

ALFRED ELLIS INTERVIEW
TAPE 1, SIDE 1

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Alfred: Alfred Ellis.

Moderator: And your rank.

Alfred: Runner Mate Second Class. Actually, First Class.

Moderator: And...uh...tell them a little bit about your experience over there in Normandy and some of your first impressions that day and what led up to that particular day. Anything you can remember...just like your sitting at home talking.

Alfred: Well, I don't...we didn't know where we were going or anything like that. We were in some little lake back inland, a whole fleet of outfits and...uh...I know they sent me ashore after the...mail...guard mail, so I took another man with me. I forget who it was now and we went ashore after guard mail and we were was interested in a beer, so the only beer we could find, he said was about two miles down the road or so in Joe Blows Bar, Pub. So let's hike it out. We went out there and had a couple of beers, came back....came back to the ship. We got there and the bloody thing was in operation, it was rolling out, heading for the gulf...for Normandy. A couple guys on another ship got left there, but they had...uh...one of the experiences I had that...that I was a commanders fighter and combat man...and they asked me to go after guard mail...you know, the fleet's mail, the ships mail and the passengers...._____ mail. I was supposed to pick an assistant gunner, you know, to go with me. You know, every time we landed in England I'd go and get him. It turned out that...I suppose all the crew remembers it, couldn't help it...I know a guy by the name of Brownie, who was the baker. The ships baker. He was on the USS Midway when it was sunk over in the Pacific Island and he got on there and he was a baker. He was a super, super guy. He would make every kind of doggoned donuts and pie and cakes and crap and he just loved the guys, you know, he was a super guy. But he was kind of fellow that had...uh...he'd been restricted for two or three years I guess, because he'd go ashore and he'd get four or five or six beers and he'd get plastered and get in trouble and...so when they asked me to go get the guard mail, why old Brownie was a heck of a good dude, you know...and...uh...so I said, "Well, the only..." I said, "I'll take Brownie." The officer said, "You can't. He's restricted." I said, "Well, okay. Get somebody else to go get your bloody guard mail." And he chewed around and chewed around and finally they okayed it. So I'd take Brownie and we'd go ashore and we go inland, you know, to some office or something, pick up the stuff, pick up the crews mail and

stuff and come back. We'd get about....I'd watch everything as we went in, you know, and I'd see a pub, you know....so on the way back out just before we got in the ship I'd say, "Okay, Brownie. Three down." We'd go and have two or three beers. That old Brownie, he just worshipped me, you know, because he just loved that beer. But all the doggoned times I never had any trouble with him, you know, and that was the end of it. He was a pretty good dude.

Linda: Were there ever times that you almost missed getting back to the ship?

Alfred: Pardon?

Linda: Any time you almost missed getting back on board the ship?

Alfred: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Me? Oh, no. No. Never did. No. I had...uh...

Moderator: What are your impressions of that first day? I remember you telling me that you really didn't know where you were.

Alfred: We didn't know where we were or where we were going or anything. The only thing we know we were on a British command and we were going into the British invasion area. There was a seven invasion fronts and we went into the top one and we had...we had the roughest of the whole outfit, because the Germans expected us to commend in the upper end...actually above where we were, so when we hit the beach there we took the brunt of the German Panger (Panther?) Division. Some of the...just like...uh...uh...(Pause)...it starts with an 'A'....aah...the General...he was in the lower end of the...in the bay area and when he landed he didn't have any interference at all. He went clear to Ansio. He would have gotten almost to the Spanish border without any combat, because the Germans hadn't got down there yet. Then when they did, well they just raised holy cane.

Moderator: You remember what you were carrying on the ship that day? What you had on board that day?

Alfred: About fifty tanks. They were mostly British tanks. They were Carnhalls (?) and I guess there was some American tank. It might have been...(Unintelligible)...

Moderator: Actually, you had some troops on board too. You had a lot of troops.

Alfred: Pardon? Oh, heavens, yes. We had a lot of troops and gun trucks...gunnery trucks and supply trucks and medical trucks and everything else.

Moderator: American and British?

