation is them strafing us, and we had no casualties. And that was an absolute miracle. Because we are laying out there in the dirt on the runway and had no revetment holes and the closest anybody came to getting hurt was a bullet went between a guys arm and his chest and just burned him. It didn't even draw blood. And that was our baptism to fire. It kinda shook us all up because they handed each one of us a can. I got a can of cherries...and they said disperse. And next...not next to but near our runway there was a big golf course and a sugar refinery that the Americans ran. And we headed for this sugar refinery and this golf course, I mean we just dispersed. And we crossed the river and I ran all over the place. We didn't know what the hell we were doing. We were scared if you want to know the truth. And my shoes all wet from crossing that river I laid down on the golf course on the green and went to sleep finally. And I don't know somewhere about ... I don't even know what time of the night it was, about ten or

eleven o'clock an airplane came over and dropped a flare. And somebody kicked us and said get up, get up, the Japanese are coming. They got a flare up there, and we could see the flare. So I grabbed my shoes and threw them on and started running again. I didn't know where the hell I was going but I was running...everybody was running all over the place. And finally I just fell down in the ditch, I went to sleep and my feet were killing me. I thought, my God my shoes shrunk when I was going through that water, and when I woke up the next morning and started to walk, I had my shoes on the wrong feet. That's what you do when you are flat scared...I guess.

But we got back to our runway and back to our operations. We all got back together and we went down to the river running behind us and we had some San Miguel beer and we went down to take a bath and we had two brothers in my squadron. Staunton R. Betts was a cook, and his brother Edward Betts was an aircraft mechanic. And Ross was a young kid like myself. I don't know exactly how old he was, he might have been a year older than me, I don't know. But he acted like he was going to squirt some beer on me and I'm a flinch person so I threw my arm out and cut my finger right by the knuckle...a little ding on the top of the beer bottle. While I am on the story about those two brothers, after we were prisons of war, they were on an outside detail. And the Japs had a rule that if anybody escaped they would shoot ten men for everyone one who escaped. And Staunton R., Ross, the cook was on the detail and so was his brother and they took ten men and shot them, and Edward saw his brother executed. So I had to throw that in there because that was an event that made us all real sad after we were prisons of war, but I'm ahead of myself by telling you that at this point. But talking about the event that happened, I just took it all the way through.

Well we stayed at Del Carmen until the 25th of December. On the 24th, the Americans in the sugar refinery cooked us a Christmas dinner, turkey and all. Now there were only two hundred and thirty-eight people in our squadron, two hundred and eighteen enlisted men and twenty officers, eighteen of them were pilots, a doctor and an administrative officer, for a total of two hundred and thirty-eight people. We weren't at full strength when we pulled out of Hamilton Field to

be sent overseas because they did not have enough qualified people to even form a full squadron. And then on Christmas day we started retreating back toward Bataan. But before we started the retreat we had airplanes that...we had bomb holes on our runway and other P-40s and so forth, had landed at our air strip and one of them for example, ran into a bomb hole and punched his landing gear back up through the wing. But those could have all been fixed but we didn't have the time. We could hear the Japanese artillery fire when we left our base on Christmas Day. So we burnt the aircraft that we couldn't take off from Del Carmen Airfield. We went down to a place, Orani. We lost S/Sgt. Dickey driving a tug. It was so dusty on the road going back toward Bataan, going through these rice fields. The road is built up higher than the rice fields and he was driving a tug and it went off the road and tipped over on him and crushed his pelvis. And we put him in the ambulance and I drove him from there all the way to a hospital at a place called Balanga. But he died. He was begging me to shoot him he was in that much pain. And course, I wouldn't shoot a man. But anyway, we got down to a place called Orani and we set up air operations again there. We built a runway in a sugar cane field. Had a bunch of hay and had a Filipino assigned to each hay stack so if a plane would take off they would move the hay stack, and if a plane was coming in they would move it. And after they landed they would put the hay stack back for camouflage. And we had planes parked under trees from other squadrons and in the sugar cane fields and what have you. And then on the second of January, 1942, they come around and said that other aircraft from auxiliary fields would come over to protect our take offs and circle above us while we got our planes in the air. So this all happened. So we got the planes in the air, they formed up, and they headed south and we never saw them again. They went to Australia. So we went down to Bataan with seven aircraft. And when we got down there the 5th of January we were assigned a new commander. And I'm going to tell you exactly the way he introduced himself to us. His name was Robert Wray, and he was from the 2nd Observation Squadron one of those clucks is what I called them. And he introduced himself and said my name is Wray, Captain Wray. They call me chicken shit Wray but don't let me

hear you call me chicken shit Wray. Now that SOB would have been shot if he ever left the orderly room area or where we wound up on the west coast of Bataan, because that day we were put on half rations foodwise, and I'll have to revert back to what McArthur did. There was twenty-five thousand tons of rice in warehouses west of Clark Air Base. It was his war plan to have this stuff retreated back to Bataan. Not one grain of it got back to Bataan. We were put on half rations foodwise that day, issued Enfields, Springfields from World War I, hand grenades and a 45 and said, now you are taking up beach defense on the west coast of Bataan and you are also in the 71st Provisional Infantry. So from there we went over to Kilometer Post 192 and started down through the jungle, hewed out a place, you couldn't even see the sun the jungle was so thick. Hewed out a place to stay in a bivouac area and found immediately that the Japs were already on the points dug in under the big banyan trees. At that point the 17th Pursuit squadron was being transferred up to Kilometer post 200 where the Japanese also made a landing on the west coast of Bataan. Well since I was a seasoned medical technician and one other kid named George McDermott, we were transferred to the 17th Pursuit squadron because they didn't have any medical people. And we went up on the road and here the 17th was on both sides of the road laying in the jungle waiting for transportation to go up to Kilometer Post 200 and here comes the 5th Interceptor Command in broad daylight. See we weren't used to war at this stage and the Japanese were flying over Bataan at very low altitudes because our orders were not to shoot at these airplanes and give away your position. Bull shit. And here they come up in convoy in broad daylight and three Japanese aircraft came over and dropped bombs on them, missed them and hit right in the middle of these guys in the 17th Pursuit squadron laying in the jungle off the side of the road. You talk about screwed up organizations you've never seen anything like it in your life. The command from General McArthur down through his command was probably the sorriest command ever in the United States Army. Starting with McArthur.

When we got back to Bataan, we were put on half rations food wise and there was no quinine available at all. And Bataan was infested with malaria mosquitoes. So no quinine, half rations food wise and issued Enfields, Springfields from World War I and put in the Infantry. That was something I told my mother that would never happen, that I would be in the Infantry. I'd be in the Air Corp and behind the front lines. Wrong. Dead wrong. Anyway, we started down through the jungle in the 17th Pursuit Squadron like a bunch of Boy Scouts. They put us in three flanks. Left flank, right flank, and middle flank. And I was in the middle flank with the squadron commander. By the way, the 17th Pursuit Squadron had the first ace in World War II. Boyd (Buzz) Wagner, commander of the 17th Pursuit Squadron, got himself five Japs before he got plexiglas in his eyes from a bullet from a Jap airplane, and was evacuated to the States and got killed in a P-40 crash back there. But his name is in Wright Patterson Museum, hanging on the wall, the first Ace of World War II. And Captain Stone took his place as squadron commander. Here we are going down through the jungle with the left flank and the right flank and the middle flank, and here come three Filipinos running up this little trail like on top of the ridge. So Captain Stone says Joes, where you going. Oh my companions are wounded and shot and blah, blah, blah. Captain Stone says well if you got companions down there, you go down there and get them. And medic you go with them. I had to put a gun on them to make them go. I put a 45 on them. I said get going ahead of me, down this trail. We got down there about 50 yards maybe and heard gun fire. The Japanese were in the trees, snipers. And these three Filipinos went to the right side of this little trail I went to the left side and we are laying there and I am scared to death as you couldn't see these people in the trees. A sniper is one of the worst things you can ever have in combat, especially in the jungle because you don't know where the hell they are. Anyway, it seemed like we had been there for hours, but it probably had been 10 or 15 minutes. And another shot went off. Pow, pow. And this Filipino laying across from me, his back bowed up and the Filipino laying next to him said Joe, Joe, my companion has been hit. I said where has he been hit. He

said in the head. I said I'm not coming over there. So the Filipino pulled his pistol off the side of his belt...see they had six-shooter pistols believe it or not.

Mr. Koehn: Colts?

