

THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE
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AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES C. TALLEY

FOR THE
VETERANS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
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INTERVIEWED BY
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TRANSCRIPT BY
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CHARLES JOHNSON: The following is an interview conducted with Mr. James C. Talley. 1477 Touraine Place, Knoxville, Tennessee. Interviewed conducted by Dr. Charles W. Johnson, director of the World War II Veterans Project. University of Tennessee Knoxville. Interview conducted on June 5th, 1990 in Mr. Talley's residence. I've got as many tapes as you need here.

JAMES TALLEY: Ok.

JOHNSON: But I usually just ask to begin with what you were doing before you were in the service and start from there.

TALLEY: Chuck, I went into service right out of the university. I graduated from McCallie School, a military school, in the summer of 1942 and I was all of, I guess, seventeen years old at the time I graduated. I came to the University of Tennessee in the summer of that year and went to summer school with the idea in mind that I would get some courses that would prepare me to go into the Air Corps.

JOHNSON: You wanted to be in the Air Corps?

TALLEY: I've always wanted to be in the Air Corps. I'd wanted to be in the Air Corps since walking across the University—no, the Gay Street bridge one day. Since an old Knoxville named Homer Cox came roaring under the bridge in an old Ryan P-36 that didn't have retractable landing gear with the props turned up full blast, and I thought, "Boy that's my idea of what I wanna do." (Laughter) And from that moment on I wanted to fly airplanes. So anyway, I was a—oh, I had the summer quarter and the fall quarter and the winter quarter at the University and went into the service in the spring of 1943. April the sixth, 1943 I went in, and a whole bunch of us—good friends, many of them football players—went to Keesler Field, Mississippi. And I remember my mother was telling me how fortunate I was to go to that garden spot down there with all the beautiful belle and (?) gardens and the camellias and azaleas and I stayed there thirty-one days and never saw anything but sand and pine trees and mess kits and leggings and canteens and rifles. I didn't see all of the flowers that Mother thought I was gonna see down there. (Laughter) But anyway that's where I went to basic training.

JOHNSON: Before that, how many of there were ... you—in the family, how many in your family?

TALLEY: Well my immediate family consisted of my mother and my sister. My father, as I told you the other day, died in 1927 when I was three years old. And he was a field-artillery man and he was gassed in Meuse-Argonne and died the night he got back from climbing Mount (McCon?) and it must've been just too much a strain on him. So it was my mother and my sister and I.

JOHNSON: So you didn't have any other immediate relatives in service?

TALLEY: No, uh huh. (Answered Negatively)

JOHNSON: How did your mother feel about your going?

TALLEY: Well I was her little boy and it was a pretty traumatic experience for Mother seeing her little baby going into the service. 'Course I wanted to go and she had sorta gotten used to me being away from home, having been at McCallie in Chattanooga as a boarding student since the eight grade. So she was sorta used to me being away and out on my own, but I was a tender child of eighteen at the time I went in.

JOHNSON: And it's different going into the military than it is going away to school, I'm sure.

TALLEY: Oh yeah, yeah. But at that time there was a spirit in this country that everybody wanted to go to war. I even cabled Washington to find out where my orders, I was so impatient to go that I couldn't wait. I volunteered and signed up to go into the aviation cadet program. And so, uh, I did contact the War Department and shortly thereafter my orders came and a whole bunch of UT students all went in at the same time. Went in on—via troop train all the way down to Keesler Field, Mississippi. And it was a rare experience down there.

The highest ranking officer I think I ever saw was a PFC, and we saluted him and it was a pretty bad thirty-one days of drilling and learning what the arm—I know one experience that I will never forget. When we lined up in formation the first day there and this PFC Broderick asked if anybody there had had previous military experience, so one of my good friends Bill Tate and I—who I may mention later on was a PW, we went through cadet together—we raised our hand, he had everybody with previous military experience to step forward and he said, "Since you all are so expert, you can start policing up the area and picking up cigarette butts around here," and I believe that's the last time I ever volunteered for anything. It taught me a good lesson.

But anyway, I learned a lot about the Army Air Corps and the fact that the aviation cadet is the lowest form of humanity and I learned that pretty good the next few months. Everywhere you went, why you were taunted. You were starting at the very bottom of the ladder and I think the Air Force or Air Corps it was at that time did it's darndest to dehumanize you. For what purpose that served, I don't quite know, but they succeeded in dehumanizing us every place we went.

JOHNSON: How did the—give me an example of how that happened.

TALLEY: Well, we had to get out of bed at 6 o'clock and go to the drill field all day and eat off of metal trays and the people serving the dinner just loved to mix the fruit cocktail in with the mashed potatoes and gravy and slopped it all over the trays and seemed to take a fiendish delight in just making a horrible mess out of it, but you were so tired and hungry why you ate anything that you could get your hands on. And as I say, saluting PFCs and making your bed up to where you couldn't see anything but blanket underneath the bed. They would even check it with a mirror to see if there was no sheet showing under there. Very particular, and seemed to be very unnecessary to me at the time.

Barracks were spotless and uh, it just seemed to be a pretty rugged basic training, but I'm sure it all served a purpose.

We were there for thirty-one days and then from Keesler Field on troops trains we went to Memphis State in Memphis. And a bunch of our group came back to University of Tennessee and a bunch went to different colleges throughout the country as a matter of fact. And I remember thinking, and I'm sure it's true that the services preserved small colleges during the war when the student bodies had left. And it also served as an available pool of manpower to go into the cadet program, as they were needed.

So I was at Memphis State for three months and I became a cadet officer and that was a big help. I was a wing adjutant and got the best end of the deal there. 'Course that was after you survived being a lower classman. And once you got to be an upper classman life got to be a little bit easier. And there we studied such things as math and physics and history and did a lot of drilling. Learned to have spotless uniforms and excellent close order drill. Didn't do any flying at Memphis State, but we studied meteorology and things in preparation to go into the Air Corps. Had an aviation student's uniform with the wings and the prop. Not quite like a cadet, it was one step below being a cadet, but at least we had a uniform that was a little bit better than an enlisted man. Not much, I think the patch—the blue patch with orange wings and prop was the only thing that distinguished us as aviation students.

