

Oral Interview

July 6, 2004

Subject: Donald D. Brown

Interviewers: Rheba Massey and Brian Thomas

Narrators: Steve Mack and Bob Hoyt

Donald Dee Brown

Born: York, Nebraska, March 8<sup>th</sup>, 1920

Died: Cheyenne, Wyoming, February 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001

Parents:

Terilus Norris "Dee" Brown

Gladys Creery Brown

Wife:

Mildred Elyane "Mid" McRae

Born: August 15<sup>th</sup>, 1926

Died: September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1991

Married: September 5, 1945

Parents:

Archie McRae

Elva Smith McRae

Children: (daughter)

Norma Brown Martinez

Born: May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1946

Died: 1968

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Interviewers: Brian Thomas and Rheba Massey  
Narrators: Steve Mack and Bob Hoyt

T=Brian Thomas  
MA=Rheba Massey  
H=Bob Hoyt  
MA= Steve Mack

Tape 1, side A

T: How long did each of you know Donald Brown?

H: I knew him, I think, from probably about 1933.

T: What was he like during High School?

H: He was like me, he was a pretty handsome guy.

MK: You were in trouble a lot?

H: We were in trouble a lot. We used to have to wash street cars on Saturday to pay our fines. But there wasn't anything mean about the guy. He was just pure joy of living.

T: What sort of things did you guys get into? What were your hobbies?

H: We were motorcycle nuts mainly. Built race cars and motorcycles and stuff like that. We ran the race car when we were just in High School and beat everybody in the country. There was a deal riding. [stops] I was from a horse background. My dad was a horseman. I messed with him a lot in my life, but at that time I was trying to dissipate the cowboy image.

T: What was the group of friends you guys had at that time like?

H: If they didn't have a motorcycle they wasn't in. That's true.

T: What type of areas did you hang out at in Fort Collins?

H: There wasn't so much of that stuff in those days. A friend of ours had a large potato cellar at the corner of Shields and Vine there. In a number of the years there wasn't any potatoes in it, so we built race cars and had the motorcycles and stuff in there.

MK: Who was that?

H: The name was Clarence Kemp. On of the finest guys I ever knew.

MA: Is that K-E-M-P, Kemp?

H: Um-hmm.

MK: And there is all sorts of pictures in the scrapbook of Kemp and Kemp's Corner and he had a good looking daughter if I remember.

H: Yeah, he did have it a little difficult, but pretty good looking. Trouble was we didn't care much about each other because we were about equally intelligent and one couldn't get ahead of the other.

T: What type of motorcycles did you all ride?

H: Rode Indians. In those days there was a constant battle between guys riding Indians and Harleys. We happened to belong to that other group. Still got five Indians.

MA: What years are those, the Indians you have?

H: Oh, years, got a '29, I got a '35, I got a '46 and a '50. Then I bought several new ones I no longer have. First thing I did when I got out of the army was buy a new Indian.

MK: You got the "Big Bertha."

H: The hill climber, yes.

MK: The hill climber that won the Horsetooth Hill Climb?

H: Oh, yes, so much I never knew you got over the Horsetooth Hill. Big Bertha, I happen to have it upstairs, in the shop.

MK: In pieces?

H: Most of it is in pieces. Actually, in those days those competition motors fit the regular frames, and they would sell them to the dealers for, so they could run for advertising. And that's what it was. Harry's Motors in Denver got it, to start with. Young Harry was up a couple of weeks ago, trying to buy it.

MA: Now Horsetooth Hill would not be the thing we think of today because they obviously...

H: You see it is just as your climbing that little hill there out at the lake as you just break over the top, if you look over to the right on the hillside it is all scarred. And that was a very well known hill climb. All over the United States it was considered about as tough as there was.

MA: So, basically, there wasn't a road, you were actually just going up the side of the mountain? Is that right?

H: No road.

MK: There is pictures of that in here.

T: Nowadays just getting up that hill in cars is almost impossible.

H: The cars today are somewhat like the people, they are wimpy.

MK: [About] your question, Bill Schneider, has an old eight millimeter or sixteen millimeter footage of the Horsetooth Hill Climb.

