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Answer: And one of those is in a nursing home with Alzheimer's. My pilot is the one with Alzheimer's in New York, Flushing Sp. I think. And I have a Waist gunner living down in the Miami area and my tail gunner in, oh, Kansas, I guess it is. The one that I was gonna lose his legs, he's still living, very active and coaches basketball and I correspond with him every now and then.

Question: This is the one thing I was going to ask about..

Answer: Oh yeah. Yeah, here was the Schweinfurt raid on the 14th of October but that was the second one to Schweinfurt. The first one was just before I became operational.

Question: So that's the list of all the missions you were on?

Answer: Right.

Question: 25 missions. I see on the right side there they have times, hours and minutes.

Answer: Within the closest fifteen minutes from takeoff to landing. So I show 179 combat hours here but actually there were many more hours in the air because of all these aborted and scrubbed missions.

Question: I noticed that there's an extra 9-1/2 added there at the bottom. What was that?

Answer: Well, it's made up of a 5, a 1 and a 3-1/2 and I think it was errors in the initial listing of the time on some of these sessions... I cannot tell you. You see it adds up to 9-1/2. I can't tell you.

Question: I thought there was another mission in there that they forgot or something.

Answer: No, I think it was times; well you'd think the 5 hours would be another mission. I don't know. But I know that I was told to add 9-1/2 hours to this total.

Question: So, also, it was a period of over, according to those dates, about five months that you did all your missions.

Answer: Yeah. I came over the end of September and finished up in February, toward the end of February.

Question: So that your actual time over there was only about five months or were you there..?

Answer: Four and a half, five months, right.

Question: Before a long time and after a long time?

Answer: No, we were operational I think about two weeks after we got to England. So this September, this milk run raid to Rheims on the 26th of September I would guess was, I would guess we got there early September, landed in Liverpool off the ship.

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Question: That's an intense four or five months then.

Answer: Oh yeah, oh, yeah, I could never live through that again.

Question: No. I can't imagine this. So after your 25 missions you left and what it said at the bottom you were recommended for training.

Answer: Yes, for pilot training. Because again I was always wanting to go through pilot training but unfortunately when I came back to the states they had plenty of pilots in the cadre around the country so I couldn't get it. So they sent, after two weeks in Atlantic City, in R&R at the Ritz Hotel there I think, I was assigned to the 4th Ferrying Group in Memphis, Tennessee. Now they were ferrying aircraft, mainly to Africa but, and mainly they were the new A-26, the B-26's, B-25's, smaller, twin engine rather than the big bombers. So I was just about ready to start you know flying as navigator on some of those where they're repositioning aircraft when my wife's Father was killed in an automobile accident back in Lancaster and I got a compassionate leave to go with my wife back home for the funeral. On the way home on a plane, we went on different planes because I knew that she could very likely be bumped even though she was on a, you know, compassionate kind of thing. She was not on orders like I was so I said, Now if you get bumped anywhere cause they're several stops en route from Memphis to Philadelphia, then you can have my seat cause I'm in the plane right in back of you, you know, 45 minutes or an hour behind, she sat next to a Major Crystal, and this was, you know, my wife hadn't flown that much, maybe twice before in her life.

And Major Crystal sensed that she was a little apprehensive about things before he took off and so he closed the curtain and started you know just visit with her. What's your husband do and where is he and how come you're on this flight and all this. It ended up he said, Well after the funeral why don't you have Lt. Rodda come to New York to my office at One Park Avenue. I think we would like to, cause there weren't too many returnees at this point. I was one of the early persons back and he was in charge of all navigational training aids for the Air Force. To make it very short here I ended up with his job. I became, it was Assistant Chief Air Staff Training, Training Aids Division. We belonged in the Pentagon but there was no space for offices down there. So we were at One Park Avenue which is pretty nice... 33rd and Park Avenue. We kept some aircraft that we used to travel around the country out at Mitchell Field on Long Island. So for the remaining time in the service, that's what I was doing, a pretty important position in a way. I won't go into what it entailed but I was charged with all the training, navigational training aids throughout the Air Force, most of it, of course in the U.S.

Question: One more question about the mission. I know that they changed the amount of missions later on.

Answer: Right.

Question: How did you miss that? I mean what was the timeframe and how'd they figure all that out?

Answer: They went to 30 missions about the time of the invasion, around June of '44. And then they went, as I mentioned earlier, to 35 missions as a tour toward the end of the thing over there because there wasn't near the losses then and we

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had heavy fighter protection and they had heavy losses and we were then, you know, into the continent with ground troops.

Question: So you just kind of missed it?

Answer: So I missed it, yes.

Question: Fortunately.

Answer: You know, when I finished 25 if you'd offered me a million dollars to do a 26th I said take your money.

Question: You were done.

Answer: I was just, oh, I was just that thankful to be through it and still alive and, you know, no injuries whatsoever.

Question: That's great. Back to the bombing that, you mentioned a bomb wire. Did the bomb, how did that work, I mean, that..?