And right in the midst of our third month at Memphis State, for some unknown reason the Air Force decided to close down the operation at Memphis State and sent us to Rockhurst College in Kansas City instead of going across to Southwestern University, now Rhodes, where they had the same kind of attachment and we ended up in Kansas City. (Laughter) Which we thought was kinda funny in a way, but our group was sent to Kansas City and we lived in a hotel, Brookside Hotel in Kansas City. And our group was very—there was a lot of esprit d'corps in our group. We were all from the south and we tried to reorient Rockhurst into how we wanted things done at Memphis State. And that didn't really set too well, so we found out they were gonna tell us how to run it instead of we were gonna tell them, and that's the way it should've been, but we decided we were gonna try anyway. And I remember one night a bunch of us got together in Kansas City and tried to get all of Kansas City to sing "Dixie" and stand attention while we paid homage to Robert E. Lee and all that kinda stuff—these were young and foolish days, but we were all about eighteen years old. So anyway, we were out there and that's when we got in ten hours of single engine time at a little airfield, (Long Airfield?), in a—oh I've forgotten, it was a Piper Cub as I remember at the time. But that's where we learned to fly, learned to take off and land an airplane and fly patterns.

JOHNSON: That was your first experience ...

TALLEY: Yeah that was my first experience in an airplane. First time I'd been off the ground. Big thrill. And it's funny; I ended up being a navigator and the guy that flew just before me got airsick. And every time he'd go up he'd get sick and have to wash the cockpit out with a hose before I could get in and it was awful. The odor was still there

and it was very unpleasant. He turned out to be the hottest P-51 pilot I guess the Air Corps ever had, so you never what's gonna happen to people once they get over the initial fear of flying, because he later became quite a pilot. (Laughter) But we stayed there for two months and when we finished our training at Rockhurst College, Kansas City. Then the next step was to go to Classification Center where we would decide whether we were gonna be bombardiers, navigators, pilots or washouts. Lot of ... trauma there. We went on a big troop train—the old kinds, Chuck, that had three-deck bunks, no air conditioning, open windows going through the desert on the way to Texas from Kansas City. Dust and dirt and sand. And a mess car. They would stop and feed us and you'd have to get out and file through the mess car. It was a pretty primitive way to travel, but these were wartime conditions.

JOHNSON: Mm hmm.

TALLEY: And I think now—and I'm gonna digress a minute—so many people now get exercised over the fact that we imprisoned Japanese during the war and put them into detention camps out in California and different other places, singing how ... inhumane it was to treat Japanese people this way. And of course, forty-something years later it sounds that way, but if people could've been living at that time after Pearl Harbor, this country was in a state of panic. We thought we were going to be invaded. The Japanese had kinda let us know that the mainland of America would be next. And of course you could tell a Japanese by appearance so easily that all those people were rounded up and put behind—I think they were treated as well—it was nothing like what the Germans did to the prisoners over there, but anyway I think if the young people knew the condition of mind that existed in the American citizens back then—it was one of panic.

So anyway, um, we got down to Classification Center at San Antonio, Texas. Brooks Field and (Randolph?) Field and the Cadet Center were down there. And classification was a real traumatic thing. 'Course rumors spread far and wide about what they did to you in Classification and how horrible it was, and I remembered hearing—before I went into the service I used to bite my fingernails—and I was told by some of the guys that'd gone through Classification that said if you want to fly you'd better quit biting your fingernails. So I did. Hardest thing I ever did in my life, even harder than quitting smoking. So sure enough, I guess the first day, I went—you had a psychiatric exam, had a question and answer and multiple choice and things. And the psychiatrist asked me to put my hands on the table and I did and all he did was looking at my fingernails. They would not take anybody that bit their fingernails.

JOHNSON: How interesting, I've never heard that.

TALLEY: And that was—well this is exactly true. I had put my hands up there and he said, “Ok” and made a little checkmark. But people were washed out for being fingernail biters and bed wetters. So anyway, fortunately I had quit biting my fingernails. And fortunately I never did wet my bed until later on when I started flying. (Laughter) But anyhow, there were psych—motor exams that I remember, and putting the square pegs in square holes and lining up things for depth perception, all those sort of things and written

exams and whatnot. And the day of decision arrived and people were being classified as bombardiers, navigators and pilots or some were washed out. And my friend Bill Tate and I ... we roomed together and were both cadet officers, we qualified for all three. And we were just real pleased about that and we were called up in front of a review board. And here were the highest-ranking officers I guess I'd seen since I'd been in the service. There were a couple of majors and a captain or two and a lieutenant. And of course we were scared to death and we were informed, standing at attention in front of this panel of officers in there, that we qualified for all three air crew positions and that they didn't have any particular recommendation except that they thought we were more highly qualified for bombardiers.

Well, and we were given five minutes to go out in the hall and talk it over and decide which we wanted to do. Well Bill Tate and I thought, well if they were saying we were more qualified to be bombardiers they were trying to tell us we need to be bombardiers. We didn't really know what was behind that little maneuver, but we said ok if that's the way they want. Our hearts weren't on flying necessarily; we just wanted to be in the Air Corps. So we went back and told them we'd be bombardiers and everybody seemed to be happy and this, that and the other.

And from Keesler Field there were a lot of real sad guys that washed out for one reason or other, but a lot of elated people went on to flying school. Bombardier, navigator and pilot training. And going into bombardier training we went to Keesler Field—no, Ellington Field in Houston, Texas. And Ellington Field was where the hazing really started. I mean it was rough there. The minute we got off of that train why we were stood at attention for an hour and dressed down real good by the cadet officer wanting to know what our name was, where we were from. They didn't like the way we pronounced their name and they had something smart to say about Tennessee and I mean this was the beginning of the dehumanization process as a cadet. And these were upperclassmen and we thought they absolutely walked on water.

We went through some pretty vigorous training there, both in the classroom and the drill field. And then we started our flight training. And we were right near the end of this course, which lasted about three months. And bombardier and navigation preflight were both being held at Ellington Field. And they posted a notice one day that there was an opening for three hundred navigation cadets at Carl Gables, Florida. Well, it was December. It was cold. My friend Tate and I had our little huddle again and they said if your grades are above a certain level you can apply. And we thought well it's a whole better to be in Miami, Florida in December than Scotsfield, Illinois or some place like that so we applied for navigation training. And lo and behold, we were two of the ones that were picked to go to Carl Gables.

So we transferred from bombardier preflight ... to navigation and went to Carl Gables, Florida. Heaven on Earth. Got there three or four days before Christmas and instead of being lined up and fussed at like we'd been at Ellington Field, why we were met by the CO and he said, "Welcome to Carl Gables, you're in the land of sunshine. Today is Wednesday; you need to be back here by Sunday night ready to go to work. Your rooms

will be assigned to you by the lady at the little desk.” And there were palm trees and I mean it was beautiful. Every morning you would wake up with Lynn Miller’s moonlight—er, Sunrise Serenade and you left your shoes outside in the hall to be shined. I mean it was a totally different world in Carl Gables. I found out later all my cadet friends were so jealous they couldn’t see straight because they’d ended up in some God-forsaken part of the world and here we were in Miami, Florida Carl Gables. So we had a real fine time down there. Studied hard.

