



Walter Stewart

United States Army Air Corps

Colonel

European Theater

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Benjamin, UT

Interviewer:

Elizabeth Searles

THIS INTERVIEW IS NOT EDITED FOR CONTENT, LANGUAGE OR HISTORICAL ACCURACY

Elizabeth: Tell me about your growing up, where you grew and just a brief...you know where you came from up to the time you heard about Pearl Harbor.

Walt: Okay, well I was born in this very house and this is the second oldest house in Utah County and I happen to sleep in the same room I was born in, so that's kind of unusual – here in Benjamin and went to the first grade here and lived on the farm the days of sugar beats and horses and cows and I was the tenth of twelve. My father having been a son of a plural marriage father was the 20th child. So I was the 10th child of a 20th child making my grandfather 98 when I was born and my great grandfather was born before the USA in 1776 of January so that's kind of...we're of the old-time history. They came from Nauvoo and they were racehorse people. And then I went to school in Provo a couple of years and then to Webster school in Salt Lake where I learned to play the piano and enjoyed life in the old tenth ward in Salt Lake City. When Salt Lake at that time in 1927 many of the goods were delivered by horses pulling like carts and so Salt Lake has much changed as you can see. But then in 19...well I went to the University of Utah in the ROTC which was the artillery. You probably won't guess what they used to pull their guns – horses! And then we went to camp at Fort Ord – Jack Adamson and I; he used to be...he later became one of the leaders of the School of English at the “U”. Jack and I were grooming horses when a B17 flew over – this was 1941 and I said “*Jack are you going to...there's a war coming, are you going to go through the war with horses*”? He says, “*let's join up*”. So he never made it, his eyes wouldn't pass so I went right then to cadet school in California and graduated on the...well 60 years ago now in 1941, from flying school and was then stationed for a short time in Barsdale Field Louisiana where I learned to fly B24's and then we went from there to...I forget things you know...New Mexico, no New Hampshire not New Mexico, anyway New Hampshire where we got our new airplane and on the 3rd day of September in 1942...well I can tell you about 1941...anyway while I was in Cadet School we went to a LDS Youth Conference in California on December the 7th 1941. It was a wonderful time and when we came back...cadets, we were cadets at that time in California, we came back to the lovely home where we stayed through the night and had...the three of us and she met us at the door at noon or a little after and she said “*I don't how to tell you this but Pearl Harbor's been bombed*”. Boy! But one of the guys said “*whose that*”? Well he didn't know, I knew

what it was. Pearl Harbor was bombed and the Japanese and the British or the Japanese and the Germans and then the Italians...I had been on a mission in England in 1939 when they sent us home when the war started and I had to finish my mission in West Virginia but boy war was...this was going to be war for us! And the wonderful woman she said, *"well your dinner is all ready"* and they brought a thing on the radio saying *"everybody get back to your base at once"*. And her husband said *"I believe these boys could miss that much time and have their dinner"* and of course it didn't take long to get us into dinner and then we went immediately out to Carole??? Academy in Ontario California and they said *"put away your civilian clothes, you will never wear anything but military until this war's over"* and then we were still training to fly and by February of '42 I graduated with my wings from Victorville California and then went to Barksdale Field and that's preceded what I've said. But we finally ended up at Newfoundland. In those days we went clear from Newfoundland (I should have said those nights), we went clear to Newfoundland, we did not stop at Iceland, we went all the way to Newfoundland – from Newfoundland to Scotland. That's where I'd been on my mission before so I knew about shillings and pence...but it was a thrilling thing to fly through the night. I had an experience that may be worth telling. I always tell this to Boy Scouts – about midnight, you're all alone, you're flying about 8 – 9,000 feet altitude, black outside just dark at night and you never see anybody else and about midnight Roper said – Hugh Roper from Oak City Utah had asked me to be his co-pilot and that was one of the best friendships I've ever had – we were good friends. Anyway he said *"okay Stu take over, I'll sleep and you sleep, I'm a little tired"*, so I started flying from the middle of the Atlantic Ocean to Scotland and I looked at the wonderful sky, the black ahead except the North Star was over our nose of the airplane. We were heading for the North Star so I called the navigator, old Gerald White and I said, *"hey what kind of navigating is this?"* *"Well what's the matter?"* *"You go flying over we're in trouble...yeah I'll say we are...look out of the astrodome"* (that's the little thing in the front of the airplane) and he said *"holy smoke"*! He turned and '1-8-0' that's south but that was really east and then he went through his papers and he said way in one...in back in the information of the flight assist *'when you get near Iceland, don't trust your compass'*, you're too close to the magnet north – and we landed in England – 37 airplanes took off and 36 landed. Lieutenant Marriott who graduated with me in cadet school, and his airplane...he must have flown till he ran out of gas, you just didn't...it wasn't made totally clear I guess because my navigator Gerald White he was dandy but anyway that was the

little incident. We finally ended up in Offenbury England and then began some local training and formation flying and finally on about...and that was September 1942, the first B24's to arrive in the Eight Air Force and we started our bombing...we never could go very far because we didn't have any fighter cover except the British. And those guys were marvelous but they fill their...I suppose they fill their tanks with eyedroppers because when they get just about to Paris they go back because they're low and we've heard they even sometimes land dead stick – just give us all the cover they could. They had Spitfires and Hurricanes and they were really brave and wonderful guys but their airplane's are made to defend England. So we would be on most of our time in those early days with only about 18 or 20 of us...or 24 is a full group, but 18 or 20 airplanes at 22 – 25,000 feet and we were starting to drop bombs on them and of course that...we have to track what's known as the Fieseler Fi 103 and the ME109, and those guys are pilots I'll tell you and they had good airplanes and we were losing a lot of ships. But anyway as the winter went on in '42 we gradually started getting more airplanes and more airplanes and in the spring of '43 then came the P51's. Oh boy what an airplane! And the P47's and the P38's. I never saw 38's, they were all southern England and then we had better fire protection, or air protection, but flack was still very very deadly and we lost...

Elizabeth: Tell me about the German...you talked about it, the German Air force.

Walt: Oh yeah. You see they were well prepared. I think Lindbergh came back and told us many years before "*look out, these people are really good*". I'm not sure all he said, I know congress didn't pay much attention to him and it was saddening to the rest of us because he could see what Germany was doing. They were even building super highways, not for the people but to get their people across Germany and I went years later, and years and years later, to Germany on a mission to build a church and low-and-behold we were on freeways that had been in long before ours were. Well anyway we finally found out that the war was no joke and we were losing a lot of guys and then some more B24's started coming. B17's, and our job was...B17's you'd fly from 29,000 feet which is just safer than 24,000. We'd get up to 24,000 but we were 10 miles an hour faster and of course we always feel superior to the B17. I'm sure anybody watching this story – well if he's a B17 man he would say "*lies, lies*"! Anyway we were proud of the B24. Finally one day the 44th bomb group (were also B24's) and one day I was cycling to

