



Norman C. Tanner

United States Army

Artillery Pilot

European Theater

Date Interviewed: 5/9/05

Location of Interview:
Eccles Broadcast Center, Salt Lake City, UT

Interviewer:
Rick Randle

THIS INTERVIEW IS NOT EDITED FOR CONTENT, LANGUAGE OR HISTORICAL ACCURACY

Rick: We're happy to have Mr. Norm Tanner with us today. Norm will you just state your name and spell it for us?

Norm: You bet, Norman Clark Tanner – N-O-R-M-A-N, C, T-A-N-N-E-R.

Rick: All right thanks very much. Could you just kind of go into your early life a little bit leading up to how you joined the armed forces and leading up to Pearl Harbor?

Norm: I went to the University of Utah and you had to take either ROTC or athletics and I chose ROTC and I kind of liked it because they had horses to ride. They had horse drawn artillery and the last two years they paid you 25 cents a day (Saturday and Sunday) so it was a little income for a person who needed it to go to school.

Rick: What year did you enter the University?

Norm: 1937.

Rick: Tell us about leading up to Pearl Harbor in '41.

Norm: Before Pearl Harbor I was in the reserve and working at OC Tanner Company, developing it in my early years. There was only one employee when I started it in 1937 and my interest was of course that company because I had ownership in it and it seems that I was also interested in retaining my commission in the army reserve and I went to camp every summer for two weeks usually in San Francisco at the Presidio and I was promoted to First Lieutenant and all of my classmates had already volunteered and gone into the service that had taken ROTC. But the recruiting officer at the federal office in Salt Lake would give me a three month extension and for three months I'd call up and then I'd get another three month extension. So I got extensions for about a year and a half but when Pearl Harbor hit I thought "*well my time is up*", I couldn't pull anymore strings to stay out of the service and I called up the same recruiting officer and said "*well I'm ready to go*". The day after Pearl Harbor. I was skiing up at Alta with

my uncle Albert and my wife Barbara on that day when they announced that Pearl Harbor had been bombed and we left the ski area and came right down into the city and Obert and I went down to our factory down on west 2nd South and we'd walk over to the Tribune every two or three hours to see what the latest situation was. So I got orders to report a week later, to report the first week in January to Fort Lewis Washington.

Rick: Do you remember before Pearl Harbor did you anticipate that there might be a war anywhere with Japan?

Norm: Oh I knew there was. My classmates had already been called and so forth.

Rick: So there was anticipation that there was going to be a war?

Norm: Sure, well there was already so much going on in Germany that we realized, anybody that was following the news would know and I was just lucky to stay out as long as I did.

Rick: And in 1941 in December how many employees did OC Tanner have?

Norm: We had 27 and four years later when I came back, or three years and nine months when I came back they still had the same number of employees. The sales volume was just the same as it was the year I left.

Rick: How many today?

Norm: About 300.

Rick: Tell us what happened after you signed up and about basic training.

Norm: Well I signed up at Fort Lewis Washington, that's where I was ordered to go and there I was lieutenant for a National Guard outfit from South Dakota and they liked me and I got promoted to a Captain and shortly after that orders came through for mandatory reading for

artillery officers requesting volunteers to become artillery pilots and I'd always wanted to fly prior to that time I tried to transfer to the air force but they refused to take me because I was too old. I think I was 27 or something, but anyway I volunteered and so my commanding officer was really teed off that I left because he had just promoted me to captain but I went to school down in Denton Texas. I was transferred to the air force and for three months I learned how to fly.

Rick: So you went down to Texas and tell us about flight training

Norm: Well the air force was training us in Denton Texas flying off of a campus at a women's college there just north of Dallas and you solo's there for eight hours dual flying with an instructor and it was very interesting and exciting and I've forgotten how many hours it was before I completed my training. I think I got 50 hours or so flying, about that, with the air force. Less than that, about 20 hours I guess of actual flying and you learned to stall and turn and things that would happen to you naturally and land on the dead stick landing and stuff like that. After that training I was transferred to Fort Sid in Oklahoma to the artillery section in the flying department. The artillery taught us to fly a little differently than the air force did. Air force people always landed in a big field and so forth, but we learned out there how to fly off of fields and land on roads and areas that you're unfamiliar with because that's what we would have in combat. So I stayed there until I had my number of hours of flying then I was assigned from there to the 69th Division down in Denton out of New Orleans – east of New Orleans, Camp Shelby Mississippi it was and I was made the air officer of that division down there. I was going fine, I liked it very much and all of a sudden I got orders to report for overseas duty. I'd been a captain and I found out there were four other captains, there five captains and five second lieutenants and five first lieutenants all replacement pilots to replace our pilots that had been shot down or missing in action in Italy and North Africa. So I joined the 7th Army headquarters and General Mark Clark was the commanding officer there and his main pilot that flew all the time had a leave of absence to go home and he got killed in a plane crash on his way to the United States. So I replaced him as the air officer of the army and had quite a lot of responsibilities. Then he transferred to the 3rd Infantry Division for the invasion of southern France.

