

Tommy Tomlinson

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Question: Your name is Tommy Tomlinson right?

Answer: Tommy Tomlinson.

Question: And your mother given name is Vernon.

Answer: Right.

Question: But you never went by it?

Answer: Only in high school, got out of high school, well some still call me Vernon, my relatives and stuff you know, but basically all my friends call me Tommy.

Question: Everyone knows you by Tommy. If I asked about Vernon nobody would know who I was talking about except for relatives. Now you grew up in?

Answer: Yakima.

Question: What did your dad do?

Answer: Well, he was a salesman for one of the meat packing companies.

Question: You graduated from high school?

Answer: 1940, Richland Senior High School, called Davis now.

Question: Joined the service?

Answer: Yes.

Question: You enlisted or drafted?

Answer: Enlisted. I enlisted right after high school.

Question: What was your thinking?

Answer: Well I think.. my thinking was the same as lot of other guys in high school you know we knew what was going on in Europe, we knew what Hitler was doing and it was very obvious we were going to be pulled into the war and they had a deal where if you enlisted you could get the training you wanted and go to the school you wanted and had your selection of the army, navy, air force, whatever you wanted, so some of us decided to go ahead and enlist and get what we wanted. So I decided to enlist and I was sworn in at Fort Lawton over in Seattle and sent to Marshfield, California for the 38th reconnaissance squadron because I'd chose the airforce. And at Marshfield they said well what do you want to do, you have your choice you can be a mechanic, or you can be a photographer, or you can be a weatherman, or you can be a radioman, armament, whatever you want, we'll send you to school. And I said well I have some training in radio and I liked it because as a boy scout in Yakima that was one of the things I was interested in and used to build crystal sets and this sort of thing with radio, so I went ahead and choose radio. So a little while later they sent me to Scottsdale, Illinois, and there was five or six months of training as a radio operator and I came back to join my outfit and they'd already moved to Albuquerque for training. And we were expecting B-17's at that time so we got the B-17's in Albuquerque so I joined them in Albuquerque and started flight training.

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Question: That's kind of neat that you already had that love for radio and electronics coming out of the boy scouts and now you get to go into the service and do what you wanted to do versus

Answer: Right.

Question: Some of the people didn't necessarily get to choose what

Answer: And it worked out very well for me.

Question: Was that a good training?

Answer: Very. At Scottsdale, it was very thorough, yes. I forget it, was either five or six months of operating, strictly operating, it wasn't maintenance, it was operating so we could you know learn all the codes. All the code, and CW which we learned in B-17's, you know voice transmission didn't go that far back in 1940 and 1941, you had to use CW, continuous wave coding, in order to contact somebody which we did.

Question: So for a novice like me, CW, tell me a little about it, how it works, where you send it to and

Answer: You know, dah de dah, de de dah, and that sort of thing, you use a key and punch it in and every letter has a symbol you know, like "a" de dah, "b" dah de de.

Question: Still remember that?

Answer: Oh yes, it is something you never forget, like your army serial number, you never forget it.

Question: The army serial number, the day you got out, I hear people remember the day they went in, the hour they raised their hand and said "I do" you know.

Answer: And I know its been four years, nine months, and twenty one days, I never forget that either.

Question: It's interesting because I've never talked to anyone that really has worked with the technology much back then. When you got up in the planes what was your, because today the kids think you just get on the cell phone and call the next plane, you know, it wasn't quite that advanced technology back then.

Answer: Oh no, you had your radio and your transmitter and you had to tune your radio into different frequencies and you knew what frequency you wanted to use for where you are going. And other parts of the country had different frequencies to operate on so you had to tune into those and turn your transmitter up to be able to transmit and get your antennae ready, and like in B-17 or in a B-26 you had what you call a trailing wire antennae and it had to be set up and ready to go.

Question: Was that part of your job, I mean did you have to adjust the trailing wire, so when you got up you would let it out to a certain length?

