

**Donald Alfred Walsh  
Veteran**

**Wayne Clarke  
New York State Military Museum  
Interviewer**

**Interviewed at Castleton, New York  
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**Q:** Today is the 20<sup>th</sup> of February, 2010. My name is Wayne Clarke. I am with the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center in Saratoga Springs, New York. Today we are with Mr. Walsh here in Castleton, New York and sir for the record would you please state your full name, date of birth and place of birth please?

**DW:** My name is Donald Alfred Walsh. I am 87 years old. I was born in November 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1922 in Mount Vernon, New York.

**Q:** Did you attend school in Mount Vernon?

**DW:** No.... yes, I did. I attended school up until about the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Then we moved to Putnam Valley, New York. I went to a one room school house that had six grades and about thirty students in six grades. I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the time I believe. Then we moved. I went to school in Peekskill, New York through high school. After high school I went to what was then New York State College for Teachers which is now SUNY. I was there until my sophomore year. Then we had Pearl Harbor.

**Q:** Do you remember what your reaction was when you heard about it and where exactly where you were at the time?

**DW:** I can't remember where I was, but I remember sitting in the assembly listening to President Roosevelt give his speech about "day of infamy". All of our students were at that assembly meeting. On the stage was the radio which we heard the president give his speech. Of course, we all realized that our time was going to come to go in the military.

**Q:** Were you drafted?

**DW:** I wasn't drafted. What happened was it was announced to us that if we joined up right away, the military would let us finish the semester. So, we all joined up and finished the semester and we were called up.

**Q:** How much college did you have at that point?

**DW:** About two and a half....one and a half years.

**Q:** Where did they send you for your basic training?

**DW:** Basic training was at Camp Upton on Long Island. After that, we went to Florida. Miami Beach. After that....

**Q:** Did you sign up for the Air Corps?

**DW:** No, I don't think I signed up for the Air Corps. I think what happened is that they gave us intelligence test and if you met a criterion you automatically went into the Air Force. That's the best I can remember.

**Q:** What was basic training like for you down in Florida?

**DW:** It was a lot of marching. A lot of us went together from the same college. It was kind of interesting

**Q:** Were you quartered at one of the hotels?

**DW:** Yes. Right on the beach. Collins Avenue.

**Q:** Once you completed your basic training. When you completed your basic training, where did you go next?

**DW:** I went to weather school to become a weather observer. That was in Chanute Field, Illinois I believe it was. At that time when the Air Force was taking a lot of losses and somehow a notice came out that, if you join the Air Force, I don't know, they gave you a three-day pass. I have no idea. I can't remember but I felt I ought to join the Air Force – the flying part, the aviation cadet program.

Then they gave us a choice as to what you wanted to be – a pilot, the navigator or bombardier. I chose navigation because I knew something about math. I didn't know if I could handle an airplane at my size. At that time, I weighed about 127 pounds. I went to San Marcus in Texas to navigation school.

**Q:** Did you find that school difficult?

**DW:** Not particularly. I felt good. It was easy to do from a navigational point of view. It was hours and hours of school. Sometimes classes started at 7:00 in the morning and ended at 9:00 at night because you were doing stars, navigation.

**Q:** Celestial?

**DW:** Celestial Navigation. Other than that, it wasn't that bad.

**Q:** What kind of aircraft did you go up on?

**DW:** I was assigned to 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Cargo which was C47's for air transport concept and sometime later, later on it I flew in 46's which was...

**Q:** Once you graduated from the navigation school were you commissioned as an officer?

**DW:** Yes. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant.

**Q:** What happened next?

**DW:** After my graduation you mean?

**Q:** Yes.

**DW:** I went to Missouri to meet my crew. The pilot, copilot, flight engineer and radio man were training together and I was the last person to come aboard as the navigator. I remember being at.... can't remember where it was...I picked up that crew and I was in the barrack. I was told the crew was across the parade ground and I should go over to

meet them. So, I walked across the parade ground, went in and saw those fellas the pilot, co-pilot were flight officers. The radio man and the flight engineer were sergeants. It was sort of unusual since I outranked them on the ground but they outranked me in the air. So it was kind of unusual.

