

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

**Question:** There you go. Okay, so start with your name and branch and --

**Answer:** My name is Wally Hoffman and I was in the US Army Air Force and I was attached to the 8th Air Force in England. I went through pilot training and I was a -- a captain when I came home.

**Question:** What -- when did you enlist? What was going on? War had already started? War hadn't started?

**Answer:** Actually I enlisted from the standpoint, really, I was taking what was called a program of civilian pilot training. And I was in -- and in taking that you also agreed to sign up either for the Navy or the Army Aviation. I was interested in furthering my flight experiences and from that standpoint this looked like an excellent opportunity. Like I suppose everybody at that time in life -- I was gung-ho, and kid could visualize myself as being a hot shot fighter pilot, which I never became. (laughs)

**Question:** What did you do? What was your position?

**Answer:** I was a pilot. I was classified as a multi-engine pilot. And went through pilot training. In fact I even went through single engine advanced which was supposedly would lead to going to fighters. The half of my class went to Luke Field to end up in P-47's. The other half, of which I was in, went to Panama City for transition on B-17's. I took advances in an AT-6. (laughs) And I jumped from an AT-6 to a B-17 in one step. (laughs)

**Question:** So what's it like to fly a big bird like that?

**Answer:** Well, it depends on the plane. The B-17's a very forgiving plane. It's in essence an easy plane to fly as long as you stay within the perimeters. Flying is no different than your basic flying. It's no different than flying your little single engine puddle jumpers. The same characteristics are there and the flight characteristics, except as you go to the larger planes your perimeter closes down on you and you're less -- and there's less things that you can do but under very controlled situations.

**Question:** Now were you ever shot down?

**Answer:** I wasn't shot down. We landed in the Channel and we bailed out a couple times.

**Question:** So you had a couple of different ladies that you flew over there. Not all of them came home with you.

**Answer:** No. Like many others, many times we had our -- our hydraulic system shot out, or else we couldn't get our gear down. We landed at one place which was almost a two-mile long runway if you had no brakes and you used it all. But the other thing is if you'd make a wheels-up landing, you'd come in on your belly. And you -- they always used a grass strip for that. You don't know what shrieking is until you come in like that. The metal itself in the plane just groans and shrieks right above your earphones.

**Question:** And you said you also put one down in the Channel?

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** What -- what was that like? What happened?

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

**Answer:** Well, they -- we'd been to Berlin and we'd had our -- we lost -- got holed in the outboard gas tanks, which didn't catch fire, which is unusual. And we just plain ran out of gas. We'd thrown everything out and then -- hopefully you get home. We got as far as the Channel and -- and that was the end of it. We had some people on board that were severely wounded. And so we dumped in the Channel. I'd say that the B-17 will stay afloat probably about two minutes. We pulled the -- the -- there's a compartment right above the -- on the left hand side of the plane that holds a raft. And we pulled that and there's Co2 cylinders will fill it. We pumped that open, and out of the crew there was four of us that got out. We were only in the water, probably at the most, I'd say about 35 to minutes to 45 minutes. We were picked up by Air Sea Rescue. We had already alerted the RAF and they were circling us as we came in and dumped down. We were very fortunate. There's many people that ditched in the Channel would float out there for 24 to 36 hours and many of them ended up back in occupied territory. I can still feel the cold water of the Channel. You think the Sound is cold. You should try going in the Channel in the wintertime. (laughs)

**Question:** Now when -- for you, we talked a little bit earlier with Bill about his thoughts. You've got this plane, you have a crew of, what, seven, eight?

**Answer:** We had a crew of ten or a crew of nine. If you -- part of the time you flew with a bombardier or you flew with what was called a toggelier, and one of the waste gunners would move up to the nose for that position.

