

**Dr. Norman Handelman
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke and Mike Russert
New York Military Museum
Interviewers:**

**Interviewed at Sheraton Four Points
Manhattan, New York City
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Q: This is an interview at the Four Points Sheraton, Manhattan, New York City. It is the 11th of January 2005 approximately 10:00am. Interviewers are Wayne Clark and Mike Russert. Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

NH: My name is Norman Handelman. I was born July 14th, 1923 in Brooklyn, New York.

Q: What was your educational background prior to entering military service?

NH: I was in college at the time of the war. The college was very affected by the war of course. A lot of people were being drafted from the classes. They started making edicts of all sorts. If you took enough courses of your major then you could be forgiven the courses that were not major courses like arts, music, philosophy, like that.

Then as it came to 1943 when I was drafted. It came down that if you passed the midterm, you got credit for the term. I was drafted shortly after the midterm which meant I got credit for the term which meant I also got credit for the courses that I was forgiven. So, I had an abbreviated college degree. I got a degree from college. It was like a two-and-a-half-year college. I missed a lot of courses a lot of people take. So, I went into the service right from there.

Q: Do you remember where you were and your reaction when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

NH: Yes, I remember. I was in my house, I was in my apartment and I was listening to a football game.

Q: Giants.

NH: Giants was it?

Q: Everybody....

NH: Thanks, because (unclear) the Chicago Bears. That's where I was and all the sudden there was a break in of some sort. Somebody announced that Pearl Harbor's been bombed. Pearl Harbor, I had no idea where Pearl Harbor was. Anyhow, slowly the news started to trickle out. I think the game went on to the finish because nobody knew the enormity of it.

Q: So, you were drafted?

NH: Yes.

Q: You ended up in the Air Corps. Did you...

NH: I ended up in the Air Corps. When I was drafted you went before the -I passed all my physicals and all of that – I went down to Lexington Avenue Grand Central Station basically, the post office. There were several people there representing the Marines, the Navy, the Army and the Army Air Corps. They all looked you over, looked your records over and I was selected for the Air Force, the Air Corps.

Q: Where did you go for your basic training?

NH: Miami, Florida. We were dressed – it was winter time, well it was late spring – we were given winter clothing. We were put on a train, a coal burning train, I remember a lot of soot and all of that. I don't know how long it took us to get down to Florida, but we got down to Florida. Nobody was going to tell us where we were going. It was top secret and all of that. There we were in winter clothing getting down to Miami Beach. We got out. Of course, we changed. So, Miami Beach was where I was trained.

Q: Did you stay in a hotel?

NH: Yes. It was a small hotel off the beach. I have visited a couple of times just for reminiscence sake. I have some pictures. I didn't bring it with me. I have pictures of the hotel and doing laundry on the roof.

Q: It must have been pretty nice back then.

NH: It was a beautiful beach, a beautiful beach.

Q: How as your training there?

NH: It was not hard. I don't remember anything. My image of what infantry training was like very arduous exposure to all kinds of things but down there I just remember marching, learning right face, left face, about face, present arms. I don't know if we had arms but something like that. The right way to salute. There's a right way to salute. If you don't salute like this, like that, etcetera.

Q: How much time did you spend down there?

NH: I think it was six weeks. Probably six weeks to eight weeks.

Q: Where did you go from there?

NH: From there, on a train again out to St. Louis. At that point, they had done all kinds of orientation tests and the like. I wound up in radio school. We learned Morse code basically and we learned also how the Air Corps radio system worked. The planes were equipped with long antennas and there were what they called "command units" you have to change the frequency. It was a big bulky tube kind of arrangements.

So, we learned Morse code in varying steps. They gave us mock-ups occasionally. We wound up in a little compartment by ourselves. We were fed Morse code at varying speeds. I did well. I did well enough to get some kind of special days off when my parents came out to visit.

From there, I guess the next question from there, I went down to gunnery school in Arlington, Texas. I must say, for a sheltered boy living not knowing anything Brooklyn, it was a treat for me. St Louis was a treat because of all of the greenery. I lived in Brooklyn and even though I was on a parkway everything was gray and concrete and that sort of thing. There I was in St. Louis with beautiful parks and wide streets. In Arlington, it was also lovely with very wide avenues, very big skies, palm trees and a lot of exciting things to do.

