

1
00:00:01,900 --> 00:00:05,940
We are recording the interview of George
Snook. This interview is being conducted by

2
00:00:05,950 --> 00:00:10,050
Jennifer Seavey from Wright State
University's Veteran Voices project.

3
00:00:10,050 --> 00:00:14,550
Also in attendance is Red Ketchum, Bob Sites, and Bob Stucky.

4
00:00:14,550 --> 00:00:23,420
This interview is being recorded at the Champagne Aviation Museum in
Urbana, Ohio. It is 9:15 a.m. on February 6 2016

5
00:00:23,420 --> 00:00:28,440
Okay George, so where and when were you born?

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00:00:28,440 --> 00:00:38,200
I was born in Ashland, Ohio in December 26th, 1920 and if my addition is
right, that makes me 95.

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00:00:38,200 --> 00:00:40,000
[laughing] Okay.

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00:00:40,000 --> 00:00:45,740
I've married to my wife Barbara for fifty-five years

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00:00:45,740 --> 00:00:56,860
and we have four children. Melody is the oldest, Terry and Tom are my two
son and daughters.

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00:00:56,870 --> 00:01:06,940
Both of them live in the Toledo area and we have one daughter, Tonya,
deceased.

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00:01:06,940 --> 00:01:09,780
Who were your parents and what were
their occupations?

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00:01:09,780 --> 00:01:10,740
What's that?

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00:01:10,740 --> 00:01:14,720

Who were your parents and what were their occupations?

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00:01:14,720 --> 00:01:20,980

My dad worked at a faultless rubber company and they made balls, balloons, and what have you

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00:01:20,980 --> 00:01:29,540

and we lived on the edge of town, we had five acres in our little bit.

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00:01:29,540 --> 00:01:35,500

There were seven of us children in our family, so always had a huge garden

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00:01:35,500 --> 00:01:43,090

and during a good year mother was in charge of the garden and my older brother and I done all the work

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00:01:43,090 --> 00:01:50,430

In a good year we'd bring in twenty bushels of potatoes and put in the coal cellar downstairs.

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00:01:50,430 --> 00:01:57,300

mother only had to buy the basics of flour, sugar, and salt and we raised everything else.

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00:01:57,300 --> 00:02:02,820

We had chickens so we always had plenty of meat and we always had eggs and at one time we had rabbits,

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00:02:02,820 --> 00:02:12,080

but we got rid of those. So as it was seven in the family. You learned to work early and late

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00:02:12,080 --> 00:02:16,940

and mother couldn't afford to buy us a lot of stuff and give it to us.

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00:02:16,940 --> 00:02:26,220

So I started out working for my neighbor across the street when I was fairly young.

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00:02:26,220 --> 00:02:31,960

All I did was take in the coal and haul out the ashes and I got a quarter a week.

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00:02:31,960 --> 00:02:41,900

That quarter would get me to a movie and buy me milkshake at that time. Later on when I was in high school,

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00:02:41,940 --> 00:02:51,500

I started working at an airport and the owner of the airport, Walt Chuy, he had a Piper Cub

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00:02:51,510 --> 00:02:58,770

and at this time in the early 40s, you had to hand crank them. They were not battery operated.

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00:02:58,770 --> 00:03:06,220

That was the first thing you had to learn. The other owner there had a Fairchild bi-wing, open cockpit

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00:03:06,220 --> 00:03:11,920

and I got ride in all of them. I'd work on weekends at the filling station and

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00:03:11,920 --> 00:03:16,260

several times I go out in the morning, open up the station, nothings happening.

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00:03:16,260 --> 00:03:20,501

Walt would come in and say "lock the door, let's you and I take a ride".

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00:03:20,501 --> 00:03:27,000

So we'd crank up the Piper Cub and fly around the city. By the time we got back there's be

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00:03:27,001 --> 00:03:31,281

six or eight cars there and all the fellows came out for hangar talk.

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00:03:31,281 --> 00:03:35,921

So I have a love of airplanes early and I never have lost it.

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00:03:35,921 --> 00:03:45,280

Okay, so you said you had seven siblings? Did they serve at all in the military?

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00:03:45,280 --> 00:03:50,360

My older brother Ed was in the Army and he served the South Pacific.

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00:03:50,360 --> 00:03:54,800

My younger brother served in the Navy.

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00:03:54,800 --> 00:03:59,120

My older sister was a nurse at Camp Atterbury, Indiana

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00:03:59,120 --> 00:04:06,280

and my younger sister was a cadet. Yes, I think five of us were active in the service at one time.

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00:04:06,280 --> 00:04:11,100

So not one star out the door, Mother had five. [laughing]

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00:04:11,100 --> 00:04:14,940

Alright, so what were you doing before you entered the service?

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00:04:14,940 --> 00:04:21,520

I started working at a printing company and I worked for them until I went in the war.

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00:04:21,520 --> 00:04:28,460

I went into service. Then when I came out of service, I went back and worked for him again

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00:04:28,460 --> 00:04:32,620

and one day -- union shop -- one day the boss comes by and says "George, you're

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00:04:32,620 --> 00:04:39,520

doing a good job, I'm going to give you your raise". Payday came, I looked at that paycheck and I looked at it.