the chow line and here came three B24's flying at 12 feet above our runway buzzing our field. Man I turned my cycle around and went back to the commander "give me a bomber, I'll fly through one of their hangars! How come the 44th can do this and you don't even let us fly around here"? He said "well I got news for you, we're gonna bomb a target from 50 feet". Whew, "you don't mean this"? "Yeah, we will. We'll never tell you where it is, you never want to know". The enemy...even if we start a combat mission like we're going to Bremen or we're going to go to Dachau or someplace like that (well never to Dauchau that was a prisoner of war place) but if we were going to go to Germany someplace and the mission was called off we scrubbed that mission because they will know where...that we were gonna go if we didn't go that day. So you never...you just tried to keep it as secret as you could, and they knew...when we got over there you even called the name of our commanding officer 'Welcome to England' on the German radio. They had a guy named 'Lord HaHa' he was an Englishman but he was a 'Turnbacker' or whatever you call it and he would announce when we got there and all the secrecy of flying at night and...but finally the big bang mission. In the meantime we're bombing many submarine pens...one little thing that might be interesting, if you remember on November the 8th (which is my birthday) 1942 the Americans attacked Africa. Because the Germans had been clear across Europe and they'd gone to Africa and they'd almost got to the Suez Canal and would have done but for some darn good British Battle – the 8th army got there and ?cannon? that had never even been equaled, turned back the Germans; and by May of 1942 the Germans were out of Africa, or May of '43. But November of '42 the Americans attacked and my job at that time with Roper was to fly the Bay of Biscay seeking for submarines. The German submarine was in WWI and WWII – it was a mighty powerful weapon and sank a lot of ships and so we were patrolling it and that flotilla that went from England and Ireland (maybe Ireland I don't remember, it's all secret) to Africa and that's a long ways, not one ship was sunk so we were doing some good. The British were...we were with the British on that little affair and then finally the low level flying it was subsequent to what I had just said about the African invasion. We were then told that our bombing would be from North Africa. So three groups (and a group is about 37 airplanes) the 93rd, the 44th and the 389th; these other two groups had arrived after we had and then we flew to Africa and landed at Casablanca, the glamorous Casablanca which is not glamorous, it nearly killed us all night when we tried to sleep in that. Anyway the next day we flew across Africa to Benghazi. The closest point you can be in Africa to Southern (well Greece

is the first) but all of Southern Europe, so we knew then the target would be in Europe, we had no idea what it would be but we knew one thing for sure, we'd been trained to fly low level. We were even practicing in England...that's fun to fly that way you know, you're not supposed to do it unless they tell you to. But anyway we finally were trained and during the time from June until the 31st of July we were bombing Sicily which I was in the lead ship to bomb Sicily and on the 9th of September, no the 9th of August (I've gotta think now), it was the 9th of July... The 9th of July of 1943 was the first invasion of Europe and it wasn't D-day that was a year and a half later – it was Sicily. And we flew out at night and it was an exciting thing...well we took off at 4:00 in the afternoon and we only had to go in at 12,000 feet and as we got near Sicily one of my guys...well you know during the war they had a thing called 'Commando', the British called them 'Commando Raids', we called them 'Ranger' I think and that was where about eight or ten fast moving speed boats would attack a town early in the morning and they'd fire all they could and they were heavily armed and they'd fire...they did it against Western France and we thought that's what it was but low-and-behold when I saw about eight of them over here...of those boats I thought it was a Commando Raid, the guy says "I see over here eight" and they said "over where"? And we looked – the whole Mediterranean was filled with the ships closing in just like all the dogs on the rabbit you might say – out in Sicily. And that was a thrill! And we bombed 12,000 feet and that night a lot of things happened there that I wasn't in them but it was a treacherous thing. But in the meantime we finally took Sicily. But we was going back home and it got dark and you don't fly formation in the dark. When it's dark you flash a light on top, never on the bottom – the submarines are looking for those – so we flash a light on top, we're only about 8 or 9,000 feet at this time over the Mediterranean and that means that the wingmen make their turn and get away so we can land. I guess it was fifteen minutes that I found...the only lights on the whole North African coast were some little flares, tiny flares on our runway but our navigator Stan Rourtwerts from Sioux Falls South Dakota – he brought us right in. We landed and told them about the invasion of Sicily and you'd have thought it...well the 4th of July couldn't compare to then. We were dancing and everybody said "we're gonna go home someday"! And about two in the morning Ramsey Potts our commander woke me up and he says "where's McKelvey"? McKelvey was on his first mission in fact after I left Roper after my 18th mission and got my own airplane which I named 'Utah Man' mainly to let the Texas guys know they're not winning the war by themselves (that's a little thing off the side, you must know

about that), but anyway McKelvey was Roper's pilot – co-pilot and McKelvey was having his first mission on my right wing and he was lost. Well we had a...we woke up early and I said, *"lets go find him, lets go find him! They can't...somebody's gotta go after him"*, they said *"you're going back to Sicily, this is the war you know"*, well of course we couldn't...the war came first but we...well I have to tell you something before I forget it.

The coast of England is like the English countryside – every ten miles there was a little broadcasting station named *'Darkey'* and it's numbered and you can hear him but you can't hear him more than ten miles away yourself but he's on the map, I mean if you see him and you hear him you know where you are. On the North coast of Africa there were... they were all alone and all through the night those guys were calling for that airplane that was lost and one British guy smarted up to say *"Hey, the American's never fly at night, I'll bet they were still on their daytime frequency"*. At six o'clock every night you change your frequency because the enemy will have it by then...and so they flipped over to the American, or the 'O' frequency and heard him say *"bailing out"* and this is a ship called *'Big Noise'* – McKelvey and all that wonderful new crew – first mission – and bailing out, out of fuel and crashed. And all you have now is one straight line from where that station was to where they crashed. Now if you've got two, they'll cross sometime because they go miles, more than a thousand miles before they could be heard and (well they can't be heard, we could only hear them ten miles but they know you) but if you've got three – you've got to be in the triangle. But they only had one. So we went back to Sicily, did our bombing and came back and the minute we landed *"what about McKelvey and his crew? Did you find him, did you find him"*? And there was just a casualness, at least we thought so – in fact we said if it had been Eleanor Roosevelt out there we'd have called the war off for a person like that. Well anyway they hadn't looked, they hadn't...we didn't know a thing; the war was just so precious at that time. Well the next morning I said *"I'm going"* (well I said I was gonna go out that other day) no – the next morning I went out in my airplane which I had named *'Utah Man'* and I got ready to go and they said *"oh no you're not, you're going back to Sicily again – this is a war on"*. So now those guys...well remember the night before we were dying of thirst because we had never gone at night like that so we...all the time we went to Sicily and I got hit bad over Messina and I got back okay but my airplane was put in the hangar (we didn't have any hangars) but the crew had a lot of repair work to do on my airplane – that was the following day

so now instead of the 9th it's the 11th and they'd been out there two days and I said *"I'm going out to look for those guys"* and of course McKelvey had been with Roper and he'd been in my seat and they had a tent right by my boy's tents and my crew...we wanted to go, nobody else seemed to do much! And so we finally...he said *"well a brand new airplane came in yesterday..."*(they named it *'Jersey Bounce'* – wouldn't you know every airplane that came over new was named *'Jersey Bounce'* – some guy in the states loved that name. I had to paint it off to get my *'Utah Man'* on it)... so we got a new airplane and took off and had our canteens and little did we realize that we should try to take some stuff with us. We didn't have any rescue stuff. Well we flew out over the desert in the heat of the day and the water is bad to fly out in the daytime (or to land, there are updrafts and downdrafts and you get airsick) and we looked and we looked...but we did know about that one line. In fact if we'd have flown North or Southeast the same distance we'd have seen the *'Lady Be Good'* which had crashed in April and they never found anybody, but ours was Southwest (we didn't know about the *'Lady Be Good'* then of course). Well we flew in an updraft and downdraft and you get airsick in fact I said to Larry *"I'd like to go back and see how the guys in the back"*...we had about 15 or (not that day, we had about 10 or 12 besides ourselves) and I went back through the bomb bay and opened the door and one guy had tried to get to the window to throw up and didn't make it. Everybody! Oh they were all sick and that makes you sick right there, but I slammed the door and went back in the front. If I'm flying I can make it but if I'm sitting I get airsick too. I said *"Larry give me the controls and let's go"*. Well then this is what happened – about one o'clock I guess in the afternoon, we'd taken off at nine or ten and you see we'd flown about three hours over the desert searching, searching, searching – we saw in the distance a grand old lava flow, a black lava flow and sand and that's all you could see. And we flew through...we had no idea where anything...but that line would be somewhere there. Finally I said to the navigator Stan Wertz, I said *"when did we start our search"* and he has to plot the search (flying out now) but he plots the search and then you bring that back and you don't search there again and I said *"what'll we do, right or left"*? He says *"I'm left handed"*, well that's not much of a reason – *"Okay we'll do a left search"* and then we started and I said *"what about the length"*? And he said *"well, that's up to you, you're the skipper"* and I said *"it looks to me three minutes from when we turned"* – we'd go three minutes and come back and that's going...you're looking four and a half miles each way and in that lava flow that's all you dared do. Talk about incidents and talk about...I'm

