

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

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So Herb. If you could give me your full name and where you come from and what your age was at the start of the – sorry – in 1944.

Well, my name is Herbert S Simmons. I was born and raised in a country farm in Iowa March 22nd 1922.

And when did you come to the UK for the first time?

Well, I went to a training programme on building of aircraft and enlisted in the United States Airforce and prepared for some special training and came to Britain, it had to be April, I don't know what date.

Which year?

Oh, '44.

OK.

We spent time here then until we went overseas. Right in this neighbourhood and the friends, the people, here were so gracious and so kind and there is a family living here yet – John Tenham and his wife – who were just a freckle-face kid, but his family owned the big home where our headquarters – officers' headquarters - was. And the neighbours - I can't remember their names - but they brought fresh strawberries, eggs, things that they could grow on the farm, to us and we gave them chocolate, cigarettes, sugar (laughs) and, a good bartering arrangement at the time. And the experience paid dividends when we got to

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France, 'cause we did the same thing. And our squadron trained from here. We started bombing very early in ... Before we went to the invasion, our planes had been flying a regular sortie, as we would call them, daily into German territory, into northern France, and we lost some mighty close friends and some ... But my friends and I were fortunate enough to bring some of those pilots home after being lost or damaged. Our equipment would be able to direct them to come back right here.

OK. What exactly was your role? What did you do?

Pardon?

What did you do? What was your role at that time?

The role was ... I was in charge of that ... we set up the code first thing in the morning when they took off, which might have been anything. And when that ... when they had a problem, IF, IF they had a problem, one ??? time they had a problem. But if they had a problem they would beep that code. One of us three guys, and I did a lot of it, would take this big antenna and rotate it 'til we lined up with their signal and then we could plot that on a map in front of us and tell them exactly where they were and exactly what was the best way for them to fly home. And that was, that was really what we were trained for. But communications equipment advanced so fast that it nearly bypassed that system. But ...

What sort of aircraft were flying from Lyminster at that time?

Pardon?

What sort of aircraft were flying from Lyminster?

P47 Thunderbolts. There. Best airplane ever built.

What were they doing when they were flying over?

That airplane could carry two 500 gallon - 500 gallon fuel tanks and a bomb or three bombs or three fuel tanks. But they could ... their purpose was to support the long range bombers - Spitfires, RP38s, for fighter planes, and they did not have the fuel capacity to get to - you know, our guys could fly there as far as the bombers could fly, with our extra fuel. And then they'd come home. And there were some very horrible experiences that our men had. Our Commanding Officer, Robert Johnson, went in with the squadron of the 81st loaded with all those tanks with napalm. And the purpose was to burn a railroad, station, the whole thing. And there was four airplanes there when they got there. They couldn't even find a town, it was bad. So they turned to come back and unfortunately or fortunately, whatever, he came over a mountain and come down a valley and there was hundreds and hundreds of white uniformed SS troopers in training. They were doing exercise camp or something. He and

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the other airplane dumped all the napalm on them, burned them all right there. When he came back I was on the wing of his airplane sat there and cried. He said, "I should never, I should never have done that." That's war. That's war.

I'm sure a lot of Americans and British people thought he did exactly the right thing under the circumstances.

Yeah. Well, he did it anyway. And ... oh we had from right here we had one pilot that went on a bombing run. His bomb didn't cut loose. It was armed, so assume that if it hit the ground it would blow up. Well, two of the other planes, or one of them at least, came over the Channel. He had the same problem but he got his to kick off in the Channel. But Pat Ness, his wouldn't shake off, so he just come in and landed anyway (laughs). And when he landed the bomb rolled off of his airplane, rolled up through a bunch of tents where men were living and rolled up there and didn't go off (laughs). I said, "Pat wasn't ya scared?" He said "Of course, but" he said, "what was the alternative? Bail out over the English Channel?" It was ... we had a good time at times during the War.

00:09:23

So Herb, who else did you meet locally when you were stationed here?