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00:04:39,520 --> 00:04:46,720

He gave me a penny. A nickel at that time would have been fantastic and a dime would have been extra good.

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00:04:46,720 --> 00:04:51,520

So I was complaining at the local pub one night to some of the fellows and

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00:04:51,520 --> 00:04:54,540

they said "come down to the OPS", which later

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00:04:54,540 --> 00:04:59,280

became the Ohio Edison Company and they were selling appliances.

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00:04:59,280 --> 00:05:04,440

I went down the next day and applied and they hired me on the site, on the first time interviewed.

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00:05:04,440 --> 00:05:10,500

I went to work the next day and I finally, after selling appliances,

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00:05:10,540 --> 00:05:15,700

I moved up in charge of the department and worked out of Mansfield for six years

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00:05:15,700 --> 00:05:18,740

in charge the sales and service department.

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00:05:18,740 --> 00:05:22,630

Then the company went out of the appliance business and I was fortunate to be

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00:05:22,630 --> 00:05:27,479

transferred to Springfield and spent my next 13 years working it in the marketing

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00:05:27,480 --> 00:05:40,060

department in there at Springfield, a total of 38 years with the Ohio Edison Company and very enjoyable.

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00:05:40,060 --> 00:05:47,000

Okay, so you were in the Army. Were you active duty or guard or reserve?

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00:05:47,000 --> 00:05:58,080

I was drafted into the service at that time

and it's called the Army Air Corps and

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00:05:58,080 --> 00:06:06,080

I went down to Dayton, Ohio to join the Army Air Corps. They said "come back in two weeks and we'll take you".

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00:06:06,080 --> 00:06:13,060

I got home, opened the mailbox, guess what? I was drafted. [laughing] and we went to Akron,

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00:06:13,060 --> 00:06:18,400

had a physical and the old story goes, if you were warm, you passed. what up your

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00:06:18,400 --> 00:06:25,660

Put up right hand and you were sworn into the military. They sent you home for two weeks to take care of personal business.

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00:06:25,660 --> 00:06:30,000

Now, at 22, how long does it take a 22 year old

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00:06:30,010 --> 00:06:35,250

to take care of business? I gave my mother the power of attorney and I sold my car

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00:06:35,280 --> 00:06:41,600

and two weeks later we were off to Columbus, Ohio where we got our uniforms and then to

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00:06:41,600 --> 00:06:48,420

Camp Atterbury, Indiana for basic training and that was in the Fall of the year

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00:06:48,420 --> 00:06:54,560

and I was only there for a short period of time. We took tests and we took... went to

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00:06:54,570 --> 00:06:59,450

the hospital got all the shots that the military gives you and in short order,

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00:06:59,450 --> 00:07:05,070

I got orders to go to Lincoln, Nebraska to take the aircraft mechanics school.

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00:07:05,070 --> 00:07:15,380

Excellent school ran by civilians. I graduated with good grades and from there I went to Salt Lake City for assignment.

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00:07:15,380 --> 00:07:21,040

They said "we need gunners" and if you graduate and start flying,

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00:07:21,050 --> 00:07:28,360

you get 50% more base pay. So I said "well let's go for the money". So off I go to Wendover Field, Utah

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00:07:28,360 --> 00:07:33,980

and I passed that. We fired everything that the military owned at that time,

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00:07:33,980 --> 00:07:38,900

from small arm fires, even guards even fired the old Springfield rifle, then

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00:07:38,910 --> 00:07:44,020

finally 30 calibers and 50 calibers like you see here on the counter.

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00:07:44,020 --> 00:07:49,940

So I had a good basic training to start with.

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00:07:49,950 --> 00:07:55,380

Okay, so how do you feel then, overall how you adapted to military life?

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00:07:55,380 --> 00:08:01,780

Well, I think the first thing you learn at Camp Atterbury was you learn how to march.

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00:08:01,780 --> 00:08:06,980

The second thing you learn is discipline and that's the most important thing

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00:08:06,980 --> 00:08:10,720

in the military. At that stage I thought a corporal was a general,

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00:08:10,730 --> 00:08:16,340
but then I found out later that he
wasn't, but I made tech sergeant and I wasn't any

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00:08:16,380 --> 00:08:23,620
more ranked than the Corporal was at that
time, but you adapt to the military very quickly

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00:08:23,620 --> 00:08:28,300
and I did, I think.

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00:08:28,300 --> 00:08:32,520
So did you serve abroad?

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00:08:32,520 --> 00:08:42,240
In... we... after gunnery school we went back to Salt Lake City

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00:08:42,240 --> 00:08:47,420
and then we went to Sioux City, Iowa and
that's where ten people came

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00:08:47,430 --> 00:08:54,140
together to form a crew on the B-24. We
started training there day and night and

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00:08:54,140 --> 00:09:00,110
right after we had trained there for
quite a long period of time, we ended up

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00:09:00,110 --> 00:09:05,760
in Pocatello, Idaho where we done
air-to-ground firing from the B-24

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00:09:05,760 --> 00:09:11,160
and one day we got... the pilot got
notice that they were transferring

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00:09:11,170 --> 00:09:17,060
three of our crews into Sioux City,
where they had lost three crews in training

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00:09:17,060 --> 00:09:21,720
So we were on a train and pretty

soon we're in Sioux City and that's when we

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00:09:21,720 --> 00:09:30,320

walk in the 703rd squadron and this is where I met my squadron CO for the first time.