And I guess the first impression—now Pan American Airways ran this navigation school, and the first day we were at meteorology class it started raining outside. And our instructor went out there and looked outside and saw it raining and he looked at his watch and he said, “Gosh. This rain is six and a half minutes late.” And I thought, “Boy can they be that good when they time the rain down to six and a half minutes late?” (Laughter) Well that was a big inside joke and of course I didn’t know the difference, but I found every class this guy would go over whenever it was raining and time it as though it was three minutes late or two minutes late, so anyway.

But we trained in the most horrible looking flying boats you ever saw. They would send up ten navigators and the flying boats were built by Consolidated, were a predecessor to the PBY-Catalina. And wire struts, um the plane would indicate about sixty knots and we’d fly over (Tula and Jubkay?) and Great Isaac and all down in that part of the Caribbean. And we would do different dog legs at daytime and nighttime, shooting fixes and ...(dumb pilot?)... and whatnot. And when time came to go back to the base, why out of ten navigators you would have ten different headings to take going back. And of course the instructor was sitting there doing nothing but reading *Reader’s Digest* magazine. And we thought, “Boy he really is brilliant knowing exactly where he is all the time,” when he access to a radio compass that was tuned in on a Miami radio station and all he had to do was read off a little dial and he would give the pilot the heading and then we would go back to base, but anyway. (Laughter)

We studied hard down there and uh, I guess it was—if you’ve never studied celestial navigation it’s a complicated thing really, and yet it makes such good sense to know that every star in the heavens of any size has a certain altitude at a certain time at a certain ring around the earth. And if you know where—if you know the time and the star you can find out that you’re on a certain ring. If you take three star fixes those rings intersect with each other and you’ve got a fix. So we had to memorize the stars and I remember—we memorized the stars out in the back of our barracks, and I memorized all my constellations and stars in reference to the chimney in the back of the gymnasium. And my first flight I couldn’t find any of the stars until I painted a little chimney on the astrodome up there and I could look at my drawing of the chimney and find the stars. Well of course when the plane changed headings where the chimney wasn’t where it was supposed to be, there went that. (Laughter)

But anyway we did learn the constellations and stars and had a lot of fun and we started really keeping up with the war. They briefed us pretty much on what the war was doing then. One of the reasons we were excited about going to Pan-American Airways is Pan-

American trained overseas navigators and most of the graduates went into Air Transport Command. And we thought, "Well that's a good deal," flying over the ocean and transferring planes and so forth—troops and whatnot. I'll never forget our graduation was in a theatre one day and we were all sitting in there and the CO came in and he had a big box full of silver wings and gold bars that we were gonna pin on our shoulders and graduate and become second lieutenants. And he said, "Well gentlemen ... I've got some good news and I've got some bad news." I had never heard that expression before, he said, "The good news is that you are going to graduate. I've got your wings, I've got your gold bar. And the bad news is that there's no more Air Transport Command and you're all going into Heavy Bombardment." You could've heard a pin drop in there. Heavy Bombardment. 'Course we were still eager to go, I mean that didn't make a whole lot of difference. And he said, "The only choice any of you are gonna have is B-24s or B-17s. Those are the only two options."

And so Bill and I—Bill Tate again, he and I opted for the B-17s and we were fortunate to get the B-17s. And we were transferred after we got our wings and we paid somebody the dollar for saluting us first. Some sergeant made a fortune standing outside the door. He made three hundred dollars that day saluting ... brand-new second lieutenants. That was one of the things I'm sure you've heard about that the first enlisted man that salutes a new officer gets a dollar, so he made three hundred dollars that day just standing at the door. (Laughter)

So anyway, we got about a ten day delay en route and went to our homes on our way to the (Dyersburg?) Army Air Base for what they call phase training. And I came home and in the process got myself engaged to my current—my only wife of forty-five years. We decided to get engaged at that time. And I went on to Dyersburg, and Dyersburg is where the crews were made up for the first time. We had new pilots, new co-pilots, new bombardiers, new navigators, new radio operators, new engineers and new gunners. And the ten of us got together for the first time. The pilot and the co-pilot had been there for two or three days learning how to fly the B-17 and then the rest of us began to arrive. And we just seemed to get along real good from the very start.

And it was quite cross-sectioned. The pilot was from St. Cloud, Minnesota. The co-pilot was from Olathe, Kansas. The bombardier was from Indianapolis. I was from Knoxville. The radio operator was from the Bronx. The engineer was from West Virginia. One waist gunner was from (Cannon?), South Carolina. The other was from Baton Rouge, Louisiana. And the tail gunner was from I think South Carolina also, but you had quite a cross-section of the crew. Most of us were young except the pilot. He was an old, old man. He was twenty-three years old and we thought he practically thought needed some help to get up and down the steps at the age of twenty-three. He was truly the old man. And I was now nineteen years old.

And just before we left to go overseas one of the crewmembers' parents came to see him and he was three months younger than I was. And he called me to one side and he said, "Lieutenant, I'd appreciate if you'd keep an eye on our boy ... he's the only child we got." And I said, "Yes sir, I'll do my best." And when he left I thought, well if he knew

how young I was I don't think he would be asking me to keep track of his son because we were all a bunch of kids. (Laughter) All a bunch of kids.

So anyway, we flew together for two or three months there at Dyersburg and did cross-country, did bombing runs, we did gunnery missions and in between times had a lot of fun. But we learned aircraft identification, formation flying, night cross-country, all the different things to prepare us for combat. Heard a lot of stories from guys who'd been over that came back and told us what to expect. Certainly put the fear into us for sure. But when we finished our training at Dyersburg we felt like we operated pretty well as a team.

JOHNSON: How long were you at Dyersburg?

TALLEY: About three months. Three months. And we felt good as a team. We worked together as a team. We had some differences, but we got those all ironed out. We all had tremendous respect for our first pilot, our airplane commander. He was a dedicated flier, been flying, I think, since he was fourteen years old. He was one of these guys that was born to fly an airplane, there's no question about it. And I hear from him every three or four months. He lives on Maui and he wants us to come over and visit him in Hawaii so we stay in good touch. I was with him in Little Rock about four months ago at a group reunion.

JOHNSON: Well good.

TALLEY: I think I showed you a picture of that.

JOHNSON: Mm hmm.

TALLEY: So anyway, when we left Dyersburg we went home for a quick delay en route and ended up in (Carney?), Nebraska. Uh, and the reason we were at Carney—no we were at Lincoln, Nebraska for a couple of days and then went to Carney, Nebraska. Lincoln, Nebraska is where we were given our overseas equipment: our parkas, our forty-five automatics. We were geared for combat there. And then we went to Carney, Nebraska and picked up a brand new B-17; it had forty-five minutes flying time on it. Brand new. Sparkling, beautiful thing. And our job was to fly that B-17 across the Atlantic and to England. We thought it was probably going to be our airplane, as it turned out it wasn't. We were just ferrying a brand new B-17 over. And a lot of funny things happen, you tell me if I'm going on too much, but a lot of funny things happened when picked up this new B-17 in Carney. We had to fly from Nebraska to (Granier Field?) in New Hampshire to refuel and spend a couple of nights ready for the big jump over the ocean.

