

**Museum of History and Holocaust Education Legacy Series**  
**William Wallace, Jr. interview**  
**Conducted by Adina Langer**  
**October 30, 2018**  
**Transcribed by Rachel Rogers**

William Wallace, Jr., was born in 1954 in Macon, Georgia, into a religious family with roots in Georgia. His father, William Wallace, Sr., was born in Millen, Georgia in 1922. Wallace's father was a veteran of the Second World War and survivor of the Bataan Death March in the Philippines, who received a Bronze Star and Prisoner of War Medal for his service. William Wallace, Jr. recorded his oral history at Kennesaw State University in October 2018.

**Full Transcript**

Interviewer: My name is Adina Langer, and I'm the curator of the Museum of History and Holocaust Education at Kennesaw State University. Today is October 30, 2018, and I'm here at the Sturgis Library with Bill Wallace for a Legacy Series interview during which we will remember his father, William Hall Wallace. Do you agree to this interview?

Wallace: I do.

(0:22) Interviewer: Wonderful. Could you please state your full name?

Wallace: Yes. William Hall Wallace, Jr.

Interviewer: And can you please tell me when and where you were born?

Wallace: I was born on June 26, 1954 in Macon, Georgia.

(0:37) Interviewer: Great. So, before we talk more about your life, I'd like to go back a bit further and talk about your father. Can you please state his full name?

Wallace: Yes. William Hall Wallace, Sr.

Interviewer: And could you please tell me where and when your father was born?

Wallace: He was born April 1, 1922 in Millen, Georgia.

(0:57) Interviewer: And what was his family like? What did his parents do?

Wallace: Well, he—. In sharing with me, his mother and father passed away by the time he was eleven years old. So, he was raised basically by his grandfather. He had two brothers. He was the oldest of the three. Grew up during the Great Depression down in the rural south, and basically, they were farmers—agriculture focused individuals. And my father joined the military when he was age seventeen, and then became a prisoner of war in the Philippines and in Japan, when the Philippines were left by General MacArthur.

(1:45) Interviewer: So, we're going to go in a little more detail on kind of each of these areas.

Wallace Sure.

Interviewer So you mentioned that he was raised by his grandparents.

Wallace: Correct.

(1:55) Interviewer: What was their home like? Did they own land, or did they rent, or sharecrop?

Wallace: I don't know. To the best of my knowledge, I believe they probably owned property, but it would have been a minimal amount. And my father often talked about the heat of being raised in South Georgia, and the lack of amenities that one would have. If you think back in the twenties, thirties—no air conditioning, no running water basically, other than a well from which one would have to draw water, things like that. But not having a mother and father when one is age eleven, and being raised by a grandfather is also something that helped mold him as well. The one thing I am confident of was his faith, and that that helped to develop his focus in later life, in which he was a minister in small rural churches throughout rural Georgia for over fifty years.

(3:03) Interviewer: So, can you tell me more about that faith? What—were they members of a particular church?

Wallace: I'm sure it was Millen Baptist Church. My father became a Baptist minister, and most of the churches he pastored at probably had less than fifty members, but he pastored all throughout Treutlen county, Lawrence county. And it was, I guess, rewarding to my mother and me and my

sister to see how he was recognized upon his retirement. He actually conducted his last sermon in 1991, and he passed away in 1995.

(3:45) Interviewer: So, growing up in this rural area, was there a sense that the Depression was affecting everyone, or was there a sense that it had always been hard? You know, did he talk about that at all?

Wallace: What he basically shared was how difficult it was growing up at that time and lack of amenities. And it was across the board. A lot of folks may not know what the Depression really was, but it truly was a Great Depression back then, in which there were no jobs. There was limited access to travel. Basically, people were land based, and to be able to have a farm and grow your own food was very meaningful and very important back then. You couldn't run to your local grocery store and buy items. You'd literally had to grow your own food back then.

Interviewer: And did he—Did he work on the farm in addition to any education that he had?

Wallace: [nods head] He did. He graduated from high school, and I think they probably graduated around age sixteen back then, rather than going to age eighteen, which we see today. But the one thing he talked about was the difficulty in terms of work. It really made him muscular, and what he shared with me later [makes hand gesture]—He thinks that that's what prepared him for the Bataan Death March. He told me quite often, had he not experienced the heat, the hard, physical labor that he endured to build muscle and endurance and things like that, he would never have survived the Bataan Death March.