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00:09:30,320 --> 00:09:34,880

Jimmy Stewart was our CO. The only thing I'll say about him,

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00:09:34,880 --> 00:09:41,840

he was a squadron commander, he was a bomber pilot, he was not an actor, he never permitted

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00:09:41,840 --> 00:09:47,560

professional photographers to follow him around the base and take pictures. I'm fortunate, I took

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00:09:47,560 --> 00:09:54,660

this picture overseas at Tibenham in March of 1944 and he was very gracious to the people

98

00:09:54,660 --> 00:09:59,840

that served with and under him. So I'm happy to have that picture.

99

00:09:59,840 --> 00:10:06,880

But, after we had finished our training we went to Lincoln, Nebraska

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00:10:06,880 --> 00:10:13,480

and it was in November of 1943 and they issued machetes.

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00:10:13,520 --> 00:10:20,000

I said "well, I guess we're going South". So we island hopped all the way down to South America.

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00:10:20,000 --> 00:10:23,280

The only thing I could remember about being in South America,

103

00:10:23,280 --> 00:10:30,480

it's the last time I had bananas until I got home again. Fresh food was almost a forbidden bit

104

00:10:30,480 --> 00:10:34,520
in England, no apples, no
peaches, no bananas, no nothing.

105

00:10:34,520 --> 00:10:40,780
But we Hopped off from there and went over to Africa at Dakar.

106

00:10:40,780 --> 00:10:44,560
The from there up to Marrakesh in North African

107

00:10:44,560 --> 00:10:50,040
and then into England and to our base in TBenham. Thirteen days from the
time we

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00:10:50,050 --> 00:10:58,880
left stateside until we ended up at our
base and there we met our.. the Colonel of the base.

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00:10:58,880 --> 00:11:04,880
The Colonel was, his name was Colonel
Terrell. He had the wings, the star, and the reef,

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00:11:04,880 --> 00:11:09,960
5,000 flying hours. He was an old timer in the Air Corps

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00:11:09,960 --> 00:11:14,880
and an excellent pilot. I had the opportunity to fly with him on a few
occasions.

112

00:11:14,880 --> 00:11:24,840
So after some more training in England, on December 13th, 1943 we made
our first mission in

113

00:11:24,840 --> 00:11:33,900
Haphazard, our airplane, to Kiel, Germany
and returned safely. [laughing]

114

00:11:33,900 --> 00:11:37,260
So what were your duties while you were deployed?

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00:11:37,260 --> 00:11:38,760
I don't get that one?

116

00:11:38,760 --> 00:11:42,000

So what were your duties while deployed?

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00:11:42,000 --> 00:11:47,759

I was the engineer gunner on the B-24 and I was from the old school.

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00:11:47,759 --> 00:11:54,019

I liked to pre-plate that airplane myself. First mission I flew, I crawled up on the wings

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00:11:54,019 --> 00:11:59,860

to check our gas tanks and the first sergeant in charge of the aircraft on the ground

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00:11:59,860 --> 00:12:05,740

says "George, I've already checked the tanks, they're full". I said "yes, but I'm flying it".

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00:12:05,740 --> 00:12:11,980

They were never sealed and I visually made sure that we had 3,000 gallons in our main tank

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00:12:11,980 --> 00:12:14,600

and 250 in our auxiliary tanks.

123

00:12:14,600 --> 00:12:19,040

Now, we had sight gauges inside, but I wanted to make sure that we had enough

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00:12:19,050 --> 00:12:23,750

gas for the mission, because some of them were ten hours or more.

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00:12:23,750 --> 00:12:33,149

You need all the gas that you had and first thing you learn when you're off, your

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00:12:33,149 --> 00:12:37,880

getting information before you fly overseas, fly over to the continent,

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00:12:37,880 --> 00:12:45,500

the first thing you learn is you transfer that gas from the auxiliary tank to main tank before you start into the combat area.

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00:12:45,500 --> 00:12:49,880

Some of the guys had later on came back. They ran out of gas.

129

00:12:49,880 --> 00:12:55,460

They had auxiliary gas, but they couldn't get to it, because flack had shot out their electrical system.

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00:12:55,460 --> 00:13:00,520

so I always like to make this statement: you learn by the book,

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00:13:00,520 --> 00:13:10,680

but boy, experience takes over pretty soon and I don't care what you do, experience is your final teacher.

132

00:13:10,680 --> 00:13:16,100

Did you witness any combat?

133

00:13:16,100 --> 00:13:18,100

[laughing]

134

00:13:18,100 --> 00:13:20,500

Is there anything you'd like to share?

135

00:13:20,500 --> 00:13:27,800

When I start by the 1943, the fighters would take us to the Channel and turn around and go home.

136

00:13:27,800 --> 00:13:31,520

They didn't have enough gas to take you to the target.