They saw me. They were all big fellows. They were from Tennessee I believe – all of them. They looked at me and I'm the fella that's going to take them across the ocean – this little guy. They said Lieutenant what we do on this crew is we take a fifth of Hiram Walker and we all take a drink. He said, when it gets around to the fifth man, that bottle's got to be empty.

Being a college student on a limited budget, the most I ever drank was two beers. They held the bottle up and they said that's your portion. It was like a water class full of whiskey. I wanted to be part of the crew so I drank all of the way down. It went down just like water. It went around to the other fellows and they emptied the bottle. Then I said, "I'll see you." I knew they were watching me and I just kept my eye on that chimney of the barracks that I was going to be on and just kept walking straight watching that chimney and watching that chimney until I got to my barracks. I got to the bed and flopped down on it. I don't think I woke up for about twenty hours.

**Q:** Did you have any additional training before you went overseas with the group?

**DW:** I can't think of any. What they said is this is the group that you're going. Our first mission, our first flight was to Florida. I think it was to Miami. After that, the next destination was to one of the islands in the Caribbean. I can't think of the name of it. I think it was Beane Air Base. I don't know what island it was on but that's what it was at that time. Then we flew from there to Trinidad.

**Q:** Were you flying a brand-new airplane to be delivered overseas?

**DW:** It was new. It had a thing that was unusual about it from our view. It had a special radar set underneath the fuselage. It looked like a gun turret. I don't know why it was on the plane because as soon as we got over to our base, they took it off.

**Q:** Now this was the C47?

**DW:** The C47.

**Q:** Where did you land overseas?

**DW:** First we landed in India. Of course, we flew down to Brazil, then we flew across to Ascension Island. It right in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. That's a nice navigational problem to find this little square of an island in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Then we flew to...I can't think...it was on the Gold Coast, the Ivory Coast of Africa. We flew across Africa. We skirted Arabia and ended up in India. We went across India to the western part of India which is called Assam. I think it's still a part of India. It might be part of Pakistan now. I don't know. That's where our operational base was, in Assam.

**Q:** How long did it take you from start to finish to get there, approximately? Was it a week?

**DW:** Two weeks because we stayed a couple of days in different places.

**Q:** Any problems with the planes going across?

**DW:** No not really. Of course, we had auxiliary gasoline tanks in the fuselage. They were huge They were probably twenty inches in diameter and probably ten feet long. They were cardboard. I remember putting my hand on one like that. My hand went in and buckled the cardboard. I stayed away from that but that was our auxiliary gas to go over.

**Q:** Did you go over as a single plane or were there others?

**DW:** Single plane It was navigational interest. So, it was kind of interesting.

**Q:** Where did you end up? Where were you based out of?

**DW:** In India?

**Q:** Yes.

**DW:** It was a place called Dohazari. I do not know where it was but it was near the Burmese border. We were assigned to the British 14<sup>th</sup> Army. We were kind of loaned to them. The British 14<sup>th</sup> Army had a pincer movement. What they did is they went from the western part of Burma across the central part and cut the Japanese line between Rangoon and I'm trying to think of the major....Mandalay. Between Mandalay and Rangoon they cut the Japanese line. What happened is the Japanese came down and surrounded the force and so it was like a little Bastogne you see. What we were doing was flying in to give them the support so they could get enough (unclear) and ammunition to break out.

**Q:** Were you landing in there or dropping out?

**DW:** We were landing. I'm trying to think. It was a time that we were not...we were dropping. I think first we dropped. I remember going around. It was like on a merry-go-round. There were like twenty planes in a row. Each one dropping. We'd go in low, so low I could see the fellas down in the fox holes you know looking up at us.

We'd go over and around and every time we made a pass over our lines, then we would throw things out. Half of the circle was half over the Japanese lines and half over the American lines.

**Q:** Were you taking fire from the Japanese?

**DW:** Oh yes, we lost....we had about twenty some planes. Seven or eight were hit and knocked down.

**Q:** Were they American planes or British planes?

**DW:** American planes but we had fighter escort with Spitfires. They weren't following us but they had a zone in front that they patrolled between us and where the Japanese would come from.