**Question:** So what do you as a -- as a pilot -- what are you thinking when you're -- well, let's start on the ground. Let's start back there. They say okay, this is the morning, you're off, you look at the weather, little bit foggy, and you're out there on the tarmac getting ready to go. Do you -- do you remember what -- or is that --

**Answer:** Well, I think you could go back a little bit further than that. You go to breakfast. You know you're going; your stomach's in one big knot. And you're -- as been indicated, fear was always with you. You'd go into the briefing room and you could feel that fear and the heat in there from the body heat was like opening a blast furnace. Everybody was talking at the top of their voice and it was more to relieve that fear than anything. Almost nonsense type things. Some guys would just sit there and stare right -- just right straight ahead. No, just sit there. And once they pulled the curtain that you could see where your target was going to be, that relieved some of the tension except that it would build up a different kind of fear. Instead of the unknown, you're -- you're looking at the known. Possibly you've been there before. And you know what it is going out. And after that first mission you know, have a pretty good concept as to what to anticipate. The thing that hits you most -- probably is the efficiency. And that is, all ten of us were dependent upon each other. And I think everybody more or less worked toward the point of the highest level of efficiency for his particular position. And I always had this feeling that just -- I hope I do everything right. I hope I don't goof. Because if I goof, the other guys are going to be goofing with me. And so I say that once you've been to briefing and then you're given individual briefing on what to anticipate, you're given your flight plans, you're given your flimsies. And then you go get dressed.

And dressing was a real tedious task. And by the time you got all that equipment on. From there, then usually they took you out to your -- where the plane was. And the -- getting out there was usually by jeep or by truck. Any -- it seems like any vehicle imaginable was there. You get loaded off and the first thing that I did along with the co-pilot, I'd go talk to the crew chief. Any idiosyncrasies in the plane. In the meantime the other crew members would usually check and put additional ammunition on, check their positions. And the other thing -- the last thing that you did, usually, was to run the props through so that there was no oil lock.

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

This had probably been done because it had been pre-flighted. But everybody participated. You ran those things at least two revolutions. And those things were not easy to turn over. And the thing I think that was real important. We all had positions but rank didn't mean anything. And it didn't mean anything whether you were an officer or an enlisted man. You were ten men bonded together in one little airplane and your life depended on each other. You operated as a unit and you were a unit. And if anything has stuck -- I believe with me personally, would be from the standpoint that of working with people, through people, and also acknowledging them as individuals. In other words, everybody's an individual, and acknowledging that. And I think that helped me a great deal in my professional work with the state in managing a department. I still carried that same basic attitude and it works. And people respond. And everybody responded equally. And I think that the Air Force -- especially the 8th Air Force, was unique from the standpoint that our, or at least the -- the commanding officers had to fly, and everybody recognized the importance of the crews and the unit of the crews, so we did think together. We went on leave together and we did -- in other words we acted together as a group, almost as a family.

**Question:** Do you have any contact with any of the people anymore?

**Answer:** At the present time there are only two others that are living. After we were ditched this crew -- the crew was split apart, cause two -- two of the individuals went to lead - - to lead crews. And so, we still maintained that camaraderie that built up. We kept track of each other. And rather interesting, we all more or less finished pretty close to the same time.

**Question:** Did you have a nickname?

**Answer:** Wally. (laughs)

**Question:** That was it, Wally.

**Answer:** That was it.

**Question:** What about -- when I heard you talk about kind of the ritual -- going out, getting the plane ready and all of that. What about superstitions? Did people have --

**Answer:** I'm not superstitious but pretty soon you found yourself doing the same thing in exactly the same way. And I think this ran -- this was a thread that ran all through. In other words you dressed the same way, you did this in the same way and you did things in the exact sequence that you had done. And those are the things that -- I wouldn't say we were superstitious, but with that underlying fear, that hey, here today, gone tomorrow, I'm not going to push anything. (laughs)

**Question:** Did you know any of the other pilots or anybody that you looked and you guys might have joked with, said oh, you know, Shorty over there does something every time he gets on the plane or anything --?

**Answer:** It was common knowledge. I think that -- I don't think that we ever talked much about it. We all knew it was occurring and especially there was no ridicule because this thing was a survival factor. When we started we had a life expectancy of about 3-1/2 missions. And after that you were on borrowed time. And the attrition rate of the air crews in the 8th Air Force was, of course very terrific.