just as sure as I'm sitting here that we were blessed. We were blessed by somebody that knew more than we would know. So I said "*well, make a left turn*" and we flew three minutes and then that's another left turn and then we flew back and of course it was more than three minutes – it's just three minutes to make your turn so you're looking four and a half miles each way and then you go back and on the second left turn and on the third left turn (no the third was a right turn and then a left turn) on the third left turn my copilot Larry Coon was talking to the radio operator and that wasn't bad for anybody – in the first place he's up high cause I'm turning left and he's talking to the radio operator Hank (the names don't come) and I just thought '*he hasn't looked out for a second*' and I just impressed to stretch up out (we sit on our parachutes) and I stretched up to peak out his window like that and sat down. I saw something white! Nothing's white on the Sahara Desert! There are no deer with white tails, there is no snow so I turned that airplane almost upside down and there was a little piece of parachute going like that and we flew right down – there was an old old tree by a...it was just coming out of the rock. There had been a little water there and two guys waving a piece of parachute. And there we'd found two of them. We were...oh we were ecstatic! Well of course we didn't have water except our canteens and I'll tell you a quick story about that. My canteen I kept when I went in the service because I got it as a Boy Scout in Salt Lake in 1932 – a WWI canteen and I had also the mess kit and so we only had about four canteens left because the other guys had been drinking them all. We filled all these up and we threw them over and they hit and bounced – later we found out when we went and saw these guys later they said, "*Who had the canteen with the steel lid? It saved our life*". My little canteen that I got in the Boy Scouts! But anyway we waved and they were so excited and then we...of course we immediately contacted the base and they ordered us to do an ever increasing...you climb a little higher until right around that is your center you know they can't be far away and all of a sudden we saw a parachute on the black rocks with sand on it and the stroud lines were the arrow. We flew down the arrow about four minutes or three which would be about ten miles or something (well it wouldn't be...) we flew down the arrow and we saw a parachute made like a tent and written in the sand on the black rock was "*four men, three hurt*" so we had found six guys. Well then we searched and searched and finally we're just gone, we are sick because you'd thrown up and started for home and about ten minutes toward home which is another hour and a half flight and I turned to the radio operator, or the radio operator shook me and he said "*Skipper, I got bad news, we're ordered to go back and search*

more". So we turned back and boy after about another hour...oh I guess it would be about another hour we looked and looked and looked and finally I said to him "*close station, don't let them call us back*" and we flew back to the base and of course they were all excited and thrilled that we'd found the men but they said...I said "*we'll go out tomorrow*", by that time my airplane was repaired and by that time Roper had arrived for me – he'd had to stay in England to bring a General down so we'd been down there for nearly a month before Roper came down there and of course he was the pilot that was – McKelvey's his copilot and so we had a real interest – they're Americans, they're buddies and we were anxious to find them and we knew where they were so we wanted to have some stuff to take and we didn't have anything. But the British were...that's their job and every day they would bring all these...oh ten feet around big like ice-cream things with parachutes on them with food and water and blankets and medicine and everything, even maps of where you are. There was even little radios (no, that was later). Anyway they had all this wonderful stuff and we said "*we'd like to take that*" and they said "*oh no we'll be going right out*". They had no idea that we really knew where they were. They didn't believe us. Well we flew right to them and we got there and there they were and they run out this day they walked out very slowly. And Roper – McKelvey was his copilot so he got in the back and I said, "*okay, you're the bombadeer*" we got two jeep cans and they usually had – oh diesel or something in them so we swished them around to get the taste out. But anyway in fact later they told us "*for the rest of our life we're gonna put a little diesel in our water*" and we swished them around and I said "*let 'em go*" and Roper hollered "*bombs away*" – "*oh*" he said "*it's flipping in the air*", but they got to it, stood it up and saved three gallons and they told us later "*not only did the canteen with the right lid save our life, but that saved us too*" and we did the same to the other guys. Well then of course we went on another combat mission. When we came back that night the British said or we said, "*What happened?*" – "*We couldn't find them, you don't...it couldn't have been where you said*". OOOHH we were furious and my commander Ramsey Potts, a wonderful guy and he said, "*If Walt Stuart says he found them, he found them! There's no question about that*". So they wanted us to go again and I said "*you take my navigator with you*" and so then my navigator went with them and went right to them. Then the British took ten more days but then...oh no I've got to tell you one more thing...

Tape Interrupt

Walt: The British wouldn't let us take this stuff and so the very next day when they came...well the very next day when we wanted to take their stuff they wouldn't let us take it and that's when we dropped Roper and dropped this stuff. Well then when we came back they still hadn't found them, they still hadn't found them! So I got permission to go again and we knew right where they were and so the British stuff...they'd come in a big Wellington and then they had a Whitley that did the searching and that's a wonderful airplane. It takes off at 101, cruises at 100 and stalls out at 99 and that old baby would just hang, but they couldn't find them and so the next day when we had a day off I said "*how many want to go*" and the whole base wanted to go but we got about ten guys or 15 guys and I said "*you guys, if you're willing to do this we'll do something*". We taxied right up where all that stuff was, the British stuff – beautiful things they had. I opened the bomb bay doors and said "*ready, set, get it*"! And they all grabbed it and put it on the airplane and we taxied out with the British stuff, this wonderful stuff. I said "*man we better find 'em today or I'll be spending my life in Leavenworth Kansas*". We flew right to them and let the stuff go out by parachute. Well it was good, we could have nearly...it was days, quite a few days before they got there and then they were just alive and fine (well the last part I'll tell you) where we went over after they got back...11 or 12 days after they'd crashed they got them to the MASH and we went over – my crew and I went over to see them and they said "*oh you can't visit, nobody visits those guys*" and they heard us there and they hollered "*if that's Walt Stuart and his crew, let 'em in or we're coming out*" so they came out and I've got a picture – 5 of them and they're all holding their canteens. So they...and I never got mine back. Okay well that was a fulfilling experience. They're probably going to make a video of that. The same guy that did the video "*Wing and a Prayer*", he used to work for KSL and he's a very good man – Mike Sanchez.

