

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR

THE NIMITZ MUSEUM

PRESENTS AN ORAL HISTORY BY

MR. LEW WEBER

INTERVIEWER - CLARENCE BRYK

TAPE NUMBER 1611

WITH 2ND MARINE DIVISION
SAIPAN,
TARAWA
OKINAWA

THIS IS CLARENCE BRYK INTERVIEWING MR. LEW WEBER. THIS INTERVIEW IS TAKING PLACE IN FREDERICKSBURG TEXAS ON APRIL 28, 2006.

THIS INTERVIEW IS IN SUPPORT OF THE NIMITZ EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CENTER ARCHIVES FOR THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR, TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION, FOR THE PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL INFORMATION RELATED TO THIS SITE.

CLARENCE BRYK

THE NEXT VOICE YOU HEAR WILL BE MR. LEW WEBER WHO HAS BEEN KIND ENOUGH TO TELL US HIS STORY.

MR. LEW WEBER

I GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN GALVESTON, TEXAS IN MAY OF 1943. ON JULY 2, 1943, I ENLISTED IN THE MARINE CORPS. I WAS LIVING ON GALVESTON, TEXAS. IT WAS COMPLETELY SURROUNDED BY WATER. SO, I DIDN'T WANT TO GO IN THE NAVY. I DIDN'T WANT TO BE DRAFTED BY THE ARMY SO I CHOSE THE MARINE CORPS.

I WENT UP FOR DUTY ON AUGUST 11 OF '43, AND WAS SENT TO BOOT CAMP IN SAN DIEGO. THAT WAS A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WORLD FOR A 17 YEAR OLD KID. THEY MADE ME, I WOULD SAY, A MAN, MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY.

AFTER WE LEFT BOOT CAMP, WE WENT TO CAMP ELLIOT, NEAR SAN DIEGO FOR THREE MONTHS FOR ADVANCED TRAINING. I WAS IN A MACHINE GUN OUTFIT. WE WOULD HAVE GUN DRILL EVERY DAY TO SET UP THE MACHINE GUNS AND HAVE THE RESERVES COME UP BEHIND THE SQUAD LEADER AND MACHINE GUNNER.

I WAS CLOSE TO SEVERAL PEOPLE IN LINE COMPANY BUT WE NEVER DID GET TOGETHER WHEN WE WENT OVERSEAS. I MET A YOUNG MAN IN BOOT CAMP FROM ARIZONA. WE BECAME PRETTY GOOD FRIENDS. OVER THE YEARS, I NEVER DID HEAR FROM HIM, NEVER DID SEE HIM AND ONE DAY, I GET A CALL FROM THIS GENTLEMAN, JOHN AMES. HE WENT TO GALVESTON WITH WIFE AND DAUGHTER AND HE SAID, " I KNEW A MAN FROM GALVESTON. WE WERE IN BOOT CAMP TOGETHER." HE LOOKED UP THE PHONE NUMBER AND THERE WAS A LEE WEBER WHO WAS IN THE 2ND MARINE DIVISION. HE SAID, "NO, I AM LEE. LEW LIVES IN SAN ANTONIO NOW, I THINK." SO, JOHN CALLED ME AND HIS WIFE AND DAUGHTER CAME OVER TO SEE ME. FIRST TIME I HAVE SEEN SINCE BOOT CAMP. IT WAS THE STRANGEST RELATIONSHIP. I NEVER DID SEE HIM AFTER THAT. WE CORRESPONDED AND TALKED ON THE PHONE REGULARLY. IN TIME HE DIED. I STILL KEEP IN TOUCH WITH HIS WIFE. ANYWAY, THAT WAS ONE GOOD FRIEND.

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AFTER THE MARINE CORPS, I GOT OUT OF THE MARINE CORPS. I HAD A FRIEND, GENE FRITZ, THAT LIVED IN DALLAS. HE BECAME A HOUSE BUILDER. I USED TO GO UP AND SEE HIM QUITE OFTEN,

MY WIFE AND I WENT ON TRIPS TOGETHER, HIM AND HIS WIFE.

