

**Harry Charles Hayes
Veteran**

**Mike Russert
Wayne Clarke
Interviewers**

**Interviewed on April 23, 2003, 2:30pm
Ramada Inn, Watertown, NY**

Q: Could you give me your full name, date of birth and place of birth, please?

HH: Harry C. Hayes. Charles is the middle. I was born in Creighton Mine, Ontario, Canada, October 16, 1920.

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

HH: Came out of high school.

Q: Prior to the service?

HH: Yes.

Q: When did you move from Canada to the United States?

HH: Oh, I was probably two years old, so it would have been '22 or '23.

Q: Do you recall where you were and what your reaction was when you heard about Pearl Harbor?

HH: It was a Sunday afternoon in Black River. A bunch of us were walking down the street and speculating what's going to happen next after we heard Pearl Harbor.

Q: Do you know what your initial reaction was?

HH: I don't really. I didn't have any great fear or anything. See, they had been enlarging what used to be Pine Camp, and we worked there while we were enlarging it. I was drafted in Watertown. Came back and went into service in September 17th of '42.

Q: Okay, so you were drafted. Where did you go for your induction?

HH: Fort Niagara.

Q: Did you do any training there at all?

HH: No, no, we were there probably five days and all of a sudden they put us on a train, said nothing, and we didn't know anything where we were going until suddenly they stopped the train. "You're in the Air Corps; This is Miami Beach".

Q: What kind of basic training did you receive while you were in Miami Beach?

HH: Very good. I was put into a separate unit. I don't know exactly what they had intended, what their intentions were. It was called the Guard and Administrative Detachment, and they took a few of us out of the Air Corps. I never knew how I got into it, but there was way up the beach there was a big hotel, a Shore Mead, and it was full of officers and we lived in a hotel across from it, two men to a room.

The first sergeant would get us out in the road and do all this close order drill. We were good. Not just plain marching back and forth. We'd go off this way and back. The people in the hotel, the officers were watching quite often because they thought we were doing real good. That lasted well, from September I got down there, until April of '43, the thing wasn't going to work out the way they thought it was. So they put us back in the Air Corps.

But it was a whole winter in Miami Beach, and the only training we did was that. Then we'd go and swim in the ocean and stuff. But it was easy duty. Interesting is that [David] Rockefeller, out of that Rockefeller family. He was a corporal in our outfit. He didn't live with us. He stayed up in La Gorce Island or someplace. His wife would bring down his Cadillac car. Nice guy, he was corporal. I know one night he came in and woke me up to go on guard duty. It wasn't my turn, you know, very apologetic and everything.

Then his wife invited three or four of us to come out to their home a couple times for dinner during that time we were there. This first sergeant, who really wasn't too intelligent, he tried to tell us, "Well, you know, you go and you have a drink with your host, and that would give us some manners." She heard it, her name was [Margaret 'Peggy' Rockefeller] Peggy. She said, these boys are away from home, and we are, too. We want them to come stay as long as they want to stay and have as good a time as we can have. We did. I tell you, it was fun.

Then she had three or four of us come out another time for dinner. I sat right next to David at dinner one night, and he was asking where we were from and it turned out he had been up at Black River when they dedicated the USO [United Service Organizations] Club. It was just on the edge of Black River, going into Fort Drum. One of the things that I thought was funny was I never been where they had servants and Mrs. Rockefeller was at the head of the table, and she'd dingle and out they'd come. You know, a kid from the country... it's quite impressive. [Chuckles]

But then he went away, and I understood he went and earned his commission. After the war, he worked in Europe, something about the rehabilitation. But it was just a wonderful duty. I mean, there was people in that outfit - one man was a master musician. They let us go into the Firestone Estate - the army had taken that over, and they were training guys for espionage because when we were doing guard duty, they'd come. They were in civilian clothes, and they were saying, "I'm so and so, I'm going downtown." They'd come back and we'd let them in. Well one night they let us go in there and this man, his name was Jim Loder, he played the piano. Believe me, he was in the wrong place because he was

talented! That was the kind of first... my first few months in the service. You couldn't help but enjoy it.

Then I went back to Richmond, and they sent me up to Pawling, New York for cryptographer school. They found out I was born in Canada, so I was out. Then I went back to Richmond and they sent me out to clerical school in Colorado, back to Richmond, then they formed the 366th group in August of 43. I went down to Wilmington.