Well now let's see, the next big thing that came...finally on the 31st of July 1943 – Saturday the 31st of July, 1943 – 17 men in big cars arrived at our base to tell us where we're gonna go – "*You're going to bomb the Ploesti Oil Refineries in Romania and there are five of them*". There are really seven but there are two or three little ones, but there are five big one's and we're going to try to bomb them all. We'll send a little group to the others and we'll take off on Sunday morning and that's the day to go, believe it or not. Every country has their Saturday night

problems and some going to church you know so Sunday's we didn't do a lot of bombing on Sunday and so you're to leave at 7 o'clock and you'll fly about 11 hours. You'll fly across the Mediterranean, you'll go across Albania and Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, you'll go down by the Danube River and you will come to Ploesti and we had it all in our maps. Of course the navigator's plotting everything – and you will carry six 500 pounders and two incendiary bombs. Your bombs will not go off until half an hour if you've dropped them, except the incendiary, they'll start at once. The last ships, their bombs will go off in 5 minutes and can go off as much as three weeks keeping them out of their refineries. There will be seven groups but there are five big ones and they assigned us where we would fly across the Mediterranean Sea. Well that of course was very exciting (and then I have another story but it's not proper...) I was holding MIA on the desert and we all met that night and it was very exciting and the guys were all pretty anxious and by the way they were, most all of them, making out their last words too because you just knew the mission was going to be tough. *"You will bomb the target from 50 feet above the smoke stacks, but you will go in at about 15,000 – don't worry about the way in and the way out, just get close to the refineries"*. The second heaviest defended target in all of Europe. Berlin only was greater and they had all kinds of Focke-wulf 190's, they even had Romanian Fighter Planes. They had JU88's, which are wonderful German twin-engines that can fly and catch you miles away. So that was a nice little thing and finally we got up the next day, went out to our airplane and there was our...oh, the night before I went out to the airplane and there I said to my wonderful crew chief – the best in the whole Air force, and I said *"hey I can't see the redline"*, see the airplane has a strut and it was right down like that, I said *"it says right on my instructions you can't taxi if you can't see the redline"*, he said *"Skipper I got news for you, you don't even have your ammunition loaded yet"*. Boy and then we had one extra gas tank so instead of 2300 we had 2700 gallons in our airplane. But then the next morning we all had the final briefing, the weather was perfect wouldn't you know, we thought it might rain but no way, it never rains there. But finally we went out to the airplanes and when we got there we had a flat tire and my crew chief was almost in tears, he said *"I stayed out here til 3 o'clock this morning, everything was ready"* and this tire went flat. So we said *"well there's a hangar queen"*, we had an airplane that has a funny landing so we used to take parts – even us, even the flying crew had to help him with the tire. But we got the tire and then there were 35 airplanes lined up and then there was 36. I was number one and there were 35 and I would have been 36 and then the one on

the runway was the commanding officer Addison E. Baker – Lieutenant Colonel. Oh I want to tell you one more thing. The night before the mission, after they had told us the mission and everything about it and the supervisors in all the cars had gone, my commanding officer said “*wait you guys come back*” and we all sat down on these tin cans with swastika’s on their sides and he said “*now as you all know this is a real rough mission and it’s the most important mission and it’ll shorten the war! There’s no question it’ll shorten the war if we do it*”, but he said “*we’re going...*” and he put his hand on Lieutenant Colonel Addison E. Baker from near Dayton Ohio and John Jerestad from Racine Wisconsin was his copilot and he said, he turned to me and he said “*you Walt Stuart, you’re my deputy lead*” and that’s when I first heard about it and I’m saluting him with both hands ‘*yes sir, yes sir*’. Roper told me “*you can’t go up there, you’ll never make it. While you’re coming in they’ll shoot you down while we’re coming behind. You’ve gotta fly with me*”. I said, “*fine thing – I’ll go to him and say I don’t wanna fly with you, I’ll fly with Roper*”, well he says “*you can’t do that can you*”? My old buddy. I said “*well don’t take your fancy shoes with you*” and he said “*well don’t you take your camera with you*”. He wanted my camera you know a little joke. So finally our commanding officer put his hand on John Jerestad’s shoulder and he said “*we’re going over that*”...after he made me the deputy “*we’re going over that target tomorrow if we go over in flames, we’re going over. And if we don’t make it you take us over*”. “*Yes sir, yes sir*”, I’m saluting him with both hands you know because that was something for a man to say that very thing – he knew it was a toughy. Finally the next morning we took off at...when we got our place Larry was trying to check the mags and the commander was already rolling, I said “*Larry*”, he said “*I haven’t checked the mags you know*”, I said “*don’t worry about all of that, don’t check on ‘em – let’s go*”! And so the heaviest flight we ever made in our life without any pre-flight – oh it shows how important a lot of that stuff is. Anyway we got off and 178 bombers took off. 54 turned back, no not that many turned back – 178 took off, 154 crossed the target so you see about 22 or 24 turned back. Some have to...if you’ve got a gun that wont work the enemy finds it out in a minute. If you’ve got anything wrong with your airplane or a man or anything you don’t risk your life. So, but some have other reasons and we know about those guys – scumbags, they’re every time nearly. When we got just about to Greece, we were flying across the Mediterranean, beautiful, about 1500 feet – just about to Greece and Larry Combs said “*look, look, look*” and I looked out his window and right past his window went an airplane straight down and smashed in the water. I didn’t know

anybody was even ahead of us, I didn't know where we were then, I thought we were leading everybody, but there was a group ahead and that was the lead navigator that went down and that caused our biggest trouble. He was the right wing, he was the deputy lead of the colonel and he would do all of the directing and so he had a brand new young man as his own navigator. We didn't know that was bad but it was. Finally we got to the coast, we flew up over and got up to about 15,000 to get over the Alps – Dinerian Alps and finally came down to a beautiful river – brown river – the Brown Danube. We flew down the Brown Danube but it was beautiful, I'd like to know what Straus...I think it was further up. But finally we made this turn and we started making our turn and my navigator said, *"no, no, no we're turning too soon"*, I said *"that's the railroad"*, he said *"that's the wrong railroad, that's the Orient Express"*. He said *"we got 40 miles to go, we're going to bomb Bucharest"* and we were shocked and we're the deputy lead, we can't turn out, we can't tell him anything – radio silence and so we knew we were going too soon, too soon and we were trying our best to get the message to our commander Flying Hales Wench and Ura Clydon was over here flying and there was the three of us leading and you never look back, you don't want anybody behind you at all. You don't even look at your copilot you look at that airplane and we were trying our best to let them know and I was shaking my wings and shaking my fists at John Jerestad and he's shaking his fist and he was at Roy shaking at me cause we were trying to let them know they were wrong, they're wrong. When all of a sudden my waste gunner John Connelly my wonderful waste gunner said *"look at 9 o'clock"* and that's 9 o'clock – there were the targets – he could see the smoke, about 40 miles away or 50 maybe. We were missing our target. And so the big thing was to turn, but I can't turn, I can't go alone in varied formation. In fact, if you'd break formation in any final run going back to the days of the nights of the round table, they'd shoot you. On the charge you don't make any fancy changes. Well he couldn't make the turn unless he got the message but his navigator might have seen it I don't know, but he might have seen us doing this but finally he made his turn in left formation and the other group went away, dropped their bombs on the corn fields and flew home with nothing. One man pulled out and dropped bombs on one little refinery and took two men with him and that's all the 376th did and they were the leaders, they were the trained people and that's what happened to that outfit. But here we are now we're out by ourselves, of course we've got about 18 or 20 behind us so we made our turn and we flew – began north and we were cheering like mad and finally we started making our other turn to get into the target and we're now ready

to go right down to low-level. Well at this time we're down about 100 feet and I'm right on Colonel's wing and I'm getting right as close to him as I can and all of a sudden they started firing at us off the side and we're firing back. At that time I always reach in my pocket and I'll show you cause the children used to love to see this, my children at Hunter High School yesterday...I'll reach in my pocket and show it. This is a kind of a bullet that the enemy uses and this is the kind we have – isn't that something? By the way my uncle was John Browning. My grandmother that lived in this house was John Browning's sister. So we started firing back and boy I'll tell you those old 50's (we had 50's on top and flexible guns on the side) so we're firing right back at them and we're getting hit. We know we're being hit, I saw a piece of flack go over my legs and down...I later picked it up but not at that time you're just so anxious to get right and going and all of a sudden there was a chicken coop and somebody pulled the rope...