Answer: Yes, right.

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Question: Now you flew first in a B-17?

Answer: Yes.

Question: In the plane where does the radio op sit?

Answer: About in the middle you know where the wings are, right in that vicinity.

Question: For somebody that's not been in one describe where it is where you are sitting, big, lot of room, no room?

Answer: Well, I would say its like a small office, maybe like a gosh.. I hope my estimate is correct, but six by six, you got your table, your chair, and your receiver and your transmitter and that sort of thing and a couple windows and you are all by yourself.

Question: And you had more jobs than just being a radioman?

Answer: Oh you're trying to be a gunner too, and sometimes you're asked to take pictures too, photography but basically it's just radio.

Question: You sound like a pretty smart kid. You knew what was going on in Europe before you got in the service, now you're on this airplane flying to what is now famous, Pearl Harbor, but I assume when you left Pearl Harbor wasn't famous, tell me about that day.

Answer: Let me go back a little bit ahead of that. We had to train our navigation and navigators and radio and that sort of stuff. We flew all across the United States many times in training and for six months before we went to Pearl Harbor, but Pearl Harbor is not our destination.

First of all we went to Hamilton field to get rigged up, that's in California, for the flight and get our send off by the generals and that sort of thing but our destination is the Philippine Islands. See we're not at war yet and the Philippines they figured was where the Japanese is going to hit so they're sending us to beef up the defenses in the Philippine Islands and most of our squadron was already there. Nineteen bomb groups are made up of say four squadrons and the other three had already got to Hawaii and had gone to the Philippine Islands. And ours was the last squadron to leave, 38th reconnaissance squadron, and unfortunately we got hit at the same time the Japs arrived in Hawaii so we didn't get to the Philippines.

Question: Where was it, were you at Pearl Harbor when you met up with the Japs?

Answer: We're still in the air. As we approach the islands we were attacked by the fighters, the Japanese zeros. And they put a lot of holes in us and we were forced to crash land at a little field called Bellows in Hawaii, a fighter field, and we crash landed there, and of course I was wounded in the air, I was shot in the air and the pilot wanted to get on the ground as soon as possible to get us to the hospital. There were three of us hit and his first choice was crash landing in the Pacific Ocean but he knew that was no good cause the sharks would get us if we didn't drown to begin with. So anyway we made it to the island. We crash landed there on Bellows and actually its amazing there was an ambulance waiting for us and they took us right in to Tripler General Hospital in Honolulu.

Question: You got shot, is that right?

Answer: Right, I got shot in the left arm.

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Question: By one of the

Answer: Zeros.

Question: Yeah. When did you know, did you fly into it blindly, or before you got there did you know this attack had started and you're flying into a war zone. How did you find out about it?

Answer: We found out about it when we first hit the island with our IP point. You know you hit that so you know where you are going and we could see bombing in the distance but we thought it was the navy out there practicing with smoke bombs and that sort of thing which is a common occurrence. And until the zeros hit us, right away, after seeing the smoke bombing we got communications from Hamilton field that they are under attack and we can't land. Find another place to land. Well everyone is out of gas by that time. Some of them landed in golf courses and some wherever they could and we landed at Bellows or crash-landed at Bellows.

Question: So you are what, maybe twenty years old, nineteen years old?

Answer: Nineteen at the time.

Question: In your wildest dreams, again people get in, they know there is a war coming, what goes through a nineteen year olds mind when this is happening?

Answer: Well I think one of the first thoughts I had was well here I am, I got all this training behind me and I'm the first one knocked out in the war, that's what I thought. I'm the first one to be hit in the war, which wasn't true, others were killed, but I was probably the first one wounded in the air, that's one of the first thoughts I had, here I'm out of it, war is starting and I'm out of it.

Question: Cause you're all at this point gung ho and ready to go. You're here to defend our country, and first quarter you're.

Answer: Absolutely, most of us were very patriotic at that time and we wanted to defend our country.