(5:29) Interviewer: So,—being a student—with his family, with not very many resources, did he ever tell you much about how they learned about the world? How they got their news?

Wallace: He did not. Basically, what he shared with me—and this is related more to his experience [makes hand gesture] in terms of military and joining the—used to be called the Army Air Corps, not just the Air Corps or Air Force, or not just the army [makes hand gesture]. It was a joint unit back then. But what he talked about was how that prepared him, and he was looking for escape to be quite honest with you. So, he did not tell the truth about his age when he joined the military, but he did so to get off of the form. And he ended up in Savannah, Georgia. And Savannah's probably about an hour, hour fifteen minutes, from Millen, which is

where he was born. And that's where he entered the military, was at that era.

(6:35) Interviewer: And this was what year?

Wallace: 1939.

Interviewer: Okay. So, he entered just as things were escalating in Europe, but before the United States got involved in the war?

Wallace: That's correct. [undecipherable]

Interviewer: So, at that moment—at that time, did he talk at all about his family's opinion of the president, Franklin Roosevelt, and did that enter into the conversation at all?

Wallace: He did not share that with me. My belief is, from knowing my father, he's always been very respectful of the Office of the President—And in reading the materials, and talking with him—. And one thing I'll say. My father did not talk significantly, or a great amount, with individuals other than those who had experienced the Bataan Death March. Witness that a lot in terms of prisoners of war—that they would not discuss their personal experience, other than with individuals who had also experienced that, so. My wife and I went quite often. They would have an annual reunion in Fontana, North Carolina, and that's where I got to meet a lot of the veterans, and I heard more about my father's experiences there than I ever heard at home. But I never heard him, to get back to your question, say an unkind word about President Roosevelt. I don't think that he had any concern that the president had any choice, other than the one he had. I know that he honored and respected the president, and that's what he instilled in us growing up, was the importance of freedom and the importance of respecting the presidency. So that's what we did growing up.

(8:25) Interviewer: So, when your father enlisted in the Army Air Corps he went to Savannah. Is that where he did his training?

Wallace: That's—Well, where he did his actual training, was Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana. That's where he did his basic training And I have a book that was written about the survivors of the Bataan Death March. And one of the comments my father made that was fascinating to me— He was interviewed by a colleague of ours at Georgia Southern, Sue

Hanson, many years ago, and he talked about his experience at Barksdale. And what he said was that they had actual training in terms of gas. Because if you think back to World War I - mustard gas, those kinds of things. So, part of their training was to go into areas [makes hand gesture] where they would be exposed to mustard gas or other types of gases with masks [makes hand gesture] and things like this, so that they could be cognizant of where if they experienced this in battle - this is what you've experienced, and this is how you deal with it. Which was fascinating. I mean it was something I had not thought about.

(9:36) Interviewer: Yeah. There was a lot done after World War I—

Wallace: Correct.

Interviewer: —To start to change how training was done.

Wallace: That's correct.

Interviewer: I mean the entire, uh, infantry school—

Wallace: Right.

Interviewer: —that was built here in Georgia, came right out of that.

Wallace: I think he said his training—basic training was twelve weeks, if I'm not mistaken, and that was in 1939.

(10:01) Interviewer: So, when was he shipped overseas? Did he talk at all about Pearl Harbor, and his memory of that moment?

Wallace: He did not talk with me, but he did with Ms. Hanson. [reaches into suit jacket and pulls out paper] If you don't mind, I did jot a couple of notes down.

Interviewer: Sure.