**Question:** How many missions did you fly?

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

**Answer:** I flew 35 missions. And I'm -- I feel even today that I'm probably living on borrowed time. In respect, I'm like many, many others. I ask the question of why, why did I come home and so many of the others didn't. And I think that in your memory you see these faces but you don't see them as they were killed or, you know, something like that. Probably the biggest loss occurred from planes just exploding in the air. I don't know. As I understand, let's see, there's oh, somewhere around 55, 60,000 fatalities in the 8th Air Force. I don't have an exact number. I know we -- they killed more men in the 8th Air Force than what they did in Viet Nam. (laughs) And so, and I think the MIA's on that was somewhere around 32 to 35,000 that were MIA's. In other words, what happened, the plane blows up in the air out there and all you see is a big flame. You see bits of smoke and little pieces of debris going by, and that debris could be body parts, could be a part of an engine, could be anything. In other words, those people were there one minute, the next minute they're gone. That's when reality really begins to hit you. And by what reason did I miss and they didn't?

**Question:** Did -- did you -- when you talk about reality hitting you, was there some way that your mind --

**Answer:** Oh, I think we

**Question:** -- removed you or --

**Answer:** I think we all went through this. I reached a point and I think everybody that completed missions went through this or else they went over the end. That I got up one morning and went -- went to briefing. And when I hit briefing and the target came out, as if I was -- had become separate from my body. I was functioning, and it was a real odd feeling. And this continued on. In other words, I was afraid -- there was a fear, but it was -- I think it was a real -- as if you're dreaming and you're living in another world. And I -- I had this same feeling. I did everything just mechanically. And -- we'd gotten to altitude, we were probably over Germany, and all of a sudden we got hit by fighters. And from that point on, I was afraid, but I always went, and I have no fear of death to this day. And I think that whole thing. And I think at that point the human mind hits a point that you either go into a survival mode, I'll call it, or you go over the end.

**Question:** Now, free time. Because it -- it sounds like you had some free time over there and it sounds like maybe you maybe met an English woman over there, maybe?

**Answer:** Yeah, I married a-- we were on what's called a flak leave, and instead of going to one of the camps, the Ball turret gunner and myself went to Blackpool. And while at Blackpool we went various places and where we were staying, they had this one old fellow; he worked in the aircraft industry. He took us to all the pubs and said here's a good place to meet people and here's another good place to meet people. And you couldn't find a better host. So we went to what's called a large dance area, it's called the Wintergardens. And I met my wife there. We will have been married 52 years this year, so you can't say it doesn't work. She was in the Royal Air Force.

**Question:** How -- how does that happen? How do you have a romance during the war?

**Answer:** (laughs) Well, you don't. But the thing is, I think that the thing that attracted us more than anything else was the ease of discussion and I think also the thing that I didn't recognize but I do look back now. She recognized the trauma that we were going through, having been in the Air Force. And she -- from that standpoint, you know, there was a relationship built up. Not necessarily totally through conversation or anything else. And it's more of a total broad relationship. And I think that's what's held us together. I think that

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

other people like Bill -- we have certain idiosyncrasies that we develop from trauma, and I think that if our wives had not lived with that and recognized that, then we'd be long gone.

**Question:** So did you court while the war was going on or --

**Answer:** Well, as much as possible.

**Question:** Because you didn't have a lot of free time.

**Answer:** No, you didn't have a lot of free time, you -- because you never knew when you were going to go on loading, and so you couldn't go very far. It was almost impossible to go east and west in England. You can go north and south the way the train systems run. She was in Blackpool which was on the west coast and I was in Polebrook near Peterborough which is on the east coast. And it used to take me, oh I think somewhere around four hours. We used to meet at what's called Warrington, which is the rail center for all of England, which wasn't too far. And we'd meet there. You try to find somebody in this train station. (laughs)

**Question:** So could you send letters back and forth in between or --

**Answer:** Oh, we wrote back and forth. And -- and you didn't -- there was no phone service or anything that you could call and we wrote notes back and forth and other things.

**Question:** So I assume a letter had to last a long time.

**Answer:** (laughs) Well, that's true.

**Question:** What -- so what did you do to -- Bill talked about fishing. Bill talked about fishing is his -- that was his -- I can get away from the war, I can relax and fish. What -- what was your --

**Answer:** You mean while we were over there or after we came home?

**Question:** No, while you were over there. That somewhere that maybe was your piece of sanity that for awhile maybe you could check out from?