They gave us all kinds of...we were taught in the Air Force to lead enemy planes. For planes coming in, you don't fire at him up there. You know he's coming in, so you lead him depending on how far away you lead him by what they call "rads" the circular vision of what the aiming thing is. So, we were learning to lead. We wound up with shot guns. We wound up with clay pigeons. We wound up riding on open trucks around a course where suddenly a clay pigeon would come out and you were supposed to get at them you know by leading it. We also did a lot of BB shooting, no not BB shooting but what do you call them, the tiny bullets.

Q: .22?

NH: Yes, 22s. A lot of that. I had a great time. It was like target practice for me. There was no real major, I don't remember any major problem, maybe KP once and a while but that's all. Other than that, for me as I said, it was kind of like an unreal experience.

First of all, the Air Force is kind of sheltered. The infantry, once basic training, I imagine, basic training you're in the mud all the time basically. In the Air Force, we weren't. Not quite coddled but it was nice. So, we enjoyed ourselves. We were young kids playing at shooting and all those things. As I said, for me a sheltered boy from Brooklyn the idea of shooting bullets and shooting.

Q: You probably never handled a gun prior....

NH: Never. No not at all.

Q: When did you first start receiving training on an airplane?

NH: I didn't receive training on an airplane. We did a little of how should we say, exposure to an airplane. At gunnery school, there were we would go up in I think they called them AT6's at the time. They're two seaters. The pilot would take would take us up and there would be some turns out later I found out Woman's Air Corp - WACs - would fly target planes pulling long distance away some targets to shoot at with this machine gun that you were given. I did poorly. So, did most of us. That was the only exposure I had, the only experience I had firing a machine gun.

I think in gunnery school, I learned a Tommy gun but not a standing machine gun. So, that was it. No real training. By that time, the war was, we didn't know it of course because as far as we were concerned the war was never going to end. It was something that you didn't think was ever, you lived in a war time and that was it. For all you knew, you'd be an old man discharged from the service and the war would be continuing.

So, I got orders to ship out. We went down to a collection point in Newport News. I went with a bunch of my friends from gunnery school also others that I had met in this collection point. One of them became a real good buddy of mine. We collected at Newport News or someplace like that. We were going to go to...we didn't know yet it was top secret...on a boat, on a ship. We went on this big ship the USS Randall. I remember that (note: the actual date was May 23rd, 1944 from Norfolk, VA)

It was its maiden voyage. It was a troop ship. It carried thousands of troops. It was fast. It didn't need an escort. We travelled alone. We left Newport News went around to the Panama Canal, through the Panama Canal. I remember watching us go through the canal, through the Panama Canal, down the South Pacific all the way up through the New Zealand Islands around to the west coast of Australia where we docked in Perth thirty days later. Thirty days aboard ship.

We stayed two nights in Perth. Some friends and I took suburban trains into Fremantle, things like that. Then we got on board ship again and fifteen more days. Again, we were told we didn't know where we were going. When you're going down, you're not going to Europe and you're going someplace south where could you go? Who ever know we're going on in CBI. We wound up. It wasn't like until a couple of days out of Bombay because we went all the way around Africa, Madagascar to avoid submarines.

We go out to Bombay. At that point we were told we could let our people know. How could we let them know? We couldn't do anything really. Somewhere. Wherever. From there, again, waiting to find out what we were going to do because we were replacements. We got on board a train again and went across India by Indian 3rd Class trains where we'd sleep on slatted benches. You'd see exotic scenery. You'd see stuff that newsreels were made of.

Wound up in Calcutta. There we waited. It was monsoon season at that point. So, we waited. I remember waiting with my group waiting outside. Beautiful blue sky. Nice weather. All of the sudden, it just seemed like that, all of the sudden it poured. Beautiful blue sky. It just turned black in no time. It poured and then it stopped. The sun came out. We were soaked and then we were dry. That was it.

We stayed in tents for a few nights. Then we were transported up somewhere north of Calcutta. I've been trying to locate it on the maps. I don't see the names (unclear), Kermatola stuff like that not on the maps.

