FOR LOVE OF COUNTRY:
The Killeen Base Oral History Project

by

Amy E. Dase

and

Stephanie L. Katauskas

U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Hood
Archeological Resource Management Series

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14. ABSTRACT
Oral history interviews were conducted to record recollections about Killeen Base, the first of several atomic weapons national storage sites to operate in the U.S. This report includes transcripts of 18 oral history interviews that reflect 32 hours of recorded digital audio recordings. Transcribed, reviewed, and minimally edited, the transcripts are faithfully reproduced. Some informants also shared photographs and ephemera. Seventeen of the informants were members of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron, and the remaining informant worked on the construction crew that built Killeen Base. The interviews mostly pertain air force operation of the facility in conjunction with the Atomic Energy Commission between 1948 and 1952. The informants recounted their memories about nuclear weapons, the Cold War, Killeen Base, adjacent Gray Air Force Base, and duties performed as part of the squadron. The audio recordings are permanently housed at the Texas Collection of Baylor University, where they available to the public.

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Abstract

Between September 2009 and July 2010, Prewitt and Associates, Inc., conducted oral history interviews to record recollections about Killeen Base. This base was the first of several atomic weapons national storage sites that operated in the United States in the aftermath of World War II. The Killeen Base oral history project includes 18 oral history interviews and 32 hours of recorded digital audio recordings. Some of the participants had photographs and ephemera to share, including one who preferred not to be interviewed. The informants were all men ranging in age from 76 to 91 at the time of their interviews. Seventeen of the informants were members of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron, and the remaining informant worked on the construction crew that built Killeen Base. Transcribed, reviewed, and minimally edited, the interview transcripts are faithfully reproduced.

The content of the interviews mostly pertains to the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron at Killeen Base between 1948 and 1952, when the air force operated the facility in conjunction with the Atomic Energy Commission. The informants recounted their experiences and memories, particularly about nuclear weapons and the Cold War, the Killeen Base facility, the adjacent Gray Air Force Base, and duties performed as part of the squadron.

The interviews were conducted to compile historical information about Killeen Base that will serve as an archive for future generations. The collected documentation is housed at the Texas Collection of Baylor University and is available to researchers and the general public.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to the informants for their participation in the Killeen Base oral history project. Most interviews took place at the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron's annual reunion held in Branson, Missouri, in November 2009. A few interviews took place at informants' homes or place of business. All shared their remembrances with willingness and enthusiasm, and several shared photographs and ephemera. We are indebted to these informants because their cooperation enriches understanding of Killeen Base and its important role in the Cold War.

We appreciate the contributions of others who helped the project run smoothly. We thank Douglas K. Boyd, principal investigator with Prewitt and Associates, for his oversight as the authors each investigated the origins of Killeen Base and its operations, prepared for and performed their interviews, and jointly wrote the report. Christine Rousseau with AfterWords transcribed the interviews.

We are grateful to the members of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron who attended the 2009 reunion and allowed us the privilege of attending their annual event. Special recognition goes to Reed and Marge Cheesman, who organized the reunion. Elmer Hounshell shared video documentation of previous reunions and interviews, and Calvin Adkins, Richard Bender, Reed Cheesman, William Fogle, Ed Helms, Ronald Napierala, and Engward Nielsen provided photographs and ephemera related to Killeen Base.

Personnel from Fort Hood's Cultural Resources Management Program were also helpful. Former acting director of the program, Karl Kleinbach, initiated the project, and Richard S. Jones, the current director, continued to provide support. Sunny A. Wood, staff archeologist, was successful in encouraging a local informant to participate, and he conducted the interview with Richard L. Powell, historian for the III Corps and Fort Hood Command. Brent Truitt, the underground training facility site manager at Fort Hood, gave a fascinating tour of the plants that once housed atomic weapons maintenance.

We would like to thank the Texas Collection at Baylor University, which agreed to be the permanent repository for the digital oral histories, printed transcripts, and other materials, including photographs and ephemera, collected for the project. An identical set of these materials is on file with the Fort Hood Cultural Resources Management Program.

INTRODUCTION

Prewitt and Associates, Inc., of Austin, Texas, prepared this report under a contract with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District (W9126G-05-D-0010, Delivery Order No. 40) for the Cultural Resources Management Program, Environmental Division, Directorate of Public Works, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Hood, Department of the Army. This report is in compliance with federal cultural resources laws, particularly the National Historic Preservation Act and the "Historic Properties Component" of *Fort Hood's Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan* (U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Hood 2010). The Cultural Resources Management Program is responsible for more than 2,200 historic and prehistoric archeological resources on the Fort Hood lands, including Killeen Base, which has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district.

Because Fort Hood may implement undertakings within the Killeen Base Historic District, the Killeen Base oral history project is intended as partial mitigation should adverse effects occur to the historic district and its numerous contributing resources. This project documents the experiences of personnel from the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron who were assigned to the facility at its opening in 1948. Beginning in late 1951, the entire squadron was transferred to a sister facility, Manzano Base in New Mexico. Recording the informants' recollections broadened understanding of Killeen Base and accumulated data from one of the most important and nonrenewable sources of historical information—the collective memories of air force veterans who worked at the installation.

The Killeen Base oral history project's primary goals were to interview knowledgeable informants, record oral histories, and transcribe, edit, and publish the full transcripts of those interviews. Other goals were to gather and copy photographs and ephemera from private collections and record people's memories of those photographs. This report satisfies those goals.

Materials the Killeen Base oral history project generated consist of original and duplicate digital audio files of each interview, printed interview transcripts, digital files of all photographs and ephemera with an index (Appendix A), documentation forms for photographs and ephemera (Appendix B), and a signed standard agreement for release of audio and other materials from each informant (Appendix C). These original materials will be permanently archived at the Texas Collection at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a duplicate set will be housed at the Fort Hood Cultural Resources Management Program.

This report includes a methodology, a brief history of Killeen Base based largely on the interviews, 18 transcribed interviews, references, and appendixes. The crux of the report is the transcripts, which are organized alphabetically by the last name of the informant. At the beginning of each transcript is a photograph of the informant along with his name and tenure at Killeen Base.

METHODOLOGY

Historians with Prewitt and Associates first reviewed previously developed cultural resources management reports about Killeen Base and some of its sister national storage site facilities, including Manzano Base in New Mexico. Four detailed reports that pertain to Killeen Base were particularly helpful: *Fort Hood Building and Landscape Inventory with World War II and Cold War Context* (Webster et al. 2007); *Cold War Infrastructure for Air Defense: The Fighter and Command Missions* (Weitze 1999); *Cold War Properties at West Fort Hood, Texas: Research, Overview, and Preliminary Identification* (Weitze 2005); and *National Stockpile Sites Alpha, Baker, Charlie, and Dog: Design and Development, 1946–1955* (Weitze 2006).

A questionnaire was developed for the two military groups most associated with Killeen Base to guide the focus of the oral history project (Appendix D). Based on the responses, it was clear that the early presence of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron was a priority topic. Respondents replied to questions about service dates and duties performed. The questionnaires included a section for comments and, in many cases, respondents provided extensive details about their time at Killeen Base. From these responses, a master list of potential interview candidates with names and contact information was created and maintained. Of the 216 questionnaires mailed to the U.S. Army Company C, Military Police, several did not reach intended recipients because address information was incorrect (11) or the individual was deceased (2). A few replies indicated a physical inability or unwillingness to participate (2). Of the 51 respondents (24 percent), most specified that their duties were limited to guard patrol at one or more posts. A few, however, had different assignments, such as game warden, radio dispatcher, administration, or driver to high-ranking officers. Of the 108 questionnaires mailed to the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron, several did not reach intended recipients because address information was incorrect (11) or the individual was deceased (3). A few replies indicated physical inability or unwillingness to participate (2) or that the individual had been in the squadron but was never stationed at Killeen Base (7). Of the 17 respondents (16 percent), most specified that their duties were limited to air police guard patrol at one or more posts. A few, however, worked in one of the plants, the technical supply division, or motor pool. Many of these forms contributed useful information for this report.

An annual reunion of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron in Branson, Missouri, in September 2009 was the perfect opportunity for the authors to interview several informants (Figure 1). Each attendee received a letter of introduction describing the project and its goals, requesting an interview, and suggesting that photographs and ephemera from their time at Killeen Base could be digitally scanned at the reunion if they had any to share. The authors interviewed 13 informants and collected photographs and ephemera from seven former squadron members in Branson. Seven of the

Figure 1. The attendees of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Report Squadron in Branson, Missouri, in 2009. Front row (left to right): Guy Priester (in black suit), Harold Lehman, James Griffin, Harry Podsiadlik, Reed Cheesman, Ronald Napierala, and Abe Hern. Back row (left to right): James Wagner, Engward Nielsen, Calvin Adkins, Elmer Hounshell, James Kinard, George Rasmussen, Rodney Helms, Jack McCoy, John Stedman, William Fogle (photograph courtesy of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron).

informants had been stationed at Killeen Base in 1948, even before installation construction was complete, another three arrived at the base in 1949 and 1950, and seven more came to the facility in 1951. All were transferred to Manzano Base between late 1951 and February 1952. One informant was not stationed at Killeen Base but joined the squadron at Manzano Base in 1952. Like the questionnaire respondents, most of these informants worked as air police and guarded various posts at Killeen Base, although a few had duties in technical supply or administration.

After the reunion, the authors consulted the list of remaining potential informants to select additional candidates for interviews. Several men were identified as good potential contributors because they had positions that differed from those of the informants interviewed at the reunion, and four additional interviews took place. The authors traveled to these informants' homes or businesses to conduct the interviews. A final interview, conducted by Fort Hood personnel Sunny A. Wood and Richard L. Powell, took place in the home of a local man who had been employed on the construction crew that built Killeen Base.

The interviews form the nucleus of the project. Preparation for the interviews consisted of reviewing previously produced reports on Killeen Base (Webster et al. 2007; Weitze 1999, 2005, 2006) and touring Killeen Base. Based on this background information, the authors generated a list of questions (Appendix E). They traveled to the reunion and recorded the interviews with high-quality digital audio

recorders and were prepared with microphones, extra batteries, storage disks, and extension cords. Each informant was required to sign a deed of gift agreement form indicating his willingness for the interview to be published and housed at the Texas Collection at Baylor University. The goal of each interview was to elicit historical information about the informant's life at Killeen Base. The 18 interviews ranged in length from 40 minutes to more than 4 hours and resulted in 32 hours of digital audio recordings. The informants were all men ranging in age from 76 to 91 at the time of their interviews.

An effort was made to collect previously gathered interviews with other members of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron. Although one videotaped interview conducted in 2007 as part of the Veterans History Project was available, the informant did not return the necessary release form, so the material could not be included. However, a transcript was prepared, and both it and the videotaped interview—with Thomas Royal Perry, an airman second class who served in the squadron from 1951 to 1955—are permanently stored at the Warhawk Air Museum in Nampa, Idaho (Veterans History Project n.d.a). The Veterans History Project has collected interviews with six other members of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron, but these each post-date the period of study at Killeen Base (Veterans History Project n.d.b, n.d.c, n.d.d, n.d.e, n.d.f, n.d.g).

The original digital audio recording files of completed interviews were duplicated and provided to a transcription service. After transcription, the authors listened to the interviews to compare them with the transcripts and edit them for accuracy. A style guide particular to oral history aided this process to reflect each informant's word, speech, and thought patterns as closely as possible (Institute for Oral History, Baylor University 2007). Meticulous attention to sounds and language produced as close to a verbatim record of the interview as possible. The transcripts faithfully retain most speech patterns. Each informant had the opportunity to review his transcript and change, add, or delete information. Although the transcripts were proofread, it is important to note that inconsistencies in spelling, of proper nouns and names in particular, may still be present.

The final task was to provide the digital audio recording files, photographs, ephemera, and transcripts to the Texas Collection at Baylor University, where they will be permanently stored and available to future researchers, historians, and the general public. An identical set of these materials is stored with the Fort Hood Cultural Resources Management Program.

The Killeen Base oral history project is intended to be ongoing and expandable. Possible subjects for future research include interviews with Atomic Energy Commission and Defense Atomic Support Agency staff stationed at Killeen Base and with army personnel, particularly members of the 8455th and 8456th Military Police, the subsequent Company C Military Police, and the 8462nd Special Weapons Units, who could provide information on the subsequent period when they operated the facility. These potential informants—and others who remain yet unidentified—are precious and increasingly rare resources who could deepen understanding of the mission and operation of Killeen Base.

Remarks on the Transcripts

A list of conventions was developed for the transcripts in an effort to provide as much consistency as possible regarding word use and proper names and nouns. Words are spelled as they were spoken, and the structure of the narrative and delivery is largely intact, although certain contracted colloquial words were spelled out. Examples of this are the use of them instead of 'em and because instead of 'cause. Brackets are used sparingly but serve several purposes. They may indicate an action, such as when a subject is looking at a photograph or gesturing. Unspoken words and phrases are inserted in brackets to provide clarity. Brackets surrounding a question mark follow a word that is spelled phonetically because the accurate spelling is unknown. The bracketed term "inaudible" is used to indicate a word or phrase that could not be understood by the transcriber and could not be clarified by either the informant or the authors. Finally, brackets are used to designate words the informant added after the interview as part of the transcript review. No marks were used to indicate when an informant chose to delete words. The following abbreviations are used:

AWOL	absent without leave	NCO	noncommissioned officer
ABC	Atomic Bomb Control	NCOIC	noncommissioned officer in charge
ADT	American District Telegraph	OCS	Officer Candidates School
AEC	Atomic Energy Commission	OSI	Office of Special Investigations
AFSC	air force service classification	PFC	private first class
BX	base exchange	PX	post exchange
CQ	charge of quarters	SAC	Strategic Air Command
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation	TDY	temporary duty yonder
GI	government issue	TNT	trinitrotoluene
ID	identification	TV	television
IQ	intelligence quotient	TWX	teletypewriter exchange
KP	kitchen patrol	VIP	very important person
MP	military police		

Finally, the reader will find discrepancies in the informants' accounts of the events that took place at Killeen Base. This is not to say that any informant's statements are incorrect but that experiences differ, as do memories. It is not the intent of this report to rectify any substantive inconsistencies but to reflect the thoughtful words of each informant.

RECOLLECTIONS OF KILLEEN BASE

The perceived threat of communism in the United States escalated in the decades after World War II. As a consequence, an atomic arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union gained momentum, and scientists working for the U.S. government produced nuclear material that required maintenance and secure storage during the Cold War era. The government built several national

storage and operational sites, each strategically positioned next to an existing military installation, to accommodate this need (Weitze 2005:20). As was common to Cold War–era landscapes, the most significant buildings at Killeen Base and similar nuclear storage sites were defined by what could not be seen. The hidden, secret, and underground assured sanctuary from an invisible threat and concealed an array of deterrent forces (Vanderbilt 2002:16).

An alliance of government, military, and civilian entities ensured that no single organization had complete control of the national nuclear program and prevented any lone institution from possessing the whole of the nation's nuclear knowledge and power (Carroll and Carroll 2009). The development, production, and assembly of atomic bombs initially took place at Los Alamos Laboratories, which became known as Sandia Base soon after it was relocated next to Kirtland Air Force Base. In conjunction with the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project and the Atomic Energy Commission, the civilian-run Sandia Base oversaw maintenance and storage of nuclear materials at Department of Defense nuclear storage sites like Killeen Base between 1947 and 1959 (Weitze 2005:x, 11).

Initially, three national storage sites were built for storage of nuclear materials, and more would follow (Webster et al. 2007:35). Black & Veatch, a Kansas City architectural and engineering firm, designed all of these facilities in 1946. The firm had a longstanding record of work with the military and had designed civilian water, power, and sewer projects, and both Los Alamos Laboratories and Sandia Base (Weitze 2006:25, 34, 37). The three national storage sites were Site Able, later known as Manzano Base, near Kirtland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Site Baker, later known as Killeen Base, near Gray Air Force Base in central Texas; and Site Charlie, later known as Clarksville Base, near Fort Campbell in Tennessee, near the Kentucky border. Additional national storage sites were eventually developed in northwest Louisiana at Bossier Base near Barksdale Air Force Base, in south-central Texas at Medina Base near Kelly Air Force Base, and in the south tip of Nevada at Lake Mead Base near Nellis Air Force Base. Operational sites were constructed in 1951 in California, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, South Dakota, Virginia, and Washington. By August 1951, seven operational sites were under construction on foreign soil in Spain and French Morocco (GlobalSecurity.org n.d.a).

Killeen Base was strategically positioned. It was southwest of Camp Hood, a principal World War II armored tank training division of the U.S. Army that flourished during the Cold War. The Camp Hood Air Strip immediately to the east became Gray Air Force Base, which was administered separately but functioned in tandem with Killeen Base for the transport of weapons. Upon activation in February 1948, the air force base had one runway, a few temporary buildings, and 13 personnel assigned from Strategic Air Command (Weitze 2005:27). In the spring of 1947 ground broke for construction of two underground plants and 49 storage igloos, along with above-ground administrative and support buildings for Killeen Base (U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Hood, Texas n.d.; Weitze 2005:26).

The design and engineering of Killeen Base incorporated lessons learned from the previous 20

years of ordnance magazine construction. The critical features for storing modern materials included underground camouflaged structures of strengthened concrete and dense steel reinforcing bars and plates, long access tunnels with internal blast traps, blast-proof entrance doors, shock absorption in floors, walls, and roofs, and independent power and water sources. A steady interior air temperature was necessary, which required dehumidification, air filters, baffle walls, and air locks (Weitze 2006:21–22).

The construction crew, many of whom came from distant mining communities, knew nothing about what they were building. Dave Ennis Conder, a local man who had just returned from duty with the U.S. Marines, joined the construction crew that built Plants 1 and 2, also known as "the tunnels," at Killeen Base. He recalled being paid $1.25 an hour at first. When he was promoted to foreman, his pay increased to $1.75 an hour. Work proceeded nonstop, with three shifts working around the clock. After an initial unsuccessful attempt to break ground with a trailer truck equipped with drills, a Caterpillar machine with seven drills gouged down 9 to 11 feet deep. Dynamite was exploded in the cavities the drills created. This allowed for the plants to be constructed about 80 feet below the surface of the hills in which they were embedded. The 20-foot-wide corridors had 30-foot-tall rounded ceilings (U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Hood, Texas n.d.; Webster et al. 2007:248). Conder recalled that the plants had above-ground vents and, just below the surface, a vent pipe that extended along the top spine of each tunnel. He helped mix cement onsite to form the 18-inch-thick concrete walls and floors, which had metal reinforcing bars. He also drove the eight-man gunite crew that screened and loaded sand, mixed it with concrete and water, and blew it onto the interior walls. Construction of the tunnels was dangerous work that resulted in many injuries. The men wore hard hats, but safety measures were limited at the time. Conder himself had a serious accident at the construction site that ended his employment on the crew.

In March 1948, Killeen Base was the first nuclear storage site in the nation to be functional, although construction was not entirely complete (Weitze 2005:11, 2006:57). The base carried out parts of the Armed Forces Special Weapons Project mission: to store and maintain nuclear material and non-nuclear components for weapons and to provide logistics and security for their transportation. The 7,000-acre top-secret base was built into the stubby hills of central Texas, sometimes known as Seven Mile, or Rattle Snake Mountain. Four heavily armed fences surrounded the installation: three 9-foot-tall chain-link fences topped with strands of razor wire and a barrier resting on insulators that carried 48,000 volts of electricity. The nucleus of the facility was the Q Area, the most secure portion of the base, which housed Plants 1 and 2 (Weitze 2005:26–27). Inside the underground plants, personnel performed maintenance on the component parts of bombs so the weapons would be ready should delivery be required. The two entrances to the Killeen Base plants, north and south, had metal doors that had to be closed before heavy metal blast doors several feet inside would open. A sally port between the entry and blast doors prevented enemy fire beyond the interior door.

Inside the plants, the tunnels extended 430 to 500 feet (Figure 2) before reaching any of the 23 interior chambers (Figure 3). The Q chamber, a handling area for bombs en route to and from storage, was first (Figure 4), followed by the K chamber, which connected utility stations for electric power and water supply. Some of these rooms still retain original machinery, such as massive generators in the K chamber (U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Hood, Texas n.d.). The most secretive rooms were the A, B, and C chambers, also known as the ABC or the Atomic Bomb Control chambers. Few people had authorization to access these areas. The two A chambers had eight vaults for storing nuclear material detonator pits. The early atomic bomb contained polonium/beryllium detonator pits, or initiators, to produce the neutrons that generate the explosive sequence. With a half-life of 138 days, the pits had to be replaced at regular intervals. Work detail in those rooms involved baseline inspection to monitor detonator pits. Instructions from Sandia Base specified that only two people should be in the A chamber at any one time, and that stays should be limited to one hour because the work was tedious and the materials both precious and hazardous to handle. Pits with spent half-lives would be transported in their cylinders to the B chamber. The two B chambers had four workrooms for maintenance activities on the detonator pits. Workers replaced the nuclear material in the pits, reinserted them into cylinders, and transported them to the C chamber. Specifications for the B chamber limited work time to two people for about four hours. The two C chambers had four workrooms for surveillance and maintenance of the detonator pits; seven people could be in the chambers continuously. Workers in the C chamber performed final inspections of renewed detonator pits before placing them into birdcages and returning them to the A chamber (Weitze 2006:62–63, 66).

Figure 2. A long concrete tunnel inside Plant 2 at Killeen Base (courtesy of Prewitt and Associates).

Access to the ABC chambers was strictly limited. Jack Stedman recalled two places that only certain guards could go to. One was the ADT room (it is unclear which chamber this may have been) and the other was the ABC tunnel. Although

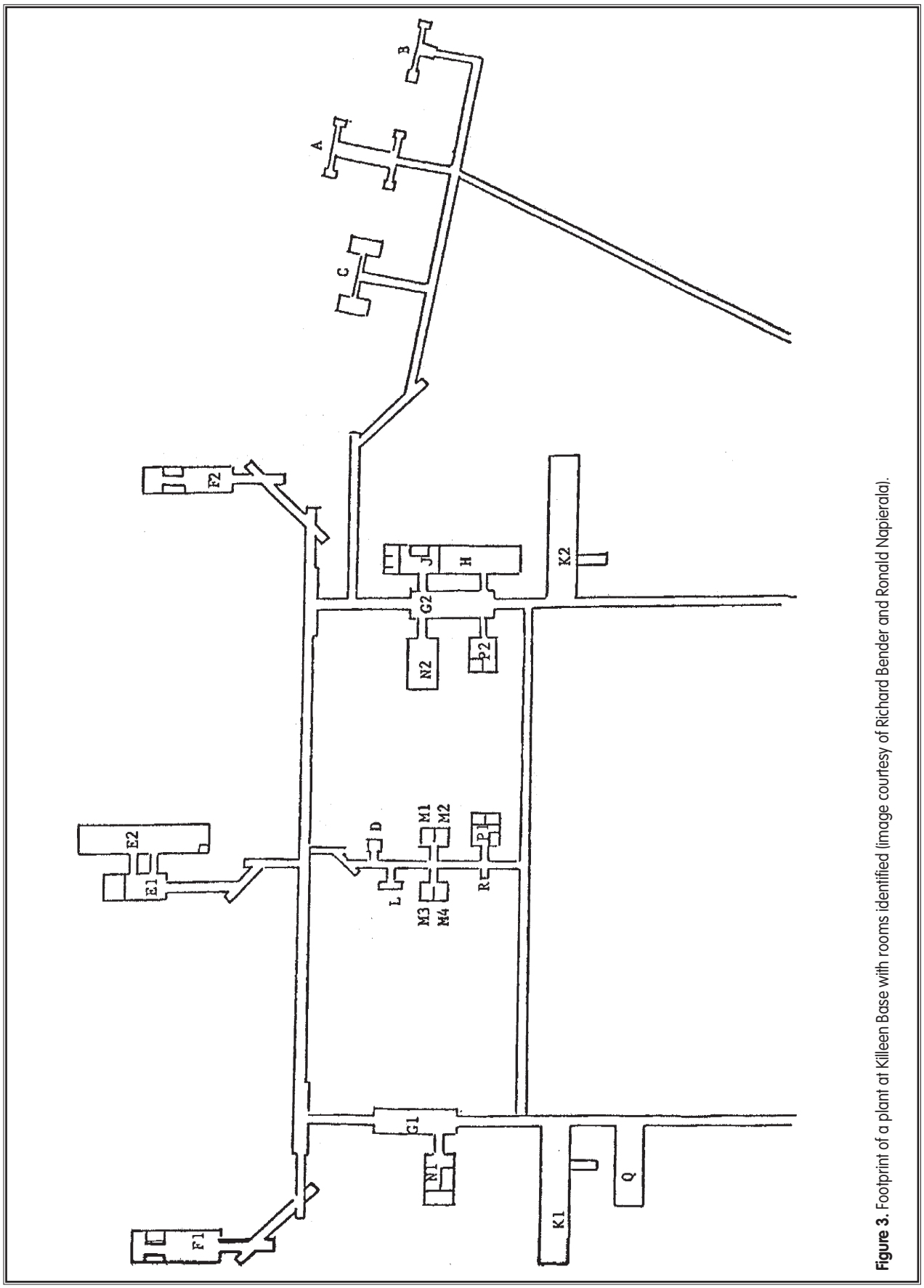


Figure 3. Footprint of a plant at Killeen Base with rooms identified (image courtesy of Richard Bender and Ronald Napierala).

Stedman was never told what the rooms were, he knew that the assigned guard carried a machine gun. Personnel in the ADT room monitored all of the alarms on Killeen Base. Stedman was correct in purporting that the ABC chambers housed the materials necessary to arm the nuclear weapons, including uranium and plutonium. Guy Priester described the ABC chambers as "different, set away from the plant. It was a part of the plant, but you had to go around a small little narrow walkway into a huge place where they stored capsules." Priester knew a technical sergeant who was a radiological technician in the ABC chamber. That access was limited to certain guards was no point of contention, according to Rodney Helms. "You had no business back in the back of the plant, so you didn't go there," he said. "I never was the curious kind to look at what was going on because it was none of my business."

Other chambers within the plants were used for a variety of activities. One D chamber housed a small workshop for maintaining detonators. The E chamber consisted of two rooms used to maintain electrical bomb components. Two F chambers were used for maintaining mechanical bomb components. The two G chambers were colossal spaces used for crating and shipping bombs. A single H chamber provided a machine shop, and the connected J chamber had a pair of workrooms. The L chamber had two vaults whose purpose remains unknown. The two M chambers had four rooms, three of which were offices and the fourth of which was a conference room. The two N chambers had office and communications rooms. The P chambers were latrines. The sole R chamber was a small janitorial supply room (Weitze 2006:62–63). The F, G, and N chambers were designed to almost mirror each other on opposite sides of the plants; their two chambers had separate access points.

Figure 4. The Q chamber, a handling area for bombs en route to and from storage (courtesy of Prewitt and Associates).

In addition to Plants 1 and 2, the Q Area had other facilities. There were initially 49 munitions storage igloos along Loop and Supply Roads, built into the bedrock and covered with earth as disguise, to assist with blast control and protection. Ten more were built in 1949 at the end of Supply Road. In 1951, 60

more igloos were added along North Road and South Road Loops (Webster et al. 2007:257). Between 1947 and 1954 nine bedrock igloos that had stored non-nuclear casings and other components were converted to A structures. These provided additional storage for nuclear pits and initiators (Webster et al. 2007:259). Two ammunition storage buildings were built in 1949, and nine warehouses were constructed between 1948 and 1950 (Weitze 2005:62). Battery-charging buildings were built near the ABC chambers in 1951. Since early batteries employed flammable materials and were a high-maintenance component of the atomic bomb, the building's arched wood-frame roof was frangible should there be an accident (Weitze 2005:18) Other resources included two water storage tanks and two pump stations (Weitze 2005:62–63). Each plant had associated fenced areas across from their respective entrances for burial of minor radioactive waste items, such as gloves (Weitze 2005:34). The routine maintenance and assembly of nuclear weapons produced small quantities of contaminated waste placed in lead-lined cylinders and stored in underground tubes (GlobalSecurity.org n.d.b).

Outside and immediately east of the Q Area was the administrative area, also known as the A Area, where four permanent buildings originally stood. The 1947 Killeen Base headquarters building, designated as Troop Housing Unit Number 1 in early plans, was a multiple-purpose building (Figure 5). It held offices for the commanding officer, adjutant, personnel, and first sergeants. It had rooms for mail, communications, medical staff, and security staff. The building provided segregated mess halls for enlisted men and officers and had a day room with pool tables, card tables, television, and a small bar. General and weapons supplies were in the basement of the building. A group of warehouses, motor pool, wash rack, and a fenced storage yard were adjacent to the headquarters building (Reed Cheesman, personal communication 2011; Webster et al. 2007:267). Technical supply buildings and a storage yard were clustered along Supply Road and on top of the hill, adjacent to the underground plants (Webster et al. 2007:256). A main gate building, guard building, and auxiliary power station were also present (Webster et al. 2007:251).

Figure 5. Ferrill Moore (left) and Charles Hounshell in front of the headquarters building at Killeen Base (photograph courtesy of Calvin Adkins).

Most airmen resided in the headquarters building at Killeen Base, but other housing options were sometimes necessary. The headquarters building provided sleeping bays for many airmen. Each long rectangular bay had bunk beds lining the room. Harold Lehman remembered the nice floors they kept cleaned and buffed, the windows they washed, and the beds that each man kept orderly as he saw fit so that it would pass inspection. A bachelor officers' quarters was adjacent to the headquarters building by 1951 (Figure 6) (Reed Cheesman, personal communication 2011; Weitze 2005:63). When an influx of new airmen

caused crowding that year, a tent city was constructed near the perimeter of the base. The 10-man tents were semi-permanent, with wood floors and frames supporting a tent roof.

Figure 6. The barracks at Killeen Base (photograph courtesy of Calvin Adkins).

Married airmen were permitted to live in Kay Bee Heights (named for Killeen Base, now called Montague Village) along Clarke Road. Built as part of the Wherry and Capehart housing act, the 1949 Black & Veatch–designed development has a semicircular layout around a central park (Webster et al. 2007:274). Richard Bender and his family occupied one of the Kay Bee Heights homes (Figure 7). Despite the construction of the new subdivision, it was clearly still a rural area. Bender mentioned finding cattle grazing on their flowers and fresh sod.

William Fogle arrived at Killeen Base in 1951 during the brief but acute housing shortage. "They didn't have facilities in the main buildings. We lived in what they called 'tent city.' We were in 10-man tents, and they had wooden floors, and wooden frames that the tent was over. We had five cots on each side." George Rasmussen had similar recollections. "The tent city really was pretty nice. It had wood floors in it, and the tents were stretched over it. We went through all of that training living in them. When we first pulled in there, we saw all of those brick barracks. We thought, 'Man we hit the jackpot. This is nice.' They pulled us around to those tents and said, 'Gentlemen, these are your quarters.' Quite a disappointment. We eventually moved into those nice brick barracks."

Although a few of the informants had already served in the military by 1948, most were prompted by the Korean War to enlist in the air force rather than wait to be drafted by the army. Once they joined, they traveled to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, to complete basic training. From there, a select group of airmen received orders for Killeen Base, their first permanent post. These troops were each originally part of one of four groups: the First Provost Security Squadron organized at Kelly Air Force Base, the 1100th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting group, or the 510th or 551st U.S. Air Force Aviation Groups. Only recruits with no Communist ties and whose parents were born in the United States were considered for Killeen Base. Airmen arrived by cargo

Figure 7. Richard Bender and his wife resided in this Kay Bee Heights home with their young children (photograph courtesy of Richard Bender).

airplane, bus, or train, depending on which group they were with; most came in with one of two large groups that arrived in 1948 and 1951. The majority of incoming airmen did not know their exact destination until after they disembarked at Killeen Base.

The young airmen were initially unclear on the overall mission of Killeen Base, although their experiences made them well aware that they were at a facility important to fighting the Cold War. James Kinard recalled that upon his arrival, they sent him through a door where he met a major. He asked Kinard if he was a Communist. Kinard said, "No." The major asked if he had any family that was Communist, and the answer was no. He then asked Kinard how much he knew about communism, which was very little. After several more questions along those lines, the major picked up a stamp and stamped Kinard's papers Killeen Base, Killeen, Texas. "I had no idea where I was going or what it was." If an airman took a periodical with a Communist viewpoint or attended a certain college, he was passed over and shipped out to somewhere else, according to Reed Cheesman. One of Harold Lehman's enlisted friends was excluded because his parents were foreign-born. "He was not taken. He was sent another direction."

Before their arrival, the 8455th and 8456th U.S. Army Military Police Company had secured the grounds of Killeen Base while it was under construction. Elton Lowell was already attached to that company when the airmen arrived in 1948. Lowell commented that there was a transition, with the army military police leaving and the air force moving in. He was one of the first ones there, arriving on one of three airplanes that brought personnel from Kelly Air Force Base. He performed guard work but never worked the main gate without corresponding army presence at first. "If two air police were at the main gate, there were always two army military police also. Then when the air force got there, they took over, of course, and the army was gone. Now up here on the hill, when I patrolled up on the hill, the first night, myself and another airman, we went with one army military police, and he showed us where we would be. We were on our own after that, and it was strictly air force up here."

In December 1948, many of the Killeen Base airmen were far from home during the Christmas holiday for the first time in their young lives. A special dinner presented to celebrate the occasion featured a roast turkey with oyster dressing, snowflake potatoes, candied sweet potatoes, buttered green beans, and buttered whole kernel corn. At the time, there were 12 ranking officers. The base commander was Lieutenant Colonel Hilliard Gandy, with leadership from Major R. E. Mathe, base advisor, Major Harold Barr, first provost, and Captain J. W. Whitehead. Other officers included First Lieutenant G. B. Daniels (S-2), Captain J. N. Scioli (S-3), Captain F. J. Kratch (S-4), motor officer Captain V. G. Phillips, and adjutant Warrant Officer Harmon Barbee. Flight commanders were C. M. Harris, J. F. Miceli, and J. J. Pickett, all first lieutenants. The company roster of 162 airmen included one master sergeant, two technical sergeants, eight staff sergeants, nine sergeants, seven corporals, and 135 privates first class. Among the privates first class were informants Calvin Adkins, Reed Cheesman, James Griffin, Elmer Hounshell (his brother Charles Hounshell was also present), Elton Lowell, and Ronald Napierala. The

attached personnel numbered 60 and included three master sergeants, seven sergeants first class, three sergeants, seven corporals, 11 privates first class, and 29 privates. Of the attached personnel, informant Richard Bender was a sergeant and Jack McCoy was a private. In total, the base had 234 personnel by the end of 1948 (1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron 1948).

The 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron relieved four existing groups from their assignments on June 23, 1950. This effected approximately 430 personnel at Killeen Base. The First Provost Security Squadron had been the first air force group posted to Killeen Base with Major Harold Barr at its helm. His squadron had 184 airmen: one captain, four first lieutenants, one master sergeant, two technical sergeants, 16 staff sergeants, 30 sergeants, 87 corporals, 36 privates first class, and seven privates. This included informants Reed Cheesman and Elton Lowell, both sergeants, Corporals Calvin Adkins, Jack McCoy and Ronald Napierala, and Private Elmer Hounshell. A second larger group assigned to the squadron was the 1100th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Group with Lieutenant Colonels Hilliard Gandy and Theodore Hikel as the ranking officers. Serving with them were 155 men: seven majors, 12 captains, six first lieutenants, one warrant officer junior grade, 12 master sergeants, 18 technical sergeants, 33 staff sergeants, 35 sergeants, 26 corporals, and five privates first class. This included informant Herman Wallace, a sergeant. The smallest group that was relieved and reassigned was the 510th U.S. Air Force Aviation Squadron. Majors June Bicknell and Kimsey Miller led this group of 86 airmen, which had 10 captains, 15 first lieutenants, two warranty officers junior grade, 10 master sergeants, 15 technical sergeants, 14 staff sergeants, 12 sergeants, six corporals, and two privates first class. Among them was informant Richard Bender, a staff sergeant. The 551st U.S. Air Force Aviation Group was also relieved of duty apparently, but specifics about the members of this group were not available. Major Herbert D. Hoover, transferred from the 1100th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Group, was named commanding officer of the newly formed squadron (1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron 1950).

Another large group of airmen would arrive at Killeen Base in early 1951 to join the new squadron (Figure 8). They came from basic training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, where they had endured a harsh winter. Engward Nielsen remembered that "it was in January and February, and it got cold down there. They about froze to death. Those old tar-paper barracks had the little potbelly stoves, one on each end. They'd get them where they're red-hot, and stand to try to keep warm. You burned up in the front and your back was freezing. They'd only issued two blankets each." Nielsen slept in his civilian clothes and put his fatigues over them in an unsuccessful attempt to stay warm. Harold Lehman recalled leaving Lackland Air Force Base under rather unpleasant conditions, standing in the freezing rain until the water froze their clothes. George Rasmussen remembered the cold, too. He left Idaho in January thinking it would be warmer in Texas. He had one leather coat, a pair of pants, and a shirt. "I was never so cold in all my life," he recalled. "All that humidity and then that temperature dropped the way it is. I'd like to froze to death." They got on a bus to Killeen, and it was finally warm.

Figure 8. Recent arrivals to Killeen Base pose in front of the tent city they inhabited in 1951. Standing (left to right): Engward Nielsen, unknown, Gaylan Tobias, Richard Zimmerman, and Leland Graves; kneeling (left to right): Milford Graves, unknown, and Bud Johns (photograph courtesy of Engward Nielsen).

Regardless of when they arrived, the incoming airmen were struck by the tight security in place at their new assignment. Many thought the base was a prison on encountering the four surrounding fences. Soldiers arriving by plane landed at the adjacent Gray Air Force Base, which had a single airstrip and control tower. Well out of sight, soldiers from Fort Hood patrolled the outmost perimeter of Killeen Base and Gray Air Force Base in jeeps and tanks with .50-caliber machine guns. Airplanes out of Carswell Air Force Base patrolled the air space, according to Reed Cheesman.

The airmen shared common first impressions of Killeen Base. Reed Cheesman reacted with astonishment. "What the heck did I get myself into? What is this? It's surely not a penitentiary, and we could see military vehicles all over, and what are all these fences for? Even the first sergeant said he didn't know where they were going and what they were going to be doing. They just knew that it was very secretive." James Griffin had a similar initial response. "All the fences piqued your imagination. What is here? And to be perfectly blunt, I sound kind of naïve, but I didn't know what they were doing there. I didn't know it was storage for atomic weapons." Said Elmer Hounshell, "Well, put it this way, when you march through two gates with four fences, and you've got a rifle, and they didn't tell you anything about what you're going to be doing, and they close those gates behind you, you wonder, 'Well, is this a prison, or is this a base?' In your mind, you really don't know what you're doing when you're marching up to that one building that's on the base. It's a weird feeling. But then later you can relax, because you find that you're doing a duty for your country, see. But you're scared as hell at first, is what it amounts to."

Many of the men were disappointed that their air force tour was not exactly typical. They would not be pilots, navigators, airplane mechanics, or radar repairmen. What they did find of interest or importance, they could not discuss. Nevertheless, James Griffin stated, "I like to think that I did my part in supporting what was needed to be supported at that time. Although it's a small cog in a big

wheel, I still did my job, and I felt proud that I did my job to the best of my ability. It was a job that needed to be done." John Stedman echoed that sentiment. "It probably was a privilege, not that we looked at it that way at the time, to be selected for something that was as important as that to this country, and it was very important at the time." As Elmer Hounshell suggested, they did it for love of country.

Members of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron each had top-secret Q clearance, which was required to enter the Killeen Base Q Area. A separate pass was necessary to enter Plants 1 and 2 (Webster et al. 2007:234). Rigorous security clearance regulations required all Killeen Base personnel—military, Armed Forces Special Weapons Project, and Atomic Energy Commission—to undergo a full FBI background check, which took several weeks (GlobalSecurity.org n.d.a). The FBI vetted all potential assignees, inquiring about a candidate's character with his family, friends, teachers, and employers. Until they were cleared, airmen were told little about the duties at the installation, and their movements were restricted.

Elmer Hounshell discovered that the FBI had been to his school in the small town of Crosscut, Texas, questioning teachers about himself and his brother, Charles Hounshell, who was also in the squadron. Their father picked up a hitchhiker who asked about his sons in the service. The hitchhiker turned out to be FBI agent George Jelson checking up on the young airmen. Calvin Adkins's mother wrote him a letter asking him what sort of trouble he was in because the FBI had been to their neighbors asking questions. Harold Lehman's family was similarly concerned, as he was suddenly notorious in his small hometown because the FBI had been to several places to inquire about his character.

Airmen were repeatedly reminded of the consequences of leaking secrets. A fine of $10,000 or 10 years in prison was the penalty for discussing anything about their work or the facility. Each airman signed a certificate pledging silence and promising not to leave the country for one year after discharge. When family or friends inquired about their air force duties, airmen typically replied that they served as military police or performed security detail. The secret nature of the installation even affected the airmen's uniforms; unlike most other military units, they were generally not allowed to wear their uniform in public and did not have a specific insignia patch identifying the squadron. Even among themselves, talk about their duties at Killeen Base was extremely limited. They did not discuss work other than what was absolutely necessary. Most never discussed their time at Killeen Base until decades later. Some had never shared the nature of their duties until they were interviewed for the Killeen Base oral history project.

"We were trained not to ask questions about what other people did," explained Herman Wallace. "Not to give out any information. The person you're talking to, your friend, may be an agent, and would report it." If fellow workers tried to get information about their duties, they had to report it. They were trained not to talk to strangers when off base as well, because they could be spies or FBI

agents watching for infiltrators, according to Reed Cheesman. Engward Nielsen reported that during an off-duty trip to town, a stranger purchased several beers for two airmen and started asking them questions. Apparently an FBI representative witnessed this and, as a result, the two airmen were required to report in their Class A uniforms for interrogation. Even after being cleared, some airmen were still tested. William Fogle was hitchhiking with another airman when a fellow picked them up. He believed it was a test. It was right after they had gotten through training, so they were still fairly new, and the driver wanted to talk about Killeen Base. They, of course, reported the incident.

The Office of Special Investigations (OSI) followed up on reports of misbehavior. OSI agents probed claims of unusual and suspect incidents on the base. One time, for example, a single-engine airplane accidentally landed between the security fences, according to Jack McCoy and Herman Wallace. Apparently weather conditions were poor, and the pilot was confused by lighting that resembled a runway. The pilot was released when his story was verified. The OSI monitored incoming mail and watched for suspicious letters, catalogs, or magazines from certain organizations deemed Communist.

Civilians working for the Atomic Energy Commission or Sandia Base were stationed at Killeen Base, although most of the informants from the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron had no interactions with these civilians, several of whom lived with their families in Kay Bee Heights. The civilian workers also had Q clearance and worked in technical supply or in the plants. Some civilians—mechanics, electricians, plumbers, or contractors performing exterior work—were not required to have Q clearance. William Fogle remembered that guard duty entailed making sure contractors stayed in the appropriate area for their work. They might be repaving roads or constructing new buildings. Fogle, Abe Hern, and Herman Wallace occasionally worked for contractors during off-duty hours to earn some extra money.

The majority of the informants performed guard duty to prevent unauthorized personnel from entering the base and its buildings. Before patrol, the men cleaned and oiled their weapons for inspection. They stood guard mount to have their uniforms and weapons checked (Figures 9, 10, and 11). Some guards with Q clearance were stationed at the main gate and checked badges of those coming into the facility. Others stood guard outside the gates of the Q Area, checking incoming military and civilians for security passes and passwords. Guards were stationed at the two entrances to each plant and at the interior blast doors. They were also stationed in various locations inside the plants as well as above the plants to monitor the air vents to the tunnels below. Guards who performed perimeter duty patrolled the four-fence-thick outskirts of Killeen Base in trucks or jeeps along a road between the first and second fences. They drove at very slow speeds, usually less

Figure 9. George Troutman at Killeen Base (photograph courtesy of Calvin Adkins).

than 15 miles per hour. Perimeter guards stayed in contact with radios. Superiors usually checked each guard location during each six-hour tour of duty. Guards were charged with observing surface soils near the fences, keeping them loose and level, and monitoring for footprints and tracks. William Fogle describes a typical day for a guard:

Figure 10. In formation, the air police stand at attention in 1951 (photograph courtesy of William Fogle).

> We worked six-hour shifts, but it usually ended up probably nine hours because if you were going to be on a motorized patrol you had to go to the motor pool to check out a truck and look it all over, mark down if there were any dents on it, you had to check the oil, check the water, fill the tank, wash it, check out the radio to make sure it was working. Then you had to get your uniform on. If you were on a motorized patrol that usually meant fatigues. Then you had to go to the arms room and draw out your weapons for that post and clean them, and get ready, and then you had to stand guard mount. That guard mount was usually the flight officer, the officer of the day, and they would come around and they would look at your uniform, they would inspect your weapons. If you had a rifle, you had to open it up for them, and then they would take it away from you and look it all over, and hand it back to you, and you had to put it back down again. If you had two weapons, you had to show them [the other one]. And they looked at your uniform. They looked at your haircut. That took a while. [When] you got ready to go [on post], if there were any other walking posts that were on your motorized post they usually rode in the bed of the truck and you would take them to where they were going. And of course, you couldn't leave a post until you were relieved, that's the way that worked, and you'd pick up the guys and take them back to the gate. Then you came off-duty, the requirement was 15 miles an hour for six hours if you were on a motorized patrol, which is very monotonous.

The movement and transfer of weapons were integral to the mission of Killeen Base. The number of atomic bombs accrued gradually during the first years of the Cold War. The entire arsenal included only 13 in 1947, increased to 56 in 1948, and reached 298 in mid-1950. By 1952, the stockpile had grown to 832 bombs (GlobalSecurity.org n.d.a). Guards provided security for these nuclear weapons as they were moved to or from Killeen Base via the adjacent Gray Air Force Base, which was immediately adjacent,

Figure 11. An airman in the first air force blue uniform in 1951 (photograph courtesy of Calvin Adkins).

or a railhead at Fort Hood, about 4 miles away. The Gulf, Colorado, and Santa Fe Railroad was used to transport atomic weapon parts between Killeen Base and Sandia Base in New Mexico. According to one source (Webster et al. 2007:252), the trip lasted three days and occurred every other week, but informants' accounts were not as specific about the timing of moving weapons via railhead. Heavily armed guards protected transfer of weapons and component parts en route. Ensconced in boxes or covered with tarps, bombs were never armed or visible during transport, which occurred only at night, according to several informants. Materials were loaded on guard-driven weapons carriers that were typically 25-foot-long low boys or 40-foot-long flatbed trailers. Guards armed with machine guns riding in jeeps in front and behind escorted the weapons carrier to its destination. Many of the informants described riding in a convoy. Flags on the vehicles designated whether explosives were part of the convoy, according to Richard Bender. Elton Lowell explained:

> At the front of the vehicle you'd have an officer, and then behind him you would have a jeep with a radio mounted, and at the back of the convoy you'd have another jeep, usually with a sergeant in it. [That jeep] would have a radio in it so that they could communicate between them in case something happened. Like when my truck broke down that time, the guy at the back called him, and then they stopped the whole convoy. [The middle of the convoy] had a weapons carrier with a machine gun mounted on it or an armored car with a .50-caliber machine gun on it.…We had an M8 [armored car], and there would usually be one at the front and one at the back.

If transferred by aircraft, in some situations, the size and weight of the bomb required the plane's nose to be jacked up and the bomb was positioned underneath it for loading. Eventually, a loading pit at the air force base accommodated loading atomic weapons. When bombs were transferred to and from the plants to the storage igloos on Killeen Base, guard duty was more limited since the base was already tightly secured.

Some guard positions were very difficult because of the tedium. Staying awake could be a challenge. Engward Nielsen was at the main door of a plant under rows of fluorescent lights. He mimicked their *bzzzzzzzz*, and how the noise would sing him to sleep. Nielsen recounted that guard duty position was boring on the midnight shift. One time he was sitting in a chair at three o'clock in the morning and fell asleep. "Oh man, I couldn't believe it. I'd gone to sleep and didn't know it, see? Boy, that's a court-martial offense. Man, I jumped up. I never sat like that again. From that time on, I would always stand up when I was real sleepy."

Although the majority of the airmen interviewed served as guards at Killeen Base, several worked at other duties in administration, motor pool, or technical supplies. Administrative staff and clerks performed clerical duties and monitored incoming mail for the OSI. The motor pool had mechanics and drivers. James Paul Breakall recalled that his duties as a general mechanic consisted of tuneups, replacing parts, changing oil, and greasing equipment. Technical supplies kept track of ordering and delivering component parts for bomb maintenance. One interesting position was decoding material

in the cryptography room, which operated 24 hours a day. Personnel there reported hourly to a headquarters in Washington, D.C., according to one informant, sending messages via teletype wire communication.

Harold Lehman initially served as a guard but was moved to technical supply after a few months. There they had file cabinets full of cards, each identifying a particular item in stock in the warehouse. Each item had a stock record with a number and a nomenclature and quantity in a supply bin. He said, "We kept track of everything we had custody of. When we'd receive it in, a document came with it that showed how many of this item were there, and we added that to the record. If we shipped some down to the people that used it, we'd make a proper entry, and that's all there is to it. It sounds real simple, but for some reason, mistakes could get made, and a lot of times what it amounted to is that what got shipped wasn't what was called for on the document." He went on to describe the monotonous nature of his position in technical supply: "I kept score of what was in the bins, and in order to do that, I had to see the documents that came through. Somebody ordered a part, we'd type up a document and it went past the stock records clerk to make the entry there. It went through the inventory clerk to make a note of it, so it had a paper flow. Of course, then I had to go to the warehouse man to get the product, fill the order."

Lehman had a unique one-time assignment to organize inventory in one of the plants. He described that experience:

> Down in the base, they had what they called bench stock, which was an extension of our supply stuff, the things that they needed to have on hand and ready, so they maintained a bench stock. I use the flashlight batteries just for an example of what it might be, so you can imagine that flashlight batteries in those days didn't last very long. So they'd get old and go dead in a short time, and they would keep some on hand in their bench stock. They were supposed to maintain [a certain number], and when they'd go bad or two of them might get broke, they'd turn that back in, and some things were considered expendable, so you simply disposed of them and declared them no longer there, and ordered some more. From my perspective, it appeared to me they didn't bother much about keeping good track of what they had, either quantity or quality or identity for that matter. So the captain said, "Lehman, I want you to go down there and straighten out that mess," words to that effect. So I go down there full of vim and vigor and I'm going to really show them how it's done, and of course, the resistance that I got from coming in there—I was a stranger and had no business there in the first place in their viewpoint. So I didn't feel like I got a lot of cooperation, but I said, "Guys, you know, you've got to put the numbers on this stuff, and you've got to keep it in the right bin so you know where to find it." I'd say, "You got this stuff. I find it, and you have no idea what the nomenclature is or what the stock number is on it." I remember taking the bins that they had out and painting them because they were just so sorry. I'm not saying anything derogatory about any of those guys because I know they were dedicated to their job, but they didn't see that as being part of their job.

Harold Lehman was later involved in the inventory control of bombs at Manzano Base. He wound up in a small room with three desks that butted up against each other. The lieutenant sat in one, and

Lehman sat in the middle one, and another airman was to his right. They had a Dutch door so that the bottom half stayed locked, and if somebody wanted to talk to them, they'd open the top half and they could not enter. Lehman said, "So we were highly impressed with our exclusive situation there." They had file cabinets and each unit identified with a card file. As items came and went, they had to make an entry. He said, "I thought about it afterwards. You know, questions, logical questions just come to your mind as, well, how many [bombs] were there? I have to tell you, I do not know. I think I deliberately—I never made any effort to find out, to see, you know, because I could have gone through those card files and identified it, I suppose, as to numbers, but I didn't. If one went out, we made the notation. One came back in, we made that notation, and went about talking about baseball or whatever we did otherwise because I think my attitude was, 'I don't really want to know more than I need to.' We took it very seriously at that time."

Between 1948 and 1952, it is likely that the Killeen Base directorate of operations, which did not include air police guards, had a directorate, storage control, ABC section, and communications section, along with workers at two plants.[1] According to Lewis Brownlow, the leadership was top heavy with mature World War II veterans that had respectable resumes. The directorate had 11 positions. Ranking officers were Director Major Charles E. Simpson, Assistant Directors Major James H. Muhl and Major Willard P. Wicks, and Nuclear Supervisor Major Homer Garcia. Other personnel were two staff officers, an operations officer, two senior clerks, and two administrative supervisors. Storage Control had 18 positions under the direction of Captain James A. Gardner and First Lieutenant Allen S. Parish, who each served as storage control officers. Storage control had one production control chief, two apprentice warehousing specialists, two senior warehousing specialists, four warehousing supervisors, two senior clerks, one clerk, one administrative supervisor, and one senior handling specialist. Informant Herman Wallace was one of the senior clerks, and Ronald Napierala was the senior handling specialist; both were staff sergeants at the time. The ABC section had 10 positions. Captain Joubert S. McCrea was the supervisor. Additional positions were three ABC officers, one nuclear officer, one radiological technician, three weapons electronics technicians, and one senior weapons electronic specialist. The communications section had 10 positions. Captain Fred E. Bond was the communications officer, and Chief Warrant Officer Kent E. Giddings was his assistant. Other positions were one communications control supervisor, three cryptograph operators, one cryptograph operations supervisor, one senior cryptograph operator, one senior radio repairman, three radio maintenance technicians, two radio maintenance supervisors, one telephone maintenance supervisor, one telephone repairman, and one cryptograph supervisor (1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron 1953).

Each of the two plants had similar, but not identical, staffs. Plant 1 had 23 ranking officers, Plant 2 had 24 ranking officers, and each plant had 51 additional positions filled by lower-ranking airmen.

[1] This was how the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron at Manzano Base was organized on February 25, 1953, and it is likely Killeen Base personnel were similarly arranged.

Which and how many positions were in each plant were detailed ina memorandum and are represented in the table below (1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron 1953). In general, plant duties were categorized as receiving and packaging, electrical, and mechanical.

Staff Position	Plant 1	Plant 2
administrative supervisor	1	1
apprentice clerk	1	1
apprentice handling specialist	0	4
apprentice weapons mechanical specialist	4	2
assistant handling supervisor	2	1
assembly officer	1	4
assistant plant supervisor	1	1
bomb supervisor	2	1
cartridge officer	2	1
electrical officer	3	4
electrical supervisor	1	1
handling officer	0	1
handling supervisor	2	1
handling technician	7	7
mechanical officer	4	2
mechanical supervisor	0	1
munitions officer	0	1
plant supervisor	1	1
radar officer	1	2
senior handling specialist	5	5
senior weapons electronics specialist	5	1
senior weapons mechanical specialist	8	1
supply clerk	2	2
technical monitor	3	2
weapons electronics specialist	1	3
weapons electronics technician	7	11
weapons mechanical specialist	2	1
weapons mechanical technician	8	12

Richard Bender, a technical sergeant at the time, was one of seven handling technicians in Plant 1. He operated a forklift and other equipment to move bombs and non-nuclear components, like casings. The forklift was used at the railhead, at Gray Air Force Base, and at Killeen Base. At Killeen Base, the forklift placed components in storage igloos and transported them to and from the plants where they underwent maintenance. Bombs were usually transported in crates. Once delivered to one of the maintenance bays, a crew would dismantle the crate, hoist the bomb from its cradle, and begin their maintenance review. The most precarious tasks involved driving bombs through the narrow tunnels of the plant, guided by yellow lines painted on the floor, and loading bombs into pits at the air force base, according to Bender.

Guy Priester, a staff sergeant at the time, was one of the seven weapons electronics technicians who worked in Plant 1. He recalled that Richard Bender would bring to the disassembly bay, where they unpacked and disassembled parts. The electrical components went to the E chamber, and the rest of the materials went to the mechanical bay for testing and maintenance. In the E chamber, weapons electronic technicians disassembled the components, tested to verify they functioned properly, and reassembled them. There was a station for testing radars, which were removed and secured to a green cart. The altimeters were tested at a different station and fuses at yet another. Lewis Brownlow frequently was responsible for the barometric switch components of the fuser assemblies. He would disassemble them for testing and quality control, and then reassemble them in Plant 1. The Atomic Energy Commission assigned Brownlow stamp number A-16 to represent his kits of inspector stamps and seal. These Atomic Energy Commission stamps—a 2 1/2-inch insignia, a 1 1/2-inch by 1-inch four-circle, and a 3/4-inch by 1/2-inch four-circle—identified Brownlow as the most recent inspector of a component or a sealed container. The kit also included a lead seal die, lead seal crimping pliers, and a cash box. The three batteries on each bomb were tested in the battery shop next to the E chamber, where Priester was assigned for three months. "We had a weapon every day. It was not just every now and then. Sometimes we would not finish a weapon in a day, and it would stay hooked up to the equipment in the E bay," Priester said. "Sometimes it would take two days to do a weapon. We would test [each bomb] every 18 months." Both Brownlow and Preister stressed that their work was exclusively on-the-job training, with no technical schooling to guide the procedures they followed.

In their free time, airmen took advantage of recreational opportunities both on and off base. Plenty of fun and hijinks took place on Killeen Base with team sports like boxing and basketball, and the camaraderie was generally easygoing (Figures 12 and 13). The boxing team, which included Jack McCoy, competed very effectively against opponents. McCoy relayed that airman Maxie Miller, who had been a sparring partner with featherweight world champion Willie Pep, helped train the squadron's boxing team. Individuals from the team went to compete in the Golden Gloves boxing competition. They were exempted from kitchen patrol so they could train, and they were given a high-protein diet, which meant plenty of steak. Killeen Base airmen had access to Fort Hood facilities, too. Abe Hern recalled using the golf course. A noncommissioned officers' club near U.S. Highway 190, about a mile from the front gate of the installation, offered live music and libations beginning in December 1950 (Figure 14). The club was cobbled together with two World War II–era buildings from Fort Hood. The squadron assembled the two buildings to form a T shape and completed the interior, even installing a dance floor. Richard Bender ran the club and brought in touring musical groups like Harry Ranch for entertainment. Reed Cheesman also worked at the club for a time.

Excursions off base offered greater adventure. This was, in part, because, unlike most of the military, Killeen Base airmen were discouraged from wearing their uniforms in public in an effort to retain as much secrecy as possible. Public display of their air force uniforms would allow outsiders to gain infor-

mation about how many airmen were present in the vicinity and instigate unnecessary curiosity and questions about the air force presence. Unlike most of the military, the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Reporting Squadron had only an air force patch, but not a specific insignia or corresponding shoulder patch to identify their affiliation, which could also raise inquiry. Civilian clothes, on the other hand, allowed the airmen to blend in with the general public and soldiers from Fort Hood. Engward Nielsen realized, however, that he was much more likely to get a ride hitchhiking if he was in uniform rather than civilian attire. "I went out there one time with my civvies on. I stood there for half an hour. I went back to the base, put my uniform on, went back out there, and bam, I had a ride. Boy, I tell you one thing I could say, in those days, if you had a uniform on, you got a ride immediately."

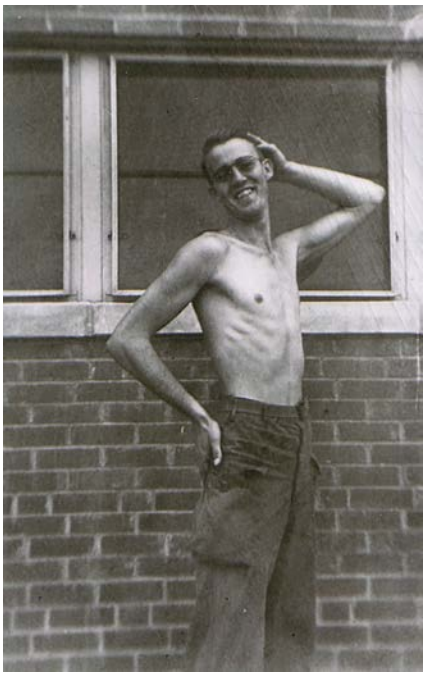


Figure 12. Airman Jack McCoy poses for the camera at Killeen Base while off duty (photograph courtesy of Calvin Adkins).

Although the very small town of Killeen was closest, airmen often preferred to go to Belton or Temple, both in counties where alcohol could be served (Figure 15). Killeen had a familiar feel to Abe Hern, who said it reminded him of the many small towns in his home state of New Mexico. "There were very few stores, and you'd go there to a movie. We used the laundry for our dry cleaning. We'd go to the corner drugstore and drink a malt. But just a pretty simple little town." Many airmen visited Austin, Dallas, Waco, Galveston, and even Mexico on their leaves (Figure 16). A leased cabin on Lake Buchanan was also available for use by airmen on leave. The rest camp had a 12-foot boat with a 25-horsepower motor. Newton James Coleman and a cook, a Sergeant Davis, were assigned to run the rest camp for a time, according to Coleman.

In late 1951, Killeen Base personnel began a transition to move to Site Able in Albuquerque. This sister facility was affiliated with the adjacent Kirtland Air Force Base and operated in the same capacity as Killeen Base. Physically, the two installations were almost identical, with two underground plants, an administration area, and maintenance buildings. The 8460th U.S. Army Special Weapons Group operated the facility when it became functional on April 4, 1950, with the 8455th and 8456th U.S. Army Military Police Commands providing security (Alberts and Putnam 1985:66; Los Alamos Technical Associates, Inc. 1993:Table 3-1). In their new location,

Figure 13. Elmer Hounshell off duty (photograph courtesy of Calvin Adkins).

Figure 14. The noncommissioned officers' club was a popular place to spend free time at Killeen Base (photograph courtesy of Richard Bender).

the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron performed the same duties as they had at Killeen Base. The move was complete on February 25, 1952, the day the installation was formally renamed Manzano Base.

Although Manzano Base had positive attributes, the informants expressed mixed feelings about the move. Proximity to Albuquerque, a much larger town than Killeen, provided a greater variety of activities during off-duty hours. Since housing on Manzano Base and in the adjacent Sandia Base and Kirtland Air Force Base cantonments was limited, many airmen, particularly married ones, got to live off base in the community. Abe Hern lived with his parents before he married and then lived off base with his wife. Richard Bender, William Fogle, Harold Lehman, and Guy Priester all lived with their wives in Albuquerque. A few found the leadership at Manzano Base to be disagreeable, and some decided to end their military careers. Several of the informants—Calvin Adkins, Richard Bender, James Griffin, Elmer Hounshell, Jack McCoy, Guy Priester, and Herman Wallace—went on to pursue lifelong careers in the military.

Figure 15. Having an automobile meant off-duty road trips to nearby towns like Killeen, Belton, or Waco—or farther afield to Dallas, Austin, and even Mexico. Here airmen (left to right) Moon Mullins, George Phillips, Calvin Adkins, and Jessie McCorstin visit a roadside café (photograph courtesy of Calvin Adkins).

When the 1094th U.S. Air Force Special Report Squadron moved to Manzano Base, the U.S. Army Special Weapons Program took over Killeen Base. The 8462nd U.S. Army Special Weapons Headquarters continued to operate Killeen Base as a Department of Defense classified ordnance storage facility. The 8455th and 8456th U.S. Army Military Police Commands, later combined as Company C, Military Police, provided security. By 1959, the installation was administered by the Defense Atomic Support Agency headquartered at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. In 1967, all

materials were evacuated. Killeen Base was deactivated in 1969, when advances in nuclear technology altered maintenance procedures and storage facilities, and the property was transferred to Fort Hood that year (Webster et al. 2007:35). The base became an army testing center and, along with Gray Air Force Base and part of Fort Hood, was redesignated West Fort Hood. Today it serves as the Fort Hood Underground Training Facility.

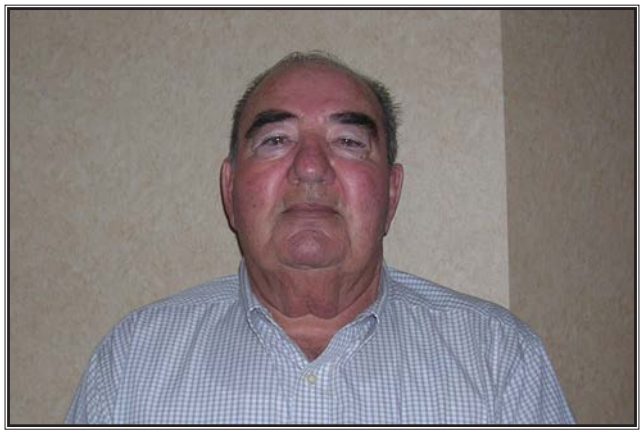
Killeen Base remains a quintessential relic of the Cold War–era—underground, behind secured closed doors, classified, and unremarkable all at once. Abandoned in place decades ago, Killeen Base stands mute, but the stories of these airmen, long silent themselves, revive this forgotten landscape.

Figure 16. Reed Cheesman (left) and Frank Pensiero on leave in Galveston in the summer of 1949 in their early uniforms (photograph courtesy of Reed Cheesman).

Informants

Calvin Howard Adkins

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase



AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Monday, September 14, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Calvin Howard Adkins. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, as part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

So how old were you when you joined the service?

CHA: Seventeen years and five months.

AED: And were you enlisted?

CHA: Yes.

AED: And where did you enlist?

CHA: In Ironton, Ohio.

AED: Was that near South Point?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Which is where you were born?

CHA: Right.

AED: What ranks did you achieve while you were in the air force?

CHA: I went to master sergeant.

AED: Okay. And did you serve elsewhere before you came to Killeen [Base]?

CHA: No. Killeen [Base] was my first station.

AED: Okay. You did basic training.

CHA: At Lackland [Air Force Base].

AED: At Lackland [Air Force Base], right. Do you remember going from Lackland [Air Force Base] to Killeen Base?

CHA: Yes.

AED: What was that like?

CHA: Well, we flew in a C-47 to the base.

AED: A C-47 is a cargo [plane]?

CHA: Cargo aircraft, yes.

AED: And you and a couple of hundred guys on that plane?

CHA: Well, it was about 30 of us.

AED: Oh, only 30?

CHA: Oh, yes, because the aircraft wasn't that big.

AED: And what did you see when you landed? What did you think when you landed at Killeen Base?

CHA: Nothing. There was nothing there. All I saw was bare [ground].

AED: Bare ground?

CHA: Bare ground. That was it.

AED: Well, you live in Texas now, so you know that a lot of people call that area hard scrabble land for a reason, right?

CHA: Yes, yes, that's correct.

AED: Had you been in a place that looked like that before?

CHA: No.

AED: Had you been to Texas before?

CHA: No. I'd never been to Texas.

AED: You'd spent your life growing up so far in Ohio?

CHA: In Ohio, yes.

AED: You were accustomed to that kind of climate?

CHA: Yes. The climate and the trees.

AED: Trees! There's not a lot of trees at Killeen [Base].

CHA: No.

AED: Did you at any point serve with another unit or group or were you only 1094th?

CHA: Well, prior to that, I was only in the 1094th.

AED: Okay. And then, after that, did you serve in any other [groups]?

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: Oh, you did. Okay. Were you career military?

CHA: Yes, I was career. I served 22 years in the service.

AED: Oh, my goodness. Well, tell me what other things that you did after Killeen Base.

CHA: Well, I was a MP. I was military police. Then I was air police. Then I was a security force member. And I served in SAC.

AED: Oh, you did? Also in a police capacity?

CHA: Yes.

AED: That was your training, is that right?

CHA: Yes. I was trained in police work.

AED: And how many different installations or name some of the different installations where you were?

CHA: I was at Langley Air Force Base, and I was at Spangdahlem Air Force Base in Germany. Then I came back to Donaldson Air Force Base in South Carolina. Then I was at a French fighter base in Germany. Then I came back, and I was at Plattsburgh Air Force Base in New York state. Then I went to Vietnam. I was at Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam. Then I came back to Langley again. Then I was at Lockbourne in Ohio. And then I retired.

AED: Wow! You've seen the world with the air force.

CHA: Yes.

AED: And you had your family come with you to some?

CHA: Well, wherever they could, yes. But Vietnam was the only place that they couldn't go.

AED: How long were you there in Vietnam?

CHA: A year.

AED: How did the Killeen Base experience compare with all those others?

CHA: Well, it was—you didn't actually do police work in Killeen [Base]. It was just [security].

AED: It was security, but not policing.

CHA: That's right.

AED: Does that make sense?

CHA: Yeah.

AED: At any point did you receive any medals or special awards for your service?

CHA: Yes. I got the good conduct medal for serving there, because I never did get in any trouble at all.

AED: Really?

CHA: Yeah. I was a good soldier.

AED: It's easier that way, I understand.

CHA: Yes.

AED: And you got to Killeen Base in 1948.

CHA: Yes.

AED: What time of year? Do you remember was it cold, was it hot, was it—?

CHA: It was, I think it was September.

AED: That sounds right.

CHA: I think it was September. But later on that year, it got real cold. As a matter of fact I think, maybe it was in '49 though, that we had really some cold weather.

AED: Unexpected.

CHA: Oh, yes, it was. As a matter of fact, if memory serves me right, we had to take blankets out on the post with us to keep warm.

AED: Where you were guarding?

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: It was out in the open?

CHA: We was riding in jeeps, we was riding in open jeeps. We had perimeter patrols, and as a matter of fact we had two perimeter patrols. Then we had, on the inside we had patrols. As a matter of fact, I think we had about three patrols on the inside of the fence.

AED: Oh, really?

CHA: Oh, yes. I think we had two entry point patrols in Plant 1 and Plant 2.

AED: So there was one at say, the main gate, right?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Describe what perimeter patrol, what that means, what you do.

CHA: Well, that was—you drove halfway up, and you turned around and you came back. That was about, I don't remember exactly how far it was, but if memory serves me right, it was about 14 miles.

AED: Oh, wow! That far.

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: Yeah, because it's a big place. So you'd cover half of it. One person in the jeep or were you riding?

CHA: No, there was two people.

AED: And then you go back to the starting point.

CHA: Yes.

AED: And then you go back again.

CHA: That's right.

AED: The same 14 miles.

CHA: Very boring, very boring.

AED: It's good you had somebody with you generally, right?

CHA: Yes.

AED: And then the other half was a different patrol.

CHA: Yes.

AED: When you were doing that, where did you get the truck? Where did you get the jeep? How did that work?

CHA: Well, it stayed on the post. The only way that you could ever come off post—wait, no. We took the jeeps on post with us. And we had to gas them up. Hmm. Man, it's been a long time since I've thought of this.

AED: Well, I know there was a motor pool area.

CHA: Yes, there sure was.

AED: Is that where they were stored?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Did you go check them out or get permission to take them to your post?

CHA: Right.

AED: And I'm guessing they had gasoline areas there.

CHA: Yeah, sure was.

AED: I know there were four fences. So where was the perimeter patrol?

CHA: Between the first and second fence.

AED: But not any further in, because I guess it was covered between the first and the second.

CHA: Between the second and third fence there was a hot fence in there.

AED: So you wouldn't patrol that part.

CHA: No! You did not. As a matter of fact, rabbits used to hit that thing, and it'd burn them in two. I mean to say they would, and the lights would come on, and it was—

AED: That's interesting. Probably more than rabbits, too. Probably other animals.

CHA: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact armadillos were also in. Yeah. It was well guarded, because we had the nuclear weapons in there.

AED: Had to be careful.

CHA: Yeah.

AED: Now how did you get into this group?

CHA: How did I get into the group?

AED: The 1094th. When you came from Lackland [Air Force Base]—let me back up. You thought you were going to be in the air force, right?

CHA: Yes.

AED: And were you thinking you'd be a pilot or a navigator or—?

CHA: Oh, no. I knew my limitations.

AED: What were you thinking, you would do something with planes or—?

CHA: No. I knew that I was going to be a military police.

AED: That was your goal?

CHA: Yes.

AED: But you wanted the air force as opposed to being in the army or the navy when you enlisted?

CHA: No, I knew that I was going in the air force, and I knew I was going to be a cop. Okay? Because I selected that field and I knew that I was going to do that.

AED: Okay. Because a few of the other fellows have said, you know, they enlisted in the air force thinking they might do aircraft maintenance or other things, you know, and then here they land at this other place not anticipating that they'd be doing this. It was kind of a surprise.

CHA: Yeah.

AED: But if you were targeting that already, then you were in the perfect spot.

CHA: Yes. I knew what I was going to do.

AED: What kind of security clearance did you need to be able to have this position?

CHA: Well, the FBI came and checked me out real good. As a matter of fact, my mother was—the FBI came and checked my neighbors and my mother wrote me a letter and she asked, what court or what sort of trouble was I in. And I said I was in no trouble. All I was getting was a clearance, because I was guarding some heavy stuff. And anyway, she was relieved.

AED: It doesn't look good, does it, when the FBI comes snooping around?

CHA: No.

AED: That's funny. So you did the perimeter patrol, but you probably did other patrols.

CHA: No. I mainly worked the main gate.

AED: And what was the process at the main gate?

CHA: I checked—all of us had Class A passes. And you had to have a pass in order to get into the gate.

AED: Okay. What is Class A? I'm not really sure what that [means].

CHA: And also I knew everyone that worked on the base. As a matter of fact, we also had civilian contractors that was working on the base, and we had a list of personnel, that they had to be on the list in order to get on the base.

AED: So you could verify they were—?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Did you ever have anybody try to come through that wasn't supposed to?

CHA: No.

AED: Someone mentioned, and I didn't ask, there was a sign. I don't know if it was a keep out, no trespassing sign, but I'm sure it wasn't at the main gate. I'm sure there were signs before that.

CHA: Oh, way before. Yes.

AED: Were they as far out as the highway?

CHA: Yes, they sure were.

AED: So that was not a civilian road that went through or could civilian traffic come back that way?

CHA: No. They were actually stopped before they got to Gray Air Force Base.

AED: Okay, I know where you mean. Did you do security for or guarding in a tower or a pillbox at any point?

CHA: Only during alerts. Now if in the event we had an operation where we were moving nukes out on the flight line, to where we were uploading or practicing uploading or downloading weapons, then we would always provide the M-20s, the motorized weapons. Do you know what an M-20 was?

AED: I do. I've seen photographs, so I'm good with that. Thank you, though.

CHA: Okay. They carried .50-caliber machine guns, and we'd always escort the weapons. And we also had .50-caliber machine guns mounted on the jeeps when we was bringing the weapons out of the plants.

AED: And where were they going?

CHA: Down to the flight line.

AED: To the Gray [Air Force Base]?

CHA: Gray Air Force Base, yes.

AED: Did they sometimes go to Fort Hood as well?

CHA: No. Now we would take them from the railroad, okay.

AED: Oh, so you'd get them.

CHA: Yes. And we'd also take them to the railroad because, as a matter of fact I was one of the guys that, I took them to Yorktown, the naval mine depot up in Virginia. And as a matter of fact, in 1949 when Truman told the army—wait, let me back up. The railroad went on strike. And Truman told them they either get them damn trains moving or we'll take them, the army will take the trains over. And anyway, they got them moving. And I mean to say that we went all the way from Atlanta, Georgia, nonstop and we went all the way to Virginia.

AED: Really?

CHA: Yes. Without stopping.

AED: Really?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Wow! That's a [long trip].

CHA: I couldn't believe that.

AED: So this was part of the 1094th?

CHA: Yes, it sure was. As a matter of fact, we had Captain Saunders that was the commander of the train that took that.

AED: So how did you get—you took them first from Killeen Base on the train?

CHA: Yes. And we took them to the naval mine depot in Yorktown, Virginia.

AED: Were there other guys from the 1094th that would [do this]?

CHA: Oh, yeah.

AED: Okay. This is the first I've heard of moving these bombs.

CHA: They were taking them then to England. This was the first time that we were taking them to England.

AED: Wow! That's the first I've heard of that. Interesting.

CHA: Yes.

AED: So how long of a process was that?

CHA: Up and back it was probably at least eight days.

AED: Would you call it a convoy, or not because it was a rail?

CHA: It was a convoy. Oh, yes. And every time that that train stopped, we had to get out and start walking up and down providing security for that train.

AED: And were the bombs in something or were they [exposed]?

CHA: Yes, they were on the inside of the boxes.

AED: Okay. But hidden inside there.

CHA: Yes.

AED: What was it like to travel on a train with that kind of [load]?

CHA: As a matter of fact we had a colored staff sergeant, his name was Washington, that was our cook. And he took us up there probably three or four times, and we had—as a matter of fact, I took that run maybe three or four times.

AED: How many of you would be on a truck like that?

CHA: There was about 10 of us.

AED: Did you have time to sleep?

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: So you rotated.

CHA: Yes.

AED: Okay. But when the train stopped, everybody was on guard.

CHA: Yes.

AED: How did you feel about traveling with those bombs?

CHA: It didn't make any difference to me, it was duty.

AED: It was the job.

CHA: It was the job.

AED: Where did you get the training to shoot the M-20s and the M-50s? When did that happen and who trained you?

CHA: Who trained us?

AED: Because you know, you got training at Lackland [Air Force Base].

CHA: Oh, yeah.

AED: But did they train you on those particular machines?

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: Was there additional training?

CHA: Well, there was additional training here at Killeen Base, yes.

AED: And did the air force do that training, too?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Someone said that the army did some of the training, too.

CHA: No. The army didn't do it. The air force did it.

AED: It was just at a place where the army was. It was at Fort Hood perhaps.

CHA: Yeah.

AED: Maybe I misunderstood. Did you guard at the tunnels?

CHA: Guard at the tunnels?

AED: Where the tunnel entrances were or inside the plants?

CHA: Oh, no, I didn't. I didn't ever do that.

AED: But it's very interesting that you did this train duty, because I haven't heard anybody else mention that.

CHA: No, I did that.

AED: And in your own words, how would you explain the mission at Killeen Base?

CHA: How would I explain it?

AED: Yes. How would you describe it? What was the mission there? What was the air force mission?

CHA: Well, I would say it was a critical mission, and it was a mission that was necessary. It was a very critical mission. As a matter of fact, it probably saved our country, you know. And SAC did it for us.

AED: They were not part of the Killeen Base activities.

CHA: No.

AED: But they eventually took on the atomic energy rule for the air force. Is that right? I might have said that wrong?

CHA: I think it was Strategic Air Command, and I was in probably 12 years, 14, but I don't know.

AED: I know that was a totally different entity.

CHA: Yes.

AED: But the SAC moved the bombs around, right?

CHA: Yes.

AED: That was part of their very large role.

CHA: Yes.

AED: Did you also guard nuclear bombs for SAC?

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: So this was a long-term position.

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: In your other roles at the other installations, was it always—that was always the kind of security you did?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Because I wondered, I guess, at a point if you were doing police as opposed to security?

CHA: Well, yeah. Mine was mostly security. I was NCOIC, non-commissioned officer in charge of security at Plattsburgh. I was a master sergeant. I was in charge of, as a matter of fact, I had about 400 men in charge and I had missiles and tankers and bombers.

AED: That's a lot of people to be in charge of.

CHA: Yes.

AED: And my understanding is the 1094th had several different flights.

CHA: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact we had six flights.

AED: Six, okay. And which group were you? You were guard as opposed to some of the flights were administrative.

CHA: Oh, I don't know how they were broke down, but I was on one of the flights.

AED: Okay. And how many people might be in a flight?

CHA: There was probably at least 40.

AED: And you all stayed in the same barracks.

CHA: Yeah, other than the married guys that lived off base.

AED: When you became a guard was there a special requirement for you, that you had to meet or test you had to pass or—?

CHA: Well, I would say that there was, yes. They would—I know later on you had to be under 3599 Manual. You had to have qualifications under the manual.

AED: And that's called the 3599?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Okay. I haven't heard of that before. So that has qualifications for a variety of different types of positions.

CHA: Yes.

AED: As a guard, then, did you have access to other areas? Did you have access to everything on Killeen Base or only certain areas?

CHA: No, the right to know. That's all you had to have, or the need to know.

AED: Need-to-know basis.

CHA: Yeah.

AED: What was a typical day like for you when you were on guard?

CHA: A typical day? Well, back then they worked six hours on and I don't know why we worked six on and six off, six on and six off, but anyway we did.

AED: And was that every day?

CHA: Oh, no. No. You'd work—as a matter of fact, I don't know we'd work six on, six off, six on, six off, and I think we'd work maybe three days, then we'd—I don't know what.

AED: That sounds familiar. I've heard somebody else say it would be three days of working. Then

you had maybe a day of leave somewhere doing training.

CHA: Yeah.

AED: Did you have more training on some days just to keep you fresh and all of that?

CHA: Yeah, but I don't—

AED: It's been a long time. It's okay. What did you think about sort of the layout of the buildings or the areas that you were in charge of guarding most frequently? Did it seem well thought out and reasonably protected already?

CHA: Yeah.

AED: Because it seems to me, having been there, it's pretty remote, isolated, and I can envision with all of those fences that it just would've been already fairly safe and protected.

CHA: Yeah, I thought it was. I thought it was well protected.

AED: When you first got there you didn't know that there were bombs, or did you?

CHA: No, I didn't know what was there. Because we were there probably maybe six months before we even knew what was there. Because they kept us pretty dumb, okay. And then all of a sudden, and we had a bunch of—as a matter of fact, we had Oppenheimer, he was the father of the nuclear—

AED: Right. I know the name.

CHA: Oppenheimer and [Schmidt] and we had all those guys that were there. And I thought to myself, Now these guys are—there's something strange going on here. But they would never tell us anything. They would never tell us anything. And then all of a sudden it dawned on me one day that these guys have got to be doing something here. And then all of a sudden, we started getting all these other guys in, you know, the plant personnel.

AED: The Sandia [Base] people?

CHA: Yes. Anyway, I thought to myself, It's got to be something. Then we started loading these B-50s with these weapons, then I knew we was doing it. And then we started to transport these weapons to elsewhere.

AED: At a point did they brief you about what was going on?

CHA: Yeah. Then we started getting a bunch of training, and it was weird.

AED: How so?

CHA: Well, they told us, Don't you say a word to anyone, you know, because—actually I was scared to death, you know. I wouldn't say a word to anyone because I was just scared. All of us were.

AED: They put the fear in you.

CHA: Oh good god, yes. And all the officers, they was scared, too, you know. We was all scared.

AED: Did you know about bombs before you arrived?

CHA: Lord, no. I didn't know anything about that.

AED: Over the years, though, having been in all these positions you've learned a lot, I imagine, about them.

CHA: Oh yeah.

AED: And at some point, that fear of what was in there, did that get easier?

CHA: Oh yes, oh yes, oh yes. As a matter of fact, after I was at Plattsburgh, I've learned a lot about weapons now that before I didn't know anything about. And then when I was stationed in France, or on French fighters, I also—as a matter of fact, I had 10 nuclear weapons on a French fighter base that I was responsible for. So it's—it was—

AED: Even with a level of comfort, it still would be a fearful thing to know that that's there.

CHA: That's right, yes. And I had several incidents over there.

AED: Really?

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: You want to talk about those?

CHA: No.

AED: Okay. When you were on a train and they were moving them, where were you in relation to the bombs? Were you in a separate car, kind of a passenger-type [car]?

CHA: Oh yeah. We had a Pullman car, and we had beds. And we also had a dining car.

AED: You said you had a cook.

CHA: Oh yes.

AED: And who would be the engineer driving the train?

CHA: That was separate. That was a—

AED: A military person, though, right?

CHA: Oh yes.

AED: Who knew what was behind him?

CHA: Oh yes, he knew.

AED: And trained as well?

CHA: Oh yes.

AED: When you were guarding the perimeter [of Killeen Base], did you do anything else? You were

just driving and watching for things.

CHA: Yes.

AED: Did you ever seen anything that caused you concern?

CHA: No.

AED: And when you were [guarding] the main gate, did you ever turn anybody away or have any conflict with somebody trying to come in?

CHA: No, no. Other than guys not having insurance on automobiles.

AED: So what would you do if they didn't?

CHA: We'd always have to check their insurance, and if in the event they didn't have insurance, we would tell them to park it over there.

AED: And they would walk in?

CHA: Sure.

AED: With your experience, is there a difference in guarding nuclear versus thermonuclear versus other kinds of bomb material? Like how you protected [bombs in] 1948 and while you were on Manzano [Base] and later, was there a change in how that happened and how the security worked?

CHA: I don't think so, no.

AED: I'm not saying that very well, but the basic procedures of keeping those munitions secure were pretty much the same kind of things.

CHA: Oh yeah.

AED: Super-high level of security.

AED: Yes.

CHA: Do you remember being on high alert at any point?

CHA: Oh yes, many times.

AED: And how was that different? What did that mean for what you were doing?

CHA: You would always tighten security. It was always—when you had—anytime, like in the SAC, you would always have the higher levels. You'd always have the expanded security.

AED: So at Killeen Base, you wouldn't bring more people in, it would still be the same—?

CHA: Oh, you would bring them all in.

AED: Oh, everybody would be out.

CHA: Everybody would come in on the inside, and you wouldn't let anyone out. Oh yes. Everyone

would be on the inside of the base. The only thing that went out was the guy that was going to pick up rations over at Fort Hood.

AED: Oh, okay, because everyone needs to eat!

CHA: Yes!

AED: Did you ever experience when you were doing your guarding someone maybe testing you, one of the higher-ups making sure you're doing what you're supposed to be doing?

CHA: Oh, the officer of the day would always come around and check you, oh yes, make sure you were on your job.

AED: Did any outsiders try to test?

CHA: Oh no. They wouldn't.

AED: They couldn't get through.

CHA: No, they couldn't get through is right.

AED: Where were the barracks in relation to where the work was, where you were doing your guarding?

CHA: They were up in the administrative area. You don't know where?

AED: Yes, I'm eliciting information, though. I have a map, I've sort of seen, but it's good to hear you talk about how far. Was it very far away or was it very close?

CHA: The first sergeant and all was right in the same building.

AED: So you're living and sleeping very close to this very dangerous material, right?

CHA: Oh no. No. Plant 1 was probably 2 miles.

AED: Okay, that far.

CHA: And Plant 2 was maybe 3 miles.

AED: Did you socialize with people outside of the 1094th?

CHA: No.

AED: You pretty much just stayed right around?

CHA: Yes.

AED: When you did the convoys that went over to Gray Air Force Base, did you have to interact with any of the people that worked for Gray [Air Force Base]?

CHA: No. No. As a matter of fact, they only had about 15 people over at Gray.

AED: Oh, I didn't know that.

CHA: Yes. Yes. As a matter of fact, they only had one aircraft over there, a B-25, and that was for Gandy, Colonel Gandy to get his time in, him and Ramputy [?] that was over there, Colonel Ramputy [?].

AED: They were just getting their hours of flight [time].

CHA: Yes, that's right.

AED: So the planes that would come pick up to transport bombs were coming from elsewhere?

CHA: Oh yeah, they'd come from Carswell [Air Force Base]. That's where they came from.

AED: Carswell is near Dallas or Fort Worth?

CHA: Fort Worth.

AED: So they'd come from there to pick up the bombs.

CHA: Yes.

AED: What was a convoy like? How many vehicles and how far did you go?

CHA: Oh, probably it came, probably a quarter of a mile out of the gate. Oh yes! It was just right there. It was right there.

AED: And how many vehicles would be there?

CHA: Maybe eight vehicles.

AED: And this would be for a single bomb or do you know if there were multiple [bombs]?

CHA: No, they'd be multiple vehicles, and they would be multiple bombs. As a matter of fact, we always called them Big Boys.

AED: And were they protected?

CHA: They had tarps over them.

AED: Who drove those trucks with the bombs?

CHA: The personnel from the plant.

AED: Would there be other vehicles that were just used—?

CHA: They were actually weapons carriers, was what they were.

AED: Was the name, not trucks. So there might be a weapons carrier for each bomb?

CHA: Yes.

AED: And then additional security vehicles that the 1094th was driving?

CHA: Yes.

AED: And they went to Gray [Air Force Base], and they sometimes went to Fort Hood?

CHA: No, very seldom did, unless we had transporting on the railroad. Now, I don't know where we got any in on the railroad or not, but we used to get them in on [C-]124s, and they flew ours in.

AED: So then you'd have a convoy to go receive?

CHA: Right. And they would come in. But why in the world wouldn't they transport them to the navy, up to naval mine depot? That's interesting.

AED: Right, think about that.

CHA: But the government does stupid things.

AED: Sometimes they do. They're generally well-intentioned, but you never know, right? And you couldn't tell anybody what you were doing. Not family. Not people who asked?

CHA: Oh no.

AED: But you talked among yourselves some.

CHA: Very little. Very little.

AED: Even at the time.

CHA: That's right.

AED: Why do you think that was?

CHA: I don't know. We was all so scared.

AED: That was a good enough reason to stay hushed.

CHA: That's right.

AED: Did you have family at Killeen Base, or you were still single?

CHA: No, I was single.

AED: You were pretty young.

CHA: Yeah, oh yes.

AED: And when you had off-duty time, what kinds of things did you do?

CHA: We had a rest camp up at Lake Buchanan. I'd go up there. I always had an automobile.

AED: Was that unusual or common to have a vehicle of your own?

CHA: I don't know. They wasn't many guys who had cars. But I always had them.

AED: When you were on leave or off-duty, you could go.

CHA: Oh yeah.

AED: There was no question about where?

CHA: No. And I didn't drink, so I was always—I just didn't monkey around. I was always a neat, clean guy, you know.

AED: The rest camp, did you go there very often?

CHA: Oh yes, oh yes.

AED: And did you have to do something special to get there, or could you go when you had time off?

CHA: Oh, when I had time off, that's where I'd go.

AED: And several guys would go at once?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Was there a house or a cabin?

CHA: Oh yeah, we had a cabin up there, and we had bunk beds. They always had guys up there that would cook.

AED: Sounds pretty nice.

CHA: Oh yes. It was. It was neat.

AED: It's a very pretty place.

CHA: Oh yeah, Lake Buchanan was always nice.

AED: Somebody talked about being on a boxing team, and that there was a baseball team and a basketball team. Did you do some of those recreations?

CHA: Oh yes, sure did.

AED: Did you spend a lot of time doing that?

CHA: Sometimes, yeah.

AED: You did something to break up the [monotony].

CHA: Yes.

AED: Did you have other things that you did, other hobbies?

CHA: No, I didn't.

AED: When you want to leave Killeen Base to go to Temple or Killeen or something like that, what did you have to do? Was there a procedure to check out or check in when you came back? Because you had to go from your barracks and leave the gate, so somebody was guarding at the gate, and so did you have to have permission to leave before you did? If you were off-duty?

CHA: No. If I was off-duty, I didn't need to check in or check out.

AED: And when you went to the front gate and came and went, you just needed the proper identification?

CHA: Yes, that's it, that's it. As a matter of fact, I spent a lot of time in Waco.

AED: What was going on that you liked there?

CHA: I'd always go to the Y[MCA], check into the Y. Cost you a dollar a day.

AED: Get some down time, just relax?

CHA: Yes.

AED: What did you do after you left the military? After you retired?

CHA: Oh, I bought a franchise with Jack in the Box.

AED: Oh you did? Here in Texas some where?

CHA: Yes. As a matter of fact, in Houston. I bought that in 1970 when I retired, and I did that. I've always been the type guy that's always set goals for himself, and I met that goal in '75, and I quit that, quit Jack in the Box, and I opened up a shoe store.

AED: In Houston also?

CHA: Yes, in Baytown. Then I opened up my own restaurant, and I opened up the second restaurant, and then I opened up another drive-through beer place, then I opened up an equipment place, then I opened up an offshore supply.

AED: Oh my goodness! That's a lot of separate, different stuff, a lot of variety. Not just the food industry, lots of different industries.

CHA: Yes. And then I sold everything, and then I got in the doughnut business, and I'm still in it. I got 26 stores now. As a matter of fact, I got two in Killeen and two in Georgetown, and three in Temple, and five in Waco, and four in Austin. I've got 26 all together.

AED: That's amazing. That's a lot of doughnut stores! What attracted you to that? When you first started it, what was that? Because you started all those other businesses, and then you went to doughnuts.

CHA: What started it? When I was in the pressure washers and steam cleaner business, I used to go by this doughnut shop every morning. This guy, he got me interested in it. He told me, he says, "Every dollar that you put in that register, if you run them right," he says, "you can put a quarter out of every dollar in your pocket." He says, "If you run them right."

AED: Pretty good return on your dollar.

CHA: Yes. So anyway, I thought to myself, Now that is good. Because I couldn't. No other business have I ever been able to do that. So anyway, I thought to myself, That sounds good, so I'll see if that's true. So I opened up one, and it was true. So therefore, and then I opened up about seven of them, and it was true. And then I give them to my boys, and then I started a franchise. And anyway, it has worked out, and I tell every one of them, I said, "If you'll

run them right, then every dollar that you put in that register you going to be able to put a quarter in your pocket." And they can do it. Some of them do, some of them don't. Okay?

AED: That's good.

CHA: It is. It's a good income. So therefore, and those two stores that I got in Killeen, right now they are running about $68,000 a month.

AED: That's good money. Somewhere along the line you met your wife and had a family, and moved them around to the many locations, or most of the locations, you were. Where did you raise your family? Were you really moving around with them most of the time? And you retired, and some of your children were already getting older.

CHA: My oldest son, he was born in '53, and my youngest daughter was born in '59. So between '53 and '59 we had six kids. I didn't have no hobbies when I was a kid, so therefore we had four boys and two girls. Three of my boys are in the doughnut business, and one son works for Bayer Aspirin in Baytown, Texas. And my oldest daughter, she's a schoolteacher. And the baby daughter, her husband is a lawyer for Waste Management. I have 14 grandkids, seven boys and seven girls, and one great-grandchild. And I've got, out of those 14 grandchildren, there are seven that's already graduated from college, and there are three boys and four girls that's already graduated, and two of them still in college right now. And I've got two lunkheads that didn't want to go. You know, you've always got them.

AED: Where did you raise your family?

CHA: Oh, okay, South Carolina and Virginia.

AED: They followed you?

CHA: Yes.

AED: Until 1970 when you were in Houston?

CHA: Yes.

AED: And you lived there then, when you retired?

CHA: Yes.

AED: This is back to Killeen Base. What was the food like in the mess hall? Your restaurants made me think to ask, what did you think about the food there at Killeen Base?

CHA: It was good. Oh yeah. We had a good mess sergeant. He was a tech sergeant, his name was Farling. And he was good. There were no complaints with Sergeant Farling. He was good.

AED: That's good. And there was also an NCO club. Did you go there?

CHA: No, I didn't go. I didn't go. I was qualified to go. I was a buck sergeant. Matter of fact, I made buck sergeant in '49.

AED: Pretty quick, after getting in and you're still a kid.

CHA: Yeah. I was a kid.

AED: That's something that's been very impressive to me is how young all of you were when you showed at this very strange place and made these connections with people, and reconnected later.

CHA: Yes. Yeah. That's right.

AED: When you were at Killeen Base, did you have the feeling you were part of something unusual?

CHA: Oh, yes.

AED: When you were saying the people that were coming through there and you were realizing, before you were told what was going on, that led you to believe—

CHA: Oh yes. I knew when those guys—because I'd read some books about those people, and I thought to myself, My god, you know.

AED: What are they doing here?

CHA: Yes! They've got to be affiliated with this place.

AED: Were you ever at the front gate checking them in?

CHA: Oh yes!

AED: So you knew their names.

CHA: Yes. That's right.

AED: It's interesting, because different people had different privileges, because if you're at the front gate a lot, you saw people's identification. Someone else working in administration might see people's service records who get transferred in, and be privy to information that not everybody else would have seen. So just very different. Similar experiences, and these very different things that make it very interesting.

CHA: That's right.

AED: Did you ever feel like there was an immediate threat that something was really going to happen while you were there, either on the base, some explosion or some kind of attempt to infiltrate? Did you ever feel that was imminent?

CHA: No.

AED: Why?

CHA: Because, well, I don't know why, but I never did. That was never my concern. I don't know.

AED: Seems like there must have been a level of trust amongst the people there.

CHA: Yes.

AED: That you were doing everything you could to keep it safe.

CHA: It must have been.

AED: That sounds like what I'm hearing from more than just you. At the time, did you consider this the Cold War? Back then, did you know this was the Cold War?

CHA: Oh yes, sure did.

AED: It was very public.

CHA: Yes.

AED: These were later, but did events like the Cuban missile crisis and Bay of Pigs, those kinds of events, did those affect the way you thought about your work?

CHA: Well, of course, those came later, but had I have been still at Killeen [Base], I would've really given that some serious thought.

AED: But even where you were at the time, though—

CHA: I was in Germany at the fighter base, the French fighter base during that Cuban missile business. But no, that was something else.

AED: Now, looking back, what do you think about the Cold War? What's your impression of what happened and your part in it, your role as a security officer?

CHA: Well, all I knew is I did my job, you know. Other than that, I can't say much about it. But I do know that I was doing my job.

AED: If you had any thoughts about the buildings that are at Killeen Base, the tunnels and all of what's still left, what do you think should be done with that? Do you think it should be preserved or demolished or—?

CHA: It's outdated now.

AED: Do you see it as a use for the public to be able to see the place?

CHA: I'm satisfied the army is going to decide that. I wouldn't be able to advise them on that, because the army is going to do whatever.

AED: That's true, they're their own entity.

CHA: That's right.

AED: Do you talk about this with your kids and grandkids? Do they know what you did?

CHA: No.

AED: Do you think about telling them about it?

CHA: No, I've never thought about it.

AED: They know you come to these reunions.

CHA: Oh yeah. As a matter of fact, my kids even come to, not this one, not this reunion, but they come to the one that is the French fighter base. That one, as a matter of fact, my oldest son and his wife and my second son, they've been to two of them. Of course, I go to about five of them.

AED: I was going to say, this isn't your only group.

CHA: No. I go to about five of them. And it is real good, actually.

AED: Is there one of them that you have a preference for? Because you were other places longer.

CHA: Well, no. See, I was a cop, so therefore I go to the [Vietnam] Security Police Association, and we have about 200 that comes to that. As a matter of fact, there's one of them that is a little two-striper that I had work for me, and he got out of the service, he went back to school, and he came back in the service and he went up to a wing commander, and he retired as a full bull. That's a full colonel, and he was a wing commander over at Barksdale [Air Force Base].

AED: Oh wow, that's a big deal, isn't it?

CHA: Oh believe me, it is. Yes, it is. And I got him to join, and he is going to be at Barksdale this next month, and he is going to be at the security police because he was a security policeman when he worked for me. So anyway, he is going to be there.

AED: What's a two-striper?

CHA: He was an airman second class.

AED: I like the nicknames, full bull and two-striper. I like that. I would never know what they meant, though. They're like code.

CHA: His name is Joe Mudd.

AED: When did you first feel like you could talk about Killeen Base? Knowing that you had to keep it secret for so long, when?

CHA: I've actually never even talked about it.

AED: Just with these guys.

CHA: Yeah. And actually, I have never actually sat down and talked to anyone about it.

AED: Because when you were in the military for so long, you do what you're told.

CHA: That's right.

AED: And that stays, to keep with that. So, it's so great you could feel like you could talk about it for this project. I don't have any more specific questions, but I wondered if you had any other stories or other thoughts while we've been talking that you'd like to share?

CHA: No. Not any.

AED: Or if I missed something that you thought we would talk about that was important.

CHA: Oh no. It's good.

Richard Augustus Bender

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Monday, February 22, 2010. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Richard [Augustus] Bender. This interview is taking place at his home in Sarasota, Florida. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

Could you tell me how old you were when you got into the service?

RAB: I was in my twenties.

AED: What were you doing before that?

RAB: I was working in a steel mill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

AED: In Pennsylvania. Had you grown up in Bethlehem?

RAB: Yes. I was born and raised in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

I remember I carried my orders in a bag. I was met in Albuquerque by a jeep with two guards, and I had my envelope with me. You know, I wasn't allowed to open it. I went over to the base. I was informed that I was at a security base. Then blah, blah, blah, this and that. See, I had no clearance yet. Then they put me down in the motor pool. Like I say, I was running the heavy equipment in the motor pool. I ran all this equipment again, and I had the charge of the equipment because I was a buck sergeant. The way it turned out, time went on, and the warrant officer we had in charge of the motor pool, he called me in. He says, "You know, I'm going to send you down to Killeen Base." Killeen Base? I'd never even heard of it. I had worked around the weapons, especially with the motor pool and that because I had the crane. At that time, you lifted a bomb, you couldn't see it because it was all covered. You didn't even know what you were doing. You just knew it was a bomb. Anyway, I went through all of this. Then he says, "Well, I'm sending you down there as a motor sergeant." I can't go down there as a buck sergeant. I said, "My god, you've got staff [sergeants], master [sergeants]. These guys are going to know that in the motor pool." So I don't know, time went on, and I got a notice from the first sergeant to appear, and he gave me an envelope and says,

"Get on your dress uniform, shoes polished, hair combed." He says, "Report to colonel so and so." And I carried this, and I reported to this colonel. I had to give him a salute and all of this, and give him the paper. I'm standing there waiting, and he's reading. He looked at me, you know, checking me out, and I thought, "Oh, Jesus, where am I going?" Anyway, he turns around, and he signs something, sealed the envelope up, and he said, "Return to your first sergeant."

And I went to the first sergeant, I walked in here, and this first sergeant's name was Bender. Anyway, I'll always remember him. Anyway, he took the envelope, and he opened it, and he looked at me for a while, and he smiled. He said, "Congratulations, staff sergeant." So that's how I made that, and that's when I was coming down to Killeen [Base]. That's how I was sent down there as motor sergeant. My god, when I got down there even as a staff sergeant, they were flooded with rank. But at that time your motor pool was not really established. Part of it was at Fort Hood. See, Killeen [Base] was using Fort Hood. Well, when I was sent down there, naturally my family's sitting back in Albuquerque, so I put in for housing. Well, the only way you could get housing was you had to find a place. It wasn't one of these deals with the military housing. You housed yourself. I found some place that you no doubt didn't hear about, the Hood Village. Did you hear the story about Hood Village?

AED: I don't know anything about it. You mentioned it, and I've heard the term Hood Village.

RAB: Hood Village was outside the gate .

AED: Of Killeen Base, right?

RAB: No, not Killeen Base, Fort Hood.

AED: Of all of it?

RAB: This is where they gave me a set of quarters, and it was filthy. They were shacks, is what they were. I mean, I cleaned and cleaned and cleaned, and I was chasing roaches. My refrigerator, when I opened there was green growing in my refrigerator, and the stove was so filthy. So I took time, I asked for time, and I took some of my leave time and asked if I could clean up, because my wife and son hadn't come yet, you know, and my oldest son. And I cleaned the stove with lye to try and—a old gas stove that had bugs crawling all over the place. That table, with your table board in the center, and when you opened that the roaches went flying.

AED: Oh, my goodness.

RAB: I mean, you know, and face that this is your quarters. There were no doors except for the front door, and your closets were open, you just had to hang a curtain. Your cupboards were open. It was nothing fancy.

There's a line where you step over it and you're in one state, and you go over this, and I remember that. So I had to bring back a Lorain crane, and that was some traveling. By the way, my wallet was stolen down there at Killeen Base. I had to go in and take a shower and what have you. It was pay day, and I lost my wallet. Well, when I went out of there I just had my travel vouchers for meals, and that's it, no money. Well, the guys got together and gave me, I think I wound up with $25 I had in my pocket. Anyway, went out there and brought the crane back, and we went out, and really working with Killeen Base now. And Mr. Jelson was a custodian. Did you get his name?

AED: A colleague of mine heard his name, but I don't know anything about him.

RAB: Mr. Jelson was like a custodian with the nuclear weapons.

AED: George?

RAB: He had the authority, with keys, to open the structures. This [place] everything was real tight. Well, anyway, he was in security, and he and somebody else, they found my wallet was underneath the building. Naturally everything was gone, but they found the guy that did it because they got the fingerprints off of it, because Jelson was a security type.

But anyway, now I bring my equipment back, now I'm starting. I come down in the motor pool, mostly I'm with the heavy equipment, and I taught some crane, because the idea of a crane was with a big boom on it, like that [motioning] that when it's coming around your load is always behind you. Since I worked in a steel mill and I used to run a crane in there, that was the same way, when I plugged that equipment in there to stop that swing so you could set it down. Well, I taught the same thing there. I taught the guys how to use compression on dropping something heavy. Not dropping. Lowering. But anyway, I did all that.

The next thing you know I was picked for what they called handling. They need a forklift operator and all this and that. Well, I finally, you know, being a staff sergeant, I'm finally with somebody a little bit, and I wound up then working in a crew. I had a tech sergeant over me, and then we had two other guys. One of them was a drunk. But our deal was that we worked strictly with weapons. Whenever weapons were needed, we would do the moving, the handling. So at the time they had put a railroad spur into Fort Hood. Everything would come in there at nighttime. Everything was hush-hush, guards and all. The guards traveled in a regular old Pullman car, you know. We got the word, and we'd be over there. I had the crew, so my hours would, who knows.

Then when we, I think we used to hold off until day light, I think it was. Then Jelson would go along, and he cut the seals off the doors. See, he was authorized for the weapons that were in there. They would come up from Sandia Base. Well, once the seals were off and that, they were ours. Well, we had to go in there and get the bombs and get them out of the boxcars, put them on trailers, load the fuse cans and all this stuff. Get it up and make a convoy. After I had everything loaded, maybe we didn't make it the first trip, but anyway you load, you would turn around and put the flags on your vehicles, which would designate explosives. They had the highway closed off from Fort Hood to going out towards Copperas Cove. That was where the road come into Killeen Base. Everything on that side was stopped, and everything down here was stopped, and we drove that highway and went in. Then once we were in, they opened the highway.

So when we delivered our weapons, we were told by—well, Jelson was the one that designated the bunkers we were going in. When we went up there, I don't know if anybody ever told you about the bunkers. They're steel doors, and very closed and locked. But what people don't know, they were sitting down in the. They had a pocket down in the cement, they were sitting down in there.

Okay. Everything was closed, you know. We went in with jacks, one guy on this side and on this one, they had pins to put the jacks on. What we were doing, we were jacking up them steel doors. When they were above the right place, we could flip the sealing to close the opening up. Okay. Now you could unlock the doors. But Jelson was the one that would do the unlocking and locking, start and end, you know. We would put the weapons away with all the different igloos. The thing was that when I went in there, Brown & Root were still working when they were digging. But our plant was done. We were Plant 1 right there by the—and that's what I started. Like I say, nuclear weapons for all the operations into Gray Air Force Base. I would transport down to there, and they'd have the aircraft come in and take off.

The one interesting deal was, and I got eaten out because I was late. Anyway, I run the crane over to Gray Air Force Base. The civilians were working there then. Gray [Air Force Base] was quite new, and they had holes they were digging, and I found out later they were going to be used for pit loadings. Over this hole, down in that hole. You remember when they used to lift automobiles, and they had center, that *shhhh*, you know? Well, they had this big cylinder, and when they called me with the crane, that's when I went over. The guy explained what he wanted to do, and we made sure we squared it up, because to go down into that you have to be just right. Well, it took time. Anyway, we finally got it done. I returned.

So after we worked with that, then I was back again into the weapons. Then, I'm trying to think, there was Sergeant Knoll [?]. An airplane come in, and it landed. They had all sorts of equipment into it and men. I got the word to go over there with my forklift and go up, you know, go into the doorway to the aircraft. They had a big deal they had to put on it. There was some sort of, going to teach some maybe electrical or what, because we had maintenance bay, bomb bay, and electrical bay, and all that. Sergeant Knoll [?] was in charge of that group. I was going to lift it everything up and take off. Well, I was the only guy only allowed to go near that airplane to get that, because when they're lifting didn't want somebody to damage it. Well anyway, to make a real story short, something I was doing, I wasn't eligible at the time, and the airplane had come in. They sent one of my helpers down there, and he run the lift into the sill of the airplane. So now Captain Scioli, "Bender." I go, "I didn't do it." Anyway, my happy friend.

So anyway, like I said, in the plant, the first bay you come into was called handling. In the handling, there was a latrine over here was built in, nice room. Back down in here was where that big generator was located that produced the air and that. We were right off that generator, and there was a big room. The bay, the bay was where we handled the bombs, because they had the hoist. Then the room to the side was where we tested fuse cans to see if there was any leaks or anything else. They were sealed, and they had their little dosimeter, not dosimeters, little indicators to show whether they were leaking or not air, because in aircraft, if they weren't proper they could collapse. So anyway, we had a tank back in there where we would test the fuses. We would, when the bomb would come, we'd take the bomb in, and usually they were coming in in what they call a beta crate. When they brought it in, or when we brought it in, we wheeled it up through that long hall, and that's why they had that yellow line on the floor in there. That was to give us a center line to travel on. So we had a Yale lift, which was a long bed trailer, where you stand up at one end and you got a steering wheel, and your handles for lifting. Well, I was running that. I had to go pick up the bomb in that. Now I've got to take it up that long hallway, and put it in that room. When we got it in that room, now we had the crew would turn around and start dismantling the crate, and the bomb would be there.

AED: Inside the crate. So you're driving this long trailer in this skinny [hall].

RAB: [Yes. Yellow was your guide] underneath. See because what it is, is a dray, you would turn around, and the bomb would sit all the way in the cradle because it's in the box. We would remove it from that cradle, hoist, hang it up, and I would go in with my lift, and I had another cradle, and so on the lift we'd lower the bomb and set it in. Then my next move was to take it and run up the hallway going out of our bay. Then it went this way, and then it went this way. The reason they had it was on account of explosions to cut down on the _____ [inaudible].

But up in this one end they had where the crew could come and sit, and they had a smoking area.

AED: In there?

RAB: [Yes, not near bombs.] But over here was the maintenance bay. So I'd come on, stay there for that, they'd open the doors, I'd drive in, I'd unload it, and take off. Well, when the bomb was completed, you know, the maintenance people worked on it. Oh, and I also delivered all the radars to the electrical section. Then I was done with the Yale tug, it's like [motioning]. They called it a tug. I had all these trailers. You remember when you go to the airport and see all them trailers that hang behind the guys when he's delivering the bags. Well, those trailers are made where I follow the yellow line with care because I couldn't see my trailers. You turned on that yellow line and they followed, all of them followed, which was something I never could understood how they did it. But anyway, like I said, I handled all the fuses and all this.

So the main thing was I had to be acquainted with a MAS, FAS, CAS, and RAS, which was radar assembly spares, fuse assembly spares, mechanical fuse spares, and maintenance they called it. I remember RAS, FAS, MAS, CAS, and all. Anyway, I had to make sure I had everything straight, serial numbers so so, because when we got the bomb back out of the bay we had to get it ready for shipment or storage. So when they come to the storage then, it was when we had Jelson, would be up and he would indicate where we would put them.

Anyway, but the unloading of them at Fort Hood was tough. I remember one time when a guy went around the corner too fast and he threw off some fuse cans. As I looked at it, I could go in and grab it with a forklift, and fork them out of the ditch, put them up on a trailer, and then we went in. Nothing happened to the fuses though, but I tell you, it was embarrassing.

But like I say, I also worked on some disassembly of bombs. I also worked with detonators. The main thing is a bomb is a bomb, but it has no nuclear capability until they have a capsule inserted. The capsules [looking at photographs], yeah here we go, now the classification was taken away from the bombs. Okay? That's my wife and I went in there—and this is probably—but here, you see this yellow bomb? That's the same one, not the one, same type, that was dropped in Japan.

AED: The technology. Okay.

RAB: Okay. So I worked with the bomb, and now it became the Mark 6, the Mark 4 or Mark 6.

AED: That's right, they did change the terminology.

RAB: There was, again, the front of nose, and on that nose was these little dots. I used to test those with a punch. The machine would then indicate that they seen this crystals that was in that. That was that there. So when this bomb was delivered the tail section was separate. We had stuff all over the place we had to pick up to make the bomb. So anyway, this guy here. But there I was down there. There's another bomb we worked on, that's [Mark] 5. This here is a hydrogen bomb. Here's the Mark 6. In other words, this one that we used to work on became a Mark 6, but see how the tail section is all installed? This sitting here right here is an artillery shell that was nuclear. Here is the hydrogen bomb. This bomb I worked with in Alaska. They built a plant up there at Eielson Air [Force] Base. This one here was the one that was being flown around there days and nights, you know, they changed off aircraft because of Russia. That was when that Cold War bit and all this and that. So that was being used during then. And I worked with this one, and I used to carry this up. I'd pick this up. I was qualified, with, they called it with a straddle carrier, which is—have you ever been round a lumber yard?

AED: Yes.

RAB: Have you ever seen this big forklift deal or whatever that would go in and hold like that [motioning].

AED: It's huge. Right. The gigantic crane.

RAB: They had one designed for me that I drove. I'd go in there, and I'd drive over, the bomb gets centered over it, and I put my hooks down, and grabbed the bomb, pick it up, get it all set, and then I would transport it on the aisle way all the way into the building. So I worked around a few. But anyway, here's the aircraft, how big it was to pick up that bomb.

AED: Wow! It's a B-25?

RAB: It's a B-25, yeah.

AED: Only because I've read, I wouldn't know otherwise.

RAB: That's about '49, '48, '49, I don't know. Anyway, but this was taken where at there when I had the chance to go through. When I went through the Killeen [Base] the first time, my wife had passed away. Then I got a notice that they were having the reunion. The guy said, "We're going to Killeen [Base]." I thought, Boy, that'd be nice. I'd like it. So I made arrangements and I flew into Killeen. That's when I went through I had the woman explain about the building, you know, and all that. When we walked into that bay, I thought, Boy, honey, I know more about this bay than you do.

Then I wound up with Sergeant Leeps. Leeps was quite a carpenter. I was sent to work with Leeps, and I was a staff sergeant then. So he and I started the civilian club.

AED: Oh, you started it. You did have those photographs that you had shared with me that have the band pictures.

RAB: Then mailway express, I got a notice I had to pick up a package. I went down there, and all these awnings and pipes and all was all folded up. Then after I got that up, they moved me. So anyway, like I say, I wanted to show you a picture of the. It was a surprise to me. Anyway, this was my wife and I. There's Hood Village in the back.

AED: Oh, in the background. Great. Oh, and you had shared with us a little picture of one of those houses.

RAB: See, that was my house. That was my wife. We had to plant all that grass at the [Kay Bee Heights] house.

AED: There wasn't anything. Just dirt.

RAB: There wasn't anything. We did all that planting. Outside this window here, it was a big window, I remember. I remember the time my wife said, "Dick! Dick!" I said, "What?" "Someone's out there! *Shh*, something's out there." See, your window is down [low]. I went out, and I had all flowers planted in there and that. I look out there and I had two big eyes looking at me, and it was cattle. See, they had, I don't know if anybody ever mentioned it, but later on they put in a cattle guard across the road to keep the cattle from coming.

AED: But before that—

RAB: Before that. So anyway, I heard this out there [making chomping noise].

AED: Yeah, they're loud!

RAB: I thought, Oh, god. So I had an air pistol, and I got the air pistol all loaded up with the pellets. And I went out, and I came around, and my god, the place is full of cattle.

AED: It wasn't just one?

RAB: Not only this one, and even one, his behind was looking pretty close to me. Well, I thought, ping I got him, and he made a snort, and then they all got moving, you know, like a stampede. Anyway, but my buddy that lived down, there was like a little hill behind me, and there was a house down in there. He says, "Next time you chase them, don't chase them down on my lawn." He was having the same thing laying lawn, and these cattle went through it though.

AED: Yeah, they just tear it up. What was your first wife's name?

RAB: It was Kathy. When Sergeant Leeps and I went over there on this, we started—I'll find the picture sooner or later—we started the [club] building on the so-called building. But anyway, we started from scratch. And I had a picture of the [building]. In fact, here—no, there's Hood Village also.

AED: The house, right?

RAB: Yeah. Here's one of the awnings [dad made for us].

AED: That's great. Oh, that's one you had already shared.

RAB: My dad fixed them up for me.

AED: That's fantastic.

RAB: Anyway, the deal on that club was we could—Fort Hood took two big buildings and they moved them over to us. Then they took them and we went and put them like that.

AED: So they made a T shape?

RAB: We joined them. On this end down here we put the dance floor. Coming up this way was your slot machines and the bar and all this and that. It was pretty neat because like here, when I had bands. I didn't even have my bandstand set up yet. After we got done working on that, I was picked by the colonel, he says he wants me to run the club with Sergeant McGlynn. Sergeant McGlynn was a master sergeant. McGlynn was in security where they worked using on the machines and all this and everything, you know. He was always busy. So anyway, they put me number two. So you go in there and you take charge. So I wound up, I was running the NCO club as a staff sergeant. In there then was when I signed up with the MCA, Music Corporation of America. That's how I wound up getting the band like that Harry Ranch.

AED: Nice.

RAB: Then this one here, was one of the finest. This guy was Charlie Spivak was the top trumpet player from Canada. This was his band.

AED: That's a big band.

RAB: [We] paid $1,000 for that group, which was cheap.

AED: Wow! Really?

RAB: The reason I got them was they had played at Fort Hood, the club, on a Saturday night.

AED: So they were there anyway.

RAB: My wife gone? I guess she went in the other room. I guess she got tired of me talking. This one here, this is the way, when you think of it like a company roster, and its personnel, that's a lot of people.

AED: Yeah, it is a lot of people.

RAB: I had guys say, When I was there, and I'd say, "Look, come on, I was there a lot earlier." Because in here, when they outlined the attached personnel, Sergeant Bender, Richard A., and now all of these other guys, I have to try and remember this, because when they showed up at these reunions, like I showed you that picture, that's only a part of them. Here, it's funny, I don't have it.

AED: It's near by.

RAB: I had a roster of the personnel.

AED: That was more of them.

RAB: Just of what showed up for one of our reunions. And I mean it was loaded.

AED: Huge, right.

RAB: Then they're down, the last one they had one time and they had three, because let's face it, I'm 91. Sergeant Green was a good friend of mine. He died. He used to, every time my wife and I would show up, he would make sure we had transportation to go to different areas, you know. Another one, Sergeant, I forget what his name is now, but his wife passed away, and we contact one another by phone. I had the phone number down anyway, and I call him. This was a map I gave you of Fort Hood.

AED: Yes, you did. This was with it too.

RAB: This was the paper.

AED: Yeah, I have that, too.

RAB: This was the one now, this one here—

AED: I don't think I've seen this one. I'm pretty sure I haven't. Could I take this and copy it?

RAB: Yes.

AED: And I'll return it to you, of course. Yeah, I don't think I've seen it before.

RAB: It's something.

AED: Oh, nice.

RAB: Remember Hounshell, I don't know if he's still living or not.

AED: Elmer [Hounshell] is. I think Charles [Hounshell], as of November he was very ill.

RAB: He and his brother was some of the guards that should come in there. His brother's dead now. When I was at Killeen Base, I was stationed in the barracks, and that barracks was full at the time. That barracks was also your kitchen, day room, officers, and they had medical. They had everything. Then you went down there further, it opened up into officers' quarters. The officers were billeted down in that far end.

AED: So they slept in a different space.

RAB: Oh, yeah, there was a separation. We had a hallway that when you entered the hallway, outside was a big drum out there with sand in it. That was for the guards to make sure weapons were empty. Pistols. You'd take them off like that [motioning], you know. Well then, they would enter the door, and they'd come in. As they come in, we had the arms room. At the front entrance was the arms room. We had one guy, I can't think who he was, but he turned around and turned in his pistol somehow. I was coming out of the day room, which is where we had to sit, I just made the corner, and all of a sudden wham! Ooh, man, it sounded like everything exploded. It was a .45. A guy come around the corner, spun around, and fell on the floor. Well, what had happened, I don't know how it was, but the guy in there that took the weapon, he must've tilt back, and that's how he shot. Just as this guy was making the turn, he caught him. Thank god it only caught him through a leg, because a .45 tears you up.

AED: Yeah, in the wrong place.

RAB: So anyway, I remember that, and that was scary.

AED: Wow! Did you carry a weapon?

RAB: Only on certain occasions, if we were carrying classified material in a briefcase or such.

AED: When would something like that happen? Frequently or occasionally?

RAB: It would be occasionally, be depending on what was going on.

AED: For example, when you were driving the forklift, or you're moving a bomb along on the dray in the tunnel. You're not carrying a weapon at that point?

RAB: I stored weapons. We'd take the bomb directly into the bay.

AED: Right. But I mean a gun. You didn't do that?

RAB: No, no, we didn't carry no weapons. We had guards that were situated.

AED: Okay. So you never had—

RAB: That's like at Killeen Base right outside was a gun turret and what have you.

AED: Right. But you would not carry say a .45, at any point?

RAB: No, no. The only time I carried a .45 was when I had got myself on an aircraft. I was going down to Okinawa. They were having trouble for a guy to find space. He says, "Well, are you classified?" I said, "Yeah, I'm classified." He said, "What are you?" I said, "Top secret." He said, "Okay. We need a courier." So they issued me a pistol, and this bag to take to the next place.

In fact, I was going into Okinawa, that was it. I remember right then, when it was issued, and them I'm all done. But I got there to Okinawa.

AED: Did you go to Okinawa out of Killeen Base or out of—?

RAB: No. We went out Okinawa after Misawa, Japan. I was in Misawa, Japan, after the war. I used to go to Okinawa because I had to take a team down there and have them certified to work on weapons.

AED: But this was before Killeen Base?

RAB: After. This is my new career. That's where I'd make the tours that way, because otherwise we never traveled. The only one was when I went after the crane. The rest of the time was always at the base. My oldest son was, well, Wendell was 12 years old when I married his mom. Wendell, he delivered the papers in Fort Hood. He got the paper route. I remember that one. Rick was born, my son was born, at Fort Hood in the hospital. I remember I was living in the barracks. See, Fort Hood had quarters they'd give us at first before we went anywhere. And I was in the center of a big thing. [At Fort Hood housing] I remember I happened to spot the post. I looked down, it looked like it had been sawed, you know. I thought, Uh-huh. So I got my car jack, you know, and with that jack you could lift the post up, and that made your living room open, you know, so nice. And I always told my wife, I had—we were hurting for money, but I had a sofa, two tables with two lights, and a 9x12 rug. Well, when you looked in that room, that was a barracks, that 9x12 [rug] looked like a floor mat. But anyway, my son was born there. That's why I say that it's clean. Then I didn't get out of there until they started building those officers' quarters.

Okay. To make a long story short, I was called in, and I don't know who the officer was any more. He says, "How about, could you talk your team into sticking around here?" I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "You know," he says, "this is going to be air force." I thought, "They're going to let the air force come in." I said, "What?" He said, "Yeah." He says, "If you can get your guys you can do the same job, because we're going to need it to start off." I said, "Well, I don't know. Are you talking about quarters and all this and that?" He said, "Don't worry about that." He said, "The quarters are yours." He says, "Your rent will be all right." He says, "You can be air force." I said, "How do I become air force?" You know, this and that, and I have quarters down at Fort Hood, right? So he turns around and says, "Well, you don't lose your quarters." I said, "No?" He says, "Your rank stays the same." I said, "That sounds familiar." And, I don't know, it went on and on and on. Finally, he says, About how many could I get from my team. Well, I got two that would do the same thing. To him, I said, "Well, how do I become air force?" "I'll tell you." He says, "Here we have it, you're RA, regular army." He says, "You've got your number in there, right?" He says, "We're going to take that RA, take it off, make it AF." I said, "Air force?" "Yeah," he says, "I can do that now." I said, "But it's about my—" "You keep the quarters, everything," he said, "nothing's going to happen." I said, "Well, that's pretty nice. But moving now costs money. So when the base changed to air force, I was there.

AED: You changed with it.

RAB: Yeah.

AED: Wow!

RAB: I'll always remember that. And I went home telling my [wife], Kathy, I said, "Hey, Kath." I said, "Guess what?" She said, "What's that?" I said, "You know what? I'm air force." "What?"

AED: How can that be? Poof!

RAB: She was, I tell you what, I'm lucky. Between the two of them I've got, had a beautiful wife. She was a worker, a real worker. So she went through a lot of it. She went through my hard times.

AED: Of course.

RAB: This was good times. And I hope I haven't bored you.

AED: No. You know, I've only asked one question so far.

RAB: What's that?

AED: Well, I want to go back to Killeen Base, but I want to ask you a few more questions about your World War II experience just because it's a precursor to what happened next.

RAB: Back in World War II?

AED: Yeah. You enlisted. Did you enlist at Bethlehem?

RAB: I was working the steel mill, when I was drafted.

AED: You were drafted, okay.

RAB: Then I had the offer to stay in the mill, but my brother had already gone, and he was in the army engineers also, and they were down training in the south.

AED: He was with the corps of engineers?

RAB: No. He was engineers, yeah. Anyway, they were 28th Division, which the combat engineers. So when the time come, and they talked about this deal that I could stay in the steel mill instead of being drafted, I said, "No." I said, "If my brother's going, I want to go, too." So naturally it hit my family, because my mom and dad, all of a sudden she loses two sons, you know. She was good about it, and my dad was, he was a prince. But while I was in the service, was '40—

AED: That's what I was going to ask you, is when you got in.

RAB: Right after Pearl Harbor.

AED: Okay. So late '41, early '42.

RAB: Yeah. Early '42 I'd say.

AED: Then you got out at '45.

RAB: I got out at '71. I was career.

AED: Oh, you were career. I didn't realize that.

RAB: I stayed in until '71. I retired as a chief master sergeant. Or a senior master sergeant.

AED: During World War II and you were serving with the amphib, you used a term called chipping? Correct me if that was wrong.

RAB: I was in amphib, engineers, we built the boats. We sailed the boats during World War II. We also built the boats, even when we were up in New Guinea we even built boats, when we were in the Philippines. We built an LSTC, landing [ship] tank carrier for the navy. In fact, I have pictures of it. Boy, we were happy, because that was the end of the war. The landing craft TC [tank carrier], landing craft tank carrier, what it was, was they had, it was really big steel, big ramp gate on this end and a ramp gate on this end. It was that this ship could pull in and dock just like a wharf. Drop the back gate, the front gate down, the next one come in you could tie on, and you could run the tanks off.