And on the way from Carney to Granier they told the navigators to be sure and get plenty of rest; that we would be working pretty hard. Thirteen hours flying over the ocean doing celestial. I went to sleep that night and we were flying along, and when the sun came up the next morning I got up in the astrodome and looked around to see what was going on

and I didn't hear anything going on. Nothing on the radio or anything. And I look back in the cockpit and the pilot was sound asleep with his head forward. And the co-pilot was sound asleep with his head backwards. And not one soul on that plane was awake. Everybody had been asleep for I don't know how long. (Laughter) But it was on automatic pilot and I walked—I said, "Wake up you guys." "Oh I thought you had it, co-pilot." And the co-pilot [said], "I thought you had it." Blah, blah, blah. Well the plane's flying along straight and level. (Laughter) And I said, "Where are we?" "Well I don't know, I thought so-and-so." Blah, blah, blah. Well we had to scramble around and call a special frequency that would get a fix on us and tell us where we were. We were way off course. We had strayed way off course. It's a wonder we hadn't had a mid-air collision or something or other, but there was not one soul in that airplane awake. (Laughter).

So anyway, we finally found Granier Field, New Hampshire and spent a couple of days there. And ate a lot of good food and bought a lot of booze to put in the bomb bay. I think we took about eight cases of whiskey in the bomb bay, because we'd already gotten word that English people didn't drink bourbon. They were all scotch and gin drinkers over there. Well, we liked to drink bourbon so we filled the bomb bay full of whiskey.

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TALLEY: We'd gotten to be real good buddies and the tail gunner was back in the tail when we flew over Presque Isle, Maine. He said, "Well I'm the last guy out of the United States," and everybody envied him that he was there flying over Presque Isle. I told the crew what was down there. That's when we left the United States—over Presque Isle—on the way to Goose Bay.

Well on the way to (Goose Bay, Labrador?)—I've never seen such gorgeous country in my life; a lot of evergreen trees and snow. This was in—gosh I'm trying to think, I said snow—this was in August—no there wasn't any snow going over, no. But we did see wrecks of several B-17s that had crash-landed in some of the lakes. In fact, they were charted so we could use them as navigation landmarks where planes had crashed or run out of fuel or something or other on the way to Goose Bay. But we got up to Goose Bay and that's where we ran into the snow. Now it was snowed in Goose Bay up there and we stayed up there for four or five days and saw some of the most God-awful poker games I've ever seen in my life; a lot of officers with more money than they knew what to do with. And there would be pots out there of ten thousand dollars in the center of the poker table. Guys that didn't know each other and several fights erupted and if somebody blinked the wrong way, well somebody would accuse them of this, that and the other. Fortunately I've never played poker, but I stood back in awe watching people that just loved to gamble, and that seemed to be the Air Corps, was drinking and gambling. There weren't any girls up there except a few Red Cross girls, which we didn't have any contact with. But these poker games were fierce.

Well anyway, we stayed there several days and were weathered in. So finally the time came for us to head across the ocean. And we were briefed, the navigators were briefed and the pilots were briefed by Pan American Airways on the weather. And we took off in

the nighttime headed for Reykjavik, Iceland. And I never thought I'd ever see or hear of Reykjavik again until President Reagan or Bush—I guess it was Reagan—ended up meeting with the Russians at Reykjavik, Iceland. And that was called Buoy West 1. BW-1 was the name of the field at Reykjavik. And that was our destination, and I guess the first time my pilot and I ever had any controversy was on the heading to Reykjavik. I'd had a chance to get a good wind from the time we took off till we got to the coastline, and I altered course. He said, "I'm not going to take that course." He'd been briefed on a heading just like I had. I said, "Well the wind is a hundred and eighty degrees different from what we thought it was," I said, "We're gonna end up being way off course if we don't take this heading."

"Well," he said, "Let me think about it." So we flew on. Finally he said, "Well give me that heading again," and I gave it to him. He said, "Now I'm going to do this, but ... it really upsets me because I know what the heading was supposed to be." And so I went up in the cockpit and showed him on my chart how I'd gotten a good heading and we altered course. And after while we saw a B-17 off to the left, it disappeared off to the left and that upset him. And then we saw one off to the right and it disappeared off to the right. And I convinced him that we were flying right down the middle between both of them and so we had to be on course and that settled everybody down. (Laughter) As a matter of fact, several planes were lost that day. We could not use radio compass, the German submarines were sending out false radio beams and if you tried to use a radio compass why they would veer you way off and you'd run out of gas and ditch in the ocean and be lost. And that apparently happened several times that day cause several ships were lost.

We did get to Reykjavik. We passed over the southern tip of Greenland and landed at Reykjavik. Stayed a couple of days there and then took off the next day—or a couple of days later for Nutts Corner, Ireland. N, U double T, S. Nutts Corner, Ireland. We had a choice of Prestwick, Scotland or Nutts Corner, Ireland or a ... little town in England. But anyway, depending on the weather—we landed at Nutts Corner. And I'll never forget the airfield in Nutts Corner, Ireland was just like we had seen pictures of. There were cattle grazing nearby and our (hard stand?) had anti-aircraft guns around and the cattle grazing and the beautiful English—or, uh Irish countryside. It was just like you could imagine, it was gorgeous and we were so glad to have crossed over that water. That's a lot of water between here and there. An awful lot of water. I've since been to Europe several times and I'm always glad to get on the other side and land again, that's a lot of water. Lot of icebergs we flew over that day too, and they don't look very friendly, I tell you.

But anyway, we were there for a day or two and then flown by—we left our plane there and then we flew—we were taken by Air Transport Command to a place called (Bobbington?) in England. And this is where we really knew that we were in a combat zone. This is where combat tactics were taught. More aircraft identification and survival instruction on walking out if we were shot down behind enemy lines. And the first time we went to a briefing, I'll never forget this lieutenant colonel. When we were called to attention he came in and he said, "Take a seat gentlemen," and he said my name's Colonel so and so and he said, "Look to your right and look to your left ... there are gonna be three of you sitting there together ... at least one of the three of you will never

get home again. Maybe two of the three of you. And depending on how much you listen this next week ... will have a lot to do with whether you are one of the one, two or three.” And if you don’t think that didn’t get everybody’s attention real quick, it did.