Then, this being the monsoon season we hung around for a couple of weeks trying to get used to what was going on. I remember how I said it was like a game and all of that. I remember coming back. When we got there, the bombing mission time was ending because you don't bomb during the monsoon season. You can't see your target. So, I remember a mission we were in an orderly room or something like that there were guys coming back from a mission came in. One guy was crying and furious, the operations officer, a big strapping Swedish guy crying and furious about the fact that his buddy had been shot down. I still remember. It registered with me, but nowhere did I feel like oh

my god this is terrible, I could die, it could happen to me. It didn't register. I don't think for any of us it really registered. It was like it was your job. You're here. Something could happen down here on your way from Albany if that's where you come from. So, you just do your job.

After a few weeks, we were assigned different planes because we were replacement radio operators. There's attrition of some sort. Sometimes people got sick. They got wounded or they died or opted out or whatever. So, we were assigned and then we went on gas hauling missions. We flew the hump. We took gas.

Q: You were assigned to a B24?

NH: No, I wasn't assigned. Every time I flew it was a different B24.

Q: You had no group...no stable crew.

NH: No, no.

Q: Did you have a decorated flight jacket or anything like that?

NH: Oh yes. I've got a picture of me. I'll show it later I guess.

Q: Blood Chit?

NH: I have a picture of that too. Some pictures of it.

We flew on a lot of these hauling missions which of themselves again they were dangerous but being a kind and being a job didn't feel dangerous.

Q: How did you carry fuel in a B24?

NH: I'm not really clear on that. We had bomb bay tanks that was one place. Instead of having bombs you had tanks in there. I guess that must have been it because I can't think of anyplace.

Q: What were they like 55-gallon drums or something like that?

NH: They were big. I don't know. I don't know what 55-gallon drums are this big I guess. May have been bigger. We had many of them. Sometimes we ferried soldiers across.

Q: Were you ever under attack by the Japanese?

NH: No. Never on these missions. By the time we were there, the Japanese had finally been stopped. They had encroached into Burma. They were there close to the border of India. At the time, there was some Indian troops that really didn't like the British at all and were likely to throw in their hands with the Japanese. So, the Japanese were pretty close to getting into India, but they were stopped by various, there were all kinds of reasons why they were stopped. Supply lines got short. The jungles were terrible, etc. But they got stopped. By that time, they were starting to retreat a little bit.

I remember flying the hump. The mountains there were very sizeable. I don't know how high 15,000 feet or something like that. When you got over them, there'd be a sudden down drop (unclear) air. I remember I was never scared. I keep on saying that. I wasn't

scared until, as a radio operator, I sat on the parachute. It was on seat under me. I don't know exactly where I would have jumped out from. If I had to, I would have.

I sat on the chute until one day over this hump, the engineer my friend, a great friend suddenly started to put his parachute on. I had never seen this before. I said, "what's wrong?". He said, "nothing" I thought he's putting the chute on. I thought if he's putting the chute on and he's the engineer, he must know something. From then on, I had my chute immediately available.

Q: Did you every wear flak jackets?

NH: Yes. Because later on, we went on bombing missions when the monsoon season ended. Then we came back and yes, then we'd wear flak jackets. Sometimes flying high, we wore heat suits. I don't remember if we wore flak helmets. I guess that we must have.

Oh, one of the things we had to learn at gunnery school. Again, I told you I was a sheltered boy as I said. I had never really done anything with my hands. I'd been studying all of the time basically. I learned, as everybody else did, to take a 50-caliber machine gun apart and put it together again blindfolded. You got to know the names of every last piece. I remember it got down to the smallest piece that had the longest name. I couldn't do it again of course. I remember that. So, what else.

Q: Did you have any problem with any kind of tropical diseases while you were there?

NH: No, I didn't. We had...we took Atabrine I believe which was maybe a little bit later. Atabrine we found out turns you yellow. I started noticing my eyeballs were looking a little strange. It was the Atabrine. We were told to watch out for the waters. We were told to watch out basically that sanitation levels were different. There weren't diseases that I know of.

I remember. Where was it? Someplace early in India. We were told to watch out for Indian alcohol, liquor. I was not a drinker. It didn't matter to me, but we were told to watch out because it can blind you. I remember seeing a guy coming back having drunk a lot and he was blind. It didn't last but he was blind. He was terrified of course. So, that kind of disease or the idea of maybe consorting with prostitutes.

I don't know in your interviews, but they were called "Pro Kit" So, you know about them. There were "Pro Kit" available.