Question: It's interesting I've never talked to anybody, I've talked to pilots and things like that but no one in your situation, flying into Pearl Harbor, not knowing you were going into war. What did it sound like?

Answer: There was no sound. You see a movie like Pearl Harbor and you hear all the bombs going off and everything, but when you're in the airplane you don't hear the, you don't hear anything, you hear the sounds of your engines.

Question: Even with the Jap planes coming at you, could you hear them or not, cause you're plane is so loud?

Answer: Yeah, you couldn't hear them but you could see them. You've got to remember we didn't have a chance to fight back either. We didn't have any ammunition. We had our guns all packed in cosmoline because of the flight from the states to Hawaii and we're going to land in Hawaii and clean out our guns, and tank up, and do whatever is necessary and then make the next leg of our flight to the Philippines. So we had no guns, nothing to fight back with, we could just fly around and let them shoot at us.

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Question: Defenseless basically.

Answer: Defenseless, right.

Question: And is everybody in their theoretic position of the gunners and everybody or because you don't have ammunition everybody is in different positions for this.

Answer: Well they weren't in their normal combat position because they weren't in combat so you know some of them might have been up front and some may have been in the radio operator room and that's where I was hit in the radio operator's room.

Question: Do you remember your crew, who was with you?

Answer: The names?

Question: I mean if you don't that's fine.

Answer: No, I could but it would take a little time to spit it out because, I remember the pilot was captain Richards, (inaudible) at that time I believe. Humiston was the co-pilot and Angeles, I think his name was Angeles, and I can't remember all the others, Tackman I think.

Question: You saw in the distance the bombing and everything when you got close enough to Pearl Harbor now you're hit and wounded by now, both you and the plane are hit and wounded and limping along, did you see Pearl Harbor and the devastation that occurred there.

Answer: I don't remember seeing it. I really don't. I may have but I just don't recall it. I was probably sitting on the floor of the airplane with somebody putting a tourniquet on my arm so I just don't. I don't think I did see it, no.

Question: Again, I never thought about the pain, do you remember the pain or is it something your body takes over or mind takes over?

Answer: You're right your body takes over, your mind takes over, there is no pain when you're first hit because you are in shock. I didn't even know I was hit until one of the other guys said hey you're hit in the arm and one of the other guys said yeah you're hit too and that's the way it is and so they started putting tourniquets on us and then the pain sets in.

Question: So was it a hard landing?

Answer: Oh very hard, yes.

Question: What was it like, do you remember?

Answer: No, not really, but I've had people tell me that as we were landing the zeros were still shooting at us trying to kill us before we were able to touch down. But the landing was a wheels up landing. It was sort of a crash landing and when we landed we went over sort of an embankment, there was a big ditch at the end of the runway cause it was under construction and I remember getting out of the plane and they said hurry up get out. We didn't know if the plane was going to blow up or not. The Japs are still shooting at us and I remember having to climb up a kind of a steep embankment but the ambulance, actually the ambulance was there waiting for us, put us in the ambulance and away we went to Tripler.

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Question: Well you were probably better off than some of the people in the harbor, there was so much going on to get an ambulance and first class service right into the.

Answer: Oh absolutely, absolutely.

Question: So where did they take you, what hospital?

Answer: Tripler, Tripler General Hospital, that was in Honolulu.

Question: And how much time did you spend there?

Answer: Well, when I first got there, like I was telling you, I thought I was the only one wounded in the war, knocked out. But when we got to Tripler General, there was people wounded laying all over the front lawn and that was my first indication that hey there's other people that are hurt in this war too, anyway they laid us out on the lawn until they could take care of us. And a nurse came around and gave us a tetanus shot and after awhile we are put in a holding ward I guess you'd call it and we could actually hear the Japanese then. We could hear them strafing the hospital which I guess they actually did.

