

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center

Transcript of an  
Oral History Interview with  
ROBERT WALLACE

Buffalo Soldier, 92<sup>nd</sup> Division , WWII and Korean War

1999

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**Wallace, Robert**, (1920- ). Oral History Interview, 1999.

User Copy: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

Master Recordings: 2 sound cassettes (ca. 90 min.); analog, 1 7/8 ips, mono.

### **Abstract**

Wallace, a Madison, Wis. veteran, discusses his military service prior to and during World War II, and in the Korean War as a “Buffalo Soldier” with the 9<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Army. Originally from Leavenworth (Kansas), he describes the positive attitude of Blacks in Leavenworth toward the Buffalo Soldiers and difficulty entering the unit due to its popularity. Wallace talks about several of the soldiers he served with who became officers, learning to ride and caring for horses, and the differences between working with horses and mules. He touches upon the transition from horses to tanks, the formation of several all Black tank units, changes in training after Pearl Harbor, racism at Fort Jackson (South Carolina), and joining the all Black 92<sup>nd</sup> Division. Wallace comments on participating in the Tennessee Maneuvers, service in Oran (Africa), and being wounded in Italy. He also touches upon his service with the 758th Tank Battalion during the Korean War, including operating tanks in a cold climate. Wallace mentions retiring prior to the Vietnam War, moving to Madison (Wis.), and the monument to Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Leavenworth.

### **Biographical Sketch**

Wallace, a native of Fort Leavenworth (Kansas) served with the Army during World War II and the Korean War. He retired from service shortly before the Vietnam War and settled in Madison, Wis.

Interviewed by Dr. James F. McIntosh, 1999.

Transcribed by Nathan King, 2003.

Transcription edited by Abigail Miller, 2003.

**Interview Transcript:**

James: So it's '40 and '41 when you're on the frontier then, with the cavalry?

Wallace: Yeah. My duty then was I was just a cavalryman.

James: I see.

Wallace: Yeah. And, I got some pictures you might want to snatch. I got the whole book –

James: Oh my goodness.

Wallace: They sent me. And to know where this was at – this was at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. I was familiar with it when I got out of high school.

James: You were how old at this time?

Wallace: Oh, let's see. It must have been 17, 18. But before then, I had been around them for years. Years. And most of the young Blacks that graduated out of high school, their ambition was the army, go into the army.

James: Which high school did you graduate from?

Wallace: I graduated from a senior high school in Leavenworth.

James: In Leavenworth?

Wallace: Mm-hmm. And then I went to C.C. Camp, and Civilian Conservation Corps.

James: They were all over.

Wallace: They were all over. Then I came and I wanted to join the army. At that time it was very, very hard to get into the army. They had a waiting list.

James: That's still part of the Depression, wasn't it?

Wallace: Yeah. They had a waiting list, and it was only a certain amount of them that got in per year. And in here, [rustling papers] let me see if I got 'em here with me. Here are some of the pictures of some of the operations we had when we were – this is the one you got.

James: Yes, I've got that one.

Wallace: Mm-hmm. And so, going back to what you said, they were fighting Indians, the cavalry was.

James: In 1940?

- Wallace: No, back. 1932, 33. And the Indians started to call the Black soldiers “buffaloes.” “Buffaloes” came from their hair – kinky hair.
- James: Ah, I see.
- Wallace: And it’s just like the hair on the mane of a buffalo.
- James: I see.
- Wallace: And it became – they called them the buffalo soldiers. My first touch with ‘em was 1935. I was quite young.
- James: Yeah.
- Wallace: And each time an older one retired, they had a retirement ball. And in that retirement ball, he got to designate –
- James: His replacement?
- Wallace: No, he got to designate who would march with him on the retirement. And this fellow was a very close friend of my family, and he wanted me. I was – I was really young.
- James: [laughs]
- Wallace: Because I didn’t know what it was all about. But, he showed me pictures that he had clean until he died. And to tell you, I was raised in Leavenworth. Most people don’t know much about Leavenworth.
- James: 1<sup>st</sup> Army Headquarters.
- Wallace: Huh?
- James: 1<sup>st</sup> Army Headquarters.
- Wallace: Now I guess it is. It’s a home of penitentiaries.
- James: That’s true.
- Wallace: Five penitentiaries there.
- James: [unintelligible]
- Wallace: You got the main federal penitentiary; you got the army penitentiary there, the D.B, what they call the D.B; then you got the state penitentiaries there; then you got the state penitentiary for women is there. And at 5:00, 6:00 in the evening, we used to watch the transfer of the guards.

They would be in the town. And one time it saved our bank from being robbed. The robbers had come in to Leavenworth to rob this bank, but around 5, 5:30, they saw all of these guards coming from east direction, and they thought they were police been tipped off on what. I guess I – it intrigued me, I guess. I don't know what it was that I got so interested in the cavalry. Many of my friends today who are – I'm going to let you look at this book. It should tell you a lot. Many of these boys in here were classmates of mine. They went on to become army officers. At one time, I wanted to be an army officer. But I backed down from a army officer because I didn't want to leave the troops. All my buddies were in this – I didn't want to leave 'em. And I didn't want to go to Kentucky, down in Knox, Kentucky. I ended up in Knox because that's where I went to train. And when the cavalry went out, the – all of us young that were in the cavalry were sent to Ft. Knox, Kentucky. Fort Knox, Kentucky was then the stomping ground for tank battalions. I never will forget when I first went there. George Patton didn't mean nothin' to me then. He was post commander at Fort Knox when I went there.

James: This was in 1941?

Wallace: '41, when I went there, to Knox. Uh, we stayed at Knox and did our more basic training, and then they sent us down to Camp Claiborne in Louisiana. Oh, you've been there, yeah. Camp Clape (?). And there they formed three tank battalions, all Black. The 761<sup>st</sup> is mentioned in the book by – I was reading it night before last – mm, the news man –

James: Oh, Brokaw.

Wallace: Brokaw has it in his book about the 761<sup>st</sup> Tank Battalion. 758 was the first. I was going in the first Black tank battalion. And then they formed the 761<sup>st</sup> and the 784 was there. And then we, when we came out of there, we went to – I was in the Tennessee maneuvers. I can just recall the Tennessee maneuvers.

James: The reds and the blues, or the reds and the [unintelligible].

Wallace: Yeah. And I remember, it stayed in my mind for years, one general has stayed in my mind, Ben Lear. I never will forget him because at that time, Ben Lear's wife and daughter was with him. And the boys started beating on the top of trucks when they went by where they was playing tennis. And Ben Lear dismounted all those trucks, and they were something like, they was close to Murfreesboro. I can remember. And he made them all walk back, all officers and all. And they were something like 35 miles away. He dismounted all the officers and he made 'em walk back to Murfreesboro. And so he stayed really in my focus. I was crazy about Ben Lear. I don't know why I was crazy about him, because he was one of the toughest generals I've ever served under.

James: He had a reputation.

Wallace: Oh, he had a reputation. And he was. And then, we came out of the Tennessee Maneuvers, and I never will forget, I guess it still stays in my mind every once in a while. They sent this Black battalions [unintelligible] different posts for immunization. And we went to Fort Jackson, South Carolina. I'll never forget it if I grow a hundred years old. And they didn't allow Blacks to go

into a PX. They sent a truck to your area, and you had to pick off this truck what you wanted, like your soap and your candy and all that. And they didn't respect Black officers. We had Black officers – we had a couple Black officers. And at the main PX, I went there and just looked at it just before I retired from the army, because I was discharged down there at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and I carried my son. I wanted him to see, you know, some of the things that we went through. And this PX was one of the main PX. It was still standing when I went there. And I got to see a lot to explain to my son. And at the time, all this – at Jackson. Mm. Mr. O. What was his name? Black basketball player. Uh, y –

James: Oscar Robinson?

Wallace: Oscar Robinson. Oscar Robinson used to be there. And our home base was going to be Fort Huachuca, in Arizona. Now, Fort Huachuca was in the mountains out there.