Believe me. We had a [Colonel] Meyer who was CO of our fighter group. He wanted to go overseas. We worked. There was no playing around then! They took us up to Camp Miles Standish in Massachusetts. And it was, I think, two or three days after Christmas that we loaded on the *Empress of Australia* in Boston Harbor. I know I was sick! *Oh, God, I was sick!* They put me in the hospital and [Dr.] Campbell was a group surgeon. I said, "I haven't got to stay here, have I?" "Just stay overnight and you can go back." I didn't want to miss it. *Good God*, we've been trained for a long time! Then our sergeant major, his name was [Bob] Carter. He had been banker. God, he was just a good administrator. He got sick and we practically carried him on board ship. We put a bunch of duffel bags down and said, lie down until we get out in the Channel. That was the story of going overseas.

Q: Did you go in a convoy or a single ship?

HH: I heard that we were in the biggest convoy. The 4th Armored Division was in it. We didn't see very many ships. We were up on deck as often as we could because it stunk, telling the hole. We landed in Greenock, Scotland, and then we got off there. The ladies were there with the little bag lunches. Then we got on a train and went down to Membury in England, and they trained there. Then we moved to a town called Thruxton and that's where they flew the first missions.

Q: Now, what kinds of planes were in this fighter unit?

HH: P47s. Thunderbolts.

Q: What were your relations like with the English people?

HH: We got acquainted with a family near the base and we'd go up to there. Not often, but I remember going a few evenings to spend time with them. Of course, their windows were all blacked out. That's about the only relationship we had with the natives was just to meet them. And in the pubs - we'd go in the pub and at 10 o'clock the bartender, "Time!" That meant you had to go home.

Q: What kind of missions did the Thunderbolts fly?

HH: Most of them were escort missions. Did the bombers like this guy, Although there were a lot of fighter sweeps when they were trying to get in on the beach.

Q: What do you recall about D Day, the night before D Day?

HH: Well, all I can think of is, it felt like if you stuck your hand up, you're going to hit an airplane. It was just full... it must have been because of the noise. Of course we couldn't go back onto the base after we left it because it was security, I suppose until the next day when we. We went down and realized that the invasion had started.

Q: Now, did you remain in England throughout the war?

HH: Oh, no, no, no, no. We were, ten days after D Day that we landed on Strip A1 in Normandy. Our planes had flown missions and landed there for service and gone back to England in the evening, ten or twelve days after D Day. They moved the whole bunch of us over there. We lived in tents over a foxhole. [Chuckles] I was out on the line, of course. Our operations tent was out close to the line and I walked out most of the time. I could take a truck, but it was more fun walking. We went to a town called Dreux, D-R-E-U-X, and they had hangars and stuff there and we weren't there very long. Then we went to a place called Laon-Couvron, it was hyphenated. We weren't there too long.

I think it was in October that we moved into Belgium. It's called Y29. It was near Asch, Belgium. Well, we were there on New Year's Day. *That was one day you'll never forget!* PHONE RINGS, it's operations, "German planes in the area." This one pilot, his name was [James I.] Taylor. Jet Taylor. Nice guy. We'd go out to get in a foxhole and it was full of pilots. So we stood at the corner of the building, "*Get the son of a bitch!*" It was like a football game. It was really exciting! Then pretty soon they'd come back again and that was the way we spent New Year's Day, it was something, let me tell you. Then one of our pilots was shot down, crashed somewhere. Christ, he came riding in on a bicycle in the afternoon! [Laughter] I mean, stuff like this, it was just humorous, you know, you had to laugh a little bit. But we did lose some pilots. I'll tell you, you know, you get to know people. Most of them were just plain ordinary, nice guys.