Alfred: Yep. Mostly British, 'cause we was...we was actually on lease to the British, far as I was always told. We took an awful, awful trips in with the British, but we also took in French...the French Foreign Legion. They were in Africa, you know, for many, many, many years and what French Foreign Legion was a money supply...money combat outfit. They would go anywhere in the world for a price, see, and then...because they were actually working. Most of the French Foreign Legion was criminals of some kind. When Germany took over Africa, why they run them out and they went back to France. So when the business of war come up, why about half of them was drafted in by the Germans and part of them....half of them escaped and went to England and formed a unit over there and we took those into combat, so technically half of the French was fighting the other half. I don't even know that they even knew it. We also had a polish outfit field...that we took in. They had gotten...snuck out of Poland, you know, when Germany took it over and they crammed out of there someway and got over to England and formed a unit, so we took them in. My recollection of the thing is that we made 176 missions over there. Us and another unit tried for the top of the European Lord Mission Division.

Moderator: What was the life like on the boat, you know, just prior to...

Alfred: There wasn't any life on the boat. Huh?

Moderator: What do you remember?

Alfred: Nothing much except...uh...had...uh...when we were off gun....off combat duty I was an engineer in the main engine room. That was the bottom deck and there was an escape trunk went straight up to the top of the Conning Tower and the next deck up was the sleeping quarters and the next deck up was the chow quarters. I'd go five or six feet and eat my meal and go up the next one only seven or eight feet and I'd go to bed. The next one was up to Conning Tower at the very top of the ship where the officers...where their control towers are and that was my(Unintelligible)gun that I run....and I was the only gun in the fleet that fired at will. And nobody knows who Will is, but that was the one that I fired so bloody darned good with it that I fired it without orders. I was depended on. If anyone else missed me then I got it and I did.

Moderator: Do you remember who you reported to at all? Do you remember who you reported to?

Alfred: Pardon? I didn't report to anybody. Well, the Gunnery Officer, yeah, but I don't remember his name. The only gun problem that I had was that when we were attacked one time there was a German

Mesherschmidt (?) Dive Bomber coming in and the one thing you had to be very, very, very careful and that was that the Germans had an art of making an impression on another fighter plane or something and you would think it was American or the British. Here these two planes was coming in. They were both firing. It turned out that the back plane was firing at the bomber, but I didn't know that and my strict orders are that if anything came within 2,800 feet of that ship you shoot at it. You don't give a darn who it is. So these two ships were coming in, planes were coming in and the shells on the side of the deck where mine was...the shells quit just above the water line at the side of the ship, but I nailed them both. The bomber peeled up and made a sling like that and went in the water. The fighter plane, it peeled up too, but it swung around and made a big spin out there and then landed, but it hit the shore. What I did was...later on it was took...uh...I don't know, maybe two or three weeks or something...you know, trip after trip after trip and I hit the same beach area. I went over there and I dug that plane, you know, this plane had landed into the...dove into the sand on the beach. I went the got the motor number and the information off the plane and a few weeks later I was over in England and I went to the...and I called the military office to find out if that was a fighter American...it was a British Spitfire all right. The guy was dead. And, no, he wasn't. He was alive. He bailed out and I contacted him at his home and we actually wrote back and forth three or four times, you know.

Linda: That's a great story.

Alfred: I was so darn darned tickled to think that...that I was required to shoot him down, but he was alive, you know.

Linda: That you didn't kill him.

Alfred: Then the funny...another thing...funny thing that happened was the fact that my gun control man...I was the trigger man, you know, all strapped in and all of the controls are on the side. My control man...I would have to look at the ships log...people....but it seems to me like it was Carr. He was my control man and he abandoned the gun under fire. If I wouldn't nailed both of those planes with...see I had 62 rounds in that magazine, but she was empty, so I wouldn't have him back on there no more, no more, no more. I took and I went out there and I practiced and trained and practiced and trained myself to put the dials at so many feet and so forth and start them and I could turn just exactly so much and on to another. Another thing that was almost unheard of and that was the...(Pause)...the black out...the black combat units and the whites