Rick: So when you went over from the states did you fly over?

Norm: No we went over on a boat. We zig zagged and it took something like 21 days to get to Gibraltar and we landed in North Africa and I was stuck there for about ten days or two weeks before we got another ship to take us to Naples.

Rick: What year was it, month and year when you landed in North Africa?

Norm: I can't remember exactly.

Rick: What kind of planes were you flying?

Norm: Piper Cubs L4's and incidentally they made more L4 airplanes during World War II than any other aircraft by many times more because the army had them and the air force had some too but they didn't use them except to teach people to fly.

Rick: So they were just single engine and you were flying General Mark Clark around? Was that your first duty there?

Norm: I was flying at headquarters and I'd fly up to the Angio Beachhead, I didn't take General Clark up there but I'd fly up there to take mail and I'd go out through the sea so nobody could hit me from the shoreline and I'd fly up to Angio and I'd land, I wouldn't turn the engine off and I'd dump out the mail and they'd dump in mail to take back to be mailed. Because Angio was a beach head that was quite separate from the main invasion force of Italy.

Rick: Did you have any close calls at that time that you recall?

Norm: No I didn't.

Rick: After that what did you do?

Norm: Well for the invasion of southern France I was put in charge of all of the pilots from the 3rd Division and the 36th Division and the 45th Division. There was about 20 or 21 pilots under my command as a second invasion force. I flew these 21 pilots over to the islands west of Italy (Corsica I think) but there's a landing place right on the waterfront and from there we loaded the planes on battleships that they built flight decks about 15 feet wide from the superstructure out past the bow of the ship about 20 feet. Then they'd head that ship into the wind so a pilot could take off and during that time for the invasion of France the pilots did this without an observer with them because that extra weight would be hazardous to fly and also it would be easier to land because you didn't know where you were going to land when you took off for that invasion of southern France.

Rick: After that invasion of France then what happened?

Norm: Well we advanced very rapidly going north along the river that comes down through southern France to New Orleans then we went through the Volgers mountains and in the Volgers mountains we didn't have a suitable place to land so we had the engineers build us a plywood flight area 15 feet wide and about 150 or 200 feet long on the side of a mountain in the Volgers mountains and we landed there for just a few days because we then advance over to the other sides of the Volgers mountains where the Rhone River goes down by the big cities in Germany. On the boarder of Germany and France.

Rick: You could land on a runway not more than 250 long?

Norm: Yeah, it was about that. No it's longer than 250 feet it's probably not quite the length of a football field.

Rick: All right, about 80 or 90 yards?

Norm: Yeah.

Rick: Now this was before D-Day is that correct?

Norm: No.

Rick: This was after D-Day?

Norm: Oh yes, after D-Day. D-Day from England was quite a few months ahead of the D-Day in southern France.

Rick: Well then after this you were able to see a lot of Germany shortly or just after they surrendered I guess or just before?

Norm: Well we could care less about seeing things until the war ended. Mostly I flew the General – Iron Mike Daniels into Paris and he was the commanding officer of the 3rd Division the second or third day after the war ended. The war ended for our division in Salzburg Austria and right across the river was Germany.

Rick: So you landed in Paris two or three days after they were liberated. Is that correct?

Norm: I don't recall exactly because we bypassed Paris, we didn't get too close to that but I flew into the airport there and one of my pilots was ordered after the war to sit with his airplane and they moved it in with a truck under the Eiffel Tower and he was stationed there for two or three months to take care of the visitors that came through.

Rick: So his airplane was sitting under the Eiffel Tower?

Norm: Yeah, um hum.