There was a fellow, he said, did you ever see the fighter pilot story that [Quentin] Aanenson did? See it sometime. Quentin Aanenson was a pilot in one of the other squadrons, and he took it upon himself -he lives in Washington, he did this story about his life in the service. It's really worth watching. It's in two tapes. It took long. One of the things that I was so pleased about, he wrote about each pilot that he was friends with. There was this one fellow, his name was Taylor. He was 389th. He used to come over to our shack at night, eat popcorn and. Just a nice guy. Anyway, Aanenson called me and said, will you give me some information on Jet Taylor? So I gave him a picture. I had a real good picture. In this tape that Aanenson made, he had a picture of each guy that he was talking about. I thought, boy, I contributed to that picture! In fact, I got in touch with his brother - his brother was in the service. They live in Reinbeck, Iowa. He told me that when the film was on public television, he called Aanenson and he said, "we talked for an hour." Well, naturally, there's a lot to talk about. But no, this Taylor was an exceptional guy, just plain nice guy. Well, most of them were.

Some of them... one guy, I don't want to mention any names, He was a major. [Whispers] He was a pri... It was when we were in Belgium, and I forget what one of the enlisted and crew chief did. The guy said, "I'll take care of you when I come back." Well, he didn't come back from the mission. The guy, his crew, they were doing war dances around the trees, celebrating, because he wasn't a nice guy. I mean, they didn't like him. How much more do you want me...

Q: Whatever you want to tell us.

HH: I have to tell about our cook, Squadron cook, named Smitty,[George W. Smith]. He was from Buffalo. They sent him to communications school. This is from Richmond. He came back from communication school all primed and ready. He worked one day in communications. They looked at his service record, found out he was a cook and he was our squadron cook. He was good. He could even make powdered eggs taste good. He drank a lot, to excess. But he and I -for some reason he liked me. He was, "God love you, kid. What do you need?"

Anyway, in Richmond, he cooked Thanksgiving dinner. We had a [Major] Hinckley, who was our executive officer, had a seat on the stock exchange. Nice guy, but he affected English accent and sort of liked to put-on-the-dog. His wife was a society girl from out west somewhere. Steadman her name was. Anyway, Smitty's telling; they served the turkey dinner and some of the officers wives came. Mrs. Hinckley sent for the cook. Of course Smitty's figuring; *Jesus!* I left a bottle cap in the dressing or something!... Because he was usually in the cups (drunk). Mrs. Hinckley wanted the recipe for the dressing. [Chuckles] These things happen.

Someone said you could write a book about Smitty. He got into trouble all the time, but he never quite got court martialled. When we went through Paris, going to Brussels or wherever..., we stayed there in Asch, he was riding the beer truck. I mean, he was the steward in the Officers Club, of course, because he knew how to tend bar. He got mad because the damn truck didn't stop in Paris. The whole bunch of us stopped. Anyway, he cracked open a case of gin or something. He's sitting on top of this beer truck- or the booze truck got loaded right to the gills. They ended up at the new base and the new Colonel came out, not Meyer, he came out and said, "Get down. Stand at attention!" Smitty fell at his feet, drunker than hell. [Laughter] The guy said he had to go back to England and said, "I'll take care of you when I come back." Well, he went down in the Channel, so Smitty's clear. Everything he did, he got into trouble.

When we were in an old building in Dreux the pilots fixed it up so they could live upstairs. Four of them. The ready room was downstairs with the Intelligence... We lived in the back end of it, six of us. Anyway, the pilots put a ladder up. They got some boards and made a ladder to go upstairs. They asked Smitty to come down and make him some fudge one night. Of course, they gave him drinks. Finally, [Lieutenant] Mahoney, good guy from Massachusetts, "Sergeant, will you come to help with Smitty?" They put a rope on him, let him down because they didn't dare let him down the ladder. Then it was my job - I had to

get him back to where he lived and stuff. But it seemed I always ended up with Smitty to look after.

We stayed friends all after the war. I used to think he said, "God love you, kid. I'm coming up and meet mom and dad Hayes." I thought, *Jesus, if he ever comes up and acts this way, they'll kick us both out!* [Laughter] Well, he came up to my house and I tell you, he got to be like one of our family. My mother and dad liked him. When they went to Florida, he had moved to Florida, they got together. My brother invited him one night to go on a hot dog roast with him and his girlfriend and a bunch of their friends. They said he sat across from the fire, smoke blowing in him. Of course, he's drunk again. Sam said, "I never saw anyone drink so much!" I thought... next morning I thought, well, this is it, they're going to say, "Put him out," but he stayed. He just stayed to be one of the best friends ever had.

Q: What was his full name?