Q: Why don't you describe them for somebody who is watching this tape sometime. What were they?

NH: A "Pro Kit" was basically, it included a condom to use and some kind of prophylactic ointment to put inside it and then something else to use after you finished the intercourse to inject into your penis to protect the penis form any intrusion of germs and to wash. Maybe some special soap. I don't remember that but that was generally the "Pro Kit". I think. I guess it was given to you on your leave.

Q: What was daily life like in your camps and so on?

NH: It was not bad. For the Air Corps, the Air Force. Between missions, there's nothing

to do. You can go to the...what's the name of the room where you go to and relax and the like. We had it easy. I have to stress. I did not have a bad war.

Q: Like a "day room" I think they called it where you could go to relax.

NH: Yes, the day room. Right. I don't remember if there was ping pong. There might have been. It was a relaxation place.

Q: Did you have any USO shows come in?

NH: Yes. We had some USO shows coming. I remember one. We didn't see any women except the Indian women and we saw them at a distance. We had a USO show. We had several. One of them I remember was like the last USO show we got because several of the guys got very disorderly and started making all kinds of obscene remarks about the girls -what he wanted to do with them, that sort of thing. The orders came down from the bigwigs, that's it no more. We can't trust you guys.

What else. I can't think of any tropical diseases to mention. I'm trying to think. I had this friend, as I said, who I see every couple of years or so. He's surviving nicely. He was my buddy in the war, in the India war. I know I have pictures showing me with a 45 automatic in holster around my shoulder. We carried them around. There was a place for two automatic clips. I know we had them. Maybe we were given the clips when we left.

When you go on a mission, even on a flight to haul gas, because there was always a danger of something happening to the plane. The jungles down below us were infested with Japanese. So, we were given kits to carry with us.

One of the things we had I regret not having taken it with me when I came home. We were given two small buttons. We had a flight suit which had buttons on it like metal copper buttons or something. We were given two of them to replace two of the buttons on the suit. When you did that they're indistinguishable from the other buttons.

One of them has a little bump on it. The other had two bumps. If you need it, you put them together and they were a compass. You put them down and they would magnetize, and they pointed north. So, that was one of the escape things we were given.

Also, I don't remember where the carbines were. We had carbines, small 30mm rifles. I don't remember where they were. They may have been in the planes.

The planes themselves when we flew on bombing missions we might have had some fighters had we flown into the hump. We had these 50 caliber machine guns. By and large, until we flew the hump, we flew at relatively low altitude. It was warm there, so we didn't have to wear too much. We could fly with the open waist window. I'm jumping around.

I was just remembering something. My lifetime experience with weightlessness. I hadn't flown for about a month overseas. My best buddy from all of the war from the beginning was shot down. We went on this mission. It was great fun watching the bombs dropping and all of that. He went on a mission a few days later and he didn't come back. I'm a

little more upset now thinking of it than I was then. I was upset though. I just felt like I can't fly. I just can't fly.

I knew the policy there was you wouldn't be charged with any kind of major offense. They'd just ground you and get another replacement. So, it took me a long time. Finally, I was going on a mission. We were awakened at 3:30 or 4:00 depending on how long the mission was and we got very long missions from up in India all the way down into Burma. Sometimes they would go twelve hours, fourteen hours. We bombed the bridge over the River Kwai. That's a long distance from India. That mission would be like sixteen hours.

Anyhow, I got grounded that month. I finally decided that I can't live this way. I want to fly. I want to fly, and I have a better chance of coming home at least for a furlough than if I just stay on the ground. This war was never going to end. So, I volunteered to fly on a training mission. The pilot was being trained for night flying, instrument flying. The training involved all kinds of maneuvers and the like up and down.

With the B24, way up front was the bombardier and, I think, the nose gunner. I'm not sure about that. Yes, the bombardier and the nose gunner way up front, downstairs. Then there was the cabin cockpit where the pilot and co-pilot were. Then, there's a narrow partition. On the right-hand side was where the radio operator sat with the radios. The major job of the radio operator on a flight was to listen if the flight has been cancelled or diverted. You have to know the code and the code name for the day. If a message comes, you put it down and you decode it.