ANY P.O W.'s, I DIDN'T KNOW.

ONE OF THE FUNNIEST THINGS THAT I REMEMBER. WE WERE ABOUT 300 YARDS, 400 YARDS INTO SAIPAN AFTER WE HIT THE BEACH. WE WERE IN A CORAL REEF SO TO SPEAK. JAPANESE SNIPERS WAS SHOOTING PEOPLE OFF, ONE AT A TIME. WE COULD NOT SEE THEM BECAUSE AS I REMEMBER, THEY WERE IN, I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY CALL IT, BUT THEIR FOXHOLES WERE NOT PRONE, THEY WERE STRAIGHT DOWN. THEY WOULD STAND DOWN THERE AND THEY WOULD PEEK OVER THE SIDE AND SHOOT US WHEN WE CAME OUT TO SEE THEM.

I WAS LAYING NEXT TO A GENTLEMAN BY THE NAME OF ACE MARTIN. ALL OF A SUDDEN ACE SAID, "LEW, I'M HIT." I SAID, "WHERE ARE YOU HIT ACE?" HE SAID, "IN THE LEG." BUT, HE GOT SOME SHRAPNEL OR CORAL FRAGMENTS IN HIS FACE, ON HIS EYE. MY SQUAD LEADER SAID, "WHAT HAPPENED, LEW?" I SAID, "ACE GOT HIT." HE SAID, "WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR IT?" I SAID, "I AM GOING TO TAKE MY BELT OFF AND PUT A TURNIQUE ON HIM." HE SAID, "DAMMIT, YOU'LL CHOKE HIM TO DEATH." I SAID, "NO, IT'S ON HIS LEGS, NOT HIS NECK." I THOUGHT THAT WAS SORT OF SILLY AND FUNNY. WE WERE IN SUCH A DIRE STRAITS.

BRYK

TELL ME ABOUT THE CHRONOLOGICAL THING. WHEN YOU FINISHED BOOT CAMP, THEN WHERE WAS YOUR FIRST OVERSEAS? WHERE DID YOU GO AFTER BOOT CAMP AND TRAINING?

LEW

I JOINED THE 2ND MARINE DIVISION IN HAWAII AT CAMP TARAWA. THEY HAD JUST INVADED TARAWA AND WERE STATIONED AT HILO, HAWAII. THAT'S WHEN I JOINED THEM.

BRYK

SO YOU WERE A REPLACEMENT TO THE 2ND CAUSE THE PREVIOUS MAN, MR. MACHALIC, AFTER TARAWA, CAME TO HAWAII AND THAT'S WHERE YOU----- DID YOU KNOW HIM THEN? THAT'S WHERE---SO, YOU WERE A REPLACEMENT FOR THE GROUP THAT DID GUADALCANAL, TARAWA, AND THEN CAME BACK TO HAWAII AFTER, AND THAT'S WHERE YOU JOINED THEM?

LEW

WE WERE ON THE PARKER RANCH WHICH AT THAT TIME WAS THE SECOND BIGGEST RANCH IN THE WORLD, NEXT TO THE KING RANCH IN TEXAS. WE TRAINED THERE FROM JANUARY TO MAY, THEN

WE BOARDED SHIPS, L S. T.'s FOR THE INVASION OF SAIPAN.

BRYK

YOU TOOK A LST OUT OF HAWAII?

LEW

YES SIR.

BRYK

“LARGE SLOW TARGET?

LEW

YES SIR.

BRYK

HOW DID YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

LEW

TERRIBLE.

BRYK

HOW FAST DOES THAT THING GO?