AED: Build a road, practically.

RAB: Yeah. It was something.

AED: You used a term chipping, that you were chipping. What does that mean?

RAB: Yeah, they call it that. I did that when we were doing the LCM [landing craft mechanized] because it was all that metal. What they do is they always have hooks on stuff so it can be picked up and put in place. So I would burn that part off the ship or boat, and I went back with chipping to make sure I get smooth spot on the deck. So I had steel mill, they nailed me on that one.

AED: You had skills they needed.

RAB: Another one that I did, which the blacksmith that we had was really a good blacksmith. And I told him, I said, "You know what?" I said, "I don't understand why you guys can't get the right chisels." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Okay," I said, "In the civilian life they have chisels like that." I said, "They also have a chisel, you know, that curl down." I said, "For everything you're down on your knees, and it is hard." By god, he fooled around and he made one. He understood then what I meant. Of course, he had fun. He loved this. He was a good blacksmith.

I don't know. But anyway, I'm talking and talking and talking.

AED: That's why I'm here. I'm here to listen. When you were drafted, did you go to basic training?

RAB: Oh, yeah.

AED: Where did you go for that?

RAB: When I went to basic training, I did it in Anniston, Alabama.

AED: You did say that. Okay. All right. I was just making sure I got that.

RAB: That was tough, because we were that, again, northerner, southerner, and we come in and a lot of the southerners were NCOs, and they hated our guts. We wore green fatigues, and they were still in blue, which was the ones you always used to see that had POW [prisoner of war] on the back and all this and that. Those were the first fatigues, the blue and the blue hat, but we wound up with the green. So you'd know darn well who was northern. So anyway, that's where I left for Fort Belvoir, Virginia.

AED: You did tell me that.

RAB: Fort Belvoir, that's when I left there to go to over the other way.

AED: Overseas. Yeah. Okay. You mentioned, this is just a term I haven't heard before, A and B bags. What does that mean?

RAB: You had A and B clothing and what have you, that's two bags.

AED: I've never heard it called—it's just one is the A and one is the B.

RAB: Blow it out your bag.

AED: So you served, in terms of the nuclear storage sites, you served at Killeen Base, you served at Manzano [Base], Sandia [Base], first.

RAB: I served at Killeen Base, at Sandia Base. Then then I had another base in there. Oh, when I left Killeen Base, I come up to Sandia [Base] again?

AED: They called it Manzano [Base] at that point, I think. Were you with the 1094th?

RAB: [The] 1094th.

AED: What did the army call the group you were with, before the 1094th was even created? I probably have it somewhere, but I don't—

RAB: It was three, smaller numbers. Three numbers.

AED: It was maybe 800 and something, 864? That's okay.

RAB: I think I could find it, but it was—dang numbers—because we wound up with—I was air force, and they come out. This was when I had gone back Sandia [Base] with the—

AED: Right. Manzano [Base], right.

RAB: And I went back up in there, and we worked in the plant for a while. Then I wound up working a lot with the motor pool, and I hauled gas and who knows what. Another thing, too, we had, at Sandia Base, New Mexico, a lot of the truckers had the right clearance, but a lot of them they wouldn't, they'd bring their truck and we were notified, and they'd park it outside the gate. We drove the big vans in and got them unloaded and brought them back. A lot of times I'd run them all the way back down to Albuquerque, because they're from Kirtland Air [Force] Base, you know.

AED: Oh, that's right Kirtland's associated with Sandia [Base].

RAB: Now Kirtland is now, the weapons are underground of Kirtland Air [Force] Base, see because that's a military and civilian air base. You know, I think it was somewhere. Did you get a hold of that from somewhere else or not?

AED: Yes, I think we do have information on that.

RAB: I think I had it in a letter.

AED: Part of it's in that's story. It's discussed in there, and other places.

RAB: Well, this is your invite, I think. Oh, no, here's what—

AED: You had sent that to us, right.

RAB: _____ [inaudible] nuclear research site. That was in the airport, that was the one. There's one I brought for you today, and I can't find it.

AED: You'll find it. You also mentioned the term cadre, you became part of a cadre. Tell me what that means.

RAB: I was going to be, at that time, instructor, and it was in the school of engineering. When I re-enlisted I wanted engineers and when there wasn't engineers, then I asked for diesel. They couldn't—the schools were full. This was after the war. So they had talked about heavy equipment. I said, "Well, look, I'll take that, that's diesel." So I took the heavy equipment. So it at Fort Belvoir, Virginia, I learned the bulldozer, which is something I had never run before, and a scraper, and all that other stuff. I learned cement mixer. I learned a little bit of everything. Anyway, that's what I was saying, I was picked for cadre to remain as an instructor, which was nice because we had Laterno [?] and all those guys in there with us. Boy, they were smart. These were old men, but they had done their share. That's when I got that call to be an interview, and then says, Sandia Base.

AED: Okay, okay. All right. When you got that call to go there, did you have any idea what kind of work they were doing?

RAB: No. No.

AED: Nothing? No. They didn't tell you before you went, right?

RAB: No. I just got orders to go to Sandia Base. Then I had to go all the way by train to Sandia Base, and boy, that was miserable. By the way, real quick like, you know when they issue you a meal ticket. Well, the guy had to turn around and they wouldn't come back and give me more coffee. You know, they wouldn't do this or that. And I mean, being a Pennsylvania Dutchman, I got pretty hot. So I nailed the steward, what it was, I told him, I said, "Enough of this." Yes. And I said, "This is all we got to travel with." I said, "You guys come in and pour it and walk off." I said, "There's people in there eating and all that," and I said, "they get what they want." I said, "Why? Is it because we're military, and we aren't deserving or something like that?" I said, "By god, that's it, we're going to—or I'm going to find somebody to talk to." We got coffee, we got seconds, but I was so mad, because that's a long way to go going by train from where we were to go out to Sandia [Base]. Whew!

AED: Wow! You were in Bethlehem?

RAB: Oh, yes. I was born on Christmas Day.

AED: You were born on Christmas Day. Oh, you put that in your note as the Christmas baby. In Bethlehem, that's special.

RAB: Yes. My halo, right? Sails bright, bright, bright.

AED: All the time. That's great. This is a little off the subject, but while you were in the military, what awards and special honors did you receive?

RAB: I've got a Distinguished Service Medal, and then I had some beautiful write ups that were pushing me, pushing me. Then the last one, real quick like was I was sent to the Philippines. I was down in the Philippines with my orders, and I got a barracks and I got my orders, but I don't know where to go. It just says that you've got orders and a bag. So I went and I looked up for that, and they have a chief of such and such. So I headed over for there, and I was in there waiting, and a door opened up, and an officer come out of that place. He looked at me,

he said, "Bender, what the hell are you doing here?" I said, "I don't know." I said, "I got it all in the envelope here." I said, "I got that special TDY to go to the Philippines, and it says for over 100 days." He says, "Oh." I said, "Well, I want to go find out where I'm going." "Don't. Hold it." He goes and opens it up, "Hey, Sam," or something like that, "I've got a Sergeant Bender out here, he's going to my outfit." "Okay." And I wound up being nuclear.

So anyway, when the time come, they [wrote] a proficiency report on you, and I had that proficiency report. I was hoping, I wish my son were to find that book, because all that was in there about my outstanding service, and all this and that. This colonel turned around and stated, Most valued individual that he had, and all that.

But I had set up emergency destruction. That's something that they hadn't had. There's just 30 minutes you have to start laying your lines to run your explosives, because in the igloos then we started calling them shape charges. You put them on. See, weapons were stored at an angle like this [motioning], or like this I mean [motioning], stored like this. The next weapon out must stay in that same line. So we put a shape charge in this one. You had a shape charge in that one up there. Okay. Now the emergency destruction was, you laid your—you had to quick get your hot line down on the outside of the igloos, and you had where the leads come out, you have your pliers and all that, and you did the hook up, and you're ready. You had, it was 30 minutes, and I did it. I'm saying, I really did. And I got honorable mention on that. So anyway, when I returned to Lowry Air [Force] Base, I got—oh, from Japan, see then when I returned back to my station in Japan, that was when they set me up to be returned home. My wife and I and the kids come back on the [steamship] President Wilson, we came back by ocean. I had a choice of flying or come by ocean. My wife wanted go, so I said, "Okay." So we come back by ocean. But my son had got a good education over there in Japan. He had all civilian instructors. Anyway, I come back from there, we went to Philippines and what have you, then finally my family, we made it back at 'Frisco, San Francisco. Believe it or not, I come back and went through the same gate that I had come on at World War II. Up there you could still read, it says, Welcome. It was at Pier 28. I'll always remember that. I told my wife, "My god," I said, "look at that." She didn't know, of course, American rule. And, "My god, way to go!" Anyway, so I come back stateside, and that's when I did all this other going, day bases, _____ [inaudible]. But early in my career was Sandia [Base] or Manzano [Base], whatever you want to call it, anyway, one of them, to Killeen [Base].

By the way, my wife was working for the military. She was doing typing that was the payrolls going out to these. There was, I guess there's only three or four bases, Killeen [Base], and you know, that were—

AED: Oh, yeah, that did the storage.

RAB: But Dick Priester, we stood up for their wedding, and they were married and they come to the NCO club, I remember that. So anyway, Dick and Bev, we remained friends. They was at Killeen Base because they come in later.

AED: That's right, they came in with that later group.

RAB: Later group. Her father was a first sergeant over in tank corps in Fort Hood, and so I had the picture of her father. [He] finally broke through, he was a mean son of a bitch. He and the wife and Kathy and I were all in the picture together. I remember the time—

AED: You were talking about being down at Gray [Air Force Base].

RAB: Oh, at Gray?

AED: Yeah, and they had the screens underneath so you couldn't see in.

RAB: Yeah. So anyway, looked and here a guy and his wife and two kids come in an automobile, and I don't know how the devil they ever got in, you know, because your security was all around you, Rattlesnake Mountain, you know, all over here, and I couldn't believe it. The guy, he hollered and he went out and he caught him. They couldn't see because of the screen, and that was years ago. But always everything was done, phew, you know—

AED: Very hush-hush.

RAB: And I don't know, he turned them away, but I think, What could he do? They just got on there by accident, and I think they didn't see what. So they never did see the bomb. But that pit loading was hairy, and that fell through, they got away with that one. They had all the pits dug out through Gray [Air Force Base]. Airplanes would have to drive up over the pit. The bomb bay open up. You delivered your weapon. It was in the center, you turned around and you dropped it, or they dropped the trailer. The bomb stayed put because you had a center, you pulled the pins. It's setting there. They'd pick it up, and take up under the bomb bay.

AED: Right. Then they close.

RAB: Then they turn around and close it closed. Now the pit, would bring the trailer up and load it, until we'd take the trailer away. It was all done with, I don't know how to explain it, but it was hairy. I remember the operation where were everything over there. We had the weapons, and I had to run the convoy over there, and that and set them up. They were having trouble on the pit. Why? Because it wasn't working, I mean, the way it's written in the manual. The guy come in, It's got to work. It's got to work. Just _____ [inaudible], or something like that. And I remember saying, and said, "Well, blah, blah, blah," you know, "It sure isn't working." So they stopped the operation, and that's the last time I ever seen it as far as pit, because it was too involved.

AED: Too many steps.

RAB: Yes. One more. This was a close one, my close call. I'm in Alaska in wintertime. So they have an operation, you keep going wintertime, summertime, whenever. So anyway, all the snow went over there. They tried to run, and had a colored line running through the snow to give you directions to get you to where you're going. Anyway, I can't think of Sarge's name. He and another guy, he's over here and his weapons carrier comes in, because weapons carrier were doing the trailer, hauling them in on the trailers. The weapons carrier come in, and we had the bomb, and they had constructed a hook up, see they called it, it was a slave. Those weapons carriers had a pulley over where they could pick up current and put it to a weapon. The reason they put it to the weapon, they had batteries that would worked inside that weapon to help, you know. They had nothing to do with the explosion. It was just to protect the bomb. Anyway, he hooked in, and I hooked in on the bomb, and a fire flew. So help me god, this is true. Well, both of us, we froze. We're looking at each other. You know, you can't run. Where do you run to? _____ [inaudible]. It worked out all right. So we turned around, and we put the bomb over the one side. We reported back to the assembly area, which was where we were when it happened. See, we're away from the base. We were back at an old anti-aircraft area, which was from World War II, and they had their building back in there where they worked the bombs on. Anyway, they turned running, and we quick reported it in. They said, What else? And I said, "That's it." I said, "Hell," I said, "it didn't go off," I says, "or I wouldn't be here," and I said, "but we set it off to one the side." He said, "Okay." So we kept the operation going. Later on, what we found out was somehow or other these cables were made by the E bay, electrical bays, and somebody goofed up on a cable where they got one of the wires cross or something. So when we hooked up we had a bad cable. So what it did,

it shorted. Well, when they opened up the bomb, which was up in the mech[anical] bay, they found that the load ring, which was run which has explosives all in it, was okay, and it has all the fingers in there and that. Nothing touched, but on the outside. What the hell they call it? The load ring, and there's another assembly just before the load ring, I can't come up with it. Anyway, this was where they hit, and its explosion. So it didn't get into there. Thank god it didn't get into that load ring.

AED: Because that would've made a difference.

RAB: The load ring would've, it wouldn't have been a nuclear explosion, but it would've been an explosion because the nuclear isn't put in until they get to the flight line. Honest to god, I'll always remember that.

AED: Did you know at the time that the nuclear wasn't in there yet?

RAB: Oh, we always knew that because we delivered weapons, we know because the nuclear weapons used to be sent in a separate capsule.

AED: Was that part of what you delivered or no?

RAB: No, that was—

AED: That was a separate process?

RAB: That was, I don't know if we, we could have, because it's called a bird cage.

AED: Right. My understanding was, at least things I've read was that some bombs went—

RAB: Did they call it a bird cage?

AED: They did. We saw the little things they could carry them in, you know. Some of them went loaded and some of them were put together on a plane.

RAB: Yeah. Like your Mark 5, they used to use it for demonstrations, when they had all these people come in and nuclear, you know, at the plant, and they'd have a place lined up in line, and they'd have that bomb sitting in there. They'd be explaining the bomb and that. Then all of a sudden, *eeerrrr*, the front end of the bomb opened up doors.

AED: Wow! That's wild. That's just wild.

RAB: These people are standing looking. That's where when the capsule would be put on that, because they did it in reverse with no capsule. Reverse, put it up in there, and the doors go. The Mark 5 and the Mark 7, I think were the two that had that. But, oh god, the stuff that I seen and I had pictures and I can't find them because, see, they were in my son's stuff. Because I worked up in Plattsburgh Air [Force] Base to where I had charge of, we were doing loading a Mark, what are called Mark 8s, and we had a bomb trailer that loaded four bombs, two and two. The big aircraft, the bomber would pull in, and when they put that all underneath the aircraft, had to lift that up there, lift up there, and each one of the bombs had a mission. See, and they knew, you know that. I had a picture of the bombs hanging like that, and then the security, the officer was standing over here, and I was up here [motioning] when they took the picture. And I happened to find it, and I figured that's mine. That was in that folder.

AED: In the stuff, yeah.

RAB: Oh, god.

AED: When you were doing a loading, was there an element of [timing]. Does it have to be speedy? Did it have to be quick? Or was it just a process that you went through?

RAB: The loading was, we go now, and you get the order and you deliver the weapon to the aircraft. Okay. That's as far as you'd go. You'd unhook the weapon, and they would turn, would either take it there or put it on another trailer to put up in there, depending on what the bomb was. But anyway, we'd pull out. We were done then. Another thing, in Japan, that I was instructed as a safety NCO, and that when they loaded the trailers with bombs that, you know, I had to inspect the equipment and all this and that. Well, I noticed the flatbed trailers were coming in with bad boards in them, you know, because they were the big trailers with bigger planks. Anyway, they wanted one over there, and I just, I said, "Nope, can't use it." Well, then this Major Cropper [?], I remember him. Major Cropper [?] says, "The hell we can't," you know. I said, "I get appointed as a safety," I said, "and you're telling me that you're going to use it?" I said, "I say you can't use it." I said, "If you tell me you're going to use it," I said, "you use it, but," I said, "I'm getting out." I said, "Because then I'm going to look up the colonel." They finally called the operation off, see, because we couldn't keep the flow going the way it was supposed to be. He caught it pretty good, you know. Then all of the flatbeds went on through the shops in there and were re-planked, because see, they had been sitting around for years over there.

AED: They weren't brand new. They were old equipment.

RAB: No. It's like all this used equipment. So naturally, you know I'm on the list, you know.

Another one, what he did, we're working in the area, and we had Japanese at the gates. They did the guarding. We're inside this area in Misawa. All of a sudden they come through with—oh, the power went off, that was it. So we had an emergency transmitter and everything set up. The only thing was, see it reverted itself and went through the lines. Trying to get the Japanese to understand that there's no power, "*Teiden des*" [Japanese] you know, because we carried the power. We finally got that one straightened out, but I tell you, I was sweating it. Because you had to have power. It's the same way when you know when Kennedy was after Cuba? Okay, well, I was—

AED: That's when you were.

RAB: I was in [Japan]. What it was, they had it that anything going in there he was going to stop it. They couldn't deliver any more weapons. See that spy plane that we had had flew over there, and they had it all pinpointed. They had stuff set up already, nuclear. So Kennedy had him on, he said, Stop every ship. In other words it was close to wartime, you know. Anyway, we got alert. I had my son in the big thick bomb theater, they called it, up there Misawa. He and I were watching a movie on the air force. Rick wanted to see it. While we're in there, all of a sudden they had a white wall, and on there they flashed on the wall, and said, Master Sergeant Bender, please report to your duty station immediately. Anyway, I went in civilian clothes, went out there, and they said, Well, Kennedy's ordered." So, help me god, because I'm sounding like a hero, but I'm not. I turned around and I got out there, and there's the senior master sergeant that was over me, Wilson, he was late getting in or something like that, and he's half drunked up and his tongue twisted all around, and that. So what I did, the first thing when I got there then, I started the breakout, they call it.

AED: The breakout?

RAB: The breakout, getting the bombs out of the trailers or to where the men took the cans off

the containers, getting the bomb down ready for loading. I first, I asked a question. I said, "Are these going with batteries or not?" And I looked, and they were working in the battery shop. I figured, "Well, maybe," but anyway nothing was said to us. I turned around and I said, "Wilson?" I said, "What about it? Are they going with batteries?" He's says, "I don't know." And I said, "Well, god damn it." I said, "We've got a safe." See, it took two of us to open the safe, that's your security. I said, "Well, look in there and see if we can find a [operations] order or something in there." In the meantime, we got a hold of Major Cropper [?]. Major Cropper [?] says, I'd asked him about batteries, "Ah, [grumbling]." I said, "Look, sir," I said, "they give all that information to you people." I said, "it gives you all the codes, all the codes from blue, yellow, green, whatever it is." I said, "In there, it'll state whether they're hooked up or they're just set." I said, "Even though there's power in them, they can—" Well, he finally found his paperwork, you know, and it says no hook up of batteries. Okay, we got that cleaned up. But I thought, What the heck kind of service are we in? See over there, you don't have a nuclear weapon. You have a bomb. The nuclear comes in from Okinawa.

AED: When you were at Killeen Base, do you remember, because you were already there, you're part of the army, one day you're air force. Do you remember when the First Provost [Security Squadron] came in from their basic training at Lackland?

RAB: No, I can't remember, because I know I wanted the blue suit.

AED: Do you remember when the other guys showed up that came in with their air force training?

RAB: I don't really recall that. I remember Scioli was still there.

AED: Then there was a second group that came in maybe a year later. When you were at Killeen Base, you were in the barracks for a while? Or because you were married, you were not.

RAB: Yeah, I was married. See I was sent there, but it was because I didn't have no record prior.

AED: You didn't have married housing right away.

RAB: I had no housing, see. At that time they didn't have housing like you go in now.

AED: Right. So you were in the barracks for a little while.

RAB: So the only way I could get my wife and them out at Manzano Base was that they found out that I had quarters available. That's when they gave me them quarters.

AED: That were so unpleasant.

RAB: It was, yeah.

AED: When you were in the 1094th, did you have different positions that you held there?

RAB: Well, when I first got into Sandia Base, I don't know what I was, and then they turned around, and they gave me—I had MP brass put on my collar. What it was, I was one of the guys that had good infantry training, so I was a buck sergeant. Every morning I'd march them down to the motor pool. I outranked all of them. I was in charge of motor pool. So, man, it was a hut, two, three, four. Anyway, that was it. The warrant officer that was in charge of that motor pool was a sharp individual. He was good. He was feared because of the fact he was smart and he'd catch you. You didn't roll up your sleeves. You didn't run around without a tie. When you're driving trucks that I had, and they had double windshield, and they

opened it up for air and that. Don't drive by with them open, because he didn't believe in that.

AED: Okay, real strict.

RAB: When the guy had their windshield, and I remember that.

AED: That's funny. So most of the gentleman we've spoken with did guard patrol.

RAB: Yeah.

AED: So your experience is so different from theirs.

RAB: Yeah. See, we were what made the thing work. That's why we were there. That's why it was the base.

AED: Do you think that your skill sets that you had with equipment was the reason you were chosen to be plant worker and not a guard?

RAB: Yeah, because what happened. See, when they sent me from my bulldozer school to Sandia Base, and yet I didn't get no bulldozer. But when they—aw, pictures!—you gave me these didn't you?

AED: Yes. Yeah, they're out in there.

RAB: When they turned around and put the two buildings together like this thing here.

AED: Oh, for the clubhouse.

RAB: The clubhouse, yeah. A guy was working there and he had a bulldozer, and he turned it off, you know, it was a civilian. Oh man, I looked and boy, he had the edges didn't have cleaned off in there and all, because it's going to be where the club is at, see. Well, you can start them, you'll need a key. So I went over there, kicked that on, and got that old bulldozer going, and I run around there, and boy, we had a pile of crap sitting in the center there that had to be burned. You know, we had to get with the fire department. But I tell you what, I cleaned up some big area in there, and I was in, oh man, I was in hog heaven.

AED: You missed your bulldozer!

RAB: The only time I seen a bulldozer from that time on.

AED: That's funny. For the work you did in the plant, did you have any specialized training for that work?

RAB: Not really, you could get green people and you'd break them in. I mean it wasn't one of these I went through a school or nothing like that.

AED: Right.

RAB: You know, you've got this guy that gets assigned to you, teach him. Because again, like RAS, CAS, FAS, and all that, that I learned, and then when breakout time come an alarm would go in, I would be out getting my trailers moving and getting going down to the igloos. I'd find out which igloos. Pull the weapons, pull the fuses. Or not fuses, pull the radars, and the, oh, what is the other one? Anyway, all that stuff, all of this is by serial numbers, and I had to make

sure I had it all down, radar one, radar two, or something like that, and A and B or whatever they would be. And I'd get them back to the plant, and at that plant, then from there then, it was us to start unloading. Because see, you only brought so many bombs because of the training exercise.

AED: So you might bring one, you might bring eight.

RAB: No, we would have maybe mostly two, twos.

AED: All right. Who gave you your orders to do that?

RAB: That would be an alarm, because you'd be alert for alert. Okay, in most cases, in—where was I at? Sandia Base. See Sandia Base had an alert system in there also. They had an area where all the pilots that flew the aircraft were in that one place. The alarm would go in, and they went flying out of there and got on their aircrafts. Well, in our case we were told we would just call in wherever we were, wherever we were going, because we had a guy we would report to. So he was there. They had a guy that took all these phone calls, and he had phone numbers, and he had all our names. Well, of course, when we found out there was alert, hell, we weren't going anywhere anyway, but there could be people that would be somewhere else. We'd fall out and go to our duty station. Right away, we'd do breakout, they call it.

AED: I don't know what that means? Can you explain?

RAB: Breakout would be what you're instructed to be when they say what weapon to call, to breakout.

AED: If you know it's this bomb, then you have a specific set of orders to follow?

RAB: Yeah.

AED: Okay. If it's that bomb, it's a different—

RAB: Yeah. They would tell us. You know, we would be notified. This one time at Sandia Base, I'll never forget, I had a colored captain. He was a real good officer. But he had just been, I think he had just been assigned or something like that, and when the alert went in, he couldn't find his badge. So I run the operation as far as getting them all this stuff they told me about the bombs and the radars, the FAS, CAS, and the igloos and that, so I was doing it on my own. And I got honorable mention on that one. But he was going, boy, he was so disgusted because, you know, on that first time.

AED: Oh. Poor guy.

RAB: He was all right, he was a good captain. Actually, you know where he went for me when I was going up for promotions, and I went before the board and I made one. He says, "You want to go get Eskimo Pie?" I remember that, Eskimo Pie.

AED: That's funny. When you went to the igloos, was it you by yourself, or it was two people?

RAB: Well, no, I've got a team.

AED: The whole team. So how many people would be in that team?

RAB: Well, it would be maybe four.

AED: Everybody had a specific job.

RAB: Then when we had all the serial numbers that we were to get, and what we were to get.

AED: Okay. So you're double checking each other.

RAB: We'd turn around, and get your load, and you'd check the stuff off.

AED: You hauled them on the [trailer]?

RAB: On the trailer. We usually had 40-foot trailers, and we'd load that stuff up, and then we'd go report back to the plant. At the plant we'd run it through that first door, first bay. They went through my bay, our bay, we'd run it through there, and then they'd go to work, if they were needed to have their casings taken off or whatever.

AED: So they'd do that in the tunnel?

RAB: No. They did that in that room, in my room.

AED: Okay. Not deep down, but in more of that first room.

RAB: It's the first room.

AED: Got it. Okay, now I understand.

RAB: Then they turn around, because that's where that hoist is, that ceiling hoist.

AED: This would happen at night, you said, almost always, right?

RAB: You never knew when.

AED: Okay. But that part could happen any time of day, but when you put them on the plane, that was at night.

RAB: They didn't go on the plane.

AED: Oh. Well, I misunderstood that then.

RAB: Yeah, they'd be taken in at, could be taken into Kirtland [Air Force Base], and then there'd be other times when there'd be planes. That would be when an operation like the one I told you that dropped. Normally, we had guys that drove six-bys[-sixes], and they weren't working for me, they'd be in another place. But they were called and they had to come up, and they hook onto the bomb trailer, and tow the bomb down Sandia Mountain.

AED: Take it to the air force base.

RAB: So help me god, maybe somebody will tell you the same story, but one guy was going down the mountain with a bomb hanging on behind, right? The bomb passed up. He was driving. In other words, his trailer had let go of something. Yeah. That bomb rolling up in a ditch. Because that one there, I went up and picked up with a crane. The only thing was a little damage to the tail too, on that bomb was okay. It wasn't dented up or nothing. But anyway, it was unreal. The guy says, "God, look what I did!" He says the bomb passed him like that and just went in the ditch, because see your roads was all twisty up in there. Oh yeah, we had some stories.

AED: Oh, I'm sure. So how many people would have a similar position as yours, at a given time?

RAB: In mine, we would be maybe four. Four people, we would handle all of the breakout, because again, what else can you do. You can only run so much equipment at one time. We would load everything up that had to go into that operation, and it was there. That's one thing that we did, we always had it on time. I always felt proud of myself, because I never missed nothing. The only thing was the only thing I was missing was I'd get honorable mention, but I didn't get promoted.

By the way, real quick like, here's something. You know how you're waiting, you want to be something, you feel that you're nothing, and I was in line. I had gone many times in line to the promotion board, and be passed. They call it when you'd get all dressed up, and get in line, wait until they call your name, go in, Okay, thank you, and you're out. Nothing. Well, I don't know how many times I met that promotion board. At Sandia [Base], the one that really counted was, I got called and go up before a promotion board. I was standing in line, and I got called, and I went in, and the officers knew me. This one officer says, "Well, Sergeant Bender," he says, "What do you think about the promotion board?" I said, "Sir," I said, "I don't think I dare tell you." He says, "Look, we want to know." I said, "Okay." I said, "There's nothing harder than turn around and be working in fatigues, grab and getting cleaned up and in uniform, and then report to the promotion line." They say, Go in. The guys ask a couple of questions, you walk out, you're nothing. I said, "I can't believe it." I said, "The guy that was behind me in that line, my god, I had him by, I don't know, 12 years or something like that, you know, for a promotion." Well, okay. That time I went back, I had to change out of my uniform and get in the fatigues, and I went up the mountain, up into Sandia Base. Later on, Dick Priester had given me a call. He says, "Hey, Dick," he says, "You made master," and he said, "I made my tech." I said, "Bull." I said, "I've heard that before," because once before they had notified, yet it wasn't right. I said, "No, sir." I said, "It's got to be in writing." "Don't be a sore head," or something like that. I said, "Look, I don't care," I said, "You give it to me in writing or give me orders," I said, "so know I got it." Well, anyway, then the captain, that black captain, says, "What's the matter? You don't know that you were promoted?" I said, "I am not promoted until you've got a piece of paper that says so." Well, I received another phone call that was from a captain, he was a real southerner. Anyway, he said, "Don't be bullheaded, Bender, admin says you made master." I said, "Oh, sir, I'd love to believe," but I said, "I want to see it on paper." Well, it wasn't too long after that that paperwork come up, and it said, "Master." I told the captain, I said, "I'm a master sergeant." He says, "Well," he says, "What are you going to do?" I said, "I'm going to the NCO club."

AED: It's real, finally.

RAB: Yes, yes. Because I'm going to go to the NCO club. He says, "Okay." He says, "I wouldn't expect you to work," or something like that. I went down to the NCO club. There was a bunch of guys that had got promotions. So what we did, we got together, and we decided we would give a party.

AED: Everybody celebrate.

RAB: Yeah. We would pay so much into it for chicken dinner and whatever it was, because we had our own cooks, you know, that made all that stuff. We set it up, but it was a success, and it was fun. I know when I called my wife, I don't know if she cried or what. I mean, she was so happy. I said, "Well, don't worry. I made it." That and making the E-8 [pay grade]. Man, that E-8 [pay grade] about killed me because I was getting close to retirement.

AED: When did you get that?

RAB: Seventy-one. Well, I retired in '71, so I had my E-8 [pay grade] for a while. That's another thing, I ran a section. I was the nuclear weapons supervisor. That used to be an officer's job. When I made E-8 [pay grade], it become my job. I got another one in loading, Sergeant Lung, a friend of mine, he made E-8 [pay grade]. He was running the loading section, and I was running the bomb section here.

AED: So you stayed with nuclear weapons throughout your career?

RAB: Oh, yeah, because once you got a clearance, you're there.

AED: They want to use that.

RAB: If you went to Lowry [Air Force Base], you were [nuclear]. And Misawa. Okinawa. And I can't even think of what the other one was. One place I went to in the islands, and I can't recall, but they had a big ship setting there, and it furnished all the power for the island. It was loaded with a power plant. They had a glass factory that was run by natives, and they made fancy figures out of, where they blow blown glass, you know. I'll be darned if I cannot remember. Because I remember one time we walked through a place where they were making these tables, and the women had covered their face. They wouldn't look at you. They didn't want you taking no pictures.

AED: Oh, and see their technique.

RAB: Using that mother of pearl and all of that in that. You've seen tables that were made that way.

AED: Yeah, pretty stuff.

RAB: I mean it was something. So I learned a little bit.

AED: Yeah. When you were at Killeen Base, you had clearance, so you had access to the entire base. Were there any places you couldn't go?

RAB: It was the only place that nobody could go, was when you entered the tunnel, somewhere along the long line there's another iron gate that was locked. That's where the nuclear capsules were stored.

AED: The bird cages?

RAB: [Yes.] They were stored in vaults just like a bank. The first time I seen the vault was when we got to walk through. I had never seen where it was stored either. I was trying to think of the guy that this—only two of us were picked to go to Frenchman Flats for a drop for an airplane from the bomb. This was when that Frenchman Flats, they called it.

AED: I'm not familiar with that.

RAB: Okay. Think of where they gamble, Las Vegas. Las Vegas is in this area, too. Frenchman Flats was an area where they were demonstrating bombs and what have you. What they did on this particular drop, maybe if you recall, I'll bet you've seen it, they showed a movie on TV of a house with dummies in it. They had a train setting up here on tracks, and boxcar and all. They had a forest. Anyway, when they had this drop, we were in trenches. We were in there, and they said, You can look up, look up, look up. Look down, stay down, stay down. Well, you're down in these trenches. You're down in there. Wham! This thing goes off, and you hear it go *whooosh* over the top, and then *whooosh* coming back. See the explosion goes out

and returns. It showed in the pictures eventually we seen, in fact they've showed it on TV a couple times. That house just was gone.

Another one that I don't understand how they did it, but we went out and we walked through areas that had sheep in, you know, foxholes, like you use for fighting a war. All different types. They had them down in there. They went through the blast, okay? You could see where it may have singed the hair on them, on their back. Well, then the other one that got me, I didn't understand, but anyway, I found out they had rabbits. They had them in cages to where they were hooked up to where an alarm system would go off. Your rabbits sleep, too, you know. Their eyes were open. This is how they found out what the reflection would do to your eyes. We all carried a dosimeter to monitor anything for radioactive. I turned mine in. Another one is, what got me was, damn it, I reported in there, and I wound up as a staff sergeant. They said, Okay, Sarge, you've got charge of that tent up there. A tent, big tent, a field tent, they called it. Put it up there, the next thing I know, officers come in. I went down there at the first sergeant, I says, "What the H am I doing up there?" I says, "There's colonels, majors." He says, "Never mind," he says, "you're to guide them." And I thought, Oh, geez.

AED: Where was this? Where were you?

RAB: This was at Frenchman Flats.

AED: It's still there, okay.

RAB: So anyway, this was what, near Boulder Dam, you know. So anyway, everything was going pretty good. I did pretty good with the officers. I just let them go. They're going to do what they're going to do, they had stolen stuff around, and I said, "Good, it's yours." Anyway, the one that got me was the day we've got to load up on the trucks and go see, go out on Frenchman Flats. They're loading up, and all of a sudden one officer said, "I can't find my helmet." I'm in there, and I thought, Oh, Jesus. I look around, I can't see no helmet in there. I happen to spot over in a tent was a helmet, you know. I don't know who the guy was. Anyway, "Here, sir." We got them all loaded on the truck, and I thought, My god, this is like looking after a little kid. A major, or whatever he was, "I can't find my helmet." The guy that went with me is dead now and I can't recall his name, but he worked with the bird cages.

AED: He did?

RAB: Yeah. But, what seemed odd was that we were the only two that were called to go. And I never received a letter to be examined, because you remember they did that, had recall. To this day there is no record, they can't find no record of me or this other guy being at Frenchman Flats.

AED: Interesting.

RAB: So something was a cover up somewhere, because I turned in my dosimeter. But one, we found out we weren't radioactive because I raised another son and he came out with two arms, fingers, legs, and I said, "Well, there's nothing wrong with this."

AED: Did you ever, were you told that you might be exposed to the radioactivity? I mean, you're assuming it because you have the equipment on you.

RAB: No. All you have was that dosimeter badge. So you figure well, there's a possibility, I didn't get scared. None of us were scared.

AED: You weren't worried about it.

RAB: The one that was, the most vicious part was being down in that trench when it blew, and have that *whooosh* over top of you, and then the, Stay down, stay down, stay down, stay down. *Schooot*, come back out.

AED: Then back at you, right. Really bizarre.

RAB: The train, you could see them. You found equipment that would be burned on one side, you know, where the flash took care. I'll tell you, it was interesting. It was something that I've seen, and I know he did, but there was many others that were in there. I know that a couple of guys, I can't say, Sam or what his name is. Anyway, there was a couple of guys that worked out on Frenchman Flats, where they had laboratories and that.

AED: That were in the 1094th?

RAB: [No,] that would come into Killeen Base.

AED: Okay. At Killeen Base, did you have any concerns or were you told anything about radiation or that kind of [effect].

RAB: We were informed about radiation. Another thing, I don't know if anybody ever reported this or not, at one time, we drew hazard duty pay, twice.

AED: Oh, I didn't know that.

RAB: It was taken away from us. We raised a flap about it, because when that train come in with all that nuclear stuff on it, all them guys were drawing hazard duty pay, in Okinawa all the guns on and that. They're making big money from [hazard pay].

AED: For security patrol?

RAB: From Sandia Base. They were civilians. We could have maybe, it was something like 20 guards or so brought in with us, around the area. Because when I'd get prepared to leave, I'd get the okay. I'd say, "Highway clear," you know, and that. Because I was always in the line with the forklift. Anything happened and I had a lift. Because we had one time where the guy dumped off a couple cans. As luck had it, they hit at, it was a ditch, but it was in such a way that I could get my forks down, you know. I got it out of there. But oh boy, it was scary. They used to call them fuses, I think. I don't know. The ones in big, round, aluminum cans. But when we tested fuses they were in the container that was aluminum, and because when it had a leak. One time we tried to weld, we found out let it alone because you can't—aluminum welding is different from that that you have, so we would just turn around, reject, and then they'd put it in a new container and what have you.

AED: Try again.

RAB: I also seen a bomb that was returned that had been airborne. By the way, the old carts that went with them, too, that bomb casing on there is to keep them. Well, somehow the airplane changed altitude or something where in there, to where it *shhhooo*.

AED: Shrunk it?

RAB: It shrunk it up on the weapon. We got that weapon in, and then we cut the cans off of it, and it was unreal. The bomb seemed like it was all right.

AED: But the extra skin, the exterior?

RAB: The damage, you know. So that's why there always was pressure. They had what they call a pressure test, and it was just for the bomb flying. Another one, believe it or not, honey, I mean, I was around a long time. I was in the bomb bay working, we were doing something, anyway, they come out with a new gadget. It was a deal that they hooked on the nose of the weapon, that was a vacuum. They had to core charge, called a core charge. You go in the vacuum and go *swooot, swooot*, kick up the core charge, and bring the core charge, cross, cross, and put in the weapon. Well, they finally scrapped that because what happened, altitude changes would effect that.

AED: Or would change the physics of it, right?

RAB: We checked the stuff that they're really not—they get away with that. So that was, no more of that. I was there when they did use vacuum, though, to put stuff in. Also, we had one that had a chain, a radioactive chain in that bomb. That was you never let that alone. You didn't touch that, not that area.

AED: That was after Killeen Base? That was later?

RAB: Yeah, it had to be later, because a lot of changes took place.

AED: When you were at Killeen Base, what would a typical day be like? Did you do the same thing every day, or was there a variety? Was it eight-to-five?

RAB: It would change a little bit, or it might change because of change in equipment or what have you. But we were always busy because we could be cleaning igloos also. We'd sweep out, keep them clean, and we'd watch for water.

AED: Keep them dry.

RAB: See the guards, now, on top of each igloo is a vent, and they had to check that vent.

AED: To keep it clear, open.

RAB: Yeah, make sure it was open. Yeah, and also they had guards that made sure nobody get up to the fence, you know.

AED: Right. That part we know a lot about, yeah.

RAB: Then also Fort Hood was our guard.

AED: Even beyond that [Killeen Base] perimeter, right? They're military police, yeah.

RAB: Would you believe, there were police, two guys are out playing around, running the jeep, and they had torn out a section of road to where you had like a pit here, a road here, a road here, right, but there's an opening. [They thought,] We can make it. You know what I mean? Two guys, too smart. They go speeding down there, well, found out later that they had to be speeding, but they went out and they went *voomp*.

AED: That's gravity, right?

RAB: So anyway, the two guys were a little damaged, you know, but that jeep didn't look too good, and I had to go up with a crane and pull the jeep out. I remember that.

AED: That's funny. I just want to make sure I understand right. When the bombs came into Killeen Base, they came in by railroad.

RAB: Railroad.

AED: When they went out?

RAB: When they went out, they went in this case, here see, they were going out, they would have to go out through Gray Air [Force] Base.

AED: Okay, all right. When they went out did they come back to Killeen Base or did they go somewhere else?

RAB: They were going somewhere.

AED: They went somewhere else.

RAB: Well, and another thing too, and we performed what are called [inspections]. When I was in charge of an M bay, which I did, I was in charge on the bomb in Japan, you kept records. Storage inspections and other inspections which were required, those were the weapons you draw out of storage and bring them in.

AED: With their serial numbers.

RAB: And give them a storage inspection, okay? The radars and that, we had deals where the guy could check radars off and that.

AED: You did the inspections, you and your team?

RAB: Yeah, that's right. Well, again, everything you did was from the book. One step, one step, two. You don't miss. The bombs, well like for instance, this one in Japan, this Sergeant Wilson, the drunk. My team was working, and I was working on records. I was down there. I also had quality control along with that. I was working with the records, and a guy come down and says "Hey, Sarge," he says, "there's a _____ [inaudible] well, that's really scratched." In the book it says, Reject the weapon. Okay, I went up. I got on my little stool and stand up there and had the light looking own into there, and sure it was a gouge in there. Okay. Wilson, now he's over me because he's an E-8 [pay grade]. Now, he's not going to reject the weapon. I said, "You mean to tell me that you're not going to reject the weapon?" I said, "We're not going to go any further." Then I said, "That weapon is a reject." Well, he got hold of Major Cropper [?], this one did. See, Major Cropper [?] thought the sun set on this E-8 [pay grade]. He hated my guts. I don't know why. Anyway, he calls [him] up. Cropper [?] comes up and he checks this. He says "No," he says, "that's no reject, no reject." I said, "It's a reject, sir. That's it, I'm not going to go any further." He says, "Blah, blah, blah." Then after a while, I don't know who got a hold of the colonel, but the colonel come up and he says, "Sergeant Bender, what's the story?" I said, "A reject." Oh my god, he says, "Yeah." I said, "I've got the little step stool, sir." I said, "We have a light. Check that _____ [inaudible] well and see if you don't see a big gouge or scratch in there." I said, "The manual states that is a reject." So I said, "We got to go by the manual because all the while we're working."

AED: It seems obvious, doesn't it?

RAB: He says, "Yes, this is a reject." See then, see now Cropper [?] is—okay. So this time, so help me god. Man, I sound like a broken record.

AED: No, not at all.

RAB: But I got called out of the bay, Major Cropper [?] went and took me for a walk through the area. He's telling me, Blah, blah, blah, and you know. He says, "I heard from Sergeant Wilson," or something, he says, "that you don't want to work with Sergeant Wilson." He kept on and on and on and on. Finally I said, "Sir, can I say something?" or I said, "Or am I supposed to remain silent?" He says, "You can say anything you want." Okay, I said, "I'm going to tell you," I said these exact words, I said, "I prefer not to work with Sergeant Wilson." Not that I wouldn't work. I said I preferred not to. That took the storm off. But see, I'll always remember that and I was so mad because they took me, preaching to all. We're working in the bombing area, see you always had a road that went around the bomb.

I have a copy, that you can't hardly read it, but it's a copy that reporting that the President of the United States was assassinated, and at the time from there on until a certain time, no other music will be played on the military network.

AED: During that grieving period.

RAB: The only thing that would be played would be was hymns or something. We had to redo this, right. I had that copy. I wonder if I left it laying it in the bedroom. I think it's hard to read because it was done with that reddish.

AED: Oh, it's that mimeograph that's purpley. Yeah, and they get faded.

RAB: Yeah, it faded.

AED: Well, that's okay. Again, back at Killeen Base, when you went in to do your work at the end bay?

RAB: Maintenance bay?

AED: I think you called it the end bay. When you would go in and there's that—

RAB: That was our bay. That was our bay. That's where we got the bomb.

AED: Right. Do you have to have a badge or something? Do you have to pass a security guard to do that or no?

RAB: No, we all had badges. You had a badge to get into the gate, and sometimes there was a password.

AED: Okay, and who did you get the password from?

RAB: Well, we were told the password before we went up the mountain.

AED: But who would tell you?

RAB: Well, it would come out of the orderly room.

AED: So like an officer of the day or something like that.

RAB: Oh yeah, yeah. It's somebody that was up there.

AED: What did you think about the overall layout of Killeen Base or Manzano [Base], because they were very similar? Did you think it was effective?

RAB: The bay at Sandia Base, I think it was well done, it was well built. It was never disclosed until some guy from the news had taken a picture, and he took pictures and he got somewhere where you could show the igloo entrances, nuclear weapons, so it hit the news.

AED: When was that?

RAB: That was early, early. It was unreal, but again, it was out. See, they didn't know what was going on. Like our wives, they were instructed that they heard nothing, they seen nothing.

AED: If they asked you, I'm sure you saw your family, if they asked you, did you have a sort of a pat answer that you were told to give?

RAB: To my wife? You made anything up. I used to tell her I run equipment.

AED: Just something very generic, right.

RAB: That's something I was busy doing, but I never told her bombs, never so help me god, because if she got the word, I could have got busted.

AED: You could have been court-martialed.

RAB: Yeah, and then she would have been on the list. No, my wife never, never, in any way, knew. When my oldest son was running a paper route, he didn't know what was going on by Killeen [Base]. He knew a lot of guys that were in the NCO club because he delivered the newspapers to them, you know, but they never heard anything.

AED: Did you know anything about bombs before you got involved at that point in your military career?

RAB: No, I know they used them on us. I was in Japan, or not Japan, but during World War II. No, in fact, I was never near a flight line or nothing like that because we were army engineers, but we were boat brigade, so we had our own deals to deal with.

AED: Before that, right.

RAB: Yeah, Subic Bay [Naval Base] they called it. We got a ribbon for that area, in the Subic Bay [Naval Base].

AED: When you first knew you were dealing with these bombs, what did you think? What was your impression?

RAB: Nuclear bomb? Weapon?

AED: Yeah. You were in there with [them]?

RAB: You're a dummy. You know, you say, nuclear weapons. What? You know, I heard about nuclear weapons, but I didn't know nothing about them, what they were doing. See, and then all of a sudden you get in there, and then, you get up. See, I was working the motor pool, and then they worked me. How was it? I don't know if I'd come back to Manzano [Base] one of the times, because when I went. I was working motor pool when I was informed about Killeen [Base], but somewhere along the line, somewhere over there, was when I returned and I wound up at either Sandia Base or whatever, and I went into the weapons part. Again, it was this handling, the same situation, same. So it was nothing new. The only thing that ever disgusted me was the fact that I had a master sergeant, I was in charge of our bay, and he

was good, a good one, Tony something. Anyway, he passed an exam to go in the, is it OSI where they had the security?

AED: No, I'm not sure, but that sounds familiar.

RAB: As an enlisted man they could go and they worked separately from everything. Anyway, we lost him, and I was there as a staff or a tech? I don't know. Anyway, working and they were getting a replacement. I asked, "Boy, it would be nice if I could get in charge, have the base to myself, have that charge to myself."

Once in a while, because again, if you would tie up that tunnel, a bomb coming in, one going out, it don't make sense. Like bad enough, like sometimes we were driving backwards, sometimes forward, but we followed that yellow line, and we didn't scrape the walls or nothing.

AED: It was one [bomb] at a time always?

RAB: One at a time. That bay was strictly in.

AED: The other was out, period.

RAB: Out. Because what they do, and also in there, of why we were working, you could feel a shift in the air, because they would turn around and reverse the air to where it would go from this end to the other.

AED: To follow the bomb.

RAB: Well, not the bomb, just in the building, the humidity.

AED: Just to keep it arid, right.

RAB: Another thing that, I don't know if you're familiar with, anybody or they ever tell you about a slap bar?

AED: No, I never heard the turn.

RAB: Slap bar was in the wall. It's like brass. When you come in [slaping], you slap your slap bar. It takes any charge out of your body.

AED: Oh, of course. Oh, interesting.

RAB: Yeah. We even had it up in Alaska up there. In fact, they were getting ready to use a plant and the officer I work with, he says he went in and inspected it and says, "Hell, they can't. They don't even have the slap bar." Well, then the other one in Alaska, was they didn't have that hole big enough, up on top there, for me when I drove this straddle carrier, I had room, I'm sitting on a seat. You got to cut a little hole. You got to have a hole. So he made sure they made that larger, because I would come up, I had a transport from the flight line, all the way up through the—oh man, it was hairy because of the ice and that. The one time, the officer says, "Hey Bender, can you teach the guys how to steer that in ice?" I said, "You know what, I hope somebody can steer me." I said, "You know the four wheels turn?" How do you control a steer with four wheels? With a car you've got one, but now you've got [four], see?

AED: Yeah, it could go any which way. Oh my goodness. Do you have any idea at Killeen Base, or at any individual base, how many bombs they were storing at any given time?

RAB: No, you never knew the amount.

AED: You never knew, okay.

RAB: That was strictly to like I'd say, Jelson would know or Weber.

AED: Were civilians handling bombs at any time?

RAB: By the way, there was a group, they had initials, but anyway they work with bombs.

AED: AEC, Atomic Energy Commission, maybe? That's one group I know.

RAB: No, they were working for the commission, anyway, they were all clearance and all that. They were the ones that also got quarters in Fort Hood.

AED: I didn't understand you, they got what?

RAB: Quarters.

AED: Oh, they lived there. Oh, there was another group called Defense Atomic Support Agency. I don't know. I just know the names. I don't know anything about them. Might have been. But there were some civilians that were a group attached.

RAB: There were civilians that worked around the bombs, too.

AED: Did you interact with those civilians at all in your position?

RAB: We maybe have had some conversation.

AED: But you didn't actually work together on anything?

RAB: No, no. ADC.

AED: ADC? I've heard somebody else use that, but I don't know—

RAB: Anyway, like I say, they had the initials like that, and we worked in with them.

AED: In tandem, but what you specifically did was separate.

RAB: Yeah, they did theirs and we did ours.

AED: You said you could work, say, an extended period, maybe 20 hours? Would that happen on alerts?

RAB: Well, again, when the bombs come in, that was it. There was to get them out of there and get them into a storage.

AED: However long that takes, that's how long you do it.

RAB: Right. We had like, one time, we had to open up packages and what have you. See, when the first bomb used to come through there, they had other boxes with it with maybe a core charge or something with it, and it was hairy. Another one, if we working and something happened, like for instance, we had a floor that was getting on in a boxcar and we got a bomb to get out of there, and I know I was doing some snaking getting that one out, but I did because I was

with the forks. Other places we worked why, maybe we were using a crane. Also, I taught crane to the navy.

AED: This was later?

RAB: Later on bomb beds. That's something, I got after E-8 [pay grade]. I had 20-ton a Lorain crane, and they had no testing. I told them, I said, "You know, it says in the manual that if any time you work on the cables, you have to test, you make tests by lifting and that." [They said,] You don't have to [do that]. Finally, I got it through, and they turned around and got a cement block the weights that were required, maybe over. I had that setting in the yard there, and I'd bring the Lorain crane in, and because you got to have your boom on a certain angle, you don't have it on here like that, you're in here [motioning], because any time you go beyond that point your crane's going to raise up.

AED: Yeah, you lose your base.

RAB: Usually, when we're working, we put outriggers on the crane, two.

AED: To firm it up.

RAB: On the boom, on the area over there, was an arrow. You stayed within that arrow, because if you didn't, you were trying to raise the crane. So anyway, I would teach this, and then I, like I say, used that block in for teaching. Also like any time we'd change cables, because the cable clamps and what have you, you pass it, pop, bounce it, what have you, you know, but if nothing happens, okay. Another thing that nobody, not nobody knew, but that I know that I developed, and I know that other guys that used it, when you have a bomb and you're picking it up, you pick it up, well, it goes up slow. Okay? When you have a bomb that you're lowering, it's got to come down slow, well, you use a Lorain cane, 20-ton Lorain crane. You reach back and you hit it, and you change compression, and you're running here with the other lever. That bomb comes down like that. You could ease it down, I mean there's none of this *scrrrt*.

AED: It's got to be gentle.

RAB: The other one I taught was how to, with the crane swinging, how to keep it from swinging that where when you stopped it, the load is over here somewhere, when you're coming in, you have a way of jamming where you get that load to stop to where you want to like lie down. I learned that in the steel mill. Other than that, I guess I've done about—

AED: You've done a lot of different things.

RAB: I've been talking your leg off.

AED: I've got a few more questions, if you care bare with me. Do you want to take a break or are you [okay]?

RAB: No.

AED: Okay, all right, good. I don't have too many more, but a few more. One is could you tell me about any times when you were on high alert, when you were on an alert, what that was like? Was it a practice? Was it real? Did you know what happened?

RAB: It would be reported in code blue, orange, red, or whatever. It was practice, practice. Now when we were on alert, we would have a place where we would call in and say where I'm at. I'm at Joe Blow's house.

AED: So you'd be off base maybe, and get this.

RAB: Could be. Give a phone number, and all of a sudden, and they get that and they call in and you report into it. Then there at the base just like that, they had all of the pilots were in one area, and they'd come pouring out of there like flies, because they were going to their aircraft. It was, of course, now, we didn't see that at Gray [Air Force Base].

AED: No, that would be—

RAB: It would be later and in other big bases. You take like Plattsburgh, New York, and you got big bombers coming in there.

AED: So it's many going out at once as opposed to a smaller amount.

RAB: When they started using that, you'd hear that *buuugh*, you know, where they'd [charge] the engines. They finally, at some places, they'd get the shields up and it would help them, for a little bit. But you knew they were flying.

AED: Do your remember that happening at Killeen Base? Do you remember an alert, practice or otherwise?

RAB: At Killeen Base we had that alert for the pit loading which went sour, and then we had alert loading, that was practice, that didn't go sour.

AED: Of course, you were off base some because you were married at the time, but you had friends that might have been guards, or were you more?

RAB: Off base, we were next door to Fort Hood.

AED: Not off base, but you weren't in the barracks all of the time there.

RAB: No, the barracks come up after Fort Hood. They brought us from there and sent us to the barracks. And I wound up in the barracks on the second floor, top floor. A guy was living next door here in the first part, and somebody was in the aft part, and I had a pretty good section of floor space. Like I say, we could have had a good dance, you know.

I'd like to brag, I'm bragging now, but I don't know what you know, but my father was an old minstrel man, and this was back many, many years ago. So I'm being a young kid, my dad could be rattling off on the piano, and they put a dance mat between my living room and dinning room, and that was for me, and my dad'd get going. So my dad could dance. He was a black-face comedian from the old minstrel shows. So anyway, up from about six years old I was dancing, and I danced up until 1965, even in the military, I did a lot of it. The one I remember was, in the minstrel show, when I finally joined my dad in the show, they would turn around and say, Here's—my dad was black-face—Here's Big Pete, and here's Re-Pete. I was Re-Pete. I have, I don't know what I did with it, but I have a deal where I had all the paperwork, and then showing I danced an awful lot in the military. In Australia, I was always working with the Australian Comforts Fund, they called it, which was 50/50, American and Australian, for Mrs. Gibbs [?]. She was the one running [it]. And I have all the old clippings, tap dance. I also danced in a show with, oh, I'm trying to thinking of the actress. Her and her husband flew overseas and where were we, but anyway, in the Philippines, but they put on a show, and my one buddy I had was a beautiful piano player, he came from Ohio. He had played in these roller skating rinks, but he sat in that glass deal playing the organ you know, and that was him. That was it. I'll tell you, boy, he was a hand. We always called him Hand. He had big hands.

AED: Big, long fingers, yeah. A piano player.

RAB: We had a big piano concerto or whatever it was that was from well known people, and we wanted to know whether they wouldn't let our piano player sit in, and they couldn't believe it. It was Mack [?], and oh man, he was beautiful.

I was in charge of quarters. In charge of quarters is when you work at nighttime. Everybody gets a chance at charge of quarters, and you answer the telephone and all that. Well anyway, some guys are in there [said], There's a guy running around on the roof. I guess his name was Brewer, that was it, Brewer. I didn't know who he was. I said, "Where is he up on the roof." I had a switchboard there. I said, "Watch the switchboard, I'm going up." I went up to the second floor, and up the ladder and that to get out on the roof. I happen to look and see this shadow go by. I thought, That son of a gun. So the second time his shadow was getting ready to come by, I [motioning].

AED: Grabbed him [at Killeen Base]?

RAB: I got me one. "Come to me. Get down the stairs." I got him down there, I said, "Now what the devil is wrong with you?" I said, "What's the matter?" He says, "I can't sleep." I said, "No kidding, you can't sleep." I said, "Just a minute. Just hold on." So I called the sergeant of the guard, and the officer in charge showed up. He come up, and goes, "What's his deal here, Bender?" I said, "Well, the guy says he can't sleep, so," I said, "he's been running around the top of the roof." "He is?" "Yeah, he is." He said, "Well look, we'll take care of that. Come on here." They took him. They went down to that guard shack, which was sitting at the gate, where they had the gate and the guard shack. Anyway, I didn't know where they went, but I figured that's where he'd go, because he was the officer of the guard, anyway. The next morning when charge of quarters is over, you go home and go to bed, you know, you had been up all night. When I went down to go out the gate, there's some guy washing the windows. It was Brewer.

AED: That's his payment.

RAB: Well, he couldn't sleep, so the guy figured, Well, you're not going to sleep.

AED: Well, do some work, then.

RAB: I'll always remember that, I can't sleep.

AED: When you lived in the barracks there at Killeen Base with the other guys, did you talk amongst yourselves about what kind of work you were doing?

RAB: You know, really, like the people that worked the M bay or whatever like that—

AED: That worked the—

RAB: Mechanical [bay], there were no discussions going on, no, because they all knew better. You know, even when we were in our day room, which was right off the mess hall.

AED: You didn't really talk about work, so to speak?

RAB: No. We talked about the slot machine we had in there, though, at the NCO club.

AED: Okay. I know you go to the reunions and catch up with guys who were there, and they were there at the same time as you.

RAB: You mean now?

AED: Now.

RAB: Oh, yeah.

AED: But did you know those guys then?

RAB: A lot of them, I'd say a lot in here that I recognize, but I can't remember their names.

AED: But do you know them more from the reunions than you do from back then, because you re-met them later in your life?

RAB: Yeah. I met them, which was at the reunions.

AED: But the fellows that you were maybe close with back then.

RAB: That I worked with, I never seen. In fact, a lot of these were from Plant 1 and Plant 2.

AED: So they were separate?

RAB: Yeah, see they were two—

AED: You had a counterpart that worked in Plant 2.

RAB: We were Plant 1.

AED: You were Plant 1. Were you in separate barracks then?

RAB: That's where I took her through was Plant 1.

AED: Were you in separate barracks?

RAB: No. It was all [together].

AED: It was all together. It was all the same big group.

RAB: Yeah, and the same way with the NCO club. Nothing was discussed. It was a club. We knew better, because again, you never knew who was sitting at that bar with you.

AED: Someone told you not to talk about it. You were instructed.

RAB: Yes. We knew that. Our wives were not allowed to. If they did, you were in trouble. So my wife would ask me, "Well, what are you doing?" "I run crane. Or I run this or that." Another one, we were blowing up old weapons over on the Fort Hood range. That thing used to carry through to where the cups would dance in the cupboard, you know, from that boom. My wife would say, "I wonder what they're doing?" I said, "I don't know. They must be doing up some bomb or something," you know, like I didn't know what bomb because there was the army, you know. I know that I went over there on a couple of demonstrations they had on the cranes, and the one thing I remember, and you never hear anything about it, was that the tank that was carrying a chain behind it that was like fire. You could pull it through the brush, the enemy after a while it's a plenty big fire, they're going to have to get out of there, right. And I remember when they did that. I also remember they were demonstrating some of the aircraft that would come in. We had one aircraft, by the way, that come out of Gray

Air Force Base, and they were flying missions over in the bombing range of Fort Hood. They used the sand bombs, you know, and all that stuff. Somehow or another when he come in, this is when you had the jet engines now, and that was when they were coming in. It sucked the sand in, and he had problems, but he had all that speed. He got himself where he made it over to Gray Air Force Base and landed. They said when he got out he wasn't talking, because I seen the airplane when they had it torn open, but they wouldn't let us see too much of it, how the jet—

AED: Yeah, what happened. Wow!

RAB: It was, they were waiting for the—I don't know if they took the wings off or not, but I know they carted the plane away on a trailer.

AED: Really? It was that bad of shape?

RAB: It was a long time ago, but that was because see they flew, like I said, Gray Air Force Base was working on their own. But the bombing range, they used. When we saying bombing, it was the smaller aircraft, not the big ones.

AED: Not the really big [ones], right. When you were at Killeen Base, during your off-duty time, of course, at a point your family was there. The other fellows that we've talked to, of course, talked about their off-duty time, and they were still single men, and they'd go to Killeen, and they'd go to Waco.

RAB: They would not. They dared not, because if they did the word got back, and they were canned. But that's why I was telling you about my buddy, the master sergeant that went into the—see, these were guys that would go out and they would sit at bars or anywhere else, to overhear if there was any open discussions about nuclear weapons. That was, we knew, a no-no.

AED: Not to talk. But you could go to those places, they could go to the places during their off-duty time.

RAB: Oh, yeah.

AED: Did you do things like that? I mean did you go out?

RAB: You could go out. I wasn't a bar hound. When I got stuck with that club, I had enough of the bar. You never heard, well, that bar, they never knew who was sitting at the table there, you know, or chair. You heard no big discussion. Oh, you heard when they had problems somewhere.

AED: Right. They talked about, a few of the guys talked about, they had a baseball team and a boxing team and things like that. Did you participate in any of those activities?

RAB: I can't remember. I played some softball. But before coming there I was up there with Lowry [Air Force Base], I was on a bowling team and I played volleyball.

AED: Things like that. So it wasn't all work.

RAB: Also at Lowry Air [Force] Base we always had a volleyball court set up within the hangar, you know. That was another one where I worked there, I had a crew that would prepare radars. I had one civilian working in there, and he would also help me on the radar bit. We did any repairs that were required like bombs, because they weren't using the real bomb. They were using mockups.

AED: Right, dummies.

RAB: They were made by training aids, which was across the street from us in Lowry [Air Force Base] hangar. They would wind up, if there with a bomb, they'd be in a classroom, and they have it all opened. It looks just like the real McCoy. What you're doing is teaching the guy, the load ring, the detonators, and everything. You teach them all that. By all, I mean on your checklist, you know, you're checking the load ring, and you have certain things you're going to do. When you get done with that, you got another thing you do, and it's also checked off. That's what they teach them at Lowry [Air Force] Base, that was school. I got into that about the time that the air force, they were building the air force base for the cadets, and all the cadets were being trained at Lowry Air [Force] Base, because we could hear them go by because they all had to run.

AED: You could hear them coming and going.

RAB: Yeah. One of the barracks had been converted so that they'd have, you know, their barracks was a little better than the ones that we had. But I didn't have to worry. I was living off base anyway. Anyway, it was funny. You'd look out there and you'd see a guy running. You'd think, Well, yep. You could talk about the peaked [hat] that they wore, you know."

AED: Yeah, it was. You mentioned that you'd worked both on assembly and detonators. Did you do that at Killeen Base or was that later?

RAB: No, I think I did more of that in Japan.

AED: Later, okay.

RAB: Yeah, because I was in charge of the maintenance bay then.

AED: At that point. Okay.

RAB: Yeah. There were times I worked, but I wasn't in charge of it, not the maintenance. I was a bomb handler, and that was it.

AED: Okay. I was going to ask, at Killeen Base, what title would you give yourself?

RAB: Bomb handler. We did unpackaging and all that. What we called unpackaging was take the cans off the weapon. Because you notice these all weapons were bare there that we have the pictures of. But they have containers that go on them. Because we had one that they had demonstrated up there, in fact we had to get the can off of it. They're pressurized somehow, and they have an indicator that's in there. Well, when the guy was flying it, something, it wasn't pressurized correctly, and it sucked the can in on the weapon, so it collapsed. They had that setting up there to show people. When we took that apart. That's another thing, we never used any tools that weren't non-sparking. The tools that we used were non-sparking. Like I told you about the slap bar.

AED: Yeah. They had to know electric value.

RAB: Always everywhere you went they had places where they were trying to protect from lightening.

AED: Rods, lightning rod kind of things.

RAB: Yeah. They'd come down at the building, and you had to bury it so far into the ground, the

bar and all that. Alaska especially, because Alaska was wild.

AED: Again, at Killeen Base, in general were you, other than when they had those situations where bombs came in and you had to pull that 20-hour situation, were you kind of in an eight-to-five work day? I mean, I just want clarification.

RAB: We were there.

AED: You just went there and stayed there.

RAB: When we got the word, we got everything ready, and went there.

AED: Then when something like that wasn't happening, you didn't need to be there then. You wouldn't work a 40-hour week. It wouldn't be like that. It wouldn't be an eight-to-five job.

RAB: The only time we got off, was after the operation. That's when they finally learned, like I told you, you know. Then we would get the day, the next day it would be our day to go to bed and rest and get ready for the next day. We didn't get no two, three days off or nothing like that.

AED: Okay. So it might be sort of every other day you might have a very long shift?

RAB: No, because your bombs didn't come in that often.

AED: So you might work a long period, and then not work for [a while].

RAB: Oh, we were working.

AED: You were just doing other things.

RAB: We were always doing other things in those igloos with the bombs. Repositioning or taking them out. Because, again, the bombs have to have storage inspections periodically. Like when I was running the van, I had all of the cards. I'd go down to there, and this bomb here needed a storage inspection, according to the date. You'd break out, pick it in, you had that storage inspection, and put it back.

AED: Right. There were many igloos. It's not like there were two or three.

RAB: Oh, we have cards on everything that's in that storage area.

AED: So, when you're not doing the operations—

RAB: You're checking.

AED: Then you're checking, you go to that igloo, you do those, you go to the next igloo, and you do those.

RAB: You always have some other things going on, too. Like the time when my little Chihuahua was in the office with me, and he was sleeping in my drawer. That was something. I lost him. He was built like a deer, you know, and his little legs under him.

AED: Was that in Korea?

RAB: No, that was in Japan. When I went overseas they shipped him to me.

AED: That's fun, a little Chihuahua coming to Japan.

RAB: Yeah.

AED: Okay, winding down. Promise.

RAB: Yes, ma'am.

AED: When you were there at Killeen Base, did you know you were a part of something unusual? Something exceptional and different in terms of being a part of the air force at that point?

RAB: You mean something dumb?

AED: Depending on how you look at it.

RAB: Okay. Because from what I remember, it was dumb. You've got a guy working in security, and they're out with a jeep. You know, they're not guards doing anything. Just went out and got a jeep. Out by a building, I can't remember the storage building, but they had unloaded a big circle of steel, you know, that they hadn't put the ends on yet or anything, like a tank for gas or whatever.

AED: Oh, you mean like a big cylinder?

RAB: Oh, this one guy, he was always in trouble, and he was drunk half the time. He said, "Well, let's try that one." They wanted to run through it with a jeep. This is true! Well, they run in with the jeep, but then that windshield jammed and they can't get the jeep out. So then they take off. Now remember, the guy, we didn't know it until they took the fingerprints off and all that, but they got his fingerprints. The guy was in security was the driver of the jeep. I'll always remember that one, and then the other one where I picked the one up out of the ditch. Or another time when I come up, and I looked up, and they had a jeep stuck on a forklift. The guys, well, they were doing their fudging on their mileage, because when the air police would leave the motor pool they had mileage, and when they completed their tour of duty, they should have a certain amount of miles on there. So they'd turn around and run that jeep until they get their mileage set, and then they could come in. Boy, I tell you, if they got caught, they were dead. I don't know if anybody remembers that or not, I did because we were always up around the igloos, you know.

AED: Right, so you could be aware of that. When you were working at Killeen Base, did you feel that there was an immediate threat to the country?

RAB: No.

AED: I mean you were a young man, but a lot of guys we spoke with, you know, they were 18 and 19.

RAB: Because again, war, obviously, I had been away at a war, and the war was over. We're at peace. The only thing you heard about was the Cold War, remember at that time. You knew exactly what was going on, because then like it would've been Kennedy. Well, a lot of presidents come by there, and I've been around a while. But the one I'll always remember was the death notice was on President Roosevelt. I was on board ship. We were on our way into the Philippines when we got the notice saying that he had passed away. Of course, that was my last base, and then the world war was over. The other one was when we pulled that operation for Kennedy, because had every bomb ready to go. That's one time when I should've got myself a nice write up but I never did, because I started the—here I'm bragging, I guess—I

started the operation because Wilson, he was getting all nervous. He couldn't even open the safe. You used two men that had combinations.

AED: You had to have both of them, so it couldn't be just one, it had to be both.

RAB: Yeah.

AED: When you were, because Killeen Base was the first opened nuclear storage site that the air force ran, so that was big. I mean made it an important place that nobody really knew about. I mean the bigger society didn't know anything about it.

RAB: That was a surprise too, when I got there.

AED: Yeah. When you got there, did you realize you were part of something bigger that was going on with, you know, this Cold War, by being there and doing that?

RAB: [Yes.] No, that didn't come in the picture whatsoever. It's first of all, you're wondering. Like me, in my case, what am I going to do? I was sent down there as a motor sergeant, see. What I did, I seen everything that was going on there. Fort Hood also has part of our motor pool there. They were repairing a bus and all this, and this one guy was a tech sergeant, working on the bus, so I parted in with him so that I was in the motor pool. I was doing my part. Then eventually when they started needing crane and this stuff, they decided they finally found me.

AED: Right, they tapped you.

RAB: Yeah. Yeah. Then I really went to work doing my thing. It was a strange deal there, that the way that motor pool was run. They had a major, and he was very abusive. You probably learned from the other sergeants when he was more so than, because they were tired of listening to him. But he was, believe it or not, he was the one that got my house before, when they informed me that my house there at [Kay Bee Heights], Fort Hood was going to be mine, he was in it, and they had to move. He took a discharge. I understood that he and his wife, I guess, fought, because he's always grumpy, and that they fought. I imagine that's when they separated, because when I was running the NCO club, I happened to have a guy come through the door, and say, "Hi, Bender. How are you?" I looked up, a guy in civilian clothes on. I thought, Oh, my god, I know him. Boy, as nice as could be, you know. He was selling punch boards and all that, because I know I bought stuff for the NCO club, because we make money off of them, and also the guy won, he we made money. But I'll always remember that. Boy, he was happy-go-lucky. I think he got rid of her.

AED: Sometimes it works that way, doesn't it? So looking back now at your role in the Cold War, what do you think? Not just your experience at Killeen Base, but your whole career during that period, what are your reflections on that?

RAB: You think about now what could happen.

AED: Looking back?

RAB: No, because again, for one, you know, we went through changes. Remember we did away with the missile in the silos, and I remember those. In fact, when I was up in Plattsburgh, New York, they had an airfield where they had the missiles. They closed the missile site.

What they were doing, they were operating out of a little silo. That's what I understood. I didn't get a chance to see it. I've never been in a silo. But I remember that, no, the one I seen,

I seen a building collapse, that was it, as [it] was being built. I guess a couple of men got killed on it because of structural steel and wood falling, you know. I was driving. It was at the base at, let's see, what base would it have been? Not Lowry [Air Force Base].

AED: Oh, it wasn't there.

RAB: No, no. I can't find—

AED: That's okay.

RAB: But anyway, I remember seeing it, and boy it made me feel down, down in the dumps, because you know those people got hurt.

AED: Right. Right.

RAB: I got word that some guy tried to attack my wife on base. I don't know where I was, somewhere. I was at the club, and then I found out about it and I went dashing home. She was okay. I don't know if she went in the house or, yeah, she went in the house, and I give her the devil, and I said—and she had her rake. I said, "Why didn't you use the rake on him?" You know. What it was, was a guy who was a civilian worker, engineers they called [them], the engineers, the civil engineers that were at all bases. They do the repair work, and that.

AED: They do, you're right. Yes.

RAB: Anyway, I got in the car, and I was heading out, and then they stopped me out at the base, told me the colonel wanted to talk to me. The colonel told me, he says, "Sergeant Bender," he says, "you don't worry about your wife." He says, "You don't need to worry about him, either." He said, "He's gone." Oh man, but you know, it scared me. I go home and tell my wife, I said, "Damn it, honey." I said, "You've got to defend yourself." But he didn't touch her, but he made his moves, and she got away and got in the house.

AED: Wow!

RAB: That's true, as I sit here.

AED: So you—

RAB: Hey sweetie [looking at photograph].

AED: Aw, that's nice.

RAB: I remember her with a passion.

AED: You've been back to Killeen Base.

RAB: Yeah.

AED: For the tour.

RAB: Let me tell you, actually I made it back twice. The first time, after my wife died, I got the word about—

AED: That you could see.

RAB: Killeen Base, you know. So that our military group said they were having a [reunion] [for the first time], so I got on an airplane, you know, to fly me in. I got to the airport, and then they turned around and they took a smaller aircraft and flew me out to Killeen Base. What it was, that was that walk through, and they had that woman in there describing something. When I walked in there, I thought, "My god, I'm home!" because they never changed the paint, and the big room, and then we had that other off to the side where we used to do the fuses, checking pressure, and all this stuff, my dividers were still up there. The ones that they use, you know, how you put it around a desk.

AED: Okay, they were there.

RAB: Yeah, it was just like coming home. Then she was talking about the lay out and, Oh honey, I remember this better [than you can describe it]. But it was just a good idea to look around. I'd loved to have gone through, you know, but they didn't take us through. Then they told us that the army took over, and they were doing some kind of experimenting.

AED: They are. They've continue to do it.

RAB: We found out they were doing the night vision, and that, so. I went back twice. I it was at Killeen Base, because—no, it was once.

AED: Maybe it was to Manzano [Base].

RAB: Then I went down to Manzano [Base].

AED: Manzano [Base], because I know some of the guys who've been there, too.

RAB: With Barbara.

AED: Right. So that's where she saw. That's why she didn't remember Killeen Base, right.

RAB: Yeah. That was the other one. Plant 1 and Plant 2 was on the other side of the mountain. In between there somewhere, was one time where an airplane with his loaded with a bomb. He was carrying it, something like that, and they crashed up there in the mountain.

AED: Oh, no.

RAB: They found the detonators didn't explode. There was a container that looks like a suitcase. It had an all rubber hole, you know, and all that, and detonators are held in there, and they ship it that way with this suitcase.

AED: On purpose.

RAB: Yeah. Well, when they crashed, that thing come flying out of the aircraft, and they had the detonators laying around up there, and they didn't go off.

AED: Nothing went off.

RAB: I don't know how, they claimed that, how was it, oh, they flew in this way. But the crew was, they were completely wiped out, because they just—

AED: Too hard of a hit.

RAB: I heard about that, but I wasn't there when that happened. I mean, they were just explaining it.

AED: How it happened.

RAB: Showed where it was, because that was over at Plant 2 on the other side of the mountain. When we took up there, and then, I don't know how many, if I ever went over to the other side of that mountain or not. I don't recall. Until we were taking the bus, and we went through Manzano [Base], and they went around, and they finally looked again at Plant 2.

AED: You saw the other side.

RAB: Yeah. I mean it was a long time. I'll tell you, it is, I've got some bad memories, and I've got pleasant memories, and I have many good friends and groups here. Guys that, [Elmer] Hounshell, get your haircut.

AED: He still has that, in case you wondered. We saw him saw last fall.

RAB: Yeah, well.

AED: Because the army is actually paying for this history project, they're curious to know what the veterans think, not that they won't do what their plans are, but what do you think should happen with the tunnels? What do you think should happen with the base?

RAB: Killeen [Base]?

AED: Yeah. Should it be done away with or preserved?

RAB: Well, again, you don't know what they want to do. Like they destroyed a lot of things from World War II. In fact, if you notice I've got the picture of this statue that's here in Sarasota.

AED: Yes, that is so sweet.

RAB: That was taken, and in fact, I had, that's it, I had paper.

AED: Okay, take your time.

RAB: It was in there, and there's a woman that's complained it was not art. So that whole statue was removed, and we got it back.

AED: That's nuts. Not art?

RAB: Okay. Now she's still fighting again.

AED: Oh, that's silly. It's big, but I like it.

RAB: But what makes me so mad, and it's World War II. We don't have any, very little bit about us.

AED: Right.

RAB: Because of kids. In fact, if you recall lately, that there was no Pearl Harbor Day. They didn't mention Pearl Harbor on TV, and not up here at all.

AED: Really?

RAB: No, just another day went by. It surprised me, I know.

AED: Yeah. That's unusual.

RAB: Oh, man, because I was very hit because my brother, you know, was in when Pearl Harbor went. Right. Let me see if I've got one.

AED: Take your time. Take your time, sir.

RAB: There it is there. In military, there was all this lots of fun, too.

AED: Yeah.

RAB: No, I'll tell you, let my feelings bust through, okay. Like the sergeant major over all of us, he was boozing. I'm running the NCO club. I have a night off. I had my wife over, we were sitting at a table because we're going to have a band and all that, we love to dance. All of a sudden the guy comes over, and he says, "You've been stealing money out of the slot machines." Something like that, and he's on the board, he's supposed to be on the board of governors. I told him, "Look, get lost." Kathy was sitting there at the table. He come back again, the second time, I told Kathy, "Go to the ladies room." I told him, "Hey, Miller," you know, "knock it off." You know? Right. But I got rid of him. Kathy come back, and was sitting down, and by the time she sat down, here comes Miller back again. I got up, and I'm angry. I was. I said, "Miller, are you accusing me of stealing?" He took his finger and said, "Yes, I—." When you've got him, so help me god, I'm a staff sergeant, and he's a master sergeant, and I decked him. I mean, I put him over the tables on the other side, because they're narrow. He fell on the tables, and I went over the tables, and was bringing him up like the old movies, and the waiter over here said to me, "Bender, Bender, Bender. Bender, Bender." You know. He come up, and man, he had blood all over the place. I didn't realize then, but he started with then, "You knock it off." So he left. Well, he had to leave. He had to go to the hospital. He had a problem. I gave him a problem. That night I had to take inventory. You take inventory every day. I had to count product, beer and whiskey, and all this and that, and I was having trouble because my mind was going, "Boy, I just ruined my career. I'm done."

AED: Yeah. What have I done?

RAB: Yeah, I'm done. I when I got home, I told my wife, too. I said, "Boy," I said, "I sure goofed." I said, "But I couldn't stand no more of that." See, I carried a key, which opened the back of the slot machines. Years ago, the money used to be dropped in a slot, and they come through it, they had like a little trough and then it dropped down in the box. You know, and then you hear it go *thunk*. But that's that box is down there in the bottom. I don't even get a key. Nobody has a key to that box. The key I had was so that I could keep those slots open, because again, that's making money. That's as far as I got with it. I had a screwdriver.

AED: You didn't even have access.

RAB: He had nipped me a bit on my jaw to go with it. I felt like it a little bit, but that didn't bother me. But anyway, I was talking to the sarge there, you know, about it. He drove up, and he says, "That son-of-a-bitch." He says, "Didn't hit me one time, he hit me two times," something like that. I said, "You called me a—," I said, "I'm going to hit you a third time." He got out of there. The next weekend. Monday I got a call, I had to go to the colonel's desk. When he walked in, and says, "You don't know why you're here?" I said, "I think I do." He says, "All right. Well," he said, "I'm going to tell you." He says, "Sergeant Miller put a charge sheet

out on you for striking him and his wife." I hadn't, unh-uh. I said, "Sure, I hit him." I said, "And I'm going to tell you why." "But," I said, "I never touched his wife." I said, "My wife can testify to that, too." So, anyway, he said, "Well, okay, what happened?" I said, "Well," I told him, I said, "I'm being accused of stealing from the slot machines." I said, "You put me there." I said, "And I didn't." I said, "I use that," I said, "to keep the slots open so they make money. I'm not taking any because I can't get to money. It's just that you push it with a screwdriver, and that'll make it slide open." So anyway, and I said, "In no way did I strike his wife," I said, "that's a lie." I said, "He was up to me," and I said, "when he took his finger and was hitting me in the chest," I asked him, 'Are you accusing me of stealing?', and when he got to 'and', that's when I hit him." So he says, "Okay." He comes up and shocks me, "Now, do you want to press charges and charge Sergeant Miller?" I said, "No, sir."

AED: I want to get out of this.

RAB: I had bouncers [at the Killeen Base club], because I was told by the commander, "If you're going to run the club," he said, "you're going to run it." Then he says, "There's doors in that club," and he said, "if you got any MP trouble," he says, "out the doors." So I got a sergeant that was an MP, military police, that was guarding prisoners, German prisoners during World War II, and he was tough. So I had him as a bouncer, and I hired another guy from Gray Air Force Base that was an ex-wrestler.

AED: Pretty sturdy, yeah.

RAB: So I was covered. So anyway, this is what I used for that, I had the bouncers.

AED: The officer's club, where was it?

RAB: It was down below our place. In fact, we went down and did the work on the officer's club for him when we working on the NCO club. We put the money in for drapes from our fund. Yeah, they did have all the money. They had the guy who would deliver the whiskey, you know, to me at my place, because I had a whiskey locker but I would order, and I locked it up. When he come out with a little box, and couple bottles of this and coupe bottles of that. They'd drop it off at my place, because I'd hold it until the officers come in. Christ, these guys, no wonder they're not making no money!

AED: You said there was a board of governors that ran the club?

RAB: Oh yeah. You have to. All clubs you have a board of directors.

AED: Okay. I wasn't familiar with that.

RAB: You have the president of the board, and, like when my wife was working at the club, they would tell her what they wanted, you know, and about seating and that, and then my wife would set up all the seating and that. Like when I had the special day, the commander would come out with his wife, and other officers would show up. They come out, and I would have a meeting. I told the guys, especially the boozers, you know, "You cool it," you know. There was this one guy, he was drunk, and something had happened down around this table, and he came to work carrying a mop on his shoulder, coming down. Aw, I thought, Geez! Goes by Allister's table and with this mop. Oh god! Anyway, fellow said, "I kicked that." "God damn it," I said, "Either that or go home," you know. All right. Okay. But anyway, I heard it from, one of the officers wanted to know, "Who was that?"

AED: Well, why we're talking about the officer's club, these are just photocopies of the pictures that you gave me, and I was wondering if you could tell me—

RAB: This is the NCO club.

AED: Right, NCO club. I just wanted to write [it] down. Do you know when any of these were taken, what year they might've been taken? Somewhere between '48 and '52.

RAB: Well, the only way, because the only way I can tell it is, I was there, well, we built the NCO club. So they never had no club or anything on the base. The only thing we had, I told you, the line going to the mess hall, we had the slot machines setting on the side.

AED: Over there.

RAB: When you go by waiting, you throw your nickel in there or whatever, and we earned, we won up to, eventually we had $5,000.

AED: That's a lot of money in the slot machines. So this might've been when you first got there or towards the end?

RAB: Okay. My son was born at Fort Hood. My son was born in Fort Hood in '43. My wife and I were married in '41. Forty-three, Rick was born in the hospital at Fort Hood. So I had some, yeah, I don't have him here, though.

AED: So was the club already there then?

RAB: No.

AED: Maybe 1949? Oh, '49. And [in] '49, the club was there already?

RAB: Yeah, oh yeah.

AED: You were running it?

RAB: Yeah, and I was running it then, because that was after we started building the club, okay. That was when I was still living at Fort Hood. No, no. I got moved, I was moved then already. I was moved over from Fort Hood to the Killeen Base housing.

AED: The village. Is that right? Is that it?

RAB: Yeah, we moved to the village. Because I could that, I could walk from my house, go down and open the club up. I had a day man that were out there, he was a Mexican, and he would be doing the clean up inside. Then I always with him the whole day and even to night when we closed up. So I put in a pretty good day. I love to cook. So we had a big electric range we got that moved with the building. Had it setting there, it was real good, we kept it around this stand. So the first room was a storage room, and then came the kitchen, we called it kitchen, and then you come out into the main part to go down along the bar and out into the dance floor. Anyway, I turned around and a guy come in there, and I said, "What, are you selling?" He said, "Well, we've got some hams and blah, blah, blah, blah." I said, "Well, who'd you ask for a ham?" He told me. I said how about a whole ham. The price was right, so I paid him for the ham. What I did, I got that oven working, and I turned around I got me spices, what the hell they call them? You just stick—

AED: A rub?

RAB: No. They're the ones. I took the heavy rind off, and had these, and stuck them in there. Anyway, I had the spices sitting in there. Then I turned around and I got a hold of my brown

sugar, and I got the pineapple, pineapple juice. I mix up this batter, and there was all that stuff, and it had all deals stuck in that ham, and then put it in the oven, and had it working. Then I used the, I got a hold of a baster, and I'd take and I would squirt that over the ham, and the ham is baking with that on there. Oh boy, next thing you know, you know, that smell went through the club, right. The guys at the bar—I knew what I was doing. I had the guys going, "[sniffs] What the hell is cooking back there?" I said, "Ham." "To eat, yeah." I said, you know, I tell them, "It isn't ready yet." When I walked out with a ham sandwich to the bar, you know.

AED: Perfect sales technique.

RAB: Oh, man! Boy we'd sell ham. The grill, I felt like a crook. I got that out of Fort Hood, and I talked a guy out of it. He says, "Okay." He says, "You can use it," you know, "use it." Well, when I got it all set up, but see he forgot, I didn't realize either, once you put anything in, it's included as equipment within the building. In other words, that belonged to that building.

AED: Right.

RAB: So I stole this grill! Then I had frog legs, and I had all other stuff. Anyway, I loved it, I tell you.

AED: So these photographs, do you remember who that band is? They don't have a name on there. Like these fellows are Harry Ranch.

RAB: No, this was a small group, and they were from somewhere where the gal that sang "How Much is That Doggy in the Window?" They were familiar with her. The drummer was the one that sent me them.

AED: Okay. So they weren't just a local band?

RAB: No, no.

AED: They were from somewhere.

RAB: These travel. What it is, we joined the MCA, Music Corporation of America.

AED: You told me that. Right. So you had access to these groups.

RAB: See, so then we get this band from there.

AED: Okay. Do you know who any of those people. That's just the backs of people, so you probably can't really identify them.

RAB: I do better with glasses, I bet you.

AED: Okay. I mean that's just backs, so you can't really [see] and that fellow is kind of far away.

RAB: I can't explain that one.

AED: What about these people up here?

RAB: Well, you see these tables, the tables set up, well, that was similar to what was set up, the tables, that's where I knocked the guy.

AED: These people, can you tell me who they are?

RAB: Now this is a group from there. This is the one that went into the OSI or whatever they call it, and that was his wife, and she became a drunk. Boy, she was beautiful. Because she come up missing, and we were all looking for her. We're there, and she's laying under a bed. This guy was the photographer. He took all the pictures of my son for my album. He did a good job.

AED: Nice.

RAB: This Harry Ranch was a traveling show from the MCA. This was a real good band. He like get half snockered, but he'd get sober for the show.

AED: He could do the show.

RAB: But he put on a show that was terrific.

AED: This was the first house that you lived in that you had to clean.

RAB: Yeah, Killeen [Base].

AED: You had to clean so much, and this is the Hood Village house.

RAB: Not Killeen. Yeah, Killeen [Base].

AED: You had to clean it, though.

RAB: Fort Hood Village.

AED: Okay. But it was dirty, you said. It was that one.

RAB: No, use the word filthy.

AED: Okay. This was the second house you were in.

RAB: That was at Hood Village.

AED: This is Fort Hood Village.

RAB: No.

AED: No? Sorry.

RAB: This is Hood Village, and this is Killeen Base housing.

AED: Oh, it is. Okay. All right. Thank you.

RAB: Geez, I've got all sorts of crap, and I can't—I don't have any, yes, my wife's picture is in here. See I used to do things for Christmas a lot, and people raved about all the stuff I'd done.

AED: Decorate?

RAB: All these soldiers I built. I had two guys with rifles, a guy with a trumpet, and a guy with a drum. Later on what I did, I turned around and split them up, and I built another guy. I built one, I had a devil of a time figuring out the arm, but had an arm that would move.

AED: That moved? Oh, nice.

RAB: I used the mortar off a barbecue, because you see other, you know, how it might grind around.

AED: Oh, right.

RAB: The speed is just right.

AED: It lifted up nice and slow.

RAB: Anyway, and a train affair, I built that, too.

AED: Wow! That's elaborate, that's very elaborate.

RAB: That's me smiling. There's a good picture there. It was decorated. I won the presidential beautification award for my yard.

AED: You [did]? Wow!

RAB: When I was living in Florida in Eustis, and that there is a gristmill I built by hand to where the water wheel turned and the water running on it.

AED: How creative. That's cool.

RAB: I made one for my KOA [Kampgrounds of America], the campgrounds. Oh, here's the top. When I finally got the idea about doing their head dress, I bought those mops, not mops, but brushes.

AED: Plume thing.

RAB: Yeah. I drilled a hole in the top and stuck the handle in, and it formed.

AED: Perfect. That's great.

RAB: There was my first silver tree I had, and that was decorated mostly with bows, but anyway. This is a good friend of mine. He and I retired together. He's dead. This is my home that I had built in Eustis, Florida. This here is what I wanted.

AED: How long have you been in Florida?

RAB: Oh, '82.

AED: Oh, a long time.

RAB: That's when I moved. I had this all set up before I come down. I sent him the plans back. Ray Terry [?], he was from Ohio, and I had been down visiting my sister-in-law, and I walked over when he was building houses. Then I happen to see this area, and I thought, Boy, that would be nice. Those are all oak trees they had. I told him, "Boy, if I was to build a house, I'd take that area there." "If you want that area, I'll hold it." I said, "No," I said, "but how about plans?" He said, "I'll tell you what. I'll send you the plans." He said, "What you want, okay, what you don't want, check it off," he said, "and send it back." So that's the way we worked.

AED: So that's what you did, nice.

RAB: I wound up with a three-bedroom, let's see, one, two, three, and I had this full two-car garage, in the back was the washer and dryer and all that. This entrance way was tiled, just up to the end there. Then there was a little wall affair with pickets on it that, when you turned around, you're looking through the pickets until you get into the living room. It had a large, large living room. I turned around and the kitchen I had done in tile. Later on, this is what I did, I tired of an asphalt driveway, and I got these guys under contract to build me cement. I'm going to tell them to build me cement, because asphalt, you had to turn around, and go out and dress it.

AED: You have to keep it up.

RAB: Yeah, keep it up. It got to be a pain. By the way, this big tree—

AED: Is that oak?

RAB: Those are oaks. Here it is.

AED: Wow! Then it's later.

RAB: The one that's cut down. Look at the size of that. That was in our front yard.

AED: That'd be great.

RAB: No, that was in the back yard. I had one right there that was near my lanai. Then I had a sliding there going into my dining room, and I, Ray, I said, "Hell, what am I doing?"

RAB: But anyway, he turned around, and he put made sure I had a door here, and I had a door on the other.

AED: I don't have any more questions prepared.

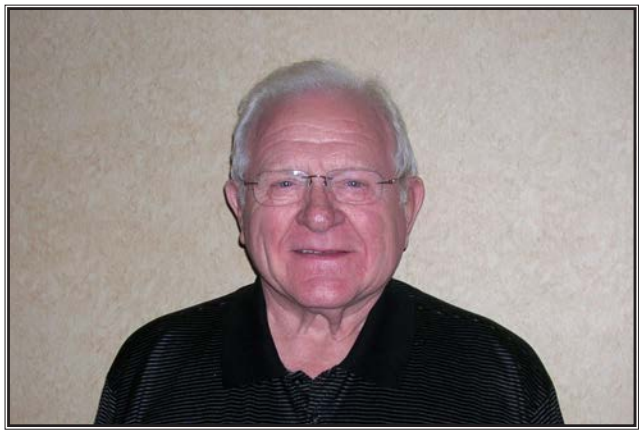
RAB: Well, do you have anything more to ask?

AED: I think I've run through all my good ideas. Did I miss something that you anticipated?

RAB: No, I don't think so.

Reed Cheesman

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase



AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Sunday, September 13, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Reed Cheesman. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron of the U.S. Air Force is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you enlisted?

RC: Twenty.

AED: And what ranks did you achieve? Where did you start and where did you go?

RC: Well, obviously you started as a private, then after basic training life, why if you were a good boy, you made PFC, private first class, and my top rank was staff sergeant, which I did in about two years. But our ranks were frozen and I was doing the master sergeant's job based on our manpower chart that we had. They couldn't do anything about it. That was the best we could do, but we give all that credit to President Harry Truman.

AED: I was going to ask, could you explain, why were the ranks frozen?

RC: Because during the Korean War the president and Congress froze domestic military expenses, we still called it a police action at that time. Later on it was called a war. He extended our enlistment. I enlisted for three years. Truman extended the enlistment one more year, so we spent four years and that happened to all the enlistments that were expiring within a given time.

AED: Okay, so all of your group, too?

RC: Yes. Everyone got a year extension on their enlistment, unless it was about to expire they added one year to it. If it wasn't, they didn't, and later on they retracted that.

AED: Okay, and when did they lift that freeze?

RC: I don't know.

AED: Oh, okay. But at some point it changed for you.

RC: Yes. Actually, the extension came along when we were within a month of being discharged, and there wasn't very many people happy about it around that time because they were expecting to get out. That additional year possibly changed some minds and they ended up re-enlisting for longer periods of time and made the military their career. But we had a job and that was it. You go do your job like eight-to-five and you went home, whether it's in the barracks or off the base.

AED: Right, and you said you enlisted in Muncie[, Indiana]. What was the motivation for enlisting? Why did you choose to?

RC: I, along with my two other guys that enlisted with me were in 1-A draft status, therefore we expected to be drafted into the army and we didn't want to go to the army. We decided we didn't want to go to the navy, and we ended up going to the air force. William Hurst and Max Manlove and I joined together.

AED: Okay, so those were your friends from home.

RC: Yes. Bill Hurst was here yesterday, but he left early this morning, and we're thinking that he's having trouble with his diabetes control. Max [Manlove] died two years ago.

AED: Oh, that's too bad. I hope that works out [for Mr. Hurst].

RC: I hope so, too.

AED: And so when you enlisted, your next step was to do training?

RC: Well, we were, believe it or not, put on a train with a group in Indianapolis, which was bringing some people from other locations, even Chicago, and it was quite a group going down to Lackland Air Force Base. At Lackland [Air Force Base] we got our first real physical exam. To reach that point you just had to have a warm body. A few people did not pass the exam. It took that train like two days to get to San Antonio, and we were put right in to the Lackland [Air Force Base] squadrons. And [Battalion 1] was a squadron, it's a quadrangle with a bunch of [Battalion 1] buildings in a square. I've got some pictures of the tar-paper-covered buildings that we lived in. They had some really nice two-story buildings, but we had to have two buildings for one flight, 30 in each building. We had 13 weeks of basic training, and as I say in here [pointing to his essay], we probably are the only groups that went through 13 weeks of basic training. They were thinking that seven weeks wasn't sufficient, which they had done heretofore. But after completing basic, it was our understanding, they weren't going to require 13 weeks any longer because it wasn't necessary. They could do everything they needed to do in a shorter period of time. So we went through a lot of physical training and a lot of different types of training. Hardly anything was designed for Killeen Base. They did show us a lot of, you know, like desert critters like Gila [monster], lizards of all kinds, and what was poisonous and what wasn't, but it was just a film. Anyway, so we thought we were going to some real desert. Well, we ended up in the rattlesnake mountains.

AED: A different kind of torture.

RC: Yes.

AED: Were you ever in any other unit or division or were you solely with the 1094th?

RC: Well, no. After we graduation from basic training, we were all shipped over to Kelly Air Force Base. At Kelly Air Force Base, it was the beginning of the First Provost Security Squadron. The cadre was assembled from various locations and backgrounds. The provost commanding officer was Harold Barr, Major Harold Barr, and he started organizing that squadron. I was called in because my service record indicated that I'd had bookkeeping and typing in high school, and he wanted me to work for him. He'd already had enlisted one of the other guys for clerical duties. In fact, he was from Indiana. His name was Jim Smith, James W. Smith. So anyway, I was essentially was a clerk typist for him in the orderly room. We worked for the first sergeant. And the outfit was organized. Well, at this point Jim Smith and I were given orders to take the service records and review them and the questionnaires. We all had to fill out questionnaires when we arrive at Kelly Air Force Base. It was about three or four pages long. It asked as to who our home neighbors were, and what periodicals we read, what organizations we belonged to, where we went to school and college.

AED: Lots of details.

RC: Yeah, a lot of detail in it. And this was all for the Q clearance that we were getting. Now we didn't know Q clearance from top-secret clearance from any clearance. We were just green horns. But anyhow, we knew how to follow orders, so Jim [Smith] and I went through all the service records and questionnaires. This was during McCarthy communism days, and so if you took a periodical that had so-called communistic viewpoints, then you were passed over. You shipped out to somewhere else. Or if you attended certain colleges. Well, by and large our group was from the Midwest, and by and large they qualified. This information was forwarded to the FBI to investigate. It took several weeks to obtain the Q clearance.

AED: This is at Kelly [Air Force Base], at this point?

RC: Yes. At some point they gave a clearance for us to go ahead and go before—because I remember when we did get to Killeen [Base] that we had some of those clearances come in for people, because I remember one guy got shipped out. When they interviewed him they decided no, they didn't want him. But it was nothing wrong with the people at all. They were Americans and they're patriotic and all this, it's just that era, a different time.

So when we left there we were flown in C-46s, cargo planes, and you can put a lot of people on them with their duffel bags. We thought when we were landing that we were at a penitentiary with all the security. We landed at Gray Air Force Base, which is on the corner of Fort Hood, right next to our operations at Killeen Base. We were put on buses and hauled over to the barracks. The barracks, as you've seen there, the brick barracks, the one big building, I forget the direction of it now, but it was there first, then the other ones built a couple years later. Anyway, four fences around, the inside two are electrified. The army was there, and they were there strictly as a security group, but they did nothing in the tunnels because they were just being built. As I say in here [pointing to his essay], Brown & Root was the company that I remember being there. It's a huge construction firm. I don't know who all they had, they had a lot of different contractors, but they really watched those people closely. The concrete thickness of the tunnels is like 3-foot [wide], and you can drive a big truck back in them. Did you go into the tunnels?

AED: Yes. It was amazing.

RC: We toured the tunnels when we were there at Killeen Base for a reunion in 1994. It was a long time ago. Anyway, the paint was hanging from the walls. It just shocked us, because that was just spick and span when we were there before. They had the lines on the floor, and

this truck had to follow that line and it couldn't go this way or that way and just different things. But I did not work in the tunnels. That was the only time I ever really got to way back into them. At the entrance of the tunnel, I had some things I had to do there. So we started our adventure there, but we're still the First Provost Security Squadron, and we were that until—you can see the dates on this [pointing to his essay]—when we became the 1094th. After the construction was completed, then it was ready to bring in the personnel and supplies for those tunnels to make the atomic bombs. And of course, no people in Killeen or Copperas Cove or any of those places had any idea that this was going on. As I recall, Killeen wasn't even 7,000 people, and it wouldn't have been that if hadn't have been for Fort Hood or Camp Hood, it was then, it was Camp [Hood]. And there was just nothing over at Copperas Cove. I mean it was just a wide spot.

AED: It was just a little town, right?

RC: Yeah.

AED: I have one question about when you went to Lackland [Air Force Base] and you enlisted in the air force, what were you thinking was going to happen? They tell you what to do, but what were you thinking would be the next step?

RC: When you enlist, they ask you what areas of interest that you have, and they give you to pick three or four interests of areas, and the most popular one is none of the above. None of the above!

AED: That's great!

RC: So, it was a waste of time filling that out. But those that did get, you might say, washed out to other jobs or other areas. They got pretty close to what they wanted, and I can't even tell you what I put on the list.

AED: But you weren't planning on being a pilot, for example?

RC: Well, I can tell you story there. During basic training at Lackland [Air Force Base] they said there was a shortage of air force cadets and you could apply if we had a certain [intelligence quotient]. We didn't call it [intelligence quotient]. We called it [army general classification test] score. So [Max] Manlove and I qualified on score. We passed our first two tests that they had. One of those was physical and the other one was mental, and we were to go back for more testing, but by this time they had all the air cadets that they needed. I remember one, possibly got two guys, and both of those guys had private pilot's license.

AED: You were talking about you were taking the two tests for the air cadet training.

RC: Oh yeah. So we neither one of us made it, but [Harold] Lagasse was one guy that did. In fact, he was in Korea as a pilot. And I forget the other guy's name. But [Harold] Lagasse had a private pilot's license for small aircraft.

AED: He already had some experience.

RC: Yes. But we were dealing with the idea that if we got into cadet training we could wash out, and could get out of the service.

AED: But you chose air force over navy?

RC: Well, yeah, because that was just a preference of a young 20-year-old kid.

AED: Okay, all right, all right. And did you ever go overseas?

RC: No. We did have similar bases located around the world.

AED: Because that wasn't really part of this.

RC: Texas. Texas was overseas.

AED: In some minds it is.

RC: But do you realize how isolated that was there?

AED: I can't even imagine.

RC: We were 7 miles back there. It was 7 miles into town, but it's back off the road. There's nothing around, and it was guarded and patrolled by .50-caliber machine guns mounted on jeeps. If you went down that road without stopping like they told you to, you would hear about it. I saw a car that had holes ripped apart. They didn't kill the driver, but they stopped it.

AED: But they gave the message, more than enough I'm sure.

RC: Well, he wouldn't stop, he just kept going. This was kind of hidden from the highway and you're down there in kind of a valley between large hills and small mountains.

AED: There's some little hills around there, but it's low-slung.

RC: They call them rattlesnake mountains.

AED: Yeah, I know why. I've seen them out there.

RC: Yeah, we got much bigger and more ravines here, in Branson, Missouri, than we had there. It was new, and we did have very good new buildings, and they were still building other buildings. Our quarters were excellent.

AED: What were they like? Can you describe what the buildings were like, outside and inside? The barracks?

RC: Well, the construction of the building is brick on the outside and inside, we had the walls of plaster, the floors were terrazzo, and there were no wooden buildings there at the time. They did build some steel buildings later for tech supply behind the quarters where we lived.

AED: Were there many rooms inside?

RC: Well, in this particular building, which is still there, we had offices, mess hall, day room, et cetera, on the first floor, we had some rooms that individuals lived in. In the beginning I roomed with two other guys, [Jim] Smith, which was the other orderly clerk, well, he and I were the only ones in that room for a good while. But down at the end of that hall there was a small bay. I don't know how many bunks were in that. But there's only like four or five rooms on each wing that people could stay in. And then on each end of that building, which is kind of U-shaped you might say, were the bays. Now you go upstairs, and we had bays on both ends and then a bay in the middle. When I say bay, it's nothing but a big room.

AED: Okay, a single big room.

RC: Right. We had the administrative group in the middle bay. The guard bays were on the ends so people would not be walking back and through. See, these guard guys worked swing shifts. They sometimes slept during the day and then work all night. So on the ends were the latrines, or bathrooms. And then out on the roof the lower bays—there was no second story above them—was a good place for us to get sun tans. Anyway, in the middle bay we had the administrative group: the cooks, bakers, and the motor pool.

AED: In the barracks building, how many men would it house?

RC: You know, I'm not really sure.

AED: Twenty? One hundred?

RC: Oh, we had probably, when we went up there from Kelly [Air Force Base], there were probably 160 to 200 people. [There were 185 men originally in the First Provost Security Squadron.] And in this First Provost [Security Squadron], people were either going to be what you would call an MP—it's a security force, except they didn't walk the streets of towns, they did the security for Killeen Base, on the gate, and they'd have bands on their arms, where people come through. The people who come through were our own people mostly. Anyway, all of the supportive items, like the supplies and mess hall people, and of course, the personnel people. The most that we had are something that, I don't know if it's in that group or not, said that we were geared to 680 people, but this was after we built some other buildings. [There were 430 on base during the reorganization.] In 1950, we were bringing in a lot of new recruits, and some of the guys will tell you about this because some of them are here at the reunion, they lived in these big tents with wood floors, and they were pretty nice, but it's either too cold or too hot, you know. They took training at Fort Hood as well as there. They did their basic training. They brought them up from Lackland [Air Force Base] to finish their training here. So they finished their training here to join the security force.

AED: So the army did some of the training then?

RC: I'm not sure. They did train at Fort Hood. Let them tell you, because I don't know.

AED: Okay, that was there.

RC: Yes.

AED: I didn't know that there were then different experiences in terms of how you got there.

RC: Yeah, I think our men were with them all the time. But they used the facilities of Fort Hood, and they probably got on like a school bus and they transferred them back and forth.

AED: Because I think George Rasmussen, I think that was his experience, and I just got to talk to him, so it sounds like a different place that you're coming from. But he didn't go to Kelly [Air Force Base] first.

RC: No, no. They sent us a number of airmen directly to Killeen [Base] to finish basic. [George] Rasmussen and Bill Fogle, was another one. Now, Elmer [Hounshell], has he been in?

AED: Not yet. I got him signed up.

RC: Well, Elmer [Hounshell] was with us at Lackland [Air Force Base], but he wasn't in my flight. [Calvin] Adkins was in my flight. He's here. [Bill] Hurst was in my flight.

AED: How many flights were there?

RC: There were 60 in a flight. I don't think that you had to have a definite number. I don't know how many flights we had there. But if I knew the number of buildings I could tell you because there's 30 to a building and they had 60 to a flight. So we marched 60 guys together in one flight. That's quite a few, but people don't realize that. That's like being in the middle area in the army and have the platoons and so forth. Well, we had flights and squadrons and groups. And the structure is the same, but it's got different names.

AED: It's just the semantics of how each entity within the Department of Defense names its groups of people?

RC: Yes.

AED: It's interesting, though. It's different among each branch of the military.

RC: Yeah.

AED: Then did you also go to Manzano [Base] ultimately, right?

RC: Yes. Of the four-year enlistment, I was there at Killeen [Base] from the time we went up there in the latter part of August, and didn't leave there until February of '52. So I was there a long time. And then when I went to Manzano [Base] I was discharged like after about three months. So I wasn't there a very long time. But I never did live on Manzano [Base], as a number of people didn't. The barracks there were too small for all of the 1094th, so we lived down on Sandia Base.

AED: So you were still in a military installation, but you were off base.

RC: No, we were always on base. It was just like us living on Fort Hood and being shuttled over to Killeen Base. Same difference. Still on a military base.

Okay, but back at Killeen [Base] now, they built another building and I end up with a room with a guy named Jack Josserand in the old building. He became my roommate. He and I roomed together when they built the new building, we moved over into it, and we were roommates there. And when we went to Manzano [Base]—he was in security force—we roomed together there. We roomed together approximately two and a half to three years of the time we were in. And he re-enlisted and stayed in. We kept in touch, and then he was killed in an automobile accident down in Tucson, Arizona, wasn't too many years after I was discharged.

AED: Way too young. That's too bad.

RC: Yeah, and he was from Decatur, Illinois. Anyway, I've got some other things in here [pointing to his essay] that might help to ask questions, but I can tell you how the 1094th was organized and so forth.

AED: Can you do that? That would be great.

So the symbol you're talking about for the 1094th is the atom, right? But it wasn't issued until 1962?

RC: Well, I'm not positive of that but the fellow that got it from the Department of Defense has some papers on it, when it was done. It was released in 1962. I don't know when it was really

done. This was one that somebody else has done [pointing to photograph of emblem painted inside one of the tunnels]. That is not it.

AED: Okay, that's a different emblem.

RC: That's someone's rendition.

AED: Right. Well, it was very interesting to see it when you walked by for the first time when you're inside the tunnels and you see that. Did you, during your time of service, receive any medals or special awards?

RC: No, there was no medals given for what we did.

AED: Okay. A good conduct medal?

RC: Well, good conduct, but everybody gets good conduct.

AED: Really?

RC: Well, unless they spend some time in the brig or something like that. No, you don't get it then.

AED: Guys from the 1094th, would they spend time in the brig?

RC: Yes.

AED: Occasionally?

RC: The main reason was going AWOL.

AED: Ah, okay, so something pretty severe.

RC: Well, yeah. And then we had guys that destroyed military equipment like rolling a jeep or something like that. Plus, they were racing around and doing some really dumb things. One guy was shooting at a bird, he shouldn't have been discharging it. He clipped a line.

AED: Oh, way to get busted right?

RC: Yeah, one guy was court-martialed. Well, we had a couple of court-martials during the time I was in that I remember. And one guy was sent to Fort Leavenworth, but he basically was stealing, and the other guy was just off his rocker, but he was doing some really bad things, which I won't even repeat.

AED: That's fine.

RC: But that's the only thing that—basically, it was very, very clean.

AED: And that's part of how you got your security clearance, I'm sure, was because you passed a certain, and the other men as well, passed a certain standard of making good choices instead of silly ones.

RC: Yeah, had excellent backgrounds and so forth. And they never talked to your parents when they're doing those. They always talk to your neighbors or relatives.

AED: Oh, that's interesting, because your parents will tell the truth?

RC: Well, no, they just don't want to be—first of all, they don't want to worry them about it, FBI coming around and interviewing.

AED: As if the neighbors won't tell.

RC: Well, the neighbors told my father, and then they called and said, Well, what is this with the questioning the FBI is doing? Are you in trouble? I said, "No. All I can tell you is it's going to get me a better job." That was our instructions to tell them that this was for job-related and it's for you to have a better job. This work there was very isolated, and well, for some it was boredom because they're doing the same thing over and over and over again. Looking for forward to time off to go somewhere to do something. We would get out to the likes of different places that we could go to, even though we—I bought a new car when I was there, from a Killeen Chevrolet dealer, believe it or not, and had virtually no money but I owned a car that I traded in. [A] 1950 Chevrolet, I'll never forget it. So, my roommate and I did a lot of driving to Dallas and places like that, Austin and Waco, et cetera.

AED: Off-duty time.

RC: Yes. We'd do it when he had breaks in his work and mine, because he was in security and I was an eight-to-five guy and I'd take a three-day pass or something like that, and he'd get his time off. And so we did a lot of things like that. Down to Mexico and just wherever, you know.

AED: Did many people have cars?

RC: There were several, but no, by and large, no.

AED: So did guys share [a car] so they could get [off base]?

RC: Oh yes. I know the first time I ever went to Mexico there were five of us in my car. Jack [Josserand] and I did several things together because we enjoyed being with one another and all that, and got acquainted with some girls in Waco and things like this, you know. Even dated girls from Killeen. Yeah, it was just one of those things that we didn't have the money, and so we just basically did what we could with what we had.

AED: The security clearance that you had, and all the guys of the 1094th, was it the same? Or were there higher-up clearances?

RC: The best of my knowledge, they were the same.

AED: Okay, everybody [had] a Q [clearance], is that right?

RC: Q clearance was a Q clearance. I had to experience with that even after I was out of the military, but of course, we don't need to go into it. It doesn't have anything to do with this.

AED: Well, at some point it's good to know what you're following up.

RC: Well, it's on record you have it. And they contacted me for information on individuals, which was always good. And so they were actually interviewing—well, one guy was joining the FBI Academy—

AED: Oh, okay. So this was after you were out. They were asking you?

RC: Oh yeah, this had been several years. In fact, I was working. I had already gone through college and I was working and they contacted me. Then they contacted me another time when one of our employees that we'd hired, a young guy, was drafted into the army or activated, I think he was in the National Guard or something, and then they were inquiring about him. I could only tell them he worked at where I was working. The experience there and nothing else, which was very limited. But they said, Well, we've got you on record here. You've got a Q clearance, and blah, blah, blah.

AED: Right before you enlisted, what were you doing?

RC: I was working at a local automotive manufacture plant, Borg-Warner. [Max] Manlove and I worked together there on the same line. We were in quality control, and just decided one day we're not going to get drafted, let's just enlist.

AED: I like that. It's good.

RC: So he talked to his buddy, [Bill] Hurst into enlisting with us, and that was the first time I ever met Bill [Hurst]. [Max] Manlove and I were acquainted before enlistment by a year or two, and I guess worked together a couple years before we went in. I was trying to get money together to go to college. I was from a poor farming family. And so that was the reason I was working and not going to college at that time.

AED: Yeah, right. So when you got to Killeen Base, what were your impressions of that place? Your first, your initial [impression]?

RC: Well, it was, What the heck did I get myself into? What is this? It's surely not a penitentiary, and we could see military vehicles all over, and what are all these fences for? And as far as we could see, you know, we were in the air coming down and looking this over, and we only get the little window, you know, to peep out of. Anyway, when the first person looked out and said, Oh, my god, look at down there. And said, Oh, well, we're going to this air force base down there. Oh no, it's not. Well, we don't even have a big hangar here.

AED: How's that going to work, right? Something's not right with this picture.

RC: Yeah, the only planes down there were small. Anyway, it made you—all the time we were doing this work, only one person knew where we were headed and what we were going to be doing, and that was Major Barr. Even the first sergeant said he didn't know where we were going and what we were going to be doing. We just knew that it was very secretive. When we got there, then [Major] Barr gave us a rundown. We all fell out into formation and he went over everything with Captain Whitehead. Both of those are dead, by the way.

AED: And they were maybe older?

RC: Yes. Either the cadre or the ranking people.

AED: Leadership of the [1094th]?

RC: Yes, right. They had a lot of years on us, been in the military for a long time. Some of them were in World War II, you know, that type of thing. And we were just basic. We were privates first class, later airmen.

AED: Yeah, youngsters.

RC: Youngsters, right.

AED: Green.

RC: Green as can be and all that. But it just mellowed out to be such a sharp unit you know.

AED: It seems so special, really. I have just this little bit of exposure to it and you just sense that that's the case.

RC: Well, when you stay together, like in a dorm, for, actually, some of these guys for almost four years. [Calvin] Adkins and I, that's here, and [Bill] Hurst and I were together four years. [Bill] Hurst ends up getting married, of course, he went off base, but [Calvin] Adkins and I, which we didn't see one another every day, but we were together every day for four years, and you get to know one another very, very well in that time. You pick and chose the people you ran around with. Well, obviously my roommate and I hit it off so well that we did so much together. But, it was nearly—you know, I didn't wait around on him and he didn't really wait around on me. Our free times were different.

AED: What were the buildings that you worked in and were most familiar with while you were there?

RC: What buildings? Well, the headquarters building there where we had our offices was a well-contained building, it had everything. We even had a barbershop, and of course, you know the mess halls, the day rooms. In the beginning, we had a little bitty bar that was only open a short period of time. We didn't have a PX-type thing on our base. First of all, they couldn't let all the vendors in. No one came on that base unless they were qualified.

AED: They were working with or for what was going on there, not just outsiders.

RC: Well, even the, for instance, the IG, [the] inspector general, because he got complaints about some of the things that happened. One happened to be staff sergeants pulling KP because we didn't have enough non-commissioned officers to do a rotation. We had no privates, or PFCs. Well, we might have had some, but they got busted and then they were PFC, but there were few corporals. The rest of them were sergeants, staff sergeants, and so forth.

AED: So higher up the food chain.

RC: Yeah, higher up the command. Well, they were staff sergeants, and some of these guys just said, Well, that's ridiculous. I'm in charge of a group of men, and then asking me to go out and pull KP. That's demeaning and that shouldn't be. And so someone complained and the inspector general, he was actually blindfolded and brought into the base. He was a high-ranking officer.

AED: But he didn't have clearance?

RC: Right, he was called an inspector general, but he had the rank of a colonel.

AED: Okay, he didn't have that security clearance but needed to deal with the problem.

RC: Right, and he was put in a room and did his investigation then left the same day.

AED: Were there other instances when that happened that you recall?

RC: No. That was the only one I remember. They wanted to bring in, and I don't think they ever did, some politicians wanted to come in, you know, senators and what have you. Our colonel had a hotline to Washington. He had a red phone in his office. No dial or nothing. He lifts it

up, he's talking to Washington[, D.C.] That's how hot it was. I worked in the adjutants office after working the orderly room. The adjutants office supports the colonel or the commanding officer.

AED: I'm sorry, you said after working in an orderly room? Is that the right term?

RC: Yeah, orderly room. You see each organization has a first sergeant who's over the orderly room. He makes out morning reports, you know, which it shows all the people and available for duty, sick, or what have you, vacations or when on leave and that type of thing. Well, we included that all into personnel one time soon after the 1094th was organized. But I worked for a warrant officer. He attended the reunions until he died. That was the commanding officer's man, the adjutant, but we just did whatever the commanding officer wanted us to, the correspondence and stuff like that. So it was still pretty much a clerk-typist job, which is, you learn everything there, but I was only in that situation about, just a few months, maybe three at the most. I was reassigned to personnel to help organize it and supervise. They had a man taken from the adjutants office, a tech sergeant, and he was trying to get transferred from this base. His wife didn't like it in Killeen. So finally they agreed to a transfer. I took over the supervision and held it all the way the remainder of my time. That's the reason so many of these guys know me because I took care of all their finances, their service records. I had like six or seven guys working with me.

AED: So that just put you in a good place for information right? Getting to know people.

RC: Oh yeah. They come in to get a three-day pass and stuff.

AED: So they know you because [of that interaction], yeah.

RC: Yeah, they know the first sergeant signed all of them.

AED: So we're stepping back. In your words, could you explain the mission of Killeen Base?

RC: The mission?

AED: You can read from that if you like. Whatever works. I know I should just have you read it out loud.

RC: Well, I think I'd use probably better words if I read this rather than—

AED: Sure, take your time.

RC: The purpose for our squadron was to build atomic bombs in the mountain tunnels, secure the base, and of course, all the support personnel to accomplish this mission. And I talk about how they—about assembling the bombs and hauling them down, and my secondary job was a nuclear courier, which all I did was—I had other training for—but all I did was basically drive a military sedan with an officer and paced a truck that pulled the dolly that had the bomb on it from the opening of the tunnel. We'd pace it all the way down to the hills and go out onto the landing strip.

AED: To the air base or to Fort Hood?

RC: Yeah, we'd take it down to Gray Air Force Base to the hydraulic lifts which were recessed into the ground, and we'd pull over. All this time it's covered with a canvas fence around it where an outsider couldn't see what we were doing. The trailer looked like a canvas box on wheels. The Big Boy bomb as about 6 feet in diameter and 6 feet long. They have one on

display at the National Atomic Museum in Albuquerque.

AED: So you're at the front of this?

RC: I'm driving a pace car in front of the truck that pulled it. So we tried to stay in about 50 to 100 feet in front. We didn't want him to get too far because he's supposed to drive 4 miles an hour. Try to drive 4 miles an hour. I tell you, it was hard. Hardest thing to sit there with one foot on the brake and one on the accelerator, just hold that back, because it was going down hill. When you got level it wasn't too bad. Of course, the officer is sitting there with his eyes glued on the speedometer. Why 4 miles an hour, I don't know. He didn't know, either.

AED: But that's what it is, is 4 miles an hour.

RC: Well, they just wanted to make sure that the truck driver doesn't go too fast and go over anything like that. We'd actually pulled off to the side after we crossed over the hydraulic lifts. The lifts came up and pushed a rack up against the bottom of the bomb, and they'd pull the dolly away, and then they'd lower it down into the hydraulic pit. Then the B-29s come in over that. Open the bomb bay doors, the lift would come up, and they'd fasten it in to the bomb bay area in the plane, close the doors, and off they went. But that runway out there is really long. We had B-36s that did touch-and-go exercises. I never was on a mission to load, help load those or do anything with it, but those things are huge, huge planes. B-36 is just an awesome plane. Now, these are not jets. They were propeller planes. Later they used B-52 jets, but we never did get to work with then.

AED: So how often did you do that?

RC: Did it two times. During the operations—we called it operations—I got this all written out.

AED: I really want you to tell me about it.

RC: Okay, well, during the operations, this something that was done to see how well our men were doing their job, so to speak, the first operation was a 48-hour endurance, so you couldn't go to bed or anything. You worked your regular job and you also worked your special job. Just about everyone had a secondary job or a special job to do. Mine was that one, you notice how simple that is. Staying up 48 hours is not easy in itself, but when you're busy, it goes faster. They want to know how productive and proficient you are in your job. You were checked all over by a team of personnel. Another time we had an operation where it was done with the navy to see how well they operated. In the army and the navy, I don't think the reigns were ever pulled in on a test like that. But the air force really out did them all by large marks, and a lot of commissioned officers involved. We had very large number of officers in our organization. Plus you had qualified chemists and physicists with all kinds of the engineers, electrical, mechanical, chemical. They were all top-grade people. I know when we had operations—they were unloading some explosives from a truck and he dropped a box of explosive. I don't know what it was, TNT or whatever. A colonel jumped off the TNT truck and caught his thumb in the tailgate, tearing his thumb right off. He was rushed over to—that happened in the afternoon—we rushed him over to Fort Hood hospital, and he had it all bandaged up. He was in the chow line that evening. And he was just temporarily there, just for an operation. For, I mean, that military operation. He was a feisty old guy.

AED: Have to be, to do that.

RC: Yeah. Of course, today I call him a young guy, but back then he was an old guy.

AED: So when they did that 48 hours—is that the squadron does that as a group?

RC: The base.

AED: It's everybody participating. We all have to be on.

RC: Alert. You're on alert.

AED: Okay, so is that called being on high alert, or is that something different?

RC: No, it's just alert. We never knew when the bombs were armed or when they weren't, but common sense would say no they weren't because we just couldn't take the chance of blowing up the United States or at least, Texas.

AED: But the exercise was to be sure that this group could pull this off for 48 hours and be consistent.

RC: Right. Yes.

AED: Interesting.

RC: Yeah, it's an endurance efficiency test. You know, there were a lot of bases that did this, not only Killeen Base.

AED: I have a map.

RC: A map showed up in *The New York Times* one time. The government and military jumped all over that.

AED: Something like that, that showed the national storage sites and the operations storage sites.

RC: Well, both. What's K here [looking at the map]? I heard the guys talk about it, but I didn't know anything about it. See, Kirtland [Air Force Base] was right next to Manzano [Base]. It's just like Gray [Air Force Base]. Yeah, is Gray [Air Force Base] on here?

AED: It's not on there separately. There's just the Killeen Base.

RC: Yeah, well, Kirtland [Air Force Base]'s right next to Sandia Base. Well, Gray [Air Force Base]'s right there. It's there but it's not—oh, I see it showed the bases only. Well, Clarksville [Base] was our base at [Fort] Campbell, that used to be Fort Campbell. Bossier [Base], yeah I remember that, it's Louisiana. Well, I didn't know where the one was in Maine. We had guys that went up in Alaska, you know. But this doesn't get the ones out of—this is U.S.

AED: Yeah, it's only the continental U.S.

RC: Yeah, we had them in Morocco and Guam, it circled Russia, a circle.

AED: Oh, wow. That was the goal, right? That was the part of the story. Were there other organizations on Killeen Base? Like the assembly group for example, do they have a formal name of any kind?

RC: Well, we didn't really get into that kind of the operations thing until we were 1094th. See 1094th came along within, well, I don't know what I was going to say there, like 1950. Well, we hadn't been there a little over a year, and that's getting all the construction completed and all the things done. Did you go all the way back—were you in an area where there's a

huge generator back there?

AED: Yes, there's one on each end, right?

RC: That's right. There was more than one, but this one particular one they used to claim they could generate enough electricity for the whole county of Coryell, which is Fort Hood. Well, today I don't know whether that'd be true.

AED: Back then it might have been true. It was big!

RC: Yeah, they have 70,000 plus people there now instead of 7,000.

AED: Right, yeah, it was major, major equipment. It was very impressive.

RC: Yeah, guess this happened a few years back. We'd had some of the leading people in this group, they'd be here, they were so sharp. I remember one Roy Green, and he was just—in fact, he took us back in. What we did this one time and explained where they were and all that and what they did. And he was such a great instructor. He would be great to talk to. We got Guy Priester, here at the reunion, I don't know what he did. A guy named Harry Podsiadlik is also here. They worked in the tunnels.

AED: Okay, good. I haven't met them yet, but I hope to.

RC: Yeah, Guy [Priester] is next door.

AED: Oh, that's right. You said he was the one that's your chaplain.

RC: I don't know where Podsiadliks are. But he's a little different person. I really didn't get acquainted with him until a few years ago.

AED: I just know he's got a tricky name to try to say.

RC: Yeah, it is. Podsiadlik, yeah, it's unusual.

AED: So within the 1094th there were positions like yours and then the guard positions, right? And then were there other kinds of things going on, administrative?

RC: Oh yeah, we were talking about the building and then what was in that, and well, you'd have the commanding officer's office and the adjutants office next to it, and then a pool of men working for them. And then we had legal officers and communications officers, and orderly rooms, and personnel office, supply rooms. We had ammunition supply.

AED: What kind of supply?

RC: Ammunition. The security guards always had to check out their .45s or their carbines, or whatever they were carrying.

AED: So somebody's responsible for getting those back and putting them out fresh.

RC: Yeah, and they checked every round of ammunition that was taken. Of course, one was a .50-caliber machine gun. We'd have that mounted on a jeep. They didn't carry those around, but they certainly had belts of ammunition they had to check out.

AED: Would someone be, say, requisitioning some of this equipment and doing that right there?

RC: Each shift that went on duty had to do this, and then when those guys come off-duty they'd check theirs back in. The guns had serial numbers, and they had their own you might say. But they didn't carry one except when they were on duty. So around the office you didn't see, unless it was a guy on security duty that day, you did not see anybody wearing them indoors. I went after an AWOL guy twice and had to carry a .45, so it was pulling some strings, you know, to go some where I wanted to go. It was not in my normal job.

AED: To get around a little. Get out of the office.

RC: Yeah, I went home one time and visited my brother another time.

Then we had tech supply and material supply. Then we had the motor pool, which is like a big garage, if you will, and they maintained the trucks the jeeps and the sedans. It was a self-contained base. We had our own water supply and, of course, sewer supply and power. Power, the substation, I don't know how that operated, but it had to have some kind of a backup, maybe even those units in the tunnels backed it up, I don't know. The buildings had the sleeping quarters. The kitchen had a very nice dining room and well-equipped kitchen.

AED: How was the food?

RC: The food was excellent, for the most part. You can always have a bad day. Your temperament had a lot to do with that. But we had some great cooks and bakers.