Rick: So what lead up to your going near Munich and going into that Dachau Concentration Camp?

Norm: Well General Bill Sexton, the one star general he ordered me to pick him up and fly him to Dachau but we didn't go to the city of Dachau but there's a freeway south of the town of Dachau. Dachau was further north and further west and I never even saw the town of Dachau but we landed on the freeway and he had his jeep there and the two of us rode in his jeep into the woods where there's a death camp where railroad came in and dead ended. There was a big furnace room with about four furnaces that had sleds on them. They'd put bodies on those sleds and then slide them in to be burned up. There were barrels full of teeth and glasses and there were cars lined up there and the general and I climbed up and looked into one of them and he said "*Tanner go down and check three or four of them and see if they all have bodies in them*". And they all did, the ones I checked anyway. The bodies were about three or four on top of each other and it was a horrible sight. It was the worst part of the war for me.

Rick: You got there just a couple of hours after the first Americans got into Dachau is that correct?

Norm: Well I didn't go into the town of Dachau, I was one of the first one's there at the concentration camp.

Rick: Give us as much detail as you can about walking into there, what it was like, what it smelled like, if you see any living prisoners and what they did.

Norm: Bill Sexton and I only had to walk about less than half a mile and when we got into the trees and got closer to the death camp where the furnaces were (which by the way I saw later after the war was over that it was quite a ways from the town of Dachau) and we saw a German soldier, a Corporal or a Sergeant and he looked like he was six foot six because he was stretched out and the Americans had killed him and he was a guard there apparently and he was the first thing we saw before we got right into where the camp was. The General looked up at the bodies and we went inside where they had wheeled the bodies in and they had stripped them of all their clothes and they had saved their glasses and saved their teeth. If they had gold in their mouth they had knocked their teeth out to keep the gold. That was a terrible sight. The day after that

the war ended and that day I flew off (I stayed all night at the airport at Munich) and the next day I flew south and east towards Salzburg Austria.

Rick: Let's go back to the death camp; was there an odor when you went in there? Do you remember?

Norm: No we didn't see a single German, the one dead one is all.

Rick: How about the smells?

Norm: Yeah it was obnoxious.

Rick: When you went in there did you realize what it was when you first walked through those doors?

Norm: No, as soon as you saw it you knew what it was. I mean it was so obvious.

Rick: Were there any live inmates still there?

Norm: No.

Rick: Everybody was gone?

Norm: Yeah. Obviously they got out of there when the Americans were coming but this one guy got shot that was still there. I wondered whether or not he was mentally off or not, this dead soldier.

Rick: Or else why would he stay there?

Norm: Yeah, I couldn't figure out why he was there.

Rick: Did you go into the barracks?

Norm: There weren't any barracks there. This was a place where they just destroyed the bodies. Nobody lived there.

Rick: Oh I see, they were burning them and putting them to death.

Norm: Yeah, well they were already dead when they got there and they were mostly Jews. As far as I could tell they were all Jews on that railroad track. It was a terrible sight.

Rick: Can you explain this place to us better?

Norm: Well this was an area that was definitely designed, the people in Dachau the city I don't think they even knew it existed. They probably did not know even because the railroad cars don't go through the town they skirt the town except for a depot or something and these were boxcars – flat boxcars like a cold car or something and everyone of them (there were about nine or ten of them) lined up there. There's no engine there, it was just these boxcars lined up and they'd unload them and wheel them into this big furnace room to destroy the bodies. It was better... apparently it was an easier way to get rid of them than to bury them.

Sally: Did they have furnaces at Dachau? I didn't realize they had furnaces outside the camps that they used.

Norm: This was a separate area from the town of Dachau. The Dachau Camp they called it. The nearest town to this camp was Dachau but it was out of town maybe five or six miles through a forest and it was close to the main freeway going across Germany into Munich. But there was no road for vehicles up to this camp. There were no roads up there to it from the freeway that goes into Munich. I didn't see the town of Dachau until after the war.

Elizabeth: I thought they kept prisoners at Dachau, was it just a death camp?

Norm: Yeah, I didn't see a live prisoner at all. They were all dead soldiers and dead German people that looked to be like Jews. Because Germany was using it as a means of destroying the bodies of the people that they killed and primarily they were Jews. It's terrible.