were not mixed together at that time during the war, you know. What this kid... I was down there...down below decks there.....(Unintelligible)...about five or six feet outside that door and he got to picking at me one time. They didn't sleep or live down there at all. They were officers. They'd served their food and took care of their rooms and all that stuff, but this one kid's name and I got his picture in my briefcase there, but he got after me to play cards. Blackjack or something, you know, whatever. We used nickels and pennies. We didn't have very much money. We would see this dining table there that nobody used. It would then...like if the ship was fully loaded with all Army, why, they would have used that table. When the battle alarm went off or anything like that why we just _____ and just leave the money and cards and everything right where it was and when we'd come back we'd play it again, you know. Well, it turned out that...that...when this guy abandoned my gun up there, why I was up there on the gun one day and this little black kid got off the officer's quarters and he come to me and he said...he said, "Al, would you train me to handle those controls." I said, "You've got to be kidding me?" I said, "That's against all military regulations as far as I know, but he kept a picking at me. He was a hell of a nice young fella, you know. I finally gave in. I says, "Okay!" I took him up there in the day time, you know, and have an hour or two or something liked that cleared and I trained and trained him and gy God I made a gun sider out of him. I think I was the only bloody damn guy in World War Two that had a black assistant, but he...he was quite a guy. I had....I've done a couple of favors and I got off...there's an area in the war that I've lost. I don't recall it, but I was on the gulf patrol in the Atlantic Pacific...Atlantic...it was a training. I was on a patrol ship and I'm 99% positive that over all of the things that I can think of that it was a 327. I believe it was, because she was an east coast patrol ship for a long time and I think that I came back when I was assigned the 53...,you know, in Evansville, we're going there to...the ship was going to be ready to launch pretty soon and I came up from Halifax, Nova Scotia. I came into some town...Boston, Brooklyn...somewhere. I don't know what and I had the tickets...train ticket to Evansville, Indiana. As I'm going out that night...I don't know. I couldn't...uh...I inquired where the depot was. I came in on a freighter, you know, a sailing ship, you know...a freighter. And so I was the only guy that got off the thing and I'm on my way down the streets _____ and here I run into to seven guys that were going to this...going to the depot to go to Evansville to the same ship, the 534. And, you know.....none of them had any money. They were all...they were all broke. I don't even think they had any gear. So we got to _____ and we was going to

the depot and going down the street and I says, "Holy cripes, you know..." I said....well, I had a lot of money. I had a money belt on me with...I don't know a thousand, fifteen hundred dollars in money in it, you know. But I said, "You know, by God, you know," I said, "We're going to be on that bloody train for four days.", you know, a military train. They never go anywhere. I said, "Donnerick", I said, "Let's see if we can't find a jug or something and we'll sit." So we come by a liquor store and it was closed, you know, naturally. I don't know what time of night it was. The guy was sitting back in an office there with a light on and I started rap-te-rap-te-rapping on the door and he finally come out there and he looked through the door and I says, "Hey, come on! Give us a bit of a go here." Why he opened up and I bought a jug and a case beer and whatever, I don't know, a couple of cases of beer, I guess. I don't remember. Then we kind of all got on the darned train and I kept walking. The dog garded trained was 99% Army. She was going west, you know. I don't know how the heck we got to the...there was sleeping in the aisles, you know, and everything. It was a mess. And they got a...they had a Blackjack game going. Well, this kid...this little colored kid...we didn't play Blackjack. We played something else. I don't remember what it was. It might have been Pinnocchle or something. I don't know. But anyway, these guys got into a Blackjack game and they were playing 10, 15, 20, 25 cents tops, limit, you know. Me, I was walking up and down the train, you know, trampling on people and everything else trying to find somebody I know, 'cause there had to be a couple thousand men on that dern thing, 'cause....perhaps it was about 75 or 100 cars and it was all military and every time I came by they kept picking and picking and picking at me to get in this damn Blackjack game. I says, "I don't know how to play Blackjack." "Well", he said, "We'll learn you. We'll teach you." Well, finally as the hours got into there, two, three, four o'clock in the morning and finally I says...I said, "For cripes sake, if you'll shut up," I said, "I'll get in the darn game." Well....I don't know if you guys know how to play Blackjack, but what you do is if you get a...in the dealing if you a certain...I don't know if it was two jacks or three jacks or something, you get the deal and you hold the deal until somebody else takes it away from you. The dealer is always a sure winner, almost 90% of the time. We kept going on and on and on and on and then when it got toward daylight and these guys...Army started coming up and walking down through there and they thought that playing 25 cents was nuts. So they eventually they got up to a dollar and then they got up to five dollars, you know. And finally, when it shut out, when we got into Evansville, Indiana I had \$324 that I had made on that bloody Blackjack game and I still had the damn