Well, we met quite a few of the farm people but I don't remember any of their names. Except John Tenham, Alan Brown (who wrote the book), some of the officials of Lymington. But basically we just met those people and Alan Brown was - or John Tenham, correction - was a red headed, freckle-faced teenage boy who rode a bicycle and this was his farm. I mean his Dad is grand. And he took offence at us just taking it over, and he told us so. But our commanding officer got involved in it and he told him the same thing and he wrote him a pass that would have passed the German chancellor (laughs). And then the other funny **lie** that was here was - and I'm sure they still have the same authority here - was the Forest Service.

OK, so Herb, so tell me about the other chap that you met here.

He was an older young man but he was a Forest Service man for this particular area and he was very proud of his position, his authority. And he was dressed in a green uniform with red and yellow trim and he drove in there. And the guard, our guard, stopped him and told him he couldn't go through and he told him in no uncertain terms that he was the man that managed this forest and that he had a right to go anyplace he wanted to in this forest land. And that was final (laughs). So our Commanding Officer got involved in it before it was over and he said to his assistant, "Give me a piece of paper" and he wrote down, "This man has an International pass to go anywhere he wants to in this forest" or something to that effect. And I mean, that man, I suspect he might have been just a little bit light in the ... But that was the happiest man you ever seen. He'd ride by checkpoint and just pull that out

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and hold it out for them to see. "Just want you know I run this part of the programme" (laughs).

But everybody was so good to us. The farmers out here would bring us fruit, vegetables, fresh potatoes, stuff like that. They didn't have any sugar, coffee, cigarettes. We had plenty, so we traded. And they were very happy to trade. We traded a lot and ... but they were so kind. They weren't arrogant, they did not give the impression that they were better than us or that ... we're all in this together. And I've said before, I will say again, without the co-operation, without the dedication of the British, we would have lost World War 2. Plain and simple – just that simple. We could have lost the Australians, we could have lost the Portuguese, but your country had been under such tremendous strain and bombing and doing without and they were so happy to have us to help what we could. And that's what we were here to help. There's a lot of Brits that think the US come in here to try to run things and that wasn't true. That wasn't true.

00:14:46

So, Herb, what was your experience of D-Day and the few days after that like? Tell me about that.

Well, my experience in D-Day was getting ... either I was on a ship or ready to go on a ship. I went right to Omaha Beach directly from here on the fourth day. And ...

And what were you driving?

Truck just like that.

What sort of truck was it, do you remember?

Yeah, let's see. I'm not going to tell you. The mechanic out there knows because he told me what the number of the truck was this morning. It was a truck that size, a monstrous vehicle. But we waterproofed it and it went under water but ...

So what happened when you actually got to the beach? I mean, you went on a ship? What happened, how did it ...?

Well, we hit a sand bar and it dropped the gate and then there was deep water beyond the sand bar. And we went down into that deep water, ten or fifteen feet deep, and finally come out. And we were being bombed. And she has been there, but there is a little road no wider much than these right here, with deep banks on each side that went up to this little village, and that's where we went. And we had the wrong maps, so everything was backwards. We were supposed to come from that way and we were going from this way. And we got in there about ... but just before we got to Isigny (Isigny, whatever they want to

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call it, Isigny), there's a little river and a German just blown the bridge out. And we had engineers right there ready to put ... and they put an aluminium bridge in and we got across. But they couldn't figure out where this gun was. About the time that engineering group finished the bridge, or the second one at least, they knew where that gun was and it was way up on the hill in a barn with big wide doors. And they'd open them doors, stick that gun out there, blow that bridge up, pull her back in and shut the door. That happened towards us twice and it was all over. Our bombers, our dive bombers, our P47s found out where that was and they blasted it. But then all the way back to where we bivouacked, to where our bivouac was, was backwards. I mean, nothing looked right. Our directions was of no value, nothing looked right. Drove up to the bivouac that we were stationed and ... headquarters and everybody else was trying to get in. It was a big walled-in fence like the garden here, only it was bigger. A big mansion and ... 'cause ... and barns and sheds and all enclosed. And that was where the headquarters was setting up, or was already partially set up, where we were supposed to set up communications. And before my turn got to go into that place, I had to stop. An 88mm shell hit the back right by my right front wheel and didn't explode. We went ahead about our business. Armament got that shell out and couldn't find anything wrong with it. I don't know how long it was. It may have been two days or two weeks or two months maybe, but I got to thinking what time that was, what time of day that was. And, my friend, it was the time of day my Mother and Dad was praying for me (gets very emotional and cries).