James: [unintelligible]

Wallace: [laughs] You didn't miss anything.

James: [laughs]

Wallace: You didn't miss anything. And so the Buffalo Division was there. The 92<sup>nd</sup> was the Buffalo Division. They had two Black divisions. The 93<sup>rd</sup> went to Bougainville, the 92<sup>nd</sup> went to Italy. We went down through Italy. Uh, I guess most of 'em, be – what I want you to have. I have these extra books, and I'll give 'em to you.

James: Oh!

Wallace: I was on a broadcast here, doin' time, forgot now, and this broadcast I was on, one lady called back and she said she never heard of a Buffalo Soldier, and she didn't know that there was any Black soldiers. And she was up in Eau Claire, called down, and she said "I just want one of them books so I can just read it." And so I had four of these, and I gave her one, and I said, "I want you to read it." And she never forgot it till she died. She used to write me and tell me about how she – things she saw in here she couldn't believe. Now, it didn't get any recognition. Buffalo Soldiers only got recognition when Clayton Powell went to the general staff. The General Staff School, when I was there, for you to become a general, you had to go through the General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. And Powell was there, but he never saw anything on the base that said anything about any of the Black troops that had ever been there. And so every time that he went running around in the base, he would look and try to find. And this here picture is of the monument. That's the monument down at Fort Leavenworth. This is it too, same big monument. And so he wanted to know why. He went back to Washington and said, "I think there should be some recognition on this base for the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry." And so they did. I guess I – well, actually, I loved the army. My wife and my sister, they talked – everybody in my family were in the army.

James: Oh my goodness.

Wallace: Everybody in my family.

James: Women too?

Wallace: Women too.

James: I'll be darned.

Wallace: My sisters were in the WACs. My brother – he was in the engineers. He died only on March of last year. 85 years old. And – excuse me – [sneezes]. And I guess it was something that all of us just fell in love with. My brother never retired – he got out. My sisters never retired – they got out. But I kept going back and forth to Europe, and I liked that travel. And we were talking yesterday – I was out visiting a lady that come here – her husband died, was a close friend of mine. And we were talking about Paris, and I was sitting there, and she said, “Bob, how long ago was you in Paris?” And I said, “Oh, it must have been 15, 18 years [since] I was in Paris.” When I went back over. But of all the places I ever went, I loved Italy. I loved it till today. Oh, it's so beautiful! And I would love to be there in May, and see the tulips. And I stayed in Italy – mm – a year and a half with a family because we stayed in families.

James: What was this? Where are we here, now?

Wallace: Huh?

James: When was this? After the war?

Wallace: During the war. This is where our tanks and everything stayed. And their name was Equi – the family I stayed with. They had two boys, and I just lost contact with them in the last four years, five years. One of them was named Roberto, and he became a priest. And his brother Alfredo owned one of the biggest night clubs in Naples.

James: Oh my.

Wallace: And so the last time that I was over in 1959, because I got married right when I came back, and they wanted me to come and spend the weekend with them. And I went over and spent the weekend over in Italy. And they come from a little town called Coreglia up in the mountains. I could sit on their porch and watch 'em ski in the Alps, and I used to just [unintelligible]. And so, this 92<sup>nd</sup> Division brought the ashes back to the tomb of Christopher Columbus, and that was in Genoa, Italy, the home of Christopher Columbus. The home of Amerigo Vespucci. And their homes were still there, and what they did, when one board would rotten off, they put a new board and then painted it. But it was one of the most – it's right in the center of the city of Genoa.

James: Where did they take 'em? The remains?

Wallace: See, during the war, when the Germans came in, they took the ashes of Christopher Columbus and took 'em to the mountains. They didn't want the Germans to destroy 'em. So after the war, when they brought 'em back, it was the 92<sup>nd</sup> Division.

James: Brought 'em back to Genoa.

Wallace: Brought 'em back to Genoa, out of the mountains. And then I stayed there, oh, it must have been another year, and I was up at Pisa. And my office used to be two blocks down from the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

James: What was your duty then?

Wallace: I was then – I had left the Tank Corps, and went to artillery. Then I left artillery and went to anti-aircraft. I left anti-aircraft and went to missiles. They had - the first missile base in Italy, I served on that base. Landow. Landow, Germany.

James: What year was that? Do you recall?

Wallace: Mm. 19 - Must have been 1955. Around '55 when I was there. And when I came home –

James: What was your rank then?

Wallace: I was Top Sergeant.

James: Top sergeant.

Wallace: Yeah. And then when they sent me back, they sent me back in the training brigade in Fort Jackson in South Carolina.

James: Back to Fort Jackson.

Wallace: Yeah. It's really funny. And then I got orders and went to Korea. The 758<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion went to Korea right after Italy.

James: So that was 1950.

Wallace: 1950.

James: That's when I went.

Wallace: Yeah. I never will forget it. We went from one end of that old boot – I can't think of it today – I almost froze. I have trouble right now with my feet from my freezing.

James: Did they fly you over, or did they take a ship?

Wallace: Ship.

James: Landed at Pusan?

Wallace: Pusan. Yep.

James: My hospital ship was there most of the time.

Wallace: Is that right?

James: Oh, either there or Inchon.

Wallace: Yeah.

James: We went back and forth.

Wallace: Back and forth. Uh, I – let me see if the last – then I went to Korea, and I came back from Korea. Yeah. My son – my son was born, in Jackson, South Carolina.

James: The place you hated so much, you can't get away from!

Wallace: [laughs]

James: [laughs] That's funny!

Wallace: Ain't that - that's peculiar. And I retired from there. I went back there and retired.

James: [continues laughing]

Wallace: Yeah. My son wanted to see the hospital that he was born in. We went back there, me and my wife, and went back there since we lived here. And we'd been away from there – must have been 19 years, I think. And he just kept after us, and so my wife had the paper from this hospital – and everybody was born in this hospital. And he wanted to see this hospital. He thought it must be a really big thing. And I never will forget it, my wife said, "When you see it, you'll be shocked."

James: [laughs]

Wallace: [laughs] So, it was really something that stayed with him – my son. He never wanted to be in the military. He said, "I've been in the military. My daddy was a military man." And I guess I was kind of hard at the time, because I had –

James: That's the way you were you were brought up. That's why all of us are –

Wallace: Yeah. Mm-hmm. And I was hard on him because – I never will forget, one time he told me, "Daddy, I ain't in the army." I used to have him – I inspected him every Saturday just like they did in the army. And he – "My shoes don't have to be shined!" "Oh yes, they do."

James: [laughs]

Wallace: And – But I’m so proud of him today. The reason I came to Madison –

James: Because of him?

Wallace: Huh?

James: [louder] Because of him?

Wallace: Because of him. What it was – my boy had just become 6 years old, and I told my wife – I have a daughter, and my daughter was snatched out of school because we were transferred, and she never made friends. To the day, she’s very hard to –

James: Army brats all have that problem.

Wallace: Yeah, all have that. And I said to my wife, “I don’t want my son to be like that.” And I said, “I know what I’ll do. When I retire, I’m going to find a place where he can go from elementary school through college, and stay at home.” And I never will forget the day I came and I told my wife, I said, “I’m going to Madison, Wisconsin.” She said, “You ain’t never been there!” I said, “No, I never been there.”

James: [laughing in background]

Wallace: And I sat down and told her, I said, “I think we’ll benefit by my son can start elementary school and go all the way through.” And we came here, and we looked at 32 homes before we bought. And my wife doesn’t drive, so I had – I am Methodist. My wife is Catholic. And so I had to get up, take my wife to mass, and rush back and then go to my church. And I used to take her every Sunday. And I pulled in front of this house – it was right on the parking lot. And I’d sit there and wait for my wife. And I said, “You know, I sure wish this house here was for sale.” My wife said, “You don’t see no ‘For Sale’ sign on it, do you?” And I went to my church one Sunday, and I came home. And I just got the paper, and we bought our home from Lucy, and it was really peculiar. I looked in the paper that day, and it said 1218 Mound Street. I didn’t say nothing to my wife, I jumped in the car and ran over, and it was this house that I had been talking about. I’ve been living there 33 years, in that house.

