

Oral History Transcript

Interviewers: Sharon Milligan

Oral History Candidate: Bill Walker, Class of 1961

June 4, 2011 in Palm Springs, CA, Bi-Annual Reunion

*My name is Sharon Milligan and I'm here with Brown Military Academy. It's June 4, 2011. I'm in Palm Springs, at the reunion and I have with me an alumni. Could you give me your name and age, class year and your address?*

Sure. My name is Bill Walker. Class year was 1961. My current address is in Tuscan, Arizona, 205 North Camino Arcar. 85718.

*So I want to thank you for being here today and interviewing with us and could you just me how you got to Brown, why you ended up there?*

Sure, kind of a long story. I have a twin brother, or did have. And his name was Don Walker. He went there, he went to Brown in his junior year and I was still in school in Arizona and then we switched and senior year, I went to Brown and he went back to Arizona. And a little story there, but I ended in my senior year at Brown really because of that. I knew one fellow there from Tuscan who we'd known before, but didn't know anyone else, didn't know anything about the school. I didn't really know whether I wanted to be at a military academy or not, so I'm not sure we had a lot of choice. We each had to go to different places. But I had, it was quite an experience, it really was. I didn't know there was a reunion, I didn't know there was a website. I didn't know this group of people all got together. I has Bob Downs call me one night, 11:00 at night and there's no good phone calls at eleven o'clock at night usually, so he says, "is this Bill Walker who went to Brown?" and I says, "yeah" and he says, "well we're going to have our fiftieth reunion and so I said send me the stuff and I'll show up. And it's been really interesting. I mean, I haven't seen anybody for 50 years. My wife, Jeanie asked me, she says, "Now, are you going to recognize these guys?" Probably not. Fifty years is a long time. But we've had a great time.

*What was that transition like? You're a senior in high school which is pretty late in the game. What was it like? Do you have any memories or feelings of that first day or first week or first month on campus?*

Yeah, Going from a public school to a military school is quite a switch. I mean the structure and the regiment and everything else is much different. I didn't really object to that. I mean, I enjoyed it. It took a little getting used to, but a good time. The folks that I've met. There's still two or three of them here, even though we haven't seen each other in 50 years, we're real good friends. We'd made a lot. It seems like in high school you make your best friends your senior year anyway. You know, you kind of forget the rest of them. And even though there weren't very many of us-I don't know how many in this senior class, maybe 45 or something-

*So it wasn't that large, it was more intimate.*

Oh yeah, no there wasn't a lot of us anyway. I'd have to count us up and see. So you got to know them all pretty well, living in the barracks together and yeah, it was a great experience. I really enjoyed it.

*You were at was campus?*

Glendora.

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*And you lived on the campus?*

I lived on the campus. About halfway through the school-year or so, I got mononucleosis, so I had to go back to Arizona for, I don't know, a week or two. And then I when I came back to school, I lived downtown, actually with the school nurse. Of course, that was kind of cool, cause I was like a day guy, so I got to bring my car and drive back and forth and had several privileges that I guess you paid for by getting sick. I had a good time. I played sports, played baseball, lettered in baseball and continued to play ball a little bit after that. I didn't really see any of the Brown fellows after that at all. I had one guy, two of them that came and visited me over in Arizona afterwards. In fact, one of them came over with me and we were out partying and rolled my car over. We were not hurt. But other than that, I haven't seen any of them in that whole time.

*I know they had demerits if you did something wrong; you got benefits if you did things right. What was that like in terms of being different from public school? How did you react to that or how was that adjustment?*

It wasn't hard at all for me. I mean, it's pretty easy, it's the rules, so once you understood them, you either did do something or didn't do something. A lot of funny times. For instance, we all had nicknames. I mean, if you look in the yearbooks, there're nicknames, and mine was 'The Deacon' and that, we had a Bible class we had to take, right? And I was a good student, but not particularly interested in Bible class. So my friend had the class before me, so test day, I'd ask him, 'what were the questions?' and he told me and the teacher, I think his name was Kitchen, he said, 'Bill, you're doing awfully-well it wasn't Bill, it was Mr. Walker-you did really well on this and why was that?' and I said 'I think I had a vision.' So anyway, I got the nickname and we all had a nice chat and so I think I was dismissed from class a time or two...*lost sound*