137

00:13:31,520 --> 00:13:38,880

Well we were up to about our tenth mission before they finally... P-51s and 47s

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00:13:38,880 --> 00:13:45,780

got belly tanks and could take you over the target. Did you see enemy fighters? Pardon my french,

139

00:13:45,790 --> 00:13:53,760

hell yes. On our second mission we were hit by Ju 88s. Combat became an old hat to all of us

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00:13:53,760 --> 00:14:00,720

and primarily ME-109s was the favorite of the Germans. They had a habit

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00:14:00,720 --> 00:14:10,100

of that coming out of the Sun high so you learned to know where they were and you learned to take care of yourself

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00:14:10,100 --> 00:14:16,160

and you learned to shoot at them. When I shot at them there was probably three or four more airplanes shooting at the same time.

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00:14:16,160 --> 00:14:19,940

But we've seen a lot of combat.

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00:14:19,940 --> 00:14:28,800

So what kind of friendships and camaraderie did you form while serving and anyone in particular that you remember?

145

00:14:28,800 --> 00:14:36,980

Well the main thing you learn in a hurry is ten people become one on the crew.

146

00:14:36,980 --> 00:14:44,840

Our pilot was an old man, he was 37. The rest of us were all in the 22 or 23 years of age.

147

00:14:44,840 --> 00:14:52,540

The radio operator and I probably became the best of friends of all of them. He was from Binginton, New York,

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00:14:52,540 --> 00:15:01,160

the pilot was from Florida, copilot was from Arkansas, two of us was from Ohio... oh the bombardier was an [inaudible]

149

00:15:01,170 --> 00:15:07,000

All he had to do was open his mouth and you knew where he was from and

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00:15:07,000 --> 00:15:15,500

The tail gunner was from Alabama and we had one from North Carolina. So we were all over,

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00:15:15,500 --> 00:15:23,780

but the crew became one and we worked as a crew and and I think this is true of all the people that flew in combat.

152

00:15:23,780 --> 00:15:29,500

You had to work as a team to make it over and back safely and we did.

153

00:15:29,500 --> 00:15:34,760

Good. So how did you stay in touch with family and friends back home?

154

00:15:34,800 --> 00:15:39,600

Well at that time you could write letters or they had what they called email, electronically

155

00:15:39,600 --> 00:15:42,790

would be posted. You write it then it went home.

156

00:15:42,790 --> 00:15:50,010

You were heavily censored on anything you wrote. So I finally found out

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00:15:50,040 --> 00:15:54,200

writing to my mother, was about the only one I wrote to regular,

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00:15:54,200 --> 00:16:00,260

I told her "you ask a question of what missions I flew and what date I flew and then all I have to do is answer

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00:16:00,270 --> 00:16:04,490

yes or no". So I can get by the censors goes I could...

160

00:16:04,490 --> 00:16:08,930

I couldn't write down "I flew on such and such a date" they'd wipe it out immediately.

161

00:16:08,930 --> 00:16:14,920

So she'd ask questions and then all I had to do is answer "yes" or "no" to what dates I was flying.

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00:16:14,930 --> 00:16:22,510

So we could convey messages back and forth by yes and no, so.

163

00:16:22,510 --> 00:16:27,330

but my mother was the only one I corresponded to on a regular basis.

164

00:16:27,330 --> 00:16:34,040

When you went over, when you were flying, I think I said, you got 50% more base pay for flying.

165

00:16:34,040 --> 00:16:39,880

You got 20% more for being overseas. I sent fifty dollars home on every

166

00:16:39,880 --> 00:16:43,240

payday to my mother, because I wanted to buy a car when I got home.

167

00:16:43,240 --> 00:16:51,080

So the Army serves you almost everything you need as far as food.

168

00:16:51,080 --> 00:16:55,740

at that period of time we were all heavy smokers, but cigarettes were cheap.

169

00:16:55,740 --> 00:17:02,920

So we did smoke and had an excellent PX where you could get those lot time Red Cross would give them to you for nothing.

170

00:17:02,920 --> 00:17:07,200

So you didn't hurt for anything.

171

00:17:07,200 --> 00:17:11,840

Hmm. So what did you do when you were not on a mission?

172

00:17:11,840 --> 00:17:21,720

Well I flew in the upper turret. Usually I stood between the pilot and co-pilot until we got to the channel

173

00:17:21,720 --> 00:17:28,340

and then I would crawl up in my turret and it was a sit-down turret with an electronic sight and

174

00:17:28,340 --> 00:17:34,640

the first thing the pilot would have you all check in to make sure your system was all working.

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00:17:34,640 --> 00:17:40,960

We're flying at 18 - 20,000 feet, were at 30-40 below zero.

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00:17:40,960 --> 00:17:47,540

We all had heated suits on and he wanted... the pilot would check in to make sure your suits were working and

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00:17:47,550 --> 00:17:53,180

your communications was fine and that happen quite frequently, not just once,

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00:17:53,180 --> 00:17:57,790

but several times he called "check in" and it started with the navigator. bombardier,

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00:17:57,790 --> 00:18:06,140

and went right on back to the tail gunner to make sure you were all safe in the aircraft.

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00:18:06,140 --> 00:18:11,440

Okay, did you have any time for recreation while you were overseas?