HH: George W. Smith. He had a half-sister, I think he lived with her – she was a telephone operator. I stayed in touch with him after the war. Smitty would come up, go down there. Then they moved to Florida. We always got together. The last time he was home was in '88. He drove up and stayed for a few days with us and drove back to Buffalo. He died in the fall of that year, I believe. But no, it's those kind of people you don't ever forget.

One of our pilots, he looked almost albino, he was so blonde. His name was [Edward H.] Gross. There again, he was one of these people that he didn't, you know, he wasn't impressed with his rank. He just liked people. He used to come over to our shack and sit and talk with us and stuff. I went into Paris on task, I remember came back and Carter, this kid that was our sergeant major, he said, well, you lost your friend Eddie Gross. The story was, of course, that he got hit and went down. Anyway, after the war, this Smitty, he came up and we were doing this sentimental journey. We go down to Glens Falls and we went to New York and called in a couple guys, went over to somewhere outside of Philadelphia. We had a fellow named [John] Nettleton. He was in communications, I guess he also was a heavy, heavy drinker. We went to see him and he. We stayed overnight at his house and I went back to the room and went to bed. He and Smitty went down and drank up the bar. Anyway, we went on over to Pittsburgh and I called this Mr. and Mrs. Gross, the parents of this young fellow. I said, would it bother you if we came to visit you? I just told them that we had liked their kid... so much. "Oh no, please come." So Smitty and I went out in the evening and we just talked about the things. They told he was a nice kid. He grew up to Canada hunting and fishing and had his dog and everything. When we were ready to leave, I guess we went back the next morning to say goodbye to them. They were so grateful. They said we were the only people, other than the officials that come to tell of the demise of the person, that had come to see them or been in touch with them. I, you know, I always figured these pilots were clannish, that two of them would be best friends. You think, well, I'm going to see the parents of my best friend. But none of them ever did. I stayed in touch with the lady, Mrs. Gross, until she died in. It was '60s... sometime... Still got letters. I went to see them in Florida one time when they had moved down there. But this kid, he

was just exceptional. They were so grateful to think that someone took the time to come and talk with them. There again, it's one of these things that these reunions.

Like I told you, the guy asked me the name of this fellow that had never driven a car in New York City. As I say, I've got all these records that I kept, you know, and they'll ask questions and I think, yes, sure. We were in Myrtle Beach and a bunch of the pilots were over in the corner, "Come over here, Hayes, we got one for you." I said, I don't know what it was. I said, well, wait just a minute. I had the history with me. So I went up to the room and back down and I said, now this is what you're looking for, isn't it? "We knew you'd have it." But it was -to me, it was a wonderful experience.

I mean, living in the foxhole -the four of us put our pup tents together and we got some straw and there we slept in there. Of course, at night those damn buzz bombs were going over. They were scary because they'd shut off and you didn't know, you knew they were going to go. But when they shut off, you didn't know where they were going to land. It was bad in Belgium too. We were in this little shack... four of us put up a shack and someone said, "Hey, buzz bombs!" We get up and put on tin hats and lie down like we're going to be safe with those damn things on. But no looking back at it, I guess. Probably because it was such a new experience.

In Miami Beach, I was in a room with a fellow named Wilmer Arnold. He was from down near Rochester someplace. Big, heavy. He could *dance* like... *Oh, God*, he could dance *crazy*! He'd go up to the pier every night and dance. Well, anyway, come Christmas Eve, I remember looking out and the Salvation Army was going up Collins Avenue playing, you know, look around. Here's Tiny. We called him Tiny. Sitting on his bed, crying. "What the hell's wrong with you?" "Well, it's Christmas Eve," and I said, "You're not in any worse shape than any of us, cut it out!"

As I say, some of the associations, you know, really, you just can't ever forget them. Just great. Even my mother sent Colonel Hinckley a box of candy one time. I don't know what she was trying to do. Butter him up or what. No, you can have a turn.

Q: How about just telling us that you were a clerk in the squadron, Intelligence. What were some of the things you did?

HH: Well get the maps ready. You know, they put on a big map in the briefing room. We, the pilots, wanted to carry these little folding maps. We'd take grease pencils, you know, and write or mark where they're going to go and stuff. I remember that. They'd fold them up so they could keep track of where they're supposed to be. I guess. Other than that, it was just the routine. I didn't have to do the briefing. It was up to the officer, Lieutenant Gray. The three squadrons went to group headquarters and got the information on the mission, then they would brief the pilots. My job was just to keep records.

