

**Video Recording Log**  
**Veteran John Louis Frothingham**

Name of Interviewer: Harriet Williamson

Name of Veteran/Civilian: John Louis Frothingham

Birth Date: 07/13/1918

**Recording format:** Mini DVD

**Estimated length of recording (in minutes):** 60 minutes **Date of recording:** 08/30/2007

**Location of recording:** WILL AM-FM-TV, 300 N. Goodwin Ave, Urbana, IL 61801

**Recording log:**

00:00 Introduction  
00:37 Background, education, Evanston High School, class of 1936, University of Illinois  
01:10 Uncle's stories about WWI  
01:25 ROTC, disenchanted with military, resigned from ROTC  
01:50 War underway in Europe  
02:05 Heard about Candidates Class in Quantico, VA, signed up December 1940, 3 months  
02:18 Called to active duty February, 1941  
02:31 Commissioned Second Lieutenant  
02:38 Reserve Officers Training, 3 months  
02:45 Artillery Branch, Quantico, VA  
02:55 Transferred to 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division, not fully formed, Spring, 1942  
03:10 Engaged, married, March, 1942, New River, NC, artillery training  
03:45 Japanese taking islands in South Pacific, found out in 1942 Japanese building air field on Guadalcanal, which would threaten Australia  
04:40 Horrible rehearsal in Fiji Islands, proceeded to Guadalcanal  
05:00 Japanese did not expect to see Americans there until Spring 1943  
05:20 August 7, 1942, landing under cloud cover, Japanese did not expect them, landing started earlier on Tulagi about an hour earlier, Red Beach, landed 11,000 Marines, relatively unopposed at Red Beach, Tulagi had to fight 2 days, best friend killed  
06:27 Only one casualty caused by someone firing rifle into coconut tree and a coconut hitting someone on the head  
06:42 Proceeded on island, 2 weeks  
06:50 Navy, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1942, Japanese had done much training on night fighting, Americans had not, Japanese sunk 4 heavy cruisers  
07:34 Admiral Fletcher pulled protective forces out of area, left Admiral Turner who commanded amphibious part without supplies, food, guns, equipment  
08:14 Japanese had not expected Americans, so they only had 400-500 fighters and 1,000 laborers; they retreated and left food there, Americans ate their leftovers for two weeks, not much else to eat  
08:50 Navy did not show up for couple of weeks with food, ammunition

09:00 Japanese came back and bombed Americans

09:20 Navy showed up with food and cigarettes

09:40 Airplanes showed up, became Cactus Air Force, generic name of all forces, Australian also, P-40s, P-49s

10:20 August 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>, Japanese Colonel [unintelligible: possibly 'Hijiki'] decided to attack across Tinaroo River, South of airfield

10:50 Artillery survey, opened fire on Japanese

11:25 Lull until September, Japanese realized Americans were serious about holding island

11:48 Traveled to Australia with wife in 1988, thanked by Australians for service, parade

12:30 Battle of Bloody Ridge, attempt to drive Americans off of island, no reinforcements

13:00 164<sup>th</sup> Regiment

13:30 Lull until November, crossed Matanikau River, defending perimeter, Japanese 11-troop transports

14:05 Cactus Force, Japanese Bombers

14:20 Japanese Zero better one-on-one, but shot 3 Japanese down for every one American plane

14:39 Almost all American pilots rescued, although good number lost

14:50 Received command to go across Matanikau River and fire at will, only time received that command, found out later it was to get rid of ammunition, tubes got hot, sunk 7 troop transports, 4 remaining were beached up North

15:57 Cactus Air Force, General Geiger, attached torpedoes to planes with rope, dropped them on troop transports, PVYs, construction battalion

18:23 No major Japanese attacks, continued to defend

18:33 General Patch relieved in December, 1942, boarded ship to Australia for rest and relaxation

18:57 87% of troops had malaria, he had it twice, had to have guard at bed because he would sleep walk at night

19:43 Casualties: 1,100 killed, twice as many wounded, later reinforced

20:00 Landing: Melbourne, went up to Ballarat, Australia with engineers, ordinance company, and artillery regiment

20:30 Made Captain, getting promoted really quickly

20:42 Correspondence with wife

20:59 Ballarat, Australia, transferred to Auckland, New Zealand to command gun outfit, much longer range equipment

21:20 Back to Guadalcanal, part of New Georgia campaign

21:50 Apprehension about getting injured

22:10 Needed people to go to U.S. to train Marine Corps, building 6 new divisions, 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division, returned March, 1944

23:34 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division ordered to Hawaii, made Major, so many new Majors they did not know what to do with him, sent him to tank battalion, indirect fire guns