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00:18:11,480 --> 00:18:18,900

When we came back from a mission

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00:18:18,900 --> 00:18:26,280

we would be debriefed. The flight sergeant would walk around and check with each crew

183

00:18:26,280 --> 00:18:30,780

and after you'd put in a few missions, the flight sergeant would say

184

00:18:30,780 --> 00:18:36,820

"I think you guys need a vacation, you've got five days coming". Well at first we went to London,

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00:18:36,820 --> 00:18:43,760

but everybody went to London, the place a crowded and I never stayed in the Red Cross facilities.

186

00:18:43,760 --> 00:18:50,400

We could stay at the Savoy Hotel for about five American bucks and have a private bath and so forth.

187

00:18:50,400 --> 00:18:56,720

So we always stayed there in the Air Corps and fortunately we had more money in anyone else, so.

188

00:18:56,720 --> 00:19:03,820

[lauging] And then finally, we started going to Scotland.

189

00:19:03,820 --> 00:19:11,140

What a beautiful place to go to Edinburgh, Scotland. The people just treated you royally.

190

00:19:11,140 --> 00:19:17,500

I could get a five day pass a cop and I had friends up a headquarters I get a

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00:19:17,500 --> 00:19:22,990

I could get a two-day pass on top of that and you got on the flight line and say

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00:19:22,990 --> 00:19:30,340

"who's flying in to Scotland?" and pretty soon you'd find a crew who is taking a training flight up to Prestwick, Scotland.

193

00:19:30,380 --> 00:19:33,440

So to you could fly that far and then take the train in.

194

00:19:33,440 --> 00:19:39,880

Your two day pass started when you were there. So we spent a lot of time in Scotland and I have some

195

00:19:39,880 --> 00:19:44,400

wonderful pictures that we took with the families that we met and the people we met.

196

00:19:44,410 --> 00:19:50,570

They just treated you fantastically. So that was our recreation, Scotland.

197

00:19:50,600 --> 00:19:58,340

Okay, so when it was time to come home, how did you feel about that?

198

00:19:58,340 --> 00:20:09,100

Well when I finished combat in June 27, 1944, some of the people that... crews that a had went home ahead of us

199

00:20:09,100 --> 00:20:12,840

were training on B-29s to go to Japan.

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00:20:12,840 --> 00:20:18,440

So the radio operator and I decided to stay overseas and

201

00:20:18,440 --> 00:20:24,140

wasn't long that a major came along and says "I need two guys to run the NCO club

202

00:20:24,140 --> 00:20:29,880

and I said "what happened to the two guys that were there before?" and he said "Well they're probably in prison by now".

203

00:20:29,880 --> 00:20:32,820

But we went down to the building they had,

204

00:20:32,820 --> 00:20:38,820

there was no whiskey, no beer, no money. We had slot machines.

205

00:20:38,820 --> 00:20:45,180

within a thirty day period we had all the beer and scotch they could drink

206

00:20:45,180 --> 00:20:54,980

and we ran, the radio operator and I ran that. We hired people to clean up, we hired a bookkeeper, we had a checking account

207

00:20:54,980 --> 00:20:59,320

and we ran it like a business and we done

that until the war was over

208

00:20:59,320 --> 00:21:04,860

They told us "well, when the war's are you've got to give everything you got to the Red Cross

209

00:21:04,860 --> 00:21:11,420

So as we approach that period of time, I went to London and bought all the scotch I could

210

00:21:11,420 --> 00:21:16,460

from the dealer and took it back and sold it to the fellows were

211

00:21:16,460 --> 00:21:26,720

members for \$0.50 a bottle and I still returns of empty bottles and soft drinks and barrels and...

212

00:21:26,720 --> 00:21:31,780

So we still had plenty of money to give to the Red Cross.

213

00:21:31,780 --> 00:21:36,780

Okay, so how did you return home?

214

00:21:36,780 --> 00:21:38,940

Can I tell you about this one mission?

215

00:21:38,940 --> 00:21:40,080

Umhmm.

216

00:21:40,080 --> 00:21:55,060

I have one mission I want to tell you story about and that's on 26th - 27th of February, 1944.

217

00:21:55,060 --> 00:22:00,040

We were flying this airplane nine yanks and a jerk and

218

00:22:00,040 --> 00:22:04,700

go ahead if you want to get a picture of it.

219

00:22:04,700 --> 00:22:14,560

we were coming off the target at Nuremberg. We took a an 88 shell up through the bomb bay, it missed me in the upper turret,

220

00:22:14,560 --> 00:22:24,740

it missed the radio operator sitting there, and it hit the armor plating behind the pilot and

221

00:22:24,740 --> 00:22:29,400

blew through the side. And if you look closely at the picture,

222

00:22:29,400 --> 00:22:36,100

you can see a hole is a side, you can see my parachute and shoes being blown out through that hole

223

00:22:36,100 --> 00:22:37,220

[laughing]

224

00:22:37,220 --> 00:22:44,340

and when got back to the channel, I crawled out and took a look at it.

225

00:22:44,340 --> 00:22:51,129

We lost our hydraulic system to the main wheel, we lost our communications to the waist.

226

00:22:51,129 --> 00:22:57,300

I carried a pair of pliers with me. I pinched off all the hydraulic lines going to the main wheel.