LEW

VERY, VERY SLOW. AS A MATTER OF FACT, AS WE WERE LEAVING HILO, WE GOT IN A TERRIBLE STORM. ON THE L S T, YOU HAD THE L C T ON TOP OF THE L S T, BATTENED DOWN WITH CABLES. WE HAD COTS IN THERE AND HAD A TARPAULIN OVER IT. SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, THE CAPTAIN SAID, “YOU MARINES, GET OUT OF THIS AND GO DOWN TO THE TANK DECK. JUST A LITTLE RAIN.” A LITTLE WHILE LATER, HE SAID, “ I WANT YOU MARINES TO GET OUT OF THAT L C T AND GO BELOW. “ THE REASONING TO GET US OUT OF THERE, THE 8TH MARINE REGIMENT, ONE OF THE L C T's BROKE LOOSE AND THEY LOST EIGHT MEN, LOST THE L C T AND EIGHT MEN GOT DROWNED. THAT'S THE REASON WE GOT OUT OF THERE IN A HURRY.

BRYK

HOW LONG DID THAT TAKE, FROM HAWAII TO TINIAN.?

LEW

WE RENDEZVOUSED IN KWAJALEIN AND YOU CANNOT IMAGINE THE ARMADA OF SHIPS THAT

WAS THERE. IT SEEMED LIKE YOU COULD STEP FROM ONE SHIP TO THE OTHER. EVERY KIND OF MAN OF WAR, SMALL SHIPS THAT YOU IMAGINE WAS THERE FOR THE INVASION OF SAIIPAN.

WE LEFT KWAJALEIN AND WENT TO SAIIPAN FOR THE INVASION. WE GOT OUT IN THE HARBOR.

OF COURSE, THE BATTLESHIPS AND CRUISERS AND DESTROYERS WERE ALL BOMBARDING THE BEACH FOR OUR PROTECTION. A LITTLE TIME FOR US TO GET IN THE ALLIGATORS AS THEY CALLED THEM.

BRYK

L C T ?

LEW

NO. IT WAS "LANDING CRAFT TROOP". IT WAS LKE A TANK WITH WHEELS ON IT. YOU GOT DOWN IN IT, YOU KNOW. COMING OUT OF THE L C T, THE L S T WAS FRIGHTENING BECAUSE THAT THING CAME UP AND THEN DIPPED DOWN INTO THE WATER. YOU HOPED IT DIDN'T GO BACKWARDS. IT WAS QUITE FRIGHTENING.

WE GOT DOWN IN THE HARBOR AND RENDEZVOUSED ' TILL THE WORD "GO, HIT THE BEACH." I WAS IN THE SECOND WAVE AND THE THIRD WAVE, WE ALL GET IN THERE. INSTEAD OF THE JAPANESE BOMBING THE BEACH, THEY START BOMBING THE SHIPS THAT WERE STILL COMING ASHORE FOR THE SAKE OF CUTTING OFF OUR SUPPLIES. ANYWAY, WE GOT PAST THAT ALL RIGHT AND THEN WE ADVANCED SLOWLY UP THE ISLAND.

THE THING ABOUT IT AT THAT TIME, ALL WE HAD WAS THESE AMTRACS, THE AMPHIBIOUS TRACTORS. THAT'S WHAT I WAS TRYING TO SAY.

BRYK

WERE THEY THE "DUKWS" ?

LEW

WELL, NO. THESE HAD TRACKS LIKE TANKS. DUKWS JUST HAD WHEELS. THAT WAS ALL THE HEAVY STUFF WE HAD. WE HAD BAZOOKA BEND FOR FIGHTING TANKS SO TO SPEAK. THE THIRD, THE 17TH OF JUNE, WE PULLED BACK OFF THE LINES TO GET REORGANIZED. FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING, THE WORD COMES, "K" COMPANY, SUIT UP. WE ARE GOING BACK TO THE LINES. WE GO BACK MAYBE 3 OR 4 HUNDRED YARDS TO RELIEVE "A" COMPANY THAT WAS UNDER A VICIOUS TANK ATTACK. WE RELIEVED THEM AND THEY GO BACK AND ALL WE HAD WAS RIFLE GRENADES AND BAZOOKAS AND SMALL ARMS FIRE TO FIGHT THESE TANKS WHICH WAS VERY, VERY ONE-SIDED.