Tape Interrupt

Okay, now we're down to 50 feet and right down below us on the left and right as close as that well out in front of the house they were firing at us and we put our 50's on them and when they pulled the rope like that and it fell apart and they had guns...they had the 20mm cannon – it'll burst even if it doesn't hit you and they were just filling us with holes but they're jumping over the...down in their own cover. I saw them jumping and we were firing back at them and of course the Colonel was up here and Lieutenant Porter's right next to him but I'm way down over trees, I even got leaves on my bomb bay when I got back from scraping the top of a tree, it's not hurt – you don't go though, you know it's the top. Anyway we flew a little further and there was another chicken coop and Sergeant Barnett, Richard Barnett from Montana he said "*what'll I do, what'll I do*"? I said, "*Go ahead fire right – the last one really got us*". He's firing like this and hens and feathers – oh we got a real one! We teased him the rest of his time overseas but just about that time we're approaching the target and Lieutenant Porter on the other...between me and the Colonel pulled up, broke in two, two men fell out – actually we found out later there were three that got out and they were high, he was pulling up to bail out and broke...and the airplane smashed. Well at that point I moved right over on the Colonel and as we were going – and remember I told you he said "*if we go over that target we go over it in flames*"? Guess what? Number three engine on his right side the other side from us was a sheet of fire and...well

smoke. He had been hit. He had been hit hard and we flew right where we couldn't help. We just...he could've barely landed at that moment or he could have pulled up and left the ??? high, it wasn't that bad. But you heard what he said before? – *“We're going over that target if we go over in flames”!* If you've ever heard of a hero or two hero's you don't know who's doing the flying and all of a sudden he...more and more and more and then I saw him reach down, I didn't see him, I saw his bombs drop. The pilot can pull the thing and you don't ever want to crash with your bombs on so he jettisoned his bombs and barely landed just before the target. He didn't need to do that, I was right there, you don't have to use a bomb sight on a target like that, you just have to...one of our bombadeers trained about having his shoe on when the target got between his toes, he'd made fun of doing that but you could do that – easily as could be – but he bailed. He crashed and lost 11 men. All of them were killed on that airplane for which he'd already done a brave act to leave the formation. That was worth the medal of honor to leave the formation and go on your own, you're either going to be a hero or you're going to go to jail but he did that before and then we don't know who's flying now so both of them got the Congressional Medal of Honor and I saw them get it and I'll tell you, that was something. But it's all happening fast; I'm not doing there like I am now telling you about it again that just happened. We pulled back to about 50 or 60 feet above the smoke stacks, no more than that and the bombadeer hollered *“bombs away”*, our man in the back Sergeant Johnston he has a glass door and we were told the day before *“don't bomb oil wells”* and *“don't bomb tanks, they can fill them – bomb buildings”*. The guy told me, he said *“you're gonna bomb my refinery, I've been trying for a long time to get the machinery for 110 octane”* – that's what an airplane has to have, he said *“I only had it about two or three weeks”* when the phone rang one morning you see you got ten minutes to get out, they'll be there and he said *“they took over – I saw them with their white big black crosses on their trucks and their tanks”* and he said *“I want you to hit that refinery of mine”*, and he said *“don't worry about...just get the buildings cause they can't replace that”* so that's what the bombadeer said, he said *“bombs away”* and Sergeant Johnston said *“I saw two bombs go in the...just like in buildings”* and they don't see them and an incendiary's on the roof and of course that explodes and the smoke is immediate and then we flew away and that smoked. But I say you see in all the pictures of Ploesti you see an airplane silhouetted with smoke, I started to smoke. Anyway we pulled up...we were being hit real bad but we pulled up to 50 feet or so higher than we were and we were supposed to turn right and go

back where we came. Well now I'm the leader and I thought *'we'd been hit like mad back there, why should we go there, there's some mountains over there at the left'*. So I made a left turn – nobody followed me. I didn't know that. I didn't know that for two hours later. I turned left and they went...well no I did find out that all of them hadn't done that because after we'd passed the target and I wanted to find Roper – he was way back where I would have been and I was ahead so I tried to...and I saw him, I got right over near him but I couldn't begin to keep up I'd been hit so hard. Going over...oh as we crossed the target, we crossed the target and then we crossed the town and right in front of us was a radio tower at our altitude. No way to get over that thing so I skidded the airplane. Now any pilot that's hearing this story will say I'm a nut but you can skid the B24 which means you make a left turn with your eighter on and a right turn with your rudder and your airplane thinks you've lost your mind but it'll skid. In other words it doesn't turn but it got that wing up over the top of that radio tower and hit it and I said *"there it goes"* and down it went and we made our turn and nobody followed us – I didn't know that, I had no way to make them follow. But we never saw another bullet, another airplane – nothing for the next seven and a half hours. But as we made our turn Larry grabbed his nose and I said *"oh brother where is it"* and the guys in the back said *"there's gasoline coming out of number three – out of the wing in number three"*. Well that scares the life out of you. You've got six or seven hours of flying and you've got a leaky gas tank so I said *"we can't possibly make it home, we can't possibly – we'll land"* and we had a nice big open field so we started coming in to make our landing and I think we were around doing about 85 miles an hour – that's landing speed. When a voice from the back said *"don't look now but you've still got two bombs on this airplane and one incendiary that didn't drop"*. Of course we didn't know that – they tried to drop them but they decide...you know, if you got it open right. Well I said *"Larry!"* and went and grabbed the super charges and the mixture controls and the throttles and that grand old B24 just ready to land – belly land when we pulled up and that was...that saved our lives of course too because we got further on and the gas leak stopped and...we have a substance inside the tank they say a 50 caliber machine gun bullet will cover easy but anything bigger...and we found we were hit with 37mm cannon and it was about an inch and a half but that thing sealed – the number three as we...then we flew back across the Danube area and up across the Dinaric Alps and got finally to the Mediterranean Sea and then I said *"okay you guys"*, we hadn't seen an airplane, we hadn't seen an enemy, we hadn't a thing and now we're starting in the Mediterranean Sea. I said *"okay Connelly check*