One of the things that was interesting is after we got the field and we could go in and land. What would happen is the British held the field in the day time and the Japanese held the field at night – the runway. What happened is the Japanese would come down at night and mine the runway. We would be loading up when it was dark and in the

hands of the Japanese. We would fly to that field in time for the British to retake the field and get the mines out of the runway. Then we would come in to land.

**Q:** I meant to ask you earlier. When did you go overseas? What year and what month?

**DW:** It was in March I think of what was that... '44. I am trying to think. It must have been '45 because I wasn't overseas very long. It must have been '45.

**Q:** Yes. You were discharged in August of '45 right after the end of the war. What kind of quarters did you have? What was your living conditions like?

**DW:** in Dohazari we lived in in "Bashas" they called them and "Bashas" were bamboo buildings. The interesting thing about them was that the termites were in the bamboo so when you made your bed in the morning and you'd come back at night there would be all dust all over the bed because the droppings. Of course, you had to worry about making sure your shoes were empty. They always worried about scorpions getting in your shoes. (unclear)

**Q:** Did anyone get bit by scorpions?

**DW:** (unclear). No.

**Q:** What about snakes? Any problem with them?

**DW:** We were pretty well confined to our little area. The unusual part of that was it was so hot, of course. The mess hall was one place where you ate and the in other place was where they cooked. So, you got your tray and went over and got what they cooked. You walked about twenty or thirty feet to under cover where you can sit down and eat. Spam seemed to be the thing for every one all the time.

Anyway, when you were walking that twenty feet or so you had to watch out because up on the roof were these vultures. Big birds like Turkey's. They would fly down and try to take food from your tray. It was kind of funny. I never saw any take anything but I saw them fly down.

**Q:** What about tropical diseases? Any problems with that?

**DW:** Everybody had what we called the "creeping crud". It was in your crotch and on your stomach and things like that you know. I still go to the dermatologist for skin problems. The other thing is one time I don't know when it was, I guess it was in China, we were going up and you couldn't say my ears hurt, let's stop this. We kept going up and my ear drum broke. That bothered me for quite a few years after the war. It's no problem now.

**Q:** So, you can hear alright?

**DW:** Of yeah. It was the cold that bothered me. When you're out in the cold weather the cold air gets in that ear its painful.

**Q:** Whereabouts did you go after you were at that one base?

**DW:** What happened was I got called into the commanding officer down in Burma. What happened shortly after I left, just before I left, the British had control now what was called Meiktila where that air base was. The Japanese were retreating southward.

The war in Burma was practically over. After I left there, they had a parachute drop into Rangoon. It was my understanding that Rangoon had already been abandoned by the Japanese. The Burma campaign was over.

Before that happened, I was called into the commanding officer. Apparently Combat Cargo had no, what they called, a table of organization for navigators. The fellas up in China they had no navigators and apparently they had some terrific winds and violent weather up there. They took a lot of losses. Ten or twelve planes went down because they went out and coming back they all ran out of gas. They didn't understand the headwinds that were holding them up you know. So they said to go up to China. We transferred up to China I was in the 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force, I think, in Burma but I was in the 14<sup>th</sup> Air Force in China. We flew missions there...

**Q:** Whereabouts in China were you based?

**DW:** I was based in a place called Chengdu. It's a big city now I guess. Chengdu, China.

**Q:** Were your living conditions similar to...

**DW:** They were better. First of all, the temperature, I think I got there around March. It was cold. It was freezing on the wings of the planes. We had solid buildings. It must have been buildings that were used prior to the war for some things. Each set...I lived in a place that was like a square with all around us of quarters. We didn't have, for example, a shower. A shower was a bucket that was tied to a tree. You let it down. They had hot water somewhere. We were guests of the Chinese so they provided the water. We'd get a hot bucket of water, put it into that bucket, lift it on to that tree. You'd get yourself all wet, soap yourself down and then turn the water back on and wash yourself off. That was the way you got a shower.