I HAVE A FRIEND OF MINE, LOREN KAHN (SP????) CLIMBED UP ON ONE OF THESE TANKS, OPENED

THE HATCH AND DROPPED A HAND GRENADE DOWN INTO THE TANK. DON'T KNOW WHY HE DIDN'T GET HIT BY SOME KIND -----

BRYK

DID YOU OPEN THEM FROM THE OUTSIDE EASILY?

LEW

WELL, HE DID . IF THEY WANT TO GET OUT. HE STOPPED THAT TANK AND GOT THE NAVY CROSS. MY SQUAD LEADER SAID, "LEW, DO YOU HAVE A RIFLE GRENADE IN YOUR PACK?" RELUCTENTLY, I SAID, "YES". HE SAID, "SEE IF YOU HIT THAT TANK IN ONE OF THESE TANKS." I GOT MY RIFLE GRENADE OUT AND PUT THE BULLET IN MY CARBINE THAT LAUNCHES THE GRENADE AND THE TANK ALMOST RAN OVER ME, I WAS SO CLOSE TO IT. I FIRED AT THE BOGY WHEEL AND I HIT IT AND FELL BACKWARDS AND THE TANK TURNED AND I DON'T KNOW WHETHER HE STARTED BACK AWAY. I KNOW, I DIDN'T STOP THE TANK. HE LEFT THE AREA SOMEHOW.

WE LOST A LOT OF PEOPLE THERE. I FIRST SERGEANT GOT HIS HEAD BLOWED OFF. I MEAN IT LITERALLY IT WAS BLOWN OFF BY ONE OF THE TANK'S CANNONS. IT JUST HIT HIM BROADSIDE. WELL, THAT WAS THE END OF THAT. I GOT A LITTLE SHRAPNEL IN THE BACK AND GOT THE PURPLE HEART FOR THAT.

IT WAS SORT OF, I DON'T KNOW. IF A MAN GETS A LEG SHOT OFF, HE GETS A PURPLE HEART; I GET HIT IN THE BUTT WITH A PIECE OF SHRAPNEL AND I GET THE SAME AWARD. THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS IN WORLD WAR II OR FOREVER I GUESS.

BRYK

THIS IS ALL ON SAIPAN?

LEW

YES SIR. AS TIME WENT ON, WE KEPT ADVANCING, ADVANCING. THE BATTLE PLAN ON SAIPAN AS I REMEMBER IT, AND ON SAIPAN AS I REMEMBER IT, WE HAD A 27TH ARMY DIVISION WITH US AND THE PLAN WAS TO GET ON SAIPAN ON THE SOUTH END, I THINK IT WAS, AND FORM A LINE STRAIGHT ACROSS, US WITH THE ARMY. I MEAN RIGHT WITH THE GUY NEXT TO YOU. WE GOT HELD UP ONE DAY FOR A COUNTER ATTACK. THE GENERAL, OUR GENERAL, I FORGOT WHO HE WAS SAID, "WE MOVE OUT." AND THE ARMY GENERAL SAID, "NO, WE ARE GOING TO STAY HERE AND FIGHT THEM RIGHT HERE."

THAT'S NOT THE WAY THE MARINES FOUGHT. THEY WENT AHEAD. THEY DIDN'T STOP. AS TIME WENT ON, THE GENERAL IN THE ARMY WAS RELIEVED AND SENT BACK TO HAWAII. OUR MARINE CORPS

GENERAL SENT HIM BACK, WHICH WAS A LITTLE THING. I DON'T KNOW WHETHER IT WAS WORTH MENTIONING OR NOT.