**Answer:** Oh I think the sanity and we -- I think the crew kind of unified together on that. We did a lot of sight-seeing. Insofar as possible. Other than that, I read a lot. And you -- always looking for books. And I read the most boring books that I think I could read because that seemed to move me. Like I read the story of Ulysses and some of those, you know. (laughs)

**Question:** How did you -- you said, interesting -- sight-seeing. And again I've never been in a war. How do you sight-see during a war?

**Answer:** Oh, you go by train. They have an excellent train service over there, and of course -- and the chaplain we had at the base, you know, was pretty knowledgeable on England and he arranged a lot of these things that you could go to. And like this huge cathedral in Chester. We went to London and we went to, you know, Trafalgar Square, and we went to Westminster Abbey and walked on all the historical people and -- and what we did, it got to be kind of a fact of thing. We'd get up early in the morning, we'd go sight-seeing and the pubs opened as I recall about 2 o'clock. So at 2 o'clock we were through and then -- then we did the other kind of sight-seeing. We were looking for talent like anybody else. (laughs) But it -- that's about as far as it went. And insofar as romantic appeals, very -- most of the

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

guys at least in our crew, nobody was shacking up with anybody or anything else. It was more a craving for female companionship. And most of -- and of course all the women that we met were usually British service people because the women were in the service as much as anybody else.

**Question:** One thing we started talking about earlier were meals, food.

**Answer:** Was what?

**Question:** Your meals that you had over there.

**Answer:** Yeah.

**Question:** You started talking about some of those. What are your fond memories of food in the service?

**Answer:** Well, I'd say the only fond memories of food in the service was -- was a delayed Christmas dinner that we had. During the Battle of the Bulge we had planned on a big Christmas dinner and we were going to invite all the local children in. We were told we could have them in to the thing. And we had also scrounged for gifts for them. And the Battle of the Bulge and General Eisenhower said that, during that fogged in period, see everything was fogged in, there was nothing flying. On December 24th he said every plane will fly. And I'd say 50% of the planes never got back, and I think only two planes got back to our base. We ended up landing in a strip near the wash which had gas-fired jets on it and it lifted the fog enough that we could get in. And for Christmas dinner that day we had fish balls and beets. Now what had happened, it was a British base. They'd had so many people come in, they just plain ran out of food. The British, I'll say, are very ingenious. But they managed to feed everybody. And the other thing that was a big factor was their Irish Coffee. It was more Irish than coffee. So between the two of them, we had a pretty good Christmas. On New Years Day we held a delayed Christmas dinner. And this dinner was probably the most sumptuous dinner I think I had in service. It was a total Christmas dinner from -- the menu was from everything. And all the people on the base participated in it, and we also had a Christmas tree and gifts for the children, and I can remember that dinner to this day. But other than that, ... we ate because you had to, and as you've probably heard, there was a lot of powdered eggs. And on occasion, on missions you'd get fried eggs, but who wants to eat a fried egg at - at 4 o'clock in the morning?

**Question:** So you were at the Battle of the Bulge, did I hear you right?

**Answer:** Well, I flew during the Battle of the Bulge. And we -- we made two attempts to fly and both of them were disasters. We never got back to the base on the first one -- it was on, I think the 19th. And we ended up in Bath. And then they -- planes from all over. And then when Eisenhower said fly, everybody got in the air and flew and then part of us got back, part of us didn't. We never did bomb what we were supposed to. The cloud cover was such -- the first time we brought our bombs back and then the second time we dumped them on an intersection that we could see, but that was all.

**Question:** What -- when you came back from a successful flight -- you've been on a successful mission. What's it like coming back?

**Answer:** You're damn glad to get home. The minute you saw that the Channel, you almost went (sighs). And the other thing is then you -- you -- once you got over the Channel and then you'd break out -- and did -- by squadrons. And then -- whoever was the group

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

lead, he'd always get right down on the deck and anybody that was flying the low, low position was almost dipping his props in the ocean. And we'd -- well, we'd fly up what was called the wash. And when you got there and then you saw it and then you peeled off and took a 30 degree heading and you were home.