James: Fantastic.

Wallace: My son could walk out of my garage into the grade school. He had three or four – five blocks over to Edgewood High School. Then he had about seven blocks down to the university. I couldn’t do any better. Then, only thing about it, my son went to university two years. And he came home one day and he wanted to talk to me and my wife. “What about?” He said, “I ain’t nothin’ but a number.” “What do you mean?” “I ain’t nothing but a number, so much. I want to go to Iowa.” So he went to Iowa. After two years, he went down to Iowa. And he was going to be a newsman. And then he worked here at the capitol – mmm - I think he worked at the capitol two years. He came home one day and said, “I’m going to get married, and I’m going to quit. I’m going to quit the job at the capitol.” He was a speechwriter, and I was really proud of him. “No, dad, I don’t like politicians.” So I never – I always asked him why, and then he’d tell me,

you know. So, I said to him, “What are you going to do?” And he said, “You know, I’m going in the fire department as a pre-medic student.” That’s where he’s at today. He’s been there –

James: At the fire department?

Wallace: Yeah, he’s been on it 12 years.

James: [unintelligible] He’s important now.

Wallace: Yeah, and he loves it.

James: Does he love it?

Wallace: He’s a paramedic, and everybody knows him at all these different hospitals.

James: Oh. He’s finally found his niche.

Wallace: Found it, yeah. And so my daughter – she lives in West Palm Beach. She has a business there where she takes care of handicapped children, and nursing and all that. And her and two girls graduated down at University of Miami, and they started that business. And me and my wife went down for the opening of that business, then we went down when my daughter got married. Business doin’ boomin’ business. Really.

James: Well that must make you feel good.

Wallace: It does. It does. I really feel good about it. The army has been so good to me, you know.

James: They provided a home for you for many years.

Wallace: And I came out, and when I came here, my wife said, “What are you going to do?” And I said, “I’m going to fish.”

James: [laughs]

Wallace: I’m going to hunt. And when I retired they gave me shotguns and all that, fishing pole. I never put a string in a fishing pole.

James: [laughs]

Wallace: Shotgun, I never shot it. Brand new – be in my gun cabinet now. And I guess I said after about two months, I said, “I’m going in the post office.” I went in the post office, worked in the post office 26 years.

James: Oh, really?

Wallace: Mm-hmm.

James: Wow. That's a record.

Wallace: Yeah, and I just retired. I've been retired 11 years. And it used to be a saying, when I was young, that when you retired from the army, you had 10 to 15 years. And me and my wife was talking a few weeks ago, and I said, "You know one thing? I've been retired from the army 33 years." 33 years I've been out –

James: That's hard to believe.

Wallace: I guess it's been – and I've never been any ailment.

James: That makes a difference.

Wallace: It makes a difference. It makes a difference because I get up, and I usually call, they call me, says, "You want such-and-such?" I said, "I go to church at 10:30, quarter to 11," and I usually try to piece it in. But I got something else I want to show you. I got the pictures of all these boys that – now this used to be how we had a picnic. And that's where they'd have all the – and they still have that today at Fort Leavenworth. Everybody comes, and they go right here. And this here, where this here is built, my barracks, when I joined the cavalry. I can stand right here and look right down. That's something. I get such a kick out of it. Most of the boys that I –

James: Served with?

Wallace: - Served with are the army boy. I'm going to give you a book.

James: Oh, thank you. The museum is very appreciative. We'll put it in our library.

Wallace: Yeah. There's a picture of that monument.

James: Oh yes.

Wallace: And I guess the greatest thrill that I get out of this is when they call me and ask me when the stamp come out, they wanted me to – and this is my, this is my hot one.

James: Oh, you sent me a –

Wallace: Yeah.

James: Great.

Wallace: Buffalo soldiers.

James: Right. 69 and 70, right?

Wallace: Hmm?

- James: The 69<sup>th</sup> and the 70<sup>th</sup>, the two regiments?
- Wallace: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.
- James: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Regiments.
- Wallace: 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. I guess the biggest thrill I get out of – I got it here somewhere – is the boys that – oh, I wanted to show you in that book there that I gave you, on the first page, you should see a warrant officer by the name of Hollowell. No, go back to the front, front quarter.
- James: There he is.
- Wallace: Alright. This - when I went in, he was a top sergeant. His brother was in there. His brother is the attorney that got Dr. King out of jail.
- James: Oh, really?
- Wallace: Hollowell.
- James: Oh my.
- Wallace: He's living today in Leavenworth. He – this here. The other brother lives in Atlanta, Georgia. I see Hollowell all the time when I go home. He's a very close friend of my sister and husband. And I want to see – oh, this is Julius Johnson. Julius Johnson was a private, and went to general. Oh, this is my brother-in-law here, after he retired.
- James: Oh, I see.
- Wallace: But I want to show you the – this here is the attorney that I was telling you about, Hollowell. He's the brother to –
- James: [unintelligible in background]
- Wallace: Yeah, mm-hmm. And this fellow here, father was a pastor in a church. He became a major. This fellow here became a colonel. He was a colonel in the 758<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion. He was one of the ringleaders of George Patton when he was – yeah. Got big pictures of him up in the general staff school, him and George Patton standing talking. Mack Henry. This boy here, he went in at little – I think '37, '38, he became a colonel. And the really peculiar thing about this, that really gets me is these boys used to have a job. See, the cavalry had a job. Each person had a job other than their horse in the stables. They took care of the general staff school. After the classes, they had to go up and clean the general staff school. Twenty-five years later, they came back there as officers, colonels.
- James: [laughs] Boy, there's a rock bottom to top –

- Wallace: Yeah! Yeah, they came back there as colonels, yeah. Oh, I really get a kick out of it. He's out in California – he retired. He's out in California. This boy's dead. He died only about a year ago, he died. And when I was first – when I first went to Fort Raleigh, Benjamin Davis –
- James: First general. There he is.
- Wallace: Benjamin Davis was the commander, and his son came there as his adjutant. And in my latter years, when I was in missiles, his son became – he was second in command of the air force in Europe. B.O. Davis, Jr.
- James: I remember that now that you mention it.
- Wallace: Yeah. Oh, this is. Sometimes, it just gets me. Now, this is a fellow that I had to go to to get in the army.
- James: When you were a young kid.
- Wallace: Yeah.
- James: 17 years.
- Wallace: Seventeen [laughs]. He – and he preached a sermon to us, then he'd carry us over to the barracks. And he carried it through the barracks, and I said, "I don't know whether I want to be in here or not."
- James: You didn't know how to ride a horse, then?
- Wallace: I didn't know nothin' about no horses. I didn't – nothing. And they taught me everything.
- James: And you were 17 years old?
- Wallace: Yep.
- James: And this is 1930-what?
- Wallace: Around '39-'40.
- James: '39-'40.
- Wallace: And uh –
- James: And what was your – tell me now, your specific duties. Once you got in, what did you do actually? What was your assignment?
- Wallace: Assignment? When I first came in, I was a cook. I went in to cook. They sent me in to Omaha, Nebraska. Fort Crook.

James: Oh, very good. You've got a great memory.

Wallace: Yeah. Fort Crook. And I became a cook. I came back, and I think I cooked a year. And you know the funny thing? My wife gets infuriated. I can't cook nothin'.

[both laugh]

James: So you did enough.

Wallace: She said, "I wouldn't eat nothin' you cook." I said, "I know it now."

James: Tell me now about learning how to ride a horse.

Wallace: Riding a horse –

James: Right.

Wallace: - is a very, very – you have to learn some of the things about the animal. The main thing – I never will forget, my last horse was named Diamond. And they took me down and made me ride barebelly.