So we listened a lot about combat situations and there was no flying done at Bobbington, this was ten days of ground instruction. And from there we went to our air base. We were the 306th Bomb Group. One of the first bomb groups over in England and the first bomb group to bomb Germany. It was an old RAF base, and the 306th Bomb Group was located in a little town of Thurleigh and we called it “Thur-leye,” but it was really Thurleigh. T-H-U-R-L-E-I-G-H. And it’s six miles northeast of the little town of Bedford in the midlands. There were so many airfields in England during the war that within our traffic pattern there were five other heavy bomber groups. And you can imagine what confusion it was to come back from a mission on a cloudy day trying to find your field, and you and a thirty-six ship formation—I’ve got pictures in this book of mid-air collisions, one that took place right over our airbase, but it was a panicky situation. In fact, just five miles from our airbase, Jimmy (Stewart?) was a group commander, full colonel, and he certainly was well thought of by everybody in the 8th Air Force. He always led the toughest missions, he was well liked by everybody and the Hollywood hadn’t gone to his head.

JOHNSON: Not your typical Hollywood star.

TALLEY: Absolutely. He was just good folk. Jimmy Stewart was extremely well thought of. Well while we were at Thurleigh, the pilots and the co-pilots flew maybe one or possible two missions with the other crews to get the feel of things before we flew together as a crew. As a matter of fact, I think I flew a mission or two with different crews to get the feel of navigating in combat before we were all put together.

JOHNSON: How much navigating did you have to do in combat?

TALLEY: Well, we ended up towards our latter part flying deputy lead and you worked pretty hard as a lead crew. But now, flying in formation as one of the new crews you kept track of your position, you knew where you were all the time and yet you weren’t actually directing the direction of the airplane. You were following the lead ship, but if something happened you knew where you were, so you’d know how to use it to continue on the target or head for home and I always had a ready heading for Switzerland or Sweden if something happened to us. Those were the two places we would go, either north or south, if we had trouble—to friendly lines. But there really wasn’t a whole lot of actual navigation, uh being a part of the formation.

JOHNSON: That’s what I was thinking. In the formation you’d ...

TALLEY: That’s right. The lead and the deputy lead did all the work. And you had lead crews and deputy lead crews in low formation and high formation and middle squadron. You had three sets of leaders. So each group had three sets of lead crews. But we had to keep track of things, and of course the navigator had two cheek guns. We had two

flexible .50 caliber machine guns and our first mission was not a particular tough mission, but flak was the big enemy then. You see, we—by the time I flew my first mission, September 11, '44, we had fighter escorts. And the T-51s and P-47s with wing tanks could take us all the way in to the target, and those lucky guys would pull up higher than the flak until we had dropped our bombs and then they would come back down and escort us back out. They didn't go over the target at a level they could be hit by flak and I don't blame them, I would've done the same thing.

But anyway, the second mission I flew, which happened to be my twentieth birthday, was by far the roughest mission I ever flew. We had a little target just south of Berlin. The target was inconsequential, but at that time—now this was September of '44—the Germans were beginning to run short of oil and they would conserve their gasoline and send fighters up only at the very best of time, and this was a mission designed to pull Mr. Goehring's Luftwaffe up off the field. So we made a pass at Hamburg and Kiel and Bremen and Wilhelmshaven and went over the Baltic Sea and came right over Berlin. And of course on our way into that mission we kept hearing over the radio that groups ahead of us were being hit by fighters and we knew that we were about to be hit by fighters. And sure enough we were hit by fighters. I believe it was the first time I ever realized that another human being was trying to kill me. I saw the expression on a German pilot's face in a ME-109 come right pass my ship, and I shot at him. And he looked at me and I looked at him and I thought, "That guy's trying to kill me." It's quite a scary feeling ...

JOHNSON: Must be.

TALLEY: ... to realize that there's another human being that's trying to kill you. The flak was kind of a remote thing. You didn't see any gunners shooting cannons. And they couldn't see you and you couldn't see them, but to see another pilot coming in on you like that is a frightening experience. And we were under fighter attack for probably five minutes or so, which seems like an eternity in the air and ...

JOHNSON: Do you remember the way he looked ...

TALLEY: Well he was intent on doing what he was doing, but his eyes—of course I can imagine all kinds of things now—but he had a cold, steely look about his eyes. He probably wasn't much older than I was, I guess. We shot down an ME-109 that day, our engineer shot a plane down that was flying off our left wing. I'll never understand yet why this fighter came up on our left wing and—he must've been looking ahead and forgot about us, and our engineer turned the guns—the top turret guns over and just blew him all to pieces and he never knew what hit him. And I—that was most unusual to see a German fighter flying a parallel to a bomber and not far away. It was just—he just must've had a lapse in thinking or something, I don't know what happened, but we did get one fighter that day.

But after the fighter attack had stopped, our pilot, Rio—we were all in a state of disregard—my maps were all over the floor with pencils, I mean the place was just in

shambles. And we had some flak through the nose, and nobody was hit or anything. And the airplane commander, this Paul Rio from St. Cloud, he said, "Does anybody see a B-17 that's flying?" And that sounded kinda strange, and I looked out of both side of my window and everybody else did and said, "No we don't see one." Well we were all by ourselves and Rio said, "Pilot to navigator, where are we?" And I said, "My God, Paul, look down below. That's Berlin!" We were right over the center of Berlin, Germany by ourselves. So we continued on towards the target, I'd give him the heading and I said we might as well go on and try and drop our bombs where we're supposed to—by ourselves. Well, gradually stragglers from all different groups kinda huddled together. Some with (ailerons?) shot off, some with the vertical stabilizers, engines feathered—horrible looking group—got together. Twelve of us. So we were flying along in some kind of a miserable looking formation trying to protect ourselves from fighters and went ahead and dropped our bombs and turned off the target and started heading generally back home and flew on for a little while. My pilot said, "Pilot to navigator, we're taking over the lead ... the lead navigator is lost, doesn't know where he is. You know where we are." Well I wasn't about to tell him I was lost to, and I said, "Oh yeah, we'll handle it."

So we took over the lead, and I swapped places with the bombardier and I got over the bomb-sight with a chart and every few minutes I'd alter course to the right or the left eighteen degrees, nineteen degrees, and everybody would call wanting to know how we were doing, where we were and everything. And I was altering course and everything and finally we broke out over the coast just north of Dunkirk. I almost got us over Dunkirk, but I didn't and of course that was still occupied by Germans at the time. They stayed in Dunkirk and apparently our people didn't think it was worth going in and getting them out of Dunkirk, so there sat this pocket of Germans.