AED: What were your uniforms like?

RC: Well, when I first enlisted they were olive drab, and then the air force blues came shortly after that, maybe within the year, so we went to the blue uniforms, which are standard today even.

AED: Was there anything different about your uniforms than the others?

RC: No, the only thing that, as far as a patch was concerned, we only had an air force shoulder patch that did not indicate any organization whatsoever. And that was by design because we didn't want anybody knowing about who we were on the base.

AED: So it didn't even say 1094th?

RC: No, no. Or First Provost [Security Squadron]. Neither one. None of that. It was just a plain air force patch, like you know, the wings and that's it. Anyway, the other reason for it is that you didn't want anybody to be able to count the number of people, and only a certain percentage were allowed to wear uniforms off base. Otherwise we wore civilian clothes, and that was also designed to keep the numbers from being able to be counted.

AED: I don't think I've heard of another group being able to do the civilian dress.

RC: Yeah, well, they even gave us extra space for civilian clothes so that we would dress that way. I don't know how much it was policed, but I know that's what we were asked to do in the very beginning. The other guys know about it. They just have forgotten if they hadn't told you that. See, it's a lot of things we'll not be able to think of or I should have told you.

AED: Right, right, or for example, Jack McCoy was just here and he's had a brain aneurysm, so his recollection abilities are good for some things and not for others. He did tell me though that he was part of a boxing club.

RC: I had some really good friends. In fact, I got a picture of one that boxed and was very good. He won the Fort Hood championship. He also boxed at Lackland [Air Force Base]. But [Bill] Hurst, and let's see who else? There's no one else involved in this group any more. We played on a basketball team for three years, and we had like 120 guys go out the first time, and the three of us—we enlisted together from Indiana—played a lot of basketball of course, and our coach was a guy that played pro ball at one time. He got drafted into the military during World War II and stayed in and made a career out of it. Of course, back in those days, see the Knickerbockers or the Syracuse Nationals or some of the teams he was on didn't pay very much, you know, they just made enough to eat and cloth themselves, that was it. He was an excellent coach, and he's the one that picked us out of this group, and we kept on going even after his time and we won a lot of tournaments at Fort Hood.

AED: That's pretty cool.

RC: Yeah, we're a small little organization, but yet we were really knit tight.

AED: Now, he said for the boxing team that they had special meals when they were competing and had a separate table. Got a little more protein than the others, I think. Was that true for basketball, too?

RC: No, it was normal routine, just like smoking. I quit when I was in the military. It was before this time. I quit when I was in basic training. Anyway, we had a few guys that smoked, and the coach's remark to that was, "If you can run as much and keep up in the practices and the games and you can still smoke, I don't care. But you can bet one thing, if you were dragging, you were going to be sitting on the bench or out." So he really didn't make any recommendations as to our diet or anything. But boxing is a little more physical, we had a lot more endurance tests because we played many games where we didn't have to check in, just one guy get up and replaced the other type thing. And we played some professional teams at Fort Hood, in fact. We helped a coach at Killeen High School that was from Indiana. He was introducing basketball in 1949 and '52. The kids in school in Killeen, they all played football and baseball but they knew nothing about basketball. They didn't dribble the ball, they ran with it, you know. So we did some things like that.

AED: Sort of exhibition like to teach, to show.

RC: Yes. They'd come out and watch us practice and then we would tell him what he can do with the kids and so forth. Wish Bill [Hurst] had stayed. He got sick and had to go home, and if he were here he could help. Bill [Hurst] was our top scorer on the team. Of course, he was 100 pounds lighter than he is today.

AED: Were there any other recreational teams?

RC: Yes, we had a baseball team and a softball team. I played baseball and developed an arm problem and so I quit, and their softball coach wanted me to come out for softball. They needed some people to do that, so I went out and played softball. And it was fun. But I only did that one year, just one year of that. I played basketball, three seasons, I think it was.

AED: That would help break the monotony of all that's going on.

RC: Yes, it did. We had a baseball diamond or a softball diamond on the base, but we did not have a gymnasium. So we went over to Fort Hood. You know jump on the old bus, and someone from the motor pool would drive us over there, and likewise with the team that went out and played. We played some civilian teams, out in the sticks some of them, in softball, but in

basketball we played Ruby's Café in Waco, and that's the farthest I think we ever went away. Reason I know, we had two flats going home.

AED: Oh, you would remember that. On a bus?

RC: Yes, on a bus. It was an air force bus. Yeah, but we made it. Anyway, we did play in the Fourth Armored tournaments, which was at Fort Hood at the time. The Second Armored Division was at Fort Hood at the time, or Camp Hood, whatever it was. And we played teams like Fort Sill, Oklahoma, and Fort Polk, Louisiana. We were runner up to Brooke Army Medical School in a tournament. We beat Fort Hood base team twice to get to that point. So it was a good experience and a lot of fun. We did a lot running. We did a lot of jogging, you'd probably could call it. Then we did most of this at the gym, the big old Quonset huts, had like three or four basketball courts side by side.

AED: So this is at Fort Hood?

RC: Yeah, Fort Hood. We had nothing of that type like it at our base.

AED: Right, no pool or none of that. That was all at Fort Hood.

RC: Right, right. And I imagine the boxing was all done at Fort Hood, too, I'm guessing. I don't recall ever seeing a boxing ring at our base. A baseball diamond, basketball, football. The football didn't go anywhere. It was six-man football. I went out for it and no, I don't want to do this. Anyway, so we had a number of these guys that were very athletic in our outfit, and on our basketball team the starting five was three of us from Indiana and one from Kentucky and one from Pennsylvania.

AED: Yeah, right, that basketball [area], you associate that.

RC: Yeah. There's a lot of different recreational things we did. They had a field day where they had contests of various types, like a baseball throw, things like this. We had a barbeque pit they'd put the big beef on. In fact, a rancher that owned a ranch there gave us a steer one time. They pre-cooked it in the mess hall, then put it on a pit to finish. The assistant to the mess sergeant, his name was John Tkagut from New Hampshire or Vermont, he knew quite a bit about barbequing. He said, "I'll show you how to really barbeque." So it was interesting, very good. Of course, they had the beer wagons. So there were things done for the people there at the base because it's so isolated. Killeen had nothing. It had a dumpy little theater, and a restaurant or two, but that's about it. Basically, we went to Temple for recreation.

AED: Closest bigger place.

RC: Yes, was Temple.

AED: Yeah, right. [Jack McCoy] also had mentioned what he called or referred to as a rest camp underneath the cannon, and that was the first I'd heard of that.

RC: Yes. Okay, we did lease I think it was two, maybe three cabins, on Buchanan Dam Lake there. I almost drowned there. I'll never forget it. We would take a load of people out and then bring back a load of people. I don't know how many we took, [maybe] 10 at a time. But first rest camp I went to was at Galveston Island, and they had a place down there for us. It's actually what used to be called Fort Crockett.

AED: Yeah, that's right.

RC: Is that right? So we swam in the gulf and you know, partied at night in Galveston.

AED: Galveston's a fun place.

RC: Yes, it was. This guy, I'll have to show his picture, he and I were swimming in the gulf, first time for both of us to be in a big body of water, and we got out too far and they were blowing horns and stuff, and two guys came swimming by us and told us, Get back in, they're calling you back, you get back in now. And so we turned around, man we were out a long ways, we'd better get back. So we started coming back in, and they had a bunch of lifeguards there, and they were coming out to meet us, and we swam back. And of course, you know we were in great shape and strong and all that.

AED: Right, that's undertow there, though, can surprise you.

RC: Yes, we were going to touch down and they said, Don't do that, don't do that! You know, to see how deep it was. Just keep swimming and you'll be all right. So we just kept swimming. We swam back, and we were banned from the beach. That was our last day there.

AED: But at Lake Buchanan you almost had a more severe accident?

RC: Oh, yes. It wasn't an accident. It was just kind of stupid. The channel is about 150 feet wide. I swam quite a bit growing up as a kid and all that. There was a bunch of girls who were there on this sandy beach. A buddy, Dominik, says, "Let's just swim over there. I'll race you over there." So here we go, and we were almost there, and I got cramps in my stomach and I just couldn't do anything. I kept holding my breath when I went down and came up. He though I was trying to pull a trick on him so I could beat him, you know. Then there's a guy in a boat real close to where I was with his son, and they were fishing, and he came over and he yelled at the guy, "Come here, he needs help!" And he jumped in the water and they helped me over to the boat. I was just dead weight. And put me in that boat and then pushed me in. He could stand up in the water. The water was not above this guy's head, and I just couldn't, I just couldn't do it. Craziest thing. Boy, I tell you. Anyway, I hadn't eaten at least two hours before then, though, so I didn't credit that. That was kind of a thing that slowed me down on swimming. We went out that night and swam in the water after I slept all afternoon. They said, You better go, you'll have a fear of water if you don't. So I went out, I was very, very cautious. That's at Buchanan Dam, Burnet, Texas.

AED: Yeah, you remember.

RC: Oh yeah. So, in fact, we've got one guy that still lives there. We have a guy that lives in Burnet and one that lives in Lampasas.

AED: Right, there's several. We're going to try to get to them because they're convenient for us, if they're available and interested. And there's a couple that live in Fredericksburg?

RC: Yeah, Arthur Haun is like 90, and he was one of the younger guys [at the time]. He was in tech supply, and when you talk to Harold Lehman, he worked with [Arthur] Haun. They would probably give some of the similar stories. And the other guy that lives in Fredericksburg.

AED: I have a list.

RC: P-A-R-E.

AED: [Joseph] Pare is in Burnet.

RC: Oh he is? [Joseph] Pare is in Burnet? Okay, well. [Arthur] Haun is in Fredericksburg. H-A-U-N.

AED: How about Wilbur Wagner?

RC: I don't know him. He's the other one?

AED: Yeah.

RC: Well, he was added later on.

AED: And hasn't been a reunion guy?

RC: I was trying to think of the guy that worked for Dell computer and has his name on some patents from there. Rodger was his first name, I think. Arthur Haun in Fredericksburg, and so that means that he lives in Lampasas. I'm pretty sure.

AED: I think there was a Lampasas [guy].

RC: Well, this guy, I'm pretty sure he's still on the list. You know something, I can't think of this name right now. I can see his face. Oh, right below. Rodger Payne, Lampasas. [Joseph] Pare is right above it.

AED: Oh, great. And what was his?

RC: Rodger Payne. He hasn't been to one of these in a long time, but he worked for Dell, retired from Dell, and I know he had a patent on something there. He was kind of an engineer for them. I don't know what he did. I think he might have been in communications.

AED: You mentioned [Arthur] Haun worked for tech supply. What would that entail?

RC: Well, tech supply I think would be maybe two dimensions, but one of the things—Harold Lehman will tell you all about it—but it's about getting the supplies to assemble the bombs, and keeping inventory on them.

AED: And then communications, what kind?

RC: Well, in the beginning we had, see we didn't have cell phones and stuff then, but anyway we had a wire room where the Morse-code type thing was used and so on, but they just called it communications.

AED: Probably telegraph capabilities.

RC: Telegraph and teletype and radio. And I don't think there's anyone on that list there unless—who'd I say might have been?

AED: [Rodger] Payne.

RC: Oh, I don't know if he was. I'm not sure.

AED: You would think maybe that was possible.

RC: Yeah. One of those other lists that had what used to be called MOSs [military occupational specialties], the name was changed. Our classifications, I can tell from that what other people

worked. Mine and another had the same classification, and it was wrong on that list.

AED: Oh no, what does it say on the list?

RC: It says 405. It don't mean anything to you. It's just a number.

AED: It's just a number, right. Yeah, there were a lot of numbers of those lists.

RC: Yeah, right. Those numbers all meant something to me at one time. So all of that stuff was kept in my office, all the special orders.

AED: I was looking at those and they're very—I mean even though I know I don't really understand all that's there—

RC: Well, the abbreviations.

AED: You get that there's this system of communication, kind of a shorthand of how you kept those records of details.

RC: Yeah, you would get back an approval letter from something you sent in. It would say approved or not approved. That was it.

AED: That was all. No explanations?

RC: No, you had to go back and ask.

AED: What areas of the base did you have access to?

RC: Well, just administrative areas. No one—if you had no legal business to be there, you're not to be there.

AED: Right, right. But because you were doing the administrative and not the guards though, you wouldn't go to even that area?

RC: No, I didn't go up. I couldn't go up unless I had a reason for the access.

AED: You were specified for these other things that had to be accomplished.

RC: Right. We could go to any of the opened areas. I could go up to tech supply or I could go to the other supply places or motor pool, and any place in our building.

AED: Just not where the plants were or where the igloos where?

RC: The plants, well, we called them plants, that's the tunnels in the hills. No, we could not go there. That was restricted to just those that worked there.

AED: Okay, and I know you were eight-to-five in general, but typically how would a day go for you?

RC: Well, typically you got up and got cleaned up, and put your uniform on, and, of course, you always had shiny shoes. Everything was neat and straight. I didn't fall out for formations like the guard did before they went on duty, because they were inspected to make sure they had all their proper gear.

AED: Their equipment.

RC: Equipment, yeah, whatever they needed. But no I did not. I had to fall in formation for special things. But basically I went to work. Well, go to the mess hall for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and go to work, and that's sort of like an eight-to-five job. But of course, the first things were to make sure all of my people were in place and doing their work. We made our morning reports for the first sergeant. We didn't do these reports in the beginning. He did that in the orderly room, but when we combined that, well then, we started doing it for the first sergeant.

AED: So every morning you did a morning report?

RC: Well, I had a clerk that did. Well, we had to make sure that all the reports were in from all the supervisors that, you know, yes their people were there, or they had so many on vacation or leave or ill or whatever. There's like four different things, I think I remember.

AED: Was that on one of those sheets, it would say?

RC: No. But now there are sheets showing the people on their leave.

AED: Right, it would say on leave, hospital. One of the terms was confinement.

RC: Confinement? That means he probably was in the brig.

AED: And the brig was the Fort Hood brig?

RC: Yes, we—well, until they got there they'd probably be restricted to a room or something like that. But that's kind of the minor thing to start the day off. I had the finance part and the group that did the records part. Of course, I always had letters to write, and I wrote a lot of letters. Special orders to write. I'd get the order from someone, and then you'd put it into the required form for that. One of the clerks would type it up, and then we'd have it dittoed, or whatever the machine was at that time.

AED: Was at that time, yeah right, wasn't hand transcribed, but a copy made.

RC: Yeah, they were always typing. Of course, after they would type, the master was signed and of course, it came out.

AED: And those orders were being for people coming and going?

RC: Well, for whatever reason. Normally, it could be anything. It could have been a special order for a promotion. It could be for an award, which I can't remember any. It could be transferring from one department to another, transfer from the guard to the motor pool or something. That's kind of dumb, but anyway, something that's changed. Well, people within the security, each supervisor had certain people under him. Now they would change, but we didn't do special orders on that. That was done within the guard group. I'm thinking someone calls the guard group, and it's just security-squad-type thing.

AED: Yeah. Were there any civilians involved on Killeen Base besides the personnel?

RC: Well, some of them will tell you that there were some people there that worked on the base, and I can't remember one. I cannot remember one. I remember them saying there was a barber that wasn't military, but I don't remember him. I remember the guy that was a barber when we first went there, and we did away with that. He was so terrible that, you know.

But I don't think he could transfer from the army. He was an army guy and I don't think we got him into the air force. I can't recall. I'll have to back up a little bit, yes, we had quite a number of construction people at the beginning.

AED: Especially that first six to nine months—

RC: When we first worked there. Yeah, until the military groups started coming in to from the other—the plant personnel started, they were working on this. There were a lot of those people that I never did get acquainted with any of them. I can remember seeing their faces that you came out to a club. We built an NCO club, and they came out there because this was the only thing without going many miles it'd take you to get an alcoholic drink.

AED: So there was an NCO club?

RC: Yes, yeah. We built an NCO club, and they were two large barracks T-ed together. And they were brought over from Fort Hood. They were acquired at Camp Hood at that time. It was just off the access road. It is there.

AED: I'm sure, and I'm just not picturing.

RC: This club was there. It's changed a lot since we were there. I think they rebuilt it or built a new one or whatever. But we were there in—I could get my paper and tell you, '94.

AED: Right, right. I think that is right.

RC: Ninety-four. In fact, we held our reunion there. We had dinner there at the NCO club, next to Kay Bee Heights.

AED: That's great. I didn't realize that.

RC: Yes. Cecil Jones, whose wife was originally from Killeen, was the man in charge of that.

AED: Somebody else had mentioned him and suggested he might be a good person to try to talk to.

RC: Yeah, he's got some good stories. Cecil lives in Pass Christian, Mississippi. He's on the list. And he called me before we came. He's 85, and he's had some heart problems and he just couldn't make it. And he also had [Hurricane] Katrina wash him out, and it took a long time to rebuild. And he said, "We finally are now rebuilt."

AED: That's a long haul.

RC: Yeah, it is.

AED: Let's see. When you first realized what was going on, what Killeen Base was about, what was your reaction to that? What did you think?

RC: Well, you know, first thing is like I think I said earlier that what am I getting myself into with all these fences around here. Not knowing what we were doing. Hadn't been briefed yet. We did not get briefed until we were on the base. Then they told us what was going on. Didn't really have much thought about it then. It's not at all what we had envisioned being in the air force. This is altogether different, and they let us know this is different. You're going to be the only outfit like this. This is different than any of them. We might have been one of the very first areas made like this, and certainly, Manzano [Base] probably was being built at the same time. But the others, like Hanford, Washington, I don't know.

AED: My understanding is that Killeen [Base] was opened first, and there had been some storage going on at Manzano [Base] at the Sandia Base, New Mexico, but that this was the first of the three. The construction just went more smoothly at Killeen [Base] than it did at Manzano [Base] or Clarksville [Base], which [both] opened just months later.

RC: Might be. I just don't know.

AED: I just read some construction documents, and that's what seems to be the case.

RC: I know that we had a very high rating for the base, and that's one reason they allowed the air force to be so prominent in this work, and it made sense. The bombs were transported by plane.

AED: So once you were briefed, how much did you know about what was really going on in terms of detail, probably not?

RC: Nothing.

AED: Just the basics. This is what's here.

RC: Yeah, we all were going to do our jobs as assigned. But you have your options. You can either be a clerk in the orderly room, work in the mess hall, work in the motor pool, or you can be in the guard. An MP in the guard is the way he put it. To Major Barr, I said, "Well, I don't know how to cook, I don't care if I go to school for that, and I don't want to be a mechanic or anything like that, and I sure as hell don't want to be an MP." Whoa. He had me standing at attention for about a half hour, chewing me out for that. I had no idea what provost marshal was. That's the head of the MPs. I didn't know it. This interview took place at Kelly [Air Force Base].

Major Barr and I became very good friends. He helped me. I was trying to get a guy back for duty and I didn't want to be late, and I was driving my car and the car lights were dimming, the alternator was going out on it. I'm driving like 85, 90 miles per hour on the highway, and I got behind a bus that I couldn't get around because it's two-lane highways. They were all two-lane back then. This Texas Ranger pulled me over and gave me a ticket. I told him what happened. Well, this guy was in the back seat asleep because he had been out late. He supposed to be on duty and I've got to get him back by midnight. I told him what I was having trouble with the car. That the faster I drove, the more light I had. I said, "Well, now that I have the ticket, would you mind taking me to the entrance that goes to our base?" I had to explain to him where it was, even though he'd up and down the road. Saw these big signs, no admittance beyond this point. "Well, if you would lead me to that point, then it's access road and I'll be all right. I'd appreciate it." So he says, "Well, yeah, I could do that." He took him right through Killeen about 70 miles per hour.

AED: Really? So you had his lights and your lights to use?

RC: Yes.

AED: Pretty shot.

RC: Anyway, we got him back on duty on time. So I had a ticket. The Texas Ranger said, "Well, you'll probably have to go to Fort Hood to go to driver's school." I had to appear before the judge in Belton, Texas, because I was stopped outside of Belton. So I got this ticket and someone told me, "Well, you ought to see [Major] Barr. He knows that judge." So we heard, and we already knew this because of one guy that got a ticket, the judge sent him to driver's

school over on the army base at Fort Hood, and they weren't very kind to airmen. He said they were just really bad and I went in and asked him. I showed him the ticket. I told him what had happened. I said, "I understand that you know this judge." He said, "Yeah, we're old buddies." Well, I said, "I wonder if you can give me any help, because I sure don't want to go to that school in Camp Hood." He says, "Well, I can't afford for you to go there. No, I'll give him a call." Barr said, "You'll have to go over to Belton and pay your fine." I went over there and they fine them heavy, but he fined me $5 and cost, which made $10. The judge says, "I just talked to Major Barr, and he says that the army guys are not very kind to airmen. Besides he needs you at the base." He says, "You're exempt from going to that school." He said, "$10, just slow down." So I went back a happy man.

AED: That's a great story.

RC: Yeah, anyway, that's the kind of guy that Major Barr was. He was strict, but he was good. He really protected his men. Also, you'll hear the name Hoover. Hoover was kind of a foul-talking guy, but he became lieutenant colonel while he was in our outfit, and he really stood behind his men. He helped them all he could, even the men that fouled up a few times.

AED: You were in a position where, today I think, someone might generally want to say, Look, I have this very important job, so you can't pull me over and you can't give me a ticket, but you couldn't say anything.

RC: No, no I couldn't. I don't think you could say that anyhow to a state policeman no matter who you were, unless you happen to be a part of the law enforcement there. We didn't show credentials for the base unless we just had to. Again, we were not supposed to show anything outside. We were not to talk to strangers in town, because they could be a spy or FBI. We had an FBI at our base.

AED: Oh, you did?

RC: Oh, yes. No one knew.

AED: Of course not. That's how that works.

RC: Yes, but I knew it.

AED: How did you? Because of your position?

RC: I knew it because his service report was the most cobbled up thing I'd ever seen in my life. When I got a service record, I review it to see what certain things in here should be done, corrected, see that they had a proper entry in there for him being assigned to our base and all that. And then on top of that, his name was Schmedicke [?]. I don't know whether any others ever knew him or not. He was a master sergeant. He worked in the tunnels, supposedly. I don't know where he was half the time. I just don't know where he was assigned for sure. We were having a Coke in the day room one time, and I said, "Your cover isn't worth a darn," or something like that to him. He says, "What are you talking about?" I said, "That service report you got. Wherever you came from previously, I need to instruct them on how to fill these out." I said, "So, very easy to tell that it's a cover." The colonel on the base knew what he was there for. [He] was the only one. He wanted to know. He'd asked me before, "Hey, you want out for dinner sometime?" He said, "I'd like to go." He was checking me out. I didn't go. So, we sat there talking and he said, "Well," he said, "I need to get to know you a little better," or something like that. I said, "Well, I'll take you up on that free dinner you offered." He didn't tell me then, exactly, but he started asking me questions about the base. I said, "You're there. You know the answers." Just never gave him anything. I said, "I already know

that you're not in the air force." He bristled up. "You're not an airman. I know that. So do don't give me this stuff." I said, "Your cover's good. You don't have to worry about me." I never told a soul. The day that he left he came in with the orders to leave. I cut the special order for him to transfer. He said, "Hey, can you walk out with me?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You're the only one that caught on." He says, "Yes, I'm with the FBI." And he's from Michigan. I don't know where about in Michigan, but he was from Michigan. David Schmedicke [?], I'll never forget that.

AED: So you were in a position of privilege in terms of that kind of information.

RC: Well, service records. You know, everyone has a service record and all the information about him, his birth, and where he is born, his parent's names, his wife's name, married, and children and so forth. All that information. Everything is in there and it's got to be in a certain spot. They used the wrong air force regulations, air force letters, they just made them up. Stating some things in his record, his promotions, the code they used was wrong. It was just stuff like that all the way through. You know, he told me, he said that, "I really appreciate your instructions on that." He said, "We're going to get that corrected." Schmedicke [?] said there were like many FBI agents down there in the area. They're there to make sure we had no one trying to infiltrate and so forth.

AED: Protection. It's another way around protecting that place.

RC: Yeah, and they were located all around us. Actually, the Second Armored Division patrolled the outside of our base, and they didn't know what they were doing, but they did. Carswell [Air Force Base] they flew over in a fairly high height. We had a guy in a trainer, and he was flying high and it was a night flight, and he knew there was a runway down below him somewhere, and he kept coming over, and he pitched his plane so loud that we'd notice it.

AED: You mentioned that the one fellow was a lieutenant colonel that was actually FBI.

RC: No, the lieutenant colonel was not an FBI. The FBI man was a master sergeant that I knew, or got to know. Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Hoover, Major Hoover, that most of them will say because he was a major a long time. You'll hear that name because he was over the guard.

AED: Who was the top person there at Killeen Base?

RC: Well, for the most part, Colonel Gandy, and you'll see his name on it. We also had a Colonel Hikel. I think his name was H-I-K-E-L. He wasn't there too long. Then of course, when I went to Manzano [Base] we had Jack Armstrong, but before Jack Armstrong, it was like a short time when I got there, we had another colonel and I can't remember his name. But the one that I really had contact with most of the time was Colonel Gandy.

AED: Okay, and they weren't attached to the 1094th?

RC: Yes, they were. He was commanding officer of the 1094th.

AED: Oh, they were. Okay, all right. What was the chain of command underneath that?

RC: Well, he had various officers in charge of various things, and the adjutant would be second in command. For the most part, a warrant officer was the adjutant. There wasn't anything other than the fact that he was adjutant to the CO [commanding officer]. You might say the commanding officer and adjutant was an office. [Major] Hoover over the security guards. One was over the personnel, mess hall, general supply, tech supply, motor pool, maintenance, and assembly plants, working the tunnels, they would have one and they would all be under

him. And then within each one of those brackets you've got a number of officers.

AED: More, yeah, breaks down even further. More and more detailed.

RC: Little more detail, yeah. The mess officer usually was a captain or something like that. In that, there's not much breakdown into that.

AED: Do you recall, I can't remember if we've discussed this or not, being on high alert?

RC: No, I don't really remember being—

AED: Because that would be something that would affect the guard situation more.

RC: Yeah. When I was at Manzano [Base], we had alerts and that they was just all trial for us, later on the high alert. Alerts that we had would've been the operations, what I call operations. I wouldn't call them alerts. That's just an endurance, efficiency alert if you wanted to, but that's not an alert. Alert's when you're getting everybody on their jobs because of some reason.

AED: Did you in your position have any reason to deal with the people at Gray [Air Force Base]?

RC: No, other than the NCO club.

AED: Okay, they borrowed that space sometimes or joined you?

RC: No, no, we allowed them to become members of the NCO club.

AED: Okay, because they were air force also, right? As opposed to the Fort Hood, and they had their own separate—

AED: Okay. We talked about some of your off-duty time and some recreational things that you got to do. Were there other things that you recall?

RC: Well, I worked at the NCO club in the evenings.

AED: Was that a separate position?

RC: Yeah, it had nothing to do with my job.

AED: Did you get paid in addition for that?

RC: Yes, I got $90 a month, but I had to put in so many hours, $90 a month no matter whether I tendered bar or was a CQ.

AED: What's a CQ?

RC: It means charge of quarters, but in most places it's a bouncer.

AED: Got you. A little of both. Did they have food there at the club?

RC: Oh, yes. We had a kitchen and a bar.

AED: So some of the Killeen Base people would work over there, too?

RC: Yes. We had the cooks, most of them worked in there, you know, they'd come out, and I don't think we ever had any people that was hired for that. We didn't hire any civilians. It was all military, and the manager of the club was almost full-time on that, managing the club. The officer's club was managed by a guy worked in supply. He managed the officer's club, but he also had—I think he finally got transferred out there because he lived there. And we had a guy that had a room and bed and everything at the NCO club.

AED: And when you went to the club to have a drink or have something to eat, you paid for that?

RC: Yes.

AED: That came out of your [pocket].

RC: Pocket! Right.

AED: Was the food better there? Or just different?

RC: No, the food was different and okay.

AED: And you could have a drink.

RC: Right.

AED: So it was just a little nice change of pace.

RC: Yeah, it was mostly sandwich and that type food there.

AED: When you moved then to Manzano [Base], how different was it?

RC: Well, it first, of all was much smaller on the base. I'm talking about the buildings. So a lot of us lived in the big brick barracks down on Sandia Base. We were on different rations in the mess hall at Sandia [Base] where the people running the mess hall just bought supplies locally. I forget how garrison rations versus the other type of rations, I forget all of that, how that goes. But on the base up at Manzano [Base], I think it was on regular rations. In other words, military stuff was bought, and I remember the Rainbow Bakery back to our mess hall at Sandia [Base] and we're getting fresh bread from the bakery and all. It was really, really great. We didn't bake it ourselves.

AED: But really different.

RC: Yeah, it was different. You might say we ate steak at the beginning of the month, and by the end of the month we had stew. It's kind of that way. So I ate practically all my meals out at Sandia Base. But I'd eat lunch up at Manzano [Base]. I did not work very much on Manzano [Base]. In breaking someone in for my personnel job, was had six or seven men try it, and they finally decided we need to get you out of here. They're using you for a crutch too much. So the first sergeant said, "You just call in and let me know you're okay for the morning report, and you don't even need to show up." They decided when the chain of command came down to the first sergeant and said, "Stay home, we'll call you in." So I'd go up and get my paycheck, or if I wanted to see someone up there, of course, I could go up there because I had passes to do so. Once in a while I get a call about an issue for what should we do or whatever and I'd just go up and get it straightened. But as time went on, I didn't know half the people I had in there, because we were rolling over personnel. They didn't all stay there. They went to [Fort] Campbell or some of these other places within the special weapons command. They moved out into others from Manzano [Base]. No, Manzano [Base] was different because it

was in smaller buildings and we could house only part of the people up there on the edge of a mountain. The other thing, the proximity of the roads going to it were different than Killeen [Base]. I don't know how many miles it was up to Manzano [Base] on a two-lane road going up to the base from Sandia [Base], but it was a few miles.

AED: Did everybody move to Manzano [Base] from Killeen Base at the same time, or was there a tapering of moving?

RC: It was done in organized groups. We started groups in August or September of 1951, and February at the tail end, and a few of other guys finished it up in '52.

AED: And then at the same time, were the army guys from Manzano [Base] tapering over to Killeen Base?

RC: No, there were people coming in. The army was replacing us at Killeen [Base]. Where they came from, I don't know. The air force was already at Manzano [Base]. All the time when you've got enlisted people, any kind of military people, their enlistments end on certain dates. You always have a change of personnel. We were replacing people going out, and then we were being replaced because we were being discharged.

AED: I guess I was thinking of it as a trade, and it was a trade of property because Killeen Base went from being air force owned and operated to being army owned and operated. And the army had been involved with Manzano [Base].

RC: Just as a security. I do not think the army ever worked the tunnels. Worked the assemblies. I think that was the end. I think when we left, that was the end of the plant work. I do not know that for a fact. Of course, same way with Manzano [Base]. How long after that it was used. And then they built—I should dig up these papers, it was in the Sandia [Base] paper—they built an automated underground storage for hydrogen bombs and so forth. You wouldn't even know where it is because of its ground covered. That is in that area. So they kind of went from this tunnel business to that.

AED: Did they call it an S structure? I read something about it, but it hasn't been recent enough. They store it differently. They moved to a different kind of storage facility than the tunnels.

RC: Yes. They just actually are holes in the ground.

AED: What did you do after you left Manzano [Base]?

RC: After I discharged, I got my quality control job back at Borg-Warner and applied for admission to Ball State University.

AED: What was the name of the company you went to work at?

RC: I was working at Borg-Warner, and after three years—I went through and got my degree in three years at Ball State in accounting, and I went to work at a local company called Maxon Corporation, and worked for them for 33 years, became their CFO [chief financial officer]. I was vice president, CFO [chief financial officer], and treasurer in my last 11 years there.

AED: Was that all in the Indianapolis area?

RC: It's in Muncie, Indiana, which is northeast. The Ball family are prominent in that area.

AED: When you were at Killeen Base, did it seem like you were part of something special and unusual?

RC: That's what you find out. You find that out over periods of time. There's times where you're there when it's just kind of desolate and you know, Why am I here? This is no fun at all. Because you only make a little bit of money, and you cannot run off to Timbuktu to enjoy it because you can't get out of there, no matter where you go. Well, I had a car all that time. But no, stuck back there, it's kind of a hole to be in. That's another reason I participated in sports and stuff was that was kind of an outlet. Looked forward to it.

AED: At any point when you were there, did you feel there was an immediate threat? Or was it more a matter of business?

RC: I don't think any one knew of any kind of threat, unless someone high up would come down and tell them that. We had television and we had newspapers, but they weren't that quick and accurate as they are today. When you turned on the television you only had so many programs and that was it. CNN [Cable News Network] wasn't born or anything like that, which is probably good, because I don't know how accurate they are. But anyway, no, I don't know of anyone that felt any threat.

AED: Now looking back, what do you think about your role in this big Cold War?

RC: We really enjoyed one another, the people. I think everybody has a sense that they gave something to help with it. Everyone, I think in the outfit, in fact, it's been talked about since we've been here, supports the idea of the atomic bombing that they did do that killed an awful lot of people, but it would have killed a lot more had they not done that because they would have been over Tokyo and everywhere else constantly just bombing everything. There would have been a lot more people die than what died in Nagasaki. The way it came up. You guys better pull out of this and pull out of it quick. And within a month, of course, they did. Remember Pearl Harbor!

There was a topic at breakfast this morning, and one guy was very forward, he says, "I can't stand someone trying to tell me that was the worst thing that we ever did. They just don't understand. We don't want to do any of it, but you sometimes have to." And what we're in today is going to take something pretty big to get it done. This type of terrorism warfare is just all together different than we ever anticipated. I don't mean we anticipate it in the war meetings and so forth, but you know, terrorism is really something that you can't put your finger on that quick. If you could you do it, but you have to get rid of the leaders in that respect, because there will be some born to come along and want to emulate the past. But it takes time and it takes money. If you can shut off the money supply and you can shut off the guys that do terrorism. But what people are not understanding, except for 9/11, we're keeping it out of the United States. And we do not have borders like the others. We have a lot of terrorists in the United States right now, we know that, but you can bet the military is following them, the FBI, the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency], and everybody else is involved with this.

AED: They're doing what they can do to keep it suppressed.

RC: Yes. People are being watched all the time. And it's sad, but that's the way the world is. I just hope my grandkids and great-grandkids don't ever have to experience anything terrible.

AED: When did you first feel comfortable talking about your experiences at Killeen [Base] after you left there?

RC: Well, we basically, I could talk about several things without mentioning anything that would be considered classified. I didn't get into that much classified stuff at all, not like the people that actually worked in the plants. Some of them even today don't think they can, but it's all been declassified. I don't know, I never give it a thought. I've never been out, you know, yacking about what I did.

AED: Right. Do you talk about it with your children and your family? Are they aware of the very big part the 1094th played?

RC: Yes. They know why I go to the reunions, and they know why I—this is the third one I've chaired in the 20 that we've had. There are two other guys that chaired two. We're trying to work out next year already.

AED: Do you have any opinions about what should be done at the buildings at Killeen Base and the tunnels? Preserved, or do you think they should be open to the public? Do you think demolition is okay? Do you have any thoughts on that?

RC: Not really. I've never given it a thought. I just assumed one day that would be something else. If the buildings are still good structures, too bad they can't use them. I'm not one to throw away anything that can be useful. I think the tunnels could become, if properly done right, could become a safety shelter for weather alerts, something like that. You know, people in the flat or plains states have tunnels in the ground for storm cellars, or tornado cellars, and they have them equipped. Of course, they'd have to equip it for water and light and all that.

AED: But it had that before. It could have that again.

RC: Yes. So the access there is the main thing, to get to it, because where it's located, and I don't know how feasible that would be, but that would be something. But no, I have no feelings or opinions. Killeen Base, as far as we're concerned, is gone.

AED: It's these people getting together.

RC: We're talking about maybe going to Killeen next time, the possibility of going to Killeen [Base]. We don't care whether we go out there or not, because it's not anything like we remember. It's different.

AED: It's very interesting to hear how clean and tidy it was. Of course, I've only seen it in this other state and couldn't picture it that way, but now I can imagine.

RC: You can't imagine how you first felt when walking into those tunnels. Now, I never did go all the way back in there, but I was in them for what I had to be, which was just the entrance, and you could see back in them. There was no paint hanging down the wall, I guarantee you. They were all slick, shiny and everything looked just great.

AED: What you expect of the military, right, that it would be the best and the brightest.

RC: Right. And they kept it that way all the time.

Dave Ennis Conder

Killeen Base Construction Crew, 1947–1948
Interviewed by Sunny A. Wood and Richard Powell

SW: My name is Sunny Wood. I work for the Fort Hood Cultural Resources Management Office. My job is in charge of dealing with the physical expressions of our history, our heritage, our culture, so everything from the American Indian camp sites, to the homesteaders, to the World War II military structures, the tunnels which are one of them. Today is the 19th of July, [2010], and I'm here to speak with Mr. [Dave Ennis] Conder. We have Richard Powell and Becky [Curb, his daughter,] here with us. If you would, please state your name for the record.

DEC: Dave Conder.

SW: How long have you lived in this area? I hear it's been quite a while.

DEC: Eighty-six years!

SW: Do you remember when the army acquired the land for Camp Hood?

DEC: Yeah.

SW: Did you know anyone that lost their land?

DEC: A whole bunch.

SW: How was that feeling at the time? Did people think it was a needed cause? Justified?

DEC: I don't really know understand. I mean they was disappointed about losing their land, but during wartime they might would've went along with it. But they couldn't do nothing but go along with it.

SW: They didn't have much of a choice.

DEC: Didn't have any choice.

SW: No. What do you see as the biggest change since the army has acquired the land out here? More people—

DEC: More people, just everything.

SW: More traffic.

DEC: More traffic. Boy, everything. That road right out there, there's about, oh, maybe two or three cars a day go down it. Mail carrier being one of them. And now, I mean thousands go down it.

SW: They do, don't they, just since the time I'm here, the last six years, I've noticed a lot of change just right here on Clear Creek from the airport. Multiple stop lights. Housing. More stop lights. The houses across the street weren't here.

DEC: The school, no, they put it there in 1992.

BC: Not '42. The school, you talking about Shoemaker High School?

DEC: Yeah. No.

BC: No. I don't even know when you all—they sold him that land, but I don't remember when.

DEC: I sold them the land so they could build a school.

SW: It's a big school.

BC: Well, my grandfather's land went down there, around like this. Okay, the military got on two sides of his place.

DEC: Three sides, nearly.

BC: Nearly three sides, except a little part up there. And I don't know, I never knew why they didn't get his [place].

DEC: I don't either.

BC: But all of his place backed up to the military, and on the side military.

DEC: But they said they was going to take it, and my daddy went and bought another place. And then there was a colonel come by here and said do you want to stay or move, and daddy said, "Well, I want to stay." It's still here.

SW: What's your father's name?

DEC: Ivey.

SW: Ivey?

DEC: Ivey Conder.

SW: So is Ivy Road and Ivy Gap, is that named after your father?

DEC: No.

BC: No, it's just I-v-y.

SW: I-v-y.

BC: He had it spelled differently.

SW: Thank you.

DEC: I-v-e-y.

SW: Do you remember the Okay community?

DEC: Yeah. I used to go over there.

SW: Did you?

DEC: Yeah.

SW: Now do you remember on West Fort Hood the last two standing stone buildings that were down there about the field containment, was that a part of the Okay community?

DEC: That there at the end of the airstrip?

SW: Yes.

DEC: Yeah, that was the Okay store.

SW: Is it? See I've heard many different stories about that, but no one has ever been able to tell me for sure if it was part of the Okay community or not.

DEC: Yes, it was. That was the Okay store there, right there at the point of the mountain.

SW: I have aerial pictures from about 1940, '41. Someone climbed up onto the top of that point and took a picture down of the Okay community. That's the only pictures I have of that area, except for those two buildings.

DEC: That was the Okay store. There was a little old school there for a while, and then there was a tabernacle way back down there.

SW: Yes. What did you all call the area when the army acquired the land? Did you call it Camp Hood? Did you have a nickname for the place? After the army acquired the land for training the soldiers, what did you all call it locally?

DEC: Camp Hood. That's what the name of it was. And they changed it in 1950 to Fort Hood.

SW: Did you all call the end down here by your property, did you all call that the Robert Gray Air Force Airfield at the time, or was it still considered Camp Hood? The airstrip down here?

DEC: It was Camp Hood or Fort Hood.

SW: I just wanted to ask, because some of the individuals I've talked with had different nicknames for what they named the area.

DEC: Well, until they built, it was just the Okay community out there, and then when they built the tunnels and that runway and stuff, well, it changed names.

RP: Did you call it Killeen Base, or did you call it Gray Air Force Base? Did you ever use those names?

DEC: [It was called Killeen Base].

SW: Who were you employed by when you were building the tunnels?

DEC: Brown & Root.

SW: Brown & Root. How long did you work for them?

DEC: Up until I got hurt. I worked there about a little over a year.

SW: A year? Okay. What was your job with them?

DEC: I was a little old foreman on gunite in the tunnels.

SW: How did you hear about the jobs on Killeen Base at the time to work for Brown & Root?

DEC: Well, it's just around town there they said there was a little work out there, in the cull of the mountain up there. And so I drove out there to find out if they did have anything going on, and that's when I found out. And I guess really they thought I was from Colorado. That's where all the miners come from, the diggers. And they said, You looking for work? And I said, "Yeah, I just got here," or something like that. And they just put me right to work.

SW: No security checks or backgrounds or anything like that, just put you to work. At the time when you started work, did you know what you were building?

DEC: No.

SW: Just digging out rock.

DEC: Digging a hole!

SW: What was your impression of the work? Hard work?

DEC: Yeah, it was.

SW: Steady paycheck?

DEC: Paycheck every Friday.

SW: Can't complain.

BC: Do you remember how much you made?

DEC: I made a $1.75 there at last, but I started out at a dollar and a quarter.

RP: Dollar a quarter an hour?

DEC: Yeah, dollar and a quarter.

BC: I remember he said that was good pay.

RP: That's what I made as a kid.

DEC: I got to be a little old foreman, and they raised me up to $1.75, and I thought that was out of this world. Fourteen-hour days, most of them.

SW: Those are long days. Did they work around the clock? Did they stop? Did they work double shifts?

DEC: They worked around the clock there for a while. They worked three shifts.

SW: Three shifts? Nonstop then.

DEC: It was nonstop.

SW: How did they build the tunnels? Do you recall the process of how they built them?

DEC: Why yeah, they just dug a hole! No, but they had a bulldozer. Well, at first they had a trailer truck with drills on it, and that didn't work too good, and they put it on a Caterpillar. Put seven drills on it, and they would just back her in there and drill from 9 to 11 feet and pull it out of there, and they would load it and shoot it, they'd go on there and scoop it out, go back and drill it again. They'd get maybe two drills a day, eight-hour shift. And sometimes they'd drill 9 and sometimes 11 feet. Most of the time 9 feet. Then they'd just load it and shoot it. Go in there and what they'd call muck it. They'd go in there with a scoop and muck it out, go back and drill her again. They had that Cat[erpillar] that'd go in there and they'd drill it, and then they'd go drive it out.

SW: Just taking off a little bit at time as they drilled in?

DEC: Eight feet, 9 feet, maybe 11. If they drilled good, they'd get 11 feet. Then they'd load it and shoot it.

SW: Did they use dynamite?

DEC: Yeah.

SW: Okay. So they would drill the holes and put in they dynamite?

DEC: Stuff it in there. It'd be seven holes they drilled. And they drilled, I forgot whether it was two or three holes a piece, each drill, and they'd load it. Then you had your lifters and your topper. They're the wings, they called it.

SW: How many people were usually working on a crew, or a shift? Was there a lot of people or pretty small number?

DEC: Yeah, there was a good many. I'd say, I don't know how many there was, but I drove a gunite crew and we had eight. We had to screen the sand and load it on the truck and take it in there and put it in the machine and blow it over.

SW: Were they building both tunnels at the same time, or did you build one and then the other?

DEC: They built the small bunkers, they called it, I guess you'd called it. They built 49 of them first. And then it was about, I believe it was in the fall I guess, and then we went back. They

kept all the foremen, and then we went back and started drilling, they called it a plant. But we drilled and built them, you know, straight back and then an angle on it.

SW: Did they ever tell you anything about like what the different aspects of the tunnels you were building? You mentioned it was a plant. Did you know anything about like the different aspects of the tunnel, like the vent pipe that they drilled on the top?

DEC: Yeah, we put a 4-foot pipe back there in the back at the top of the ground. It was a hundred-and-some feet. And we drilled it, they drilled it and let it drop down and hollowed it out. It didn't take long to go to the top, not with them drills.

SW: Easier than digging the actual tunnels?

DEC: Oh, yeah. They'd shoot it and it'd just drop out, and they'd go up there again.

SW: So they had the drills on the Caterpillars, then they would go in and drill the holes and put the dynamite in, blow the dynamite up and take the excess material out. After that, what would they do? Go in there and pour the concrete on the walls and continue back?

DEC: No, they didn't put no concrete in there until they got done.

SW: Until they got it all done?

DEC: Yeah. They put the concrete in after they got it dug. Didn't have a concrete crew come there with the cement. But hell, they put them walls were 18 inches thick, and then it's got two bars I guess, might be three but I know it's got two each deal, and they had them forms that fold out, stick them in there, and then they'd pour that full of cement.

SW: Did they have any problems with water when it would rain? Because when it rains around here we get a lot of those vertical seeps in the little springs. Did they ever fill up with water or anything?

DEC: No. They had one or two little old springs, but they'd just dig a little hole out and let the water out. But then they put that—I don't know whether they stuck a—what did they call that? Anyway, you'd drill a hole through the cement and put that pipe in there.

RP: Like a sump?

DEC: Yeah, and they'd pump, and then they'd pump that full of cement, and they'd keep on pumping it. And then no telling how far they'd run that cement. But if they had a little water leak, they'd just fill it up with cement.

SW: Keep the water from going up. Kind of like what they're trying to do with the [British Petroleum] well out there in the Gulf [of Mexico], fill it up with cement. That's what I heard.

DEC: I guess. But they'd pour the floor or the walls was 18 inches, and then they'd drill the hole through there, put a pipe on there, they'd pump up, oh, I forgot how many pounds of pressure. That would run that cement down all the cracks and the holes. No telling how far it went. It'd go for days. They'd be pumping for days. Just hundreds sacks of cement they poured in that thing.

SW: Did you actually help in that process of pouring the cement too, or just the digging?

DEC: Yeah, we had to pour that dry cement in that machine.

SW: So they actually mixed it up on site?

DEC: Oh, yeah. It went in there loose, pumped it in there. Water. It's slushy.

SW: Yeah, yeah. Until it dried and cured hard.

DEC: They'd have a trailer truck full of cement and they'd just put it all in there, and then go get another, or they have another one there.

BC: His crew was that gunite stuff.

RP: What is gunite?

BC: It's what you spray in a swimming pool.

DEC: What?

RP: I'm not sure what gunite is.

DEC: It's just cement and sand, and you just spray it on the walls. Really all it was good for is keep it from [flaking]. If you leave it open, the weather would, or the wind would make it flake, and we just sealed it all off with gunite. Just sprayed the walls and the ceiling.

RP: Did you wear any kind of protective mask?

DEC: No. They didn't care what you did. Did whatever you wanted to. We had a truck with a—we fixed a bed, platform on it, and the gunite machine would sit on the back of it, and they'd just drive in the—had the sand and stuff in the truck. We'd scoop it in that machine and start blowing it on there. Put the water through it.

SW: Were there any other safety precautions you had to follow?

DEC: No.

SW: You mentioned you didn't have to wear masks.

DEC: No, we didn't have to do nothing.

SW: Just get the work done.

DEC: Get the work done.

RP: Did you wear a hardhat?

DEC: We wore hardhats, yeah. That's the only thing we did, everybody wore hardhats.

SW: Were there any cave-ins?

DEC: No. There was a few big rocks fall out at our feet and around, but it wasn't really a big bunch.

SW: Nothing major. If I understand it correctly, there were a few accidents. You broke your back and pelvis.

DEC: I got bashed. It was carelessness, but I got mashed.

SW: Why don't you tell us what happened?

RP: Tell us what happened in that accident. How you got hurt.

DEC: Well, we had them old trucks, rock haulers. What'd you call them? They hauled a bunch of rock.

BC: Didn't you call them a dumpster?

DEC: Dumpster. And we had, let's see, about six of them.

RP: Were they on rails or on wheels?

DEC: On big wheels. They were up about that high [motioning the height]. But they'd haul, oh my god, 20 yards of rock. Anyway, it was colder than the devil, and the superintendent told me, said, "You make sure all them are in the tunnel tonight when you leave at 12." So we was out there getting it ready to get up in the holes, and I got between trucks. The bumpers would meet just barely. And we had little old 3-foot crossties that we'd put between the bumpers. Well, I was supposed to be driving really, but anyway there was another guy got in the truck. And I was holding the crosstie to get it started, and he come back and never did stop, never slowed up or nothing, just pow.

RP: So you got caught in between?

DEC: I was in between them. That thing weighed about eight tons or something, and it rolled it against the wall there. He hit me. Of course, I just crumbled down. I did pass out. My brother was there, and I told him to go get the ambulance. Well, the ambulance had a flat on it, and I finally asked if he wanted to get me out of there to get a basket. They had them baskets out there. Put me in one of them and put me in the back of a pickup and take me to hospital. And just as they was getting me in the basket and stuff the ambulance drove up. They got the tire changed.

RP: So where was the hospital?

DEC: Where it is now. Now Fort Hood, we went to—they had this long, long—

RP: Right, I know what—there are long corridor-type hospitals with—yeah, over in the First Cav[alry] area. I remember the first time I was stationed there, it was still, portions of it were still there.

DEC: Well, it was. They had a whole bunch of them. They had an A-3 [hospital bed] is what they put me in, and I stayed in there 43 days.

RP: Did Brown & Root still pay your salary while you were in there?

DEC: No.

RP: So as soon as you got hurt they took you to the hospital and that was it?

DEC: That was it! Yeah.

BC: Well, they did pay him something. Didn't they pay you something afterwards?

DEC: Actually, the insurance company give me $5,000, but that was the max. But they give me $5,000.

RP: So you were in the hospital 43 days. How long did it take until you were feeling closer to 100 percent?

DEC: Well, I was out at Fort Hood 43 days, and then they sent me to Scott & White. There was a colonel there that made me move. He said I could go to a civilian hospital, and so they sent me to Scott & White, and I was in bed for 97 days. Long time.

BC: They also, his doctors, he said at Fort Hood were very nice. Doctor Murray and Doctor Lamb.

DEC: Oh, they were good.

BC: And one of them had invented a bed that would flip you over without moving. The bed would turn over.

DEC: They got them now, but anyway, you just laid on it and they put a deal on top of it and they'd turn it and take the other piece off.

BC: But it was in Houston. And his daddy and the guy that owned the funeral home took the hearse to Houston and picked up the bed. And then he said the engineers at Fort Hood fixed a tray thing on the bottom, and a place for him to rest his arms.

DEC: Well, they did get it all, really, they did get all the bed. But they built me some things to lay my arms on. And then a trough they hung under there for me to eat. I could eat but just lay there.

BC: But what got me when I was—I wrote a thing about it after we did that [Killeen Base] tour last year. Okay, he's 23 years old, strong as mule, and he had just come back from he was in the marines fighting at Iwo Jima. Made it through that. Then he comes back and goes through that.

DEC: It was all my fault, though.

BC: How do you say that?

DEC: It was carelessness.

BC: Well, it was an accident, but it wasn't your fault.

DEC: I shouldn't have been there, but I was.

RP: Yeah. So what happened after you got out of the hospital from Scott & White?

DEC: Well, I was on crutches till November.

RP: So almost a year, then.

BC: It happened in February, I think.

RP: February.

DEC: Got hurt in February [1948], and I got out of the hospital on crutches at the end of June.

BC: Then he had to wear a brace, and he was wearing the brace when he met my mother.

DEC: I wore a brace and all that stuff. But I was there in that till about November.

SW: Did you go back to work at the tunnels?

DEC: No. They finished.

SW: They were done by then. Did you help build any of the other structures at Killeen Base? The towers or the pillboxes? I know you had mentioned some of the other bunkers.

DEC: No, none of those got done. I mean because when I left they were still digging, but then they went, I mean they went tight-lipped and nobody went back to that without a security pass and all that stuff.

SW: At the time that you were working in the tunnels, you didn't know what you were building. Did other people ever come out there to inspect the place or visit to see how work was progressing that you can recall?

DEC: Not that I know of. But all we was doing is digging the holes. They didn't tell you what it was for or anything. And they told us at the time that they was going to store airplanes in it and stuff like that, but didn't tell everything. But they was building at that time, still at the same time, they built that airstrip.

SW: So it was all going on at the same time.

DEC: Yes.

SW: Happened pretty quick, too, didn't it?

DEC: Oh, they built it in a couple of years, completed. Fenced it all. They put a three-fence wall around that. I mean four, 8-foot fence, a cyclone fence. First the middle one was sitting on the cement. It was an electric fence. And then they had built on either side two more fences out here. But that one, if you touched it, it was all of it.

SW: Pretty high charge, then?

DEC: Oh yeah, they said it was high hot. I wasn't there, but I went out there and they said it was really—they had three gates you couldn't get through, though. But they had them fences. They built that. They put, they dug down to rock all the way around and poured that full of cement and put that fence on top of that. Electric fence.

SW: What did the local people think about it? Did other people know you were out there digging big holes?

DEC: They didn't know what you was doing.

SW: Didn't know what you were doing.

DEC: Everybody was for you, you went out there [and worked]. You couldn't say nothing about what you was doing or anything.

SW: Did anyone start, you know, did you ever hear any rumors or stuff?

DEC: Well, they'd start rumors, you know. Hell, but I never did know of anything with any truth to it.

SW: At the time you were working out there, did you ever get a feeling or a thought you were a part of something bigger or something important?

DEC: Nope.

SW: Just digging holes.

DEC: Just digging holes is all we did. Getting paid.

RP: Could you take us through a typical day for you? What time did you get up? How did you get out there? What did you do when you got there?

DEC: We went out there in our own cars, but there wasn't no roads out there. There was a little old road come over that little mountain over here, went down across Clear Creek, up there, and then this little old dirt road went down out there to it. But they put all of them roads in there after. They built them. I mean just old dirt roads out there.

RP: So what time would you get up in the morning to make it to work on time?

DEC: Well, you know, different times. But I got up, we got out there about, seven o'clock.

RP: And when you got out there, what would you do? What was kind of the first thing you would do when you got out there?

DEC: Well, we'd get the gunite out, we had to get our sand ready. And after they'd shoot it, you'd have to go in and gunite it. First you had to let the smoke get out of it, that old steam, them old dynamite steam could make you sick. They had to let it air out a little, they had a big fan in there trying to suck a little of it out. And after that was through, we'd go in there. And most the time the drillers would drill, they'd let them drill two or three times before we went in there and gunited it. But that was just hazard. Them rocks would fall off and break their arms and all that stuff. Cut their fingers off if they had them on the drills. It was pretty bad. A lot of them got crippled on it.

RP: The boys on your crew, were they local guys or were they from somewhere else?

DEC: They was all local.

RP: Do you remember who they are? Can you remember any of the names of those guys that you worked with?

DEC: Oh yeah! My brother, he was I. E. Conder, and Uncle Forrest Elmore. And every time they'd send me to town to hire somebody, they didn't advertise for workers or nothing. But if I needed a local fellow, they'd send me to town to see if I could find somebody.

SW: You were, just like today, networking, right? It's who you know, right?

DEC: It's who you know!

BC: That's his time book of his people on his crew and their names. That was their badge number.

He said they had a badge. And he had—no, he didn't have that badge. He had another badge.

DEC: But anyway, that's different hours they worked and all that.

RP: Right, 1947. So you were 23 when you went out there to work?

DEC: Yeah. [Went to work in February 1947.]

RP: What kind of experience did you have?

DEC: None! None! They thought I was a miner, really, when I went out there. They thought I was from Colorado.

RP: You managed to hide your accent, hide that Texas accent? They didn't—

DEC: They'd say, Well, when did you get in? Yesterday? And I said, "Unh-huh."

RP: And put you to work.

DEC: They put me to work.

RP: What did you do before you went to work out there?

DEC: I worked at Fort Hood for a while as a guard. When I got out of the marine corps. They was supposed to have a horse platoon in that there, they was going to run all the stock off Fort Hood. There was a lot of cattle and everything out there, sheep, and they was going to drive everything off. And they had, oh I guess 50 horses out there, and they hired a bunch of hands to ride them. That's what I hired out for, and at the time until they started that, they said, Well, we could just guard at different places, you know, like. So we stood around, and well, at motor pools, just different places, anywhere they could dream up for you to stay. And they had little old shacks out there and we just stayed out there. But I went to work the very day after I got out of the marine corps. They said that the guy was coming over to ride horses and drive them stock off the reservation, and I thought that'd be a good job, you know.

RP: Did they do that, did they drive the stock off?

DEC: No, they never did. They got everything ready, but they never did drive. Well, I think they found out it wouldn't work, because if you didn't fence it that you couldn't keep them off.

RP: Now did you grow up riding horses around here? Are you a good horseman?

DEC: I rode one to school for eight years!

RP: Where did you go to school?

DEC: Willow Springs. That's about 2 1/2 miles over the hill there, past Shoemaker High School, on down across the creek and up on top of the next little old hill was Willow Springs School.

RP: And what grade did that go up to?

DEC: Well, at one time it went up to the 10th, but whenever I went over there it went up to the eighth.

RP: I see. And then from there you went to Killeen High School?

DEC: Yeah. And they run a bus at that time. Like they had, they got to running the school bus to pick up the kids, take us out there. It was big stuff when you get to ride a bus!

SW: Do you remember any of the communities on Fort Hood? Elijah or Sugar Loaf?

DEC: Yeah, I do. And Antelope.

SW: Did you ever go out to any of them?

DEC: Yeah. At Elijah, that's on the river. A swimming hole. And they had singings out there on Sunday, and I'd go out there with Mom and Daddy and of course, we'd go to the creek, the river, and swim in it.

SW: Was Elijah a pretty big town?

DEC: It was a store! That was all.

SW: What about Sugar Loaf?

DEC: I don't guess Sugar Loaf—I don't remember Sugar Loaf. I remember where it was at, but it wasn't nothing, just Sugar Loaf. At one time, Killeen was—that's where Killeen was, and they moved it into where it is now from Sugar Loaf. But as far as Sugar Loaf, as far as I know there wasn't nothing out there just other than Sugar Loaf. That's what they called it, Sugar Loaf community.

RP: Is your wife a local girl? Is your wife local? Is she from the local area?

DEC: Well, yeah, but she's a lot younger than I was, and she's from Pendleton. That's on the other side of Temple, north of Temple.

BC: Little, little bitty. No stop lights.

RP: Pendleton. So how did you meet her?

DEC: I just run into her. No, I met her. I don't really know. Football game, I think, [in Cameron, Texas].

BC: She would be here later. She could tell you exactly. I go to the Cameron football games.

DEC: I went to Taylor.

BC: Taylor? He had a car, and she was eight years younger and in high school, and you all had a car there I know, and her and her sister had ridden to the game on a school bus. I think that's the first time she saw him.

RP: So you were living in the old house then south of where we're at right now? And then just commuting in to work from there.

DEC: I lived over there until about '50. Then I built this house up here. I built it in '48, but I didn't move in it till '50. Then I lived there for 47 years, then I moved out here. Hadn't been very far!

SW: You mentioned you were a marine. Would you tell us about that?

DEC: Well, I was in the marine corps. It was a good deal! The marine corps is a good outfit.

SW: My brother-in-law is a force recon marine. He's been there for several years now.

RP: So why would go, if you're right next to Camp Hood and the army, why would you become a marine?

DEC: Well, you see, the _____ [inaudible]! And I went to the marine corps, my brother, twin brother, he didn't go in the marines. He went in the army. Of course, he got killed. I don't know.

BC: He didn't have to go. His brother didn't have to go.

RP: Because [Mr. Conder] was serving.

BC: And he went and joined anyway. So.

RP: I see.

DEC: Yeah, he was my twin brother.

RP: I didn't know he was your twin. I knew, yeah.

DEC: Yeah, he was my twin.

RP: What outfit was he in?

DEC: I think he was 97-something, army.

RP: Infantry division?

DEC: I don't know what the name of it was, really.

BC: I know he said, well, I don't guess you could tell, but he said he was like at the front when they were at that island that starts with a G. Where was he killed, it starts with a G? I forgot the name of it. That island that starts with a G.

DEC: Oh, he got killed at Okinawa.

BC: Oh, sorry, Okinawa. But he would be at the front, and then he had one of those Browning—

RP: Browning automatic riffle?

BC: Yeah, and that a sniper killed him because he had the gun.

DEC: Well, no. [There was two snipers. Dennis shot one and the other shot him.]

BC: No?

DEC: He lay four hours back to it, but he was headed for the ship, mopping up, going to the ship. There was a boy that stayed out here at Fort Hood and stayed over there at Mom and Daddy's. His wife stayed there while he was overseas. He come back and he told us that

that's where he got killed and what time of day. He got killed at 11 o'clock in the daytime, and he was aboard a ship that evening at 4 o'clock. Didn't lack much making it.

RP: No. It's a shame.

DEC: They said he shot him under the right arm, come out on the left, went all the way through.

SW: And it was a sniper?

DEC: Yeah. He got one sniper. They said he was treed, and he got one of them, and the one over here got him under the arm here. So, that's what that guy that was with him told us that's what they did. But there was a bunch of them, a good many come to his funeral. They brought his body back in '48 I guess, and some of the guys that was with him come to the funeral. I guess he had lots of buddies in there. Most everybody did, though. Because everybody in there had been in their group.

SW: You get to know them pretty well.

DEC: Real well, yeah.

RP: So where did you do your training, marine corps training?

DEC: San Diego. They just got two places. Camp Lejeune and San Diego. That's the only places they trained.

RP: So how did you get out there? Did you take a train?

DEC: Train. Got out there in two days. They stopped at every cattle crossing in the world, they stopped. But we got out there, and I wished we'd stayed longer when we got there. I was wanting to get there, but after I got there I found out I should have waited longer, because they started on us. We got there about 11 o'clock at night, and they started on us till 2 o'clock in the morning, and had us up the next morning at 5 o'clock, getting ready. They had us dressed out. Fit everything, we had a box and had you just throw everything in there, and they started out with underwear and they gave us your stuff. Go in there, they suited you up. You didn't have nothing but what they give you. All your other stuff was in the box and they shipped that home. Mostly sent all your money home, too, and everything, but most of us held out a little bit.

SW: Keep a little back.

DEC: Yeah, but you couldn't go nowhere really. you didn't need it. They didn't let you go. Even to go to the PX. You couldn't do nothing but stay right there and train. You trained every day, though. Late days, long days. But that's a lot of discipline. That's where they get you disciplined at.

SW: Agreed.

DEC: Yeah, lots of discipline. I know we raked, or swept the area one time with toothbrushes. That was on a Sunday. Something all the time. But there wasn't nothing wrong with it, really. I thought there was at the time, but it wasn't really. It was just really discipline. I guess if you'd have broke or something, well, they'd have weeded you out. But if you hung in there, you was in there.

RP: The folks that lost their land here that's adjacent to you, did you know those families? The

people who lived next door to you here on the adjacent ranch land, did you know those ranchers?

DEC: Did I know them!? Why sure I knew them! Yeah! Robert Stansil, Billy Schaeffer. Yeah. [Houston Ray, Tom Ray, Arthur Dowdy, Bennie Schafer.]

RP: Stanslaw?

BC: I think it's Stansil, is that right? I don't know how you spell it.

DEC: Stansil, yeah.

SW: Where did they go when the army acquired the land?

DEC: They went to town.

SW: Just moved in to Killeen. They tore their houses down, the ranch house down?

DEC: No, they left them up. But they got tore down and burned up in time. They didn't last long. Vacant houses don't last long.

SW: Did any of them come and work on Camp Hood, to help build it? Did any of those people, that you can remember, when they lost their land, did they come and work on Camp Hood when they were building it?

DEC: I don't know. Probably did, maybe. Some of them was too bitter about it.

SW: Oh, I can imagine.

DEC: But right up here where the hospital is now was Houston Ray, he had 900 acres there, and he moved to Prairie Dell, over at Salado. People like that, they hated leaving their land. I mean, he had livestock on it, sheep, and they just told him he was through, and I mean you just had to get rid of what you had. It's sickening. But he sold all his sheep and bought an old place over there in Salado, or Prairie Dell, and moved over there. I know he had a wagon, two or three wagons, and I drove one of them over there. Took all day to get there. Left there in the morning, it's over the other side of Salado, by Salado over there, and it took about all day drive them mules cross—well, we went kind of across country. It wasn't like it is now, there wasn't all kinds of roads and stuff. Just country roads.

BC: Well, his daddy farmed with mules until when? He farmed, you know, all where Shoemaker is now, that was his farm land, and over here.

DEC: He had 200-something acres of farming, what they call row cropping. He done it with teams of mules.

RP: What did he grow? What kind of produce did he farm?

DEC: Well, he raised cotton, corn, maize, [and oats].

SW: Most people have farming and ranching? Most people were farmers and ranchers around here?

DEC: Yeah. That was all. Even if they was over at the other end of town, they was all farms right up to town, went right up to the streets in town, which there wasn't no town much.

BC: But didn't have they have a lot of cotton? Didn't they have a cotton gin? They have a lot of cotton?

DEC: They had four cotton gins in Killeen. I know there was Adams and Saegerts, Jost and Burks. There was four of them, and they stayed pretty busy all the time—there was lot of cotton here.

SW: Was there a lot of cattle? Did a lot of people run cattle out here?

DEC: No.

SW: Just sheep?

DEC: Well now, it was all farming, but back over here what they call towards the river they had sheep, cows, and stuff. But over this side, really this side of the railroad, it was just farming.

SW: Just farming.

RP: And where the railroad is right now, that's the same rail line that was back there?

DEC: Yeah, that old railroad, yeah, it's still there. You can still hear that old train, that old steam engine going up the grade over here, and it would really have to puff sometimes, they had a good load. That was the steam engine, you know.

RP: Did they have any rail at all in the tunnel? No rail at all out at West Fort Hood?

DEC: At one time they run a little track out there.

RP: What was that for, the track that they ran?

DEC: To haul the bombs out there. That's all it was for. They didn't want to go down the road with them, and so they built a little track across the road. The highway up there is about, well, about where that gate is now, that pass is where they built the little track across to the tunnels over there.

SW: Did they run all the way up to the tunnels, or did they stop short of there?

DEC: They run on out there, as far as I know. You didn't go out there and see what they was doing.

SW: Yeah, yeah, of course.

DEC: But they run out there. As far as I know, they went all the way.

SW: To the best of your knowledge, did they only dig those two tunnels?

DEC: Well, yeah. They dug 49 little ones.

SW: Yeah, the smaller ones.

DEC: I don't know what you call them, but they were 100-and-something feet deep and about 50 feet wide.

RP: Okay, let me make sure I understand. So we have 49 of the small tunnels, and the big tunnels are called 51 and 52?

DEC: Yeah.

SW: So tunnel 50 is where?

DEC: I don't know.

SW: Is that like a connecting tunnel?

DEC: No, it just—they just had a—well, it's there in the book. It shows what it is.

BC: I thought that one was 26. The one long one. They just have those numbers on them.

SW: Yeah, those numbers were arbitrarily assigned when the army acquired the land.

BC: Yeah. Okay.

RP: Yeah. When I read the history that Mrs. Elmore gave me, Polly Peaks-Elmore?

BC: Don't ask him about her!

DEC: If you're quoting her, you're quoting something, I'll tell you.

RP: I was just asking! That's why were here is to try to make sure we understand the perspective. So the main tunnels, did they have a number? Did they number them while you were out there, or were they just called the main tunnels?

DEC: Well no, they had numbers. I guess they had the 49 little tunnels, and each one of them was numbered. And then they had them two big tunnels, and we just finished that one when I got hurt that night. We was moving over across the hill to dig the other one.

RP: So what did you do with the ore? Where did the ore go when you pulled it out? Was it just dumped out there somewhere?

DEC: Yeah. They hauled it out there and had 'dozers smoothed it all, just keep pushing it back. They can draw that, they fill—pretty good draw, and they just filled them up. But they just kept pushing it out there.

RP: So when you guys would break for lunch, did you just bring your own lunch with you, like a lunchbox?

DEC: Yeah, we brought a paper sack or whatever you want. Sit down and eat. Thirty-minute break.

RP: That's it? Thirty minutes?

BC: When we went out there for the tour, he said it looked so much different, because when he worked out there it was like pasture land.

DEC: There wasn't no trees or nothing.

BC: No trees. That it was hard now to see where everything was because it was so grown up.

Because, he said, when they were out there, there wasn't hardly any trees.

DEC: There wasn't any. You could look off down through that clear.

SW: Were there houses up there on Seven Mile Mountain before the army got the land? Did anyone live up there that you can recall?

DEC: No, they wasn't. Them little old mountains, didn't nobody live on them or nothing.

SW: Just down on the sides.

DEC: Yeah. Somebody maybe owns, you know, a pretty good chunk of it. But there wasn't no cows or nothing. They didn't graze, because there wasn't no cows. There wasn't no demand on them because you couldn't run nothing on them, no stock to amount to anything.

SW: Yeah, it's all rock.

DEC: Why, yeah. Short grass. A few trees. Not many trees. It was just hills. It just didn't look the same. Even this little old mountain right over here, they took about 20 feet off the top of it

RP: Did they?

DEC: Army did. Cut it down.

SW: For the airfield?

DEC: Where the airfield is. Oh, they put a lookout thing up there. Little houses and guards up there all the time.

SW: Down on the end where the radar tower is, right?

DEC: Well, I don't know where the radar tower is.

SW: Okay. I think that is the spot where they cut the top off [looking at a map].

DEC: Well, the little radar hill over there, that's an old mountain. We used to go over there hunting or fishing, and go up on that mountain. Weenie roasts and all that stuff. The owners didn't care who went up there, really. And we went up there, used to go up there, go over there hunting, fishing, up at that little old creek.

RP: What was the name of the creek?

DEC: Clear Creek.

RP: What kind of fish did Clear Creek have in it?

DEC: Little catfish about that long, and perch. But we thought we'd done pretty good to catch a few of them and bring them home. My mother would cook them for us.

SW: Down there off of Reese's Creek, Camp Mayberry, do you know what that originally was? Was that a city or, I mean, a town?

DEC: No, it wasn't nothing.

SW: It was just a cemetery out there?

DEC: Little old cemetery, and Cordons had a house out there, but that's all about to it. Cordon built him a rock house, before the army took it over.

SW: Do you know how the area got its name Camp Mayberry? Because I've heard different stories about that area down there.

DEC: Well, it was all done by the army. When the army come, I mean it was—they put two little old or three little old buildings out there, and then they had parties and things out there all the time.

SW: So it was like a little recreation area?

DEC: Yeah. But there wasn't no town or anything.

SW: Yeah. Because I've heard different stories that it was actually like a little community, or—

DEC: No. Just the Cordons lived out there, right there by where you turned down to go down there to the rock house up there.

SW: I've pretty much covered everything that I have. I could probably sit here and talk to you forever.

RP: So Becky, what are we not asking him that we should of the stories that you've heard?

BC: Well, the one thing I know is when were talking about—I took him out there and we drove around, and he would tell me all kinds of stuff about what was here, what was there. And then he said when we were little, that they would bring bombs down Clear Creek and the MPs would come by and make us stay in the house.

DEC: Oh yeah. Because I lived up there in this house. They'd come by and tell you not to come out of the house till the convoy had gone by, not to come out.

RP: MPs would come up and knock on the door?

DEC: Well, it was MPs or the security out there that would tell everybody to stay off the road till they'd got the trucks down through there. But of course, I wasn't going in the house, I wasn't afraid of being shot. I stood on the front porch and watched them come by. Was wrapped up. They had them all tarped down. But they put like a guard out there, put right down there at my daddy's gate, they put a guard out there. Everybody that had a gate, they put a man on to stand guard there to keep everybody off of the road while they was coming down it. And, if I'd have knew what all it was, I might would not have wanted on the road.

SW: I was about to say, did you all know what they were moving down there at the time?

DEC: You figured it was something, but you didn't have no idea.

SW: When did you find out what they were doing down there?

DEC: Well really, I don't know. I never did find out for sure. You hear everything, but as far as really knowing, you didn't know until you went out there and seen what they showing it to, where they had the bomb and everything in the little boxes and things [when we went on the Killeen Base tour].

SW: So you've been out there before? Recently?

BC: Just last year.

SW: Does it look the same? Has it changed a lot from when you were actually building and constructing it?

DEC: There wasn't no cement in it when I was out there. When I got hurt, we'd just finished digging them.

SW: Just finished digging them. So you didn't get to see them move in any of the big generators, the equipment, the pulleys?

DEC: No, no.

SW: None of that.

DEC: Didn't nobody get to see much of that. And they put hoists in there and all that stuff in the ceilings.

BC: He had a close friend that lived right down here that worked out there that wouldn't tell him nothing.

DEC: You couldn't get nothing out of him. He lived right up there and he worked at Gray [Air Force] Base. He'd just say, I work at Gray [Air Force] Base.

SW: That's what a lot of people have told me, just that's where they work, Killeen Base, Q Area or A Area, and that's it, nothing else.

BC: Well, he was like a meticulous, perfect, everything was nice and clean and neat. He had a little race car, a little red convertible race car, when I was growing up that he would drive sometimes.

DEC: I couldn't hardly believe it, when I was out there just old dirt tunnels. He talked about actually cemented them and painted them and swept them out, vacuumed them. It was really a clean place, you know, inside.

SW: What do you think they should do with the tunnels now?

DEC: Well, they said they use them to train underground people in them.

SW: Do you think that is a good use for the tunnels?

DEC: Well, I don't know anything else they'd be good for.

SW: Agreed. They're there. Might as well use them.

DEC: It's well to use them. They're there. One of them bunkers, they used it for a long time to store it full of whiskey, and they couldn't nobody steal it. I mean, they—

SW: It's a good spot to put it. It's a good spot to keep it.

DEC: Well, they just put it out there, and they'd come out and draw it, you know. You can only draw so much booze. But you couldn't steal it out the backdoor or nothing.

SW: They got three fences out there!

DEC: Well, they took them down. But they had them big vault doors on the front of them.

SW: Those are big doors.

DEC: Yeah. They still got doors on them. They had a door, and over about 4 or 5 feet or 6 feet they had another door, and it was a vault door.

SW: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us that you can recall about the tunnels, or that you want people to know about them?

DEC: Well, if I knew anything I'd tell you, but I don't know other than just digging them holes.

SW: Did you ever think about that you were one of the people in the Cold War? Did you ever think that you were part of the Cold War?

DEC: No.

SW: Because those tunnels are a key facility, you know, within the transport and storage of nuclear weapons within the Cold War.

DEC: Well, if you'd known what they was doing, it would have been a lot different. But they didn't never tell you what they was doing with them. Digging holes was all you knew. And you figured it was for something, but you had no idea what for. And I didn't figure, really at that time, I didn't figure it was atomic stuff was in there.

SW: Have you learned anything about the other storage facilities that they have? The Manzano Base in Kirtland [Air Force Base] in New Mexico is an identical sister facility to what Killeen Base has over here.

DEC: Yeah, there was a lot of work that appeared out there to work in New Mexico. [There were local people who went to New Mexico to work.]

SW: Doing the same type of tunnels?

DEC: Yes.

SW: Maybe a little bit different digging. Did you hear anything from former people you'd worked with about it? Or did you keep in touch with them? [Yes, one was my cousin.]

DEC: No, just some of them that lived here that went out there was going to go to work in the tunnels. And they'd worked in the tunnels here. I guess that was a recommendation that you'd worked in the tunnels here.

SW: Yeah, pretty good experience, probably.

BC: We asked him about those people, if there were anybody still—

RP: Forrest Elmore and Hugh Reding and Troy Rhodes. So is Ivey Conder in here, is that your father?

DEC: That's my brother.

RP: So your brother was named after your [dad]?

DEC: My dad.

RP: How old was your brother? How old was Ivey?

DEC: How old was he?

BC: He was eight or so years older.

DEC: Yeah, he was about eight years older than I was.

BC: I think Daddy was born in 1924, and he was born in about 1917.

DEC: Nineteen-seventeen.

RP: So he was on the crew with you and stayed on the crew after you got hurt?

DEC: Yeah. But I went out there. All of them people there I went and got—local people I went and hooked them up. They'd tell you to go see if you could find somebody to work. They wouldn't tell nobody what they was doing or nothing.

RP: Right. I know you said that $1.25 was good. Was that a lot better than pay at other places around town?

DEC: Yeah. Even like a carpenter would draw about $1.12, I believe. They was paying something like a dollar and a quarter out there.

RP: So $1.75, that's a good salary.

DEC: Oh, that was a good salary. I had a perfect job. That old boy from Colorado, he was the gunite man, that's what he come here for. He asked me, he said, "Do you want this job?" He said, "I don't like it here and I'm leaving." He said, "Would you like to have it?" And I said, "Oh yeah, I'd like to have it, but they won't let me have it." He said, "Yeah, I'll get it for you." And he went down at the office. In a little while he come back and showed me a little old book there, said, "This is yours. You're the foreman." [And] $1.75, man alive, that was a gold mine.

RP: So where was their office at?

DEC: I don't know. There was an old wooden building up there, but it was in the wooden building. But it wasn't no elaborate building. They might've hauled it in there, I don't know. But then they had a shop and stuff all up on top of the hill.

RP: I see. Okay.

DEC: Up on top. I know we'd go up there. There were like the little old 'dozers and stuff, we'd go up and get them.

RP: For you was this Monday through Friday, or was it every [day].

DEC: Seven days a week. Making a fortune of money. More money than you ever dreamed you could make. I was making $1.75 working 14 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week. You talk about when you get to payday. Payday started on Tuesday overtime.

RP: So standard workday was an eight-hour day?

DEC: Yeah.

RP: And then anything above eight hours was overtime.

DEC: Overtime.

RP: And you worked on an average 14, 16 hours?

DEC: Twelve, 14 hours a day. Usually 14.

RP: Is it straight pay overtime, or were you getting time-and-a-half?

DEC: Anything over 40 hours was time-and-a-half. An eight-hour day, anything over eight hours was time-and-a-half.

BC: Wow! A lot of places don't even do that now. You have to work 40 hours, and then you get time-and-a-half. Not eight, and then time-and-a-half.

DEC: Well, if you worked over eight in a day, you got time-and-a-half.

RP: I don't get time-and-a-half. I get straight pay, same pay. At least I get paid for working past eight hours, but I don't get time-and-a-half. I only get time-and-a-half maybe on a weekend or a holiday or something.

DEC: No, we got time-and-a-half for anything over eight hours.

RP: So I see you worked through Thanksgiving. Did you guys shut down for Thanksgiving and Christmas, big holidays like that?

DEC: Maybe. I can't remember. But we didn't take no holidays. They wanted that built.

BC: And I asked him too, if there was another book or, you know, and he said he didn't know.

DEC: Yeah, they wanted us to—well, they was in a hurry.

RP: Now, like a lot of jobs, you get on the job and you learn how to do the job. Is there something that, as you were in charge of this crew, that you know we could do this better? Things that you saw that you got the guys to do differently to make the job easier or faster?

DEC: [Yes, we first built a platform to get on to shoot the gunite. It was my idea to make a platform on a truck to stand on. It could be moved.]

Well, we was definitely good at the scaling. They dug some scaling.

RP: What is scaling?

DEC: Loose rocks. We had a bar that you'd punch them down.

RP: So you'd be on like a platform in the tunnel, and if there was anything lose you're hitting it with a stick to try to knock it down?

DEC: With a bar, yeah.

RP: Holy smokes!

BC: Knock it down on you!

SW: I would be afraid it would cave in.

BC: He said they dug up a lot of dynamite that wasn't exploded. You know, that they'd be digging it and it would just be [there].

SW: Well, I appreciate your time, sir.

DEC: I wish I knew more! But I don't.

SW: I've talked with many different people. We're currently doing an oral history with many of the [air police] that were stationed up there. You are the only person we have met to have worked on building the tunnels before they were actually up and operational. So it was a pleasure to come out here and speak with you.

DEC: Well, of course, I was glad to get the work. But it was just like I lucked out. I started out at a dollar-whatever it was, and then I got the that little foreman's job and that jumped me up to $1.75. Man, that was just like a gold mine. I had more money than I knew what to do with. We worked 14 hours, couldn't go nowhere to spend it because you're working all the time. And I bought me a new car and a whole bunch of things.

SW: Anything else, Richard?

RP: No. It was fascinating.

SW: Yes.

DEC: I have some pictures there. Those were when I was in the hospital hurt, this woman drawed them, a friend of mine drawed them and sent them to me, a girl.

BC: I don't know if you know Bud Duncan?

RP: I don't.

BC: He has been friends with Daddy since they were little, and anyway his sister drew those for Daddy when he was in the hospital, and wrote this little poem.

DEC: Yeah, she brought them out to the [hospital].

BC: Anyway, it's pretty cute. I made him that book after last year when we went out there. It was very interesting to go out there when none of us knew for sure exactly what was out there.

SW: I didn't know until I started having to manage these. I'm a prehistoric archeologist by training, and my boss comes to me one day and goes, "Sonny, we need to do something with these tunnels." And I looked at her, and I was like, Well, you know, I know arrowheads, I know dirt, I know bones. I knew nothing about tunnels. And that's how I became involved with dealing with these.

DEC: Of course, I didn't know nothing about it neither. We just went out there and went to work. Most everybody out there didn't know nothing either. Just digging like they said to do. There was an engineer out there, he'd step up there and he'd put an X on that, and that's where

they'd drill. And they'd shoot it, he shoot a line in there again, and take a machine, a 'dozer with some drills on it and back up to it. We went by that X on the wall and we'd start on the wall. Every time keep it straight, I guess. But they had it on a trailer truck to begin with, and it was hell to back one in there.

SW: I'll bet.

DEC: A lot of the drillers, it would just tickle them to death because he couldn't get it in there, and they'd just lay out there and wouldn't even help him back in or nothing. And after that, then they put it on a D8 [driller], them drills, and they could just back right in there to anywhere they wanted to go with that, straightened it around in there. It was something else.

BC: Dad, he wanted to know if you had any pictures of the place.

DEC: I don't think so.

BC: And this is the only book. I don't know that there would be pictures of [anything]. Well, this is one when he was like little, but as far as the general, that's Willow Springs School. Anyway, you can look and see if there are any. He was wondering if you had any pictures of your home place.

RP: So these are the twins, right?

BC: Yes, and that's him.

SW: Nineteen-twenty-four. And then you can see the house on the background.

RP: Where was this at?

DEC: That's the old house up there. That's the old porch. See that little old car sitting up there?

RP: Late '40s?

DEC: I imagine. Early '40s, I'd imagine.

SW: So what was your first car that you owned?

DEC: Oh, me and my twin brother, we had a '33 Ford. That's an old, old car. And boy, we got rid of it and got a ['36 Dodge].

BC: Here's that house up there on the road.

SW: You built that yourself? That house?

DEC: Up here? Yeah. I didn't do it all, but I done a lot of it.

SW: Nice.

BC: There ain't nothing out there. It was a field.

SW: Nothing.

BC: No.

DEC: I lived there 47 years, and then moved out here.

RP: This you and your brother?

DEC: Yeah, in '32.

BC: Okay, that's the house over here.

DEC: That's me right there, and that's my double, my twin and I.

BC: There you are in front of the [Willow Springs School in] 1951 and 1952. That's in front of their house over there. Oh, that's Willow Springs School. Oh, and there they were in at the state fair.

SW: At Fort Worth?

BC: At Fort Worth or Dallas?

DEC: Fort Worth.

SW: That's a good picture.

RP: Yeah, that's real interesting.

SW: With your Killeen T-shirt on. Is that what that K is, Killeen?

RP: Yes, they have letter sweaters, and so you'd have your letter was right in the middle of your chest.

DEC: Yes, there was 11 on a team, and they'd give out about 12 of them.

BC: I know I had a section in here when they were growing up, and he don't have a very big section. That's his house he grew up in.

DEC: That's what?

BC: Poppy's house. I called him Poppy. That's his parents, his father and his mother, him.

RP: So you played in the backfield?

DEC: Yeah.

RP: Running back, fullback?

DEC: Half back.

RP: Hundred and seventy pounds when you were in high school. That's pretty good.

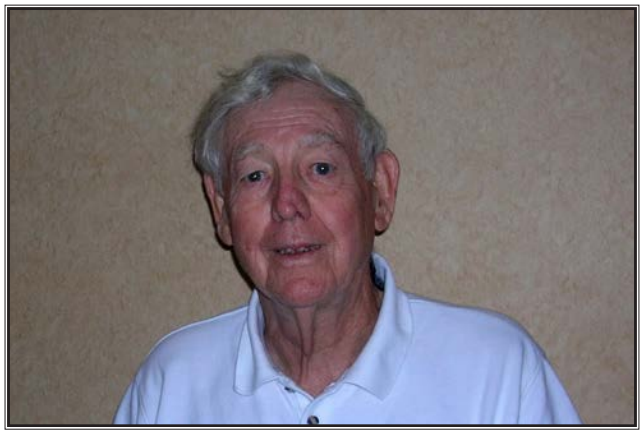
DEC: I was a big one. Most of them didn't weigh but 140.

BC: There he is in high school. He's just a baby!

DEC: My twin brother never did letter, though.

William Jonathan (Bill) Fogle

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1951–1952
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas



SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Monday, September 14, 2009. I am interviewing, for the first time, Mr. William [Jonathan (Bill)] Fogle. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

I've got a script of questions, but they might not make sense chronologically, but as the questions arise we'll just kind of go over it. And I apologize if they seem repetitious.

WJF: I understand you need a structure.

SK: So you said you were 20 years old when you enlisted?

WJF: Correct.

SK: And were you on the East Coast, Midwest, before you came to Texas?

WJF: I came from Akron, Ohio.

SK: And were you born in Ohio?

WJF: Yes, I was born in Barberton, which is a suburb of Akron.

SK: And you went to Killeen [Base] for your training?

WJF: Yes. I took a train from Canton[, Ohio], for about three days and then came into Lackland [Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas].

SK: And then Killeen Base?

WJF: And then from Lackland to Killeen Base.

SK: What were your first impressions of Killeen Base? Did you come at night? Did you come during the day?

WJF: We got there just about suppertime and we were starved. That's why I remember that. We hadn't eaten. I think that we came in probably about six in the evening. I don't think it was quite dark yet because they took us right to the mess hall.

SK: What ranks did you achieve when you were in the service?

WJF: I was an airmen second.

SK: Did you serve in any other unit besides the 1094th?

WJF: No. The 1094th was my whole career in the service.

SK: How long was that?

WJF: Four years. The Korean War started in June 1950. I enlisted January 5, 1951. I got out December the 15th of 1954. It would be about two or three weeks before the four years was up.

SK: And did you go to Manzano?

WJF: Yes. We were in Killeen [Base] for about one year. I came in February of '51 and left by February of '52 to go to Manzano.

SK: Did your experience in Texas differ from New Mexico at all?

WJF: As far as duty, or—?

SK: Just your general observations. The set up of the base, your duties—

WJF: Yes. It was very similar. When I was assigned to Killeen [Base] there were a number of us that came in at the same time, I'm not sure about the number but it was one or two hundred. They didn't have facilities in the main buildings. I think they may have built a building for air police barracks, but we were in what they called tent city, and we were in 10-man tents and they had wooden floors, and wooden frames that the tent was over. We had five cots on each side [showing photograph]. This is [Harold] Lehman, you're going to interview him. This fellow, you won't be interviewing him, I haven't seen him since we were out of the service. Of course, that's myself. That was our tent.

SK: Did you enlist with any friends?

WJF: Two buddies from work. We enlisted at the same time. One fellow stayed with me. We stayed together and he and I were in the 1094th for our whole career. The other fellow went to a different outfit in basic and then he went to a tech school.

SK: What was your position?

WJF: Guard. We were called air policemen. We called ourselves the guards.

SK: Previous interviewees mentioned the different gates and different tunnels. Where were you guarding?

WJF: Well, it just depended on the day. I've done some main gate, Q [Area] gate, perimeter patrol, [Q] Area patrol, plant entrance.

SK: So you were inside and outside?

WJF: Inside and outside, pillbox, the whole thing.

SK: You had to kind of be specially assigned to the 1094th. Were you aware of that at the time?

WJF: No I wasn't, originally I thought I would probably go to radar school, but it was a critical AFSC, and after we were there not very many people transferred out.

SK: Later, did you discover the FBI interviewed any of your friends or family for a background check?

WJF: I think it was when I went home [on my first furlough], someone had called my parents and said the FBI had been checking on me. They wanted to know if I was in trouble, and my parents said they didn't think so.

SK: Was there a time limit as to how long you could be stationed at one facility, so one person didn't know too much?

WJF: Since we were in the guard, I don't know of any restriction that way. I don't know if that applied to anybody that worked in the plant or anything.

SK: Was there a method to the rotations?

WJF: No. I think there was some rotation between flights. I don't know if anybody told you, but we had six flights that were guards, and you worked three-day shifts. You'd be on six [a.m.] to noon for three days, and you'd come back and work noon to six [p.m.] for three days, then you'd go on [six p.m. to midnight], [then to] midnight to six in the morning. So you worked the shifts that way. And then we had three days that we were on alert, 72 hours that you stayed on the base, and then you were off for [a] three-day [pass], then you come back and do the same thing again. The only thing I know that they did rotate some of the people from one flight to another. [The guards worked an 18-day cycle. Four flights were on guard duty, one flight on alert, and one flight on three-day pass, 24/7, 52 weeks a year.]

SK: Were you ever in the tunnels for those three days straight?

WJF: No. [I have worked a shift in the tunnels three days in a row, but not 72 hours.] The three days we were on the base, that was the alert flight, and we did training. I didn't tell you, but we had about six or eight weeks of training after we came from Lackland [Air Force Base], and that was combat infantry training, but some of it was done at Fort Hood, running through the live-fire and obstacle courses. We had bayonet training, we had training on the firing ranges and we learned to fire different types of weapons.

SK: Did you have any other special training to be a guard than somebody else on the base?

WJF: I think other than just the routine of the air police, we did have that training. We had fire-arm training, which I don't know how much fire-arm training other people got. We fired .45 automatics and .45-caliber grease guns, which is an automatic. And we had M1 carbines, and M1 Garands, .30-caliber machine guns, .50-caliber machine guns, Browning automatic rifles, and 60-millimeter mortars. That kind of training I'm sure nobody else got.

SK: Did you need a special security clearance to work at Killeen Base?

WJF: Well, we needed a Q clearance.

SK: Did you ever go to Fort Hood?

WJF: We used facilities at Fort Hood, all of their firing ranges, also their medical facilities if you had to go to sick hall or something, you had to go there. We went there for dental checkups, went there for shots or whatever. We could go on Fort Hood. I think all we needed was a general area pass. That's where they had a PX.

SK: But people from Fort Hood couldn't got to Killeen Base?

WJF: No. They did have people from Fort Hood who patrolled outside our perimeter. Killeen Base had four fences, they were chain-link fences. There was an outside fence, there was a road, there was an inside fence, there was an electric fence, then there was another fence on that other side. We patrolled the road between the first two fences. Fort Hood patrolled outside that fence. [We also patrolled the Q Area.]

SK: Were there different levels of Killeen Base that you could access? Was there any one place that you couldn't access?

WJF: The ABC tunnel, you were to be a certain rank before you could. I was not that rank, but I needed to do that at one time. There was the ADT room that also required a certain rank.

SK: You were in the ABC tunnel?

WJF: One time. I didn't have the rank. I think I was airman third [class]. At Killeen [Base] they had a residual force, if I remember correctly, was six of us. They would take three from a flight that was going on from six to midnight and they would take [three from] the flight that was going on from midnight to six and we'd all go in at six o'clock and stay until six the next morning, 12 hours, and we slept in there. I did that once or twice.

SK: Did you refer to it as Killeen Base or Gray Air Force Base?

WJF: I was [on] Killeen Base. We weren't on Gray Air Force Base. The only time I went to Gray Air Force Base was because they had a shuttle flight weekly that went from Gray Air Force Base to Clarksville, Tennessee, and if there was room on it, if you were going on furlough you could take that shuttle to Clarksville, and I did that a couple of times.

SK: Did you have a nickname at all for Killeen Base?

WJF: I don't recall. You were usually referred to by your last name because there were so many Bills and Bobs.

SK: The tunnels were referred to by certain names, like the ABC tunnel.

WJF: Yes, when I pulled duty at the plants, it was Plant 1 [and Plant 2] entrances.

SK: Were you at both plants?

WJF: Yes. It depended on the roster.

SK: But guards routinely did both.

WJF: Right.

SK: Do you have any recollections of any of the other buildings at Killeen [Base]. The above-ground buildings, igloos, pillboxes?

WJF: Yes. When you patrolled up in the area, the Q Area, you had to patrol those too. You had to check out all of those to make sure they had not been tampered with.

SK: So as a guard, you kind of went between patrolling the areas and then standing guard in the tunnels?

WJF: Yes. Then there were people in the ADT rooms, and there were other guards in different places inside.

SK: Were you armed when you were in the tunnels?

WJF: Every time.

SK: Was there a difference between guarding the ABC tunnel and guarding the main entrance?

WJF: As I recall, if you were on the main entrance you had a side arm, which is a .45 automatic, and you probably had an M1 Garand, and you had bandoleer ammunition. On the other tunnel I think we had a grease gun. It was .45-caliber, 30-round clip.

SK: At the time, were you aware of the mission of Killeen Base? Some of the other men have suggested that when they first got there they weren't aware of the gravity of the situation, they weren't really told.

WJF: Until we got out of training, we did not know what was there. We had six to eight weeks of combat infantry training, which were marches, 20-mile [hikes] and we did things like that, and bayonet training. At that time, you just knew you were going to be guarding something. Of course, we knew it was secret, that's all we did know at that time.

SK: At some point you did learn what was going on?

WJF: Yes, once you were cleared and you knew what was there. And you worked up in the Q Area. After I'd been there a long time, they brought some other new people in, and you can only work the perimeter until you were cleared, and I think we did that. I worked with a fellow after I'd been cleared, and for some reason he was gone. He was with us for a few days and then he wasn't cleared. [He was taken out of the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron.]

SK: What were the main activities that you saw at Killeen Base?

WJF: The movement of units. Sometimes we were part of a convoy to guard the unit. I'm not sure where they took the unit that time, but I remember there were civilian cars that we had to keep from getting into the convoy. Usually they didn't take it off base. They went from the Killeen Base over to Gray Air Force Base and were loaded in the transport. I remember one time there was a convoy on the main highway. It may have gone over to Fort Hood [to the rail head].

SK: Can you talk a little bit about the organization of the 1094th at Killeen Base? You mentioned different flights.

WJF: We were in the I&S [intelligence and security] section and the flights were the guard flights.

The people that worked in the plants were separate from us. The people that worked in the code room and the people that worked making badges and things like that, they were all separate groups. If you worked the [entrance] to the plants, you got to know some of the people that worked in the plants on sight. As you went from the general area, you had to exchange [a general badge] that for a badge for the Q Area. The Q Area badge, as I recall, had numbers on it. The numbers on the Q [Area] badge [showed] where they [were allowed to go]. You would make sure that they had the right badge for the right place.

SK: So you were considered air force. Did that have any drawbacks, being so close to the army base at Fort Hood? Was there any contention between the two?

WJF: I never had any contention. There were over 20,000 army and we were a small base, I think that there could have been. When I left base, I didn't wear my air force uniform. In fact, if I [wore] it home, [it was] just to let [family and friends] see the uniform. I would just travel usually in civilian clothes.

SK: Who did the 1094th answer to? The air force? The Atomic Energy Commission? The Department of Defense?

WJF: As I understood it, it was kind of related to SAC, Strategic Air Command, since we handled the weapons for the Strategic Air Command. Whenever I worked on a convoy that took a unit to a plane, it usually went on a transport, and I don't know where they went from there. You just guarded the plane while they were loading or unloading a unit.

SK: In your estimation, how many men were in the 1094th at Killeen Base while you were there?

WJF: Just a guess, probably about 1,000.

SK: What kind of positions did other people hold at Killeen Base?

WJF: You had the people that worked in the plant. You had the administration, the office. There was a coding room, and there were people in there. There was a small building where they took photographs, took fingerprints, made badges, things like that. We always felt that if anything happened there, it would not be a large force trying to take it over. It would be sabotage.

SK: Did any soldiers from Fort Hood ever come to Killeen Base?

WJF: When we were in training, we had a lieutenant who brought his squad over and taught us bayonet training. I think there was some coordination when we went to the firing range. We pulled our own targets and things like that. Our flight officer would be in charge of our people, but I'm sure he coordinated with the people at Fort Hood to make the arrangements and ensure that there was safety on the firing range.

SK: You mentioned sabotage. Was there ever a case?

WJF: [Not that I knew about.] The only case I ever had, and I'm trying to remember whether it was at Killeen Base or Manzano [Base], I was working the six-to-noon shift, and usually the plant workers came up in a bus and started around seven, and there were one or two bus loads that would go into a plant. One fellow did not have a Q Area badge, and I stopped him. Because you're supposed to look at the badge and look at the face, make sure that's the man. He had his face on the badge, but as I recall, it was a general area badge and it wasn't one to go into the plant. So I pulled him off to the side, and he kept telling me he had to get to

work, and this is the badge they gave him. As you came from the general area to the Q Area, you had to get a Q Area badge. You exchanged your badge so they knew who was up there and they had the right badge to go where they wanted to go. He kept saying, "I've got to get to work," and I finally told him, "You stand over here until I let the rest of them go in." I kept my eye on him, and then I called the officer and the sergeant of the guard and they came and got him and took him back. I'd never seen him before, after working there for a year. You got to know people's faces, even if you didn't know them by name. So I think it could have been a test. That's what I always thought, because I never heard any more about it.

SK: So you never heard what happened to him, you never saw him again.

WJF: I don't know what they did with him. I know they came up and picked him up and took him back.

SK: So what was a typical day like for you at Killeen Base?

WJF: Typical day. As I told you, we worked six-hour shifts, but it usually ended up probably nine hours because if you were going to be on a motorized patrol you had to go to the motor pool to check out a truck and look it all over, mark down if there were any dents on it, you had to check the oil, check the water, fill the tank, [wash it,] check out the radio to make sure it was working. Then you had to get your uniform on. If you were on a motorized patrol that usually meant fatigues. Then you had to go to the arms room and draw out your weapons [and ammo] for that post and clean them, and get ready, and then you had to stand guard mount. That guard mount was usually the flight officer, the officer of the day, and they would come around and they would look at your uniform, they would inspect your weapons. If you had a rifle, you had to open it up for them, and then they would take it away from you and look it all over, and hand it back to you, and you had to put it back down again. If you had two weapons, a .45, you had to show them that. And they looked at your uniform, they looked at your haircut, and things like that. That took a while. [When] you got ready to go [on post], if there were any other walking posts that were on your motorized post they usually rode in the bed of the truck and you would take them to where they were going. And of course, you couldn't leave a post until you were relieved, that's the way that worked, and you'd pick up the guys and take them back to the gate. Then you came off-duty, the requirement was 15 miles an hour for six hours if you were on a motorized patrol, which is very monotonous. [After the duty shift, the truck was returned to the motor pool and the weapons and ammo to the arms room.]

SK: When you were in the tunnels, did you sit at a desk? Did you have to stand at attention?

WJF: No, you had a chair [at] the main entrance. You weren't supposed to have any reading material or anything else.

SK: Did you ever work with a partner, or it was just you?

WJF: Usually about halfway through your shift maybe the sergeant guard would bring [around] coffee or something like that. If you were on midnight-to-six, there was not much activity. Maybe the officer of the guard would come around and inspect the post.

SK: So when you were guarding the tunnels, you were mostly at the main gate?

WJF: I was usually at the main entrance. As I said, I remember once or twice where I spent the 12 hours inside. I was on the ABC tunnel, which was off to the side.

SK: Where did you spend your time off?

WJF: The pay wasn't great, so you [spent] a lot of time [on base]. I had a car [and] I would go into town. In Albuquerque I had an account for gas, so I could run an account up to the end of the month. When I was in Texas, before I brought my car back, I hitchhiked. I went to Austin to see what was around Austin, and I hitchhiked to Waco and Dallas. One time there were two or three of us, and we were going to Temple. We hitchhiked. A fellow picked us up, and again I think it was a test. It was right after we had gotten through our training, so we were still fairly new, and he wanted to talk about Killeen Base, and nobody would tell him anything. [We reported the incident.]

SK: So the locals, there are a lot of stories about the secrecy at Killeen Base, and there were all these stories about planes flying in or never flying out, or flying into a mountain, or things like that.

WJF: We heard some of those, yes.

SK: So he was the only local who tried to kind of get information from you?

WJF: The only one I recall. I think there were two or three of us that he picked up, and we just drove from Killeen to Temple. He was just asking questions along [that] line, and nobody knew anything.

SK: What did you tell people that you did, if they asked?

WJF: I'm an air policeman.

SK: What about your family and friends back home?

WJF: I'm an air policeman.

SK: Is that what they told you to say?

WJF: Yes. My parents never knew what I did. They'd say, What do you do? And I'd say, "I'm an air policeman, I can't tell you what I do."

SK: Is that what the air force told you to tell people?

WJF: You signed a [paper] that you would never discuss what you did under penalty of law. In fact, the first time my wife, she and I were married about five months before I was discharged, she came back to Albuquerque with me. She was also from Akron. She had to be fingerprinted and everything just to get on Sandia Base. But she could only take me to the main gate of Manzano [Base]. She never really knew what was going on. She'd see convoys on the access road, and then they'd disappear because there was a side road that went to Kirtland [Air Force Base]. You just didn't talk about it. In fact, I think the first time I talked about it was at the first reunion [with other members of the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron].

SK: What year was that?

WJF: [The first year I attended was] 1995. They had three before they [contacted] me. First of all, they had one or two of them in Albuquerque, and I think it was just word of mouth, Oh I know this guy, I'll get in touch with this guy. [George] Rasmussen was the one that contacted my nephew because he has the same name as I do, and my nephew contacted me and I called George back. That's how I got [started] going to the reunions.

SK: When you were at Killeen Base, you mentioned that you stayed in tent city. Were you in the

barracks at all?

WJF: After we finished our training, it wasn't right away, but probably we were there two or three months I think. That's what I'm saying, I don't remember for sure whether they built a building for us or whether they just made space in a building, but we did have barracks then.

SK: Were there barracks on Killeen Base?

WJF: Yes.

SK: How did you get from the barracks to where you were posted?

WJF: [By] vehicle. They did have a six-by-six, which is a large truck, and if you were going to go up in the hill area, if you were in a pillbox, or if you were in the plant or something like that, you went that way. If there was some pillbox or something like that, you might take some people in a pickup truck. That's how we got around.

SK: What is a pillbox?

WJF: As I remember at Killeen [Base], we just had sandbags. [They] would be [placed] outside of the plant. You could protect the plant from the outside. Usually [we had] rifles, but I think we did have some machine guns also.

SK: What do you think about the layout of Killeen Base? Do you think that it would have been effective in the event of an attack? Do you think that it was secretive enough, or purposely confusing enough for the enemy?

WJF: I think the only way that anyone could have gotten in there would be to parachute in, because you did have the high-voltage fence. I don't think there would ever be a large force because you had Fort Hood there. That's the reason I thought that anyone who wanted to do any damage would have the right credentials and it would be sabotage.

SK: In the event of someone parachuting in, when you were doing patrols, were you looking at the air and the ground at the same time, or mostly just your surroundings?

WJF: Well, there were different posts. We had posts up above the plants. I know one night I was up by the ventilators [that] ventilate the air in the tunnels. [We guarded] the ventilators so someone couldn't [access them]. You'd have a guard out in front of the plant, you'd have people in the plant. So it was well guarded. You'd have [motorized] patrols in the area. [We] had [guards] on roving patrols [on] the perimeter. I'm sure that any airplane would be detected. I did hear a story that there was one small plane that did land near Killeen [Base]. That wasn't while we were there.

SK: The configurations of the tunnels, did you find that confusing at all?

WJF: No. I knew where the rooms were, and I walked back into the tunnels. If you were on the [entrance], that was your post and you didn't leave it.

SK: What was your first reaction upon knowing you were guarding nuclear bombs?

WJF: I felt that that was the strength of the country, and that was the job that you had to do. I felt that as long as we kept a strong defense we wouldn't have to use them. And it proved out, they never used them except with the Japanese.

SK: Did you know anything about the bombs before you arrived?

WJF: The only thing I knew when we were in training is we went over to Fort Hood because there's a B-29 going to drop an atomic bomb. Then they realized we hadn't been completely cleared, so they didn't let us go down where you could see where it was actually being dropped. We were by the communications truck, we could hear the talk from the airplane to the ground. You could see the B-29 come over to the bomb-drop area. Of course, it was not an armed bomb. The thing that amazed me was the size of it. When the bomb bay doors opened, I'd seen movies of these 1,000-pound bombs, then I saw this come out and it looked like a bathtub to me, it was so large. That was [my] impression. I never really felt that there was any problem, us having the bomb.

SK: Did you ever see the plant, or when they were working with the bombs, or unloading or loading?

WJF: We were always where they [were] loaded and unloaded. I have seen them inside the plant.

SK: Where was that, the tunnels?

WJF: Yes, this would be just like a general area room that was a large room. They just had to determine [if] it was okay, and then it would go to one of the igloos.

SK: Were you ever nervous? I've been to the tunnels, and I was kind of nervous just knowing I was in the same room with something like that.

WJF: No, never felt any problem like that at all.

SK: Were you worried about exposure to radiation or anything?

WJF: We used to joke about it, but I never was really concerned. I thought there were enough safety factors there that if there was any problem that would be handled.

SK: Did you wear any kind of device to monitor radiation exposure?

WJF: No, never.

SK: How did you feel about civilian working with the nuclear bombs?

WJF: There were contractors on the base. My job was to make sure the contractors stayed in the contracting area. In fact, I worked with the contractors while I was there. They had no union, so they would hire men on the base for a dollar an hour. If I was working midnight to six or if I was on three-day pass, I would work with them on Killeen Base. They were re-paving roads, and also I would help dig a foundation if they were going to put a building up there. We were talking about it the other day, George [Rasmussen] and I, that's the first time I ever used a jack hammer. We had a crew of about four guys, and then also the guy that worked with the company, and we would just do a rotation. We'd work the jack hammer for 15 minutes, and then switch off and use the shovel and do that, and one guy would take maybe a 15-minute break. I know one time one of the supervisors came up and he was upset with the man with the company because he was supposed to be [on the] jack hammer and we were supposed to be the diggers, and the fellow told him that he's got it working good and leave us alone. I did lose my high school ring there that I never did find.

SK: So they have the thermonuclear bombs and hydrogen bombs. Was there a difference guarding them?

WJF: No. [When] the first hydrogen bomb [came] in I was at Manzano [Base], and they had that in a different building. The only thing we were told when we went on duty was pay special attention to that building when you're driving your patrol.

SK: But you weren't told what was in there?

WJF: Later I found out that it was a different type.

SK: Were you ever on high alert at Killeen Base?

WJF: Well, we had alerts. You were on [the alert flight] 72 hours that you were on the base, and during that time it was usually moving a [unit]. That was the only high alert we'd have.

SK: You were never told, This is it. Get ready.

WJF: No, not really. You were always ready.

SK: Some people mentioned that kind of the intenseness of the situation faded a little bit after the beginning, and then it was just a job. Did you ever feel that way?

WJF: Oh, I think that when you first learned you were going to be guarding atomic bombs, yeah, it would probably be a little bit heightened. And as they said, it just became a job. You were ready, go drive the vehicles, guard the bombs. It was [not] an eight-to-five job, you'd just get ready to do it.

SK: Within the 1094th, did you discuss or exchange what you were doing with other guards, or was there other talk about it outside of those three days that you were on?

WJF: Well you know, everybody knew what their job was, and I don't think there was a lot of discussion about how you did this or how you did that. But if there was any information you needed, like be especially watchful of this or that. I know one time somebody in the provost marshal [office] took a certain set of keys home, and we were told at guard mount watch out for this, and I guess we knew what to do with that.

SK: What did your family think about you being in the air force?

WJF: My family? I think they were—my mother, had a brother in one of the wars and she didn't really like the idea that I was going to enlist, so I didn't tell her. I just enlisted and I said, "Okay, I'm leaving." But as it worked out, we were in the States all four years and I didn't go to Korea. I think some of the people when they enlisted they thought that they should be going to Korea or they should go to a war zone, but I always felt that that job was as important as any other, and I was very satisfied with it.

SK: What did you know about the Cold War at the time?

WJF: I was well aware of it.

SK: What kind of information was the military feeding you about it?

WJF: I don't know of any particular information. I knew that the Russians had atomic weapons, and probably if it came to that—

SK: Mostly it was Russia that you were hearing about?

WJF: We were more concerned about Korea at the time, and the Russians were arming the [North] Koreans and we were arming the South Koreans. Then the Chinese came in, and that was the biggest change that I remember because we had the M1 carbine, which is an automatic or semi-automatic weapon, and they took the automatic weapons and gave us the M1 Garands, which were not automatic weapons. You fire eight rounds, but you had to pull the trigger eight times. The other ones you could just set and fire a whole clip, if you had to.

SK: Did you ever know how many bombs Russia had or any other people had?

WJF: No.

SK: Did you ever know how many at any given time the U.S. had?

WJF: No.

SK: They release more and more information every day. We know more now about what was going on then. Does anything ever surprise you? Like are you surprised by the amount of weapons that we had?

WJF: I knew we had many there because of all the igloos. And I knew there were other bases similar to ours: Clarksville [Base] and Bossier [Base at] Shreveport. So I guess I knew that there were a lot of them. It never overwhelmed me, but I just knew there was a lot of weapons.

SK: What were your impressions of Killeen?

WJF: The city?

SK: Yes.

WJF: When I first got there, I think there was probably about 7,000 people in the city, and it was just the main area. I remember there was a café and there was a USO [United Services Organization] and there was an Olan Mills studio, was all in the one strip. One thing I did notice, there were some Fogles in Killeen, and I'm trying to recall, I think there was a pharmacy and a hardware and I think there was one other, but I never really looked into it. My dad said there were two brothers that came from Germany that were Fogles, one went to Texas and one went to southern Ohio, and I know I'm from the group that was in the southern Ohio area.

SK: When you would take the shuttle with Clarksville [Base], did you ever have any interaction with the people on the Clarksville Base?

WJF: No.

SK: You just took the shuttle out there?

WJF: There may be a few people from Killeen [Base] going there, and you'd check out a parachute, and you know, it was in a C-47, twin-engine transport. We'd land in Clarksville and you'd get off and go to the train station.

SK: When you were in Manzano [Base], did anyone ask you about your time at Killeen Base? Did you offer up that information?

WJF: You mean civilians?

SK: Civilians, personnel at Manzano [Base], did anybody ask you where you were before you got there?

WJF: No, because the whole unit transferred at the same time. I guess originally the air force went in to—it probably was the army air force at the time went into Killeen [Base], and it was the First Provost [Security Squadron]. That was before I got there. That was in '48 and I didn't get there until three years later. The year after I got there, they decided to bring the army back to Killeen [Base] and send us to Manzano [Base], so they transferred the whole unit. I was still there when some of the army came back and we worked together, but that was the only time. They knew exactly what was there too, because they just come from Manzano [Base].

SK: Did you ever consider staying in the military past those four years?

WJF: Yes. Probably if I had gone to school and gotten a technical career I might have stayed in. I did consider cadets at one time, flight school. When I enlisted, you needed two years of college. I was just a high school graduate at that time. After I had been in about two and a half years they changed that and they would accept high school graduates. I'm not sure whether that was flight school or whether that was OCS. But after two and a half years I thought no, I'm too independent. I didn't like the structure, I guess.

SK: Did you ever consider staying in Albuquerque?

WJF: No, I knew I was going to go back home, because I worked for Goodyear before I left, and Goodyear, by law, had to hire me back.

SK: So you had no problem getting your old job back.

WJF: No. And In fact, my wife was from Akron too. There was never any doubt in my mind that I would not stay in Albuquerque. I liked Albuquerque. You know, if I'd ever decided to relocate I probably would have gone back to that area, maybe up around Santa Fe, I liked that.

SK: Do you think that your military service helped you or hindered you after you got out?

WJF: It helped me in one way because I'd never saved enough money to go to college, and I did use the [GI] Bill and got a BS [bachelor of science] degree in industrial management. I would have never been a policeman! Because I did find that to be kind of boring many times.

SK: Looking back, at the time did you feel like you were part of something bigger, or was it just a guard job?

WJF: Well, I guess we felt it was something bigger. I knew it was a job, but I also felt that it had a purpose.

SK: Do you feel like you were part of the Cold War?

WJF: I suppose, [yes]. I figured that we had to stay ahead, and I thought that was probably what we were doing.

SK: At the time you mentioned you were more concerned about Korea than maybe Russia?

WJF: That was the "hot war." At that time you had to be 21 to vote, and that was the first time I was able to vote. When Eisenhower said he was going to bring the boys back from Korea, I thought that was a good thing.

SK: Now do you agree with the involvement at that time? Do you still think that it should have happened?

WJF: The Korean War? I think at that time I thought it was, yes, I thought we should do that. But in retrospect I'm not sure, because we still have troops there and I'm not sure that was a necessary thing. The class that graduated after I did from high school, the marine recruiter came, so almost all the men in that class joined the marine reserve. When Korea came along, that would be the class that graduated in 1949, they had already had their training. So as soon as that happened, that reserve unit went right to Korea, and I know a couple of my friends were killed, one guy was blinded, another guy lost some toes when [he] got frostbit. So that was more relevant to me than the Cold War.

SK: You mentioned you were more concerned about sabotage than actual invasion.

WJF: That was my opinion. I didn't think there would be anybody come down the main road.

SK: Were you aware that there were civilian contractors working with the bombs?

WJF: Yes.

SK: How did you feel about that?

WJF: I thought they had to be completely cleared and be able to work on there.

SK: Did you think that there was more of a threat for them to be going in and out from the base to wherever they were out in Killeen?

WJF: No, because I didn't think so at the time and I still don't think so, because when I was with Goodyear Aerospace I had a top-secret [and a Q] clearance. We worked with military people as well as civilians. There was only one time there that we were clearing some people and two people didn't get cleared.

SK: Do you think that Goodyear Aerospace knew about your work guarding the bombs?

WJF: The only thing they knew was I spent four years in the air force. Now how far back they delved into that[, I don't know].

SK: How do you reflect on your time at Killeen Base?

WJF: Well, I think I wasted some time in the fact that I could have been taking some college courses, correspondence courses. A buddy of mine from Warren, Ohio, had two years of pre-law at Kent State, he said, "Well, get your general courses out of the way, so when you get out you can go into your major," and I didn't take his advice. I figured I wasted that time. It took me [eight] years. I worked full-time and raised five children in the time I was getting my degree.

SK: What do you think should be done with the tunnels and the buildings at Killeen Base?

WJF: Is there an idea that they will destroy them?

SK: I think that they want to do some work near them, but I don't think that their intention is to take them out.

WJF: In a way, it's a historical site because that was started only three years after the end of the

Second World War, I know there was a Site Able and a Site Baker. Killeen [Base] was Baker and Manzano [Base] was Able. I think those were the first two sites that were established to store the nuclear weapons. I know they are using Manzano [Base] now as storage for other things, and that they're building a new area that is supposed to take the place of Manzano [Base]. I think that would be an historical site that should be preserved. People [could] see how things were [during the Cold War].

SK: What do you want military personnel or civilians to know about your role at Killeen Base?

WJF: I [hosted] a reunion in Dayton, Ohio, where Wright-Patterson [Air Force Base is located]. We were able to get an air force band. And a speaker, he was a chief master sergeant, and his role was security. He pulled security checks at different places, and he told us what was going on in Manzano and Killeen [Bases], what is going on now. He read a poem called "The Bridge." This guy built a bridge, and they said you'll never use it, you can't go over it. I'm building a bridge for the people that are coming after me. That's what I felt. I feel that we were there when we had to be, and now the other people are coming behind. I think it's historical.

SK: Do you have any additional comments or thoughts that you'd like to share?

WJF: No. I think I made some good friends in the service, the people that came in when we did, people that were there before we got there, people that came after we got there. But I think ours was probably the largest group that came at one time. And the fact that we were together for almost four years, doing the same [thing].

SK: Did you do the same things when you were at Manzano, guarding?

WJF: Yes, it was exactly the same.

SK: Were the bases similar?

WJF: Exactly.

SK: Did that help with getting to know a new facility?

WJF: I don't think we were really concerned that much with the facility. We had our training for what we should do, and it just transferred automatically.

SK: Do you have suggestions of anybody else that we should talk to that aren't here today?

WJF: The only one I really see much is the one that enlisted with me. He lives in Uniontown, Ohio. There's one fellow who was a good friend of mine, and I think he stayed in the service, but I haven't been in contact with him since we were out. [Jack] Stedman and I were pretty [good buddies] in the service, and [Jim] Kinard and I were [good buddies]. We were all guards.

SK: I interviewed [Jack] Stedman yesterday and I'm interviewing [James] Kinard tomorrow.

WJF: We worked more closely with the guards. We knew the people going into the plants, but I didn't really know what they did.

SK: We've had a couple of people mention Sandia [Base] and to talk to maybe some of the people that were there. Do you know any group like this that they have?

WJF: I brought these [pictures] along. This is the last flight I was in. I'm here. Stedman was right

in front of me. This was our flight sergeant, his name was Roberts. Very nice fellow. He'd been in since the Second World War. This officer's name was McGuire. This was our flight officer and our flight sergeant, and then everybody reported to them. This was a flight, this would be one group that would go on a shift. There [were] six [flights]. Since we had the white laces in the boots and everything. Whenever they had an inspection, they liked to get the guards out. They didn't get the other personnel out. This was at Killeen [Base], and then this was at Manzano [Base]. This would be a guard mount you'd stand in. These were the vehicles that would take the people up to the plants to guard, and we had pickup trucks. This was probably an alert flight here. We'd mount a .50-caliber machine gun on those. That was my job when we were on alert, I had a .50-caliber [machine gun] squad. You had four guys in a squad. The gunner, and all he had to do was carry the tripod. Wherever you put the tripod down, that's where the machine gun went. Then the assistant gunner carried the machine gun, which was a big, heavy [weapon]. The ammo carriers, they each had two boxes of ammo.

SK: Do you know if the Sandia [Base] group has a reunion?

WJF: We're not Sandia [Base]. We are the Manzano [Base] group. There were people after us, I don't know when they closed that. Probably in the '80s or '90s. I'll show you something. Nobody in our outfit ever knew where it came from. My son got on the Internet one time and was looking for different groups, and he came up with that patch. We never wore this patch. I don't know what the colors are, but you can see the atom, the crossed rifles, the mountains and the cactus, and then 1094th Air Police Squadron. That must have come after we were there. The only thing I really remember is I never could get used to three days on a shift. Just when you were used to one shift, you'd go to the next. You're used to going to bed at midnight, and you have to go to work at midnight.

SK: Kind of hard to get your schedule—

WJF: Oh, very. You can take it when you're young. I couldn't do it today.

WJF: Now this would be your main entrance to the plant, and then up above here is the ventilators, and there used to be sandbags over here at the pillbox [looking at photographs].

SK: This is where the pillboxes were?

WJF: They were like out in front. That looks like an igloo. Some of them were built into the mountains.

SK: Yeah, these were the ones that were built into the mountain. That's just one of the big rooms.

WJF: When you go back in the tunnel it goes off to the side. This was where I would see the bombs, where they dismantled them. Is this from the plant?

SK: Yes.

WJF: There's a tunnel that goes off this way. That's kind of as I remember [where] the triggers were.

SK: That's just one of the tunnels.

WJF: In those main tunnels, there used to be blast doors about halfway back.

SK: Yeah, that's probably one of them. I can get you, if you want, copies of these photos.

WJF: Oh, I would like it if you would, Stephanie.

SK: And when you go down there now, there's no risk of lead or radiation. They've totally abated that.

WJF: I guess that's something that we never even thought about. At least I never thought about it. We'd kid about it. We'd glow in the dark and things that.

SK: Well, I guess if you're down there you can't be claustrophobic?

WJF: The only thing I remember about the tunnels, they always had kind of a musty smell, and you'd hear the air handlers on at night, especially if you were working at midnight to six, you'd hear [making a humming sound]. You had to get up and walk around, stamp your feet just to keep moving. That's one of the rooms there.

SK: Well, it's not well lit right now. It's just—but I'm sure it was better then, but they turned off all the lights and it was freaky. That's one of the shower rooms.

WJF: I stayed that 12-hour shift and that's where we had six cots in there. You had a place to shower and so forth. The old guys here, they started in '48. They were more tuned to this because we were just new and there were only certain areas that you could go in at that time. I remember that 12-hour shift. One time I was eating a bologna sandwich or something and really didn't feel good, and just had to stay in there. I remember these large parts back in here.

SK: And all of the equipment is still there too, the diesel engines.

WJF: That probably goes to the air handlers, goes to the ventilators.

SK: The problem is they don't really know how to get some of that stuff out, and it's too far gone to probably be used any more.

WJF: They don't think there's any radiation in there do they?

SK: No.

WJF: We never wore any [radiation] badges or anything. Those tunnels were narrow.

SK: Well, this is the one at the plant [that] has been completely redone because they use that for training and things like that, so this is the nicer one. It's got lights. It's painted. There's no water. But the other one is the one that, you can see it's a lot cleaner.

WJF: This is more like I remember. I picked up one of those at the atomic museum in Albuquerque. I have a patch like that, and there's another one that was earlier than that. It's like lightning flash but it's kind of shaped like a question mark, because before they detonated the bomb, whatever group had it, and they didn't know what would happen. If you show these to some of the older fellows, then they'll remember better than I do, we were there a year and probably two months was in training and then probably a month perimeter duty.

SK: That's one of the blast doors.

WJF: I remember these. I always liked doing the outside work rather than inside, but I did help

pave those roads, and it was all manual labor. Fill in the pot holes and tamp them down, and then they would put the asphalt on top of it. That gave us some extra spending money. You'll be talking to Guy Priester. He was a plant worker, so he'll probably tell you more.

SK: I think [my colleague will interview] him.

WJF: He's a minister. He usually gives our blessings before meetings. That has to be the power room. That was interesting. All the time my wife was [in Albuquerque], she never could go through the main gate of Manzano [Base]. We went there in 1999 and one of the fellows that I was with, Bill Fay, after he got his degree he came back to work the AEC and was director of real estate, he had the bombs too, so he made [arrangements] so we could go into the tunnels.

SK: Well, they have a large collection of people who stayed in Albuquerque, so we're hoping to maybe get there someday to interview.

WJF: I'd like to go back there for a reunion, especially if [they would] make arrangements so they have a reunion around the time of the balloon fiesta.

SK: Well, and we've heard to check out the museum, the atomic [museum].

WJF: That used to be on Sandia [Base], but now they moved that after 9/11, they moved it down to [Old Town in Albuquerque].

SK: I think, because I do all these work trips and my husband is never interested, but I think that might be a trip he's interested in.

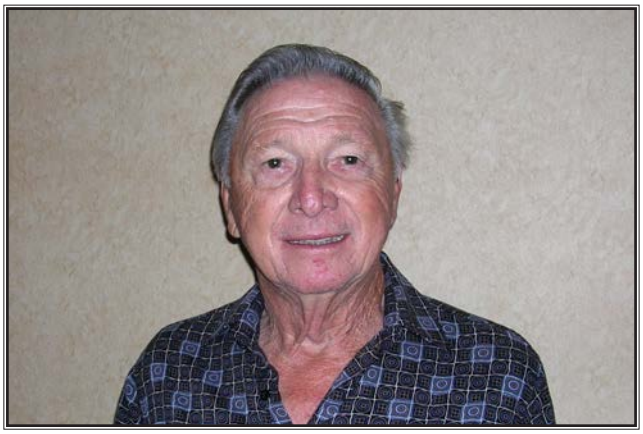
WJF: We [had] our reunion the week before, and my wife and I took an extra week and stayed over just to get the balloon fiesta, and it's well worth it. Look at that there!

SK: I think that's one of the ventilation holes. And it's got wire.

WJF: I remember one [night] I was up on the ventilator, you could hear animals going through [the woods]. This one time I heard somebody definitely walking. You could hear his foot steps. And I thought, I'm the only one that's supposed to be up here, and I was a little on edge. And I was ready. Before the guy broke out onto the road there, I hear, "Hey Bill, where're you at?" He was supposed to be out in front of the plant. That's where he was supposed to be, and he got bored and he came up and talked to me, and I said, "You better get back down [on post]."

James Leroy Griffin

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase



AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Tuesday, September 15, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. James Leroy Griffin. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron of the U.S. Air Force is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

Can you tell me how old you were when you became a member of the service?

JLG: Seventeen.

AED: And you were enlisted?

JLG: Yes, I enlisted.

AED: Where did you enlist?

JLG: I enlisted in Portland, Oregon.

AED: And what ranks did you achieve while you were in the service?

JLG: While I was with the 1094th in the four years—well, we had originally a three-year enlistment, but because of the Korean War they extended us one year, so it turned out to be four years. I was 17 when I went in, 21 when I got out, and the highest rank I achieved was three stripes. Sergeant. I'm a retired major now.