James: Right off the start?

Wallace: Right off the start.

James: Wow.

Wallace: And he just run right alongside a fence. Just tore my legs all up. And he got so the old Diamond, I'd go in there, and I learned to carry me – you know how you had the sugar – little squares of sugar – I used to carry 'em in my pocket. And I got so I used to cut apples for him and everything. And then I started riding him. I could tell from the feel of his body, just about how he felt.

James: About you.

Wallace: You. Yeah, you know what he – and if you happen to be sick, he knew whoever had to take care of the stable wasn't me.

James: I'll be darned.

Wallace: He knew that. And each person had two animals to take care of, unless he took care of an army officer. Army officers had – everybody in his family had to ride. His wife, all of his children had to ride a horse.

James: You mean, they had to?

- Wallace: Yeah. Had to. That was a requirement. Each of them had a horse. And this one fella took care of almost all of the army officers [unintelligible.] I haven't seen him lately, but he still lives in Leavenworth, a little town off of Leavenworth called Lansing, where he lives now. And he got extra polo – polo – that's it. He took care of all the polo horses. Army officers' wives played polo. Once you learned, you had two animals to take care of. You had your horse to take care of, and you had a mule to take care of.
- James: Oh.
- Wallace: Mule was labor horse.
- James: He pulled things.
- Wallace: Yeah, he pulled guns into position, he did all that. Even on a base, he pulled all – at that time at Fort Leavenworth – all the furnaces, the coal furnaces. They had one that worked nothing but the coal yard.
- James: You mean, to drag coal around?
- Wallace: Yeah. One thing you learn if you want to be in horses, you had to learn that horse. You had to learn him. One thing, smartest horse – smartest animal that I ever had was a mule. A mule is much smarter than a horse. A mule learned the time of the day. Now, when he heard the bugles, he was done for the day. He knowed that.
- James: [laughs]
- Wallace: And wasn't no need of you trying – if you had a load on –
- James: He's not going one inch.
- Wallace: Not an inch. He wasn't going nowhere.
- James: [laughs]
- Wallace: No. Uh-uh. Not him. He wasn't goin' nowhere. And two, if he worked hard, if you worked him hard the day before, he could play sick in a minute. He'd play sick in a minute. You'd walk in the stall, he'd drop his head and lay right on you.
- James: It won't happen today.
- Wallace: No, it meant "you better take me to the doctor."
- James: Oh.

Wallace: You had to take him to the veterinarian. He knew. And he knew how to put on in that veterinarian.

James: What is the expression? You can lead a mule, and you can –

Wallace: Lead him to –

James: What is it? The horse –

Wallace: horse to water, but he can't drink?

James: No, you can lead a mule, but you can't –

Wallace: A horse has more skillful, but a mule is a animal that would learn everything. He learned the smell of you. He could tell if a person walks in his stall, he could tell you whether you'd ever been around a horse. I don't know how he did it, but he could tell you. And a horse, when you're training and breaking them in, he knowed how to get back at you. Because when you walked into a stall, he'd move over, and get you right up against the rail, just squeeze you right up against the rail. Had to know what to do with him.

James: A horse would do that?

Wallace: Yeah, a horse would do it, yeah.

James: Did he do that just to be mean to you, or what was the reason for that?

Wallace: No, they – the reason for that, a lot of them played that way.

James: They were just having fun?

Wallace: Yeah. They playin'.

James: But a mule wouldn't do that?

Wallace: No, a mule wasn't going to play with you, because he wanted you to know when he was sick. He wanted you to know that you had to carry him to the veterinarian. And we'd be lined up going to the veterinarian with our mules. That meant – the doctor – he knowed he wasn't going to go to work. He was goin' back to the stables. He knowed that.

James: Mules are better workers?

Wallace: Oh yeah. Yeah.

James: I mean, they were the movers.

Wallace: Yeah, they're better workers, yeah.

- James: But riding them, was there any difference in riding them, or not? Or, you didn't ride the mules.
- Wallace: No. You didn't ride the mules. There's difference in riding different horses. You could be a cavalryman, but riding someone else's horse is something that he did that you didn't do. And he recognized that. He recognized it right in a minute.
- James: The horse will.
- Wallace: He recognized the way you feed him. He was so – you know sometimes I used to just think, you know – how did he know who was puttin' the oats in there? Now, if it was a person who had been riding him all the time, and you put the oats in there, he'd come up there and stick his nose up right under your arm. But if it was another person puttin' 'em in there, he'd come over there and then turn away. And usually you had to call the stable sergeant if you didn't know, see. The stable sergeant would come down. And I guess I had more fun, and I guess that's why I stayed in as long as I did.
- James: For a 17-year-old boy, I think this would be a tremendous experience.
- Wallace: It was. It was a great experience for me.
- James: Did you get out in the field with those horses? Maneuvers and things?
- Wallace: Oh yeah. See, you had to ride – we had what they call Camp Locket California. And every two years, they rode out to Locket in California.
- James: From Kansas?
- Wallace: Yeah. You'd ride your horse and at night the commander, whoever your commander was, would have an area where you were gonna bed down and everything. Till the next day, you get up and ride. I rode one time when I was going out there, I got so sore, I didn't know what in the world to do. And an old stableman took some horse – what they call horse liniment, and just spread it all on my legs and everything. Healed it up. I don't know what it was, but –
- James: But it worked.
- Wallace: It worked. I loved –
- James: How long would you drive? What would be a day's march from –
- Wallace: When you were going out to California, you rode from about 6 in the morning, right after breakfast, until it was time for your supper at night. Then you had, before you ate, you had to feed your horse. Your horse had to be fed. The mule had to be taken care of, that was pulling – like our kitchen stuff and everything like it. But I guess altogether, the horses that we had – I really hated that he was dying – I hated to lose him. And they took him down to Louisville, Kentucky. They had a retirement farm for 'em.

- James: For the horse?
- Wallace: Oh yeah. Whole lot of horses went to a retirement farm in Louisville, Kentucky. Yeah, that's where all the cavalry horses went. They went down there. And they had a fellow that worked - I laugh every time I think about how I say and tell it. We had a fellow that was in our stables - he was stable sergeant. And he made just beaucoups of money. He had one of them old army wagons, and on Saturday mornings, he'd start on the post - he had all these children he'd pick up, a dollar a piece, two dollars a piece, and he'd ride 'em all over the post in them wagons. Now, he had three horses of his own eatin' government food.
- James: Did they allow you to have your own special horse?
- Wallace: No, he did. See, all the generals would - he was in with all the generals.
- James: Oh, so they overlooked him.
- Wallace: And when he retired at Fort Leavenworth, they brought the cars - horse cars for him. He took 'em out to Texas with him, his horses. But, oh, we used to laugh at him. He'd get them - he had children - all of them in the army - officer's children. They knew Buccaneer. "Buccaneer's comin'!" And he - I guess he didn't know nothin' but horses. You couldn't talk nothin' unless you talked horses to him.
- James: That was his life.
- Wallace: Yeah, that was his life. And, oh, don't hit a horse in front of him.
- James: That's not the way to do it?
- Wallace: No, no. Hmm-mm. You hit a horse, and - we used to say hit a horse and go to the DB. [laughs] That meant you goin' up to jail. He didn't allow that, no. But he learnt me so much.
- James: I bet everybody learned from him.
- Wallace: Learned from him, learned from him.
- James: [unintelligible]
- Wallace: Yeah, knew how to train a horse. Knew how to train you at the end of it.
- James: Was it hard to learn how to ride with the equipment on?
- Wallace: No, no.
- James: That was easy. Once you learn how to ride -