MA: Oh, really?

MK: Um-hum. You always picture Big Bertha going up the hill.

H: Yes sir. My, cousin, came to town on December 12<sup>th</sup> 1941 and went to be first in line to enlist. You don't find that anymore.

MA: Where did he live?

H: Lived at what in those days we called the Log Cabin, but it's just above the Boy Scout Ranch on that particular branch of road. Good sized ranch, and I got pictures of it too. It's gone now, the Forest Service or the Fish and Game went out and bought the ground. A beautiful place.

MK: Was he one of the Robinsons?

H: Yeah. They are all Robinsons, except the Monroes, all the rest of them named Robinson. There was one girl and she married a Monroe.

T: Did you guys keep the preference for the Indian motorcycles up 'til the company closed down?

H: I'm still an Indian man. Closed up in 1951, I'm still an Indian man.

MK: To answer that question at 80...

H: 84 in November.

MK: 84, I have a trunk full of parts that we're leaving here and were from a 1929 and we're going over to the plater's to drop them off to get a total restoration on the '29.

H: Yeah, she's gonna be a honey.

MK: That's for sure.

H: So valuable anymore that I don't know what I'm going to do with it. I got it in one of my spare bedrooms right now because I don't want to leave it where anybody can sift it out on me. I got it from Brown. He bought it in Pennsylvania somewhere,

some big town in Pennsylvania. It had sat under a rain spot for several years and was rusty as heck. We finished the, all of the, well I guess it was a...

MK: The aesthetics of it?

H: Yeah. And it looks great. What he did. He was a terrific artist.

MA: When did you buy it from him?

H: Just shortly before I took him to the Veterans Hospital in, what is that town?

MK: Lyons, Fort Lyons.

H: Fort Lyons, he never got out of there.

MK: Well, we got him out of there and we got him up to Cheyenne.

H: We got him out of that one, but...

MK: But he never got out of the hole he was in.

H: He was in there in July.

MA: What year was that you took him to Fort Lyons?

H: It's a little difficult to know, it had to be ten years ago, ain't it?

MK: Yeah, I think it was like '94, '95. Somewhere in there.

T: When did you guys take him up to Cheyenne?

MK: And then, probably took maybe six months or almost a year in order to get him moved. So he probably moved to Cheyenne in May. The end of '96 or something like that.

T: Then, you say you both worked on restorations of Indians?

H: Well, I restore about any old klunker. Don't have to be an Indian, as long as it's long in the tooth, like I am. You know where long in the tooth comes from, don't you?

T: I don't know.

H: Old horses, as they get older their teeth get what they call a bad mouth and their teeth, their gums recede and they stick out like a long tooth, long in the tooth. I love horses.

T: Did you and Donald ever work on Model A's or Model T's together?

H: Oh yeah, we had a race track that they, a couple of different promoters, of races I did this side of the hole there for. And you had to go through some people's yards to get there. There was a little area back there, it might have been...let's say it could have been two acres that had been a pond there, when I started it wasn't...it was shallow. And it had been a probably started out as a buffalo wallow. And as time went by it turned into kind of a little pond. It was just dry as dust, there wasn't anything there until [then] except that in... So these promoters come in and they secured the use of it. And they made a track down there. When I say made a track, they just drove a car around it. Surrounded it with bales of straw, which was a barrier or something, I don't know what you call it. But Don and Keith Mitchell, and Lee Kent and I built this hotrod Model T. I got pictures of that, there might be one in there.

MK: There are.

H: And we absolutely whipped everybody in Colorado with that thing. It would run 90 miles an hour on the pavement.

MA: When you think about the old airport, are you talking about this one out here [off of Link Lane]?

H: Yeah.

MA: Ok.

H: That's the old airport that our city so generously gave to CSU. I hate CSU.

T: Why is that?

H: Well, they are just like a sponge. Anything surrounding it, they grab it.

T: Yeah.

H: I don't like to see everything belong to cities and places like that. I like to see people have it.

MK: Bob is a man of very weak opinion.

H: I'll admit I'm pretty easy to sell.