AED: Tell me briefly about your other service duties.

JLG: You mean other than 1094th?

AED: Yeah.

JLG: I dropped out of high school when I was sixteen and went in the service at age seventeen, and

while I was at Killeen [Base] one of the fellows helped me attain a GED [general educational development] diploma. I was discharged in 1952, the GI Bill was about to start, so I used the GED and the GI Bill to enter community college.

AED: Were you back in Portland then?

JLG: Yes. I attended school there approximately two years, then enlisted in the air force. At that time they lowered the educational requirements from four years of college to two years of college. At that point in time I had about two years. And so I went down, passed the exam, and went to flying school. I was supposed to be a pilot, but they got the orders mixed up. I was more qualified for a pilot than I was for a navigator. So I took the navigator at that time I graduated from navigation school at age 25. I said, "What can I do to get into pilot training?" They said, You've got to finish out your time as a navigator. I had to get about 1,000 hours flying time. Well, I got 1,000 hours flying time then they increased it to 2,000 hours. I was in a real flying outfit. We got a lot of hours. To make a long story short, if you're not in flying school by age 26 1/2 they won't accept you. I grew too old. So I finished out my career as a navigator, and I had various assignments around the world. Navigation, as you probably know, in the old days, the only time we ever flew was when we went over an ocean. That's when you needed a navigator. Well, today, we have GPS [global positioning system], et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. We don't need navigators any more. But the highlight of my career in the military, besides with 1094th, I have a special niche for the 1094th with all these guys. But the highlight of my career was when I went to Vietnam. You know, in the military you train, train, train, it's just continuous training, and many times you don't ever get to do what you're trained for. You're trained for combat, for example, and we don't have wars every day. It seems like we do, but we really don't have wars every day, and so you don't get to do what you're trained for. But I trained in gunships for Vietnam. [The Fairchild] 119-G, that's the old flying boxcar with the twin tails.

AED: Okay, I'm not familiar with it.

JLG: It's called a gunship, with four Gatling guns, and 39,000 rounds of 7.62 [ammunition]. They fly low and slow, and we work what they call TIC [troops in contact]. So this is Vietnam now, and we're flying about 3,500 feet, which is extremely low, but with our ammunition, in order to hit the target, and I hate to say this, but the target was humans. We'd shoot people, and in order for the weapon to be effective, you've got to fly low. And when the ground troops are being run over by the VC [Viet Cong] or Charlie, they'd call in our aircraft which was Shadow, call sign Shadow. We'd come in to hose them down, [shoot the enemy]. We'd come in, my job as a navigator and safety officer was to get us to the target, identify Charlie, identify the friendlies, confirm target.

AED: What was that?

JLG: Friendlies. Our people. And make sure we were in what they call a free-fire zone. We always had to get permission from what we call our highers. That's the higher headquarters, which is a pain in the butt because we had the target and we wanted to shoot. Anyway, we worked on TICs, troops in contact, primarily. And we were a pretty good shoot-'em-up outfit. I remember one time this major general wanted to fly with an outfit that saw action, which was ours. We were over the target and I have the enemy identified, and we're going around in circles. The general says, "What's wrong major?" And I say, "We're waiting for permission from higher headquarters." He says, "You got your target?" I say, "Yes." "You got your friendlies?" "Yes." "You got the enemy?" "Yes." "Shoot them." So we shot!

But that was one of the tough things about being in Vietnam is the fact that your hands are halfway tied behind your back. You couldn't really get in there and do what you are capable

of doing. So as the result of all that I ended with 172 combat sorties—I'm bragging a little bit—eight or nine air medals, and Distinguished Flying Cross. That was a culmination of my career. Then I came back to Travis Air Force Base and finished out six months, in C-141 cargo jet aircraft, ironically, flying back and forth to Vietnam. That was the end of my military career. I enjoyed every minute of it!

AED: Did you really?

JLG: Yes.

AED: When did you retire then?

JLG: I retired in May of 1971.

AED: And what did you do then?

JLG: Oh, then, what did I do then? Well, I got a divorce the first week I got out of the military, out of Vietnam. My wife and I had three children and 15 years of marriage, we thought it would be kind of tough to throw it out the window and we decided to give it another try. So we went to Reno, Nevada, and tried to patch things up. But a gambling city is not a place to patch things up. In fact, a little side light here. After I was there about four months or five months, I thought I would buy a house. So I went down to the bank and the banker says, "Well, Jim, how long have you been here?" and I said, "Well, four or five months," and he says, "Well Jim, I tell you what, you come back and see me in six months, and if the gambling doesn't get you, the booze doesn't get you, and Mustang Ranch doesn't get you." I don't know if you're familiar with that, but that's a brothel on the outskirts of Reno. He says, "Come back and talk to me and we'll make a loan for the house." He was 100 percent correct. It didn't work. I left Reno.

Then I became a stockbroker for a while but couldn't make any money. After that, I worked for the Veterans Administration. I was what they call a VROC, that's a veteran's representative on campus. I worked at one of the local colleges, American River College, in Sacramento, California, and my job there was to help the GIs going to school on the GI Bill, obtain their checks. There's always a lot of delay in getting your checks.

AED: Government, right.

JLG: Yeah, well, the GIs cause most of their own problems because they'd sign up for 16 units and drop four, that sort of thing, and the GI Bill pays according to the load you carry. A full load is considered at least a minimum of 12 units. I worked there for about three or four years. Then I switched over to the Department of Labor and there I was the assistant state director for California for Veterans Employment Training. My job there was to evaluate the employment offices in my area of the state, which was the Sacramento area. Basically we were federal watchdogs. The federal government gives the states money to help veterans obtain employment. My job was to ensure that that money was spent only on veterans. That was basically it. Then I retired from there in 1992, and from then on, I've been traveling a bunch. My wife and I go some place eight to 10 times a year. We have timeshares and swap them out for various places throughout the states. So that's about the extent of my employment.

AED: Okay, that's great. Let's see, when you enlisted, you chose the air force?

JLG: Yes.

AED: Because you knew you wanted to?

JLG: I chose the air force primarily because of my favorite relative, Uncle Leonard. He was in the air force. It was just a natural progression for me to go in the air force. Most of my family were navy people. We were living on the coast so the navy kind of comes into play. Because of my uncle, I chose the air force, I wanted to be a pilot.

AED: That would be the best way to do that. When you enlisted did you go to Killeen Base first or did you go to do your basic training somewhere else?

JLG: Basic training was at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. After graduation we went to Kelly Air Force Base, which is just a few miles from Lackland [Air Force Base]. We went there to form what they called a cadre that would organize our people. We shipped from Kelly [Air Force Base] on an old C-47 aircraft. We went to the flight line, with our duffel bags on one shoulder and a carbine on the other. As we're marching out to the plane, you could hear the civilians saying, There goes the boys to Germany. That was the Berlin airlift time. There goes the boys to Germany. Well, we were fat and dumb. We got on the C-47 and landed about an hour and half later at Gray Air Force Base which is next door to Killeen Base, home of the 1094th. All our training was completed by the time we got to Killeen [Base]. We were the first ones in Killeen [Base].

AED: That was the First Provost [Security Squadron]?

JLG: The First Provost Security Squadron. We spent approximately three years there. Then we were transferred to Manzano Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. At that point in time everybody's enlistment, even though it was extended one year, the four years were just about up and everybody was re-enlisting or accepting a discharge. I didn't re-enlist. They gave you a whopping $600 for six years of your life if you re-enlisted. No thank you. I enjoyed it, don't get me wrong, but I wasn't going to make a career of it at that level. I wanted to go on and do other things.

AED: And at Kelly [Air Force Base], what was the training there? What was the focus?

JLG: There actually was minimum training there. It was a matter of forming the group and identifying people and things like that. There wasn't much training there that I recall.

AED: Okay. Were you there, you said, not very long?

JLG: No, probably, I'm guessing now, but maybe six weeks. It was a short period of time just to organize the group.

AED: How did you get chosen to be part of this group?

JLG: Oh, that's a wrinkle. Well, when you go through basic training at the time we went through, you take a test, this and that and whatever. You'd qualify for certain schools, like radio repairman or air police or, in my case I was selected to go to radar repair school. At that point in time, it was the longest school in the air force. Nine or 10 months of training. We were ready to go to our different schools, but in the last few weeks of our training, all schools were cancelled. We were put into the First Provost Security Squadron. We had no choice, we didn't choose.

AED: Do you think they were picking this group?

JLG: My understanding is that they just needed a group. They needed some bodies to perform this

mission, and rather than go out and select them individually. I think some personnel man just [said], "Hey, we got a couple of units graduating from basic training, let's use them." So they had a cadre of experienced people and brand new recruits just graduating from basic training, and had to meld them together. That's when it was formed.

AED: So you had no say.

JLG: No.

AED: You were just told this is where you're going.

JLG: Yes.

AED: What did you think about that?

JLG: At that time we were trained to follow orders, just another order.

AED: You're 17, right?

JLG: You can mold people very easily when they're 17 years of age. I don't think anybody objected. I didn't know what I was getting into. It was all a big adventure. I think everybody enjoyed it, no one objected.

AED: And so once you were chosen for this, did you need to get some kind of security clearing?

JLG: Oh yeah. They do an extensive background check. And in fact, I remember, I came back from leave and was asked to see Major Barr, our commanding officer. Major Barr asked me, "How did you enjoy your leave up in Portland, Oregon?" I said, "Oh, it was fine." Then he quoted me apparently from some report that, "Well, I understand you went over here on such and such a day at this restaurant or this whatever." In other words, they were following up on us to make sure that we didn't have any ulterior motives or connections with somebody that might have reason to sabotage some of the stuff that we were involved in. They did a lot of background identification. At Killeen Base they had what they called a Q Area. I'm sure you've been told what a Q Area is. It's a super-secure area, and in order to get in, you have to have a Q clearance. That was a higher level of clearance. You know, like you have secret, you have top-secret, you have top-secret crypto, et cetera. When I was in the air force as a navigator we had what they called a top-secret crypto, which is only given to people who have exposure to worldwide atomic targets. Like, who we're going to drop the bomb on like, say Russia or whatever. But Q clearance is over and above a standard clearance, so they check the background thoroughly.

AED: So did they talk to your family?

JLG: Yes, as far as I know, they did. They would contact relatives, family, friends, that sort of thing. I don't know what the heck you're going to find out about a 17- year-old guy.

AED: Make sure you're not a communist is the major goal.

JLG: We didn't know what communists were.

AED: When you landed at Killeen Base, what were your first impressions?

JLG: What the heck am I getting into, because there was fences around the base. I think we had three fences. I'm not sure. Some of the guys could tell you.

AED: They said four, that's the number they—

JLG: Four, yeah that's what I had in mind but I wasn't sure it was four. And one was an electric fence. It kind of piqued your imagination. What is here? And to be perfectly blunt, I sound kind of naïve, but I didn't know what they were doing there. I didn't know that it was storage for atomic weapons.

AED: And you'd been at this point to Lackland [Air Force Base] and Kelly [Air Force Base], and those are air force bases. This doesn't look like that.

JLG: No.

AED: Not the same setting at all.

JLG: Not at all, not at all.

AED: And in your words, what would you describe as the mission of Killeen Base?

JLG: The mission of Killeen Base, in my estimation, would be provide the security for the storage of atomic weapons.

AED: So the main activities there were to house those?

JLG: To house them, and also to assemble basically the bombs. They assembled the bombs in these plants. I guess you've heard about the quote "plants." Most of the areas were just storage areas where they stored the weapons, but other areas in the plants, that's where both civilians and blue-suiters assembled the parts necessary to complete the bomb.

AED: Right, and who were the people who were doing that? What were those organizations that did the assembly?

JLG: I really can't tell you because I don't know. I never worked in the plants. Many of our people did. I was strictly a guard on patrol, and then I worked in the guardhouse where all the paperwork and the administrative area was. I didn't have access to the plants themselves. I did not go into the plants, so I really don't know what all went on in the plants, but many of our people do, civilians and blue-suiters.

AED: When you got to Killeen Base, was there more training at that point?

JLG: We had to keep current on carbine and .45 and shotguns and that sort of weaponry. That was the training.

AED: And did the air force provide that training?

JLG: Yes.

AED: Because of the affiliation with the army, I guess that's why I was wondering if there was any interaction between their training folks and, I mean they were doing tank training basically there, but—

JLG: No, not at all as far as I know. Fort Hood, to my recollection, is home of the Second Armored Division, and that's strictly army and tanks. When we came to Killeen Base, we relieved the 8455th MP Company. That's army. So when we moved in, the army moved out. And I believe, a long time ago, the initial idea was to have the army provide the security, then they are

relieved by the air force to provide the security, and maybe another branch of the service, but I don't think that every materialized. I don't think it got beyond the army and the air force, to my knowledge.

AED: Right. How many men were in the group that came to Killeen Base?

JLG: Ooh, wow.

AED: Was it many, many, a huge group? Or just a small—?

JLG: No, I would say we were a relatively small contingent. Oh my gosh. This is kind of a wild guess, but I'd say approximately 100 people.

AED: And was it just the group from Kelly [Air Force Base] that came, or [were] there others?

JLG: In my group, it was just the group from Kelly [Air Force Base], but that was supplemented from other, what we call, sister organizations. They did basically the same thing that we did. It wasn't a big mass introduction of a new group of people. The only exception of that is after we were at Killeen [Base] about one year then they had a second wave of people come from Lackland [Air Force Base]. See, some of these came in a year after we were there. And they did, you were talking about training earlier, they did, I understand, training at Killeen [Base], additional training at Killeen [Base].

AED: Okay, all right because I'm trying to keep separate the different groups that are coming in at a little bit different timing. Yeah, trying to get that understanding.

JLG: But the main group, and then a year later supplement to that, and then individuals from there on in.

AED: How would you explain the whole 1094th organization? Because your group came in and you did, you were security, but there were other groups doing other things? Other flights doing other things?

JLG: I can't really speak to that other than there's a differential between the security guards, and the people that worked in the plants. I'm not familiar with the people that worked in the plants.

AED: But there were some administrative people?

JLG: Oh yes.

AED: Okay, and people have spoken about the mess hall, those kinds of things.

JLG: Yes, that's a standard thing. In any organization, you've got your administrative personnel, you've got your motor pools to support the vehicles, and you've got the kitchen to support and feed the people. You also have day rooms for recreation and small PX, for example, where you buy your supplies. We were paid once a month, by the way.

AED: And how much were you paid?

JLG: About $105, somewhere around there. It depends on your rank. You'd buy your cigarettes and toothpaste for the full month. And you really had to watch your money because it had to last. They only paid you once per month.

AED: You're young to try to balance that. You only have so much cash.

JLG: Well, most people could handle it, but some of them can't. For example, for those who spend their money before the end of the month, they go around wanting to borrow money, and there's always people willing to loan you money, but for a price. The standard price was 50 percent interest. You borrow $5 and you pay back $7.50 at payday. These are small numbers, but those are the kinds of number we worked with.

AED: Yeah, and that had different value at that point in time, definitely very different.

JLG: Oh yeah.

AED: Interesting. So within your flight, were there administrative people and guards or—?

JLG: Yes, you had the administrative people.

AED: And did everybody eat in the same place?

JLG: Yes, we had a mess hall, standard GI affair. You have four meals a day: three meals, breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Then for the guard personnel, which was us, they had what they call midnight chow, and we'd go down at midnight. But that was kind of a funny thing. I liked to eat quite a bit when I was there, and so when it'd come around midnight, I'd always ask the guys in my bay, "Wake me up. Tell me what they have for midnight chow," and they'd tell me, and then I'd strap on a web belt with a holster for a .45 and go stand in the chow line. They'd never challenge you whether you're going on duty or not. One guy says, "Hey Griff, they're going to have tube steak tonight." Oh great, I'm going to get up and go get myself some tube steak. Went down there, you get educated very quickly in the military, tube steak is a weenie, wieners.

AED: Have hot dogs.

JLG: Yeah, hot dogs. I didn't know that.

AED: No steak about it, right?

JLG: I don't think there's anything unusual about a standard organization chart. It takes personnel, administration, support function, motor pool, mess hall, that sort of thing.

AED: Who took care of the guns? The equipment? Where was that? How did that work?

JLG: They store all the rifles, shotguns, pistols and the ammunition in the ammo room. When we'd get ready to go on guard duty, you would report to the room they issued your weapon and your ammunition. It's all counted so if they issue for example, 10 shells, when you get through, you've got to turn in 10 shells.

AED: When you did guard duty, where did you typically [guard] where were you?

JLG: Well for me, my guard duty, 99 percent of it was inside the Q Area. We had jeep vehicles. We had a driver and a radio operator, and patrolled halfway around the perimeter, and turn around and go halfway around the other way, back and forth all night long.

AED: At the same time another team is—

JLG: Doing the other half, correct. And the procedure is you're not supposed to meet because

you're supposed to keep separate. Guys fudged a little bit, you know.

AED: That'd be hard to do every single time. How many hours at a time did you—?

JLG: I was thinking it was four hours. I'm not really sure.

AED: Some of the guys have said six.

JLG: It could be. I'm not sure. It was a full shift. Probably six is closer than four.

AED: And so how did you not, how would you not meet?

JLG: Not meeting? If we would meet we'd have to separate quickly and go the opposite direction. Inevitably you'd meet sometime somewhere.

AED: Right, and are you driving at a certain pace?

JLG: Oh yes, the pace, oh my gosh. The pace varies, maybe 5, 10, 15 miles an hour. Or if you wanted to kind of doze or sleep a little bit, you can put a jeep in low gear, low range, and that thing will creep along. You can walk faster than that jeep will go. In case you doze and fall off to sleep and start going off the road, it's going so slow you awaken and gain control.

AED: Did you have concern that you might get [caught]. Someone might be watching you?

JLG: Oh yeah, Lieutenant Picket caught me one time. You want me to tell you that?

AED: I do want you to tell me that! No one has 'fessed up yet.

JLG: These GI guys, our group, they could come up with anything. They could solve any problem. As a group, they would just manage to solve things. The standard procedure for our people was the officer of the day has to come in and inspect the guard on duty on post, I think it's once per shift. We'll say it's six hours. Somehow we used to get word from the gate guard in the Q Area. You know, when the [officer of the day] comes in the Q Area, well, the gate guard has to check him in, so somehow we used to get the word from the Q [Area] gate that hey, the officer of the day is in the area. Well, one night we did not get the word. I forget who I was with but we did not get the word. We were on patrol, low gear, low range, 2 miles an hour, and Lieutenant Picket came up behind us, and he had been following up for two or three structures, storage areas, you call them sugars, sugar one and sugar two whatever, that's the storage area. That's the old terminology for the alphabet, instead of alpha, bravo, Charlie. We finally saw him. I was a radio operator and I had to halt and challenge. Who goes there? And all the identification procedures. And then at the end I say, "Corporal Griffin post 13, all in order, sir." And then Lieutenant Picket says, "Did you check that last sugar, so-and-so, back there?" And I knew the jig was up, and I say, "No, sir." And he says, "Well, you're going on report." "Yes, sir." "Dismissed." So he goes on his way. And the next morning after getting off shift, this is at night, orderly room Smith, we have orderly-room Smith, motor-pool Smith, and mess-hall Smith. That's how we identified people with the same names.

AED: Seems reasonable.

JLG: And I went down in the bay. We had 50, 60 men in the bay, you know two bunks one on top of the other. And orderly-room Smith came down, he says, "Report to Major Barr." I said, "Okay." I knew something was up, because I knew the difference between see Major Barr and report to Major Barr. Major Barr was kind of a fatherly-type figure. He was a very nice man. I reported to Major Barr. "Corporal Griffin reporting as ordered, sir." And I'm standing in

front of his desk. And he didn't give me at ease, so I knew something was going on. He says, "Corporal Griffin, I have the officer of the day's report from last night that Lieutenant Picket says you didn't check several structures." And he says, "Is that correct?" I say "Yes, sir." He says, "That'll be all, Private Griffin." I said, "Yes, sir," saluted, did an about face, went back down, jumped on my bunk. About 30, 45 minutes later Smith comes roaring into the room and they're there just laughing up a storm. Slapped a piece of paper on my bunk. I was now a private. Yeah, I got caught.

AED: That's what happens. And then did you get back?

JLG: Oh, eventually I got back up, but that probably knocked maybe a year, a year and a half of my promotion.

AED: Did that change the way you—?

JLG: No, that didn't bother me.

AED: But the way you guarded, did that have—I mean, you were checking then?

JLG: Well, more careful. Basically, though, we did our job I'd say about 99 percent of the time. But my gosh, you get two young guys, 17 years of age, give them a jeep at nighttime and the moon's out, anything is possible.

AED: And you're driving this half circle just continuously. That's monotonous at a minimum.

JLG: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. So you can see where it'd get very dull.

AED: Did you think about what you were doing at the time? What did you think about it when you knew what you protecting?

JLG: About the job itself? Well, like I said a little earlier, I was a quite naïve. I really didn't know what was in there.

AED: When did you find out?

JLG: They have the storage areas and then they had the plants where they did the assembly. Well, it took a very short time to find out what they were doing in there, and I knew then that was a storage area for weapons, atomic weapons.

AED: On duty, you did that every day?

JLG: We didn't have what you call work five days, two days off. I'm not sure what the work schedule was, but that was our job, day in and day out, for a specified period of time. I don't recall that time frame, but I'm sure it was equitable, you know, get a couple of days off. Then we have our leave in there. We get 30 days leave each year.

AED: And then, did they continue to do additional training while you were there?

JLG: Well, they did training with the new ones that came in about a year after. And the initial training was just to maintain currency. The training would be in your weaponry.

AED: Okay, keep you fresh on how to use everything.

JLG: Yes.

AED: When you were doing, when you were on guard duty, did you ever experience any potential threat?

JLG: No.

AED: Did you ever need to shoot your gun?

JLG: No, I never did. I don't know that anybody ever encountered any act of espionage. That's probably what you're leading to. I don't know that anybody ever got involved in that. It was a very secure area. How they would get in there, they'd have to damn near parachute in. Seriously, because you got the Second Armored Division on the outside of our perimeter, and then you've got four fences, one with the electric, and then you've got another secure area inside the Q Area, then you have super-duper locks and steel doors on the storage areas, and then you have guards guarding the exterior, the perimeter, and then you have guards at the entry of the plants where the people working in the plants would go in and out. So it would be very difficult to penetrate all those levels of security, I would think.

AED: You said you also worked in the guard tower? How would you describe that?

JLG: When you come onto the base you have what you call the main gate, and you have a main gate guard, and then inside the main gate we had a building there, sergeant of the guard, officer of the day, people that would record the calls from the security patrol to check in everything. In fact, that was one of my jobs, to record when such-and-such [happened] at such a time, when patrols checked in and log the info and tour of duty of everybody.

AED: Okay, keeping track of who's where when.

JLG: Yep.

AED: Okay. Did you guard in the pillboxes at any point?

JLG: Pillboxes? I'm not familiar with that.

AED: There were some structures, little short guard towers, physical towers that you'd stand in. I think there was really room for just one man in each one. I think they were concrete.

JLG: No, I was never involved in any of that.

AED: Okay, so basically perimeter and then the—

JLG: Perimeter patrol and the guard shack.

AED: Okay, and where were your barracks in relation to where you were patrolling? Were they nearby?

JLG: No. Well, nearby would be, let's see, how would you say? You have the main gate. Well, first of all, you come off the main highway and they have what they call an access road. That was 2 or 3 miles. Then you get to the main gate, and you drive maybe from the main gate to the administrative building would be the equivalent of six or eight blocks, something like that, the administrative building with billets. And then you had another separate building that was built a little later on that was totally billets, all billets. Then you had the motor pool behind that. So we only basically had about three main structures: billeting, administration, and the officers' quarters, we only had a couple officers there, and then the motor pool. That was basically it. A relatively small operation, I would say, compared to other operations.

AED: Right, well, thinking about Fort Hood and its expanse, this is very—

JLG: Oh, we are miniscule compared to Fort Hood.

AED: Did you ever guard off Killeen Base and in some of the convoys?

JLG: Yes. When they would remove a weapon from the storage area and put it on a train. They have to all kinds of elaborate procedures to make sure everything is secure, and then we, as guards, would escort that unit over into the Fort Hood area. They had a train over there where they load and unload. That would be one area where we'd provide extra duty off base. Or if we were escorting the weapon to an aircraft down at Gray Air Force Base. Gray Air Force Base was literally just outside the main gate of Killeen Base. That would be the extent of my duty as a guard. Occasionally get involved in that, but that was on rare occasion for me.

AED: What was that like? I mean how many guards would be involved in something like that?

JLG: Oh, let's see. I don't know, not that many. I would say a couple. You know, a jeep mounted with a .50-caliber machine gun would escort.

AED: And it might be just a single bomb or would there be multiple [bombs]?

JLG: The ones where I was involved would be just one weapon.

AED: Did you know where they were going?

JLG: No, I had no idea. We had no idea. That would be all classified. We had no need to know.

AED: Right. Did you ever actually see a bomb? Were they protected?

JLG: Yes, they were all covered. You couldn't see what was there at all. There were heavy-duty tarps over them. You could see the general outline, but in those days, everybody watched the World War II movies and the pictures of bombs, but you never saw, to my knowledge, a bomb the size of the bombs that we had, because they were atomic weapons and they were huge: Big Boy, Little Boy, Fat Boy, some of the names that they tack onto them. Yeah, they're huge. Now the people that worked inside the plant, they, of course, saw it all the time. We saw the bombs that were covered, at least when I was on duty that's what I saw.

AED: When you realized what you were working with, what you were protecting, how did that make you feel? What was that like?

JLG: Well, I felt a huge responsibility, knowing that my gosh, this weapon has literally killed thousands and thousands of people. This is 1948, and Hiroshima and Nagasaki was in '45, and hundreds of thousands of people killed. Yeah, yeah, it weighed pretty heavily. There's the potential there and everything, and the thought that maybe somebody could sneak in and want to try to do some damage like detonate or take hostage or something like that. Yeah, that passed through my mind.

AED: Did you ever fear that explosives themselves, that something could—?

JLG: I didn't. I just totally bought into the thing they were going to take care of me. Everything was secure so that didn't bother me a bit.

AED: Wow. So the thought of the radioactivity nearby wasn't—?

JLG: Well, let me back up a little bit there. That's always a possibility, but where I was working, I think. It was remote. Now the people in the plant, that was a different story.

AED: Do you recall ever being on alert or high alert?

JLG: Yes, it's called DEFCON.

AED: Yeah. Wait, did you call it DEFCON?

JLG: DEFCON, defense readiness condition. You see, we used to have what was called DEFCON 1, DEFCON 2, DEFCON 3, et cetera. I remember when I was in, not in the 1094th, but I was over in the Fiji Islands. Our mission, I was in C-121 aircraft, that's a radar picket ship. Our job at that particular time was to blow a hole in the ionosphere with an atomic weapon. As you probably know, radio waves bounce off the ionosphere. We worked with Stanford Research Institution. Our 17 radar tests sets this recorded atomic action. When it blew the hole, it would create literally a hole in the atmosphere, and the radio waves would go literally boom-de-boom-de-boom, bouncing across and into that hole. The whole idea was to find a new weapon to disrupt a potential enemy's communication. So getting back to DEFCON, that's when Khrushchev and the missile problems in Cuba came about, and JFK [John F. Kennedy] threatened to do this, threatened to do that. So we were alerted to DEFCON 2, which pulled our particular outfit from the Fiji Islands back to the United States. They cancel leaves and recall all personnel back to their units. It's a state of high alert where readiness is increased. That's DEFCON.

AED: Okay, stepped up.

JLG: Yes.

AED: Did you experience that at Killeen Base?

JLG: I don't recall any.

AED: At Manzano [Base] did you?

JLG: I don't recall any.

AED: Yeah, okay. Your barracks then they were not part of Fort Hood. You were in an isolated, separate area.

JLG: Totally, totally different. Yes. Fort Hood was a couple of miles away, actually. The territory was up to our fence, but the tanks, personnel, and guns they were a long way away.

AED: Right, and did you ever spend time at Fort Hood for any reason?

JLG: Only time I ever spent any time in Fort Hood is to maybe go to the base exchange or something like that. But no training or interactivity with the army, no. The only time we ever encountered the army from Fort Hood is on the exterior perimeter we keep talking about. The army patrolled right up to that edge also, so once in a while we would meet them in the middle of the night and exchange challenges. We would challenge each other, and exchange code words to establish friend or foe. But that's the only relationship ever that we had with the army.

AED: While you were there, did people ask you when you were on leave, for example, or went into town or were with family, what did you tell them you were doing?

JLG: Well, I wouldn't. You'd tell them nothing. Would just tell them we were on the air police at Killeen Base. "What do you do?" We never explained anything.

AED: Was it hard to—?

JLG: Yes, you can't tell people what you do. "Oh, we guard atomic weapons." No, we didn't do that.

AED: Did other people, outsiders, they didn't now what was going on there?

JLG: Tons of rumors, tons of rumors. Everybody's, What's that? Oh that's that secret base over there. Gray Air Force Base is right outside our base, like I said earlier. The way the aircraft come in, to a low spot, and land. People from Killeen and outside the area, they just see the airplanes disappear. They think, they're going into those mountains. They have those tunnels in the mountains up there. That's where those aircraft go. A lot of wild rumors, yeah.

AED: Yeah, it would lead that way.

JLG: Speculation. Very secretive, I think is the word. The base was secretive to the local people. For example, Fort Hood GIs out there, I don't think they knew. They just knew we were over there. They didn't know what was over there so that created a lot of speculation.

AED: Of course. And the barracks situation, what was it like living in those barracks?

JLG: Well, going back to 17 years of age, I didn't know any difference. It was fine by me. I didn't care but to think of it now, I wouldn't want any part of that. Well, I mean the bays we slept in, it was a two-man bunk. You're familiar with the bunk, one on top of the other? Must have had, oh my goodness, maybe 50 men in the bay, I would think, something like that. That's a guess. So there's no virtually no privacy. You had a bunk, a locker, and then a foot locker at the foot of the bunk with your toiletries, socks, shorts, stuff like that. It gets a little tight in there. Guys always pulling pranks. One of the best pranks I remember, it's a little risqué but not that bad. Some guys go to town and come in late after they've been drinking. They're kind of tipsy and making a lot of noise, and the other guys are already in bed and don't like to be disturbed, you know, like anybody else. Well, what you can do. I'm not saying I did this, but what you can do, you can take a condom and fill it with maybe 2 quarts of water, a large amount. It will hold a large amount. You fill that, and then you get two pairs of hands to lift that condom with water in it and put it on top of the bed so it's just laying there, a condom filled with water on top of the bed, which took four hands to get it up there. Then the guy comes in a little tipsy from his night on the town and he wants to get in bed, but if he discovers the condom, how does he get it out? Little things like that.

AED: Not many options. That's fun, very fun.

JLG: Again, the guys come in tipsy at night after some guys lined up a bunch of foot lockers around the main entrance, so they'd come in they'd stumble over the foot lockers.

AED: That's good. The barracks were set up so there was sleeping bays, bunk bays for bunks, and on the ends or—

JLG: On the side. The bay is rectangular with the bunks on the outsides, and then the middle would be wide open.

AED: Okay, and what was the middle area for?

JLG: Just access, access to the bay. Nothing in there, oh maybe a table or something like that, but generally speaking just wide open.

AED: Did you have an area to sit and watch television?

JLG: What television? It's called the day room. The day room is a wide-open place where you play checkers, play cards, things like that.

AED: Just relax time.

JLG: Yes.

AED: And your off-duty time, you'd spend some time there at Killeen Base. Did you go off base frequently?

JLG: Your off-base [time] was in proportion to your money. If you had some money, you got off base. I mean you wanted to get the heck out of there, you know. But most people didn't go off base that much because it was quite a ways to Killeen. And then we had Temple, Texas, which is a long way away, and there's another little town, Belton, was a little town in between, so it took transportation and money. We're all 17, 18 years of age and don't have cars. I had a car, but only a few people had a car. No, we didn't go to town too much. We had an air force bus that would take us from our base, Killeen Base, to the little town of Killeen. The last bus from town to Killeen Base would be midnight, so that's what most people used when they went off base.

AED: All right, but you had a vehicle of your own. That was unusual.

JLG: Yeah, there was only a few vehicles.

AED: So when you went to Killeen or Temple, what would you do for your down time, for your off-duty [time]?

JLG: Well, hunt for girls!

AED: Did you find any?

JLG: Oh yeah, they're around. Nah, we'd just go in town and we would go to bars, they used to let us go into bars. I don't know, for some reason they were pretty lax on letting you in the bars. Killeen was a dry county. I forget the name of the county, but it was dry.

AED: Bell County, but it was dry.

JLG: It was dry, so you had to get to Temple, Texas, and for the majority of our people, the 17- and 18-year-olds, they didn't get to Temple very often because they didn't have any wheels, they didn't have transportation. Those who did have transportation, they'd always go as a group, you know four or five guys, because it cut down on the—here again, we didn't have any money, so we had to cut down on the expenses by everybody chipping in.

AED: And on base, were there recreational facilities for you to use? Were there basketball or a swimming pool?

JLG: No, no swimming pool.

AED: It wasn't a country club, was it?

JLG: No, no. We had tennis courts and—tennis courts and, tennis courts, and tennis courts.

AED: One fellow said he was on a boxing team.

JLG: Yes, Jack McCoy, he was a boxer. Another fellow by the name of, he's not here, Fred Grimsrud, he was on the boxing team. I don't know how much boxing he ever did before he came to the air force, but he took the Golden Gloves championship in Temple, Texas. Oh, there was a lot of baseball, yeah, baseball. Boxing a little bit there. I don't think we had any weightlifting rooms. I don't remember any of that, but there wasn't a whole lot of recreation on the base. The day room is the place where you play cards, basically.

AED: Somebody else mentioned that there was I think he said rec camp out, where you would go off-site?

JLG: Yeah, that's R&R, rest and recuperation. I didn't go, but it was available. I think our people built it and had access to some property and maybe a building. Our people maintained it, for recreation, and for time off.

AED: Could anybody go or did you have to be a certain, was it a privileged kind of thing?

JLG: I never went, but it was basically for the GIs, for our personnel. I assume you could bring a friend if that's what you're asking.

AED: Well, just if you had to be higher up to go? Or anybody could go?

JLG: Oh no, to my knowledge it was open to everybody.

AED: Okay. When you completed your service there at Killeen Base and at Manzano [Base] too, could you talk about what you had done at that point?

JLG: I believe they asked us not to speak of our duties there.

AED: Okay, when did you first feel comfortable talking about it, or have you?

JLG: I never even thought about it until I started going to these reunions. You know, before that I never said anything, just told generally what I did as a guard at Killeen Base. Patrolled the area and it wasn't very exciting.

AED: So did your family, do your children know what you did there?

JLG: I doubt it. I doubt it very seriously.

AED: At the time when you were there, did you realize you were a part of something different, unusual, special? Did you know that?

JLG: Initially, no. Later on, it kind of overwhelms you because you understood what was there and the potential for what was there to be used on other countries and people, yes.

AED: Yeah. At any point did you feel like there was an immediate threat when you were there, that something was impending or was going to happen while you were there?

JLG: Locally or worldwide?

AED: Locally.

JLG: No, I never felt threatened.

AED: But worldwide, did you?

JLG: Well yeah, you read the papers, and a little breakout of a little war over here, are we going to drop another atomic weapon or something. Yeah, that thought crossed my mind.

AED: And at the time, did you know this was the Cold War? We're in it?

JLG: Yes, yes, yes. You know, if you watched those news reels in those days, you could pick up on that. But our people, getting back to the age there, they're really not concerned about world affairs. They're well ahead on world affairs for 17- and 18-year-olds compared to civilian 17- and 18-year-olds. I mean right now today, I don't think young people don't really fathom what's going on in the world. We were basically the same thing, but we're several notches above our counterparts. I would say that because of our training and what we did and what we were exposed to.

AED: And the nuclear stockpiles in the U.S. were so much larger than those elsewhere at that time, although I don't know that U.S. [citizens] knew that then.

JLG: We did not know the numbers of weapons stored. Literally thousands of weapons like that. We didn't know. I don't think anybody really [knew]. I don't think the top-secret people probably wouldn't even have known because they're all over the country. Kind of a hush-hush era you know? People just didn't talk about it.

AED: Didn't talk about it. And now when you're looking back, what do you think about your role doing that work at that place during the Cold War?

JLG: Well, I like to think that I did my part in supporting what was needed to be supported at that time. Although it's a small cog in a big wheel, I still did my job and I felt proud that I did my job to the best of my ability. It was a job that needed to be done. Somebody had to do it, and we were selected to do it.

AED: That's good. If you were thinking about the buildings there today, the tunnels, do you have an idea, do you think they should be preserved? Open to the public? Demolished? What are your feelings about that?

JLG: I like openness myself. I would like to see people made aware of what went on at that particular point in time. I don't think there's any security risk at this time, so why not? Open it up and let everybody know this is what was going on. Oh I didn't know that, and well, my son did this and my son did that. I think it would be a great pat on the back for the people who did these jobs that were unknown to the general public.

AED: Because there were so many places that were doing this. I didn't know that, of course, when I first got into this, but the Clarksville [Base] and Killeen Base and Manzano [Base] were three. Then there were even more that were built.

JLG: We had no idea how many numbers were involved.

AED: That's pretty much my set of questions, but maybe you have something else?

JLG: No. I appreciate the fact that you people are getting this together, and I think you're approaching it the right way. You're getting a little bit from a lot of people, and by doing that, I think you can put it together and get a pretty accurate reading on what was actually there,

what was done, and the feeling that the people had for the job and what they did. I assume that's basically what you're trying to put together here.

AED: It's been very impressive to talk to each person and get that. Some of it's repetitive, but like you said before, that's confirmation about the information and trying to make it as accurate as possible, but then each person brings their own part to the table, too.

JLG: Like for example, my part. My job there, I didn't get involved that much, but you put that together with some of the fellows that worked inside the plant and the fact that like Elmer [Hounshell] has these recordings, hopefully he still has them, of people way back when and what they did. I've talked to Elmer. Elmer and I are pretty close friends. I talk to him throughout the years by the phone, and from what Elmer tells me, those interviews were quite thorough, you know, from what they did, how they did it, and whatever. So from your point of view, I would think you gathered some good information there to round out.

AED: Yeah, a different layer.

JLG: Oh absolutely, absolutely. That plant business is a much higher-level layer than patrolling outside, very routine.

AED: Right. And do you have any other stories that you could share with us?

JLG: Oh, gosh.

AED: I know there was a lot of hijinks going on.

JLG: Yeah, there was. I remember I was in the chow line one time. Have you ever heard the term "goosey"? Goosey is when you take your thumbs and goose somebody in the ribs, just in the ribs, that's all.

AED: A serious tickle.

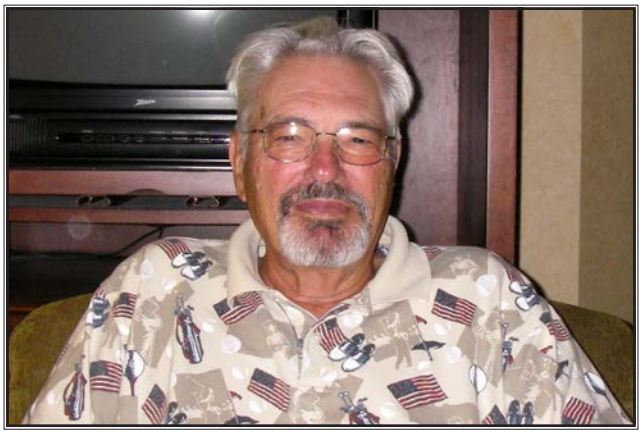
JLG: Yeah, just kind of gouge you a little bit. Well, at the time, I was a little goosey and guys knew that, so whenever they know something, they're going to jump on it. And I remember I was in the chow line and we had metal trays, and you go through the chow line, potatoes, gravy, whatever. I had my tray and it was at breakfast time. I had ham and eggs or something on there, and somebody came up behind me and goosed me, and I acted instinctively and threw my tray up in the air and I spilled food all over two or three people. And the consequence of that was pretty dire because I was on the promotion roster for corporal. The end result of that, they pulled me off the promotion roster. That costs me about six months or so to get back up. Little things like that. All in all, I had a very positive experience there and I enjoyed it. The people, my gosh, I'm retired 20 years military, but my officer friends don't get together like we do with this group. The uniqueness of this group is the fact that we all came in at one time. Normally in a military outfit, you feed people in and one guy's retiring, the other guy's coming in and it's piecemeal back and forth, but see we had three to four years together, period, just together. When I was in Vietnam I had one year with one group but rotating in and out, but these people here are very, very, you'll probably find out, a very tight-knit group. They keep in contact.

AED: That's really special, a special group of people. And then you moved together, too. You went to Manzano [Base] as a group. It wasn't just a few of you, it was the whole [group].

JLG: Yes. As a group. Just like a family you packed up and moved.

Rodney G. (Ed) Helms

1094th Special Report Squadron
Manzano Base, 1952–1954
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas



SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Tuesday, September 15, 2009. I am interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Rodney (Ed) G. Helms. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you became a member of the service?

RGH: Eighteen.

SK: Did you enlist?

RGH: Yes, enlisted.

SK: Where were you before you enlisted?

RGH: Appleton, Wisconsin.

SK: Where did you go for your training?

RGH: Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio.

SK: And what year was that?

RGH: [In] 1950, July.

SK: And they sent you to New Mexico after that?

RGH: No, I went to training in the Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City for six weeks, then I was up at Selfridge Air Force Base in Detroit for two weeks just waiting to get a deployment to radar sites that were opening up in the northern part of the States, and then I was in Empire, Michigan, at a radar site.

SK: How did you end up at Manzano [Base]?

RGH: In 1952, in January, I got orders to report to Sandia Base in Albuquerque.

SK: Is Sandia [Base] different than Manzano [Base]?

RGH: You have to go through Sandia [Base] to get to Manzano [Base]. Sandia [Base] would be an army, navy, air force, even though it's combined with Kirtland Air Force Base.

SK: At Killeen Base the guys that were going in were kind of especially assigned. Is that the same case at Manzano [Base]?

RGH: I was in the air police at the time, so I was in security. I was going to school every day, going to classes, and then you had to check a bulletin board to see if you get assigned some place. I guess they were forming a unit that was similar to the 1094th that was going to go to another base, because we were getting cleared. I guess that's what I understood later, we were getting our Q clearance. And all of a sudden on a bulletin board my name was on a list to go out to Manzano Base.

SK: How long were you in the air force?

RGH: Four years.

SK: And the remainder of that time at Manzano [Base]?

RGH: Yes, until July of '54.

SK: What rank did you achieve?

RGH: Airman first [class].

SK: Did you serve any time overseas?

RGH: No.

SK: At the other bases you were at before you go to Sandia [Base] and Manzano [Base], were any of those national storage sites?

RGH: No.

SK: So at Manzano [Base] you needed a Q clearance to work there.

RGH: Yes.

SK: Did you need a Q clearance for Sandia [Base] too?

RGH: I don't know on that. That was just organizing a group there, so.

SK: What were your initial impressions of Manzano [Base]? How was it different from the other places where you were?

RGH: Well, the weather was completely different because Michigan, there's a lot of snow. Albuquerque is a little bit different. Otherwise, I didn't think much of it. All I know is I had to go on a base with four fences and 10 miles around of fence.

SK: Before you got there, you didn't know that you would be guarding nuclear weapons?

RGH: No. I had an idea, though.

SK: Was that something at these other bases, the guarding that you did?

RGH: Oh yeah, the other base was a radar site.

SK: Can you explain what a radar site is?

RGH: That's when, remember during the Cold War they had radar sites that would go out 250 miles. Any planes that would be coming in, they figured planes would come in from Russia, the northern realm, and they had enough to cover from Washington all the way to Maine, to catch anything coming, and that wasn't supposed to be. And those sites just opened up in 1950 and '51, all those radar sites opened up in there, and they're not in existence any more.

SK: At what point did they tell you that you were guarding nuclear weapons?

RGH: I don't think they ever did. Just took it for granted.

SK: They just told you it was something serious?

RGH: I think I read it in a paper, too. What was going on, it was in the paper.

SK: Was there any speculation between your fellow soldiers?

RGH: No.

SK: You didn't talk about it with the people that you worked with?

RGH: No. Just did the job. So I really didn't get to chum with a lot of them because I got up there in June, and I got married at the end of August.

SK: So you lived off base then?

RGH: Yes, I lived off base.

SK: Were there any other buildings at Manzano [Base] besides the tunnel and the plants? Storage? Igloos?

RGH: There was an administration area you entered. First, you entered the administration area, and that's where the barracks was. If you weren't married that's where you were living. Then they had naturally a cafeteria and other stuff, I think the motor pool and stuff like that.

SK: So this was all inside those four fences.

RGH: Yes.

SK: So to even get inside the four fences, did you need area Q clearance?

RGH: Yes.

SK: Were any civilians ever working there?

RGH: If they were, I didn't know if they were civilians or military personnel. You wouldn't know, because all you did as a way in security, you made sure that they had the correct pass.

SK: Do you know what the mission at Manzano [Base] was?

RGH: All I knew is it was for storage and assembly of killer weapons, the igloos and the plants, what they did. My assignment was on the main gate, the second area gate where you had change passes which showed which areas you could go into. And then I had duties in the plants also and outside the plants, and patrolling the perimeter.

SK: So the 1094th moved from Killeen [Base] to Manzano [Base].

RGH: Right.

SK: Were there any other people who joined the 1094th who came from outside of Killeen Base like you did?

RGH: I think I have something here, my special orders that shows how many people came up at that time [looking through papers].

SK: So they didn't just keep that contingent of people that came from kind of—they added more people?

RGH: No, they added more people because apparently they must have shipped some of the people to different areas. I think there were about 50 people. I thought I had it, but this is something else.

SK: So Sandia [Base] was, you said, the army contingent there?

RGH: They had army personnel and navy personnel there, too.

SK: Was there any ever animosity between the army and the navy and the air force?

RGH: No.

SK: Everybody jelled pretty well?

RGH: I had no problem. This is 22nd of April, 1952. The following names are assigned primary duties effective on the date. This was called the Sixth Aviation of 1090th training. But that isn't the one I'm looking for. See, this is a whole list of people that were on the Sandia Base, and they were all air force getting cleared and probably get assignment after clearance. There's quite a few people. And off of that list, this would be me, 26th, 1952, I got orders to go to Manzano Base, and this is a list of the airmen that went up to Manzano Base at that time. Must be about 50 of them. I don't know why I kept all this stuff, but like anything else—

SK: When they were checking your clearance for Q Area, were your family members contacted by the FBI at all?

RGH: I understand, later, I guess they checked back all the way to your birth record and all the way back further, because I know they went to the schools and went to the church where you belonged doing all that.

SK: Did they interview your parents at all?

RGH: That I don't know. I can't remember.

SK: Do you know who the 1094th answered to? Was it the Atomic Energy Commission, the Department of Defense?

RGH: It was Atomic Energy Commission, AEC.

SK: Can you explain a little bit about the 1094th organization? When they were at Manzano [Base], did they have the same flights as they did at Killeen Base?

RGH: I wasn't at Killeen [Base], so I wouldn't know.

SK: Were they still set up in flights?

RGH: Yes, they were. When you arrived, you were in the back parking lot and you all lined up, and each flight got their role call, and then you went to your assignment.

SK: How many men were in your flight?

RGH: I can't remember. Around 80, I believe.

SK: You were a guard. Were there other positions the 1094th members held? Administrators, plant workers, things like that?

RGH: Yes, but like I said, when I got married you lose contacts and the only people that you know are the people in your flight.

SK: Were there any special requirements for being on guard? Did you have to go through any special training to guard?

RGH: I went to Tyndall Air Force Base with security school, and then we were going to school when we were at Sandia [Base], we were taking classes in security.

SK: What areas of Manzano Base did you have access to?

RGH: Both administration and the inside area, and both plants were inside.

SK: Were there any areas that were off limits to you?

RGH: Yes. Well, you had no business going back in the plant because you only went back as far as what your dealings were, and you had no business back in the back of the plant, so you didn't go there. And I never was the curious kind to look at what was going on because it was none of my business.

SK: So when you were inside the plant, where were you usually posted?

RGH: It would be on the big main steel door, and then back about from here to the elevator [motioning] they had another big steel door. That was during the nighttime. Then you had another guard standing there in case somebody would try to come in and take over the plant, then you'd close those big steel doors, they could only get in so far.

SK: What was a typical day like for you at Manzano [Base]? How did it start? How did it end?

RGH: Well, you do your assignment.

SK: How did you know what your assignment was?

RGH: Depends on what it was. There were pillboxes, that if you were a site for inside the pillbox, you had to watch for what surround you had. And then there was walking guards in front of the plants that knocked off about nighttime. There was a perimeter between the first fence and the second fence, there was a road that you patrolled. And then there was a patrol up the main road that went around the whole mountain.

SK: Who made the assignments?

RGH: Offhand, I don't know.

SK: Were they just posted somewhere? How did you find out about it?

RGH: I really can't remember.

SK: Were you able to switch with somebody, if you didn't like a particular assignment?

RGH: No, I never worried about that. You're in the service, you do what you're assigned. If you don't like it, do it.

SK: What did you think about the layout of Manzano [Base], with the buildings and the tunnels? Did you think it was efficient for being a secret?

RGH: Well, I thought how can it be a secret when somebody had to build it. And it was local people that did the building, so how can you keep anything a secret?

SK: Do you think that the people at Sandia [Base] knew what was going on at Manzano [Base]?

RGH: I'd say probably.

SK: Did anybody ever ask?

RGH: No.

SK: When you were living off the base, you would come in the front gate?

RGH: Yes. And you had to go through Sandia Base first, and then you had to go 5 miles up to Manzano [Base]'s main gate. You had to show your pass. Most of the time everybody knew you. And then you went in an administration area and got to your assignment.

SK: Do you think you had a different experience than somebody who would have lived on the base?

RGH: Well, I did live on the base for a short time, and to me it wasn't any difference going back and forth to work, because once you lived on the base, you lived on the base and you ate there, and if you wanted to go off you just went off on your own, if you weren't working.

SK: When you were living on the base and you had time off, you could leave whenever you wanted?

RGH: Yes. But you had to be available if there was an alert.

SK: How long was your shift usually?

RGH: I think we were around eight hours.

SK: Did you work every day?

RGH: No. I can't remember, really!

SK: What was your first reaction upon knowing you were working with nuclear bombs?

RGH: I had none, no reaction.

SK: Did you know anything about nuclear weapons before you started working with them?

RGH: No.

SK: About like they're effectiveness in World War II?

RGH: Well, I saw movies, naturally, during the time they showed when you got in there in some of the classes that we had some classes, and they showed movies what the bombs would do.

SK: But that was the extent of your knowledge of the nuclear bombs?

RGH: Yes.

SK: Did you ever see any of the bombs at Manzano [Base]?

RGH: Well, I saw the containers that were stored in. Because I never got back into the area where they were assembling because they didn't have security people back there because there was no need for that. Those security people were only in the perimeter and for people that were coming in, because the people that were coming in the plant would have the right ID to get in. If they didn't have it, you didn't allow them in.

SK: Did you know of any FBI agents working at Manzano Base?

RGH: Possible. Anything is possible.

SK: Did you ever work any of the protective details when they were transferring the bombs?

RGH: No.

SK: Did you work with any civilians?

RGH: No.

SK: You didn't know of them accessing the tunnels at all?

RGH: If a person came up, all I was concerned about was what kind of pass they had, and if they had the correct number—it went by numbers—if they had the correct pass to get where they were supposed to be.

SK: So could you differentiate a civilian from an airman who was working in the plants?

RGH: I can't remember offhand.

SK: Did they wear uniforms?

RGH: There had to be some civilians because of that one area that it went in, you had to have two people going into that. I forget what they called that area.

SK: ABC tunnel?

RGH: Must be. Because any and all they had what they called ADT room to get in, that even though they had the pass to get in there, and they had a card file, somebody shows it and they get in that room, they had a whole bunch of card files with names on. If the name wasn't on there, even if he was the commander of the base, his name wasn't on that card file he couldn't go in that room. And before you could get in that room you had to call the ADT anyway.

SK: Looking back, were you worried about possible exposure to the radiation?

RGH: No.

SK: Did you spend the night in any of the tunnels at any point?

RGH: Just your shift, you had to spend the night. Because if you were in the gate, you were inside.

SK: Do you think the reason why they rotated you and your fellow flight men so much to perimeter, main gate, things like that, was so that one person wasn't working—

RGH: No, I don't think that was ever even as—it was depending upon if it was airman first class, PFC. Because you had main gate duty if you were an airman. Like a PFC didn't have main gate duty. Different duty by your code, I forget what they call that. You're like a 961-30 or something like that, and that's how you got your assignment. Then you got different assignments. When I first started most of my time was out in the pillbox walking, then as you made another stripe then maybe you were in the trucks, and then another stripe and you got the main gate and then maybe the other gate.

SK: So what do you think the best assignment was for you?

RGH: Didn't matter.

SK: Would you have rather been inside than outside?

RGH: Didn't matter.

SK: What was it like in the tunnels? Did you feel—?

RGH: Didn't feel anything. This was my job. Sitting behind a big steel door, and you have you pants bloused up in there, and all of a sudden the wind blows, it sucks in because you had these big centipedes that would crawl up your leg.

SK: Did you have to do anything to pass the time? Or was it a constant stream of people going in and out?

RGH: Depends on what time. During the daytime they were busy because there were all those people going in and out. Like a midnight shift you only had a few, that I can remember.

SK: Did you ever fall asleep?

RGH: No.

SK: Did you ever work with another person? Were there two guards at the gate?

RGH: No, just, but you always have the patrol truck. If you had one at the big door, and then they had the second door, like I said before, there was another one, but you never were together. You were always separate.

SK: Were you ever on high alert?

RGH: Yeah, a couple of times we had a high alert, and all up on the base and did some training.

SK: Did you know that it was a practice drill?

RGH: No, it was always practice.

SK: What would you tell people about your occupation, like if I would ask what do you do for the air force?

RGH: My wife knew I was up at Manzano Base, her family did, because she was from Albuquerque.

SK: In Killeen, the locals had these stories about airplanes and underground airstrips and planes flying into mountains, and it was all very secret. Was there anything like that in Albuquerque?

RGH: Not in my wife's family or anything.

SK: No curious locals?

RGH: Well, not really because my wife was born 60 miles south of Albuquerque, and that was 90 miles from ground zero. She was about 14 years old when the bomb went off. They didn't tell anybody anything. They said they were going to do an experiment. She still remembers how bright it got and all that stuff.

SK: So at what point did they realize that that was what happened?

RGH: After a while there was some experiment. I don't know.

SK: Did you discuss what you were doing with other people in the 1094th?

RGH: No.

SK: Not exchanging stories or anything?

RGH: No, I just told my dad, and he thought that was all hogwash, that there was no such bomb that was as big as that would go. I think a lot of people don't believe a lot of stuff. A lot of people think the Holocaust was made up.

SK: I guess some people, if they can't see it, they don't believe it. Did you ever have any interactions with the soldiers at Clarksville Base in Kentucky or at any of the other national storage sites?

RGH: No.

SK: Do you know of any international storage site training?

RGH: No.

SK: So they were pretty much the same, they were stand-alone bases?

RGH: I believe so.

SK: There was no interaction. What did you do when you left the service after those four years?

RGH: I was married and we had a child one year old, my wife was pregnant, I was going to stay in the service and re-enlist, and then I thought no. Then I thought I'd stay in Albuquerque, because she was from there and get a job probably at Sandia Base, because I could have gotten a job because they had a lot of civilians working there, and because I had the clearance I figured I could get a job. And I thought, No. I asked my wife if she wanted to go to Wisconsin, she said sure, so I went up to Wisconsin. Took the first job I could get, and we worked there a year, and then worked six months at Kimberly Clark, a paper mill, and then I was on the police department in Appleton for 31 1/2 years, until I retired.

SK: Do you think your training at Manzano [Base] helped you with that?

RGH: I think so.

SK: At what point were you able to talk about what you did, the guarding and security.

RGH: I didn't talk about it too much, really.

SK: Do you feel like being able to come to the reunions—?

RGH: Oh, yeah. I thought you meant talking with other people about what I did.

SK: You didn't talk about it with other people?

RGH: Unless it came up, what I did in the air force or something.

SK: But nobody was really curious?

RGH: No.

SK: Were you able to tell your wife eventually what you did?

RGH: She knew I was on the base and what I was doing, yeah.

SK: So when you were guarding the base, who did you think you were guarding it from?

RGH: I really never thought about that. It was whoever wanted to come in and try to do something, I guess.

SK: Were you more afraid of Russians or communists or internal sabotage?

RGH: No, I didn't even worry about that.

SK: Did anybody try to access the base while you were on duty that weren't supposed to?

RGH: Nope, not while I was working. But I heard about something, but I don't know, for instance, that's a fact or not. There was supposed to have been some lieutenant that came on the base

there, and figured he was going to catch somebody. And I guess he got in his truck and drove up on the base, and then got out of his truck and started walking up off on the gravel on the road, and tried to approach a guard, a walking person, and the guard challenged him. He was up on top, I guess he was supposed to. The soldier then took his carbine and pointed it at him because he didn't stop, and pulled the trigger but nothing happened. And he grabbed the gun and the shell casing came out, and it was the indent and it didn't go off.

Now, I don't know if that's a true story or not. But there's no way anybody could sneak up on somebody because if you ever try to walk up this hill here, and they'd have to walk up three or four hills, and when you're driving a truck and you're driving a vehicle and you're going up a hill, does it make more noise? And if it's the middle of the night, what do you hear? You can hear that coming up, because that's how you could tell if somebody was coming. And actually, after a while when you're patrolling outside of the plants, you were walking, and then the guard up in the pillbox, and you had a truck coming up here that was a security approach only, the trucks made different noises. You could tell who was coming up, what truck was coming up because of the noise most of the time.

And when this person came up, that's why they said you could hear the truck coming, and then it stopped, and then you could hear footprints in gravel, and then when he walked on the road, you couldn't hear him, but in the middle of the night when it's quiet you can hear a lot of stuff. And you can make out certain noises, what it is. But I don't know if that took place or not, because I just heard it.

SK: So did you know at the time that the Russians also had nuclear weapons?

RGH: I believe so, yes.

SK: At the time, did it seem like you were part of something bigger than just being a guard? Did it feel like you were a part of the Cold War?

RGH: Oh yeah, yes. I was doing something important, yes.

SK: Was there ever a time it seemed like an immediate threat?

RGH: No.

SK: What do you think about civilians working with the weapons? Do you think that they were more of a risk because they weren't in the military?

RGH: No. If the people's background is checked properly and they're a bright individual, I don't think it should make much difference, if they're doing their job properly.

SK: Do you consider yourself a part of the Cold War?

RGH: No, I never thought of it that way.

SK: Looking back with what you know now, what do you think your role was now back then?

RGH: I really haven't even thought about it.

SK: What do you think should be done with the buildings and the tunnels at Manzano [Base]? Do you think they should be preserved or open to the public or interpreted as a museum in any way?

RGH: No. I really don't think so, but there is really nothing there. When you think of a hole in the mountain and it goes in there, you wouldn't see anything unless they would have an enactment for how stuff was done.

SK: Have you ever been back since you left?

RGH: When in Albuquerque—I forget what year we were in Albuquerque—we had permission and a bus load went up there and got into Plant 1, and walked in there.

SK: Was it any different than what you remember?

RGH: No. To me, it looks smaller. And I got into an area in the back part that I never was back there, so I at least saw what that looked like.

SK: What kind of condition are the tunnels there?

RGH: They were in good condition.

SK: Are they still used?

RGH: Not that I know of. They're not used by anything. At that time there was nothing. There was storage in one tunnel with old computers and monitors. That's the only thing I noticed.

SK: What do you want airmen or civilians to know about your role at Manzano [Base]?

RGH: Doesn't matter.

SK: You don't want the 1094th to have a legacy? Maybe let people know that this was going on?

RGH: Well, that sounds like a good idea.

SK: But do you think it's important for this generation to know what—

RGH: Oh, yeah. I think of what was going on at that period of time, yeah.

SK: Do you think we can learn anything from it?

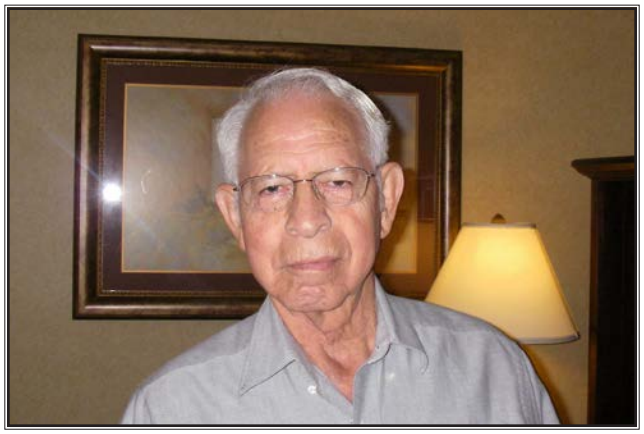
RGH: Because I think when the government started doing all that stuff, I think that stopped a lot of stuff from happening, because who knows what might happen if we showed our weakness. We didn't have that.

SK: That's all I have. Do you have any additional comments or thoughts you want to share about your experience?

RGH: No.

Abe Hern

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1950–1952
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas



SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas. Today is Tuesday, September 15, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the time, Mr. Abe Hern. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you became a member of the service?

AH: Eighteen.

SK: Were you enlisted or commissioned?

AH: Enlisted.

SK: Where did you come from? What state were you living in?

AH: I lived in New Mexico.

SK: Was Fort Hood or Killeen Base your first stop in the military, or did you go anywhere for training?

AH: No. I received 10 weeks of basic training at Lackland [Air Force Base] prior to Killeen [Base]. [I lived in the small village of Wagon Mound, New Mexico, in the northeastern part of the state. I enlisted through the service recruiting office in Las Vegas. From Las Vegas, I went to Albuquerque where I was sworn in and waited while a large group was assembled. Then we took a long train ride to Lackland Air Force Base.]

SK: So that's where you did your training, San Antonio?

AH: Yes.

SK: How long were you in the service?

AH: Four years.

SK: What rank did you achieve?

AH: Staff sergeant.

SK: What year was it when you arrived at Killeen Base?

AH: [It was] 1950.

SK: You had to be appointed or assigned to Killeen Base. Were you aware of that at the time that you were specially picked?

AH: I didn't have any idea of Killeen Base [or how we were picked]. We knew we were on our way to a station where we would [receive service] assignments.

SK: So when you left San Antonio, you didn't know where you were going?

AH: No, I did not.

SK: How long were you at Killeen Base?

AH: At Killeen Base, about a year and a half, I believe.

SK: Were you single at the time, married?

AH: Single.

SK: What kind of security clearance did you need to work at Killeen Base?

AH: I found out later it was Q clearance.

SK: Did you have that before you got to the base or were you cleared after you got there?

AH: We were cleared after we got there.

SK: Did you go through any extra training once you got to Killeen Base?

AH: We were doing infantry training during that whole period that we were [being] cleared.

SK: What were your initial impressions of the area of Killeen Base?

AH: It was like we were at a hotel. Had duties of course, and all these training periods, some just clear infantry training and familiarization with weapons and orientations on military. At that time it was just about military [orientation].

SK: How long was it before you knew what you were doing?

AH: Such as what?

SK: How long was it since the time that you arrived at Killeen Base to the time that you knew what position you would eventually take, a guard or plant worker?

AH: It worked out for us to where we were doing just regular guarding exterior parts of the plants

and riding patrols around the area. At that time it was jeep patrols around the perimeters, and some of the outside areas of what they referred to as the Q Area.

SK: What did you think about the four fences?

AH: Four fences, it was kind of strange, because once in a while you'd see a [flash of light]. We knew that one of the fences was hot. Of course, we were told that. And it was evident sometimes when you'd see a blade of grass or something touch the fence and of course, it would burn, or you'd see a fox or something like that run into the fence. It was up from the ground probably 16 inches or so and animals could go under it. But it was kind of strange, and for a long time we just accepted it, because we were there as members of the air force.

SK: As a guard, what areas did you cover? Were you mostly on the outside fence or were you in the tunnels at all?

AH: No. I guess after we were cleared, we had more interior duties of the area.

SK: Did the FBI contact any of your family or friends back home to clear you?

AH: Yes. I know that they did. It was kind of strange when the people I worked for, one in particular had thought that I was in trouble, because he said the people that came out and questioned him were not very eager about telling them why they were there, but they wanted information. And it was just more evident that they just wanted them to answer the questions that they were asking about me.

SK: Were any of your family members tested?

AH: Tested?

SK: There have been some instances of the FBI officers trying to test the family members, trying to see if you were telling them anything.

AH: Not that I'm aware of, nobody has. I've got four brothers that were military, and as far as I know, nobody asked them any questions.

SK: Since there were three kinds of entities there, Killeen Base, Gray Air Force Base, and Fort Hood, did you see those as one big base or was Killeen Base separate for you?

AH: Separate really, because we had no reason to go over to Gray [Air Force Base] unless maybe some of the people did. We would see airplanes land, and for the longest time I had never gone over to Gray, but later I found out that there was a regular shuttle that went between Albuquerque and Killeen and Clarksville. And I found out that during our three-day pass I could take the shuttle to Albuquerque and then come back on the next shuttle going the other way. So I used that, not many times. But I almost got in trouble one time doing that because I was in Albuquerque and the shuttle was not going to fly because of weather, so I ended up having to take [a] commercial [flight] around the weather and down to El Paso and up to Austin, Texas, and then take a bus from there to Killeen. That was quite a deal, because I ended up being six hours late for our flight to be on duty, and so they covered for me though. It didn't cause any problems.

SK: What would happen if somebody would not show up for their shift?

AH: Well, I've heard that the people could be demoted because of not being there for duty. And I don't know the people. In fact, one of the fellows was telling me that he knew of a real

good airman that was a perfect example of a person that was clean and a good duty person. He ended up not being able to be on time for duty and he had trouble getting back, and he was demoted. That kind of ruined him, because after that he didn't care too much about his appearance or his duty. Things could happen, depending on the person that was in charge.

SK: Did you ever work in any of the above-ground buildings, the igloos, pillboxes, any of the storage warehouses?

AH: No, but the only above-ground buildings were quarters and it looked to me like up in the Q Area, the above-ground buildings were mainly construction sites like where they keep construction vehicles and gravel piles and stuff like that.

SK: When you were guarding the perimeter, did you alternate between walking or driving or being stationary up at the main gate?

AH: The perimeter I would think would be described as the area where the fences were, and that was all vehicle patrols. And when we got there of course, we used jeeps, and later we were using pickups, but there was no walking patrols around the fences.

SK: What was the mission at Killeen Base?

AH: Mission?

SK: For example, Fort Hood trained soldiers for combat and for infantry. What do you think the mission was at Killeen Base?

AH: Our mission was guard duty of the installation.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about the organization of the 1094th? When you came it was already the 1094th, right?

AH: Yes.

SK: What flight were you in?

AH: I found out later that the first group got there in '49 or maybe a little earlier. I don't believe that all of them were brought there in buses like we were. They were assembled from different areas of the air force. And I don't know, some of them were like recruits that were just in service or whether they were older service people that had some rank and some service time, not like we were right out of basic [training], and brought there in buses. They were assembled from other areas. But that was referred to as the first group to Killeen Base. And then when we came, we were additions which I ended up being the second group of people that were 1094th. While we were there and before we shipped to Albuquerque, there was a third group that came in, and we called them the tent people because there was no barrack space for them, so they lived in tents while they were waiting for barracks to be built, and of course, they were put up pretty fast.

SK: Did you enlist with any of your friends from Albuquerque?

AH: I was the one person from our area, and of course, when [I] got to Albuquerque, [I was] acquainted with the other people that were waiting to be shipped to San Antonio to start basic training.

SK: The 1094th was considered air force, but it was housed at Fort Hood, an army facility. Do you

think that there were any drawbacks to that? Did you feel any animosity between the air force and the army sharing those facilities?

AH: No. As far as I knew we were just air force. When we first got to Killeen [Base], Fort Hood army was patrolling the outside fence, and we knew that. And we didn't hardly ever even talk to them. There was no reason to. I mean I never did. I don't know if some of the others would make voiced contact with them—

SK: Did you go over to Fort Hood to use any of their mess hall or the PX over there?

AH: I used Fort Hood quite a lot. [Went] there to go to the golf driving range and some of the other things that they had available there.

SK: Was there a shuttle? Did walk you or drive?

AH: They had a shuttle bus that went to Fort Hood and to downtown Killeen that we used regularly as a regular time we could depend on if we wanted to go into town or go to Fort Hood.

SK: What did you think of Killeen as a town?

AH: It looked like the little of the towns that I was familiar with in New Mexico. There were very few stores, and you'd go there to a movie. We used the laundry for our dry cleaning. We'd go to the corner drugstore and drink a malt. But just a pretty simple little town.

SK: Do you think that helped you in your transition into the military being somewhere that seemed familiar to you?

AH: Not to me. I was very comfortable with the fellows that I got acquainted with. In other words, I grew up in areas where there was just small towns. In fact, there was more there in Killeen than some of the places where I lived before I got there.

SK: Did any of your fellow flight members or anybody else at Killeen Base, go back to Albuquerque with you on those three days that you had off?

AH: No. I made those trips alone.

SK: How many men were in your flight when you went there?

AH: Flights usually consisted of maybe 30 people.

SK: Do you know how many flights were there when you were there?

AH: It was usually six.

SK: Were there any special requirements for being a guard? Did you have to know anything else that a normal army soldier would have to know, any special munitions?

AH: Only special instructions were that we would pay strict attention to what was given to us by mouth, by the flight sergeant or maybe the lieutenant that was in charge of the flight itself, but as far as any special instructions, I thought they all came as was needed.

SK: What areas of Killeen Base did you have access to?

AH: Areas?

SK: Some people have said that the only place they didn't have access to was the ABC tunnel or the ADT room.

AH: I don't know what areas really actually were referred to as ADT. I know that the interior parts of the tunnels had guards at the entrance all the time, and then some distance from the entrance was what we referred to as the blast door, that always had a guard. And I believe that was pretty much where I pulled duty in the interior of the tunnels.

SK: The main gate and the blast doors?

AH: [The main gate was the plant entrance. The blast door was located in the tunnel back from the entrance.]

SK: As a guard, what was a typical day like for you at Killeen Base?

AH: [Typical day at Killeen Base. After shower and breakfast, clean your barracks over, shine your shoes, prepare laundry to be sent out. Take time to lay out in the sun. See that uniform was ready for duty. Draw and clean your weapons. Stand guard mount. Take a ride to your duty post if not on a motor patrol. Prepare your vehicle for duty if on motor patrol. To use of some of my free time, I took jobs with outside contractors in building the new barracks and resurfacing the plant roads.]

SK: How long were your shifts usually?

AH: It was usually six hours.

SK: Would you spend that whole six hours guarding the main gate or would you sweep the perimeter at all during that time?

AH: Usually I would just spend the whole six hours at a particular post whether it'd be patrol or a stationary post. You got breaks. They'd have someone come and give you a break, get away from the post for a while.

SK: Did you ever have a case of your replacement not showing up?

AH: No, I don't think that was taken care of if someone had a problem, there was always someone to relieve you.

SK: What did you think about the layout of the tunnels and the underground storage facilities at Killeen Base? Do you think it was confusing or confusing on purpose?

AH: No. To me it there's something the military came up with, and it was strange and unusual, but so there was always things going on that we thought were maybe even more strange than that. But no, we didn't. I myself didn't think of, I was amazed at some of the things that I saw—

SK: Did you live in the barracks?

AH: Yes.

SK: So the barracks were already built. You didn't have to live in a tent when you got there?

AH: No, but it was good and they had air conditioning. Of course, it was the swamp-cooler type. It wasn't the refrigerated air, but it was comfortable. We were always treated real well with the good air in permanent buildings.

SK: Was there anything else in that building or was it just where you lived?

AH: The main building where the barracks was just had everything. It was just one big building that had the cafeteria. We didn't have a gym or anything like that. They didn't even build one before we left there. We didn't have any better facilities in Albuquerque and no worse. Nobody had to live in tents, but they built more barracks at Manzano [Base], and I think they even built a gym later.

SK: What was your first reaction upon knowing you were working with or protecting bombs, nuclear bombs?

AH: I really didn't know it was actually a bomb. We knew that there was some units in there that may be that.

SK: So you weren't told what you were protecting?

AH: No.

SK: Did you ever go down to where they were transferring the bombs at the railhead?

AH: We knew not to go down where they were doing anything like you described. I know some units, whatever they were, were moved. And I really don't know where they were. I don't remember that they were ever moved to a place like maybe Gray [Air Force Base] or an area where they might be transferred away from the area or anything like that.

SK: Was your main goal to keep people without the appropriate clearance from entering the tunnels?

AH: Definitely. That was the entire reason for us to be there is that we knew who belonged there, and our job was to see that other people did not gain entrance to the area.

SK: Did anybody ever try?

AH: No, I didn't have that to happen, and of course, they wouldn't have made it.

SK: Did you know anything about nuclear weapons before you arrived?

AH: Nuclear weapons, I knew they were available or something that we had. We knew what happened in Japan. As far as knowing anything more about it, I really didn't.

SK: At what point did you find out that you were guarding nuclear weapons? Not until afterwards, until you got out of the service?

AH: I don't even know that they ever really told us, You're guarding these things. We knew that there was special weapons, and I think generally everybody pretty well knew what special military weapons were during that period of time.

SK: Were you ever on high alert?

AH: Well, I don't know. I think we were on high alert all the time really, but as far as like maybe

thinking that someone was trying to enter the plant or anything like that, I wasn't ever aware of anything like that happening.

SK: Did you ever work with any civilians?

AH: I knew they were there. Of course, we checked badges for people that were civilians and had the jobs within the plant, but all we were concerned with was making sure that the badges that they had were their own badges, and that they were—that we could let them in the area wherever they worked, depending on whatever badges they presented.

SK: Did anybody at Fort Hood ever ask you what you did at Killeen Base?

AH: I had very little contact with anybody at Fort Hood when I went to Fort Hood. Usually if I went there I was either by myself or maybe one other person to go to the golf course or go to some of the other places that were there.

SK: Did anybody in Killeen ever ask you what you did, any of the civilians or town people?

AH: No, not that I can remember.

SK: Did the air force give you instructions on what to say if people asked what you did? Did you tell them you were an airman or a police officer?

AH: No. We were instructed to not visit with anybody about anything in that area or near Killeen Base or anything like that at the time. I didn't have a problem with anything like that.

SK: What were your impressions of the Fort Hood facility?

AH: We knew they were very big. They had a lot of things that we didn't have, and we knew that they were a large military instillation.

SK: Do you think the airmen and the army personnel were treated differently at all?

AH: No, because we were very proud of being air force, and of course, as far as I knew it didn't bother me any about them being army and me being in the air force.

SK: Did you ever travel outside of Killeen? Did you ever go to Waco or Belton or Austin or Mexico?

AH: Yeah. Several of us went to Dallas. I made at least one trip to Waco. My sister and brother-in-law and nephews and nieces were on a trip, and they stopped off in Waco, and I went there and visited with them. That was the only trip I made to Waco. I used to go to the rest camp that we had at Lake Buchanan. The rest camp was a residence at the lake maintained by Killeen Base for our use during weekends or three-day passes. There was a small boat with an outboard motor and some fishing gear. We could drive there or use base-provided vehicles. In fact, I drove the vehicle there that we used to make trips back and forth from Killeen [Base] to Lake Buchanan. And we'd take supplies and take some of the guys down there that wanted to go spend the weekend. Of course, we could drive our own vehicles down there.

[The rest camp was a residence at the lake maintained by Killeen Base for our use during weekends or three-day passes. There was a small boat with an outboard motor and some fishing gear. We could drive there or use a base-provided vehicle.]

SK: Did anyone have a personal vehicle?

AH: I had a vehicle several times. I never kept them very long. I brought one up from home initially, and somebody always wanted to buy them, so I sold that vehicle. And then on several occasions I decided I needed transportation, and I'd buy a vehicle and keep it for a while, and someone else would want to buy it, so I think I ended up going through about three vehicles while at Killeen [Base].

SK: When you would go into town into Killeen or when you would go to Waco, did you wear your uniform or were in civilian clothes?

AH: We never wore our uniform.

SK: What do you think the American public felt about the military at that time, about America and its involvement in Korea?

AH: I don't remember ever visiting with anybody in the area about that, and Korea, I wasn't really aware of what was going on there. We were not paying attention to it. I really found out about it more on my first leave because my brother was in the air force and he was stationed at Holloman Air Force Base. He had bought a vehicle, and I wanted to borrow it when I was on leave. He told me I could go ahead and borrow the vehicle. When I got there to pick up the vehicle to take home, just days before that he had been alerted to leave for Japan. So it came at the right time, because somebody had to take his vehicle. And he ended up [going to] Korea, and I had taken his car home.

SK: Out of your four brothers, how many went overseas? They were all four in the military, right?

AH: Yes.

SK: And just that one went overseas?

AH: He went overseas and he was tail gunner and weather observer on a B-36. That was his longest tour. Then when Korea came along, he spent some time in Korea, and then later on he ended up in charge of an early warning station in Alaska. That was shortly before he retired from the air force.

SK: Did your brothers ever ask you what you did?

AH: No, not specifically. They were aware that I was at a special base, just like Killeen [Base] was. They were just, nobody seemed to know what was going on there. It was just a regular base, but as far as them asking what I did, we guarded the place, and that we were security guards.

SK: What year was it when you went to Manzano [Base]?

AH: I'd say we were in Killeen Base probably a year and a half, so that was about the middle of 1951.

SK: Were there any big differences between the two bases?

AH: The only thing being is that Manzano [Base] was built into a mountain, and this was of course, a lot different [at Killeen Base]. The hills, you know. [Manzano Base] was in the mountains, and of course, the installation as such was the same. In other words, it had buildings where they had their barracks and some vehicle areas. And of course, it had the four fences. About the same as Killeen [Base].

SK: Do you think that that helped the 1094th adjust to a new base, because it was essentially the same?

AH: Well, I don't think that. I didn't have any problems with it. I don't know if anybody else did because it was the same duties, essentially the same kind of buildings, and nothing really changed.

SK: When you were in Albuquerque, did you live in the barracks as well?

AH: I did for some time, but my folks lived in Albuquerque, and so after that I went on separate rations, and I lived at home. Of course, then after that short period of time I got married. I became a person that lived off the base, going out to Manzano [Base] to do the duty.

SK: When you were discharged after four years, did you stay in Albuquerque?

AH: Yes.

SK: What did you go on to do?

AH: ACF Industries were contractors for Sandia Corporation, Inc., and people that worked at ACF [Industries] were required to have Q clearance. I don't know if it was Q clearance, but special clearance. And so our clearance was accepted there, and I went to work for them as a security guard.

SK: Were you there for a long period of time?

AH: I worked there for at least two years, and was asked to consider buying a milk route in Missouri. My wife's cousin came to visit us, and he had bought a route that he wanted to get rid of because he was doing other work. So we thought we'd do that, and went over and took over that milk route.

SK: So you've been in Missouri for a long time then?

AH: [Off and on from 1956 to the present.] My wife was from Missouri, and I had been there on a trip. And we thought it was a good idea to buy the route, and my wife was eager to, because she was going back home. The milk route didn't work. So I moved to Kansas City and I went to school. I took a job with Bendix Corporation, which my clearance helped me get in there also, because they were people that were doing work for the, I think it was referred to then as the Atomic Energy Commission. And I worked there while I went to school.

SK: Did the military pay for your school?

AH: Yes. They helped under what they referred to was the GI Bill.

SK: So once you have your security clearance it stayed with you all that time after you left the air force?

AH: Yes. The people that needed it where I had to go were able to check and see if your clearance was current. I never knew that they had any problem reinstating it. In fact, I don't know at this time now, since I haven't used it since 1959, I haven't worked any place where a clearance was required. I'm sure that they would want to check that prior to, if I decided I wanted to use it.

SK: At what point did you start talking about what you did at Killeen Base? Did your family ever

know after you got out? Did you ever talk about it with your spouse?

AH: I never talked about it to anybody. I don't remember that I've ever really told anybody in detail what I saw in the tunnels, if anything.

SK: Do you think it's just because you don't think to talk about it or you just don't want to talk about?

AH: I can't remember that I've ever.

SK: Do you think that these reunions could've helped bring back those memories and your time there?

AH: Memories of—?

SK: Memories of working at Killeen Base, being with your fellow guards and fellow airmen.

AH: No.

SK: Do you ever exchange stories when you're at the reunions? For example, This is where I worked. Where did you work?

AH: No. Well, there was really nothing ever really special about it, in my way of thinking. In other words, that I thought somebody might be interested in.

SK: So you didn't feel like you were a part of something bigger? You didn't feel like you were a part of the cold war with Russia because you were protecting these bombs?

AH: No. I don't know that. I never looked at it that way.

SK: Did you feel like you were protecting Killeen Base against communists or more of internal sabotage?

AH: At that time, definitely against communism, and of course, communism was Russia, and that's about all I ever thought about, that part of it.

SK: Did you ever consider extending your time in the air force beyond those four years?

AH: No, I was eager to get out, but I think it would've been—career-wise I think it would've been a good thing for me to stay at Manzano [Base]. I had a good job there, but I was ready to get out. At that time I thought that I could do better. I had good rank, and good working conditions, everything was set up for me, but I didn't take advantage of it.

SK: How do you reflect on your time at Killeen Base? Do you have good memories of it? Do you have bad memories of it?

AH: Good memories. I never had any problems. You asked about Fort Hood. I did end up with a hernia that I had repaired there. But I have good memories of the area. I had a good time. We used to go skating and swimming. There was a time before Albuquerque, I had started going to the bars, and it was probably good that we transferred, because that was going the wrong direction for me.

SK: When you went to the bars, did you have to go outside Killeen because it was dry?

AH: I really didn't know anything about Killeen being dry. The way it got started I ended up in Temple with some of the guys that did that. And I thought, Well, this is not too bad. Maybe I'll do this some more. And I did several times go to Temple with [them]. And I think as far as I know going out drinking that was the only place I ever did it was in Temple, Texas, because some of the guys that I knew went there all the time, more than I did. And I happened to start going with them.

SK: What do you think should be done with the buildings and the tunnels at Killeen Base? Do you think that they should be preserved? Do you think that the army should use them for training?

AH: Well, they're good buildings as far as the outside structures and everything. There's no reason why someone shouldn't be using them. There's nothing there that would prevent them from using it as regular business buildings. The tunnels themselves I think is something that if they'll clean them up and put them back in decent shape. They could be used [for] storage or something of that nature.

SK: How long has it been since you've been back to Killeen Base?

AH: It's been at least eight or 10 years, I guess, that we were allowed to go in. When we had our reunion in Killeen, we went in to see some of the tunnels.

SK: I have some pictures if you want to look. We got to go in last year.

AH: Did you?

SK: Yes.

AH: But it was very disappointing to see the tunnels in the condition that they were in.

SK: Well, the one tunnel, the one plant has been fixed up and painted, and the lights have been reinstalled. They use that for training now. But the other tunnels—

AH: They use them for what?

SK: Training.

AH: And who do they train?

SK: The army soldiers.

AH: For what?

SK: For combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. So that's one of the big bay areas redone.

AH: Is this what they maybe refer to as the ADT area? Probably not.

SK: That is one of the tunnels. If you can see this is the tunnel in the one plant that is not fixed up, and this is the tunnel in the plant that is fixed up. It's just painted.

AH: Yeah, this looks more like what they used to look like.

SK: That's just some of the equipment.

AH: In those bay areas?

SK: Yes.

AH: In some of these bay areas, I was acquainted with them, and didn't spend much time in those areas.

SK: Did you ever have to sleep in the tunnels?

AH: Sleep, no. I never did. I don't know if some of the other guys did or not.

SK: That's just a map.

AH: Yeah, this is where we—

SK: This one is upside down. That's in one of the equipment rooms.

AH: Now I've seen some of these areas, but I didn't spend a lot time in them. At one time we were, I don't know, asked to go and help out people that were working in those areas.

SK: Did your family go with you when you had the reunion at Killeen Base? Did they get to go in the tunnels?

AH: Yes. I don't think my brothers were with us when we went in there. I know my wife was. What's that?

SK: That's one of the blast doors.

AH: Yeah, that looks familiar. Well, I have pictures that I took in there, but I didn't have as many or as much detail as you got.

SK: Well, we had a guide who knew the tunnels down there, and he took us all around in the golf cart.

AH: You didn't have to walk?

SK: No, thank goodness. There's some water in there now. In the one that has not been redone there's water seepage.

AH: I don't even remember seeing water in those gutters when I was there.

SK: What was the weather like when you were at Killeen [Base]?

AH: The winter of 1950 it was not too good for us because we were patrolling in jeeps. So of course, we wanted inside guard posts during those periods of time. But other than that, everything was pretty normal.

SK: Was it much different than what you were used to in New Mexico?

AH: Yeah, New Mexico has pretty calm weather. That's one of the blast doors also [looking at photograph]. We had posts around the outside of these areas.

SK: Were you ever up here?

AH: Yeah, the pillboxes. Did you get to see some of those?

SK: Yes.

AH: Those were pretty cold in the wintertime. Of course, I don't think we had them at Killeen [Base].

SK: When you were guarding the main gate, were you mostly on the sides of the gate?

AH: No. The posts were inside.

SK: We think that was one of the ventilation holes.

AH: Oh, okay. This was up on the hill. We used to guard those, also. I didn't like that post very well at nighttime, because you were up there by yourself, and those were not—

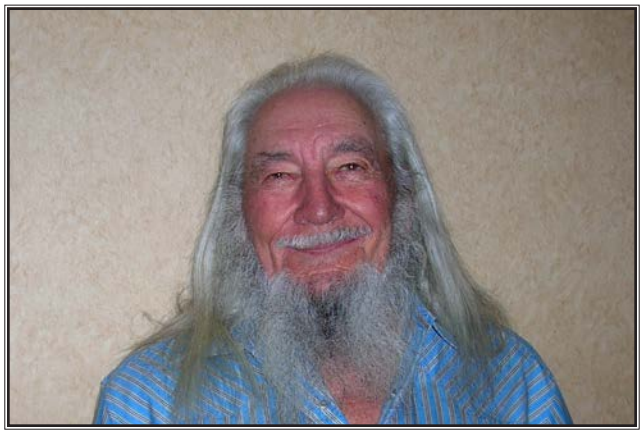
AH: What I remember about guarding the ventilators, and I don't know why they couldn't have two guys be up there, but I remember that. That was kind of a weird post, I thought.

SK: Well, that's it for my questions. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments you want to share? Anything you want the civilians or researchers or students studying this to know?

AH: No. I can't think of anything really at this time.

Elmer Hounshell

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas



SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas with Prewitt Associates. Today is Monday, September 14, 2009. I am interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Elmer Hounshell. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

Were you born in Texas?

EH: Yes, out in Brown County.

SK: And what age did you enlist at?

EH: Nineteen years. I was 19 years old.

SK: And where did you go to first?

EH: Lackland Air Force Base.

SK: And did you go from Lackland [Air Force Base] to Killeen Base?

EH: No, I went to Kelly Field, in San Antonio, after a 10-day vacation, you know, a leave. We reported in to Kelly Field.

First, I don't know what the guys have told you or not, how we got into this. My brother and I enlisted in June 1948, and after 13 weeks all the troops in the flight was assigned different locations. But he and I, plus I think four other guys, was chosen to be interviewed for special assignment, and we volunteered, my brother and I did, because we didn't know what it was going to be, but a special assignment, that's okay. And we were interviewed by Major Barr, by Major Harold L. Barr, and accepted for special assignment. He could not tell us where or what at that time. We didn't know what we was getting into, but 10 days later, after we took our 10-day leave, we reported in to Kelly Field. And we were only there three days. We was issued M-2 carbine. That's a rifle, M-2 carbine. One morning we got up, they marched

us out, we got on a C-47 aircraft. Didn't know where it was going, but we was going. About 45 minutes, hour later, we'd landed on an airstrip. The control tower looked like an outdoor toilet, but we got off that thing. They marched us up through these electric gates, four fences. The first two, just 9 foot of wire, chain link with three strands of barbed wire above them. But the third fence was setting on these insulators, big insulators, carrying 48,000 volts of electricity, I found out later. Then the next fence was bare, another 9-foot fence with barbed wire on it.

We marched up to one big building. And immediately they told us that we didn't talk, see, or tell anything that we knew. We kept it to ourselves. And we signed this little certificate, 10 years in the pen[itentiary] or a $10,000 fine if you talk about what you see or hear. So, we sat around there a few days, and found out, well, we found out where we was at. Killeen [Base], Texas, Gray Air Force Base was the name of the runway. The Killeen Base is where we was stationed. Anyway, fooled around and they told us we'd have to be cleared by the FBI you know, and you couldn't do anything until you was. You couldn't go up in the plants or Q Area. You had to be Q cleared. Which I suppose they tell you what a Q clearance is. That's from childbirth to whenever, by the FBI. It ain't like getting a top-secret, it's a Q clearance.

SK: What kind of clearance did you have, Q [clearance]?

EH: Yep, Q [clearance]. But we finally got our Q clearance and got to work, but I went back to my school at Crosscut, Texas, and the FBI had been out there, questioning everybody about me and my brother. And then my father picked up a hitchhiker on the road. And he was very inquisitive about if he had guys in the service, his children in the service. And sure, he had two boys out at Fort Hood. Well, what did they do? He didn't know, because we had never told him. But come to find out later, it was George Jelson, FBI, and he was just doing his job, clearing me from the school, my parents, what my father did, all this stuff. And were we loyal Americans, basically. But it's kind of odd, you go back and the FBI's been questioning everybody about you, and your friends.

[Each time I came in contact with the FBI agents, Mr. George Jelson and Mr. Bailey, was when I was working the post at the entrance of Plant 1 or the entrance to the ABC tunnel. For a person to enter the ABC tunnel, they must be on the access list and have the proper number on their Q Area badge. There was few listed on the access list. I think there was about six to 10 on the list. I never knew what their jobs were. I was never in the ABC storage area while at Killeen Base.]

SK: What rank did you achieve?

EH: In my 20 years? Staff sergeant.

SK: What about your brother?

EH: [He achieved staff sergeant also.] He served six years and got out. I stayed in. I could never achieve a 7-0 proficiency because it was froze, they wasn't issuing any more. I could have transferred career fields, but I did not. Chose to stay with mine, nuclear weapons. Glad I did. I got to serve my country.

[I failed to give the proper answer about my brother, Charles Hounshell. He lives at Cisco, Texas. Charles and I made all the moves at Killeen Base and at Manzano Base. Charles worked the main gate, Q [Area] gate outer patrol duty, and later as assistant flight sergeant and as flight sergeant. While at Killeen Base, he extended his enlistment to six years. I accepted the one-year extension placed on us by President Truman. He and I was always close and good friends. When he was my boss, he would put me on posts more than anyone

else. He didn't want the other guys to think he was showing favoritism and I treated him the same.]

SK: Where did you go after Killeen [Base]?

EH: After Killeen [Base]? Went to Manzano Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and got discharged up there, and I came back to San Angelo, Texas, to Goodfellow Air Force Base. Well, you got to take into consideration Korea was really hot, you know, we were fighting a war in Korea. And of course, we weren't able to go overseas for quite a long time because of our security clearance. But I saw it on the bulletin board, assignment to Albuquerque, New Mexico, again, and I chose to go there. And after being assigned the 1083rd Special Reporting Squadron, they were a reassignment organization. I called Manzano Base and got reassigned back up to Manzano Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I stayed there, operated as a flight commander until 1955 on assignment to Medina Base, San Antonio, Texas, which is also nuclear weapons. I chose to go down there, and I spent two years. And then I found out that the limit to be spent was seven years in the organization. Well, I had spent seven and a half.

SK: In the air force?

EH: In the nuclear weapons[, special weapons, atomic weapons].

SK: So there was a limit on how long you could work?

EH: [Yes.] By field command out of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Anyway, they sent a TWX to ship immediately, and I got assigned to Korea. And I come back, spent a year at Reese Air Force Base, Lubbock, Texas. And I chose to go to Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, Texas, and again, with my clearance, I worked with Atlas missiles. That's when we had the Atlas missile. And then later, we shipped to Montana, and I again worked with Minuteman missiles out of Security Control Room, Bravo 1.

SK: So you were mostly doing security and guard work?

EH: [Yes], all my career is security, and worked investigations, police investigations, for a while. But most of it was security and sentry dogs. My entire career was security.

[In July 1957, I received orders for Kimpo Air Force Base, Korea. Upon arrival, I was assigned duty as NCOIC of the K-9 Sentry Dog Section. At that time, I knew nothing of my job. Immediately, they sent me to Sentry Dog Training Center, Showa Air Station, Japan. After 15 days of training, I realized that a dog had four legs and could bite your arm. The K-9 section was responsible for securing the bomb storage area and the POL [petroleum, oil, and lubricants] fuel storage area. I remained there until July 1958, at which time I was transferred to Reese Air Force Base, Lubbock, Texas. I worked as flight sergeant until July 1958. My enlistment was up at that time. I volunteered for assignment to Dyess Air Force Base, Abilene, Texas. I was assigned to one of the flights and worked as desk sergeant for about four months. I was contacted by Tech Sergeant Morehead. He wanted to know if I would be interested in coming to the investigation section as a clerk, to type reports for the investigators. I gladly accepted that offer. I had been there for about two months and had done nothing except read the Uniform Code of Military Justice. There was four investigators and they weren't solving any cases, so I had nothing to do. One morning, we arrived in the office and was joking about what we would do today. I made the statement that if I was an investigator, I'd get out there and solve one of those burglaries and I'd have something to do. About three days later, I received orders as an investigator and I was given 18 burglary cases to get me busy. Luck was with me. I solved all 18 cases in the first month. Tech Sergeant Morehead and two of the investigators was transferred to overseas assignments. Staff

Sergeant Dailey and I remained in investigations for about 18 months. Morehead, Legg, and Davis was transferred for assignments overseas. Staff Sergeant Dailey and I had to be on call at night. He had four school-age boys. This was keeping him from activities at home and school. He decided to go back to flight duty. I remained in the section for about one year by myself.

In about August 1963, I, along with 52 other security policemen, was sent to South Dakota for the purpose of installing Minuteman missiles. We were to provide security and changing combinations on the A circuit and the B circuit. Prior to going to work, we had to attend school for about two weeks. I worked at two missile complexes. Upon completion of 120 days, I returned to Dyess Air Force Base. I worked with the squadron first sergeant, taking care of the barracks and as property custodian. I was asked to return to investigations, which I declined. That got me and my family a PCS [permanent change of station transfer to Malstrom Air Force Base, Great Falls, Montana. My family and I got settled down. I attended about three weeks of school just as I had in South Dakota. I was assigned duty as flight security controller at Bravo 1 missile complex. I worked there for two years. I was assigned duty as NCOIC of the K-9 sentry dog section. We secured the munitions storage area at night. I worked there until I retired from the air force in July 1968.]

SK: What year did you arrive at Killeen Base?

EH: Killeen Base? In September 1948.

SK: And how long were you there?

EH: Let's see, just minus four years, three and a half years.

SK: And so, in '48, it had just started, right?

EH: Well, we got to go back to the Fort Worth article. I believe you'll find an article in 1946 where they're building an underground airstrip in Killeen [Base], Texas. Now, this is personal. I think you'll find in the *Fort Worth Star Telegraph* somewhere, underground airstrip at Killeen [Base], Texas. This is for—all the time I was there, people who lived within 20 miles of there never knew what was really going on. We were never allowed to say what was going on. We could tell a false big lie about maybe we was making women's panties and bras and all that stuff, or whatever. We could tell any lie, but not the truth, not that there's atomic bombs there, no.

SK: How did you get posted to Killeen Base? For the special assignments? You had said that you had volunteered for it.

EH: We volunteered, [yes].

SK: And your brother worked with you?

EH: Yes. He worked with me for six years, military up at Manzano Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Killeen Base.

SK: Did you need a special security clearance before you got there? Or did you get your clearance after?

EH: Well, we got it afterwards. We could not go to work until we had it. If you couldn't get a clearance, basically you needed it like that.

SK: Did you know about anything that you were doing during your training, they told you afterwards?

EH: Oh no, no. Later on, once you get your clearance, they could tell you exactly what you was doing, you was doing security for weapons, bombs like we dropped on Hiroshima, Nagasaki. And then since then, all the years I spent, we graduated on up on these weapons, to the hydrogen bomb, thermonuclear bomb that we tested on Enewetak Atoll in 1952. I believe that's correct time. And right today, see it's uninhabitable by human beings because of the radiation we left there.

SK: What were your first impressions when you got to Killeen Base? Was it similar to where you were in Texas?

EH: Well, put it this way, when you march through two gates with four fences, and you've got a rifle, and they didn't tell you anything about what you're going to be doing, and they close those gates behind you, you wonder, Well, is this a prison, or is this a base? In your mind, you really don't know what you're doing when you're marching up to that one building that's on the base. It's a weird feeling. But then later you can relax, because you find that you're doing a duty for your country, see. But you're scared as hell at first, is what it amounts to.

SK: You referred to it as Killeen Base, not Fort Hood or Gray Air Force Base.

EH: No, it was Killeen Base. That was the name of it.

SK: Did you have a nickname for it?

EH: No, I never. Just Killeen Base.

SK: Were the tunnels and the plants known as something different?

EH: Not to me. They were known as Plant 1, Plant 2. I've slept in them, basically lived in them.

SK: Talk a little bit about your role at Killeen Base.

EH: Just security. Doing what the flight sergeant said, and if we had to have strike teams at night in Plant 1, that's what we did. We went and slept in there at night. I don't know for what reason, security.

SK: Did you guard the main gate or tunnels?

EH: Yes, yes.

SK: Did your flight do different things?

EH: We did the outside security and at night we did the inside security. And also we augmented personnel who transported the bombs from, okay, we'll take from railhead, which was the trains came in, and it would have different parts on it. It might be the electrical parts of a nuclear bomb, or it might be the whole bomb, or it could be just any part of it. We had to secure that. We furnished men to walk on top of those boxcars until we could get them unloaded. And I always volunteered to ride vehicles because I was a vehicle idiot. I could drive the 18 wheelers or forklifts or whatever, and most of all I was out to drive the truck that went to Fort Hood to pick up the groceries, because on the way back I could eat bananas and ice cream, and all that good stuff.

SK: Do you think that the reason why they had you at so many different things was so you didn't know too much about one thing?

EH: No, I don't think so. I really don't think so. You just did them and enjoyed them. I don't regret doing any part of it. Of course, I was a guy that tested my commander, you know. If I was supposed to do something and I violated it, I might be out digging ditches the next day or for seven days or 14 days. I tested the commander [to] make sure he was doing his job.

SK: Do you have any recollections about the above-ground buildings, the storage, the igloos?

EH: Igloos, yes.

SK: Warehouses, pillboxes?

EH: Yes.

SK: Did you work in those?

EH: Worked in a them many times. But before they had pillbox, they had foxholes. And at Manzano Base, now Killeen Base didn't have this, you walked, you walked a post, and there wasn't no pillbox to get in. If it was hailing or rain or whatever, you walked. But Manzano Base, they had pillboxes, but before they had pillboxes they had foxholes. You'd sit up there with a raincoat on, and it would be snowing, keeping the rain off of your .30-caliber machine gun, or your Browning automatic rifle, or whatever you was carrying. But it was pretty miserable.

SK: So the nuclear bombs, were they stored in igloos?

EH: Yes.

SK: And were the igloos above ground?

EH: Well, they consisted of a dome of concrete, 18 inches of concrete, with probably three—Have you been out there to base?

SK: Yes.

EH: You seen those igloos?

SK: Yes.

EH: Okay. They're covered with 3 foot of dirt basically, and the doors are secured by ADT alarm systems, and they have two different types. One takes a hydraulic jack to open the door. The other one is just lock that opens.

SK: What do you think the mission was at Killeen Base?

EH: It was to protect America. At that time, as I see at, as a young man then, we were in one heck of a Cold War with Russia. To give you an example, I don't know how you want to check this to see if it's 100 percent true, but we could put a nuclear bomb on a train at Killeen [Base], and that train would be sabotaged before it got to Albuquerque, New Mexico. So what they did, FBI, they put a dummy on the train, and put the real bomb in a Sunset Motor Lines [truck] with a guard inside with a machine gun, and the FBI at the front and the back in old plain cars, and they escorted that to Albuquerque, New Mexico. The train had a dummy on

it. FBI has many things to say about that I bet. Something you will find out, you can't find the fact that we was ever there. Just try.

SK: What were the main activities of Killeen Base, while you were there?

EH: You mean duty or social?

SK: What were they doing there? What was the main goal?

EH: Well, we trained soldiers, too. We were in competition with Fort Hood at many times on many things, like the mortars. We had 60-millimeter mortars, Fort Hood had 81-millimeter mortars. But we'd have competitions you know with the dummies, shooting at bushel baskets with the mortars, and our troops beat Fort Hood. We could put it within an inch of that bushel basket.

SK: So there was a rivalry between you too?

EH: Oh, yes. You go to town. There was very much a rivalry. They called us fly boys and bus drivers and whatever.

SK: Because they really didn't know what was going on?

EH: Well, they just didn't like the air force. And especially the girls in town, we competed with the soldiers on them. Big problem. There was jealousy on their part.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about the organization of the 1094th and how it came about?

EH: I would say that the beginning of this would have been under President Truman. He as I see it, I'm no politician, I think he wanted to defend America to the fullest, that we would never be overrun. He dropped the two bombs on Japan, not wanting to, but to end the war. I feel that he was for America. And I think that he persuaded Congress and them to produce these bases with the utmost defense for our country.

SK: So the 1094th was already established when you get there?

EH: Well, no, it was the First Provost Security Squadron. The Second Provost [Security Squadron] went to Clarksville Base, Tennessee. And I wish I'd known this was coming around, I'd give you a picture of the building. But no one in Clarksville Base or Killeen Base, now that Fort Hood is there and you know about it, you know something about it. But I visited Clarksville Base let's see, four years ago, I couldn't find a single soul that knew that the air force had ever been there. I had a picture of every one of them standing by the flag pole in front of the building, and I walked in there and talked to this captain, I said, "My friends were stationed here in 1948, '50 to '51, air force." "Oh no, the air force was never here." I said, "Well,"—I had this big picture, 8x10—I said "How did the air force stand in front of this flag pole out here, if they weren't ever here?" "I don't know." I gave him that picture, and he said, "Thank god you had it, because I didn't know the air force was ever here." And nobody else does.

[About the word provost. I know the word means high official. I don't know why it was used, unless it came from provisional security squadron.]

SK: There's people at Killeen Base that don't know, or there's people at Fort Hood that don't know about Killeen Base.

EH: Cecil Jones and I, he couldn't be here today, he's very ill. But we had a reunion at Killeen

[Base], set up a reunion. We spent about a week going from colonel to colonel to colonel out there, West Fort Hood. Never could find a single soul that knew we was there, until I met Mr. Henderson, Plant 1 custodian. And you may want to write his name down. Mr. Henderson and his wife.

SK: Is he on the list?

EH: No, he's a civilian in charge of Plant 1, which is inoperative. They haven't operated it in 28 years. But anyway, I was so lucky. On a Thursday I went down, my friend and I, and we was riding around. The Plant 1 door was open, where it goes to the ABC tunnel. I asked him, I said, "Mr. Henderson, can I take a picture of this? I lived here for four years or three and a half years, and I'd like to, we've got a reunion, I'd like to take this to the reunion and show it to them." "Oh, sure. You want to go inside?" I said, "You bet, we'd sure appreciate it." I videoed some of it, the ADT room, the generators, which you've already seen. But I told him, I said "We would just love to get in this place, but we can't find anybody in charge." He says, "I'll call my colonel tonight." And we got to go in there, with our wives and all of us.

SK: How is it different from, putting that much time in between it, how is it different going back into the tunnels?

EH: Well, you know, I walked them for years. We had to secure them every night, and as plant sergeants you had to check every door, E[lectrical] bay, F bay, all of them. And all night long you walked it and checked the doors, make sure nobody had bothered them. Of course, you had a guard on the front door, and one back at the blast doors, which I called it, right back there by the generator, electrical generator, you have to guard at night.

SK: So since the 1094th was air force, but you were right next to Fort Hood, did the army ever try to flex its muscle with you?

EH: A few occasions. If you was outside the base, see they patrolled in tanks and all that outside, and occasionally I heard stories where they'd stop you and check you out. But we never had any mess, resentment in any way that I knew about.

SK: Were you able to access all of the amenities at Fort Hood? The mess hall and the PX?

EH: Oh yes, yes. Fort Hood, see they have a housing area over there, and our married people lived on Fort Hood, in their housing area. And I don't know of any resentment, they were always polite to me. I'd have to go over and pick up my flight sergeant. A lot of times his battery would be dead on his car or something at four o'clock in the morning, and they never stopped me.

SK: Did you live on Killeen Base?

EH: Yes, lived on Killeen Base. I was single.

SK: Were there barracks on Killeen Base?

EH: That one building. See there's six flights living there, approximately 30 per room. We used to live in one big room. Each flight had a dorm, and that's where you stayed.

SK: So there were 30 men in a flight and then six flights?

EH: A total of 195 of us, security, lived in there, plus the plant people, headquarters squadron, lived down in one bay.

SK: Do you know who the 1094th answered to, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Department of Defense?

EH: The Department of Defense in Washington, D.C., as far as I know. Now we had what you call field command. That was out of Albuquerque, New Mexico, they published a field command bulletin as to the operations and what would happen. We're loading these planes and B-50s with these units, the bombs. And as far as I know, the last order out of Washington, D.C., come through field command in Sandia Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico. I know when I was at Medina Base as flight commander, and our orders came from field command, Albuquerque.

SK: Were there different positions within 1094th? You've said there were 195 guards. Do you know what the other men did?

EH: Yes, you take Napierala, he was talking to you last night. See, he is a plant personnel. They are the ones that took care of the electronics and all the parts of the nuclear weapon. Test electrical, test the altitude drop, and all that crap. They'd take the hull off of them, which is heavy, heavy steel, and then they'd put these units in it, the electrical part. And then where the uranium went, you know it's a tube about that big, shove it in there, about 20 pounds of U-238 or whatever they, purification of that was, I think 238 is on the Mach 4.

SK: So just guards and plant people then?

EH: Well, the plant people did all the maintenance and work on the—but we augmented them on these operations, say the Department of Defense wanted 100 nuclear bombs flown to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Well, they'd have in operation, these B-29s, B-50s—because my brother was in B-50s—they'd fly in there, and they'd pick their unit up, and they'd fly to Albuquerque, New Mexico, and one operation, one of them went into the mountain there, in Manzano Base and exploded, plane and all, killing all 12 people on it. But this operation would run 24 hours or 36 hours, and our job as air police was security. We had to escort them, each one of them, to the plane, guard it at the plane, until the plane was ready to leave. And the same way, they'd return them, and they'd come in, and we'd have to escort it back to the plant, Plant 1 or Plant 2 depending on what kind of weapon it was. And we provided that security again. And then they'd go into G bay or in the plant, and they'd re-box it. Take it off the little dolly that they had it on, put it in the box that it came in. It was a continuous operation.

SK: Were there any special requirements for being a guard?

EH: You had to be Q cleared by the FBI. If you didn't have it, you didn't walk in that Q Area.

SK: Do you think there was any special reason why you got assigned to be a guard?

EH: We volunteered, and was cleared as being loyal Americans, and if you weren't a loyal American, you didn't stay very long. There's only two that I know, that didn't stay any time.

SK: So what areas did you have access to at Killeen Base?

EH: All of it except ABC.

SK: What did they do in that tunnel, do you know?

EH: ABC, yes. That's the storage of the uranium or the plutonium, or whatever detonated the bomb. There's only a few people. Okay, Napierala has some orders, showing who was authorized in there. I don't have those orders. I did have, but I give them all away. But there

was only very few people authorized in there. And see, when you're dealing with nuclear weapons, you have a two-man concept. There can be never one of just knowledge. There's got to be two of equal knowledge to be around a nuclear weapon or perform any maintenance on it. There got to be two of equal knowledge. It's a two-man concept.

SK: What was a normal day like for you? A typical day, what did your duties include?

EH: Oh, me, or what I should have been doing?

SK: Both.

EH: Well, my day began, before my six hours. I'd catch a bus or drive my car and go to Temple, Texas. Flirt with the girls and drank all the beer I could, come back and hope I wasn't in big trouble, which sometimes I was.

SK: Did you ever know if you were going to be outside or inside before you came on duty? Did you have a set schedule that way?

EH: Yes, see your flight commander posted a roster, okay, say post 1, 2, 3, I'm going to just use the number, 29 is on top of the mountain, looking down over the ventilators of Plant 2 or Plant 1. And you was assigned each post by the flight commander. Well, to give you an example, my brother was flight commander, and I was working for him. Ordinarily, post 29, you'd only get it once a month. Thirty people, you could rotate it, you know, and share the misery. It was on top of the mountain, guarding a hole in the ground out there. But my brother, he always messed over me, I did him too, but he assigned me that 29 days in a row. And I come in one evening, and I said, "Bud, if my name's on the post 29 tomorrow, I'm going to give you what for." Well, me and him had trouble. He got fired, I took over as flight commander, so I made him walk Plant 1 punching the time clock for the rest of his career.

SK: Was there any one area that you felt a connection to you or you felt like you spent the most time?

EH: Well, you always love to be in the dry, in the warm. Walking a post on the side of a mountain in the snow is not that. So you had to kind of share the bad with the good.

SK: So there was snow up there?

EH: Killeen [Base], Texas we had 14 inches of snow. Killeen [Base], Texas, January 1949. That Christmas card, did you read that, how cold it was? It was cold. Yes sir. Riding around in a jeep with no heater, near zero temperatures, or walk a post? It's horrible. But that was a bad year.

SK: Do you think your goal as a guard was to prevent being invaded or do you think it was more to prevent sabotage from within?

EH: I feel that, well, it could be both. I feel that we provided security for the very weapon that kept us very free. No matter how cold it got or what, it was necessary that we had this in the Cold War to counteract what Russia was doing at that time. It was the most important thing America ever did.

SK: Do you have any examples of people trying to access places that they shouldn't have been?

EH: No, I really don't. I know that there was, but I don't have that knowledge, the FBI would have that knowledge.

SK: So you didn't have any personal experience with that?

EH: I don't have personal experience with that. I can't say one way or the other. I know that there was cases gossiped, so I can't put concrete evidence to that.

SK: What do you think about the layout of Killeen Base, with the above-ground buildings, the tunnels, do you think it was efficient?

EH: I think it was the most efficient thing I've ever witnessed. You go out there right today, and this is many years after 1948, I drive around, I go to Plant 2, they're still using those areas. Now from 1 to 26 igloos underground, that's their storage area, and it's secured. They have a guard. You can't go in there. I've talked to them, but I think it's a very important thing and Killeen Base could be utilized in another Cold War to really secure this nation.

SK: Do you think the layout was confusing on purpose in the tunnels?

EH: Well, like I say, if you can find an article in the paper of this underground airstrip. Back then, to give you an example, we could not publish any information. And now that wasn't just Killeen Base. I was stationed other bases. Up until this act that you've got to give information to every[one], Freedom of Information Act. You weren't free to do that. A guy flying over that base could not publish anything. Number one, he couldn't fly over it. Number two, if he did, he couldn't report it or he'd be liable. But Freedom of Information Act come aboard. Now we have no security, as far as freedom. These people will publish anything in the world, we couldn't keep a secret nowhere in the world. And then, you kept a secret.

SK: What did you tell people, when you were in Temple or when you were in Killeen [Base]?

EH: You didn't tell them anything.

SK: Did you say, I was just a police officer.

EH: No, you just don't tell them anything.

SK: Did they question that? Did they ask you what you did?

EH: Well, if you're over there drinking beer, they don't give a darn what you do. Okay, give you an example. If we were in a car wreck, and as long as we're ourselves, not unconscious, we had to notify the doctor to call the FBI before he administered anything that would put you under.

SK: Because they were concerned about you compromising—

EH: That's right. That's the secret. But later, it didn't matter. But then, you did not violate that. And to give a sad example, our security officers, let me think of his name. Well, I can't think of his name, but his wife was on a bus from northwest country, Washington or Oregon, I don't know which, but this airman was on that same bus and seated with her on that bus. And he told too much information, but her being the wife of a security officer, had already called the FBI when they had a break. When he got off in Killeen [Base], they apprehended him. He got three years in the pen[itentiary] for running his mouth.

SK: And he was at Killeen Base?

EH: He was a Killeen Base airman, in our outfit.

SK: When you were doing your patrols on the exterior, did you walk, did you drive?

EH: Well, we drove jeeps until we wrecked 76 of them through carelessness. I wrecked one of them, too. But then they took the jeeps away, and they made us all walk. We walked our patrols. That wasn't fun. You'd kick the rattlesnakes out of the way in the dark, you know, and go on.

SK: When you were walking, did you walk the roads or did you walk the terrain?

EH: Oh, yeah. You haven't toured that base completely, apparently. Now what's down below, what's down below is also up above. They call that ventilator road up there. You been around ventilator road?

SK: Yes.

EH: Okay. Each one of those ventilators, we had to check them, you know. To test you, to see if you'd walked down there and checked that ventilator, I mean that round thing on top. The officer of the guard would attach a number to it to test you. You was supposed to go down there and check it. Well, if you didn't find that note, you were in big trouble.

SK: How did you get from the barracks to your guard position? Did you walk, did you have a bus?

EH: Well, once it was on patrol with the jeeps, they rode. And the others rode in usually a weapons carrier, or a 2 1/2-ton truck. Usually it was a weapons carrier, 3/4-ton weapons carrier. They haul them up to the post and post them. Like your Q [Area] gate, when you went into Q Area, and if you had special guards, occasionally they'd be testing weapons against humidity. They'd put them on stakes and water below them, a tent over them, to test how humidity was affecting those weapons. Whether it would rust, corrode or what. Whether you'd have a guard on that, or if you had a guard on the boxcars over at [the] railhead. You had to post your guards.

SK: Was the railhead on the base?

EH: [No], on Fort Hood.

SK: Did anybody ever ask why you were using it?

EH: No, no one ever questioned it.

SK: Do you think they just knew better?

EH: I'd imagine they knew better, because we had .50-caliber machine guns on the jeeps and .45-caliber machine gun on top of that boxcar. I imagine they knew that there wasn't nothing they wanted to do about it. And it's all in an area where it's quite secure, desolate area out there. Each one of these bases had a railhead. Now at San Antonio, Medina Base, see I had to go through that electric fence to check [the] railhead. Had to get the electrician to kill it, and open the gate and go check it, and then come back. If we had guards out there, I had to go post them.

SK: What was your first reaction when you heard that you were working with nuclear bombs?

EH: Proud.

SK: Did you know anything about the bombs prior?

EH: No, no. Other than the fact we'd dropped two of them on Japan. That's all I knew. I knew it ended World War II.

SK: Did you know anything about the risk with working with them?

EH: Well, I didn't figure there was any risk to it. What we do over here is pretty safe. And I figure that's up to the big guys to tell me if I'm setting on a live wire.

SK: So when they were building the bombs, they kept the plutonium and the uranium—

EH: In the ABC tunnel.

SK: So were they ever armed?

EH: Oh, no. No. The only time, as far as I know, that a nuclear bomb can be armed is just before the target.

SK: Unless you were working in that ABC room, there wasn't really much of a risk?

EH: No, other than a leakage. There was leakage of radiation on some occasions, but minute.

SK: So you weren't afraid of radiation exposure?

EH: I wasn't, no. We carried those little black boxes that tell you if you have been in any radiation. Carried that for 20 years. But I was never alarmed about it, never worried about it.

SK: So the uranium and plutonium was stored one area, and then the warheads were stored in another area?

EH: Well, the bomb, imagine a stovepipe in the back of it. That's never inserted in that weapon until it's just ready for target, if you're going to drop it on Tokyo or wherever. But as far as I know, there is never one of those inserted because that would be bad news if the plane had trouble and had to crash. You'd have a nuclear explosion, and my gosh, just think 19 kilotons of weapon. But then, take the thermonuclear weapon, millions of tons, 20 megatons, how much of the United States that could destroy. If it was dropped on Washington, D.C., it would affect New York City, and there wouldn't be nothing but dust left.

SK: You had said that the guards were moving the bombs, they oversaw that.

EH: We escorted them.

SK: Did you ever handle anything? Were you ever asked to participate in physically moving them?

EH: I hauled them many times. I had an 18-wheeler license, and I'd pick them up over at [the] railhead and bring them to Plant 1 or down to Structure 3. Maybe they was going to store it for a few days there, or use it as a training weapon. I didn't know what they was doing with them, I just knew what they were.

SK: Could any guard do that? Or because you had a special clearance?

EH: No you couldn't, you had to have a license to drive the vehicle, and I was lucky I had a license

to drive anything they had. And most of them didn't. You take the average person, like Napierala, I don't suppose he ever hauled a weapon, other than on a dolly. Now he hauled them out of Plant 1 and Plant 2, or Plant 1. He was assigned Plant 1. But they had these little, they had a name for them, pick up these pallets with a bomb on it, and take it to G bay or E bay or F bay, or—they did that.

SK: Was there a limit to how long you could work in the tunnels at one time?

EH: No, there was no radiation in there. Very minute might have happened one time while I was there, I don't know. I know FBI agent George Jelson one time made me move back from my post, and he had this arm, which is uranium in a canister, they're lead, inside a lead container, weighing probably 20 pounds, somewhere in that neighborhood. But one time he made me move back because he had a leak, and he was wheeling that thing as fast as he could walk.

SK: So the FBI was in the tunnels too?

EH: Oh, yes. They're the only ones authorized in the ABC tunnel. George Jelson and Bailey. [The FBI was not the only ones to enter the ABC area. I think the access list usually had about six to 10 persons on it.]

SK: Do they come to the reunions at all?

EH: Oh, no. They're dead. George Jelson would be 90 years old, I'm sure.

SK: What did you like better? Did you like working above ground or below ground?

EH: I don't have any choice, just wherever I was assigned I did it. Or tried to do it. If I didn't do it, they'd take care of me.

SK: Was there ever a time that you spent an extended period of time in the tunnels, like three days straight?

EH: Oh, yes. Shoot, there's been times that you haven't went to bed for 72 hours, 48 hours.

SK: Was that a normal guard shift?

EH: No, no that's in emergencies. We'd have alerts, say, and that's what created that, alert, and it's testing your durability is what it was doing. But there's been many times, 48 hours, you didn't get to go to bed.

SK: Was it hard to adjust from going underground to above ground?

EH: No. No. You been inside the tunnels?

SK: Yes. It was kind of hard to breathe at some times.

EH: Okay, now, you don't have the ventilation. See it was well, ventilated when we worked there, well, lighted, well, cleaned. Just like you could eat off the floors.

SK: The one plant has been redone, and they're using it for training. So it's painted, it's well lit.

EH: Probably Plant 2.

SK: And the other one is not well, lit, and they turned the lights out on us, and it was [dark].

EH: Horrible, ain't it? When we had our tour on there, they just didn't have real good lighting at all because it hadn't been used in 28 years. They didn't know was wrong with the bulbs or anything with the wiring.

SK: You had mentioned the thermonuclear bombs and the hydrogen bombs. Was there any difference in how you guarded them?

EH: No. You guarded it 100 percent.

SK: Was there any difference in storage?

EH: Well, the thermonuclear, the only one that I ever saw, came out of Plant 1 at Manzano Base, and that is one big. Well, get on your computer and go to the museum in Albuquerque, New Mexico, you'll see a picture of it.

SK: So they only had the nuclear at Killeen Base, they didn't have the thermal or the hydrogen?

EH: No, I don't think they ever had a thermonuclear at Killeen Base.

SK: But it was larger than the—

EH: Oh my gosh, yes, 45,000 pounds. Probably 20 foot long. Get on your computer, go to Atomic Museum, Albuquerque, New Mexico, and you'll see a picture of it, I think. [The Manzano Base group], well, they're the same group that you're talking to right now, basically. We worked there. I worked there in 1955, and I volunteered to go to Medina Base in San Antonio, which is nuclear just a different type of weapons altogether. It was the hound dogs and all that stuff, B-52s, the nose cones for Minuteman missiles and stuff like that. Altogether different. Still nuclear weapons.

SK: Can you a little bit about what happened when you were on high alert?

EH: You just work your tail off.

SK: Were you aware that it was just a drill?

EH: No. Sometimes you had a thought that it might be real. You didn't know. Such as if a guard, say one of one our guards went off his rocker and started shooting, which happened, at Structure 3, you don't know what it is when bullets are flying. You don't know what's the enemy or your friend. So you have a leery thought there, or whether he's one of them.

SK: An incident happened at Structure 3 where a soldier discharged his weapon?

EH: One time, yeah. He was just goofing off and shot his weapon off a few times, and then to cover up he said he saw somebody running. Well, you don't know. Did he actually see somebody running? Don't know. So they have a base alert, I mean I spent 24 hours out there guarding everything. And you don't know whether it's the real thing or not.

SK: Where would that alert come from? Would it come from Fort Hood, would it come from Killeen Base?

EH: Fort Hood had nothing to do with it.

SK: So you were on high alert, they just went about their business?

EH: They didn't know nothing about it. No. Far as I know they didn't have any knowledge of it, it come from, like I say, field command in Albuquerque, New Mexico, or Washington, D.C. Fort Hood had nothing to do with security out there, other than out on their part of Fort Hood.

SK: Were there any civilians working on Killeen Base?

EH: Oh, yes.

SK: Did you work with any?

EH: Yes, Mr. Hughes, he ran a service station in Killeen [Base]. He was also a ADT operator. The alarm system for every one of those tunnels and igloos, Hughes was his name. And Pate, he was the barber. Base engineers, I can't think of his name right now, it will come to me maybe in a minute. He played the fiddle. Can't think of it.

SK: Were there any civilians in the tunnels that had the security clearance?

EH: Yes. See, your ADT room, you remember the steel door, that's where the ADT operator sat. And see he was civilian, one of them was, well, two of them was. I can't think of the other one's name.

SK: Were there any other civilians contracted to work directly with the bombs?

EH: Not that I'm aware of, [no], not at all.

SK: What are your feelings if they were contracted to work with the bomb?

EH: Well, if they were security cleared by the FBI, I don't see that there would be any worry. I'd be just as confident in him as I would myself, if he was properly cleared.

SK: You had said that there were barracks, but then you mentioned a barber. Were there any recreation—

EH: See, there's only that one building. Where the flag pole is. Supposedly they tore that down by now, haven't they?

SK: Yes.

EH: It's gone. Okay, that building, I'll send you a picture of the one in Clarksville [Base]. The only difference is the one in Clarksville [Base] has a second floor on each of the wings. Killeen [Base] only had one story on the wings of the building. That's the only difference. And see, you had your three, four, five, five bays, six bays, that people lived in. Then you had your administration office, the colonel, and security, and telephone communications office, and then you had your barbershop, you had your day room. You had the circle bar, if you've been in that building. Were you in that building? That curved bar?

SK: Yes.

EH: Okay, they had it all boarded up. But that used to be the PX and they sold beer and shaving equipment and all that stuff out of there. The day room, and then the mess hall. But that one building is where everybody survived.

SK: Do you think that the civilians who did those, the barber jobs and things like that, do you think they knew what was going on at Killeen Base?

EH: They never talked. They just as close-mouthed as we were. You didn't talk about that. You go get your hair cut and joke about everything in the world, but not that. They could care less, and they were cleared. I'm sure their background was just as pure as mine.

SK: Did your family ever come visit you in Killeen [Base], since you were in Texas?

EH: No, my father didn't know what I did when he died in 1957. I wasn't allowed to tell him. Now I could tell him, but then I couldn't.

SK: You never married when you were on base though, right?

EH: I was single. Other than Albuquerque, I was married up there.

SK: And your brother was single, too?

EH: He was single. We all lived in the same barracks.

SK: What were your impressions of the larger Fort Hood facility? Did you get to explore around Fort Hood a lot?

EH: Well, there wasn't much there at that time. It's not like it is now. I visited Fort Hood, even went to the big building where the newspaper is, I couldn't believe it. When we were stationed there, there wasn't anything there; just offices and barracks and whatnot. But now, my goodness. Copperas Cove wasn't nothing but 500 people when we lived there. Only had a service station, a drug store, and an old theater.

SK: Did you socialize with anybody at Fort Hood?

EH: No, I didn't. Not permanently.

SK: Did you socialize with anybody else in the 1094th?

EH: We were all just camaradering, camaraderie. We were all one group. Sergeant Bender, he ran the NCO club. And how close—he was in Plant 1. He was G-bay operator in Plant 1. How close we were, if one got drunk down there at the club, he just called, got him a ride back to base. We took care of each other.

SK: Is there a difference between an enlisted, commissioned, or a non-commissioned officer?

EH: Yes, in a way. In a way, there's not. We associated with officers, but yet you had that respect, we had to have. You know, they're just a little above me, but they were good troops. In fact, the finest officer I ever had is Malcolm I. Gray. He graduated [from the] air force academy and was the sharpest man that ever walked, about 6'2" tall and proud. But he was a great man, my flight officer. He lives in Illinois. I wish he was here, he could tell you a lot.

SK: Where in Illinois? Is he on the list?

EH: I've got his phone number. I don't know whether he's on that list or not, but he's on a list.

SK: The one that Mr. Cheesman has?

EH: He's got his address and phone number.

SK: There were two from Illinois.