Rick: I've been to Dachau myself after the war and they did have barracks but they were away from the ovens a little bit and there was a main camp that did have prisoners. But I do think that when it was liberated the prisoners left to go into Munich or whatever. Well Norm after your Dachau experience tell us what happened and where you went after that.

Norm: Troops were moving rapidly and we were moving for Hitler's hideaway place, the Eagles Nest at Burchess Garden and north of that was a town in Austria...there was no place that I could land an airplane near the Eagles Nest – you had to drive into it and the road going up I had a driver and I took a newspaper reporter named Henry J. Taylor, he was a war correspondent and the General called me in and introduced me to him and he said “*Tanner take him up to Hitler's Eagles Nest*” and this was the day the war ended and so I did. We got in my jeep and the driver drove us and going up the good two lane road that winds around like they do in our canyons and at the last we went through a few tunnels like the ones down in southern Utah with windows where you'd look out. The last tunnel we went through we couldn't get the jeep through because snow had covered the exit and we had to crawl through an opening about three or four feet where the snow was up against the main road. So we assumed there would be nobody up at Hitler's Eagles Nest but just about two or three blocks from there there's a big open area and there's an entrance into a passageway that went into the mountain where they had an elevator to go up to Hitler's Eagles Nest. This opening, it was all closed off with snow the Germans had not been using it right to the last at all. But we climbed up and this Henry J. Taylor he published a feature story for the Associated Press all over the United States about that experience. We climbed up through there and we climbed up to the top where Hitler's Eagles Nest was and we got about 30 or 40 yards when we heard some voices. Some American soldiers had beat us up there. They'd climbed up from the other side somewhere from a different outfit from mine but they yelled down and told us where to come to get up into the building the easiest way because Hitler's Eagles Nest did not have a normal entrance. The tunnel or the main entrance parking area was 300 or 400 feet down and away from that you had to go in a tunnel and go up in an elevator

which I did later, about ten days or two weeks after the war was over I went up there again. I located my younger brother who was a private in the infantry and he was wounded twice but he survived and I found him and his officer excused him to go with me for a few days so I took him down.

Rick: Well now when you first went there it must have been just a couple of days prior to the surrender.

Norm: It was the day of the surrender.

Rick: So you were obviously one of the first American soldiers up in there.

Norm: Well there were a couple of soldiers that beat me to it. But I was the first officer and I had Henry J. Taylor the war correspondent with me and he wrote a big story about it. He called it a very hazardous climb but I'm from the mountain area and I thought it was an easy climb for me but he was worried as hell because of the steepness and so forth.

Rick: Tell us what it was like when you went inside.

Norm: Well going through a door there's a porch and going through there's a long hallway and there's 37 hooks along one side of that hallway so 37 people could hang their hats and then there's a dining room. There was no bedrooms, there was a big dining room with a dining room table that would seat about 37 people and at the head of the table would be a special chair which Hitler probably used when he was there. There were a few things that we took. I took a towel that had '*Adolph Hitler – AH*' monogrammed on the towel and a couple of saucers and a couple of cups that were from a very famous china company in Germany in Bern somewhere that made a special setting to serve food on and so forth. There was no place to sleep up there, there was a big fireplace and a big veranda and the dining room and a kitchen and no place to sleep.

Rick: Was there food and wine?

Norm: No I didn't see anything like that.

*** Tape Interrupt ***

Rick: Let's go back to where you were still up at the top and then tell us about those houses and any other details that you can remember. Were there any monograms on the china?

Norm: No but it was Misen China. It had the Misen insignia. I have a cup and saucer that I still have at home.

Rick: Give us some more detail about being up there and going back down again.

Norm: Before we went up we looked at the ground area first where these homes had been destroyed by the British and we went in the tunnels and the tunnels went up to the houses so they could go from one house to another without being exposed outside. The British had destroyed these houses by air so there was nothing for us to see really but there were things down there...there was a music room that had all kinds of records and a library room with books. So they had a storage area in these tunnels for certain things like that.

Rick: There were several houses that were all interlinked with underground tunnels?

Norm: Yes. Hess and some of those chief people that worked for Hitler all had a place there.

Rick: Well that's interesting, so after you came out of Burchess Garden did you just drive back down or did you have to climb back down again?

Norm: Well we had to climb back down to where our vehicle was parked inside of a tunnel. The next day the General called me and told me to fly Henry J. Taylor down to Italy and I flew him down there in an L5, which is a bigger plane than an L4.