- Wallace: Once you learn how to ride, the equipment was next.
- James: And you originally did, the Buffalo Soldiers, had something to do with keeping Indians from trouble. You didn't have any of that [unintelligible] did you?
- Wallace: No.
- James: You really didn't have any duties other than –
- Wallace: No, we had a lot of the boys that were older than I had patrol duty on the borders.
- James: Borders of what?
- Wallace: Mexico.
- James: Oh, Mexico.
- Wallace: Yeah, down in –
- James: [unintelligible]
- Wallace: Yeah, yeah. They had been down to Mexico, and – I'm trying to think of the place in Texas. I don't know if I've got the name of the little town in Texas, but they were –
- James: Well there was trouble with Columbus –
- Wallace: Columbus [unintelligible]. And most of these were the old boys, these old timers that – I want you to have that. All of these boys – you know, it's really peculiar. Every once in a while, you run into one of them. And I go –
- James: They're pretty old now.
- Wallace: Oh, yeah. Some of them 95. Yeah, 95 years old. One called me that is retired, and he's out in Phoenix, Arizona, and he asked me, "Did I remember?" I didn't remember. I didn't remember. And he said he'd read a article about me. I didn't know nothin' about it. And I had one fella that was down in the troops with me down at Milwaukee, and I never did get any contact with him. He called the house, and talked with my wife, but he never called me no more. I didn't ever – so I don't know whether he died, or what.
- [irrelevant excerpt omitted]
- James: OK, well now let's get into Europe. When the war started, all of a sudden, you were already in the service.
- Wallace: Oh yeah. I never will forget the 7<sup>th</sup> day of December.

- James: Right. And what were you doing that day?
- Wallace: I never will forget it. Sunday. And we was all beggin' to go on pass, and they had let us have passes. I was at Knox in Kentucky and we went down to Louisville. And I guess we wasn't in Louisville about two hours, and they had the old – what we called a scout wagon, but I'm trying to think what – they – mm. We called it a scout wagon, but it's one that's – you had to be a colonel to ride in it, you know, for revue. And they had these speakers on it. "Everybody report back to the base." And when they said – and we hadn't been in town long –
- James: Just two hours.
- Wallace: [laughs] And we got back to the base – I never will forget it – George Patton, the way he spoke to us. George Patton said, "The play days of war." I can remember, when I first went into the tank outfit, how well we were, you know in forest fighting – because you could take a .50 caliber, and shoot through a turret on a tank – it'd go through nothing but hard wood. And I never will forget the guard duty started, because while I was there – I think the first week, there was three people killed on the base.
- James: Training?
- Wallace: No. They guard – they had guards before then they didn't have no ammunition.
- James: Right, because they didn't need it.
- Wallace: Didn't need it, see? But when they gave ammunition out, there was a old sergeant on the base, and him and his wife were driving across the base, and they hollered, "Halt!" and he didn't hear 'em.
- James: He was too old or his hearing wasn't good enough?
- Wallace: Yeah. And –
- James: They were probably pretty excited.
- Wallace: Yeah, and after they shot him, they found it was him. It was really something.
- James: Well, if there was a panic, I think then everybody's –
- Wallace: Oh yeah. Everybody was right uptight, see. And said, "Oh, no. I done got it in here, and not even going to war."
- James: So how long did you stay there, before you moved out?
- Wallace: I went to Italy from, I was telling you, Fort Huachuca in Arizona. We went out to Huachuca and joined up with the 92<sup>nd</sup> Buffalo Division. That's how we went across – with them. And I remember our first stop. 33 days going across. I never will forget.

James: Across the Atlantic?

Wallace: Yeah.

James: That's so long.

Wallace: Oh, liberty ship. Oh, liberty ship. And I never will forget the first stop was Oran, Africa [Algeria]. And I said [sighs], and everybody was getting sick aboard ship. None of us had ever been on a ship. And I never will forget it – one officer we had, he got so sick, he just laid on the deck. He was so sick, he didn't know - I never will forget what he said to us. We landed in Italy. He said, "I'll never go back across there on a boat." And he got killed about 14 days before the end of the war.

James: Oh my goodness.

Wallace: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

James: At Oran, you just stopped there, you didn't –

Wallace: Yeah, just stopped.

James: So by this time, they had invaded Italy, and all that –

Wallace: Yeah, down in Italy. And then we joined Mark Clark down in Italy.

James: I interviewed Mark Clark's driver.

Wallace: Is that right?

James: Bob – somebody up there in Portage.

Wallace: Yeah. Mark W. Clark.

James: There's two sides to him. [unintelligible]

Wallace: To me, he wasn't. And not – you know, since I have retired

[tape ends]

Wallace: -because I remember the great discussion when he and his son graduated from West Point, him, Patton, and there was one more that he graduated with. Was it Eisenhower? I forgot now.

James: His son graduated – John.

Wallace: Yeah. John. Yeah. They all – I remember then when they – but Clark, to me, was a glory hunter. I've always pictured him – he just wanted the glory. He didn't ever –

James: He wasn't much of a leader.

Wallace: He wasn't a leader.

James: Mark Clark's son is a very good friend of mine.

Wallace: Is that right? Yeah.

James: A girl I knew lived down in New Orleans, so I lived in New Orleans.

Wallace: Yeah. Well you know where Claiborne was at.

James: Oh sure.

Wallace: Yeah.

James: When you got to Italy, then, what was your duty?

Wallace: Our duties were at that time, we had a light tank. Our light tank was to draw fire.

James: Stewart?

Wallace: Huh?

James: The Stewart tank?

Wallace: Yeah, little, no.

James: Not like that one we have upstairs, that Stewart is upstairs. Not that small.

Wallace: I didn't ever see it. Stewart tank?

James: Yeah, it's a small tank.

Wallace: Well, this was a small tank when I first went in, what was called a light tank.

James: Before the Patton tank.

Wallace: Before the Patton tank. Yeah. And we were to draw fire, get in position. And you could move it so fast, and maneuver it so that you wouldn't, you know, get hit. I think we lost about – we didn't lose about 10 or 15 jokers.

James: That 88 will go right through that thing.

Wallace: Oh yeah – right through the front, and out the back. [laughs]

James: No chance with that gun.

Wallace: No. We drew fire and usually artillery would know where it was coming in. But we had a friend – I had a friend that was in the tank outfit at Anzio, and a 88 hit the front plate. And the front plate of that tank was bolted down. He just took it off. Killed everybody in there but him.

James: Just like a knife.

Wallace: Yeah. Well he never, I guess after, must have been four or five years, he never was no good.

James: It was a shock.

Wallace: Yeah, yeah. In and out.

James: You did get wounded there at Italy?

Wallace: Huh?

James: Did you get wounded in Italy?

Wallace: Yeah. That's where I got wounded, in Italy.

James: Tell me about that. How did that happen?

Wallace: It was really something, because I was going between tanks, and they kept telling us not to go between tanks. And after you are there for almost a month, you start losing that alertness, you know. And I went across, going to another tank, and he hit me in the leg.

James: Rifle bullet?

Wallace: Yeah. But it just tore a hunk out of my – and I never will forget, they said that there was a German doctor – they had captured some Germans, and they was going to amputate my leg because they said if they didn't, gangrene would set in. And he said this German doctor wanted to work on me. And my commander said, "I don't know." He talked with me. He said, "Now, we're thinking about amputation, and your career will be over in the army." He said, "But this German doctor said he can fix your leg." And you know how young – and I, "Yeah, let him fix it!"

James: Right. You don't want that thing cut off.

Wallace: No, I don't want it off. I never had a pain in that leg after that doctor.

James: He sewed it up?