227

00:22:57,300 --> 00:23:05,080

Now in the front we had tanks, cumulative tanks. So I knew we had enough pressure brakes and flaps one time.

228

00:23:05,080 --> 00:23:13,600

So as we approached the airport the radio operator fires a red flare to give us preferential landing,

229

00:23:13,600 --> 00:23:18,580

I walk out into the bomb bay and there's a handle up overhead, 25 turns,

230

00:23:18,580 --> 00:23:23,600

the main wheel comes down, the waist

gunner goes thumbs up it's down and locked.

231

00:23:23,600 --> 00:23:31,320

I go out to the front to toss out that nose wheel. I weighted about 138 pounds at that time, it weighs several hundred

232

00:23:31,320 --> 00:23:36,960

it was several hundred I pitched it out it would not block so I told the pilot.

233

00:23:36,960 --> 00:23:42,380

On the ground it was Captain Williams, when we were flying it was Mac. I said "Mac, We've got a problem,

234

00:23:42,380 --> 00:23:47,440

so if you put any weight on that wheel, that airplane's going to collapse.

235

00:23:47,440 --> 00:23:50,380

He ordered everyone to the tail,

236

00:23:50,380 --> 00:23:58,560

he and the copilot brought that aircraft in on the main wheels, nose high, all the way down the runway,

237

00:23:58,560 --> 00:24:06,320

Turned off.. turned our [inaudible] it collapsed. Very little damage to the airplane whatsoever.

238

00:24:06,320 --> 00:24:14,840

First guy to greet us was our squadron commander; Jimmy Stewart comes up and says "want to make sure you were alright".

239

00:24:14,840 --> 00:24:20,340

Some of the guys got our and kissed the ground and I'm told later that he had the pilot

240

00:24:20,340 --> 00:24:26,800

went out and hung one on that night to celebrating that bringing that aircraft back and landing it safely.

241

00:24:26,800 --> 00:24:32,460
So that's about the only time that
we really had any serious problems flying,

242

00:24:32,460 --> 00:24:39,020
was on that particular aircraft, but you heard me say experience kicks
in.

243

00:24:39,020 --> 00:24:49,100
You learn in a hurry what to do when your flying combat and I'd like to
say that, if you can land safely and walk away, it's a good landing.

244

00:24:49,100 --> 00:24:52,160
I walked away thirty times.

245

00:24:52,160 --> 00:25:03,220
There you go. Okay, so when you came home how were you received by your
family and the community?

246

00:25:03,220 --> 00:25:07,160
Well probably not as bad as the Vietnam war, but

247

00:25:07,160 --> 00:25:17,320
there was no big celebrations whatsoever. I
flew into...

248

00:25:17,320 --> 00:25:23,080
The war was over and I said "am I taking the boat home?" They said "no,
you're flying"

249

00:25:23,080 --> 00:25:29,780
Went up to Prestwick, Scotland, had a B-24 there. Five man crew crawled
aboard,

250

00:25:29,780 --> 00:25:35,380
ten passengers. We flew the northern route home. We were supposed to go
into Massachusetts,

251

00:25:35,380 --> 00:25:38,740
but they were too busy. So we
landed at Bangor, Maine.

252

00:25:38,740 --> 00:25:44,960

What a beautiful sight to land in the United States at a place where there's beautiful pine trees,

253

00:25:44,960 --> 00:25:51,940

nice weather, and a PX where you get milkshakes and get a good cold beer for a change.

254

00:25:51,940 --> 00:25:55,380

And then from there, went to Massachusetts.

255

00:25:55,380 --> 00:26:04,300

We were sent home for our thirty day vacation and then I went back in to Camp Atterbury and

256

00:26:04,300 --> 00:26:08,820

at that point and time in the service you had points to get out. I had bucko points

257

00:26:08,820 --> 00:26:14,800

and they said "well let's see, you're an engineer and a gunner. We may need you".

258

00:26:14,800 --> 00:26:22,300

Sent me to Florida for thirty days vacation at Miami Beach and from there they finally sent me out to

259

00:26:22,300 --> 00:26:27,160

Liberal, Kansas in the middle of nothing. They said there's a girl behind every tree

260

00:26:27,160 --> 00:26:31,220

and there wasn't a tree within a hundred miles of that place. [laughing]

261

00:26:31,220 --> 00:26:40,620

Anyhow, I was there until Lawrence Tibbets dropped the bomb over in Japan and the war ended very quickly after then.

262

00:26:40,620 --> 00:26:46,200

We had birds in the air that night or that day and soon as the word

263

00:26:46,210 --> 00:26:51,880

was announced on TV and all the guys ran and we were in a dry area, but I've never

264

00:26:51,880 --> 00:27:00,080

seen so much whiskey come out of trunks in my life. All the crew took off. I said "hey, we've got airplanes up there that we've go to get down".

265

00:27:00,080 --> 00:27:07,980

I was working on the ground crew at that time. So I stayed until we got the birds back on the ground safely

266

00:27:07,980 --> 00:27:11,340

and the next day I go to headquarters and I said "you know,

267

00:27:11,340 --> 00:27:18,000

they're going be discharging us very soon. You think you can get my name to the top the list?" and they did.