24:30 Indirect fire, tanks, Naval gun fire, Iwo Jima, Aerial air fire

25:30 There over a year (Iwo Jima), miles of underground tunnels, dug in;

26:13 Landing on Iwo Jima, 5<sup>th</sup> Division went ashore with 5<sup>th</sup> wave of infantry, going through black volcanic sand, saw a lot of dead marines

27:10 Looking back, really dug-in troops not going to be damaged even by a good attack, no matter what; compares to Guadalcanal

28:08 Did not want banzai attacks, only one Japanese commander tried it

28:38 Nip and tuck outfit  
28:43 Some days lucky to gain 300 yards, sometimes 50, sometimes none  
28:55 Ground got worse father North, rocks, hills  
29:10 Technique: infantry would get shot at, fighting and flame-throwing tanks would come in  
30:00 Flame-throwing tanks outlawed in 1983  
30:15 Napalm, shoot fire 100 yards for 3 minutes, fighting tanks  
31:02 Unbelievable casualties, only battle where American casualties surpassed enemy casualties, 28,000; buried 8,000 marines right there  
31:50 March, reached headquarters of Kuribayashi, who committed suicide, hara-kiri  
32:20 Wiped out last 200 soldiers in Japanese counter-attack  
32:32 Stood with Colonel on board LSD, taking in LCMs, LCSs, had to leave ten damaged tanks there  
33:05 Took Japanese tank to try to get it fixed and use it in Hawaii  
33:25 Japanese motorcycle  
33:40 Back to Hawaii, received message his first child had been born, tank and motorcycle  
34:27 Original training at Quantico, VA  
34:40 Disenchantment, commanding officer was unpleasant, could not see a future in it  
35:15 Studied History in college, knew something big was happening in Europe  
35:30 Candidate Class, Quantico, VA, 03 Rifle, Guadalcanal, M1: much better rifle  
36:20 Army Ordinances would have new weapons designed, Army would try them out first  
36:40 164<sup>th</sup> showed up, had M1s, would allow Marines to use them after casualties freed guns  
36:57 Training at Quantico, VA, infantry, basic training, similar to Paris Recruit Training, instructors were enlisted people  
37:53 Other training: Officers Training, ROC, employment up to company level, with about 200 troops, how to command in combat  
38:23 Learned how to tell Lieutenant what to do with platoons, playing roles as infantry people  
38:43 Artillery training, up to time of Pearl Harbor, firing indirect fire at targets far away  
39:05 Felt he was adequately trained  
39:20 Being shot at  
39:35 Lieutenant at Guadalcanal, promoted to Captain, Service Officer: running survey to coordinate guns so all 4 guns would hit target, mathematics  
40:20 Executive Officer: of firing battery, in charge of guns; then Commanding Officer of battery  
40:45 Eleanor Roosevelt made visit at Guadalcanal, troops loved it; Guadalcanal still not secure at this point  
41:36 February, 1943, finally pushed Japanese off of island  
41:50 Howitzers 75-pack, could be disassembled and carried, spaced 15-20 yards apart, would realign after every round; describing Howitzers, forward observers  
44:30 45-50 men in battery, communication, survey people  
45:00 Marine Corps, no medical personnel, Navy furnishes core men: chaplain, supplies, and medics  
45:32 Howitzers took 5-6 men, up to 5 rounds per minute  
46:15 Forward Observer calls for fire, gives approximate direction, observes each shot until they start hitting target  
46:57 Other 4 battalions surrounding, 105 Howitzer, 75 Howitzer  
47:10 Howitzers effective

- 47:21 October-November, Guadalcanal, 2-4 guns, Japanese could outrange American guns, Americans could not answer fire because Navy had left with 150 Howitzers
- 47:50 Guadalcanal: once taken, became forward supply depot for American troops
- 48:25 Terrain: Guadalcanal strictly jungle, flat, ideal
- 49:47 Raising of American flag at Mount Suribachi, Iwo Jima: story of Colonel, photographer Rosenthal who took famous picture
- 53:10 Well-supplied
- 53:20 Semi-active volcano, infantry could dig hole, put can in and heat food
- 53:55 Different view of War because of Officer position: was not on front line, only killed one person directly, describes
- 56:10 Overall strategy: researched after the War, so now sounds more knowledgeable than he would have been if he had not researched
- 56:50 At the time heard a lot of rumors about plans and strategies
- 56:55 Fire at will operation, found out later was ordered to pull out after mission because they were afraid Japanese would come in and attack
- 57:15 Radio and telephone communication, wires, complications thereof
- 57:30 Men under command from all over U.S.
- 58:15 Correspondence with family, tried to write every day
- 59:17 Cuts out without wrap-up