So, we sat with the headset on, on the right-hand side. On the left-hand side was the engineer. He's got his own desk as we did. Also, the plane that we flew there's various models. The plane we flew in you went up through little trap door underneath the plane. You went up the trap door and then you were in a compartment. There was a gallon of fuel for a little engine. We called in the "put-put" engine. It kind of warmed the major engines. It got them primed for starting. You got one more trap door, you open the trap door and come up and you've got a floor. That's where the radio operator sits, and the engineer sits. Then you walk straight through the walkway, the catwalk, through the bombs. There was a narrow catwalk about this wide. Then you got to the waist.

In this flight that we're talking about the pilot was doing various maneuvers. At one point what he was doing was apparently checking out a stall instrument. He went up, then stalled it. This big B24 started falling. I had no idea. We had no idea what he was doing. He was just being told by the instructor what to do.

All of the sudden, I felt like I was being pressed up against the ceiling of this plane. I thought we must be upside down. I started to try to right myself and I couldn't do that. Then I saw the trap door open and up comes floating this one gallon can of gasoline. I think something's wrong I don't know It was weightlessness. So, that's my experience with weightlessness.

Guys who were sitting in the waist, as I said, it was warm there, had the waist windows open and they were just hanging around. Before they knew it, they were starting to float towards the windows and float out and they were grabbing things. Of course, nobody got hurt. That was exciting. That was my experience with weightlessness.

Q: Did you guys carry any kind of what they called them a “Blood Chit”?

NH: Yes. I have one here.

Q: You mentioned on your form that you had some detached service.

NH: Yes. After a few bombing missions, I’ll get to that (unclear). To go on a mission, you’re awakened. You go in, you have breakfast. You go into the room and you’d be told what the mission of the day is. You’d be told, at one point, watch out here’s a prisoner of war camp. See to it you don’t bomb the prisoner of war camp, but you want to get the railroad station and tracks here.

Then, we went out and went in to another room to pick up our parachute. We also picked up a belt, it’s like a life preserver belt like which we had on board ship. Only the belt had, I forget what else it had in it, but it has a whole bunch of things to be used in case you’re downed.

We had the Blood Chit to help in one way but there was also a tin and the tin had opium in it, it turns out. There was also American dollar bills. Old bills. The old bills were in order that if you were downed, you gave them to the people who were helping you.

They couldn’t be accused by the Japanese of having these had these recently because they were so old. The opium was a special bribe to people to help us get out. They were told, and it was true. I have a friend who indeed was downed and was indeed taken out by the Chinese and it did indeed help him all the way through. There were quite a few like that.

So, yes, detached service. Let me brag about something else that happened. We were shown the dangers of anoxia in our training. We were taken into a decompression chamber where we were told that you want to wear a mask when you are above 12,000 feet because oxygen deprives your brain of the capacity to work well. It was hard to know so we’re going to show you guys.

Groups of us were taken into this chamber and they would slowly reduce the oxygen content. They reached 25,000 or sooner than that. Whatever it was, they showed at twelve, thirteen thousand your judgement is off.

I remember watching one guy. We are now pretty high. He was asked to write your name, rank and serial number. In my case, it was Norman S. Handelman, 327...or whatever. I forgot what it was. Just keep on writing it. Just keep on writing it. I remember watching this guy writing and writing then his hand started to tremble. He was uncoordinated. He dropped the pencil. He just stared blankly into space. He was out. Somebody gave him the pencil back. Gave him some oxygen.

Oh yes. We had this oxygen mask on. They're plugged into the oxygen circuit. He was told, because we were all wearing it by this time. He was told to unplug his. Unplug his, yes. It was a male, female plug. Unplug it and do this exercise. So, he did. He was passing out. Plug your oxygen mask in. Plug the mask in. Plug the mask in. He lost it. He just passed out. They plugged it back in for him. They gave him the pencil. He immediately started writing his name, rank, serial number as if nothing had happened.

I thought. I was going to experiment with myself. I volunteered. What a jerk. Permanent brain damage (laughs) But I volunteered. I remember they told me this to unplug it, ok. I remember name, rank and serial number. I felt so wonderful. I had never seen my handwriting this good. It felt so good. It was really and then they gave me this pencil. That's how it felt to me. I started writing and all of the sudden I realized that I had passed out because there was a scrawl there and I hadn't known it.