**Q:** Were you quarters strictly officers?

**DW:** Strictly officers, yes.

**Q:** OK.

**DW:** They were all officers.

**Q:** Was your units ever under direct attack by the Japanese, bombing or?

**DW:** No. Never once. We were way back from the Japanese lines.

**Q:** Were your aircraft ever under attack?

**DW:** Not in China. One time down in Burma it was. A fighter. Other than that, the Japanese Air Force was way back. We were way back like two hundred yards, two hundred miles back from where the Japanese and the Chinese were fighting. We flew up close to the place where the Japanese were – a place called Xian. That's where they found that army of clay soldiers. We flew up to Xian. The time came that the Japanese were advancing on the Chinese. We flew up to Xian and brought up some Naval forces – four or five fellows from the Navy. They knew demolition and their job was to blow up the air field before the Japanese could take it.

We flew in and were the last plane out of Xian. They set the charges and that was a little nervous thing because they said the Japanese cavalry was just over those hills. We were kind of glad to get out. We flew the last plane out. The charges went off and the field was blown. We burned all the warehouses that were there. The Japanese did not take the field for about five days later.

**Q:** What were you carrying most of the time for cargo?

**DW:** Down in Burma we carried...one of the things I forgot to tell you is that when we were down in Burma we were supporting the Mars taskforce. Are you familiar with that?

**Q:** Sure.

**DW:** We were doing that before Meiktila before they took that field. We would go down there and drop....and we were supplying some British forces too with air drops. What we did is we had free falls which were bags of rice with triple bags like burlap bags which were only so big. They weighed about fifty pounds. They were very loose so that when they hit the ground they would kind of roll around and the rice wouldn't come out you know. So we would drop rice and we would drop ammunition.

One time, we must have been supporting the British because we didn't know who we were supporting. We were told this is the coordinates you would go. The coordinates where we had panels. One side was yellow. The other side was blue. It was a code for where to drop. In other words, the northeast panel would be turned, the home base would be turned red, blue and the yellow would be turned up on the northeast corner. Another time it would be another way. The reason they did that is because the Japanese would put panels down and we would drop to them. My job was to sit in the astrodome. When you fly down. We would drop at nine hundred feet for parachute drops. Free falls were at three, four hundred feet. When they went down like that (motions with hand) and then come up, I would be sitting, standing in the astrodome and looking straight down like that you see.

So, I would check to make sure the parachutes opened on the parachute drops. They pushed this. We had pushers. They were Indian. We had this very, very mechanical method of getting things out of the door of the plane. The Indian lay on his back by the door and put his feet up like this. Two of them would hold him so he wouldn't go out the door. When it came time to push, the pilot would put the light on and he'd push out. That's the way we got rid of stuff. Very modern.

Anyway, I saw one parachute didn't open. We went back to the same area the next day to drop again and there were parachutes in this field which spelled out R-U-M. Apparently, we had five-gallon tins and there were four of them. That was twenty gallons of rum and apparently the parachute hadn't opened.

**Q:** It broke.

**DW:** It broke. We had to come back and bring rum to them. They must have been British I guess. (unclear) That was interesting.

**Q:** Did you ever move troops around at all?

**DW:** I'm trying to remember. We moved Chinese.

**Q:** I was going to ask you about that. We had interviewed a fellow that was over there the same time you were who said they would move Chinese troops around occasionally and he said, on occasion, one or two of them they'd lose them. They'd fall out of the aircraft.

**DW:** What happened from our time and I was at the field. I don't think. It wasn't my day to fly, I was just there. Apparently, this plane was loaded with Chinese troops was going down the runway. The pilot behind him yelled at him his elevator lock was on. You know what it is?

**Q:** Yes.

**DW:** The plane couldn't take off. Apparently, the flight crew didn't go around and check before it took off. We had big tank traps around the runway – steep down and steep up. Well that plane went into that trap and up on end and everybody was burned. Just burned them.