I don't know when I was hit the second time. I could have been in the hospital, could have been running up the embankment, but I was hit in the arm and the leg and the leg was just a flesh wound but the funny part of it was after I was wounded in the hospital it was my turn to go to the operating room. I remember they gave me a shot, what is that serum they give you, I forget. But anyway you count to ten, I remember counting one, two, then passed out. Well when I woke up the doctor said I have a souvenir for you and he said look at your right hand, and on my right arm he had that bullet tied with a piece of cat gut around my wrist, said there is your souvenir. I was taken back to the ward and I don't know if it was that night or the next day or what I was scratching and my hand was bloody and the nurse happened to be coming around at that time and said how come your hand is bloody and I said I don't know something in my leg and so they looked at my leg and sure enough my leg was hit. No one knew it because they took care of the obvious things first but my leg wound left a scar all my life but it was only a flesh wound and it wasn't life threatening or anything like that.

Question: So the bullet, did you carry it with you during your time in the service, did you mail it home cause I know you still have it.

Answer: No, I didn't carry it with me, it stayed home.

Question: So, your time in the hospital did you have conversations with other people?

Answer: Oh yes, the conversations we had in the wards, you don't get around much when you're laying in the hospital but you have a chance to eat and talk with your roommates and that sort of thing. But on Christmas day we headed back to the island, back to the United States on one of the Matson Liners and it was later converted to a troop ship but at that time it was still a luxury liner and they took the wounded and some of the officers wives and the evacuated and put them all on the boat and sent us back to San Francisco. We landed in San Francisco on New Year's eve and put in Letterman General Hospital where I stayed for five months, just that long to get it healed.

Question: Was your thought process I want to get healthy and get back there or?

Answer: Oh, absolutely.

Question: Oh, it was, ok.

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Answer: Yes, especially when they, the Tokyo Raiders hit there in I think it was April. And I said boy sure wish we were with them, but it wasn't to be.

Question: So you spent five months in the hospital in the San Francisco area and then went right back or?

Answer: No I think it was a 30 days R&R, furlough, so I went back to Yakima and Ellensburg where my mother was and my sister and then I was reassigned after thirty days to Hamilton field to a fighter outfit. It was the fourteenth fighter group, fiftieth fighter squadron, I think it was. We had P-38's but they didn't let me fly for awhile. They put me in a fighter outfit which was on its way to England so after we joined them they put us on a troop train and took us over to Hartford, Connecticut, getting us ready for embarkation and so we went to England by boat and the pilots flew their planes over to England and so that's another story when we get into the European Theatre.

Question: Well, yeah, cause now you are moving from the south Pacific, Pearl Harbor, over to Europe now. Homebased out of England or out of London or where did you?

Answer: It was a town called Shrewsbury, its not too far from London and that's where the fighters were getting their training. And at that time shortly after we arrived they were fixing for the invasion of Africa and several of us were selected to with our radio training to go into Africa and set up radio stations for the incoming aircraft which they knew were needed so I was assigned to detached service with a signal corp outfit assigned to a tank outfit and we went into Africa on the first day of invasion and we set up our radio and that sort of stuff that we were supposed to do and we went on from there.

Question: So you had to create the building and the structure and everything?

Answer: No the structures and the buildings were already there. There was an airport already there too and that was in Iran but we had to set up our equipment there for the incoming fighters and after that well we went on to bigger and better things.

Question: What was bigger and better?

Answer: I got back flying again, but first my buddy and I, his name's Scotty, had to take a direction finding truck up to I think it was Algiers from Iran and the fighting was still going on and they told us how to get there and put us in this truck and one of the exciting parts of the trip we ran into a pocket of Germans and we didn't know it. That they were on the highway and no one else knew it either but anyway this town was occupied by Germans and we started into the town and they started looking at us and they started saluting and you know the only thing we could do was salute back and step on the gas. It was just a short time and they realized who we were but these trucks a lot of them look alike whether you're German or what because they are camouflaged. So at the edge of town they started firing at us, but they didn't get us and we kept going and we got into Algiers and after that I was wounded again. I think it was around December 15th. e were stationed at a radio station set up by Tebessa And Kasserine Pass and there was a lot of fighting going on at that time and the German's were really heavy fighters at Kasserine Pass. They were trying to stop us. Anyway we set up our radio stations and stuff and I was wounded again there, not seriously, just knocked me out for a few days I guess. And the colonel in charge of our group, I said I'd sure like to get back flying again, back in the air, so he fixed it right away and shortly after that I was sent to the 320 bomb outfit 41st squadron and I got back to flying