EH: Well, that's the one that's here tonight, but he's not here, I don't know him, maybe he's sick. I've sent him a Texas Rangers hat, a Texas Highway Patrol hat, talked to him long ago. My relatives are Texas Highway Patrol stole it. Didn't steal it, borrowed it.

SK: Where did you spend your off-duty time, and what did you do?

EH: Most the time, I was on the way across in Cross Plains, Texas, up here, 100 miles away, 120 miles. To my mother and dad's, and to the girls and all.

SK: Did you ever spend any time in Waco or Belton?

EH: Temple, yes. In fact, I stayed in the Temple jail one night.

SK: We've heard from some of the others that there wasn't really enough going on in Killeen, and Killeen was dry.

EH: There was plenty going on but it was dry, so we'd go to Temple and get in trouble there. Go to Palace Bar, Park and Eat Café, Lil's Bar.

SK: So what were your impressions of Killeen [Base]?

EH: Good people. Very, very good people. And there's things to do there, if you just find it.

SK: How did it compare to Cross Plains? Where you grew up?

EH: About the same.

SK: Did you feel more comfortable? Mr. Stedman was from the East Coast, he had never been to Texas before, so it was, it was different for him. Do you think you were more comfortable because you were from Texas?

EH: Well, put it this way. If I'd been in his place, down in Alabama, or Georgia, or wherever he's from, I'd depend on him to introduce me to girls, and I did likewise up here. I took them up to my mother's house many, many times, and after we separated and went our ways, they still wrote my mother. That's how I found them. After 20 years I retired and wanted to find them. Where'd I look? In my mother's book, because she corresponded with them. Hal was in Alabama, Cecil Jones in Mississippi, having pictures of their kids and all that stuff. My parents worshipped military people, and they just welcome to stop by and spend the night any time.

SK: Do you feel like since you were a Texan you were a little bit more familiar? You kind of were a liaison for people?

EH: I would say I probably did, yeah, probably a little bit more knowledgeable of Texas ways.

SK: So you were at Manzano [Base], did you have any contact with the people at Fort Campbell, in Kentucky?

EH: Manzano [Base] is in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

SK: Oh, I'm sorry, Clarksville Base.

EH: Oh, yes. People in Albuquerque is very friendly people. Good restaurants. And I was married and lived on South Walters Street, 1041 South Walters. Good neighbors. Good landlord. And that was in the poorest part of town, but survived.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about what happened when the 1094th was moved? Because everybody was moved together, right?

EH: And there's no trace of us ever being there at Killeen Base.

SK: Did they move the equipment, did they move the bombs with you?

EH: No, they just moved the people and turned all the rest of it over to the army.

SK: So what happened to the bombs, what happened to the uranium?

EH: The army took care of it, through the Department of Defense and Albuquerque, New Mexico, field command. They turned it over, and I'm sure that anybody that signed for them was very accountable.

SK: Do you think that because Manzano [Base] was so similar to Killeen Base that it helped you acclimate and get your bearings of the facility?

EH: They were identical. Had Plant 1, Plant 2, the buildings are just exactly like that map you've got. Other than in the ABC tunnel, the ABC tunnel up there has steel-bolt doors inside there to secure the plutonium and uranium and tritium and all the stuff that makes up those horrible bombs. But the bolt doors that thick, and 10 foot tall and weighs probably 10,000 pounds or 100,000 pounds, I don't know. With dials on them, and time secured, you know, you work the dial and it won't open for six hours or something like that.

SK: So the army took over Killeen Base when you left.

EH: 8455th and 8456th MP companies.

SK: Do you know about anything that they did after you left?

EH: Nope. No idea.

SK: Do you know if those people get together at all?

EH: I haven't heard or read anything where I ever saw them mentioned.

SK: How long were you at Manzano [Base]?

EH: Let's see, I went there in '52. Well, I stayed six months, after I left Killeen [Base] I spent six months, got discharged, come back one year later, and spent, let's see, almost two years, and then I went to San Antonio, Medina Base.

SK: Did the guard duties differ at all from place to place?

EH: No, it was basically the same anywhere you went. You had to, as a flight commander, I had to escort weapons to the aircraft, or to [the] railhead, or to wherever it was supposed to go. In San Antonio, I had to escort it across military drive to Kelly Field, and I had to secure all

the highways, you know, Military Drive, and that's a pretty busy place right out, right by Lackland Air Force Base. But we shut down traffic and blocked traffic for 10 miles, but when those units went across, then we'd release the traffic. And the highway patrol couldn't do anything about it. We did it as orders from the Department of Defense.

SK: Besides being at Manzano [Base], the rest of the time you were in Texas bases?

EH: Yes, other than Manzano [Base and Montana].

SK: How did that compare with Texas?

EH: Well, again that was Minuteman missiles, which I had worked missiles here in Abilene, Texas, the Atlas. It was still security, other than a little different type. Each one of the [launch control facilities] had 10 missiles in Montana, and so you had to control access to those sites through communications and code pages. You had to have codes to do everything.

SK: Did you feel like you had to learn about what you were guarding to make yourself a better guard?

EH: No, I don't think so. Of course, knowing that you're guarding something that is as precious as our nuclear weapons, you know you're just dang proud to do it. I don't think you'll find anybody that wasn't proud to do it because it defended this nation, and it's still doing it. Whether you agree or not, if we destroyed all our nuclear weapons, which our president is trying to do, will be the biggest mistake in the world, and that's my thoughts and not anyone else's.

SK: When did you retire?

EH: [In] 1968, from the air force.

SK: Did you do anything after the military?

EH: Yeah, I'm retired from the State of Texas. I ran the workshops for the mentally retarded. Employed 400 of them, had 31 schoolteachers.

SK: Did you end up going back to Cross Plains?

EH: Oh yes, yes.

SK: Was that always a goal of yours?

EH: No, I lived in Lake Brownwood, that's only 30 miles away now. But I sold my house in Cross Plains my mother lived in when she passed away, moved to Lake Brownwood, bought a ranch. Ranched for a few years, decided I'd rather fish. Gave the ranch to my daughter, my house I gave away, and now I don't do anything. Drink beer and sit around and agitate people. Got a bunch of good neighbors I see.

SK: At what point did you start talking about what you did at Killeen Base?

EH: Once it was cleared to do so, up until I'd say around 1960, when did that information act come into affect? I don't know. Can't remember. But you didn't talk about nothing. I know my father died in 1957, and he didn't know what I did. Had no idea.

SK: Once it became available for you to talk about, did you talk about it?

EH: Sure. If somebody wants to know something, I'll tell them what an [atomic] bomb will do to them.

SK: Were people surprised?

EH: No, I wouldn't guess they were. But you hear so many people that have little knowledge of a nuclear weapon. They don't know that that thing will wipe your New York City right off the map and turn it to dust, and so many people, Oh well, it will take care of itself. Well, it won't take care of itself. First one that's dropped over there, they'll find out how dangerous it is. And look at Iran and North Korea. Iran is a problem, and if we don't take care of it, Israel is going off the map, and what's that going to do to the world?

SK: At the time, did you feel like you were a part of something exceptional?

EH: Yes. I sure do. I still do.

SK: And you were able to grasp the seriousness of the situation?

EH: Yes. It is very, very serious. And it's getting so relaxed now that it bothers me. People just don't understand what can happen.

SK: What kind of information were you getting about the Cold War?

EH: Basically what the American people got. The American people then was for America. Now we have 40 percent of them that's not for America, and I don't know when it's going to explode, but it's going to. Then, everybody was for America. Look at World War II, we'd have never won World War II, had it been today. Never would we have won.

SK: When you were at Killeen Base, do you think you were more afraid of Korea or Russia?

EH: Well, Russia was, in my mind, very, very dangerous. They owned all the satellite countries over there, Poland and Finland and all that. And here they are producing all these nuclear bombs just horribly, and America had to show them that they wouldn't benefit from a war, because we'd wipe them right off the map within 15 minutes. Well, it takes 15 minutes to get over there, but it impressed them. And what we did is, broke them financially. Which we're being broke right now financially, that's what really worries me now, is our nation is going down by finance, just like Russia did. That's what worries me.

SK: Were you aware at the time of how many nuclear bombs Russia had?

EH: Well, yes. They had equal amounts until we decided to overproduce them and outsmart them by the weapons we have. You take the Minuteman 3, well, they have the Minuteman 1, 2, and 3, but we have what, 2,000. The Minuteman 3 can hit three targets with one missile. It will separate and take out Leningrad and Moscow and some other place, just one. Okay, we tested the one here, what two months ago? Three months ago. Into Enewetak [Atoll], it hit right where it was supposed to hit, out of California, we test them every year. But it's a very accurate missile, and it can carry a warhead that will just wipe a city right off the map. Russia would be a fool to try to deal with something like that. They don't have the accuracy, now they can blow the thunder off this nation, but they can't pinpoint it, [but] 2,000 of ours over there will wipe them clean off the map. And they're accurate.

[Several times we have mentioned the Cold War with Russia. As I think back in time, I recall the Berlin Airlift and the death of the Rosenbergs. I think the Cold War became less interesting to us. In about 1954, or the first of 1955, I was assigned the duty of escorting 12

Russian dignitaries to Plant 2 at Manzano Base. They were escorted into the plant by Major Cunningham and the base commander, Colonel Hoover.

I credit this change in policy to President Eisenhower, a great president. He was responsible for prayer breakfast in the services.]

SK: Do you think at the time there was an immediate threat to Killeen Base?

EH: Yes, I sure do. Because at that time, saboteurs was all over this country from Russia, Russian saboteurs. You couldn't run a train here to Albuquerque for they'd saboteur the darn thing. In Albuquerque alone, they estimated there was 5,000 of them in a city. If you go down to a bar and get to shooting your mouth off, you was talking to communists.

SK: Do you think the communists knew about Killeen Base or about Albuquerque?

EH: I think that there was plenty of them. Not in the mass amount as there was in Albuquerque, because Texas, okay, what governor was it? Got a law passed to, anyone carrying a communist card and all that stuff was subject to be prosecuted. Of course, they found out later that he couldn't pass such a law, it would be illegal, the good righteous doodads. But it never did become affective, but it sure did thin out the communists in Texas. They all went to Mexico.

SK: At the time, did you consider yourself a part of the Cold War?

EH: Well, in a way, yes. I think I defended this country against the Cold War as much as anyone could, and be a private as I was.

SK: Could you talk a little bit about your time in Korea?

EH: Sure. I landed in Korea. The guy that was running the K-9 section, sentry dog section, was shot, so they needed a new staff sergeant, and asked me if I'd take it.

SK: What's a sentry dog?

EH: That's guard dogs. German Shepherds. It will bite your head off.

SK: Did you train them, too?

EH: Yes.

SK: Was that something you knew how to do before?

EH: No. I went to Japan and learned how to train them, and supervise them, and then went back to Korea and came back to the United States. We guarded the bomb dump and the [petroleum, oil and lubricants], well, that's fuel for your aircraft, with sentry dogs at night.

SK: How long were you in Korea?

EH: One year.

SK: And were you shipped back as a result of the war ending?

EH: Oh no, just transferred back to Lubbock, Texas, Reese Air Force Base. Spent one year there and re-enlisted for Dyess Air Force Base.

SK: In general, how do you reflect on your time at Killeen [Base], Base? Was it favorable?

EH: I loved it because I was close to home and I had many friends, even in Killeen [Base]. We were very close as military as you'll find here tonight, or while you're here. We were one good, big bunch of people. Young men are old people now, but still have camaraderie.

SK: When you were transferred, when the whole 1094th was transferred to Manzano [Base], did it become the 1095th? Do you know how that works?

EH: No, we transferred just as the 1094th. It remained 1094th at Manzano [Base], stayed the same. Just moved locations. The same flight commanders took over up there and wasn't any difference really. Same people, same project you know, Plant 1, Plant 2, pillboxes, mountain guards. Same old thing.

SK: You talked about the bombs being transported from Killeen Base to Albuquerque at some point, was there ever a threat when they were being transported?

EH: Not that I'm aware of, other than the train. As I told you, Sunset Motor Lines hauled them right down the highway with the FBI in the front and the back, and a guard in the middle, in the truck. But the train would have dummies, and they didn't give a darn, what were they going to do with a bunch of concrete? I guess that's what was in it, I don't know. Wasn't nothing in it that I knew of.

SK: Did you ever have an instance where you thought something was fishy, or you were kind of suspicious of how somebody was acting?

EH: Yeah. People, I've reported a number of incidents where I felt they weren't true Americans, it wouldn't be long, they'd be gone.

SK: When you were guarding?

EH: It had been a man in my own unit. I felt that he just wasn't a loyal American, making remarks that was not for America. That's not the way you stand guard. You worry about when you go on post with a guy that's not for your country, you know, very much.

SK: Were you ever with anybody who was drafted instead of enlisting?

EH: No. See the draft wasn't in effect in the air force. The army, you know, they drafted the heck out of them. But we were already as a unit, and there's no way they can draft us, we was already in. We joined in 1948. We joined to keep away from the draft, really. I was a farmer, or I worked on farms, and I knew that they was going to start drafting within a year or so because the Korean War was brewing real hot. So we just decided to enlist, my brother and I and three more guys.

[You asked if I was ever with anyone that was drafted. I gave you an answer that was false. All the flight sergeants were World War II veterans. My first flight sergeant was Arthur Hixon. He fought in the Pacific and was prisoner of war by Japan. He survived the Bataan Death march. He was one great guy. During my service career, I had the honor of working for three guys that survived the Bataan Death March. They were all true Americans.]

SK: When you first enlisted, did you think that you would spend 20 years in the air force?

EH: No, not really. I thought, Well, when I get out, I'll get me a job. Well, I got out for 15 days, and

I evaluated the economy in 1952, and the economy was just terrible in '52. I just drove up to Abilene, Texas and re-enlisted.

SK: When you re-enlisted, were you at a different rank than you were before?

EH: No, I went back the same rank, enlisted the same rank.

SK: Was your brother's experience in the military the same as yours?

EH: Exactly. For six years, he got out at six years. Of course, my two older brothers, they fought in World War II. One was in Europe, and the other one was in Brazil. He was a parachute rigger. Made parachutes for the troopers going to Europe.

SK: What do you think should be done with the buildings and the tunnels at Killeen Base?

EH: I think they should use them to the best of their knowledge, and Fort Hood has a lot of need for them, I think. Those plants could be made into factories real good. If nothing else, turn it into a prison. Just put them in those two doors and put them in there, and let them cook their own meals, whatever they want to do.

SK: I know you said you were back in '93, but I have some pictures of when we were there.

EH: This is the entrance one of the tunnels, but I don't know which ones. Is that an igloo?

SK: Those are in the tunnel.

EH: Oh, this is in the tunnel, okay. I don't know what part by looking at that. Sure don't. Yes. That's a door, but I don't know to what. Sure don't. What is that a door to?

SK: Well, the rooms aren't numbered any more, and when we were down there, we really didn't know where we were. We had a guide, but that was one of the bays.

EH: That's not Mr. Henderson, so I don't know who it is. Mr. Henderson is the custodian of that Plant 1.

SK: That's one of the ventilation holes.

EH: I don't know what that is.

SK: In one of them, there's been a lot of water in there, in one of the plants.

EH: Yeah, they have a seepage in one of them. Well, I'll be. Well, don't need me looking at these.

SK: If you look at this one.

EH: Okay, which one?

SK: If you look at that one, you can see the difference between the tunnels. This is the one that they've redone, you can see the fluorescence on them.

EH: That's got to be Plant 2. This is the way Plant 1 looked. It was just disgraceful how it had gone down when we toured it.

SK: So you can kind of see the difference. This is in one of the areas where they're doing training.

This is, they redid that. They are doing training in that tunnel.

EH: Are they?

SK: Yes.

EH: That bay in Plant 2, I bet, on the backside of the mountain.

SK: They have said that it stimulates a lot of the tunnels and things that are in Afghanistan and Iraq, so they do that with training.

EH: They're going to do it for training? [Yes].

SK: And then this is, that was painted onto the walls, that symbol.

EH: I don't know who would have painted that. Don't know.

SK: Well, that's your patch right, one of your patches?

EH: No, not that I ever saw. Now somebody here had something like this, but I never saw it. The one I seen is the one that's on my hat. Which is the nuclear atom. Neutron, proton, electron.

SK: What do you want the military personnel or civilians to know about your time at Killeen Base?

EH: Well, I want them to know that we need to defend this nation just as we did in 1948, '49, '50, and '51, and since then. And quit being a bunch of jelly-bellies. Start defending this nation and quit giving our information to the enemy.

SK: Do you think that what you did at Killeen Base, future generations can learn from someday?

EH: I think they could, I sure do. And it's going to come to haunt them if they don't. I think that we're going to be in a civil war, because of lack of love for our country. I think where in schools, start learning Love of Country, as I had to when I went to school. I'll bet you there's not a kid in school that can say Sir Walter Scott's "Love of Country." Why? Because the teachers don't teach it. The schools won't allow it taught. Do you know "Love of Country?"

SK: No.

EH: Gosh, it's been 61 years, 65 years.

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!
Whose heart hath never within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand!
If such there breathe, go, mark him well;
For him no Minstrel raptures swell;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim;
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,

The wretch, concentered all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust, from whence he sprung,
Unwept, unhonored, and unsung.

SK: And that's something you learned in school?

EH: Yep.

SK: Everybody had to learn it?

EH: Oh, I'd say everybody in my sixth grade did.

SK: Well, those are all the questions that I have. Do you have any additional comments?

EH: No, I sure don't.

James C. Kinard Sr.

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1951–1952
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas

SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas with Prewitt Associates. Today is Tuesday, September 15, 2009. I am interviewing, for the first time, Mr. James C. Kinard Sr. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron is having an annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you enlisted in the air force?

JCK: I was 19, and I went into the air force on January 10, 1951. And on the second day of February, I turned 20 years old. So it was just a few weeks, and I was 20.

SK: How long did you serve?

JCK: Four years. I got out on January 9, 1955.

SK: So where were you when you joined? What state were you in?

JCK: I lived in Jacksonville, Florida.

SK: Was that your native home?

JCK: I was born and reared there.

SK: And then did you go to training somewhere before you went to Killeen Base?

JCK: They sent me to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas where I stayed four weeks.

SK: What ranks did you achieve?

JCK: Some called it sergeant, some called it airman first class.

SK: Did you serve anywhere after Killeen Base?

JCK: Yes, our outfit moved to Manzano Base, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

SK: So when you arrived at Killeen Base, what were your first impressions?

JCK: When we left Lackland, San Antonio, we were all on buses. It seemed like there were about seven bus loads of us. There had been a snowstorm, and we drove in the snow. I had no idea where I was going, and when I arrived, it looked like I was going to a prison, with the fences that they had around the base. And my first impression was, Are they putting me in prison? And then they let us through the gate and we went into the dining hall. That was the largest meeting area they had at that time. And then this colonel came, and I don't remember his name. He jumped up right in the middle of one of the tables. They were oak tables. And he said, "Welcome to Killeen Base. You are now in an atomic energy base." And that was the first impressions I had.

SK: So what did they tell you when you were leaving San Antonio? They just told you they were taking you to your next position?

JCK: In San Antonio we went to a building, and I thought I was going to radar school in Biloxi, Mississippi. They sent me through a door, and I met a major. And he asked me, Was I a communist? And I said, "No." And he said, Did I have any family that was communist, and it was "No." And how much did I know about communism, which was very little. After a number of questions regarding communism, he picked up a stamp and he stamped my papers "Killeen Base, Killeen, Texas." I had no idea where I was going or what it was. And of course, when we drove up in those buses, I thought I was going to prison.

SK: So you thought you were going to radar school in Biloxi, Mississippi originally?

JCK: Yes. Radar school in Biloxi, Mississippi.

SK: Looking back, do you think you would have rather have done that?

JCK: I don't know. There were good days and then there were days that it was kind of dull with the type of work we had. But I have no idea what radar [school] would have turned out to have been.

SK: How long were you at Killeen Base?

JCK: Let's see. We got there in February, the middle of February. When I left Killeen [Base] it was the last of October. I was selected with another member, his name was Jim Wolf. Jim and I was called to the CO's [commanding officer's] office one day, and he says, "We're going to send you two boys to the Air Force Police Academy at Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City, Florida. So we left our unit and, I believe they called it, TDY. We were there during November, December, and January. After graduation we came back to Killeen [Base], our outfit had moved on to Albuquerque. So we stayed overnight and then caught an airplane the next day off of the little Gray Air Force Base, which was just outside the gate. They flew us to Albuquerque, where we caught up with our unit. So I really was at Killeen [Base] just from February to, I'd say, October.

SK: Did you ever hear from family or friends that the FBI investigated your past in order to get security clearance?

JCK: Oh my gosh, yes. I remember the first time I went home, they wanted to know what kind of trouble I was in. My dad always would ask me, every time I would go home, what I did, and I couldn't tell him. But they said just a few weeks after I had left, different people would call

them, Is Jim in trouble? The FBI is asking all these questions. They even went back to my boss at the job I had, and he called my dad and wanted to know what kind of trouble I was in. I was never able to tell them what I was doing. Because I always will remember what that colonel said when he jumped up on the table and told us that we were an atomic energy base. And he said, "What you see and hear, you don't say anything about. If you do, it's $10,000, 10 years, or both." And to this day, I still remember that.

SK: So if people asked you what you did, what would you tell them?

JCK: I just told them I was in police work in the air force. Of course, when I went to the school, they knew I was going through a police academy.

SK: What kind of security clearance did you have at Killeen Base?

JCK: Top-secret.

SK: And what areas did you have access to at Killeen [Base].

JCK: My badge had a lot of holes punched in it. I could go most anywhere I wanted to.

SK: So you worked as a guard then, right?

JCK: I was a security guard, yes, at that time.

SK: Where were you mainly positioned? Did you do perimeter guard work or interior guard work?

JCK: Most of mine was perimeter in a pickup truck, that was our patrol car, and we would go check certain areas and drive around the base.

SK: Were you ever in the tunnels?

JCK: Oh yeah, I went in the tunnels.

SK: For guarding purposes?

JCK: I guess the main doors, the front doors, whatever they call them, the entrance. That's the word I'm looking for, the entrance. Oh yes, I had that kind of duty.

SK: Were you told of the mission at Killeen Base?

JCK: Not at first, no.

SK: How long was it before you got there, to when they told you that you were working guarding nuclear bombs?

JCK: You know, I don't know if they ever told me that or not. I think I more or less picked up on it. I don't think they ever told me.

SK: So they told you when you first got there, when that colonel stood on the table, that you were at a nuclear base, but you didn't know that there were bombs.

JCK: But I didn't know, yes.

SK: But you kind of put two and two together?

JCK: Really, to tell you the truth, I really put it all together when I came back and went on to Albuquerque. That's when I really found out what we were doing.

SK: So you never saw any bombs or anything like that?

JCK: Oh, yes. I'll rephrase it. I never actually saw the Fat Man that we had, I only saw them covered. I never actually saw the bomb until I got to Albuquerque.

SK: The 1094th was air force, but you were housed kind of at Fort Hood. Was there any dissention with the army soldiers? Was there any contention between the airmen and the army that you felt?

JCK: I didn't feel any. We took a lot of ribbing. We were one of the first groups out of Lackland [Air Force Base] to have the new blue uniforms, because the air force had only been pulled away from the army air force since the middle of the year before in 1950. And all the airmen at Killeen [Base] still had the old OD [olive drab] army-colored uniforms [Class A, brown army uniform]. We were called "bus drivers." There were so many of us that went to Lackland [Air Force Base] so they just processed us and moved us on. When we got to Killeen [Base], they decided we had to have basic training. So every morning after breakfast, we'd load up on 6x6 trucks and off to Fort Hood. Now some of the guys say we had eight weeks. For some reason, I have got 12. And I tell everybody we had 12 weeks of infantry combat training, and those old sergeants were what was left out of General Patton's old army. And I thought for a few weeks that they were going to kill us. They really put us through. We had some good training. It was tough training. I look back now, it was very good training. But as far as getting along with the army, we always got along real good. Of course, if you went on sick call, you had to go over there anyway. I had to go two or three times for the dentist having wisdom teeth pulled, you know, but other than that. Some of the guys had flu and pneumonia and what have you.

SK: Did you ever use their PX or the mess hall or the recreation facilities over there?

JCK: I did at the small one in Killeen [Base]. I never used Fort Hood, no.

SK: Did you live in the barracks at Killeen Base or the tents?

JCK: When we got there, they put us in tents. And after our training, we were moved into the barracks, yes. The permanent buildings kind of looked like motel buildings. They were real nice buildings.

SK: Do you know who the 1094th answered to? Was it the air force or the Atomic Energy Commission or the Department of Defense?

JCK: We were told we were in SAC or we were part of SAC. And of course, SAC was the large airplanes that delivered bombs and things like that. So we were in the—to tell you the truth, I guess that's who we reported to. The CO [commanding officer] of SAC was General Curtis E. LeMay.

SK: How many men were in your flight?

JCK: Seventy.

SK: Do you have an idea how many men were in the 1094th when you got there?

JCK: No. There were very few. It was a small outfit. They didn't have too many. And that was another reason they sent us there, to beef them up.

SK: Were the 1094th just made up of guards or did the men hold other positions?

JCK: Oh no. You had the motor pool, you had the clerical staff, and the cooks. You had all different areas. Of course, our group was in the security end of it. But you had the motor pool and the food service, the officers, the clerical, what have you.

SK: What's a general description of your duties at Killeen Base as a guard?

JCK: The duties?

SK: Yes.

JCK: Well, it was actually guard duty.

SK: So like a typical day. You would get up, you would go to guard mount and then they would inspect you?

JCK: Well, it was posted on a bulletin board. First you went each day and read where you were going to be assigned, your post. And it told you what type of weapons you had to check out. Then that particular day, whatever shift you were on, you went and had a bite to eat. Then you stood what they called guard mount. And then you took off and went to your post. While you always had your general orders, but then you had special orders, and each one of those stations were probably different from the other ones. So when you got there, you had to make sure you knew what the special orders were for that particular day in the hour that you was there.

SK: So, if you were doing perimeter work, perimeter guarding, would you have a different weapon than you would if you were guarding inside the tunnels?

JCK: Yes. If you was riding, say, in a pickup truck, you would probably have a side arm and a weapon. It could be different from what the guy was on the entrance to the tunnel. It could be different from a guy on the main gate checking the people in and out. That was another thing. You were always told what type of uniform to wear. Like if you were on the main gate in daylight hours, you were in dress blues. But if you were off on the perimeter or in an entrance, a civilian, they might let you go with what they call Class C in your fatigues. You always were told what you were going to wear, wherever you went.

SK: Where did you spend most of your time on duty? Like if you were stationed at the front gate, did you have like a desk that you sat at?

JCK: I never pulled front gate at Killeen [Base]. I was one of the first ones to be cleared. You couldn't get too far involved in it until you got your clearance. But once I got mine, they were so short that they had me on the perimeter quite a bit. I went around that base a number of times in the pickup truck stopping and checking things. I did a lot of perimeter work there.

SK: What do you think about the layout of the buildings and the tunnels at Killeen Base? Do you think it was efficient in what they were trying to do guarding the secrets of the nuclear bombs?

JCK: I guess so, because see, I was new and just getting started and it seemed like every time I turned the corner it was something new for me, you know. I really picked up a lot of this after we left there and I went on to the other base.

SK: Do you think it was confusing at all with the way the tunnels were laid out? Because I've been down there, and I don't know if I could find my way around without a map.

JCK: Well, I didn't go that far back in there. I was at the main entrance, and I would get as far back as where the tunnel, like a key where it turned, that was about as far as I got.

SK: Could other guards go deeper [into the tunnels], or was that the extent of the guard's access?

JCK: No. I don't know that in Killeen [Base]. I could tell you more about [Manzano Base], the other base I was on. But I assume that it was. But you shouldn't assume anything, so. I wasn't there. I don't know.

SK: Did you walk or did you drive most of the time between the buildings? Like when you would come from the barracks to your guard post. Were you driven, did you walk, was there a shuttle?

JCK: Well, from the barracks to the armory room and the mess hall, you walked. You walked to guard mount. And then depending on what post was assigned you, whether you were assigned to drive a vehicle or if you were assigned a post, you just jumped on the back of a truck and rode and they dropped you off wherever you were going. And then you were relieved when the next crew came. But yes, you'd have to drive or they'd have to drive you from guard mount to wherever you were going.

SK: What was your first reaction upon knowing you were working on a nuclear base?

JCK: Mmm. What have I got myself into?

SK: Did you know a lot about nuclear energy and nuclear weapons before you got there?

JCK: What I knew and what I had read in the papers and heard on the radio. Not too much on TV. TV wasn't that strong in those days. I knew about the atomic bomb being dropped on Japan, and Enola Gay, we had heard about that kind of stuff. But that was about the extent of it. And then all of a sudden I woke up and realize, Hey, here I am on a base where they actually had the thing. And that kind of woke me up a little bit, you know.

SK: Did you ever see any of the bombs? Did you ever escort them when they were being transferred?

JCK: Ah, yes I did. I sure did.

SK: Did you go to the railhead at all?

JCK: Yes, at Fort Hood. I was on duty a couple of times when they—of course, they were covered, like I said before, I never saw them, but then I knew what was in there. And I remember one time that I was on the tail end of the jeep, and I was the .50-caliber [machine] gunner. They had the .50-caliber [machine gun] mounted on a jeep. And we were told to let nobody pass it when we went out on the highway from our base to Fort Hood, the railroad siding. And I remember we went over one of those little knolls, and here comes this car flying up there. And it seems to me there was a lady driving, and she had a passenger with her, and it looked like there was a small child in the car. And she'd move over like she was going to go around, and I kept saying, "No, no, no, don't do that," with my hands, you know. And directly I realized that she was going to go. And so I lowered the barrel of that .50[-caliber machine gun] down, and I jacked a shell in it. Because if she started, I was going to tear the front end

of that automobile off. And she must have saw the barrel of that gun. And boy, she slammed on the brakes! Every time we went over a hill you couldn't see back at the last hill. She really backed off then. But I've had that experience.

SK: Were there any other times that you felt like there was somebody trying to access the base that weren't supposed to? Anybody who didn't have the clearance and the right identification?

JCK: No. Like I say, on this base. I got a lot from the other base. But on this base, I would say no. I know once in a while a section of the fence would go off, and we would be called to go check it out. But it would wind up to being a deer trying to get out or something. It would hit the fence and set the fence off.

SK: How long would your guard duty last?

JCK: Actual duty time was six hours. But it would take you an hour or so to get ready and almost an hour to get off. So you would put in a full eight-, nine-hour shift. But actual duty time was approximately six hours.

SK: What did you do when you were guarding? Did it differ from doing perimeter sweeps to working inside?

JCK: Depending on what your post was. Some of them you could stand, some of them you sit. And you stayed right there, you didn't move around. And then if somebody would come up, like I said, you had the challenges. You had your general orders and you had your special orders. Of course, on each post special orders was different. And if you were on the entrance and the guy comes up there with his badge on, if he didn't have the clearance, you didn't let him in.

SK: Did that ever happen?

JCK: Not with me it didn't, no.

SK: Were you ever on high alert? Like when you thought—

JCK: Yes, I know what you mean. Did we ever have one of those at Killeen [Base]? No, only what we had were a couple of practice alerts. But we didn't have any high alerts.

SK: At the time, did you know that they were practice alerts?

JCK: Oh yes, they told us what we were doing. We just had to go through it, but—

SK: Did you ever work with civilians?

JCK: At Killeen [Base]? I don't think so. Of course, I did at the other base quite a bit, but not at Killeen [Base].

SK: Did you ever go into the town of Killeen?

JCK: Oh yes.

SK: What did you think about that?

JCK: Very small.

SK: How did it compare to Florida, where you grew up in Florida?

JCK: Well, kind of a small country town. I know that especially during those 12 weeks of training, once we were through, say noon Saturday with the parade, we were free. We had a pass where we could go into Killeen. And the only thing to do was go to the movies. They had a bus that they would take us, because we didn't have cars. And they would drive us into Killeen and put us off at the bus station. And you could go to the theater, and the guys were lined up. Of course, we weren't all airmen. The GIs from Fort Hood was there and what have you. And you'd see a movie and you'd come back and catch the bus and go back. That was the extent of the entertainment.

SK: Did you wear your uniform when you went into town?

JCK: No, we did not.

SK: Was that because you didn't want anybody to know?

JCK: We were encouraged if we had civies, to wear them and not wear uniforms. We had a patch and insignia. In fact, this is it on my hat. But we were not allowed to wear that on our uniforms anywhere because they didn't want everybody to know what we were doing.

SK: You mentioned civies. That's civilian clothing?

JCK: [Yes].

SK: Do you think that was because the air force wanted to keep it a secret that you were there? They didn't want people asking questions about why airmen were there?

JCK: No, I don't think it was the air force. I think it was just the Atomic Energy Commission. The whole package. I don't know that many of those guys that were in Fort Hood knew what we were doing.

SK: Nobody asked?

JCK: They knew Gray Air Force Base. And I think they just put us all together thinking that we were all this one group.

SK: Did any civilians from Killeen ever inquire about what you did?

JCK: No, with me they didn't, no.

SK: So you were single when you first got there, right?

JCK: Yes, I was.

SK: And when you left, you were still single? Your family was never there?

JCK: No, I waited until I got through and then got married.

SK: So when you were working with guarding nuclear bombs, do you think that you were trying to protect them against the Russians, communists, inside sabotage? Who do you think your biggest enemy was?

JCK: That's a good question. I think I just took everything for general, and, don't mess with me and that bomb. To break it down into different groups, I don't think I ever thought about it.

SK: So did you consider yourself a part of the Cold War?

JCK: I knew we had a part to do with the Cold War, and I think the Russians were the biggest part of that. I know I didn't feel too good about the North Koreans. And I guess it was that I just tried to be a good American.

SK: Were you ever worried about people parachuting in or flying into the base? Did you ever worry about a threat from above?

JCK: No. I do remember now that we've been talking about it, I do remember one time they told us that if we did have a serious alert, that our group—we had positions where we went and stations we got ready to defend the enemy. But Fort Hood would be there immediately with their tanks to back us up. So they had some type of training where they knew to get over there and come help the airmen out. I felt good about it, because during the training that we had all those weeks over there when I saw what the army had, the training that those guys had with the tanks and all, I felt real good about it. But as far as parachuting coming in, I don't know that I ever even thought about it.

SK: Did you ever question the loyalty of some of your fellow airmen who were also guards?

JCK: Well, I had one guy that I wondered about. And he, incidentally, was the guy that one night as I was on perimeter patrol, went by the entrance of one of the plants, and he shot at me with a .45. It was in the wintertime, and I had the windows up. And I don't remember hearing it. Some of the people outside told me later that they heard the shots. But he emptied the seven rounds out. And of course, there was a big investigation and they arrested him and sent him off, and that was the last I heard of him.

SK: Is that somebody who you trained with?

JCK: Started out with us, yes.

SK: And how long was that after you had first got there?

JCK: Well, I had already gone through the training and had gotten my top-secret clearance. Let's see, February, March, April. It must have been, well, it was still cool weather because I know I had the windows up, so it must have been about the last of April, first of May, somewhere along in there.

SK: And how did they find that this was the person who shot at you?

JCK: Well, other people outside heard it, heard the shots. And I was radioed. I turned around and came back. And they were checking my truck to see if he'd hit the truck with a round. Of course the officers and all came up and everything. I don't know whether he shot it in the air or shot it at me or what have you. But that was a no-no, and they sent him off. So that was the end of that. So I don't know where he wound up.

SK: Did you ever have prisoners on Killeen Base? Did you ever have to transport prisoners?

JCK: No, not on Killeen [Base] I didn't, no. Wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute, wait a minute. It seems like, and I'm not positive on this, but it seems like they sent me to Fort Hood to pick up a prisoner and bring him back to Killeen [Base] for something with a jeep. Now my memory is fuzzy on this because I've been on two bases. Well, it seemed like I did. All I remember, all I had was a .45, and it was on my right side. And of course, he's sitting

up there at front. I remember when he got into the jeep to take him, I had a few words with him that he was to sit there and keep his hands crossed, you know.

SK: Was he a service member?

JCK: He was in the prison for something. And they were having his trial, and I had to go get him and bring him back. And here again, I don't remember whether it was there [Killeen Base] or at Manzano [Base]. But one of the other of the bases I remember doing that one time, going and picking up a prisoner and bringing him back. Then I had to take him back to prison after it was over.

SK: So you finished out your duty at Manzano [Base]?

JCK: Oh, yes.

SK: And did you stay in Albuquerque or did you go back to Florida after that?

JCK: I finished in Albuquerque. I was there almost three years. And when I was discharged, I went back to Florida.

SK: How do you think the two bases compare?

JCK: They were similar. Well, I know the Rocky Mountains were higher in Albuquerque than the hills were in Texas.

SK: Do you think that Manzano [Base] was more secure than Killeen Base because of that?

JCK: No, because we patrolled it almost identically to Killeen [Base], and it was the same group of guys.

SK: Do you think that helped moving with the same guys there?

JCK: Well, it probably did because we were familiar with what we were doing and with one another. I just was not in the big move, as I was off at the police academy at Tyndall Air Force Base. And like I said, when I got back they were gone, so I had to stay overnight and then catch a flight out. They had an army group that had come in and relieved them at Killeen [Base], and I don't know how they shipped out, because I wasn't there. But we stayed overnight and then got up the next morning and we went out to the gate. And you know, you just go out the gate at Killeen [Base] and there's Gray Air Force Base, that one runway they've got there. And they flew in a C-47 and picked us up and carried us back to Albuquerque. Like I said, there was just two of us: just Jim Wolf and myself, the two Jims.

SK: Why do you think you got picked to go to the police academy?

JCK: I have no idea. We were in our barracks. We weren't on duty. And the runner came from the administration building and he said, "Kinard," they referred to him as "the old man" in the CO [commanding officer] units, "the old man wants to see you." And I said, "Well, what have I done now?" So I went in there and he said, "Kinard, how would you like to go back to Florida? I see you're from Florida." And I said, "I sure would." He said, "Well, I've checked your grades." I guess it was my grades I took when I was taking the test at Lackland [Air Force Base]. He said, "I'm going to send you to police academy." "Okay, where's it at?" "Panama City." I told him, "Let's go!" So I turned around and there was Jim Wolf. He'd done the same thing. I believe he was from Gary, Indiana, if I remember. So the two of us took off

and went to school. Both of us were in the top 10 percent of the graduating class and we got promoted. So when we got back, we actually outranked all the rest of the guys in our outfit. They were all PFCs and we were corporals by that time.

SK: What did you end up doing when you got discharged?

JCK: I went back to the job I had. I was with the City of Jacksonville, Florida, in the recreation department. When I got out of high school, I didn't have enough money—came from a large family—to go to college. So I went to work. Well, I graduated in June of 1949. And I was lucky enough to get on with the city on their pension plan. And some of my buddies were being drafted. We had selective service back then. And they were going into the army and having a few month of training sent over to Korea. In fact, one of my buddies had already been away and been killed. I knew they were getting close. And I said, "You know what, I don't want to go in the army." So I went down and joined the air force. The day I shipped out. So I got a letter a few weeks later from my mother. The letter came: my draft notice. But I was on the train going to San Antonio, so I just did get in before I got drafted.

They kept my job for me, and four years later I came back and I said, "Well, I've got to work a little bit until I can accumulate some money." So I went back and saw my old boss and went back to work. And got credit for those four years that I was in. So I stayed with the City of Jacksonville and worked my way in civil service right on up through the ranks, and by the time I was 28 or 29 years old, I was a superintendent.

In recreation, you think about playing ball all the time, but I was in the construction and maintenance where we had to build and keep up all of the buildings and playgrounds and parks and the old Gator Bowl. We actually ran the Gator Bowl, our maintenance staff. I was supervising men that was old enough to be my father by then. And then the consolidation come along in the City of Jacksonville, and I got involved in that.

SK: Did you ever consider staying in the air force longer than those four years?

JCK: If it had been that I wasn't dating my wife long distance in those days, I think I might have re-upped. Because when I got to Manzano Base, I got tired of pulling duty in that cold weather on the side of that mountain with that wind coming around there. And they had a security system built on it. I want to say ADT—

SK: ADT?

JCK: ADT. One night I got assigned to work the room. And went back down. I liked doing that, and I went and applied for the post. And that's when I got to working with civilians. And so for the last two years, I went in Plant 1, went all the way back in that long tunnel, way back in the back where they had the ADT room, and I learned to operate that thing back there. And I liked that. So when it came the day for discharge, they tried to get me to re-up and offered me another rank and the money and all, and I said "No, no, no." So when they paid me off and I walked out the door, there was a civilian and they wanted to hire me right then to go to work with real good money. But love does funny things, you know, so I had to go back and meet my wife. Of course, this was January, and then she and I were married in June that same year. Had not, I probably would have re-upped. But I would have asked for a transfer or getting out of that, because that work just worked on you.

SK: Just because it's monotonous?

JCK: Yes, very much so.

SK: So at the time when you were at Killeen Base, did it feel like you were part of something bigger? Or did it feel like it was just a job?

JCK: No, I thought it was big. When Truman told them to drop it, of course, that's a horrible thing. But I knew we were guarding something that was very dangerous, and we could control the world with them in a hurry if we turned them loose. Or blow the world up! And I knew it was a very important job. And I was serious about my part. I don't know why some of the rest weren't, but I was.

SK: Did you consider yourself a part of the Cold War?

JCK: Well, if the United States considered themselves a part of it, then I was part of it.

SK: Do you think that what you were doing was just as important as the men who were fighting in Korea?

JCK: I guess to an extent I did. Of course, I realized that those poor guys over there that were in the snow up to their knees and crawling around there, that was tough duty that they were in. But also, I was here guarding something that, if it came to it, could really help them out, so.

SK: Looking back, what do you think about the Cold War now? Do you think it was necessary?

JCK: You're getting into politics now, and I'm not a politician.

SK: You don't have to answer if you don't want to.

JCK: Well, our political fathers were fighting that part of the war with the Russians that finally broke the ice years later. So, I don't know. That would be a tough one for me to answer.

SK: Did you know at the time that the Russians also had atomic bombs?

JCK: No, I didn't.

SK: So you weren't afraid of their nuclear capabilities?

JCK: No. I was afraid that they might get their hands on it and would know about it. But I didn't think, at that particular time, they had it. Of course, I think they have now. But I don't think they did then.

SK: How do you reflect on your time at Killeen Base?

JCK: Well, number one, I was young. I guess I would classify that as an adventure. I was athletic. I loved to play ball. And we had intramural games. Football, softball, what have you, that I was involved a lot in. And we didn't make much money then. I think about $75 a month is what airmen were getting. By the time you bought your articles from the PX, you didn't have too much money or time either to go anywhere to do anything. But I did follow the ball teams around. We went to Belton. I believe one of them was called Belton.

SK: Temple? Waco?

JCK: I went to Temple. You had Killeen, Belton and—

SK: Waco? Copperas Cove?

JCK: Copperas Cove! Belton and Copperas Cove is all close in there. Yeah, when you get to Waco and all that. After the first year, I got my car. When I went home, I got a car. So driving I would come through Waco and Temple and all down through there. But by that time, I had already gone to Albuquerque. I didn't have a car while I was at Killeen [Base].

SK: What do you think should be done with the buildings and the tunnels at Killeen Base now?

JCK: Well, there's any number of things you could use them for. They'd make very good storage areas.

SK: Do you think they should be preserved? Do you think that they should be open to the public or interpreted as historic sites?

JCK: Well, we've been so far now away from that war, and most people now know what went on. I guess if it was operated in the proper way, it could be opened up to the public and go through and see what happened way back then.

SK: Do you think that the public now can learn anything about the Cold War from the tunnels?

JCK: Well, it's part of history! But the young people know what us old folks did.

SK: Well, I do, because I'm a historian, but—

JCK: But it was very top secret back in those days. We couldn't know. They had us so programmed, you wouldn't even trust your own mother hardly. And this was something with my dad, bless his heart. My dad was about a thumbnail short of being an alcoholic to start with. He loved to drink. And he had retired, and he'd go to the bar and sit down. Well, there would be his buddies. Well, they had sons. My dad's name was Curtis, and they called him Curt. And they'd say, "Curt, what's Jim doing?" "I don't know. He won't tell me a thing." "Well, my son's on a ship. He's doing this." Or "My son's in the army, and he's over here." And I'd come home and Dad would say, "I've got to know what you're doing." Well, I knew what he was going to do. He'd go down to that bar. Well, here come that 10 years, $10,000, or both. And I thought, Oh no, I'm not telling you. Because I knew what he was going to do.

SK: At what point did you talk about your experience at Killeen Base and at Manzano [Base]? Did you ever get to talk?

JCK: I didn't talk about it until years later, even to my wife, bless her heart. I couldn't even tell her when we were even dating and then after we got married. But *LIFE Magazine* came out with it, showed the picture of the Little Man and the Fat Boy and history of the bombs. And I came home from work one day and she said, "Honey, I saw something in *LIFE Magazine* today. It has to do with atomic energy." And I said, "What did you see?" And she said, "They showed a picture of a bomb in there." "Huh?" And I went and grabbed that and I read it and I said, "Okay, come on and sit down." And that's when I told her what I did. And my dad, by the way, the good Lord had already called him on, he went to his grave not knowing what I did. But then I told my mom, my brother and sisters and all of them. Because they all didn't know what I did. But I never said anything about it until that happened. But that was years later.

SK: Do you know what year that *LIFE* [*Magazine*] came out?

JCK: I really don't, to tell you the truth. But I can tell you it was *LIFE Magazine*.

SK: What do you want the military now or civilians to know about your role at Killeen Base? What do you want to be the legacy of the guards that worked there?

JCK: Well, on my part, and I hope I'm speaking for the rest of them, is that I was a good airman doing my job to protect this country and the people in it. And basically, that was it. I was doing my part of the war.

SK: Did you find it hard not being able to tell people what you did?

JCK: Very hard. Very hard. And sometimes you had a feeling that the people would say, Well, that sorry rascal. He just won't let us know what he's doing. He's too good, or he's this or he's that or he's something else. I just wasn't able. And that was the part that hurt that I was not able to tell them at that point in time.

SK: Do you think that maybe your family had some inkling? You know, I guess if a family member came to me and was like, I work in the military, but I can't tell you what I do. Maybe I would assume that they would do things secretive. Did you ever get that feeling?

JCK: One time, just before my father died, he made a remark. He said, "You know when you first went in, the FBI done a lot of checking with you. And you went in the air force and you never would tell me what you were doing." He said, "Was you working for the FBI?" And I think he kind of thought I was kind of working with them a little bit. So that was just one opinion. My mother never said anything, so I really don't know what she thought.

SK: Do you think the FBI was working at Killeen Base at all?

JCK: They could have had. I don't know.

SK: Covertly?

JCK: Could have. I don't know. See, in Killeen [Base], I wasn't there like some of these guys that was there for a year or longer. I came in and the first thing I know they shipped me out to go to school. And by the time I come back, they were gone. And these guys stayed on and on. So there's probably some of these guys that can tell you about stuff that happened the whole year, but I wasn't there.

SK: When is the last time that you've been back to Killeen [Base], or have you?

JCK: I went back to Killeen [Base] two years after I got to Albuquerque. We had a base football team, and I played defensive end on it. And we won in Albuquerque. So they had a little playoff tournament between the atomic bases around. And we went back to Killeen [Base]. And I was there for about two, three days during the tournament. But that was the last time I was there.

SK: Do you want to see some pictures of those tunnels on the base?

JCK: Yes.

SK: That's the entrance to one of the plants.

JCK: Oh, yes. That looks very familiar right there.

SK: Do you know what this building was right here? Is that one of the guard houses? Or was that there when you were there?

JCK: I don't think so.

SK: Because, after the 1094th left, the army came in and utilized it so—

JCK: Yes. The army came in and relieved us there, and we relieved the army in New Mexico. There was a lot of rust on that one and the decaying, yes. And you're in the tunnel here with those lights on. I guess that's a hole in—

SK: Oh, I think that's one of the ventilation holes in the tunnel.

JCK: Oh yes, okay, all right, that's what that is.

SK: Now one of the tunnels is still in its original condition. And the other one of the plant tunnels has been renovated. Painted, installed some new lights, and they use that for training.

JCK: I'll tell you the one thing that went on in Killeen [Base] while I was there. I was telling you about the deer that set the fence off. The rascals could jump that fence! And we had a lot of them on our base up in the hill. So one day the CO [commanding officer] gave some of our boys that could use rifles pretty good and they went on a hunt, and I forgot how many of them that they got during deer season.

SK: This is one of the blast doors.

JCK: Yes. And they butchered them, and we had venison there one night from the dining hall right off of our base.

And one other story I'll tell you is when I was on the perimeter in the summertime, I'd never been anywhere where I saw so many copperhead snakes. They would crawl out up on that hard pavement. And I learned you come along with that patrol car and, if you hit them just right with that front tire, it sound like a 12-gauge shotgun would go off. And boy, I'd kill 18 to 20 a night during the real hot weather. So that was part of our amusement was going around there, killing snakes.

Oh, boy, this thing when they closed it was really deteriorating, wasn't it? You've been way back in there, didn't you?

SK: Yes.

JCK: You've been further than I have.

SK: This was a bathroom area that was way back there.

JCK: [Yes]. Now I can see this turned around.

SK: So none of these drawings were there when you were there that you knew of?

JCK: Well, see, I didn't go that far back, so I wouldn't know it.

SK: That's some of the machinery that's left.

JCK: Yes. Well, see, what I'm doing now, I'm seeing things like I saw at the other base, comparing with.

SK: So at Manzano [Base] you went farther back into the base than you did at Killeen [Base]?

JCK: Oh, yes. I was way back there in the back. And I'm going to tell you, when it was 0 to 5 degrees and snow on the side of the mountain and the wind coming around there, it felt real good to be back there in that ADT room, let me tell you. Okay, it looks like we're doing some work now.

SK: [Yes]. This is in the newer part or the tunnels that they're utilizing.

JCK: Now there you go. Now when you were at the front entrance, you'd see long tunnels like that. Yep, yep. That's what they had the Fat Boy sitting on. They would put it on. You know I don't know how much work they did on them in Killeen [Base]. I sometimes feel like that Killeen [Base] was just a storage place for them. And I believe that our base at Manzano [Base] was larger than Killeen [Base], but I've got no way of proving it. But I've often thought that, with these bases being built the same time that they were doing the development of the atomic bomb before they dropped it, because that's a lot of digging going on in all these buildings. Oh yes, here's some of the drawings. I don't know how many of our guys that worked in the plants is here in our group, if there's any here or not. Now they can tell you some stories. They went way back in there.

SK: [Yes]. Well, I think Mr. Priester worked in there. That's the newer side. You can see that they've got fluorescent lights and the walls are painted. So if you want to compare that to the older ones.

How did you find out about the reunion?

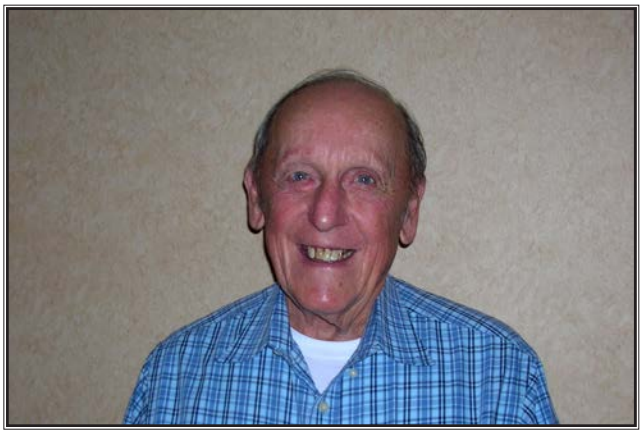
JCK: They found me. You know, they had been meeting for several years before. Now, that looks almost new now, doesn't it?

SK: Yep, yep. That's on the other side there.

JCK: I'll tell you how. The first one I went to was the reunion they had in Reno. Jim Griffin, who is here, was heading it up at that time. Years later I joined the American Legion, and we get a monthly magazine. And I'd retired from my job as director of physical plant at Campbell University in North Carolina, and had moved to our place in Myrtle Beach. And I'm reading about the reunions in the back of this, and all of a sudden 1094th. I said where are they at? Because when we were getting discharged, there was somebody in our outfit, and I don't know who it was, that was taking everybody's name and number down, said, Now when we have a reunion, we're going to call all you guys. Well, somehow, my name gets dropped. Call Jim Griffin in California. So I called him. And he said, "Where have you been?" I said, "I've been here all the time." Of course, I had moved from Florida to North Carolina, and that was another reason. Anyway, to make a long story short, I went to Reno that year and met up with them. They railroaded me that night and two years later I'm hosting the reunion in Myrtle Beach. So I have hosted the reunion one time.

Harold Andrew Lehman

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1951–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase



AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Tuesday, September 15, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Harold Andrew Lehman. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron of the U.S. Air Force is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

Tell me again, how old were you when you enlisted?

HAL: Twenty-one.

AED: And where did you enlist from?

HAL: The recruiting office was in Lafayette, Indiana, and I actually was sworn in in Indianapolis and then rode a bus to Killeen Base—or not to Killeen Base but San Antonio to Lackland [Air Force Base] Air Force Base.

AED: Lackland [Air Force Base] Air Force Base.

HAL: Yes.

AED: What were you doing before you enlisted?

HAL: Farming.

AED: Okay. A family farm?

HAL: It was my dad's farm, right. I was working for him.

AED: All right. And you'd gone to high school there?

HAL: Yes.

AED: And so after high school, you worked on the farm.

HAL: Yes, but I did also work in a factory, Alcoa, for a period of time, and soon learned that that was not for me.

AED: Okay. And you took a bus with a bunch of other guys?

HAL: Yeah. The whole, several busloads of recruits went. I think there was three buses, if I'm not mistaken, that we went together. It got to be late in the evening or night before we got out of town, and it was snowing heavily. The buses skidded as we departed, and we thought this is going to be quite a ride, and it was because we basically went non-stop through. We took breaks for fuel and lunch, and that was it. Otherwise rode through the night and the next day, and I think we arrived the following evening about dark.

AED: Wow. And you enlisted. Why did you choose to enlist?

HAL: Well, it was the situation. You know, the Korean War was going pretty strong and there was a good bit of drafting being done. I went to the draft board and I said, "Where do I stand? I'd like to know whether to make a commitment." I was going to make some investments for business, and I didn't know whether to commit to anything or not. In fact, Alcoa had asked me to take a training program, but it was a four-year commitment. They would have paid my education and et cetera, but I said I didn't want to make a long-term commitment like that. I went home and a few days later enlisted in the air force for four years! But anyway, when I went to the draft board and asked them my position, they said, We're not going to tell you because every time we tell a person that they're right at the top of the list, they go and enlist in the air force or the navy, and I said, "Thank you very much," and went home and enlisted in the air force. I couldn't stand the suspense and not knowing. I did not know whether I was close up or considerable distance in time away, and I just found that intolerable. I'm the kind of person that if I've got something I want to do, I have to get on with it. So that's how I dealt with it.

AED: And not be on hold.

HAL: Right, for months or even years possibly.

AED: And why did you choose the air force?

HAL: My brother had gone into the air force some time before that, spoke well of it. I said, "That sounds like more fun." And I talked to the recruiter, and he said, "You can have whatever line of activity that you choose. You'll be tested and if you qualify for it, you'll get your choice." So I tested out and qualified for most everything, but they told us at the time not to try to cheat on the test because it was loaded in such a way that you couldn't tell. I could tell very clearly that it was slanted in a way that if you answered certain questions well, you'd wind up in cook and baker school, which I didn't want to do. So I kind of skewered that a little bit, but the rest of them I qualified pretty well. So I thought, Well, I'm going to get my choice in almost anything. Wound up put in a guard flight.

AED: Not what you were thinking, right?

HAL: That wasn't what I had in mind, but that was part of the agreement that I'd made, and I would follow orders, and did.

AED: The training at Lackland [Air Force Base], was that a basic training facility?

HAL: It was a basic training facility, but they were so overloaded with enlistees at that time that they couldn't deal with it. So they basically just kept us busy for the month, really, that we were there, and we didn't get any, what I thought was basic training. We got training in close-order drill and the military code of conduct and these kinds of things, but the basic infantry training didn't seem—

AED: What you'd expect?

HAL: It wasn't what I expected by any means at all, or the others. So we didn't really get any basic training during that period, in my opinion. But then when we transferred to Killeen Base, we were given 12 weeks, I believe it was, of what they called combat infantry training. We lived in the tents and trained there, and commencement occurred in, I believe it was April of '51.

AED: Of '51?

HAL: Yeah.

AED: Did you serve in any other unit or group in the military?

HAL: No.

AED: The 1094th was your [only group].

HAL: Right.

AED: Okay. Did you do any overseas duty then? I would presume not.

HAL: No. I don't know if you've been told this or not, but I was given to understand that once we were committed into this program at Killeen Base, that we were not eligible for overseas duty for security reasons.

AED: Oh, I see. No, I hadn't heard that. Okay. Which, it makes sense.

HAL: Yeah. That was very clearly stated, and the only—I think we had the option of maybe because AEC had, or the special weapons group, had an installation in Morocco, and we would have been eligible to go there, and we opted—at least I thought. I wasn't given that opportunity, but I didn't come forward and ask for it either.

AED: So when did you enlist?

HAL: January 10, 1951.

AED: Okay. Then when the group moved to Manzano [Base], you made the move at the same time.

HAL: Yes.

AED: All right. But you spent a year at Killeen Base, approximately?

HAL: It was about a year, maybe a little more than that. I can't remember exactly when we moved.

AED: I do have the dates that Reed [Cheesman] provided me with, the specific dates, that he had gotten.

HAL: Okay. Can you give me that? That might help my memory.

AED: I don't have it written down. He had it verbally. So at least I have the information, because when everybody moved, it was all at the same time.

HAL: It was all at once, right. Yes.

AED: While you were in the service, did you receive any medals or special awards?

HAL: Good conduct medal and that's it.

AED: I think that's important!

HAL: Yes.

AED: Because not everybody got one.

HAL: Right, that would be correct.

AED: How were you chosen to go to Killeen Base?

HAL: A lot of these things didn't get explained to us all that well, but as far as I could tell, we were simply the next people in line to be, I guess you'd call it deployed or assigned. I think they just went down the list. There were certain criteria that would exclude you, because one of my buddies that I enlisted with, his dad was born in Europe, I think Yugoslavia.

AED: Okay, somewhere eastern.

HAL: Yeah. It was—I'm not sure. But anyhow, he was not taken. He was sent another direction. So you had to have American-born parents, for security reasons, and they explained that to us in a roundabout way, I think maybe. I don't think they gave us a lecture on it, but that was the word that we got that the concern would be that if you had close relatives behind the Iron Curtain, basically, and pressure would be put on them to learn things from us, that we'd be inclined to do it to spare family, and to avoid that eventuality they simply didn't allow anybody to go to Killeen [Base] that had foreign-born parents. I said, "Well, my grandpa was born in Germany," but that doesn't count.

AED: Oh, my goodness. Did you have others from your town that were also in the 1094th?

HAL: Yes, yeah. There were three of us that enlisted together, and the way that came about is they had talked to each other and said, Heard you were thinking about enlisting in the air force, and I said, "Yeah, I was thinking about it." They said, Well, we're going to—meaning me and Al—we're going to enlist and wondered if you just want to go along. I said, "Yeah, that'll work." So we all scheduled that date, and I think we enlisted a week or so before we got delayed till the tenth. Then we had to report on that date. So we did that. Then Al Sigo and Eddie Hageman and I enlisted together and rode the bus together, and that was about the last we really saw much of each other.

AED: Really?

HAL: Yeah. Well, because Eddie got transferred to radar school in Biloxi, Mississippi, and Al and I went on to Killeen [Base]. Then we were both in the guard flights after our basic training, but we were in—I think we were in different flights. Because we worked on a swing shift, we didn't see each other a lot after that.

AED: Were there other kinds of criteria that you had to meet besides having native-born parents, that you know of?

HAL: Nothing that I remember now. I don't think there was. I think they simply went down the list and took everybody except they excluded these few. There may have been some other things that I wasn't aware of, but I was more keenly aware of it because my buddy was included in that.

AED: Interesting. How did you feel when you got to Killeen Base and it wasn't going to be—I mean it's not an air force base, and you'd been at Lackland [Air Force Base]. Was that—?

HAL: Well, this wasn't just my big concern at the moment, but the fact that we left Lackland [Air Force Base] under some rather unpleasant conditions, Killeen [Base] looked pretty good to me. Because we stood out in the freezing rain at Lackland [Air Force Base] until actually the water froze in our clothes. So we got on the bus, and it was warm. It took us all the way to Killeen [Base] before pants thawed out, yeah.

AED: So you took a bus?

HAL: Yeah, we rode buses. [There were] 127 of us as I remember in the group, and they set us up in tents. But they were fairly comfortable because they had wooden floors and wooden end walls on the tents and an actual door in it. So that was quite an improvement from our previous conditions.

AED: Not as primitive. Better living conditions.

HAL: Yes, right.

AED: Much more comfortable. Well, more comfortable.

HAL: It was more comfortable by a good bit.

AED: Did you need some kind of security clearance to work at Killeen Base?

HAL: Yes. I don't remember how that came about because I know they didn't give us the clearance before we went there. Well, I'm pretty certain. But I think we were restricted to the base, we were restricted to our area, and weren't allowed to go anywhere except the mess hall really until the clearances came through. And we were informed when we'd gotten the clearance. And a letter from home says, What do you do? I said, "Why do you ask?" They said, Well, the FBI was around checking on you, and they went to the school and various places. So all of a sudden I'm notorious at home, and I knew nothing of this until they told me, but then of course, the clearance came through. There again, I'm not aware of anybody that failed to get the clearance, and that is possible, but at this point I don't remember. It's been a long time ago and I don't remember that anybody failed that clearance. But the formality had to be carried out. Then like I say, we were notified when we received that clearance, and we were given weekend privileges to go into town and these kinds of things.

AED: Before the clearance you could not leave?

HAL: That's right, as I recall.

AED: Okay. Interesting. Do you know what kind of questions they were asking, the FBI?

HAL: No, I really don't. I just know that they went to the school and made some inquiries a couple

of other places. I think we might have been asked to give references, and I think they might have checked those. But I never—I didn't hear an awful lot about it. I just got this word that yeah, they'd been checking on me.

AED: That would give pause to your parents!

HAL: Yeah. That would give them a little time to worry, and then I explained that to them, that we were in a high security situation and not allowed to talk about it, so don't ask me a lot of questions. You know, that just rouses the curiosity, you know!

AED: So you get to Killeen Base, get off the bus. What did you think about what you saw? What were your first impressions?

HAL: The first thing we did was park the buses right in front of the mess hall. They took us in and fed us a good meal, and it actually was good. We were still cold and wet. We got a talk from the colonel, and he told us how tough he was, but welcomed us. Then they took us through getting settled in and assigned us to our spot, each one into our tent. I can't say that I had any great emotional experience. It was just what we were doing. When you first enlist you don't know what's going to happen anyway, so whatever, it's not a surprise, it's just whatever comes next. So we launched into our training then the very next day. We hadn't even gotten uniforms at Lackland [Air Force Base]. We had some clothes, but wasn't a complete set, so they took care of all that kind of business in the first few days, getting shoes that fit and clothes that fit.

AED: That would be helpful.

HAL: Yeah, it was nice. So it was quite an improvement from the conditions that we had. You're young, you know, and it's whatever.

AED: Yeah, everybody's in the same situation.

HAL: Yeah, we were all in the same—not the same boat, the same airplane!

AED: Yeah, you can't say boat! You have to say airplane. That's just wrong!

HAL: Yeah, you can't say boat! Right. Exactly.

AED: How long were you in the tents?

HAL: Until after our basic training.

AED: The combat infantry training?

HAL: Yes, which was, I think it was 12 weeks. Then they moved us into barracks at that time, as I recall. There may have been a few days' delay one way or the other. I don't even remember that.

AED: What was the training? Tell me, explain to me a little bit about the infantry training.

HAL: I think as compared to what the regular army training is, it was pretty mild.

AED: Oh, really?

HAL: Yeah. We did a lot of marching. One thing we were trained in weapons and a little bit in self-

defense. And this combat training, what you might imagine, but I think it was a little lighter than your basic infantry [training]. In fact, I felt like, Man, I'd hate to go into combat with the training I'd had!

AED: Really? It didn't seem like if you were on the front—

HAL: It didn't seem that aggressive, right. We went to the firing range a time or two and fired the .30-caliber carbine and the M1. They had the M1 rifle at that time and the .30-caliber [machine guns]. There were a few other weapons, .45[-caliber guns].

AED: Who provided the training? Was it air force?

HAL: No, the base had their own. Yeah, it was air force, but they had their own people. These were probably mostly career sergeants from the base. Pretty effective, I think, really. There were officers that supervised us training, and it was a lot of marching and all. We marched everywhere we went, you know, and so forth. It was quite a—pretty intensive in a way. We were doing something about all day long every day, so it wasn't like we just hung around. We were being trained, and I think it was better than I felt like it was. I was an old farm boy and I thought it was going to be pretty tough, you know. It wasn't really stuff that I expected, but we had what they called, I think they referred to it as infiltration training, where you crawled on your elbows and knees and belly for that kind of stuff. So there was—you know, at the time when I felt like it was kind of tough, but then when it was over you'd say, Oh, it wasn't that bad.

AED: Okay, that's good.

HAL: Yes.

AED: And you were expecting it to be harder in some ways?

HAL: I think, yeah, a little.

AED: What were you thinking would be—was there something specific you were thinking that would be more physically challenging or more time with the equipment?

HAL: Oh, yeah. You've seen the movies where they put these marines through all these really stressful efforts, and maybe we just didn't do all those things. But I really didn't have a lot of preconceived notions, so I didn't know. I just thought, Well, this isn't as bad as I thought it might be.

AED: You lived to tell about it.

HAL: Yeah, that's right!

AED: There were other facilities nearby. There was the Gray Air Force Base and Fort Hood. Did you ever spend time at either of those places for training or for any other reasons?

HAL: Well, yes. We marched, actually, to Gray Air Force Base for a parade one time, as I recall. It wasn't all that far. Then we went to Fort Hood to the firing range because we didn't have a firing range on our base, but we'd ride vehicles over there, personnel carriers.

AED: Because it was a little distance further.

HAL: Yeah, to the range it was. We bordered basically on the fort almost, but the distance to the

firing range was considerable. I have no idea. I just rode along. But I spent 15 days in the hospital in Fort Hood.

AED: Really? Oh, wow!

HAL: I woke up one morning feeling really bad, you know, and the guys said, Oh, what's the matter with you? You got the measles! So I looked in the mirror and I'm all spotted, you know. I went to the officer of the day. This had to be on a Sunday of course. I says, "I need to go on sick call," and he says, deadpan as he could be, he says, "Why?" I says, "I think I've got the measles," and he says, "What makes you think so?" So I'm very patiently explaining why. You know, I've got this fever and I've got these spots all over me and it really hurts back here, you know, and I'm just going on. He says, "Sergeant, take him over to the hospital," because we had no sick call on the base.

AED: That's true, there was no infirmary.

HAL: No. Well, during the week the guy was there, a medic, but he didn't do anything but give you APC [aspirin, phenacetin, and caffeine] tablets anyway, aspirin. But he took me over there and they checked me out, and had to put me in isolation, see, because it's contagious. While I was there—I was only sick a day or so with that, but then I caught a cough.

AED: Like whooping cough?

HAL: No, it wasn't whooping cough. It was bronchitis, really bronchitis is what he called it. I coughed. So they kept me there and I wound up being there for 15 days, and I'm missing basic training. That may be part of why I didn't think it was too tough!

AED: You missed the good part!

HAL: I missed all the fun. So I was there 15 days, and then the doctor came by and he said, "Well, I'm going to send you back to your unit," and he grabbed a pad and he said, "I'm going to give you a light duty pass." I says, "Well, what's wrong with a convalescent leave?" He looked up at me like, You rascal, and he gave me a 10-day convalescent leave. So I got on the train to come home and got my convertible and drove it back to Killeen [Base].

AED: Perfect timing!

HAL: It was beautiful. So I was rather popular with my convertible down there for a while till other people got their cars.

So I was the only one out of that group that got to work that little deal. So 25 days of our basic training I missed, and I got back just two or three days before the graduation, so to speak, see. The next day we were scheduled for this 9-mile march, as I recall. There was some talk about a 27-mile march, but it wasn't. So we had this 9-mile march, and the sergeant was just a pretty good old boy, you know. All the guys were razzing me how, You're not going to be able to take this. You're soft. You've been goofing off all this time. I says—well, I just kind of nodded my head. I wasn't going to make any brag, but I'm thinking, This old farm boy isn't going to let these city kids show him up out there walking. The sergeant come around and he says—we were in formation and we were marching along—and he says, "Lehman," he says, "there's a jeep back there you can go ride in if you need to." I said, "I'm all right, Sarge." I didn't even look at him, and I just kept on and we just kept on marching. It turned out it wasn't that bad. I got along fine. But all the guys, you know, they were just watching, waiting for me to fall!

AED: Good friends that they were.

HAL: Yes, absolutely. And anyway, I did make it, so we got through that. Then we had the big ceremony and all this and then moved on and were assigned then to regular duty and worked on a swing shift so that nobody had those graveyard shifts forever, but once every three weeks or four.

AED: Would cycle through?

HAL: Yes, it cycled. So that was good. There wasn't anything glorious about it, but it wasn't all that bad, either. The hard part was staying awake in the night shift.

AED: I heard one story of that so far. One person 'fessed up, but that's all.

HAL: Oh really?

AED: Yes.

HAL: Well, I think the statute of limitations has passed for me, so I can tell you this. You'll probably want to delete this. But I drove a pickup. Most of my assignments were as pickup driver on patrol, and we patrolled up through the hills, just wound around up through there. Fifteen miles an hour was the maximum speed, and you cannot stay awake driving 15 miles an hour. But I had a radio man with me, and he was supposed to help me stay awake. Well, he'd get in there and sack out and that'd be the last I'd see of him till morning, you know. We had telephones here and there throughout the route and we were supposed to stop at each phone, call in, give them our position, and move on. One night I said, "You've just got to give me a little break. I've got to close my eyes for a couple of minutes here." And I parked the pickup, engine running, lights on, whole works. I just laid my head back and that's the last thing I knew. I woke up, it was a little before time to check out, maybe six o'clock. It was starting to get daylight and I woke up, and I just zipped right through the hills, using all kinds of verbage on him, you know. I said, "You were supposed to give me a little break and you didn't do it." We got down there and zipped through the gate and checked in our weapons, and nobody said a thing. Now that's the only night of all the patrols that I did for several months where the officer of the day, the sergeant of the guard, didn't confront us in the night or sometime during our six-hour tour that I wasn't checked out. That's the only time.

AED: Is that amazing? How did that happen?

HAL: Well, I don't know.

AED: Because sometime during each shift I understand, someone would come out there to check, right?

HAL: Yes, and we'd have to challenge them and identify them and all this. And every time, as I recall, every time, every shift that we had this except this once. Now do you think that they found me there and didn't have the heart to court-martial me? They could have. Do I think so? I don't think so. I really think the hand of the Lord was there. That's the only way I can explain it.

AED: The night you needed rest.

HAL: I had to. I was going to fall asleep.

AED: Yeah, it's not a flat place.

HAL: And they told you, you know, Whatever you do, don't go to sleep. Call in. Tell them, and admit it. You know, say it. But I was afraid of the consequences of doing that, and especially if you made a habit of it. Maybe I was a little too macho to admit it, you know, but that once, that's the only time. Believe me, that put enough of the fear of circumstances into me that I had less trouble falling asleep after that. But you know, that was that one event.

AED: So what did you do to help stay awake?

HAL: We talked. Well, when I had the radio man there to talk to me, why we'd talk, sing. You could stop, get out, walk around. I did that at times.

AED: Stretch your legs.

HAL: Sure. During the day wasn't so bad, but that night shift, oh, it was tough.

AED: It's unnatural, right?

HAL: It was, right.

AED: And the radio operator wasn't required to be awake?

HAL: Yeah.

AED: That doesn't seem fair!

HAL: Well, it wasn't fair!

AED: What was their job in that?

HAL: Well, we had radios, and he was supposed to call in from time to time and just report in. This is what's so amazing about this. Nobody—the radio people didn't call me. The people at the guardhouse that sit—we had one radio man, and he sat there at that radio, and for however long this was. I don't remember what time, but it was more than a half hour. Nobody bothered us on the radio or in person. I don't think I ever admitted to it, you know, but him and I had a long talk.

AED: Yeah, I would think at least he should have some consequences from you.

HAL: Yeah, well, he did.

AED: Your concern that this is not how it's going to work.

HAL: He didn't take any responsibility on himself at all. It was a bad attitude in my opinion. But I had that responsibility, and that was that. It wasn't like I was trying to shift the blame to him, but he definitely didn't help me out.

AED: There were two people, yeah.

HAL: Yeah.

AED: So you did the periphery patrol.

HAL: I never actually did the perimeter, as I recall. I may have.

AED: Where were you driving?

HAL: There were roads up through the hills. Wind around up through the hills where the structures were located, and they were there, I suppose as much as anything, for patrol purposes. That's what we did, simply.

AED: Okay. So the guys who were doing perimeter, they were between the first and the second fence.

HAL: As I recall, yeah.

AED: As I understand it. And this is outside of the first fence, even a broader area.

HAL: Where they were. Where I was, was inside. In the interior, there were roads up through in the interior between point A and point B and C and D.

AED: Okay. You're the first person who I've talked to who had that particular patrol.

HAL: Oh, really?

AED: Or that's mentioned [it], that's talked about it.

HAL: Okay, wow.

AED: Did you do other patrols also?

HAL: I didn't do a lot of other patrols. I had other, oh, you could say walking posts at times, but not very much. Mostly what I did was the interior patrols.

AED: Okay. Because people have talked—there's the perimeter patrol. There's the main gate. There's pillboxes, or little, small concrete structures that only one man could be in.

HAL: Right. I never was in one of those.

AED: And then at the tunnels, there were people there.

HAL: Yeah, there were people in the tunnels.

AED: Right. At the front and then inside further in.

HAL: Yes, and I had that duty a time or two I think is all. I don't know why, but I always wound up driving.

AED: Yeah. I wondered why people had certain posts, so to speak.

HAL: There were times when we had like surveyors or engineers in the interior, and they didn't have the clearances, so they had to have an escort. I did that duty a time or two. In fact, one time—this is an afternoon on a hot day—Class A uniforms and tall grass, walking around, just staying up with those guys and watching. I don't know what I was going to do, shoot them if they slipped around.

AED: If they ran or something?

HAL: Yeah, but anyway, I spent my six-hour shift doing that. And at the end of the day, I was

itching really bad. So I checked, and around my cuffs, my ankles, and my wrists, and my waist, and in fact, any place where my clothes rubbed, I was really red. So I went to the medic about that. He said, "Oh, you got chiggers." I said, "Well, what the heck are chiggers?" "Well," he says, "they're little bugs that burrow into the skin and make it sore." I said, "What do you do about it?"

AED: Itchy.

HAL: Oh, it itched like crazy! It burned, actually, like fire. He didn't have any good suggestions. He gave me some stuff, but it was totally ineffective. So the next day when the stores opened in town, I went into town and got something at the drugstore. Told them my condition, and they said, Oh here, we've got stuff for you. It didn't cost much as I recall, but I took that back with me and applied it and it gave me quite a bit of relief. So about two days of that, I was just being eaten alive. So I go to the sergeant that assigned this stuff and I said, "Can you give me some different duty?" I said, "Chiggers are just eating me up," and I showed him and he goes, [gasping]. That's all he said, and the next day I had a walking post. It wasn't luxury duty, but it was better than being down in that grass. So I got that. I don't know who took my place.

AED: Who was with the chiggers?

HAL: But I feel sorry for them. But most of the time, I drove the pickup. So that was, actually, that was pretty good duty, if they'd have let me run 40 or 50 miles an hour around through the hills, I'd have had fun!

AED: In a pickup truck, as opposed to guys on the perimeter talk about riding jeeps.

HAL: Yeah. They rode jeeps, but we had pickups. They were nice Chevy pickups, a fairly late model at the time, I think, maybe '51.

AED: Why do you think they gave you the pickup as opposed to a jeep? Was there any [reason]?

HAL: I have no idea. That was what they had. We had a fleet of Chevy pickups that we used for patrol, and there were jeeps. I don't remember even driving a jeep. I drove a jeep a time or two, but I mean on patrol, I don't remember driving a jeep on patrol.

AED: Okay. When you were with the chiggers, you said they were surveyors and engineers [who you were watching]?

HAL: I think they called them engineers, but that's what they were doing is surveying, probably for some new structures to be built or—I have no idea.

AED: Yeah. I wondered if in the process, if you learned what they were doing.

HAL: No.

AED: All right. And a walking post, what would that entail?

HAL: I might have worked at the gate a very little, especially the Q [Area] gate. But the walking post—I know that in the tunnels it wasn't even a walking post. It was a standing post, and you spent your six hours. You weren't supposed to sit down, just spent your six hours standing in a little bit of an area. Of course, you could pace up and down and so forth, but you stayed pretty close to where you'd been assigned. I only did that a time or two, so I don't have a lot of recollection of it. I do remember I did it and I thought, Man, I'll never survive

this, you know, but I didn't have to do it that much.

AED: It made the driving look [good].

HAL: The driving look good after that.

AED: More appealing.

HAL: Right, absolutely. Beyond that, I don't remember that I did a lot of other things. I don't think I was ever at the main gate, but I think I worked at the Q [Area] gate a little bit. Well, I know I did, and yeah, maybe a good bit of that. Actually, you could sit around there, but if people were coming and going, well, you had a little something to do. So that was not difficult to work that shift.

AED: I've heard the term about the front gate, but where is the Q [Area] gate?

HAL: Well, the main headquarters for the base and the barracks and those type facilities were all down outside of the Q [Area] gate, I guess I'd say. The tunnels and what they referred to, or we referred to, as structures were just caves like built into the hills that were all inside the Q Area. You had to have Q clearance to get into that area, and there were different levels of Q clearances.

AED: Oh, there were? Okay.

HAL: As I recall.

AED: So the plants, the tunnels, and say the igloos, the storage facilities, those were all inside right?

HAL: Igloos, yeah. Yeah, right. I forgot that term. Yeah, they were all inside the Q [Area] fence. There was another fence all the way around the Q Area. As I remember, that was just a single fence and a gate and you had to go through and show your pass to go in there. I'm not sure if that was a single fence or not, come to think about it. I just don't remember. Is that gone now?

AED: I'm trying to think. I can only picture a single fence, chain-link, very tall.

HAL: Tall—it was 12 feet probably with barbed wire on top of it.

AED: Yeah, yeah, around it. But I think that that's one that surrounds the whole base, but that's all—it's been only one year and I can't remember.

HAL: Yeah. I was back there once, and I've been back to Albuquerque since. And again, you know, sometimes my memories may merge Albuquerque and Killeen [Base].

AED: It would be hard not to.

HAL: Yeah, it was very similar. But I remember, I took my family back to Albuquerque and showed them. We drove back there. Nobody bothered us, so we went back in there and I could show them. Actually, we got to a vantage point that I could look out to the tech supply place where I worked after I got out of the guards. So far what I've been telling you about is about two or three months.

Then one day after our shift, we were laying around and were trying to get some sleep. Of

course, that's difficult to do in the daytime and you're young and want to be up doing other things, but we had the night shift. I know this was a weekend. It was, it was Sunday. I got a call from the sergeant of the day, what do you call him, wanted me to come over. And he says, his exact words were, "Do you want to get out of the guards?" And I says, "What do I have to do?" He says, "The people in tech supply need a couple of people, and they want me to select a couple of people to send up there." I said, "I'll take it." I didn't know what tech supply was, but I'll take it. He said, "You got a buddy over there that wants to come along?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Go get him." So I went over there and I woke up old Beeky and I said, "Beeky, wake up." He says, "Leave me alone!" I said, "Beeky, you want to get out of the guards?" and he was up and had his pants on.

AED: In no time!

HAL: We went back over and he explained to us that this was not your pillowcases and linen supply type thing, but it was a technical supply for the project that we were on. So he said, "Just be up there." We had to get a ride because we weren't allowed to drive up into there. But be at the gate or, I don't remember, but somehow we made ourselves available to go and showed up at the tech supply building.

AED: Was that within the Q Area?

HAL: Yeah, that was inside the Q Area. Yeah. So there we were and in fact, worked there the rest of the tour. Both of us did.

AED: And did you do that at Manzano [Base] as well?

HAL: Yes. Yes.

AED: When you moved there, okay.

HAL: We were transferred. Our job went with us, exactly. But we went into there, and it was basically a supply room. And after some time of counting parts and you name it. You know, some of the stuff I couldn't identify today as far as what it was, but parts for atom bombs was what it amounted to. Worked in a warehouse there for a while, and then they needed somebody up in the office and transferred me up to work in the office in the stock records department. That was kind of neat.

AED: Tell me what that—I don't know what that means, stock records.

HAL: Well, we had file cabinets full of little cards. Each card identifies one particular item in stock in our warehouse, and each item has a number and a nomenclature and a number, number of quantity that's supposed to be out there in the bin.

AED: How many ball bearings are there in this size?

HAL: Yes, and how many flashlight batteries. Right.

AED: And up the chain.

HAL: And other things, right. So the stock records, simply that, that we kept track of everything that we had custody of. When we'd receive it in, why a document came with it that showed how many of this item were there and we added that to the record. If we shipped some down to the people that used it, we'd make a proper entry, and that's all there is to it. It sounds real simple, but for some reason, mistakes could get made and a lot of times, what it amounted

to is that what got shipped wasn't what was called for on the document. The people down in the base didn't want to be bothered with too much detail on some of that stuff. They might have asked for the wrong thing or it got, you know, a wrench or whatever, and if you called it by the wrong name, you got a lot of confusion. I'm not saying it was a whole lot of that, but it did happen.

AED: Mistakes happen, right?

HAL: Yeah, mistakes could happen, and then of course, we'd have to do inventory every once in a while and reconcile all that stuff. After some period of time, quite a bit of time, I don't remember how long, I wound up as the inventory clerk for this tech supply. I had my own little desk and I kept those, just kept reconciling inventories and conducting the inventory on a regular basis.

AED: I was going to ask you, what ranks did you achieve while you were in the service?

HAL: Staff sergeant.

AED: In your words, what would you describe the mission at Killeen Base? What was the mission?

HAL: Oh, it was to store and maintain atom bombs.

AED: Okay, and when you were at Manzano [Base], it was the same mission?

HAL: It was the same mission.

AED: Did they also have thermonuclear weapons there, or do you know?

HAL: I don't remember using that term. I think, at that time, there was a change being made, and I was aware of it and that's about all, I think. We went through several different styles, if you want to call it that, or designs of bombs, but I don't remember a lot about it. I saw them. I wasn't deeply involved in either the maintenance or care of them. I was more in the records department.

AED: Right. So I do want to know more about the tech supply business. So it was all kinds of material.

HAL: Well, I think that basically it was about anything that would—the hardware that was used and the tools and equipment that was used to maintain the bombs, but we didn't own TNT or—

AED: Not uranium or plutonium.

HAL: Uranium, right.

AED: That was handled by the personnel that were working inside?

HAL: Yes. Actually, I'm not sure where that was kept.

AED: So what kinds of things did you see passing through there that were unusual?

HAL: Well, that's where I learned what an oscilloscope was.

AED: Oh, what is an oscilloscope? I've never heard that.

HAL: It's a little screen that you can—it contains a screen that you can watch when you're doing test equipment or test things. Don't know enough about it to use the right terms, but it's a little similar to a little tiny television screen.

AED: Okay, I was going to say not like a window screen, more like a visual—

HAL: A tube, yeah, that you could track current, basically. It would give you readings of the flow and intensity of current on various components of the parts. In fact, you could test for continuity of wiring so that if you had a broken wire, you wouldn't get a reading and you'd know you had a failure there somewhere. That's just for one example.

AED: Okay. Oscilloscope.

HAL: Yes.

AED: It's a new one for me.

HAL: Oh, really? I thought that was commonly used in the radio world.

AED: That makes sense, right.

HAL: Or at least it was. I think they got more sophisticated equipment than that nowadays.

AED: These days, yeah, for sure. And other unusual things that you'd see come through there?

HAL: Well, the detonators, I think we stored them, and once in a while because the people down in the base were constantly testing this stuff, and if they found a failure, then they'd have to have a replacement part. The detonators were just what it sounds like. They were a handful of wires with connections on ends that led to the actual, I guess, caps or things that threw electrical charge that set off the dynamite or the explosive. Dynamite's not the right term, but TNT. There'd be a web of them. They were all designed to go to each one of the component trunks of explosive, and so they'd simultaneously explode. Again, that about exhausts my understanding of it.

AED: Okay. I know nothing, so that's more than I know. In those cases of those things, were you ordering mass quantities or were you inventorying mass quantities of things or were they smaller? Was there a lot of volume?

HAL: No, it wasn't a large volume. It was mainly just the replacement parts that we kept some on hand, and I was not involved in the ordering.

AED: Okay. All right. You were more on the inventory end.

HAL: I just kept score of what was in the bins, and in order to do that, I had to see the documents that came through. Somebody ordered a part, we'd type up a document and it went past the stock records clerk to make the entry there. It went through the inventory clerk to make a note of it, so it had a paper flow. Of course, then I had to go to the warehouse man to get the product, fill the order. It's not more complicated than it sounds. It was a fairly simple process.

AED: Okay. When you were inventory clerk—is that the right term?

HAL: Yes.

AED: Was that in the warehouse or was it in a separate facility?

HAL: The office was at one end of the warehouse and you simply walked through a gateway.

AED: Okay. Was there more than one tech supply warehouse?

HAL: No.

AED: What did it look like?

HAL: It was just a brick building.

AED: Okay, and inside, how was it organized?

HAL: No windows. No windows whatever. It was air conditioned.

AED: Oh, nice!

HAL: Yeah, so it was comfortable.

AED: Was it air conditioned because the items in there needed climate control, or some of them maybe?

HAL: Possibly, but without windows, you had to have some kind of—

AED: Now I get it, right.

HAL: In a hot part of the world or cold, but I really don't know what the justification was or if that was given any rationale, I have no idea. It was done before my time. Inside it was just rows and rows of bins numbered and labeled so that we knew where everything went. You can go into any parts warehouse in the world and find a very similar setup. There was nothing unique about it, except the numbering system was military.

AED: How did that numbering system work, in general?

HAL: It was a series of numbers and letters, and I can't quote it any more now, but maybe there'd be a five-digit number and it would be specific for one item. Some of them had a lot more digits than that. And the coding for the numbering system was a clue as to what the item might be, so that you weren't looking—if you've got a certain number, you weren't looking for washers. It might be flashlight batteries or something like that. So you had a little clue where to start looking, right.

AED: And then you had a separate space carved out that was office space?

HAL: Yes.

AED: Was it a single office or a couple of different offices?

HAL: The office where we worked was basically one room. Can't even give you dimensions very well. Probably, there were quite a number of desks, so there'd be—

AED: So it wasn't small.

HAL: No, it wasn't tiny. And then there were a couple of offices where the captains used. I think there was two as I recall, but the captain was the chief of [special weapons accountable property office], or tech supply, what was the private office. When you got called in there, you'd better have some answers.

AED: Great!

HAL: Yeah.

AED: How many people might work in this building?

HAL: It might be 20.

AED: Okay. Did they come from all the same flight, or were your peers from some of the different flights?

HAL: They came at different times. Like I said, we had two men—

AED: From your—

HAL: The other guy—[we] were the only two that came in at that time. The others were old hands. You know, they'd been there. They had stripes and all this kind of stuff, so I don't know how. They didn't all get there at once either. They just, as they needed personnel, you know, the military is dynamic, it's changing. People's term of enlistment expires or they get transferred and somebody else comes in. So we were there pretty much all—like I say, after I got assigned there, I was there the rest of my tour, and the others were there before me. Of course, a lot of them were still there when I left. So I don't know how they got there except as needed. Somebody was assigned and that was his job. But we stayed pretty constant. It wasn't like [a] musical chairs type thing. And there were some other people came in while I was there and some left.

AED: During that time?

HAL: Yes, and most of the time, why you'd be aware that they're getting transferred or getting out of the service or whatever and then they're gone. That's what I did.

AED: Right, somebody gets pulled in.

HAL: Yes.

AED: So I asked you about the unusual things you might handle. There were some things I'm sure that were extremely common.

HAL: Oh yeah.

AED: And what kinds of things would those be?

HAL: Wrenches, screwdrivers, pliers, these kinds of things. Sure.

AED: Tools.

HAL: Tools they needed to work on the units, and then actually the specialty stuff was some of the electronic parts and the equipment testers and what have you, that they used. Again, I don't know that they were that specific, maybe not specifically designed for that job, or they could

have been bought off the shelf for all I know. A lot of them I wasn't familiar with. I wasn't trained in that, in electronics. So I didn't know. I assumed that—I was trying to remember where I saw an oscilloscope, and it was a common term at that time, one of the first electronic devices that people used to test things. You know, the radio guy in the shop back home, he would use an oscilloscope to find.

AED: To find problems with things.

HAL: Yes.

AED: Interesting.

HAL: It would read various levels of resistance and impedance, and what were the other terms. Anyway.

AED: The radio technology.

HAL: Voltage and amperage and all that stuff, yeah.

AED: So did you enjoy your work there?

HAL: I did, yeah. Yeah. You know, it's kind of like having a civilian job in a way but with the military implications. But especially after I was married and living off post, why I'd get up in the morning, go to work, and get off work in the evening and go home.

AED: It was fairly eight-to-five?

HAL: Seven-to-four. So that early hour—and that didn't bother me too much because I was growing up on a farm—I was used to getting up early and milking the cows. That didn't seem too out of place.

AED: And when you moved to Manzano [Base], then you had the same—was the facility the same, the warehouse?

HAL: Actually, I got married at Albuquerque, so I was living on post all the while I lived at Killeen [Base]. So I have to make that distinction, but basically I had the same job. The job kind of progressed as it went along. I started out in the warehouse, went to the office, got from stock records clerk to become the inventory control clerk and basically I think because nobody else wanted it. Then somewhere along at that point, I was sent down into the tunnels to straighten out their inventory.

AED: Really? How interesting.

HAL: Yeah. This was unique because I was the only person that did this at all in the whole base as far as I know. But down in the base, they had what they called bench stock, which was an extension of our supply stuff, the things that they needed to have on hand and ready, so they maintained a bench stock. I use the flashlight batteries just for an example of what it might be, so you can imagine that flashlight batteries in those days didn't last very long. So they'd get old and go dead in a short time, and they would keep some on hand in their bench stock. Let's just say, for instance, that they called for 10 or two, I don't know. But whatever number, they were supposed to maintain that many, and when they'd go bad or two of them might get broke or they might short a screwdriver out, you know, and it burned the end of it. And they'd turn that back in and some things were considered expendable, so you simply disposed of them and declared them no longer there, and ordered some more. They didn't bother, as from

my perspective, it appeared to me they didn't bother much about keeping good track of what they had, either quantity or quality or identity for that matter. So the captain said, "Lehman, I want you to go down there and straighten out that mess," words to that effect. So I go down there full of vim and vigor and I'm going to really show them how it's done, and of course, you know the resistance that I got from coming in there. I was a stranger and had no business there in the first place in their viewpoint. So I didn't feel like I got a lot of cooperation, but I said, "Guys, you know, you've got to put the numbers. You've got to keep the numbers on this stuff and you've got to keep it in the right bin so you know where to find it." I'd say, "You got this stuff. I find it and you have no idea what the nomenclature is or what the stock number is on it." I spent quite a bit of time on it. I remember taking the bins that they had out and painting them because they were just so sorry.

AED: Really! That's funny.

HAL: It is. It was frustrating as all get out to me.

AED: What are they doing in there?

HAL: Yeah! What did they do? Well, they didn't see that as germane to their job, you know. Their job was to work on these things and throw a tool aside when they're done. So I went through all that process and spent quite a bit of time at it. I was having a ball because I wasn't up there doing the old routine things up in my office. I was going down the halls and meeting these guys and seeing this stuff being worked on. Sometimes I'd just observe a little bit, you know. Finally, Captain says, "How you coming down there, Lehman?" And I said, "Well, you know, I've got an awful lot to do yet." He said, "I want you to get back up to your desk," and, he says, "It's time for you to get back." I felt like that I wasn't missing much and it shouldn't have been a problem, but he was a man of order and he gave orders. So I said, "Well, give me a few days." "Well, I want you to do it by the end of the week," or whatever. So I wrapped it up and I got back up there and I said, "Captain, it's not done," and he said, "Well, it'll be good enough." And we moved on.

AED: That was that.

HAL: Yeah. I think I must have spent a month or more. I don't remember. Quite a bit. I think he expected me to clean up in a week and that wasn't about to happen.

AED: Right. One person with all of that.

HAL: Yeah, and the resistance that you got because they didn't want to be bothered with that stuff. They were good guys. They were all right, you know. I was just a nuisance to them.

AED: So that just happened that one period of time.

HAL: One time. That was it.

AED: And where were you in there, in the facility? Do you know what chamber or they have names for the different rooms?

HAL: Well, they called them bays, as I remember. You went in the tunnel and down. I can't remember if I was in Plant 1 or 2. It's just been too long ago.

AED: Yeah. But it was just one of them. It wasn't both of them.

HAL: I think I was in both of them, as I remember, and I think that I mainly worked in one of

them. Why I don't really know. I just went to do what I was told. But no, I don't remember that specifically. I heard somebody mention the ABC room and I can't recall being in there, and that doesn't mean I wasn't because I was pretty much. And oh, I had to have another clearance.

AED: That was my next question, was did you have to achieve another level of security?

HAL: Yeah. I had—

AED: What did that require?

HAL: It just—

AED: They gave it to you.

HAL: Yeah, it was given. I think they did a little checking and looked on the record and, Well, this guy hasn't got anything against him, so we'll give it to him. But it apparently took more checking than I was aware of because at the time when I was being discharged, well, they were ringing their hands about the fact that I had these clearances. I was the only one there that had them, and I said, "Well, how did I get them?" And they said, Oh well, okay.

AED: Yeah, think about that!

HAL: Yeah. Don't make me think I'm indispensable, because I know better than that!

AED: So when you would go in, you had to show your identification.

HAL: Yes.

AED: And answer questions, or—?

HAL: You carried an ID tag and flashed it wherever you went, wherever there was a guard, and these guards in the tunnel were supposed to check that. Of course, if you'd walked by and they saw it, that was that. Most of them, they knew you.

AED: In your case, they would know you, right?

HAL: Yeah, most of them.

AED: Because I'm sure so many people going in and out of the tunnels weren't with the 1094th and they might know they because they became familiar, but they didn't.

HAL: Anybody not with the 1094th didn't get in there, except on a very special occasion when they were being escorted by some of the locals.

AED: Right. But I was thinking of the personnel who are working with the bombs.

HAL: They were 1094th.

AED: They were?

HAL: Oh yeah. Yeah. All of the people that—then when they talk about somebody that was in Plant 1 or Plant 2, these are the people that actually worked on the bombs, okay?

AED: Well, that's how I've understood it, but I just want to clarify.

HAL: Yeah. Yeah, I think you've only got a couple of people here that actually worked on the bombs. And I didn't realize this, but the plant personnel split away from the rest of us at a time before I actually became aware that this reunion was going on, so they aren't here.

AED: That's right. They were talking about that last night.

HAL: [Ronald] Napierala can fill you in a little more. And if he won't give you an interview, don't worry about it, just talk to him. You'll get the same thing.

AED: Exactly! He'll talk.

HAL: Oh yeah. And he was there before I was, so he knows more about that. And Priester is very knowledgeable of what went on down in there.

AED: Okay. He's my next [interview] victim.

HAL: Okay. Well, I'll be interested to know what he has to say. He's very straight.

AED: Okay, good. You said you'd had resistance. Who were the folks, when you were in the plant. I mean, they were some of these guys that don't come [to these reunions]?

HAL: They were workers. Yeah, I don't know their names.

AED: Right. They were supposed to be taking care of these things.

HAL: Yeah, but they didn't want to be bothered. It wasn't like, you know, they weren't anti[-work], they just were careless.

AED: Yeah, not important.

HAL: It wasn't important to them.

AED: Right. Which is very interesting, because in the warehouse and what you're doing, the level of accuracy you're trying to achieve because of what's going on, you would think on the interior that that would be required as well.

HAL: But have you ever been in a mechanic's shop? You take your car to your favorite mechanic, not the dealership, but just the local guy.

AED: No, no, no, a true mechanic, right.

HAL: And you go in there and you step over parts that are laying around and he just can't be bothered with keeping that shop immaculate because he is busy digging around under the hood.

AED: All right. That helps me understand.

HAL: That's a little bit that, yeah. I'm not saying anything derogatory about any of those guys because I know they were dedicated to their job, but they didn't see that as being part of their job and they just didn't want to be bothered with it. That's the way it came across to me, and I did. I went in and talked to the major and I said, "I'm not getting the cooperation I need here to get this job done in time." I said, "I'm going to need some people" They didn't

want to be pulled off their regular work to mess around with parts, you know, identifying parts. They thought that I was being sent down there to do it. Well, I wasn't. My viewpoint was I was being sent down there to show them how to operate this more efficiently. So a good man, Major Muhl. I'll never forget that.

AED: Major Muhl?

HAL: Major Muhl. M-U-H-L. I went down there, and he was having a meeting, all these captains and majors and lieutenants sitting around, and he says, "Come on in." I was about a buck sergeant at that time. Maybe I was staff [sergeant] by then. This might have been at Manzano [Base]. I think it was. Its effect is the same. But "What do you need?" I told him, and he said, he just looked around at these guys, you know, and he said, "Any of you got a man you can spare?" One of the captains said, "I've got somebody, somebody else. I've got somebody I can let him have for a few days." So I got a couple of guys and we went back and got the job done more or less. I mean we proceeded.

AED: To the best of the time constraint you had.

HAL: Yeah. I had one that was a pretty good typist, and he sat there and typed up these cards. They didn't have a card file. So anyway, we got it kind of halfway shaped up. And really, when I went back to my regular job, I never heard any more about it. So whether I did good, bad, or indifferent, I don't know.

AED: Or what it looked like a couple of weeks later.

HAL: Yeah. I'm sure it was the same disaster it was before.

AED: That is very interesting.

HAL: But it had gotten to the point where it came to their attention, and I think what happened through my efforts was I gave them a little more awareness that, Look guys, you've got to keep track of stuff here. In the process, I think they did an acceptable job after that.

AED: Right. If they need to find things, it's helpful if they're in the place where you know to look.

HAL: Well, I think they became aware that they'd better keep track of it a little bit or they're going to have somebody down here again stirring around in their stuff. I'm not saying they did an exemplary job, but acceptable. That was kind of a unique experience. It was kind of fun for me. It broke up my career a little bit into something that I could talk about.

AED: Can you think of, off the top of your head, any other sort of experiences that were unusual along those lines as you were involved with the tech supply?

HAL: Well, again, I know in fact, that an experience that I had at Manzano [Base] was unique for me. It wasn't, again, not an earth-shattering thing, but I got assigned to the inventory control of the bombs themselves, so that I wound up in a little room about as big as this area [motioning]. We had three desks and they all butted up against each other. And the lieutenant sat in one and I sat in the middle one and another guy to my right. We went in there and locked the door. We had a Dutch door so that the bottom half stayed locked, and if somebody wanted to talk to us, we'd open the top half and they couldn't come in. So we were highly impressed with our exclusive situation there. And we had file cabinets. We had each unit identified with a card file, and that's what we did basically. If they came and went, we had to make an entry. I thought about it afterwards. You know, questions, logical questions just come to your mind as, well, how many of them were there? I have to tell you, I do not

know. I think I deliberately—I never made any effort to find out, to see, you know, because I could have gone through those card files and identified it, I suppose, as to numbers, but I didn't. If one went out, we made the notation. One came back in, we made that notation. And went about talking about baseball or whatever we did otherwise because I think my attitude was, I don't really want to know more than I need to. We took it very seriously at that time.

AED: Were there different kinds of bombs coming and going?

HAL: There were some. There were some. There wasn't like traffic, you know. But we'd have what we called an alert, and we'd send out a bunch of them and load them up in planes and send them airborne. We had to record them by serial number and so forth, so when they went out and then when they came back, we had to check them back in and make sure that the same ones came back that went out, you know!

AED: Not somebody else's bomb.

HAL: We took this very serious, you know. The seriousness of it from that viewpoint was that the captain that was in charge of tech supply read the serial numbers to me and I recorded them. You know, it wasn't like you just sent a couple of flunkies out there to do this. He was the man, and he saw to it. So that's how we dealt with that. And how many went out and came back, I don't know. I mean it could have been six or eight or a dozen.

AED: That was on an alert situation?

HAL: On one alert, yeah. Whether they were real or not, I can't attest to that because all I saw was a shell. I don't know if it was in it or not.

AED: But you did physically see them coming in?

HAL: I believe they were real, and I believe we were capable of delivering those to a target at that time. Whether the alert was actually because of a confrontation somewhere in the world or not, I don't know. I think at times it was. I think we were that close to having to use them, but I don't know, and they did not confide that in us. Our job was to deliver and we did.

AED: And record that activity.

HAL: Yeah. My job in particular was to just keep score. Because I didn't handle them. I didn't drive the truck. I didn't load it. I simply, as it went through the gate, I recorded what went out and I recorded what came back in. Meanwhile, we sat there and waited, several hours at times. I wonder if this is for real, and you always had to hope that it was not. I said a number of times that one of the things I'm really thankful for in my life is they never got used on my tour, or ever since, for that matter.

AED: Ever since, yeah.

HAL: Thankful for that.

AED: Yeah. So the captain would read to you the serial number. Was the serial number always in a certain location on a bomb?

HAL: Pretty much, yes.

AED: And you would see where he was reading it from.

HAL: Yes.

AED: So would he be standing, I'm trying to picture [how this happened].

HAL: I mean this was always at night, you know, so he's got his flashlight and he's out there reading that serial number and I've got a pad and the document and clipboard and I record it.

AED: And you're writing it.

HAL: Yes.

AED: Okay. And you're outside?

HAL: Oh yeah. We're out at the gate as they're going off leaving the [Q Area].

AED: Okay. And at that point the bomb is guarded as well? So it's not just you and the captain, there are other people present?

HAL: Oh well, it's escorted.

AED: Is it on a truck at this point?

HAL: It's on a trailer being towed by a 6x6 or a truck capable of doing that. Yeah, it would be on a bomb trailer. They were designed for that.

AED: I'm just guessing, were they in a convoy formation at that point?

HAL: Yes.

AED: So you had your guards present?

HAL: Oh, there were guards all over the place, yeah.

AED: Would it be one bomb at a time, or might there be several?

HAL: I think most cases there'd be more than one, and I don't think in very many cases there was any large number, but they'd be in a convoy and they're escorted.

AED: Okay. And they're uncovered?

HAL: No. Hmm. Now you're stretching my memory because I'm not totally sure, but I think they were exposed.

AED: Okay. Because to be able to read the number, unless it's in a position—

HAL: Yeah. For transport by ground equipment, there was a cover on the trailer. But in this case, they were going strictly from our storage to the airport to be loaded on B-36s or B-29s or whatever. They were capable of delivering these to almost anywhere in the world. But I don't believe that they had a cover on them. But at any rate, he could find the serial number and read it. I can still picture him, you know, out there in the dark and a flashlight.

AED: And always at night, never during the day.

HAL: Oh yeah, never. I don't remember ever doing one in the daytime.

AED: Yeah. Very interesting. So did you work nighttime shifts then?

HAL: No, no. No, this would be called a called alert. Wherever you were, somebody would come around and say, We've got an alert. You've got to be there. You had time to get there, and you were either on alert or not on. It was like sometimes two hours or four hours or six or eight, so if you're on a six-hour or eight-hour—I don't remember, really—alert, that was because then you'd get called and you had to show up in time to relieve the first guys that got called. I think most of the time, if I was called at all, it was on the first shift, and I think even then you had two hours to get there, or whatever.

AED: Warning to get—yeah.

HAL: Because you know, if you lived downtown, they've got to come get you up and you get dressed and run and get on in there. Usually you was in there way before the required time, but like I had to go out to the gate. We'd show up and report to the office and then whoever was going to go out to the gate to check it out. Usually it would be three or four people. We'd go out together. Even when we went out to check the serial numbers, somebody was still back in the little guard shack. It was very precisely done.

AED: That's fascinating. It really is. It really is.

HAL: It was fascinating at the time, actually.

AED: So you were called to be on alert, showed up, did the recording. When [the bombs] came through, did you have to wait? You said, I think, sometimes you waited quite a while.

HAL: Yes.

AED: Might they not come during your shift and somebody else might have to show?

HAL: That was a possibility, yeah. We'd be relieved, and then new guys would come in and we'd go home.

AED: Because they weren't ready yet? They knew it was going to happen but it wasn't time to bring them to you to the gate to check them out?

HAL: No, it was more because they kept them out longer than my shift called for. I don't remember. It may have happened. I can't remember. For the most part, they'd take them out and then a little while later they'd come back. I think, and I don't even know this, but I think sometimes they didn't even load them on planes. I think they simply called it off because it was simply a test of our efficiency. So we're going to see if we can do this, and we did it, and then they sent us all home to bed.

AED: Practice.

HAL: Yeah, practice.

AED: In the event that, you know—

HAL: But I think there were a couple of times, as I recall, when they were out for several hours and that they said they'd actually loaded them and took off with them. They went somewhere and they were called back, set them back down. Now those orders may have come from the

president.

AED: We don't know.

HAL: No, we don't know. That's right. But we did practice stuff. That's like the fire department. They do some practice runs. Maybe the busier fire departments don't need to because they're kept busy, but we did just to make sure that we had a plan. We talked about the plan. We trained in it in a sense, but when the time came, you've got to make sure that everybody's on their post and the only way to do it is to run through it.

AED: To be prepared.

HAL: So we did, yeah.

AED: At any point, did you know where they were intended to go?

HAL: No.

AED: They didn't give you that information.

HAL: No.

AED: All right. How frequent were the alerts would you suggest?

HAL: Not often.

AED: Every month, a couple of times a year?

HAL: In between there. Maybe every two or three months or more. Again, it kind of blurs at this point, but there were several. I know that during the time I was there, there were several. So maybe every couple of months or so probably.

AED: Wow. That's a pretty unique experience.

HAL: Yeah.

AED: It's really, really amazing.

HAL: Again, I don't know if you can find anybody to interview that—well, I don't think you will that had that experience. There were others that did, obviously, but I don't think anybody's here that—

AED: It doesn't sound like it. It sounds like you are one of a kind.

HAL: Involved in that.

AED: Are there other experiences as part of tech supply that you can share?

HAL: Well, some thought passed through my mind and now I forgot what it was.

AED: If you think of it, just—

HAL: Yeah, I will.

AED: When you were at both these places, what did you think about the layout of the buildings and the situation? Did it strike you as effective or dangerous? In your mind's eye picturing that place at that time.

HAL: I didn't consider it dangerous in that we were made keenly aware of what the dangers were and how we could prevent anything bad from happening. You didn't smoke or carry lighters in certain places and so forth, for one thing. In all the storage areas, nobody went in with a lighted cigarette or this kind of thing. So some common sense precautions were taken, and no, I didn't consider it like I was on a powder keg that just could spontaneously blow up and kill us all. I never looked at it that way. I thought if it ever did, why we're gone, but that was as far as you went with that thought because you couldn't live with it otherwise.

AED: Yeah, there was nothing you could. Did you ever have to wear any protective equipment?

HAL: Well, if you handled the nuclear stuff you did, but I didn't handle directly. I think you heard the term bird cage.

AED: Yes.

HAL: When you handle a bird cage, it was lead case, and the active ingredient was inside that, enclosed. Supposedly there was no leakage and no danger from it, and I don't remember using protective clothing unless we did use gloves. I want to think that we had gloves. Again, that gets pretty vague, but I remember them passing through.

Oh, I think this is what I was going to tell you. I think I heard you talk about that when they loaded them, that the product was transferred from the bird cage into the bomb. That wasn't done. It wasn't done period, except in the delivery vehicle. In other words, it was loaded on the plane. It wasn't done in the base.

AED: Oh, okay. I misunderstood that.

HAL: It was never, ever. That's my understanding. My understanding isn't necessarily perfect.

AED: You would know more than I.

HAL: I think they didn't ever load them in the tunnels or in the transit except in the plane. It was designed in such a way that it could be, without being handled physically by hand, it could be transferred into the bomb, and even then it wasn't capable of being exploded until it was what they called armed. I don't remember now if the arming was the process of putting the material into the bomb or if it was—there were several steps as I recall, and I never was in on it. I just know, the way I was told, that several steps had to be taken that were safeguards to keep you from setting one off. It would be unhandy as everything if you set it off at the airport, you know.

AED: Right. So putting the material actually in the bomb took place on the plane.

HAL: On the plane.

AED: So it was a very last-minute [process].

HAL: It was not done until they were airborne and ordered to do it.

AED: Oh, I didn't know that. That's very interesting.

HAL: I think that, and I think [Guy] Priester can really help you on that.

AED: All right. So your understanding of the bird cage is that they—what were they doing with those?

HAL: The bird cage contained the material, the fissionable material, and it was in a lead coffin. Good term.

AED: It seems appropriate, doesn't it?

HAL: Yeah, it does. So it was sealed in that so no radioactive particles could escape. That is what contained stuff that went inside this huge ball of TNT. I think you can get all this information down at the museum.

AED: Also. I'm sure that they explain it.

HAL: Yeah. I don't know about at Killeen [Base], but at Albuquerque.

AED: At Albuquerque, right, which I have not been there, so.

HAL: You should go.

AED: I would love to.

HAL: It's a nice little museum there.

AED: Yeah, it's supposed to be great.

HAL: I stood right beside the atom bomb that the public can go to. Until I got there, if you had tried to interview me before that, I wouldn't have done it. So I hope I'm free to say all this.

AED: My understanding is you are or they wouldn't be paying for it.

HAL: Yeah. You're taking responsibility. You'll go to Leavenworth for me.

AED: Yes, I will.

HAL: Whew, that's a relief.

AED: So what is your understanding of how they used the ABC chamber?

HAL: You exhausted my knowledge of that altogether!

AED: Okay, all right. One question back to the tech supply thing is when they needed materials, tools, or supplies from your warehouse, what physically happened to transfer [them]? Did they come and get it or did you take it to them?

HAL: We had one fellow that his job was to deliver. They could come and get them. They could get as far as just inside our door, and then they would give us the paperwork. Somebody would run back and get the stuff, run it through all the bookkeeping processes, and away he'd go. That didn't happen very often. It was mostly done if they were really urgent for something and our deliveryman was already out doing other things. The normal procedure is they'd give us a call and tell us what items they want. We'd ask the guy, Do you have the stock number? and he'd say, "Son, I don't know what it is. Just give me the part I need." "Yes, sir." Now for

the most part they were pretty good about it. But they'd give us the phone call, they'd give us the order. We'd type up the necessary document and send it out to the warehouse to be filled. They marked it with the quantity and initial it and send it back to us and we'd send our deliveryman then would carry the document and the parts and zip it right down there to them. We had, I think—his normal routine was to go maybe make a run a couple of times a day, so if you called it in, you would get it on the next time around. Well, it was 9 miles or whatever around through these roads where I patrolled earlier, so it wasn't like you could just run it next door. It took a while, and if he was out on this run, he couldn't give you the urgent response on the next one. So I think he'd go a couple of times a day, and that went pretty good.

AED: And there were two plants.

HAL: And only once in a while they'd have a real emergency and they could send a man up to get what they needed, and they did on occasion. So that's pretty much how it was done.

AED: Okay. So they would drive from place to place. It was too far to just walk.

HAL: There wasn't—I don't think we had any place you could walk to efficiently. It would take hours, you know.

AED: So when you were at Killeen Base, somebody was doing the job, somebody else was doing the job that you eventually acquired when you were at Manzano [Base] checking bombs in and out.

HAL: Yes.

AED: All right. I'm just trying to make sure that it's parallel operations.

HAL: Well, I think I did this at Killeen [Base] as well as [Manzano Base]. Because most of the time that I was in the service I was in that tech supply. From the time I enlisted to the time I got the job in tech supply was about four or five months, less than six months.

AED: Okay. So you were at the tech supply, and when you were on alert, you would do the bomb checking in and out.

HAL: Yes.

AED: So that was part of that position.

HAL: That was part of my job.

AED: I was thinking it was two separate positions.

HAL: Yes.

AED: Now I got it.

HAL: No, it was just part of the job. Yeah.

AED: Okay. So that would happen, you said, every few months maybe or something like that.

HAL: It could be that often. Again, I don't remember.

AED: When the alerts took place, and you said you knew that at times it was probably, in looking back, practice, preparedness.

HAL: Yes.

AED: But a few times you thought it was a sincere [effort].

HAL: It could have been real.

AED: And those few times, what made those different? What was your thinking?

HAL: Well, for one thing, the rumor mill is very efficient in the military, so usually we knew it ahead of time even though we weren't supposed to. Surprise alert, you know, we still—I don't know how we knew, but somehow somebody knew.

AED: Were there things going on in the world. You know, a hot spot somewhere that made you think this is real?

HAL: Well, it was pretty hot during that time. This was the Korean War, and Russia was not friendly, or the Soviet Union.

AED: Right, at the time.

HAL: And a lot of posturing went on.

AED: That's a good point.

HAL: Yeah. So from day to day, somebody would say something, you know, that would excite people either in the Kremlin or in Washington[, D.C.,] or other parts of the world, and that'd make people nervous. So you know, you always wondered is the guy that sits there by the panic button, is his hand shaking or not? Is he going to bump that accidentally? I don't know. I don't know how some of those men—you know, they had nerves of steel, I guess. But there were a lot of safeguards, and no wild man could just simply set things off. But you still wondered if something like that could happen. Yeah, I think there were times when we knew the conditions were real tense and we'd better be ready, and we didn't go take a trip up in the mountains.

AED: Right. Do you think that the alerts, or do you know, if the alerts that went on at Killeen Base and Manzano [Base] if simultaneously the other storage sites were doing that? Or were those alerts unique to that place?

HAL: I don't know.

AED: Okay. I'm just curious.

HAL: Yeah. I hadn't thought about that, but I think that it's entirely possible. It depends on what level that it was called. If it was simply practice to us boys, local guys were doing to keep proficient, then it might have been only us. If the president said, "Boys, let's be ready for a quick response here," then we put planes in the air. We weren't privy to that information, so we don't know. I wasn't at my level. I don't know if the commander of the base was, and he may not have been. But if he was told to put some planes in the air, he did it. That was that.

AED: Right. So there were different levels of alerts?

HAL: No. We don't know. Yeah, we didn't know.

AED: Okay. It was a feeling sometimes that it was a different situation.

HAL: Sometimes, yeah.

AED: When the planes were—

HAL: If you watch world affairs at all, and we didn't that much, but yeah, we did. Yeah, we watched television, watched the evening news and stuff and see what was going on. See, France was being kicked around real bad in what was then a French Indochina. It became Laos and Cambodia and Vietnam. I remember watching that and saying, "Let's leave it alone. If the French couldn't handle it, what makes us think that we can go in and straighten it out?" Obviously, we couldn't.

AED: Right, ultimately. When you first got to Killeen Base, you didn't know what was going on there.

HAL: They told us in a hurry.

AED: They did.

HAL: Yeah. And first thing they did, they said, Now, this is a secret operation and you are hereby sworn to secrecy. You will not talk about this. And then they explained it, as much as we needed to know and maybe more. In basic training we didn't need to know anything, but they did tell us enough to impress us with the seriousness of the matter, and it was. Then as time went along, we developed more understanding of what was going on. Just like in the guards, when you're driving around through the hills, you knew what was there and so forth. But you had your job and didn't concern yourself whether somebody was putting the right bolts in an atom bomb or not. Didn't care whether it was a Mark 3 or a Mark 8.

AED: Right. When you first found out, what did you think?

HAL: We were pretty awestruck, I think really, pretty impressed. I don't think you can relate to it today. I think you'd have had to—in order to get the feeling of awe that this creates, you'd have had to been there first of all, and we were when the atom bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The awesomeness of that was so enormous that we wanted to observe from a distance, but not get close enough to get hurt by it. I tell you, yeah, we were duly impressed, I think. A fair term to use.

AED: With good reason.

HAL: Yeah.

AED: Did you know anything about bombs before you arrived there?

HAL: Well sure, because I was a kid at home yet when the atom bombs were dropped in Japan, and we saw those pictures and movies and so forth. We realized what a horrible and an awesome thing it was, and so we had that much knowledge going in. But we didn't know we were being sent to a base that kept them. Then there was a time when we were told that some people were going to be selected to go and view an explosion in White Sands or wherever. I forget now where it was. I said I'd go, and I wasn't selected, and then I was kind of, well. But they took a lot of precautions for those that did go to view it. Just 12 feet of concrete or whatever it was that you stood behind, and then you had helmets and protective glasses, the whole

works. Even at a distance where there was no chance of radiation, it was my understanding that the light would damage the eyes, the flash. So you didn't go stand around with bare eyes looking at that. But I didn't get to go to that.

AED: Do you know what happened to the unused bombs?

HAL: No.

AED: Do you know how they were stored or did you see them in a storage facility at any point?

HAL: They were stored in these structures.

AED: What was stored in the igloos?

HAL: I never got into an igloo. I assumed that the atom bombs were. I don't know.

AED: Okay. When you patrolled, when you were doing that, was that part of your patrol area, too, where the igloos were?

HAL: Oh yeah. Yeah, you'd drive past them.

AED: Right, but they wouldn't be open.

HAL: Not very often. If they opened them up, they had guards, additional people, and my job would be to drive by and see that everything was going okay. I don't remember being part of that escort at all.

AED: Yeah, I haven't heard anybody talk about being near the igloos even.

HAL: Igloos wasn't a term that I was familiar with at that time. I think they were built later. Might have been. I don't even know for sure.

AED: Oh, maybe so.

HAL: When they moved them out of the tunnels, see. Again, I just—boy, you didn't expand a whole lot beyond your responsibility.

AED: Right. Did you ever work with any civilians?

HAL: Yes.

AED: And what kinds of people would those be?

HAL: Well, the Atomic Energy Commission had civilians doing more or less parallel work to what we were doing, or at least what I was doing in the final job that I had. We didn't discuss it. I knew them. We'd chat a little. They had an office right next to ours. And what exactly they did, I'm not sure. I think it was kind of civilian watchdog, you might say, of oversight of what we did.

AED: Hmm. And where were they? I mean where would you deal with them?

HAL: Well, they were next door.

AED: Okay. In a different building?

HAL: Actually, they were down the hall in the same building I was in the last position that I had.

AED: So there wasn't that much interaction, but you were both present.

HAL: Yea.

AED: Interesting.

HAL: I'd see them.

AED: And they were AEC guys?

HAL: Yes.

AED: So did they come and go. If they were civilians, they obviously lived off base.

HAL: Oh yeah, they lived off base and they'd come in. They had the same clearance we did or maybe more, and they simply came to work and put in their day and went home.

AED: Did they have access to the bins, the same bins as you did?

HAL: No, no. They weren't in the supply. They were in the custody end of it more. I don't know what they did. I simply don't. They didn't fit into our whole chain of effort at all, that I recall. There wasn't very many of them. There was a couple of women and two or three men, and that's really all I ever saw. So it wasn't a large number. I think what you'd say is civilian oversight of the whole—more on the control end of it than—and like on an alert or something, I didn't see them.

AED: They weren't there.

HAL: They weren't there. They were probably in their office. I'm sure they were.

AED: Present but not—

HAL: Yeah, but they're not in the physical handling of the stuff.

AED: Okay. Who, since you, as part of tech supply, didn't say order plutonium or uranium, who did do that ordering? Do you know?

HAL: I don't. I think probably the civilians.

AED: Okay, because that kind of makes—we don't know—but it kind of makes sense.

HAL: That would be my guess, and that's all it is. I think that they probably did things like ordered the movement, if some were transferred from one facility to another, and I'm sure that happened. The new models. But we weren't in the research and development at all. That was done other places.

AED: Right. Let's see. Your barracks building at Killeen [Base], was it comfortable?

HAL: Yes.

AED: I mean you said it was so nice to be there instead of to be at Lackland [Air Force Base].

HAL: Well, right.

AED: But over time—

HAL: Well, when we got out of the tents and moved into the barracks, they were very comfortable. If a big open room full of army cots—or not cots, but bunk beds really is what they were—if you can call that comfortable, yeah, they were comfortable. We had nice, clean floors that we had to keep buffed and cleaned and windows we had to keep washed, and our own bed as our personal thing. So we kept it as orderly as we saw fit as long it passed inspection.

AED: And how many guys would be in one of these rooms?

HAL: Maybe 30.

AED: Would you call it a sleeping room?

HAL: Yeah. It was simply that.

AED: Intended mostly for [sleeping].

HAL: It was a bedroom, a huge bedroom.

AED: And then what other kinds of rooms were in the barracks?

HAL: Well, there was a day room, and that was where you could hang out. There might be a pool table or two in it, some tables where you could sit around and drink beer and play poker, talk. Some couches and things around.

AED: Space to relax.

HAL: Let's see. I don't remember if there was television. Television was kind of new yet in those days, so there wasn't—I think there might have been, though. But just things like that. And in the afternoons and evenings, a beer would be opened and soft drinks and stuff, of course. The PX was somewhere else. Let me think. At Killeen [Base], I think the PX was in the same building, as I remember.

AED: I'm thinking that what I've heard is there was a BX there at Killeen [Base] and the larger supply—

HAL: Oh BX, base exchange, yeah.

AED: Right, but if you wanted more than just some very basic things, you had to go over to Fort Hood.

HAL: Fort Hood. Yeah, I think that's right.

AED: That they had much more.

HAL: Yes.

AED: You know, it's a huge place, so of course, they had more.

HAL: Yeah, you could buy toothpaste and these kinds of things there at the BX. I don't remember calling it that.

AED: In your free time off-duty, what kinds of things did you do?

HAL: Oh, well, you could go into Killeen. There wasn't a lot to do in Killeen. There was a movie theater where we went to the movies, and there were some restaurants and we went. We'd go in there and have a Coke or just hang out.

AED: And how did you get there?

HAL: Well, after I got my car I was all set in the convertible. Yeah. And then we went other places. I remember we went to San Antonio one time and went to Houston one time, and Austin wasn't that far away and Temple. There was a girl's school in Temple, as I recall. I think that was an attraction. I'm not going to say more than that.

AED: For obvious reasons, right?

HAL: Self-preservation. Lampasas, there was a swimming pool there.

AED: Oh, right. That's a nice place.

HAL: We went there some. A friend of mine talked me into taking him up to see his girlfriend in Dallas. We did and went and toured Dallas and Fort Worth and got to know those towns a little bit. Spent a couple of days doing that. So we drove to other places like that and just got acquainted geographically, I mean, more than anything, and just a place to get away a little bit. I always had a car load, and we'd go somewhere.

AED: What kind of convertible?

HAL: A Chevy.

AED: Oh, that's right. What year was it?

HAL: Forty-nine.

AED: Okay. Nice. Sweet.

HAL: Yeah, it was nice for this time, too. It was fun. Yeah.

AED: And on base, were there recreational opportunities? Was there pool, tennis?

HAL: There wasn't much.

AED: One fellow talked about being in a boxing club.

HAL: Yeah, well, I learned early in my life I was not a boxer.

AED: Okay, so no boxing. Baseball, those kinds of things?

HAL: I think there was some. I want to say there was a gym. Now again, I think maybe I'm mixing that up with [Manzano Base].

AED: It could be the other [place].

HAL: Sandia [Base] had pretty extensive facilities, but there wasn't much at Killeen [Base] as I recall.

AED: Let's see. I'm getting to the end, just so you know.

HAL: Yes. I thought we've got to be working down here.

AED: When did you discharge at Manzano [Base]?

HAL: In April '54. April '54. The war was over. They were winding down, and they were saying unnecessary personnel were being discharged. I says, "What about me?" And they said, "Well, no, you have this critical AFSC."

AED: What is that?

HAL: Air Force [Service Classification], AFSC. I hadn't thought about that for a few years. So, we've got to keep you. My dad was sick, and he says he's going to have to give up the farming if he didn't have some help because all his sons were in the service. Well, my older brother was and my next brother got drafted and then the other one was going to as soon as he got out of school. That's just the way it was being done. They kept the draft going then, even though the war was over, the Korean War. So I says, "Well, let me see what I can do and I'll see if I can get out early." I talked to the personnel officer and he said, "Well, the only way you could probably do it right now is with a hardship discharge," and I said, "How do you do that?" "Well, you've got to be in need." I said, "Well, I've sure got it." So I told my dad to get a certificate from the doctor and this and that, and he knew our representative to Congress.

AED: That would help.

HAL: Yeah, Charlie, and he got him to write a letter, I think. I think. I never actually saw that.

AED: Who was the representative?

HAL: Charlie Halleck. So I wrote a letter.

AED: Explaining?

HAL: Yeah. Here's the situation, and it went right through.

AED: Okay. So you were supposed to be in for is it four years?

HAL: Four years, yes.

AED: So it was just a little shy of that.

HAL: Just a little shy. Yeah, less than eight months short, yeah. So it was no big deal because I just was not needed really any more anyway. And when my response to those, they said, Well, you've got these clearances and you've got these special classifications and so forth. I said, "Well, how did I get them?"

AED: Yeah, didn't ask [for them]!

HAL: They said, Oh. I didn't ask for them, right?

AED: When you say you're not needed, was the mission changing there?