Q: When were you discharged?

HH: November 11, 1945.

Q: How did you get back to the United States?

HH: We came back on. It was a victory ship... Can't think of the name of it. Oh, man, it was *awful*! We came back in the spring, and the ocean was rough. I got seasick the first day out. We left from Brussels and coming down the Channel, Smitty said, "Come on, kid, we'll go up and look at the white cliffs of Dover." We're looking at the white cliffs of Dover. I said to Smitty, "Hey, you know, I'm going to be sick!" And I was, I upchucked. I couldn't eat after that. I'd start up the steps -we had to pass the kitchen- the smell of food... I'd turn right... Smitty would bring - I remember he brought up a can of peanuts once and some oranges. I lost about twenty or twenty-five pounds in that short time. We were thirteen days coming home.

So I remember I weighed out of the service at 176. In fact, the day that we were... I can't think of the camp up the Hudson where we landed -we didn't land there, they took us there... and they were lining us up to take us down to [Fort]Dix for discharge. I'm standing in the front line. I passed right out cold. Well, I'm not going to get out today, I guess! The sergeant was real nice. He sent a jeep over and they drove me down to the train. We got down to Dix and we're discharged. Smitty, because of being an 'S', he was going to get out late. So he said, "Hey, kid, you go and get a room in New York City and meet me at Penn Station this evening." I couldn't get any rooms. I was in the Pennsylvania Hotel and the clerk, I said, "You don't have any rooms?" "No, but go over there. See that man standing there? Go over and ask him." This man ran the Turkish bath. He said, "That's no problem when you meet your buddy. Come on in." So we slept in this big - it was a great big room. Went swimming, went in the hot room. Someone came in with a long scrub brush and scrubbed us up. Then you go swimming. The room was comfortable. It was soft lights and stuff.

The next day we did find a hotel room and we went to call on one of our pilot friends, [Joe] Kelly, he lived in New York City. We went to his father, I think, well, we were on Wall Street anyway. They said, "No, he's at the barber shop." So she told us where to go. We're going down the steps and you look in and here's Joe Kelly in the barber chair. Off comes the bib. Out he comes. Boy, I'll tell you. We reunited. "Hey, you guys gotta stay and go to lunch with dad." Well, we'd been in New York a couple days or three, and Smitty wanted to get to Buffalo, and my mother was over in Massachusetts. So we passed up the chance to go to lunch on Wall Street.

Another one that was really funny. His name is [John] O'Reilly, and he's in there in the names that I brought. We were walking down Grand Central. You know, four stairways come down and there's this big rotunda thing. Anyway, I said to Smitty, "Hey, there's John O'Reilly!" He had a Navy nurse or something on his arm. Well, you talk about men hugging each other! Boy, I'll tell you; he was as glad to see us as we were to see him! He was from Syracuse originally, I talked to him a lot because he used to date a girl in Watertown. So when we saw O'Reilly, he said, "Be sure you go see Kelly." O'Reilly and Kelly were good buddies. They both flew. So we went to see Kelly, and he took us up Park

Avenue somewhere, one of those fancy places. But they were such ordinary, nice guys, you know, nothing phony about them. But as I say, it was quite an experience.

One kid when we were in Richmond. His name was [Shirley] Thomas. I'd never forgotten him. Apparently, he had. His family must have had a lot of money. They sent his car to him, and we were only going to be there about two or three months. It was from Texas. He didn't go overseas with us.

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

HH: Oh, yes, yes. I went to business school for a year and a half.

Q: How about the 52-20 Club?

HH: Was that where they gave us \$20 a week? Oh, I didn't go fifty two weeks. I did sign up when I was first home.

Q: You did mention you did stay in contact with people you served with.

HH: Oh, yes, yes. [Larry] Charbonneau was one of them. Then tonight, I've got a call, this fellow in Texas, his name is [Blaker], he was one of our pilots. I've been in touch with him mainly because his son, who I met in Colorado, had to have a liver transplant or something, and I was interested enough to keep track of him. No, there are five or six of them that still call, but we're supposed to go to a place called Sevierville in Tennessee. It's near Dolly Parton's. Do you know where it is?