I figured that this is routine (unclear). I'm going to try something else. So, I volunteered again. I figured that I'll do the Gettysburg Address. So, four score and seven years ago our fathers brought on this continent. Four score....and dedicated to liberty... and started repeating myself. They gave me the pencil again. At this point, I didn't know what I was doing. I just stopped and realized that I had passed out. But a routine matter, you'd think you had been doing it all along.

So, anyhow, about detached service. When you come back from a mission, you'd be given a slug of whiskey and you'd work your way back to a room where they'd debrief you, tell what you saw, what happened, how much the flak was, where was it, the fighters, what the results of the bombing were and so on.

I came back from this mission. You're kind of tired. You got up early and it's intense. I got back and I'm starting to relax. Somebody comes from the orderly room saying the Major wants to see you. I said, "What for?" I didn't know. I went to the office. They said pack up your clothing, you're going on a secret mission. A secret mission. The hope of everybody there was that the mission would be to go back on a bond selling tour in the states. All I was told was that it's a secret mission.

I got back to the barracks. The barracks by the way, we had it easy. We had bearers. We had men who cleaned the barracks. We slept on (unclear) when we had beds. We slept on (unclear) which were string beds with interwoven (unclear) on top of which were blankets and four poster so that there were mosquito nets to cover you. The cleanliness was taken care of. We had somebody we hired, all of us, probably eight to twelve of us in this room. This barracks. We hired him to....

So, I came back and everybody else was taking off their clothing. Here I am packing my bags. "Where are you going Handelman?" I said, "I'm going on a secret mission." I figured that I've got something over them. "What do you mean a secret mission?" "That's all I've been told, it's a secret mission." "What do you think it is?" "I don't know. Maybe it's a bond selling tour." What could it be?

So, I get on this...I pack up. The next day, the truck takes me to the airport, to the airstrip. I get on the plane. God knows where I am going. Who knows? Maybe to Delhi. Maybe home. I get in. I get on the truck and about twenty minutes later. Then we get on the plane. Twenty minutes later, the plane lands. That's a pretty short trip. I figured that's not home. Maybe you've got to change planes there because it's a secret mission. For god's sake, its only twenty minutes.

We wait for the other plane. A truck comes and takes us to another airstrip where we were then -there were a whole bunch of us, several crews of us, we were replacements for combat cargo. We did then become part of combat cargo on detached service.

What we did then, we carried all kinds of cargo to the front-line troops in Burma. It was all kinds of stuff (unclear), We may have carried some ammo. I don't remember that. That was out detached service. Then, I came back. I logged many, many hours. We went by hour in terms of citations and the like.

Q: So, you didn't go by number of missions, you went by number of hours?

NH: Well. It was number of flights, but they were all varied. Some carried gas across the hump. Some were bombing Burma or Thailand. Some were giving food and ammunition to front line troops. In total, I had 60 flights flying in planes with high octane fuel carrying fuel and carrying dangerous cargo into dangerous areas. So, I had 60 flights.

The way it worked there.... I came back and most of my friends had gone home by then because they had served their bombing missions and I had been doing some lesser than bombing missions. I came back but I was scheduled for return home too. At the time, as I said, you got medals based on the number of hours you had put in. You got an air medal if you put in, I don't know, a hundred hours. You got an oak leaf cluster if you put in two hundred. You got a distinguished flying cross if you put in three hundred combat hours. You got a third oak leaf cluster for another hundred and another hundred would be another DFC.

I had just a few hours short of an oak leaf cluster. I did something that you're always told time and again don't volunteer for anything. I figured I'd like to get that oak leaf cluster. So, I volunteered for a mission even though I knew I was going home I was told. Thanks god, I 'm here.

I was all set for the mission. It was supposed to be an easy mission what they called a "baksheesh", a milk run. I get awakened. I get to the front line. Our plane is scrubbed. Something is malfunctioning. So, ok I'll go. That's a mission from hell. The guys...some didn't come back. Some came limping back. It was not a good mission. It was Rangoon where all the Japanese had concentrated their flak and planes and that sort of thing. I got it, but I volunteered for a foolish thing.

So that was my detached service. Just to add insult to injury, when I came back, I didn't fly back. I came back by boat again. I got on a troop ship in Calcutta, went through the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean, the Strait of Gibraltar back at the same place I debarked from. Thirty days this time. I put in two and a half months at sea. (unclear) Navy.