- Wallace: Sewed it up with goat – goatskin, I think he had. They had, on this farm, and got some goats – goatskin, and knitted into that leg. It left a scar on there, but it never bothered me.
- James: You didn't get an infection afterwards?
- Wallace: No, no infection. Closest thing to infection was in Korea.
- James: Don't get too far ahead, now.
- Wallace: Yeah.
- James: Anything else happen in Italy while you were there?
- Wallace: I lost about four of my buddies in Italy.
- James: In tanks?
- Wallace: In tanks, yeah.
- James: So you were there until the end – VE-Day?
- Wallace: Yeah, I ended up – I stayed a little after that because they had started moving down into a truck battalion – went down – hmm. I'm trying to think where we went in at in Italy.
- James: Salerno?
- Wallace: No. Hmm. Because I went back down there. It was where they had scuttled ships.
- James: Oh, that was way to the south.
- Wallace: Way down south. And I went – excuse me – I went down there. And then I came back to the State. They had disbanded the tank unit. And 1948, they put out a notification that anyone who was in the former tank unit could go back to the tank unit. So I went to the tank unit then, back to the tank.
- James: You already decided to make the army your career.
- Wallace: Yeah. Yeah. It was no different than – I wasn't going to – well, I had a lot of opportunities in school while I was there.
- James: You were still single?
- Wallace: Yeah. I was single until 1959.
- James: [unintelligible]

Wallace: Yeah.

James: You stayed in the army?

Wallace: Yeah, I stayed in the army, and in 1959 I got married, the first day of August, 1959. And let's see – yeah, '59. I'm trying to think of where – I'm trying to think where – oh, what I was telling you about Korea that I didn't want to forget is that they had a rat in Korea that came down from the Manchurian border, and he carried – if he walked over your food or anything, kill you. And our doctor was killed. That stayed with me, you know. It was on a payday night, and he got to drinkin', and he had some Ritz and beer, and when he laid down, he had this Ritz, and he just laid 'em there. And the next day, he got up and grabbed a handful of them Ritz. Before they got him to the airplane, he was almost dead. Yeah.

James: Anybody else got – died from that?

Wallace: No, but a lot of 'em died from alcohol.

James: When you got to Korea, you say you flew over there, or you took a ship over there?

Wallace: Ship.

James: Back on the ship.

Wallace: Mm-hmm.

James: You get sick the second time, too?

Wallace: Yeah, second time.

James: So that took you to Pusan, and you were with what outfit, then?

Wallace: Pusan. 758<sup>th</sup> Tank Battalion.

James: Did they put you up on the line?

Wallace: Uh, I didn't go right up. I stayed in headquarters for a while. And then one day I got kind of mad, and I wanted to get out of headquarters. I was sittin', I wanted to get up where the action was. And I didn't know what I was talking about.

James: It was a bad move?

Wallace: Yeah. After when they drove MacArthur back, we came up in December. Woo! I never will forget December 15<sup>th</sup>.

James: That's when I got there.

Wallace: And all my feet had got frostbitten. The alcohol had to be put in the gas on the tank.

James: Otherwise it wouldn't work?

Wallace: Wouldn't work – wouldn't run.

James: You mix alcohol with the gas?

Wallace: Yeah, we all had a five-gallon can of alcohol. So you had – before you could start, you had to put the alcohol into the gasoline, it was so cold. But I tell you, it was 180 proof alcohol. I never will forget that.

James: [unintelligible]

Wallace: Of course, a friend of mine, then – they were up on the front for a while – must have been two weeks, and they had been takin' this alcohol and crossin' it with grapefruit juice – and they ran out of grapefruit juice. And they drank that – one of 'em went blind. They had to –

James: It wasn't ethel-[alcohol] it was methel-[alcohol].

Wallace: Yep. Yeah.

James: It'll kill you.

Wallace: It killed him.

James: Oh, that's a shame.

Wallace: Yeah. Yeah, they got all – I never will forget, he was one of the best tank sergeants we had, and they all got up there and all of 'em got to drinkin' that stuff. And at that time, I didn't care too much about drinkin' anyhow – I was young.

James: Did they evacuate – did you just move 'em back down the peninsula of Korea, or did they evacuate you by ship?

Wallace: No, we just moved back down – moved back down –

James: You re-established the line.

Wallace: Yeah. Back down to Pusan, started back up.

James: Korea was not a very pleasant place.

Wallace: Oh no.

James: The difference between Korea and Italy is like night and day.

Wallace: Night an day. Yep. That's right.

James: Everything that was beautiful in Italy was ugly in Korea.

Wallace: Yeah, it was – woo! And I guess – and I got it bad because on our way to Korea, we stopped in Japan, and I went out of my office one day, during the lunch hour, and I said “Well, I'll go get a shave and everything.” And I went up there, and he knicked me, right here. And I went back to the office. The warrant officer was in the office. “What in the hell happened to you?” I didn't know what he was talking about. He said, “Man, you go right on up to the doctor.” And he said, “Your head is swellin'.” My whole face just – they gave me all kind of shot. Woووو!

James: Penicillin, I'm sure.

Wallace: Yeah, and it came from the area and what they fertilized with. And it was –

James: It got in there – his razor was –

Wallace: Razor, that's what it was. And boy, I was –

James: You were lucky you survived that.

Wallace: Yeah, I was really –

James: Those are bad bacteria to have in your head –

Wallace: Yeah, it was bad – that bacteria.

James: How long were you in the hospital?

Wallace: Oh, I guess I must have been in the hospital close to two weeks before I was getting back to normal, and I never went to another. [laughs]

James: Did you get wounded in Korea?

Wallace: No. You know, I never got wounded no more all clean through the war. Didn't ever get wounded. Seen a lot of them that was wounded. Been in a building in Korea – we were eating – we was eating dinner. My buddy and me were right next to each other, and he got up to wash his mess kit. And he didn't come back. You know, “Where's Tuck at?” And as he was going, a bullet come through the building, and hit him, dead on.

James: Oh my God.

Wallace: Yeah, I was really heartbroken. It hurt me so bad. And that's about – and the other was that when you had to move a tank, especially when you had to move in for camouflage at night, it

was really dangerous, because you had a .50 caliber sitting on top. And if you cool down under anything, this friend of mine, he was out leading the tank in.

James: On foot?

Wallace: He was on foot leading him in for position for camouflage, and the .50 caliber caught in a limb, and took off, just sawed in just like you took a knife.

James: Oh, it shot him. It didn't pull the limb off.

Wallace: Yeah, made it –

James: [sighs] Jesus.

Wallace: Yeah, I never – woo!

James: That was bizarre. That's really unusual.

Wallace: Yeah. And a lot of little things that happen, you wonder why, you know. And I wondered *why*. Said, it's something I don't know nothing about. Just, that's it. But –

James: Now what is this camera thing you mentioned – you have to explain it. You'd get set up for a camera – get their tanks set up.

Wallace: Camouflage.

James: Oh, just the camouflage.

Wallace: Yeah, see, you pull 'em in –

James: You get behind something?

Wallace: You get behind or down under by the trees, and when you pull in under any tree, you had to get out. And you had to be out in front of it, the tank driver, telling – so what I did, what I used to do when I got out, I'd make 'em turn the turret around. Turn it –

James: Turn that gun around.

Wallace: Yeah, turn him around to the back. And then I'd lead him in, see. But we didn't have that much sense before, you know, we'd just jump out and run. And I'm going down next month to see one of the boys that was in a tank outfit with me. He lives down in South Carolina, down at – hmm – it's the little town where the girl killed them children. Well, that's where he lives. I'm going down there.

James: So what medals did you win in Italy? Other than the purple heart.

Wallace: I had the purple heart, I had the bronze star, I had the – what is it – what’s the other one?

James: Well, all the theater ribbons.

Wallace: Oh yeah, I had all them.

James: Any unit citations there?

Wallace: No.

James: And in Korea?

Wallace: No, I had none in Korea. I was really happy when I got out of Korea.

James: You lucked out there.

Wallace: Yeah. And when they said “Vietnam,” I said “I’m retiring.” [laughs]

James: You weren’t going to test your luck a third time.

Wallace: Uh-uh. I said, I believe in “three strikes, you’re out.” And I really do.

James: You may have been correct. That may have been the end of you.

Wallace: Because I had three buddies that were in tank outfits with me –

James: In Korea?