Rick: When you took your brother up there that had been wounded; he was in the infantry, what were his impressions of being up there in Hitler's Eagles Nest?

Norm: Well he was kind of shocked and I took him to the Generals mess to eat that night, there were just officer there...I took him for breakfast, I ate in the Generals mess all the time and I took him in there and there was about 15 officer's or so and a big table and the General would be at the head of the table. His waiters were Philippino and they would go around and ask him "*how would you like your eggs cooked?*" My brother said "*I haven't seen a fresh egg for six months*", he said "*anyway you cook it will be fine*". He'd been using powdered eggs; anyway it was kind of funny we got a few laughs when he responded like that. The General was glad to have me bring my younger brother to eat with us.

Rick: I can't imagine how he must have felt after being in the infantry and then going up there where Hitler's Eagles Nest was.

Norm: Well he was wounded twice but not so serious. He had the Purple Heart twice; he was in the hospital but went back with his unit again.

Rick: Take us then what you did after that and eventually going home and what you saw and thought when you got back home.

Norm: When I took Henry J. Taylor to fly him down to Italy he wanted to go down to join General Mark Clark, the commanding officer who stayed in Italy he didn't come to the war in France at that time and the generals asked me to fly him down to meet General Clark and so I flew him through a pass and there were some wires above me with a heavy load because he had so damn much luggage the plane was overloaded. He had a suitcase and a sleeping bag, he lived pretty well I guess as a war correspondent but anyway we got through the pass okay then got down to a lower altitude and the highway going across northern Italy from one sea to the other sea we knew the general would be up there somewhere so we followed the highway going east towards the other sea and I saw a big column of motorized vehicles. So I flew low and we knew there was a general in the lineup so I made a loop around and went forward to where they would

be coming and I landed on the freeway and I pulled my plane off of the highway and then this Henry J. Taylor stood there and waved like this and halted the whole damn convoy. The whole thing stopped and they checked me out too and then I flew back to Austria and I didn't see him again. I saw General Mark Clark though and I saw General Mark Clark again after the war, I was in either South Carolina or North Carolina and I was back there on business and I was at a country club with our salesman and Mark Clark was at this country club. He remembered me. It was quite a few years later too, but he remembered me and we had a good visit again.

Rick: After the war in Europe and VE-Day occurred which is just about 60 years from yesterday, how did you get back to the states, what were your feelings, what did you first see when you got back?

Norm: Well I was very eager to see my wife, that was the most important thing and I had a daughter I'd never seen before. She was born while I was going overseas and my wife was in Ogden and I got off the train in Ogden and I called her on the phone and told her when I was coming and she met me at the railroad station in Ogden.

Rick: Did you take a boat from Europe over to the United States?

Norm: Yes.

Rick: And did you see the Statue of Liberty or where did you land?

Norm: I'm trying to remember, we didn't take off for the war from New York, we went south and took off from a town in North Carolina but I saw New York from the air because the plane landed at LaGuardia Field as I remember. Or is there another field right there besides LaGuardia? Well anyway I was so damn glad to see my wife.

Rick: So you flew back from Europe then to the United States after the war and you saw the Statue of Liberty from the air?

Norm: Yes.

Rick: Do you remember what went through your mind at that point?

Norm: Well I was just so glad to see land and be back to New York and know I'd be seeing my wife soon. That was the important thing.

Rick: Was your wife back there to meet you?

Norm: No. Traveling in those days was not easy and it wouldn't have been appropriate for her to try to go back there to meet me because I was flying on military orders and my orders took me to Salt Lake.

Rick: How did you get back to Salt Lake then?

Norm: I came on the train. I got off the train in Ogden.

Rick: So you got on the train in New York and got off in Ogden and did she know you were coming in?

Norm: Oh yes I talked to her on the phone.

Rick: And so she met you there at the train station?

Norm: Right.

Sally: What was it like to see her and your new baby for the first time?

Norm: I was only excited to see her. I had a little boy and a little girl I hadn't seen but I was more interested in seeing my wife. It was just good to see them both and eventually all three of

them. My little girl Susan she lives in Denver now and our son Clark died several years ago and he'd been in (World War II) he had a rougher time than I did, he was wounded twice.

Rick: And so your wife and your two babies met you getting off the train in Ogden?