268

00:27:18,000 --> 00:27:25,000

So in short order I was heading back to Camp Atterbury and then home from there.

269

00:27:25,000 --> 00:27:29,260

Okay so how did you readjust to civilian life?

270

00:27:29,260 --> 00:27:39,900

You know I don't... They talk about that today. I don't think we had any serious problem that I know of.

271

00:27:39,900 --> 00:27:46,760

It's just like they say "were you scared when you were flying?" No. I'm just like the kids today.

272

00:27:46,760 --> 00:27:51,800

You're going to live forever. Nothing's going to happen to you and that's way we were.

273

00:27:51,800 --> 00:27:59,920

Unfortunately, the Air Corps had the highest percentage loss of any of the groups overseas.

274

00:27:59,920 --> 00:28:11,960

In early February of '43, on one mission we lost sixty bombers and that's times ten. So you can see the losses were tremendous

275

00:28:11,960 --> 00:28:22,240

in our period of time. I knock on wood, I'm still here. I made my thirty missions and I came back safely

276

00:28:22,240 --> 00:28:29,220

and I thank that good guy upstairs every day for each day I have on this good earth.

277

00:28:29,220 --> 00:28:37,580

Okay, so have you remained in contact with any any of your fellow veterans over there?

278

00:28:37,580 --> 00:28:45,700

I was in contact with the radio operator for a long period of time and I visited him in his home in New York City

279

00:28:45,700 --> 00:28:52,240

or Binghamton, NY, pardon me and also when he went to Florida, I visited him down in Florida.

280

00:28:52,240 --> 00:28:57,920

I call by Florida or I called my pilot once and he was supposed to meet us

281

00:28:57,930 --> 00:29:01,870

at the Hilton Head for a meeting. He didn't come and I call him.

282

00:29:01,870 --> 00:29:06,690

I said "you still smoking those damn camels?" and he said "yeah, it's too late to quit"

283

00:29:06,720 --> 00:29:14,740

and it was too late, because it wasn't long, he was gone. I am the only survivor of our crew. The rest of them are all gone.

284

00:29:14,740 --> 00:29:21,380

So at 95 I'm lucky I'm still here.

285

00:29:21,380 --> 00:29:25,560

So are you a member of any veterans organizations?

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00:29:25,560 --> 00:29:30,300

I've been a member of the American Legion for sixty-nine years.

287

00:29:30,300 --> 00:29:34,040

I was post commander. It takes three years to get there.

288

00:29:34,040 --> 00:29:40,660

I went into district and was active in the district. That's ten counties in northern Ohio

289

00:29:40,660 --> 00:29:45,120

and I tried to visit every post in that area at least once.

290

00:29:45,120 --> 00:29:54,980

Then some areas like Mansfield, Sandusky, and Elyria I was there many many times. you swore in the new officers when they came aboard.

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00:29:54,980 --> 00:30:01,260

I've had the opportunities to speak at Memorial Day and I've had the opportunity on Veterans Day.

292

00:30:01,260 --> 00:30:06,480

This being quite frequently. So yes I've been busy. [laughing]

293

00:30:06,480 --> 00:30:12,520

After that, one day, my wife was still working. She worked for the Yellow Springs Instrument Company and on day I said

294

00:30:12,520 --> 00:30:17,420

"boy, there's got to be something to do besides play golf and mow the lawn.

295

00:30:17,430 --> 00:30:24,420

I started going to elder hostel programs, educational programs held throughout the United States.

296

00:30:24,420 --> 00:30:29,420

I've attended twenty-four of those programs from Detroit to Washington, D.C.

297

00:30:29,420 --> 00:30:39,280

to Florida couple of times and Kentucky and Texas and Arizona. So I've been all over

298

00:30:39,280 --> 00:30:44,640

and now my wife went with me on the last one to Savannah, Georgia.

299

00:30:44,640 --> 00:30:51,080

So yes, I've been busy and I think that's the way you've got to live and have a long life. You can't sit in a chair and rock.

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00:30:51,080 --> 00:30:56,060

You've got to get up and move around and do something, every day.

301

00:30:56,060 --> 00:31:01,680

Okay, so how are you a part of the Dayton Honor Flight?

302

00:31:01,680 --> 00:31:10,260

I was there when they dedicated the World War II Memorial. My son and daughter took me there.

303

00:31:10,260 --> 00:31:15,100

the only problem is there was 100,000 people there and you couldn't see nothing.

304

00:31:15,100 --> 00:31:21,440

So five years ago I got the opportunity to go on an Honor Flight and a young lady I bet there

305

00:31:21,440 --> 00:31:26,400

was escorting us around and I said "what are you doing in Washington D.C.?"

306

00:31:26,440 --> 00:31:32,840

She says "I'm taking graduate work". I said "well were did you graduate from?" She says "Bowling Green".

307

00:31:32,840 --> 00:31:37,340

I said "oh my goodness, my son and daughter both graduated from Bowling Green".

308

00:31:37,340 --> 00:31:43,740

So we hit it off real well. She escorted me around that place and she knew everything

309

00:31:43,740 --> 00:31:49,120

there was to know about that World War II Memorial. We even got down to...