Mr. Brown: Colts. And they were so old, and they fired ammunition that was so old you couldn't even get ammunition for them. Anyway, he took his gun and crawled around the other side of the tree and I laid there and...my God what am I going to do? And I heard some Americans talking and Lieutenant McClelland out of the squadron, and Captain O'Conner who was administrative officer, and some other officers, and they were about 40 yards below me. So I said who's down there? Lt. McClelland. So I said okay, I'm coming down. So I got up and ran like hell. And got down where there were six or seven people there. So Lt. McClellan decided that we'd go off on the left flank and he would throw some hand grenades. Well we had World War I hand grenades and you could pull the pins and hit them with a baseball bat and they wouldn't go off. So we went one by one down the left flank as fast as we could run then fall in behind a tree, and all of us made it down to the bottom, and here was the left flank all sitting around down there waiting for us, or waiting for somebody. So he said okay we'll make it to the beach. It was kind of a trail going down there so we all made it to the beach. We go all the way where we could see the ocean and the Japanese opened up on us from the rear. And we had bullets flying all over. I'm laying on the ground and they're popping across your back. The snipers, or what have you. But believe it or not, we all got out of there, one by one. Sergeant King took command of the whole operation and we got out one by one, had to cross the creek and up the steep side of a hill. I tell you what, when you are scared you a Harley Davidson, with five thousand horsepower, and you're not tired. We made it back up to where the command post was, which was nothing but a place in the jungle under a tree. And we're standing around up there...nobody got hurt by the way, from the fire we are getting behind us. It was starting to get dark. When we finally got up to the command post it was...and the reason I knew what time it was because a Jap in a tree right above us shot at a Filipino and hit his watch and stopped his watch at a quarter to eight. And the bullet went through his penis and into his left

leg. I pulled the bullet out and said we're going to send you back to the hospital. And he said no Joe, I'm staying. I not go to a hospital. These people were fabulous, especially the Philippine Scouts. Anyway, when that happened we had a guy in the 17th named Punchy Kimball. And he was packing a 30-caliber machine gun out the wings of our airplanes. That's the only machines we had, the ones that we took out of our planes. Now ordinance people would modify them so we could fire them on the ground, but he fired this machine gun from his hip at that Jap in the tree. And he was tied in the tree. And all we saw was blood dripping out of him because he stayed up there as he was tied to the tree. We weren't about to go up and get him out. We could care less. But by the way, that was probably one of the last times we got to eat for probably three days. They brought some cream of wheat with raisins in it. And we got a half a canteen cup full of mush. But food never got to us on the beach up there, because the trucks would be robbed by the people in the rear before it ever got to us. I've never been so damn hungry in my life.

Then, we shot a Jap out of a tree. He was up there waving flags. And the Jap plane would come down right over the trees and drop to the Japs that were already dug in on the beach. And we shot him out of the tree. But later we wound up eating the Japanese food they were dropping in...hardtack and smoking their cigarettes and so forth, because these guys were all dug in under these banyan trees and so forth. And we finally made it on both sides of the point of this ridge and we set up our machine guns and so forth...50 calibers, they made twin 50s out of them, and twin 30s and so forth. On the horizon a big ship pulled up. And right up from us was a point. They called it Bobo Point. And they had a 155 and a 75 millimeter guns up there. And when that ship pulled up in the horizon, that 155 fired about three rounds out there, they went over the horizon. We couldn't see them any more. They got the hell out of there. But several nights later, they started coming in on barges, making amphibious landings on us. And one of the prettiest sights I have ever seen in my life. There were seven airplanes on Bataan. Four P-40s came over that night. The Japanese were coming in on barges on us and this is the only action I ever saw from our Air Corp from the seven airplanes

we had on Bataan. Four of them took off from Bataan field and came over and strafed these barges in front of us. What a beautiful sight. 50 Caliber machine guns on P-40 Es, and every fifth bullet there's a tracer and boy it lit the whole ocean up and they were hitting these barges. Well the Japs bailed off the barges and that's the only action we ever saw from our airplanes. There was another action I understand from the Filipino pilots. His name was Villamar or Villamore, or something like that. I can't remember the exact name of the Filipino pilot. Took this old biplane off to go over to Cavite to take pictures of where the Japanese artillery was. And we put five P-40s up over Corregidor and the Jap Zeros came up to get this old biplane, and these guys came down out of the sky and knocked the hell out of 'em. But we did lose one P-40, but we didn't lose the old Villamore on that biplane. And they got the pictures that Corregidor needed. That's just incidental. But that's the only action I know of any planes were involved in. See the Japanese zero would outrun a P-40 on the low altitudes. The only way the P-40s are any good is if they had altitude on them, and they could out dive. A P-40 would dive at 515 miles and hour and no Jap airplane could go that fast. The wings would come off of it.. Paper Wind was what they were called. Kamikaze - Divine Wind.

But they wouldn't go 515. That's why the Flying Tigers were so good in China because they learned how to attack the Japanese. Because they could turn inside of them and do everything...out run them...climbing, but they could not out dive them, so they would make one pass, knock the hell out of them and keep on going. Anyway, we had Japs out there in the water trying to come in and we're shooting everything we had, those 30-06s, until you couldn't touch the barrel. And we killed every damn one of them. And we were called the Flying Infantry. But the machine guns that we had we were peeing on them, throwing salt water on them and everything else, because a gun out on the wing of an airplane has it's own air cooling system going through the air. When it's on the ground, those barrels are real light compared to any machine gun that's air cooled on the ground.

Anyway, we stayed there until almost the end of February. And when we were finally pulled out of there, the Japanese came through and dropped smoke bombs for the Japanese dug in on this ridge that went all the way to the ocean. There was quite a few of them, probably about a hundred and fifty or two hundred. I don't know how many. But we had to walk through those dead bodies. But we had another accident down there. Captain Stone, commander of the 17th Pursuit Squadron was killed. He got three bullets to the belly. And his last dying words were, this is one hell of a way for a ten thousand dollar pilot to have to die. We had some damn good men with us. But McDermott and I pulled him out from under fire when the Japanese tried to break out. They came through and dropped smoke bombs, so they could break out. Thank God Sergeant King was the highest ranking Master Sergeant in the whole Philippine Islands. I think they gave him Master back in 1933. And he took command actually of the right flank and I wound up on the right flank. And he told three guys in our squadron to set a machine gun up behind us and I'll be damned if it hadn't been out there behind us more than an hour and three Japs came out of that tunnel they were in dug in under those trees on the point and these guys let loose of that machine gun and killed two of them and one of them got a bullet across his nose and cut his cheek. One bullet hit him in the knee. So I patched him up a little bit. There wasn't a hell of a lot I could do for him, the knee was not bleeding and across his nose where it went across his cheek. Anyway, we sent him out with a Filipino to take him back to the prison camp. The Filipino was gone about 30 minutes and he came back and I said Joe what the hell you doing back here. He said but Joe, he tried to escape. He took him out there and shot him. That's just what they did because the Japanese would not surrender to us. Sergeant King walked out into the water to one of the Japs that got in fairly close and was talking to him. Come on in son and when he was in thirty feet of King, he drowned himself. They commit suicide rather than be captured. Anyway, we were pulled out of there the end of February and we hadn't had a bath and we were starving to death and we went many days without eating. I had a can of ...the only can of sea rations I ever had on Bataan, a can of hash, and I carried that thing in my gas mask and I was

going to eat that thing a hundred times and I said no it will get worse...it will get worse. Sergeant King and I ate that when we started to pull out of there. And when we got out of there we were put on third rations. Now I don't know if you know what third rations is.

Mr. Koehn: One-third of normal?

Mr. Brown: Yes. For us it was one canteen cup of red moldy rice. Now we had already eaten all of the horse and mules on Bataan. Everyone of them went through the chow line. And then were eating monkeys, iguana lizards, and one of the guys happened to kill a wild boar and that was really a treat, but we starved to death from then on. Our guys feet were swelling up from malnutrition before we ever surrendered.

We relieved the 4th Marines on the southern tip of Bataan because McArthur would not commit them to combat on Bataan. And they were pulled out and sent over to Corregidor at the end of February. So we took over their positions on the Southern tip of Bataan on Shark Point and they went to Corregidor and we took up their positions. We stayed there until the surrender on the 9th of April. On the night of the 8th of April we had one of the biggest earthquakes they ever had in the Philippine Islands. It was an 8.2 on the Richter Scale. It rattled Bataan real good. And we thought that was the ammunition dumps being blown up. But it wasn't, it was an earthquake. And I rolled over. We all sleep on the ground. We had no tents or anything like that on Bataan. You slept where ever you could find a place to sleep on the ground. I rolled over and a scorpion stung me in the lobe of my right ear. And I tell you I thought I was going to die. My head was hurting me so bad I didn't know what to do. And this American doctor that we had T.T. Bronk was his name...they were living in tents...the officers were eating in tents... they ate better than we did, which is not fair, but they did on Bataan take a bunch of the best pilots and fed them special in case we got reinforcements from the states. They fed them, because they were in no condition to fly an airplane in the condition they were before they made this special unit to give them food. We were starving to death on Bataan. We didn't have any food. You know what a can of corned beef would cost you if you could find it from the Navy? Twenty-

dollars American money. A can of sweetened condensed milk was also very popular. That was twenty bucks if you could find it. But on the 9th of April we went over a ridge and down on Marivales Field. We had three airstrips on Bataan. Marivales Field, Bataan Field, and Cabcaban Field all waiting for these reinforcements that were coming from the states. Which never did come, of course. But we had no idea on Bataan that the Japanese had taken every island in the Pacific including Singapore and everything else. Now Singapore surrendered on the 27th of December and never fired a shot. Sixty-five thousand British troops were taken POW there. The Japanese come in behind them and shut off their water supply so they had no drinking water. That brought the whole damn Jap Army on top of us. But General King who surrendered us on Bataan, was a devout historian. And he could have surrendered us any time but he waited until the 9th of April to coincide with the other surrender in the United States of Robert E. Lee to Ulysses S. Grant on the 9th of April, 1865, Appomattox, Virginia. So that's the day Bataan was surrendered. I was so damn sick with that scorpion bite and the guys were scrounging food from wherever they could find it, and since we were surrendering, they pitched it all in so we could have something to eat before we surrendered. And I was so sick I couldn't eat it. I mean, it stung me right in the lobe of the right ear. And I was sick

Anyway, we went over to Marivales Field and one guy did have a can of salmon and he shared that can of salmon. That was the last food I had. The next day, we started the Bataan death march.