Norm: No the kids weren't there. They were with my wife's mother Mrs. Ada Lindquist, she lives on Adamson and my wife didn't want to be worried about children when she met me.

Rick: Well that's a great story Norm, is there any other details that you'd like to share or is there something that maybe you'd like to say to younger generations of Americans about the sacrifices over there?

Norm: Well it was wartime and a very legitimate war and later on, if you want to know my true feelings, at the time our government was testing atomic bombs in Nevada when the wind was blowing our way I went down there with Henry J. Taylor and some other official people and protested. I was so teed off with our federal government that I wrote them a letter as a lieutenant colonel in the reserves I said *"take me off your records. I don't want to have anything to do with that. I don't want any retirement. I don't want to have anything to do with the military for what you're doing to the people in Utah by testing bombs"*. And so that was the end of my career in the service.

Rick: And that was in the 50's I guess?

Norm: I guess it was, I forget the exact timing.

Elizabeth: Can you describe Ogden's train station, what it was like with everybody coming home?

Rick: Tell us a little more about getting off in Ogden, what the train station was like and I guess there were other GI's getting off and meeting their loved ones, can you describe that a little bit?

Norm: I don't remember too many other GI's on the train. There could have been some, it was a regular passenger train and I just got off and I knew she would be there and she greeted me with this big hug and so forth and we got in her car and headed back to her mothers house on Adams, just a block off of Washington Boulevard on the southern edge of the city of Ogden.

Rick: Do you remember what the train station looked like?

Norm: Well it hasn't changed any I think.

Rick: What we want is a picture of it in 1945.

Norm: Well there were a few other soldiers I guess on the train and maybe some native people too but it wasn't a special train, it was a regular passenger train so I was so please to get off the train I could care less how it looked. But I've been back there since and it still looks the same as it did then.

Rick: Could you see your wife waiting there in the window as you pulled in?

Norm: No I didn't see her until I got off the train and a few yards away from the steps before I saw her.

Rick: Well Norm where were you when they dropped the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima and were you anticipating going over to the Pacific and fighting after the war in Europe?

Norm: No I was too old. Well I wasn't too old, are you talking about World War II? I knew that I'd served my time and I'd be discharged. The fact is that I didn't get out of the service at that time. I stayed in the service but I had a 90 day leave of absence for a rest period and I was going to be called back in but I didn't get called back in.

Rick: So on VE-Day and when they dropped the Atomic bomb were you in Europe or were you back in the states?

Norm: I was en route home.

Rick: And what were your thoughts when they dropped that bomb?

Norm: I was shocked and I was excited for our troops that were in the war. That was the most important thing.

Rick: Do you think that Truman made the right decision?

Norm: He made the decision to drop it. I think he shouldn't have hit the civilian population though. I don't think that was good.

Sally: The evening that you and the other officer went into Dachau and witnessed that and the war ended the next day how did you sleep that night. I mean how did you process what you had just seen; what were your thoughts and feelings about witnessing that?

Norm: Well I was very completely relieved that the war was over and we celebrated. I probably got drunk.

Rick: The question was, after you saw those bodies at Dachau and the furnaces did it bother you? Did you have a hard time sleeping that night?

Norm: Yes. I forgotten whether I did or not. I often had a hard time sleeping but I used to sleep underneath the wheel of my airplane because I could get some shelter that way but I didn't like to go to a German home and sleep like some of the officers did. I slept under the wing of my plane all the time.

Rick: Were there any other people with you at the time that you were walking into that Dachau death camp?

Norm: There was only my driver and the General.

Rick: What were the comments made? Did you talk about it with the General after you got out of there?

Norm: Not much, I was only a captain at that time. But the General, Iron Mike Daniels was the division commander, a two-star general but the other general was a one-star general and he was the one I...no I took the main General into Dachau and I saw him once after World War II by the way too and I saw General Mark Clark after the war once.

Rick: When you went into Dachau did you think that was just the only one or were you aware that they were all over Europe?

Norm: I didn't know that there were many others. I assumed there might be but I thought this was the main one but it might not have been. Were there others?

Rick: Well the main one was really in Poland – Auschwitz.

Norm: Oh yeah, I didn't get there. I remember reading about that. That's terrible.

Elizabeth: You said the Eagle's Nest wasn't very fancy, could you talk about that a little bit more?