**Question:** When you see one of the ladies flying today, cause there's still a few of them out there flying, what -- what goes through your mind when you see one of those birds up there?

**Answer:** Oh, if I go on a flight today, I'm -- and the minute the wheels are off the ground I'm saying, get your damn wheels up, get your wheels up. And coming in to land, you know as they straighten out and you think, come on, start your flare, start your flare. And then they drop, saying, oh-oh, that's something that I used to do. (laughs)

**Question:** Did your plane have a name?

**Answer:** Huh?

**Question:** Did your plane have a name? I know you had a couple --

**Answer:** Well, the first one, we did. We were assigned a plane and then I believe after that they quit assigning planes. But ours was called Morning Delight. And we flew that on the Schweinfurt Mission, and it was so shot up that the tail dropped off when we landed and it never flew again. After that, we never did have a specific plane assignment. Either that or else they didn't want to trust us anymore.

**Question:** What was the Schweinfurt Mission like?

**Answer:** I would say the Schweinfurt Mission to me was the most traumatic thing that ever happened to me during the war. I don't think up until then I had -- this was my fourth mission. And I had seen planes go down and I had seen them explode. But I had not seen the fury and the explosive nature of being hit totally in -- in almost total annihilation by fighters coming in. The noise, the smell, you can smell the gunpowder. And you can -- of these planes exploding and the shells going through, you know the plane is taking it. The plane just shudders. And I think the worst thing, on an attack, and these were fighter attacks, is having to sit there on that flight deck and not do anything except keep that plane going straight. The pressure is terrific. You want -- you want to look but you've got to watch that plane that's sitting right out here in your formation. You've -- you want to see what's going on. You can hear the gunners, you know, there's a bandit at 6 o'clock, okay I got him, -- I'm getting him here, okay, you, you hit. You pictorially in your mind you can see it but you don't dare look.

**Question:** So what's your job? What are you doing while this is going on?

**Answer:** I'm trying to keep that plane flying.

**Question:** And you're watching - your formation on either side of you and straight --

**Answer:** Right, straight ahead. I'm watching my instruments and I'm jinking the plane once in awhile, but other than that, there's very little room to move when you're in a tight diamond formation to -- because that's your combat formation. And if you move very much you're going to hit them.

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

**Question:** So you have all this going on around you, but --

**Answer:** You can imagine, you're trying to concentrate, like trying to concentrate driving a car. And you've got all hell breaking loose all around you. And that I think is the hardest thing. Schweinfurt, to me, I think that Schweinfurt we proved our point that nothing was going to stop us from bombing. And I think this is when everything came to a head. And to me Schweinfurt was also the turning point. Insofar as the air war in Europe went. Because from that point on I think that we began to win. But also we proved a point that even though they threw everything in the book at us, we still made it in. We lost 60 planes over Europe and five planes over England, that's a total of 650 men were killed. And we had an attrition rate that day of about 26%.

**Question:** Uhm-hmm.

**Answer:** And it was a long mission, and then also that happened on that mission is how intent they were. The German fighters were flying through their own flak over the target.

**Question:** Did you know, and you just said, looking back, it was a turning point in that war. When you came back from that mission, was there a sense that --

**Answer:** No. It was a sense of total defeat because we had seen nothing but total annihilation of plane after plane after plane. And we could hear in the air, these planes. We felt that we had been defeated. In looking back now I can see what happened. And I might also say that I think that this became a reality in the 8th Air Force. The 8th Air Force was never turned back by fighter or enemy opposition. The only thing that ever turned the 8th Air Force back from bombing was weather.

**Question:** This is a sensitive question, if you don't want to answer it, I'll try to find some way to ask it. For me to understand -- you know, you're up there and these bombs are being released. Do you just block out of your mind where they're dropping?

**Answer:** No, we had a specific target and we wanted to put them on that target. And hopefully that's -- that's where they went.