the"...he's our crew chief and I said "well, how about that fuel"? and our fuel thing was like a thermometer for each engine and of course you don't have one of them on the spare tank but we used that already in a hurry. So anyway on our main tanks we had...he said, "*one two and four have got some fuel, number three shows out*". Well we have a staying park in a tank so after you use it down to there but it works – from there down – it won't feed an empty tank or a leaking tank so we knew we had some to go and I said "*okay you guys if your lives are worth as much to you as mine is to me – there's Greece. They have rutabagas and whatever it is to eat and they're not mean people and they've been conquered by the enemy, I think they'll take good care of us. If you want to we'll belly land in the water as close to the shore as we can get...or as we can try to make it and you've all heard we don't have any idea how much gas we've got*"...And I said, "*We'll take a vote*". Just then the voice – Sergeant Richard Bartlett from Montana he said "*you call that a river (or an ocean)? We've got rivers in Montana wider than that, let's go*"! And the vote was about ten to nothing, we voted to go. Here we are alive, your engines are turning so we started across 450 miles of the Mediterranean Sea very low – but we're already at 1500 feet or so. So you stick the nose down and you pull back the throttles and the mixture controls and you just keep those fans just going enough to go down to the water and then you put the power back on and we only had to do it twice. We were already at 1500 so you go right down on the water and you pull up and you keep going. Four o'clock in the afternoon the radio...the radio operator said, "*Well we got...*" (let's see what did they call that? Oh I can't remember, it was a program that often times started in America – every four o'clock every day – it originated in America or Britain – Britain had it and then sometimes they have American) but here came a voice "*We welcome you Yanks wherever you are, we got a good show for you today. We'll have a beautiful song*" and then the music started and I say it was Dinah Shore because I like Dinah Shore but some American girl sang '*Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer*' and we thought...for a minute we thought '*you don't tease you know who*'! And of course he couldn't sing when they announced the song and then she sang...but below there was our field over there...but we're all looking at the Mediterranean Sea and you know the song was...you know it was just a reminder that somebody's watching us...you know above. And we...finally my navigator got us right in, believe it or not. There's not a thing on that coast, no landmarks or anything but all he's got is the sun you know and the daytime, you have no streets or anything over water but they do what they call '*celestial navigation*' and he knows the time of year and he knows where the sun is or

where it ought to be. The ocean actually makes a turn and goes way down to Tripoli and we're way out on the peninsula...but it's straight west of Cairo in Bengaze and there was our runway. Well you know the wind always blows from the water to the land and that you always land up wind you know, you don't ever land downwind – no, except when you've got to and we landed with the wind behind our back. We rolled about 300 yards or 500 yards and 'bang' out went that tire we'd fixed that morning and we'd been hit with flack and we pulled off to the side and there you see a picture right there what we looked like. We got out, we loved each other and here came...well I'm not sure about the Red Cross girls on that day but it is on that picture, anyway we kissed the ground – just the most beautiful place on earth (actually it's the ugliest of real estate on earth – that desert is nothing, not a tree where we were but we had got in). And then when we went back in and told them about our story and then we'd end the rest of our lives hearing about it. Oh here I'll tell you a little bit about the results. We had seven refineries, five big ones – two or three weren't even touched. They just made the wrong turn and the navigator was shot down. You can't blame the leader; he just wanted to almost kill himself. He had a General between the seats and we've always blamed him till one day somebody said "*he was a balloon pilot*" he wasn't a pilot, he didn't know about bombers, he just wanted to go on that mission and he was the commander of the mission and they just made a turn flying down the wrong railroad and luckily enough for us went the right way and some of them went right to their target but some of the targets were not hit and they were producing oil again in about three to four months in all of them. They put all the Russian prisoners of war to work. Our bombs would kill some because they would blow off later but they didn't care. Anyway, we were told before we took off "*if we hit the target right, Italy would be out of the war in 30 days*". I don't know whether you remember or not but Italy was one of the three [Axis]. Italy was out of the war on the 3rd of September – quit the war, so the Germans of course they're in Italy now we can start bombing Italy (well we could bomb Italy anytime – that was in the...we bombed Sicily and all), but now they can't...wherever we were when we went through Italy as you well know and if you remember this – whenever Hitler, when he started that war, he went into Poland, took Poland with the benefit of Russia doing the same, then the Germans turned their guns around and started firing at the Russians which was a very good thing for us but then Russia became our ally. And that's kind of a person Hitler was but after that from that time on every time Germany wanted to take a place, they took it. And if you watch the...check on World War Two from the first day of

August 1943 the only advance they ever made was Christmas '44 and then they ended in May '45. He was so short of oil and everything that he couldn't make another attack. He was wiping...if he'd of got Russia he could have then released divisions of men to go against England and if he could get going against England, they had the Air Force and they had the Army's and they had the Navy's too – he could have gone against them but he couldn't. He never did take Moscow, he never did take Stalingrad, he was just hurt. And recently they asked the German Generals that had survived the war (and I've got a copy in there), "*what was the reason that Germany lost the war*" and all of them even now said "*high altitude bombing. You got our gasoline, you got our airplanes, you got our cities, you got our ability to make war*". So we feel pretty good about that. That's the story.

Elizabeth: That's a great story. Can you tell me – what was the feeling before the war about the war that was already going before December 7th, 1941? What did people think?

Walt: Well they didn't want to...we're not a warlike people you know. We don't want to go to war. We had guys...in only 1918 I was born, I knew all about it – I was a year and three days old when it ended...no I'm just kidding you. We don't like to go to war but we're for the British. In fact when I was on my mission in England and we got sent back we sang '*God Bless America*' and other songs with the biggest bright lights on our boat because it was after the war had started when we came home on an American ship but all that time we were...my landlady in England, her son stopped at our house in 1940 on his way to pick up a B17. We were selling American airplanes to the British but the whole country was pleading us not to go to war. There couldn't have been anything much less than the bombing of Pearl Harbor that would have put us in war – we were not war people. But boy that one did! Especially when they had two emissaries that landed in San Francisco and we flew them across our nation and they were meeting with Cordail Hall (I think that's what his name was) and others in Washington DC on peace with Japan on the 7th of December '41 when the great flotilla had already been at least almost a month on their way loaded with war planes and they bombed the helpless people on Sunday morning December the 7th 1941. So that riveted...I'll tell you what I was doing, I was (oh no, I told you that). I was going to tell you another little funny thing – I was taxiing a B24, no I was taxiing a B29 – what a wonderful airplane – one day in August of 1945 down in

Roswell New Mexico and they flashed a red light in the tower...no, no, they didn't flash the red light, a red light and a jeep came at us and I said to the guys "*what have we done? We've run over somebody, what's happened? They don't do that, they flash a light from the towers – here he comes. What have we done*"? So we stopped our B29 and we opened the door back there and he said, "*cut your engines the war just ended*". That was my last flight in a big bomber.

Elizabeth: Tell me about the B29 and the B24.

Walt: Oh the B29, let's see the B29 carries ten bombs – ten tons of bombs. We could carry ten...we could carry four tons. We didn't like to carry a one-ton bomb though because if you miss it with a one-ton bomb that's it but if you've got ten 200-pounders or something like that you might hit... So the one-ton bombs are only for heavy...like submarine pins or something giant. The B29 could carry...well he could carry ten tons of bombs and they flew...they never had them in Britain, it was always in the Pacific and of course one of them dropped the atomic bomb and they would fly at very high altitude up to 40,000 feet. They had control turrets...we had...well the B24 had a nose turret and a tail turret but later it got a top turret and a tail turret and later it got a nose turret, but the other guns were just flexible like that – you just had to shoot like you do at a deer.

Elizabeth: But you got to sit up high in those?