Norm: Well it was not designed for anybody to sleep there so we guessed that Hitler would take somebody that he wanted to impress up there and maybe threaten to push him off of that porch and fall to their death. But I don't know exactly...Hitler hadn't used it recently because he was further north in a different area and he probably was escaping when the British bombed out these homes of the head officer's of the military. Political figures they were too. You're so relieved that the war is over that you're jubilant. It's just a thrill to know that...and then you couldn't wait to go home and you wanted to get the hell out of there as soon as you could but that was hard to do because they had priorities and if you had a wife and some children that you gave

priority to go. If a single officer was there and he'd been there longer than you had been he'd have to stay longer. They gave priority to married people that had children and so forth. So it wasn't too long after the war was over that I was on my way home.

Rick: When you were flying around in that Piper Cub did you ever encounter any other German aircraft or fighter planes or were you ever shot at?

Norm: Yes.

Rick: Tell us about that.

Norm: Well I was taking the S2, the Intelligence Officer for the division of artillery was sent down to the air section to look at this city that we were approaching and they wanted to have him identify a particular building from the air and to do so I had to fly up high to get away from ground fire from the German lines. I took him up and flew over our lines (I can't remember the name of the city) but we got a good look at the city and I turned the plane so he could see it and so forth and all of a sudden there was a big burst of black puffs right in front of me. About eight puffs from two batteries with four guns to a battery so there were about eight puffs that went all up like that and I thought 'boy' and I started to dive down and then I thought '*oh the next round is going to be lower*' so I didn't...I started to go down but then I pulled the stick back and went up as fast as I could and sure enough I'd have gone right into it if I'd have gone down. Then in the meantime I was turning and heading back to safe ground where I could get away from those German guns but they didn't hit us. But it was close.

Rick: Those were flack bombs I would imagine and if you got hit with any of that that would have downed your aircraft.

Norm: Well I was hit once with my L5 that was a little bit bigger than the Piper Cub and you're sitting in the front seat and your observer is in the back seat and there's two wheels out in front of you (the tires) and a tail wheel or a tail skid and that left wheel, a German Burp gun (a burp gun is when you pull the trigger instead of just one shot coming out three go out – one, two, three

like that). The German mechanics had more efficient rifles than the United States troops had – far better. Because they could fire three shots at a time, but anyway I could see the wheel and they put a couple of holes in the wing above me and it didn't hit me at all. But it was not more than four or five feet from my left foot and that wheel was just shattered so when I turned around and headed back I called and said "*I've got a blown up left tire*" so I'd have to land on one wheel so when I landed on that dirt strip they had in a field and they had an ambulance there, which they didn't need but they thought they might need it. So they had an ambulance there and I landed as slow as I could and hit the right wheel and I had the stick back and landed on that one wheel for a little ways and then the lift of my wings was gone and that other wheel came down and made a ground loop. So we didn't get hurt. Either me or the observer behind me. That was the only time that my plane was hit.

Rick: Do you remember seeing the movie *'The Battle of the Bulge'*?

Norm: Yes.

Rick: And they had a pilot that flew Henry Fonda around observing the German lines, do you remember that?

Norm: No I don't remember that.

Rick: I was just wondering how accurate that was. Did you have any other close calls in landing and such?

Norm: Well when we had this 15 foot wide plywood runway that was a hazardous place to land and take off and so we only used it about three days. But the General wanted us to have those planes close to the front so we could be of better service than 10 miles behind somewhere. So the engineers come in and put in that temporary ramp. The engineering company with their bulldozers and so forth. But it wasn't too bad. A couple of pilots got off and broke a wheel and broke a propeller and stuff like that but it wasn't too serious.

Rick: Do you have any thoughts on the Second World War and the sacrifices that were made there in relation to our present day?

Norm: Well it was a different situation completely. I think that what Bush has done is terrible. This current war is not needed and if somebody had told President Bush that if he didn't have a war he wouldn't be re-elected and I think he believed that but I don't know for sure but that's what I've heard. I think it's a very needless war and ridiculous to be over there right now.

Rick: Well we really appreciate you coming in today and telling your experience. It's really a unique experience.

Norm: Well it was an exciting time and I was very relieved when it was over.

Rick: Well we appreciate your service and honor you for the contribution that you made.

Norm: Well thank you very much. I appreciate being interviewed and I hope it's of some value.