T: Do or die. Did you guys do any other restorations later on with some of the Model A's or Model T's?

H: We didn't truly restore them, we just drove them Models A's. I've had several of them. In fact I have a picture of them too, and of course, we kind of had to break up that after high school. Don and some of the other guys joined the National Guard and went into the army from there. And I went to California, well, first of all, I went to Gunnison [Gunnison, Colorado] and I packed for the forest service for a year. Which means I, we used pack horses and mules. In those days there was no four-wheel drive around here. To get back to fire, back to... anyway, that's what I did for the first year after you get out of high school. Then I went to California, and, got a job at an aircraft plant and was there until they drafted me.

MA: So, you didn't see Don during that time?

H: No, I, we corresponded up a lot of letters and stuff. I suppose amongst that stuff we left down there, there's some stuff from me to him.

T: There are a few.

H: We had a mighty good friendship.

T: Were you looking, were you fine with being drafted, or were you, did you basically not want to be drafted?

H: I didn't ask for another deferment, which is the same as wanting to be drafted. But I just got tired, I guess, burned out or something. Anyways, joined the army. But I guess this is about Don, so we better...

MK: You know we better get through it, we don't have too much time.

T: When, do you remember, did Don move to Trinidad?

MK: '80s, '86, somewhere around there.

H: Somewhere around there.

T: Did you both keep pretty good contact with him while he was down there?

H: Oh, I went down a lot of times, and he [Mack] did too.

MK: The best you could. Now Don and his wife lost their only child, they were very reclusive people. And, so when Norma died they just ran. They joined the Peace Corps at the age of fifty-something; and traveled around with the Peace Corps for a lot of years. And then when they came back they were going to be nomadic... they bought a motor home and lived in Bali, California for a number of years. They didn't like that quite either, and they finally, they didn't want to come back to Fort Collins. They felt it had grown too much, and it was not the town that they used to know. And then, eventually, they decided to settle in Trinidad. So, you stayed in touch, but it was until it was the end of their stay; it took them that many years to get over, to start to get over the death of their daughter. And she [Mildred] died an

untimely death of liver cancer down in Trinidad. Which, I don't know when that was, you should have some papers in there on it.

H: Wasn't it over a year before I took him to Fort Lyons.

MK: Um-hmm, it was early '90s.

H: He was very ineffectual at taking care of any household things, he just couldn't treat himself decent.

MK: When she died, he just couldn't manage himself. Bob and I helped him get to Fort Lyons and, then ultimately before everybody picked through everything. His house was kind of unlocked and the neighbors were coming in and stealing things. And we went down and rescued what was left and what we could get. Fortunately all of the local history stuff was of no interest, everybody was picking through things, so, eventually that is what we brought back.

H: They had scattered a lot of the memorabilia around on the floor like it was trash. Stole the books and...

T: Was Donald an avid reader? You said that they stole a lot of his books.

MK: He had a lot of books that were [history], he was into history. Don had his own fantasy world in some ways, so he wanted to be the world's best historical painter. So, he would collect file cabinets on the history of this or the history of that. I think one of the few pieces he ever wrote is, he wrote and published that article on the Colt Russian, the Colt .44. But he did research and research and never quite got the momentum up to do anything with it.

H: Very good. [He] did a few sketches of military stuff. And it's whatever I could that was appropriate for that time, he had in there. Nobody could argue with him.

MK: He was careful about that, so he was commissioned by Willard Wright, he was a plumber here in town, to do a family picture. It was a fascinating one, it's still here in town in Willard's family. You might even want to [take it on] loan, he's had it up on loan before. So, it is a big mural, probably five feet by four feet or five feet. And it depicts Willard Wright's family going through Kansas during the depression and migrating to Colorado, and in the dustbowl there. And Don researched everything himself. The vehicles exactly as a 1920 whatever international... was it a Model T? I can't remember the details. But the detail was [intricate], so there's articles, in fact I even think I have some here about the rock fence posts that were in and around Hayes, Kansas where this supposedly takes place. And there is a lot of research about the flora and fauna in the background, and when I was done I had lived in western Kansas, and [he said] what do you think? And I said, you know it's missing one thing, it's missing a prairie falcon sitting up on the REA pole, and so he researched prairie falcons and then painted one then after the fact, up on top of an REA pole, but it had such detail, so you could look at that painting and a newspaper that is blown into the barbwire fence and you could actually read the type, and it was the appropriate headline for 1920, whatever it was.