WE JUST KEPT ADVANCING. WE HIT HOT SPOTS AND WE WOULD HAVE TO DIG IN AND RELAY THE COUNTER ATTACKS AND TRY TO GET OVER IT. THE LAST TOWARD THE END OF THE ISLAND, END OF THE CAMPAIGN, WE WERE DOWN NEAR THE BEACH AND THE ARMY WAS DUG IN. THE JAPS CAME WITH THEIR BIGGEST COUNTER ATTACK WITH ALL THE TROOPS THEY HAD. THEY ATTACKED THIS ARMY GROUP THAT WAS DUG IN. THE KIDS REALLY TOOK A BEATING THERE. THEY FINALLY KILLED THEM ALL AND SETTLED THE ATTACK. THAT WAS THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN AS FAR AS I KNEW.

WE STILL HAD MOPPING UP TO DO OVER THE MONTHS OF SNIPERS THAT WERE STILL DUG IN AND WOULD NOT GIVE UP THINKING THEY WERE STILL IN THE CAMPAIGN.

BYRK

SO, THAT WAS SAIPAN. THESE NEIGHBORS STAYED ON FOR QUITE SOME TIME?

LEW

YES SIR. WE ADVANCED TOWARD THE END OF SAIPAN. THE JAPANESE PEOPLE WERE SO AFRAID OF THE MARINES THAT NEAR MOUNTAIN TAPOTCHAU, THAT WAS A BIG MOUNTAIN THERE ON THE ISLAND. THEY WOULD THROW THERESELF AND THEIR CHILDREN DOWN INTO THE WATER TO KILL THEIRSELF THINKING THAT THE MARINES WOULD TORTURE THEM WHEN THEY CAPTURED THEM. WE HAD A BIG BUNCH OF MEGAPHONES, HAD INTERPRETERS TRYING TO TELL THEM TO COME OUT AND THEY WOULD BE TREATED VERY WELL. THEY WAS SO INDOCRINATED THAT THEY WERE STILL AFRAID. THAT WAS A TERRIBLE THING.

THEN, WE WENT TO TINIAN. THAT WAS NOT THAT BIG A BATTLE. WE WERE TRYING TO SECURE THE ISLANDS FOR THE FIRST B-17s THAT WAS TO COME IN.

BRYK

B-17's ?

LEW

B-29's. I'M SORRY. THE FIRST ONE WE SAW FLY OVER US, WE THOUGHT, MY GOD, IT LOOKED LIKE TWO PLANES TOGETHER. THEY WERE SO HUGE. I WAS HOPITALIZED SO I -----

BRYK

WHAT YEAR, WHAT TIME FRAME, MONTH, YEAR THAT YOU ALL DID THAT" I KNOW THAT BUT I DON'T REMEMBER.

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LEW

WE INVADED SAIPAN IN JUNE 15TH 1944. SECURED THE ISLAND , I WOULD SAY, THE 10TH OR 12TH OF JULY. WE GOT REORGANIZED AND I DON'T KNOW THE DATE OF GOING TO TINIAN. IT WAS ABOUT TEN

MILES ACROSS. WE WENT IN THERE AND IT WASN'T THAT MUCH OF A BATTLE BUT, THEY STILL HAD JAPS THERE. WE STILL GOT PEOPLE KILLED. WE SECURED THAT AND THEN WENT BACK TO SAIPAN AND BUILT OUR CAMP. WHEN

ALL THIS TIME WENT ON, THEY INVADED OKINAWA. BOARDED SHIPS. THIS TIME WE WERE ON TRANSPORT SHIPS TO GO TO OKINAWA. WE WENT THERE AND THE ARMY ESTABLISHED A BEACHHEAD BUT THERE WAS VERY LITTLE RESISTANCE, SO TO SPEAK BECAUSE ALL THE JAPS WERE PULLING AWAY FROM THAT AREA, GOING DOWN TO PROTECT THE TOWN OF NAHA, THE BIG TOWN ON OKINAWA.