Answer: It's just a long copper safety wire, it's actually just a length of wire and it was placed in the tail end of all the bombs when they were loaded or in the plane when the shackles so that the spinner, the tail fuse spinner wouldn't start to spin off and arm the bomb. As long as that safety wire, that was the name for it, was in there, that spinner couldn't go so the bomb couldn't be detonated. Even if we'd crashed or something, probably we wouldn't have any exploded bombs. But after we assembled and got started across the channel or across the North Sea the bombardier would go back and take all these arming wires out. Then when the bomb is dropped the force of it going through the air, spins off that spinner at the tail and now the bomb is armed.

Question: So the spinner actually spins and detaches from the bomb..

Answer: Yeah, flies and is gone.

Question: Okay, so that's.. all right. Another thing mentioned was feathering the props when you lost them, what is it, how, what does that mean and how does that..?

Answer: If you feather a prop, you turn the, these are three-blade propellers on the B-17. You turn them directly into the wind so that they're not cutting through the air like normal, so you turn the blades directly into the wind so that the propellers don't windmill. If you can't turn them into the wind and you've got an engine that's dead or blown or you've lost oil pressure or whatever and that windmills as you're going through the air, in time you're going to have the props fall off, fall away, maybe damage the wings when it does it. It's a drag that you can't imagine to have an engine that isn't putting out any power and yet it's pushing through the air. It was like part of the aircraft so they call it feathering. And turning the blades, now often if you had enough damage and hydraulic lines and you couldn't feather, nothing to do about it..

Question: So you're talking about..

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Answer: Then you would hope the prop would drop away soon, you know.

Question: So you're talking about the dead engine propeller?

Answer: Right, right, oh yeah. Only the dead engine.

Question: Okay.

Answer: Or one that you'd lost excessive power.

Question: I never knew that. So what kind of, you know I've always heard these stories about these planes being amazing to take all this damage and stuff. How much, I mean you talk about a breather. How much, kind of damage would it take to get to spend two days in the shop or whatever, that you could actually fly back...?

Answer: I wish I could show you some pictures that I have at home of the damage that that flying fortress could accept or take and still be flyable and still fly home. It just was amazing; it was a very well built, sturdy, tough airplane.

Question: What's the most that your actual plane took, like the worst mission that you had to put it in the shop for two days? What kind of things happened?

Answer: Oh, you know, we had maybe thirty some anti-aircraft holes in the wing and in the rudder and in the fuselage. We had one or two where they cut into oil lines, you know and you'd lose oil pressure on the engines. We were again so lucky but I think eight or nine times we could not fly our plane because of whatever damage and it wasn't operational until they put it in a hangar and worked on it for two or three days, patching the skin and changing the engines and putting in new hydraulic lines and that kind of thing. But that plane was back flying again..

Question: Really.

Answer: Two or three days, she's back in the air.

Question: So, did you have, actual, like flak or bullets in there, like going right through the plane, fuselage or?

Answer: They wouldn't go all the way, they'd come, they'd penetrate the skin and not likely to go on through and out the other side so to speak. There was enough, cause in the first place, it wasn't a bullet. It was a fragment of an anti-aircraft bullet but it's just steel fragments, you know. But the high velocity coming in, I imagine some did go through and out the other side and..

Question: So you had more from that than you actually, from the fighter planes shooting bullets at you, actual bullets.

Answer: We did, we did. And I think in general it was a toss up of the planes that were lost to fighters as versus those that were lost to anti-aircraft. We just lucked out and we didn't have any losses because of fighters.

Question: Cause, I was being not involved in the war I would see the movies and stuff. It always looks like it's the fighters that are on them all the time. I mean there's the flak but it's like the fighters, that they're really worrying about.

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Answer: Oh, in the movies you see fighters coming in; that's the color of the whole thing.

Question: Yeah, it's more action.

Answer: You can see these black bomb bursts and you've seen one, you've seen them all kind of thing unless you're there.

Question: What's the, can you fly back with just one engine? Is it possible to just keep?

Answer: There is one plane that did that and flew 400 miles back from the continent to land. He didn't go into his regular base. He took the first RAF field that he could come to on one engine. If you're letting down and have a slow let down, you don't have the need for as much power and if you can still steer that craft by hard rudder and hard controls over against the one engine he brought it in. But many times they'll come in with two engines. Two engines out on the same side like No. 3 and 4 like we had can make it pretty dicey. You don't do much of the way of holding altitude if you've lost two engines. You just can't. But that's a really, that's why they called it a flying fortress. It just was a fortress. Now B-24, the Liberator, actually could carry a greater bomb load, had a greater range, it could fly farther on the fuel tank it had, it had greater power, the engines on the B-17's were 1250 right engines and I think there were 1500 on the B-24 Liberators, but they had a very narrow cord or wing. They had a very narrow wing so that if they got any flak at all to speak of and they lost any of that wing area, they were done. So the B-24's didn't work too well because of the heavy anti-aircraft in the 8th Air Force although they did make up the 2nd Bomb Division. There were three divisions. 1st Bomb Division, 2nd and I was in the 3rd Bomb Division. And it goes from an echelon which is a three planes in an echelon goes to a squadron and three or four squadrons makes up the group and the group makes up the combat wing and then the whole divisional force that's flying that day. So it's, you know, a step up right through there.

