

Oral/Family History Project

Interviewer: George Giannopoulos

Interviewee : Mr. Charles Scot Brown

Date of interview: January the 26th, 2012

Place of Interview: Crestwood Preparatory College, Room 203

Charles Scot Brown and the Journey Of WW2



Introduction

- World War 2 was the biggest and costliest war in human history. The deaths caused by the war may have reached 60 million between 1939 and 1945 which involved literally the entire globe.
- Charles Scot Brown was born August 31, 1923 in Quebec. He was an extremely brave and courageous soldier who has given us the honor in retelling the accounts that happened during the time of his experiences in the war.



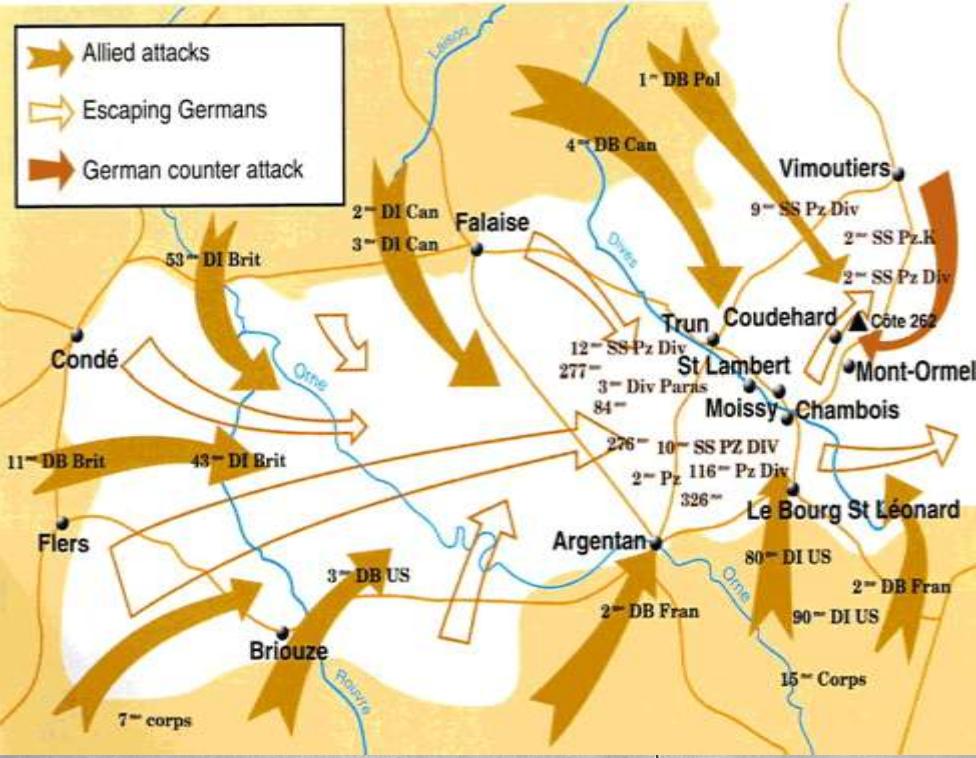
A Typical Day as A Solider

- A typical day of being a soldier during the war consisted of tasks such as, having patrols out every night scouting for enemies and making sure the area is secure. This was called “Dominating no mans land.” 90% of the work was done at night for the simple reason of protection in which the darkness provided. This made it easier for soldiers to complete orders. On average, 6 out of 10 soldiers would be awake during the night and 2 out of 10 would be awake during the daytime. By day you sleep, by night you work. At 10:00 every morning Charles recalled he had to send a report to the headquarters known as a CSR that notified Headquarters (HQ) by rank, How many soldiers had been killed or wounded and how much ammunition had been used, as well as the type of ammunition.
- It was the job of a company commander to report results of night patrols. Snipers would also keep watch from the positions they took during the night. Other soldiers would have to venture out and find a good position where they could snipe the enemy the next day It was also common for rifle inspections.