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right away cause they had lost a lot of ships and a lot of crew in their heavy fighting and they needed replacements and I was one of them.

Question: And they were flying B-26s?

Answer: B-26s.

Question: Ok, and home based where did you fly out of then?

Answer: Out of Tunis and after Tunis we were hitting Italy and Sicily And some of those places and then we moved over to Sardinia the whole group and then we were still hitting Italy and southern France. Then after forty missions they said good bye you can go home now.

Question: Forty?

Answer: But you flew a lot more than that because a lot of time you went up and the mission didn't count. They only counted if you bombed somebody. Sometimes you don't drop your bombs you have to drop them in the ocean on the way back.

Question: So is that part of the catch because if you flew so many missions you could go home right?

Answer: Right.

Question: Which they raised at least once, I know they started with a lower amount and then they raised the amount of missions you had to fly. I wonder if not dropping your bombs or dropping them on a target was part of that catch twenty-two?

Answer: No, they didn't count. They had to be forty missions where you tried to hit the target or in combat.

Question: Forty missions is a lot of missions.

Answer: Yeah it is.

Question: Especially when people not only are you firing at them

Answer: but they're trying to kill you too.

Question: Yeah. We interviewed one guy from Newport, Gil Landon, and he said "you know he said, all the training, he was a ball turret gunner, he said in all the training I never ever thought they would be firing back at us until I got out there and saw my first flack then all of a sudden I realized they're firing back at us".

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So what were some of your targets? Were they usually cities or what were types of things you were out after?

Answer: I don't think we ever intentionally bombed a city it was always rail yards, tunnels, and beaches and that sort of things.

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Question: Transporting moving of equipment and

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So about what altitude were you usually flying at?

Answer: I'd say under ten thousand feet usually six or eight thousand.

Question: So from your perspective as a radio operator all the bombings going on what is your duty?

Answer: When you are in combat your duty is firing the machine gun at the fighter

Question: The radio part you are over

Answer: No.

Question: While you're firing you're defending any of the fighter planes coming in at you.

Answer: Yep. Right. And I managed to get one.

Question: Oh is that right, where was it, do you remember it?

Answer: Well coming back, off of Italy. It was one of the biggest fights of the war really for twenty-sixes. It was dubbed as one of the biggest war battles. But anyway coming back from one of the charges in Italy, that's the we are jumped by a bunch of Messerschmitts ME-109s and they got a lot of our ships and we got a lot of theirs. And I got credit for shooting one down and a probable for another. Our crew we got a lot of them but we were heavily hit too and I remember coming back we had to crash land at Sicily. So we lost our plane in Sicily but Sicily was already under our control at that time we had already invaded it.

Question: So when you got the one you got.. now you are mid-plane right?

A: Right, not the guns though, not

Question: When you're running guns, where are you?

Answer: I'd say half way back towards the tail. They had two side guns, one on each side.

Question: And you're watching the sky, watching what's coming, where did he come from and what's that like or was it just chaos?

Answer: They are all over. When you say where did they come from, it's hard to say. I remember I was shooting out of the right side of the plane but I think he was coming up, not down, he was coming up at us and that's all I remember.

Question: Close?

Answer: Oh yes, very close. These fighters are so close they even fly between you. They try to bust up your formation and they try to single out an aircraft so it's easier to hit. In other words if you stay in formation they are under the fire of three to four ships, where if they can fly between you and kind of single you out then they are only under several guns instead of a whole squadron.