Anyway, we got back home and had briefing and I was able to identify the target and this, that and the other. And that night in the officer's club my friend Rio and I, he said, "I want you to know that I've got the smartest, great navigator in the whole 8th Air Force." And of course I agreed with him and everybody gave me a big round of applause and after a couple of drinks Rio said—he used to call me Cisco—he said, "Cisco, how did you happen to know where you were when all the rest of them were lost?" I said, "Well ... I was kinda lost myself." He said, "The hell you were! What's all this altering course to the right and the left? You sure fooled me." I said, "Well Rio, one thing I knew was that they didn't put flak guns in the woods and fields ... I stayed over woods and fields and stayed out of towns ... That's how I kept us from getting shot at. I just avoided every town I could find and went around it." (Laughter) He said, "Well I guess you've got a little common sense anyway, whether you knew where we were or not." So it was a little bit of luck getting back.

Well that was our second mission, and the rest of the missions were fairly routine as far as we got hit a few times and we saw some good targets and bad targets. I think I may have mentioned to you the other day, but one of the most interesting targets that I went on—and I don't have the date right here in front of me—but this was to bomb a gun installation in (Ninaagen?) in Holland. And we were told not to drop our bombs after ten o'clock in the morning, and after we turned off the target and hadn't dropped our bombs

my bombardier started yelling—said, “My God, look up ahead,” and I have never seen so many C-46s, C-47s, gliders ...

JOHNSON: Gliders.

TALLEY: ... all the way back to England. And the channel was filled with gliders where the wings had broken off or maybe some of them had cut loose and just couldn't bear the thought of going on over. But we were leading the invasion of Arnhem, which turned out to be a disaster, but this was kept so secret from us that we didn't even know there was to be an invasion except “don't drop your bombs after ten o'clock.” So that was an interesting mission.

Coming back from missions, when you go to the briefing, I can hear—you almost could sense when the sergeant was coming into your little barracks. I used to think I could sense he was there before his hand ever touched the doorknob. But he would come in—it was cold when we were flying, this was September, October, November and December, the winter of '44. And several times I had to wipe the snow off my blanket the next morning where the snow had blown through the cracks in the roof, and the sergeant would come in and cut a little light on and he'd said, “Lieutenant (Delapore?) you're flying 093. Breakfast at three, briefing at four. And I thought, boy he's gonna call my name next. “Lieutenant Talley, you'll fly 055. Breakfast at three, briefing at four.” Well this was 3 AM and you'd get up and it was cold, the bathroom was outside, the seat on the john—I don't have to tell you had cold it was. (Laughter) There was ice that had formed over the water in the bowl of the john, and then you had to get dressed. And I guess the biggest superstition I had: I always had to put my right shoe on first. And one time I got all the way up to the mess hall and had put my left shoe on first, and I got back on my bicycle and rode back and took both shoes off and put my right shoe back on. And that was a little thing I believed very strongly in.

So anyway, you would go up to a briefing up there and everybody's scared to death and not talking a whole hell of a lot and riding bicycles up there, cold. Powdered eggs, orange marmalade, thick bacon, coffee that would eat the paint off an automobile and oatmeal cereal that had all the husks on it. I haven't eaten oatmeal since then; they called it porridge over there. But we would eat that. Occasionally we'd have fresh eggs, but a lot of times it was powdered eggs. And we would go through breakfast and then go to briefing.

And when you'd get into the briefing room—and I'm sure everybody's seen movies about the briefing room with the big map at the end of the wall and everybody would be sitting there kinda scared to even talk. And when the commanding officer would come in they'd call attention and everybody would stand up and he'd say take a seat gentlemen. And then the sergeant would come in and pull the curtain back and there was this map. And the length of that red string is what everybody was looking at. The string would stretch all the way in. Marked on the map were big red blotches showing heavy flak concentrations. And then they would tell you what the weather was going to be like. They would tell you where to expect fighter opposition and what type of airplane that would be

attacking you. They would tell you how many anti-aircraft guns would probably be surrounding the target. They always tried to plan the mission so that you went over the target downwind so that you spent as little time over the target as possible. Sometimes that worked and sometimes it didn't. Sometimes the meteorology people would be just exactly opposite and you'd have a headwind that would seem like hours getting over a target.

But the most critical time of the mission was when you turned on the IP—the Initial Point—and you had about a five to ten minute bomb run when the bombardier is in control of the ship. The bombardier has control through the Norden bombsight. The bombsight—his movement of the bombsight affects the controls of the airplane and it's under automatic pilot, so actually he's flying the airplane with the bombsight. And you maintain absolute radio silence then, you're flying straight and level, the Germans by that time know exactly where you're heading and they know you're altitude and that is a bad time; those times on the IP heading to the target. And once you got over the target and when you dropped your bombs, why always somebody—I guess usually it was me—that'd say, "Bombs away,"—no, bombardier said that. And I would come on and say let's get the hell out of there 'cause the minute you dropped your bombs why you veered off pretty strong to the left and tried to get away as fast as you can.

And I guess the most frightened I've ever been, and my crew has ever been on a bomb run was when we were on a bomb run and you could hear somebody breathing. (Heavy breathing) And the navigator is the oxygen officer and I would say, "Navigator to crew, oxygen check." "Tail gunner, OK." "Waist gunner, OK." "Ball turret, OK." To see that somebody hadn't unplugged from the oxygen and was dying from ...(?) Well we couldn't get this strange sound and it almost panicked everybody. Everybody was getting scared then and nobody could figure out where the noise was coming from. And finally it dawned on me, under my leg, somehow or another my microphone button had—the little handle had gotten under there and it was me breathing—I was listening to myself breathe over the interphone. Here it was scaring me to death and scaring everybody else to death. And I said, "Oh God, I've got the—I'm on the mic button myself." (Laughter) Anyway, that cleared it up when I realized who was causing all the problems: it was me. But that was an interesting thing.

And one time, one of my gunners—one of the gunners flying in the tail—in the ball turret position, his guns jammed. And we knew we were gonna get hit by fighters and he got a little panicky and I was afraid we were gonna have to take some drastic measures to get him quieted down. He was upset. It was a substitute gunner from another crew and he was very much concerned. But anyway, we worked together well. We got through finally. The only actual hit: our bombardier got hit in the face by some glass when a piece of flak came up through the Plexiglas nose and it didn't hit him directly. Cut his face up pretty bad. And finally on our last mission that we flew, which was my twenty-fifth mission, we were over the target in (Koblantz?) and made two circles over the target that day. The clouds were about eight-tenths and they wanted us to bomb visual, so we had an eager colonel that wanted to go over twice. So we circled the town and got shot at and we think we were hit at some point, and don't know how badly or where, but everything

apparently was OK. So we headed back for home and we're getting along fine and all of a sudden the oxygen caught fire. A part of our nose was on fire; the floor, around the chin turret. I was sitting over the bombsight and the bombardier pointed out that a fire had started and all of the sudden it blew. So we scrambled to get out of there and the bombardier, as it turns out, didn't have his parachute harness on and he wasn't even able to get a parachute on. He jumped out without a parachute on. Now the pilot and I were pretty badly burned, I was in a hospital—he and I were in the same hospital for about six weeks in what was call Buzzbomb Alley. The 8th General Hospital was just north of London and they were really beginning to pelt London with V-1s and V-2s at that time.