Battle Of Normandy

- “Normandy was the most tenacious fighting we had” Charles quoted.
- By 1944 the Germans knew that the allies would attempt an invasion of France in order to liberate Europe from Germany. The allied forces based in Britain decided to begin the Invasion by landing a huge army at Normandy Beach (located on the northwest coast of France). The codename for this was “operation overlord”, commanded by Dwight D. Eisenhower. The allies landed on June 6th at five beaches in Normandy and allied planes bombarded Nazi defenders and dropped thousands of paratroopers behind German lines.
- Landing in France was tough because the area was small and there were small fields that were 15-20 yards square. The land was not rolling, it was flat which meant that the soldiers had to switch their style of fighting. They used shot mortars and snipers in order to defeat the enemy. Mr. Scot said even the farm boys were excellent fighters as well as the Canadian snipers. A large number of Germans (30-50 thousand) snuck out of the Falaise Gap because allied forces didn’t secure it as well as they thought. The allies tried to encircle and destroy the German Seventh Army and Fifth Panzer. American, British and Canadian troops met heavy resistance from the German forces, but managed to get their way inland securing safe landing zones for reinforcements.
- “You never make the same mistake twice.” The soldiers learned this after Normandy. Casualties were high. The lessons learned were to prove invaluable.



Operation Market Garden

- On September the 17th 1944 the goal of operation Market Garden was to secure bridges across Holland so the Allied army would be able to advance quickly north towards Germany. If this was carried out as planned the war would have ended by Christmas time. The reason why operation market garden failed was because the British Para troops were dropped too far (10km) from the Arnhem bridge. Also a U.S officer was captured with a copy of the operational orders. After ten days of fighting, it ended with the evacuation of the first British Airborne Division.



Preparing for Market Garden

Paras and Airborne Divisions

- The first parachute group was all the Para battalions in formation known as the First Airborne Division. Their tasks were to do small Para-operations in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. The objectives of the Para battalions were to hold and secure a piece of land for a period of time so that when the commanders came they would take it over and the Paras would leave. The Paras felt relief because they knew they did not have the equipment to be able to survive a counter attack by the enemies. Another airborne division Charles noted was called the 6th Airborne division during operation Market Garden. This was formed in 1941-1942. These soldiers were very well trained that were both physically and mentally fit they had to run at least a minimum of ten miles and carry 60-90 pound of ammunition. Charles mentioned that for him jumping out of an airplane was not an exciting experience. He said that routine drills were common. Everything and any action that a person had done was a drill, whether it was waking up, brushing your teeth, or taking a shower.



Charles' Involvement In Operation Market Garden

- Charles had been wounded on the 10th of July by a shrapnel Grenade that tore up his back and legs. He started his parachute course on the 28th of July. He took an accelerated course and after he finished he joined the First Battalion Parachute Regiment on Sept 2nd. Charles and his airborne division were given warning orders which caused them to be on hold for a period of time so they were not sent in to fight. They were given many warning orders and had to wait a total of four days before they went into battle. Many men were becoming impatient because they were missing the battle. Finally when Arnhem came, there was great excitement for Charles and his division. Little did they know, the Germans had been regrouping in the area because they were planning to attack. Charles believed if they tried to surprise attack them they could have been successful. Due to the fact that the Germans retreated, they were successful. Charles was in the first battalion and his group name was Leopard Force.