Walt: Yeah, one day I said to the crew "*I've never fired one of these guns though my Uncle invented it but I've never fired one. I'd like to fire*"...this was practicing over England and I put a hole in my left wing. Oh, the commander said, "*What did you do a thing like that for*"? I said, "*I'll never do a thing...*" "*No I know you wont, we won't let anybody do that anymore*", the gunners know. But the turrets, they have a cutout; they can't hit your prop. But the B29 was well armed and it could fly right up to 40,000 feet and they dropped the atomic bomb and they also bombed the...if they would have had to keep going, they'd have just mutilated Japan. And it was...the attack (let's see what was the attack that we finally decided), well it has often been said it was a shame we didn't attack the country because they had a try-out on Sampan – an easy island and killed hundreds and hundreds of Americans. They fight till...they don't let you take

them for war, they're just fanatic about it so it would have been very tough for us to get on with that war so we dropped an atomic bomb and the next two or three days they said...we dropped it twice you know, once on Hiroshima and once on Nagasaki and then they said the next day "*the atomic bomb is (they had a good word)*". The atomic bomb is just one too many, where do we surrender. So they had to give up. And it actually saved thousands and thousands of Japanese lives because one city...if they'd have taken...Saipan alone we lost many, many. We got taken in a few hours'...weeks and weeks and the Japanese would get in a cave and they'd fight till you go right in the cave and shoot at 15 feet away. And so they would have fought hard, hard, hard and so actually...and the wise Japanese to this day will tell you that the atomic bomb was a mercy bomb. They quit the war, one that they'd lose anyway. So nowadays they take off from a place in Missouri (I don't think I better tell you the name, somebody might hear it), they take off in a place in Missouri in a great big black airplane, they fly clear to Iraq – it takes them a day or almost a day to get there, they drop their bombs and fly back non-stop, they get re-fueled in the air. You see what they can do nowadays. Wow – wipe the world out with a couple of bombs.

Elizabeth: It's a different world. Tell me about how you and Hugh Roper met; tell me about your relationship with him.

Walt: Oh, well when we arrived at Barsdale Field in Louisiana he was in 41-I and I was in 42-D, each one of the letters is four weeks ahead of the one next to it and so six of us young guys got out of 42-D and went right directly...I drove in my car (I bought a car) and we went down to Barsdale Field Louisiana. When we got there a big sergeant said "*which one of you guys is Stuart – you've been asked for*" and I said "*well you guys, I've been asked for*" and it was Hugh Roper and he was from Oak City Utah and he'd asked for me and so it was a wonderful friendship, we were good friends. He'd been married, he was married and Abbey went with him, she got as far...well they went to Florida, then from there on we were in the war. But we were dear friends and we'd go to church together. I had a funny church story to tell you, when...in Aukenbury where we first flew out of – we fly out every Sunday morning and we'd fly...it was high, we'd fly right over a little church just as they're going to church. You know in England they have the State Church, that's the Church of England – that's church. All the rest are per chapel (I might have that backwards) and the church just paid for by the...anyway this was a

little old Methodist church so I said “*we outta go over there someday and tell them we’re not Godless, we just have to fight the war and apologize for going over ‘em on Sunday*”, he said “*well you go, you’re the old missionary*”. So I went over one Sunday and saw where they met at two o’clock in the afternoon and...no one...it’s two o’clock in the afternoon they have a little other thing but it’s just about the time we were taking off about eight or nine o’clock in the morning and I went over there and opened the door, quite a big chapel and about ten or eleven people are right up at the front and the lady stood up and said “*you’re just in time*”. I said “*time for what*”? “*You’re our speaker*”, and I said, “*I was on a mission here and was never ordered in*”. I was never in anyplace except when I was ordered – out of a lot on my mission, so I went down and got on the stand and I had to tell them...they had the songs outlined and they did the collection. I ended up doing the collection but I gave them a good old LDS talk and the dear sweet little ladies...one man and then about $\frac{3}{4}$ ’s through my talk a sergeant came in the back door and sat in the back seat and I thought ‘*Oh brother, they thought that I was he*’, and low and behold – so sure enough they invited us to dinner, invited him and he walked about four paces behind me, he was real mad. Finally we ate with him and then he and I made friends and I said, “*Well what was the story*”? He said “*whenever you arrive in England on a troop boat they have a sign there ‘any of you people that have had anything to do with preaching in a church we would like to have you sign up’*”, they had no preachers. They can’t get preachers in England! Most of the English Vicars have four churches and they go one a month to each one and he said “*you sign up and then they put your name down and then you’re asked to speak*” and he said “*that was my job*”, oh man we made good friends but in the next week we flew away – anyway I’m sure they...I talked about revelation and they don’t believe in that.

Elizabeth: Well tell me, you must have been scared you know you get down to 50 feet – were you scared?

Walt: Boy I’ll say – especially when they start hitting you and you hear it hitting. You see them shoot; you see the smoke out of the cannon types. Of course you don’t see anything out of their rifles and stuff – you bet, you’re really scared but you’ve got so much...you’re so busy and if you’re on a gun of course you’re answering it back and they’re scared too but...I have to tell you something that’s bad to tell but we had about four guys that about half an hour after take-

off...the enlisted men on the base, the gunners or I mean the mechanics and the truck drivers they'd say "*well you know Joe's back, he'll be back in – oh, twenty minutes, give him five more*" and he'd come back in firing a flare sometimes because you fire a flare if you've been hurt but you couldn't fire a flare if you just have an engine go out and he'd come back in with an engine feathered or something. And the only thing that's bad about that...actually you got two mags on an airplane, on each cylinder and (that's two sparkplugs, you can turn one off) and the engine starts to shake and it ruins the engine and it blackens up and everything and you've got a bad engine and you go back and you and your crew know you're rattling like mad and just before you land you turn it back on and it cleans up everything but they can't prove anything to you. But the crew...the only thing that's wrong about that, a sergeant stands between the two pilots and he knows what you've done, boy is he protected from then on! Anytime he wants something he gets it because they would turn back and we had about three...one of them who was a coach of a football team in an Iowa college and he went on twelve missions when I did 32. And to this day...and of course he came back alive already, but you just wonder. In fact it's kind of funny, we bombed one time (are you still taking this down? [yes] well don't print it). We onetime bombed Norway and that was an easy trip, my goodness you don't have to fly halfway across Germany, you fly across the North Sea and go up to Norway and bomb a place that was making '*heavy water*'. I think that's what they have to have for atomic bombs...well they had to have that for some ammunition stuff...and it was an easy mission – 12,000 feet and this one guy who had turned back and turned back and turned back – he made it and he came back he was white with...as white as...with sweat, couldn't hardly talk and that night they celebrated. He thought they were celebrating for him, he was dancing up and down "*what do you know I made a mission*" and everybody was just laughing to themselves, that was a...he had a big bomber and one of his co-pilots was one of my co-pilot's friend and he said "*we'll never go home*", if you cross the enemy coast it counts as a mission but he wouldn't wait that long usually – and another, there were three. And there was one – you saw the movie '*Wing and a Prayer*'? That guy was good, he'd made all of his missions but the night before the mission I was out checking my airplane, he always had a jeep, I never had a jeep, I walked in and out but he always had things and sure enough I was walking and he picked me up and he said "*you're not gonna go on this are you Stu*"? and I said "*what? On this mission? This is the whole purpose of our whole life over here*"! Well he said, "*I'm not going*", he said, "*This is a crazy mission*". He said, "*We*

wont even get there”. I said, “I can’t believe it”! He said, “Well if you go you’re dumb”. Sure enough he developed engine trouble or they’ll develop a gas leak – some silly thing, but its always...and the enlisted men on the ground know about it and I wouldn’t have ever told that story in Utah Man you know the Wing and a Prayer story but when he got...he was very wealthy and when he came back we heard this story...when I found out it was really true I thought at first it couldn’t even be true but they’ve told it to me again. He was in West Palm Beach Florida and he owned a charter boat, a fine charter boat to take couples out to the Bahamas and stuff and he was taking a couple out one day and the boat sank and about two days later he was rescued. He was rescued, he had a lifebelt on and he was...and they had an inquisition about it, about a week or so later and he was being...the couple and their two kids drowned and he’s in telling this story about what had happened that a violent wind came and the mast went right down and killed the man and his wife. They were sitting someplace where it killed them both and the two kids didn’t get out – down went the boat. Right in the middle of his questioning the little girl walked in. Boy! He was then indicted but he was that night found dead in his hotel room, he shot himself. But he had killed...his wife’s mother was lame and he had an accident going out to Key West you know that’s where the road goes and both of them were had so I didn’t mind telling about him.