Wallace: In Korea. One of ‘em was in a tank outfit in Italy with me. And we were both down at Jackson, and they come down and they said, “A lot of the old-timers are going to be shipped to Vietnam. Well, I didn’t worry about it because my commander – he said, “You know you ain’t goin’ unless I go.” And when he said that, he was a full bird. He said, one day he come in and he said, “Bob, what are you going to do with your wife?” I said, “What am I going to do with her?” I said, “I don’t know what you talkin’ about, ‘What I’m going to do with her?’” He said, “We’re going to Vietnam.” And I said, “Not no ‘we’ goin’!” [laughs]

James: Wrong pronoun!

Wallace: Not “we!” “We’s” not going!

James: You’re right. That was what year? Sixty-something? They started putting troops in there in ’65, but it was rangers then.

Wallace: This must have been ’57. ’57, I think it was. Because he went – this one buddy of mine went, and four of the others with him, all the master sergeants were killed. And he was the only one that survived out of the group that went.

James: It must have been '67.

Wallace: Hmm?

James: It must have been *sixty-seven*. They didn't put any large numbers of troops in there –

Wallace: No, it *must* have been '67.

James: Because that's when they started putting big numbers over there.

Wallace: You're right. You're right. Because I retired in '66, see.

James: That was the time that they invited you down there.

Wallace: Yeah, they invited me down, and he come, and I never will forget – he had just got – just bought two boxer dogs, and his wife said, "Get rid of them," because she wasn't going to have them and him gone. He said, after he finds - found I wasn't goin', he said, "Bob, what about taking these dogs?" He had just paid \$125 apiece for them. I said, "I don't want no dogs." But, see, he knew my wife and my son. And he said, "Bobby would like a dog."

James: [chuckles]

Wallace: And then after I admitted that I'd take the dog, he said, "You have to take both of them."

James: That's right, they'd be upset if they were separated.

Wallace: Yeah.

James: I can hear 'em now.

Wallace: Oh. And I went home, and my wife said, "You know, we ain't got no business with no two dogs." And she said, "We don't need *none*." See, because my – [laughs]. And so, we kept one, and across the street from me was a friend, and they had three boys. And I went and asked, I said, "Why don't you let them boys have a dog?" I really got mad afterwards that I let 'em, because they wouldn't let the dog in the house in the winter.

James: Oh, that's too bad.

Wallace: Yeah, and he died. But mine – we laughed till we cried about that dog. That boxer – I had all the way around my yard was fenced in. And then, the gate led in my driveway to a carport. And every time my son went to that gate to try to get out, he'd grab him right in the seat of the pants, and sit him down. He never let my son out of that yard. And my son would get up and get sticks, you know, and be throwin' at him. He'd run, duck, as soon as he got back to that gate to lift that gate up, he'd grab him, sit him down. And he didn't allow nobody in that yard. Because down there, see, I didn't stay on the base, I stayed in town.

- James: Uh-huh.
- Wallace: And they had – the garbage collector had – you had to pay for it. And so he would come out, and everytime that I knew it was his day, I had to hitch him up. I had to lock him up.
- James: No garbagemen [unintelligible]
- Wallace: Mm-mm. No. Not in his yard. And the really funny thing about it was, when I told my son that he couldn't take him with him. I was retired, and I didn't know where I was going then. So I said, "Bobby, you know daddy's retired. We won't be able to carry that dog with us." And so he went out in the yard, and there was a widow that lived right next door to us. And he used to go out when he was about – oh, I guess Bobby was about 4 years old – he used to go out there and holler at this widow, "You ain't got no business being out after dark by yourself!" And so when we got ready to go, I said, "What do you think we should do with the dog?" And this woman was named Dixon. He said, "Give it to Ms. Dixon." I said, "OK." You know, that dog lived 17 years.
- James: After that?
- Wallace: Yeah. 17 years. The family – they came up here to visit us. [laughs] And she said he didn't allow a man in that yard.
- James: So he took over her yard.
- Wallace: Yeah, he took over that yard. He said he didn't allow a man in that yard. Yeah, he was something. He was really –
- James: Smart dog.
- Wallace: And since I've been here, I've had four dogs. I don't have none now. The last one died. I had a doberman. And when I worked at night, I didn't worry about my family at all, because he, when that doorbell rang –
- James: He was there.
- Wallace: [claps] He'd get right – pushed my wife to the side, and get right up in the front. When she opened the door, the first person you'd see was him.
- James: You can see their nose –
- Wallace: Yeah, see him.
- James: I had a rottweiler. 110 pounds rottweiler. Nobody dared open that door.

- Wallace: Mm-hmm. Boy he – that’s when I decided I’d never get another dog. He died about a year ago. We went on vacation, and he took sick. And my son called us – he was down at Miami. He said, “I don’t know.” He said, “Dad,” he said, “We got him out to the veterinarian, in [unintelligible].” And he said, “He done quit eatin’.” I said, “What do you mean, quit eatin’?” He said, “I don’t know. He perks up when I go out there,” and he said, “But they called me yesterday, and said that he wasn’t doin’ too good.” And we said, “Well, we’re on our way home.” And so – and I got about a block and a half from my house, I seen my son’s car. And I said to my wife, did you call him? She said, “No, I didn’t call him.” And soon as I got there, he said, “Let’s go out to the veterinarian.” He said, “They think he’s dying.” He had cancer.
- James: A lot of dogs – a lot of male dogs have prostate cancer. That’s very common.
- Wallace: Yeah. That’s what he had. He had cancer. Boy, he was a good dog. Yeah.
- James: Well, we’re running out of soap here, Bob.
- Wallace: Alright!
- James: I can’t think of anything else, unless you can – that I can ask.
- Wallace: No, I think I’ve –
- James: You about talked out?
- Wallace: I think I’ve pulled the most out of it. I’m almost sure I’ve done told you most of it. This was a picture that was taken –
- James: This is a reunion, obviously.
- Wallace: Yeah, that was a picture taken when they first got the mount –
- James: Oh yes.
- Wallace: And these are all cavalry soldiers, old cavalry soldiers.
- James: When was this picture taken?
- Wallace: July – hmm, let’s see. July eighty – eighty-two, eighty-four.
- James: This one’s even older. This one’s 1942. The band.
- Wallace: The band? Yeah. On there is my dad.
- James: Oh really?
- Wallace: My dad’s on there. My dad’s on there. Yeah. I kept that because my dad was on there.

James: Sure. That's a great picture.

Wallace: Woo. And I – they all told me, “You'll always be in the army.” [laughs] And I said, “Yeah, I guess I am.”

James: Look at all the years you're in. Look at all the years you were in.

Wallace: Yeah. I've seen it.

James: From '39 to '69. There you are. There's thirty years.

Wallace: See, uh –

James: You retired on a pension?

Wallace: Oh yeah. And then –

James: What do you get? Do you get three-quarters pay?

Wallace: Three-quarter pay. And then I went to – when I came here, I said I was, you know, going to look for a job, and my wife said, “What are you – you know you ain't gonna do no work.” I said, “Yeah, I can fish.” I can't fish, I never have. And they were trying to make me a fisherman.

James: You're too active.

Wallace: And I – honey. I got the most beautiful 20-gauge with 22 mag and over. I ain't never fired it.

James: Oh my goodness.

Wallace: I've got a 12-gauge. I think I've fired it three times. And one of the fellas that used to be at the post office with me come by the house, “Bob, can I?” And I said, “Yeah, take it on out.” He'd go out hunting rabbits with it. But I never. And then I got my son – it don't kill animals. He's one that they – and said “Aww, what are you going out killing animals for? You know there's a animal something.” I said, “[groans].” And so my wife said, “You know you ain't never going to fire that gun.

James: She was right.

Wallace: But I really have had a nice – I've had a nice life.

James: Well you certainly have an interesting [unintelligible].

Wallace: Yeah, up ahead, I've had my part of it.

James: Think of the amount of the world that you've seen.

