

## Robert Finley

Tape 2 of 2

**Answer:** Mimi and my wife were born just a few days apart so they became very close friends. She visited us over here several -- several times, and we visited her over there. And my wife, about ten years ago, was dying of cancer. And Mimi -- Mimi and my wife were born the same year, same month, just a few days apart. So every Sunday Mimi would call from Belgium to see how dear Barbara was. And so finally I had to tell her that Barbara had died. And I didn't hear anymore from her until later. I got the word that, on her birthday, the following September, her sister took her down to Brussels or down to Louvain, to buy her a birthday present, and on the way back they were in an automobile accident and Mimi was killed. So Mimi and Barbara were born the same year and died the same.

**Question:** Pretty hard, huh?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** So when you got back home, did -- your mother was still --

**Answer:** Still what?

**Question:** Your mother was fearfully waiting for you?

**Answer:** Oh, she was relieved, of course, yes. I think all mothers were. And fathers. Oh, that was kind of a funny thing, too. I -- my wife and I were there and one day my father motioned me, he says come in here. Went into the bedroom, and he says, he had kind of a smile on his face. He says, I don't know what this is, but he says, you've got a letter from Belgium and it looks like some girl's handwriting. And it was from Mimi.

**Question:** Thought you had a girlfriend.

**Answer:** Yeah. He thought that -- (laughs) you know how men are, you know. So I explained to him that she was just -- she was the interpreter for me. And so he says well I wasn't sure, I didn't want to cause any problem. (laughs)

**Question:** Did -- what do you think was the hardest thing about your time in the service?

**Answer:** Oh, I enjoyed it. I -- I thought it was great.

**Question:** Wasn't anything that was just --

**Answer:** Oh, you know, GIs gripe about different things, but I think the -- oh, I don't know. You just learn -- I learned a lot of things, you know, that's a very impressionable age anyway. And I enjoyed what I was doing and I griped just like everybody else, but all in all, I was -- I was pretty happy doing what I was doing.

**Question:** Is there anything that you think that history left out about the war and about that time?

**Answer:** That history left out, you mean?

**Question:** That's not in the history books.

**Answer:** Well, you know, there were how many million men in the service? There area million stories that haven't been told. Or have been told. I don't know that there's anything of any consequence that hasn't been -- but each one has an experience, or a series of

## Robert Finley

Tape 2 of 2

experiences that -- it makes up the individual, you know, later on. It's part of our -- it's like what we learned in school and what we learned in the service or what we learn in marriage or what we learned in our business life, it's all a part of our make-up.

**Question:** So in that time of your life you made friends for your life or --

**Answer:** Well these -- these Blue Flames, as I say, we're closer than brothers.

**Question:** And Mimi and --

**Answer:** We're going to meet -- I wrote a letter to them last night. I think it would be nice if we each chipped in about 20 bucks or and buy some flowers and send them to the wives --

**Question:** The ones that aren't there anymore.

**Answer:** (Nods head yes).

**Question:** Is -- is that bond that you have with the Blue Flames -- have you ever had a connection like that with a group of people since --

**Answer:** I have a -- I have a very good friend that we started grade school together and we've remained friends all of our life and that -- it's a real tight bond. But nothing like the Blue Flames.

**Question:** I just hear different veterans say that they'll see somebody and whether it was their unit or another unit, they see a patch or a hat, they don't even have to say anything -- that there's some unique bond in there that -- that a lot of us will never, ever experience.

**Answer:** Yeah, that's right.

**Question:** Do you have anything you wanted to say to your -- the kids that haven't been born yet or grandchildren about your life and the times and what you did and --

**Answer:** Well, I've enjoyed my life.

**Question:** Do you think there's a message in what you did as a young man during World War I -- or II, and what the country did for future generations that they should know?