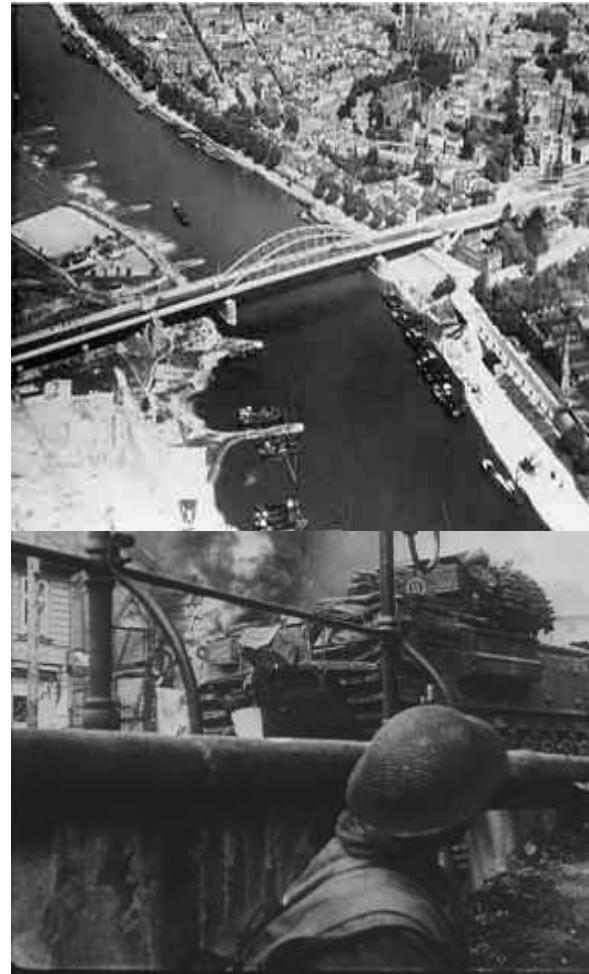
The Battle of Arnhem Initial Landing

- The battle of Arnhem was fought in and around the Dutch towns of Arnhem and Oosterbeek in September 1944. It was one of the boldest and intense battles in WW2. Allied forces were to be flown behind enemy lines to capture the eight bridges around the canals and rivers of the Dutch/German border
- The Canadian Parachute Battalion was created to be highly mobile, quick and deadly. Their training and used a variety of equipment as well as being able to complete five parachute assembly tasks. They trained to do practice jumps and during the battle they jumped from a C-47 Dakota aircraft. The practice jumps had to be away from the combat zone jumping from as high as 1000 feet and anything below 1000 feet there was no reserve parachute “There was no sense carrying 40 pounds of parachute”. The British were very practical because it was more important to carry grenades and ammunition. While flying over Holland the Para troopers were expected to jump out in 3 seconds, check to see if their parachute is okay, land, get their weapon, open their kit bag, and run to their Rendezvous, all within short matter of time.



Battle Of Arnhem-Ground

- It was extremely important that when you used your weapon, you cleaned it and made sure everything was in order because at any given point there could be an attack from the enemy, "You are married to your rifle". "You sleep with it, you eat with it, you fight with it, you make love with it. It's what saves your life." The problem with landing in Arnhem was that the landing zone was 28 km away from the defensive position. "We had to run". The Germans were extremely quick at retaliating. This caused a great chaos and destruction which resulted in many deaths and a great deal of bloodshed. The Germans were vigilant and observed the movement of their enemy closely. Unfortunately the allies had no vehicles to steal in order to escape. Many soldiers found objects to pull their ammunition such as baby carriages. The enemies fought from every angle and hit hard. When the enemy's tanks approached the allied soldiers had to get close enough to cook their grenades and then throw them in. The soldiers regrouped and realized at that point that their radios were not working and everything was going wrong.



Battle Of Arnhem (The end)

- Towards the end Mr. Scot wrote 16 letters (death notifications). He was unable to get rid of the letters until four days later. Other Paras were picked up from different regiments and even German ammunition and machine guns were gathered along the way. They finally reached Oosterbeek and got out in 8 days. Some tried to swim through the river and those that didn't' were taken prisoner. "the battle of Arnhem was over".



Women's Roles In WW2

- The war brought major changes to the lives of the women. Due to production requirements and loss of men who entered, the military provided women with the opportunity of a wide range of jobs. Britain depended on women to carry out much of the war work. Some men were exempt from the army because they had important skilled jobs needed for the survival of the country such as Doctors, Miners, Scientists, School teachers etc. Women were particularly active in the defense industries as well as manufacturing industries. Most of these jobs came with the understanding that they would be dismissed when the men returned from the war. The women were frustrated that their pay was less than what a man would make. Their job was to help assimilate the returning veteran into society by making him “the man of the house” when the war ended.
- “Women had men’s jobs”. They were driving street cars, TTC and doing jobs traditionally done by men. Women worked long hours in factories producing aircraft, ammunition weapons and other goods needed for the war effort.