deal. And we got off of there and these seven guys....I said...well, they didn't have any money. They were fricking broke. I said...I says, "Well, I'll pop for a beer and breakfast." So we got off...down the street there at 7:30 or something, I don't know the heck and I...when in and had a couple of beers and went into the restaurant and had breakfast. I said, "You know," I said, "you guys"...I'd known where they come from then and I said, "You know something?" I said, "We've got seven days delayed orders here." And I said, "You guys..." I said, "When we go over there...over in Europe or in Africa or wherever", I said, "our chances of coming back alive are about 50%. We don't know." And we said 'We might never get back.' I said, "Why in the devil," I said, "I'll tell you what I'll do." I said, "You're going to be under arrest services if you don't produce." But I says, "I will buy your bloody tickets, roundtrip tickets home." for that seven days. Well, they thought I was nuts. We went back and had another beer. I bought another beer. I said, "You know something," I said...I said, "You ain't going to believe how happy your parents are going to be to see you." Finally, I talked them into it and run to the depot and I bought their bloody roundtrip tickets and one of them went to Memphis, Tennessee, one of them went to Houston, Texas, one of them to Minneapolis and one went up to the upper pennisula of Michigan and another went to Early, Iowa and I don't know where the hell the rest, but they all bought round trip...got round trip tickets and I paid for them and got the price on them and everything and I shipped them out. Then I left. I went to the University of Illinois. I went to see my quarters there and then I went up to Wisconsin and seen my family and came back and when I got back to the ship, why, all these guys...they come in and every....what happened was when I was in the University of Illinois there, and I don't even know how I come to mention the fact that I was going to be so and so for two days. The darned telephone rang at nine o'clock in t he morning and wanted to know if 'Ellis was there' and I says, "Yes." He said, "Well, your wnated at so and so's drug store." I said, "What for?" "Well, it's personal." So I said, "What the devil!" I go down there and there's monies there, you know, one of these guys....by three o'clock that afternoon every doggoned of these people, their parents wried the money into that damned drug store. They were so glad to see those kids home, you know, and I thought that was one of the nicest things I ever pulled.

Linda: What a great story. How long were you in Evansville then? You came back before you sailed down the Mississippi.

Alfred: We went aboard the ship and I don't think we was on there over a couple or three days. I just really don't remember, but I think it was a real joy when that thing was launched, 'cause went she went down that ramp sideways and she just rocked around, you know....you don't know the damned bloody thing is going to sink or not, you know.

Linda: You were on board when it....

Alfred: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Sure. We all were. Yeah. Course, it was a skeleton crew, you know. I think... (Sighs)...three officers and twelve or fourteen men was all.

Linda: Jim Sares was there.

Alfred: Pardon?

Linda: Jim Sares was there. Is that when you first began your friendship with him?

Alfred: No. I didn't start that until this reunion. I didn't start...none of these guys that we're connected with right now...I just have a vague recollection of them being around, but I don't know even what rank they had or nothing, because I was one of these guys that...it was...I've always been absolute and correct about everything I did. I was determined that there's no man that ever going to beat me to a gun. That's why I never, from the main engine room to the meal and the cooking and the sleeping and that gun and that's as far as I ever got. I just have a vague recollection of the officers. The one thing I did...the officers did call me up into the headquarters one time and they instructed me to write to my wife. I said, "What for?" I said, "She don't write to me." Well, they had the orders Washington (Laughs)..what was she was doing...what she was doing...she was...drove Washington nuts, you know, trying to keep track of me or find out where I was at and so I...finally, I was under orders to make an answer. She didn't write to me and ask me where the heck I was doing or nothing. Well, I couldn't tell her where I was. You couldn't say...well, you were aboard ship or on land or water or the weather is raining or darned...you can't say nothing, so I just said 'Ev, Alive. Al.'" (Laugh) That's all I wrote for the whole war. (Laughs)

Linda: Were you in both the Altantic and the Pacific?