What else. I think that's it. Then, of course, I was one of the earliest people back. I came back in October of '45 because I had...you got points for overseas time, combat time, medals and all different points. I came back, and I was a changed boy by that point. I had experiences that I never dreamed of having.

For me, I remember somebody once called it you had a good war and I did. I was fortunate. People there, I saw things I never would see. I escaped unscathed. I met friends one of whom I still correspond and visit with.

Q: Do you remember when you heard about Pearl Harbor, not Pearl Harbor, the dropping of the Atomic Bombs?

NH: I was home. I was coming home. I was on board ship when Germany surrendered. There was a celebration but at the same time the war was still on with the Japanese. I had been fighting the Japanese. It felt like it was ok, it was very nice that the war is over, that the Germans surrendered but we're going back again. That was the prospect that we'd go back, and it would be worse because the Japanese would be concentrated. I was at home on leave when the Atomic Bomb dropped. I was delighted. So were all of my colleagues because that ended the war.

Q: Do you remember the death of President Roosevelt, where you were?

NH: That too. We were overseas when that happened. President Roosevelt died. He did. Oh my god that's awful. That's terrible. Who's the Vice President? Nobody knew who the Vice President was. Nobody knew the name Truman. That was shocking of course. What's going to happen next because he was really the man.

Q: When and where were you discharged?

NH: I was discharged in New York City in October '45.

Q: Did you make use of the GI Bill at all?

NH: Oh yes. Very much so. We got the 52-20 club.

Q: I was just going to ask you about that.

NH: Fifty-two weeks and twenty dollars a week unemployment. After a few weeks, I couldn't just hang around to collect the money. I had been trained basically as an accountant. I knew I didn't want to be an accountant. I just didn't. I had too many opening experiences in life at that point. An accountant sitting in an office scribbling numbers didn't appeal to me anymore.

I was advised by a cousin, a knowledgeable cousin, who was a counselor to try it out. I tried for six months. Terrible. I just sat and wrote numbers and I hated every minute of it. Finally, after six months of it, I quit. I started looking for what to do.

I went looking for schooling looking for something to do, maybe journalism, maybe use my radio skills in an airline piloted plane but there was nothing there that I knew of. The journalism schools were closed by the time I looked to get in.

So, I didn't know what to do. Somehow the idea of psychology, the idea of understanding people had come to my mind some conversation I had through lunches. I

went to visit the dean of the psychology department at NYU. He was very discouraging. There was no way to make a living. You can't make money or whatever. At the time, there really wasn't a way for a psychologist to make money basically. Not for many.

Just around that time, a lot of veterans were coming home with a lot of mental disturbances. The Veterans Administration was swamped. They didn't have the facilities of the people to work with them. The number of psychiatrists was limited.

I don't know how they got the idea, but they established training programs under the National Institute for Mental Health, the VA. They had a training program just at the time I was looking at getting into psychology. I took a test and I apparently passed the test. I was accepted for a four-year training program in Clinical Psychology. At the same time, you were going to school, you'd work twenty hours a week. I had a lot of good training that way.

Q: Did you join any veteran's organizations?

NH: I joined AMVETS briefly. I didn't like the American Legion. I felt it was much too bound with tradition and didn't have the right political slant for me. Veterans of Foreign Wars. Jewish Veterans. They all seemed like organizations (unclear). So AMVETS came around at that point too. It had a very short life but again. That attracted me, but I really wasn't focused on that. I was focused on getting my life together and becoming something.

Q: You did say that you keep contacts with people who served with you especially one.

NH: Yes. I met my best buddy who had been with me in radio school and gunnery school was shot down in India, in Burma. Coming across on the ship, I met other people. I met this other fellow Bob La Canto and we became quick friends. We had a lot of great conversations and shared a lot. We shared a tent in Israel, no India, sorry. Please delete that (laughs).

Then, wait a minute. I forgot to mention something else. At the time...for some reason...this is before detached service. For some reason, they needed more people in China so a bunch of us were sent into China to Luliang which is near Kunming. We were established there, and we were to fly back and forth. We had flown over the hump from Luliang before during the monsoon season.