00:20:03

Fantastic. So Herb, when you embarked for France, four days after D-Day, where were you supposed to land in France?

My orders were to land at Utah Beach, which was near Cherbourg. But the Navy landed me at Omaha Beach, which was clear at the other end of the area.

Why did that happen, do you know?

Well no. I would say it wasn't anybody to blame, anything seriously, it really didn't matter that much I guess. But we in our finite minds cannot understand the formation of that landing in Normandy of all the thousands of brains that came together under Ike Eisenhower and he says, "This is the way we are going to do it." And that's what we did it. There's more (I won't say this on air).

So Herb. When you landed on the beach, what was, what was that like?

Confusion. Massive fear. Indecision. Wondering if we was going to make it, I guess. About it. You don't think straight when things like that happen, you don't ... you don't have time to think or remember or ... I'd rather just forget it.

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How quickly did you get off the beach?

Huh?

How quickly did you get off the beach? Were you there a long time?

Well, probably before we got to the top of that little village, where that little village is, is probably a couple or three or four hours, I don't know. Slow moving.

And you still had your truck? You were still driving your truck?

Oh yes, oh yes. And the last time we was over there, believe it or not, a part of that bridge that was in between there and Isigny was still there along the road. Aluminium. But there's nothing glorious about the place where we landed, just a big wide beach, but big high banks on each side of this little road that went up through there and that's where we went. That was it. Otherwise every place was like this, you couldn't move vehicles up.

Ends: 00:23:42

Key Words

1944

John Tenham

Alan Brown

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OK, Mr Simmonds. In your own time I would like you to recall if you can the recollections of this test firing and the local lady at the Lymington airbase. So, in your own time, sir, if you'd care to tell us about that story.

Well, the P47 Thunderbolt dive bomber that was our outfit was equipped with four 50 calibre guns in each wing. Needless to say, when the pilots took off to go to France or Germany or wherever, and they were going all over, they wanted to be sure the guns were working. And it was required that ever so often the guns were tested anyway. So they were out here on the field and they headed out towards the Isle of Wight, pointed out that direction, nobody thinking that there was anybody or anything out there to be worried about. And they would taxi up to this area and they would fire their guns. I don't know how many hundred rounds but quite a few to see everything was working. Well, unbeknownst to our

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people and the pilots, them bullets was hitting a ship out (laughs) by the Isle of Wight. This elderly lady, the boys, I don't know at what stage but evidently between changing plane, moving, I don't know when, but she come out there and she, she said, "Stop your shooting, you dammed Yankees! You're bouncing bullets off of my nephew's ship over on the Isle of Wight. Stop it!" And she called the American people some names that you don't want put on ... They were Americans and she didn't like us. That was about the end of it. The next day when they ready to test guns, Captain Johnson had a bulldozer in and built a monstrous big wall about twenty feet high and they'd go up there and shoot and that satisfied her, she thought that was fine (laughs).

Brilliant. Well I think - thank you very much for passing on that story. I think it's ... we've got a couple of those butts, those target butts, still remaining on some of the other airfields here and you can still find some of the bullets in some of these huge mounds that are still out there. So that fits in very nicely and we can add that information with that.

We've got some photographs and so what I'm going to do, I literally just going to leave that going and get rid of those.

I don't know if there's ... You would know more than I if there's even evidence of that mound that was put there. I don't think so.

No there isn't, no. Most of them were cleared away.

Well, when we were here that was a field and we destroyed the field and when we left they put it back into production, that's about it.