WE WERE READY AND I MEAN, READY TO GET OFF ABOARD SHIP. WE HAD OUR PACKS AND RIFLES READY TO GO. THE CAPTAIN CAME ON, SAID, "PREPARE A SPECIAL SEA DETAIL." WHICH MEANS YOU ARE GOING BACK TO SEA. WE WENT BACK TO SAIPAN SIMPLY BECAUSE THE KAMIKAZE PLANES WERE DIVE BOMBING INTO THE SHIPS.

BRYK

YOU JUST WANTED TO GET OUT OF THERE.

LEW

JUST WANTED TO GET OUT OF THERE.

BRYK

YOU HAD ENOUGH PEOPLE ON THE ISLAND ALREADY?

LEW

YES SIR.

BRYK

NOW, THEY SAID, A FRIEND OF MINE SAID, THAT THERE WERE----- I DON'T KNOW HOW MANY KAMIKAZE ATTACKS. I TALKED TO NAVY PEOPLE ----- THEY DO A LOT OF DAMAGE. DID YOU SEE ANY OF THEM?

LEW

NO SIR, I NEVER DID SEE ANY OF THEM. WE THOUGHT THEY WERE AT FIRT (?????)

BRYK

NO SENSE OF GETTING ALL KILLED OUT THERE FOR-----

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LEW

AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, I WAS IN THE 6TH REGIMENT. THERE ARE THREE REGIMENTS IN THE 2ND DIVISION, THE 7TH SIXTH OF EIGHT. THE 6TH REGIMENT WAS SUPPOSED TO GO REINFORCE THE ISLAND OF

OKINAWA. BUT, LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, THE 8TH MARINES REGIMENT WENT ON A HUNGER STRIKE. THEY WERE NOT EATING THE FOOD THEY WERE SERVING US. K-RATIONS, SIMPLY BECAUSE THE AIR FORCE WAS SUPPLYING THEIR FOOD AND SEEBEES WERE GETTING ALL THEIR FRESH FOOD. WE WERE GETTING NOTHING. SO, GEN. WATSON SAID, "WE'LL JUST SEND THE 8TH MARINES AND LEAVE THE 6TH MARINES ON SAIPAN. WELL, THAT SAVED MY LIFE.

FROM THERE, THE WAR ENDED.

BRYK

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE ATOM BOMB RIGHT AWAY? YOU WERE AT SAIPAN?

LEW

WE WERE THE FIRST DIVISION TROOPS GOING IN TO JAPAN. WE WERE QUARTERED AT A MITSUBICHI AIRCRAFT FACTORY FOR A WHILE. THE JAPANESE PEOPLE WERE SO HUMBLE. OF COURSE, IF YOU GET BEAT, YOU GOTTA BE HUMBLE, YOU KNOW. THEY WERE VERY COURTEOUS. THEY TREATED US VERY WELL.

A STORY I'LL TELL YOU. THEY TOLD US TO TRY TO STAY OUT OF THE BOMBED AREA ON ACCOUNT OF RADIATION. WELL, YOU COULDN'T HARDLY STAY OUT IF YOU WERE CLOSE BECAUSE IT COVERED SUCH A GREAT AREA. WELL, I STAYED THERE THREE MONTHS AND CAME HOME.

I WENT TO WORK FOR UNION CARBIDE IN TEXAS CITY. IN 1989, I GET CANCER OF THE VOCAL CHORDS. MY DOCTOR PUT ME IN RADIATION FOR FIVE WEEKS, FIVE TIMES A WEEK. AT THE END OF FIVE WEEKS, IT WAS CLEARED UP, COMPLETELY CLEARED UP. WELL, I TALKED THE VETERANS REPRESENTATIVE AT GEORGETOWN AND I WAS TELLING HIM. HE SAID, "YOU FILE A CLAIM.? I SAID, "NO." HE SAID, "WELL, LET'S FILE A CLAIM TO THE VETERANS TO TRY TO GET SOME KIND OF COMPENSATION FOR YOUR THROAT CANCER."