Question: Wow. Did you have an emotional attachment to your plane and your equipment that you used or was this..?

Answer: Oh absolutely. I hated to fly another craft that wasn't ours. It's, it's, I guess like getting into your car, you know where everything is, you know what the buttons do and what the gauges look like and all that kind of thing whereas you get into a strange flying, you're not sure about the compasses, do you swing?? the compasses, are they accurate? Is it too much deviation, can I bank on them, that one's a main concern for a navigator. But all the other equipment also is strange to you and you don't know. It's fine for the one that that's his plane but it's awkward and..

Question: Did you have any kind of rituals or routines or anything before, you know, superstition kind of things?

Answer: I don't think I did, Ken. Too busy to think about... no I really think I didn't.

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Question: You described earlier about your actual compartment, kind of a desk and stuff, was it, was it cramped, I mean did you get uncomfortable sitting there, was it you know..?

Answer: Yeah, when I first started to fly, that B-17 in Walla Walla when we were on some training missions, I thought wow, look at this, it's like a big expanse, it's like a huge master bedroom kind of thing you know I thought it was all kind of space cause I'd been used to flying AT-13's or something and twin engine Cessna's or something for our training through navigational school and you were quite cramped but you know about a month ago I went through this B-17 that the museum here has. They're bringing back into flyable condition here down at the plant in Renton, and I had the privilege of being able to go through the plane cause I, you know, that's my old baby..

Question: Oh yeah.

Answer: I got into, no way could I come up where I always did, up through the nose hatch, I used to grab a hold of the crossbars and the bar and swing myself up into the, if you went, turned to the right, then you go to the pilot compartment, if you turned left, you'd come into the nose compartment. I couldn't even (Inaudible), I wouldn't even get out that way. I had to have a ladder put down so I could get down, but I came in through the waste door and here I am dressed similar to the way I am now with a jacket and I was walking through the Bombay and there's two big pillars and the runway where you walk is about that wide going from the radio room back to the waste composition and true, I'm sure I always kind of side, pushed myself through there with all the jacket and harness and May West, everything I had on. I could hardly get through there now and I thought, oh God they've done something here but no, that's the way it was. I get up, I could hardly climb into the nose, you know, I had to watch my head and I'm scrunching around. What used to be huge was not today.

Question: Huh, that's interesting.

Answer: You know, in the nose we were out of sight with anyone else. We can't see the pilot or co-pilot unless you stand up and there's this celestial Plexiglas dome where if you stood up you could look at the co-pilot and pilot through this Plexiglas dome, which was meant for celestial navigation. We never used celestial navigation. No. 1 we didn't fly at night, and well, there was just no use made of it. Too many things happening too much to even and yet we spent a lot of time training, back in navigation school and flying celestial navigation, even during daytime shooting sun spots and all that kind of..

Question: But you could, if you'd needed it you'd..

Answer: But what was large back then, it's pretty tiny today.

Question: My last question is after you got back, what was the emotional feeling that you had when you saw your wife after..?

Answer: You know she knew I was back in the states, but they had sent us up to, up on the Hudson River, there was a place where they some final demarcation procedures and so forth and check you out and make sure your shots are up to date before you really get in and then I went down to my, Patrick Henry, which is another

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one, Fort Patrick Henry in Virginia and from there they cut orders for me to, I don't know what the length of the leave was that I got. And then the leave also included two weeks at Atlantic City after this ten days or whatever it was. Well, as I said, my wife knew I was in the country but she wasn't sure when I was actually going to knock on the door and come in. And she was living with her parents in Lancaster. Well I came in off the train and took the old trolley; they had a trolley that went up Broad Street. I went to the house at 20 North Broad and I just tried the door to see because they often didn't lock it and I walked in. She was in the kitchen. Her Mother was in the, kind of living room, and she was the first to see me. She said Sissy because she called my wife Sissy, not Donna. Sissy you can't believe, look who's here. Well Donna hadn't had a chance to primp and lipstick and everything and she'd been doing dishes I think in the kitchen. Oh, but I picked her off the floor and hugged her and kissed her but she never forgave me for not letting her know I was coming that day. She said, you could have called me from Patrick Henry and I said, yes I could but I thought I'd surprise you.

Question: And you didn't care, you didn't care..

Answer: No, no.

Question: I just want to see her.

Answer: That's right.

Question: Great. Thank you very much.

Answer: You're so welcome. It's been my pleasure and I trust what you get is worthwhile.

Question: Oh this has been a good one. Normally we do one, you have a lot of good stuff and I wanted to make sure we got it.