**Q:** Did you ever carry drums of gasoline?

**DW:** Always. I have to tell you that one. For some reason or another I always sat at my desk. I don't know what happened but we had stretchers in the back of the plane to take the wounded. I went back there. It was a milk run. This particular flight we were carrying about six drums of gasoline and the doors were open on our plane. We never flew with door open, closed. They just took them out. It was always open doors. The flames from the nacelles, the beautiful blue flames on each side were going as you were flying. I was back there taking a nap. Suddenly I was on the ceiling pushing myself off the ceiling. After a while I was slammed down into the stretcher. There was pressure on me. Then the whole plane was, did you ever hear it, what do they call it....Halley's.... I can't think of the name of it. St. Elmo's....

**Q:** St. Elmo's fire?

**DW:** St. Elmo's fire. All around the plane. Like thousands. It like you're in a tin can with thousands and thousands of things hitting you all over. It was hail stones. What had happened. When we broke out in the clear. What had happened, I went to see what happened to the pilot. We had gone into a thunderhead, a cumulonimbus. I'm trying to know which way we went. The plane went suddenly up. The pilot was pushing the engine straight down. We were going up at 4,000 feet per minute. That's the indicator as fast as the indicator. After a while, we must have been going upside we were still going forward of course, we went down at 4,000 feet a minute. In the meantime, all the St. Elmo's fire and then the gasoline drums broke loose from their moorings. They were out floating around. If I hadn't been in that stretcher, I'd have been crushed by 55 gallon drums. A big section of the floor came out when a drum hit it and flew up and the windows went out. We came out in the clear and the gasoline was leaking because the drums turned upside down. So, the crew chief, the radio man and I kind of got those drums set up straight and lashed down again. The gasoline running down and those nacelles was kind of worrisome but it worked out.

**Q:** Now. What type of aircraft were you flying then? Was it still a 47?

**DW:** Yes. C47's right.

**Q:** When did you switch over to the 46's?

**DW:** I didn't fly many missions in 46's. We all thought they were great because the 47's had 1800 horsepower engines and the 46's, the 47's had 1200 and the 46's had 1800 horsepower so they could hold their altitude if they lost an engine. 47's couldn't if they were loaded. So, we looked forward to it and I had a big desk in the back compared to the little desk I had. It was really a nice setup.

**Q:** Did you always fly with the same crew?

**DW:** No. They flew about every third or fourth day. I flew every day. That's why I wasn't over long. I flew like twenty days straight one time because they didn't have navigators. Every time the plane went up, I went up.

Anyway, I flew in that 47, 46 and we had about five of them. They don't tell you anything. You learn of these things later. The next thing you know we had one missing. We don't know what happened to that 47, 46. A few days later, another one's missing. We lost about three in about four or five days. We didn't know what it was. They sent someone over who was from Curtiss made those. They flew somebody over to check what it was.

Well, in the C47, the gas lines were welded. In the C46, they were screwed. The connections were screwed. Apparently in the vibration of the engine, the gas leaked, the gas lines and there was a fire wall of course. The gas fumes collected in front of the fire wall and couldn't get out. She blew. That was the end of that plane.

So, a fella from Curtiss came over and they drilled holes in the firewalls. We didn't have any problems after that. But we lost at least three. I never flew. I flew about seven missions in that C46,7. C47. Most of the missions were in the 46. I didn't like to fly in that. (unclear) I didn't see too many missions after that. I flew so many days when other people didn't. When we got new navigators. When we had some navigators join the organization, I had flown over two hundred missions. When I went in, I weighed 127 pounds. On my way out, with my GI boots on the scale I weighed 97.

**Q:** Was there a limit on missions you would fly before they'd send you home. I know there was in Europe.

**DW:** It wasn't missions, it was hours, how many hours you flew in the combat zone. I didn't know for sure but I looked on the board at headquarters could tell you the hours that you had. The pilots had 200 hours, 150, 250 hours. I had 900 and some. At that time, they sent me home for forty days rest and recuperation. Then I had come back and do it again.

**Q:** Now, the planes that you were flying, we any of them named at all. Did they have any kind of nose art or anything like that? Names painted on the side of them?