Alfred: No. I didn't go to the Pacific. No. No.

Linda: So you were awarded the 534 in Evansville. What were you doing before that?

Alfred: I was...uh...I went into special combat training. I was pulled out of the troop...Autumn Farrigot (SP?), Idaho...and went to special training for NN knife throwing. I'm an expert at it. Yep. And Judo,

Jujitsu, the Japanese killing arts and Karate and all that stuff, and like the rifle training...I made expert rifle in five minutes. I was a crack shot from the time I was five years old, my father bought me a rifle a week before I went to grade school, so I was a good shot. But they put me into special training and pulled me out of a troop of a 140 some men...the Chief did...and another thing he done, he put me through a lot of the old combat training. The routes and the whole business and...ended up...I beat what he was actually trying to do, and these guys will do some funny things sometimes. They'll...what he tried to do was to beat the camp record and I did. All these combat runs, you know, the five mile obstacle courses and then the whole bloody works. There was one of them there, the five miler I think, that I beat it by three or four seconds, but I was the top, top man that went through Faragot and there had been a quarter of a million men that went through there already and I was the top one of them.

Linda: How old were you?

Alfred: Twenty-six maybe. Twenty-five, twenty-six. Something like that.

Linda: So you went on the 534 after the Normandy invasion and then came back to Norfolk or wherever, that you got off the ship then?

Alfred: I got off of the ship when we came into the Brooklyn Navy yard, went up on dry dock for repairs. We had been a bomb hit on the starboard side. They put a lot of new stuff...they had to put new...the engine....the shaft...cruise staff was knocked out of line and so forth and so forth and there was some of the guns changed. And, also the multi-forty boffer (Sp?) was designed during the board and we didn't have them aboard, so they put a couple of those on, but what happened was they transferred me off. There was about six men, crew and two officers were transferred off. But we stayed aboard while the rest of the crew that was going to go on...stay on the ship went home on a thirty day leave. And then when they get back then we left. I went to Bradford for reassignment. I was assigned to the new USS Midway, aircraft carrier.

Linda: You said that you got a bomb in the Normandy invasion.

Alfred: Not in the invasion it was during that combat area, you know, on the channel there. Yeah.

Linda: Tell me about that night or that day?

Alfred: Pardon?

Linda: Tell me about that. When did that happen?

Alfred: I do not remember. That's just....that's one thing I was telling the guys the other day was that a person should have had a little note pad and made notations of all these things when it happened, because I do not know, just don't pay attention to it.

Linda: Do you like talking about the war?

Alfred: No, okay, if it's with some of the crew, you know, but I don't do much with anybody else.

Linda: What do you want Craig to know about your time in the war? What do you want him and his kids to remember about you on the 534?

Alfred: Well, I was a top line combat man.

END TAPE 1, SIDE I

TAPE 1, SIDE 2
ELLIS (Continued)