That's something that was happening all across the Forest. In some areas we see things left so, as I said, at Beaulieu we have this huge mound and that's the only butt that's left as it were in the Forest from those ranges. And people think it's a Bronze Age feature until we tell them, "No, it was the Second World War butts for doing the shooting range". So yeah, we have one of those.

So we're going to have a look at some of the photographs and it's literally just a case of - I'll do a quick description of the photograph so we know which one it is when we're talking about it, and then if you have any memories or you can tell us maybe some of the names of individuals or what we're looking at. What we'll then try and do is put that photograph with the oral history so people can see a photograph and if you have anything then we can put that too. If you don't, then we don't need to worry about it.

Well, firstly, as far as my friends and buddies and working companions here - they're gone. As far as we know, I am the only living one of the 81st Fighter Squadron that was here - as far as we know.

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00:05:02

This, well we're finding – I do lots of talks to the genealogy clubs and societies here and they've found the archive. Because all this material we're creating is going online and when they do all the searches, if we have a name for a photograph or a person that obviously comes up and they are able to find that photograph. And in some cases they're finding photographs of relatives that they never – they don't have photographs of. What we're then finding is they are then able to say, "Well the person beside it, beside him, is his best friend, this is his name." So we add that name and so the next time someone does a search for their relative that comes up and then says, "The person behind him is his best friend," and so on. These names are growing and it helps people, sort of, once it's on the Internet it's searchable throughout the world, so we're finding particularly genealogists or family members they'll be able to find family members, they'll be able to find their names. So it's always useful to try and put names if we can. But I know it's quite difficult in some cases.

Bob has been able to locate, get the location and record – I shouldn't say record but the longevity - of a lot of my friends. And he just comes up, "They've passed away of this" and "They've passed away of that" and so on. He's very capable of that and ... You see, I've lost contact with all but just a few. When we first started having our reunions, the Squadron having reunions, we kept in touch and knew a lot ... are gone, they're gone. I hear there's a book out that one our people have that I've never seen, that's supposed to give me, a lot of my information. I'll try and get it from his wife or his kids.

So, where would you like to start with photographs? What would be the first one to have a look at then?

So, this is a photograph of an aircraft with four crew members in and one sitting on the wing. So, if you have any memories or recollections about this, would you be happy to tell us?

Well, I wouldn't know ... that pilot, he's not shown here but that pilot just passed away – what, six, eight months ago. He was one of the last of us. And my Indian buddy was the other one. I just knew of two and they're both gone. I'm not even sure where this picture was taken. That's an armed bomb right there. This airplane would carry – could carry bombs under each wing and under the belly they'd carry gas tanks or bombs. So the distance that this airplane would be with standard equipment could be even tripled by fuel capacity. It was an airplane kind of one of its kind.

(Daughter) You want to tell them the pilot's name.

The pilot's name? That was Alex De **Graaf**.

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Alex De *Graaf*.

De – capital D, e.

Brilliant.

(Daughter) And what kind of a plane, Dad.

The rest of them is important. I guess that's me, but it isn't important.

And what kind of aircraft is the ...

That's a P47 Thunderbolt. That's what was stationed here on this farm, on this field. There was three squadrons here. Alan Brown has got an absolute record of that but there were three squadrons of the 50th Fighter Group that were stationed here. There was the 81st, the 10th and the three – what was it Nancy?

00:10:18

(Daughter) 310. 310 or 313.

(Richard) The 501 do you mean?

310.

(Daughter) 313.

313.

Lovely.

(Daughter) I'll just interject here.

That's OK. We are literally just talking about the photographs.

(Daughter) The name of the plane is Freda Belle, that's Freda Belle II, and that was Alex's wife, who he had married just before the War. And they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary and she was, of course, she spoke with Dad at length at Alex's funeral. Dad has about this that some of the other names are Tommy Asbury in the centre of the photo.

Mechanic on the wing.

(Daughter) The wing maintenance. Is his name Ignatius, Dad? Ignatius on that **Biggy** they

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call them on the Mig wing was the maintenance for that.

Those.

(Daughter) This is Dad, with the gun. And that's the wing maintenance guy.