HAL: No, just the air force had a lot more people than it needed to maintain the level of national security that was called for at that time.

AED: Right. The draft is still on. People are still coming. They had the manpower.

HAL: Yes. Well, the draft was still on, but they weren't calling in the numbers that they had been, but it was still active.

AED: They could still bring people in, though.

HAL: Yeah, they were because I know that my brothers volunteered for the draft because they didn't want to hang around and wait.

AED: You had two, three brothers?

HAL: That were in, yeah.

AED: And all air force?

HAL: No. No. Wayne, my next brother, he just volunteered for the draft and they put him in a tank corps and sent him to Germany and Austria. Then the next one, Vern, was in the medics and he wound up in Korea. He was the closest of any of us to combat because he said every once in a while one of those gooks on the—that was the term—one of the gooks on the other side, because you were facing them, you know, across the valley you were facing them. You can see right across there.

AED: You were head to head.

HAL: And he said once in a while they'd get liquored up and they'd take a shot at somebody. So that could have escalated instantly into a flat-out war, but it never did. But his main job over there was keeping the guys healthy that strayed down to the village. It was a bad situation.

AED: Bad, yeah. So you were the oldest?

HAL: No, I have an older brother.

AED: Oh, that's right. He was already [in].

HAL: Yeah. He was in the air force, and then he got out of the air force and got a job in California and didn't come home right away. So I said, "Okay, I'll see what I can do," and I got [discharged]. So I cleared out of there and I was gone.

At that time, and it's not to my credit, but I just wanted to put it behind me. I didn't keep in touch with people. I regret it now because there was some good friends. We could have done better on that, but we didn't.

AED: But it's understandable that when it's time to go, you go, and you don't look back necessarily.

HAL: Yeah. Oh yeah. Well, that's my life. When I leave, I don't look back. I look forward, and I've always been that way. I've had several different occupations, and when I was done with one, I was done with it. No regrets.

AED: I was going to ask you, after you left, you went back to the farm to take care of that.

HAL: Yes.

AED: What was your post-military career or careers?

HAL: I stayed on the farm and still live on the farm, and we did farm then and had, and if I could tell you, we did some specific things that were, I don't know, a non-farm person might not understand, but we got involved in the fertilizer business with my dad and my brothers and we sold fertilizer to the other farmers around and got rather active in that. My dad died and we tried to keep on going with that, and we actually took on a feeder pig business, which is we bought and sold feeder pigs, you know, basically 40-pound pigs.

AED: Feed-to-farrow? Is that what it's called? Farrow-to-feed?

HAL: The term is farrow-to-finish. We were in the feeder pig business. We would buy from Kentucky and Tennessee specifically and some from Illinois and even Iowa, pigs that we would—oh, and Michigan, too I think—and we'd sell them to guys that—we grew them up and then sold them to people, and they would feed them out to finish. So we were doing that. We also had a dairy herd. We needed hay because there wasn't a lot of hay grown locally there, and we'd buy it in Wisconsin and haul it down and feed the cows. Then people found out we were doing that, and they'd say, Hey, get me a load of hay. So I got to where it became almost a full-time job hauling hay out of Wisconsin. So we had a lot of irons in the fire. Then we decided that this wasn't going to get it and we got out of the milk cow business. We hired somebody to run the feeder pig business, and he wasn't real effective at it, so we shut that down. Then one thing and another. My one brother got a job with a fertilizer company. We were doing the fertilizer business and they said that there's a lot of things you need to do and it took more investment than we wanted to put in it. They said, Look, you design the facility and we'll build it for you and you run it. I said, "Do it. Take it." Then another brother that was—oh, we were in the implement business, farm machinery business.

AED: Of course, because you need those, right?

HAL: Yeah! We had the Oliver dealership.

AED: What is it?

HAL: Oliver. It was a rather large company at the time.

AED: I'm not familiar with them.

HAL: No longer around. White Motor Company bought them out, and then they got out of the farm machinery business altogether. But he got a job offer from an equipment company, Short Line they called the company, and he went with them. My oldest brother was back by then, too, and he got a job in Iowa. A friend of his said, "Hey, this is where it's at. You've got to come." He got into the advertising business in Iowa, you know, signs. This is when interstate signs first started being developed. You know, 80 foot up in the air, a big Shell [Oil Company] sign or whatever, and so they were putting those up. He sent me a picture one day of him standing on top of this sign 80 feet in the air, about this wide, and 10 or 12 feet long, and he's standing up like this waving. I said, "You're crazy! You're not getting me up there." He's still working. He's 82 years old. So that's what he did. And then we had a semi that we used to haul our fertilizer in, and, of course, off-season because it's a highly seasonal thing, so off-season it needed work. So we had a driver that we just put him to work and he was not very effective. We shut down all this other stuff and I said, "I'll just take that truck and run it a while." So I drove the truck for three or four years and enjoyed it for a while, but then my kids were starting to be aware of things and I was away from home too much. So I quit that, finally sold the truck. Then I needed something to do, so I took a job as a car salesman. I sold cars for two or three years.

AED: All right. What kind of dealership did you work for?

HAL: Oldsmobile. And that was fun. Meanwhile, I got lured away by a trucking company that thought I could manage their company for them, and it was beyond my ability to salvage it. I didn't last very long there because I could see it was not for me. And then I got a job as a fertilizer plant manager from a national company that had put a new facility in at Wolcott, [Indiana,] and I ran it for 24 years. So I stayed there too long, but that was my career. I got done with that, and I'd always wanted to fly. Finally, I took lessons and at age 65, I got my license.

AED: Oh, that's cool!

HAL: Yeah, it was fun. So then I just happened back into a job of—now, this is my second retirement already, see?

AED: At least!

HAL: The fellow where I kept my airplane got sick and wanted me to take over, just look after it for him while he was in the hospital. He said, "I'll be a week or two," having colon surgery. So I said, "Well, a week or two, you know. It's okay. I don't care." Then he lets me know he's not coming back, and I said, "Now wait a minute! You know, I didn't mean to do this." I talked to the board. I said, "Jim said he's not coming back." I said, "I'll look after the airport for you until you find somebody." They said, Okay, and we went a couple of meetings. We'd have a meeting once a month, you know. Go to the meeting and I was sitting down at the end of the table. They're all meeting there, you know, and they said, We think we've found somebody to manage the airport for us, and they were all looking at me. I knew what they meant, but I turned around and looked behind me. I said, "I don't see anybody back there," and they said, There's not. So I got that job.

AED: There you were, back at work.

HAL: I was there a couple of years, and then they decided they needed a guy that did mechanical work and so forth. So they made a deal with him and I was out, and I said, "Well, that was the agreement that I made in the first place, that, until they found somebody, I'd run it," and it was good. So I was fine. I was going to go home. They came from a nearby airport and said, We heard you're leaving here. Come on! They said, Why don't you come to Kentland and run that? I said, "Man, okay," I said, "let's talk," you know. And I went over and we got together and made an agreement. March 1, of '00, I went there. I thought I'll run it a year or two. I was getting up towards retirement age again, you know. I don't know, by then I must have been 71. They said, you know, it was fine. I would go to them and I'd say, "Look, this has got to be done," or "that's got to be done," and they'd say, Oh man, there's no money. I'd say, "Well, maybe you just can't afford to have me here at all." Oh, no, no, no, no.

AED: "Don't go anywhere!"

HAL: Don't leave. We'll do it. We'll do it. So I really got the place cleaned up and shaped up real nice, and then, of course, people started to see that it started looking pretty good to some people, and then there would be other people come along and kind of show some interest in it. So as a consequence, the first of March this year, I quit.

AED: Just now? Oh my goodness!

HAL: Yeah, I left the airport and moved out. I moved my plane back to Rensselaer, [Indiana,] where I started out, and another guy has taken over that does mechanical work at Kentland. Well,

that's a good deal, so we're on decent terms. I keep flying, but I don't have any responsibilities other than my own plane. I've got to pay the rent now, though, and that's bad. But that's been pretty much the story of that.

AED: Wow. And you are still flying?

HAL: Oh yeah.

AED: Great. That's great. They said in fact, You'll know when he's here. His plane will be parked out there. But not this time.

HAL: No, it didn't happen. I just made a conscious choice because of weather and some other factors that we'd have kind of a strenuous week and then one thing and another. I said, "I'm not going to fly it." My wife said, "You always fly. Why don't you want to fly this time?" I said, "You going with me?" "Well, no." So no. Anyway, I drove. That pretty much brings you up to today.

AED: Yeah, that's good. I have a couple more, maybe three more questions. One is you mentioned you might talk about the NCOIC, and so I wanted to bring that up.

HAL: Oh, okay. Non-commissioned officer in charge, NCOIC.

AED: But the IC part, in charge?

HAL: In charge, right. That's just as simple as that. When I worked in the stock records department at Killeen [Base] and at Manzano [Base], Jerry Forbes was the NCOIC in that department. Then when I went into the little isolation room where we were, there's just the three of us in there, I was the NCOIC. Big whoopee.

AED: It matters, though. It matters.

HAL: It doesn't.

AED: So you were chosen to be that person because of your experience?

HAL: I like to think of it as my extreme capability you know. Now, I don't know. I was asked, really, to go to that, and I think I was given the right to refusal. But you don't. I accepted it, but I did feel like I was sort of given that choice, which is kind of a good feeling. Then they said, We're going to send Sergeant Plumb over there with you. Plumb was also a staff sergeant. We were both staff sergeants, okay, but I had probably a couple of months' time in grade, and so it fell favorable. It wouldn't have had to. You know, not everything is by seniority, but it was. I think in all humility I can say that it was properly aligned.

AED: Right. I was also going to ask you because you met your wife in Albuquerque?

HAL: No. No, I knew her from home.

AED: Oh, okay. She was a hometown girl.

HAL: Not very hometown, but I knew her and we were dating. It really wasn't in any hurry to go anywhere. We were just having a good time, but I wasn't ready to get married and we weren't talking about it, really. I don't know, maybe we did a little.

AED: So did you take leave to go to be married?

HAL: Oh yeah.

AED: And then she came back and you lived—

HAL: In Albuquerque.

AED: Off base.

HAL: Yes.

AED: And you were telling me about your home there.

HAL: Yes.

AED: It was something you purchased or you rented?

HAL: Rented. I was going to buy a home, and I never did get over this, but her dad advised her not to. It would have been a good business deal to have bought it.

AED: It's a good investment, real estate.

HAL: Would you like to guess what that house would have cost me? I want to say $5,000. I'm not sure that's right. It was cheap. I mean relative to now because it's done nothing but escalate all these years. I knew that it would have been cheap but adequate housing. It would have been new because it was not yet built, but they were going to build it for me not far off base. It was on a slab, see, and this is Albuquerque we're talking about. We don't have the freezing conditions that we have in Indiana. It would have been adequate but small, but we never had any children while we lived there anyway. I could have sold it or rented it out after we left and it would have been a good business investment.

AED: Yeah, you would have turned a profit.

HAL: I had made a deposit on it. They were good enough to give me my deposit back when I backed out. I consider myself lucky to get treated that well, but they were good about it. So we rented and we lived in two different locations. We moved closer to the base a little later on, and I was able to carpool with the guy that I worked with. So that helped out.

AED: It was convenient. Yeah, it made it more convenient to carpool.

HAL: Yeah. And we went back later and visited both places, you know, and saw it after we got down there, June says, "I don't remember it being that small." A little efficiency apartment, you know. It was actually a bedroom, living room, kitchen, and bathroom.

AED: And then you went back to Indiana and you had your children, raised your family there. How many children do you have?

HAL: We had four children. We lost one at a week, lived a week, and then we had a handicapped one that died last December.

AED: Oh, I'm so sorry.

HAL: He was 42. Two other sons. We had all boys. The oldest son is single, and he works for Caterpillar in Peoria as an engineer. The other one has got a son that's 20 and adopted daughter that you've probably heard about.

AED: I have not.

HAL: Oh really?

AED: No, not a word.

HAL: Well, she was with me last year just for a night. We went to Las Vegas.

AED: How fun for her!

HAL: And my son says, "Las Vegas is not a place to take a 10-year-old girl." But she had a ball!

AED: Yeah, there are things for kids to do there now. It's not the same.

HAL: No. It went fairly well.

AED: Oh, how fun for her.

HAL: But in order to eat somewhere, you'd have to go through the casino and the restaurant is in the back of the casino, so you'll gamble going in and going out. So I had to keep her out of that stuff.

AED: Keep close watch.

HAL: Oh, she's a pistol.

AED: Really. She'll never forget that trip.

HAL: Yeah, oh yeah. Oh no, I know.

AED: That's fantastic.

HAL: But she swam with the sharks.

AED: Oh, she did?

HAL: Yes.

AED: Oh, my goodness.

HAL: There's a tube that goes right down through this pool.

AED: I think I've seen a photograph or something, an image on TV or something.

HAL: It was real impressive. So I'd go sit out there at the pool and let her swim.

AED: What an experience! Really, that's sweet.

HAL: Yeah, it was neat, and she was home schooled so that I had to make her get her school work done. Then she could go swim, and so that really worked out good.

AED: That's an easy carrot to dangle.

HAL: I had a big carrot. Then my grandson is in Purdue [University] at pharmacy school, and I don't know if he's going to make that or not.

AED: That's a hard, hard thing to do from what I understand.

HAL: Well, it is. It's very difficult, but it's more than that. They only let so many in and if you don't make the cutoff, you might be—well, I don't know what his problem is. He wasn't quite—he had the grades, but something else—I don't know what it was.

AED: Got in the way?

HAL: Yeah. So he's working. It may take him another year, which it's already a six-year school. Oh, man, I don't know if I can wait this long to see you through this! But he's doing pretty good. That boy's a worker.

AED: He'll get there.

HAL: It's funny. This is really getting aside, but he decided he was going to sell sweet corn at county fair and so forth, see. Roasted ears, you know? Okay.

AED: Right, yummy!

HAL: Oh yeah! So he buys them for a quarter here and sells them for $2 apiece, cooked and salted and buttered, and made some money. He said this past weekend he went to two county fairs and then he went to a couple of other dog fights. The Labor Day at a nearby town has a big festival., four-day event. And he went to that and sold that corn and made $1,200.

AED: Good for him!

HAL: Yeah, so that's big money!

AED: That's a motivation. That's great. That's good.

HAL: And then he went this past weekend to another event, Dan Patch Days.

AED: Good for him! So he's got some get up and go.

HAL: Yeah, he's got the ambition to do it, and I don't want to squelch that. Anyway, he's active in that way. He's been to Jamaica, and Haiti a couple of times, and Mexico and worked church-sponsored efforts.

AED: Excellent, excellent.

HAL: He takes it all in stride.

AED: It sounds like he's well-rounded.

HAL: Yeah, oh yeah.

AED: That's great. A couple more, I promise.

HAL: I'm sorry. I keep getting off the track.

AED: No, no. I want to know. I mean, that adds an element.

HAL: Flavor.

AED: You know, that's part of you too, right?

HAL: Yeah.

AED: At the time when you were at Killeen Base, did you know you were part of something special and unusual?

HAL: Oh yes. Oh yeah.

AED: It was just so obvious and evident?

HAL: We were told. Yes, we did and we were duly impressed. Really.

AED: And you knew that this was part of the Cold War effort?

HAL: Yes, yes. Oh, yes.

AED: And looking back now, what do you think about your role in that?

HAL: Oh, well, I don't want to try to ascribe any heroism to it whatsoever because it's not. We just did our job. We didn't see it as *we* were doing any big thing. It's just the whole effort of world peace was maintained, and I do truly believe this, that world peace was maintained at that time because we carried a club so big that the world feared that to the extent that they behaved enough to let us all live. Because I think that there was a time when, if cool heads had not prevailed, we would have had a horror that we don't even want to think about. I believe that sincerely.

AED: When were you first able to talk about your experiences with the 1094th?

HAL: This afternoon. Well, this morning.

AED: Well, you reminisce with these guys.

HAL: No. In the last few years, it's become evident that nobody seemed to care any more because it was public knowledge. In fact, we hoo-hawed at it a little bit in Albuquerque when one day the front page of the *Albuquerque Journal* was pictures of the structures in the hills. We had a big meeting, and we were called in and said, Somebody really spilled the beans here, and we're all looking at each other and we know we didn't do it because they told us we couldn't even tell our wives what we did there, and of course, we were tickled to pieces to have a secret from our wives, you know? We says, We can't even tell you what we're doing, and they said, We don't care.

AED: That worked out somehow, didn't it?

HAL: It was fine. It wasn't us peons, pardon the expression, that spilled that. How the information got out, I don't know. My feeling was the other side, the Soviets knew more than I did about that place. So I wasn't going to tell anything I shouldn't, but by the same token, I was totally convinced that I didn't know anything that the Soviets didn't already know. I'm pretty sure that I was right because they had their spies that were able to find out more information, and it's come out in the news that people gave information that they shouldn't have, you know. So we didn't. We didn't tell anything we shouldn't have.

AED: Have you talked with your family about what you did at any points? Are they aware of your experience?

HAL: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Now, sure, because I took them to Albuquerque and showed them the bomb. I said, "See this bomb right here?" This is out for the public to see. It's no longer a secret, and that was when I was totally at ease with discussing it, because right there, it says atomic bomb. This was the Little Boy or whatever, the Big Boy, whatever it was, I forget.

AED: Different names.

HAL: The name that was used for the public consumption wasn't the one we used, but anyway, it didn't matter. But it said, This is the one that was dropped, and it wasn't exactly the same bomb dropped at each city, at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. I think there was a little difference there, but these are not the nuclear device or proton. The proton bombs is not what was dropped in Japan, and I don't know after that, I was out of there. They developed them further, I know that. Just absolutely with no information at all to go on, I think we probably got some weapons that keep us secure today. But I believe the respect for the bomb is what kept the peace over those years. I believe that totally.

AED: Do you have any opinions about what should be done with the buildings or the structures that are at Killeen Base?

HAL: No. They'd make good bowling alleys!

AED: Nice long lanes, right. You'd have to learn how to bowl with a curve.

HAL: Yeah, absolutely!

AED: Do you think they should be open to the public, demolished, preserved?

HAL: Oh, man. As far as I can tell, I see no reason not to have them open to the public. If they could be utilized for entertainment or use of storage of anything, I have no problem with that. I don't see any point, and I don't see any reason to destroy them, like I think we have this situation where we've had military bases and so forth that are destroyed that could have been useful for some other good. That seems like a waste to me. Other than that, no, I don't have any thoughts on it. To preserve it as a museum or just for nostalgia's sake and keep it there, I don't see any great value in that. It's an era of history that hopefully has passed.

AED: Well, I don't have any more questions.

HAL: I thank you!

AED: Did I miss something? Was there something you wanted to talk about?

HAL: Man, I think I've told you everything I know in a whole lifetime! No, I don't know. There may be things that come to mind. I can always be in touch.

Elton Joseph (Al) Lowell

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas

SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas with Prewitt and Associates. Today is [Thursday,] February 11, 2010. I'm interviewing, for the time, Mr. Elton [Joseph (Al)] Lowell. This interview is taking place at his residence in Henderson, Nevada. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

What is your birthday?

EJL: Okay, we're going to have a problem right here. My military records show I was born in '29. I was born in '30. Someone put down '29, 9/4/29.

SK: Where were you born?

EJL: Seattle, Washington.

SK: And you came to Killeen Base from Seattle?

EJL: No, no. I enlisted in the air force in Detroit, Michigan.

SK: Do you remember when you were at Killeen Base, what date?

EJL: I was there from September 1948 to January of '52.

SK: And how old were you?

EJL: Nineteen. It was a long time ago!

SK: Were you enlisted or commissioned?

EJL: I enlisted.

SK: Some of the other people that I've interviewed have said that they joined the air force because of the Korean War. Did you have anything that prompted your enlistment?

EJL: Yes, that was my intention also. My brother was in the service at that time, and that was one of the main reasons I did was because of the Korean War, yeah. I got sent from Lackland [Air Force Base] over to Kelly Air Force Base, and then directly from there to Killeen [Base].

SK: Was there any special reason why you chose the air force? Because your brother was in the air force?

EJL: No, I was on my way to join the navy and these two air force sergeants got a hold of me and I ended up in the air force.

SK: What rank did you achieve?

EJL: Staff sergeant.

SK: And how long were you enlisted?

EJL: Nine years.

SK: Where did you serve after Killeen Base?

EJL: Manzano Base, Albuquerque.

SK: So for the rest of that time you were at Manzano [Base]?

EJL: No, I was there until August of '55, and then I went to England and finished out my enlistment over in England.

SK: When you were in England, did you do the same sort of things. Guard, military police?

EJL: No, I was never in the military police. I was attached to the 8455th. And I don't know, but I think the reason we were is it was a transition. The army was moving out and the air force was moving in, and our outfit [moved in]. I was one of the first ones there. There were three airplanes with personnel under that of Kelly [Air Force Base] that landed at Killeen Base, and that was the first, I think, air force personnel that got there. I'm not positive but I think we were designated as a first provost flight, I believe, because it was military police, and then the 8455th of course, did all the guard work, so we were attached to them until the 1094th was formed. I don't really remember exactly when the 1094th was formed. It had to be some time after I got there, because I think we were designated First Provost [Security] Squadron, or something like that, attached to the 8455th.

SK: How many men were like you that were attached to the 8455th?

EJL: I'll take a wild guess and say probably 60, maybe 60 all together. I'm guessing, because like I say I was 19. I remember they flew us in on two airplanes, and there were about I'm guessing about 30 on each airplane.

SK: When you were attached to the 8455th, what kind of duties did you perform?

EJL: Guard duty. We patrolled the outer fence and also the road that went around the top of the hill where the plants were at, we patrolled that.

SK: What happened when the 1094th came about?

EJL: When the 1094th was formed I went into maintenance, automotive maintenance. My first

duty when I went into the 1094th was I ran the driver's school until everybody got their driver's license and stuff, and I did that. Then I went into the motor pool, and they found out I guess through my records that I had a lot of automotive experience, plus I had worked for a Ford [Motor Company] dealer in Michigan, so I had painting experience, body and paint work. So I was the only body and paint man, had that function. Oh, I hated that.

SK: So you arrived in Killeen Base in 1948.

EJL: Right.

SK: How long did you spend in San Antonio?

EJL: My basic training was from May 17th until August something. It was 13 weeks of basic training at that time. Then I was held over, myself and another guy were held over. The rest of our flight shipped out after basic training. Myself and another guy were held over for a week, and then they sent us over to Kelly [Air Force Base], and that's when we fell in with a bunch of other guys. Well, the guy that I was there with at Lackland [Air Force Base], just he and I, what I understand is he went to Oak Ridge in Tennessee, which was the same kind of deal as this here. I think I heard from him one time. I don't remember his name. It's been too long. That's all I know about him.

SK: Was it called Killeen Base when you first got there?

EJL: Yes. There was no such thing as Gray Air Force Base. In fact, I didn't even know about Gray Air Force Base until, oh, maybe 10 or 12 years ago I was looking at a map and I was looking for Killeen and all that, and I thought what's this Gray Air Force Base? That's the first time I realized that they had changed it.

SK: What was it called when you were there?

EJL: Killeen Base.

SK: The air strip?

EJL: Yes, it was just one strip down between two hills. See, I even helped pour asphalt. I drove a truck. I married and got off base, and that following summer they were adding asphalt and fixing the strip up. I drove a dump truck hauling asphalt, so I knew how that base was laid out. It wasn't anything like this at all. It was just one strip that went down kind of between two hills, and it went from I'd say east to west. When I looked at that it was confusing, I thought something was wrong.

SK: So when you were attached to the 8455th, you always knew that you would get moved to a different [place]?

EJL: Oh, yes.

SK: You knew that going in.

EJL: Yes.

SK: Did the men that you worked with, with the 8455th know what you were guarding?

EJL: I'm sure they did. When we were at Kelly [Air Force Base] they showed us training films, what happened over in Japan, of course, and the dangers of radiation and all this and that.

So I'm sure that the group that I was with, like me, we had a good idea what it was. When we left Kelly [Air Force Base], we had no idea where we were going. They didn't tell us. And we flew over Lake Buchanan, and a whole bunch of the guys thought we were on our way overseas because they saw the water down there. Then we landed of course, at Killeen [Base]. We didn't even know what it was at that time. In fact, we didn't know this was Killeen Base until—what they did is when we got off the airplane they marched us up to the headquarters building. It was about 3 miles. Maybe not that far, about 2 1/2, 3 miles. And when we got up there, this army captain, I never will forget him, Captain Niaboli [?], he came out and gave us a little lecture and welcomed us to Killeen Base, and that was the first time we knew that it was Killeen Base. And of course, he gave us a little speech and all, What you see here and what you do here is to be kept here, and you don't discuss it, and this and that. And I don't know, but I think he must have been the 8455th commanding officer, because I knew there was a captain and a lieutenant who was the man in charge of the guard details, and then you had a sergeant of the guard and a corporal, that kind of stuff. And I didn't see this Niaboli [?] more than maybe a half a dozen times, so I don't know whether he shipped out after we got there or just what.

SK: Where did you stay when you first got there?

EJL: We stayed in the headquarters building. That was another thing, there were only four permanent buildings on that base. That's what threw me. There was headquarters building, motor pool building, main gate building, and the guard building, which was just inside the second fence right down by the main gate. Those were the only permanent buildings there. There was a big Butler building, maintenance building, up behind the motor pool on the side of the hill. That's where I worked when I went into the maintenance field there.

SK: So were you considered army, or were you considered air force?

EJL: We were considered air force. And that's what made us so mad because we were wearing the air force patch, but everything else was army. But we were considered, yes, air force.

SK: Did you get your Q clearance when you were working with the 8455th or the 1094th?

EJL: I believe, I won't swear to this, but I believe when I went with the 1094th. Although when I was with the 8455th we had access to the plants, we had access to the ventilation systems, and also the igloos, the silos.

SK: So when you were with the 8455th, do you know what was going on, what you were guarding at the time?

EJL: Yes.

SK: Were there operations going on?

EJL: Yes. We saw, especially on patrol. I pulled more patrol up on the mountain up around the plants than I did, I think. One or two days I went on the outside patrol on the outside fence, and I'd worked the main gate I think twice. But we never worked the main gate without army being there. It wasn't just air force at that time. If two air force [personnel] were at the main gate, there were always two army [personnel] because we weren't trained military police. These guys were regular military police. We were just put in there to relieve, I assume, some of the other army personnel as they were leaving. And then when the air force got there, our military police, or [air police], whatever you want to call them, then they took over, of course, and then the army was gone. Now up here on the hill, when I patrolled up here on the hill, the first night, myself and another air force man, we went with one army [man] and he

showed us where we would be. We were on our own after that and it was strictly air force up here. But when we patrolled down here, there was always one army [man] with us because we were not considered military police. We were just attached to them.

SK: What were you initial impressions of Killeen Base?

EJL: It wasn't bad, but I was very discouraged because I had joined the air force. I hadn't joined an outfit to be stuck out in the hills where there was nothing there. I joined the air force to be on an air force base, and actually for seven years I was never on an air force base until I went to England, and then of course, I was on one.

SK: You refer to it as Killeen Base, not Site Baker?

EJL: Killeen Base is all I ever knew it as, and all the time I was there it was never called anything else.

SK: You described the four buildings that were there when you first got there. Were there any added?

EJL: Not while I was there, no.

SK: You stayed in the headquarters building?

EJL: That's where we were billeted at first, yes, in the headquarters building. On the second floor there were big bays up there, and that's where the air force stayed. Down on the first floor there were bays also, but the army was down there, so as the army moved out and more air force personnel came in, then we moved downstairs and they had the bays down there.

SK: There are a couple of buildings that are there now that we're not sure if they were there when the air force was there or when the army came back.

EJL: Oh, did the army come back again?

SK: They did. Some of the buildings that are there are igloos, ammunition storage, warehouses, battery charging buildings.

EJL: Oh, battery charging, yeah. The motor pool was here. The headquarters building was like this [pointing to drawing]. Behind that over here was the air force motor pool permanent building. Then right across the street here on the corner was a battery building. It was permanent. It was considered part of the motor pool because it was automotive batteries. Now later on when I worked in the plants we had different batteries up there all together than automotive, and the batteries were all done up there in the plants.

SK: Pillboxes?

EJL: Didn't have any pillboxes.

SK: Guard towers?

EJL: No guard towers.

SK: Surveillance structures?

EJL: No, none of that.

SK: Any underground storage buildings?

EJL: Outside of the plants and the igloos, what you've called igloos here, that was the only underground that I was aware of. When I got my Q clearance, of course, I had access to everything naturally, and I was the only person on Killeen Base with prior automotive experience before I went into the service. I was the only one who could do vehicle road testing, and I used to do a lot of things I wasn't supposed to. I would go off base, and there used to be an access road here behind the thing. Well, I used to take vehicles and go down here and road test them, and right at the end of the strip I run right into an army company and they had tanks all set up and they were all camouflaged and everything. So I assumed that they guarded the outside perimeter. They must have been guarding the outside perimeter. Air force was just on the base only. So I saw a lot of stuff that other guys didn't see, being out there messing around.

Another thing is, right off the main highway there used to be Wherry housing for air force officers and enlisted men, first three grades. It was just off the main highway. Then right next to that in, I believe it was 1951, they built an NCO club, and I was wondering if that was still there at all. That was clear off base.

SK: I don't think that's there any more. Did you know what the mission of Killeen Base was?

EJL: I had no idea when I first got there, no. But after the air force took over completely and the army was gone, they did hold classes and training films and all that. We knew, especially when I went to work when the plant was up here it was for sure then, and the facts we knew before then. There was never just outright talked about it. The VIPs that came there, a lot of the boxes we saw it was radiation and stuff like that, and the way it was hush-hush all the time we knew what was going on.

SK: Did you ever have to sign anything saying that you wouldn't talk about anything?

EJL: Yes I did.

SK: Did they tell you that you would have a certain penalty or a certain jail time?

EJL: Yes, yes. See, the seven years that I was with the 1094th, my understanding was that every six months—I never knew this, but I heard several different officers talk about it—that every six months you underwent a new investigation, FBI check. Well, when I first got here I went under an—well, before I got to Killeen [Base], you know, I didn't know this, but they went back east and talked to my folks. My folks were awful upset because they thought I was in trouble. Of course, the FBI wouldn't tell them what was going on, naturally.

SK: Did you parents ever feel like they were being tested at all?

EJL: I don't think so. Not to my knowledge.

SK: Nobody unfamiliar to them ever asked about you or asked what you were doing?

EJL: No, just the FBI. That was the only ones that ever. Because I asked them specifically. When I went home on leave the very first time, first thing my mother said, of course, is, "What have you been into? What are you doing?"

SK: Did they talk to your friends, your employer?

EJL: They talked to my ex-employers, yes. Two of them, I think. Of course, again, I was just a kid

of 19, so maybe some of this I don't remember. But I know they talked to my parents, they talked to my aunt and uncle. But other than that I don't really know. But they were pretty well shook up.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about the main activities at Killeen Base, about why it was there?

EJL: Well, I don't really know why. The only thing I can imagine would be it was a storage facility for atomic weapons. And when I say atomic weapons, I don't know because I'm not an engineer or anything like that. I was just an enlisted man. But I did see the bombs, several different sizes, and I also saw what I think to this day was torpedoes, because the navy had torpedoes with atomic warheads, and I saw some of those. When I worked up there in the plants, I was not privy to the areas where this was made, but if we had what we called an operation going on, the plants were open, the areas in the back where the bombs and stuff was assembled or made. I don't know if it was made there or just assembled. Those blast doors sometimes would be open, so when I was doing my work I would walk by, of course, I was nosy, and I would look in. It didn't make any sense to me, but there were several different types of weapons, I could tell that. And then of course, when the stuff was completed and the operation had come to an end, a lot of times we had to take convoys that went over to the railhead at Fort Hood. Now where it went from there I don't know of course, but we took stuff by convoy over there. Some boxes were huge. I used to drive a tractor with a 40-foot float, and I had two of these big huge boxes. I didn't know what was in them, of course.

SK: When you were driving, did you have a guard escort you?

EJL: Oh yes, there was always an officer in a jeep first vehicle, and then usually an M8 armored car with a .50-caliber [machine gun], second, and then the convoy, and then at the back you would have like another M8 armored car, and then behind that you'd have maybe a weapons carrier with two or three guys in it, and then of course, the driver. Depending on how big the convoy was. I think the biggest convoy I was in was maybe eight vehicles all together.

I've got to tell you a story about this, though. I was in one convoy and I was driving this tractor and trailer, and it broke down on the main highway before we got to the west gate to go into Fort Hood towards the rail center. So I broke down, and the vehicle behind me came up and wanted to know what was wrong. I told them. He had a radio, of course, and contacted the officer in charge. The officer came back and he says, "All right, we've got to keep this convoy moving. You stay here with your truck. Don't let anybody stop. Any car that comes along, make them keep moving." I said, "Okay, fine." Well, of course, I had a rifle and I had a side arm. They didn't give me any ammunition. I was sitting here with no ammunition at all. Well, nobody stopped or anything so it was okay. But I thought that was so dumb. Here I am sitting out there on the main highway, cars going by, got my rifle and my side arm, no ammunition, so what could I have done? Anyway, they got a wrecker and came back and got me.

SK: What did you enjoy better, your guard duties or the automotive work?

EJL: Automotive, definitely automotive. I never cared for the other. I was too small to begin with to be military police. I was too small for that. And I didn't like that we had to have an inspection every time we came on duty. We had to fall out and they had to inspect our equipment. You know what I mean, it was constant. You had to keep your boots shined all the time and stuff like that, and I never cared for any of that so much.

SK: So as a maintenance person, you didn't have to report to your flight commander or anything like that?

EJL: No. I had one officer that I—no, I definitely did not care for the guard part of it at all. Automotive maintenance was fine. I enjoyed that because the prior experience I had, I was only a private first class. At that time it was still army, so PFC, corporal, buck sergeant, all that. So I made rank pretty fast because of prior experience. I made buck sergeant in 18 months. So that's how come I was the only one that could do road testing on the base, and I was the only one that could teach at the driver's school. Of course, I had somebody working with me, and I was the only one that could run the battery shop because nobody else knew how to run the battery shop. Our squadron commander, his name was Major Barr, and I'm sure he was there for us. But he found out I guess through my records or what have you that I had body experience and painting automobiles. So he had his own private jeep. Well, he wanted his private jeep painted a shiny color. It was the old OD [olive drab] color. So I mixed up some paint and painted it, and it come out almost between a dark brown and a black, but it was real shiny. Well, he was tickled to death. So I did all the body work and the painting for, I don't know, several months anyhow. My maintenance officer, his name was Captain Beverly. I remember him real well because he used to fly out of Killeen Base out here on a B-25 because he was a pilot, he had to fly so many hours. And he was from Texas. He was a real nice guy, Captain Beverly was. That's actually the only two officers. Oh, we had a lieutenant for a supply officer, but I didn't really know him that well. Those were actually the only three officers on the base that I had any dealings with.

SK: So that's who you got your assignments from?

EJL: Yes. Oh yeah, definitely. And 99 percent of the time it was Captain Beverly. The only time it was Major Barr was when he wanted something special done. I also drove staff cars sometimes. We had a lot of VIPs come in there, a lot of civilians. We didn't know who. I don't know whether senators or congressmen, and a lot of army brass, but they wouldn't come to the base. They would go to Fort Hood and be barracked over there at Fort Hood, and then we would take staff cars and go get them, bring them to the base and take them up to the plants and up to the headquarters building. Then when they got all done, we'd take them back to Fort Hood again. That was about the extent of it. That was when we were with 8455th. That was about the extent of that there.

SK: Did you [drive] any VIP when you were with the 1094th?

EJL: Yes, some of the same thing. In fact, General Hershey, he was a four-star [general], and he was in charge of what do you call it, when they had to get drafted. Well, he came one day. I believe our base commander, his name was Colonel Wing, I never met the man, I never saw him, but he was a young fellow. He was a fighter pilot in the Second World War, and my understanding was that he was the base commander, but like I say, I never met him. All I knew was Major Barr, Captain Beverly, and this lieutenant, and I don't even remember the first sergeant's name any more. Because I didn't really have that much dealing with him because they always let me be on my own because I could do the painting by myself, I could do the road testing and stuff like that, and I was the only one authorized to drive every vehicle on the base.

SK: So you had a few people that you answered to. Did you know at the time who the 1094th answered to? Was it the air force or the Atomic Energy Commission?

EJL: I think the 1094th I would imagine probably answered to the air force, even though I did see on Killeen Base, and more so at Manzano Base, a lot of AEC vehicles, and we saw a few here [at Killeen Base] but not too many. Most of it was all vehicles from Fort Hood. Now I don't know whether the AEC had an office at Fort Hood or not. They must have had some dealings there because it was too convenient for them to show up different times, and they were always civilian personnel. So I don't know who they were, if they were scientists or engineers

or just what. I wasn't of course, privy to any of that. I was down the ladder too far.

SK: Did you do any maintenance or anything at Fort Hood for the army?

EJL: No, but all our vehicles were from Fort Hood. Even after the 1094th, they were still all Fort Hood vehicles that we had. Now I used to go to Fort Hood and pick up parts, and also I went to school there to go to advanced automotive school there, because when I first went into Killeen Base I didn't have experience on armored cars. And I did this on my own time, myself and another sergeant, we went at night before we started working up. That's another reason we got the job working at nights at the plants, because we went to this advanced automotive school, which included a lot of the vehicles that we worked on up here. But other than that, I didn't work actually on Fort Hood except go to school there and go over there to get parts or fix a vehicle. Now, here at Killeen Base we just had a maintenance shop. We did three-month, six-month, and one-year inspections. Anything major like engine overhaul or engine replacements, that went to Fort Hood. We would either put them on a trailer or wrecker and take them to Fort Hood, because they had the big maintenance shops over there. When I was there at Killeen Base, Fort Hood was Second Armored Division. I don't know whether it still is or not, but that's all that was there at that time was the Second Armored Division, so they had all kinds of tanks and heavy equipment stuff, so we took all our trucks that had to have major work done on them over to Fort Hood.

SK: Did you have any training as a guard? Some of the other interviewees have said that they had guard training or combat training. You didn't have that because you already had the automotive training?

EJL: Right, yes. That was one reason I didn't like the guard work. There were three reasons I didn't like it. I was too small to begin with. I didn't like all the inspection you had to go through and all the rigmarole. And then the work of guarding, like up here on the hill, to me it was a waste of manpower and a waste of time. There was no way. Now down here, yes, around the fences, definitely. But up here there was no way anybody could get up here if these guys were patrolling like they were supposed to. And nobody could get up there on that hill without them being seen.

SK: There were four fences. Was there a guard posted on every fence, or just the main gate?

EJL: The main gate, like the main gate sat here, and then you had four fences. My understanding—now this is something else I don't know for sure—they patrolled between the first and second fence all the way around the facility. Between the second and third fence there were lights that if anything hit those, they would automatically come on a certain section. Then the third fence in was an electric fence. Then the inside fence was dead. It was just another fence. So we patrolled between the first—the third fence in where the lights were at, that was done by civilians from Fort Hood. They were grounds people from Fort Hood. They kept the dirt loose and leveled, so that in case somebody got over that fence they could see the footprints and that kind of stuff. We never did see anything like that. Well, we did from like coyotes and rabbits and that kind of stuff, but no human. And then we did have the electric fence one night go off, and there was an electrical storm, so that set the fence off. That kind of stuff there. But I didn't care for that just constant patrolling. Another thing that was so dumb is when we were patrolling between the first two fences, like this was the main gate. Of course, our jeeps had radios on them, or we had walkie-talkies, either one. It was fine until you get down here and get around to the other side of the mountain, you lose contact and you couldn't hear anybody, so you're on your own all the way around here. Well, nobody is going to attack the place from here. They're going to come up behind. So that always seemed to me how dumb. Then the officer of the day, all the time that I was there, he never came around here and patrol. The only time he did, he came up here on top of the mountain and checked

out the guards up here. But from Plant 2 you could look down and see the access road, or you could at that time, you could see the road or the fence. So maybe that's why. You know, he could get up there with binoculars and watch and make sure the guys were doing their job, but he always came up there and bothered us guys up on the hill, and I didn't like that.

SK: So as a maintenance person in the plants, did you have a different kind of clearance than just a normal guard?

EJL: Oh yeah. With a Q clearance at that time, I don't know how it is now. The only thing I did not have, I didn't have the top-secret, but my understanding is the Q clearance was above a top-secret anyhow, so I had access to everything. Like I say, I didn't go into the assembly area because the guys were working, and we had an operation going on. My job was to keep the maintenance going on the vehicles outside. It was up to them guys to do that part. So I didn't go in there and snoop around and try to look. I could have because I had the Q clearance. Same way with Ray Gardner. He and I worked together. He worked in Plant 2 most of the time. I worked at Plant 1. Then when he was on vacation or leave I would work both plants, or if I wasn't there he would work both. It wasn't that hard of a job.

SK: How many men were in the 1094th when you were there, do you remember?

EJL: No, I don't really remember, but when I was at Killeen Base there couldn't have been more than, I'm going to take a wild guess, counting military police and all, military headquarter personnel, mess hall, and all them, there couldn't have been more than maybe 300, and that might be stretching it. We didn't have any hospital. We had a medic trailer set up, and I think we had two or three medics is all, so anybody that got sick, which I did at one time, they sent you to Fort Hood to a hospital at Fort Hood. When I was living in Copperas Cove after I married and moved to Copperas Cove I got the measles. I called in to the first sergeant, he said we'll send an ambulance for you. I said, "No, I'm not that sick." He said, "Oh, yes you are." They sent an ambulance clear out to my house that took me to Fort Hood and put me in the hospital at Fort Hood. But I may be even stretching it when I say—I'm trying to picture it.

SK: So there weren't just guards. There were medics and—?

EJL: Oh yeah, we had medics, we had mess personnel. We had a crypto, we had some people in crypto. That's decoding. That's highly secret. That's the very top-secret. Nobody gets into a crypto room unless you're Q [clearance] or above. The way I got into that, I wasn't even supposed to be in there, was a friend of mine, Homer Catron, he worked crypto, and one night I was pulling CQ, and he happened to be working and he let me in there, which he wasn't supposed to, but I had a Q clearance so it wasn't a big deal.

SK: Where was this building?

EJL: This was in the headquarters building. And see, headquarters building, that's why I say when I was there, there were only four permanent structures. Headquarters building housed the mess hall, the day room, crypto, supply, first sergeant, squadron commander, base commander, plus all personnel that lived on base all slept in the headquarters building. That's why I'm thinking there might have been 300, maybe 400, counting the people that worked in the plants. Now I don't know how many worked up here. I do know that down by headquarters building, across the street on the west side there was a parking lot. During the day that parking lot, it was maybe 75 cars, that would be full. The motor pool personnel, the drivers in the motor pool, these people would come into work in the morning, park their cars there, and the motor pool personnel would usually have a couple of buses, these people would load up, they would take them up to the plants. Some of them, I guess the officers would get

a jeep or some of the civilians like the AEC, they'd have their own car. This parking lot would be almost full. Plus if you had insurance on your car, you could park there on the base. If you didn't you had to park in the lot outside the gate. So some of those that would park theirs were headquarters personnel maybe, like Captain Beverly and people like that would park there. I would say on the outside, and I'm strictly guessing, maybe 300 at Killeen Base. I could be wrong.

SK: What was a typical day like for you?

EJL: Fun, because like I say, for no more rank than I held, like corporal and buck sergeant. Of course, when I was a PFC I had to pull KP a couple of times. But when I got married, I got married in November and moved off base. It was just like a civilian job.

SK: November of what year?

EJL: Forty-eight. It was just like a civilian job. I'd come to work and go home at the end of the work day.

SK: Did you meet your wife?

EJL: No, she was from Michigan. My oldest daughter was born at Fort Hood.

SK: Where you lived in Copperas Cove, was there base married housing?

EJL: Oh, no. The only place we had base housing, and that was that Wherry housing project. The reason I call it Wherry housing is because back in those days, this Wherry company—

SK: I'm familiar with it.

EJL: Oh, okay. And it was the same way at Manzano Base, that was Wherry housing for on-base personnel. It was right down by the main highway, just off of the main highway, and I can remember there was a big bunch of trees, and back in here were these houses. My maintenance sergeant that I more or less worked for or was responsible to, Sergeant Foster, he was a tech sergeant, he lived there with his family. Another was Sergeant Dockery, he lived there in married housing. Well, I didn't have enough rank at that time when I got married, so I had to live off a way, so I lived in Copperas Cove. I didn't like Killeen at all. That was too much military. I never did care for Killeen that much, but I liked Copperas Cove, and I lived on a ranch outside Copperas Cove, then I lived right in Copperas Cove two different times, and then I lived in a little house just off the highway.

Other than that, it was just like a civilian job, really. Now when I went to work in the plants we worked nights. Well, we would come to work usually, it depended, if there was no operation going on, we might go two to three weeks and everything would be quiet. I mean the guys would be working there, but nothing was moving in or out. Then all of a sudden they'd lock down the base and nobody was allowed to leave. All these people, you know, they'd start moving stuff out of it, and then they'd move them into the igloos, and the igloos were nothing but storage bins. So during that two or three weeks when they were working, they might have been putting stuff in those igloos that I wasn't aware of, and then when they would have the operation they would take a lot of this stuff and take it over to the railhead at Fort Hood.

SK: So was working in the plants different from the automotive and maintenance?

EJL: Oh, yeah. It was still automotive type work, but it was definitely confined, and I really

enjoyed it. I was always by myself here, and then my buddy, he was over at the other plant, he was on his own.

SK: What were the kinds of things you would do?

EJL: We were in charge of all automotive electrical equipment. We had electric platform lifts, electric forklifts, electric tugs, battery chargers, which were big huge battery chargers, and we were responsible for any maintenance that had to be done on the vehicles that were used. See, the main job we had was on a normal day, say they worked in the plants just a normal day, Ray [Gardner] and I would come into work at night. We would go up there and we could tell from where we had parked our vehicles whether it had been used or not. Well, if the vehicle had not been moved or anything, we didn't have to mess with it. But if we found a vehicle down this tunnel or over here or something, we had to go and hook it up to the charger, make sure it was fully charged for the next day. Well, on an operation they used all vehicles, and that's why everything had to be fully charged at all times. And then as soon as they would park a vehicle on an operation, I would go and ask whoever was there, "Are you done with that vehicle, so I can put it back on charge?" So we'd take the vehicle and put it back. Ray [Gardner] and I had a perfect record. We never had a vehicle break down, which we were pretty proud of. So everything worked well. They never had to say, What's wrong? Where's this? Where's that? Why isn't this working? So it made for a pretty good record for us there.

SK: Did you work on the automotive and maintenance simultaneously with the plant work?

EJL: No.

SK: Or did you go from one thing to the other?

EJL: One thing to the other. We worked before we got assigned. Actually I was the one that got assigned, but I was living in Copperas Cove and I didn't have a way to get back and forth to work at night, and so Captain Beverly, he asked me, "We're going to need two, who do you want?" And I said, "How about Ray Gardner?" because he lived in Copperas Cove also and he had an automobile, so we shared rides. So Captain Beverly says, "Fine, we'll put him up there." Ray [Gardner] is the one, him and I went to school over in Fort Hood also, so it worked out just beautifully. So him and I are the ones that worked up there. Like I say, it was just like a civilian job. We'd come into work, we would go over and go to the motor pool, draw us a vehicle out of there. By the time, a lot of time when we got to work everybody else was gone home, or over in the headquarters building or over at the mess hall, what have you, so we were really on our own. And we didn't have anything to sign in or sign out. The only thing we had to do was fill out a trip ticket. Well, they knew that we were there from such a time to such a time because there was a trip ticket. Captain Beverly never questioned us one time. Major Barr never did. It was like a civilian job.

SK: Did you have to go through security when you went into the plant? Did you have to get different badges?

EJL: No. There wasn't anybody in the plants except us. Now that's not true. Just Ray [Gardner] and I, two military people. Now there were civilians in there, and there were engineers of some kind. At the back of the plant, I would say the tunnel from the main gate to the back to where the crossover tunnel was I would say was probably maybe 2,000 feet. At the back of this tunnel there was a little room off to one side. In that room was a huge generator, about 12 feet high, and probably maybe 20 feet long, maybe not quite 20 feet long. I've never seen such a huge machine in my life. Each plant had one of those in it. That generator would put out enough juice to supply the whole city of Killeen with power. Two civilians were always

there. And I only saw the generators work maybe twice all the time I was there. Usually they didn't have to use them. They were standbys in case the base lost power or the plants lost power, they could crank these big diesels up, and they were started with compressed air. When they'd start those things, the whole tunnel would vibrate the floor, that's how big they were.

SK: Was there a certain name for that room?

EJL: No, just I would imagine generator room because it was just the big generators there, and then these two civilians had a desk over there where I guess they did their paperwork, and in the corner I used to have just one battery charger and I could put one vehicle in there to charge it even when those guys were in there working, it was too small. But on the other side on the cross tunnel over on the other side of the plant that's where I had the bigger room and I had four big battery chargers over there and I could charge four vehicles at a time if I needed to. But on this side over here where the generator was I could only charge maybe one.

SK: So there were times when there was no one in the plants.

EJL: Oh, yeah.

SK: No guards?

EJL: No, there were never any guards in the plant at all, never any guards.

SK: Were there guards on the doors?

EJL: No, never were. The only guard that you ever saw were the ones that patrolled the access road. You used to go up the road like this, and right at the top of the road it would turn. Plant 1 was here, and then the road went on around and Plant 2 was on the other side of the mountain. That's what I did when I first go there, I patrolled that road just around the mountain. Now when I patrolled this when I was with the 8455th, we had to stop and check the ventilator shafts to make sure that there were no footprints, you know, like somebody got up there and got down into the plants through the ventilator shafts or anything like that. We checked those and we checked the ventilator shafts at what you call the igloos here. We'd park our vehicle and walk up and visually look. You know, we didn't have to inspect them or anything. In fact, we didn't do it all the time.

SK: Did you have a badge at all?

EJL: Oh yeah, we always had to have a badge.

SK: Where did you show that? At the front gate?

EJL: The only time we ever showed that was at the main gate. When we left we had to take our badge off, of course, but we only had the one badge. On our operation, we had an operation, and if I was working in the plant. I didn't always work in the plant on an operation. In fact, sometimes at an operation I would be working in the maintenance shop on the automotive vehicles because they didn't want anybody up there when they were fooling with some of that stuff because everything was, you know. And those tunnels were not wide enough for me to take a vehicle here and then coming out of something, so we didn't do anything wild there during that. When they shut down, then we would go back up there and go to work. Now I only wore one badge, and that was with the Q clearance. Some of the guys, I would assume that they handled the real stuff, they had a badge with a red bar across the bottom of it, and

of course, they carried a little Geiger counters or whatever you have up here. We never did ever have to wear that. Now I've had three bouts of cancer, and I'm just wondering if this, you know, I don't know. But no, we just had the one pass, and that pass let us onto the base, let us go anyplace on the base.

SK: Did anybody at Fort Hood ever ask what the air force was doing?

EJL: Never did. Like I say, I would take a vehicle and go over to Fort Hood to the maintenance to pick up parts and all that kind of stuff, and of course, they'd say what is it for and I'd say Killeen Base. Never no questions. Of course, I never would have told them anyhow.

SK: Were you able to access any of the facilities at Fort Hood, any of the recreation facilities or the mess hall?

EJL: I guess we could have, but we had a good mess hall ourselves. I was never on Fort Hood that much. Of course, I did get the access to the hospital over there, and like I say my daughter was born over there. We could have went to the NCO club there. We never did go to the movie theater, but we had access to all that, being military we could have accessed any of that stuff that we wanted to.

SK: What did you think of Killeen as a town?

EJL: I didn't like it at all. I did not like it. It was, how can I say it? It was overrun by—now there are some beautiful people, and I met some nice people. When I worked in the maintenance shop on the base I worked with two civilians that lived in Killeen, and I can't remember their names, but the one civilian was real nice. He invited us to his house for dinner. I went fishing with him down at Lake Buchanan and everything. But it was too run over with military personnel, and they all were there to. Of course, Killeen was not dry. You could get I think beer and wine. I don't think you could get hard liquor. These young GIs, they would come off, and you know how GIs are, and every girl and all this and that, and I just didn't like it.

We went in there one time, and there's a church right on the main highway coming into Killeen, and it was holy rollers, and I heard all this noise and everything and we had to stop and go investigate, see what this was. I don't want to be in Killeen at all. Like I say, some nice people. I met some real nice people in Texas. But Killeen, no. Copperas Cove, it was a little bitty dump. It had the high cement blocks where you could drive the horse and wagon up to it to load it. It had one gas station. I even ran for constable there one time. I didn't get it though because they changed my shift. Ray [Gardner] and I ran for constable. They had one gas station, a motorcycle shop, one little restaurant where you could sit at a table and look through the floor and see the dirt underneath on the ground. Had a theater that held about 40 people. It was just a little old cow town, you know, but I liked it. The people were friendly and all that. But no, I didn't care for Killeen at all. I liked Belton, I liked Temple. You know where McGregor is at? That's over towards Waco. We used to go back towards McGregor and out that way, like on Sunday rides and on time off.

SK: Did you ever go to Mexico?

EJL: No, not when I was there, no. San Antonio, when I was at Kelly Field, we were there a week and we went, about four of us went down to Eagle Pass. Now I've been to Mexico, I've been to Juárez and all that, but I was a civilian. But when I was there, that was all.

SK: What was your first reaction upon knowing that you were working with nuclear weapons?

EJL: I guess kind of excited in a way. Being a part of that, because it was so much talked about

and everything. Then again, being just a young kid, I think I expected more. Back then I expected to be more hands-on with it, since you were working in that area, that you could actually get in there and do it. Of course, that was all done by scientists and engineers and stuff like that. The average GI didn't do that. But it was kind of exciting, yeah.

SK: How long were you there before they officially told you?

EJL: Probably an hour. Captain Niaboli [?] when he came out, and he didn't come right out and tell us, but we got the gist of what he was talking about. And then they did have some training films, and of course, they had training films at Kelly [Air Force Base] before I left Kelly [Air Force Base], and that gave us a good indication. And when we landed at the airstrip and went through the gate and saw all those fences, and saw the MPs and all. I think the reason they marched us up to the headquarters building from the airstrip was to let the army see the air force. I think it was just a show. But you got a pretty good idea as soon as you came in. You could tell that it was a secure facility. It wasn't like a regular base. And then of course, this Captain Niaboli [?], he gave us a little information on it, and then we had some training films. Then when more of the air force got there, then our officers told us more and all that.

SK: Did you know anything about nuclear bombs before you got there?

EJL: No. Not outside of what I saw on like newsreels and that kind of stuff, that's the only thing.

SK: Did you know anything about their potential use during World War II?

EJL: Oh yes, oh yes. I was old enough to know what was going on there, yes.

SK: Did that affect your feeling of working with them?

EJL: No, absolutely not, and the reason it didn't is I know I'm very prejudiced. I have no use for Asian people. Now I don't mean all Asian people. What Japan did to us in the Second World War, and what the Chinese also did. Now one of my best buddies, in fact, the only buddy I've got left, his wife is Filipino and Asian. I get along with her fine, she's okay. But that's why I never did object or think bad of the atomic power. But at that time I wasn't aware they were going to use it for energy. I thought it was just nuclear for war, and I didn't really feel bad about what they had done, and I don't to this day. But I just hope we never have to, you know, of course. But I'm very prejudice that way. I hate to say it, but it's the way I feel.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about what were in the plants, how they were organized? Because I've been inside, but the tunnels, the rooms, there is pretty much nothing left. A lot of the diesel equipment is still there, but it's rusted. But here are different rooms. I was hoping if you could talk about if you knew what was in the different rooms?

EJL: That's what I was saying, I was never allowed to go into there and look around, but I have been there when the doors were open. You had two entrances to the plant, you had two tunnels and then you had a cross tunnel. Facing the plant, the right-hand tunnel there, about halfway in there are the blast doors. Halfway through you had the first set of blast doors. As the tunnel ended here where the first tunnel was, that was the generator room where the big generator was. Just beyond that crossover tunnel there was another door. That's where the room was at. I've seen that open and I looked in there, and all there was in there was all kinds of gauges, wires. I did see what looked to me like fins. How the atomic is set up, there are two sets of fins so one goes one way and one the other, so it sets off a chain reaction. I could see some of that in there. But I didn't get into where I could really look at it. I think this was more electrical, and on the left-hand tunnel, at the back of that, I think this one on the other side was assembly where they could assemble it, because they could

bring them out here, then your igloos would be to the right as they come out of the tunnel, the igloos were down here.

SK: So the igloos were in the plants?

EJL: No, the igloos were out on their own outside, just like what it shows here, like the different igloos there. They were I would say from Plant 1 to the first curve around a hill, maybe five, maybe four, I don't remember. And then on the back side there were several back there also. They were storage was all they did. They took it out of the plant and put it in there for storage, and then took them out of storage and took it over to Fort Hood and what have you. I always said to myself this has got to be the electrical bay because of all the wires and that kind of stuff. Now I do not know, and I've been wondering about this now, where this little cross tunnel was, there must have been a tunnel back here at the back behind where they could transport from the electrical bay over to the assembly bay because that little crossover tunnel was too narrow. All you could do was walk down that. You couldn't move vehicles and bombs and such down that. So there must have been. Unless they brought them clear out and brought them around and clear back in again, which I don't think they would have. But I never had access to that, so I never did know for sure.

SK: So where was the equipment that you maintained?

EJL: My equipment was in the left-hand tunnel. The right-hand tunnel I could do one vehicle at a time. Left-hand tunnel, where the second blast door was there was a room, and that's where my chargers were at, and that's where I kept a tool box for, like if something was broke or a bolt come lose or whatever have you, I could work on it there. That was my little area to work in, and that's where my chargers were at there. That's where I worked all the time.

SK: What do you think about civilians working in the plant?

EJL: Oh, I think it was great. Yeah, really. I think they had much more knowledge of what was to be done and could be done over military personnel because I don't know how many officers worked up there, but I know there couldn't have been too many officers. Most of them were enlisted men. Not saying that they're not smart, but being in the military, I don't think they would have had the education that civilians would have had, working in that capacity.

SK: Do you think that they were a security risk?

EJL: No I don't, not at all.

SK: Did you ever hear about anybody being removed because of being a security threat?

EJL: No, never did.

SK: Did you ever hear about anyone trying to access Killeen Base without the Q clearance?

EJL: No, never did. Never had anything like that.

SK: Was there a difference in storage? I know that there were the bombs, but they were never armed. There wasn't different forms? I know you mentioned that there were torpedoes?

EJL: Now I said torpedoes. They may not have been torpedoes. They might have been bombs, too. But to me they looked like torpedoes. Again I don't know, but what we had in training films and stuff, what they told us was all this stuff, none of this was armed. None of this could be armed unless you had what they called the black box. The black box is what started the

chain reaction. The black box was never kept to where any work was being done or any of the assembly was being done. Now, whether the black box was on Killeen Base I have no idea. Whether it was some other location, I have no idea.

SK: There was a room that stored plutonium in the plant.

EJL: Back when I was there, we never heard of plutonium at that time. Really. See, I didn't know anything about that.

SK: Did you ever hear about the FBI in the plant, about anybody working undercover FBI in the plant?

EJL: No, never did.

SK: Do you think that that could have been possible?

EJL: Yeah. I don't know why not. Because the amount of civilians that I saw, I don't know who they were. I always assumed that, like I was saying, when VIPs would come and we'd go to Fort Hood and they would bring them on a bus or staff cars, whatever have you. They'd be in civilian clothes. They could have been FBI, I have no idea. I always just assumed them coming to this facility and what we did or had there, they must have been scientists and that kind of lot. They could have been FBI, I don't know.

SK: Why do you think they had some people wear radiation detectors?

EJL: I assumed because of the hours that they spent and the stuff that they handled. I never handled it, and I spent up to eight hours, but I was always on this side of the rooms. You know, the doors were always closed, and of course, they're not little doors, they're the thick heavy doors. So I just assumed that. And I could have been in just as much danger of radiation.

SK: So you would have never passed that second blast door for a long period of time?

EJL: Well, I was past that second blast door because when I'd have my vehicles charging, sometimes they'd have to go six hours or eight hours, depending on how much they were used that day. I would go in and on that cross tunnel there used to be a little day room. You went on this cross tunnel and then another little short tunnel, and then here was a day room. And they had magazines in there, you had a restroom in there. Of course, back then they didn't have TV, and couldn't have a radio in there naturally. But I'd go in there and sit and read the magazines and use the facilities, stuff like that. They had a pop machine in there. I'd carry my lunch with me from home and I'd go in there and eat my lunch. I'd be in there maybe six to eight hours. Now on an operation sometimes I'd be there 14, 15 hours, depending.

SK: Was there a limit of how many hours you could work in the tunnels?

EJL: No, they never said anything to me about you're not allowed, you know, so many hours. That's why radiation just didn't enter my mind at that time. Now I'm going to take this back. When we first got there, when the 1094th was forming, they did give us little things that we hooked on here, and I think most of us wore them for a few days then left them at home, lost them, they were never reissued. We never had to even sign for them or anything, and I think they were just forgotten about. Because we never figured we were exposed to anything because we were outside except when I was working in the tunnels. Everybody on Killeen Base proper, it was just like a civilian job, you know, a day job, so we didn't think that much about it.

SK: What was it like in the tunnels?

EJL: I felt very secure. Yeah. Never one time did I ever think about it. I would look up and think, Oh, what if that concrete fell? and I'd think, "\Ah, that's ridiculous. I went to work one time, and in the tunnels they had gutters along each side. I saw water in there one time, and I thought, Oh, I wonder where this water is coming from? Well, when I got to the end of the tunnel where the blast arm was, evidently they had taken a hose with water. But no, I felt very secure. In fact, when I saw those blast doors I thought, Oh, that's where I'd like to be if anything happened.

SK: Was it well lit?

EJL: Oh yeah, they had lights all the way through, even the little cross tunnel, very well. I'll tell you, the one night that the power went out, talk about being black! You couldn't see even that.

SK: When we were down there, the gentleman who took us around turned out all the lights.

EJL: Oh! Then you know what it is.

SK: It was pretty intimidating.

EJL: [Yes]. And as much as I worked up there when the power went off I knew where I was at, but yet I didn't. I mean you couldn't even see your fingers or anything. I remember reaching out and touching the side, and I followed it down, then I finally got back over to the right-hand tunnel where the civilians were, and the power came back on just about the time I got back there, so it wasn't that bad.

SK: Is that the case where the generator would kick on?

EJL: No, that's what I asked them, I says, "How come your generator didn't kick in?" They said, if I remember now, again, this has been 60 years ago, from what I understand, they didn't start the generator unless they got a call from higher up. Now what he meant, I don't know. He just said, "We never got a call to start it." So it must have been just probably a civilian outage, you know, the civilian power company that the power went out. Because it didn't last but 10 minutes maybe, at the most.

SK: How long would your shift generally last?

EJL: Well, on a regular shift we never worked over eight hours. On a regular shift. A lot of times a lot less. Again, like I say, Ray [Gardner] and I were on our own. Ray Gardner was his name. And we were very close friends because we lived in the same town. It'd depend. If my plant, Plant 1 didn't operate that day, or very little, I could be done with my work in an hour. Maybe Ray's plant worked all day, it would take him four, five, six hours and I would have to wait on him, and vice versa: if they didn't work Plant 2 but worked Plant 1, then he would have to wait on me. But on just a regular shift, never over eight hours. We could have all our work done easily in eight hours. Sometimes we got to work at 4:00 and we were home at 6:30. Nobody ever questioned us or anything because nothing broke down or anything. Captain Beverly never questioned us one time. Everybody was happy.

EJL: And the skunks and the armadillos, we used to fight them all the time on Killeen Base. I got hung up, when I was working up there in Plant 1, I got hung up on a 440-volt power line, and I burnt my finger real bad here and my elbow and my thumb. So that was the one little story, you know.

SK: How did that happen?

EJL: I was working in my little area up there and I was charging vehicles, and I had too many battery chargers going at one time. I could only operate three at the most. Well, I had all four of them going and they overheated. And I had a ventilator fan, and then the machines had fans, ventilation fans. But they were getting too hot, so this one machine kicked off. Behind the machines there was a main power box that you shut off, and then there was a box for each machine. Well, I shut the little box off but not the main. Well, there was a reset button on the inside, so I reached in with my hand. And I had the door open. I almost put my hand on it. If I had put my hand on the door it would have went through me and killed me. I reached through and I was feeling around for that reset button and I found it, and just as I found it that electricity hit me, and it went through here, and my elbow was grounded like this, and it came up. And my thumb, the top of the machine was right here, and I was shooting a blue flame out about that far. I started to reach over, and I thought whoa, if I do that it will go through me and kill me. So I sat there. I was up there about a minute, trying to get loose, and I finally pulled my arm loose. This was laid open to the bone. It cauterized. Anyhow. And I could see the bone, and it wasn't really hurting that bad, and I thought what in the world. And then I looked at my thumb and I had a hole in my thumb right here.

I was all by myself over on that side of the tunnel. The civilians were working down here. Well, the first thing I thought about is I'm going to bleed to death, so I grabbed my arm like this. It never bled of course, because it was all, you know. I walked all the way down that cross tunnel where the civilians were. I told them what had happened. The guy looked at it, he says, "Oh boy." So all he had was some Band-Aids, so they put a couple of Band-Aids on it. Well, then I had to go clear back across the tunnel to shut my machines off and everything, and of course, then it'd start hurting. So I put up with it, then went outside the tunnels waiting for Ray [Gardner] to come and pick me up, get the shift done. He took me down to the medics down on the base. We had just an army trailer set up for what little they did there, you know. So I went in there and the medic was on call. The dumb nut, he put salve on it and then he wrapped it tight. Well, I went home, and a little while after I got home that thing was thrumping and bumping, you know. I said I can't stand this, so I took the Band-Aid off. Well, I had a blister on it. I couldn't put my fingers together. Big old blister. And so I put up the rest of the night.

Well, the next morning I went out to the medics again. I never will forget, the guy's name was McKnight. Nicest guy. He was just a medic was all he was. He wasn't a doctor. He said, "What in the world did you wrap it for?" I said, "I didn't. One of your boys did." Oh man, he was mad. Took a scalpel and he went *shoomp*. Didn't hurt. I mean just like that it quit hurting. Of course, it released all the pressure. He put some salve on it and he put a Band-Aid but real lose. He says, "Now don't let that fall off." By the time I got back home again I was fine. That's all.

But little things like that. I don't mean to get sidetracked.

SK: No, it's okay. Can you talk about the operations? You mentioned operations. What were those like?

EJL: Oh, chaos most of the time. No not really. It was an organized chaos, you might say. That's what we called them was an operation. We called it lockdown, because like nobody could leave the base. So it'd depend, sometimes you'd go 24 hours or 48 hours on a lockdown deal. Of course, then the mess hall was open 24 hours a day. Everything was on a 24-hour basis. The only good thing about being on that was when it was over with you always got two days off, so that helped. It was just like, you know, We kept you, so take a couple of days off. I mean we had it pretty well made.

Now the civilians could go home at the end of the day if there was an operation, but no GIs were allowed to leave the base. In other words, you could leave the base anytime. We had a shuttle bus that would run to Killeen back and forth, two trips a day. The guys that wanted to go into Killeen or go to the movies, you know, do this or that. But that was all cut down. Nobody could leave the base, except the civilians could go home.

When I say it was organized, these rooms were open. There were guys, people coming and going all the time. I was on a standby over here with my equipment all the time. I never had a piece of equipment break down, so I was just more or less on standby and that's all I did. But I saw stuff being moved in and being moved out: crates, boxes, bomb trailers. They moved the trailers out with these big electric tugs we had. They were big tugs. They would be gone for just a short time, so that's why I knew they went down to these igloos and they were putting stuff in there. They'd come back. Then they would take a break like for lunch, for chow, you know, what have you. The mess hall would bring them chow up to the plants. These guys didn't leave the plants to go down to the mess hall, so they would bring their chow up to them. Of course, I always got a chance to eat too, if I was working. I'd eat with them. And that's what that little day room [was for]. We'd all go down to that day room.

That's where I noticed the badges were with red bars and stuff on it. But they never talked. Of course, everybody knew what everybody was doing that worked in the plant, so there was no discussion. And of course, I didn't want to say, "What do you do?" you know, "What you got?" Because I guess they figured I knew what was going on too, because I had a Q clearance. Well, the only reason I had a Q clearance was to get into restricted areas to do my work. So nothing was every discussed like that.

SK: So there wasn't a feeling of alertness or anything? Like they didn't tell you that something was actually happening and there was a threat, or it was a test or anything?

EJL: No. There was never anything that way. To me, and I think the people even on the base, I don't know about the guys that worked in the plants, but I think the people on the base, and I think along with me, I think we just thought it was okay. They need more materials and more stuff at another facility, and they've got to hurry up and assemble this to get it out to go over to another facility. But on these operations like that, we never did take the stuff out of the igloos during the operation. Now maybe a week later they would say, Go get you a tractor and trailer, go to Fort Hood, go up to Plant 1 or 2, or what have you, and check with the officer on duty and he'll take you to the igloo. Then at our maintenance down on base we had big forklifts, big gasoline forklifts. One of those would come up the hill and he would go to an igloo, take these boxes out and load them on the trailer. We'd make a convoy and go over to Fort Hood to the rail center. Well, we called it a rail center. I never did see a train. I saw the boxcars. We would load the boxcars. But I never saw a train. I think there were two tracks, kind of like on a siding. Well, we called it the railhead because that's where we always took the vehicles. And that's where Fort Hood would have their big Hyster forklifts, and they would take them off and put them in these boxcars.

SK: Did you ever put any on planes?

EJL: Funny you should ask. Down here on the strip, the day that we landed—okay, going back to World War II, on the training films that we saw, the B-29s that flew over Japan and did the bombing, they had a big A on the tail. Now I don't know whether they were Fifth Air Force. I know they weren't Eighth Air Force, but I think they were Fifth Air Force. Anyhow, they were the ones that bombed Japan from the islands, you know. The day that we landed there, right here at the end of the strip in the corner, right where the fence was, where we marched through here and come up, there's a deep pit, and this B-29 was backed over it. And underneath the B-29 was kind of like a net, so you couldn't see what was in this pit. So after

we got in there and found out what was going on, I figured that's what they were doing, they were loading bombs. But you know, I never did hear. I never did, and I don't think anybody else did. We never did hear planes coming and going. Now I don't know whether it was because of the hills that were on either side of the strip or what. But there was a pit right there where they would load the bombs.

SK: So you never saw any planes coming in either?

EJL: No.

SK: Did you hear or see any trains coming or going?

EJL: [No], never did, no. We didn't have any train tracks over there at Killeen [Base].

SK: But there were train tracks over here?

EJL: No. There were train tracks, as far as I know, I didn't see any train tracks here. There were train tracks that went through Copperas Cove. And this of course, was all Fort Hood, and I assumed they went into Fort Hood to the rail center. But I never saw any trains.

SK: So the boxcars that you loaded, were they train boxcars?

EJL: Yes, regular train boxcars. But they were over here on Fort Hood. They weren't over here.

SK: What did you think about Fort Hood?

EJL: I liked it. It was a nice facility. Of course, again, like you say, Fort Hood is huge now. But when I was there it was huge. There were a lot of temporary buildings, but a lot of permanent buildings also. All the maintenance shops were permanent. The hospital was temporary at that time because I remember my daughter being born there. The officers' club I think was a permanent building, because that's where we used to go pick up a lot of VIPs. They'd go over there and get half drunk. Anyhow, we hated them guys. Of course, this was all Fort Hood. Fort Hood went to Copperas Cove, and then it went from Copperas Cove almost to McGregor, way back over in there. Well, I used to go out there to Fort Hood, my wife and I did, on the weekends or on days off and pick pecans and sack them up and take them into Killeen and sell them to the stores, and we used to make pretty good money. Like on a weekend we could get maybe 10 pounds of pecans. So we'd gather them all up and take them into Killeen and sell them. So I knew this was all Fort Hood. Then I rented a house from a man by the name of Walt Nerrit, and he used to run cattle. They were allowed to run so many cattle out there on Fort Hood. Each farmer or each rancher was allowed so many head of cattle. And of course, they had maneuvers all the time, tank maneuvers and stuff. But when I was renting from him, I would go with him and move some cattle around and stuff. I got my feet into a lot of stuff, you know, just really enjoyed it.

But Fort Hood, yeah, to me Fort Hood. There was nothing here, nothing around Copperas Cove, nothing towards Lampasas except rolling hills and stuff. Now this is when I was there. I don't know how it is now. So any time we got to be able to go. Ray [Gardner] and his wife used to go in and shop at Fort Hood. We never did. My wife and I never did. But they'd go over to the PX and they would do some shopping over there. Because air force was allowed the same as the army, and they would get stuff. So we would go with them sometimes and buy a few items. We were always treated good. The army never did look down on us or anything. So we got along good with the army and everything.

SK: Do you think it was a good strategic location?

EJL: Well, not really. I mean it was out there, I don't know what you'd call it. It was just out there in the doggone hills. You know what it is around Austin and down in there. I often wondered why is it setting here? There is no close airport, other than Waco. Now something I'm not aware of is maybe that railhead there, maybe it went to Waco. Maybe that's where the stuff went is out of Waco. I don't know. I have no idea. Or it might have went to Fort Worth, I have no idea. But to me, strategically located, no. It was just kind of out there in the boondocks at that time when I was there. I don't know how it is now.

SK: Did you feel there was a lot of speculation from residents of Copperas Cove or Killeen about what was going on out there?

EJL: No. That surprised me. That really surprised me. And we were not restricted on any place we went, socializing or anything, and we socialized with a lot of people. And not one time did I feel uncomfortable or did anybody ever question me or ask me.

SK: They didn't ask what you did?

EJL: Didn't ask a thing. If they'd say, You at Fort Hood?, nine times out of 10 I'd say, "Yeah." Even though it was the air force I'd say yeah, because we were told you don't discuss anything, what have you. But I know that civilians, we had civilians working there from Fort Hood. I know that them being in Killeen, I'm sure they must have said some things or what have you, or people must have asked them or something. But no, nobody. I never felt uncomfortable at all. I never felt like anybody was. Like I say, to me, I was very privileged for no more rank than I had of what I could do and what I did and what have you. I enjoyed the duty. I didn't like the base because it was nothing. When I shipped out of there to Albuquerque, that was a whole new experience because then you had a big city right there and all that. This was very restricted.

SK: Did you think there was any speculation. You know, did you and Ray [Gardner] speculate what was going on at all, or do you think there was any speculation with any of the guards?

EJL: I don't really think so. Ray [Gardner] and I, we never really ever talked about it, either. It was just a job we did. A lot of times I'd say, "Were they moving stuff out of your place over there?" "Yeah, I saw them taking some crates out." Or something like that. But it was A-rated bombs or something like that. We never did.

SK: What did you wife think about Killeen? Was she from Michigan?

EJL: Yes, she was from Flat Rock, Michigan. She didn't particularly like it because she was from a populated area, and when she got to Copperas Cove. Of course, we were just kids. She was 18, I was 19. She came from a large family. She had never been away from home. And I'd gone away on my own since I was 12, so I had never lived at home or anything, so it didn't bother me. And of course, being a kid, I didn't think about the consequences, you know. But she never complained. That's one thing I'll say about her, she never complained. She fell into it, and like I say, with Ray [Gardner] and his wife we became very close, and with these other friends and mine, Foster and Dockery, we played a lot of cards, a lot of games, and spent a lot of our off time together. So it wasn't too bad. She fell into it. But never complained or anything.

SK: So what did you do on your off-duty time?

EJL: Oh, see, back then we didn't have no TV. Had a little radio. We used to listen to the radio. Well, again, most of my off time I always had a civilian job. Nine times out of 10 I had a civilian [job]. Not always. But when I lived on the ranch, the Dawson ranch, I helped him on

the ranch. I shucked oats, cleaned the barn, stuff like that, gathered eggs and everything. He rented us a little apartment on their main house. They had a little apartment upstairs. And we would do those things. I think our rent was $35 a month, and by helping him shuck oats, and I would work on his tractor and a pickup truck and stuff, they'd take $5 off the rent and stuff. Dawson, she owned a lot of property. He was a milquetoast. He was a very meek person. She was big and very outgoing. I mean you could hear her a block away. And she run that household, she run that ranch. I used to have to hide his cigarettes for him. She didn't want him smoking. They were both real nice. They would invite us downstairs to dinner. They taught us how to play dominoes, which is big in Texas. Just real nice people. He had a horse. They had a bunch of Shetland ponies and then they had a couple of riding horses, and I used to ride one of the horses all the time.

But we socialized with everybody. I met some nice people in Copperas Cove, some people by the name of Millsap. They owned the gas station there, been in that area for years. But that's what we did mostly, I usually worked. And if I wasn't helping Mr. Dawson, I did a lot of work for the guys out at the base on their cars. I painted some cars for them. Down on the highway an old man had an old garage with a dirt floor in it and all, he used to let me work in there and I'd paint cars and work on guys cars, because I had the automotive experience. So I always kept busy, socialized and stuff.

SK: Did a lot of the other members of the 1094th have other jobs?

EJL: I don't know. I have no idea. I don't think that many did, no.

SK: Because you had such an open schedule?

EJL: [Yes], that's why I was able to do so much more. The other guys more or less had regular 8-hour shifts, and they had their duties. They had either KP or they had to pull CQ or whatever have you. But I was so diversified. That's why I kind of enjoyed it, I could come and go almost at will. Ray [Gardner] and I always tried to make it a point to get to work to see Captain Beverly before he left to let him know that we were there. But if he wasn't there or he didn't see us for a week or so, he never questioned us. He was real good.

SK: Did you have any interaction with any of the other nuclear bases, like in Kentucky or Tennessee?

EJL: While I was stationed there?

SK: Yes.

EJL: No.

SK: There was nobody coming in?

EJL: Not to my knowledge. Now there could have been, there could have been. Like I said, when I left Kelly [Air Force Base], this one guy, him and I had been kept behind at Lackland [Air Force Base] after basic training was over, he went to Tennessee, Oak Ridge. Like I said, I think I got one letter from him, and this was when I was still living on the base, and he says, kind of like I would have said, "There's not much I can tell you." And so I assumed when I heard Oak Ridge, because Oak Ridge was big in the news for atomic stuff back then. I don't know what it's called now, or whether it's even there any more. But that was the only one letter. Like I say, I don't even remember his name, it's been so long ago. And I never even knew anything about Manzano [Base] until they shipped us there. Very disappointing. I loved Albuquerque, I loved the area, but the facility, the people, [shaking head].

SK: Was it the same as Killeen Base?

EJL: Same thing as Killeen Base, only on a bigger scale. Much more segregated. You had people that worked in the plants, and you had no contact with them. Like at Killeen [Base], I could talk to the guys that worked in the plants, you know, just on a one-to-one basis. These people up there, they thought they were, you know. Of course, that's another whole story, Manzano Base. We're not into that, so I'll back off.

SK: So you were stationed at Manzano [Base] after Killeen Base.

EJL: Yes.

SK: And it was different?

EJL: The work was the same, but the facility, well, the facility was very much based on Killeen [Base]. The same kind of set up. Plants were the same. There were two plants there also that I knew of. I worked in Plant 1 and I didn't work in Plant 1. I worked in Plant 1 with Howard Foster, the tech sergeant, and my friend from Killeen [Base], Ray Gardner that I worked with at the plants at Killeen [Base]. He went to Manzano [Base] about two weeks before I did. I went in the second movement that went. There were so many that went first movement, then second, and I'm sure there were some behind us, too, that came up there. But I met an entirely different breed of people. I mean it just didn't—of course, we were right there at Sandia Base, which was all AEC.

SK: Did you have any contact with Sandia Base, or did you just work on Manzano [Base]?

EJL: We just worked on Manzano [Base], but we did convoy to Kirtland [Air Force Base], so I know some stuff went out of Kirtland [Air Force Base]. I didn't, but some of the people that worked in the plants convoyed stuff down to Sandia Base, so I imagine probably some Manzano [Base] down to Sandia [Base] worked down there, what have you, and finished up or assembled, or I don't know what they did. Again, at Manzano [Base] I was involved in maintenance and I did the same kind of work there at Plant 1 at Manzano [Base] as I did at Killeen [Base]. Did the same kind of vehicles, except we had a lot more bomb trailers, a lot more, so they must have been doing a lot more movement. We did have more movements there too, what we called operations or movements, and those usually lasted at least 48 hours. For us that lived off base, they didn't have enough room on Manzano [Base] for all the personnel, so we were allowed to go from Manzano [Base] to Sandia [Base], and there were barracks down there that we could put up there, and they would bus us back to the base if we stayed on the base, but a lot of the guys that lived off base couldn't go home, so they could go down to Sandia [Base] and let them sleep down there in the barracks.

SK: Were there more civilians at Manzano [Base], do you think?

EJL: No. In fact, I don't think there were as many civilians. There might have been, but I don't think so. I think most of the civilians were down on Sandia Base. I don't think there were that many on Manzano [Base]. It was strictly air force. I'm sure they might have had some dealings back and forth. And Manzano [Base] was set up the same way as far as buildings went. We had permanent headquarters, motor pool. Our maintenance shop was up on the side of the mountain, it was a Butler building, and the main gate was a permanent facility, and that was all.

SK: Did you know what they did at Sandia [Base]?

EJL: Oh, I'm sure they did what we did at Killeen [Base], only on a grander scale. Yeah, I'm sure

they did, because they had all kinds of scientists. I know even in the Albuquerque paper you'd see where doctor so-and-so was at Sandia [Base] doing whatever, or senator so-and-so. That's where you saw 99 percent of your AEC vehicles and personnel was on Sandia Base.

SK: So you did vehicle maintenance at Manzano [Base]?

EJL: Yeah, same thing.

SK: So they had the same electric equipment that you'd have to maintain?

EJL: Same thing, yeah, only like I say, on a little grander scale, more of it. Because it was actually a bigger facility.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about the process of moving from Killeen Base to Manzano [Base]? Like, how did they tell you?

EJL: They cut orders. I went to work one day, and somebody said, Hey Lowell, have you seen your orders? And I said, "What orders?" And he said, "You'd better check with the first sergeant." I went to the first sergeant's office and he said, "Your orders are being cut, you're shipping out." I said, "Where?" He says, "Albuquerque." So I went home, loaded up, and in I think, about three days, I was out of there and we drove to Albuquerque.

SK: How many people were transferred at the same time as you?

EJL: That I'm not really sure. I had one guy riding with me. In fact, I towed his motorcycle on the back of my car. I can't remember his name. Anyhow, he rode with me. Like I say, when I got to Albuquerque, the only person I recognized was Ray Gardner. He'd been there a couple of weeks. In fact, he got me a place to live. He got there, and he told me when he left, he says, "When I get there I'll look around." Of course, I didn't even know I was going at that time, but I guess he assumed we were going because we were staying with the same outfit. He wasn't transferring to another outfit. He even found an apartment for us. When I got on the base, I think he was the only one. So when I reported for duty up on Manzano [Base], Ray [Gardner] was there, and then I think within a day or two, here came Howard Foster. He came in, and then Wilson and another guy, and then some other people that I didn't really know. I recognized by faces, you know. So I would imagine there must have had to be at least three movements I would say by the time that all the air force left to go to Manzano [Base].

SK: Did you bring anything with you, like tools, or was that all waiting for you when you got there?

EJL: Oh no, that was all waiting. We left all our tools at Killeen [Base], and we just took our personal belongings and everything else of course, was furnished.

SK: Did you ever hear about Killeen Base again?

EJL: Never did. That's why I said, after I got out of the service and everything and years later I was looking at a map, you know, wanted to see where Killeen and Copperas Cove and all that was, and I saw this Gray Air Force Base and I thought what in the world is that? So I figured there was no more Killeen Base. They called it Gray Air Force Base. I didn't know that.

SK: What did you call the airstrip again?

EJL: It was just Killeen Base. Just the airstrip at Killeen Base. There was no separate name. But I assumed when I saw Gray Air Force Base they had expanded and made a regular air force

base out of it. When I was there I drove that asphalt truck, and I knew that they were. I don't think they were expanding the airstrip because it was already set up to carry a B-29. Now they might have over the years. What I was hauling asphalt for was the parking strip there along side the main deal, and I only did that job for about three weeks, and I only drove the truck when I was off-duty. I can't even remember the guy's name. It was a civilian that hired me.

SK: So he was in charge of lengthening the airstrip?

EJL: No, not this particular one. The guy that hired me was just an individual. He owned a gas station, and I used to trade with him. I worked with him also, like greasing cars and what have you, on my time off again. That's another civilian job I had. And he had this dump truck. I guess that they had put out word that they were doing work out at the airstrip, and he had a truck, so he asked me if I could drive a truck and I said yeah. They had the asphalt plant on Fort Hood, so I would drive over to Fort Hood and load the truck up and come back to the strip, and go back there. I'd have lasted longer except the truck I was driving was another story. I was coming back over the highway to Killeen Base. That highway used to just be two lanes. On the map it looks like a freeway now from Killeen to Copperas Cove. It was a nice two-lane road, but before you got to the road that went into the base, there was this concrete, and I have this truck with its load of asphalt, and I'm coming down this hill. I looked in the rearview mirror, and here come my rear wheels. I'd broken an axle and my wheels came off. So the guy that owned the truck, I guess he didn't want to fix it or anything, so I didn't have a job any more, which was okay. I just did it to make a few extra dollars, what have you.

SK: Did he do any other projects on Fort Hood?

EJL: Not that I know of. I don't think so. I know he was a graduate. He owned a gas station and a garage, and I went by there one day and asked if he needed any help. He says, "Have you got any experience?" and I said, "Yeah." He said, "How much school have you got?" I said, "High school." He says, "You ought to get more education." He said, "I'm a graduate," I think he said Texas University, but I'm not sure. And I thought to myself, Now why are you owning a gas station and a garage, and you need someone to help in a gas station that has to be a college graduate? So he was kind of a weird guy, but I don't know his name.

SK: How did you get transferred from Manzano [Base] to London?

EJL: I assume that my tour with the 1094th ran out, I don't know. Just again, one day I went to work, and Captain Stroup, he was my maintenance officer. Nice guy. I used to bail him out of jail all the time, but that's another story. But he told me, "You'd better go down and check the bulletin board. I think you got some orders cut." So I went down there, and there were a bunch of us that were shipping out. So myself and a fellow that I worked with for quite a while at Manzano [Base] Rusty Fruit, Leon Fruit, him and I got sent to Sculthorpe, England. That's up by the North Sea, up by King's Lynn. It's north of London about 120 miles, I think.

SK: Was that a U.S. base?

EJL: No, it was RAF, Royal Air Force. RAF Station Sculthorpe. Then there was RAF Station Laken Heath, which was also a U.S. Air Force. We've had those bases. We had them all over. I lucked out on that job too, but that's another story.

SK: What did you do there?

EJL: I was maintenance, but I was the only one that had an AFC [air force code]. That's a specialty

code they give you. See, when I first went in the service, it was still part of the army. It was the army air force. The air force didn't become a unit of its own until 1951. So I had an army specialty code, which is 014, which is automotive mechanic. When the air force come along, I went to a 47151, which is an automotive mechanic. Then you go to a 47171, which is automotive mechanic senior. I made that. And then just before I went to England, I made 47170, which an automotive senior technician supervisor. So when I got to England, I was the only one classified again to road test vehicles. Well, about 12, 15 miles from Sculthorpe, they had 325 American vehicles, World War II American vehicles, that were left there after the war. Well, the British government wanted to buy these vehicles, so they sent myself and two other guys out to this abandoned airstrip out in the boondocks someplace. I don't even remember how we got there. And it was snowing. There was snow all over the ground. And we went out and we found all these vehicles. Well, they were in Quonset huts on this old abandoned airstrip. So we spent just about two months inspecting these vehicles. I had to write up every one of those vehicles. Get the serial numbers and the vehicle types and all this and that. We had to start each one and make sure. We had to carry batteries and all kinds of stuff. So again, I lucked out real good. So when I came back to the base after all that mess, they put me in quality control, so I had charge of quality control. See, this was the first time that I had ever really felt part of the air force, because the 1094th to me was always part of the army. We drew our rations from the army. You know, everything come from the army, our vehicles and everything. Although when we got to Manzano [Base] and the air force became a unit of its own, we did start buying new pickups for the air force.

SK: What did you do after you got out of the military?

EJL: I went and moved to Lubbock, Texas, and went into business for myself, then I moved to San Diego, to here [Las Vegas], to San Francisco, back to here [Las Vegas]. Florida, I worked down there a couple of years, back to here [Las Vegas], and I've been here [Las Vegas] ever since. And I worked for the airlines from 1961 to '85, for the old National Airlines, and then I worked for Western Airlines. I worked for Lockheed Aircraft as an aircraft fueler and mechanic. So I've done several things.

SK: Did your family go to London with you?

EJL: Yes. That's a whole other story. But yeah.

SK: When you were at Killeen Base, how were the bombs transported from storage to the railhead?

EJL: They were transported on flatbed trailers, either 25-foot lowboys or 40-foot trailers. And they were crated. They weren't out in the open or they weren't covered with tarps or anything. Now how they were covered in the crates, I don't know. I don't know whether bomb trailers were put in the crates. I don't think so. I just think the bombs were put in the crates. But they were transported from the plants to the igloos on these bomb trailers, and covered, they just had tarps laying over them because they didn't go that far and then they were put in these igloos. But from there to the railhead they were in crates. I never saw one out. And there were several different. Like I say, I don't know how many types of weapons because there were big crates, little crates, all kinds, so it might have been in these different-size crates all went together, so it might have been all parts of a bomb, I don't know. I wasn't privy to the crating and all that kind of stuff.

SK: What sort of information did you cover in driver school? You were a driver instructor, right?

EJL: Yes. It was just general for your driver's license.

SK: Did a lot of the people who came in not have a license?

EJL: Everybody that comes into the military has to have a military driver's license. Even if you have a civilian, you still have to take training for military vehicles, which is stupid. But like I say, I trained on everything from a 1/4-ton vehicle to a 20-ton wrecker, so I did all this out on my own, and I would get into a 20-ton wrecker and I would drive it around and figure out how it worked and all this and that. I didn't actually do the training per se. I did the driving tests.

So a guy would come along and say he needed a license to drive a wrecker. "Okay, what kind of experience have you got?" "Well, I don't have any." Okay, then he would have to take a written test, and then I would go with him and show him what to do and everything. And he would take a driver's test, and if he could pass it fine. If not, he would have to take more training. So it was kind of like civilian driver. We had the written test, then we had the oral test, and then we had the depth perception. We had this little machine with two strings on it, and it was set way out there and you had to align these two pegs up, get them close to the cross. That was for your depth perception. So I did that, and I graded them, stuff like that.

SK: Did anybody ever flunk?

EJL: Oh yeah, I had a lot of guys flunk, guys especially from back east. You could tell they were from back east, you know, the way they talk and stuff, because they didn't own cars. Not all of them. I mean they would pass eventually. And most of the vehicles I did, really, like I say, there on Killeen [Base] we had jeeps, weapons carriers, personnel carriers, a couple of armored cars, 2 1/2-ton trucks. We had two wreckers I believe. We had three buses. Kind of civilian-type vehicles except for the 2 1/2-ton what have you. Then we had a couple of drag lines, which the civilians operated most of that heavy equipment. They did like the roads on the base and keeping the ditches clean from the runoff. That was done, although we did have one staff sergeant, a big guy, he operated one of the drag lines because he did it in his civilian life, so he knew what was going on.

SK: So the maintenance for Killeen Base was mostly done by civilians?

EJL: Ground maintenance, yeah, that was all done by Civil Service. In our maintenance shop we had two civilian mechanics. They were Civil Service. And then the grounds maintenance, and of course, we had electricians, plumbers, grounds keepers.

SK: Would they have Q clearance too?

EJL: Not to my knowledge, no, not Q clearance. They had base clearance. They weren't allowed, they never went up on the hills. Now that's not true either. They did go up on the hills, but those that went up there, like grading. See, the roads up on the mountain were not paved. Just hard rock. Are they paved now?

SK: No.

EJL: They're still just. Oh yeah. These civilians would go up there and take a grader, like after maybe a heavy rain, or too much traffic, and then they would go up and grade the roads. When they did, there was always a guard truck with them. I don't know if it was because they didn't have a Q clearance. I would say yes, probably. They just had a base clearance just to get on the base. And then down of course, around headquarters building they kept the grass cut around the building. Stuff like that. Then of course, the plumbers did the work wherever they were needed. They must have had plumbers up on the hill too, I don't really know. But I do remember them when they would grade the upper road there that was still

gravel, there was always a guard vehicle that stayed with them. You know, they'd follow them and what have you.

SK: How would you get the orders to drive around the VIPs? Who would contact you?

EJL: Our maintenance officer, Captain Beverly, and his orders I think came from Major Barr. I think Major Barr and the captain would get together and Major Barr would say, "Okay, you've got so many VIPs coming in. Have so many vehicles ready to go to Fort Hood, so many drivers." Of course, Captain Beverly would pass it on to the motor pool sergeant. You know, he'd have to go through the chain of command, and I don't even remember who he was. And then he would tell his drivers, "So-and-so, you're driving the bus, you're driving a staff car," what have you. That's the way I used to get it. The motor pool sergeant would say, "Lowell, Major Barr wants you to drive staff car this," or, "I want you to drive the bus." That's what we did, like that.

SK: So did you drive more than one person around at a time sometimes? Were there big groups that you would take around?

EJL: Yes, sometimes we'd have maybe two buses. We had two 37-passenger buses, and maybe one bus would be full and the other one half full, something like that, and then the military would be in the staff car. That's why I was saying I drove General Hershey from Fort Hood up to the plants and had to wait for them to do their stuff and what have you. Then at that time there may be one or two buses following us up there, and they'd be going in groups through the plants and what have you. Like I say, I don't know who they were. I don't know whether they were senators or congressmen. The only thing I knew is the military because they'd be in uniform.

SK: Would you just sit with the vehicle while they were doing their thing?

EJL: Right.

SK: You didn't go along?

EJL: No, we had to stay with the vehicle.

SK: Did they just want to go to Fort Hood and Killeen Base, or did you take them anywhere else around the area?

EJL: No. They couldn't wait to get back to Fort Hood to get to the officers' club. To be honest with you, we used to take our time a lot of times. So they could wait to get to the club.

SK: What was at the officers' club?

EJL: That's where they could get their booze and dances and whatever have you.

SK: So you couldn't go to the officers' club.

EJL: No. We drove them to it, but we couldn't go in. Now they did let us go in the kitchen when we were waiting on them, what have you, and we could get something to eat out of the kitchen. But we of course, weren't allowed in.

SK: Did you have to take them from the officers' club back to Fort Hood then? Did you have to wait for them?

EJL: The officers' club was on Fort Hood.

SK: You didn't have to bus them back to where they were staying?

EJL: They stayed in what was called the BOQ, bachelor officers' quarters, on the base as far as we knew. Like we would take them from the officers' club to the BOQ [bachelor officers' quarters], and then we don't know where they went, we don't know whether they stayed there, whether they got on a train, airplane. We didn't know what was going on.

SK: What was the most difficult piece of equipment to keep running? Was there one piece that would kind of consistently break down?

EJL: Yeah, at Manzano [Base]. Of course, this wasn't at Killeen Base. Killeen Base, the most trouble vehicle to keep running was jeeps because the cotton-picking cars, the guards, they didn't care how they drove them. They'd speed up, slam the brakes hard, grind the gears. Jeeps used to break axles real easy, and I don't know how many hundred of axles we replaced. Manzano [Base] was a different story and we had civilian pickups up there, Chevrolet pickups, and those guards used to just tear them up. You know, they didn't care. And that was about the biggest thing. The rest of the vehicles were pretty well taken care of. Like convoys and stuff, because they knew in these convoys the vehicles had to be in good shape. And we did have some good guys that worked in maintenance. I mean they were conscientious and they did keep them up good. Weapons carriers were kept in good shape, the armored cars were kept up in real good shape, staff cars of course, were keep up in good shape. The biggest things was jeeps, and when they were on patrol where nobody could see them, you know, *"Eeeeeee!"*

SK: But they were only supposed to go 15 miles per hour, right?

EJL: Yeah, tell me about that. Like I would go on a road test with a vehicle, and you could see around the back these dust clouds. Well, you knew they were driving more than 15 miles an hour. And you could tell by the time they would get back to the main gate again that they had to be driving 40 and 50 miles faster than they should go.

SK: Was there any difference between the equipment that you maintained at Plant 1 and Plant 2?

EJL: No, it was the same thing. Yeah, we had the same vehicles. I don't even remember which one was. I think Ray [Gardner] might have had one or two more pieces of equipment than I did.

SK: So basically Plant 1 and Plant 2, they had the same function?

EJL: Same function, as far as we knew. Like I say, I worked Plant 2 when Ray [Gardner] was either on leave or couldn't get there, something like that, and Plant 2 was set up identical to Plant 1. You could go into one and you wouldn't know which one you were in. Even the day room, if I remember correctly, they both had Coke machines in them, they both had a little like a coffee table where they had magazines. The restrooms were the same. So yeah.

SK: At what point did you start talking about what you did at Killeen Base?

EJL: I never did. Right here. That's why I'm asking you how long this thing has been declassified.

SK: At least since the '80s.

EJL: Okay. Because you know we took an oath not to talk about stuff.

SK: That's some feedback that we got from a couple of people who wanted to talk to somebody at Fort Hood before they would be interviewed.

EJL: I thought about that, but then I got to thinking in the stuff that you sent me, you mentioned Manzano [Base]. Well, Manzano [Base], when they had the reunion in Albuquerque for the 1094th, they stated in there that we would be bused from downtown or from some place to Manzano [Base] and be taken on a tour. So I assumed Manzano [Base] must be like Killeen [Base], it must be closed. I don't know whether Manzano [Base] is closed or not.

SK: There was also a reunion at Killeen Base in '94, I think it was, and they got a tour of Killeen Base at that time.

EJL: I didn't get anything on that. So that's why I wasn't too concerned when you called me and I got this. I figured it's all got to be declassified, so I won't go to jail. I was threatened with jail and 10 years' imprisonment and $250,000 fine. Oh, all kinds of stuff.

SK: A lot of the people that I talked to said that they would talk about it at reunions, but other than that they really didn't talk about it.

EJL: Since I found out through that reunion in Albuquerque that Manzano [Base] was opened up, I've talked to people about what I did at Manzano [Base] and stuff. But before that, did I ever talk to you about it, Deanna?

DEJL: No.

SK: Did you have any information that you were privileged to over, say like a guard ,about how things worked?

EJL: Yes, yes, I think I was privileged to more information than the guards. The guards, I don't know, now I could be wrong on this, I don't think any of the guards had Q clearance. I think they had like a base clearance, whatever it was called, A, B, C, or whatever have you. In fact, I think some badges did have a C. Yes, it's coming back a little bit. Yeah, some of them had an A, which A was nothing but headquarters. In other words, they worked in headquarters and that was it. B, I don't know. C seems to me was the guards. I don't think any of them had Q clearance. There wasn't too many Q clearances. I mean everybody on Killeen Base didn't have a Q clearance. I remember when I got mine, of course, I didn't know what's a Q clearance, and Major Barr is the one that got my and Ray Gardner our Q clearances, or told us that we had a Q clearance. And that's the other reason that I made rank pretty fast, because they needed somebody to have some rank that could access these places and know what to do. Not that we were any smarter, but it was just that they needed somebody with a Q clearance to get into these areas where the equipment was to work on, what have you. But not too many.

Now I know the civilians that worked in the maintenance, they didn't have no Q clearance. I think they were either A or B, something like that. They had access to come through the main gate, go to their job, work their job, back off the base again. They couldn't go here or there or whatever have you. They weren't even allowed to go from maintenance to the headquarters building, which everything was in walking distance. They were allowed to work on vehicles, but they weren't allowed to road test them. That's where I came in, I had to do the road testing on them. Even the military that worked in there, they could drive the vehicles around. I don't mean that. But I would get my little road test sign and hang it on

there, and I went places I wasn't supposed to, you know, but killed some time. Like I say, I was privy to a lot of that stuff. That's why I enjoyed it so much.

SK: How much extra protection did you have to have going to the railhead? You said you had an escort in front.

EJL: Yes.

SK: Did you have an escort behind too?

EJL: Yes. Usually it was a weapons carrier. At the front of the vehicle you'd have an officer, and I don't know who he was, I don't know what his name was. And then behind him you would have a jeep with a radio mounted, and at the back of the convoy you'd have another jeep, usually with a sergeant in it, would have a radio in it so that they could communicate between them in case something happened. Like when my truck broke down that time, the guy at the back called him, and then they stopped the whole convoy. And then usually right behind that jeep we usually had a weapons carrier with a machine gun mounted on it or an armored car with a .50-caliber machine gun on it. There are two different types of armored cars. There's an M20, which carries the cannon, which I have never seen in real. They're made exactly like the M8 that carries the .50[-caliber], but one carries the cannon and one carries the .50[-caliber]. We had an M8, and there would usually be one at the front and one at the back, and then a lot of times you'd have like a weapons carrier.

And then when we got into Fort Hood, when we turned into, I call it the west gate because it was on the west side of Fort Hood. Might have been the north gate, I don't know. But when you turn in there at the west gate to get on Fort Hood proper, then our escort would pull over and the MPs at Fort Hood would pick us up and take us to the railhead. And then when we'd come back again, our escort was usually gone because we didn't have anything on our vehicles that were empty, so we could just go back to the base on our own.

SK: When they transferred the bombs from the plants to the storage igloos, did they have to have protection at that time?

EJL: No, because they were on the secure area on the hill.

SK: Did the plant workers move those, or did they need your assistance for that?

EJL: I assume that it was the plant workers, because they used these electric tugs to pull them out of the tunnels, and they didn't go down the road that far. Now if they did have to transfer them farther, they would bring them out on these electric tugs. These electric tugs were just a vehicle with a big huge battery in the back, a nickel-alkaline battery, and a steering wheel and brakes and gear. They can pull those out to the road, and if they had to go say to the first igloo, they would use this electric tug. But all our electric equipment had hard rubber tires. They weren't like car tires, they were hard rubber tires, so they couldn't go down the roads too good, so they would have either a jeep or most of the time a weapons carrier. Now weapons carriers would pull down to the igloos. You know, back them in and what have you, and then come back up. This was done by plant personnel. The only time we were involved, motor pool personnel or maintenance personnel, was when they were moving it from the igloos to Fort Hood. That's the only time we were involved. We did the convoy work.

SK: Is there a reason why the equipment was electric and not gas or diesel?

EJL: Oh yes, definitely you couldn't use gasoline equipment in the tunnels. You'd die. You'd die pretty quick. So everything had to be electric. Even though you had ventilation, I mean can

you imagine a gas vehicle throwing out that emission? Ugh! Yeah, you wouldn't last very long in those tunnels, so everything had to be electric. And plus for fire protection and stuff like that.

SK: Would you charge everything? You were in charge of that?

EJL: Oh yeah, yeah. Ray Gardner and I, and we did that for, oh gee, I don't remember how long. It had to be, oh, at least two years we took care of that stuff. That's why I say him and I were always pretty proud that we never had a vehicle break down, never had one that didn't operate when it was needed. And I think we got some recognition through our maintenance officer, Captain Beverly, he was pretty proud of that record, you know, because, of course, we didn't get anything out of it except for, you know, a little recognition, thank yous and stuff like that, which was fine. But that was all. And all the stuff that we used was nickel stuff.

SK: Were the plant workers there when you got there with the 8455?

EJL: Yeah, they had to be, yeah, because the plants were operational because the army had the place. And I assume that it was army personnel working the plants until the air force come in and relieve them. And I assume that was air force personnel working the plants.

SK: Did you ever get a feeling for why it transferred to the air force? Why didn't the army keep it?

EJL: No, I just figured when you're in the service like that, you know, you pull a tour of duty. I just figured okay, the army has pulled their tour of duty here. And then I always thought that when the air force got it, we got it, and then when we left and went to Albuquerque, just for some reason I figured the navy moved in, and then after the navy would be the marines. You know, it would be a service-related deal with all branches of the service. I didn't know the army came back again. And I'm not sure, why did the air force take over from the army, then the army take it back? That never made much sense.

SK: Yes, that's something that we don't know. We haven't talked to any of them, but we have contacts for some of the army people who were there after the 1094th. We just haven't talked to them yet.

EJL: And another thing that upset us so much at the air force deal is that army could wear their division patch or their unit patch or what have you. We couldn't do that. See, we tried our best to get an air force patch with the atomic symbol, I don't know what you call it. Anyhow, it's where the atoms are circulating. We couldn't do that. We couldn't have that patch. We couldn't have anything with the 1094th at all. All we could wear was just the regular air force patch. So we were always upset about that. I mean how come the army can show their division or their regiment, whatever the hell you call it, how can they do that and how come we can't do it?

SK: Did you have a patch and you just couldn't wear it?

EJL: Oh no, we didn't ever have a patch. Even when I was Manzano [Base], see, we couldn't wear one because it was atomic related, the emblem, the symbol. Whenever I would get a deal for the 1094th reunion, they've got that on the paper. We never were allowed to wear that.

SK: Were the fences up when you go there?

EJL: Yes.

SK: What was your impression of that?

EJL: That's what made me realize that it was something more than just a regular base. And especially, like I say, I was old enough during World War II. In fact, I ran away from home when I was 12 years old. Joined the service when I come here, see, so I mean I was a lot more mature than a lot of the fellows because I had been on my own so long. That's why I knew the day that we landed at Killeen Base and I saw that B-29 sitting there with that A on the tail, plus that draping over the bomb bay door, that it had to be something to do with atomic. Plus the fact that we'd seen movies at Kelly Field, you know, training films.

SK: Did you say you joined the service at 12?

EJL: Yeah, I ran away from home and changed my birth certificate.

SK: So you said that you were 19 when you joined?

EJL: Well, my mother—this is the thing, now. Is this going down on the recording? Because I don't want anything in the transcript. You would think they'd have caught that. Anyhow, I'll shut up.

SK: Have you ever heard the term First Provost Security Squadron?

EJL: Yes! Yes! I was going to ask you about that. Okay. When I got out of the service, I got my 201 records and all. Okay, in my moving about—I went through a nasty second divorce, so I was moving about—and I had my foot locker from the service. I had all of my stuff in there. I had my 201 record, and I left it in San Francisco at a friend's house up there. Well, this so-called friend moved, and I didn't know where they were at, so I forgot all about it for about 25 years. I get a phone call from a woman up in Washington that I knew while she was a friend. I can't remember their names. Anyhow, but she had gotten divorced and remarried again, and she had all my records. She had kept them with her all these years, including my footlocker. So she sent me all this stuff, and this was in there. It's kind of beat up now. See, that's when I was over at Sculthorpe. This thing is kind of dirty, dusty. Them is my old dog tags. She sent me this stuff, and I remember looking at my 201 file and I thought, That's it! I was in the First Provost [Security] Squadron first! We were attached to the 8455th when we first got to Killeen [Base], and then the 1094th was formed after that. But I had forgotten all about the First Provost [Security] Squadron. You know, provost means military police, so evidently the First Provost [Security Squadron] was part of a military police that was attached to the 8455th army, so it all come together. I'm glad you mentioned that, because I had forgotten about that. Yeah! Where did you hear about that?

SK: I had just a little history of weapons storage sites, and I think I just picked that up in here.

EJL: It surprised me that you mentioned that.

SK: I'll make a copy of this.

EJL: Would you! Oh I'd appreciate that. Yeah, when you mentioned that, I'd forgotten. In fact, I told Dee, First Provost [Security Squadron], I've heard of that some place, I don't remember it. But that was probably the first outfit probably at Kelly Field is where that was formed to come to Killeen Base, First Provost [Security] Squadron, or whatever it was called. Then we worked with the 8455th until they left, and then it was still the First Provost [Security Squadron] until it was changed to the 1094th. I'll be darned.

SK: Did you ever hear the term ABC tunnel?

EJL: No.

SK: Or ADT room?

EJL: No.

SK: The ADT room was where all of the security systems were back in the plant, and the ABC tunnel, I'm not sure what was in there, but everybody I've interviewed said that that's the area that they didn't have access to.

EJL: See, that could be that tunnel that run from the back, like with this first cross tunnel, it could have been that tunnel that went across the back here. You know, it might have been a big tunnel, like the first too. Yeah, I had no access to that, no.

SK: So it was you and Ray [Gardner].

EJL: Yes.

SK: And then you had other people working for you as well?

EJL: No, not really working for me, no. I mean, there were some that—at Killeen Base, I didn't really supervise there. I did at Manzano [Base]. I was supervisor at Manzano [Base]. But there at Killeen Base it was more or less, "Lowell, take so-and-so and do so-and-so." Or, "So-and-so, go with Lowell. He knows what to do." Something like that, not really working for me on a regular basis, like, you know. Ray [Gardner] was a staff sergeant when I was a buck sergeant, and then the air force come into its own and I was an airman first class and he was still staff sergeant, then I made staff sergeant. And we worked together. I didn't work for him. He didn't work for me. The only sergeant that I ever worked directly for that I can remember was a guy by the name of Wilson, and he was a—well, I won't go into that, but he was terrible. He was in charge of the maintenance shop on the base. Enlisted men, in charge of that. Didn't know his left foot from his right. But Ray [Gardner] and I both more or less had to work for him. Maintenance had to work for him. And then Sergeant Foster, he was a tech sergeant, he was my buddy. He was a real nice guy. Him and I were really close friends. He came in and we kind of ignored Wilson and we would just kind of hang with Foster. If he told us something, we did it. If Wilson told us to do something, "Yeah, okay, Sarge." We'd get it done, but we wouldn't do like Howard did, Howard Foster. He was just a real nice. He was from Nebraska, an old farm boy. Anyhow, I didn't really work for any one individual really, because I was privileged that I had experience before I went into the service, and it was on my 201 file, and I guess when they read it, you know, Here this guy's got experience, you know. And I know that's one reason I made my rank so fast, because once I left Manzano [Base] and got into the regular air force, I stayed a staff sergeant because my AFSC was froze because they didn't have no room to move up. That's one reason I got out of the service, because I was going to make a career out of it, but I had a family, and being staff sergeant wages, I couldn't hack it. So that was one reason that I got out.

SK: Did Ray [Gardner] have prior training too?

EJL: No, he did not. I'll be honest with you, I don't know where Ray [Gardner] came from. He wasn't really a mechanic. I think what he was, more than anything, I think he was just a motor pool driver. Wherever he came from, I don't know. I think he came from Alabama, Montgomery, but I'm not real—it's funny, because as close as we were and everything, I just never asked him. But like I say, he wanted to be a mechanic, so him and I, well, I got us into that school at Fort Hood, and he was a fast learner, but he didn't like to get his hands dirty. So he was good, and he fit right in, working in the plants, because that was kind of clean

work, except if you had to pull one of those wheels off and grease them, you know, and stuff like that. And he would do it, and he did it, and he did a good job. But he wasn't into getting dirty very much. And I was just the opposite. Ever since I was a kid, you know, I'd always worked in stuff like that.

SK: There was a lot of covert operations going on at Killeen Base. Not covert operations, but purposely trying to prevent sabotage, with the different levels of clearance. Do you ever think there was a threat from Russians or communists?

EJL: I never felt that way, I really didn't. I just always felt very secure. The base was laid out, as far as I was concerned, which was you might say invade proof because of the fences, and working with the 8455th, patrolling that fence, there wasn't just a whole lot of ways, as far as I was concerned, that anybody could break security at the base. Unless they did it on the back side where you couldn't have radio contact, but then again, like I say, Fort Hood, they always had tanks out there and companies of soldiers and stuff out there bivouacking and training, whatever have you. Now I say training, they might have been out there for the purpose of guarding that back side of the base, which probably was really true. But as far as it being secured, I felt very secure.

SK: Was there any fear of any like double agents or anything like that?

EJL: Never. Not to my knowledge, no. Not to my knowledge. We were never put on any kind of a security breach alert. We were never on that. The only time that we were put on alert and security was tightened was when we had an operation going on, and that was to keep, I think more than anything, civilian personnel from getting close to the plants to see what was going on. Maybe not only civilians but military personnel that weren't Q cleared. Like even transporting between Killeen Base and Fort Hood, I always felt very secure, the way it was handled. It seemed like everybody knew what they were doing, even the young people. And like I was talking earlier, when we had an operation it was always chaos, but it was controlled chaos. I mean everybody looked like they knew what they were doing, where they were supposed to be, and everything seemed always, you know, just go off good.

SK: Did Fort Hood have a prison or a jail?

EJL: Oh yes.

SK: Did you ever escort prisoners?

EJL: No, not there, but I did to Killeen Base, or Killeen rather, civilian jail. We had a few guys, again, when I was attached to the 8455th, we had a few guys that got drunk in Killeen and raised some hell and stuff, and instead of taking them to the Fort Hood post lockup, they just locked them up in civilian jail and we'd go in and get them and bring them back to the base.

SK: Did you go in as a friend and go get them?

EJL: Well, I would be in uniform. Yeah, we'd go in as being attached to the 8455th. We were considered MPs, which I never considered myself to be. We would go in as a friend. It was just a matter of going in and signing them. Kind of like signing them out. The Killeen police, they were pretty good, because not only did they have a few air force that they tangled with, but a lot of army. So they were pretty good about it, yeah.

SK: At the time, did it seem like you and the people at Killeen Base were part of something bigger?

EJL: No, not really. I always felt that we were just a storage facility. We knew what was going on. We knew that things were being assembled, and we knew that they were being stored, and we knew that they were being shipped, but we had no idea where, by who, whether it was civilian trains or whether it was military trains. I have no idea.

SK: The bombs were in part because of the Cold War. They were building and storing these bombs because of the amping up of the Cold War. Did you consider yourself part of the Cold War?

EJL: Well, yeah. Of course, the Korean War was going on, and I considered that more important than the Cold War. But yeah, according to what was going on with Russia at that time and everything, I figured that we were storing nuclear weapons because of an all-out nuclear war. So the Cold War, yeah, I considered part of that.

SK: What do you think about the Cold War?

EJL: I think it was a big farce.

SK: Do you think it was necessary to stockpile all that stuff?

EJL: No, no I don't. I never did think that. I never did. I think with the nuclear weapons that we had right after the Second [World] War, after the bombing of Japan, we still had several nuclear weapons. I always thought that was enough. All this other stuff I thought was a waste of money and a waste of military time as well as civilian time.

SK: Did you know that Russia was also building bombs?

EJL: Oh yeah, I think every civilian and military person knew that, again from the news and what have you. News reels, you know, they're testing, that was always on the air, you know, Russia set off a nuclear device, or whatever happened.

SK: So do you think that the United States was just amping up and stockpiling because Russia was?

EJL: Yeah, I think that was it, more than anything. Because you know, it doesn't take with a nuclear weapon, it doesn't take that many to destroy. You know, one nuclear weapon wipes out Moscow, one of theirs wipes out Washington[, D.C.]. So you don't have to stockpile thousands and thousands of them. You know. Now they've got nuclear weapons, of course, you know, that are handheld that has the little warhead on them. I just think it was a waste of taxpayers' money, and a way to keep the general population hyped up, keep them in a nervous state all the time. I don't think it was good. I don't think it was good for the nation.

SK: How do you reflect on your time at Killeen Base?

EJL: Enjoyable. Lonesome in a way. Even though I was married and lived off base, it was good. Actually the two months that I lived on the base, I didn't mind it too bad. Again, I was privileged where I could do a lot of things. Like I could sneak into the mess hall at night by working, I could sneak in there and get me something to eat, get me a sandwich or something. The guys that lived on the base were good. We used to see movies on the base. Some guys would have movies. Day room, we had pool tables and ping-pong tables in there. Didn't have no TV because there was no TV back then. Well, I guess there was TVs, but we didn't have any. When I first got there, like I said, they had slot machines, but that only lasted I think about a week and they pulled the slot machines out. But over in the living facilities were good. The bays were good. They were big, they were well kept. The food, like I say, the mess

hall food, and we had some little vending machines, you know, for snacks. But the food even in the mess hall, I always enjoyed military food. It was always satisfying and always plenty. So yeah, I enjoyed Killeen Base. I liked the country around when I got out. But the everyday life, I mean like I say, Ray [Gardner] and I, our families, we would maybe drive to McGregor and Gatesville and Temple and Belton. I think Temple is one of the prettiest little towns. I don't know how it is. Of course, a lot of the GIs used to go there because there was a nursing school there. Now Belton was a nice little town. It was smaller, of course. Yeah, the guys from the base and the guys from Fort Hood also used to go to Temple because of the nursing school there for women, you know. But I liked Temple and Belton, Gatesville, McGregor, and all those places. And Lampasas. We used to go to Lampasas in the summer. They had a big swimming pool there. That was the closest place you could go swimming. Just things like that. It wasn't bad.

SK: What do you think should be done with the buildings and the tunnels? Do you think that they should be used? Do you think that they should be open to the public?

EJL: Definitely open to the public, and restore what was there, I think. You know, this to me is discouraging, because Killeen Base was a tight little community. And it was small. But open it to the public to where they could see what the tunnels were, what was down there. You know, you could have a little tour of it. But to use it again as a military base, I don't think so.

SK: What do you want the military or civilians to know about your role at Killeen Base?

EJL: I don't know.

SK: Do you think that what you did was important to be included in the fabric of the Cold War history?

EJL: Oh yeah, I think so, because I feel this way, since all this is coming up and everything, I feel that if I hadn't been there to do my job, that if my job hadn't been done and done right, the people above me, they couldn't have done their job and done it right, or the people below me couldn't have done their job and done it right. So yeah, I think I played a big part. Not just me, but the air force at Killeen Base, I think we played a big part in the Cold War.

SK: Do you have any additional comments perhaps that you want to share?

EJL: Not really. No, I think we pretty well covered everything.

SK: Well, that's all my questions. Do you have any questions for me?

EJL: No, not really. Like I say, if you've got a list of the personnel that was there from '48. Now Manzano [Base], I don't care about Manzano [Base] because I only had you might say three good buddies there, and one of them went overseas with me to England. The other two I don't know what happened to them. I don't know what happened to Ray [Gardner] or Howard Foster. I've often wondered. Now my first wife, she kept in touch with Ray's wife, Boots. I don't remember Boots' real name. I think it was Ruth. We called her Boots. They kept in touch I think for a few years, but I don't know. And I'm sure, I would imagine Ray [Gardner] is probably gone, and I imagine Howard [Foster] is gone too.

SK: Well, I've got a list. I don't know if it is comprehensive or not, but I have a pretty long list of the 1094th people. And I'll also get you a copy of this article.

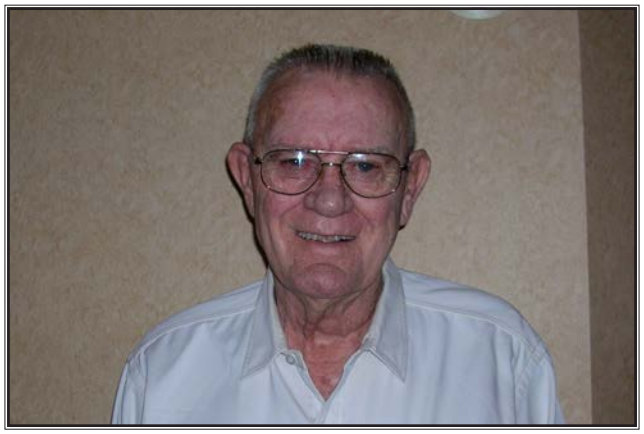
EJL: Okay, that one I would like, yeah.

SK: Also I have some pictures that I'll send with your transcript, and if they trigger anything you can just jot that down.

EJL: If I think of anything else. I think we've pretty well covered everything. I can't think of anything else. Most any other thing we would talk about would be just stories of things that happened. You know, little odds and ends that happened.

Jack Lee McCoy

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase



AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Monday, September 14, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Jack Lee McCoy. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron of the U.S. Air Force is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you first became a member of the service?

JLM: Seventeen.

AED: Seventeen, and you were enlisted?

JLM: Yes.

AED: Yes. All right. What ranks did you achieve?

JLM: At Killeen [Base]?

AED: Yes.

JLM: Private, private first class, corporal, sergeant.

AED: And after Killeen [Base]?

JLM: Staff sergeant, tech sergeant.

AED: You didn't serve elsewhere? Killeen Base was your first stop?

JLM: No.

AED: Did you go to Lackland [Air Force Base]?

JLM: I went to Lackland [Air Force Base].

AED: Lackland [Air Force Base] first. All right.

JLM: And then we went to Kelly Air Force Base for 30 days' training, and then we went to Killeen [Base].

AED: What was the training at Lackland [Air Force Base]?

JLM: Basic training.

AED: All right. Then Kelly [Air Force Base], what was the training at Kelly [Air Force Base]?

JLM: How to learn how to drive a jeep.

AED: Was there some tricky—?

JLM: Military police training.

AED: Then did you serve in any other group besides the 1094th at any point?

JLM: Oh, I couldn't list them all.

AED: Oh really?

JLM: I spent 20 years in the air force.

AED: Career practically.

JLM: Yes.

AED: Was this the group you were with the longest, the 1094th?

JLM: Well, I had four different career fields.

AED: You did? Tell me. Let me know all the different things you did.

JLM: Okay, I went in the air police at Killeen [Base], and then from there I went to Manzano [Base]. I went to Wichita Falls Sheppard Air Force Base for aircraft and engine mechanic school. Then I went to Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois for advanced jet engine school. Then the next school I had was ballistic missile electronics technician, and I retired as a technician.

AED: You did? What did you do after retirement?

JLM: I went to work for a company called Moore Business Force.

AED: Are they in Abilene?

JLM: Oh, they're worldwide.

AED: Oh, they are? I'm not familiar with them.

JLM: Well, most of the paperwork you have is from Moore or Standard Register or Oracle.

AED: It's just not the company name I'm familiar with. Did you see any overseas duty during that period?

JLM: Yes.

AED: Where did you go overseas?

JLM: TDY. Temporary duty [yonder] to England, Alaska. Spent three years on Guam. Norway. That's about all I can think of. Japan.

AED: Did you spend big chunks of time in those places or were they—?

JLM: Three years on Guam was the longest. My family and I was station on Guam for 34 months on a permanent change of station. That was the only permanent duty overseas. All the rest were temporary duties. Alaska was 65 days. French Morocco was 90 days. Norway for one week for an air show. Temporary duty from England back to the U.S.A. for a Strategic Air Command bombing competition lasting about 10 days. Then back to England to finish out the temporary duty. England was 60 days.

AED: And these were because of your affiliation with the—?

JLM: Aircraft. The B-47 jet bomber.

AED: Aircraft, all right. You served at Killeen Base and at Manzano [Base]. Did you serve at any other national storage sites?

JLM: No.

AED: Did you receive any medals or special awards for your work?

JLM: Yes, but I couldn't name them all.

AED: Really? Well, that kind of speaks volumes that you—more than a good conduct medal, I bet.

JLM: Well, yes. I got four rows of medals, so I couldn't name them all.

AED: Oh my gosh, wow. Was that also with your affiliation with the—?

JLM: All services. See, when we first went in, it was the air force, but the air force had just started. We had army uniforms, and so our medals were army medals. Like you mentioned a good conduct medal. That was an army medal.

AED: That's army. Oh, I didn't realize that.

JLM: Yes. So I got both the army and air force good conduct medals.

AED: Is there an award you're particularly proud of, of your many?

JLM: No. Korean unit citation. Presidential unit citation. Commendation Medal.

AED: What is that for?

JLM: United States Commendation Medal?

AED: Yes. For particular service during a particular period of time.

AED: About Killeen Base, when did you arrive there?

JLM: September of '48. Ours was the first group.

AED: So it was with the procurement, or I'm saying that wrong, before it was the 1094th?

JLM: Yes, it was the First Provost Security Squadron.

AED: That's it, [First Provost Security Squadron], that's it, right. How did you get there? Physically, how were you transported?

JLM: I think by airplane, but I don't recall. I had a brain aneurysm in '86, so there's a lot that—

AED: Well, we'll take what we can get! What was your impression? Do you remember what you thought about when you first saw Killeen Base?

JLM: Just another base, but four fences around it.

AED: Because you'd been, by that point, at Lackland and Kelly [Air Force Bases].

JLM: Kelly [Air Force Base].

AED: And then here's just another—

JLM: Well, my dad was military too, so I was on other bases. Black Hills Ordnance Depot in South Dakota, which was a bomb storage depot. Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois. I was an army brat.

AED: So you moved around a lot.

JLM: Yes, a little bit, yes.

AED: Were you at Killeen Base until the 1094th moved to Manzano [Base]?

JLM: Right.

AED: What kind of security clearance did you need to work at Killeen Base?

JLM: Top-secret Q.

AED: And how did you get that? Was there a process?

JLM: Yes. The FBI checked you out.

AED: Really? They checked you and—?

JLM: All my friends, my relatives.

AED: Really? Do you know what kinds of questions they were asking?

JLM: Well, no, [no]. No, I didn't.

AED: Right, right.

JLM: Was I good boy?

AED: You weren't very old. You couldn't have been too bad! At Killeen Base, what were your specific duties there?

JLM: Security. What jobs?

AED: Yes. What did that entail?

JLM: I worked the main gate. I worked all of them. I done perimeter patrol. I stood outside in the rain guarding a couple of atomic bombs that were left outside during the night. I was a plant sergeant for inside plant security.

AED: A plant sergeant. What is that? I don't know what that means.