H: You know another...

MK: He was careful about a lot of that, and that is what a lot of these files and details are all about, is researching micro-minutiae. He would get so wrapped up in the micro-minutiae that he couldn't produce things.

H: Another thing a lot of people don't realize is that he was absolutely an English nut. Now when he made a statement, every word was placed correctly and used correctly and spelled correctly. It was very much perfectionist.

MK: This is a small copy of that painting and there is some research, you could flip over on the backside, you'll see, there's the article on the stone fence post and you see the stone fence post in the background of the painting. And you'll also see there is no prairie falcon on the REA pole, you'll find one on the actual painting Willard Wright has.

T: I actually...

MK: In fact, there it is, I didn't even see it. He did research prairie falcons as I said, and there is the info on the prairie falcon that he added to the . . .

H: In high school, Brown and I ; we wrote it, but we did put it on, it was a melodrama. It was called, "In the Daze of the Pioneers," spelled D-A-Z-E. [inaudible] spittoon. It was a typical melodrama, the audience rushed to the stage to try and clobber the villain and the whore.

T: He was an English nut, you say?

H: A what?

T: He was an English nut, you say?

H: No, he was not an English nut, he was a semanticist.

MK: He was a semanticist. So, he always had the Oxford-American English dictionary, that was the one-footer that weighed about thirty pounds and that was always in his living room. And he would always be jumping up, checking language and...

T: Would he correct people if they misused words or had the wrong grammar?

H: Well, he wouldn't...

MK: He would ridicule them after the fact.

H: The only ones he would fuss with was some writer in the newspaper that made a 'faux-pas.'

MK: Somewhere there is a letter, in the pile of stuff, is a letter from James Kilpatrick, did you find that?

T: I don't recall.

MK: You can dig through it, you'll find a letter from James Kilpatrick and I forget what it was, but he had written James Kilpatrick on whether making reference to the common use of the word "shit" or something to that effect, and Kilpatrick replied to him on the letterhead, so that is in that file. So he would do odd things like that, and I would think in this day and age you would certainly guffaw over the 'faux-pas' of Bush. For example, the "Bush-isms" that are out there.

H: He was eccentric.

MK: That's a kind way of putting it.

H: Well, that's what it is. He wasn't a certified nut, or anything. But...

MK: Came close sometimes.

H: Well he got carried away, but I mean his brain always worked good.

MK: He always had the artist temperament. He was very temperamental, and the ultimate consummate perfectionist. And what he had to do, in his artwork, [he] was over-demanding on himself. So, he once stripped a motorcycle on an old BMW for me, and had done it five times before he finally, and wiped it off, before he finally got it where he liked it. So, he was really perfectionism.

MA: What about his daughter Norma, when was it that she died, we couldn't find an obituary?

H: It should be in...

MK: '68.

H: Files of the Coloradoan, or whatever they call it right now.

MK: But it was about 1968.

MA: And then what happened to her husband?

H: He got killed too. Afterwards, in the same kind of a situation.

MK: In the same road, ten years almost to the day.

MA: You're kidding?

MK: He never remarried. His name was Fernando Martinez. And they were both killed in Spain. He was a graduate student, doing graduate work here in Fort Collins-CSU, and she was a language major studying Spanish and Italian. And the two of them met, and they got married and married for six months. And they had moved to Spain, and they were both killed; she was killed in a [car accident], and he was with her in a head-on accident.

H: He was a member of some real high top family over there.

MK: Um-hmmm, um-hmm.

T: Did Don and Fernando keep in contact after Norma died?

H: Um...spasmodically.

MK: Yes, spasmodically.

T: Did either of you really know Norma that well?

H: I knew Norma from the time she was born. She'd sit on my lap, she would pull my hair and do all that stuff little girls will do.