Wallace: And I did so because I thought you might ask me some dates, so that's what I had jotted down. Let's see. He enlisted on October 14, 1939. Seventeen years old. Basic training was at Barksdale as I said. He was a part of the 16<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, the 27<sup>th</sup> Bombardier group. He was

stationed at Fort McKinley in the Philippines when Pearl Harbor was attacked. And one of the things that he had been asked that was an interesting question to me: What were your thoughts about Pearl Harbor? And what he said was that they were surprised, and that they were apprehensive after learning about Pearl Harbor while they were over in the Philippines. He said that they were frightful, and that most people were until you experienced a bombing yourself. [makes hand gesture] Once you are on an Air Force base, that had been strafed or bombed, or—and later he was talking about he had to fight in the jungles against the Japanese. [makes hand gesture] When one is placed in the term used, not to be sexist, but no man's land, which is a place where no one generally survives, then he was able to understand and was not as fearful and frightful. Because once you've experienced that personally, the surprise and apprehension is over because your own personal survival then depends upon that. It's not something that happened to someone else. [makes hand gesture] It happened to you personally.

(11:58) Interviewer: Absolutely. So, what did your father tell you about serving in the Philippines? Did he ever talk about that even, you know, later with his—.

Wallace: He did. Particularly, his friendships that he made with fellow soldiers or fellow Air Corpsmen that were there. And he talked about the difficulty, I guess, of that experience. I think the things that really resonated with him, and it's not to be gruesome, but the first time one experiences someone else being killed is something one will never forget. And on the Death March itself—the term that they use—there were approximately 10,000 American soldiers at that time. Ten to twelve thousand. And after they were, I guess, survived, or after they were freed from prison camp in Japan, there were only about 3,500 to 4,000 individuals that had survived. But he talked about walking through the jungle [makes hand gesture]. And when a Japanese infantry would come through, they would have to get off the one road that was basically there into the jungles [makes hand gesture]. If anyone complained or anyone did anything that the Japanese soldiers did not like, they literally would bayonet those individuals, and kill them. And then to remove the bayonet from the individual, they would literally shoot the gun and just leave them where they were [makes hand gesture]. So, that was something that he never ever forgot. And one thing that a lot of folks don't think about or may not know—There were actually women at that time. We don't think about nurses of Bataan. [makes hand gesture] So, in our meetings with survivors of that era, we literally had met nurses who had served with these men. I could not imagine the challenges, or what they faced. But the men and the women, and the mutual respect that was demonstrated [makes hand gesture]—The bravery is something that should be honored and remembered.

(14:25) Interviewer: Absolutely. Now you mentioned that your father was a man of faith.

Wallace: Yes.

Interviewer: Did he talk about what role that may have played during his experiences in the Philippines?

Wallace: I think more so it came into play prior to his liberation from prison camp in Japan. It's not that he did not have faith, but—A lot of folks who feel a calling to the ministry, or that there is someone urging them to go in one direction or another in their life [makes hand gesture]—He stated that while in prison camp—and he was a prisoner for three and a half years—Toward the end of that, he felt this inner [makes hand gesture] calling that said I really think, you know, if you would make a commitment to go into the ministry, things will work out. And he said once he made that commitment himself, soon there after the war ended, and he came back home [makes hand gesture]. And what he did upon his return in 1942—He had the—I guess it was called the G.I. Bill or whatever the term was at that time. So, he went to Mercer University in Macon, to their school of theology, went through in twelve consecutive quarters. [makes hand gesture] He did four years' work in three years and became a minister, and then pastored in small rural churches from that point forward. For over fifty years as a matter of fact.

(15:50) Interviewer: So, when—. Going back a little bit, just to his experiences of the Death March, and the very beginning. Did he talk to you at all about his memories of the moment when General Edward King surrendered, and they were kind of left in the situation?

Wallace: I think his comments, from what I've read—Like I said, he did not talk with me or the family, but these are things that I've read from his first-hand verbal account with others—He was concerned that the officers, the majority of the officers, went with MacArthur [makes hand gesture], and they went to Australia—I believe is where they eventually ended up. That there were very few officers, if any, that remained with the enlisted men when they became captured. And that was of concern to him. Because having not experienced what the enlisted individuals did, it was hard for them to fathom and understand the difficulty of what had gone on. One of the fascinating things that I discovered about my father is upon his release, he was given backpay for while he was a prisoner of war. And that came in a lump sum check. And that was from like 1941 through 1945, so for those four years—I think it was less than 4,000 dollars that he received in terms of backpay. His comment was that so often there were no reparations payed to any of the men and women who survived

Japanese prison camp [makes hand gesture], but a lot of the individuals who did not go to war or whatever, Japanese individuals—A lot of them were given up to 20,000 dollars. So that was something, that inconsistency, that lingered with him later in life with respect to the U.S. government of how did we treat those who had actually been in battle versus those who had been a part of the Japanese encampment, or whatever [makes hand gesture]. And then, in terms of reparation, that was fascinating to me to have been a prisoner, and get a lump sum check for less than 4,000 dollars.