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Question: Is it chaotic or are you so well trained that you're somewhat in control of the situation?

Answer: Oh you're very much in control, very much, because you don't think of getting hit, dying or anything like that. You're in battle to get the other guy, same as he's in battle to get you so its more than a game, it's war, but that's what war is.

Question: So when you're shooting does it just become a plane rather than thinking oh there's people just like when they're shooting at you they're a plane and there's people in it when they're coming at you does your mind just say that's just an object?

Answer: Right, just a plane, hit a plane, knock it out, before he gets you.

Question: Huh. So when you got shot down over Sicily what happened then, how badly did your plane get wounded on that one?

Answer: I was wounded for the third time and I'm not exactly sure where it was, it could have been on that mission, but for the life of me I don't know how we got back to Tunis. Some other aircraft had to land and pick us up and take us back to Tunis, but the plane was you know badly damaged.

Question: It's amazing when you see the pictures of some of the planes you guys kept in the air, went and did your job, came back busted apart, still kept them flying and the great pilots and crews.

Answer: That's what it took, it took a great pilot on the B-26s. On that particular flight we were hit so bad it knocked out one engine over the Mediterranean and we're kind of in a steep dive when we're hit and the pilot hit the buzzer or the bell to bail out over the Mediterranean which some of them had already bailed out cause we're watching them to see if their chutes opened and report that sort of thing. But it came our turn to bail out but we couldn't because we're going down so steep the centrifugal force you can't crawl back to get out. But anyway what happened the pilot recovered with the one engine and got on a straight and narrow course and he cancelled the bail out order and we crash landed in Sicily.

Question: I never thought about that in fact one of the gentlemen we interviewed before just like you said you would look to see if their shoots opened and keep track of where people were jumping and then you would report that back.

Answer: Right, you'd try to get them rescued.

Question: What an amazing team effort I mean our servicemen our crews and people and what we accomplished is amazing I mean for me looking back at it. There was a lot of travesty and tragedy but yet there were these people that came together and did whatever it took to do it.

Answer: Right. At that time during World War II everyone was so patriotic that it was just one of those things, you were fighting for freedom and for your country and it was just the thing to do. You didn't have second thoughts about it, you just went and did your job.

Question: Now you, mom was back home.

Answer: I wasn't married yet.

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Question: Your mom, she got a letter that Vernon was wounded or did she get a letter?

Answer: Telegrams.

Question: Telegram when you came home?

Answer: We regret to inform you.

Question: Did your mom ever talk about that?

Answer: Oh I'm sure she did, but I just don't remember.

Question: Are you the only boy in the family?

Answer: Oh no, I have two brothers.

Question: Were they in?

Answer: One was and one wasn't. One was too old to be in the military and the other one was fighting in the Pacific. He went to the Philippines.

Question: That had to be tough on the parents, people left back home.

Answer: Yes, I imagine it was, but people back home are doing their part too.

Question: Well that's it and that's where again we've talked to all varieties of people and you're exactly right everybody was involved in the war effort in some way.

Answer: In some way, you bet.

Question: Whether it was Red Cross cookies or Rosie the Riveters or the people that still had to work at the orchards.

Answer: It wasn't like other wars we've had where people wanted to go to another country to get out of the fighting but it wasn't like that, at least to my knowledge.

Question: What was the best part of being in the service?