Wallace: Oh yeah. I was telling ‘em when I was in Italy, my officers used to be just down from the leaning tower.

James: Pisa, huh?

Wallace: Yeah, I used to –

James: What would you say to a young man that comes to you and says, “I’m getting out of high school now, I don’t know whether I should join the military as a career.” What would you tell him?

Wallace: Sure.

James: You still think it’s a good deal.

Wallace: I know it is. I know it is.

James: [unintelligible in background]

Wallace: Yeah. Today, it’s a good deal because when I joined the army, a lot of people thinks I’m kidding. My pay was \$15 over the pay table.

James: That bought a lot more.

Wallace: Woo.

James: That’s pretty good money in those days.

Wallace: Yeah, that was *good* money.

James: 1939, nothing the matter with that.

Wallace: That’s right. And I look at em today, and they got a lot of opportunities that, you know, turned over. Because, see, I came out and went to criminology school at Boston University while I was still in the army. I’d go to Boston University School of Criminology at night. You get so many opportunities to go, and then –

James: They can teach you a skill now.

Wallace: Oh yeah.

James: And so you put your number of years in, and you can go right into something.

Wallace: Yeah.

James: Whatever they taught you.

Wallace: Yep. Whatever they taught you, you could go right into. No sweat.

James: Did you join any veterans organizations?

Wallace: I belong to – what’s here?

James: VFW?

Wallace: Yeah. VFW here.

James: That’s about it?

Wallace: And, what’s the other one?

James: The Foreign Legion?

Wallace: I did, yeah, Foreign Legion. And I never go. They write me all the time.

James: Oh, and they send you those stickers.

Wallace: These tickets, send me the tickets, and I just send ‘em the money. Just leave me alone, because I-

James: Just send ‘em ten bucks and they –

Wallace: Because they say, “Oh, come on!”

James: I send a little money for that monument that they’re building for World War II veterans in Washington.

Wallace: Washington, yeah.

James: I sent – that thing that Bob Dole is head of – I sent ‘em a little money, because that’s, you know, that’s part of us.

Wallace: That’s part of us. That’s part of us.

James: So that’s about it.

Wallace: But the young man – and the young men can go places today. Woeee. I seen boys that come out of high school that today are full colonels. I have a friend – me and him joined the army together, and he lives out in Tacoma, Washington, and we talk all the time. His boy – he was stationed down here in Milwaukee for a while before he retired, and he said, “Bob,” he said, “My son went to the university, was in ROTC. Today, he’s a major general.”

James: Fast.

Wallace: I said, "What'd you say?" He said, "He is a major general." I have another friend – there were two brothers. One of 'em was a captain, and the other one was a first lieutenant. Both their sons are in, and both of 'em are majors. Just –

James: They didn't have to learn how to ride a horse.

Wallace: No, they didn't learn how to ride no horse, and didn't have to dunk in no tank. That's right. It's really something, you know. When I was down to my daughter's, my daughter is their aunt. And I went to the wedding, and they were there. And I hadn't seen them since they were a little small. And he came in, he said "I worked for something in Washington, I'm a major." The other brother, two months later, he made major.

James: That's great. I think the things that – are you impressed that there was a great improvement in the treatment of Blacks in the military?

Wallace: Yeah.

James: From your beginning with -

Wallace: Oh yeah.

James: - now the Blacks are dominant in the military now.

Wallace: Well, I tell you –

James: And that's been a great opportunity, I think.

Wallace: Great opportunity. I remember Clayton Powell, when he was a second lieutenant, he was in that 92<sup>nd</sup>.

James: Did you know him then?

Wallace: No, I didn't know him. And but, you know, it was funny that I was out at Huachuca, and they used to have a USO had a show out there, and they had this girl that they just now – this girl's playing her. Dorothy Danridge. I used to see Dorothy Danridge every day.

James: Oh really?

Wallace: Yeah, she used to ride a horse.

James: Beautiful, beautiful. Oh, pretty girl.

Wallace: Yeah, she used to ride a horse every morning out to Huachuca. And at that time, Louis was out there, Joe, and I seen some of the army officers that came through there. And I was surprised to

see the Black generals. You know, when I came in the army, there was not nothing but one branch of service a Black officer could get in.

James: Supply?

Wallace: Mm-mm. Chaplain.

James: Chaplain.

Wallace: This girl – what’s her name – you said – she just went to Europe. She used to be on the news. Hmm. Her daddy was the first Black officer I’ve ever seen. He was my chaplain, and he was a captain. And she used to be runnin’ around, and one day after he retired, I said to one of my friends, I said, “You know, I don’t know what happened to Captain [unintelligible].” I said, “I don’t know whether he retired or what.” And he said, “You don’t know?” And I said, “No.” He said, “Well that’s his daughter. It’s on the news.” I said, “What?” And he said, “Yeah.” And finally, I read up, and yeah. I mean, they come along. Woo.

James: That’s terrific.

Wallace: Oh, see, and it’s a blessing from the Lord. A blessing for the nation.

James: It’s really a blessing for the nation.

Wallace: Yeah. Oh. You’ve got so many – and you’ve got so many you can pick from now, see.

James: Well, education has done wonders –

Wallace: Oh yeah.

James: And so they don’t have to be given anything extra now, you can earn it.

Wallace: Earn it, earn it.

James: And that’s the answer to it all.

Wallace: Yep. You can earn it now. You don’t have to – and so I like it because I – they send me a lot of stuff from the organizations – the cavalry organizations.

James: Oh yeah.

Wallace: They send me a lot of stuff now. And I guess I’ve been through ten schools, then I was with this broadcast company once, down at the university. On Sunday morning, I had to go. I don’t – I read his name every time and forget it – but everything else, I have really enjoyed.

James: How many from the Buffalo Soldiers are left? You, and – what? Four other guys?

Wallace: Uh, living today, there's ten of us. We just lost one.

James: You get together with the others?

Wallace: Every once in a while. One of 'em was really peculiar. My wife got a call, and I wasn't home. And she said – she didn't know him – and she said – I came home and she said, “Do you know Eddie Samuel?” I said, “Yeah, classmate of mine.” Very good friend. Me and his brother and him. And she said, “Well, he left his number for you to call him. He lives in Denver.” So I called him, and he said, “I've got to ask you a favor.” I said, “What is it?” He said, “My daughter's coming out there. Her husband's going to be stationed down in Janesville, and they don't know nobody out there. And I told 'em to contact you.” And I said “Yeah.” She came out. Now, it was really funny that he had begged me over the years to come out there to Denver, and he had retired from the army, and then he had retired from Fitzsimmons in Denver, hospital. And he said, “Come on out, and spend three weeks.” I said, “Man, I ain't spending no three weeks.”

James: [laughs]

Wallace: “Oh,” he said, “We can play golf, and we can do this.” So they – his daughter came out. And she came up to the house – one evening came up and she said, “My dad said to be sure and check in with y'all.” I said, “Yeah.” And she had a little baby, and when they wanted to go to movies, they would come up from Janesville, and my wife would take care of the baby while they was at the movie. And he looked just like – when you lift him up, like lead. And my wife said, “What are you feeding this kid?” And she had a – in the nipple, she had cut a sunflower in the nipple, and she put oatmeal in there with the milk, and he was big, so I would talk – Eddie died two years ago, he died, and his wife – we still stay in contact. And so, he never had said much about it, you know, until they came out here to visit. And he said, “Bob, you know Pam Grier?” I said no, because I don't know – my wife would help me out – I don't know nothing of movie stars. And he said, “This is her mother.” She called us every month – every month we get a call from her since he died.

James: Oh how nice.

Wallace: Yeah. He and Pam sent us a big picture of her. I've never seen her. Yeah, yeah. [excerpt omitted] Well, alrighty.

James: Thank you so much for stopping in and sharing this with us.

Wallace: All right.

James: We appreciate it.

Wallace: Yes, indeed.

**[End Of Interview]**