McArthur left the Philippines the 18th of March, of '42. He took all our PT Boats, five of them and bailed out. But we could care less. He didn't do anything while he was there and him leaving didn't make a damn bit of difference. Major General King surrendered us on Bataan with out authority from General Wainwright or anybody, because we could not go any further. We had no food, we were getting short on ammunition, we had a lot of malaria, a lot of dysentery, and the guys feet were all swelling up due to malnutrition before we ever surrendered.

Mr. Keohn: Do you fault General King for that?

Mr. Brown: I fault McArthur for doing that. He never brought the food back from the quartermasters depot in Manila, that's why we were put on half rations on the 5th of January 1942. Left it all in Manila, declared Manila an open city and gave it all to the God damn Japs. McArthur is not a hero for any man on Bataan. That's why we hate his guts. He should have been court marshaled and hanged for treason. A commanding General...and the sorriest command structure...nobody knew what the hell they were doing. Thank God we had some Air Corp people. There were a lot of Air Corp people in the Philippine Islands. 27th Bomb, my two squadrons, the 19th Bomb, people were all being sent over on the 20th November, '41. Like I said before, if those two ships hadn't gotten to the Philippine Islands there wouldn't have been a Bataan, because we all wound up on Bataan. There were 11,776 Americans on Bataan. And that's a hell of a number. Well there were only 25,580 Americans on Bataan and Corregidor. Out of that, 10,800 died as a POW under the Japanese.

Mr. Koehn: When did Wainwright surrender the Philippines? I think it was sometime after April 9th.

Mr. Brown: General Wainwright surrendered the whole Philippines on May 6th, 1942. But Bataan had already been down. We went on 9 April. They went down on May 6th. Now a lot of guys on Corregidor claimed they were on Bataan because nobody had ever heard of Corregidor. And those are fighting words for any man, especially me on Bataan, because that's an insult. They went by barge from Corregidor to Manila by barge and then paraded through the streets of Manila and were then put on trains and rode by trains all the way to Cabana Tuan prison camp.

Mr. Koehn: Why were they taken to Manila?

Mr. Brown: To show off that the Japanese were so superior, they marched them through the city.

Mr. Koehn: That was the sole purpose?

Mr. Brown: That was the sole purpose. Mind you they were...but with us on the march out of Bataan, I think they were pissed off at us because we stopped them for four months. Because if it wasn't for us on Bataan, the Japanese would have taken

Australia. We saved Australia. You ask any Australian...they even named a ship after us. HMAS Bataan. Did you know that?

Mr. Koehn: No.

Mr. Brown: They did. In fact it was a small aircraft carrier.

Tape one – Side B

Mr. Koehn: We are talking with Bob Brown. And here he is.

Mr. Brown: Yes. When we went over the ridge and surrendered at the Marivales Airstrip, which we had and there was people coming in from all sides. I mean, on Bataan to surrender at Marivales Airfield. And they lined us all up across the Marivales Bay for protection from Corregidor, because Corregidor could still fire over there with their 12” mortar. And they were bringing tanks and so forth, and using us as a shield, so they could bring their equipment and so forth because the Japs still hadn’t landed on Corregidor. And on the 10th of April they started us on the Bataan death march. And the first part of it was not that bad because we just got started. But the whole Jap Army was coming down the one road into Bataan and they were on trucks and so forth, and if you had a steel helmet on they knocked the hell out of you. As the truck went by they would smack you with their rifle butt or a stick or whatever. But I traded my steel helmet for a Navy guys cap, the Navy cap, which was a big mistake on my part. Because a Navy cap ain’t worth a good God damn as far as the sun is concerned. Because it’s hot in the Philippine Islands. But anyway, that’s what I had, a Navy cap, from a guy named Shivers. I never met the guy but anyway that’s what I wore on the death march out of Bataan.

And anyway we got out as far as Balanga... but this is my memory now. All you could do, we didn’t know where we were going, didn’t know how far it was. We were starving to death, we had no food, and the Japanese would take the water, take a canteen away from a guy, and either drink it themselves or dump it out on the ground. But I broke for water at a place called Lema or Lamo, I don’t

remember which one it was. There was water running down through there and I another guy out of the 48th Pursuit ran to that stream and we drank water and filled our canteens and looked up stream and here's two dead Japs laying in the water. I had some iodine in my medical kit that I carried and I put that in everybody's canteen and filled the canteens up there, then went on the march. That's the last time I got water by the way. Because they wouldn't let us get water. When we started getting out of Bataan we started getting artesian wells. Spewing, beautiful water out of the ground. And the guys would break for that water and the Japs would immediately start shooting and bayoneting. Because they didn't want us to have any water. And if you fell down on the Bataan death march, from malaria, which goes to your head, and it's called cerebral malaria, and dysentery or anything like that they shot you or bayoneted you. They didn't fool with you. So you didn't want to fall down. That's why it's called the Bataan death march, because so many men were killed. We don't know the exact number but between 750 and 1,000 were killed on the march. That's why it's called the Bataan Death March.

Mr. Koehn: How many started on the march?

Mr. Brown: 11,700 and something. Because there were only 11,776 Americans on Bataan. But now we had a lot of Filipinos. You know the Filipinos Scouts counted in the regular American Army. And there was probably 40,000 of them.

Mr. Koehn: Can you tell us about the Philippine Scouts?

Mr. Brown: The Philippine Scouts were the best soldiers I ever saw in my life. These people were trained to the nth degree of mastery of combat. They could break a machine nest down and take it apart and set it up again before you even knew what was even happening. And they were fearless. I asked this one Filipino on Bataan, and he was a PFC. I said Joe how long have you been in the Philippine Scouts? He said I am but a recruit. I am but 29 years.

Interviewer: Were they a part of the United States Army?

Mr. Brown: They were a part of our Army strength. They were a part of the American Army. They were paid...if I drew \$40 a month, they drew 40 pesos. And the exchange was two to one. They were part of our strength of the American regular Army.

Mr. Koehn: Were they paid by the United States?

Mr. Brown: Absolutely.

Mr. Koehn: Did they wear United States uniforms?

Mr. Brown: Well, we all wore khakis. Yes, they had American uniforms, American guns and what have you. But the Philippine Scouts were the greatest. Thank God we had them there, because they saved our butts.

Mr. Koehn: Were they more than scouts? They were just regular infantry?

Mr. Brown: Yes the 45th Infantry Division, the 57th Infantry Division, and the 26th Cavalry, Philippine scouts with horses. They charged tanks on horseback.

Mr. Koehn: Now the 45th Infantry Division was regular US?

Mr. Brown: Philippine scouts. So was the 57th Philippine scouts. I had more admiration for those people. I would go to war with them any day of the week. They still have complete authority to come to the United States, if they were in the Philippine scouts. If they are in Manila and they say I want to go to America by God they go.

Mr. Koehn: On the Bataan death march, did you experience any kindness from the guards at all?

Mr. Brown: None. None whatsoever. No Filipinos lived on Bataan. There was one little shack there at Marvales, which was a fisherman. All the houses are built on stilts. Because of the tide I guess. But no people lived on Bataan. It was unpopulated completely. Until we got out of Bataan, and we got up to Balanga and you started to run into Filipino barrios and what have you. But no, there was no one on Bataan. Anyway, at Balanga, we were looking for food on the old river bottom there, and there were wild turnips about the size of a marble, and we were scrounging around the area trying to find something to eat. We were hungry before we ever started the march and I had this scorpion hit me in the ear, so now I'm starting to get straightened out. It lasted about three days I guess. But something that just turned my stomach upside down, just made me sick to my stomach. They decapitated three Americans there and we had to watch. I don't know what these guys did, but they had their hands tied behind their back and their hands tied to their ankles in back of them and they chopped their heads

off...decapitated them. I killed chickens when I was a young kid and I still have nightmares about that. Because it just absolutely warped our minds, I mean it did mine anyway. What the hell kind of people are these? These Japs to pull shit like that. But they did. And there were other cases of this, but this was the one I saw. Three Americans decapitated at Balanga.

