**Wayne Collins** (00:00): I grew up in Mineola, Texas. It was a farming town. There were small farms all around the community. 10 to 20 60-acre farms. It was a big farm. And everybody came to town on Saturday. It was a cotton area. We had a compress here. They sold cotton and it was a farming area. And my dad started off in the cleaning business, tailoring business. And from there, he went to the men's clothing business. And the town turned to be a railroad town about 1929. The terminal move from Longview, Texas to Mineola. And that was a turning point for Mineola. We became a railroad town.

(00:44): Oh, the community didn't move around. Before World War I, people didn't move to other communities. So most of the people I started school with I graduated with. We went all the way through. There was an influx when the railroad moved in some young people. And right at the end of my school year when the Hawkins all boom came in, we had an influx of people that moved in from Hawkins. But most of us went all the way through. Unfortunately, most of the friends that I've gone through... I'm 89 years old now, and so a lot of my schoolmates are not here.

(01:22): Well, it was great growing up. I was on North Pacific Street in Mineola. You know it now as North Pacific, but back then it was a boulevard. We had trees down the center. And it was not paved. It was sandy. And Mr. Mosley was the street foreman or he took care of our street. And he had a caterpillar tractor pulling a grader in the back and he would come down and grade the streets. And he would let us as young people stand on the platform and ride with him on his tractor. And we had no organized type of... for the young people. No organized entertainment. We rode our bicycles, we went out into the country. We just enjoyed life. It was a really free life. And our swings were... Cossack swings are hanged single rope or in a big tire and we'd swing in the tire, but it was a great time to grow up.

(02:20): You're starting in 1937. As a young person ages, that y'all are here or younger, knowing Europe is going to be at war, then when I'm your age Europe's at war, I don't know how it's going to affect me. And I start at the college, and then you spend years that should be... I'd be a year older than you are and I'm at sea commanding people. So I'm doing mature stuff that I wouldn't normally be doing. So it has a great effect on what happens on your later life. You know? I don't know what it would've been like if it hadn't been there. So it did have an effect.

(03:09): I enrolled in [inaudible 00:03:11] at Rice University when I went as a freshman knowing the war was coming. That was in 1941. December of '41. I was riding with a friend of mine on South Main Street in Houston and we heard on the radio we were at war. Japan. So our unit was... The day I went out to sea, was called up to active duty and sent back to college. I entered at Rice in 1943.

**Speaker 2** (03:39): Where did-

**Wayne Collins** (03:40): Active duty. I didn't... I entered '41.

**Speaker 2** (03:43): Where did you receive your basic training?

**Wayne Collins** (03:49): At Naval OTC, we finished the end of our junior year in Naval OTC in February of 1944. And two weeks before I ended my junior year, we were told that we would be called to active duty and be commissioned in the United States Navy. So I received my incidence commission in 1949. I mean, that's... Correct. I received my incidence commission February 28th, 1944. And from then I was sent immediately to Fort Pierce, Florida for amphibious training.

**Speaker 2** (04:30): When did you deploy overseas?

**Wayne Collins** (04:33): When overseas in January, 1945.

**Speaker 2** (04:40): What theater of operations were you in?

**Wayne Collins** (04:45): South Pacific and the South Pacific up into the Sea of Japan.

**Speaker 2** (04:53): Were you involved in any invasions?

**Wayne Collins** (04:55): We were involved in the occupation and usually involved two to four weeks at the initial invasion. And that was throughout the South Pacific, or New Guinea, or Iwo Jima, Okinawa; only into Japan.

**Speaker 2** (05:14): What was your military specialty?

**Wayne Collins** (05:19): Boat officer, assistant navigator, division officer, and top watch officer on board USS Todd.

(05:26): My most found profound memories are not as much as the war as right after the war as we signed an armistice... Or not an armistice. We signed a peace treaty with... In fact, I was at Tokyo Bay. Our ship was pulled up and I watched the ceremonies aboard the [inaudible 00:05:51] through a long spyglass and watched MacArthur and all of the ceremonies. After, I had some time left on the G.I. Bill while I was in college. And so I really liked flying and had a field here in Mineola teaching. And I was able to go to the G.I. Bill and learn to fly in 1946.

(06:14): The aviation is a wonderful mode of transportation and it's a safe mode of transportation. And it's a freedom of flight that I don't think till you experience it there's not a way for me to explain it to you. But walking on a high places, if I'm high walking on a narrow stretch or something, I have a tendency to walk back. I mean, the heights bothered me, but inside an airplane, inside it, I feel really safe.

**Speaker 2** (06:54): What has been your most significant journey?

**Wayne Collins** (06:59): Well, in flying myself, flying... The last time I went around the world and I got a chance to go down to South Africa through the Indian Ocean, and I can show you in a map, it was 30 days that I flew my airplane around the world. First time I did it was in 1986. And I was with other aircraft in 1990 when I went around in my plane by myself. Myself and a co-pilot. There were two of us. But it was quite interesting the places that we were able to go to and spend some time. And in areas we were able to fly our plane, fly my plane around in those areas like South Africa.