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Alfred: Another little item that's kind of a cute cutie in a way and that's things that people will do that they're not supposed to do. I don't really remember where, we was up in the North Artic someplace. I don't know where, in God's country somewhere. I was called up in the officer's quarters and they were coming in and I don't remember if they dumped me off in Halifax, Nova Scotia or someplace. I don't remember where. They gave me strict orders, what they called delayed orders. I was to go to Joe Bloke Camp and Henry Camp and so forth and so forth and I was to go to Rice Lake, Wisconsin, to my home town, very important. I don't know as they said that really and I don't know what in the devil was going on. It didn't make any sense and it didn't have nothing to do with the war and we're in combat, you know, conditions. I get up there and there's my sister's funeral and we were....it was really nice, because we were only about ten months apart and we were a lifetime just...love child...._____ just super. Her husband...she married a Johnson and they were...there was a big orchestra, the Thornton (?) orchestra. They played at her and my dad played at her and the whole family played in that Thornton orchestra for forty years, but on the way back then I had to stop...make two or three stops. I had to stop in Evansville and go to some military office, you know. When I get back and they picked me up in Brooklyn or somewhere, I don't know where. When I come up there to the officers and they just looked up and grinned like a bunch of Chessy cats, you know. There's no way in this fricking world today that they could have legally sent me home to a funeral, anybody's funeral, during war...combat like that. So they sent me on this God derved on this darned Burger King crap, you know. And I loved...that was the cutest darned thing that ever happened to me.

Linda: Made up a story to send you that was a really cute...

Alfred: They just grinned. They didn't say anything. They just grinned liked a Chessy cat when I got back, you know.

Linda: Tell me about the LST. What does it stand for and what...what function did it serve during the war?

Alfred: Running ship tank and the bottom deck took all tanks,well, it could take anything on there, but it was all tanks and then in back of where the main doors open in the bow...in the bow...in the base, the

ramp goes down. Inside there's another ramp that drops down where the top of the ship is put on as....army trucks and amunition trucks, Red Cross and so forth and anything, just military artilary and whatever. On the way over there we carried two LCT's on the top deck. They were strapped in there. When it got over there, why they took the railings....they took the railings out. I didn't have anything to do with it, the deck hands did that, but they took the railings out and tipped the ship, you know, they pumped the water out and tipped her over and the darned thingLCT's went off the side. That's the way they got them over there, because they're not ocean operated, you know.

Linda: It was a rough ride, the LST, wasn't it?

Alfred: Aaah.....(Sigh)...well, yes, it was. It was...I forget how many hundred thousand gallons of tank water that they had below deck that they'd pump in and out or use, you know, but if you were empty, it was a pistol. That thing would just rock like a God darned canoe, you know.

Linda: Did you ever get seasick?

Alfred: No. But you had...there's a lot of things that you had to do sometimes. You had to face bow or stern, you know, that was important. But we had a couple of guys...I forget their names....I could pick them out of the ships log. But they had to transfer them off over in England. They were just deathly sick all the time. There was no way in this world that they could stay aboard, so they were put on land duty over in England somewhere. Yeah, there's one thing about that that you have to....if you stand sideways on the ship, you're going to get sick. You always look either bow or stern. The middle of the ship was better than the side, because it don't rock as far.

Linda: What incidences happened aboard the LST 534 that you remember particularly?

Alfred: (Pause) Geez, I don't remember.

Linda: What about the day you were getting in the floatilla to go to the Normandy beach? You knew you were going to an invasion, what were you thinking that day?

Alfred: We didn't know what we were going to do, because they didn't tell us. The whole god darned floatilla and ships there..._____ lake. They pulled out and we started down the coast and went past the....I don't know...what is it? Big bluffs.

Voice: White Cliffs of Dover?

Alfred: Pardon. Yeah. The White Cliffs of Dover. Went down and went out into the ocean. The one thing they did do and I don't remember exactly how much we delayed out there, but...but the General...they stopped the invasion. They held it up for six days, you know, from the day it was supposed to happen, because of the weather...was so bad...just terrible.

Linda: Is that the storm that you were in, the 534 was in, when it...when the tanks were running around on the tank deck?

Alfred: No, they were strapped in. Oh, yeah! They're tied in with chain locks, goes into a deck...pits like that and then locks in and they strap 'em down. No, they didn't move around any. No.

Voice: Any other thoughts on it all then?