MK: And she was a year ahead of me at CSU. So I really knew her well.

H: She was a really pretty girl.

MK: And very, very smart; very bright woman.

T: So, how would you guys describe her?

MK: Well, she had the sense of humor of both of her parents. And she was very vivacious, and very, very bright and very worldly and all. She just on the cusp of probably doing something really substantial, and that is why I think it was, besides the fact it was their only child, she was a pretty exceptional girl. And it just destroyed both the Browns; they never really recovered.

H: I wish I had a better memory of dates and stuff. I never paid much attention to dates, I even try to ignore the 84<sup>th</sup> birthday.

T: I don't think anybody likes thinking about their birthdays that much once you get past thirty.

[Tape 1, side B]

T: [What was Mid like?]

H: She was great, she was real. But, I never could actually see how they got together, because she was kind of a 'go-er,' and he just wasn't.

MK: At the end, we all kind of conjectured what would happen when she died. And everybody always conjectured whether she held Don back from doing all these dreams and becoming a great artist, or whether she was really the cement and kept him tied to reality. And the answer, unfortunately, unfolded that she was the anchor

and she was the cement that kept it going. She was the one who always worked a regular job, she worked for Handy Andy Oil Company as their bookkeeper. In town they had the Handy Andy Oil Company, what was his [the owner's] name?

H: Vernon West

MK: West, [he] developed the first token operated automated gas vending pumps. The equivalent of today's credit card ones were developed here in town, so she worked for Vernon West for a lot of years and did bookkeeping and all sorts of things. She kept the family together and she kind of worked with Don keeping the books on Brown Sign Company and kept him going.

H: She was his anchor.

MA: Where did she live here in town?

H: Where?

MA: When she was going to high school?

H: No, it's west of, ah, Shields and Vine. You go west on Vine to the first place you can turn left. There is a stone house there, an old stone house. And that's the corner. And they had a quite a little bit of [property] back in there. Her dad was an [important] person.

MK: This is over by the Poudre then?

H: No, its just a little ways from the service station Kemp had there on...

MK: Way back on Shields and Vine.

H: Shields and Vine.

MK: My brain was working someplace else. But that is over by where that gas station is, and where that low income apartment building. Actually sits where that low income apartment building, concrete apartment building, is on Shields and Vine.

H: She still has a brother and several sisters in this area. I don't know how many sisters.

MK: Her name was McRae and her brother Archie is still here in town. And they have most of her pictures and things.

MA: So she went to high school, she was in the same high school class that you were?

MK: Brown was six-seven months older than I was, so he was in the next class up. But we kept a lot of the same courses and in that respect we were in the same area.

MK: And was Mid younger?

H: Yes, she was the age of my sister [Betty Hoyt].

MK: So, how many years younger?

H: I'm four years older than my sister, so she was four-five years younger than Brown.

MA: So did Don date her during high school, or is it something that happened later?

H: No, he dated this Kemp girl. And [when] he come back [from WWII] and because he had visions of sugar plums and stuff, getting married and all, she evidently wasn't having any of it; so he started going with Mid and married her.

MK: That was after he came back from the war.

T: Was Mid as grounded as you guys described her when she was younger?

H: Was she as what?

T: Was she as grounded as you guys described her in the '40s and '50s?

H: Well, I don't know exactly what you mean?

MK: Was she always the stable one in the relationship?

H: I'm sure she was in that relationship. But, what teenage girl has got any sense.

Really they got a lot of pressures working on them, that even the boys don't have.

MK: And she was a really attractive woman when she was younger. So there is all sorts of pictures of her on the back of Don's Indians, and shortly thereafter with Norma sitting on it.

H: What they used to say that covered the waterfront for her was she was built like a brick outhouse – good.

T: I have a lot of material [on the] issues he had with the Phi Kappa Tau fraternity?