**DW:** No, we didn't have anything.

**Q:** No?

**DW:** The planes that we had were so far east of where you could get resupplies – gasoline for example – I think it took nine gallons of gasoline to get us one to fly by the time we flew it in. Air craft parts were hard to get. The plane I flew in quite often at 950 hours on the engines and you were supposed to change engines every 500 hours. In so many landings on those tires, that was ridiculous. We never changed tires.

One plane I remember the crew chief putting his hand out like that you know. It was oil dripping from the engine. We lost about forty quarts of oil on every mission because, I don't know, we didn't replace the engines I guess. Underneath the plane was like tar with the oil. We used to land on dirt strips you know so the dust would...

**Q:** Sure.

**DW:** Each engine had two magnetos for safety in them. We had one. One magneto because we didn't have replacements. The hydraulic system. Sorry.

**Q:** Its ok.

**DW:** The hydraulic system was used to let the wheels down. It leaked so often that we had to put canteen water...there was a little outlet there. I didn't do it but they told me that some of the guys had to urinate...

**Q:** I've heard that story before....

**DW:** To get the hydraulic system down.

About General Chennault, I've got to tell you. We had this flight to take.... I don't know where it was but It was where General Chennault was going to be. It was a milk can full of ice cream and it was packed with ice around. We never had ice cream where we were. It was ridiculous you know. We started to take off and for some reason or other the pilot had an accident, the engines didn't go or something. He had to turn around and went back to base. We got back to base. Everybody was lined up with their canteen (unclear). They came to rescue that ice cream but it was gone before he really could get it.

I'd like to tell you there was a place we flew to get some supplies. So, I went there. I had a jeep. I went to the square to see what I could buy. They had watermelons for sale there. So I bought five or six watermelons and put them on the plane to bring them back. They were only about that big (gestures with hands). When I got back there, everybody saw me and said Lieutenant, can I have one of those watermelons? So, I gave the watermelons away.

I went up there again. This time I had a jeep and I loaded up with about twenty-five watermelons and put them in the plane. When we went up the watermelons all went to the back of the plane and the pilot was trimming her up to get going. So I got back to the base, I had these watermelons and I couldn't get rid of them. Nobody wanted the watermelon. I had about twelve or fifteen watermelons I couldn't get rid of so I put them in my corner (unclear). I wake up in the morning and there's a big hole in one of the watermelons. The rats got it. We had a lot of rats. We were surrounded by rice fields and there were rats and also malaria.

**Q:** Yes.

**DW:** So anyway, I had to throw that watermelon away. I go to bed and the next morning another hole. The rat ate that other watermelon. So, what I did is I got a trap you know from supply. I caught a couple of big fat rats. My watermelons were now gone. I got rid of them. No problem. A couple of days later, I noticed a terrible smell on the bed. I didn't know what it was. I looked under the bed and I saw this trap had caught a rat like that. What happened is the trap cut the rat in half you know. He blew up on each side. I reached in there to pull that rat out and I got half a rat. The other half stayed in the trap. So, I had to get rid of that rat.

We were I guess one of the problems that I had at night what we used to do is because of the malaria they had these bombs they called them. Actually what they were was DDT. What you'd do is to tuck yourself in from the netting all around you, then spray the DDT and hold your breath while it settled down. You wanted to keep yourself tight because one of the problems people had was that the rats would get in with you in the bed. You know what they would do. They would lick you for the salt in your skin. You know where they would lick, your heel. You know why they licked the heel?

**Q:** No.

**DW:** Because you couldn't feel it. If it licked you somewhere else you'd wake right up. There was one fella whose heel was licked raw. I was sleeping this night and felt this sensation. A rat ran up my leg and jumped out. How he got out I don't know but he was gone.

**Q:** Did you take Atabrine for the Malaria?

**DW:** Oh yes.

**Q:** Did it turn you skin yellow?

**DW:** Yes. Yellow bellies. All the time. We had a radio man. He didn't take his Atabrine. He got malaria and had those shakes you know. I didn't see him too much after that maybe one or two times. He was a big fella. He had hands like that (gestures with hands). He was a wrestler. Big fella. I sat next to him. He was a sergeant. I was a lieutenant.