JLM: Well, there was a crew of airmen, security people, inside the plant that—there was a room that there was a guard on that only certain people could go in that room. Two or three rooms like that if I remember right. And then of course, there was a tunnel. You've seen the tunnel. Well, there was a guard at the second door. I was in charge of the guards inside the tunnel and outside the tunnel there's pillboxes. Not pillboxes, but machine gun nests.

AED: Right. Yes, they're not as substantial as a pillbox, right?

JLM: No. If I remember right, they were just nests in the ground. They got wet.

AED: So there was some security deeper in the tunnels as well?

JLM: Security inside the tunnel? Yes, at the entrance door to the work areas.

AED: So when you first walk up to the tunnel, there's someone here [pointing to photograph of tunnel entrance].

JLM: Yes.

AED: Just right at the front?

JLM: At the second door at the far end of the tunnel.

AED: And then you go in and there's another set of doors, and there's another person there. I'm not sure I'm going to find this [looking through photographs]. There's this kind of door, too [showing photograph of door inside tunnel].

JLM: That I'm not familiar with.

AED: I want to say I think that's called a blast door, and it's further in.

JLM: Well, this is not the tunnel because we didn't—on [Plant] 1, at the time I was there, I don't remember an extra room being out here on the side.

AED: I think that's recent. I think that's been put up in the maybe 1990s or something like that. I don't think it was there. Well, I know it wasn't.

JLM: And these doors, these doors look were really too flimsy.

AED: There's one set of doors they replaced. I thought that those were original, but I might have them flipped with the other side of the tunnel.

JLM: I don't know that these doors don't look as—

AED: They don't look right?

JLM: No.

AED: Did you go in places like the equipment room where they had these kinds of [looking for photograph]—this is kind of blurry, but this kind of stuff [showing photograph]? Or would somebody—?

JLM: No. These were the rooms that were guarded by an exterior guard sitting at the door and only certain people could get into it. I never went into it.

AED: Right. But when you said you were sergeant, you would be working with people who did sit there.

JLM: Yes, when they come in the door, we'd check them in and stuff, but I didn't become familiar with any of them, friends, or whatever you might say.

AED: Do you want to look at these [sharing photographs]?

JLM: Sure. Whoa, there's a bunch of them.

AED: Yes, there's a lot of them. A lot of them are repetitive. There's a lot of the equipment room.

JLM: Well, a lot of this stuff. When was you there? A couple of years ago?

AED: We were there last, a year ago August, so August 2008.

JLM: Well see, you're talking about better than what, 50 years back when I was there? [It was] '48 and this is [2009], [more than] 60 years. No, I don't recognize any of these.

AED: But those were just the people we were walking through with.

JLM: No, I mean the equipment.

AED: The equipment, right.

JLM: These were all an equipment base. Security, was, Elmer [Hounshell] says he went back into security because he'd go anywhere, but in the security base, no, we never—

AED: Did you have opportunity to go back to Killeen Base when they did the tour there several years ago?

JLM: No. I didn't even know about the reunion.

AED: Oh, that's too bad.

JLM: I didn't know about it until '99. No, I don't remember any of this.

AED: Yes, those are in some of those internal rooms. But the tunnels look familiar, I imagine.

JLM: I haven't seen a decent—

AED: Yes. They're pretty dark right now.

JLM: Well see, at the end of the tunnel, there was a big blast door, and that's where we had a guard up.

AED: And those doors went like that, right, as opposed to on a hinge?

JLM: Right. Center outward.

AED: Got it.

JLM: Well, that's a shame we didn't ever get back into equipment rooms, but I never did in any of it.

AED: Yes. A few people did, it sounds like, but not many. The people who were actually handling the bombs. You weren't going to go back in there, it sounds like.

JLM: No, no, in fact, I was there a long time before I ever seen my first bomb.

AED: Really.

JLM: Yes, and that was because it was, for some reason, two of them were left out on the highway in front of the tunnel.

AED: You mentioned that. Did you know why they were out there?

JLM: No. I just knew I had to stand out there all night with them.

AED: And watch them. Was there somebody else on guard with you?

JLM: Well, there was a patrol that drove all over the Q Area.

AED: But that just happened once. It sounds sort of unusual.

JLM: Yes, because it's the only occasion I ever had that a bomb was left outside.

AED: Really have that happen.

JLM: Yes, because once it was tarped. They were covered by tarps, and the wind come up and the tarp came loose. So I pulled the tarp back, and that was the first look at one and I like to have wet in my pants! Big!

AED: Yes. What did you think when you saw that?

JLM: It scared me. I'd seen bombs before, but nothing like that.

AED: At points, they moved the bombs over to the Gray Air Force Base in convoys to ship them out.

JLM: The air force base was right outside the main gate, so a convoy couldn't have been less than half a mile long.

AED: Right. Were you ever involved in one of those?

JLM: Oh, yes. Yes, I guarded planes parked at Gray Air Force Base.

AED: And how did the convoy work? I mean how did they do that?

JLM: Well, most of the convoys were from the railhead in Fort Hood out to the base.

AED: So bringing material in?

JLM: Yes, bringing material in. Because we'd have the jeep in front of the convoy and a jeep in back. The back jeep kept anybody from passing the convoy. But back then, you didn't have the freeways. All you had was like Highway 190, a two-lane road. This is familiar [looking at a photograph]. This looks like one of the blast doors.

AED: Which one is that? Ah, right. Do they seem deep enough, thick enough?

JLM: Big enough. Can't tell by—yes, they're pretty thick. But they're big because the unit had to go in through them. Strange, looking back over the years.

AED: In your words, how would you explain the mission of Killeen Base?

JLM: Protection of the atomic bomb.

AED: Were there other organizations there at Killeen Base or at Manzano [Base], other military locations, besides the Sandia [Base], the civilian personnel that were handling the bombs?

JLM: No. There was headquarters people and stuff like that, you mean?

AED: [Yes].

JLM: Well yes, it's just a typical organization.

AED: But were there others besides the 1094th?

JLM: As far as another unit?

AED: Yes.

JLM: No.

AED: No? Just that one.

JLM: After the army left. The army was there when we got there. But after the army left, no, we were the only unit on it. The people from Sandia [Base], I don't recall whether they lived on base or not. Like I said, I didn't get to know any of them.

AED: How many men were in the 1094th in your flight?

JLM: In my flight?

AED: There were flights, different flights, right?

JLM: Yes. Oh, I have no idea. Thirty or 40 just as a rough guess.

AED: And did you live—?

JLM: In the barracks.

AED: What was that like? What were the barracks like?

JLM: Very big and it was a very pretty building.

AED: Comfortable or not?

JLM: One big building. Well, it depends on. If you were a lower rank, you slept in open bays. There were 50 to 60 men in a bay. No air conditioning. Once I became a sergeant, I moved into a room, but mess hall, BX, everything was all in one building.

AED: Tell me, what's a BX?

JLM: BX? Base Exchange.

AED: And that's for purchasing items or—?

JLM: Yes. Toothpaste, toothbrushes, like a drugstore.

AED: That was on Killeen Base or did you have to go—?

JLM: That was in the building that we lived in. If I remember right, the whole building was housing all of our troops.

AED: But there wasn't a post exchange, but there was a base exchange.

JLM: Well, PX is a post exchange for the army. BX is air force.

AED: I hadn't heard BX before. That's why I was asking.

JLM: Base exchange.

AED: That's good. What other kinds of positions did guys in your flight have? Was everybody doing exactly the same thing or doing different things?

JLM: Well, it depends on whether you was on perimeter patrol. Yes, we were all doing security, but as far as kitchen patrol, washing dishes, you know, you got those jobs, yes.

AED: Everybody did that, too?

JLM: Well, except if you was a sergeant.

AED: Did you have to do that very often?

JLM: Kitchen patrol? Did anybody detail how we worked the shift work to you yet?

AED: They have, but I want everybody to [explain]. Why don't you tell me that because the more we get, the better we'll understand.

JLM: We worked shifts, like from, say your shift started at six a.m. in the morning and went to noon, and you worked that for a week. Then you went from noon to six p.m. and you worked

that for a week. And then around the clock again, all the way around. And then your fifth week, you had training, four days of training, and then you got a three-day pass.

AED: And what kind of training would they do?

JLM: Fifty-caliber machine gun, 60-millimeter mortars.

AED: How to use those. But you had already been trained to do that, but they continued to repeat to keep you fresh.

JLM: Oh, yes. B.A.R. Browning automatic rifle, .30-06 caliber.

AED: What is that?

JLM: Running an automatic rifle. Everything dealing with if anybody penetrated the base, what we would do.

AED: At the guard stations, were you usually just a single person, one man, or more than one person?

JLM: Well, at the guard station, there was a main gate coming in. There was always two people there. Then inside the fences from the main gate was a guardhouse. That's a sergeant of guard, corporal of guard, and also the guard all was in there. Then you had a free area where the barracks was, where we lived, and then the Q Area where the plant was, there was a Q [Area] gate and there was always two people at that gate. Then you had your interior patrol in the Q Area.

AED: On the perimeter patrol that you mentioned, was that because there's these four fences, right?

JLM: Yes.

AED: Where is the perimeter? Where does that take us?

JLM: Between fence one and two. It started at the gate house.

AED: So the most outside fence.

JLM: Most outside fence, perimeter one. Then it went—you had two jeeps, you always had two people in each jeep. You went around and you met on top and then you'd come back around.

AED: But not between the other fences at that point?

JLM: No, because the third fence was electrified.

AED: Okay, stay away from that one.

JLM: Yes.

AED: In your time doing these patrols, were you ever on the spot, in danger, run across from someone that wasn't supposed to be there?

JLM: No. Any time a jeep—let's say you was on patrol, perimeter patrol, and a jeep come down the perimeter. You stopped them, made them get out, lay their pass on the jeep hood. You might

make them walk up to your hood and lay the pass down, then back them up and then check them out for—you might know the officer, but you still checked them out.

AED: Right. Did you ever have a moment where someone wasn't supposed to be where they were?

JLM: No, not that I was involved in.

AED: Never.

JLM: Well, yes. A plane hit the fence. Anybody tell you that story?

AED: No, I don't know anything about that. Tell me.

JLM: A light, single-engine aircraft hit between two and three, I think, fence two and three. He was quickly surrounded, but I was on three-day pass, so I don't remember any of the details.

AED: Right. What kind of training? You talked about the different guns you need to be able to know how to use. Did you have other training for patrol, other types of training besides using those, that equipment?

JLM: We didn't have foot patrol, no, because everything was done in jeeps. Other kind of training. Like marching, stand in formations, close-order drill.

AED: What is that?

JLM: It's when you march back and forth, hup-two-three-four, hup-two-three-four.

AED: The thing you picture when you see—

JLM: Yes.

AED: I didn't know it was called that.

JLM: Marching in formation.

AED: So you mentioned your uniforms were initially army. At a point, did the uniform change?

JLM: It wasn't until about—well, the only difference between our uniform and the army was on the shoulder patch was a set of wings, and then you know what the collar tabs were?

AED: Yes.

JLM: One was a U.S. and on the army it could be artillery or tanks. Ours was a set of propellers. I've still got mine. That was the only difference. I think it was about 1950 before we ever started getting air force uniforms. That's when we changed over from [army]. Like I was a buck sergeant in the army uniform, but when we went to air force uniform, I became an airman first class.

AED: The titles change with the group.

JLM: Yes. When I went to aircraft engine mechanic school, I was still a sergeant. Yes, I think so.

AED: When you enlisted, what were you thinking you'd do with the air force? Were you wanting to follow the aircraft maintenance? Was that something you were interested in?

JLM: Aircraft, yes.

AED: That's what you were—

JLM: That's what I was interested in, but I got air police. I pursued it, though. I never quit and gave up. So I finally got to go to school for aircraft maintenance.

AED: How did you feel when you ended up at this other sort of strange situation at Killeen Base?

JLM: Well, I'm a 17-year-old kid, how do you think I felt? Oh, I'd just turned 18 when we got this—

AED: At that point.

JLM: Yes. We got there in September and I turned 18 in September.

AED: And did you know what was going on at Killeen Base when you got there?

JLM: Oh, no. The army is very close-mouthed. But it didn't take long until they briefed us. A big lecture. But when we first got there, first day or so, no, I had no idea.

AED: Those first days that you were there, what did they have you doing then?

JLM: Boy, you're asking me to go back a lot of years.

AED: I know!

JLM: I don't remember. Being checked out on how to drive a jeep, make sure you've got a driver's license.

AED: Right, right. Did you already know how to use those guns, the .50-caliber machine gun? Or was that part of the training?

JLM: Well, no. We had training, basic training on it and the M1 Garand and the .45-caliber. But the advanced training on the bigger weapons we had at Killeen [Base].

AED: Who did that training?

JLM: Training sergeants.

AED: And were they army?

JLM: No, they were air force. Well, army to start with, yes. But they left I don't know how long after we got there. But then it become all air force.

AED: So you described the schedule of the six hours on. So what would you do with the rest of your day? If you did your guard shift from six to noon—?

JLM: Do you really want to know?

AED: Well, yes I do.

JLM: Slept. Sometimes went to Temple. Chased girls and drank beer. That's all it was.

AED: I think that's very appropriate. Were there recreational facilities at Killeen Base?

JLM: Well, I was on a boxing team.

AED: Oh really? I haven't heard anybody speak of that. Was there a pool? Were there—?

JLM: Swimming pools?

AED: Yes.

JLM: No, not that I recall.

AED: I think there was one there but later, maybe mid '50s, maybe by the time the army took it back.

JLM: Yes, there was no—

AED: But not when you were there, right?

JLM: Yes, not when we were there.

AED: So if you wanted to do a boxing club, how would you do that?

JLM: Well, we had regular trainers and everything. We had a boxing team.

AED: You did?

JLM: There was a guy by the name of Maxie Miller that was a really, well, he was so good that, well, you're probably too young to remember, but there used to be a professional boxer world champion called Willie Pep.

AED: I don't know the name.

JLM: Willie Pep was like a lightweight world champion, and Maxie Miller was one of his sparring partners. So Maxie helped train our boxing team. We went to the Golden Gloves, which is now the Olympics. But back then it was Golden Gloves.

AED: Was he a member of the 1094th?

JLM: Yes.

AED: Oh, wow.

JLM: He was in my flight.

AED: He was?

JLM: Yes.

AED: In the barracks there, you said you did get a room after a while, but you had a roommate I assume?

JLM: No.

AED: No? Oh. How many people would be in a situation like that where they just had a room to themselves?

JLM: Most of the senior sergeants had rooms.

AED: How many senior sergeants would be in your flight? Maybe just a couple or many?

JLM: No, not many. Because most of us, when we got there, were either privates or private first class. Then what they called the cadre, c-a-d-r-e or something like that, they were older soldiers, older airmen.

AED: More experienced?

JLM: Yes. Came from different bases. They didn't come out of basic training, like we came out of basic training, and they taught us. There was a sergeant in each flight that I know of. There was a lieutenant in charge of a flight. A tech or master sergeant was flight sergeant, but as we gradually, moved up in ranks, there was probably quite a few airmen first [class] or buck sergeants.

AED: I don't come from a military family, so I don't quite understand how you move up the ranks.

JLM: Get promoted.

AED: And what kinds of things do you have to do for that to happen, because you obviously had a lot of promotions over the years?

JLM: Keep your nose clean.

AED: Stay out of trouble?

JLM: Stay out of trouble. Do a good job.

AED: Right. Be consistent.

JLM: Be neat in appearance. Sharp in what you did.

AED: All of those things.

JLM: Yes.

AED: Because I think from the people that I've met here, there's a variety of people, but not everybody achieved those same ranks over time.

JLM: Well, a lot of the people you see around here didn't stay a full 20 years.

AED: Right, right. So that's a big difference for you.

JLM: Most of them got out. Well, Elmer Hounshell, when he retired was only a staff sergeant. Now why he never made anything higher, I don't know.

AED: But several of them left. They were discharged at Manzano [Base], so that was the end of

their military career.

JLM: Yes. That was the end of their military [career], quite a few of them. What all they went into after that I wouldn't know.

AED: Right. Do you have an impression of whether or not the layout of the buildings at Killeen Base and the way they were built, were they safe? Did you feel like you were in a safe place other than you were guarding something that wasn't?

JLM: Well, after the wooden barracks at Lackland [Air Force Base], that was a big mansion to us. But I felt safe. Yes, I never felt any problems. I'd hate to see that building tore down because it was a uniquely qualified building for its job.

AED: The barracks building?

JLM: Yes. Well, it wasn't just a barracks. It was all the offices and everything.

AED: Right. It was efficient and easy for a lot of people to live in it at one time.

JLM: Yes, very, very efficient. Yes. That's the way I remember it.

AED: So if your father worked at an ordinance depot, you knew about bombs.

JLM: Oh yes.

AED: Were familiar with them.

JLM: Just as what a 15-year-old kid would know.

AED: Right, but knew that they were—

JLM: Deadly?

AED: Yes! Don't want to be around them any more than you have to, and then there you are, not just with bombs, but with, you know, truly even more serious. How did you feel about that?

JLM: I take things as they come. I always have. It didn't bother me, if that's what you mean.

AED: Yes.

JLM: No. It was a job.

AED: Right. You weren't fearful for your life?

JLM: No. We were careful. Not to say that we were sloppy in our work. I don't remember anybody really getting sloppy because they kept us on our toes.

AED: So they didn't let you know enough probably to think that you might be exposed to radiation or something of that kind.

JLM: I don't remember where. Somewhere in my career I wore radiation badges, but I don't think it was there. I think it was after I got into missiles. Then on a B-47 bomber, that was the first swept-wing bomber that was designed to carry atomic bomb. So I may have wore—

AED: At that point?

JLM: Yes. I just don't recall.

AED: Did you ever guard in the tower or a pillbox at Killeen [Base] or Manzano [Base]?

JLM: Manzano [Base] I remember nothing about. I can't even remember the base because I was only there probably five months.

AED: Oh, and then you shipped out.

JLM: Wichita Falls, Texas. Sheppard Air Force Base. When I got off-duty, I got on my motorcycle and I went downtown. I didn't stay at the base very much, as I got married while going to school at Sheppard Air Force Base.

AED: While you're guarding, what are you doing? Are you constantly surveying the landscape? What are you doing?

JLM: Riding around in a jeep. Looking, always aware of the area you was in.

AED: That's the perimeter one, but when you're guarding at the front gate?

JLM: Oh, every car that comes in, you checked identification, make sure you knew who they were, if they had authorization to be there.

AED: And how would you know? I mean what kind of paperwork would they have to show you?

JLM: No paperwork. ID cards.

AED: ID card. Anything besides an ID card?

JLM: Special ID card for the base [showing identification card]. That's a military ID card right there.

AED: That's great. Neat. It would be an older version of this.

JLM: Oh yes, yes.

AED: You couldn't scan it, right, like you can now?

JLM: No.

AED: Do the security measures that go on now, say at an airport, does it remind you of—?

JLM: No, because we didn't do anything like making them take off their shoes, you know, or go through a metal detector because they didn't have any of that back then. But we had a bus that run, you know, into town, and when the bus would come back from town, you'd have to get in it and check everybody's ID and everything. It was like a military ID card.

AED: The bus was for the 1094th to go?

JLM: Yes. Anybody on the base that had to go into town.

AED: For social things?

JLM: That didn't have a car. I had a car.

AED: You did?

JLM: Yes.

AED: Was that uncommon?

JLM: Well, now if you're a PFC or a private making $75 a month, what do you think? And that's what we made when we went in. I was fortunate, I had a car most of the time.

AED: Did you buy it there?

JLM: My dad bought it for me, and I went to Wyoming on vacation and brought it back. Out of the money I had saved.

AED: Right. How do you save money on $75?

JLM: I worked before I went in the service.

AED: You were working?

JLM: Oh yes. I'd been working since I was 14 years old.

AED: What were you doing?

JLM: What was the last job I had? Well, I started out planting onions at 50 cents an hour. I worked at a bowling alley setting pins before they had automatic pin setters. I worked at a garage, Ford garage. My dad run a movie theater, so I worked in the theater. I worked on a farm. I worked for a construction company handling a jackhammer. I did whatever I could do.

AED: A lot of different things. Was this all in Riverton?

JLM: No, this isn't Riverton. It's Illinois. I went in the service in Illinois.

AED: That's right. Do you recall being there and ever being on high alert?

JLM: Oh yes. There was always—I don't remember what caused the high alerts if that's what you're asking. Well, the guy hitting the fence for one thing.

AED: That would, right.

JLM: Yes, or somebody outside the fence we'd see a Fort Hood vehicle or something and then we'd call it a high alert, or somebody trying to get into the main gate a high alert. But no, I don't recall anything in particular.

AED: Were there times that you were tested?

JLM: Oh, yes.

AED: What was that?

JLM: Well, the officers always tried to sneak up on you and catch you doing something wrong. But

as far as major test, you know, like trying to penetrate the base, no. They'd have got shot up.

AED: Oh. You couldn't really do that safely, I guess, without—

JLM: Oh, there was no way they could do that safely because we were armed and ready.

AED: Were there ever civilians that came in other than the personnel that were working? Do you recall?

JLM: Probably the FBI. But just as visiting dignitaries? I don't know. That was above my pay grade.

AED: You mentioned that the barracks were really nice. What was the food like?

JLM: Well, this is kind of hard to explain. I was on a boxing team. I was an athlete, so we had a special table.

AED: You did?

JLM: Yes, for a while.

AED: Any of these other fellows, were they on the team?

JLM: Oh, I have no idea. Maxie Miller was, I can remember. Max Manlove, I think, but he's not here. Not many. Most of these people that are here now came in in the second or third groups. It was one group, two groups, three groups come in. Like you mentioned they come from other bases? Well, those come in later. We never really got to know them good. Some of them even didn't come in till we got to Manzano [Base] and I wasn't there long enough to know them.

AED: Yes, to know those folks, right. So you had sort of a special diet?

JLM: Yes, more protein.

AED: So maybe you had better food than—

JLM: Like steaks.

AED: That's nice! Was there any jealousy over that?

JLM: Yes, there was slight jealousy.

AED: I would expect there would be.

JLM: Yes.

AED: But they also probably understood you were doing something else.

JLM: Oh yes. We got out of kitchen patrol most of the time because we went to training. I remember when Phillips. Yes, we went boxing training most of the time in the season for boxing when the Golden Gloves were going on. The rest of the year, no, we ate with everybody else. But I don't recall good or bad food. The guy I enlisted with was a cook, too. But I can't remember whether the food was—.

AED: When you traveled, how long would you be gone for?

JLM: Traveled in which way?

AED: With the boxing team.

JLM: With the boxing team?

AED: Yes.

JLM: We went on a bus. It was just like to Temple and back again or to Fort Hood. We boxed in the Fort Hood championships. Just local areas. We didn't travel overnight, I don't remember.

AED: So maybe Austin or San Antonio, Waco?

JLM: No, I don't think so. I don't remember.

AED: No? That's pretty interesting. That's neat.

JLM: It was fun.

AED: How many guys were on the boxing team?

JLM: I have no idea. There was maybe less than 10.

AED: Very small group, just a few people.

JLM: Yes, just a few people.

AED: That's interesting. When you were off-duty and you did go to Temple, you said—

JLM: Off-duty?

AED: When you were off-duty and had time off, you would go to Temple you said?

JLM: Well, you go into the Killeen shops, stuff like that. Go up to Buchanan Lake. We had a rest camp up there on the lake or on the river below the dam.

AED: Right. I don't know of that. Was that air force property?

JLM: Yes, air force property.

AED: And it was called a rest camp?

JLM: Rest camp, recreation camp. It had a house. I was assigned there once for maybe a month or so. I was in charge of it.

AED: Nice! That sounds like a pleasant situation.

JLM: Well, yes. It was better than working.

AED: To get a little break?

JLM: Yes. But you had to go down to the base with a three-day pass, every third day you had to go

down to the base and pick up whoever wanted to come up there, see, and bring food back and stuff.

AED: All right. So was it just informal?

JLM: Oh yes. It was just a rec camp.

AED: All right. That's neat. Did everybody get to go there?

JLM: Anybody that wanted to.

AED: Really? This is the first I've heard of it, so that's interesting.

JLM: Yes, I remember because I run it for a while.

AED: Right. Yes, that's probably true. That makes a difference. At the time, were you allowed to talk about what you were doing?

JLM: No!

AED: Right. Did you have to sign anything?

JLM: Oh yes.

AED: You did.

JLM: I remember signing a lot of papers.

AED: Really? That you would not talk about this.

JLM: When I left to go to Sheppard Air Force Base, I was called into I think it was Major Barr, and he gave me a very strict lecture about I couldn't talk about what I'd been doing or where I was at. Just I came from Albuquerque.

AED: And that would be hard to do at certain points because it was a pretty—

JLM: No, because you forget about it as soon as you leave. You don't want to remember it.

AED: When people asked you where you'd been, that would be the answer that you gave them?

JLM: Yes. I was stationed at Albuquerque. Just military police.

AED: Did you have family while you were at Killeen Base or Manzano [Base] or you were still single at the time?

JLM: I was married for five months while at Killeen [Base], but we never lived together.

AED: What did you think about Killeen and Temple as places?

JLM: Just towns. Nothing particularly impressive about them. [Of] course, like I said, Temple's the only place you could buy booze.

AED: Was there a particular place you went to in Temple, or were there several places?

JLM: No. I don't even remember the name of bars now, but there was three or four different bars.

AED: You left the military after 20 years of service and went to a fairly different kind of occupation. It sounds like your post-military career was very different from what you were doing.

JLM: Yes.

AED: Is that a part of you just needed to do something different?

JLM: No, it's just that I got a job.

AED: Got a job, all right. Why did you choose to leave when you did, to retire?

JLM: Because I didn't want to go to Thailand.

AED: Oh, time to stop traveling.

JLM: Yes. I was selected to go to Thailand, and I'd get it from orders and then I'd go to Thailand. I told them, No, I want to retire. I had a good part-time job. There was a company called Family Record Plans. You sold a portrait album and you got 18 pictures from a photographer, you know, like you go and take your child in. I sold that plan to newlyweds, new births. I was making good [money], more money than I was making in the air force, so I got out.

AED: Not to go to Thailand, either.

JLM: No, I didn't want to go to Thailand because I couldn't take my family with me.

AED: Right. When you were at Killeen Base and at Manzano [Base], did you have a feeling that you were part of something special, different?

JLM: Oh yes, we were special. We were air force on an army base.

AED: Yes, you had to know that bothered them. But as part of the atomic—

JLM: Oh yes.

AED: Age of the atomic bomb. At the time did you realize or [was it] in hindsight?

JLM: Well, I realize more now how important it was than I realized when I was there how important it was. It was a job, you know. It was a secure job. Not a secure job. It was an important job because of what we were protecting, and we knew what we were protecting after a while. But no, that's about it.

AED: So now looking back, do you consider your role in the Cold War, what you were doing. Now how do you feel about it?

JLM: The Cold War?

AED: Yes.

JLM: I've got a certificate on my wall from the Cold War.

AED: Really?

JLM: Yes.

AED: That's good. That says you were part of this?

JLM: "Thank you for your service during the Cold War." This and a nickel will buy you a beer.

AED: That's funny. Do you have any thoughts about—you had mentioned that you would hate to see the barracks—or that's the wrong term, but demolished. But what about the tunnels?

JLM: Oh, the tunnels. I'd hate to see them go, but I wouldn't miss them! I spent too much time in them.

AED: That much covers most of the questions that I was going to ask, but there are probably things you might know of that I don't even know to ask.

JLM: No, you've covered it pretty thoroughly.

AED: Because if there's something you think of, I'd want to know if you have other thoughts you want to offer, other reminiscences, other memories.

JLM: Well, you's asking about off-duty stuff. It wasn't all Temple and beer and girls. We did a lot of sightseeing. Longhorn Caverns. You know those? Lake Buchanan. Of course, we had the rest camp up there. San Antonio. Nogales, Mexico.

AED: How did you end up in Abilene?

JLM: I was transferred from March Air Force Base to Abilene.

AED: Dyess Air Force Base was there?

JLM: Dyess [Air Force Base], yes.

AED: So you were up there for a while at the air force base in Abilene?

JLM: Yes, that's where I married my last wife.

AED: There was something else. Did you raise your family there in Abilene?

JLM: I've raised two families from two wives.

AED: All right. How many children do you have?

JLM: I have five.

AED: Wow. Wow. Are they here in Texas?

JLM: One's in Arkansas just a couple of hours from here. Three are in Abilene. I mean one's in Abilene. Two are in Houston. One is in England.

AED: Oh wow. So mostly they're not far from home.

JLM: No.

AED: That's good.

JLM: I see my son. He comes over about once every two years.

AED: Have any of your children pursued military careers?

JLM: No. All girls except one boy.

Engward William Nielsen

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1951–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Wednesday, September 16, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Engward William Nielsen. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron of the U.S. air force is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

Can you tell me how old you were when you became a member of the service?

EWN: Twenty-one.

AED: And you were enlisted?

EWN: Yes, I enlisted.

AED: Where did you enlist from?

EWN: Portland, Oregon.

AED: And what were you doing in Portland? What had you been doing after high school until you enlisted, between high school and enlistment?

EWN: Well, I graduated from high school in Benkelman, Nebraska, and I moved to Portland, Oregon, because I had three, older, married sisters and they all lived in Portland, Oregon, and they said, Boy, you can get jobs out here and all that, you know, and that's why I went out there. And I just, I got out there and I had a hard time getting a job because I was 18 and looked like I was 13. And I'd go to these different places to get a job and they treated you like they don't need you because, evidently, they thought I was like a kid or something, you know. And I finally got a job in Foundation Worsted Woolen Mill as a percher. How I got that job, my brother-in-law and my sister, they were working there, and so I got a job that way.

AED: As a percher?

EWN: A percher, which is an inspector, but in the woolen industry they don't call them inspectors, they call [it] a percher.

AED: Interesting, I had not heard that term before. So you did that?

EWN: So I done that until the Korean War come along and I enlisted in Portland. You want me to tell you how we got on the troop train and went on down?

AED: Sure.

EWN: Maybe the other guys told you.

AED: But you're coming from a different place.

EWN: The troop train started in Spokane, Washington. They had a bunch of guys on it that enlisted in the air force. And then it stopped in Walla Walla, Washington, picked up another bunch, so many cars. Then it come down to Portland and picked up a bunch of us. That's when I got on. It went on to Boise, Idaho, picked up another bunch, went on to Salt Lake, picked up another bunch, went on to Denver, Colorado, and picked up bunch, and then we went south to Durango, Colorado, and picked up a bunch, and that was the last. But by the time we picked them up, that train was mighty long, and from Durango on to San Antonio, the train just kept jerking back and forth. I don't know whether it was too many cars for the engine or what. I don't know. It was that way all the way to San Antonio.

AED: How long did it take total, because you were [one of] the first groups on there? It was a long ride.

EWN: It sure was. Three days.

AED: Oh wow. Stop for food or did they have cars, dining cars?

EWN: Oh yeah, we ate aboard.

AED: They only stopped to pick up more troops?

EWN: That's the only time they stopped.

AED: Wow, wow. And why did you choose to enlist?

EWN: Well, like I said, I had three older sisters there that were married. They were all married to—all three of my brother-in-laws were in the old army air corps during the Second World War, and that's why. And I liked airplanes, and I thought I could do something around airplanes. I had a brother-in-law that was tail gunner on the B-24 and it's lucky he was alive, you know. He was flying out of the Eighth Air Force out of England to Germany, and damn fortunate, because usually, when he first went over there, when they had so many planes going over, about half of them came back.

AED: A lot of them didn't make it.

EWN: Yeah.

AED: It was a one-way [trip].

EWN: Yeah.

AED: Wow. While you were in the service, what ranks did you achieve?

EWN: Well, when I made rank it was buck sergeant, but before I got discharged they changed from buck sergeant to airman first class.

AED: Okay, so it was private, private first class and then buck sergeant, or is there something in between?

EWN: No, you've got private, PFC—private first class—corporal, and then buck sergeant. And then they changed it, I don't know, about a year, a year and a half before I got discharged, they changed that. Like a private was an airman, and a private first class, PFC, was an airman third class, corporal was an airman second class, and buck sergeant was airman first class.

AED: Right, because I hear the different terms at different times for different people, so I'm trying to keep them clear, to keep them straight. And then the train you took with the other newly enlisted kids, basically, went to San Antonio? And where did you go there?

EWN: Lackland Air Force Base.

AED: And that was for basic training?

EWN: Right.

AED: And how long were you there?

EWN: Three months.

AED: Oh, okay. Briefly, what was basic training like?

EWN: Ohhh, it wasn't very good, I'll tell you.

AED: How so?

EWN: Well, right at that time, you know, the Korean War had just been going on about six months and they were pouring the guys through. I'll tell you what it reminded me of, it reminded me back on the farm when you went to sale and you run cattle through the sales barn and everything. That's just about the way. It just reminded me of was that, only instead of cattle it was men. Because they had so many of them. I mean they had so many of them that they had, like your regular barracks were full. I happened to get in where, we got in the old barracks, tar-paper shacks. You could actually see through them, you know? And some of these poor guys were in tents. Anyway, boy it got cold down there. That was in January and February, and boy it got cold down there, and boy we'd about to freeze to death. Those old tar-paper barracks, we'd have the little potbelly stoves, one on each end. We'd have them where they're red-hot, and we'd stand to try to keep warm, and you was burning up in the front and the back was freezing. They'd only issue us two blankets, and man, you'd go to sleep at night and man, I slept in my civilian clothes and put my fatigues over them, and you'd still freeze. It was cold. All they could do is issue us two blankets and that was it. Needless to say, everybody got sicker than hell down there. Then they finally decided they better get us more blankets. It was too late, the whole base was sick. In fact, I wound up with pneumonia, wound up in the hospital.

AED: At Lackland [Air Force Base]?

EWN: Yeah.

AED: So they had a facility to take care of you? It was probably crowded, too.

EWN: Oh, it sure was.

AED: But warmer?

EWN: Oh yeah, I hope to shout, it was a lot warmer.

AED: I haven't heard about the tar-paper barracks before. How many men would they have?

EWN: Well, a flight, one flight that's 70 guys. I think a flight is 70 men.

AED: And it was a one-story [barrack]?

EWN: Yeah.

AED: Sort of [a] frame [building] just covered with [tar paper]?

EWN: Just a long building, you know, just the old, old barracks.

AED: Did they have windows in them?

EWN: Oh yeah.

AED: It did, okay. It looks much like a more solid building, but it's just tar-paper covering, so it's not.

EWN: Right.

AED: And the training there, the basic training, what kinds of things did they have you doing?

EWN: Well, hell we marched all day long. Every morning at four o'clock, hit the road on the double. Get out there. And hell, it seemed like wherever we went, whatever we was going to do, get clothes or shots or whatever, it was always clear across from where in the heck we was at, you know. And they didn't do that in the daytime, they done that at nighttime. Because we was marching and all that stuff all day long. In fact, that was when the air force blue uniform was just coming out. In fact, when we went in, the guys that were shipping out of basic training, they all had the old army olive-drab uniforms. It was hard to get a complete uniform, see? So needless to say, we were marching, I'd say, heck, the first, I'd say the first couple months I was marching with my civilian clothes. In fact, I had a brand new pair of shoes on and by the time I got my military shoes, I wore my shoes out. They had big holes in the bottom about that big.

AED: That is a lot of marching!

EWN: It sure is.

AED: And in the final months, did they change the training to something more [advanced]?

EWN: No, it was still just the same thing all the way through. But you know, the most sleep we ever got was four hours a night.

AED: I didn't know that.

EWN: Oh yeah, because when you're marching and training and all that all day long, then at nighttime, seems like you no more get to sleep, you hit the road on the double and then you get out there and you're marching across base to get shots or take tests or whatever, you know. Taking a test was a big joke because like, god, everybody was tired because we only got four hours sleep a night, you know? And I remember, god, we marched across the base one night and, hell, it's like about two, three o'clock in the morning. And everywhere you go, you got to stand at attention and they single-file you through. And we went in there and sat down and okay, we're taking tests to see what you're qualified for. Everybody's sitting there and some guy had a big long stick. I think it was a cue stick or something. Man, he jabbed you to wake up, you know. And you couldn't think worth a damn, and all you done is if you read something and you knew it right off, you'd put—75 percent of what there was was blank because you didn't have, you just couldn't figure it out that fast because you only have a certain length of time to do this, so needless to say, that was a big joke.

AED: I didn't ask you, also, when did you enlist?

EWN: January the 8th of 1951.

AED: At Lackland [Air Force Base], then, you were selected to go somewhere else. How did you end up at Killeen Base?

EWN: Well, I'll tell you what happened. I grew up on a farm and you know, in those days, you had to take care of the tractors and implements and everything else, and your dad taught you all that stuff, and so I knew quite a bit about mechanics. So evidently on the test that we took, you know it'd ask you about wrenches and whatever, and I knew that stuff. I wrote that down. Everything else was probably blank or didn't know, you know. So by that, I'm presuming, they had me scheduled to go to A&E mechanic school in Denver.

AED: What's A&E?

EWN: Airplane and engine mechanic. That's what it was called back then. In fact, one of my brother-in-laws was an A&E mechanic during the Second World War. And I like mechanics, oh boy, this is great. That's where I'm going. Well, guys started shipping out to different places, you know. The biggest portion of us didn't have our clothes, and you couldn't ship out without your complete clothing, see?

AED: You had to have your blues?

EWN: Oh, you bet, or you didn't get shipped out. And I had everything but I didn't have an Ike jacket and something else.

AED: What is that? An Ike?

EWN: An Ike jacket? Well, it was referring to Eisenhower. He wore it. It's a jacket that only comes down to here.

AED: All right, so it's a short cut.

EWN: Yeah, and then they issued you a blouse and it went all the way down.

AED: Oh, I've not heard that term before. Okay, so you didn't have a couple of items.

EWN: Yeah, so I was redlined, like I say. Heck, I would say probably 70 percent of us guys were redlined because we couldn't get our clothes, because like I say, the blues were just coming

out and they couldn't make them fast enough. So here I am waiting for my uniform to ship to Denver, which oh boy, that was great. Denver was only a couple hundred miles from where I grew up on the farm, and I thought boy, I can go back and see my old friends.

AED: Right, it's almost like home in a way.

EWN: So anyway, while we was waiting for that, guess what? We pull a lot of KP, and I really enjoyed that [said in jest]. But anyway, so what happened was that one day they pull up there, several air force blue buses. They were old ones. I didn't think they could carry anything, these old, beat up, old blue air force buses. And there was three flights. They took the rest of us that were redlined, took us all. And the guys say, How in the hell do you remember this? But it was 599, 600, and 601. They took three flights, what was left of the three flights. I happened to be in Flight 599. I asked these guys, a lot of these guys say, Well, what flight were you in in basic training? How in the hell do I know? Right off, for some reason, I remembered.

AED: Even a couple of gentlemen have said, I don't remember the term flight.

EWN: Hmm. We're getting old, you know.

AED: That's true, that's true. But it's the air force. It seems like a good term.

EWN: I don't know why I remember some of this stuff. So they hauled us, put us all aboard these old buses and while we were in basic training, we were restricted to our area. You never went to town, never left our area, and it was all—it was like you had 70 men turn into one man. When you fell out, some guys like me, I was skinny and I was always kind of cold, you know, and I'd fall out with my field jacket on, and a few others, too, and then most of them didn't have field jackets. Well, we had to take our field jackets off because everybody had to be alike. Didn't make a damn whether it was cold or not. Everybody—you either all wore your field jackets or you didn't. And wherever we went, we all went together. One time we went to the PX to get a few things. We weren't allowed to buy aspirin or any of that kind of stuff.

Anyway, we got on the buses and we're going through San Antonio, and I was on the right side of the bus and some guys on the left side go, Hey, there's the Alamo. Man, I'm looking at it. Oh god, that looks great. I'm going to go see that Alamo. Well, hell, needless to say it was about 40 years later that I finally got to see the Alamo.

But anyway, we went on to these buses and we didn't know where the hell we was going. Nobody tells you nothing. We didn't know where we was going. So we get to Killeen [Base], and west of Killeen [Base] you make a left and go to Killeen Base, but anyway, you go down this road, I don't know, a couple of miles. I remember that last hill going down there you can see the base, and there was four fences, and one of them was electric, and I looked at that and I go, "What the hell is this?" We go down and there's only one entrance to the base, and we pulled in there, and I'm thinking, "Holy smoke! I get in there, I'll never get out." You know, it looked like a stockade or something. So we went in there, and way off a ways from anything else we had all these tents set up, and that's the picture I got beside those tents. But anyway, and there was about I'd say a couple hundred of us, or close to it, and so that was where we went.

Then they had a lieutenant from Fort Hood that was training us. So we had three months combat infantry training right there. The only time we went to the administration building right there was we all marched over together and ate chow and come back, otherwise it was like it wasn't there. It was like we had a blue uniform on, but you might've said we was in the army because we got paid by the army. If you got sick, they took you over to Fort Hood. Anything was like army, you know? Of course, they trained us a lot for this combat infantry

training right there at Killeen Base, and we done a lot of marching and so forth. Like when we went to infiltration course, you know what that is?

AED: Well, I'd like to hear more about it though, so if you'd explain a little bit that'd be good.

EWN: Okay, first time we went through in the daytime, and the infiltration course was at Fort Hood, and they hauled us over there. And what it is, it's set up to teach you how to crawl properly with your weapon through all kinds of obstacles while the enemy is firing on top of you. They had .30-caliber machine guns set up and they were firing live ammunition over your head. In the back they had big mounds of dirt where the bullets went into, see, in the back. But anyway, I remember the instructors, they said, No matter what happens, keep your heads down, because a while back one guy, when he was crawling, why, he run into a rattlesnake and he got scared and jumped up and they shot him in the head and killed him. So no matter what, you keep your head down because that's live ammunition.

AED: Take the snake bite.

EWN: Yeah. Anyway, they train you. You got your ammo and rifle, you know how to crawl with it. You got to protect that gun, and you's crawling through barbed wire. Then they had mounds of dirt with sandbags around it, you know, and they'd have, oh, maybe that much of an area [motioning] in between where you had to crawl through. I was crawling through one of them and just as I got right in between them, they had dynamite charges set, and they'd blow them up on you. Damn near buried me. It surprised [me]. I didn't know it was going to happen. I was an old farm boy and I'd had a gun all my life, and I kind of liked that kind of stuff, where most the guys hated it. Anyway, went through that in the daytime, and then later on went through at nighttime. In the daytime, it's totally different from nighttime although you're doing the same thing. At nighttime, when it's dark, when you're crawling there, they got tracers, and boy you see them tracers, you know those are bullets going over your head. And you kind of look back and you see the embankment and these plants all over it. It's kind of like fireworks, you know? And so we went through it once at daytime, once at nighttime.

AED: That's wild. That's crazy.

EWN: But you know, I got a big kick out of it.

AED: And who did that training? Was that air force training you?

EWN: No, that was army. We were trained by the army at Fort Hood. Like I say, it was an army officer that trained us at Killeen Base, and like I say, we done some of this stuff at Fort Hood itself.

AED: What about learning to use the different machine guns?

EWN: Well, I'll never forget. They had these wooden guns, and they're telling you how to properly put the gun to your shoulder and the sight and all that, and I'm thinking to myself, boy, there must be a bunch of dummies out here. Hell, I've had a gun ever since I was six years old. Of course, my dad was very strict with it, you know. Hell, by the time I was I'd say 11, 12 years old, I had a .22 single shot. You have to make that shot count. One shot. I was shooting pheasants on the fly with a .22. I was a pretty good shot. And here I had to go through [this training]. I told the guy, "Hell," I said, "I know all about the gun. I've had a gun ever since I was six years old." Boy, he chewed me out. He says, "It don't make any difference. You go through this training just like the rest of them." You know, where I was raised, everybody had guns.

AED: It was part of that life. Being on a farm.

EWN: Yep. But you know, a lot of the guys there had never seen a gun before and they didn't know what end the bullet came out of. To me it was a big joke, but I had to go through it anyway. But they taught us how to fire all these different weapons and handle them. We had to learn how to take them apart and put them together and all that stuff. And I enjoyed that stuff. Most of the guys hated it, but I liked it.

AED: What kind of different equipment were you learning to use? Which types of guns?

EWN: We were using the same equipment that World War II used. Forty-five automatic Colt, and then your .30-caliber carbine, and then you had a .30-06, that was the M1 rifle. Boy, that was a fine weapon. And then of course, the .45-caliber grease gun.

AED: I'm not familiar with that.

EWN: Well, the grease gun, the reason why they called it that [is] it looked like a grease gun. Have you ever seen a grease gun?

AED: No.

EWN: Well, on the farm we always had a grease gun, you had to grease all the equipment and everything.

AED: Oh, I see what you mean. All right, it's not very long?

EWN: No, not very long. And it did resemble a grease gun. Instead of having a stock with a butt plate to put up to your shoulder, it had a wire that slid into the deal so it was real compact. But if you're go to use it, you pull that wire out about that far and you use that to stick up to the shoulder.

AED: Okay, that makes sense.

EWN: And it had a 6-inch barrel, and I think it had 30 rounds to clip. I mean it wasn't very accurate with that little 6-inch barrel, but it was designed so that if you got in a situation where you was overrun with people, man you could just mow them down. That .45 would knock you down, I'll tell you. Then of course, the .30-caliber machine gun and .50-caliber machine gun. Then we trained with mortars. I'm a mortar man, too. Here I was in the air force, and I was a rifleman. Oh, a B.A.R., a Browning automatic rifle, too, that was a .30-06. Like I tell everybody, well, hell, I was in the air force, but I was a rifleman, a B.A.R. man, a mortar man, you know. But we was like we was in the army. The only difference was we wore a blue uniform. That was the only difference. But I always enjoyed going to the range. I liked it.

AED: After you had been there and done this initial training, then did you go back to the range?

EWN: Oh yeah. All through the whole works, every so often we'd go on the range and fire different weapons and so forth. Most of the guys, Oh god, we got to go to the range. Man, oh boy, that is great. I think they thought I was nuts.

AED: But you'd been comfortable with a gun for so long.

EWN: Oh yeah, I enjoyed it.

AED: I'm sure there were few in the similar situation, but many who were not.

EWN: Oh yeah, most of them weren't.

AED: Right. And they're powerful pieces of equipment.

EWN: Oh yeah.

AED: Did you ever go overseas for part of your duty?

EWN: No, when I joined the air force, my thoughts were, Boy, I'll get to see the world or whatever, and I knew a lot of guys that had gone to Germany, and I got relatives in Sweden and Denmark that I'd never seen at home. Man, I hope I go to Germany and I get to see my relatives and all that. And I liked airplanes. I though, well, maybe I can be a gunner or something on an airplane or whatever. You know, you're kind of young and stupid. That was my thought. Like I tell everybody, yeah, I was going to see the world, and man, I was going to be around airplanes. Well, hell, I got stuck in that and I seen Texas and New Mexico for four years. The only time I'd seen an airplane was when I pulled atomic bombs from the AEC site down to ship them out.

AED: That's as close as you came?

EWN: Yeah.

AED: While you were in service, did you receive any awards or medals of any kind?

EWN: Well, not while I was in there, but about, oh hell, 25 years after, I think about 25 years after I got discharged, my sister lived in Portland at that time. I'd moved already to Redding, California, and she says, "Hey, there's an article in the paper about Korean vets that, if you send this information into wherever, they'll send you your medals that you've earned." [Of] course, I knew on the back of your discharge they have all that information that I had these metals. Yeah, I got two medals: one was an American defense ribbon and another was a good conduct medal, and that was it.

AED: Oh, that's good. Some guys didn't get good conduct medals. It's something to be proud of. When you got to Killeen Base, those buses pulled up, what were your first impressions?

EWN: I thought, my god, I get in here, I'll never get out. You know, you see movies of the stockades during the war. Hey, you see four fences and one of them is electric. Boy, there's something going on here.

AED: It looked more like a prison than an air force base.

EWN: Right. But you know, what amazed me, to this day, what amazed me, when we got in there, nobody tells you a damn thing of what that base is all about. We're there for three months taking combat infantry training. During that time, the FBI is checking you out to get you clearance, see. Well, then after that's all taken place, then they split us up in six different flights that were there. To that point, we knew there was something, but nobody told us a damn thing. In fact, then when we went on duty, my first duty, well, we went on duty at six p.m., and they took me around and they dropped me off, and there was this—well, it looked like a wagon with rubber tires and so forth with a square box on it, but the square box was like a frame with a olive-drab canvas over it. It was just square and so forth. They dropped me off there and they said, So-and-so is going to pick this up sometime, they didn't know when, but you guard this with your life. Okay, so we're around the back end of the base.

AED: And it was just you they dropped off?

EWN: Right, just me at that particular spot. So I'm walking around there killing time, and I wondered what the hell was in there, what's so damn important? After, I don't know, an hour or whatever, and like I say, I'm all by myself with nobody around and I got real curious. So I get down on my knees and I look up under there, and it's one of those Fat Boys. Boy, did I have a creepy feeling, I'll tell you what. It just gave me the creeps. Boy, I was thinking, If that thing went off, there wouldn't be a grease spot left of me, you know. Then after a while, why somebody come along and picked it up, hooked onto it, and took it out to Gray Air Force Base, which was right next door, to ship it out. Well, then, I pretty well figure out what the hell's going on. Because nobody tells you nothing. To this day, I would think when a group like that, when they get cleared, you got clearance, you know. At that point that they'd have you all in a room and tell you.

AED: Give you a briefing?

EWN: Yeah. Now this is what we do here, and blah, blah, blah. They never said a word to us. That always amazed me. Another thing that amazed me was when we went in, all they had was what we called them the Mark 4. That was the old Fat Boy bomb that like they bombed Japan in the Second [World] War. That's a huge bomb. I mean, it was huge.

AED: Could you give me some idea of how big?

EWN: Well, it was along from that wall to here to this wall [pointing].

AED: So a good 12, 14 feet? Something like that? Big around?

EWN: Yes. And it was huge. It kind of looked like a Zeppelin. It had the tail fins on it was crossed like that [motioning]. That's all they had there. You know, they're making them and shipping them out all over. The next year, after we were there—well, we were there a year and then we, well, I was there exactly one year. Shipped in there March of '51, shipped out to Albuquerque March of '52. And then we got to headquarters command there at Albuquerque. Well, we done swapped bases. Army had [Manzano Base], we had Killeen [Base], we just swapped bases. They claimed that that's what they've done every six years, they swapped. Now, I never could figure out why they done that, but that was what I was told. Then we got there and then they come out with these new atomic bombs. So what they do, they manufacture these new ones and ship them out and bring in the old ones and dismantle them, see. But the new ones were half as big and 10 times more powerful.

AED: And were the new ones the Mark—?

EWN: The Mark 5. So that's what they do. Then they'd be manufacturing new models. It was just like, all four years I was in there, they'd done that every year. It was like new models of cars coming out, only this was models of atomic bombs. Then the next year, the Mark 6. It was half as big as the Mark 5 and 10 times more powerful than that one. The last year I was in was the Mark 7, and it was probably, I'd say about that big around.

AED: Okay, a couple of feet. Oh, it was this big around. Maybe 3 feet in diameter?

EWN: If that. It kind of resembled a—what the hell do they call them? I'm getting old, can't remember. But it was still fairly long. It was 10 times more powerful than the other one, too. About, I don't know, seven, eight, nine years ago, we had an air force reunion in Dayton, Ohio, and they had a guest speaker, and it was an air force sergeant, and he is in the same thing that we was in. Boy, they changed their stripes. Man, I mean to tell you, he had stripes from his elbow clear up to his shoulder. I have no idea. He must have been a super-duper sergeant of some kind. But anyway, our table at the banquet, it was right close to where he was

speaking, and when he got through we invited him over to sit at our table and BS-ing with him. While we was talking to him, I said, "Man," I said, "You know, the four years we was in there," and I was telling him about this, every year they come out with a new model 10 times more powerful, half as big. I said, "My god, us guys were talking about it," and we thought, Nowadays, the atomic weapon must be the size of a suitcase. He says, "No, you're wrong. It's the size of a briefcase." Now that is pretty scary! Can you imagine? I can understand why they're so against Iran or anybody, if they develop something like that, that hate us and give it to the terrorists, hell, they could carry that right into New York or Chicago or L.A., destroy the whole damn city at one blast. I mean, that's scary! Believe me, they would do it if they could do it.

AED: Plenty of people would be happy to give it a shot.

EWN: Oh, you bet. Fortunately, most people don't know this, but that is scary.

AED: I had no idea, because you still picture in your mind's eye the bigger ones. Those are the ones I think of anyhow.

EWN: Oh yeah. Can you imagine? Something the size of a suitcase that you carry in there and I mean destroy a huge city. I mean not just a small area. That is damn scary to me.

AED: Like what happened in Hiroshima.

EWN: Yeah. Or, like I say, it'd be a hell of a lot more powerful. I mean that was peanuts compared to what they got now. Oh boy, I tell you what.

AED: Tell me more about the security clearance. What did you have to do to achieve that? Did you have to do anything or did the military?

EWN: No, I didn't do a damn thing. In fact, when we was taking that—I'm just presuming that, well, common sense tells you that during that three months that we're taking that combat infantry training, they have to be checking you out or they wouldn't let you in doing what you're doing. But the FBI was checking everybody out. Well, see, what I found out was later that my teachers back in my hometown, the FBI was talking to them, asking about me and what kind of student I was.

AED: From your high school?

EWN: Yeah. In fact, my brother-in-law in Portland, an FBI guy approached him and was asking about his brother-in-law, me, and what kind of a guy he is and who he associates with and all that. Now I don't know who else they checked with, but I do know that. Anyway, I wound up with a top-secret clearance, so I could go in the plants all over where they were making atomic bombs. When I made buck sergeant, why I was a plant sergeant, like I told you, where I was checking posts. I rode a bicycle all around checking posts.

AED: You're the first person I've heard mention a bicycle to move around. You know, people were mostly in trucks.

EWN: Well, you said you was in those [tunnels], weren't you?

DASE Yes.

EWN: Where was this at? In Albuquerque?

AED: No, this is at Killeen Base.

EWN: You were in Plant 1 or Plant 2?

AED: I was in both plants. I had been in one plant maybe four or five years ago, and then last year we went to the other one.

EWN: Well, they're all basically the same. Killeen [Base] and Albuquerque got Plant 1 and Plant 2, and each plant, you had two doors to go in. Well, at night when all the workers that were manufacturing bombs, they left, then the guards took over. You always had a guard in the entrance to one of the doors to the plant. The other door was completely closed down. And then back about, I don't know, a couple hundred feet maybe, was the blast doors. You've probably seen those.

AED: I can picture that, yeah, those are huge doors.

EWN: They're about that wide. Well, see, in the daytime, they push them out so they can haul bombs in and out, material in and out, see? But at nighttime, when they left, us guards took over, and if your post was a blast door, you had to check out a .30-caliber machine gun, and you'd go in there and you'd pull those doors closed and you'd leave a space open enough to where you could set your machine gun up aimed at the main door in case somebody rushed the place or something. Of course, the man at the main door at nighttime, why if somebody wanted in, they'd have to take their badge and hold on that glass, and the glass is about that thick. You probably remember this. Bulletproof glass. And he'd hold it up there and you could check to see if he could come in. He still couldn't come in unless he could give you the password. And before he could open the door, he'd call the guy at the blast door and say, "I'm opening the doors." The guy at the blast doors had orders that if you went through all that and you opened the doors and somebody rushed in, you opened fire. Boy, you'd kill your buddy down there for sure, you know, but I mean, there's no doubt about it, but that was your orders. Also, at nighttime they had a guy stationed at the other blast doors, too.

AED: The other ones being the [other entrance]?

EWN: The other entrance. You had two entrances.

AED: Right. During the day, there was only one of those entrances guarded?

EWN: During the daytime, you just had the guys at the main entrance. You didn't have the other.

AED: But at night, you had both entrances guarded.

EWN: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. You'd have both blast doors, you'd have a machine gun set up at each blast door. And they also had, in Plant 1 they had what they called the ADT man. Did you ever go back there and see that? The ADT room, they had a guy that was permanent ADT man, and what he done, he sat in there. I used to when I was plant sergeant, I'd go back there once in a while, you're killing time, you know, two or three o'clock in the morning, and drop by and BS with him. And he had a big board on the wall. I'm not sure, but you had 97, 98 structures all around where they stored the bombs. You've seen those when you was there? Other than the plants where they manufacture them. So they had ADT system, and they had this board up there, and they had little lights for each one of those. Anyway, if somebody was messing with those doors trying to get in or shook it just a little bit, that light would light up. The ADT man, then, he'd pick up and call the guardhouse and he'd say, "Have the alert squad check structure 83," or whatever the hell it was. You always had an alert squad on at all times.

They'd call them and they'd rush up there and they'd surround the area. Just like as if they enemy was attacking, they'd check it, and that was our ADT system.

AED: Can you tell me what does ADT stand for?

EWN: What the heck does it stand for? It's been so long. Automatic detecting something. I remember one time, I was with him. It was dark at night. We must have gone on at six o'clock, but anyway it was after that. Probably a couple hours after we'd been on duty, why I stopped by, checking on him. I checked on these guys back and forth. A light went on, and he reached for the phone, and another light went on, another light. Pretty soon the whole damn board was all lit up. Well, he called the guardhouse. We was having a hell of a thunderstorm out there and the thunder shaking the ground and everything went on.

AED: False alarm, but pretty scary at the onset to try to figure out what's going on.

EWN: Oh yeah.

AED: You talked about workers in the plant. Are those other 1094th guys coming out?

EWN: In the daytime?

AED: Yeah.

EWN: Well, in the daytime, you had a lot of brass in there and you had scientists and just workers that were putting the bombs together.

AED: And some of them were civilians?

EWN: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. A big portion of them were.

AED: And the brass that you mentioned would be air force personnel involved with those?

EWN: Oh yeah.

AED: And you mentioned a password, too. Is that something that changed?

EWN: [Yes]. It changed every night. Something different.

AED: Every night, so daily you had something different.

EWN: Yeah.

AED: Because people talked about that, but I haven't thought to ask. And who was in charge of telling you what it was?

EWN: Of the password?

AED: Do you remember how you knew what [what the password was]?

EWN: Well, if you're assigned that post when you went on duty. You didn't know it until you went on duty that night, they'd give you the password. Our flight sergeant would give me the password. And I don't know where it come from, whether the flight officer made it up or whatever, I don't know.

AED: When you went on duty, what was the procedure? Did you have to go somewhere to check in and get equipment?

EWN: We had guard mount before we went on duty.

AED: What's that?

EWN: Formation. I think you got 70 guys to a flight. Well, you'd have 70 guys in formation, three rows. And they'd check you. Boy, they'd check you to see everything, your weapons and everything else. You'd have to clean and oil your weapons for inspection and shine your boots and all that stuff. They'd inspect everything before you went on duty. And then you'd have your assigned post. The whole base was surrounded with four fences except you had one entrance only. When you went in that one entrance, well, then you had a small area where the administration building was, the fire department, motor pool, barracks, and all that stuff was in this small area. And you had a badge to get in there. When you went on duty, you had what you called perimeter patrol. They didn't have to go through the—well, there's three perimeter patrols. They didn't have to change badges. They just went on their perimeter patrol in that area between the fences.

AED: Okay, and there were three perimeter patrols? The one that I know about is the one between fence number one and fence two, both sides of it.

EWN: Yeah, you had a road there where you had what you called perimeter patrol where these guys drive. Say it was basically, the base was round. It was divided into thirds. A third of the area, this patrol went up and turned around, and this other one went to his, turned around, turned around back and forth, and the other covered the whole works. Everybody else that went on duty went through the Q [Area] gate. We had a Q [Area] gate. You'd have to exchange badges, and those badges, they had little round holes there where they punched out to where you could go into certain areas. Now, I had a top-secret clearance, so it showed that I could go anywhere inside or out. But some guys didn't have a top-secret clearance. I don't know whether they called it just a secret clearance or a Q clearance or whatever, but they couldn't go in the plants, but they could be on patrol inside or pillboxes, walking post on the outside, but they couldn't go in the plants.

AED: Okay, and top-secret would be for the guys going into the plant. That was my understanding.

EWN: Right. Yeah, that's the only guys that could go in the plants was with the top-secret clearance. And hell, I'd pulled every post there was.

AED: It sounds like you had a lot of variety as opposed to some of the guys really just did perimeter for the most part or just did front gate for the most part.

EWN: Yeah. I was BS-ing with one of the guys. He wasn't here this time, but it was a few years ago and we was BS-ing, and he said, Well, he was always on Q [Area] gate. That's one post I never did pull was Q [Area] gate, but they assign that. And the same guys had it all the time. Just like the same guy was in the ADT [room] in the plant. When you went through the Q [Area] gate, you took your badge and gave it to him, he gave you the other badge and away you went, see. And then you come back out and you exchange them again. Anyway, I was talking to him and he was telling me, he said, When a person—they had a roster there of all the guys who were in the plant when he was on duty, and he said that when he exchanged badges—when a guy come out from being on duty, he had a Geiger counter. He would scan that, and he'd write down whatever the hell it said. I had no idea until a few years ago when he told me that.

AED: That that was happening.

EWN: See, evidently those old atomic bombs were leaking a lot of radiation. But they told us, Oh everything's safe, don't worry about it. Every so often they'd have a meeting, Oh don't worry about, it, the bombs are safe. You know, we'd be around leaning on them and the smaller ones, hell, why I'd even straddle them and sit on them because you didn't have any place to sit, you know? I imagine sometimes when I come off duty, man, that Geiger counter must have really lit up, you know? I didn't know that until just a few years ago.

AED: You mentioned that you did most of the different posts. You did pillbox post? And tunnel?

EWN: Oh yeah. Outside, I'd done a lot of patrol, pillbox, walking post. In the Plant 1, you know, like the main door, blast doors. I'd done everything there was except Q [Area] gate.

AED: Okay, and what was the walking post?

EWN: A walking post, they always had a man on the walking post in front of the plants. He'd walk back and forth on walking post.

AED: Okay, because the guy that's at the front entrance, he's just stationary. So this is to look for movement, someone coming that you're not expecting, things like that?

EWN: Yeah, they always had a walking post in front of each plant.

AED: Okay. You talked about alert squad. Tell me about that.

EWN: Okay. Before I tell you about that, you want to know about all these posts? There was one other post in Plant 1 that I pulled quite often, too, before I became plant sergeant. The only time you done that was in the daytime. It wasn't nighttime. It was when they were working. Way back in the back of Plant 1, they had, well, you had another tunnel that went back there and it stopped. And this particular—I forget what this post was called—but the door went into where they have all their blueprints and all the stuff to manufacture atomic bombs. I mean, this was supposed to be a very secure place. Whenever I pulled that, and like I says, the only time you pull that was in the daytime when the workers were working there. What had happened was that these guys would need to check blueprints for some reason or other. I don't know the details, but I do know that the blueprints on how to manufacture these bombs was in there, in this little room. Well, I had a log book that I would sign, the guys would have to sign in and out. And I had orders that you always had two guys in there at the same time. You could never have one person in there at once. Everything went pretty smooth, but I remember one time I had a problem. They were two officers, I don't remember what rank they were, but they were in there, and one comes out and he's going to sign out, and I told him, "Sir, you're going to have to go back in there, because we're not allowed to have one person in there at one time." And he was a smart ass, one of those kind of guys. Who in the hell am I, the lowly enlisted man to tell him? And he got really smart about it, so he wasn't going back in there. I wasn't going to tell him what to do. And he was pretty belligerent.

AED: What did you do?

EWN: I patted my .45 and said, "Sir, I strongly advise you to go back in there and immediately." And he changed his mind real fast. But I would have, I'd have taken that gun out and jacked around and I'd told him, "You can get your ass back in there."

AED: Well, what was he trying to pull? I mean, he knew the rules, too, right?

EWN: Yeah, but you know, wherever you go, you always got one or two of them's like that. Arrogant. Boy, he wasn't about to let some lowly enlisted man tell him what to do, you know.

AED: Did you have other experiences like that in that position?

EWN: No, that's about the only one. That's the only one I can really think of.

AED: In any of your other guard posts did you ever have any kind of attempt to infiltrate?

EWN: Well, one time I was on perimeter patrol, driving back and forth, and hell, all of a sudden, this guy is walking on the outside of the fence. So, I [though], What the—he's not supposed to be anywhere around there. This was on the back side. So I stopped and I approached him, and I don't remember asking what he was doing back there. I don't even remember what he said. And I told him, "You're not supposed to be here and to stay right there," and I called them and they sent somebody out around, they picked him up, took him in and interrogated him. I don't know what happened, but that was the rules. Nobody was supposed to be out there.

AED: And the exterior, my understanding is, the military police from Fort Hood did some of that.

EWN: Not around our base. The MPs from the army, they were allowed to come up to—what the hell was it? Five hundred feet of our gate and that was it. Because I know, I recall somebody saying that they was on the main gate and these MPs—well, I don't know why, but them MPs thought they were hot stuff. And they were chasing one of our guys one night. They were going to nail him for, I don't know, speeding or something, and the guy kept coming. And they was telling me about—you know, you get to know everybody's car, you know. And he's coming up there to the main gate and you're supposed to stop everybody and check them, and these MPs are chasing him and they figured what was going on. So they just opened the gate and let the guy go through, and the MPs come right up to the gate. They wanted that man for speeding or whatever, and they warned them to get the hell out of there immediately because they weren't allowed there, and that's the only incident I recall.

AED: The alert squad, tell me about that.

EWN: We had six flights and we pulled six-hour duties, but actually we spent seven hours because before you went on duty you had to take and clean all your weapons and shine them up and get ready for guard mount. If you had a vehicle you had to wash it and shine it. So it was eight hours, but you only spent six hours on duty. So you had six flights, and you had a flight on duty from say six p.m. to midnight, another one midnight to six a.m., and another at six a.m. to noon, another at noon to six p.m. Well, when you got to that point, then you went on alert for three days and three nights, and when you was on alert you was restricted to the base for three days and three nights, and that was alert squad. And that squad was, well, we had a lot of details to do, like they'd have so many a day for KP and so forth.

AED: Other things to keep things running on base.

EWN: Yeah. But you still had enough men in alert squad that if they call alert squad like I told you, you jump in your vehicles and you take off to that area to check it out. You got loaded guns and everything, too, you know.

AED: And at that point, a different flight is doing the six-hour shifts, but you're the alert squad? So you're the backup?

EWN: Right. That's correct. All the alert squad does is concentrate on where they think somebody's

breaking in or whatever. That was alert squad. And then you went on three-day pass for three days and then you started all over again.

AED: In your own words, what would you describe as the mission of Killeen Base?

EWN: Well, to manufacture atomic bombs for security. A lot of people don't know it. I don't know if you know it or not, but during the time we was in and a long time afterward, you had what they called the Cold War with Russia. Russia would have like to have kicked our ass if it could. 'Scuse my French.

AED: That's okay, that's acceptable. I think you're right.

EWN: There's no doubt about it. If they could have whipped us, they'd have sure as hell done it. [In] fact, I was over in Sweden one time. This was a long time after I got out. And I know my uncle, he was thanking me. He said, "Boy, if it wasn't for the good ol' U.S.A., us Swedes would be speaking Russian for sure." And he was really thankful for us.

But anyway, a lot of people don't know it, but during that Cold War period, we had, I don't know how many, but a bunch of B-52s. You know what a B-52 is?

AED: Yes.

EWN: With atomic bombs loaded in the air 24/7. And each bomber had a destination. If they got the word, they was going to drop the atomic bomb on these different cities, they'd have wiped out Russia. And Russia knew this. That's the only reason why they didn't dare attack us because they knew they'd have cut their own throat. People don't know that, you know.

AED: So those kinds of missions were going on and Killeen Base would be supporting that.

EWN: We were the ones that were supplying atomic bombs. And it wasn't only Killeen Base or Manzano [Base]. I don't know whether you know it or not, ours was the 1094th. Well, after we got out of basic training, we were all split up in the 1094th. Then they used that same tent city to train others. Another group come in like we did and they'd train them. It was called the 1095th. After they got trained, they got shipped to Shreveport, Louisiana. I don't whether you know this or not. That was the 1095th. They got shipped to Shreveport. Shipped in a bunch more, after they got trained, that was the 1096th. I think, I'm not too sure, they got shipped to—well, let me put it this way, then there's 1096th, 1097th, 1098th, and 1099th that they trained there. I know the 1095th I know for sure went to Shreveport. Another group went to Bangor, Maine. Another group went to Spokane, Washington. Another group went to, I think it was North Dakota somewhere.

AED: There were other national storage sites.

EWN: Oh yeah. They went to places just like where we was at. Like I say, one was in Spokane, one in Bangor, Maine, one in North Dakota, I believe. Because I know our group was the first ones to train as the 1094th, and then there was the 1095th, 1096th, 1097th, and 1098th, and 1099th.

AED: And they all landed in different locations?

EWN: Different areas, right.

AED: That's so interesting. Could you talk more about being plant sergeant? That role [and] what those duties entailed?

EWN: Well, like I say, at nighttime when they closed everything down and all the brass and the workers and the scientists and everybody left the plant for the day, that's when the guards took over. And you had, at that time, each plant they closed the one main door and locked it, but the other one they still used. So you had a man on the main door, you had a man back on the blast door, and then on the other side you had a man on the blast door over there, and like Plant 1 you had the ADT operator. What else did you have? I think that was it. But as you know, if you went through those plants, it's quite a long ways around.

AED: Yeah. I was glad we had a golf cart.

EWN: Yeah. I had a bicycle, and you know, my job was I'd go check one and drive over and check. And if they need go to the bathroom or something, why then they'd get on the bicycle and I'd take their post and they'd go to the bathroom.

AED: Oh, okay. They had relief, right, a break.

EWN: Oh yeah. And that was my job.

AED: So it was plant specific, you weren't on your bike going back and forth to the Q [Area] gate?

EWN: I was strictly in the plant. Just strictly in the plant.

AED: Was there a special requirement for you to be in that?

EWN: Had to be a sergeant.

AED: For the position, you had to be a sergeant. But that seems like a higher level of duty, responsibility.

EWN: Well, I guess because you have to be a buck sergeant in order to have that post, but up till that point, I used to pull main doors and blast doors and then that other special post I was telling you about where that officer got smart.

AED: At the ADT.

EWN: No, that wasn't the ADT. I don't remember what they called it, but it was—

AED: It was guarding one of the particular chambers they had—

EWN: Yeah, where they had the blueprints and all that stuff, and the idea was you never left two men in there, or one man in there, because if he *was* a spy or something, he could take pictures of all that. That's why you always want two guys in there.

AED: One watching the other. Were there other responsibilities as part of plant sergeant? It's checking post to post that everybody's there?

EWN: Yes. That was it.

AED: Okay, and was that—? The guys who were doing the perimeter posts were telling me—

EWN: Patrols.

AED: Patrol. Someone would come every shift and make sure they were there doing what they were supposed to be doing.

EWN: Oh yeah, you never knew when they was showing up. Sometime on your shift, the flight officer, flight sergeant, they'd be driving around checking everything. And it didn't make any difference if you was on patrol in the perimeter patrol or in the Q Area, when you's on patrol, it didn't make a damn if it was nighttime or daytime, when you was driving along, here come another vehicle and you knew it was, you could see it was the flight officer and the flight sergeant, you had a routine, no matter what. You'd stop, get out, take your .45, "Halt. Who's there?" You know damn good and well, who it is, but you have to go through it. Make them get out, they'd show you their badge, you'd have to do this no matter what, day or night, and that was the routine.

AED: Okay, all right. At Killeen Base, at the time, was your impression that it was a very safe place? That the layout of what they were doing was safe or did it seem dangerous?

EWN: Oh, I felt plenty safe there. Oh, yeah.

AED: When you first realized, as you have described that realization what was going on there, what do you recall your reaction? Could you explain about that a little bit more? What your thoughts about that activity going on there?

EWN: Well, it's kind of a surprise because you never thought about anything like that before and you didn't realize something like that was going on, you know. Oh, I don't know, well, like I told you, when I first seen that atomic bomb, it was pretty scary.

AED: Did you talk with your fellow soldiers about what was going on? Soldiers is the wrong word—troops.

EWN: Well, yeah, airmen.

AED: Airmen, that's better, right. Have to be careful with those terms sometimes! Anyhow, did you talk to your fellow troops about what you were seeing and what was going on at Killeen Base at the time?

EWN: You know, I don't recall that at all.

AED: Because you were told not to discuss.

EWN: No, nobody said a damn word.

AED: And I meant to ask, were you ever a part of one of the convoys that escorted the bombs to and from Gray Air Force Base?

EWN: Oh, you didn't do that. Well, Gray [Air Force Base] was right next to our base, but I never escorted anything like that. I don't know if they did or not.

AED: I've had several fellows tell me that they were part of a convoy that would just simply go over to [Gray Air Force Base]. It was a pretty short ride, but that was part of their responsibility.

EWN: Well, I'm sure they probably did because once you're out of the gates, why, you're vulnerable, you know. I never did get in on that. The only thing that I got in on the convoy was you always got paid with cash, and the staff car would go get the cash, and they always have a jeep in front of it and a jeep behind it with a .50-caliber [machine gun], and I got on that duty a few times. And boy, you had orders. Man, anybody mess around, you shot them with a .50-caliber [machine gun]. Man, you might as well, kiss yourself goodbye.

AED: Do you recall how much you could get paid for your service, what the rate was?

EWN: I don't really know. It wasn't a hell of a lot, I can tell you that. It seems to me when we first went in it was—see, I do remember that my brother-in-law was telling me about they got paid $21 a month during the Second World War when they was privates. I think we got $30-something if I remember right. Boy, we was getting overpaid!

AED: You weren't getting any hazard pay?

EWN: No, that's for sure.

AED: Have you been back to the tunnels?

EWN: Oh, yeah.

AED: Describe how you remember them, their appearance, what did they look like?

EWN: Pretty run down compared to when we were there.

AED: But when you were there, I'm sorry, when you were in the service, what did they look like then?

EWN: Looked like a tunnel that was painted.

AED: Okay, they were in pretty good condition, though, relative to today?

EWN: Oh yeah. Hell, they were kept up nice.

AED: Who did maintenance on them, do you know? Is that something you would've seen?

EWN: I have no idea, I never—

AED: 'Cause other guys were saying they were just so clean. Somehow somebody was doing that.

EWN: Yeah, but I have no idea who was doing that. I know we weren't, but they were nice and clean and well kept.

AED: But as you've seen they're, not falling down, but just sort of ratty.

EWN: Yeah, they're just not kept up.

AED: And you said you've been in the pillboxes, too. Can you describe what those were like in appearance?

EWN: Well, they were just a concrete square box, and I suppose on the inside they were probably, maybe 5 foot square, and then 6 1/2 feet high. And all the solid concrete and all four sides you had like a big thick metal deal that they must have poured in concrete with an opening where you could stick your gun out and shoot.

AED: Where were they in relation to the plants? Were they near them or were they [remote]?

EWN: Oh yeah, they had one, well, they had one in front of each plant, and they had others in structures around.

AED: There were some that were more remote.

EWN: Yeah, there was a few others. And you know, I really can't honestly tell you why, but my guess is the reason why they had them there is because those were the structures where they probably kept the bombs, most of the bombs, in. They didn't always have bombs in all the structures You could pretty well, guess that, like some of those pillboxes wouldn't be manned. So I mean, common sense tells you, well, hell, there's nothing in that structure because they don't have a pillbox that's manned. Then times they'd put guys on that pillbox, because if you got any brains at all, you know damned good and well, they must have it loaded with atomic bombs or something.

AED: What was it like guarding in the pillbox?

EWN: Boring as hell.

AED: It could only fit one man, right? And you're standing, presumably?

EWN: Yeah, you're supposed to be standing, just observing, looking out, make sure everything's okay.

AED: I think it'd be hard to stay awake.

EWN: Oh yeah, difficult, very difficult. Well, you know, talking about staying awake, you know, I'm from the farm and I'm like an old chicken. When it's nighttime, it's time to sleep, and I can't sleep in the daytime very well. And I remember one night, in fact, I was at the main door at Plant 1. You probably never noticed, but up above you, you had a whole string of fluorescent lights. A whole bunch of them, rows of them, up top. They go *bzzzzzzzz*, and they sing you to sleep. Anyway, you know, that guard duty was boring as hell, and like Plant 1, I was on by the main door, and it was the midnight shift, and you had a folding chair there. You'd stand up and look out, you know, killing time. I sat in that folding chair and oh, it was probably three o'clock in the morning, I don't remember, and holy smoke, I sat back like that, and I woke up. Oh man, I couldn't believe it. I'd gone to sleep and didn't know it, see? Boy, that's a court-martial offense. Man, I jumped up. I never sat like that again.

AED: Just that sound.

EWN: Yeah, that buzzing just kind of sings you to sleep. And man, from that time on, I would always stand up when I was real sleepy. And there's many times—now people probably think I'm lying to them—but there's many times I'd be standing up and next thing you know I'd be picking myself off the floor, I'd fall asleep standing up.

AED: But falling down wakes you up. Pretty suddenly.

EWN: Oh yeah, no doubt about that. That's for sure.

AED: You recall ever being at a high alert?

EWN: Not that I recall.

AED: Do you recall, maybe, were there practice situations?

EWN: Like as if there was a high alert?

AED: Yeah.

EWN: Oh yeah. We did those.

AED: Were those just at random or were they regular?

EWN: No, they were just random.

AED: Okay, were they frequent, like every week?

EWN: No. Seldom.

AED: Okay, maybe several times over a year?

EWN: Oh god, I remember maybe once a year, maybe something like that. It wasn't very often.

AED: Infrequent. Okay.

EWN: And then the officers would question you about why did you do this or what would you do if this or this? I remember we had one guy in the outfit, why that happened, and he was saying the enemy was coming at us with all this equipment, you know, imagine it. And then they asked this one guy about—I forget just how it went—but anyway, he told them something and the officer said, "Well, you can't do that because you don't have that equipment." He said, "Well, hell, you imagined that it was the enemy, so I imagined I had this equipment." And he got chewed out for it.

AED: On these rare occasions when you did high alert practice, what happened? What kinds of things would happen? Anything different or unusual?

EWN: No, it was kind of like if you an alert and they called you out, and you have the way you would attack a certain situation. I don't know just how to explain it, but it was just basically kind of like a training session, you might say. I think it was just to kind of keep you in practice in case something happened.

AED: And there was not a time while you were there, either at Killeen Base or at Manzano [Base], when there was an actual high alert?

EWN: No. Not that I recall.

AED: Tell me a little bit about your living conditions at Killeen Base. You lived in barracks?

EWN: Barracks, yeah.

AED: After the tents. First you were in tents, and then—?

EWN: Right, see after we got through the three-month combat infantry training and we got cleared, our clearances, then they split us all up in six flights that were already there.

AED: Okay. So there were pre-existing flights that you all went into?

EWN: They split us up in those.

AED: What were the barracks like?

EWN: Oh, they were fine. Yeah, at Killeen [Base] they were nice. In fact, that building it was a two-story building, a brick building, if I remember. It was nice.

AED: And the first level, what was that used for? Do you recall?

EWN: Well, some of the flights were in the lower level and some were up higher, the second floor.

AED: What was the second floor for? I'm getting at there were sleeping areas and recreation or lounging areas, things like that.

EWN: Yeah, I'm trying to think.

AED: My understanding is there was some bays on either end where there were, I don't know that you'd call them sleeping rooms, but there were bunk beds in those?

EWN: Well, we called them bays, but they were like barracks. The whole flight would be in one bay, so you'd have six bays. You know, I don't know where. I think there was two buildings.

AED: I think there were, well, eventually there were maybe six buildings, but at the time when you were there, I don't think there were that many.

EWN: No, I think there was two brick buildings. I think they're still there the last I was there, and oh yeah, hell, they were nice.

AED: Comfortable?

EWN: Oh yeah.

AED: And where did you eat?

EWN: In the mess hall.

AED: And how was that?

EWN: Oh, that was fine. Yeah, we ate good. Well, see, I always had fun. My little brother is 10 years younger than me and he was a tank driver in the Vietnam War, and they ate a lot of slop I guess, and I always talked, oh god, you should've been at my outfit, we ate steaks every day. We got sick of eating steaks. And that's a fact, because and I'll tell you what, the officers and all the brass, they ate in the same mess hall that we ate in, only they ate at one end by themselves, but they ate the same food that we ate, you know. Hell, we ate good. I'd rub that into my little brother on how well, we ate. You stupid jerk, you enlisted in the army. You should have gone in the air force!

AED: That's great. And did you interact with the guys that worked at the Gray Air Force Base or Fort Hood, in general, for any reason?

EWN: No, not really. I remember, you know, god, Fort Hood there is like a million guys there, you know. You'd go into the town of Killeen, and Killeen was just a small place at that time, and you get sick and tired of staying out at the base for three days when you're on three-day pass. You go into town and to see a movie or something. My god, it was wall-to-wall army, thick as hair on a dog's back, you know, all over. And then once in a while, you'd see a blue uniform. But we got along real good with the army guys. Yeah, we got along real good.

AED: And when you were off-duty and you could leave, you went to Killeen. Did you go other places too?

EWN: Oh yeah, I used to get bored and I'd just put on my uniform, go out on the highway and thumb, hell, I thumbed it all over Texas looking at places.

AED: Oh you did?

EWN: Oh, yeah.

AED: Excellent, and you could wear your uniform?

EWN: Oh, yeah.

AED: Because some of the guys were saying they would wear civilian clothes sometimes.

EWN: You'd never get picked up. I tried that one time. One time I went out there. Boy, you bet. You know where the road hits the main highway that goes? I forget where it goes.

AED: Yeah, [U.S. Highway] 190 I think. It goes to Killeen.

EWN: It goes east and west, and our road went north. I went out there one time with my civvies on. I stood there for half an hour. I went back to the base, put my uniform on, went back out there, and bam, I had a ride. Boy, I tell you one thing I could say, in those days, if you had a uniform on, you got a ride immediately. I'll never forget. Like I say, I thumbed it all over hell looking the country over just to kill time. And I'll never forget one time this guy took me. I don't know, I was up around Dallas, Fort Worth, somewhere up there, and the guy had taken me quite a ways, and he pulls off the side because he's going to go right, on the road right, and I want to go straight ahead. It's a four-door sedan and I'm in the back right, so I get out and I'm thanking the guy and before I slam the door, I heard breaks screeching. Somebody pulled up behind me to pick me up. Just like that.

AED: Wow, that's impressive.

EWN: You bet. I tell you what, those Texans down there, they really treated us good. I can't say a thing about them. Like I say, I thumbed all over. Hell, I caught a ride with a rancher one time. Picked me up, and he's talking about his cattle and ranching. And I told him yeah, I said, "I'm an old farm boy from Nebraska," and he started asking me questions. I could tell he thought I was just BS-ing him. So he's asking me different questions about the cattle and different things. But I got him finally was convinced that I was an old farm boy from Nebraska. Next thing I know, he says, "Well, you doing anything? Going anywhere?" No, I was just looking the country over, killing time. "Well, come on out to the ranch with me." And you know, they treated me like a king.

AED: That's nice, very nice. One of the guys was telling me there was a rec camp out at a place called Lake Buchanan. Do you recall hearing about that?

EWN: No, I don't recall that.

AED: Okay, and then another fellow, Jack McCoy was telling me he participated in a boxing team. Do you recall doing any boxing or basketball, baseball?

EWN: Well, I knew they had a baseball team. I knew that. I can't remember this guy's name in my flight. He wasn't a professional baseball player but he was the next thing to it. He was one hell of a baseball player. The commander, Colonel Hoover there at Killeen [Base], he was a hell of a guy. He loved baseball. Boy, that Killeen Baseball team, boy, he was right on them all the time. And I remember one time, hell, we just got there out of tent city one time, and

hell, we were both PFCs, and we's walking down the hall. Here comes Colonel Hoover. Oh god, you know, here comes the colonel! He comes right up to us like an old buddy and he tells this guy, "Hey Jones," or whatever the hell his name was, he says something about, "what do you think of that team we're going to play here Friday night?" Or whatever the hell it was. He says, "Well, sir," he says, "boy, they're a pretty tough team." He says, "I hope we can beat them," and all that. And the old colonel—I'll never forget that guy, he was a character—he says, "Well, kick their ass for me." So he was just like one of the boys. Real nice guy.

AED: Had a lot of responsibility, but could talk to the troops.

EWN: Yeah. And I'll tell you, when I was in Killeen [Base] there, I was going to make a career out of it. I liked it. They treated you good. If you worked hard, you made your stripes, and they treated you like a human being. So then when they changed bases when we to go to Albuquerque, we was there, I don't know about five, six months, Hoover got shipped overseas and they shipped in a new commander, Jack Armstrong. We called him the All-American Boy. You know why we called him that, don't you? Do you remember Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy?

AED: I know that name.

EWN: Yeah, that was back when we was kids growing up, they had these different stories on radio that you listen to, and there was one Jack Armstrong and they called him the All-American Boy. And this guy, this colonel was named Jack Armstrong. So we always called him the All-American Boy. But boy, he was just the opposite, boy. I mean, I can't say anything good about him at all. The base just went to hell after he took over. We had a decent flight officer and we worked our butts off to make him look good because he treated us good, you know. We was flight of the month most of the time. Boy, after this guy took over, why he shipped him out overseas and all the decent officers they got rid of, and if you ask me, I can't tell you what I called the rest of them that stayed, but anyway it went downhill, I tell you what. By the time us guys got ready for discharge, and there was a bunch of us that got discharged, probably 150 of us all in one shot within a couple days here. Nobody would re-enlist because I mean they treated us like dogs.

AED: You didn't have much incentive.

EWN: I wouldn't have re-enlisted for anything in the world, no. But afterwards, there was a big congressional investigation why nobody re-enlisted, and they were checking with the enlisted men at the base, and the next thing you know Jack Armstrong got shipped out and they started treating the guys decent again. But if I was treated there like I was in Killeen [Base], I'd have re-enlisted. I'd have made a career out of it. I liked it.

AED: When did you discharge?

EWN: January the 10th of '55. The reason why I got discharged, I enlisted on the 8th, and I had to make the two days for being AWOL. And that was a fluke because, when I went in I was married and my wife was pregnant. So that was in January and my first child was born in the last part of May. I'd gone to my flight officer, who was a real decent guy, and I told him, I said, "God, I've got to go clear to Portland, and it's going to take me three days by train going, three days coming back. I'm only going to be there three or four days." I said, "Could I borrow a couple of days?" "Sure," he said, "I don't see why not. Go see the first sergeant and he'll fix you up." So I went in there and talked to him. He said, "Oh yeah, we'll fix you up. We'll have your papers ready for you by the time you're supposed to leave." So when that time came, I went in there and I asked him, I said, "Do I get my two days off?" "Yeah, everything's okay." Handed them to me. I said, "Now," boy, I want to make sure, I said, "now, I have to be signed

in by midnight at such-and-such time?" "Yep." I was young and stupid, you know. I didn't even look at them. In your uniform, you've got this pocket on the inside. I stuck it in there, I never looked at it, see. So I went on the furlough. Come back, signed in before. And we had records check, I think about every six months, you had records check. We had to go in and get your records checked. A few months after that, I had to go in for record check and they were reading off this list, and the guys says, "AWOL, two days, charged $5-and-something a day." I looked at that and I thought, What the hell is this? He says, "Well, you were AWOL two days." So somewhere, someone screwed up, either the first sergeant told the guy to do it that way, and the guy didn't do it, or I don't know. I don't, to this day, I don't know, but all I know on my discharge papers it said I was two days AWOL. I enlisted on January the 8th and got discharged on January the 10th, but I learned something there, by god, never trust anything. Always check. I never even looked at it.

AED: But you had no reason to suspect.

EWN: No, but the funny part about it. The flight officer never said a word to me. Nobody said a word.

AED: Right, you would think somebody would have, when they were checking you in, they might say something.

EWN: Yeah. But that flight officer that we had was one hell of a nice guy. He was really great.

AED: So, there weren't very serious consequences somehow.

EWN: No. But compared to after we got the big changes and when we got to Albuquerque and this other colonel took over and everything went to hell and they got rid of all the good officers. Boy we got an officer, Lieutenant Ellis. We called him pear-shape because he had a big rear end. Anyway, that is the most miserable person I have ever seen in my life.

AED: You've seen a lot of people between now and then.

EWN: Yeah. I've been around a long time, and he is the worst human being. He ruined more good men. Have we got enough time where I can give you [more]?

AED: Sure.

EWN: In comparison to what happened to me. We had a single guy in my flight in Albuquerque, and he was from Flagstaff, Arizona, and he was the sharpest man in our flight. Even if you had a walking post, boy, his fatigues, he ironed them, he had creases in them, spit shined. He was a corporal. He was the sharpest man in the flight. Well, anyway, he was single and when we get on three-day pass, occasionally he would take a bus. He didn't have a car. He'd take a bus to Flagstaff, which is about 300 miles west of Albuquerque, and go home, and he'd take a bus back. Well, this one time we're getting ready to go on duty at six o'clock at night, and everybody mulling around, ready for guard mount. Somebody says—I forget the guy's name—somebody says, "So-and-so isn't here yet." God, we had guard mount and he wasn't there. We went on post, and I understood that three or four hours later, he come on duty, three or four hours late. This chicken, pear-shape, he court-martialed him. He was a corporal. He busted him to private, restricted him to the base for 90 days as I recall, and fined him $100 bucks. A $100 bucks in those days.

AED: Was a serious amount of money.

EWN: You're damn right. For being three or four hours late. And the reason why was because the bus broke down.

AED: He probably helped fix the bus, right?

EWN: So, to show you what the difference was in these officers. After that, when he stood guard mount, he'd just wash fatigues and he was all wrinkled, never shined his shoes. He'd stand at attention. You could hear an officer, I forget if his name was Jones or whatever, and he said, "Jones, how come your clothes are wrinkled and your boots aren't shined?" "I don't know, sir. I don't know, sir." He didn't know nothing. And that's the way it was from there on. He just didn't give a damn. He just ruined him. And he was the sharpest man. He just didn't care after that. But you know that's a shame. And he's not the only one. I mean he ruined a lot of good men.

AED: What did you do after you were discharged?

EWN: Well, I went back to Portland and I got a job, on-the-job training as a printer, and after four years I became a journeyman printer. [Of] course, everything was going good, but my son was little and he kept getting pneumonia a lot. Anyway, where I lived, our doctor happened to live right next door to me, and he kept getting pneumonia a lot. He had weak lungs, and Portland is damp, and all that.

AED: True. Not helping.

EWN: No, that's what really made a big difference. But anyway, god, it seemed like he was always sick, on the verge of pneumonia or whatever. We'd get a prescription for this kind of medication or that kind. Hell, we had one cabinet in the kitchen that was just loaded. It looked like a pharmacy, and the funny part about it is like, for instance, in the middle of the night, two or three o'clock in the morning, boy, he'd be getting really sick. We was worried about him. Call the doctor and he'd come over in his housecoat, slippers on. He get on a chair and get in the cabinet and, "Well, let's see. Let's try this one." But that was really convenient. At the last, he got some kind of pneumonia, I forget what it's called, but I believe it was 90 or 95 percent of the people that get this certain pneumonia, they don't make it, but he was lucky and made it. So the doctor told us, he says, "You're very fortunate that he made it," but he says, "next time he probably won't." So he says, "My advice to you is get to a dry climate." So I left there, and I was headed for, I don't know, Arizona, somewhere. It just happened my wife's parents had a furniture store in Redding. So we stopped there to see them, and they said, Well, boy we got long hot summers here in Redding. Why don't you try this? Well, we get a lot of rain in the wintertime. Like 42 inches of rain.

AED: Oh my gosh, I didn't know that.

EWN: Oh yeah. But you know one thing, storms come in, rain like hell for a couple days, three days, and then the sun comes out and you got sun for a while.

AED: It's a short winter season.

EWN: Yeah. Like Portland, hell, when it sets in, it's misty rain. I've seen it for three months when I lived up there, without ever seeing the sun, you know.

AED: Is that the son that's [in Branson] with you?

EWN: Yeah. So we decided, well, let's give it a shot. Our summers in Redding are long. They're like six, seven months, and hot. It was 104 degrees the day before we left there, coming up here.

AED: Kind of like where we live. Plenty toasty.

EWN: But it's dry. The humidity is only like 5, 7 percent maybe, right in there, and that makes a big difference. So after this one summer, I mean, it was like somebody took a magic wand and says, Abracadabra, your health is fine, and he's never been sick since.

AED: That's fantastic.

EWN: Yeah!

AED: Do you have other children, too?

EWN: I have a daughter, yeah.

AED: When you were at Killeen Base at the time, did you realize you were part of something unusual? Exceptional? Special? Did you know? Did you feel that?

EWN: Well, yeah, I felt like we were special. After all, the FBI checked me out. I had a top-secret clearance, I mean, not everybody gets that. I figured it was kind of a special outfit.

AED: Did you think of it as being something bigger, you were a part of something bigger going on in the world?

EWN: Oh, yeah, I figured that, you know.

AED: At the time, did you know that this going to be or was called the Cold War?

EWN: No, not at that time. Because that was just kind of the beginning of it.

AED: But now, you know you were part of this long engagement that was just a very different kind of war.

EWN: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. Well, like I tell everybody when I talk about it is, if it wasn't for our outfits that provided the atomic bombs for the B-52s, we'd be speaking Russian right now is what it boils down to.

AED: What do you think now, looking back on your role in the Killeen Base and what it did?

EWN: We were just part of something that protected this country, which we need real bad. Boy, that's one thing that really upsets me is when stupid politicians talking about cutting military here and there, and all that, that upsets me. But I guarantee you, if we get real weak, somebody's going to try to kick our rear ends for us.

AED: And like you said before, we know there are people, there are groups out there who would like see that.

EWN: You bet. Lot of them.

AED: When did you first feel comfortable talking about Killeen Base and what was going on there?

EWN: Well, we couldn't talk about it while we were in the military, and I never really talked about it. I don't know, you just kind of more or less forgot about it. I guess you get used to—you know, like we had orders that we didn't even talk to our wives about what was going on, and I guess you just kind of get used to doing that, you just do it without even thinking. And I never—I don't recall really talking to anybody about what I'd done and what the base is like

for a *long* time after I got out of the military. I guess it was from habit or whatever, I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

AED: Have you talked with your family? Do they know about what you were doing there?

EWN: They didn't at the time.

AED: Right, but subsequently.

EWN: Afterwards? Oh yeah.

AED: Yeah. They're aware of it.

EWN: Well, like my dad was a World War I veteran, and somehow we got discussing. We didn't talk about it much, you know. Just he mentioned a few things when he was in the military and I mentioned a few, but we didn't we didn't really go into big detail. I don't know why but you just don't really talk about it.

AED: I think that's a really important part of these reunions for all the different groups because it gives you that opportunity if you haven't had it before, and, yeah, it's nice, it's just a good way to catch up.

EWN: I enjoy doing it because you know, like most of the guys at our reunion I didn't know while I was in there. Like [Reed] Cheesman, hell he was in the office, I didn't know him. A lot of those guys, some of those guys were in different flights when I was in. In my flight, there was [George] Rasmussen, [Bill] Fogle, and [Abe] Hern. Those three guys were in my flight at this reunion. Sometimes there's more guys that were in my flight, but what I get a kick out of is us guys get to BS-ing about this and that and the other thing, and it never fails, somebody will be talking about something, and you'll say, "I'll be damned, I forgot about that."

AED: It triggers a memory.

EWN: Yeah, totally forgot about that. Or I'll be saying something and somebody will say, Hey, I forgot about that. yeah, you're right. You wonder, why in the hell did I remember this certain thing and he didn't, and then he remembers something else that I forgot, and it makes you wonder what the hell, why that is?

AED: Different things impress different people, I guess.

EWN: Yeah, it's sort of strange.

AED: Do you have an opinion about what should be done with Killeen Base? The tunnels? The buildings? Is demolition does that seem like an okay, acceptable thing, or could you see it being preserved or open to the public again at any time?

EWN: It might be a good idea, you know, open to the public to see how things were, that might be a thought. I'd hate to see it demolished. I would think maybe the army could use it for some reason. The way I look at it, *if* they could use it for some reason, that would be the right thing to do, that would be the first choice, the way I see it.

AED: Most efficient, too.

EWN: Right. But if they can't, I'd kind of like to see it preserved. Down the road, years down the road, people could go in and see what used to be.

AED: I think it's a fascinating place, you know. The first time you go in there, you're just sort of awestruck that this is here and then you realize this isn't the only one. It's one of a collection, and connect with what's going on in the air with planes. It's just a very impressive place.

EWN: Oh yeah. I agree. It's quite an operation.

AED: Do you have any other things that I haven't addressed or things you want to share that we haven't talked about?

EWN: All I can say is that although you had all those army guys there, you thought there might be a little friction or something, you know you hear different stories. I don't know of any time there was any friction between the army guys and us air force guys. We all got along real good.

AED: And they had no idea what you were doing.

EWN: No, no. No, hell no. I know. Something I just thought about. I remember a couple of guys in my flight at one time, it was a few days before payday, and hell, you're always broke. So anyway, these two guys were single and so they go down, they were on my flight. So they scrounge up a couple bucks, and you get sick of being out at the base, you know, Let's go to town, go to the bar. We got enough for a couple beers, two or three beers, four beers, whatever. And so they're down there one night, and they're just killing time having a couple beers. This guy walks up, and god, he's well dressed. Sits down beside them and he asks them, he says, wanted to know where they was from and so forth. We were never supposed to tell where we was from or what we done or anything, which they did. They didn't tell him anything. I don't remember what they told him, but that we were just in the air force, working at the base or some damn thing. The guy was really a nice friendly guy, you know, and he said, "Here, let me buy you a few drinks." God, he was buying them drinks all night, you know.

AED: Hard to turn that down.

EWN: Yeah. He said, "By god, he appreciated us guys are fighting for the country," and everything like that, and so he went to buy them some drinks. Everything went real good, you know, and they were just BS-ing and drinking and so forth. And so finally they leave and go back to hit the rack in the barracks. Boy, the next morning, first thing you know, somebody comes up, I don't know who the hell it was, a sergeant comes up and told them, "Get your ass out of the sack," excuse my French, "and report downstairs to"—whoever it was, I forget who it was—"and you better have your Class A uniform on." Man, What the hell is going on? Man, they were scared to death, they're going, What the hell is going on? Because we didn't know what was going on. So we go down and report, and they take one in one room and one in the other room and interrogate them. Well, come to find out, the guy that was talking to them was a spy, and the FBI was watching this guy all the time, and they reported these two guys he was talking to, and they wanted to find out. They interrogated separately because they wanted to find out what questions the guy asked them and what they told him, and then they compared it, see. But then they were off the hook because they didn't say anything, but they were worried there for a while. One thing, and I was told that occasionally the FBI watches each person. You never know when in the hell the FBI is watching you.

AED: When you would go off base, for example?

EWN: Right.

AED: You might go home to Portland and somebody might be [watching].

EWN: That's correct. You never knew. We were told that, and whether they did or not I don't know. Maybe that was just to keep you honest or something. I don't know. But anyway, these guys, everything checked out so they were okay. Security was great back in those days. I wished it was that good nowadays, I tell you that. Some of the things that goes on nowadays, I'm thinking to myself, Boy, this is not good.

AED: Right. Every now and then I read something in the newspaper where they're testing access to different federal buildings and people are getting in.

EWN: Oh boy, just makes me sick.

AED: But this seems like it was a very safe, tight, secure place.

EWN: Oh, it was. You bet it was.

Guy Barr Priester Jr.

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1948–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Monday, March 15, 2010. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. Guy Barr Priester Jr., and his wife, Gladys (Bess) Louise Priester. This interview is taking place at the First Baptist Church in Snellville, Georgia, where Mr. Priester serves as a minister. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

Could you tell me how old you were when you became a member of the service?

GBP: Eighteen.

AED: All right, and were you drafted, enlisted?

GBP: I was drafted in 1945 and given permission to finish high school and I enlisted June 1946.

AED: And where were you in high school?

GBP: City?

AED: Yes.

GBP: Quitman, Georgia.

AED: All right. And you're native-born Georgian, then?

GBP: No, born in Alabama.

AED: All right. What ranks did you achieve while you were in the service?

GBP: E9.

AED: And what does that mean?

GBP: Chief master sergeant.

AED: Had you served elsewhere before you came to Killeen Base?

GBP: Well, I went to Lackland [Air Force Base] for basic training, went to Scott Air Force Base for radio school, and then spent two years in Japan, '47 to '49. Got out of the military briefly, but, because I didn't serve six years, which I was required to do at that time, I was going to be drafted again. So I re-enlisted in 1950. Then they sent me from Fort Benning to Killeen [Base]. I got to Killeen Base in 1950, June of '50.

AED: Okay. And your earlier experience was also air force.

GBP: Army air corps.

AED: And basic training was at Lackland [Air Force Base].

GBP: Lackland [Air Force Base].

AED: And then you said you went to Scott [Field]?

GBP: Scott Field for radio school.

AED: When you re-entered, did you have to repeat basic training again?

GBP: No. They sent me directly from Fort Benning to Killeen Base.

GLP: The first time, you went in you didn't go to Lackland [Air Force Base], did you?

GBP: Yeah, in 1946. I had to go to Lackland [Air Force Base].

GLP: It wasn't Lackland Air Force Base.

GBP: Yeah, it was Lackland [Air Force Base]. Yeah.

AED: It was there, because I know the other gentlemen we've spoken to, I mean in the air force they usually go there. It might have been called Lackland Army Air Corps [or been part of Kelly Field]?

GBP: It was just Lackland Air Force Base.

GLP: There was no air force.

GBP: There was no air force, but it was Lackland [Air Force Base]. That's where the air force people that had been selected to go to the air force, army air corps went.

AED: And when you initially enlisted, why did you choose the air force?

GBP: I loved airplanes.

AED: Okay, for good reason. So you went to radio school. Did you get to choose that or were you selected?

GBP: No. When we took tests at Lackland [Air Force Base], they just shipped me to Scott Field.

AED: Okay. When you enlisted and you were in Georgia at the time, did you enlist with other people that you knew?

GBP: I was trying to think. There were probably several other men out of my graduating high school class that went in the same time. As a matter of fact, in 1945 when they drafted me, they said, You're drafted. I came to Fort McPherson from south Georgia and took a physical and everything and passed, and they said, We'll let you finish high school. I had from December—I came here in December—from December to June or May.

AED: Okay. How did you end up in Japan? Was that part of your radio [training]?

GBP: After that, right. They had—what was that project called? [Project Mule Train]. It was military people that were going to replace all the troops that had been overseas during the war. So we went. They just sent me straight to Japan and I was in AACS, Airways and Air Communication Service, under the Fifth Air Force.

AED: Occupation forces.

GBP: Right.

AED: You said you were there for two years?

GBP: Two years. Actually, '47, '48, and part of '49. Two years there.

AED: Okay, wow. Did that have a group number? Like there's a 1094th?

GBP: I was under the Fifth Air Force and it was, seemed to me like it was 1915th [Airways and Air Communications Service] squadron. It was an airways and air communication squadron.

AED: When you first enlisted, were you thinking you'd be a pilot? Is that what you were [hoping]?

GBP: No, that would have been a dream, but I wasn't smart enough to be a pilot.

AED: I doubt that! And the radio operation is a critical part of all of this.

GBP: We worked on—our main job there in Japan was repairing the radios that went on all the airplanes.

GLP: I laughed a while ago because he is a pilot.

AED: So clearly smart enough! So you were involved in overseas duty, but of course, after you became part of the 1094th, then domestic only, right?

GBP: Yeah, but I was overseas a lot of time since then.

AED: Sure. That is part of military.

GBP: Yes.

AED: Okay, good. We'll get to that, then. You served at Killeen Base and at Manzano [Base]. Did you serve at any of the other [national stockpile sites]?

GBP: Those are the only two national stockpile sites I served. I was with nuclear weapons, though, the rest of my career.

AED: Okay, and that's what I wanted to know was what after you [did after Killeen Base].

GBP: After Killeen Base?

AED: Yes.

GBP: I went to Manzano [Base] in 1952.

AED: With the group?

GBP: With the group. We swapped. The army, for some reason, from Fort Hood was at Sandia Base, Manzano [Base], and the air force for some reason was at Killeen Base, Fort Hood. And so they switched. The whole thing just completely changed, the division, all of us. And we took over the plan at Manzano [Base] and the army took over the plan at Fort Hood, at Killeen Base.

AED: Okay, and you had the same role at both?

GBP: At both places, yes.

AED: And then after Manzano [Base]?

GBP: After Manzano [Base] in 1952, was it September of '52? I believe it was. I volunteered and I was in the 4925th Test Group Atomic, which was thermonuclear weapons. I went from atomic weapons to TN [thermonuclear], and I was there until December '54, and then they moved the whole school. They started a school there teaching pilots on B-47s and B-36s loading and delivery techniques for thermonuclear weapons. Then we transferred the school from Albuquerque to Lowry Air Force Base in Colorado, where I stayed from '54 until '56. And I was transferred to Chanute Air Force Base in '56, and I was going to be in SAM 61 [surface-to-air missile] program, which was a land-to-air missiles. But they cancelled that project.

GLP: They gave it to the army.

GBP: Gave it to the army, and I was supposed to go overseas because I had been in stateside so long. So they sent me to Germany, and I went to the Fifth Tactical Depot Squadron, which was atomic weapons for fighter aircraft. We had F-100s and we had atomic weapons on our base and I stayed there from '57 till 1960. Came back to Lowry [Air Force Base] as an instructor from 1960 to 1966.

GLP: You need to stop and inject right there how many times you left me with the children to go to the Riviera.

GBP: Yeah, I was all over the world. As an inspection team in Germany, we went to all of our nuclear weapons in the world.

GLP: While I was home with two little people, and he would have the nerve to bring pictures back of a cabana on the Italian Riviera.

GBP: I was terrible.

GLP: Here I am, snow in Germany up in the mountains!

AED: So tell me when you were married.

GLP: [In] '51.

GBP: [In] 19151.

GLP: He made the mistake of coming home from Japan, and they tried to get him to stay and [he said,] No, he was going home. He came home and was going to Stetson [University], went to college that one year, and met me and that was it.

GBP: History.

GLP: He tried to get rid of me, but they sent him to Killeen [Base] where there was 10,000 soldiers and no girls.

GBP: There were two divisions in Fort Hood [and North Fort Hood] when I got there in 1950. That's about 200,000 troops on Fort Hood.

GLP: Going and coming.

GBP: Right. One division, Third Armored Division, was coming and another division was going. They were stationed on both Fort Hood and Copperas Cove, in that area. So now we're up to 1960, I come back to Lowry [Air Force Base] and stayed till '66 and then I get transferred to Tyndall Air Force Base where I went to from [Lowry Air Force Base]. Can I give you weapons numbers?

AED: Sure.

GBP: Mark 7s. We were using the Mark 7 in Germany. I came back, and then I got into re-entry vehicles. We were beginning to put missiles on top of missiles. When we had silos and all that, so I taught that for six years, and then went to Tyndall [Air Force Base] and went to AIR-2As, which was an air intercept rocket. I stayed there for only 10 and a half months, and then they sent me to Canada to CFB Chatham, which was a NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] base.

AED: CFB?

GBP: Canadian Forces Base, and worked. Then I went back to weapons again, and I stayed there from '67 to '69, and was transferred. I said, "Lord, send me south." I got sent to Bangor, Maine, 265 miles south, back to weapons again. I stayed there from '69 to '71, was transferred to [what is now known as] Fresno [Yosemite] International Airport, Fresno, California, back to weapons again and we closed that base in August of '71 and retired those weapons. And then I retired, 1971, from the military.

AED: So that's 20 [years]?

GBP: [It's] 24 years.

AED: Wow. And you were able to move with him to most of those locations?

GLP: He deserted me the first time when he went to—

GBP: Germany, three months.

GLP: For only three months and then we got together. Then, when he was transferred to Tyndall [Air Force Base], there was no housing, and we stayed with his mother, got to go back home for three or four months, and then when housing became available, we went down, but already a man was coming back from Germany. I can't remember his name.

GBP: Woods. Chief Master Sergeant Woods.

GLP: He was coming back from Germany and he outranked Guy, and there's only one on the base, and so he got bumped and away we went to Canada.

GBP: Two wonderful years.

GLP: And they said, Well, you can't take your dependents there, and he said he really didn't know where it was in Canada. So he got the map out and he said, "There's no big bodies of water. We can drive up there."

GBP: We did.

GLP: Drove up there.

GBP: Highway 95 all the way.

AED: Wow. No oceans to cross.

GBP: Right.

GLP: No housing, either.

GBP: No housing there, either. We had to live on the economy.

GLP: God had a house waiting for us. Do you want to hear about it?

AED: Sure! Tell.

GLP: He got sick. When we first got there and we were in a motel, so a friend on the base, one of the co-workers—how many men were in the outfit?

GBP: Sixty.

GLP: Suggested a house over in Newcastle, New Brunswick, and so we went over and looked at the house. And the owner, he owned the gas company in town and the dairy and half of the little town of about 5,000 people maybe, and he said it had furniture in it. He had built himself a new house and I looked around and I said, "Well, we have all our own junk. We can't rent this house." And he said, "Well, I'm renting it with all the furniture." We said, "Thank you," and we go back to the motel. He calls us and said he would remove the furniture. The house had been vacant about six months and so we go back over there. I'm young and dumb and I said, "It has a gas stove," I said, "I don't cook on gas."

GBP: He owns the gas company.

GLP: He owned the gas company, and he said, "That's okay. You can have an electric stove."

AED: Very accommodating.

GLP: Oh yeah.

AED: He needed to lease the house.

GLP: Yeah. So we lived in that house for, how many?

GBP: Two years.

GLP: Two years. We had a great time.

GBP: Wonderful.

GLP: And he hired our son to wash milk bottles at his dairy, and our son became fast friends with his son. They lived in a house about two blocks up the hill.

AED: So that was a different kind of accommodations than you were accustomed to?

GBP: Ooh.

GLP: Well, there was one little closet in each bedroom, but the hanger wouldn't fit.

AED: Wasn't wide enough?

GLP: And it would, it would rub your clothes, so you'd have to swap around.

AED: That's funny.

GLP: But the chief person in our house has always been—[pointing to Priester]—and so as you went up the steps, the space—there was a window. He made himself a closet out of that. So his uniforms and all, no, you know, mister perfect. And our daughter had a bedroom that was a 4x6 rug in front of her bed. That was about it.

AED: That was it.

GLP: But she had a huge closet! Because she was at the top of the stairs. So the son had a room like ours with the hangers that wouldn't fit.

AED: That's funny.

GLP: It was interesting.

GBP: Germany was a real hoot because in Germany we had to live on the economy. We lived with a German family. Had no bathroom. We lived on the third floor, and to go to the bathroom, you had to go all the way to the basement. But there was nothing to take a bath with. So we bought this huge tub, and we had to heat the water, and they had briquettes, not gas or electric, but it had briquettes, little briquettes and we heated the water with that and we lived there for a while. But then we moved on base and it was just like living in the Waldorf Astoria.

AED: Was it really?

GBP: It was very nice, yeah.

GLP: Two children, third floor, one still in diapers, and no hot water. You had to heat the water in the stove, a cook stove with briquettes. On the side it had a—and then to bathe. He bought a galvanized tub, an oval shape. I remember taking a bath. Mister perfect, he went to the base and had you know, showers and everything.

GBP: Go to the gym.

GLP: Yeah, every day, you know, so he was fine. So I'm trying to take a bath in this tub, and I got down and then I'm so fat I got—I wanted my back to get water. I couldn't get up!

GBP: I think she sat in the tub till I got home.

GLP: I did not. You were not there.

AED: That's so funny!

GLP: And then the first morning after we came from, wherever we landed.

GBP: Frankfurt.

GLP: And drove down to Bitburg. The next morning, he goes to work and he's on A shift. He left at 5:30 or so. He got home about two o'clock, and a son five years old and a daughter one year old and myself, we are huddled on a GI cot in front of that stove and it had gone out. Well, I never had a—

AED: Don't know how to use that, right?

GLP: Briquettes and all, so we're sitting there all huddled up.

GBP: I went to the base and checked out a pot-bellied stove that you put diesel fuel in. Only problem with that is it went out one afternoon, and so I opened it and didn't see fuel in it and I lit a match and threw it inside. It wasn't 20 minutes that stove was white hot. We opened all the windows in the place, praying, "Don't let this house burn down!"

GLP: The third floor had just been completed.

GBP: Completed. It got bombed during the war.

GLP: Direct hit.

GBP: The last week of the war, that house got pummeled.

AED: Oh, my goodness.

GBP: It was just freshly rebuilt with stones and all that kind. It was a sweet, sweet family.

GLP: The owner of that family had been a prisoner of war for four years in England, and he didn't want to come home but he was the only son and he had to come home.

GBP: Rudy Lingen was his name.

GLP: He spoke perfect English and so did his wife.

AED: Wow. What a great experience!

GBP: Oh, great experiences.

GLP: There were a thousand of them.

AED: Yeah. Tell me about the housing at Killeen Base.

GBP: Housing at Killeen Base.

AED: This would have been your first stay at installation was at Killeen Base?

GLP: Oh, no.

AED: Oh, no? Okay.

GBP: Yeah. Well, our first installation was Killeen [Base]. That was the first time you went with me to the base.

AED: The first time you were married, when you—

GBP: When we got married—as a matter of fact, we rode a Greyhound bus from Tallahassee, Florida, all the way to Killeen, and I didn't even get to sit with her. She was taking care of some man who had his granddaughter and didn't know how to take care of her, so she took care of her all the way to Killeen. But we had rented an apartment in Killeen. It was a little bitty, probably almost as large as this room, and it was divided. The kitchen was there and the little thing here and the bed was here and that was it.

AED: Kind of a studio kind of thing?

GBP: No, it was a regular bed, and it didn't have a stove per se. It had a gas, two-burner gas thing, and you had to sit the little oven up on top of it. This was before you were born now, but we had to set a little oven up on top of that burner to cook anything in the oven.

GLP: That's why I didn't cook on gas because of that little stove.

AED: Oh, that's how you cooked.

GLP: In the beginning.

GBP: I think we lived there the whole time we were in Killeen, and then when we moved to Albuquerque, we moved into a garage. Yeah, we moved into a house first. The room was half this big with a roll-out bed. We had the only television set in the whole [place]. It was a whole bunch of kids stationed at the base with us out at Manzano [Base], and we bought a 14-inch black-and-white television set.

AED: That's fancy living!

GBP: And they came over at night and we'd watch wrestling on TV and watch Howdy Doody and a couple of those little things for the kids. And then we got high cotton. We moved out of that little room into a garage. Same place, and it had a bathroom in it. In the house we had to share a bath, but out there we had our own bathroom, and that's where our son was born, in the garage. Then we moved on Sandia Base. That was after we got to Manzano [Base] now. We moved on base and lived in a Dallas hut, they called it.

AED: Oh, I don't know that term. What does that mean?

GBP: It was a little square cracker box. It had two bedrooms, one bath, and a living room-kitchen combination. It was a little bitty square thing. The whole house probably was a little bit larger than this room.

GLP: Not much.

GBP: Not much larger.

GLP: It had two bedrooms, and our son was three months old, two months—three months or four months old, and his crib. As you went in the door, his crib was across the room, and that same 4x6 rug.

GBP: And it was the most expensive piece of furniture we ever had in our life was that baby bed.

AED: Really, the crib?

GBP: Yeah.

GLP: It was in the front of that was how big the room was.

GBP: A white baby bed with little things on the end of it. It was nice. We moved all over the place in Albuquerque. We went a bunch of places in Albuquerque. We moved from, onto the base, and the reason we moved out of the base was because when I volunteered to go into the thermonuclear weapons program, I had to move off of Sandia [Base] because that was the base housing for people in Manzano [Base] that couldn't live up in the ad[ministration] building. So we moved over on 1225 San Mateo Boulevard. Then we moved from there to Lanada [Street]. Then we moved to—that's after we lived over on Lanada Street—and then moved to Denver[, Colorado]. I'm getting going off of your subject probably.

AED: That's okay. No, this is part of the flow of things. But I was going to ask at Killeen Base—you left the air force for a little while?

GBP: Yes.

AED: And then you re-enlisted because?

GBP: At the time I got out, I said, "I'll never darken a door of the military again," and I started school. But then when the Korean War started 1950, her uncle happened to be [on the draft board]. He said, "You didn't put in six years and they're going to call you back." So before they called me back, I re-enlisted in the air force this time because in '47 it went from army air corps to U.S. Air Force. So I went in again, and they sent me from where I was at the time in Quitman. I went over to Thomasville and got on a bus and rode to Fort Benning, and Fort Benning sent me to Killeen Base.

AED: Do you know how they—did they select you to go to Killeen Base because of your previous experience?

GBP: I guess. I had no idea. They didn't tell me, ask me, or anything else. When I went in and filled out paperwork and all that and they ran me through personnel, they said, You're being assigned to Killeen Base, Texas.

AED: And when you showed up at Killeen [Base], you just showed up by yourself? Like you said, you took the bus?

GBP: Yeah. I did. I just rode it by myself with my duffel bag, and there was a bus downtown to meet me from the base.

AED: Okay, because that's different than the other experiences we've run into where bus loads or plane loads of—

GBP: No, I was by myself. And I was assigned a barracks at Fort Hood. I lived on Fort Hood. There were two barracks on Fort Hood with all of our people plus the ad[ministration] building on the base. On the base, mostly, were the guards lived on the base.

AED: They had those shifts, those six-hour shifts.

GBP: They did.

AED: So maybe being close.

GBP: They had an upstairs and a downstairs on that one end of the building. If you remember the building, I don't know if it's still like it was. Anyhow, but there were two open bays bunks all up and down on both [sides], and the guards had most of those. Then, finally, they moved us on the base over to Killeen Base, which was attached to Gray Air Force Base. That's the reason when people ask us about anything, we say, Well, we were attached to Gray Air Force Base. We did have planes come in there, I don't know whether once a month or every now and then, to bring weapons parts or take weapons out. When I first got there, I didn't have a security clearance.

AED: I was going to ask you about that.

GBP: Right. I had no security clearance at all, and I worked. When I first got there, the first two weeks I was there, I nailed siding on an officer's club. And then, I got on base and I worked in the radio shop. Then I got a Q clearance, which is the highest clearance you could have. I worked in the radio shop for about—

GLP: Excuse me. That Q clearance, they came to the little town of Quitman, Georgia, and asked all the townspeople.

GBP: FBI.

GLP: And ran into his aunt, his mother's sister.

GBP: Oh, they had the wrong woman there when they asked about me.

GLP: She was a nurse for the local doctor, and her husband had died and left her with three children, two boys and a girl, and she was miss independent. They came and said, so-and-so, and she said, "Who wants to know?"

GBP: And since it was that FBI, she said, "What has he done?" Yeah, you know.

GLP: It was a big deal in little town with 2,000 people for the FBI to come.

AED: But you were already with him. You were there.

GLP: No, I wasn't.

AED: Oh, you weren't. Okay.

GLP: I did not know him.

GBP: Oh yeah, you did. You knew me. You were going to school. When they were getting my clearance, you were already attached.

GLP: Oh, that's right.

GBP: See, she's getting old. She can't remember these things. This is her day to be out of the home.

GLP: That's when I got the dear Jane letter.

GBP: Yeah. Oh, get out of here. So anyway, I'm now going up to the plant. I worked in the radio shop for about six months, and they needed some more people in the plant. So the first thing I did in the plant when I went up there was to sit on top of a Fat Man. You remember the Little Boy and the Fat Man?

AED: Yes.

GBP: Those are the two weapons we used on Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Those are the first two weapons I worked on, and then we started retiring those and they moved me into [the] E bay. The plant was like this [motioning the shape], and when you come down the long hallway through double steel doors, the unpack bay was right here, and then unpack, they would take your weapon apart in pieces, and the fuse, which was what we called the fuse, the electrical components, went right up in this bay here. That's where I was. The rest of it went down the aisle and to the left and around to mechanical bay where they did all the mechanical parts and where they painted the weapon, and we painted [those weapons] to death. We would take it all apart, take all the radars off of it and altimeters and everything else, and do a test on them, put them all back together and assemble them all back together again. But then I worked in the E bay until—then I had to do a three-month stint in the battery shop, which was right next door to E bay, and each weapon, we had three lead acid batteries on there. They went to NiCad batteries, nickel cadmium. We had three of those on there, two and one backup battery. So we had two radars on each fuse and two altimeters. Actually, the two was for a dual and if one failed, the other one would work. The only thing I did not do at Killeen Base was I had no access into where they kept the bird cages [with the nuclear capsule]. None of us did. Those people were different people. They worked for AEC and we did not, of course. We were in 1094th.

AED: So they were civilians.

GBP: They were civilians.

AED: Moving back just a little bit, you started in the radio shop and you already had the training.

GBP: Yes.

AED: Because of your previous experience.

GBP: Right.

AED: So you could walk in there and know what you were doing.

GBP: Right. What we did, the most part we did on those, during that six months that I was there

was to put new radios on brand new Chevrolet pickups for all our guards. We had all brand new vehicles, and we put radios in all of those. That was the extent of the radio part was all working on radios that call between the guards and headquarters and trucks and so forth.

AED: Because I understand when they were driving, there would be the driver and then a radio operator, right?

GBP: Right, truly.

AED: So they were a team.

GBP: Exactly.

AED: Okay. And then did you need special training when you—?

GBP: When I went to E bay?

AED: Yes.

GBP: I didn't. I got OJT, on-the-job training. I was trying to think of the little guy that taught me. Pajor was his name, Sergeant Pajor, Tech Sergeant Pajor. I was a buck sergeant then. I was a buck sergeant when we got married, right? I was a buck sergeant.

GLP: Airman first class.

GBP: Yeah, that was it, buck sergeant, airman first class. And Pajor taught me how to run the big machines. All you had to do was hook the [radar testers] up, you know, and then you'd push all the buttons and it would work. So that was the extent that I did that. And really, my best experiences with weapons was when I volunteered to go to thermonuclear weapons. I went over to Kirtland [Air Force Base]. I came down from Manzano [Base] then and went over to Kirtland [Air Force Base]. That's the reason I had to move off base. And then we worked with the Mark 17, which is big, big.

GLP: She's writing about Killeen [Base].

AED: No, that's okay. This all related.

GBP: It's just history, if you even want it.

AED: We go back and forth, I know.

GBP: I worked Mark 17, which weighed about 60,000 pounds.

AED: And what kind of work were you doing with those?

GBP: I worked helping unload and delivery, teaching pilots loading and delivery techniques. The first time I was there I worked in the orderly room writing up all the exams. Then I got out and showed them how to load the planes.

AED: Writing up exams for?

GBP: Test flights. We'd have crews come in, all of our bomber crews, come in for training at Kirtland [Air Force Base], and we would teach them how to load the weapon on the plane. Then I taught a course on delivery techniques, and we did that from '52 to '54.

AED: And you were able to do that because of your experiences at Killeen Base and Manzano [Base]?

GBP: Just about everything was OJT [on-the-job training]. We learned the hard way because no one had worked with thermonuclear weapons before. We didn't even know what we were getting into. We had two men from Manzano [Base]. Noel Clark, which you never got to interview him. He died last year. Christmas a year ago, I believe. He died. He was my boss. And myself. We went from Killeen [Base], and we got three people from Bossier Base, Louisiana. I noticed in here you said something about another base in—I mean there was not another base where you said it was. We had Bossier Base and we had a base in Kentucky. Those were the only two bases.

AED: Was it called Clarksville?

GBP: Clarksville [Base], Kentucky, and Bossier, Louisiana. Those were the two bases and one was 1095th and the other 1096th.

AED: Okay, and they were all doing the same things in these different facilities?

GBP: Right.

AED: And the facilities were basically the same.

GBP: Right. We taught them at Killeen Base. They learned what they did with weapons at Killeen Base. Now I don't know, I never was on Bossier or [Clarksville], either one of those other bases. They were not near the size of Killeen and Manzano [Bases].

AED: Oh, they were smaller.

GBP: They were a lot smaller.

AED: Oh, okay. Yeah, I don't know as much about the other storage facilities of course, because this is what we've been focusing on [Killeen and Manzano Bases].

GBP: Right.

AED: When you got to Killeen Base, what were your first impressions?

GBP: Well, I mean, I didn't even know what I was getting into. You know, I said, "Whew, what is this?" You know? I looked. I said, "I'm going to an air force base." Gray Air Force Base. That's what they told me, you know, but it said, Killeen Base. I said, "Well, how is that tying in with Gray Air Force Base?" And then when they said, You're going to work in a radio shop. I said, "Okay, radio shop. What's going on in the mountains up there?" Well, that's where we had atomic weapons. So.

AED: So the radio shop wasn't on [the mountain]?

GBP: It was [out behind the administration building]. All downstairs where the ad[ministration] building was where you were, if you were there. Right out behind that building was a small building radio shop, and it was also tied in with the motor pool. The motor pool is all one big building, one like this [motioning]. In between that, they put a couple of jeeps and cars they had there to work on. They had a garage there, like a grease rack and so forth. But the motor pool was here [motioning]. The radio shop was here [motioning]. As you came in from the radio shop, there was a dining hall here. We had a PX and a barbershop right there,

and then in that long hallway down the building, if you've been to the building, we had the administration and a medic and all that stuff on the first floor with that end was barracks and upstairs barracks. That was the whole building.

AED: Okay. When did you realize what was going on?

GBP: When they told me I was going to go up to the plant in six months. I said, "The plant? I'm going to go up and work in the plant." The first thing they told me to do was get up on top of that Fat Man, Little Boy and Fat Man and hook a crane to take it apart. I said, "Wow!!" Straddle a bomb, you know, and then it dawned on me that these were the two weapons that we used during the war.

GLP: Well, and also when they issued you the—

GBP: A dosimeter. I had to wear a dosimeter.