Mr. Koehn: When General King surrendered the forces at Bataan, were there any terms of surrender as far as Geneva Convention rules? Were there written terms at all?

Mr. Brown: Not that I know of. General King sent a message out to all of us. He said you did not surrender, I surrendered. You did not surrender, I surrendered. And he took full responsibility for the surrender of the troops on Bataan. And he made it very emphatic, that you did not surrender, I surrendered. But General King, knew we couldn't go any more. With no food, no medicine, and we blame McArthur for every damn bit of that, because this was his war plan. The battle of the Philippine Islands was his plan. You know he was retired living in the Manila Hotel. And then called back to duty in July of 1941, and told to train the Philippine Army. They drafted, they had the Philippine Constabulary and the Philippine Army, but how can you train....I'll have to give him credit for this....but he didn't train anybody. But in the Philippines every fifteen or twenty miles they speak a different dialect. Now how in the hell can you get these people trained when you can't even talk to them? But that ...I will give the guy that, but that's all I'll give him.

Mr. Koehn: Was it Tagalog.

Mr. Brown: Tagalog.

Mr. Koehn: Tagalog, was that the main language?

Mr. Brown: That's the main language of Manila. But hell, you get out in the province, twenty miles from there, and they talk something different. But anyway, on the Bataan death march, I refer back always to the rules of perseverance. Rule one, is you take one more step. Rule two, when you don't think you can take one more step, refer back to rule one. And that was my motto, to keep my butt going and parts of the march I don't even remember. I made it in three days and nights. I got to O'Donnell on the 14th of April in '42.

Mr. Koehn: Did you have any close friends with you?

Mr. Brown: No. I didn't know the guy in front of me, behind me or any. I don't how I got separated from everybody, but I didn't know anybody. But on the march, I thought I had to have some water, because my tongue was getting pretty thick. But I was still putting one foot ahead of the other. And the Filipinos, God bless them, they put tubs of water along side the road, in hopes we would get some of it. Well, I decided I was going to get some water, so I took my canteen cup out and it was only about four or five feet off the road. I looked around the next tub I came to, and I said I'm going to get some of that water. And I looked around and didn't see any Jap anywhere, I just stepped off the side of the road and bent over to get some water out of that tub, and that son-of-a-bitch hit me with a rifle butt on the back of my neck and knocked me flat on my face, and I said that's the end of me. I came up spinning, and got back in the ranks, and he let me go. And you said, some of their kindness? I don't know who he was but he never killed me. I never got any water either. But guys were dying, I mean falling down, and you'd hear them scream and be bayoneted or shot. You didn't help anybody because it was survival of the fittest you know.

Mr. Koehn: How many days did the Bataan death march take?

Mr. Brown: For me, I left Marivales the 10th of April and got to O'Donnell on the 14th. Now, some of the guys it took them as much as two or three weeks to make it. They held some of the guys back for work details, picking up whatever, metals and so forth. But it took some of them that long to make the march out of Bataan.

Mr. Koehn: How far is that to O'Donnell?

Mr. Brown: I don't know the exact miles, but oh, things that I can find it's sixty-five miles.

Mr. Koehn: Did you average about twenty miles?

Mr. Brown: Now they marched us mainly at night. In the daytime we are sitting out in what we called the sun treatment, men out in the open fields with no shade. And that's where you sit, because the Japanese are marching with you. Of course, they change off guards. They marched us at night. In fact I was with Edwin Dyess, who Dyess Air Force Base is named after, the squadron commander, of my sister squadron, the 21st Pursuit. I was about twenty miles with him on the march. And

I'll never forget...we didn't understand any Japanese, for God's sake and it was just dark enough where you could make out a few standing within three or four feet of me. And a Jap was yappin' at him and they hit him on top of the head with a bayonet, but it hit flat and bounced off his head. We still to this day don't know what was wrong, but that was the last time I saw Dyess. And he escaped out of Mindanao and made it back to the states and that's how they found out about the Bataan death march was from Dyess. And Dyess Air Force Base in Abilene, Texas is named after him. But he escaped from Mindanao, and him and Grashio, Second Lieutenant Grashio, escaped out of Mindanao, wound up with the Guerillas and picked up by a submarine and returned to the states in January 1945. I went back to the Philippines with Grashio by the way, who escaped with Dyess, in 1986. Yep, back to Bataan, went back to where we fought on the west coast of Bataan, Marivales, and Agaloma Point, and the only way we could get down there was by Filipino bonca...we rode these bonca twenty two miles down the South Center Sea to get down there.

Mr. Koehn: What's a bonca?

Mr. Brown: It's a canoe with an outrigger on it, and with a 15 horse Briggs and Stratton engine on it, put putting down there. When I got to O'Donnell on the death march....well, before we got to O'Donnell, we...the first place we stopped was the San Fernando Union. And there's an old bull pen, left over from the Spanish influence of the bull fighting. They run us in that place and I tell you it was a mad house. I'll tell you these guys are going crazy, yelling and screaming and crapping all over the place. I mean...indescribable conditions. But I was so damn tired I just fell down on the dirt and went to sleep. And the next morning they got us up and broke us into groups of 100. And they set us out by the railroad tracks and set us down with our legs crossed and our hands on our knees. And we were given orders not to turn our heads right or left or you would get bayoneted. And one guy did and he got bayoneted. And then they put us in box cars, that are a third the size of ours...with 100 men to a car, closed the doors and we rode to Capas in those cars, and the temperature inside those cars must have been 140 to 150 degrees.

Mr. Koehn: Were they wooden?

Mr. Brown: Metal.

Mr. Koehn: Where is Capas from O'Donnell?

Mr. Brown: It's about six miles from Capas out to O'Donnell. And that's where we depart from the train. They did let the Filipino Red Cross give us some sweet potato.

Mr. Koehn: Raw or cooked?

Mr. Brown: Cooked. And then we marched down to O'Donnell. Now I carried a blanket on my arm all the way out of Bataan. That thing weighed five thousand pounds. I was going to throw it away ten thousand times, but being bullheaded like I am I kept it. When I got to O'Donnell, the first thing they did was take that blanket away from me. They had an American major in charge. There were very few people when I got there on the 14th of April. And they took my blanket, and that really ticked me off, so here comes this ratty looking Second Lieutenant Noto with this Major and he said I don't have my blanket yet. All officers got a blanket. And I said well God damn, so the Major said go over there and take one off that pile. I followed that little turd over there and when he grabbed a blanket I grabbed one and ran like hell. So I didn't have the blanket I carried off Bataan, but I got a blanket back. But any way, O'Donnell was another hell hole place. We had fifteen hundred men die there in 45 days, they made the Bataan death march and then died. O'Donnell was a hell hole. There was no medicine of any kind. I've got to tell you this story about my key. I used to skate, roller skate, when you used to put your skates on the soles of your shoes, and I don't know why I had that skate key in my muzette bag. I have no idea. The Japanese had one fountain, one faucet up there and there would be guys with twenty canteens apiece in a line a mile long, waiting to get to that one faucet to get water. And the Japs would come along in the evening and turn it off. Well we didn't have anything to turn it on with...my skate key fit that damn faucet. I'd go up there at night with my little group and fill the canteens. If I'd been caught, I'd been shot probably.

Mr. Koehn: What ever happened to that skate key?

Mr. Brown: I've still got it. I still got that sucker. There were two keys in my life that became very important. I'll get to that one later. But anyway, we stayed at O'Donnell, and like I said there were fifteen hundred men that died there in forty-five days. That was the condition we were in. Can you imagine that? I tell you that we were starving to death on Bataan, had no medicine, and these guys made the Bataan death march and then die. It's just unbelievable. We had no Generals in our camp. It was all enlisted men. There were some officers but they weren't high ranking officers. But we stayed at O'Donnell until June of '42, and then they moved us, marched us, back to Capas and put us on a train, this time they didn't close the doors. And rode that train, how it got over to Cabana Tuan I don't know...to the train station and then we marched into Cabana Tuan prison camp. And they declared an area a hospital area. There was five thousand men in that hospital area just dying. The lowest death rate that I was ever aware of per day in the Philippines was thirteen. But we lost...Christ...I don't know how many, probably three thousand four thousand men died after we became prisons of war. But that was the condition we were in from Bataan. And the Bataan death march didn't help anything either. But I didn't even want to work as a medic over there. But I had to. They said any bona fide medical man had to go to the hospital. Well, they put me down in what they called the zero ward. And I never had malaria thank God, on the death march, and after I got to O'Donnell, I came down with malaria. So every other day, a hundred and five temperature. I get over to Cabana Tuan and of course the hospital staff...now there are a lot of what we call field or combat medics. And the tank squadrons and tank office and the air corps and so forth, well we got all the shit details. Down in what we called the zero wards, people were down there to die. And this detail came up, we didn't know where we were going, but the hospital people put all us guys on the detail to go on the first detail that was pulled out of Cabana Tuan and we had no idea where we were going and neither did they. That's why they put all us field medics on the detail. Except they put two people...one was a queer and the others name was Thornel. He wasn't worth the salt he could eat. So they got rid of those two, and the rest of us were all field medical people.