That man – that man right there was a most important person including, with the pilot. But he was really the most important person of the whole crew because he kept that airplane in tip top operation. I haven't told very many people, but that airplane had a unique system. It had a 20 gallon water tank in it and when they would get into a tight dogfight or asking, when they were asking everything that that airplane would put out, there was a little button on the throttle and all they had to do was push that button. It would shoot water in the cylinders and that thing would just put out white puffs. But it would triple the compression and if they kept it on too long it would blow the top off of the pair of cylinders. They were for an absolute emergency. But they would work. My commanding officer came back once with his completely empty and his airplane was still flying (laughs).

I suppose today the answer is they'd use the Nitro in the engines to sort of boost the engines. I've never heard of water being used, that's quite unique. I'm able to scan that or have you have got a decent ...? We'll put that on the pile to scan. I've brought the scanner with me as well today. OK. So, so we have – this is a photograph with a gentleman sitting on the wing holding a gun. Sorry. What could you tell us ...

That's an English Spitfire. This picture was taken someplace in the northern part of France. It was snow on the ground. That's me and that's a 45 calibre "Burp Gun." These Spitfires, where we were pushing the front lines all the time, all the time. We'd stand just as close as we could, they needed us to go ahead of them. The Spitfire outfit, of course there was many English squadrons of Spitfire but they kept them as close to the front line to support, to support the troops. But also that was a terrific fighter if they had any German air force in the air, that baby was after 'em. It was a great attack plane but it was no good for diving in comparison with the P47. That thing could pull out of a dive at 700 miles an hour and this thing, the wings would ... The German Messerschmitt, the wings would actually fly off of them. They would ride it too close to the ground before they tried to pull her up and our guys just used to think that was the funniest thing (laughs). I guess it would have been if you'd been in that pilot's seat.

00:15:38

OK. The next photo we have here is of three gentlemen. I think that's a Spitfire as well.

That's a Spitfire up in same ... It's a Spitfire up in winter of 1945. That's myself. That's the man that saved my life. He was a Cherokee Indian. And this was my other buddy. We had military numbers, the only three in the 9th Air Force. We were specialised. But then

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things moved fast, they didn't need us. Our van was equipped to locate. We had an antenna on top of it, a rotating antenna. If our flight was up in Germany or wherever, up north, and they got hit - a pilot got hit, he had to bail out - he could push a button on that ... An identifying code was made up between us and him that all they had to do was push a button and we could rotate that antenna 'till we could locate 'em. Then if they were able to talk to us we could tell 'em exactly how far and where they were. If they weren't able to talk to us and were bailed out or anything, we could also tell Intelligence, "This man went off the air at this particular time at this particular axis". Some of them, some of them did, some of them didn't, make it.

OK. OK, this is a photo looking at what I'm assuming are beach landings? So yes, if you'd - any recollections you have for this.

I can't identify this location, but this is somewhere in the Omaha Beach area. That's what it looked like.

OK. Are we nearly done?

Except when I got there. These guys, when I got there (becomes emotional) there was hundreds of boys dead as far as you could see out across the beach. We lost - I can't remember how many men we lost at Omaha Beach. There's a record. But in the thousands got killed there and nobody knows, there's no record of the wounded, there just isn't any record. There was how many went in, how many didn't come out, how many came out somewhere or close, how many came out wounded. The rest we don't know. So it's all a guess. I don't know, I guess, I guess it's important, 'm not sure.

(Daughter) at the 50th and that was the old new sign ...

The original pattern, oh look at that.

(Daughter) The original as they were building it. So we thought you might ...

00:19:56

*We're, just looking at these photos here from the original panel by Alan Brown when it was first installed. And the photographs of the blister hangar and what looks like parts of the remaining ... is this the ... is it **summer feld**? Is that the right ...?*

This is a field of grain.

(Richard) That's field, that's just ploughed land, cultivated land.

Oh so this is from the vehicles rather than the footprint of the tracking underneath?

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This was the airstrip. The probably was the airstrip, I don't know, hard to tell. But that's the hangar that's still there - there it is.