Answer: I think you look at the good times rather than the bad times. Sure we did a lot of fighting and that sort of thing but I kind of put behind me all the bad things that happened and try to concentrate on the good parts. Where on R&R it's a good time you know we went to Alexandria and we got to see that part of the world and come back and do fighting again and then another time on R&R we got to go to Casablanca and you see that part of the world and you come back and fight some more and when you come home you get R&R again and we came back from my forty missions in a navy transport ship. I remember the name of it, USS Alexander. And anyway you came into Newport News and they said where do you want to go for R&R and I said well California that's where my relatives were so went to California, Santa Monica, stayed there thirty days and while I was at Santa Monica, well it was R&R and those side trips we got to do a war show up at San Francisco and come back and go home and come back and I mean there are a lot of good parts. And after R&R I was reassigned to B-17's again. I got back to Rapid City, South Dakota, and was test flying refurbished B-17's and we did a lot of flying there and I remember some of the high lights. We'd fly down the canyon

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and look at Mt. Rushmore and take pictures and that sort of stuff and there were good times where you didn't have to concentrate on hey you're getting killed or you've got to kill somebody. It's not all that way.

Question: Who do you think your enemy is?

Answer: The guy that I was supposed to get, my enemy. What do you mean by your question?

Question: Well, I just, cause every war is different, World War I, World War II, Vietnam, when you went over to fight were you fighting against the government, a person, people or were you just fighting for your country?

Answer: When you're in combat it is very personal. You're fighting to stay alive but you know you're fighting for your country like when we were wounded at Pearl Harbor, the Japanese were our enemy, we knew that and we wanted to get back at them. We didn't think about really the Japanese as being a country, I really don't think of it that way just the Japanese.. got to go get them. And of course we did. And in Germany you got to go after Hitler, you had to go after the regime over there and which we did but you're not really fighting against the common people. The German people are nice people and I'm sure the Japanese people are very nice too, my grandson married one so I know they are nice people. It's hard to say where the dividing line is but when you think of fighting the war you're fighting the Japs you're fighting the Germans and you're fighting the Italians that's all. You're fighting for your country. You're doing your assigned job because they know what they are doing. Your country knows what you're doing. Your government knows what you're doing and they give our assignment and we go and do it.

Question: When its all said and done is it done then? By that I mean, I know some people continue to have, well one gentlemen we interviewed, Tom Hartwell, he said I know its wrong, I know logically its wrong but you know its wrong to dislike the people but the Japs killed my little brother and I have to go home and tell my mom I didn't protect him. He says I know its wrong to feel bad about it but I still feel this animosity but I've talked to others that have said it was a war, they were fighting for their country and we were fighting for our country and when it was done it was done. How do you see that?

Answer: Probably the same as this gentlemen did. After, we were fighting the Japs, the war we knew about all the atrocities the Japanese did in their camps like the Baton Death March and my friend died in the Baton Death March too because the 19th bomb group some of them went on that march and it could have been me but I got it in Hawaii instead of the Philippines. But that stays with you for awhile and then after awhile I think I wouldn't buy a Japanese car, I wouldn't buy anything Japanese, oh no not Japs, but you get over it. I don't know how long it took me but I got over it and the same as the Germans.. you get over it. The Italians, to me the Italians were never really in the war, but the Germans you get over it. They were more humane than the Japanese were, they at least followed the Geneva Convention which the Japanese didn't but

Question: When you get together with the Pearl Harbor survivors, what do you talk about?

Answer: We get together once a month. First Tuesday of every month for lunch and we talk about just about anything but the war. The war is past, it is all gone.

Question: It's interesting because the argument the schools had when this project started, now mind you it was started by World War II vets, thank goodness, but their argument was

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the veterans just want to glorify war, what would you say if somebody said that to you, is that accurate or an inaccurate perspective?

Answer: About as inaccurate as you can get. No one in their right mind wants to glorify war. The people talking that is silly. They have never been to war, they have never had to fight, they never been shot, never shot at anybody. You don't glorify war you pray for peace always. Even today we pray for peace.