Mr. Koehn: How many?

Mr. Brown: That went to Manchuria as medics?

Mr. Koehn: No, I mean in this group. Is that what happened to this group?

Mr. Brown: We all went to Manchuria.

Mr. Koehn: How many of them?

Mr. Brown: Oh God, there must have been fifteen hundred of us.

Mr. Koehn: Why Manchuria?

Mr. Brown: Slave labor. We had a MKK Mitsubishi, a tool and dye factory, built laths and milling machines, index machine and even had us making landing gears. And then we had three branch camps and one was a leather tannery, one was a canvas making factory and the other was a kind of a saw mill and nail factory. And we were pulled out of Cabana Tuan prison camp on the 6th of October, marched to the train station at Cabana Tuan and rode to Manila. And we stayed over night on the 7th and got on the ship on the 8th and sailed. They jammed over two thousand of us in the two front holds. We all couldn't lay down at the same time. And two days out from Corregidor, we had two torpedos fired at us. One went across the front and one went the back of the ship. If they had hit us we would have gone "blub-blub" 'cause we were loaded with scrap iron. And we kept on going...by the way we found out what submarine fired the torpedoes. The USS Grenadier fired torpedoes at us. Then we went to Formosa, Takao and we stayed there for ten or twelve days. This ship was going at a speed of five or six knots, we were on that thing thirty days going from Manila to Korea. We got to Pusan, Korea on the 8th of November, 1942. And it was colder than hell for us because we had khaki pants and shirts on with the legs cut off and what have you coming out of the tropics. Man it was cold. And they stripped us down naked on the docks and gave us Japanese uniforms and marched us to the train station, put us on a train and we rode three days and nights all through South Korea and North Korea six hundred miles into Manchuria. We got up there the 11th of November, 1942. I weighed eighty-two pounds when I go there. No skin on my testacles, no skin on my tongue, my feet swelled up almost half the size of your head.

Mr. Koehn: How much did you weigh?

Mr. Brown: Eighty-two pounds when I got to Manchuria. And all I can say is it was a bad trip. Well the whole damn thing was a bad trip. But, in Manchuria I have all the addresses they put on our bulletin board. The first was December, 1942 and it sounded like this Matsuda was going to treat us halfway decent. But we found out real quick that this was just temporary. And I hate to say things like this but the officers we had, sixteen of them, they weren't worth the salt they could eat...any one of them.

Major Hankins was the camp commander. We had two doctors that weren't worth a good God damn either. But Shabart tried to be a good doctor.

Mr. Koehn: Were you part of a medical unit now?

Mr. Brown: Yeah, and I wound up running the hospital. I worked directly for the Jap doctors and the Jap administrative people.

Mr. Koehn: This was a medical unit to serve the needs of the American POWs?

Mr. Brown: The Japanese.

Mr. Koehn: No this unit you were with. Was it a medical unit to help American POWs?

Mr. Brown: Yes. We were medics and we are going to take care of the guys that were on the ship.

Mr. Koehn: OK. So what was your function when you got over there? Were these prisons going to be slave labor?

Mr. Brown: Oh yes.

Mr. Koehn: And you continued to be their

Mr. Brown: I continued to work....well they hooked a railroad car on when we were going through Korea somewhere, I don't know where because the shades were all pulled down and we couldn't see anything. But there were eighty-five British and fifteen Australians, and out of that group there must have been thirty medical people...corpsmen...and a doctor by the name of Brennan from Australia. Good doctor. But the British...we were so damn run down...the first camp we were in was an old Chinese Army camp. It had mud roofs on it and the buildings were built down in the ground and that winter...the normal winter in Manchuria is forty below zero. And that winter it went down to fifty below zero. And we had over two hundred men die that winter. And we had almost three hundred that we left

in Pusan, Korea that were too sick to even ride the train. They all died but twenty-six of them. So we left a trail of dead no matter where we went. I don't know how many we buried at sea, twenty-eight or twenty-six, something like that at sea, in route to Pusan, Korea...dumped them over board. But the Japs did let us put them in a canvas bag and use an American flag and dumped them over the side on board the ship.

But these British...we didn't get along too well with them.

Interviewer: Tell me about the British.

Mr. Brown: Well first of all they started calling us dirty filthy Americans cause we had scabbies, we were all sick, had dysentery, malaria, and everything else and we had nineteen barracks in this camp. And they were about the third barracks up from my barracks. And we got sick and tired of them calling us dirty filthy Americans. So we went up and told the whole damn bunch of them we were going to kick ass and take names. And they said, now bloks, we don't want to have a brawl you know. Well why don't you put your best man up and we'll put our best man up instead of having a brawl. And these guys they looked just like they had come out of the States. They had every damn thing they ever owned. And they put this big burly limey up there and we put Art Campbell, he'll be here, and he was a boxing son-of-a-gun. His damn arm up here is as big as the cap of my legs. He beat the Christ out of that guy. About two hundred of us were standing by and we were going to kick ass out of the whole bunch of them. And we said, now who's next? They put their heads down and charged like a damn bull and he upper cut them and beat the Jesus Christ out of them. He boxed them. Anyway, it was a sad situation, sorry we had to do that, but we weren't going to take any crap from these people.

Mr. Koehn: Did the things improve with the British after that?

Mr. Brown: We got rid of them in the hospital, all but two of them. No, three of them.

Mr. Koehn: What does that mean?

Mr. Brown: Well, they were relieved. Two of them worked in this little two-bit pharmacy we had in the new camp. In the old camp, one of the limeys, his name was Anger, and he was helping with the Japanese doctor and he got dysentery in his bowels

fell out about six or eight inches, so I took his place. From that time on I was working with the Japanese completely. That's why I learned to speak Japanese. And when we moved into the new camp, in May, of '43, made by Mitsubishi, the Japs left a key laying out and I stole it ...so two keys in my life are very important. And then, I never used it for six months. Let them forget about it. And then I could open every door in that hospital, pharmacy and everything else. So the other two guys, Hunke and Ski were working with me. When the Japs would go away, they'd stand guard and I'd open the pharmacy ...their medicines were so antiquated...medieval stuff.

Mr. Koehn: Like herbs?

Mr. Brown: Well like for dysentery they would give you ground up charcoal. And they had medicine called theroporo which was a form of sulfathysol. They didn't have any of the strength...you would have to take a bucket full of it to do any good. There medicine was so antique; it was from the medieval ages. That's how bad it was. For example, for Brights disease, kidney disease, the Japs, they had scars up and down their back where they would take like punk and put it on their skin and light it and burn it. That's supposed to take care of a kidney disease. I mean, now see how medieval we're talking about here? That's just an example.

Mr. Koehn: A punk like you used to light firecrackers with?

Mr. Brown: Exactly what it would look like. They'd make a little pile of it up and down the guys back, set it on fire and burn it and they had scars up and down their back from this stuff. But any way, two doctors that we had up there, Herbst and Chabart were Americans. And Herbst outranked...he was a Captain...worthless as a doctor as anything. And Chabart, he claimed to be a surgeon. He took my appendix out in April of '45, and hell it took him forty-five minutes to an hour just to take my appendix out. But he was still learning I guess.

Mr. Koehn: Did they have anesthesia?

Mr. Brown: Yes. I had a spinal. But they weren't allowed inside the doors of the hospital for at least two years in Manchuria. For their misconduct, arguing with the Japanese doctor, what have you. And we got bombed by B-29s on 7 December, 1944. First American airplanes we had ever seen. Here come forty of them. Ten in

each box. The first wave hit an ammunition factory about a thousand yards from our prison camps. Blew it off the face of the earth. The second flight was hitting an airfield over the top of us. They dropped their bombs. The third flight was hitting an airfield off to the right of us. And the Japs tried to put a smoke screen between our prison camp and the factory next to us. But one plane came out of formation right over us, dropped three bombs. One hit outside the prison camp wall and one hit guys out on the parade grounds and the other hit the latrine at barracks two. Killed nineteen and wounded fifty-four. Blew out all the walls and windows and we were so damn glad to see them.

Mr. Koehn: Did you have mixed emotions?

Mr. Brown: No, no mixed emotions. Those are our guys up there. And it was so cold and clear we could see the blast of the tail gun, flashes. And the Jap fighters would go in that formation and come out spinning. Yeah. What a thrill to see. We had no idea what the hell was going on in the war. But to have forty B-29s come over Manchuria, by God we're doing something. Well, it was sad, but we worked on these guy. I worked in operating for forty-eight hours straight. And there was no alcohol in that two-bit pharmacy. We had been stealing alcohol from that pharmacy for a year. And I had six canteens of alcohol buried in the floor of the hospital. That's what we did surgery with.

Mr. Koehn: Ethel alcohol?

Mr. Brown: Yeah. It's hundred grain.

Mr. Koehn: Did you have any idea what progress was being made by the American forces?

Mr. Brown: No.

Mr. Koehn: You didn't have any information coming in?