Yeah. I spent all of yesterday inside it. It creaks quite a bit when it warms it, doesn't it? We had lots of bangs and crashes and people were climbing on top of everything and it was just the metal extending and contracting during the day.

You'd creak too if you were old as me in that building.

(General laughter).

I know how I creak.

(Richard) I slept in there the other night.

You were saying, yes.

It was creak, you know, obviously as it was cooling down it was creaking and groaning and banging and clunking.

But it's lovely that it's still here as, to my knowledge, the only blister hangar in the Forest from the airfield. So it's nice to have that, and particularly when you opened the doors and went "Oh there's a Hurricane parked inside it", that was brilliant. I thought that was lovely.

You know Richard, I don't know how many blister hangars there was in the Forest. I don't know if the other squadrons had them, I don't know.

The ... Lymington had four, I think four. And then Needs Ore, which is another ALG that I'm familiar with, it had at least four if not six because we've got some photographs of when they installed an anti-aircraft gun installation right by the airfield. But when they set it all up they didn't camouflage it at all and so there are four photographs of an aircraft flying round it taking photographs with the ALG in the background. Then they obviously camouflaged it and went back up again. So we've got some photographs of Needs Ore ALG and we can see at least four in that. So that seems to be sort of the standard number that they seemed to have.

(Richard) There is a blister hangar that was from Bisterne that was relocated to where the Owl Sanctuary is. And also there's one at Ashley Heath – er not Ashley Heath - Ashley New Milton. You know the crossroads, there's a garage. There's a blister hangar in there behind the garage, and I'm not sure which airfield that one came from. So there are two that have been relocated.

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Relocated and re-used, oh that's excellent.

(Richard) This is definitely the only one still on an airfield and with planes in it.

Lovely.

See that tank right there. That's about as far as he ever got. This guy, this guy is I reckon trying to pull him out (laughs).

Lovely. So what was this? This is ...

That is an actual reproduction of a photograph taken in our first field in France. This man that flew that, he had a charmed life I think. One time he was on a bombing run, had tried to dump all of his bombs and one of them, I don't know whether he had three bombs or only one bomb, I don't know which, but he, he had some others and they dumped 'em in The Channel, but his he couldn't get loose. Now he was crazy until the day he died.

Lovely.

He come in and landed with that live bomb under his wing and the bomb bounced up and down, rolled up through a bunch of our tents out here on the field, rolled way up the hill and didn't go off (laughs).

Lucky. Just touching on that, could you, can you briefly describe the accommodation that you had at the airfield?

Yeah. It was a tent 16 feet square, about that high on the sides, no light, no heat, no air conditioning, no floor. And that was it.

00:24:53

And how long were you at the ...

I was here about the biggest part of two months. I don't remember when we ... my phase of our outfit, I don't know when, what date we landed. I know what ship we came on. 'Cause I never will forget you English - forgive you, forgive you, I'll make that clear, forgive you (laughs).

Brilliant.

First place it was a white castle, it was a converted pleasure ship – what am I trying to say? Excursion ship or whatever. And they put about three people on that where there should have been one. And we hit bad seas, bad weather, way up north, and it even blowed in

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once case – I still think there’s a picture of that someplace – blew a man off the deck of a aircraft carrier in front of us. And we stood on our ship and watched them Navy boys go out and get that man. And sometimes, so help me, sometimes their rubber raft you could see blue sky under it. A wave would whip ‘em up that far. They got him, they got him, he didn’t drown. But that was a ... our medic for our outfit, he was a jackass, that’s the simplest way to put it, and I think they taught how in the Army to give aspirin, I think that’s as far as he’d ever gone as far as a medic’s concerned. But he had called a report to check us guys out and we’d all line up along the railing in the core of the ship, we’d drive up and he’d – line up – and he would go around and check off and see if you was dead or alive and all that kind of stuff. And every little bit he’d go ??? and just “Hey”. His idea was he was supposed to tell us what to do when we got sick (laughs). But the man, he was just as I said a jackass. When he came back, our CO, our Medical Director, sent him to college and he became a doctor and he never changed because I had an Irish friend up in New York – do you remember Pat? He run him off the road. One of the Army boys, one of my buddies, run him off the road in New York and jerked him out of his car and told him what he thought of him since, what Dr Mudge had done for him. He was horribly unfriendly, didn’t recognise any of us guys. I don’t know what happened to him. I know what that Irish man would have done to him (laughs). He didn’t like him.