**Question:** But do you think I'm bombing buildings? Or do you think I'm bombing cities, or what -- I mean, cause --

**Answer:** Actually, my -- my personal feelings were that we were bombing a target which had been demonstrated and pictured to us. Where those bombs went once they left, we had done our job of getting -- I felt -- I got the plane there. The bombs were dropped -- they were dropped as a part of a war effort, and that was it. I had no personal feelings towards anybody on the ground. I had no personal feelings toward any of the fighters coming in, except we admired them. They were darn good pilots. But insofar -- any misgivings on it, no, I don't have any to this day. And I can also rationalize from the standpoint that in a sense, Germany started it when they bombed Coventry and some of these other places, they asked for that. And I was involved in the bombing -- in the burning of Dresden. And I have no misgivings on it. They talk about it being undefended. Like hell it was. You could -- the flak was almost walkable up there. But insofar as the people keep saying to you, what a terrible tragedy and the thing that was done, the burning of that. Both Bill and I have seen some of the segments of the burning of London, and so to me, in the time of war of that type, both used every advantage they could and that was part of it.

**Question:** Where were you when you heard the war was over?

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

**Answer:** Well, the war in Europe or the war -- World War II?

**Question:** World War II.

**Answer:** I was in the -- in Bremerton, working at the Puget Sound Navy Yard. (laughs) I was relieved from active duty on July 4th, 1945. I got home, nobody was home. (laughs) And so I went to work. My -- went to work in the Navy Yard.

**Question:** After flying, what did you say, how many missions?

**Answer:** I did 35 missions.

**Question:** After flying 35 missions.

**Answer:** Rather interesting. When I was processing through to go to work in the Navy Yard, there was all this gung-ho patriotism being shown, and so from the standpoint they and a lot of people coming in. And so they expected everybody that was being processed to take out war bonds. Well, I went through, I said, I'm -- I'm not sure what I want to do. You know, I -- I wasn't even sure what I wanted to do. And so I don't think I'll take out war bonds. Well, the guy blanched and -- and so then he asked me again. And each time his voice got louder and louder. You mean to tell me you're not going to take out war bonds? Boy, you're just totally not patriotic at all. I still remember that.

**Question:** And you said?

**Answer:** And I said you can go to hell, I'm not taking out war bonds now or any other time. I said -- I said I've got all the scars that I can show you from helping protect your fanny.

**Question:** Did he ever understand -- did he ever know what --

**Answer:** He had no comprehension of what I was talking about.

**Question:** What do you think -- what do you think the major message is to leave for generations to come?

**Answer:** I think this. That there -- to me, war is atrocious. And I don't think that I would like to see anybody within -- of having to go through some of the hell that we went through. And in conjunction with that, I think Hollywood had made it, you know, romantic, which it isn't. But I think there also reaches a point in time that somewhere along the line you're going to have to believe and stand up for the way of life that you want to achieve. And that may mean going to war. I don't think that we should fight a political war. I'm not inferring that. But I'm saying that you almost have to come to a point, and I think we reached that point in World War II, we had both the Japanese and the German war machine that wanted to inflict upon us their way of life. And so we said hell, no, and that's why the guys went. And I think that's to a certain extent -- at least my feeling is this. I went to war, I did a job, I came home, I went back to college and got my degree and got on with my life. Nobody came home waving a flag because -- we were there with a purpose. To preserve what we felt was the way of life we wanted to live. And I think that also that we have spoiled our children - - the baby boomers, from the standpoint that we've given them everything except the basic value of what it is to lose what you have. Didn't mean to get a spiel.

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

**Question:** No, no, this is very important. Did you understand that retrospect when you were out there fighting? Did you understand what you were fighting for?

**Answer:** I think that all of us did. It wasn't there that we were waving a flag. We were in there to do a job. And we figured the job took everything and everybody. As a case in point, during the Battle of the Bulge, there wasn't a man in there that didn't almost bleed for those poor guys over there, freezing half to death, no equipment and no communications, and when it came time to try to fly a mission to help them, everybody was Johnny-on-the-spot, even though we knew we had a very slim chance, in many cases, of being able to get back because of the fog. But we were willing to go. It isn't a case that hey, I'm willing to give my life for you. It's a case of hey, there's a job we've got to do and this segment over here needs some help. Let's get over there and help them. To a certain extent it's like the early days, I suppose, when we grew up in a community. That somebody had to have some hay put up, everybody went over and helped them do it. Somebody lost a crop, everybody was in there helping them. And if somebody was short of food, there always seemed to be somebody willing to give to them. It wasn't an organized relief; it was a sense of community and helping each other, and you had a respect for the individual.