JOHNSON: Mm hmm.

TALLEY: This was desperation. The Germans were doing anything they could to try to hang on and shatter the morale of the British people. And we stayed in the hospital and visited a couple of rest homes afterwards. The Air Force had “flak homes” where they would take people that had flown so many missions and you'd spend a week there and then you'd go back into the line of duty. So we went to a couple of those and by that time the war was almost over. Uh, I think V-E day was May 8th if I'm not mistaken ...

JOHNSON: Yes.

TALLEY: ... So we came back home in April. We had flown twenty-five missions and they decided the war was so near over that we didn't go back on combat duty. We got to come home and the rest of our crew flew five more missions. At that time they had raised the limit from twenty-five to thirty missions. So while they were finishing up—we all finished about the same time—but while we were in the hospital they went ahead and flew five more missions.

JOHNSON: But you and the pilot were the two who were wounded in this ...

TALLEY: We were the two that were hurt that were in the hospital, that's right. We were burned and the other two weren't. The pilot was burned because he stayed in there and I was up where the fire started. I was right where it all happened and I was the one who told the crew there was a fire in the nose and to bail out. And the pilot stayed and tried to level the ship and put it on automatic pilot so it wouldn't go into a spin and he was a very brave man and we all thought the world of him. But we ended up in the same hospital. I had the British people take me—my final funny experience, I guess you could call it funny, I didn't even realize I was hurt when I landed.

JOHNSON: I heard on the radio—the tape that you had that your chute didn't completely open.

TALLEY: Oh yes, I forgot tell you about that! I always kept my chute and chest pack by the drift meter. And when I got back by the escape hatch I crawled—well I had three distinct moments I thought I was gonna die. And I've told my Sunday school class this, 'cause it's certainly made a Christian out of me. When this explosion occurred—an

oxygen fire is an awesome thing, it's just like a bunch of blowtorches turned up—I was forced over the top of the bombsight into the very nose of the ship to get away from it. And there I was crouched there and the flames were between me and the escape hatch. And I thought, “Well there's no way for me to get out of here,” and something told me that you can't just sit here, you've got to go through that fire to get out. So I got through the flames somehow or another and got back by the escape hatch and there was my parachute back up in the nose by the drift meter. So I reached in there and pulled it—I had on silk gloves—navigators wore silk gloves so they could operate the computer and so forth and kept the hands warm. But anyway I pulled the chute out and the end of it was smoldering. So I put the chute on thinking that that was no particular problem and then I dived out the escape hatch. And while I was floating down I saw our plane going into a gentle turn and head into a hillside and I started counting the parachutes and I realized one was missing. I didn't know the bombardier had already jumped out without a parachute.

But anyhow, I remembered when I pulled the rip cord and I was falling, my back to the earth, and I had the D-Ring in my hand and I thought this is really gonna look good over my fireplace—my mantle when I get home some of these days and I can show my grandchildren my parachute ring. Well, I thought, gosh something's supposed to be happening now. And there the parachute was just packed as neat as anything you ever saw. Nothing had happened when I pulled the parachute D-Ring. So I tore the parachute pack open and threw the nylon up in the air and it opened. As it turned out the chute—the nylon had gotten hot and fused together and the little pilot chute wouldn't pull it out.

So anyway, when I got in the hospital a week or two later I was telling a paratrooper what had happened and he said, “You ought to be dead ... when they pack the chutes they lay the shroud lines in parallel to each other in very neat form so that when the chute opens why these will go out.” He said nine times out of ten that should've fouled and never opened the parachute. He said, “You're just lucky to be here.” So I've had that—I've had plenty of time to think about that. So I was very fortunate and it opened up, I guess, a thousand feet off the ground, just in time to hit. And I hit awfully hard. I hurt my ankle; I lost a flying boot when it opened. Hurt and ankle and had some burns. And the funny thing that happened to me, these two—well the first ...

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO-----

JOHNSON: Talley interview, tape two.

TALLEY: I think where I left off was when I was at the Ovaltine plant and they decided to transfer me to a United States hospital. And this hospital had sent two drivers in an army ambulance over to pick me up, so I was trapped in the back of this ambulance. I'd been given a lot of morphine. Apparently I had skin hanging from both cheekbones and was kinda messed up looking. Didn't hurt.

And these drivers were talking to each other. One of them said, “Did you notice the brakes don't work on this thing?” “Well we'll have to get it fixed tomorrow. We'll put it

in the motor pool.” Blah blah blah. And they weren’t paying attention to me. Well when we got to the hospital—the army hospital—both of these drivers got out of this thing, left the motor running and went in to make arrangements to bring me in. Well I kept feeling the vibration of the thing and I thought I was rolling downhill. And I thought, this just isn’t right to survive what I survived and be killed in an ambulance that the brakes don’t work. So I started screaming and hollering and by the time they got to me, why, I was just in—I was all to pieces. So anyway, I did survive all of that and when I got in there and they were cutting my uniform off—this was full of tank guys and infantry guys. They said, “Good Lord, this guy’s from the Air Corps ... Only time the Air Corps ever in the hospital is when they got appendicitis or a bad cold ... I don’t know what this guy’s doing in here.” They were making a lot of sassy remarks about me. (Laughter)

But anyway, uh incidentally I came in touch with some real combat veterans in that hospital. I’m (only reading?) the direction of Air Corps, but there was a Captain (Striker?) there that was a tank commander. And he lost all his teeth in combat over there; shell fire. And he swore that he was gonna get back over there and kill one German for every tooth he lost. And I would bet that he probably did. He was telling some stories of having seen some wounded Germans beside a road and how he veered his tank over and ran the treads over the guy and ground him up like—I mean he was a vicious fighter, if I ever saw one.

But he had some horrible stories to tell. He told one story, I don’t know whether this would be of interest to you. He said his group that he was leading—his tank company, needed a house for a command post and they had picked out a German farm house. And this old lady just put up an awful fuss. She didn’t want her house confiscated. So she put up such a fuss, he had her taken out to the road—snow on the ground and everything—and laid down on the road and put blankets over her and everything. Didn’t, you know, hurt her or anything and then set fire to the house just for pure damn meanness and left her there just squalling and fussing and calling Americans everything. And I thought that was a little bit cruel to me. I—you know, you don’t hear of Americans doing things like that, but I’d say it happens on both sides.