(18:31) Interviewer: Did your father describe, in any of his accounts, the removal of all the captives' possessions? Because that was something that—

Wallace: He did. He did. Upon their capture, and prior to their beginning the Death March, the first thing that happened was they had to give all their jewelry away. So, any rings or any things like that were literally taken, and I'm sure that they were used in the war effort by the Japanese to assist their government and to assist their military. But that was one of the statements that literally was made. You're exactly right.

(19:06) Interviewer: And did he have—because one of the major concerns were if people had Japanese artifacts or souvenirs that that would get them in big trouble. Did he ever talk about—Did he have anything he had to hide?

Wallace: He did not. Basically, what he talked about was his experience after being transported to Japan. He literally had to work in the coal mine. I think it was Rinko Coal Mine, I think is what it was. But literally they would have to shovel coal, put it in box cars, push it up a hill to a ship, and unload either to the ship or to the train [makes hand gesture]. My father basically unloaded his coal onto a train, and they would put them in groups of four. And so, my father talked about going from prison camp— if this is of interest to you, his personal experience—They would leave around 4:00 in the morning, is when they would be awakened, and they would literally have to walk to the coal mine, which was in Japan itself. They would have coal shoveled, push the carts up to the train cars [makes hand gesture]. Groups of four. And what they would say is the Japanese expected them to fill two railroad cars daily. And what he said most people didn't realize - there might be small cars and there might be large cars. And what he meant by that - 10-ton, 25-ton. But each group of four was expected to fill two coal cars. So, if you got a 25 and a 10, rather than two 10's, you might not finish up until 8:00 at night. [makes hand gesture] So, then you had to go back to camp, and if you failed to fill a car, you knew you were subject to a beating. So, that's the one recollection that he never forgot, was the physical beating and the

physical torture. And he talked quite often about his term—and I'm sure I've heard this from a lot of other survivors—It became literally survival of the fittest. It became dog eat dog. [makes hand gesture] You'd literally have to look out for yourself. When my father was liberated, he was 6'2, which is my height. He weighed 87 pounds. When he came back, he was liberated to California. And I think one story I think I'd like to make sure I share with you—. My father passed away and was buried on February 27, 1995. The day of his funeral—. He had done many funerals in Dublin, Georgia with Townsend Brothers' Funeral Home, and Mr. Forrest Townsend was the main owner of that. And the reason I bring this up— Mr. Townsend came up to me, prior to my father's funeral, and he said "Bill". He said, "Did your father ever tell you how he and I first met?" And I said, "Mr. Townsend, he didn't." He said, "Well, you know your father and I've conducted funerals throughout this area together for over 50 plus years." He said, "I was in the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II." He said, "I was one of the people who went to Niigata, Japan." That's where my father was a prisoner of war - Niigata, Japan. He said, "The first time I met your father, is when I liberated him from prison camp." [makes hand gesture] So, if you sit there and think, 50 years later, here are two men that met for the first time. [makes hand gesture] And so, I also believe in a higher being. I believe that the Lord puts us where we're supposed to be, when we're supposed to be there. And these are the kinds of stories one could not make up. [makes hand gesture] How could two people meet for the first time ever, and then end up in a small town of maybe 10,000 citizens and work together for 50 plus years? [makes hand gesture] So, that gave me a sense of comfort at my father's passing. And literally, [makes hand gesture] to fulfill the entire circle, my mother passed away this year at age 96. She passed away on February 23, 2018. We laid her at her final rest on February 27, 2018. [makes hand gesture] The very day that my father passed away in 1995, my mother and father were reunited in 2018. So, [makes hand gesture] it's just something that says someone is in charge and leading us to where we need to be. I never heard my father say anything unkind about his experience. The only thing he would not do—and this is true of most of the people in this book—they would not buy an automobile that was made in Japan. They bought exclusively U.S.A. and American made, and that was their protest against what they had endured. They just would not buy a product that had been made there.