BRYK

FOR RADIATION?

LEW

FOR RADIATION. SO, THAT'S IN THE WORKS RIGHT NOW. IT'S BEEN A WHILE. ABOUT EVERY THREE MONTHS, I HEAR FROM THEM, "WE'RE STILL WORKING ON YOUR CASE. WE ARE INVESTIGATING BUT, THERE ARE SO MANY.

BRYK

I VISITED THERE IN 1968 BUT, I HAD FOOT CANCER. TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SILVER STAR NOW.

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YOU HAVEN'T SAID ANYTHING ABOUT IT. WHAT ACTION WERE YOU WERE AWARDED FOR? DON'T BE HUMBLE NOW. I WANT TO KNOW.

LEW

WELL, THAT'S WHEN I HAD THE RIFLE GRENADE.

BRYK

THAT'S THE RIFLE GRENADE WHEN YOU ACTUALLY GOT RIGHT IN FRONT OF THAT TANK? THAT WAS IT?

LEW

YES SIR.

BRYK

AND THEY WROTE YOU UP? WHAT WERE YOU THINKING ABOUT WHEN YOU DID THAT? I EITHER DO THIS OR, I MEAN, DID YOU THINK MUCH BEFORE YOU DO THAT?

LEW

I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR FRAME OF MIND IS. YOU DO WHAT YOU GOTTA DO, I GUESS. HE SAID, "DO YOU HAVE THAT?" I COULDN'T SAY, "NO, I DON'T." HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND OVER THE YEARS. BUT, YOU DO----- I MEAN, IT IS JUST NATURAL INSTINCT.

BRYK

AND YOU WERE HOW OLD AT THAT TIME?

LEW

EIGHTEEN. YOU DON'T PLAN ON THINGS LIKE THAT. IT JUST HAPPENS.

BRYK

WHAT WAS YOUR STATE OF MIND USUALLY? WERE YOU JUST SCARED OUT OF YOUR WITS MOST OF THE TIME, OR WERE YOU JUST GETTING IMMUNE OR-----?

LEW

I THINK YOU ARE TOO YOUNG TO REALLY REALIZE THAT YOU GET KILLED EVEN THOUGH THOSE PEOPLE RIGHT NEXT TO YOU ARE GETTING KILLED. YOU JUST THANK GOD MAYBE, IT WASN'T ME THIS TIME.

LIKE I SAY, YOU ARE SCARED BUT YOUR'E NOT GONNA----- YOU ARE GOING TO GO WITH THE

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LOW. THAT'S WHAT IT AMOUNTS TO. WHATEVER THERE IS REQUIRED OF YOU, YOU DO.

BRYK

BY AND LARGE, WERE THE MARINES MOSTLY PRE-REGIMENTED AND EVERYBODY SORT OF DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO?

LEW

YOU DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO.

BRYK

THE COMARADORIE OF THE MARINES IS-----

LEW

I HAD A CAPTAIN, BRUCE KOWERT, (SP ??????). HE WAS A GREAT PERSON. AS A MATTER OF FACT, WHEN WE WENT INTO SAIPAN, WE LOST ALL OF OUR OFFICERS EXCEPT TWO. CAPT. KOWERT AND MY SQUAD LEADER, LT. LANG EDWARDS. CAPTAIN KOWERT GOT HIT IN THE LEG AND WAS EVACUATED. SO, THAT LEFT US A GREEN YOUNG LIEUTENANT IN CHARGE OF THE COMPANY. SURE ENOUGH, HERE COMES CAPT. KOWERT BACK. HE WASN'T GOING TO STAY DOWN ON THAT DAMN BEACH WITH HIS MEDAL.

BRYK

SO, HE'S GOT THIS SLUG IN HIS LEG OR DID IT GO RIGHT CLEAR THROUGH?