Not any more about ... that could be a little bit sensitive.

We didn’t like him. Nobody ever liked that boy.

(Daughter) This has become quite a famous painting in the States, Pat. And that was the one that the bomb dropped ...

And he wasn’t, and he wasn’t.

(Background voices).

OK. So this is where you ...

(Background voices).

OK. The last photo we’re looking at is – I believe this is you and your best friend here and Nancy was just telling me this is the airfield, the location you went to from Lymington.

00:29:54

This, this is the end of the airstrip. The first one. A10 in France. This is the end of it. It goes right down and it went just about a mile. Way back over here, you can’t see it, now there’s a water tower and every year on June 6th they put an American flag on it. This man here took care of that and he’s gone now. We had dinner with his wife in France when we

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was over there. And this, this was just trees and – when I first went here from this direction I was stationed across the road and down but the engineers were still putting wire mesh down. They were hauling ammunition in there and piling it up. That would have been one of the greatest times the Germans could ever have found to stop that phase. But there was tons and tons of ammunition piled right out in the open.

As the, basically as the airstrip was being constructed out of land, yeah. OK. I think – I think I've taken up enough of your time. I just want to firstly, you know, really say thank you so much for talking to us.

For whatever it's worth, you're welcome.

It is lovely. I'm going to stop the recording now.

Ends 00:31:45

Key words:

P47 Thunderbolt

Butts

50th Fighter Group

Freda Belle II

Spitfire

Burp gun

9th Air Force

Omaha Beach

Blister hangar

A10

File name	HSS	001	_0003MO.WAV	Interview date: 03.06.14
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... for breakfast.

On the Stirling Castle?

(Laughs) You probably had relatives on there and I'm blaming the whole British nation for it.

Well, I can tell you I get seasick just looking at the sea. So, and I can't stand fish, so that sounds to me to be the most awful mix you could possibly image.

We were all sick and we were hungry and they bring that crap out for us. Oh.

Brilliant. So it's the Sterling Castle was the vessel that you came over on, yeah. Brilliant. So we can do that.

Ends: 00:00:40

Key words

Stirling Castle

File name	HSS	001	_0004MO.WAV	Interview date: 03.06.14
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... so kind. He, he made you feel like – that we were at least first cousins of the King.

I've heard an awful lot of good things about Mr Brown and it's really nice. What I'm trying to do when we replace the panels is keep what Alan did and then add a bit more details to it and re-vamp it with new graphics, etc.

Alan took the ... Alan had the feeling here that the Americans saved the world and that was not the case. It was because of everybody together. But he, he wanted to give the American people, you know, it wasn't true, I mean. As I've said in more interviews since I've been here, had it not been for the experience and the dedication of the British people, we'd never have won the War. We never would have won. If we'd had five American ??? I don't think we'd still have won it. These British boys were pretty tough (laughs).

From the few that we've had a chance to interview, it's a real honour to hear what they were doing. We've interviewed two veterans that were here in the Forest in some of the camps, particularly about when the camps were closed getting closer to D-Day. And one talks about, they'd had a challenge with the other camp about they were better in their woodcraft skills - survival techniques as we call it today – and so they challenged the other group, "Well you know I reckon we could get into your NAAFI and be drinking tea before you discover us." "No chance." The next day they were discovered in their NAAFI drinking tea. And they'd broken in through the wire and got into the camp and were drinking tea before the security. He said they got in a whole lot of trouble for that but just it proved a

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point. So yes, so.

I think what ... I don't want to take up any more of your time. It is a pleasure and an honour to be able to talk with you. And thank you so much for all you've given. We will make sure that we will ...

Ends 00:02:30

Key words

Alan Brown.

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