We were to be established there for how long we didn't know, of course. Where we would go back to India or pick up something in Luliang and fly to Sichuan or Guilin or other places where the Chinese were holding back or trying to hold back the Japanese and also supplying the 14th Air Force – Chennault's Flying Tigers. We supplied them with gasoline and stuff like that.

We were in China for two or three months. I think two or three months. While there, I shared a tent also with Bob. We became very close friends. However close you are, you're still at war. He went back to Ohio. I stayed in New York City. I contacted him briefly after the war then I got involved in my own life getting married that sort of thing.

Then about six or seven years ago – his name always stayed with me – I thought I’m going to look him up on the internet. I found several Bob La Canto’s five of them. I sent a postcard to each one saying I’m looking to get in touch with Bob La Canto. I got a call from this guy enthusiastic about hearing from me and so on. So, we became friends again.

It turns out he became a professor of journalism in Illinois and other things too. I visited. We still share so many of the same interests, really, it’s remarkable. We had very different backgrounds we share much the same with one exception. He’s crazy about flying. He has his own plane which delights me because when I go to visit him, I fly with him and it’s fun. Here’s this other old geezer flying a plane.

Q: You have some photographs?

NH: Yes. This is a photograph...

Q: If you just hold it like this, I can zoom right in on it.

NH: This is a photograph...Jay Cutler who you interviewed and I...he was my friend during my teenage years and a year after this photograph was taken he became my brother in law. He married my sister.

We decided in 1946 to go to.... you got it?

Q: Yes.

NH: We decided to go to a photographer in the neighborhood in our full regalia, so I wore all the medals I had, all the shoulder patches, the staff sergeant’s badges and that sort of thing. That’s like the overview. I don’t have anything in order in particular. Ok if I....

Q: Sure.

NH: This picture is of several of my friends in India.

Q: Are you in that picture?

NH: I may have taken this picture. Let’s see. No, I’m not in this picture.

Q: OK, I’ve got it.

NH: This picture shows George Chauncey who is on the right here. He was the one who was shot down. The other one on the left is Bob La Canto. He’s still around and we share. The middle guy was a Gurkha. We employed Gurkha’s, little Indian fighters, who never carried weapons except the Gurkha knife to guard our planes at night.

There’s a picture here, I think, of me and Bob. Yes, here’s a picture of me, Bob and George. George is the one who got shot down. This is in India.

We were in various places in India. This is what we called the “Basha” where we lived. As you can see, life was not difficult where we were living.

Q: OK. Got it.

NH: On the other hand, it also had a thatched roof. On the other hand, in some places we lived in tents.

Q: OK.

NH: I'll stay in India for a while.

Q: You mentioned that you had a Blood Chit there that you are going to show us?

NH: Yes.

Q: That's a nice one. Did you have that sewn on the back of your jacket?

NH: Yes. I had it sewn on the back no on the inside (shows picture)

Q: Oh yes. So, you wore that sewn inside your jacket?

NH: Yes. I may have worn...I have something else that I didn't bring with me. I have something like this except it has many different languages on it from the area – Burmese, Thai, etc. I don't remember if I wore it or not. I very well may have worn in on the outside of the jacket. I don't remember. But this one, I wore this one to show all of the paraphernalia, the hat, the helmet that sort of thing.

I have this, in India ...

Q: The cows in the street.

NH: Yes. Right. The tall, lean guy was whose crew I flew many times. Then I was taken off and unfortunately, he and his crew crashed into a mountain in China taking off. They just couldn't get the height. The other fellow was a guy who roomed with me and Bob.

Here, I don't know if this is Bob or me. Blood Chits on the back.

Q: Alright.

NH: This is, yes, this is in China. They had conscripts.

Q: OK.

NH: More of China here.

Q: Ok,

NH: This is an overview of China. I took this picture because there were guys who spent their working days carrying these huge loads of water up to that water tank on top up the steps. They're Chinese coolies of course.

Q: OK. We have one-minute left.

NH: OK. Let me show you one more thing. This is a survival kit we were given. This I did take with me. I've had this ever since. It fit into the side pocket of your flight suit. It has various things. It had a compass on top, Wrigley's Spearmint chewing gum, a chocolate mix you could make hot chocolate with.

Q: Probably matches and band-aids?

NH: Yes. A little vial of matches. I don't know where they are right now. They're in here. Yes.

Q: OK. Thank you for your interview. It was a very good interview.