(24:43) Interviewer: So, your father was liberated and able to come back home to Georgia, and went through university. Theological seminary at Mercer. Right?

Wallace: Correct.

Interviewer: And in 1945, he would have been done with that.

Wallace: Correct.

(25:02) Interviewer: Did he tell you about his feelings upon the end of the war, when the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan?

Wallace: He did not, but we were with my father—And as I shared earlier with you today—one of the guest speakers at one of the reunions in North Carolina—Fontana, North Carolina, was the bombardier of the Enola Gay. And his name was Colonel Thomas Ferebee. And so, we literally heard this story about how the atomic bomb was made. The direct contact between the Enola Gay and the President of the United States. The president literally wanted to know what the target site looked like. Was there any clouds? Was there a clear observation? [makes hand gesture] Because he wanted a direct report of what was the outcome of that. The thing I had not known, and perhaps many citizens don't know—Hiroshima and Nagasaki were not the only two target sites. There were multiple target sites because had one not been available to drop the bomb, then they would have to move to another site. And the interesting thing that caught my father's attention—[makes hand gesture] And Colonel Ferebee identified various sites. One was Niigata, Japan, which is the prison camp where my father was at. And from what I've been told, Niigata is in very close proximity to Tokyo. But he did talk about the shapes of the bomb; How they had gone from a small barrel size to an elongated bomb. So that was fascinating, and to watch my father react to that was interesting to me. And I think one of the other experiences I think was interesting for me—[makes hand gesture] In 1983, my wife and I were married, and one of the gifts that she gave me was a *Life* magazine collection from March/April 1945. [makes hand gesture] These were discarded by the library at Georgia Southern University. [makes hand gesture] So, I have it in a bound volume. And so, my father came and took Lana and I out to dinner one night, and I said, "I have a surprise for you Dad. I want you to look at *Life* magazine from when you were over—a prisoner of war or immediately after your release." [makes hand gesture] And he sat there on the sofa for about an hour, and just to watch him read through or flip through and see not only the stories, but the advertisements and those kinds of things. [makes hand gesture] It's like this was the first time he had ever seen these materials, and to watch the reaction on his face—. He said during his time of imprisonment, he received one package from the American Red Cross, and what it had was 13 letters and I think some candy bars or things like that. So, that was the only mail that they ever got. And to keep up with what was going on in the world prior to their surrender to the Japanese, they would listen to the American radio: *Voice of America*. And so, he talked about that, and that's literally how they found out about Pearl Harbor. And so, he knew

from that point on that it was going to be challenging. But he didn't get many, if any, but that one package from the American Red Cross. And the one thing that I will never forget—. The last question asked of my father is: Was it worth it? And—[tears up with emotion]. I apologize. He said that to have the freedom that we have in this country, it was worth it. And when asked if he would do it again, he said if it would protect the freedom that we as citizens experience today [makes hand gesture], he would do it again. I don't know that we appreciate the freedoms that we have, or the sacrifice that has been made to ensure that each of us can do what we're doing today [makes hand gesture]. Say what we wish to say; Read what we wish to read. That's why individuals wish to come to this country. I truly believe it's the greatest country in the world, [makes hand gesture] and we have traveled extensively. There are lovely people throughout this world, and I feel honored and blessed, along with my wife, to have met these individuals. Kind people everywhere. But when I read and know what he went through, to say for freedom risking one's life is worth it, [makes hand gesture] that resonates with me. And that's something I shall never ever forget. Growing up, my father as a minister never saw one activity that I was in. And the reason I bring that up—. It was his dedication to his parish, his church, those types of things. He would preach every Sunday, every Wednesday. He would go visit people in hospitals. On Saturday, he visited all day. So, he never saw any sporting events or anything that I did, but I know that he loved my sister and me and his commitment to others. And I know that he loved my wife. So, somethings you don't have to say. You just know that it's there. And to me, he was a man of honor. And I thank you for allowing me to share his story today. And I did bring a book called *Death March* that was written by Donald Knox. And Donald Knox interviewed 200 survivors and put 65 of their stories in this book. My father's story is one that was in here, and there literally are pictures of him from when he was a prisoner of war. I think the other thing was the lack of food, water, and the cold. They were given one blanket, [makes hand gesture] and they were put in an open-air arena. They were told—this is a story my father shared with me—that if any of you try to escape, we will put you in a group of 10, we will make you dig literally a hole or a trench, and then we will shoot all 10 of you, and have 10 other people cover your bodies. [makes hand gesture] And my father talked about that while on the Bataan Death March, individuals who died quite often—There were trenches. Or once they were under Japanese authority, if individuals died—literally they would die from travel on ships, travel on trains, those types of things—they literally would dig trenches, put the individuals in there, and cover them with dirt. So, years later, they remembered where these were, and they put crosses there to honor the family members and the members of the ones who had not survived. And I think that's probably something Mr. Knox said that resonated with me as well. They tell their story to remember those who did not come back. It's not to

identify themselves or request to be identified as a hero, as much as it is to remember an individual who fought by them, side by side, and to honor them and their families. So, when I said he was a man of honor and integrity, he was, and he instilled that in us—to treat others the way you wish to be treated. So, that's been my focus.

(33:43) Interviewer: Yeah. Absolutely. Did he meet your mother when he was in seminary?

Wallace: No. They went to school together. My mother was from Millen, Georgia, and my mother was his high school sweetheart. So, when he returned from prison camp, what he did was he reconnected with my mother, and they married almost immediately upon return. So, they were married— Good Lord—45 or 50 years. I don't know the exact number. But my mother, like I said, lived to be age 96, and my father passed away in '95. So, she passed away this past year, or this year.

(34:31) Interviewer: And what was her name?

Wallace: Her name was Mary Dickey Wallace. But I can remember the love that they had for each other. My dad was awarded the Bronze Star at Warner-Robbins Air Force Base, and we attended that ceremony. And to see the pride in my father's face, and just the smile on his face, with his family there and my mother there—. That was really really important to us as a family. And the other thing a lot of folks may not recognize. My father was also awarded a Prisoner of War Medal, and that was approved by President Ronald Reagan when he was president. That anyone who was or had been a prisoner of war would be awarded a prisoner of war medal. And Congressman Roy Rowland, from Dublin, awarded that to my father in January, before he passed away in February. So, my father had his Prisoner of War Medal for one month before he passed away.

(35:46) Interviewer: That must have been both a—. Did he talk about how that made him feel to get that medal?

Wallace: He did. He was always grateful to the president, particularly President Reagan, for having recognized the importance of that to those who had served and to their families. He had to apply to receive the medal, as did everyone. They had to be able to document that they had served, or they had been a prisoner of war. And he did that, and according to his interview earlier, in December it was approved almost immediately. It was awarded in January, and then he passed away. But he was always grateful to President Reagan, and my father, I know, was not a long-term Republican. He had grown up in an era in which Democrats

basically were in the presidency during that time. But party affiliation had nothing to do with that. And for that, I'm grateful to President Reagan for having recognized that as well.

(37:03) Interviewer: Now I know that you brought his metal, his Bronze Star with you.

Wallace: I did.

Interviewer: Would you be willing to show that for the camera?

Wallace: I would, if that would be agreeable with you. I did not bring the medal itself, but I did bring the plaque and award. And this was made—.

Interviewer: Where should he hold that up so that the camera can see it?

Film Crew: In front of his face.

Wallace: This was awarded by the Department of Air Force.

Interviewer: Can you hold that up in front of your face after you explain it?

Wallace: I will.

Interviewer: That would be great. Thank you.

Wallace: [Holds up award] This is the outside cover, [opens award] and this is the inside cover of the award itself. And what the citation says, if I may read that for you [puts down award]. It says: "Citation to accompany the award of the Bronze Star Medal to William H. Wallace. Staff Sergeant William H. Wallace distinguished himself by meritorious achievement during combat while serving in the Southwest Pacific Theatre of operations between 7 December 1941 to 10 May 1942. The actions of Sergeant Wallace were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect distinctive credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Air Force." And then the other thing I brought, just so you—[holds up program] you probably can't read this, but this literally is the autograph of the bombardier of the Enola Gay, Colonel Thomas Ferebee.

Interviewer: [undecipherable] Thank you.

Wallace:

Up? [Lifts program higher] Okay. And this also is the program that every year would be held. It's called Bataan Corregidor Veterans Reunion, and this was at Fontana, North Carolina. So, I got to meet a lot of the folks, and I have even photographs of my dad with other, I guess, fellow servicemen that he had experienced this with. And I guess the thing that just really touched my heart—. In each of these photographs, they're holding hands. It's not that they got arms wrapped around each other, or there standing straight up, but they're literally holding hands. And it might only be two or three of them together, but the sense of brotherhood, the sense of sharing—. And like I said, they would talk to each other, whereas they would not talk with you or me. My father would never tell you what he experienced. It just was not appropriate, in his opinion, to discuss that in company other than those who knew what he had experienced. So, when you asked me about the officers earlier, his feelings about that, I don't think that he would ever state this, but there was some disappointment that some of them had fled to safety while leaving some under their command at risk. And that's not true of everybody, but some of those, he felt that way. The other interesting person we met at one of these reunions—and I have his autograph as a matter of fact—is a pilot named Pappy Boyington. If you ever saw *Black Sheep Squadron* that was on television that was about these individuals who flew in the Marine Corps and fought the Japanese. They were called Black Sheep Squadron. We literally got to meet Pappy Boyington, and I have his autograph as well. So, every year they try to have a keynote speaker come in that could relate to the men and the women who had incurred or experienced this, so—.

(41:01) Interviewer:

What were your earliest memories of your father before you knew about all of this experience?

Wallace:

To be honest with you, probably at Christmas. I can remember Christmas presents. And I probably was 5 or 6 years old, something like that. My sister—. And see him sitting in his recliner. My mother would fix breakfast. And just the four of us sharing Christmas together is something that I'll always remember. And the other thing is when we got married for him to participate in our wedding was very very meaningful to me. And to watch his friendship with Lana's parents, and that bond. The four of them were very very close, and it's just meaningful. Like I said, growing up, probably what I remember most is once I had gone to college because my dad was the first to receive an undergraduate degree in our family. [makes hand gesture] I was the first to receive a master's degree. So, him attending graduation. [makes hand gesture] Lana was the first to get an undergraduate, masters, and a doctorate. So higher education was a pathway for each of us to move from our place in life and to accomplish and achieve what we wanted to. But I guess the other tender moment for

me is when I was looking back at the pictures of when he was awarded the Bronze Star. To see the smile on his face. And I guess the last memory was not a pleasant memory, but it's the one I can see—. My father basically had rheumatoid arthritis so severe that he became completely immobile. So, [makes hand gesture] he basically was restricted to either a bed or to a recliner, and to see Representative Rowland awarding him the Prisoner of War Medal—. And my dad had oxygen on at that time [gesture to face]. But the meaning of being there and witnessing that, it was meaningful to me, and I'm very very proud of him.

(43:28) Interviewer: What lessons do you think your father would want to impart to students of history?

Wallace: [makes hand gesture] There's always consequences for actions or inactions. I think his message truly would be what I said earlier: Treat others as you would wish to be treated. Higher education is important. Any type of education, whether it be technical college, whatever the case may be. Take advantage of opportunities that you have. And it doesn't matter if people know your name or not. [makes hand gesture] A kind deed is something that will be observed by someone else who you may not recognize, and maybe they integrate that into their life and pass that on. So, how we treat people, either kindly, or if we treat them unkind, someone's always watching and paying attention. But I truly believe he was a man of God, and his faith was important to him, and how we treat others, I think. He valued freedom. Don't ever take freedom for granted, if I had to say another message of his. So that's what I believe he would share.

(45:02) Interviewer: And you, as the son of a veteran and a survivor of the POW camps in Japan and the Bataan Death March, what do you think is the most important lessons that students should take from studying World War II and the Holocaust today?

Wallace: I think the same thing I just shared there, but the thing that concerns me too often is that we don't learn lessons. We had the Vietnam War after that, and that was my era and my generation [makes hand gesture]. And we have war continuing today. We need to sit down and have dialogue, but we need to have more than dialogue. I became Associate Vice Chancellor for Human Resources for the board of regents for the University System of Georgia. I've served for every governor in some capacity from Zell Miller through the present governor. So, I've served on many many task forces, [makes hand gesture] and my thing is that we should do more than just talk. [makes hand gesture] We should have

action. [makes hand gesture] We should look at results. [makes hand gesture] We should look at impact. Anyone can talk, but at the end of the day, did we change anything? [makes hand gesture] Did we improve anything? And so that's what I'm looking at this current generation and the future generation. And they're different from when I came through. [makes hand gesture] The texting, the technology, those types of things, are things with which I'm unfamiliar. And I've not adopted those, and I've not adopted them intentionally. [makes hand gesture] I'd much prefer to do what I'm doing with you. I'd rather talk one-on-one and watch a person's face and their reaction because I can gauge that. I can't gauge what a text message is. To often we become so enthralled with that, we don't see what's going on around us [makes hand gesture]. So, I would say pause. Talk with your fellow classmate. Talk with your teacher. Volunteer. [makes hand gesture] How many people know what it's like to be homeless? We have a homelessness awareness week here at Kennesaw State University, but how many people have literally gone out on Highway 41 and seen individuals giving them clothes, giving them food, giving them shelter? We had a pop-up thrift store last year, at the Marietta Campus, and we did that. We provided clothing. We provided food. And what was interesting—some of the young students had never had a suit in their life. [makes hand gesture] So, I took 4 or 5 of my old suits, and these young men—. I said, "I'd like for you to take a suit because if you go on a job interview, appearance is going to have an impact. And so, if you have a suit and a tie [makes hand gesture], it's going to leave a better impression than if you don't." What we found was that a Greyhound bus stop ends at the campus there, and many of the individuals who get off are hungry and homeless. They need shelter. They need food. So, [makes hand gesture] if I were to say I were a student here, why not volunteer with CARE center? [makes hand gesture] Why not go over to the Marietta Campus? [makes hand gesture] I will promise you, there are students on this campus who are homeless. You may not believe it, but there are. [makes hand gesture] They'll use the gymnasium to take a shower in. They'll stay in the library for heat. [makes hand gesture] They'll stay in parking garages and grab a nap, or something like that. So always be aware of your fellow student. Be aware of employees on the campus. The staff. Many are at risk. All of us are. We don't realize how close we are sometimes. But just a kind deed I think would be of great benefit.

(49:23) Interviewer: So, you've shared some wonderful stories and wisdom. Is there anything you'd like to talk about that I haven't asked you about yet?

Wallace: No, other than I'm honored to have been asked to be interviewed. [makes hand gesture towards wife] My wife, Lana, and I have been married 35 years. We were here at Kennesaw State University. I think the thing I'm

most proud of, one of the things I'm most proud of here—We've created the Triumph Scholarship. And what that is it's a scholarship available for anyone who has been homeless at some point in his or her life. [makes hand gesture] They can apply for this through the foundation, and it covers their cost, I believe, of tuition from freshman all the way through. And so, we do that. We also have a scholarship we created at Georgia Southern, and that helps—it did originally single mothers to be able to secure their degree, but now it's a sociology major. And the other organization that we work with is called Orange Duffel Bag, and that's for homeless and foster kids who are attending technical college or a University System of Georgia institution. If they should be at risk—let's say they might have to drop out of college because they don't have sufficient money. Maybe they don't have money for food. Maybe they don't have money to commute, or whatever. They can apply to our emergency fund, and we will provide funding so they can stay in school and complete their degree. Our first one was a single mother of three children.

Lana Wallace: [coughing]

Wallace: And, here Lana, here's some water [passes water bottle]. —Was a single mother with three children whose generator went out during the winter. So, for 600 dollars, she got a generator, was able to complete her education. [makes hand gesture] And they have programs that prepare students to go to technical school or higher ed. So, we provide funding of 200 dollars per student that graduate through this program to help them as they move forward. [makes hand gesture] So those are the three things I'm most proud of.

Film Crew: Oh, excuse me, do you need to leave. [undecipherable]

Lana Wallace: [Coughing] Yeah.

Interviewer: That's okay. I was just going to conclude. Thank you. Thank you very much for sharing your story with us today.

Wallace: Your very—. Thank you for honoring my wife, me, my father, my mother, my family by doing this. And the military. Thank you for doing that.

Interviewer: We're honored.

Wallace:

Thank you.