**Q:** Now were you overseas when President Roosevelt died? I think it was in April of '45.

**DW:** I must have been.

**Q:** Were you there when the war in Europe ended?

**DW:** I must have been...I must have been because the war...

**Q:** It ended in May.

**DW:** I was...I had flown my missions. I was on the way home and I got to Karachi, India. I was there waiting to get a boat or transportation home and the war ended.

**Q:** That was the war with Japan ended?

**DW:** Yes. The war with Japan ended.

**Q:** OK. What about the dropping of the atomic bombs? Were there any rumors about those bombs?

**DW:** Nothing.

**Q:** Nothing.

**DW:** We never had any news like that where we were.

**Q:** Did you find it hard to believe that one bomb could take out an entire city?

**DW:** Yes. I couldn't believe it. Then they dropped the second one. I still couldn't believe that it happened and they just surrendered. It must have been the truth.

**Q:** How did you get home?

**DW:** I came back on a Victory ship. What they did...on top of the hatch...the cables held down to top of the hatch these sheds you could just walk in. There was that much space (gestures with hands) between the shed and the bunks on each side. It was probably twelve feet by ten feet in the shed and six fellows slept there. When the sea got rough, the water would splash over to the shed. You've got to keep the doors closed. We went from India to the Red Sea across the Atlantic Ocean back to the states.

**Q:** Did you get sick at all? Sea sick?

**DW:** Sure. Sick as a dog.

**Q:** Were there anyone else from your unit with you at that point?

**DW:** No. I was like a lone fellow because I was one of the only fellow left. I was one of the first navigators up there and the first one to go home.

**Q:** Whereabouts did the ship land?

**DW:** In New York harbor.

**Q:** Was there a lot of celebration?

**DW:** No.

**Q:** No.

**DW:** It was just getting home nobody paid attention.

**Q:** Alright. Whereabouts did you get released from? Did they send you to Fort Dix?

**DW:** Yes. Fort Dix. Now that I think of it somehow I was down in the Carolinas I think for processing. I don't know how I got down there but I know we came in in New York harbor.

**Q:** Did you go home first for leave and then get processed out later?

**DW:** Probably that's what happened. I probably went home for leave and then head to North Carolina for processing or whatever it was then I came home.

**Q:** How much time did you spend overseas?

**DW:** Not long. I think it was about seven months overseas. Because I flew so many missions. Another fellow I flew with, Larry Thompkins he was from Ossining, New York. He was in his sophomore year in college too so we had something in common. Most of the other fellas were much older.

**Q:** I was going to ask you if you made use of the GI Bill?

**DW:** Yes. Because of the GI Bill, I went to Fordham in New York City for a while then I went to Albany Law school.

**Q:** What year did you graduate?

**DW** I think it was 1949.

**Q:** You practiced law at that point?

**DW:** I became...I was attorney for the New York State Conference of Mayors. We represent the cities and villages in the state legislature. (unclear) for municipal officials. I became General Counsel to the Conference of Mayors. Just prior to my retirement, I was temporarily Executive Director to the Conference of Mayors until they could find somebody to replace me. After that I became Counsel to the Commission on Rural Resources in the New York State Senate. I was there for twenty years or thereabouts until I retired. My demise came about when there was a change in political parties in the legislature.

**Q:** Were you a Justice of the Peace here in Castleton?

**DW:** I was village Attorney here in Castleton. I was the Attorney for the town of Schodack and attorney for the planning board and zoning board of appeals also for the town of Schodack and also attorney for the Schodack Central School district for about twenty years.

**Q:** So, you had a very busy life it sounds like.

**DW:** Yes. It was interesting.

**Q:** Did you join any veterans' organizations?

**DW:** I joined the American Legion and then the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The American Legion went out of business here in Castleton I guess for lack of membership so I was a member the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Castleton.