Question: Scary to see what is happening right now. Hopefully we can learn from history and at least change it some. I don't know if we'll ever remove war and that would be great if we could but knowledge is real valuable. You know when people come and offer, you know Hitler offering this saving thing to the Germans and people why they follow it, but I guess in Germany it was like here, coming out of a great depression also and Hitler came in and offered money and at first people thought that's good, jobs, but there were strings with all of that so. Do you think there is a message from World War II for your grandchildren and great grandchildren who you will never meet? I think in any war, World War II, World War I, whatever it is, Afghanistan, its the patriotism you show for your country, your God and your country. You've got to have God before you all the time and your country. That's what you're fighting for and your freedoms. It doesn't make any difference what war it is when your country calls you got to be patriotic enough to follow.

Question: When you see the American flag

Answer: I fly it all the time, it is in my front yard.

Question: Do you ever forget what that means?

Answer: Heavens no. I'm a patriot, I never forget.

Question: You know I've always had respect for it and I kind of realize how lucky I am living in this country but when talking with people such as yourself when I see Veterans Day Activities, I see the parade, I see the colors, it brings tears to my eyes to know what people like yourself did for the country but yet if I ask you are you a hero?

Answer: Am I a hero? Everyone that puts on a uniform to defend his country is a hero. Everyone. Everyone that wears the uniform regardless if he is on the front lines or behind a desk or what, he answered the call, he is a hero.

Question: What do you think the biggest change in your life was from your time in the service and World War II. How did it change you?

Answer: I don't know if it has. I don't know. The war was time out to defend your country and after the war you went back at it again. I knew what I was going to do even before I went into the war. They have days in school, career days and that sort of thing, we had career days in Yakima and in Yakima Senior High School and I remember when the people talked to us and I wanted to be a policeman and a friend of mine was a policeman and he said you know when you get back from the war there will be a job waiting for you and he kept his word and I kept mine. I went back and worked for the Yakima police department when I got out. There was a job waiting for me. But after three years of that I went back to school.

Question: GI Bill?

Answer: GI Bill.

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Question: Then what did you do?

Answer: I went to Prairie Trade School in Yakima for about 30 months and I wanted to be back in the radio business. I wanted to be a control tower operator and I took all my examinations for licenses and that sort of thing and got my license for first class and radio operator and instead of being called by the FAA I got a call from the Atomic Energy Commission and they said would you like to be interviewed for a job with us. You know we have an airport there at Richland and it is a closed field and we need a control tower operator. I said yes. He said this is no guarantee of a job but come down and talk to us. So I went down and talked to them and said well after the FBI finishes the investigation well you're hired. So I worked for the government in my lifetime about 32 years.

Question: So you had your own private airstrip?

Answer: I didn't always work at the airport but after that I was still in communications and other things in security .

Question: Well, thank you very much.

Answer: I should mention while I was on the police department, that's when I got married. When I met my wife and started raising a family.

Question: So she wasn't your girlfriend when you were in the service you met her after?

Answer: I met her after. She was a nurse at the (inaudible) hospital in Yakima and I was called up there one night, they had trouble with a drunk or something, answered the call and there she was. That was for me.

Question: Love at first sight?

Answer: Yeah, that's the way it happened.

Question: How many children?

Answer: I have four children and seven grandkids, two great grand children.

Question: Do your grandchildren ever talk to you about Pearl Harbor, do they know what you did?

Answer: Oh yes, we talk about it every time they come.

Question: It must feel good to know the next generation is curious and wants to understand.

Answer: Oh yes. They know. They take pictures and they take videos.

Question: Well if people like yourself don't share the stories we'll never know which leaves the possibility of history repeating itself.

Answer: Right.

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Question: Also its hard, cause I'm the generation right after World War II, to understand the things that you talk about which I think are coming back now, the patriotism, the strength in belief in your country and in doing your job, you were called, you went, and even the fear of losing your life didn't prevent you from.

Answer: You will see patriotism growing all the time, all the time. It's not like it was, oh patriotism was low during the Viet Nam War and of course there was a reason for it but it has certainly grown since then.

Question: Have we done anything different?

Answer: Nothing different. This is my country. I'm proud of it.

Question: I'm glad there were people around like yourself.

Answer: Many. Many people around. Millions.