**Question:** So to make sure that I heard accurately -- war is not about killing.

**Answer:** No.

**Question:** Not at all.

**Answer:** No, it isn't a matter of killing, it's a matter of obtaining and keeping territory.

**Question:** And the freedoms that come -- that come with it.

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

**Question:** So, and I know this is going to sound real clichéd, but are you proud to be an American today?

**Answer:** Oh, yes, very definitely. I can see a lot of faults but the basic items are still there. Look at the time that the Bill of Rights and the Constitution have stood up. You know, and we've always got our little individual quirks and bitches on it. And I think there are too many people, though, that don't respect what's in that Constitution and what's in that Bill of Rights, and that they have a personal responsibility to see that it stays in place. It's just like these people say, hey, I've got a right to say this and I've got a right to say that. I believe in their right, but I don't believe when they start taking actions to prove that right, that's wrong.... I think one other thing that's happened to a lot of us and this is. We came home, got our life in order, but we still maintained that inner mode of helping one another and every one of us, in talking to Bill and some other people you're going to interview, have all done a great deal of community service. You always seem to find time for it, like in the case in point, in my case, I have donated a lot of time to the fire service. And other people have donated time to this. And I think all of us, especially those of us that were in combat, have this inner push to help other groups and other people. In other words, there's a community service factor that gets -- that gets built into you.

**Question:** That's interesting. I could see where it goes back to that community that you talked about that you formed over there and bringing that community back and still --

**Answer:** That stayed with us.

## Wally Hoffman

Tape 1 of 1

**Question:** What was your best memory of being in the service? I mean, is there anything you think of when you think -- you look back and say, well, you know, that's a pretty damn good time?

**Answer:** I would say probably the -- one of the best memories was when we graduated, you know, the idea that hey, I made it. And then I don't think that I ever fully appreciated this difference between officer and enlisted men, and that, you know, I say that's one of the best times. And I think the other thing is, during crew training, as we got to know each other. We had some real good times together. We went out and we partied. We went out and we went fishing. And we did all kinds of activities at that time. We used to play each other in volley ball. And I can remember those as real good times.

**Question:** Have you ever experienced anything like the camaraderie-ship that you had in the service once you left the service?

**Answer:** Well, only with those people that -- for instance, there's -- there's a basic camaraderie that exists to those of us that flew in combat. And I think it would still be true, anybody that's been in combat. I have never allowed myself, and I think this is something you build up, the camaraderie that existed with the crew when we went overseas. In other words, I think we got hurt as we lost people. And so there was a certain extent you will not go beyond this certain point. I have a lot of good friends that I've related to, but I think there's this basic camaraderie thread, for instance, that exists between Bill and myself when we talk about things. We'll mention one thing and another and we can talk for hours. And the same thing is true of other people that I know. I've had fun doing things together with people but I wouldn't say that I ever formed that relationship that we developed when we first went overseas and anyways when we first went into combat. I think you have developed a pretty good relationship but the minute you went into combat and started shooting at you, that thing really glued together.

**Question:** Do you think -- I mean, because you've faced the ultimate. I mean the ultimate fear to me, I mean you're being in a plane, people are shooting at you, to me the ultimate fear, the fear of death. Did that change your life?

**Answer:** Very, very definitely. I -- I -- as I said I have no fear of dying. If anything I don't have any fear of falling off a bridge, I'll walk on the edge of a bridge. I'm not going to do anything foolish, but I don't have any fear of that type. Personally I had been diagnosed about five years ago of having cancer and was given six months to live. That didn't bother me in the least except I made my mind I'm not going to let it beat me, and I'm here today. And I think a lot of it is mental attitude. And this is a mental attitude that comes along with this fear trauma that I mentioned. I think we're survivors is what we are. (laughs)

**Question:** I would say so. That is it.