LEW

I DON'T KNOW. HE CAME BACK. THAT ACT IS BRAVERY.

DRYK

DID HE SURVIVE HIS WOUNDS?

LEW

YEAH. HE WAS A WONDERFUL PERSON. I LOVED CAPT KOWERT.

BRYK

DID YOU EVER SEE HIM AFTER THE WAR AT ALL?

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LEW

OH, YES, A LOT.

BRYK

HIS JOB WAS IN MICHIGAN, I THINK. I THINK SOME PLACE UP THERE. OVER THE YEARS, THEY HAVE WHAT THEY CALL A SECOND MARINE DIVISION ASSOCIATION REUNION. EVERY YEAR. WE HAVE BEEN TO THEM ALL OVER THE PLACE. PLACES LIKE SAN DIEGO, FLORIDA, RENO, NEVADA, LAS VEGAS, EVERY YEAR. WELL RUN BUT, AS TIME GOES ON, THE PEOPLE OR DYING AND YOU JUST DON'T SEE MANY FRIENDS ANY MORE. AN OTHER THING, MY YOUNGEST SON WHO LIVES IN GEORGETOWN, TOOK ME TO WASHINGTON D.C. FOR THE DEDICATION OF THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL. THAT WAS NOVEMBER TWO YEARS AGO. TOOK ME AND HIS SON UP THERE. THERE WAS OTHERS TO EXPLAIN THE ELATION THERE WAS THAT HE DID THAT FOR ME. I DIDN'T SEE ANYBODY I KNEW BUT IT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE. YOU KNEW EVERYBODY. WE WERE ALL TOGETHER, YOU KNOW.

A LITTLE STORY I HAD TROUBLE AND I CALLED MY NEPHEW WHO IS STATIONED AT FORT MEADE IN WASHINGTON, D.C. I SAID, BILL, CAN YOU GET US A ROOM. ALL I NEED IS TWO BEDS, TWO DOUBLE BEDS FOR GUS, MARK AND MYSELF. HE SAID, I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO. SO, HE GETS US A HOTEL ROOM. TWO BEDROOMS, TWO BATHS, A LITTLE KITCHEN. A LITTLE BALCONY OVERLOOKING THE STATE CAPITAL, THE CAPITAL BUILDING. HE IS A GENERAL IN THE ARMY. SO, THAT CARRIED A LOT OF WEIGHT.

BRYK

THAT PROBABLY CARRIED ???????.

LEW

YES. I MET A FRIEND OF MINE THERE. HE CAME FROM LEBANON, PENNSLVANIA. HIM AND HIS SON CAME AND WE ALL MET TOGETHER. HAD A GLORIOUS TIME. I CANNOT SAY ENOUGH FOR IT.

ANY THING ELSE I CAN THINK OF.

BRYK

NO, I THINK YOU SUMMARIZED THE COMRADERY AND THE FEELING WHICH EVEN AS A LITTLE KID, YOU KNOW, IT WASN'T JUST IN THE MOVIES. IT WAS REAL. WASN'T IT.

LEW

YES SIR.

BRYK

THE MARINES, YOU KNOW, SO MANY PEOPLE WE HAVE INTERVIEWED, SAY THAT, YOU KNOW, THEY WERE DRIVEN QUITE A BIT BY TRYING TO KEEP THEIR BUDDIES FROM GETTING KILLED.

LEW

YES.

BRYK

YOU FEEL THAT, TO KEEP YOUR BUDDIES.

LEW

THAT'S WHAT I SAY. COMRADERY IS ----- CAN BELIEVE IT.

BRYK

WELL, IT'S THERE. YOU KNOW THE CURRENT----- I'M GOING TO STOP THIS NOW. WE ARE GETTING RATHER WATER SOAKED.

END OF TAPE

TRANSCRIBED BY FOREST J. REES

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FREDERICKSBURG, TEXAS

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