Mr. Brown: No. Once in a while the Chinese or the guys who worked for the factory would tell us certain things, but never anything positive. We had no idea what was going on in the Pacific.

Mr. Koehn: So these B-29s coming over was the first indication that everything was going well?

Mr. Brown: Uh huh. That told us that something's going on. Then we learned that Tokyo had been bombed by General Lemay in March of 1945. He put over three hundred

bombers over Tokyo with thirty pound incendiaries at night going east and west, north and south. One wave was at five thousand feet and the other at ten thousand feet and dropped incendiary bombs and burnt Tokyo to the ground. There were more people killed in the fire bombing of Tokyo than there was with both atomic bombs put together. Did you know that?

Mr. Koehn: I did. I did.

Mr. Brown: I'm glad you did. You are the first person I've heard that knew that.

Mr. Koehn: Did you have any idea about the Doolittle raid?

Mr. Brown: No. And that amazed me because here Bataan was surrendered on the 9th of April, on the 18th of April, they take the USS Hornet with eighteen B-25s on it and go over and bomb Japan. Why in the hell couldn't they have done that and brought us some quinine? That's my response to that. I still have mixed emotions about that raid. Doolittle took off first. Doolittle made it to China. The rest of the guys didn't make it. They crashed and some of them became prisoners of war. In fact I got to meet one at the Texas Marine survivors of Iwo Jima four years ago and they invited us to Dallas. He was on a B-25 and he had a fuel leak and he dropped his bomb and turned north and landed at Vladivostok and became a Russian guest. And he and his gunner both were there. What a thrill to meet those guys.

Mr. Koehn: They were treated like prisoners weren't they?

Mr. Brown: Yes they were. But they weren't locked up. They escaped and they walked away. They ended up in India. How they made it to India I'll never know. Yeah, that was a real trip.

Mr. Koehn: Tell me about how you were liberated.

Mr. Brown: Okay. We didn't know what the hell was going on. They brought the guys back from the factory and they didn't have to go to work MKK, Man shu ko kashia, was the name of it, made by Mitsubishi. And we didn't know what the hell was going on. And then these guys came to the main gate. And this kid Hunky, I can show you a picture of him, he's dead now...both of the guys who worked with me are dead, but we went over and looked around the corner of the building to the main entrance to where the prison camp was, and the Japanese guards sitting

right there by the main gate. And they brought these six guys in there in green fatigues. We'd never seen green fatigues before. They were wearing combat boots, we'd never seen combat boots. We thought they were British. The British had every damn thing they owned, and I had no idea who they were. Like I said we thought they were British. Well there was a strip down building between ...next to it was the Japanese headquarters and the windows were all open in August, and Hunke and I went over there and we tried to listen. I speak Japanese, so we were listening to what was going on and we were peeking up over the window. We saw these Americans as they had come in the main gate. And we saw this guy pull out a cigarette and thump it on his wrist and lit it with a cigarette lighter. POWs don't have cigarettes lighters...no way. And then we heard them say, we will contact our headquarters in the morning. I looked at Hunke and I said Hunke if those are our guys by God, we are liberated. And that was the way it was. But they wouldn't let them come into the camp. They took them to a hotel down in Mukden called the Yamato Hotel and they were driving back and forth every day. They were never allowed to come into the camp until the 20th of August.

Mr. Koehn: Why was that?

Mr. Brown: The Japs wouldn't let them come in there because they were scared to death of the Russians and they wouldn't release control or do anything until the Russians got there. And the Russians got there on the 20th of August. And that was declared the date of our liberation. You see, the Japs took Manchuria away from the Russians in 1931. Paybacks are hell. They hauled over six hundred thousand Japanese out of Manchuria to Siberia, put them on box cars, trains and everything else...gone.

Mr. Koehn: What ever happened to them?

Mr. Brown: This one doctor, Oki, we had when we first got there, was taken away in '43 and they brought him back in October of '44 and he treated us all real good. But we found out later through a kid named Rodriguez, whose Dad was a prisoner, who has done a lot of research in Washington, D. C. But both of these people were involved in Unit 731 which is where they did all of these experiments on people

on bacterial warfare up in Northern Manchuria. That's a big deal I tell you. The Russians wanted those people real bad. McArthur gave those people complete immunity

Mr. Koehn: This is the Japanese unit? From any type of prosecution, for the information they had gained from doing research on human beings?

Mr. Brown: Uh huh. Unit 731.

Mr. Koehn: Those germ warfare experiments used on American POWs?

Mr. Brown: American POWs, on Chinese, on Russians and us too. When we first got up there in '42, I think it was January, or somewhere in there. About thirty of those people came in on a truck...open truck. They were all wearing white smocks and all Japanese wore a mask...because we were the dirtiest things in the world. These guys bailed off this truck and they were giving injections to people, and when they died, we couldn't bury them. That winter we didn't bury anybody anyway. We put them down in a warehouse building. They called them marutas, which means log in Japanese. And they were using those glass rod like things sticking them up guys rears, up their noses, what have you and giving them injections. And before we could bury those people they took livers, and hearts, and pancreases and so forth, out and took them to Unit 731.

Mr. Koehn: How did you find out they were granted immunity by McArthur?

Mr. Brown: Because they were by his authority, and did you ever hear of Green Peace? Those people were from that Unit 731, were all the head people in Green Peace. Probably not alive today, but they are the ones who started it.

Mr. Koehn: What happened after you were liberated?

Mr. Brown: Well, the Russians liberated us, and we had a guy in the camp he was Russian, and he was in the 31st Infantry in the Philippines, and he changed his name to Patrick Hurley. And he spoke Russian, so he translated and they came into our camp on the 20th of August and they said they were going to make arrangements for our soon departure and Patrick Hurley is translating for them. But we had all the full Colonels and Generals of the Philippine department come into our camp in May of '45. All the full Colonels and Generals of the British Army out of

Singapore, all the full Colonels and Generals of the Dutch Army out of Java were all brought into our prison camp in May of '45.

Mr. Koehn: Why?

Mr. Brown: To get them away from Japan and the furthestest away they can get all the brass from the war.

Mr. Koehn: Maybe it was because it was an important prison camp.

Mr. Brown: No, because it was the only prison camp there was in Manchuria. And they brought them in because of the bombing that was going on in Japan and they didn't want these people to be captured.

Mr. Koehn: Now this was August 20th? When was V-J Day?

Mr. Brown: The war was over on the 14th of August when the Japs surrendered.

Mr. Koehn: So these people were brought up there after the Japs surrendered.

Mr. Brown: Oh no. They were brought up there May of 1945, before the Japs ever surrendered.

Mr. Koehn: So you didn't know about V-J Day did you?

Mr. Brown: Hell no. We didn't know anything about V-J Day until these six SS men parachuted in.

Mr. Koehn: The men with the cigarette lighter?

Mr. Brown: Yes. We saw them. We heard the airplane. It was overcast with clouds that day. We heard the airplane, we knew that it was a heavy plane. The Japs had four engine aircraft too. And we never saw the airplane but we saw these parachutes come down. They were orange and white and what have you, and we didn't know what they were. Well hell the Japanese are practicing parachuting. They missed our camp by five miles.

Mr. Koehn: Did you see the parachutes?

Mr. Brown: Oh yes. Oh hell yes. They took them prisoner and the Japs in Manchuria did not know the war was over. They didn't know it. And this Colonel Matsuda our Jap camp commander would not give them authority to come into our prison camp until the Russians got there.

Mr. Koehn: So how did you make it back to the United States?

Mr. Brown: Well the Russians had to make arrangements for our travel out of Manchuria and we came out through Darin, China, on the hospital ship USS Relief. And they picked us up I think on the 12th of Sept. 1945.

Tape Two – Side A

Mr. Brown: The doctors were not allowed inside the doors of the hospital. And they came racing over to see Dr. Oki, to ask him if they could come back to work in the hospital. And Dr. Oki turned to me after they left and said should I let them come back. And I said Dr. Oki I'm an American soldier. I have no response. You think I would do anything and say no, don't bring them back? That's yours not mine. I'm not any part of that. Anyway, he did let them come back in November, '44. Dr. Oki had to kick the doctors out after Dr. Shabarts was drunk in Dec. '44.

Mr. Koehn: Where had they been?