310

00:31:49,120 --> 00:31:55,120

We seen the whole bit that they have here and if you walk outside and down into a hole,

311

00:31:55,120 --> 00:32:03,980

you can see where Kilroy was here. A lot of people go and don't see Kilroy, but he is there on a wall. So yes,

312

00:32:03,980 --> 00:32:10,640

I've been to Honor Flight and then when you come home, they give you a certificate, your family is there

313

00:32:10,640 --> 00:32:19,180

there's a band there, there's an honor guard there, you're treated royally, more than you were when you left the service.

314

00:32:19,180 --> 00:32:20,300

Good.

315

00:32:20,300 --> 00:32:22,840

I have one bit of trivia when you're all done.

316

00:32:22,840 --> 00:32:31,780

Okay. Alright, so how did your wartime experiences affect your life?

317

00:32:31,780 --> 00:32:37,340

Well it makes you more aware of every day that you're here

318

00:32:37,340 --> 00:32:42,620

that God has given you permission to be here and to fulfill your life to

319

00:32:42,630 --> 00:32:50,320

its fullest everyday that you're here. War experience, a lot of people have a problem with it, but I don't.

320

00:32:50,320 --> 00:33:00,760

I love talking about the service that I was in, I'm prod of what I've done in the service. So, don't bother me one iota.

321

00:33:00,760 --> 00:33:04,720

So what are some life lessons you learned from your military service?

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00:33:04,720 --> 00:33:05,900

I didn't hear that.

323

00:33:05,900 --> 00:33:11,500

What are some life lessons you learned from your service?

324

00:33:11,500 --> 00:33:16,950

Well the first thing you learn is discipline and you learn how to do things and complete

325

00:33:16,950 --> 00:33:23,190

your message or whatever you're doing. Military service is good and

326

00:33:23,190 --> 00:33:27,540

I've always advocated that every kid that graduates out of high school ought to have

327

00:33:27,540 --> 00:33:32,839

at least three to six months in military service. They would learn discipline in a hurry

328

00:33:32,840 --> 00:33:38,860

and we wouldn't have some of the problems that were to having today with young people.

329

00:33:38,860 --> 00:33:50,960

So how has your military service impacted your feelings about war and the military in general?

330

00:33:50,960 --> 00:33:59,780

I've got to be careful how I answer this one. [laughing] During the war we had people that knew what they were doing.

331

00:33:59,780 --> 00:34:04,300

We had generals like Patten, who was famous for moving into moving

332

00:34:04,310 --> 00:34:09,580

his tanks across the country. We had a general like Eisenhower that was famous

333

00:34:09,580 --> 00:34:14,760

for what he done, squadron commander like Jimmy Stewart that knew what he was doing, and our

334

00:34:14,760 --> 00:34:22,960

squadron leader. Quite different that what we have today.

335

00:34:22,960 --> 00:34:31,640

Got ya. What message would you like to leave for future generations who will watch this interview?

336

00:34:31,640 --> 00:34:45,440

Well, I think primarily young people today got to stop and realize what happened in World War II.

337

00:34:45,440 --> 00:34:50,560

I like to tell them when I finish the speech out here to the young people,

338

00:34:50,560 --> 00:34:54,560

What would have happen if Japan had won the war?

339

00:34:54,560 --> 00:35:01,680

What would have happened if Germany would've won the war? If you were even here today, what would this country be like?

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00:35:01,680 --> 00:35:06,840

Be proud of this country, protected it, love it, and do anything you do.

341

00:35:06,840 --> 00:35:15,460

If you have to go into service, do so gladly and take care of this American flag that flies behind us.

342

00:35:15,460 --> 00:35:19,280

I cherish that flag and I

343

00:35:19,280 --> 00:35:27,280

tell a little story of Johnny Cash's about this
American flag and I've read it many times to the groups out here

344

00:35:27,280 --> 00:35:33,300

and it finishes very simple: "we raise it up every morning, we bring it
down every night,

345

00:35:33,300 --> 00:35:42,180

we fold it up right, we never let it touch the
ground, I'm proud of that old American flag.

346

00:35:42,180 --> 00:35:46,860

Is there anything you feel like we haven't discussed or should be added
to this interview?

347

00:35:46,860 --> 00:35:55,440

Yes, let me say one thing, it's a trivial question.

348

00:35:55,440 --> 00:36:02,320

You've seen the firing squad? They fire three volleys,

349

00:36:02,330 --> 00:36:09,220

they call it the twenty-one gun salute. If you've been to Arlington
Cemetery, you've seen the soldier march

350

00:36:09,220 --> 00:36:17,200

across the front of that platform, twenty-one steps one way, twenty-one
steps back.

351

00:36:17,200 --> 00:36:29,880

The signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1767, one-seven-six-
seven, twenty-one.

352

00:36:29,880 --> 00:36:30,760

Oh.

353

00:36:30,760 --> 00:36:32,080

That's my trivia for today.

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00:36:32,080 --> 00:36:38,300

Okay. [laughing] Alright, well that concludes our interview and thank you for your service, sir.

355

00:36:38,300 --> 00:36:42,080

And I thank you very much for the opportunity to talk to you.