**Answer:** Well, I think -- I think that our -- our age group was ... we came up through the depression, you know, and I think maybe that has had a bearing on us. And then I -- I don't know. I'm sure that the fellows that were in the Korean War and were in the Gulf and so forth have similar experiences and -- and -- I'm sure that they did the job well. I can't think of anything that -- that we did that was so spectacular, you know. We did what needed to be done. And -- I don't know what else to say.

**Question:** That's quite a message just in itself, though.

**Question:** What do you think when you see the American flag go by? What does that mean to you?

**Answer:** Well, I ... I respect it. And I -- I hate to see these guys wearing it. (laughs) As clothing. It means something.

## Robert Finley

Tape 2 of 2

**Question:** Does your time in Europe fighting the enemy and you were telling me before we started this that you were in a writing class, and was it your instructor that turned to the group and said that your the only person that's ever killed anybody in the room?

**Answer:** Yeah, that's -- one night he says, you know, I think Bob here is the only one who's ever killed anybody.

**Question:** Did that surprise you?

**Answer:** Yes, it did. It kind of shocked me. And -- I -- yeah, that was -- kind of caught me up short, you know. (laughs)

**Question:** So you had to think about that? That --

**Answer:** Well, I -- you know, when you're -- you don't -- you don't see the death that you -- you cause, normally, in the work that we were doing. Now if you're -- if you're in a dogfight and you shoot somebody down, you know that. But, say, we didn't -- we didn't really run into planes dog fighting much in the mission that we were doing. But one day I was -- it was at -- crossing the Rhine River. We just got a foothold across the Rhine. And so our mission was to go out. We had three or four different possible targets to go to -- we had quite a triangular run to make. And the order was that any moving stock going toward the front was fair game. Could be horse-drawn wagons. They used to -- they brought ammunition, you know, under hay -- hay wagons. Or any kind of movements of trucks or anything going toward the front was fair game. So I had my flight out this one day, there were four, four of us. And I noticed a truck going down the highway. So I called it in and I peeled off and went down and the truck came up to a "Y" in the road and stopped right there at the "Y". And it was a -- a beautiful target for me because I could just run my sight right up that road and when I get to a certain point I drop my bombs and I know the bombs are going -- where they're going to go. So I dropped my bombs and I pulled off to one side and looked down and that whole intersection was just completely obliterated. So I -- I must have bracketed that truck. So I must have killed at least the driver. There might have been other things in there. I don't know whether there was ammunition or whether it was personnel or whatever it was, but I know I must have killed somebody that day. If -- if -- if no one else, you know. But that -- that was my mission and that was what I did.

**Question:** You enjoyed your -- sounds like you enjoyed the people that you were working with --

**Answer:** I did. Yeah. It was -- I, I, you know, people say you mean you enjoyed killing? No.

**Question:** You enjoyed the people --

**Answer:** I enjoyed getting the job done that needed to be done.

**Question:** And you made lots of friends along the way it sounds like.

**Answer:** Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, especially these nine fellows are real close friends, you know.

**Question:** Will you ever go back to Europe one last time, do you think or --

## Robert Finley

Tape 2 of 2

**Answer:** Oh, I've been over there several times.

**Question:** Have you been there since Mimi passed away?

**Answer:** I haven't been there since Mimi passed away, no. No, I -- I was in the travel business, you see, so I got a chance to travel all over the world. I've been to, oh, about a hundred countries, island groups.

**Question:** Have you ever talked to any -- anyone on the other side that might have taken a shot at you?

**Answer:** Matter of fact, I did. (laughs) I was -- I was on a trip to Guam, I think it was Guam. And we had a -- a German anti-aircraft -- he was a travel agent. And he -- there was one other fellow there, what did he do? But anyway, I think he was in the Infantry. American Infantry. And I was in the Air Corps. This German was in the tanks so we went out one evening and had a party together, the three of us. It was great.

**Question:** Well, very nice to meet you.

**Answer:** Nice to meet you, too. I hope you got all you need.

**Question:** Oh, very interesting.