Mr. Brown: In their own barracks. But they couldn't lay down during the day. The officers could not lay down. The Bull caught them laying down one day ...Ishikawa...we called him the Bull...looked upstairs and saw one of them laying on the bed, called officers call and beat the hell out of them, right outside the windows of the hospital. But anyway, Shabart, we had alcohol swabs in little cans, and he would come and squeeze the alcohol out and drink it. Well, when we got through and we had all these casualties, we still had three canteens of alcohol that Hunke and I had been stealing for over a year...longer than that. But anyway, after we patched these guys all up amputated arms and legs and what have you...fixed their wounds and everything all up, well he takes the alcohol and gets drunker than a skunk. Now they allowed Shabart and Herbst to sleep upstairs in the charge of quarters room. And downstairs is the same configuration. Well, they figured they should stay over there in the hospital because of all these wounded guys. ...54 casualties we had...which wouldn't have made a damn bit of difference because we took care of them and never lost a one of them. Anyway, they came around for roll call and they couldn't find Shabart. He was down stairs in what we called a simanjo, which we used as a morgue. Laying on the floor,

passed out drunker than hell because he got hold of the alcohol and drank it. So the Japanese are very rank conscious. They made us turn the lights out and carry him up and put him on the straw bed up there. Like I said the same configuration was downstairs. Well that night he pissed the bed and the Jap guard down below ...it run down on him.. We had to carry him back up there...so the next day they wanted to see him at Jap headquarters. And they wanted to know where he got the booze he got drunk on. And the damn fool told them he got it from a Japanese soldier. Now they wanted to know who. The Jap Army gave you booze? Who is he? And they beat the hell out of him. They have what they call jokabinta, which means leather strips. They strip you and beat you about the head and shoulders. Broke one of his eardrums. Well, Dr. Oki had no choice but to kick them all out again. So they were all kicked out of the hospital again. And we medics, Hunke and I took care of those people and never lost a damn one of them. I had to tell you that story.

What else do you want to know?

Mr. Koehn: You got on a hospital ship...take it from there.

Mr. Brown: We were put on a train by the Russians and taken down to Darin, and we passed Russians cars, on the track next to us. They had women and everything else on board and we were giving them cigarettes and they were asking us to come over and take care of these women. That was crazy you know. They are all drunk. I had a gun put on me before we got to the ship in downtown Mukden. Here came three drunken Russians down the old walled city and they had a glass with them...oh Americanski, and all that kind of crap. Oh, Americanski...have a drink ...had a glass about yea high...it was so dirty you couldn't see through it. And I said no, no I'm not going to drink out of that...oop...I'm looking right down the barrel of a Burp gun. I drank out of that glass...guaranteed....guaranteed.

Mr. Koehn: Vodka?

Mr. Brown: It was saki. A big bottle of saki. And when we rode that train out of there, down to Darin, and there was a flat car on the railroad track where we couldn't get through, and this is kinda comical because a Japanese were running the train. And the Russians were there and the Chinese. And Patrick Hurley, and had that

Marine who could speak fluent Chinese. He was with the 4th Marines out of Shanghai...Tommy Thompson. Anyway they had all four of us out there trying...Russian, English, Japanese.... what to do with this damn thing. Until finally a decision was made that all of us would get off that train and tip that railroad flat car off the tracks. And we all got our manpower and tipped the damn thing over so we could keep on going.

We got down to the hospital ship and there was a band playing. It just put chills down my back I mean like you can't believe. And then they had to spray us all with DDT...before we got on the boat. It was like being back in the Jap prison. You know what we had to do in the hospital? We had to put bandages around the door knobs and keep them soaked in creosote and water to keep the bacteria off the door knobs. Anyway, we got on that hospital ship to leave and we had two DE escorts, escorting the ship out. And we stopped many times for mines. And one of the kids got killed when a damn mine blew up and a piece of shrapnel hit him in the forehead and killed him.

Mr. Koehn: From a destroyer escort?

Mr. Brown: Yes. There were lots of them out there. And we pulled into Buckner Bay, I think it was the 15th of September.

Mr. Koehn: Where is Buckner Bay?

Mr. Brown: Okinawa. And there was a typhoon coming up. Now all the officers were on the promenade deck up topside. And they said well...we're going to take the enlisted men off so the officers can get below deck, because we are going to have to go out and ride that typhoon out. Well, I was number three in line to go over the side of this landing craft. One minute that thing can be forty feet below you and the next minute you could step off into it. It is dangerous as hell you know.

Mr. Koehn: Timing is everything.

Mr. Brown: The timing was perfect so nobody went over the side. Finally, the Commander of the hospital ship reached us ... nobody is going over the side, get back down to your bunks downstairs in the hospital beds, we are going back out to sea and ride this typhoon out. And that's what we did. We went back out to sea and rode that sucker out. You talk about sick...Jesus Christ I was seasick and we were listing

forty degrees and bouncing up and down and the prop coming out of the water...you ever been in a typhoon?

Mr. Koehn: No

Mr. Brown: No. Don't do that. Anyway we rode it out and half the camp came out on...I think the name of the ship was the Merrill...I'm not sure. But they hit a mine in the middle of that typhoon. Blew a hole through the side and killed four prisoners of war and I don't know how many Navy guys got killed. But they sank down almost to the rail, before they managed to control it, and then they towed it in. But I've got a picture taken from inside of the ship with that hole blown, in my scrapbook.

At Okinawa, we went ashore by landing craft and we were on the beach down there and a Marine General came down. He says any Air Corp down here. Yeah, we're Air Corp. A whole bunch of us. He said is there anything I can do for you guys? We said yes General you can. I didn't say that...one of the guys said that...You know, we are Air Corp and we have never seen any of our fighter airplanes. We would like to see one. He said you got it. He went back and about twenty minutes later here come three Corsairs. They put my nose in the sand. There was a flag pole, on the beach. And one of those planes knocked the ball off the top of that flag pole. You think I wasn't scared? Jesus Christ, I've been through all of this and the Marines are going to kill me on the ground? And they were doing snap rolls and loops and everything else. And when they would pull up over us you could smell the fumes from the engines. Oh God. Anyway, we never did go to bed, I don't think. We had tents and the next morning at four o'clock they got us up and got us out of there, put twenty of us to a truck and went up on the runway. There were B-24s parked as far as your eyes could see. I saw my first P-51. I fell in love. God, what a beautiful airplane. The P-40 was a good looking airplane but it had no power. That was one of the problems wrong with it. But that 51 sitting there was just a beautiful sight. And there were twenty of us to a truck and they were calling off role. And he said this is the first load of all Americans....see we had British, Dutch and everything else in Manchuria. And he said this is the first truck of all Americans. You guys go to the head of the

line. So we went roaring down the runway, past these B-24s, and got down there and here's a bunch of parachutes sitting outside and they said grab a parachute. Well, I grabbed a piece of webbing or whatever it was, pulled it out. It was the only damn seat chute in the whole pile. And so I asked the crew where is the best place to ride in this plane? The guy said way in the tail. So I took this damn seat chute, big heavy damn thing, and stuck it back in the tail. I talked to another guy and he said no you don't want to ride back there. You want to ride up in the nose. I didn't know that. I'd never been in a bomber before. So we got on board that sucker and we took off heading for the Philippines. We landed at Perry in Northern Luzon and stayed over night. The next morning got back in...raining like hell...got back in that airplane and they finally flew us down to Clark Air Base. And we got out of the B-24 and climbed over into a C-47 and then they flew us down to Manila to Nielsen Field which is right outside of Manila. And there was a B-25 and P-38 run together on the runway. There were too many airplanes so they had to take one off to have a parking place for another one. And these two were burning and we had to circle Manila Bay for three hours. And we were bouncing all over the sky up there, and the guys were puking all over the place and oh God what a mess. Then we got on the ground and the stupid Red Cross made us all go through a line and get a half a cup of coffee...and I don't drink coffee... and a donut and they were taking pictures of us. I don't want to go through that damn line...you're going through that line. So then they put us in a place called Santa Rosa outside of Manila called the 29th Replacement Depot. We stayed there until the 2nd of October, of '45. And there was a curfew in Manila at 11:00 o'clock at night, for all the troops in the Philippine Islands. McArthur put it on. But that doesn't apply to my Bataan boys. The M.P.s ran all these G.I.s off the streets and there were probably 200,000 troops in the Philippine Islands. They were rioting to come home because there was no transportation. And here comes 10,000 prisons of war, with priority number one. We had Manila, after 11:00 o'clock, all to ourselves, because they had run all these guys off.

Mr. Koehn: How did you identify yourself?

Mr. Brown: They could take one look at us and tell we were all prisons of war. We had this Captain, I don't remember his name. He had a 20th Air Force patch on his shoulder, and he ripped that off, took his two bars off...he wanted to stay with us. The M.P.s saw him rip his bars off and they ran him off. They tried to run us off too, fact they took some of our guys over to the guard house. Then they called the M.P. headquarters. We got some prisoners of war down here. What do you want us to do with them. Turn them loose. Back on the street they went. But the Filipinos, had been ruined by them. And we all had sabers brought from Manchuria and we were sitting in a little bar of bamboo. Those G.I.s had these Filipinos ruined. They were charging them too much money and so forth, and this one guy got pissed off and got up, took his saber and chopped the bamboo down and ripped it.

Mr. Koehn: Samari sword?

Mr. Brown: Yes. Hell yes. But anyway, and McArthur issued and order that we were to be fed 24 hours a day. We couldn't eat that food it was too rich for us. I would be hungry and go in there and take a whole pile on a plate...metal...what did we call those things...