Q: I know where it is, yes. My son lives in Nashville.

HH: Oh, well, that's what I've heard is the site for our reunion this year.

Q: It's a nice place, you'll like it. When was your first reunion?

HH: Well, the first time we got together, it wasn't an official reunion. This Hinckley, who lived in Warrenton, Virginia, I guess he had a business in Syracuse or in Washington. A bunch of us gathered at some hotel for an afternoon of just reminiscing. There wasn't much to that except just how are you doing? But the funny part, not funny- it was kind of foolish; one of the fellows who had been in our squadron, [Henry J.] Donovan, he was in the police department in Detroit, so at this little gathering, we were having fun, you know, laughing. Henry J. Donovan comes over and he said, "Everything all right over here?" "Well, yes." "Well, things get out of order..." He hauls out his pistol. I said, "Put that thing away and get away from us." He was going to show him who he was. [Laughter] He's died just recently.

But I can't remember the first reunion. We went to Boston one year. We've been to Richmond, Colorado Springs, Sacramento, somewhere in Oregon, Minneapolis. Last year we were in Las Vegas. At first we were doing them every two years. I guess they decided that that wasn't enough, we wanted to get together, win that war every year. [Laughter]

Q: You do belong to veteran's organizations?

HH: VFW [Veterans of Foreign Wars] and The American Legion.

Q: Have you been a member since you left service?

HH: Our postmaster, who was a World War I veteran, when we first came home, "Come on, you guys, sign up for the Legion." So I've been a 50 year member for quite a few years... It was one of those things. We didn't have a home or anything when we first got home from the service, but we'd meet and then we put together a little shack sort of thing. And it was all volunteer labor, of course. And we've got a real nice Legion now but it's different. The people that are in the Legion in our place, and I think it's all over maybe, they're not looking to help the Legion or do anything patriotic. They're looking "What's in it for me?" Because one guy told me that he and another fellow charged \$800 to shovel the roof one winter. This other guy sitting next to him, he'd been in Vietnam, "*\$800? I'd do it all winter for that!*" But no, that's what's happening, I think, is my opinion of the Legions is there isn't the feeling that we did this together. Of course, there aren't many of us that did it together, you know, and it's more of a social get-together.

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

HH: I appreciated the opportunity to see what I saw and to meet the people I've met and stay friends with so many of them. It's been a wonderful experience. In Miami Beach, I saw Lily Pons, the opera star. Well, when I was a kid, my dad loved music and I used to listen to the radio. Lily Pons sang and I'd listen with dad. And then this one night, it was a Starlight concert and I went to see it, of course, real proud to write home and tell my dad that I'd seen Lily Pons. And then when I was taking music lessons on Monday night, Grace Moore used to have a radio program and I wanted to hear that. But my music teacher, he was like me, he couldn't stop talking. He'd come at seven and at nine o'clock he'd still be there giving me piano lessons. I'd say, "Ward, we're going to stop at 7:00 so we can hear Grace Moore." And damned if when I was in Germany, in Bayreuth, I saw her in person! Which, I mean, that impressed me to be able to relay that home, you know.

Q: Did you see her in a USO show?

HH: No, she appeared at the opera house in Bayreuth.

Q: Did you ever go to any USO?

HH: Oh, yes. I saw [Dorothy] McGuire. Her movie was Dear Ruth or something. Saw her in on the Riviera. I got a pass down to the Riviera, went for a week and stayed three. They couldn't get a plane out. [Laughter] But one day I was walking down, I thought, I know that gal, and turns out it was Dorothy McGuire! But those things didn't mean anything to you, but you know, to a kid from the country, see these bigwigs... *boy!*

Q: Did you have any pictures to show us?

HH: Oh, I didn't think you wanted pictures, golly.... No, I don't have any. I brought just those things that I gave you on the pilots and I've got a couple of that. In fact, I was looking through... what I was thinking of doing - and I probably should have followed

through, find a picture of the pilot that goes with his name and, you know, put it on there. I can, I've got loads of pictures.

Q: If you want to make a few copies and mail them to us.

HH: Oh, really? Would you want just the pilots from New York State?

Q: Yes, that you sent us things on, and also some pictures of you in uniform. So, okay. Thank you very much.

HH: Well, thank you for listening.