Alfred: No, not very much. They had...we had some...one thing we never did have and that was liberties. Never had...I had one liberty at the University of Illinois and then we had a five day pass...we pulled in...that's when we got that bomb hit, one of them anyway. We were out of commission and we went into dry dock in Falmouth, England and they just gave everybody absolutely strict orders to get the blazes off the ship and stay off it for five days, so we went ashore. I walked inland there for a couple of miles and came back and there was a pub there and there was a bunch of guys in there, about a dozen or fifteen of them and...went in and had a couple of beers and we found out there was a train that went to London, so we all decided to go to London. We didn't know where in the devil we were going to stay there, so I suppose anybody...you probably never heard of it, but every G.I. that ever went over in that country heard of Piccadilly Circus. So we landed in there and there was nothing there....and we all ended up in a French hotel up on the top floor, the whole darned gang, about fifteen of us in one room, you know. A couple guys rented the room and then we all sagged in there on the floor, just slept in our clothes, you know, _____ darned thing....and went out in this doggonned Piccadilly Circus. If that ain't a zoo, I've never seen anything like it. There was guys out there that...with little tricky finger things, you know, and what they'll do is selling whisky, you know, and you could buy Scotch and Irish Whiskies out there, you know, and...very reasonable, just...peanuts. But they'd take you out back off the street, you know, and give you that and of course, they had the girls....(Laughs)...there was a hundred business girls out there on the street. We didn't have anything to do with them, naturally. (Laughs)

Voice: During the invasion do you remember like how many hours you would go without break or without any.....

Alfred: Oh, Yeah, yeah, yeah. One time there was six days and six nights without sleep or anything. That was down by St...that was when General Patton, when he was in St. Lou (?) and we landed down there and went in to support him, combat crew, you know. We just never had any sleep. Nothing. Carried no sleeping gear. The only food you took was what you had in your pocket.

Linda: Were you drafted or did you enlist?

Alfred: I enlisted. Yeah.

Linda: You know, my dad enlisted...that...he was drafted at 25.

Alfred: Yeah. Oh, was he that old?

Linda: Yeah. Yeah.

Alfred: Cripes, I didn't think he....he must have not been in the crew then called the Masonite Gramps.

Linda: Maybe right in between. He really wasn't in the young crowd either.

Alfred: Most of the darn kids were 17, 18, 19 years old, you know, and they called....Leon Mase, you know, he was from Anvil, Pennsylvania, and he called us 'Gramps'. Grandpa.

Linda: Do you remember my dad?

Alfred: Yep, I do. Yep. When I seen that picture I just went banana cake. I said, "I remember the name..." probably wouldn't have known him if I met him on the street, you know, now. None of us...most of the guys don't look anything like...no resemblance whatsoever to what they were back int he service, but he...that picture there hit me. I knew him right off.

Linda: What do you remember about him?

Alfred: Nothing really, because I don't remember anything about the crew. We had nothing to do with them, you know, and you doesn't have any liberties to go out and go with the gang and that one bunch of us that went to London that time, well, I just packed off and stayed with some other people there located...run into some other people and got acquainted. They were guys that was in the ships sailing quarters, you know, so I never had anything to do with the rest of the guys at all. Never had a chance. Didn't have time. Never ever, ever had a liberty.

Linda: If you were in...you were older...you were 25-26 and you were married, why did you enlist?

Alfred: Because I figured that I was a top athlete and a super rifleman and a super pistolman and I had trained with a man there, Otto Hugen (?), started when I was 10 years old with a Spanish knife and I could take a man right in the doggoned Adams Apple at 50 feet with that bloody knife and being a crack shot and everything like that and super healthy....I was a hundred and ninety seven pounds and I was all iron. I had a 26 inch waist, big buffy arms and shoulders and muscles and I just figured that...

Voice: The thing to do.