MK: Yes. We all went through that, that was when I knew him well. It was pretty awful, they just tormented the poor man. That's the house that was right on the corner of Lake and Remington. And the University would do nothing, the city would do nothing. They would be out there, urinating on his front windows and carport, they would be carrying on drunk at all hours. Nobody would assist them [the Browns]. And I think finally he went out there one night and found some kid that was urinating in his carport and punched him and all hell broke loose. Don was really pretty awful. He was at that point [of snapping], the man that had lost his daughter and lived on the very, very edge of things and they did everything they could to push him over the edge. Relentlessly.

H: And the city just was hand-in-glove with the damned University.

MK: The University wouldn't do anything to censure the fraternity at all.

T: Just a little lip-service maybe?

MK: Barely that. And I know because I lived in what was then the Sigma, god knows what, that was next door, the next house over. That's how I met Don, when I lived there in that fraternity house here about six months or so. And I was the across the alley neighbor.

H: You know the truth of the matter is, there is no, not a nickel worth of difference between how the kids behave here under auspices of the University Board and all those in Boulder, that are in such a lot of hot water. They are the same kind of people and they are helped by the same kind of people. Anything is all right as long as there was a football game.

T: In the records I have, he got arrested for slandering an officer after someone ran over the fence. Do you guys remember how he reacted to being arrested?

MK: I wasn't in town.

H: I'm sure he got arrested for that a dozen times.

MK: That started at an early age.

H: Oh, yeah. He wasn't as dumb as me, he never punched one of them.

MK: You have to understand they come from an era of western rural justice. Things were not necessarily settled back then by...

H: I had a policeman one time, [I punched him] right in the middle of his forehead and I blacked both of his eyes.

MA: What happened to you as a result?

H: Nothing. No, he just got through calling me a "son-of-a-bitch" and the sheriff was there, so I just speared him.

MK: Bob was pretty tough and intimidating in his younger years when he ran his motorcycle shop. We young punks, we were pretty careful, we danced around a lot. There was...

MA: So, did you ever think of yourselves as the Marlon Brando crew, the wild ones?

H: No I think of myself as common in those days, an ordinary motorcycle demon. You had to be tough, because you didn't [want to] have no sissies coming in.

MK: But, if you look at some of the pictures, he comes about as close to looking like Marlon Brando [as possible], he was always incredibly handsome.

MA: That's what I think of when I see that, of course with Marlon just dying, I just think [he was] like the perfect example of you guys when you were in high school.

MK: I don't think they raised that kind of hell, although you talk...

H: I never saw that kind of stuff growing up, and I've been running a lot of motorcycle events. Actually, I prefer them to football crowds. Really, they are going to tear down the goalposts and all that foolish stuff. They aren't going to go out and burn cars.

MK: But you used to tell tales of Don Brown riding his Indian down College [Ave] standing on the seat, balancing.

H: Standing on the seat.

T: Did either of you end up going to Sturgis when they started that tradition?

H: I've been to Sturgis so many times I can't even count. When I was a dealer, I always had several motorcycles running in the races. I got pictures of poor guys riding with my Blazer and they came in first, second, third and fourth. The guy that rode the most for me, he won a one-day tournament twice. He's seventy years old

now, and he still puts it on the kids. Yeah, he's something. You know him don't you, Burt?

MK: Um-hmm, um-hmm. And the other interesting thing is, you know the legacy continues and Bob's son John is here in town that runs Acme Machine-now builds racing motorcycle frames, etc.

T: What sort of things would you and Don do to get arrested?

H: Well, actually, usually it didn't take much. I can remember one Halloween we met some over-zealous policemen in those days, [the policemen were the] first place that got part of the fine. And the Justice of the Peace, which was Judge McCurry, he got part of the fine. I don't think the city got a whole lot because that's how they paid officers, I think. And you didn't have to do much to get arrested. I had a model A during college, maybe [it] was one with those front and back seats, an open car; and if I was headed one direction on the street and one of the cops, his name was Holzfaster, was going the other direction he turned around to stop me to see if he could find something wrong with the car. They can't do that today, just on suspicion, they got to observe some little [thing], I don't think it has to be much, but it is better than just pulling the guy over and seeing what you can find.

T: So, the police didn't have something against you, it was just whatever they could do to anybody?