**Q:** Are you an active member?

**DW:** Not a very active member but I am still there. I pay my annual dues to support the organization.

**Q:** I do too.

**DW:** I don't attend.

**Q:** Have you attended any reunions at all?

**DW:** No. I did meet with my pilot. He was in Oil City, Pennsylvania. I joined the CBI organization. They put out a book of all the members. I got this telephone call. This guy says Don Walsh, you remember me. I said no. He says "Larry Thompkins, 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Cargo" Well, I had to go see him so my wife and I drove to Oil City to see him. Larry had a bad leg. He was in a wheel chair and he couldn't get around too well. Eventually, they took his leg off and he died about four months ago. He was a nice fellow. We spent a lot of time together. We had a really good friendship. I used to call him every so often when he was in the VA hospital. I was his outside source of information.

**Q:** What about the other members of your crew?

**DW:** I don't know. I couldn't tell you who they were. There's a picture over there of Larry Thompkins but I didn't have contact with anybody...I tried to call somebody who was in this area, 1<sup>st</sup> Combat Cargo, but they didn't call back.

**Q:** How do you think your time in the service changed or affected your life?

**DW:** What was it...you had to make decisions. I can remember we were flying alone in the dark one time. I couldn't see the ground. I couldn't see the sky. It was solid socked in. I fixed the astro-compass where I thought Polaris should be. The plane was going back and forth, back and forth. Finally, I saw a star and was almost certain it had to be Polaris and I got a bearing on it. I went and plotted it and it seemed we were way north of the course. The mountains ahead of us. We were flying at about 18,000 feet, less than that because we weren't on oxygen. We were flying and those peaks were ahead of us. So, I called the pilot and said I want you to do a 90 degree turn to the left. I want you to hold that for thirty, forty minutes, forty minutes –forty minutes it was-and I want you to take a 90 degrees to the right. So, up in the air. When we came that distance, our radar was able to pick up the base and it was dead ahead. So, that showed that we were way off course and headed for those mountains.

The point I wanted to make is that it's up to you to make a decision. You could make those decisions. That was (unclear) make those decisions yourself.

**Q:** Is there anything else you would like to touch on? Maybe we missed.

**DW:** I can't think of anything.

**Q:** Did you ever get to see any sort of USO shows?

**DW:** Yes. They were great. I made a contribution not too long ago to the USO shows presently because it was a kind of home, something home (unclear). It was nice to know that you weren't isolated that there were people at home who thought of you.

**Q:** Did you received letters regularly from home?

**DW:** I got letters from my mother. I had a brother who used to write to me but he was killed during the war.

**Q:** Was he in the Army?

**DW:** He was in the Army. He was with the 104<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. I don't know if you remember The Timberwolf Division.

**Q:** Oh yes.

**DW:** He was in college like the just rest of us. I don't know what they called it the AST program? When D-Day came, they were taking a lot of losses in Infantry. They called up all of those AST boys and put them in the Infantry. So, John went over and his buddies told me they were fighting in Aachen. That was a major city in Germany that Hitler wanted to keep at all costs. His buddies told me that they were fighting from room to room lobbing hand grenades over the partitions.

Then, they made a river crossing sometime later called the Maas (or Meuse) River. Apparently they decided you'd do it without artillery support. They went to row the boats across the river. The Germans were waiting for them. I think twelve out of a hundred and sixty of so got back. The rest of them were all killed. John was one of them. The last letter I got from John...you can't say where you are or what you are doing...but he wrote me a letter saying his favorite weapon was the bayonet. I can't ...

**Q:** Alright. Thank you so much for your interview.

**DW:** OK.

**Q:** You say your brother went to Manhattan College?

**DW:** Yes (holds up a picture)

**Q:** That's him in the center?

**DW:** He was 13<sup>th</sup> in the country in Cross County Championship in IC-IVA

**Q:** Are your parents in that picture too?

**DW:** Yes.

**Q:** That's your dad?

**DW:** Yes.

**Q:** And then your mom?

**DW:** Yes. Then John and my aunt, Aunt Marie then my brother, my older brother.

**Q:** OK. Your parents are on the right-hand side. And you have a photograph of yourself?

**DW:** How about that.

**Q:** When was that taken?

**DW:** When I came home. When I was home after the war.

**Q:** You received the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal?

**DW:** Three Air Medals.

**Q:** Three Air Medals.

**DW:** Three battle stars.

**Q:** Alright Thank you so much.