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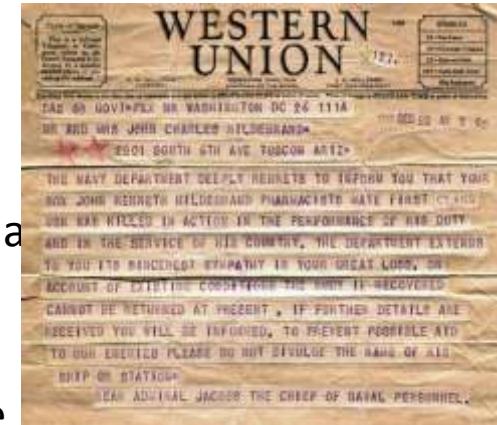
V-E Day

- Victory in Europe Day was May 8th 1945. This was the day when allies celebrated the defeat of Nazi Germany. It was victory of Freedom, Humanism and Democracy and a belief for a peaceful future and united civilization.
- Allies began to overrun Germany from the West during April 1945, as the Russian forces advanced from the east. On April 25th, 1945, allies and the Soviet forces met at Elbe River. The German army was destroyed. It was a battle where the fighting, killing and dying went on up to the very last minute. After the German surrender, a treaty was signed in Reims, France, the headquarters of U.S. general Dwight D. Eisenhower. May 7th, 1945, U.S. President Harry S Truman declared May 8th, V-E Day, the end of World War II.
- On V-E Day every family was touched because they had someone that was in the war. Out of 11 million people in Canada he said, 1 million were in uniform. He proudly stated that Canada had the third largest Air Force and was the third largest Army. This was the day the world celebrated.



The Loss of a Soldier

- The bodies of soldiers were placed in temporary cemeteries throughout the war zones. After the war was over some were returned home while others rest in permanent cemeteries. Death notifications were made by telegram. It was a very difficult assignment to do because the news to the family was always traumatic and devastating. It was the army's policy to make personal notification to the primary next of kin of the deceased soldier.
- Mr. Scot relives the moments of D-Day where he lost one Sergeant and three soldiers out of 38 men. "I had the least casualties." "The question was, could anything have been done to save a man?" Mr. Scott had to be mentally and emotionally tough by making the decision of saying he felt he had a "good record" and did not loose many men. It was the job of the Platoon Officer to write to the next of kin on how a soldier dies. "I hated writing letters" he said. It was important that the family new the soldier was "killed fighting for his country."
- These brave soldiers were very self-disciplined, strong mentally and physically and were able to adapt readily to changing situations. Their courage and dedication to their country is something to never be forgotten.



The Importance Of Oral History

Oral history is a very crucial and valuable part of the past that is important for everyone to learn in order to be able to gain understanding of the circumstances surrounding that time. It not only enables us to analyze the present better, but we can also learn from past mistakes. By taking part in oral history, we can understand who we are and how we got to be that way. It is the personal perspective that helps us connect with the person we are interviewing and it gives us more meaning about the past.

Veteran Charles Scot Brown gave a very detailed account of his experiences in World War 2. He talked about some very memorable moments or impact moments such as the time he had to write his first letter (Death Notification) for a soldier that had been killed in his Platoon. It was a very difficult time for him and I had the honor of being able to witness and understand the pain, sorrow and fear he expressed, first hand. This interview was very fascinating, in the sense that you are able to learn about people, moments and experiences which not only helps in preserving all of the information but it helps in the development of being able to listen and communicate. After the interview, I realized that I had gained the utmost respect for this courageous Veteran as well as the brave soldiers who endured the battles of World War 2. I am thankful that I had the opportunity to participate in the interview because it touched my life and I am sure many other people's lives in being able to listen to the vivid narrations of Veteran Brown. This first hand interview focused on living his life as a soldier, experiencing battles, tragedies and triumphs. For me, his stories provided a compelling view of his intricate strategies, his incredible courage and his most personal moments which will stay with me forever and will touch future generations to come.





The End