Elizabeth: What did you think of FDR?

Walt: Franklin D. Roosevelt? Well great for two terms but he got tired later and he was not really strong. He was doing fine I think, started the...boy that rallying cry (what did he say?) ‘*A day in infamy*’ and it was a day in infamy. He rallied us all so of course that day I was of his party, I’m not that party anymore but I think he did fine. But two terms were decided way back with the Continental Congress and he did four, part of four.

Elizabeth: I saw in the video there were haystacks when you were flying – haystacks and chicken coops, tell me about...

Walt: Oh yeah, their haystacks all have a little wicker on top so you see it just rains so much there, they have this little thing on top of their haystacks and the haystacks – they had them

camouflaged and one would tip over – the enemy had them and they'd come out firing like mad at you. They're just little tiny hay things and we were shooting those things cause we found out that they were shooting back at us.

Elizabeth: That was amazing though I mean the haystack just flipped over and out pops this big gun.

Walt: Yeah, but they were haystacks. I was close enough to them and I know a haystack, but it was small and they didn't have baled hay and they hid behind them and of course that's a good protection if you can stay behind but you can't shoot from behind so...

Elizabeth: The Utah Man – tell me about when you were discharged and what happened to the plane the Utah Man.

Walt: Oh, the Utah Man! I had done thirty...I did 32 mission...31 was Ploesti and I...well and 25 we were still in Africa and eight of my crew members came to me in my tent and my co-pilot wasn't there of course and Ralph Cummings my great bombadeer who was the property of the Brooklyn Dodgers as a pitcher, he was a great guy and came from Seattle and we used to love him and he said *"skipper, are you gonna go home now on 25 missions? If you do we're all dead men"*. By that's pretty hard you know to take and we were in Africa where missions over in Italy and Sicily were just a breeze, boy I said, *"I'll go to 30 anyway, I think we should"* and they said, *"well, we appreciate that"*. Well then Ploesti was 31, then we went on 32 and on 32 we went to bomb Fojah. Fojah is the west point of the air freight for Italy and as we were coming in – I was leading the mission – as we were coming in on the target we saw big airplanes going down over Fojah and I said to Larry *"Boy the Germans have got big fighter planes"*, he put his glasses on, he said *"they are B24's going down"*, *"well they're not supposed to do that over Italy, what's going on here"?* And we flew over and they didn't get any of us but they lost seven B24's on that day on Fojah. See the Germans had moved in and they're deadly because they know more about...so we bombed in turned, started out and we got on the Adriatic Sea and this is my 32nd mission and the tail gunner said *"skipper, there's something funny back here, it flies like a hummingbird, it turns and quick and its fast"* and then it fired at us and they were rockets

that went right over the top of our wing and then it flew past us and it was a jet. A German jet, I called them a 362 or something (I don't remember the exact number of it), but a German jet and I said to myself '*man if they've got jets this is no match for me*' and so I wrote...I think I'll ask to be relieved of combat and I had a...in fact in that film you'll see where I'd written '*war is hell*' and when I got back the commander met me and he said "*how many missions*"? and I said, "32", he said, "*you're grounded*" Jimmy Doolittle wants us to go to 50, we're not even getting to 25, we had very few of us that got to 25 missions, just a handful of us. Ploesti was the final of it so I left after 32 missions. That German jet – but they didn't last long by the way, they were very expensive and they just didn't...well it wasn't going to win the war and so he couldn't do much more.

Elizabeth: What happened to your plane?

Walt: Oh, well I turned my airplane over to Larry Coon my co-pilot and he got a new co-pilot and he's on the back cover of the Ploesti – the Wing and a Prayer...the new cover – Larry and I – there are twelve of us there and one of them is his new co-pilot '*Timmer*' and he then became the co-pilot and Larry was the pilot and Larry wasn't...well you can't say that an airplane is shot down because of a poor pilot, but you can't...you can say that somewhat by being somewhat aggressive and staying in close formation just as close as you can get because you've got ten, he's got ten, and he's got ten – 30 guns are harder to fight against than ten and that's what he would do. But anyway – three missions after I left on the 13th of November 1943 bombing Bremen they were shot down and they crash-landed in Northern Denmark – one man got out. So the Utah Man died in Denmark. And do you want to know something funny? I was called on a mission to build a church in Denmark and it happened to be 13 miles from where that plane was and I never knew it until I got home here. I'd have been out there everyday. It crashed, they were all killed, Larry and Cummings and all those guys – the guy that said, "*We got rivers in Montana...*". My buddies. One fell out, the guy that said "*I saw two bombs go in the target and didn't see any come out*", he got out by parachute but the man that took his place later – there were 20 men I flew with and they're all...they all went down but me. So I was really very fortunate.

Elizabeth: You had quite a camaraderie with all these people didn't you?

Walt: Oh they're your friends! I thought the same...well I don't know whether you're LDS or not but doing temple work is a wonderful thing and I did it for my crew and they said, *"you can't do it, you can't do it. What do you know about them"*? I said *"I know their name and I can tell you within five minutes when they were killed"* and the lady said *"well there is the temple president, you go ask but I don't think he'll let you do 'em"*, because there was a time the church had been told they can't do the Holocaust so I went to see him and he said *"what do you know about them"*? *"I know exactly their names and I can tell you within five minutes...one of them was shot down, one of them crashed in Yugoslavia at about 15 minutes after one August the 1st 1943, the other one crashed from an attack in Bremen Germany on the 13th of November '43". "Well go ahead and do 'em but don't do the whole US Air Force"*.

Elizabeth: Why did you come up with Utah Man?

Walt: Well the Texas guys you know they're very proud of their state and they say *"well you guys can go home, we'll win the war for you guys"*, you know they're just a smart Alec – they're good guys I love them too but Utah was hardly ever heard of and of course Roper was from Utah too and he named his *'Exterminator'* with *'skunk'* on the bomb, but I'm proud of this state and the old Utah Man – an Indian, have you seen the thing? – an Indian throwing bombs – yep and that's why I named it Utah Man. I went there, I graduated first in...I got a BA in Speech and Drama and then I got a JD in Law.

Elizabeth: It's a neat little piece of artwork. And every pilot gets to pick what they put on their bomb?

Walt: Yep, yep. I have to tell you something funny, you see we're trying to get one at Hill Field and it's very difficult – B24's are...they made 18,000 of them more than any other airplane ever made but there are none left. There's one flying – of course you can't get that at Hill Field but they're trying to get one, they find wrecks and stuff around but they're after money because it costs money to do this and the guy in charge is a two-star General – I think he's a ground type

General you know they're not like we are and he got me in my uniform to go up there to meet the committee – the finance committee from the Utah Legislature to the Capitol Building and we're sitting there waiting our turn and he leaned over and he said "*not a word about Utah Man, we're going to name it anything we have to to get the money*". "*Oh – I wouldn't say a thing*". So when it got my turn, I had the uniform on and I stood up and the chairman of the committee said, "*well here's the Utah Man*"! I looked at this guy and he wasn't pleased but as we were walking out I said "*look General, I know you got a good idea trying to get the money, do have any idea some of the names of some of the airplanes those guys had*"? Jimmy Doolittle made them at least paint a bathing suit on them because the German's were making terrific comments about our '*wicked*' and '*lewd*' American pilots so nobody cared about an Indian throwing bombs – he did have loincloth on.