H: Yeah. I always had those noise-exhaust [devices] like smart-aleck kids did. And I had it fixed so I could just take it off and put it back on and nothing would happen. They'd make me go home and take it off and put on a regular outfit and I'd come back down and they'd inspect it and sign the, whatever they called it, and [show]

that it was fixed and I'd go home and put it back on. This was a good world, this was a good world. I feel sorry for all you young guys, you never see the real world, you never see it. Everything is phony today. Really, you think about it, a young person, the minute he gets in school they start engineering this for him and that for him and programs to add in. But there is all kinds of stuff. I got a grandson, and they engineered canoe trips, he is on one of them right now and then, put him on one of those wind-jammers back on the east-coast. He was on one of them for a trip and, whatever happened to going out and hunting rabbits? Really! And everything has got to be soft and easy and if it isn't it is somebody else's fault.

MK: No, fortunately you had the opportunity to grow up when the world wasn't nearly as regulated. And you could do what you wanted to do.

H: No, I feel sorry for people today. I really do. You're missing out on living.

T: Everything is little censored.

H: Oh yeah. A canned opinion [is all you hear], most of them made by a newspaper man who can't spell "cat."

T: Donald was part of like the 94<sup>th</sup> division reunions and all that army stuff?

H: He was actually left here in [the] heavy weapons company of the local National Guard. And then, somehow or another he got in some kind of hot water and they transferred him and another guy from here to Panama. And he was down there for a while, just theoretically guarding the Canal.

MK: That was during World War II? When he got out of training?

H: Yeah, and he got a leave and they shipped him to Europe.

[Tape Stops]

H: Went around the block or something there that was on the east side of town.

MK: Um-hmm.

MA: So, is that the only place he lived here in town when he was growing up, up there at the Scott apartments? [During high school Donald Brown lived with the Kueblers in the Scott Apartments of Fort Collins – Mr. Kuebler was the caretaker]

H: Well, no, a lot of the times he would go and live with his dad and his dad kind of had a little apartment in the back of his barbershop, and Brown would sometimes go down there and stay. [T.N. Brown's apartment while Donald Brown was in high school was located behind the barber shop.]

MK: Where was this barbershop and apartment?

H: Well, the barbershop was there on South College Ave on the 100 block where the old JC Penney place was, and that Electric Shoe Shop. That barbershop was there in the basement, and I remember seeing a striped pole there.

MA: Striped pole is still there.

H: May be a barbershop for all I know.

T: What was Don's relationship with his mother as he got older?

H: Bad!

MK: She abandoned him.

H: Yeah. That's the reason he lived with his grandmother, because she just ran off and left him. She, I shouldn't say this about somebody's mother, but she wasn't worth a damn. But his father was a fine man.

MK: His father ran a barbershop that [had an apartment in back]. Didn't he also live in the Antler's hotel? Or the Eagle?

H: He might have. At the time that I'm referring to, we always said that time getting the motorcycle down that stair to store it.

T: I have a lot of postcards that he sent to his mom during the years he was working for the Peace Corps. Did he try to patch things up then?

H: I don't know. All I've got to go by is the things he said. And, as far as I could see, he never gave her any slack. But I don't know that for sure. She did have it coming, I know that.

[Tape stops]

H: . . .They'd come to town and to the dances on Saturday night, and he got in bad blood with them. So they was coming up the stairs at that dance hall, and Brown clobbered him. And he grabbed the trash and he swung out and he kicked one of them right in the mouth, and all of them piled up in a heap at the bottom of the stairs. There was some hospital cases out there. He was a tough man...

MK: What was his name?

H: Jim Cowan [Jim Cowan was part of a gang in Fort Collins known as the CC Boys]

MA: Jim Cowan

H: I guess it was his mother he lived with, and she was a something like the superintendent of schools or something. Her name was Ruth Cowan.

MA: Ruth Cowan, I've heard of her.

T: Fort Collins Public Library, Tuesday, the 6<sup>th</sup> of July, 2004. Interview by College intern Brian Thomas and Local History Archivist Rheba Massey, interviewing Bob Hoyt and Steve Mack.