JOHNSON: It probably does.

TALLEY: This is one of the few cases I’ve ever heard of somebody going out of the way just to be nasty. And he just burned that woman’s house down just to get even with her. He hated Germans, Lord he hated Germans like nobody I’ve ever seen. And probably had good cause, but anyway I don’t know what’s ever happened to Captain (Striker?).

Came on home on the *USS (Aphos II?)*. It was a converted French passenger ship and we had um, oh I don’t know how many thousand Americans, but we had 1700 wounded German troops down on D Deck behind bars. Second day out of South (Hamp?) we ran into a submarine pack and the destroyers were racing up and down, smoke screens and signs and everything, depth charges. And I had a chance to go down and see what was going on D Deck. You’ve never seen such petrified guys in your life as those wounded German prisoners knowing what was happening. I saw a guy running around on two

bandaged stumps, he lost both feet, and I—that made quite an impression on me. And here they were locked behind bars and they thought, well if we go down we're gonna be trapped and have no chance for anything.

Well as it turned out we didn't get hit. Got on home alright and ...

JOHNSON: Were you in pretty good physical shape by the time you left the hospital ...

TALLEY: Yeah, oh yeah I was in good physical shape. I was fine. I was ready to go home and resume a normal life. I came home and got out of the service and (Mrs. Talley and I were married?) in the August of that year. And I've been married forty-five years and life is going on fine. But my war experiences are the big experiences of my life. Not a day goes by but what I don't relate something I see or do to the experiences I had.

And I told you the other day when someone compared flying combat missions to getting in and out of a cold shower, that's as good a comparison as I can think of. If you get in a cold shower you can almost get used to it after a while. But to get in it for a little while, and get out for a week or two when the weather was bad—for example, during the Battle of the Bulge. We briefed every day for two weeks. We'd get out to the plane and load up and almost start engines and they would cancel the mission because the weather was so bad.

JOHNSON: Must've been almost as bad as having to go.

TALLEY: It was! You're all psyched up, you're ready to go. The bombs, the gasoline, the briefing and everything you've been through. The agony of getting up at three o'clock in the morning and going through all that and then the anticlimax of having the mission canceled is really a kind of a trauma 'cause you've reached a peak emotionally and all of the sudden, well I've gone through this exercise for naught. We're not going anywhere. And then you go back and change and you've got the rest of the day to do nothing.

JOHNSON: And it doesn't count.

TALLEY: Doesn't count for anything, not a thing. That's exactly right.

JOHNSON: How about the guys on your crew that had to fly thirty missions rather than twenty-five? Did they feel that that was not particularly fair, or ...

TALLEY: Well, uh, they all came down to the hospital to see the pilot and me and told us what was going on. And they knew that we were hurt. But they had changed—I believe they had changed from twenty-five to thirty missions maybe a month or two before all that happened ...

JOHNSON: Oh so you knew that you were going ...

TALLEY: Oh yeah, yeah. I knew at this time that we still had five missions to go and we were prepared to go ahead and finish our five. But by that time the war was so near over they just said, well gosh you guys can just go home. No, they actually—in fact we've had—I've shown you pictures. We've stayed together and we've been together and we party together. It's been nothing but good will as far we're concerned. We're all good buddies and there's no feeling at all about that. As a matter of fact, I'm gonna let you have some of these issues of this paper if you want to take something like that.

JOHNSON: Yeah, I'd like that.

TALLEY: But that, uh—it had quite an emotional impact on me. And I think my son really just realized how quickly I had to grow up then, because I was not—I had flown one mission while I was nineteen and I had my twentieth birthday on the second mission. And you grew up quick back in those days. And nowadays, even in Korea I guess they had a lot of young eighteen year-old guys in Korea and Vietnam, I don't know, but I don't know whether they had any that young flying airplanes. I don't remember hearing that, but we were extremely young people and very, I guess, daredevil-ish. But I feel very fortunate to have survived that war. Very fortunate.

JOHNSON: And so it's made a long term impact, and for the good for you.

TALLEY: Oh, nothing but good. My whole attitude towards my fellow man. You see, I teach a Sunday school lesson and I'm teaching the thirty-seventh Psalm Sunday about fret not about people who, by various means have become quite wealthy and life hadn't been that good to you, but don't worry about it. And of course the Psalm dwells on the fact that those people—that if they gained all of that wealth and so forth by devious means the good Lord is eventually going to punish them. Well, to me that doesn't really bother me at all, I'm so content and happy to be alive I don't worry about anybody that's got a lot more money or more affluence than I have. I'm happy. I'm alive. I've got some friends. I'm warm. I'm dry. No, I think war taught me to appreciate the simple, good things of this life. A lot of people don't know that, really.

And I tell my Sunday school class that all the time: how fortunate I am to be here and that love is the greatest thing that I have learned—loving your fellow man and trying to be helpful. And that all came out of the war. Of course I had a mother that taught me that sorta thing, but my experience in the service and my brush with death made it a lasting impression on me: life is so fragile. And to have survived that, it just mean all in the world to me.

JOHNSON: Every day from there on is a gift ...

TALLEY: Every day. Every day is a gift that I get out of bed, that's exactly right. And as you can tell by looking around, I still think of the days and I've got my little mementos and my ...

JOHNSON: A little B-17 up there ...

TALLEY: Yeah.

JOHNSON: I see you've got the stencil on it for your group.

TALLEY: Well that is our exact tail-markings. My first pilot made one of those for each one of us and brought 'em to us personally in a box with a little plastic pellets and everything. He made eight of those dog-gone things himself. Heaven knows how much time he spent on that. I didn't make that, but our first pilot did. And he, uh ...

JOHNSON: Still taking care of you.

TALLEY: Oh yeah, he's still taking care of us. He made this one. This plaque, he brought it to me. It's got our markings on it and everything. James C. Talley, the second navigator. B-17 flying fortress and so forth. He did all that himself. He is real gung-ho and I think I told you I had a plaque made for him. (Zucker?) furnished me the wings to go on this plaque and it has meant more to that guy than anything in the world. I think he'll never forget what he did. And I don't know that I can find that. I don't want to use up your tape while I'm looking ... yeah. Here's our crew and he's holding that plaque right there. They've got the pictures reversed, that's me right there as you can probably tell. But those are (Zucker's?) wings right there and this is Rio that we love so much. Copilot, ball-turret gunner, that's the waist gunner and this is the engineer from West Virginia. This hadn't been long ago. This was in the fall of '89 I guess. There in that little town there, Thurleigh, that I mentioned awhile ago. Now I've got several of these papers that I'd be willing to let you take and read and ...

JOHNSON: I'd like to.

TALLEY: Ok, well I ...

-----END OF INTERVIEW-----