Mr. Koehn: Trays

Mr. Brown: Trays. That's it. And we would load it up with food, sit down and take about 10 or 12 bites and if I would sit there I would vomit right back in that plate. It was just too rich. American food was just too rich for us. We could drink beer, but oh God...what a life. But anyway, we stayed there until...I think we got there on the 18th of September and stayed until the 2nd of October or something like that. And set sail, and we docked ...now my parents got a message from the war department that I will dock in San Francisco on 21 October, 1945. We docked on the 20th, there was nobody there to see us. Welcome home. I honestly believe they did that on purpose. We weren't supposed to come home. Hampton Sides is going to be over at Fredericksburg who wrote the book Ghost Soldiers, which I have a copy of., I got it with me. He was in Monterrey about three weeks ago. We had a western states chapter meeting in Monterrey. And he was down to that. But he wrote and article in AARP magazine, which is all true stuff. When World

War II started in December of '41, Churchill came over to the United States to visit Roosevelt. And through his persuasion is why we went to Europe first and then Japan. Well, Simpson was Secretary of State...

Mr. Koehn: Stinson.

Mr. Brown: Stinson, that it's. You're right, Stinson. Stinson said what about the men in the Philippines? His response was, well some men have to die. And die we did. Over 10,800 of our guys died as POWs under the Japs. That's not counting those that were killed on Bataan. We don't count those. I'm just talking about POWs. Never in the history of America...have so many men...never in the history of the United States has a piece of real estate been lost by fighting men...never in the history of the United States has that many Americans been taken prison of war. We were first in everything. ...all kinds of firsts, but we were written off the God damn day the war started. If we'd known that, we should have surrendered in January and we wouldn't have lost that many men.

Mr. Koehn: What happened on the 21st. Did your parents come see you?

Mr. Brown: Oh, well we're in the hospital at Christy Field, at the Presidio of San Francisco and I'm in an end room up there and one of the guys says well I'm on the east coast and I'm going down and make a phone call. When I left to go overseas my folks did not have a phone. These were depression day, you know. I said well, I hadn't got anything to do. I was heartbroken. Why is nobody here? None of my family. There's nobody there except some Filipino girls because these guys married them over there, to get in their pants, and they met every damn boat that come in. So I went down with him, and he's on the phone calling back east somewhere, and there's a whole table full of phone books there. So I thought well hell, by chance I'd just go in and pick up a book from California to see if my folks got a phone. I picked it up...there's my Dad, Howard A. Brown, 619 12th Street, Marysville, California. So I went and got some quarters and called and my brother answered the phone. Now when the war started, my brother was in Newfoundland, I was in the Philippines. You couldn't get two brothers any further apart than that. And he says what are you doing here today? You're not supposed to be here until tomorrow. I said I know but I'm here. Well, they came

down the next day. In the meantime, my cousin who lives in Pittsburgh, would check on every boat that come in, and they came over. I'm back there laying on my bed and the orderly come and he said Bob Brown you've got a visitor out here. It couldn't be my mother or my brother and I started shaking. I started walking. It almost brings tears to my eyes even now...I walked out and here's my cousin. And I was so upset I had to go back and lay down a bit. See I have tears in my eyes now.- I'm sorry. Anyway, the next day my mother came down. At least that was the initial shock...I got over that a little bit.

But from there they put us on a train, on a hospital train and rode us all the way to Van Nyes, California. And that was a helluva mess down there I tell you. They didn't do a damn thing for us down there. They took our clothes away from us and said you're restricted. You can't leave here. And we said to hell with you. And we got these monkey suits on, red jackets and blue pants. We wound up over in Hollywood. And Earl Carroll, when they found out we were Bataan survivors, we couldn't buy a drink. People just went nuts...you're a Bataan survivor...oh no. You got the whole joint.

But I was in that damn hospital thirty days. I tell you, I was glad to get the hell out of there. But most of the POWs that came back through Fort Lewis and other places were given good physicals and everything else, and taken care of, but not us. Why me? I just wanted to get the hell out of there that's all.

Mr. Koehn: When did you get out of the Army?

Mr. Brown: I got my first discharge at Camp Beale on the 14th of March, 1946. They gave us a hundred and fourteen days leave at home with pay. That was our reward for being a POW. And I stayed out seventeen days and reenlisted. Stayed in twenty-nine years and retired as a Chief Master Sergeant, on the 6th of October, 1969.

Mr. Koehn: And what was your MOS then?

Mr. Brown: 73291. Personnel superintendent.

Mr. Koehn: You didn't go back in the medics?

Mr. Brown: No, hell no.

Mr. Koehn: Did you receive any formal training as a medic.

Mr. Brown: Oh yes. At Hamilton Field. Absolutely

Mr. Koehn: Any on the job training?

Mr. Brown: Oh yeah. But you know, back in those days enlisted men couldn't even give an officer a shot. Because we were enlisted swine, and you were lower than whale shit on the bottom of the ocean. Officers had to give officers shots.

Mr. Koehn: I'll tell you a story about that in just a minute.

Mr. Brown: But no, I pulled over 200 teeth in the prison camp and no anesthesia on any of them. I've done surgery, assisted on surgery, cut off arms, legs, patched, done it all. And when I got home, this Full Colonel Gillespie who came in on May of '45 with the Full Colonels and Generals, he found out the work I was doing in the hospital in Manchuria and was absolutely amazed. In fact, after I reenlisted in the Army Air Corp in '46, 2nd of April I went back in. I got a letter from the War Department signed by the Adjacent General Witsell, a letter of appreciation for the work I did in the prison camp for my fellow man. Which I honor that very highly. And also at the bottom it said that this has been placed in your personal files in this office. And I was really disgusted because there was no rank back in those days. My squadron commander was a First Lieutenant, we had one Master Sergeant in the whole squadron, and I was a PFC, Private First Class. On the day of liberation I was promoted to Corporal. Okay?

Mr. Koehn: Yes

Mr. Brown: I came home with seven overseas bars, a hash mark, a three rows of ribbons and two stripes. Now when you look at a man like that, he says there's a screw up, he's dumb or he has been busted. Take your pick. And I wanted to make rank as fast as I could get there. So when I reenlisted I went on a recruiting duty in Sacramento, California. I was the lowest ranking man out there. All the rest of the guys were Techs and Masters. And this Master Sergeant Perry who went to pilot training and went in the service in 1939, in pilot training, and was a B-24 pilot, bombing Germany out of Italy. But he was a Master Sergeant and very up in age, but knew his job, and knew what to do, and he took me under his arm. I went to night school, learned how to type, and took a couple of courses. I knew I was probably going to stay administrative and he had me doing every damn job in recruiting. I was morning report clerk, motor Sergeant, supply Sergeant, Squad

Sergeant, everything. But it was darn hard for me with two stripes to go out and try to sell some kid to enlist in the Army. If I'm looking at me as an example, I didn't do too well. So I didn't make Buck Sergeant until January, of '47. Can you believe that shit? But now listen to where I go from there. I worked my butt off and made Buck Sergeant in January of 1947 and made Staff in November of '47, and made Tech 1 September of '48 and then Master in '51. Is that moving?

Mr. Koehn: That's a lot faster than some people.

Mr. Brown: I worked my butt off, and I was recognized. When I made Master Sergeant at Travis...I left recruiting duty in July of '51, and reported to Travis in August and they were only promoting four people to Master Sergeant every six months. That's all. And there were over 14,000 enlisted men on Travis Air Force Base. Well, this Captain Tucker came around and I had been working in the 14th Air Division, dealing with personnel, and he said is everybody up for promotion? Everybody except Brown. Well, put him in. So they did. I pulled one out of the pile. So I made Master in '51. In 1960 I had a MAG assignment to Japan. Which I wanted that bad because that was a beautiful assignment. Wore civilian clothes and was a military advisor for the Japanese Military Defense Force. I was in the 1501st Transport Wing at Travis, and Colonel Jerrett called me in. He said Sergeant Brown you're not going on that assignment. What do you mean I'm not going on that assignment. He said because I'm recommending you number one out of this Wing and so is the wing commander for E8. And I said I will not accept E8. I want that assignment because it's for a Master Sergeant, and an E8, I wouldn't have gone. So I turned it down.

Mr. Koehn: Is an E8 higher than a Master Sergeant?

Mr. Brown: Yes, it's Senior Master Sergeant.

Mr. Koehn: What's the highest rank now?

Mr. Brown: Chief Master Sergeant. That's what I retired at. So I went on MAAG assignment was over there and came back in August of '62 and then the first cycle for E8 was April of '63, I was promoted in '63, on 1 April, you have got to been in a grade two years. Two years later, 1 April, '65 I was promoted to Chief Master Sergeant.

Mr. Koehn: E10?

Mr. Brown: E9. That's the highest you can go. And only one percent of the Air Force, the Army or the Navy, the Coast Guard or the Marine Corp. can have that rank at any time in their strength. So it's a very prestigious rank. And believe it or not we don't take any lip from anybody.

Mr. Koehn: I heard that. I know that.

Mr. Brown: You heard that.

Mr. Koehn: I know that.

Transcribed by Virginia Roberts

Horseshoe Bay, Texas

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