Alfred: ...the thing to do. They needed me worse then I was needed here. Among other things, see, I was working for Belson Publisher Corporation (?) and they lost all their...they was losing all their men, you know, they were taking them to war and they're going to shut down thousands and thousands of acres of cropland, which they did, because they lost their tractor men. We used Indians for workers and now days we have fifteen million Mexican people in this country that's working the fields and all that, you know, in Florida and every place...whatever, whatever. But in those days we didn't have them and I worked....that was a potato concern...period...just potatoes. They had outfits from Dangers, Maine to Bakersfield, California. I was in the....in the summertime I drove heavy equipment for them and then I started planting and run planter, but we used Indian workers. I used to go to all the Indian Reservations in northern Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota and Dakota and Montana and get workers and bring them up, you know, haul them in on a big international truck. We'd camp them and feed them. We had a great big..._____outfit. We had a great big...cabins, you know, ...log...buildings like...you know. You'd almost call them a motel, you know. We'd haul them there and keep them there and then they worked there from the first of April until December. They were super good paid. They were paid, you know, same thing as anybody else, but....I took them...when we were down....we were grading and shipping a couple million bushel up northern and the boss said that we're going to have to shut her down, except there was going to be all winter work there for that grading and shipping operation, so he called a crew together and said that he don't want lay off Joe, Pete, Amos, Paul or Henry or anything like that. He said, 'What I'm going to do', He said, 'I'm going to ask for volunteers for anybody that thnks or knows that they can get a job somewhere else...will volunteer to leave rather than have me lay somebody off.' So I said, 'No problem!' I said, 'Hell, I can get a job in five minutes.' So I did. I packed up and left for Detroit and in five minutes I was working at Briggs Aircraft. What happened was...that...I took over as

supervisor and in about a week I was training and training. I was a top machinist, but the...making the aircraft...the wingspans were...for all kinds of fighter planes and bombers and everything else and there's this machine...it was like a hundred and some feet long and it cut and milled and drilled and ground the planes. You had to be able to coordinate all that and I got....and I took it over. It took two or three weeks and I took over and the man that I replaced was drafted and the guy before...I find out the guy that he replaced five or six months ago was drafted and went, so here this job as important as it was, you couldn't hold them. So I worked there about three or four months and I finally came to the conclusion. I said, "I'll betcha my life's earnings that in another month or two they're going to draft me." So I just went down to the...I went down tot he headquarters down there near Bell Island, the drafting quarters and I asked them about how's it coming. I says that everybody that I know of went out of here went in the rmy. Well, they said that they were behind in the qualifications of whatever, whatever, I don't know. So they took and....so I told them, "Is ther some way", I said, "If I am drafted or I enlist, what happens?" He says, "You go Army." I said, "If I want in the Navy or Air Force, What'll I do?" He says, "Just get the heck out of here. Go to Milwaukee." You know, Wisconsin. SO that's what I did. I went to Wisconsin and enlisted there and got into the Navy.

Linda: What happened when you went home and told your wife, "I just enlisted in the Navy?"

Alfred: (Laughs) I don't know if I went home and told her. I don't know. I guess she was a....we was spitting heads anyhow, so....(Laughs).

Linda: What about your mom and dad?

Alfred: Oh, They loved it.

Linda: Did you have brothers in the Navy?

Alfred: Yeah, my brother was a special undercover....pardon?

Voice: He was OSS.

Alfred: Huh?

Voice: OSS.

Alfred: Yeah. He was a special undercover agent.

Voice: Parachuted behind enemy lines.

Alfred: He can't even....to this day he can't tell anybody what he did or where he was, but they landed him by parachute in Germany out of Berksdiddgotten or Hitler's Mountain Retreat, not too far from there, but he...when I was out his house one time and I seen in his desk there...those leather folders, you know, all the Germans carried them, you know. They had their name, _____ name...and if they had a picture of family or wife or whatever, whatever and they carried those all over....that leather folder was there and I looked at it and it's Lt. Chop-Chop-So-and-So-Smorgashbord, you know, whatever, some German name and the picture of him and his uniform and everything, but he was in the rescue services that took part of the top German officers and he was a witness of one thing or another at the Darnbird trials (?). He was a spy. He was. He never wrote to anybody all the time, because he couldn't write out of there. He landed in there by parachute, slept in there.

Linda: Was he older than you or younger?

Alfred: Younger. Yep. Six...five-six years younger than me.

Linda: Is he still alive?

Alfred: Yep. Living out of Marshall Town, Iowa...about three miles.

Linda: Okay, anything else you want to tell us?

Alfred: No, I don't think so.

Linda: Okay, thank you.

Alfred: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW