

Interviewer: Tell me your name.

Killingsworth: Hugh Killingsworth. Hugh Praytor Killingsworth. I was born in Aliceville Alabama it's in Pickens County in 1920. It was a little small town of Aliceville there was about 1800 to 2000 people. Of course you knew everybody. And growing up I worked at the theater and played sports both baseball and football. Weighted 150 pounds and after graduating from high school I went to state teachers college in Livingston Alabama which is now West Alabama University of West Alabama. And I worked at the theater at night went to school in the morning and played baseball and football in the afternoon. And after two years of that I measured cotton in the summertime when I was in Livingston to help pay my schooling and from there transferred over to Auburn all the way across the state. And at that time we hitchhiked both ways and no problem we had our ROTC uniform on. Just stick your thumb up and people picked you up no problem, can't do that today, not at all. But I was there and the war broke out in December the 7th 1941 and the draft board was after me even though I was in school they said you are going anyways. I went over to Montgomery and took the exam and passed it. They said go home and we'll call you, everything was full. Maxwell Field was full of cadets' future cadets and those type. So I went back home and then I was called March the 17th, come back to Montgomery and they swore me in as private, go home we'll call you. So in June I got a Western Union to report to Hattiesburg Mississippi Army base. And they didn't know what to do with a cadet even though I was a private at that time but a future cadet. And so finally about three or four days they put me on a train to San Antonio Texas. To go from one base to another we always traveled on a train and it would take you forever that switching back and forth and coal burning stoves on the train. But anyway we got to San Antonio the processing center where we took a battery of test and they classified us as either pilot, navigator, or bombardier. And fortunately I classified as a pilot. And the next week after that I went up on the hill at the time which is now Lakeland Airforce Base and they had just built it and there was mud no walkways or anything between the buildings. And as a private I was getting \$21 a month and a meal ticket. And when I went into the cadets I got a big pay raise \$75 a month.

Interviewer: What, that is good.

Killingsworth: And so after six weeks of training not training but physically of preflight I went to _____ at Hatbox Field in Muscogee Oklahoma and it was a civilian school and graduated from there and went to Waco which the army school for basic. And graduated from there and went to anyway a check and advance another base in Texas. And graduated from cadets as second lieutenant in January 1943. My first assignment was Long Beach California where I was assigned to the ferry command which ferried aircraft from factory schools training schools factory to port for shipments overseas. And at that time being straight out of cadets I was co-pilot all the time. And after about three months there I was transferred to Ronalds Michigan just outside of Detroit to a base there which was a ferry command. And from there started ferrying aircraft on my own started with light aircraft and between aircraft. And then after about six months I was sent to Palm Springs California where I got checked out in the P40, P39, P51, and the P47 all in 30 days. And after graduating from there I was flying different aircraft. We would maybe go to Long Beach and pick up a P51 take it to New York or Norfolk for shipment overseas. We'd go out and pick up a P47 and take it to Florida for school. And we actually lived out of our briefcase sometimes as much as 30 days at a time without going back to the base. And at that time the ferry pilots had a priority two for the airlines so we could get back to the base and several times civilian passengers were kicked off to put the pilots on to go back. And after flying those and the P39s were flown to Montana and from Montana to Alaska for the Russians because the P39 had a 37 millimeter cannon in those and the Russians loved those against tanks. And after oh almost two years of flying those I was checked out in transport the C47s which was originally DC3 aircraft twin engine. And after I got checked

in that they checked me out in a C46 which was an aircraft that carried twice as much as the C47. And after I graduated from that we went got orders for overseas and of course we really didn't know where we were going. And in the meantime I had gone through survival training and PW training where we had to survive and we were sequestered just like a PW in a PW camp. And they threw out the little tin box out in the dessert where the sun was shining and they questioned trying to get information out and of course name, rank, and serial number was what we were supposed to stick with that, not give out any information. But that was just for preparation for going overseas. But after we got orders we went to Miami and from Miami we went to Bermuda we were flying on a C54 at that time taking us over. And after we got in the airplane we could open our orders and it was to India. And we went across North Africa in the Karachi up in the Assam Valley. And the Assam Valley is up in the northeast corner of India, north of _____. And it was Burma, China, and India all up in there. And they had several bases they were flying over there and I was assigned to _____. And the first few flights we had mechanical problems, turned around and came back because the C46 was such a new aircraft the test pilot came over to India still testing the aircraft. We had problems they called it the plumbers nightmare with so much hydraulic leaks. But we would carry our primary cargo was 55 gallon drums of gasoline. We could get 23 drums in the C46 and of course you couldn't get out you'd have to crawl over the barrels to get out. But anyway we flew to different bases in China but the fuel most of the time was in support of the Flying Tigers. And the other cargo as my logbook shows was everything you could think of that we'd carry over there. And weather was our big worry over there and our problems. The last bombing of the Japanese into _____ was in Christmas of 44 and they got into their belly got into traffic pattern with their C46 and bombed their runway. And the Chinese maybe 1000 or 2000 Chinese they would repair that runway over night. And the Chinese has a suspicion that dragons were after them. And may of times little Chinese had these little carts that would dash out across the runway so it carefully would get that dragon that was following them. And sometimes some of them didn't make it. But getting back to the bombing of _____ that night, a lot of the boys I wasn't in _____ at night but they tell me that they all run for the ditch and that ditch happened to be a sewer. And later on after that we always like to go to China we could get eggs, we couldn't get eggs in India. But those eggs in China they'd probably been buried for years. You'd land and you could smell the sulfur but we ate them, we were glad to get them. But the one night I had a new co-pilot and he had his first trip over the _____ and we were in icing conditions. We had to shuttle back and forth in the Assam Valley 10,000 feet to go across the first ridge from separated India and Burma. And then we could go out on our route to go we would fly over to China at 15,500 feet and we'd come back the northern over 20,000 because the mountains were much higher over there. And we lost so many aircraft they called it the aluminum trail from India into China just follow the airplane crashes. But this one night the 6th and 7th of 1945 we lost 17 aircraft in one night from our base due to weather. Our normal daily winds were 240 to 260 at about 40 knots so this one night it shifted around to the south at over 100 knots and being icing conditions and it was all up into mountains 22 to 23,000 feet. Some made it and some didn't but some of them that made it were so far off course they had to fly an hour due south to get into their base and some of them that recognized they had the wind, some of them didn't realize what was going on because they were flying and drifting north. But those that did corrected and made it into the base alright.

Interviewer: How many different planes did you fly in World War II do you know?

Killingsworth: Oh the different bases over there

Interviewer: No how many different planes how many different kinds of planes?

Killingsworth: Oh planes, I flew my career I flew 23 but during War World II I ferried the fighters and small light C5s, L2s, L5s and the fighters and I co-piloted the B17, B24, B26s as a co-pilot before I got checked out in those aircraft.

Interviewer: Since we're talking about it, how long did you remain in the service?

Thirty years it was actually 28 years of duty because I got credit for reserve time was I was back finishing school so I retired as a Lieutenant colonel. Back to flying the hump this one night as a new co-pilot we were in icing conditions over Burma and the ice would go off the props we'd use deicing on the props and chunks of ice would come off and the sides of the aircraft were just dented with ice on it. And the wings some of them had boots for it to help crack the ice but most of them didn't. But this one night I was icing up and the ice this new co-pilot the carburetor heated to get the ice out of the carburetors they were beginning engines to cut out and I lost both engines and now we were above oh about 50,000 feet. And I told the crew I said if we don't get our engine back and break out of the icy conditions at 15,000 feet we are going to leave the aircraft. And so fortunately we did break out but the mountains were right off my wingtip. So after getting out of the icy conditions we were able to get our engines back and made our delivery. And another time going over I called in over Parisian at BFR over top and ____ said condition on course BFR over top and the clouds kept climbing. And I got up to 29,000 feet and I was a service center for the aircraft but got over ____ and they said you can't land you have to go to Luann we have 30 aircraft below you trying to get in. So I flew over Luann which is about 100 miles east of ____ and I turned and came back and that thunderstorm was over _____. And I went through the thunderstorm and the aircraft had a deck in the nose and I got snow in my cockpit for a while there until we broke out of that. And that load I had a load of penicillin on board and we had to land at ____ there and when the weather broke we went back over to our base. And that was there and we had a we always kidded one another we had a load our cargo was kotex and we always kidded said that was for Madam Shanks girls school. But really they were oil filters for the P40s they couldn't get oil filters and they used kotex for the oil filter.

Interviewer: Was maintenance a big problem?

Killingsworth: They did but they did a wonderful job with practically nothing over there. But the transport finally had set up red ball flights all the way from the states to bring in parts and it would take about two weeks so we could get parts for some of the airplanes. But one night General Turner took over command and he wanted to make an impression so we stood down for 12 hours got all the aircraft in commission loaded. And we were going to see how much we could carry across the hump in a 12 hour period, a 24 hour period. And from my base we had 75 aircraft and we made 120 trips over the hump that day. Some of the airplane had to make two trips. And recreation over there it wasn't too much we had a hospital farther up the valley that had nurses and sometimes they'd have a dance and we could go. But the trucks me personally over there while I was in high school and all and working in the theater and all the owner of the theater I played baseball for him in the summer time and all and who did I run upon in India was my old boss.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Killingsworth: He was a captain at a unit of black truck drivers who were driving trucks over a little road over the Burma bowl into China and we would bring they would leave the truck in China and we would bring fly the truck drivers back into India for another trip. And we all some of the loads at some of the bases there never got to where they were going because they would go right off the base take the

whole cargo up in the hills. And we had a sidearm if got off the aircraft we had a side arm because communist were right outside of the bases of most of them over there at that time.

Interviewer: How many over your 30 year career how many hours did you log?

Killingsworth: Well I had over the hump I had 750 hours. It was when they first started flying the hump they made 23 trips to come home and they were flying C47s over there and then they got the airplanes and then they increased it to 750 hours. And in that 750 hours I had 97 round trips and then came back and we had our commander for the base had been a reserve colonel flying for United Aircraft and he took the aircraft base to the state. But I came back on a C54 because that was North Africa back to the states and when I got back to the states I was assigned to Memphis. And from Memphis they sent me to Love Field in Dallas Texas for air transport command it wasn't the ferry command anymore but they had reclassified it as air transport ATC and flew they had a regular schedule for flights around the country to different bases. And I did that for oh six months and then went to the war was winding down and they let the pilots go and they transferred me to Topeka Kansas getting ready to get out. So I was there for about maybe six months and while I was there to keep me busy they made me assistant cub officer. And they gave me an MOS of mess officer and so after that was my trip from there I called Nashville to my girlfriend who I corresponded with all the time I was in India and told her that I was coming through Nashville and I'd like to see her. And she said sorry she and her girlfriend were going to Miami and I said I'll see y'all in Miami because fortunately that aircraft was going on to Miami. So anyway I had all my flying gear and everything with and after a week in Florida I ended up with the girlfriend. And I liked just one semester finishing up at Auburn I went back to Auburn and all that time I was at Auburn I got on a train and come to Nashville to see the new girlfriend and after that on her birthday that was in September and in February I asked her to marry me and I graduated from Auburn the 8th of June and I married her the 28th of June in ____ Tennessee. And she was the only child and after graduation there I went the boss in India the owner of the theaters told me I could have a job with him. So I managed the estate in his hometown in Utah Alabama and his family his mother and father were there looking over my shoulder. And so 18 months of that I said I just can't put up with it and I applied and came back in service for the Berlin Airlift. So when I got to Germany to the classification center there SAC was opening up new bases in England and they were trying to get personnel for those bases. And having screened my record they saw I was a mess officer so I was sent over to England and I spent about two months in London they had quarters there and was at Eisenhower's old headquarters. And from there they sent me up to ____ up over in ____ and it was a new base and no outfit had ever been in there and it was built for the French training during the war but they had airman quarters there the British were there. They had I don't know a couple of hundred people and the king and the staff. And we had Americans they set the base up for TDY American bombers at first B29s and then later on we had the B47s come in there and spend 30 days at the base. And while I was over there well went over to Switzerland my wife and I for vacation and we were there that whole group went over and while we were in Switzerland the Korean War broke out and I had a daughter who was born in Alabama and she came over and was six months old. We lived there on the base in airman's quarters while we were in Switzerland my wife she had to get back to England they were going to bomb our base but anyway I told her wait we're going in two days anyway we got back and they hadn't bombed our base we got back on time.

Interviewer: I was wondering when you were flying the hump did you come in contact with a lot of soldiers from different places or just mainly Americans and Chinese?

Killingsworth: Just Americans I didn't get any of the British. Of course the British were in charge of India at that time. It was that was in 47 was when India broke off from the British.

Interviewer: So you didn't have a lot of contact with the British?

Killingsworth: No

Interviewer: And when you flew into China was it Americans on the other end or was it Chinese what you would deliver?

Killingsworth: Well most of it was just Americans because we didn't stay in China we offloaded our cargo and turned right around and fly back.

Interviewer: Then how long would you have before you had to fly back?

Killingsworth: Well it was about 500 miles one way and we were maybe on the ground an hour to two hours and then we'd turn right around can go back.

Interviewer: How much time did have between like missions?

Killingsworth: Oh we'd fly practically every day if

Interviewer: Weather

Killingsworth: But we'd go back after we got back from one mission at that time they'd give us combat whiskey. We'd get a shot of guggenheimer and sometimes we'd save up our check they'd give us a check if we didn't take the whiskey at that time until we got enough for a bottle. Then we'd have a party.

Interviewer: So you had no heat did you when you'd be flying at those heights in your plane.

Killingsworth: No heat we wore a heavy coat the heat wasn't very good in those airplanes.

Interviewer: Right, how much do you think the clothes you wore weighted? You got any idea about how much the clothes that you had to ware weighted? Were they heavy?

Killingsworth: Yeah they were heavy. But sometime we would pick up medal special in China and bring it back I don't know what was needed for manufacturing on there. It was but we'd bring back and then we'd fly just passenger some flights were just passengers. So after continuing with my service there back in the states. And going back into SAC of course SAC had quarters there I was three years in England supporting TDY bombers coming in of course they were all dispersed. And when some of the times a squadron would come into the base to ____ they'd still divert them over to Whales for somewhere else just as a precaution didn't know what was going on. But after going after three years in England I wasn't to McGill Air force Base in Tampa Florida. And in mess halls we had 17 mess halls at that time we had two the 305th and the 306th bomb wing B47s and every squadron had their own mess hall. I had about 250 or 300 in my squadron running the mess hall and also an inflight kitchen where we'd make up lunches for the flights when they'd go out on flights. In fact I think that was where the first got the idea of frozen dinners because that's what we did. We'd make it up one night and freeze it and boys they'd give us their menu. We'd show them a menu and they'd select what they wanted and we'd fix it up for them and freeze it and they had a little microwave oven in the airplane. Which that's where the microwave oven came from was in the flying for their crews. And from after three years at Tampa I was transferred to Little Rock Arkansas that was a new base. And I opened up that base with the mess hall

and there was no housing or anything on the base. The enlisted had to stay at an army camp about 20 miles away until they built a, and I was there for three years and I went to command staff school Montgomery. In Montgomery I requested to get back on flying status and so I was assigned to Spokane Washington and when I got there I approve co-pilot on B52 until I got checked out had to go down to California for training Merced California. And after my two years there I was transferred to Merced as a instructor over training. We put the flight simulator on training and we would travel take the training to the different bases. And a pilot would go to the base and give training for 30 days at the time. And in fact I was in Little Rock no, where was I was at ____ when Kennedy was killed. And the way I found out that I was in ____ at the base schedule for training in the flight simulator and he didn't show up and I called and they said he won't be there President Kennedy just got shot. And of course that upset everyone.

Interviewer: Did you fly in Korea or no?

Killingsworth: What

Interviewer: Did you fly in Korea or no? In Korea

Killingsworth: No I didn't fly.

Interviewer: You didn't

Killingsworth: And the SAC had the after nine years doing flight simulator and working in the command post and then training head of training they sent me to ____ they make you transfer from warm climate to cold climate. So ____ was in upper Michigan just south of the Lake Ontario up there. And I got there in October it was snowing and I said I'm done. I asked for overseas and I spent one year there and the day I left it was snowing. And that year we had at least four feet of snow and we had more snow, I was operations officer head of operation training there and we had so much snow equipment than the rest of all SAC put together.

Interviewer: I guess you needed it like that.

Killingsworth: And the drive on the base we put a flag on the top of the antenna so you could drive around because snow was built up so you could see cars coming. And after a year of that I had to volunteer for Vietnam. And so I got checked out in the C130s and after being training with C130s I transfer, I left my family in California when I went to upper Michigan. So I said well I can't leave them again so I took the family and we lived on Okinawa and I was there 26 months flying in and out of Okinawa. And then we put 30 days in country ____ and then I checked out on the went into ____ Thailand and I was flying blind bat. There was a black airplane we would fly with no lights on board and we would have a night scope in the rear door and the navigators would pick up lights from trucks on the Hachiman Trail and we would call it Navy fighters to bomb. And we would circle to direct air fire and almost every night we had attack we were flying 3,000 feet. And when the moon was up and it was cloudy and we were just spotted up there just like a mirror up there they would see us because we were up against the clouds but it was light enough the moon was up above. And then we flared for in addition to picking up trucks we flared for troops fighting in _____. And we would drop flares they were fighting at night and drop and then we would pick up maybe enemy attack or so we'd call and notify them down there that an attack was coming in from a different direction. And that was ____ embassy in ____ one night we picked up it was a hanger it was a large building anyway and they had a fuel truck sitting out

and we called in of course you couldn't bomb anything without permission. And we called in and they said no don't bomb that, that's ours. And got close enough to ____ that we picked up Sam signals you know the missiles they were using to shoot down our aircraft. As soon as we picked up the signal of course we turned around and got out of the way.

Interviewer: How do you feel, what was the difference in your experience in World War II and Vietnam?

Killingsworth: No comparison but still flying aircraft. The weather was flying the hump was weather and of course the enemy in Vietnam shooting at you.

Interviewer: What do you think can you is it comparable or if you had to do it again would there be one that you would choose? Flying the hump or Vietnam is the weather or man?

Killingsworth: I don't know but we were all so young then. But I had a total of 713 combat missions and 7,000 total hours. And I had DFC three DFCs and five air medics.

Interviewer: You flew how many different kind of planes how many did you clear?

Killingsworth: Do what?

Interviewer: How many different kinds of planes did you fly?

Killingsworth: Twenty three different aircraft.

Interviewer: Twenty three

Killingsworth: I was either pilot or co-pilot. But some of the bases there we would have to come and in and descend about 4,000 feet because the enemy was all around the base. We'd almost have to come straight down and land. And but above ____ in the DMZ up there went in one they wouldn't turn the lights on there and we landed in the dark they put a truck at the end of the runway with the lights on and of course we turned on the aircraft lights. And the navigator got me lined up with the runway and we went in. But there was a lot of experiences. Up on the hill we'd pick up fresh vegetables and take them to the different bases and we'd haul ammo from one base to the other. The worst flight that I had was after midnight going around the different bases and picking up KIAs killed in action. And that was rough too. And then on Okinawa went through a typhoon and of course I was out taking aircraft in ____ and my wife and son were left on Okinawa and the homes there was cement block. And that water would come through that block and just ruin our rugs and everything.

Interviewer: I bet that was quite an experience for your wife being from ____ Tennessee and being in Okinawa by herself with a kid a baby.

Killingsworth: So after we were shutting down everything I had in Thailand I had just finished up a 30 day on the Hachiman Trail. And I got back to Okinawa and she called me the next morning and said Hugh we lost an airplane and crew it was shot down last night and you're going to have to go back and kill the enemies. So I had to go back for another 30 days so it became 60 days I had 120 days of flying out of Thailand. And then about almost that many flying in and out of Vietnam. But I one day I made ten different ____ ten take off and land at different bases carrying stuff from one base to the other. And

some of the runways was 1500 to 1700 feet and we had to land and take off. But there was it was kind of fun flying.

Interviewer: It was?

Killingsworth: Uh huh but in Vietnam it was because I wasn't shot at in Vietnam like I was down the Hachiman Tail. But we were shutting down over there and they transferred some of the aircraft to the Tennessee National Guard and so I came back ferrying aircraft from Okinawa to the Tennessee National Guard that was that first aircraft the C130A model the first ones. And while I was delivering aircraft I came to Tullahoma to see my wife's mother and she had an aunt Geneva Holt here in Tullahoma so I came down to see them. And the while I was here I said I'm up for reassignment to the states I said I'm calling out there at that base to see if they've got an opening and they said yes we just lost our operations officer, they had an airplane out there at that time a B29. And said it was reassigned to Saudi Arabia said come out for an interview. So I went out for an interview for all the commanders and said give us and they the first general Randolph and right there at the Pentagon and got permission and said call us tomorrow morning before you leave to go back to Okinawa we'll let you know something. So I called and they said you got the assignment so my wife Mattie got the word back at Okinawa before I got back. She was out at the golf course and some of the girls said oh Mattie have you heard Hugh got his assignment Tullahoma Tennessee, where is that? And she told me said I married you to get out of Tennessee and here you are taking me back. But anyway we made it so that's how I got to Tullahoma in my service. I was serving as operations officer and then they got rid of the airplane and I went up to engineer ____ to _____ before my retirement. And while I was out there see my 25th wedding anniversary we had it there at the base and one

Interviewer: Here's a picture of when you met your wife.

Killingsworth: That was the first me when I met my wife and the girl that I wrote while I was in India.

Interviewer: I wanted to ask you about technological advances in aircraft.

Killingsworth: Okay

Interviewer: Can you explain the technological advances that you witnessed like the difference between an aircraft that was flying in World War II one that was flying in Korea one that

Killingsworth: Well of course they were all propeller airplanes in World War II there and it wasn't I mean the B47s which I didn't fly. The first jet I got check out in the B52s so I made 17 24 hour missions in the 52s.

Interviewer: What did you fly then in the B52s? Where were you flying the B52?

Killingsworth: Well the training we had of course we made one flight a month which was an 8 hour flight. But when the Cuban Crises or the Middle East Crises we had 6 aircraft for our base in the air at all times. And the timing was such if we landed after a mission our replacement would take right off. So it was a touch and go situation the Cuban Crises and the Middle East Crises. Of course I ended up with bad ears that's why I ended up with hearing aids because of the jet noises and APUs on the airplane the APU they used before they could start the aircraft.

Interviewer: The evolution of war with airplanes was pretty amazing wouldn't you say?

Killingsworth: Yes it was and the development of it advanced so much from 1942 until I got out and just no comparison to the aircraft as of sophistication. The B52 they were beginning to put terrain avoidance in it and you could watch it there and keep from over the hill of course the B52s had different mission some were lower level. And the terrain avoidance would tell you there's a hill coming up and you could go up and avoid it. And of course I survived all of that.

Interviewer: You loved it didn't you? Did you love it?

Killingsworth: Huh

Interviewer: You loved it didn't you?

Killingsworth: I did I had a wonderful career and I wouldn't just do it over again I would. But the service has changed so much since then and that's why I'm here right now telling and you asking me what I did.

Interviewer: Well I want to thank you for your service to our country.

Killingsworth: Thank you glad to give my experience.

Interviewer: Showing medals and such on the camera. This is the article written about you in Chinese?

Killingsworth: Uh huh. This is the name and his wife. (Looking at pictures) That's where all the bases in India they were level that's where they plant tea plantations. We had to pay the British for every tea plant we dug up and they had to pay the British for every man stationed in India and every time we took off we had to pay the British.