AED: You did?

GBP: Right. It was an interesting thing, and probably had nothing to do with any of it, but all of the [men] that were left [who worked on the weapons], since we've been going to these military reunions, every one of them have had cancer. Whether or not it was due to handling nuclear weapons and nuclear material we don't know. I had my hands inside a pit many times in Germany to clean pits. I was on an inspection team, so I would look in there with a flashlight and I would put my hands inside and check and see if [it was clean]. But overseas we had Mark 7s and Mark 5s in Germany, and that's what we had also in Turkey. I was in Turkey and I was in France, and we had one in Spain and I was in Holland. I was in Italy at Aviano [Air Base]. We had a base in Aviano. [I was with the Fifth Tactical Depot Squadron quality control inspection team].

AED: These are all American facilities.

GBP: Yes, they were all American bases in foreign countries.

AED: And just in your own words, would you describe the mission of Killeen Base?

GBP: National security. It was, in the event of the necessity to use atomic weapons, they would come from that base.

AED: And the main activities at Killeen Base to do that, how would you describe, if you were going to list the main things that happened to support that.

GBP: What we did? What was the work there? Was to disassemble and test all components of the weapon and reassemble and have it on ready status.

AED: Okay. Do you have any idea of how many [bombs]?

GBP: A bunch.

AED: That were coming through on a regular basis?

GBP: We had a weapon every day. It was not just every now and then. Sometimes we would not finish a weapon in a day and it would stay hooked up to the equipment in E bay. Unpack was out front. That meant they took it out of the cases, the wooden cases out in front of the first

set of steel doors. Then they would take a weapon down the long hallway, open the second set of steel doors, and bring it into the disassembly bay.

AED: Okay. And how did they move it down the [hallway]?

GBP: On a Yale [lift]. There was a flatbed thing with a long bed. It looked like this [motioning], and the weapon sat on this thing like this [motioning] and a man was standing back here driving the Yale [lift] with his hand like that.

AED: Okay. I'm not sure of the terms. A Yale [lift]? That was the brand name?

GBP: That was the name of the piece of equipment.

AED: Okay, and so a single man would be driving.

GBP: Yes, driving it down the hall.

AED: And at that point, does it have munitions in it?

GBP: Have what?

AED: Have radioactive material?

GBP: I don't think any of those weapons ever had the capsule in them because I never saw a capsule in any of the weapons I worked on all that time, other than when I went overseas. It was a different situation there.

AED: So what you're doing is then testing, like you had described, the electronic components and mechanical components to make sure they're functioning and the backup systems.

GBP: Right. Correct. That's it.

GLP: So why are you wearing the dosimeter?

GBP: Well, these weapons had had a capsule in them, but I never inserted a capsule. I don't know whether they did that at another place, but we had to, well, I mean the whole place was, we had capsules. I don't know how many. Had a bunch of capsules in that place. You saw the ABC place. It was called ABC. It was different, set away from the plant. It was a part of the plant, but you had to go around a small little narrow walkway into a huge place where they stored capsules.

AED: It was much deeper, very deep in the [hills].

GBP: We were deep in the mountains. I don't know how many yards, feet, or whatever. I know we were a length of a football field from the door back to where we unpacked the [weapon], at least that far.

GLP: But when you had so many roentgens then you weren't allowed back in the plant.

AED: When you had so many what?

GBP: Roentgens on the dosimeter. It tested how many roentgens you were allowed to have. If your dosimeter ever got into a critical stage, they say you can't go into the plant until that gets back down. But I never had that. I just was dumb anyhow.

GLP: Well, the reason I was interested in that is because he's had cancer and he's had radiation. But he never mentioned to them that all those years back there he was exposed to radiation. So therefore, his bladder is not functioning properly. He has a birth control patch on his hip. That's what we call it! The patch.

GBP: The patch. She's on the pill and I'm on the patch. But she had cancer and she had to take a pill and [because of] cancer and [I] had to use the patch. So we've got it covered. If they read this on the transcript they are really going to say—

AED: Well, this is the part you might want to cross out!

GBP: Well, no. Oh, me. You're going to run out of tape on this in a minute.

GLP: But anyway, he's back to normal with the patch.

AED: That's very good. How do you wear the dosimeter?

GBP: It was a pocket thing like this [pointing to pen]. It was like a pencil. You just stuck it in your pocket.

AED: Did you ever notice it having any readings that [would put you at risk]?

GBP: No, they read it. They read it. As a matter of fact, it went from a pocket dosimeter to one about like this to put in your pocket, a little round black one. They just read it every now and then. You'd have to take it down to the ad[ministration] building and they had a machine down there that would read it.

GLP: Well, how did you check in every day? You were supposed to take the rings off.

GBP: Well, you're supposed to take your rings off when you work on them. I'd just tape my ring up, and I didn't have but just this one ring.

AED: Tape it. Oh, okay.

GBP: Taped over it. You were not supposed to wear any kind of jewelry.

AED: Okay. Tell me about your daily activity. Were you an eight-to-five job? How did your day start? Walk me through that.

GBP: I was in a car pool with three other [men] that worked in the plant: Noel Clark, Dan Thomason, and—

GLP: Richard [Priester].

GBP: Well, at Killeen Base I wasn't with any. I was with Richard [Priester] only. That was at Manzano [Base]. At Killeen Base, I went by myself, and we had to park our cars outside the gate on the base. At Killeen Base, they had a parking lot. If you called the fences around outside, there was a parking lot out there and we parked cars there. But I didn't have a car, so I rode with Richard Priester, the man I told you I would try to get in touch with. We would have to go through a double gate at the entry security gate there to get in, and then we would report to [and] go through the ad[ministration] building. They had two buses there. One bus went to Plant 1, one bus went to Plant 2. We'd get there and we'd go to work at 7:30 in the morning, and we would work all morning till 11:30, and then we had a ready room that was called, and that's where you'd go down the hall and around on the other side and you'd go in

and then we played pinochle during lunch hour and ate our lunch, sack lunch. They had a Coke machine in there.

AED: It was called a ready room?

GBP: Yes, and we ate lunch in there for 45 minutes to an hour and then we went back and worked until 4:30, caught the bus back down the mountain, and same procedure five days a week.

AED: Okay, and at what point did you have to pass through security?

GBP: We passed through security coming and going. Once we got up inside the area, I didn't have to. When I went into the plant, there was a guard sitting outside the door, opened two steel doors, and we would have to show our badge when we went in there. Then I didn't have to show a badge to the man on the second door. He just opened the doors for us back there. There was a security guard back there and also outside. Most of the people at any of these reunions I go to now, they are all security people, all guards, except me.

AED: Yeah. There were four of you going in at the same time?

GBP: I don't know how many. It was however many got off the bus, all our bus load that were going to go in. We all went in the same door.

AED: Okay, but went to different locations?

GBP: Different locations in the plant.

AED: Okay. That was all military. The civilians weren't [on the bus].

GBP: No civilians. All military.

AED: So how did they come in? Did they come a different [door]?

GBP: You know, I didn't know much about civilian people up there. All I knew was they worked for the AEC.

AED: Didn't interact with them.

GBP: Didn't interact with them at all. We had a civilian truck driver that he worked with them because he hauled bird cages [with nuclear capsules] on the truck. But he was a civilian man. I can't remember his name. He was a short, fat guy, I remember. I don't remember his name, but he worked for AEC, also.

AED: Okay. Did you work in both plants or just one?

GBP: Just Plant 1.

AED: Were there several men doing exactly what you were doing in Plant 1?

GBP: Yes. In Plant 1, [in the E bay], there were two stations. We had two stations to check fuses. What we did though, was disassemble the fuse and then we had different stations to do different pieces of the fuse. We'd take the radars off and we'd put them in a tester. It was on a cart. The fuse sat on a green cart, and we had to secure it on the cart. They would take the altimeters off and they had an altimeter station. They had a radar station, and they had a fuse check station. They had plugs, called red and green nose plugs, and the plugs, red plugs

mean it was hot and green, of course, it was cold. That way we'd test the systems, they'd put the red plugs in. But it always came in with green nose plugs in it. We never put a bird cage in any of the pieces that I had. As a matter of fact, the piece I had, you couldn't have done anything with it anyway because that was the electrical components that went back to the big piece that was the sphere which I didn't test. That was done in another bay. But we would do that, and sometimes it would take two days to do a weapon. There was no big particular rush. I know overseas it was different. We would test every 18 months. We went through the whole group of weapons, however many. I don't remember. I never, ever knew, how many we had. I mean we had a lot of them.

AED: My understanding is they were stored then over in the igloo area.

GBP: That's right.

AED: And then they would come in for you to work on them.

GBP: Yes.

AED: And then go back out there again.

GBP: Right.

AED: Just rotate them constantly?

GBP: Did you see any of the igloos?

AED: Yes.

GBP: Did you know we had to jack the door up to get it open?

AED: No.

GBP: They had jacks under these big [doors]. Because when they closed it of course, it locked and it would drop down. But they had hydraulic jacks and they had to jack the doors up a little bit off the ground. Open the doors and bring a weapon out. As a matter of fact, they had a storage room [in the plant across from the unpack bay]. If they brought more than one weapon in, we had, off the unpack bay, a room over here where they would put one or two weapons there.

AED: And wait for you.

GBP: And wait for us to get to those.

AED: You just worked on one at a time.

GBP: Yes.

AED: And I can picture the room that you were in. It's a pretty big cavernous thing.

GBP: It is, a big bay.

AED: And right now, the last I saw it, it was entirely empty.

GBP: Yes.

AED: But when you were working there, how was it?

GBP: It had an office.

AED: Lots of stuff in it? I mean, I can't picture what it would look like.

GBP: [File cabinets with manuals on what and how to do the testing, all top-secret.] Electronic equipment, all the testing equipment. We had an office where we had two warrant officers and a captain in that bay. Let me see, Captain Hudgins and Warrant Officer Robinson and Warrant Officer—ooh, I can't remember the name of the other [warrant officer]. Anyway, we had three officers. They were officers, two warrant [officers] and a captain, in our bay. I forgot how many enlisted men we had, probably about six or eight men in that bay, in the electrical bay.

AED: So maybe up to 10.

GBP: About 10 people in that particular area, yes. Now unpack bay, I don't know how many people they had out there, but they were different. I actually started out [with an air force specialty] as a 3-3-1, which was electrical. Then they changed it to a 4-6-3, which is an overall for both.

AED: Okay. What are those numbers? Were they connected with your job assignment?

GBP: Job assignment—[3-3-1 designated electrical, with 50, 60, 70 designating experience level. I was a] 33150 when I was working in Killeen and Manzano [Bases] to begin with. Then I made 33170. You had to have a 70 to get promoted from staff to tech. Then they changed them. Because we did many other jobs beside just those when we finally got the program all together. They changed us to 4-6-3, and I was a 46390, which E-9, 9-0. That was all.

AED: It sounds complicated!

GBP: It was. When I first went in, my serial number was RA14228012, and they changed that. Then it went to your Social Security number. So in the last 21 years, it was my Social Security number rather than a [serial] number.

AED: Their identification number or whatever.

GBP: Yes. First and all, it's called RA, regular army, 14228012. Then it went to 14228012 AF, air force. Yes, they just had to do something different.

AED: That's their system.

GBP: Yes, the government.

AED: So the 1094th was part of the plant, both Plants 1 and 2, and the AEC was in there. Were there any other organizations or groups that you're aware of that were also working in the plant?

GBP: Did not know of any others.

AED: Who did you get your orders from?

GBP: You mean—?

AED: You individually or your [colleagues].

GBP: Oh, if I was going to move, transfer, or something like that? I got my orders from down in ad[ministration] building there. As a matter of fact, the man that I meet with, you met him, [Reed] Cheesman, he was the personnel man. He was the one that cut orders. He worked in the order room, as a matter of fact. Real nice [gentleman].

AED: It just sounds really different since you came in solo, you know, as opposed to the men who came in the first group with the First Provost Security [Squadron] and then the second batch.

GBP: They came in in '48 I believe. It was the latter part of '48?

AED: Yeah, the base was still under construction.

GBP: Right, when they got there.

GLP: When they first started, you see, they didn't have anybody. So they came in groups. But then he probably was just replacing someone who died, transferred, or retired from the military.

GBP: But we got a whole bunch of [men] in when we decided to train the 1095th and 1096th, the ones that went to Bossier [Base] and to [Clarksville Base in] Kentucky. We got a double crew. We had double people working in the base in doing the same job, learning how to do the job. They got trained. Well, as a matter of fact, they trained guards there, too. I think, and I may be wrong on this now, you'd have to check that far back, but of course, Killeen Base and Manzano [Base] were the only two bases in the world. We didn't have those other bases at the time we started because Bossier[, Louisiana] was started and so was [Clarksville Base]], Kentucky. That's where the two places after, and they sent people there.

AED: So there were the guys you worked with in your bay and a same set of fellows doing the same thing in Plant 2.

GBP: Right.

AED: But you only worked daytime?

GBP: I don't ever recall having to work at night, no. I did have to work at night—

GLP: Where were you all those nights?

GBP: I was going to tell you I did have to work at night when I was in the battery room. That was a 24-hour thing because those batteries were critical, and if the electricity went off in there, we had batteries. Oh good night, I had thousands of batteries, and they were sitting three on a charger because there were three in every weapon. We had, goodness alive, I don't know how many. I had to open every one of those things and put acid in every one of them. I had more holes in my fatigues than you can shake a stick at from putting acid in the batteries and washing them and drying off and putting them [away]. There was a sergeant, I can't remember his name now. Bill Hearney was his name. Sergeant Hearney designed a little [butterfly fuse] that would help us because in case a charger went off, he had designed a the butterfly [control unit for the charger] that would pop like that and an alarm would go off. Because if you sat there all night long just watching this thing, you're bound to go to sleep. So I would stay there, we'd have to stay all night long. As a matter of fact, somebody was in that battery room 24/7.

AED: Okay. Remind me. When did you do that? Was it after—?

GBP: That was when I first got into the plant.

AED: Okay, all right. It wasn't in the E bay. It was—

GBP: No, it was outside of E bay. It wasn't connected to E bay at all.

AED: Okay, and you did that for?

GBP: I did that six months.

AED: Do you think that was part of the training of having you in the plant?

GBP: No, I think they just had to have people do that and I was on a rotating basis. I didn't stay in there all the time, I was just in there part-time. They had other airman in there also doing the same thing, and then when I went back to the E bay, they'd send somebody else in there. It was just part of the E bay training.

AED: How many hours at a time would a shift be? Would it be like the guard shifts where they have six hours?

GBP: Well, if I worked in the battery room, it would be all night long. I'd go say, at 4:30 in the afternoon and get off at 7:30 the next morning. You'd have to stay all night long, and I did that [for six months].

AED: And did you do that with somebody else?

GBP: No, I was by myself.

AED: That was by yourself. Wow, that would be hard to do!

GLP: You stayed awake all night?

GBP: During the day—no, that's the reason they had the alarm on, or I could go to sleep. During the day, they had somebody else in there with me helping me with the batteries. There were two of us in there.

AED: But only daytime. Nighttime they just need—

GBP: Right. Nighttime it's just a—

AED: Watchman.

GBP: It's like a batteries guard. That's what I was doing, just guarding the batteries more or less.

AED: Do you think that there were special requirements to have been chosen to be a plant worker?

GBP: You know, I really don't know. I don't see how there could have been, really. We all had been doing something different, and then when they opened the weapons facility, they just started choosing people and taking them there and it was kind of an OJT [on-the-job training] thing. I'm sure the officers knew what we were doing because they were there supervising and so were the warrant officers, observing everything we did. As a matter of fact, the warrant

officer had to check off everything we did on all of it. Radars, altimeters. All of it was checked off by one of them. We had a myriad of check sheets to go by.

GLP: Didn't you say you couldn't be color blind?

GBP: No, you couldn't be color blind. That's one thing.

AED: Right. That would be a problem.

GBP: It would have been a problem!

AED: You had access then to much of the plant.

GBP: Yes.

AED: You said you didn't go in the ABC room.

GBP: I did not. [That was the only area I did not have access to.]

AED: There's another room called an ADT room.

GBP: ADT, yes.

AED: What was that?

GBP: ADT was disaster control room, I guess in that room. I don't think I ever went in it other than the fact that I saw it when I was in the plant. It was a control room. You just monitored all of the rooms for security.

AED: Were there guards in there?

GBP: No, there was one person in there. I don't know who that was, though. I didn't have anything to do with that. I was trying to think. It did have something to do with one of the others. Crypto. I didn't have anything to do with that. Now crypto was when I was with other bases. I was the ranking NCO [in the detachment]. So I was in charge of the whole thing, but that was entirely different.

AED: What is crypto? I'm not familiar with that.

GBP: I guess I'm authorized to tell you that.

AED: Just be very generic.

GBP: That was the codes that we used. It was like if we had a code that would tell us what to do with a weapon if they sent us. Cryptography was a machine. We got it from the Germans, really. It was kind of a teletype machine. It typed in what you were going to do with weapons, where they were supposed to go and everything. Crypto was the secret room of any detachment.

AED: And they did not have one at Killeen Base.

GBP: No.

AED: That was later.

GBP: Yes.

AED: And other areas of Killeen Base you had access to, did you go to the igloos?

GBP: I did go to the igloos every now and then. On a Yale [lift] they'd say, We've got to go over and pick up this weapon, and I did go over and help them. What was the boy's name? Mary and Dick Graham. Young Airman Graham worked with me, for me. He and I would go down. I went with him and another named Hescock. What was his name?

GLP: Hescock.

GBP: Hescock, something like that.

GLP: One was A. J.

GBP: Yeah, I can't remember the names of them. Two young airmen. They came in after I did. They were young airmen worked with me.

AED: My understanding was that there were people, like Mr. Bender was telling me actually—

GBP: Dick [Bender].

AED: That he was in charge of moving those weapons back and forth.

GBP: Right. Now they had a building outside of the plant where they kept the Yale [lift]s that I'm telling you about, and they charged them up in this building outside, and that's where Dick [Bender] was in that building. But he was in charge of all the unpacking. That was his job.

AED: All right.

GLP: But he was in charge of those people going down the mountain, dropping them off.

GBP: Oh, shh! Nobody knows that.

AED: But in some cases you would need to go get [the storage containers] yourself?

GBP: No. Really, they had people for that, but I was asked every now and then to go there with somebody and help them, but that was not my job. Every one of us was just like a doctor, I guess. We had specialties. We just did the same thing. I never worked in M bay and I did work in unpack when I first went up there because until they brought me into E bay, I helped unpackage the weapons. But that was only a couple of days until my clearance came through and they say, You're going inside the E bay now.

AED: And the two younger men who worked with you or for you, in general, what did they do?

GBP: Um, I think Dick [Graham] and Hescock was that boy's name I think. They were both in unpack. They didn't work in the electrical bay. But they were friends of ours. They lived in the same—we all practically lived together. I lived with a man named Newton Baxter, [he] was a close friend, and a boy named Sergeant Howaniec. These are all guys that worked in the radio shop.

GLP: Are you going to interview those people?

AED: Not those.

GBP: No, they didn't work in the plant. They worked in the radio shop. Now Howaniec worked in the plant. As a matter of fact, he was coming down one day on a forklift and dumped a beta crate off on the ground.

AED: Whoa!

GBP: It didn't hurt it.

AED: There were I think several small accidents when things were being moved around.

GBP: Yeah, moved.

AED: Yeah. It just was going to happen sometimes.

GBP: Yeah. That's right. One was on a Yale [lift], going around. At the end of these tunnels, they went all kind of ways. It went this way and you went that way and you went back this way. And somebody, if you get real anxious with a Yale, you're going to dump whatever it is on the can off on the floor. That did happen sometimes. I never drove a Yale [lift], thankfully.

GLP: Especially if they'd been over to the club for lunch.

GBP: Oh, gee.

AED: So if I'm understanding you right, your position was a daily eight-to-five job, and so you weren't part of say the convoys that carried the bombs over to Gray Air Force Base.

GBP: No.

AED: Because I know guards did that.

GBP: Military did that. The guards did that. They would load them on, right, on trailers. They had big green trailers, four-wheel trailers, and they'd put a weapon on the trailer, had it covered, and they would hook it on the back of a forklift, a tug. Not a forklift, tug. Like tows an airplane, a tug, and they would tow it down the mountain and they would take it over to Gray [Air Force Base], which was right adjacent outside the gate, if you know. Now it was a helicopter base when I was there last time.

AED: Oh really? They have re-opened the airport and it's a municipal purpose [facility] now.

GBP: Oh, it is?

AED: I think that the military still uses it.

GBP: Yeah, it's just one strip, one long strip, yeah. They had B-29s land there.

AED: They did that at night when they moved those weapons around, by and large.

GBP: Yes, they did.

AED: Did you ever have to do that?

GBP: No, never did.

AED: Okay, all right. When they had alert status going on.

GBP: We would go to the base then.

AED: Would they call you? How did you [know]?

GBP: They would call us, but that was few and far between.

AED: Okay, because at that point, your job, if it isn't already done.

GBP: Yes.

AED: Yeah, that already had to be taken care of for them to do what they're doing.

GBP: But they did sometimes call us and we'd have to go into the base. We would not go to the plant, but we would be in the ad[ministration] building.

AED: So you would be available.

GBP: We were available in the event we were needed, right.

AED: Okay. You never did any guard work at all?

GBP: Guard duty. I don't think I ever guarded anything except over in Japan and I went to sleep and they stole 55-gallon drums of gasoline [back in '47 to '49].

AED: Oh no!

GLP: What about in Bitburg? Well, that wouldn't have anything to do with what she's interested in.

GBP: No.

GLP: But your job was to get the weapon and go out on the runway, be the first one shot!

AED: Oh dear.

GLP: Full alert.

AED: And having been in the plants, what did you think about their layout? Looking back, do you think that that was functional?

GBP: It was an awesome place. The generators—did you ever get to look at the generators? Aren't those things—there would be just room for one generator.

AED: Oh, they're three times as big. They're gigantic.

GBP: Yeah. There was four of them in there. I think it was four. Seemed like it was four. One, two, three. It's either two or four. But they were huge, huge generators. We could have lived in there forever.

AED: Who ran those?

GBP: You know, I never saw one of them cranked up, but I'm sure we had motor pool people do that. But I never saw those. Of course, they probably had to check them and test them to see if they worked properly, run them. I don't know when they did that. Of course, that place was

sound proof. Where I was, you couldn't hear anything going on right outside the door down there. But it was a well-constructed, great place to work.

AED: Did you ever feel you were in danger there?

GBP: No, never. You know, I never even thought about that. That was something you never thought about.

AED: That has been repeated with each of the men we've spoken with, and I find that fascinating knowing what was going on in there that you felt protected, guarded, safe, that the facility was structurally more than accommodating.

GBP: It was, very good facility.

AED: Do you recall your first reaction when you knew you were working with bombs? I mean they told you to get on top of one.

GBP: Yeah, that was really exciting to me. I mean, I couldn't believe that. I said, "Oh, gosh!" I was telling myself, "I'm going to have grandchildren and I'm going to tell them I sat on top of the Fat Man." Because I'd heard about Little Boy and Fat Man a long time before this happened. One was a gun-type weapon and the other was a regular atomic weapon. But the yields on them were low yields because fire did most of the damage in Hiroshima. All the buildings were made out of wood. So the [weapon], I think, was set for something around 2,000 feet over the city and when it went off, it just blew everything all to pieces, just burned it all down. But those weapons were retired right after we started. I know when we started, we started on the Mark 6 and then the Mark 4. Those two weapons were the ones we worked on primarily. If they stop my retirement pay for telling all this, I'm going be in big trouble!

AED: No, you don't have to worry about it, I can assure you.

GBP: Okay.

AED: Did you have access to information that the guards did not?

GBP: Yes. All weapons information, I had top-secret information.

AED: Did you interact much with the guards at that point or were you more [isolated]?

GBP: Only interaction I had with the guards was we played on the same basketball team. As a matter of fact, I traveled with the basketball team some and there were only six of us traveling in this man's car, a big Packard he had. We'd go play basketball, and two or three of them, three of them I think, out of the six were guards.

AED: Wow. And are those fellows you know still?

GBP: One. Ramirez. He was our star basketball player. He was coming down the mountain one day. Anyway, they were racing. He was in a half track, which is a tank type of vehicle, and it turned over. It just about severed his leg. They were racing another one of those [vehicles] coming down the mountain.

AED: They don't really seem to be racing vehicles!

GBP: Well, it was boring up there. All night long you just ride around, around, around, around,

around the mountain, and so it was boring and they were chasing one another and one of them flipped over. But anyway, we won't tell that.

AED: Did you know anything about bombs before you arrived other than the impact of what happened at the—no?

GBP: None.

GLP: Yeah. You were in Japan.

GBP: Oh, I knew bombs on airplanes, regular 500-pound bombs or whatever kind of bomb they had on airplanes because I was in Japan. In the occupation forces, we had B-25s and we had A-26s and we had F-80s, the first squadron of jets, [also B-17s].

AED: But you hadn't worked with them.

GBP: Never had worked with them before.

AED: All right. You said you didn't have any idea of how many bombs were at Killeen Base at any given time?

GBP: No.

AED: It was just one would come in and you would work on it.

GBP: Right.

AED: Another one would come in and you would work on it.

GBP: Right. I only knew that it was called a national stockpile sight. That was its title.

AED: So there's no indication there's a bomb.

GBP: How many were there.

AED: Did you know where they were coming from and where they were going to?

GBP: Never.

AED: When they took them down to Gray [Air Force Base], was it one bomb or was it several bombs? Do you have an idea of that?

GBP: I don't know how many planes came in at a time. Usually the most I ever saw was one plane at a time and they would take one weapon.

AED: Yeah, okay. Then I've heard different people describe where the bird cage material actually was assembled when it was on the plane or on the ground. There are variations on it and maybe it was done differently. But I just wondered if you knew.

GBP: I don't know. I would imagine they sent the bird cage along with the unit because they were all numbered evidently, and they would probably send a bird cage with a weapon. If there came a necessity for them to insert the capsule, they would do that. But other than that, I would assume they would not ever put that capsule in that weapon unless they planned on using it.

AED: Okay. So, in the case of they were doing a test run of taking the bomb out and loading it.

GBP: Right. Now it's possible. I know that overseas when I was in Germany, we had what was called test capsules and we could insert the capsule because that was a part of the training. But that was a test capsule anyway and it was put in and you'd unscrew the handle on it and the weapon bolted in. So you had the sphere in the plane. But other than that—

AED: So other than that, just installation.

GBP: Right.

AED: So I don't really know if they were because we haven't figured out who actually [dealt with the material that was in the bird cage]. You suggested that the AEC would have maybe been involved in this.

GBP: I would think it would be involved in putting the capsule on the plane, but I have no idea who would insert that capsule. Now it's possible that the Atomic Energy Commission people would do that, but I would think that somebody on the flight crew would do that. I would think that an officer who'd been trained in nuclear weapons, specifically, would insert the capsule.

AED: Maybe like the version of a fire control on a naval ship or something similar to that.

GBP: Probably, right.

AED: Yeah. That's what we've just been trying to figure out because the whole AEC side of things we haven't [been able to understand]. We're not being able to explore that, so we haven't been able to put all the pieces together.

GBP: Right.

AED: Did you know a man named George Jelson?

GBP: You asked me that, and I never heard of that name.

AED: Mr. Bender worked for him. He's the one who received orders from Mr. Jelson. He was considered, I guess, a custodian of the unpack room.

GBP: Was he a civilian?

AED: No, I believe he was military. I believe he was a part of the [1094th].

GBP: Oh, mister would have been a warrant officer. If you called him mister.

AED: That was just my term. I just said that.

GBP: Well, I know, but that's what they call warrant officers.

AED: Is mister?

GBP: Mister. Let me look for his name. What was his name again?

AED: George Jelson. I think around about the second—

GBP: Here it is, George Jelson. I never heard of him, though.

AED: Okay. I just wondered because it was a name that had come up in two different interviews. Stephanie interviewed a man named Mr. Lowell. He's in Las Vegas and he knew Mr. Jelson, too. But he also I believe worked in the unpack bay. So there was then no reason that you would have [known him].

GBP: You know, maybe that was one of the civilians that drove the truck. I don't know.

AED: It's just one of the few names that have come up. Two people remembered, so we were just—

GBP: I knew one man that worked in ADT, though. Slick was his name. I worked at his service station on Saturdays. He worked at the base during the week, but he ran a service station also. I can't remember his name, but I called him Slick anyway. But he worked in ADT at the base. But I didn't know any of the people that worked with the bird cages. Seemed to me like Hart—did you ever interview a Sergeant Jim Hart?

AED: No.

GBP: He had something to do with the capsules. I don't know whether he was uh—I don't know what his role was. James Hart was his name, but I don't know whether he's still living or not. [He was a tech sergeant and a radiological technician in the ABC room.]

AED: And we talked about that you wore the dosimeter, so were you concerned about radiation exposure at the time?

GBP: I was too young and didn't know much about what it would do to you or anything else, so I never thought about it, really.

AED: But when you were working in the plant, you knew about the bird cages.

GBP: Right.

AED: And since you didn't handle them, how did you know they were there?

GBP: Well, we knew that for the weapon to be put in use, it had to have a piece we didn't have.

AED: Okay, all right, and there was an obvious hole, gap.

GBP: Right, the capsule and we always called it the capsule. They had to have the capsule.

AED: How big was the bird cage?

GBP: About this high [motioning], like that, a four-cornered open thing. You could hold it by four corners. It had a cylinder in the center of it, and on the top it had a screw top thing on it. You had to screw handle into it like that and then you unbolted it and you could lift it out.

AED: So you did see them.

GBP: I did see them.

AED: Did you see them at Killeen Base?

GBP: No, I saw them overseas.

AED: Okay, all right. So then you knew.

GBP: But I knew that we had them. Even at Killeen and Manzano [Bases], I knew that's what they were for.

AED: Were there guards in the E bay with you?

GBP: No guards in the inside of the plant. I think they were allowed to come in, though, to go to the break room at lunchtime and things like that. They had a security clearance, of course. They had to have a security clearance. But as far as any of them being inside the plant itself, the working area, they were not.

AED: So when you worked in those areas, were there doors that closed it off and sealed it off [closed]?

GBP: No, it was an open bay. It just had a walkway that went right up out of the unpack bay into the E bay.

AED: Did you need to be armed at all?

GBP: No.

AED: At any point were you?

GBP: No.

AED: Okay. Tell me a little bit more about your living conditions there at Killeen Base. You were off base.

GBP: Right.

AED: Well, first you were on Fort Hood.

GBP: Yes, that was when I was single, and then I moved on to the base itself, moved upstairs in the barracks, and then when I got married, of course, I moved off. Bess and I moved off to this little 1113 South [House].

GLP: And a half.

GBP: That's right, 1113 1/2. It was Broad Street I think was the name of it. There was only one street in Killeen at the time.

GLP: No, that's not it.

GBP: What was the street? Dallas. No? Anyway, it was a little bitty duplex house with a bath in the middle of it and we shared with another couple from the base.

AED: That's right, okay. So but it wasn't military housing. It was privately [owned].

GBP: No, no, no military housing. Now they did have military housing there. I forgot what they call it. It wasn't—

AED: There's one section called Kay Bee?

GBP: Kay Bee Heights, Killeen Base Heights. They came in and built those houses in '51, and, of course, we moved out of them in '52. All the big wheels lived [there], the top sergeants and all those. I was just a peon. They lived in those houses, but a number of them didn't. The people I worked with didn't live in those houses. Now Richard Priester, the other one that I wanted you to talk to, he lived with his mother-in-law and father-in-law [in downtown Killeen].

AED: Because they were local?

GBP: He was stationed at Fort Hood. His father-in-law was a master sergeant at Fort Hood.

AED: And so you shared a house with another couple and they were military also.

GBP: Right.

AED: And that was part of, I'm guessing, your social [circle].

GBP: No. Well, Richard and Beverly, the Priesters were mostly ours, and Roy Green and Doris [Green], those people we fellowshipped with. Now Roy [Green], who died, who would have been a great interview, he died almost two years ago now, he worked in unpack. He was a chief master sergeant also, and Richard was chief [master sergeant]. All of us ended up being chief master sergeants. Roy [Green] got out of special weapons and went into something else. I don't know what he did in the latter years, but he was a [Killeen Base] and a Manzano Base man. Richard [Priester] worked in the other plant. Now he was a plant man. But he worked in mechanical bay, not in electrical. Richard [Priester] eventually got to Lowry [Air Force Base]. He didn't come the way I did. I was with the original crew that went there from Manzano [Base] to Kirtland [Air Force Base] to Lowry [Air Force Base]. Richard [Priester] came later to Lowry [Air Force Base], and he worked in Minuteman missiles and I worked in the Titan and other missiles.

GLP: That apartment that we lived in, that has been in his outfit for two or three years, and when we moved there, the couple that lived next door were in this project. When they left, the Pratts moved in, which were also in the project.

GBP: Yes, and he's dead.

GLP: As one man would get shipped out, another one would come in and move in.

GBP: Most of them were young airmen coming in and so we were all, we were not authorized to be in base housing. It was all NCOs at the time, and we were all sergeants or below, buck sergeants and below. So we were not authorized housing.

AED: How did you find your experience living there as a young bride?

GLP: Living in one room? Well, let's see. It was quite an experience with a gas stove, that the first meal I cooked after we got there. Of course, he didn't marry me because I was a cook, that's for sure. And the first meal on that gas stove [was] fried chicken which was a little bit dark on the outside and bloody on the inside!

GBP: It was tough cooking on a gas stove, really. I mean back in the early days in the '50s, where you didn't have an oven or anything, you just had a two-burner gas stove and you just set this little [oven] up on top of it and that was it. You know, you had to cook on it.

AED: And did you make friends with other women in your situation?

GLP: To this day, we're still friends with the Priesters and the Pratts. He's gone now.

GBP: He died, yeah.

GLP: Richard [Pratt] is gone.

GBP: They've all died. The Lord has been gracious to me.

GLP: Because they were all at Killeen [Base]. Then they were all over in Albuquerque, and then [most] all went to Denver.

GBP: It seemed like after we left Manzano [Base], I mean, when I even got to Germany, there was a sergeant that came to Germany that Bess was friends with his wife that was at Manzano [Base]. But I never knew him at Manzano [Base].

GLP: He was after you.

GBP: But he was in 1094th. His name was Russ Richardson. He's dead, too. They all died.

AED: I'm recalling that you mentioned when we met previously that you knew the [move to] Manzano [Base], that that was going to happen, that the group was going to [there].

GLP: Oh yeah.

AED: I would like to know how you knew that.

GBP: Me, too. I never did find out. I came home one day. She said, "You know we're moving." I said, "We're moving, what?" "We're going to go to Manzano [Base]."

AED: I would love to know how that came about.

GLP: Just one of the wives. The men all played softball. We were married in June, and they were playing softball and then they were playing basketball.

GBP: And football.

GLP: And I'm not really sure how. Just one of the wives told me, I'm not sure which one or anything.

GBP: Probably someone in headquarters like in [Reed] Cheesman's group knew that we were going to get the orders to move. It was a swap thing. I don't know why they didn't do that when they first started, why in the world they sent air force to Fort Hood and the army to Sandia [Base], Manzano [Base]. I don't know. But Sandia [Base] is still a great big base and Kirtland [Air Force Base], Kirtland [Air Force Base] is still a large base. We've been there several times since.

GLP: But I don't really remember. I just remember we came home and I said, "We're leaving!"

AED: You already knew.

GBP: Yes. See, I wasn't going to tell her.

GLP: We were at Killeen [Base] for—

GBP: Right. Beverly [Priester], did Beverly [Priester] know?

GLP: They all knew.

GBP: Doris [Green] and Beverly [Priester], they all knew, I guess. All the wives that we were friends with.

AED: Was having other women that sort of understood [helpful]? Not knowing what was going on because the guys couldn't talk about it, was that [helpful]?

GLP: Well, we went to the movies together. We played cards together.

GBP: Yeah, we did that.

GLP: We ate together.

GBP: But you know, we never talked about business at all. It was just friends, and we never talked about the base. It was like we'd get together and, Do you know what's going on? Nobody ever said that. There's a huge sign right there. I think I told you about this before, but a huge sign that says, What you see here while you are here when you leave here, let it stay here, and that sign was right outside of Killeen Base.

AED: And that's what people practiced.

GBP: Right.

GLP: Some of them may have told their wives, but mine didn't.

AED: Because I think that would be hard when you're doing something. I guess maybe day-to-day it wasn't that interesting to take shop talk home.

GBP: It was just a job.

AED: But the bigger picture part was a big deal.

GBP: It was more exciting actually when I got into thermonuclear weapons because I was in on the ground floor on that. That was TN [thermonuclear] weapons and we hadn't ever even heard of thermonuclear weapons. We'd been working on atomic weapons for all these years.

AED: And you talked about playing on the basketball team.

GBP: Yes.

AED: I guess there was a boxing team?

GBP: They did have a boxing team. They'd box at Fort Hood. As a matter of fact, we used to go watch the boxing. They had the boxing ring set up on the softball diamond, and we would sit in the stands behind and watch them. They had boxing, outdoor boxing at Fort Hood. Yeah, they did.

AED: My understanding was the team was pretty good and they traveled like the basketball team to some other areas.

GBP: We traveled a lot of different places with that basketball team. We had gone to Waco and we'd gone to several different places. I can't remember some of the places we went and played basketball.

AED: Did people ask you what you did when you were off base? What would you tell them? What was the explanation?

GBP: You know as a matter of fact, no one ever asked that question.

AED: They just, You're in the air force.

GBP: You're just in the air force and they knew Gray Air Force Base was there and they just assumed I was in the air force and left it alone.

AED: And just left it alone. Interesting. Okay. Were you told to tell outsiders something?

GBP: They never told us what to say.

AED: Okay. A few people have conveyed that the FBI would kind of come and go, might be in Killeen watching for people who might be trying to pump for information and making sure that the guys, everybody was behaving themselves and what not. Did you ever have an experience with that?

GBP: No, I did not.

AED: Even one fellow told us that he went home on leave and he was being followed at a point and it was a guard.

GBP: I was going to say, I would imagine most of that would have taken place with security rather than plant personnel.

AED: There were so many guards.

GBP: Yes, way more guards than there plant personnel because their shifts were 24/7 and they only worked [a six]-hour shift. They had [four] shifts, see, and so they had a lot of guards and most of the guards lived on base in the barracks. I didn't know any of the guards, I don't think they lived off base, Most of the people that I lived in the barracks with at Fort Hood were plant people.

AED: Okay, and if you were guessing, how many people do you think worked in the plant? I mean a bus load for sure.

GBP: Yeah, yeah, a bus load every morning would go up to the plant, and we had a 24-, 28-passenger bus, so it was full every morning. As a matter of fact, I had to drive a bus, too.

AED: Would that bus take people both to Plants 1 and 2?

GBP: Two buses.

AED: That's what you said, okay.

GBP: One to Plant 1, one to Plant 2. They had to leave the bus and park the bus right outside the plant and I wouldn't drive it again until [4:30 p.m.] in the evening. Everybody had to do their turn driving the bus. But I don't know how many people you'd say that were, in the whole

outfit, I don't know. Like I say, the guards were the most people in the outfit. I would say it was, I'm way off guessing less than 500 in the whole outfit. There wasn't that many I don't think.

AED: What did you do during your off-duty time?

GBP: Well, we played softball. Every sport season changed. We played flag football. We played softball. We played basketball and went to the movies on Fort Hood for a dime, 15 cents. That's about all we did, and she and I used to stand out in front of our little domain and throw a softball at night. She had a glove. I had a glove. We'd toss the softball.

GLP: We played tennis.

GBP: Played tennis. And I did that, too, with the guys.

AED: Where did you play? On the [base].

GBP: No, in the city, and actually most of the golf and tennis and all that kind of stuff was in Albuquerque. There was not much to do in Killeen. As a matter of fact, when we went back for a reunion, the largest reunion we ever had was back at Killeen Base about what, eight, 10 years ago now?

GLP: About '90.

GBP: It was about then, about '90. Okay, somewhere along in there, and that was at the old NCO club, and there must have been oh, a hundred, over 100 of us. But again—

GLP: About 175.

GBP: How much?

GLP: About 175.

GBP: But again, most of them were guards. Now we had that one there at Killeen [Base], we had Rodger Payne, who was my NCO when I worked in the radio shop. I had Rodger Payne, and there was a whole bunch of other guys. Newt Baxter was there. On the way home his wife died from [natural causes, a heart attack].

GLP: Everyone we knew.

GBP: Everyone we knew practically was there at that time. We're down to 30 now. You know how many, you saw how many there were, and this year we're meeting where? Did you find out?

AED: I thought they said Oklahoma.

GBP: That's what I said, too, Oklahoma City, but I don't know anybody that lives in Oklahoma City.

GLP: Yes, we do.

AED: George Rasmussen.

GBP: Oh, that's it. That lady, that man, yes, we are going to Oklahoma City. You're right.

AED: But I hadn't heard when.

GBP: Month? We don't know what month it is yet.

AED: I don't think I'm on the mailing list any more.

GBP: Reed [Cheesman] is the one who lets us know.

AED: He still does personnel [for the reunion] basically.

GBP: He does. He does personnel for all of it. He is a good guy.

AED: Very good job of it. Let's see. There's something else that you had said. Hang on.

GLP: You're about five years too late for the project to get the [older men]. It's a shame.

AED: I know.

GBP: Yeah, because all the good guys, I say all the good guys, all my friends are dead.

AED: Yeah, to get the diversity of what happened inside the plant, we have spoken now with three people who worked in the plant: yourself and Mr. Bender and Mr. Lowell. Then two guys who worked in admin[istration]: Mr. Cheesman and a Mr. Wallace, I think. I didn't do that one, so I don't remember, and everybody else. Oh, one tech, Harold Lehman. He was in tech [support].

GBP: Oh yeah, [Harold] Lehman. He flies his own plane in. He's a nice guy.

AED: Yeah, super guy! But everybody else was a guard.

GBP: He brought his granddaughter, flew a granddaughter in with him last time. Brought a little granddaughter.

GLP: Yeah, who was the fellow we still hear from every Christmas?

GBP: Oh, wait a minute, I'll tell you.

GLP: We'd go over to their house, and we have movies of our son chasing their rabbit.

GBP: Oh, Jim Huber. He worked in 1095th. Now we trained him and he went to Bossier [Base], but he volunteered and came back. There were the three of them, two of those guys from Bossier [Base] and Noel [Clark] and myself were the five men that started the thermonuclear program in 1952. Yeah.

GLP: He might could tell you.

GBP: I don't know.

AED: We did send a survey to everybody who couldn't attend Branson, and we heard back from not everyone but a pretty high percentage. I don't know if he's someone we heard back from.

GBP: No, he would not have. He became a geologist with Texaco. He got out of the military.

AED: Okay. So he wouldn't be on the 1094th mailing list maybe because he's [inaudible]?

GBP: No, he's not. As a matter of fact, that 1094th mailing list now is down to practically zip. We had what was called the [Roy] Green reunion at Branson about five years ago, I think, and there were, let's see. Did you get [Harry] Podsiadlik?

AED: No.

GLP: [Harry] Podsiadlik.

GBP: [Harry] Podsiadlik, we called him Kelly, but his name is [Harry] Podsiadlik, right.

AED: Yeah, I remember how to spell it because it's hard to spell. He decided he didn't want to.

GBP: Did he? Well. He was working the mail room. He was not in the plant.

GLP: His name was [Harry] Podsiadlik.

GBP: But we called him [Harry] Podsiadlik, but his—really pronounced it is [Harry] Podsiadlik.

GLP: He did that when his children got into school.

AED: To make it easier?

GBP: Right.

AED: It's still hard to spell!

GBP: [His wife,] her name is Babs and his name is Kelly [Podsiadlik]. When we go to the reunions, we play pinochle with them all night long.

AED: Right. That's why you didn't have time for me!

GBP: Yes.

AED: Between that and the golf, I couldn't catch you!

GBP: Right. Played golf with Jim [Griffin] as a matter of fact. He's out in California. All those men that were guards practically got out of the military after four years. They didn't stay in.

AED: Yeah, at least of the ones, we interviewed, several stayed in, but we just have a small sample, but they mostly did. But, oh gosh, who [were they]? [Calvin Adkins, Richard Bender, James Griffin, Elmer Hounshell, Jack McCoy, and Engward Nielson were all career military.]

GBP: Who?

AED: [Engward] Nielsen. He stayed in[, as did the others].

GBP: Oh, I'll tell you this. It's interesting that most of the people in the plant stayed in the military and all the guards got out.

AED: Right, right. Calvin Adkins stayed.

GBP: Calvin [Adkins], yeah.

AED: He stayed in security for 20 years, probably.

GBP: He's the one that owns all the doughnut shops.

AED: Exactly, exactly. I'm going to go visit him!

GBP: Are you?

AED: Yeah, he's not very far from us, and he provided so many photographs.

GBP: Did he?

AED: They have a name on them, but I want [him to identify] buildings in the background, so I want to get him to talk to me about them, so I'm going to go visit them.

GBP: Great. I wonder how he got those pictures. They must be after the plant closed down, after that [base] closed.

AED: No, but they were people socializing. He was near the barracks with some other guys taking a few pictures, that kind of thing.

GBP: Okay. Oh, I imagine if you were down out of the secure area, if you were down in the lower part of the area where the admin[istration] building and everything was, that you could probably take pictures down there.

AED: So there's pictures with the admin[istration] building in the background, the NCO club.

GBP: Yes. The NCO club was off base now. It was down closer to almost the highway.

AED: Did you spend time there?

GBP: Only putting shingles on it when I first got there. They were building that when I was there. Richard Pratt, the fellow that lived in the building with us, he worked out at the [club]. He worked for Dick Bender at the NCO club out there.

AED: Right. Yeah, because Mr. Bender ran the place for quite a time.

GBP: Yes, he did, and [he] had a bottle of whiskey in his back pocket one night. He was drinking on the job and he got fired.

GLP: They lived in the apartment house where we lived out in the back [in Killeen].

GBP: Yeah, they lived in the house and we lived outside.

GLP: They lived in the back.

AED: Okay, because he had some photographs [Kay Bee Heights].

GBP: Kay Bee Heights. Yeah.

AED: He had some photos of those little houses.

GBP: They were small houses.

AED: Yes, they were very small.

GBP: I don't know whether any of this has been profitable for you or not.

AED: Oh no, because your experience is entirely different in terms of what you were doing physically in the plant. Of course, we have spoken to no one else who has that experience, so for us it's fantastic. It gives it breadth. We can talk to another guard, and it's good to hear that they confirm each other's routines. And some of them had different responsibilities. Some of them did that perimeter. Some of, you know, guarded the front of the plant and that kind of thing. So it's good to have some more breadth. So that's why we really, really appreciate hearing [your memories].

So at the time, did you realize when you were there what you were a part of [the Cold War]?

GBP: No, I guess I never knew what I was part of. I just knew that I was in the air force, and I was far divorced from the air force working in Killeen Base. It had nothing to do with the air force. I did get back in the air force in 1952, when I went over [to Kirtland Air Force Base and the 4925th Test Group Atomic]. Went over and got with airplanes again. No, we had an exciting time with the friends we met there, which have been life-long friends. It's interesting that we never, I don't think we ever were together and talked about that plant at all. We just talked about family and playing softball and having good times together off the base.

AED: Normal social interaction.

GBP: Right.

AED: When did it hit you what you had been a part of [it]?

GBP: I guess really after I retired, because I went from one stage of weapons to another stage and I just kept moving in circles with different groups of people.

AED: Even more exciting as you get more involved?

GBP: It was. I guess most of the greatest part was the part with the TN [thermonuclear] weapons at Kirtland [Air Force Base] from '52 to '54. Then we got back into a routine. Well, when we went to Lowry [Air Force Base], it was all instructing and teaching. I went to instructor school up there and learned how to be an instructor. They taught me basic, how to talk to someone, and then we started teaching the precepts of the weapon. Then when I got transferred it was just from one aircraft squadron to another with weapons. It was always with weapons.

AED: And when you were at Killeen Base, did you ever feel, I mean, on the heels of World War II and how it ended, did you ever feel the sense of immediate threat that these bombs were going? Did you ever have that?

GBP: I don't think so. I thought about the importance of what we were doing, but I never thought that there would ever be a time where we would have to use one of those [weapons]. When we were at Manzano [Base] now, they did testing out in Nevada, the desert testing shots they did out there. Richard [Bender] would have been a good one to get on that one because he went to that test.

AED: He did talk about it.

GBP: Then when we went to Kirtland [Air Force Base] to work on TN [thermonuclear] weapons,

they did a device at Enewetak and blew the whole island away with 11 3/4 mega tons. So we had all of the big guns to do the damage with, but it would have been devastating if we ever had to use one, and still is.

AED: And this [happened after you were at] Killeen Base, but so when things were going on like Bay of Pigs, what were you thinking when that was happening knowing your business?

GBP: What years were that? That was in—

AED: [It was] '61.

GBP: That was when Kennedy was president.

GLP: We lived in Denver.

GBP: Denver.

GLP: I know exactly the spot I was standing in.

AED: You do.

GBP: Oh okay, I was in the black hangar. We were teaching school. I was teaching weapons then. We were teaching.

GLP: You probably were teaching Fred Hudspeth.

GBP: Probably.

GLP: A member of this church.

AED: Who is that? Oh really?

GBP: He's a colonel. He was a pilot, a B-52 pilot, command pilot. As a matter of fact, he was a squadron commander. He thought he might have come through school when I was teaching there.

GLP: They both wore their uniforms on Veteran's Day.

GBP: Yeah, I still have a uniform.

AED: That day, really?

GLP: He was in his—

GBP: Colonel's uniform, and I was in my—

GLP: Guy was in his chief [master sergeant]'s.

AED: Nice.

GBP: We do that once a year here. Um, I was trying to think when Kennedy was president. I was in the black hangar the day we got the word at noontime that he'd been killed, and we'd just gone through the morning shift of teaching. Every weapon we had in our arsenal we taught in the black hangar at Lowry [Air Force Base]. As a matter of fact, one of the last things I

did was to go to Davis-Monthan [Air Force Base] and bought a B-52 [to be used as a trainer for teaching loading]. They flew it in. Couldn't get it to pressurize, so they flew it under 8,000 feet all the way from Davis-Monthan into Lowry [Air Force Base], and it wasn't long after that they closed the runways down at Lowry [Air Force Base]. They no longer had a base there. And I went home and got my wife and the kids and took everybody out and let them go all through the plane. They'd taken all the security equipment off of it. It was just a plane.

AED: Wow. How fascinating.

GBP: But we used it for loading and delivery. Then I went out to California. That's the last thing I did, went to California on the aircraft carrier Intrepid and bought an F-4 that had been shot down in Vietnam. They trucked it back to Lowry [Air Force Base] from California and put it in a hangar on Lowry [Air Force Base] 1 and put it together, and we used it for a trainer. We were loading weapons on it all the time, teaching people how to. We also made Agent Orange in the hangar that they used in Vietnam. We had the machines there for that. Of course, we didn't make [the real thing] there, we just showed them how to do it. But we did have all the different weapons that we had in our arsenal. We [also] had a British Canberra and a B-57.

AED: What is it?

GBP: A British Canberra is a small bomber. It had a rolling door and you [loaded] the weapon on the door, it would roll and close like that [motioning], and the weapon was on the door. We had an F-102. We had an F-100, and an F-104. As a matter of fact, F-104 is sitting outside of Lowry [Air Force Base Hangar] 2 at the entrance to the base. Chuck Yeager, I don't know if you ever heard that name.

AED: I have.

GBP: Chuck Yeager flew that plane, broke [the main spar in the plane]. That's the reason it was there. That's the reason we got it because he was chasing our Mark 17 from 60,000 feet taking pictures of it. They dropped it on a test. You know, it was the weapons we had then were only test weapons. They were no good for anything else. As a matter of fact, we had a Mark 16, which was a true weapon that was a true nuclear weapon. You had to carry the bomb in one plane and the other half of it in another plane. Liquid deuterium it had. So anyway, he was chasing one of our weapons down they dropped, and then pulling out of that F-4, it cracked a rib in the main frame of the plane. So we got the plane.

AED: So you'd use it for training.

GBP: We used it for training. But that was the most exciting part when I was in that particular part of it, and then as I say, after I left Lowry [Air Force Base], I went down to Tyndall [Air Force Base] with F-101s and F-102s down there, but I was now working with air-intercept rockets, AIR-2As, which is different altogether. A-I-R-2As, air-to-air rocket. Heat seeking, *shoo*, would fire from one plane to another.

AED: Wow. As you sort of graduated to these other [technologies], I guess as the equipment evolved, did you need special training or did it continue?

GBP: It was all OJT [on-the-job training]. Everything we did was learned by trial and error.

AED: That's amazing. I mean because I think everything's so new that's going to be how it is, on the one hand. On the other hand, you'd think that there would be some [training].

GBP: Technical school or something, but it's so new that we learned it as we went.

AED: You were the technical school.

GBP: Yeah. We did.

AED: And hopefully without errors, right?

GBP: Yeah. Oh gosh, I could tell you one. It was really an exciting thing. It was a [training weapon] that we were loading a Mark 17 on a B-36. That weapon took up two bomb bays, by the way, bomb bays 3 and 4, and we were loading it and we had a big straddle carrier they call it that lifted the weapon up into the bomb bay, and then they put this huge strap, U-2 strap, it was called. It went around the bomb and hooked up over here on the other side. Then you would put pressure on the thing to lift it up off of the carrier, and then you could lower the arms on the carrier. Well, we never lowered the arms on the carrier down more than about like that [motioning]. But one day, we were loading that [shape] on there and had a group of officers, who were pilots, teaching how to load it, and someone said, Release the U-2, and they released that weapon. It fell out of that airplane. The whole back end of that plane jumped off the ground—and you're talking about a B-36 now—jumped up off the ground, back down on the ground, and that weapon fell back on those [hydraulic arms] and as it would have it, [they] didn't rupture. It held that weapon. But it scared them to death. [Captain Burrows] said [to the crew loading the weapon], his eyes got this big, and he said, Where would you go if it was a real one and you dropped it? But that was a test weapon and it was a loading shape that they learned by trial and error. That never happened again, by the way.

AED: I'm glad to hear it! Wow. That's amazing it can tip the plane with that load.

GBP: That whole plane came up off the back end of that B-36 altogether off the ground because you let that much weight go off of it, and it weighed 60,000 pounds. *Boom*! All of a sudden then it's gone, you know.

AED: At the time, did you consider yourself part of the Cold War?

GBP: Mmm.

AED: Or did you think about it that way later?

GBP: I didn't think about it that way at all. You know, it just never occurred. At that time, we were living in base housing in Denver. During the Cold War, and that's when President Eisenhower, in '55, '55. I was living there in '55? I came back in '60. Okay, I was living there when Eisenhower was president. I lived in [base housing] and I didn't in the '60s. In the '60s, I bought my own home in Denver. As an instructor, we were so wrapped up in instructing and teaching young airmen. Now, these are airmen coming through. These were not officers coming through Lowry [Air Force Base] in the '60s. These were all enlisted personnel learning, all the parts of re-entry vehicles. We'd gone to re-entry vehicles then because we were now putting weapons on top of missiles, and so they were learning how to do that. That's what we were teaching them there. So we really were wrapped up in all of the different weapons we were teaching, [Atlas, Titan, Minutemen, etc.].

AED: Looking back now, what are your thoughts about the Cold War era and your part in it?

GBP: Our part in it. I guess we prayed a lot. Because we knew what we were working with and hoping that we would never see. You know, when the president said to get those missiles out of [Cuba] that the Russians were sending down there and President Kennedy said, "Get those things out of there now." I can't think of a time at Lowry [Air Force Base] when we were ever on alert. We were on alert in Germany, now.

GLP: Excuse me.

GBP: Yeah, we were on alert several times in Europe.

GLP: When the President was shot?

GBP: [We were in Denver then.] Well, I know we were called on base [with the Fifth Tactical Depot Squadron at Bitburg].

GLP: You didn't come home. I didn't know where you went, but you didn't come home.

GBP: I was trying to think of the time when we were in Germany when they had a real flare-up and she had to—when was that, we had to—?

GLP: It's when the U-2 plane—

GBP: Okay, [we were] there when that happened. I [saw the U-2 when I] was in Turkey on an inspection tour.

GLP: When the U-2 plane was shot down and we had to put the dog tags on.

GBP: Right. And they had all of our clothes in the bags and food in suitcases, and we were all told we couldn't leave the base.

GLP: He brought home the instructions.

GBP: Right, for what to do.

GLP: Drive so-and-so and the so-and-so, all that.

GBP: But like I say, the whole thought process I guess then was that we were just thankful that we were in a country that did have defenses that were capable of offsetting any kind of offense that another country might have and prayerfully hoping we'd never have to use any of them. I guess that would be my main thought about the Cold War. I was still in during the Vietnam War, too.

GLP: Well, the Cold War in Germany.

GBP: The Cold War in Germany.

GLP: I said to him, "We're doing all this? They have missiles that can go anywhere, and I'm supposed to be driving to Holland to get a plane to go home? Give me a break." Waste of time and gas.

GBP: But overall, I guess I look back on my whole military experience. It was probably the greatest thing in my life. Well, I say that. That wasn't the greatest thing in my life, I know the Lord Jesus is my savior, but in the military, the experiences that we had will be things we will never forget, and our children will tell you that they probably got one of the best educations they ever had by me being in [the] military.

AED: Because of their access to good schools?

GBP: Different schools, different countries, [different cultures,] and different people.

AED: How do you reflect on your time at Killeen Base?

GBP: It was great. That was some of the best friends we made was at Killeen Base.

AED: It's so great that you have stayed [friends].

GBP: Yeah, and we try to.

AED: It's hard to maintain friendships with people that don't live in your town or near your town.

GBP: Truly, and we have what we call the Christmas card thing. We save all the Christmas cards. As a matter of fact, talking about Cal Adkins, his name came up just this weekend. We save all of our Christmas cards from all of these people and pray for one of them every day.

GBP: We still contact them, and we will do this I guess until—we were discussing that the other day about would this be our last year because they're getting down to so few any more.

AED: And travel gets more difficult.

GBP: It does.

See, I don't have anything really in common with any of these men because they're all gone, but I enjoy the fellowship because, being a pastor, it gives me opportunity to talk to them about things other than military.

GLP: Now don't tell all the secrets!

GBP: Yeah, don't tell all the secrets, yeah.

AED: Do you have any thoughts on what should happen with the buildings that are at Killeen Base?

GBP: It would be wonderful if they didn't tear them down. I hated to think that they were going to tear that place all to pieces. When I was at Manzano [Base], the last time I went by there, we rode out to the base and all the windows were gone out of that building, out of the ad[ministration] building. There was not a window in it. Like someone had either had taken it all out or they'd—I don't know what happened to them, but it looked terrible.

AED: Yeah. One of the tunnels is being used. Actually, I think both of them in limited ways for training purposes at this point. I don't know that they actually want to tear them down. I know that they're pressed for space and they need to consider how they could either keep them in some functional use that's productive for them or find another use.

GBP: Well, think of Colorado Springs [North American Aerospace Defense Command]. Now see, they're inside the mountain. That's where our control for all of our top-secret material, I would assume, is still in Colorado Springs. Those buildings were soundly made, wonderfully made. Air conditioning, heating, everything was perfect in those buildings. To destroy them would be a shame, really. But I mean, progress, you can't stop progress. But I can't see what they want to build on that mountain.

AED: Yeah, I'm not sure either unless it would be more training facilities.

GBP: I can understand them wanting to use the ad[ministration] building and those kind of things.

But you know, Fort Hood could use those. Like I say, when I was there before, they had helicopters and small L-15s and planes like that over at Gray Air Force Base now rather than military air force as I know the air force. They could use that for headquarters. They could have people live on that base. It was good. It had good dining. Oh, they had everything.

AED: Yeah, yeah. If there's something you want people to know about your experience at Killeen Base, what would you [offer]. Not just your experience but the whole idea of the 1094th, what that organization did, what would you say for posterity?

GBP: Maybe to know that I met some wonderful people there, and we did the job that was given to us the best that we knew how, and we're thankful that we had a part in keeping this country safe. I guess that would be what I would want them to remember. Because that was the beginning of everything, really for, I mean the first three years in Japan as an occupation had nothing to do with the rest of my career in the air force, which was all weapons. It all began at Killeen Base. I just thought it was wonderful that I had that experience, and the people that I still know and love that are still left, and that's not many.

AED: No. When did you first feel comfortable talking about it?

GBP: This is the first time I've ever talked about it.

AED: I mean, that's been a very common answer and it's just something I'm curious about because you didn't—when you have your reunions, you're catching up.

GBP: You know, we tell war stories there, but the war stories we tell are not about building weapons or anything like that. I don't know whether anyone ever told you, like someone took shoes, boots, and put them on [a long mop handle], paint them and put them all across the ceiling like that and the guards come in and look to the footprints and want to know who's been walking across the ceiling. You know, funny things like that that happened.

AED: Pranks and such.

GBP: Pranks they did. And like I told you about the guard and the weapons carrier, the half track. And they had a beautiful lake up there was just absolutely beautiful. It was a lake back in the back over there where deer used to come on the back side of that mountain. Both of those bases were special, Killeen Base and Manzano [Base]. I would imagine we had more of an openness at Manzano [Base] than we had at Killeen Base because Sandia Base here was such a large place as was Kirtland [Air Force Base], and so we were not confined to such a small area like at [Killeen Base]. It was just Killeen Base and the part of Fort Hood that we went to was only the PX and to the barracks. We were not part of the base itself.

AED: And Gray [Air Force Base] was so small.

GBP: And Gray [Air Force Base] was so small. It didn't have anything but a landing strip.

AED: Right, right. My understanding was there was only a single small plane that was housed there so the man who basically ran it could get his [flying] hours, and otherwise it was just coming in to pick up or drop off.

GBP: Right, right. That's what it was. It was just a one single strip there. They would receive word that a plane was coming in. They'd have a weapon down there for them to take out. I would assume, and this is strictly an assumption on my part, there may not be truth in any of it, that when we opened up Bossier [Base] and [Clarksville Base in] Kentucky, that they would

have taken some of the weapons from our base there. I don't know whether they did that or not.

AED: Distributed them.

GBP: Distribute them there, or whatever.

AED: This is way back. When you were working and testing, disassembling and re-assembling, where did you get the equipment that you needed?

GBP: All the testing equipment?

AED: Yeah.

GBP: You know, I don't know where that equipment came from. I would assume, I'm guessing that it came from the Atomic Energy Commission because they were the ones that designed everything we had, and so I would assume that the equipment for testing all the components would have come from them. It was painted olive drab, though.

AED: You said they were painted to death, but you didn't do that.

GBP: I didn't paint the weapons. Weapons were painted. Every time we brought them in, they would paint them, be sure that they went out of there without any—. That's what I used to say over in Germany, we painted and disassembled and assembled those [weapons] to death.

AED: Did you enjoy working with the equipment more, or did you enjoy the teaching part that you eventually did?

GBP: I enjoyed the teaching part.

AED: [Interacting with] people.

GBP: I got to interact with more people that way, whereas with the assembly and disassembly and working on components, I only did that every day five days a week and that got kind of old.

AED: Kind of repetitive.

GBP: Right, repetitive. When I started teaching, of course, you had a new class every six weeks.

AED: How big would those classes be?

GBP: Probably about 30 in a class. In the black hangar on Lowry [Air Force Base], they had classrooms made into that hangar. When I left the teaching part, I went over to the maintenance side. I was the NCOIC of the maintenance side that kept all of the weapons that we were using for training painted and decals and everything put on them. They would naturally tear off when they would load them and unload them on these airplanes so many times that would destroy them. We had to redo that. Then I got transferred up to headquarters, and procurement, and that's where I had the opportunity to go to get a B-52 and get an F-4, buy the airplanes we used in training. Then after that, I got transferred to Tyndall [Air Force Base] back into weapons again, and [maintenance,] from then on I stayed in weapons until I retired.

AED: Okay, and after you retired, just briefly, is that when you became a minister?

GBP: I retired in 1971, came here to Atlanta because my folks live down in south Georgia, but my wife's sister lived here and mother. There's nothing in the little town of Quitman, Georgia, but about 3,000 people. So we stayed here and do you mind if I tell you about how I accepted Christ?

AED: Not at all.

GBP: Okay. I accepted Christ in Switzerland in 1959. I was in Germany in '57. I've been in church all my life, but I accepted Christ in Switzerland, in Gunten, Switzerland, in 1959. My wife accepted Christ in Holland in 1960. And we came back here and came back to Denver, and I taught Bible studies for a group you've probably never heard of called The Navigators.

AED: Oh, I don't think I have heard of them.

GBP: They were started in 1939 by a man named Dawson Trottman for the navy in San Diego, men in the navy going out on ships. There was no interaction with other Christians and so they began to have Bible studies on battleships and they were wondering, What's this weird group of little people on these boats together? When I accepted Christ in 1959, we came back to Denver in '60 and I taught Bible studies in Denver for six years with The Navigators. I was in the military still.

AED: I was going to say, what were you [doing]?

GBP: I was still in the military and transferred to Tyndall [Air Force Base], and we stayed down there 10 1/2 months and we were very active in the church there.

AED: And what kind of work were you doing there?

GBP: I was NCOIC of a detachment on the base that—

AED: NCOIC?

GBP: Non-commissioned officer in charge of about 30 men. And we disassembled and assembled AIR-2A test vehicles all the time. We would take as many as 30 and 40 up on the flight line for them to go out, and they would drop them out in the ocean and retrieve them out there in the Gulf of Mexico and bring them back and we'd do them all over again. Then we went to Canada, and I had opportunity to be a member of a church in Canada and I preached in three churches and still in military. Anyway, to make a long story short, I got out in '71, came here, went to seminary in 1972 and graduated from seminary in 1976. A church called me to be their pastor in Miami. We spent 10 years in Miami. Then a church called me to be pastor in Tampa and we spent 10 years in Tampa, and we've been here going on 15 years. Came here in 1995. So, God has been good.

GLP: Retired, retired, retired.

AED: I know, I was going to say! Not really, though.

GLP: My mother lived in Tampa also. She came down with cancer in January, the same month he did, then she died in April. [At that time we had] a travel trailer and were traveling, and the kids said, You need to come up here so we can take care of you, and there's no point in living down there. And the grandsons were little.

GBP: We have raised three grandsons.

GLP: We flew up here [for Guy to have surgery], so that's how we came up here.

GBP: Yes, and the Lord has been very gracious to us. Both of us had cancer and we're both cancer survivors.

GLP: Yeah, five years free.

GBP: They have a beautiful Methodist church next door. Did you see it? Isn't it pretty?

AED: Yeah, competition!

GBP: No, no, no. Pastor Hunter has been over here. We're good friends, and right down the street is the Presbyterian. Mike Garrett is the pastor there. He lives right next door to my son. We've joined forces together for July 4th fireworks in our backyard here.

AED: Oh, perfect. Yeah, that would be perfect.

GBP: We have fireworks here in July 4th and all that.

GLP: A lot of kidding.

AED: I'm sure. It's got to be fun.

GBP: Yes.

AED: I didn't ask you your date of birth and I need to.

GBP: No, 2-15-28. That means I am 82.

AED: Wow! Wow. I would not know that. You both look very young, both of you.

GBP: Thank you.

AED: And you were born in Quitman?

GBP: Selma, Alabama.

AED: Oh you said Alabama. That's right.

I have exhausted my questions, but if I have missed something you anticipated or we didn't cover something, can you think of something else?

GBP: I don't know. Oh yes, what happened to unused bombs. They were all unused.

AED: Right. So some of the questions I didn't ask because things came out as we were talking.

GBP: Ah, let's see. We put down here—[reading through questions] Did you handle the bird cages? No, I didn't, civilians [did].

GLP: It's interesting that one airman, when we first went to the church in Miami, was so intrigued when Guy asked him about—he was a serviceman. Actually, most of them were. And he came to the church and then we went to visit and Guy asked him what his [air force specialty] was, [what he has been trained to do], the numbers you were talking about, and wondered how he knew that. He said, "I was in the air force 24 years." And he said, "Wow!" Then the young

man says, "Well, that number, you worked with the weapons." Guy said, "Yes." He said, "Wow! You worked with high power. Now you're working with the real power." He was a Christian. Swapped jobs from one power to the high power.

AED: Yeah, that's great.

GLP: Of course, he never intended to do that.

GBP: What do you think should be done to the buildings and tunnels at Killeen Base? They may be needed one day, but I think they should keep them functional. I just think that that's just a shame because when I look back over that time of course, then I'm being, I guess, selfish. I just thought that those buildings would always be there forever. May not, though.

AED: We're hopeful that they will consider keeping one that the public can actually go into.

GBP: Right, be a museum. That would be great. Actually, the plant that we went in at Manzano [Base]—and you didn't go to Manzano [Base], did you?

AED: No, I've never been there.

GBP: Okay. Manzano [Base] in the tunnels, there was a sergeant there, a black master sergeant from Kirtland [Air Force Base] I believe, that had all kinds of signs and storage things all up and down the hallway and that. Actually, he had them stored in the rooms where they had the bird cages. That's where their little office was. They used them and now I don't know what they were doing. But they had a nice museum down on Manzano [Base], on Sandia [Base], [of the different weapons that had been maintained at Manzano Base]. There's a real nice museum there. There's a great museum at Wright-Patterson [Air Force Base].

AED: Oh, you know I've never been there either.

GBP: You would love that one. They built a hangar and put one of these big B-52s inside that hangar. [They replaced the B-36s and B-47s].

AED: Yeah, I think I've seen photographs or some something.

GBP: Yeah, and they also have a Mark 17, [our largest weapon at the time in the 1950s], go up and I'm talking about sitting right beside it. Yeah.

But my military time was really a tremendous experience in my life other than the last—in 1971. It was not good. I went to Fresno, California, and the guys were on drugs, [though none of my maintenance personnel were involved in that]. I was in charge of the nuclear weapons. We had weapons there. Actually, what we did, on an international airport, you only have two to four birds, airplanes, and they are loaded all the time, and they are alert birds. I don't know whether they do that today, and if this is classified, I didn't say it.

AED: No, I'm sure what was going on back then is [no longer classified].

GBP: In Canada, we had F-101s and those Canadian pilots, they would fly any time and they did weapons. We were in charge of them and they maintained them. My crew, in our detachment there, we had about 60 men, I think, total. I was NCOIC, and we had, Canadians did all the work on the weapons. [They were wonderful men. We worked well together, Americans and Canadians.] They disassembled them and then we would inspect them while they were doing it. We watched them. In California, we had F-105s, and we had weapons but we did the maintenance on them. We had our own maintenance division.

GLP: I'm really disappointed. I thought you would say, the last six months, it was because you left the family back in Maine.

GBP: Yeah, she just had major surgery and I got transferred from Maine to California.

AED: Oh, and you were on your own.

GBP: I was on my own in the barracks, in the barracks, which was terrible. But I did find a good church.

George Andrew Rasmussen

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1951–1952
Interviewed by Amy E. Dase

AED: This is Amy Dase with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Sunday, September 13, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. George Andrew Rasmussen. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron of the U.S. Air Force is having its annual reunion. The interview is sponsored by U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you became a member of the service?

GAR: I was 19.

AED: Were you enlisted?

GAR: Yes.

AED: What ranks did you achieve?

GAR: I achieved an airman second [class].

AED: You started as a—?

GAR: I started as a private.

AED: Private first class, is that right?

GAR: Yeah. And then it was private first class and then it changed to airman second [class].

AED: What's the difference between those ranks?

GAR: Not really that much.

AED: Did you serve elsewhere before coming to Killeen Base?

GAR: I went into Lackland Air Force Base to go into basic training and was then sent directly in to Killeen Base.

AED: How long were you at Lackland [Air Force Base]?

GAR: I was only at Lackland [Air Force Base] for about six weeks.

AED: So it's basic training?

GAR: Yes.

AED: Air force version of basic training, right?

GAR: Yes. Air force.

AED: Everybody goes to Lackland [Air Force Base] first?

GAR: Yes, in the air force.

AED: Did you serve in any other unit or group or battalion other than the 1094th?

GAR: Yes, I did. I was transferred out of the 1094th into the 12th AFDS which was a like-type organization and squadron.

AED: AFDS?

GAR: Yes. It was called the 12th AFDS and it went to Okinawa.

AED: Okay. What is the DS? What's the DS?

GAR: I don't remember what the AFDS was. Air force something. [Possibly the Air Force Air Depot Squadron].

AED: Were you involved in overseas duty then?

GAR: No, I wasn't. I was transferred out of that and ended up in the 1090th [Special Reporting Squadron], a students' squadron, at Sandia Base, from which I was discharged.

AED: When were you discharged?

GAR: February of 1954.

AED: Did you serve at any of the other national storage site facilities or operational site facilities?

GAR: No.

AED: Killeen Base only.

GAR: Well, I went to Killeen Base and then we was transferred to Manzano Base.

AED: So you were at those two?

GAR: I was at those two bases. Like I say, then I went in the 12th AFDS, and then I went into the

1090th students' squadron.

AED: And the students' squadron, what was that?

GAR: That was a squadron that just took basic trainees and brought them into Sandia Base for other schools. It was kind of a holding squadron.

AED: Did you receive any medals or special service awards?

GAR: Not really. Good conduct medal.

AED: Well, that counts. Good conduct. That's a good one. Do you remember when you first got to Killeen Base what time of year it was? Do you remember?

GAR: Yes, it was in February. Yes, I remember it very well.

AED: What do you remember about that first—?

GAR: It was a hell-hole. We came out of basic training and it had been so cold in San Antonio. We'd lived in tents at Lackland [Air Force Base]—and when we arrived at Killeen Base they moved us into tents again.

AED: In wintertime.

GAR: In wintertime, and it was cold. But we did have pretty nice facilities as far as tents are concerned.

AED: Wow, were you in those tents the whole time you were there?

GAR: No, we went through 16 weeks of advanced infantry combat training in tents. We had army ranger instructors.

AED: There's that difference of the branches, right? So you weren't expecting this?

GAR: No.

AED: Wow. What did that training consist of?

GAR: It consisted of advanced infantry combat training.

AED: It really did?

GAR: It really did.

AED: Did you call it Killeen Base or did you call it something else?

GAR: We called it Killeen Base.

AED: And that was separate from Fort Hood?

GAR: Yes, but we had Gray Air Force [Base] next to us. Of course, being in the air force I think people assumed we was with Gray Air Force Base. I don't know. But we still was connected with Fort Hood.

AED: Was Killeen Base known by another name?

GAR: No.

AED: They were always knows as the base.

GAR: Killeen Base.

AED: How would you describe the mission at Killeen Base?

GAR: I don't really know how to describe it. What they did, of course, after we got done with all of our training was we went on into and we ended up being guards. Then after that is when we found out this was a storage base.

AED: Did you know much about what was going on at any point? Nobody ever really—

GAR: No.

AED: It was just a learning curve of trying to figure out what you were looking at.

GAR: We knew at that time that we were going to be charged with the responsibility of security of bombs. We were responsible for the security of the base.

AED: Were there other organizations like the 1094th that did the same thing at Killeen Base or exclusively 1094th?

GAR: The 1094th was in charge of Killeen Base at the time.

AED: You were it. You were it. Okay.

GAR: We come out with an AFSC as an air policeman, is how we were classed.

AED: No. Not just protecting.

GAR: No, air police was just the police force of the air force. We were classed as that, but we really were security guards.

AED: Who was oversight for the 1094th? It's air force, but was there anybody in between?

GAR: I wouldn't know.

AED: The 1094th, did everybody pretty much perform the same kind of duties, or were there [various responsibilities?

GAR: We was in the security part of it.

AED: They've mentioned the security clearance that was required. What does that mean?

GAR: The Q clearance. We had the highest security clearance there was at the time.

AED: What areas of Killeen Base did you [have access to? Did]you had access to all of it?

GAR: Well, in the security you was assigned posts to the entire base.

AED: So you might do one post one day—

GAR: Yes, you might be on the perimeter. You may be in the plant. You may be wherever.

AED: So you were in the plant potentially.

GAR: Oh yes. There was guards inside those terminals too.

AED: I didn't picture that when we went through.

GAR: Well, there was a guard at the front door. Then when you went back in further there was another door, and you had a guard there, too. So you had access. Really you was within the whole plant.

AED: Did you do a specific post most often?

GAR: It was just assigned.

AED: So it was kind of random?

GAR: You may be in a pickup. You may be in a plant. You may be at an exhaust [vent].

AED: When you are guarding what are you looking for? What's that time like?

GAR: You were looking for anything that looked suspicious

AED: Did you ever guard in those pillboxes outside?

GAR: Yes, there was pillboxes.

AED: They are not in the main—I'm not picturing any inside the main fence.

GAR: No, of course. I remember more pillboxes at Manzano Base than I do at that [Killeen Base].

AED: You needed to know how to guard each space.

GAR: Yes. You was always supposed to be on the lookout for anything that was out of the ordinary.

AED: How long of a stint, how long was your [shift]?

GAR: Six-hour shifts. It was on six-hour shifts.

AED: [Was it] 24/7?

GAR: [Yes,] 24/7 for 15 days, and then we'd have three days off. Then we would start through the cycle every six hours and every three days we would change our hours.

AED: And then each day you only worked that six-hour shift.

GAR: Yes.

AED: And the next day you'd have another one.

GAR: Well, you'd work that same six-hour shift for three days.

AED: At any point did you have things you were confronted with that you had to protect against?

GAR: No.

AED: It was pretty insular, seems like.

GAR: People just didn't—

AED: No one questioned.

GAR: Nobody come out there. Well, they wasn't allowed out there. But you never knew.

AED: But you never knew and that was your job to make sure no one got past those places. What was a typical day like when you were on duty?

GAR: It was boring. If you were in a pickup you patrolled real slow and so on and it was a very boring job. Didn't smoke when I went in. I started smoking after so long.

AED: Something to do. When you were doing in the pickup, you were doing an interior perimeter or—

GAR: Or outside. We had all the security around it and we would patrol on the outside. The perimeter of the base and of course, we had patrols inside the base in the Q Area.

AED: You'd be in the truck six hours moving around.

GAR: Six hours just continuously patrolling.

AED: Was it always two [men] together or one?

GAR: Whenever you was in a pickup there were two.

AED: But if you were, say, at one of the main doors?

GAR: There was one.

AED: Just a single. And then at the next door there'd be a single?

GAR: Yes.

AED: Were there places where you had more than one or two?

GAR: Not really unless it was the main gate or something like that.

AED: At the igloos were there guard stations out there?

GAR: No, not like they did at the plants, but there was some as I recall, at some of the igloos.

AED: Maybe walking, even, around?

GAR: Well, and, of course, you're motor patrols watched them.

AED: Can you sit when you're on patrol, or are you always standing?

GAR: No, you could sit down.

AED: Did you have a special uniform that identified you as 1094th?

GAR: No.

AED: Did you end up working in all of the buildings ultimately?

GAR: Well, all of the different posts, yes.

AED: That would lead you to each place eventually.

GAR: Like I say, they was assigned kind of randomly.

AED: When you were guarding, what did you think about the layout of the buildings and the tunnels?

GAR: Never gave it a thought.

AED: At any time did you feel like you were in danger?

GAR: No. When you're that young, you was looking for trouble, actually.

AED: If you felt that there was potential for intrusion it would be different than if you feel like everything's protected.

GAR: No, I didn't.

AED: Did you generally walk to your location or drive to your location?

GAR: No, we drove.

AED: How did you react when you—what was your thought when you realized that these bombs you're protecting were not standard munitions?

GAR: Well, you can't help but feel that it really was an important position.

AED: You obviously didn't know anything about the bombs before you arrived.

GAR: No.

AED: And then made some assumptions about what was there but no one ever told you. The guys who were working inside the tunnels were coming and going. You were giving them clearance to come and go?

GAR: Well, we would check to make sure they was authorized. They had to have the right badge to go into there.

AED: Did they have to have more than just a badge?

GAR: They had their picture and they had—and of course, where we were, they just had to have the right one to come in.

AED: Did you ever interact with those people beyond your—?

GAR: Not really.

AED: They had a different job.

GAR: They had a different job.

AED: And they were doing theirs and you were doing yours.

GAR: And we didn't know what they did with them.

AED: Did you have to ever physically move bombs?

GAR: No.

AED: Somebody else put them where they—

GAR: No, we just did the security.

AED: When you realized what was there, were you concerned about the potential for explosive—?

GAR: Never gave it a second thought.

AED: Or exposure to radiation?

GAR: No. We didn't know that much about them then.

AED: And they didn't want you to know.

GAR: And they didn't want us to know anything. The less we knew the better we were.

AED: Right, you could do your job better.

GAR: You didn't want to know what it was.

AED: How would you describe the tunnels, being in them? What do you remember about them?

GAR: They was the cleanest. They was always fresh painted. They was so clean. I remember it being so clean in those tunnels from the entrance all the way back. Well, I was in them some time ago.

AED: Oh, you were?

GAR: We had a reunion down there several years ago.

AED: I didn't know that. I don't know where all [you've met for these reunions]. I know you've met a lot.

GAR: They allowed us and our wives actually to go into the base and go into those tunnels. I still remember the paint was peeling off of them.

AED: Like that.

GAR: Yes.

AED: So that's not how it was when you were there?

GAR: Oh, no. These were just as clean and just as shiny.

AED: I guess it's because they've not been in use that they're [unkempt].

GAR: They just let them go. The maintenance of them. That's what shocked us when we went back. Was this look. Because they was so clean and shiny.

AED: Right. That's very interesting. I guess because I had not seen them before I would not have expected them to be—

GAR: Oh, no. You could just about eat off of the floor. They were so clean.

AED: Who kept them so clean?

GAR: I don't know.

AED: Somebody you let it in.

GAR: It must have been somebody in maintenance.

AED: That's interesting because somebody, I'm guessing the guys who are working with the materials changing out the contents of the bombs.

GAR: I just don't remember them cleaning them. I just remember it being cleaned and painted and in good shape.

AED: At points did you get all the way back in to the tunnels?

GAR: Yes.

AED: But there weren't guard stations back there?

GAR: There wasn't guards beyond so far. Then of course, your other people took over from there. I'm assuming that they did most of the cleaning and everything and kept it.

AED: In the guard towers, you said you were in those more in Manzano [Base] than at Killeen Base.

GAR: No, we were talking about the pillboxes.

AED: Pillboxes. I'm sorry, that's what I meant. Tell me what it was like to be in one of those.

GAR: That probably was the most boring thing you could ever get into.

AED: It's such a small space.

GAR: You was just in a hole.

AED: Was it just one man?

GAR: Yes. They could be so cold in the wintertime. You was supposed to stay inside them, and you was supposed to stand and look out all the time.

AED: How do you get the wherewithal to do that for six hours?

GAR: It's tough.

AED: Try to keep your eyes open.

GAR: At night and you're up there. And, of course, you'd look forward to seeing the patrol come by.

AED: Every so often?

GAR: Every so often they'd come by.

AED: Did your group that you started with stay the same men by and large?

GAR: Pretty much. Once you got into that outfit it was very difficult to get out.

AED: You didn't have an option of being in it?

GAR: No. You had no options.

AED: When you did get transferred where did you go?

GAR: I went to Sandia Base.

AED: You were there for?

GAR: I spent about six months there and then I was discharged.

AED: Were you ready to be discharged at that point?

GAR: Well, actually I got out early because I'd been in an M20 accident at Manzano [Base]. I was going to Okinawa, but they didn't have medical facilities to treat me in Okinawa. So they transferred me into that 1090th students' squadron where I could continue my therapy at the hospital at Sandia Base.

AED: Were you ever on—did they have a high alert or a—?

GAR: We practiced that.

AED: At times. What was that like? Tell me about that.

GAR: That's when you had three days of being on that. I forget what they called it now. Anyway, you was on alert for three days. You'd go through exercises and so on. It was an alert flight. Everybody went through that same thing.

AED: What kinds of things would they do?

GAR: Well, we'd take positions around the plant entrances and things like that.

AED: So be in at the ready more than be in a guard mode?

GAR: Yes. We had special equipment and everything. We would go into an alert status. Of course, we would go to like a plant entrance or something like that. It was just practice.

AED: It never came to that you actually happen, but you had to practice them.

GAR: No. We had to be ready all the time. You was always sent out on that all the time when you was in that alert group. You went some place.

AED: Was that hard?

GAR: No. It was just part of the same only you'd go up there and take your positions and so on.

AED: Would you mind talking about that M20 accident? I'm sure it's different from—

GAR: It was on alert. An M20 was a six-wheeled armored vehicle. It carried six people and it had a .50-caliber machine [gun] turret on top. It was an old armored vehicle. There's pictures of them at Lackland [Air Force Base] in the air force museum there. But the army had them to begin with, or had them. We were in one as we came down this mountain road the driver lost control and we rolled the vehicle. It was a 12-ton vehicle. The fellow across from me was killed, and we were all banged up pretty bad. I know my steel helmet had a crease in it about 2 inches deep where I hit that turret. It was a bad, bad accident and ended up upside down. It was at night. Anyway, it was a bad deal. That sergeant who was sitting across from me didn't have a chance. It was just one of those things that happened. Everyone in the vehicle was seriously injured.

After the accident the colonel called me Ras. Never knew me before.

AED: It's good to be on a name-known basis or something like that.

GAR: Yes. Every time I'd see him he'd say, "How you doing, Ras?"

AED: That sticks for them too. They know you went through an experience that was a bad one.

GAR: Yes.

AED: If you were just a regular—

GAR: I was just somebody out there.

AED: Right, but that's really different.

GAR: He was a nice guy, Colonel Hoover. He was a very fair man. One of the few.

AED: Really? What makes you say that?

GAR: Some of the officers didn't know how to handle authority.

AED: They weren't always very much older?

GAR: No, that's right, they were young. I learned how to treat people, and how you get the maximum out of people. It isn't by fear.

AED: No. Excellent point. Tell me a little bit about where you lived. What the housing was like, what the food was like. You were in a tent first and then—

GAR: They had a tent city set up for us in Killeen [Base]. It really was pretty nice. It had wood floors in it and so on. The tents were stretched over it. We went through all of that training living in them. When we first pulled in there we saw all of those brick barracks. We thought, Man we hit the jackpot. This is nice. They pulled us around to those tents and said, Gentlemen, these are your quarters. Quite a disappointment. We eventually moved into those nice brick barracks. Of course, in the military your food is never good. It doesn't matter what you eat or how good it is. It's still not good. It really was—it was good duty. The boring part of it was the bad part. Being a security guard was just boring.

AED: That was the hard part. Not what you were doing, but there was nothing to help you stay alert.

GAR: Started me smoking. That doctor told me, Maybe if you smoke that will give you something to do then. Well, it did. And of course, in those days, in '51, I mean, that was the thing to do, was to smoke. I did give it up though in '79.

AED: Good for you. That's a big step to take.

When you were in those barracks was it just 1094th? And went you were in the tents, just 1094th?

GAR: Yes.

AED: You all ate in the same place, but there was no mixing with the army?

GAR: No,. We had no army at all at that time.

AED: Did you ever spend time on Fort Hood other—?

GAR: No, just for training.

AED: And [Gray] Air Force Base, did you spend time there?

GAR: No.

AED: Since you didn't know what was going on at Killeen Base, really, did any other civilians or Fort Hood, did they have any idea of what was going on over there?

GAR: I don't know.

AED: Since you had this high security clearance, could you socialize off base?

GAR: Oh yes. Yeah, it didn't mean that—

AED: You weren't cut off from everything.

GAR: No. We chased girls.

AED: There you go. Were you told to tell people something?

GAR: Oh, no. We were told not to tell them anything at all. Of course, people knew there was a base out there, but they didn't know what it was. So we told them we had a peanut factory.

AED: Among many other things, I'm sure. Were you told—could you say, I do security, or not even

that?

GAR: No, you didn't tell them anything. You was just stationed at a base, and that was the end of it.

AED: But you could have you fun with [it,] like the peanut factory.

GAR: Yes, well, we just jokingly said something like that, you know.

AED: Did anybody believe that?

GAR: No, I wouldn't think so.

AED: With your 1094th men, though, could you talk about it with each other, what you were doing?

GAR: Oh yeah.

AED: Was that good for morale because you are all stuck in that position of having that—?

GAR: Of course, we joined the air force to do something besides what we were doing.

AED: You were thinking of flying maybe?

GAR: Well, I wanted to be an aircraft engine mechanic. When I went through career guidance that's where I was going. How we got assigned to Killeen Base, that was interesting.

AED: Really? Tell me.

GAR: We were going through career guidance, and I remember just in front of me a captain walked in and said, "I need 150 men starting right here." And he had some little tags that said Killeen Base, Killeen, Texas. They would ask you if you were or ever had been a member of the Communist Party. Of course, no. That little tag was put on your permanent records and was clipped with a staple gun. And 150 of us that answered, No, as far as being a communist, that's where we went. Now I know of two guys that said they wanted out of Texas and they tore that thing off and they got to go where they wanted. I was headed for aircraft and engine mechanics in Wichita Falls at that base there.

AED: But that one man came in.

GAR: But that one man come in and said, "I need 150 men starting right here." That's how we were selected.

AED: It seems a little more random than I would suspect. It seems like they would have done some checking first.

GAR: Not at that time. They had so many people at Lackland [Air Force Base]. It was six months after [the] Korea[n War] had started. They had like 180,000 men at Lackland [Air Force Base]. And they had no facilities for them. That was intense, and it was just under the—oh, it was under terrible conditions. There was no restrooms. And they had burlap deals set up and holes dug, and that's where you—and you was in tents and it was cold and you'd beat ice off of the tents at night. It dropped down to right at zero degrees.

AED: That's unusual for that area.

GAR: Oh, it was terrible in January 1951. Everybody was sick. Everybody had dysentery. It was terrible. So, we was all glad to get out of there. But that's how we were selected.

AED: The original group stayed. They didn't go looking for other—?

GAR: They put us on buses, and shipped us to Killeen [Base].

AED: Had you been to Texas before you went to Lackland [Air Force Base]?

GAR: No.

AED: That would be a harsh beginning. It's generally a nice state, but not with that kind—

GAR: I was from Idaho.

AED: Born in Colorado.

GAR: Do you know where Idaho Falls is?

AED: I do. Is that where you grew up is Idaho Falls?

GAR: North of there about 50 miles right on the Montana line.

AED: I'll bet it's beautiful.

GAR: I left Idaho in January you know and it was like, Well, we're going south to Texas we don't need—I had one leather coat, a pair of pants, and a shirt. Going down there that would be fine. I was never so cold in all my life. I had all that humidity and then that temperature dropped the way it is. I'd like to froze to death. They gave us a cot and a mattress cover and one blanket. No stoves. We'd like to froze to death. You'd go to bed with all our clothes on.

AED: Being from Idaho—

GAR: We thought we were used to cold.

AED: Yeah, you would be prepared normally.

GAR: But not with that humidity.

AED: It's clammy. It's very clammy.

GAR: Well, and see in Idaho it was so dry. It was a dry cold and down there it was a wet cold. Man.

AED: Very different.

GAR: It was terrible.

AED: When you talked with your peers about what you were doing there at Killeen Base, what kinds of conversations might you have? Do you recall?

GAR: Yes, as far as what we were doing, we all didn't like what we were doing. We really was—all of us wanted to be in the air force. You know, when we got done with that training the army came over and told us if we would transfer over into the army we would all qualify to go through OCS and become officers. Well, they didn't get any takers because at the height of

the Korean War if we went through 90 days' training and became a second lieutenant—we was already trained—we knew we were going to Korea and we wasn't too interested in that.

AED: Not one?

GAR: Not one.

AED: Isn't that interesting? Determined to stick with the air force. That's where you started. That is very interesting. Your family wasn't there at Killeen Base. At that point you were still single, right? But you corresponded with your family. What did they think about what you were doing?

GAR: They didn't know what I was doing. We just told them we were air police. That was the end of it.

AED: They didn't ask? Your family didn't pursue—

GAR: Just told them not to ask.

AED: And then that was that.

GAR: Because they knew we'd been investigated, so they were curious, from the FBI.

AED: I didn't think about that. They knew something was different.

GAR: They knew something was different and of course, when I went home on leave I was questioned. Or I was asked what I was doing. I said, "I'm just an air policeman."

AED: This is going back, but what motivated you to sign up to begin with? The career path you were on?

GAR: I was going to college.

AED: Oh, you said you were in school, that's right.

GAR: I was in my second year of college.

AED: Where were you studying?

GAR: Idaho State College. And I knew I was close to the draft. And I went home. In fact, I'd checked into the service and had taken my test and everything, but I'd never signed the final papers. Well, I went home on my Christmas vacation from college and my friend and I that went through high school together, we decided that if either one of us got our draft notice while I was home that we'd both just go and enlist. The first day of January he came to my house and says, Look what I've got. And he didn't even open it, it was from the draft board. So the next day we went down and enlisted. He took his letter back unopened and gave it to the lady at the draft board and she says, "Well, we'll call Rasmussen for this month." And he says, "Don't need to. He enlisted with me."

AED: Good plan.

GAR: So I was pretty close to being drafted. That's how I chose the air force. And he went on to become an aircraft and engine mechanic.

AED: Isn't that interesting.?

GAR: He wasn't in that 150.

AED: That is very interesting. Did you stay in touch with him?

GAR: Oh yes. In fact, he just died about two years ago.

AED: I was going to ask. Wow. That's a lifelong friend. Someone who enlists with you, right?

GAR: We'd went through school together, grade school and high school.

AED: Wow, that's a really nice, really nice thing. So what did you do when you were off-duty? Tell me about the girl chasing. Where did you go? Did you go to Killeen? Did you go farther a field?

GAR: No. Killeen wasn't there. Killeen was one square block. There was a bus station and a couple of restaurants and a movie theater and that was about it. And it was just on a square and you went across the tracks and you went into Killeen, and that's where it was. Temple was a little too wild. We really liked Waco. That was our town. We'd go to Austin some.

AED: So how did you get there?

GAR: I had a car. I bought a car.

AED: Okay. Did most everybody have their own vehicle? Or that was uncommon?

GAR: No. Another fellow and I went in together and we bought a car. We was both making $75 a month when we went in. We bought us a car. We shared that car. He was in a different flight than I was. So when I was off-duty I was running the car and when he was off-duty he was running the car.

AED: Perfect plan.

GAR: A '48 Oldsmobile convertible. Boy, we was uptown.

AED: That sounds sweet. That sounds very good. So you'd drive up to Waco and stay. Would you stay over?

GAR: Yeah, we'd go up there.

AED: Because that's a little bit of a hike. It's not too far.

GAR: It's about 60, 70 miles.

AED: Something like that.

GAR: Those days it was all two-lane roads. And we used to go to Belton over at that swimming pool and chase girls over there. I think they had a girls' school or something over there.

AED: They did.

GAR: Is it still there?

AED: I don't think it's still there. I think it's closed now or it's merged with another school.

GAR: It was something, I remember. Waco was the place we went.

AED: Where did you go there?

GAR: We went to Terrace Club at Waco.

AED: Really? I don't know what that is. Tell me about that.

GAR: It was a club.

AED: Drinks? Dancing? Dinner?

GAR: Oh yeah. Just drinks and dancing.

AED: Don't need any food?

GAR: No, no food. We wasn't interested in food in those days.

AED: So you'd meet some local people?

GAR: Oh yes. One of the guys met a girl and we got in with her mother. She would invite us to go up there. There may be three or four of us that go up there and stay at their house. She communicated with our parents and everything. It really was nice.

AED: More about home.

GAR: Yes, away from home. And she'd go out with us, too. Her daughter and two or three others, and then she'd go with them. They'd go out with us.

AED: You mentioned your pay when you went in was $75 a month. And then, as time passed, did it increase?

GAR: Well, as your rank went up.

AED: A little bit?

GAR: But I got up to $108 before I got out. Then when I went back to school, I got $135 on the GI Bill. I was in pretty good shape.

AED: Even better at that point, right? So did you go back to Idaho to finish your degree?

GAR: Yes, I went back to Idaho.

AED: You mentioned that your friend you bought the car with was on a different flight. Tell me what that means.

GAR: Well, we had different flights. I think as I recall we had four or five flights, each of the same number of men. That way each flight would take a six-hour shift, see and so you'd have different flights.

AED: So it was just part of divvying up the patrol, the responsibilities of guarding.

GAR: Yes. You worked different shifts and different hours.

AED: Were those the men you were in the barracks with as well? Were they—

GAR: Each flight was housed separately.

AED: Was there just one [mess hall] for the whole squadron?

GAR: Yes, one for the whole squadron.

AED: Were there other groups that worked with the 1094th?

GAR: I don't know that any other groups worked with it. We worked within ourselves because we had a motor pool. We had—everything was all in one.

AED: It was a nice isolated [group].

GAR: Yes, it was an isolated group. We didn't communicate with any others.

AED: How about when you were with Killeen Base, did you communicate with anyone at any of the other storage sites?

GAR: No.

AED: They were doing their thing?

GAR: Us, as security had nothing to do with it. We didn't even know about other sites at that time.

AED: That makes sense. Do you know why the group was moved to Manzano [Base]?

GAR: All I know is at the one time the army had Manzano [Base] and Killeen [Base] and the air force had Killeen [Base]. We traded bases. The army come out of Manzano [Base] to Killeen [Base] and we went to Manzano [Base].

AED: Manzano [Base] was a sister facility, so it is almost identical, as I understand it.

GAR: Same type of thing.

AED: Maybe not exactly the same layout, but pretty much—

GAR: Oh no, not the same layout at all, but—

AED: Were there some things that were strikingly different about how it was laid out?

GAR: No, that wasn't the point. It was all basically the same. It was in tunnels.

AED: Just a different setting, different landscape.

GAR: Completely different landscape and setting and everything. Bigger mountains.

AED: You were still doing the same work though.

GAR: Same thing.

AED: That didn't change.

GAR: No.

AED: And so you were within a flight like you had been.

GAR: Had the same type system. Same group, motor pool, operations.

AED: Did you prefer one place over the other for any reason, in looking back at that?

GAR: Not really. It was all the same type of duty.

AED: Okay. The same group of men.

GAR: Probably I enjoyed Albuquerque more because of the climate. It was cold in the winter, but it was a drier climate. And it was closer to town.

AED: And bigger.

GAR: And a bigger town. Of course, then there were only 90,000 people.

AED: It's still small, but for then it was—

GAR: That was a big city.

AED: Relative to Killeen.

GAR: To the square block [of Killeen].

AED: Right. Exactly. What did you do after your service? You went back to school and then what was your career?

GAR: I went back to school and I ended up—I didn't have that many jobs. I come out and I started out as a clerk and worked up to a senior accountant with National Lead Company in Utah with uranium mills and then ended up in Albuquerque. Worked for Nabisco for 10 years in sales. Then I ended up a food broker and I did that the last 20 years, and I ended up the senior vice-president of the company.

AED: I don't really know what a food broker. I haven't heard that term before.

GAR: A food broker is an organization that is a selling organization. They represent different companies. These companies hire you on a percentage to represent them and to present them to the grocery trade and the warehousing and so on. Then, of course, the broker has retail salesmen that go in the actual grocery stores to make sure this product is into the stores and sells to them, has promotions, sets advertising, things of this type.

AED: Interesting. Is that still a position these days? Or has it changed?

GAR: Yeah. It's changed a little bit. I've been retired for 20 years. It's changed some. It's more of a service organization. There's not near as many warehouses as there used to be. It used to be really a good lucrative business. Because I represented 80 different major companies within the grocery industry, which—I had 80 different bosses you might say and I had young people coming in telling me how to run my business all the time. But it was a good business. I did extremely well.

AED: Was the one position you mentioned dealing with Idaho mine?

GAR: No.

AED: Idaho Lead?

GAR: National Lead.

AED: National Lead. I'm sorry.

GAR: It was a uranium contractor. There used to be a paint called Dutch Boy Paints and that was National Lead Company. They had an AEC contract with a uranium mill in Monticello, Utah. I went down there as a clerk and within a year I was a senior accountant. Then they was going to close that mill. Of course, in my position I knew what was coming, so I moved back to Albuquerque. I went from discharge to Idaho and then worked my way back and ended up in Albuquerque and then of course, in Lubbock and El Paso, and so I stayed in that area through my working years basically.

AED: You raised a family in Lubbock? El Paso? Albuquerque?

GAR: Albuquerque.

AED: But that position with the uranium was not related at all to your service?

GAR: No.

AED: But it's interesting thing that you ended up still back in that kind of—

GAR: We were processing uranium for that and I ended up back—like I say, it was kind of a close circle there. But yeah, we had that yellow cake and that uranium, of course, it was radioactive. I never had any problems with it. But I was around it, you know.

AED: I just have a few more questions. First, at that time did it seem to you like Killeen Base was something unusual? Exceptional? When you were there? When you were on the ground there?

GAR: Well, like I said before, we realized it really was an important mission. We realized that we were charged with a lot of responsibility even though at the time it didn't seem like that. But, without us, we knew that it would be bad. But nobody infiltrated. We had the opportunity one time at a reunion to go back to Manzano Base and were taken on that base. Also, we were the first ones ever allowed to have our wives accompany us back to that base. They told us at the time that they had never been able to equal the security that we had when we were there, which made us feel pretty good. Now, whether they did or didn't we didn't know.

AED: Did you think at the time when you were there, and young, that you were part of something bigger?

GAR: We knew we were part of something big. I felt like that personally. I knew it. I didn't like it, but I knew that really it was an important position. Even though I was on the lower end of deal, I knew that we had a lot of responsibility.

AED: Other people couldn't do their positions without that.

GAR: Well, you know you can never run a company without the people at the bottom.

AED: Exactly. At any point did you feel like there was an immediate threat in the wake of World War II and the arms build-up going on?

GAR: No.

AED: It seemed like a safe. Even at Manzano [Base], too, a relatively safe place.

GAR: Well, we knew it was safe because we were in charge of it. So we didn't have that—I didn't have that feeling that we wasn't safe. We had some crazy people up there.

AED: They ended up being your friends, right?

GAR: Right.

AED: When you were guarding, when you were doing that, and you were pretty much knowing that something really important was going on there, what did you think about civilian involvement with making bombs, with the activity that's going on there?

GAR: I didn't think that much about it. I knew there were civilians up there, but I knew they were very important people.

AED: Qualified to be doing what they're doing.

GAR: Yes.

AED: And now what do you think about what was going on then? What are your thoughts?

GAR: What do I look back on now?

AED: Now, that you were part of the Cold War?

GAR: We really were, and I look back on it now and I think I realize more how important those areas were at the time. We just didn't realize it then. Now I look back, and it was just part of the protection of the country. I feel that. And I'm glad that I was able to have participated in that era, even though we didn't realize how important it was.

AED: Do you think there was a point as you matured where you knew that—because when you were there it was still not—

GAR: It really didn't register.

AED: So when did it register? Was there an event in world—

GAR: Several years later.

AED: I'm thinking of the Bay of Pigs and the Cuban missile crisis.

GAR: I think now when you really—and I've really never stopped to think about it—I think the older you get the more you realize what you did. And the more proud of the people you were with, and the friendships we have today is tremendous. We never had that before.

AED: Not there.

GAR: We're very close.

AED: It shows. I think it's very tight-knit and good.

GAR: Yeah, it's just a good feeling.

AED: Because you know you were there at that place at that very important time.

GAR: At that time and how important it was, and not realizing it. And like I say, when you're 19 years old nothing's that important.

AED: The [air force] has to break you.

GAR: And I'm glad I got to go through all of that. I really am, now that I look back on it. I'm glad I got to do all of that.

AED: Did it contribute, do you think, to your career in other ways?

GAR: To my later career?

AED: Yeah.

GAR: Not really. I say not really. Yes. The discipline. The training. It all kind of fits together and I think it made me a better individual.

AED: But you didn't get to pursue the path you were hoping to through the air force.

GAR: I've always kind of regretted that.

AED: It seems like you had no control in that situation.

GAR: I had no control at all.

Everything in life that you start and that you participate in, the longer you live the more you use all of it. It all comes back together and it all intertwines within itself and it just makes you a more rounded person. From the time of going into the service and going through my lifetime and dealing with people and working with people and having employees and being an accountant and being this and that and the other, it all fits together and brings you into one whole person. It's really been an education. At 78 years old, I'm still enjoying it.

AED: That's great. That just speaks [volumes] for those experiences. This being one, and probably a very important one for setting you up for the right path for the rest of your life.

GAR: And I think that basically the military did that for me. It started me out right. Kind of straightened me up, and we did get into a very important situation, I feel like. In later years, I realized how important it was. Didn't at the time.

AED: Do you have any opinions about what should be done with the tunnels and the buildings there at Killeen Base? Do you think they should be preserved?

GAR: I would love to see those tunnels refurbished.

AED: I think that would be nice.

GAR: If they're going to make it a historical site out of that, I think that's what needs to be done. Because that's what was so—that always impressed me, how clean they were.

AED: I think they've used them for some testing and they've used them to try—for penetration testing. You can't tell that so I don't know what they've used to try to break into those first sets of doors.

GAR: Well, the second set was more secure than the first set.

AED: Was it really? Was it thicker or just—?

GAR: Thicker and they slid in and out.

AED: They went further into the tunnel.

GAR: They slid out of the walls and closed down.

AED: And that first one, did it go—?

GAR: No, it opened.

AED: It opened. There was a hinge on it. They don't know what's going to happen for sure. I think they'd like to be able to use the land where the igloos are for other things. But they understand that the tunnels are a really unique resource.

GAR: The igloos I never paid that much attention to.

AED: There's a bunch of them. You see them in many places. Not just that facility. They're associated with this very particular—

GAR: Oh yeah, ammo storage areas. It's like in Oklahoma they build, or they make a lot of ammo there and have those things. And I know at Fort Wingate, New Mexico, I don't know if they still have those igloo-type things out there or not, but that was a big ammo storage area years and years ago.

AED: Really? Fort Wingate, is that right?

GAR: [Yes.].

AED: I hadn't heard of that.

GAR: Right around Gallup, New Mexico. They used to see all those out there. Those igloos.

AED: I think because Killeen Base is still so intact. My understanding is that Manzano [Base] has changed quite a bit.

GAR: I haven't—of course, they improved Manzano [Base] after I left there, but basically you can't change much of those tunnels.

AED: Right. I want to say the ones at Clarksville may have been demolished.

GAR: I don't know on that.

AED: Did you know people who worked at Clarksville?

GAR: Yes. One of the fellows in that M20 accident was from Clarksville. He come into our unit. And he came from Clarksville.

AED: I don't really have any other questions, other than what would you, if you were telling people about what you've done then, what is it that you would want them to know about your experience there at Killeen Base?

GAR: I don't know. At the time, and of course, I've never really talked much about it until now, other than with my friends. We just talk about old times and the things we did and some of the crazy things we did at the time. It's just we have a lot of good friends. But I don't know at the time. Like I say, we never talked about it. We was told never to talk about it. And of course, you understand that that was the security of what we were doing.

AED: When did you get the feeling it was okay to talk about it?

GAR: Not until the last few years. Never felt comfortable talking about it until the last few years.

AED: Because this group has had a reunion many years, pretty regularly.

GAR: Yeah, we've had them. We'd kind of talk about what we did and so on. Not about actually what we did, but the things that we did together and so on, as friends. I never felt comfortable about talking anything about Killeen Base until 45, 50 years later. I think it was just kind of instilled that you just didn't talk about it.

AED: That was still there from—

GAR: It's still there.

John A. (Jack) Stedman

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1951–1952
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas

SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas with Prewitt and Associates. Today is Sunday, September 13, 2009. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Mr. John A. (Jack) Stedman. This interview is taking place at the Grand Plaza Hotel in Branson, Missouri, where the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron is having its annual reunion. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, as part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you became a member of the service?

JAS: I must have been 18. Yeah, 18, I think. I think I just had my eighteenth birthday.

SK: Enlisted? Commissioned?

JAS: Oh, I enlisted.

SK: Did you serve anywhere else before going to Killeen Base?

JAS: I went to basic training at Lackland Field in San Antonio, Texas, and then I went from there to where [air] police go at Tyndall Air Force Base in Panama City[, Florida,] and then from there I was assigned to the 1095th [Special] Reporting Squadron, which was being trained to take over a new base at that time. So the 1095th was [at Killeen Base] as a training facility and the 1094th was permanently stationed there at the time. Before the 1095th left for Shreveport, Louisiana, which was the place that they were going to be assigned, I was transferred to the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron because I had had the training, the official training in the air police school, whereas some of the others had none.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about the assignment process because I know that you were handpicked, right?

JAS: [Yes.] When I was in air police school, I had to fill out a questionnaire that had to do with [details such as] did I ever belong to certain organizations and my entire background, where I was born, where I went to school, people I knew, who my neighbors were, who my friends were, and ultimately after I had been assigned to the special reporting squadron, I found

out from some of my former neighbors, when I went back on furlough, that the FBI had been talking with people. So the FBI was responsible for making thorough background profiles of people who were tentatively to be assigned to that base.

SK: Did you serve at any other of the national storage site facilities?

JAS: [Yes. As I mentioned, the entire squadron moved to Albuquerque.] I was full-term there, and I was mustered out at Manzano Base in Albuquerque in 1954.

SK: And then you left the service at that point?

JAS: Right. By the way, at that time when you were discharged, you had to sign a paper that you would not leave the country for at least, I believe, memory fades a little bit, but I think what was said at least one year after you were discharged.

SK: Some other soldiers have told us that like when they arrived at Killeen Base it was at night, and kind of when they woke up the next morning, it was a little bit of a culture shock.

JAS: That's right.

SK: Do you have any memories of that?

JAS: [Following a furlough after air police school,] I flew in to Waco, Texas, and how I got to Killeen [Base from there] I don't remember, but I do remember that I shipped my duffel back by railway express and picked up my duffel bag at the railroad station, and I remember thinking at the time, this is the end of the world. Ten more miles and you'd fall off.

SK: Was there a limit to the time your could serve at one particular post at Killeen Base?

JAS: You mean in that particular role or—?

SK: Yes. To make sure that no one person knows too much—

JAS: Oh yes. You rarely knew what other people did. We were in the guard service and security, which operated out of what they call a provost marshal's office, but there were technical people there and you had no idea what they did. You didn't talk about your job, and even the kind of guard service that we did was highly security rated at that time.

SK: So what kind of clearance did you need to work at Killeen Base?

JAS: You needed a very high clearance. You needed clearance of the highest order. And then there were people who, as they say, were triple qualified because they served in such ultra-sensitive areas [and they had a different code on their badge].

SK: Now, it was called a couple things in its involvement: Killeen Base, Fort Hood, Gray Air Force Base. Did you call it something else? What was it known when you were there?

JAS: No, it was Killeen Base, and Gray was called Gray Air Force Base, and there was Fort Hood.

SK: Okay, did it have a nickname?

JAS: Nothing that can bear repeating.

SK: Did you refer to the tunnels separately or was that just, that was Killeen Base?

JAS: Yeah, it was all Killeen Base because in order to be able to get to the tunnels, at that time anyway, you had to go through the main gate. You had a pass that, you know a security pass, to get on the base. When you went into the tunnel area, you went through a gate and you had to surrender that badge, and they had what they call a Q badge in the guardhouse, and they would take that, put your base pass there and give you a Q pass and you have to put the Q pass on, and those Q passes were related to the level of clearance that you needed to do whatever job you had.

SK: Do you have any other recollections of maybe some other buildings at Killeen Base like the igloos or warehouses or pillboxes or towers? Since you were a guard, were you in the towers more than the tunnels?

JAS: There weren't any towers there. The closest thing that they had was—like for instance, you talk about when you were in the Q Area, the things that were referred to as the igloos were the storage areas for the atomic units. The tunnel areas were used for, number one, engineering, for the ultimate in security because they had what they called blast doors, and they had sally ports, and there was a door on the outside. I don't know when you said you went in the tunnels I don't know if there was sally ports still available, but—

SK: The big doors are still there.

JAS: The great big doors inside?

SK: Yes.

JAS: Okay. Now see, those doors, you couldn't open those doors until the entry doors on the outside because there was a door on the outside and then you went down the tunnel, and then there was the blast doors, and then there was—I think there were two sets of blast doors so that one set had to be closed before the other one could be open. That's what the sally port means. That was where a lot of the work was done on the units themselves. So they would haul them out of storage, they would bring them into the tunnels, they would test them, they would replace parts for them if it was necessary, and then they would take and store them back in the tunnels they got.

SK: So where did you spend most of your time?

JAS: [I spent about three years at Manzano Base where] I did a variety of things. One of the things that I did the most was I was in what they called the ADT room. It was well back in the mountain, and that was another thing, that was another level of security because they didn't want, obviously, didn't want people to get in there. The ADT room was controlled entrance to all of the igloos on the base. Somebody wanted to go into one of the tunnels, or the igloos I should say, they had to—there was a phone jack on the outside of the igloo, and whoever wanted to go in there would have a communication device and plug it in a telephone, and that would connect it to the ADT room. They had to have a code word in order to be able to open up that door. If they didn't have the code word, you didn't open it.

SK: So, as a guard, what was your mission at Killeen Base?

JAS: Security. To secure the entire base.

SK: Were any other organizations part of the 1094th?

JAS: The 1094th encompassed the entire base. Usually, in a lot of cases it wouldn't, but in this particular case, the entire base was the 1094th. You had security, you had administration, you had a fire department, you had the motor pool, you had operations, you had all kinds of—the entire operation itself was a self-sufficient base. But it was a single squadron.

SK: So, you were considered air force, but Fort Hood was army?

JAS: That's correct.

SK: Were there ever any power struggles between the two or did you find that you worked together?

JAS: No. When I first went there, Fort Hood was responsible for security around the outside perimeter of the base, and they had stations, foxholes and so forth around the outside perimeter of the base, and I can remember talking to the guys through the fence, but that didn't last too long after I got there. I got there probably around June or July of 1951, and then a couple of months later, they were gone. And other than that, for all practical purposes, Fort Hood didn't even know we were there.

SK: Who did you answer to? The Atomic Energy Commission? The air force? Department of Defense?

JAS: The air force basically was in charge of the security and the base itself. We did have people from the Atomic Energy Commission who would come from time to time and talk with us about other matters, but I have no idea. For a while, when you get on a base like that, you had no idea even what the base was all about. You didn't know why it was there, what was there, and it was only after you had sufficient training that you began—if not dawn on you—you began to be told indirectly what this was all about.

SK: Were you able to go onto Fort Hood?

JAS: Yes.

SK: But they weren't able to come onto Killeen Base?

JAS: No. But we could go in Fort Hood if there was entertainment. We could go to the PX there. We could utilize the facilities to a limited extent at Fort Hood.

SK: Did anyone ever question why you could visit them and they couldn't visit you?

JAS: No, I think because of the fact that we were enlisted personnel. Most of the enlisted people, the Second Armored Division was there when I was at Killeen [Base]. They didn't, it didn't mean anything to them. We were an air force outfit. Most of the time you'd be in fatigues anyway and you didn't look that different. They never paid much attention to you.

SK: Did you have to go through any special training to become a guard?

JAS: Oh yes.

SK: As opposed to somebody who wasn't a guard?

JAS: Right. You had to learn weapons management, you had to learn about terrorism, you had to learn about incarceration. Think of a police force and what the police force is responsible for, and you get a general idea. Also you'd be trained in prisoner escort, prisoner management,

all kinds of things that we'd have to do with law and order.

SK: Did you ever have any prisoners?

JAS: I never did. I never did because I was transferred so soon to the 1095th. Although we served under what they called the provost marshal's office, which would be like the head sheriff or the chief of police.

SK: Was there any special reason they transferred you?

JAS: No, I think that they had a particular need for people at that base at that time, because as I say there was that new squadron that was forming, and I don't remember how many of us were picked for it, but there were several when we graduated that were assigned to Killeen [Base]. A relatively modest number. I remember there was at least 12 of us because when we got there, then we were responsible for training a company of people at the 1095th who would be assigned to that base.

SK: As a guard, did you have access to all of Killeen Base?

JAS: There was one place that no one—only certain guards could go to. One was the ADT room and the other was what they call the ABC tunnel. I didn't have no idea what was in there, but I know they carried a machine gun.

SK: So what was a typical day like for you?

JAS: Well, we were on a rotating shift. We would serve three days. The shifts would last six hours. It was broken down from midnight to six a.m., six to noon, noon to six, and six to midnight, and then you would work each one of those shifts rotating three days at a time. Then on the fifth time, you were on what they called alert, standby, for three days, and for those three days, you couldn't leave the base, you couldn't go anywhere, you had to have your weapon with you at all times and all of your defense gear, your helmet and a .45, and then you had three days off, three continuous days off, and that was the rotation.

SK: Did you find like it was really intense and you really needed those three days off?

JAS: No. You were young and you don't even think about it. I don't remember that you really—you look forward to it, but it wasn't an exhausting job. I don't think you really realize so much the seriousness of that until you get older and you realize that was pretty serious stuff.

SK: What do you think about the layout in the tunnels and the buildings at Killeen Base? Do you think it was efficient? Do you think it was dangerous?

JAS: Well, they did stay there for three days, too, sometimes. I don't remember how that worked, but I do remember you could go on, whether it was when we would have special alerts or not, but you could stay there for three days at a time. But it was so well done at the time, it was well lighted, it was painted, it was—

SK: So it gave you direction—

JAS: And it gave you directions and it was a simple thing to do at the time. Never really thought too much about it. Boring more than anything else.

SK: Did you walk between the buildings when you were doing guard duty? Did you drive a vehicle?

JAS: Oh yes. The base was surrounded by four fences. There was the outside fence, and there was what they called the perimeter road, and that was patrolled constantly, which was another thing that we did, and then—that was between two fences—and then there was an electric fence, and the electric fence was charged with, I don't know, something like 75,000 volts, and it had light towers. Now if anything touched that, the lights would go on and, of course, they would get electrocuted. So then, beyond the electric fence, there was another fence guarding the electric fence.

SK: Did you stay in the barracks?

JAS: Yes.

SK: Was that on Fort Hood, the barrack? Or was it was on Killeen [Base]?

JAS: No, this was right there at Killeen [Base].

SK: Was it proximate to where you were working?

JAS: No, the base itself probably a third of the base was, you might call it, general admission. That's where the motor pool was, the fire department, it's where the barracks were, it was where the administration building was, it was where [the mess hall and] the day room was. That was just the general area, and then you had to go through, as I said, another gate that had a separate security area, another fence around that, and so you spent most of your time down in the general area, or you could go in town if you were up to being—maybe sneaking in the night or something.

SK: What was your first reaction upon knowing that you were guarding nuclear bombs?

JAS: Well, I think I was a little bit awed by it because it was only a few years [after] the first atomic bomb was dropped in 1945 and this is 1951. It was only six years later and we knew that it was a big, top-secret thing, and I think that I was a bit awed by what this was and the power of it and the size of it, but something like that wears off. Like when you get a new car it's very exciting in the beginning, and then after a while it's just transportation. You got a bit blasé about what your responsibilities were and the overwhelming seriousness of it.

SK: Did you ever see any of the bombs?

JAS: Constantly. Constantly.

SK: Were you unimpressed, impressed with the size?

JAS: The very first time I saw one it was called the Mark 4, and that's on display down at the atomic bomb museum in Albuquerque, and you can see that bomb. Do you know about that museum?

SK: No, I have not—

JAS: Well, if you're going to do this, check out the atomic bomb museum. That's very important because they've got displays off all of the different kinds of bombs and how they transport them. There's a picture of the fences that I told you about in Manzano [Base] because I brought my wife there and I said, "This is where I was. That bomb."

SK: You never handled the bombs though, right?

JAS: No, that was another division, another responsibility.

SK: Did you know anybody else who did?

JAS: No, because as I say, you were separated [at Manzano Base]. Everybody did their own thing their own way. As a matter of fact, there were civilians there and the civilians at the time I was there, the civilians controlled what we called Plant 2, and the military maintained Plant 1. As far as security goes, it was the same all the way through.

[I suggest you dig deeper about this matter because it is the heart of the whole reason the base was there. As I told you, we did our job and they did theirs.]

SK: Were civilians treated any different?

JAS: Well, in their case, they had a civilian job [at Manzano Base]. They didn't live on the base. They lived off the base. They came on duty and worked there and went home at night. It was, if you will, a sort of a nine-to-five job for them.

SK: Were you at all concerned about the exposure to radiation at all?

JAS: Yeah, I wasn't concerned about it, but I had curiosity about that because I had problems years later and I often wonder if that had anything to do with it.

SK: Were you told at all about a possible exposure?

JAS: Not that I recall.

SK: Did you take any precautions against it?

JAS: No, because basically the instrument itself was inert at the time. It wasn't loaded with highly, not toxic, but radiation-type—you didn't have to have a radiation badge like you did in—yeah, what I'm thinking about is the base where they used to assemble the bomb. It'll come to me. They used to call—it's interesting because they called it the atomic triangle: 1) doors, 2) alarms, 3) Sandia [Base], 4) Manzano [Base]. I remember that was one of the lectures that we had. And it was Kirtland [Air Force Base]. I remember that was one of the lectures that we had, and it was Now let me think for a minute. I'm wrong. That was in Albuquerque, it wasn't in Killeen [Base]. But Gray Air Force Base was assigned the responsibility for transporting those bombs from time to time. If we had to deliver the bombs, we delivered them down to Gray Air Force Base.

SK: How did you deliver them? In what mode? Like a train or—?

JAS: In what they called a wishbone trailer, and they would put the bomb in the wishbone trailer and they'd hitch a truck up to it and haul it down, and at that time, that bomb was so big that the only way that you could load it on a plane was to either put it down in a pit and move the plane over or jack the plane up. That was the only way you could get them on a plane because it stuck out of the bottom of the plane it was so big.

SK: There are stories when you talk to locals in Killeen of all this covert activity and planes flying in and out, and a lot of secrecy. When you were in town, did you feel like anybody ever asked you about what you did or any curiosity from the locals?

JAS: No. One of the things about Killeen is that it was an incredibly small place. In your mind, it'd be so difficult to envision what it was. There was one stoplight in the town. There was

one or two restaurants in town, and that's it. You know, there was a pharmacy, and so forth. And it was a dry town, so we used to spend 98 percent of our time in Belton, which was 28 miles away because that's where you could go get your beer. So, you didn't interact, at least I didn't, with the civilians very much there.

SK: You had said that your shifts were six hours long. Was that because there was some kind of limit to how long you could be down there?

JAS: If there was, I wouldn't know. We had six flights within that outfit, so that six flights was four that were on duty on a rotating basis, one as on alert, and the other as on a three-day leave.

SK: Were you ever on high alert? Like was there ever a time that you were really afraid or—?

JAS: No, they had what they call alerts, and they would have, for instance, a red alert, and the red alert was just as if there was war declared, and you'd break out the units and transport them down to the base, the air force base. Every single person that was assigned to that base had to be on duty at that time. The cooks had to be there, administration had to be there, guards had to be there, the technicians had to be there. Everyone, even if they lived off base, they had to come back and stay there as long as red alert lasted, and it could last anywhere from 24 hours to three days, and as far as you knew, war was on.

SK: So they didn't tell you if it was training?

JAS: Oh no, not if it was in a red alert. Now, they didn't do it often, but if it was a red alert, you had to believe that maybe there really was a war.

SK: First they started developing the nuclear bombs and then transitioned to the thermonuclear. Did you ever guard the thermonuclear ones?

JAS: The hydrogen bombs.

SK: Hydrogen?

JAS: Yeah.

SK: Was there any difference in your type of guarding with the different bombs?

JAS: No. Technically there was a—I assume you're going to be talking to some of the technical people. You'll find that handling them, physically, was a much more demanding job because it was so big. It was even bigger than the Mark 4 originally. It was big. If you see these lumber carriers, they had to carry them around with one of those things they were so big.

SK: At the time, were you allowed to tell anybody what you did?

JAS: Oh no.

SK: Not family back home? Civilians?

JAS: No, no one knew.

SK: Did you talk about it with your fellow guards?

JAS: You mean what we were doing?

SK: Yeah.

JAS: It was the last thing in the world you wanted to do as an 18-, 19-year old was talk about your job, no matter what.

SK: So you didn't trade stories about what you did that day? It just wasn't important?

JAS: Well, if your talking about the chicanery and the camaraderie, sure. And I suppose as far as personalities go, you might talk about someone, but not necessarily about what you were doing. That was the last thing you wanted to talk about. You talked about girls.

SK: How did you explain to outsiders what your job was?

JAS: We would just say that it was a secure area and we weren't permitted to discuss it.

SK: Did anybody on Fort Hood ask you the same thing?

JAS: I don't think, in my tenure, I don't ever remember anyone really trying to, if you will, cross-examine me about what I did or why I did it. It is true that when they knew that you were up at Killeen Base, they'd say, Oh, that's that secret base up there, and that would end it. They understood.

SK: What were your impressions about the Fort Hood facility? Do you think the Killeen Base worked well with having that army facility there?

JAS: I'm not aware of the fact that they had any kind of an interface at all. I don't even recall. You know, there was what they called an [M65] atomic cannon, [Atomic Anne] which apparently was a pretty big failure, which probably would have been assigned to—well, see Fort Hood was an armored division, so there was really no interface there at all. It would be like you working in the school department and somebody else working in a store. You don't talk about your jobs back and forth, nobody is interested in what you're doing.

SK: You said you had three days off, where did you spend most of your time?

JAS: Most of the time at Killeen we'd go to Belton. You could get beer there.

SK: Did you have any interactions with any of the soldiers from Manzano [Base] or Clarksville Base in Kentucky?

JAS: No.

SK: Since you were one of the first people to work at the base, there weren't other people coming in? You guys were just all moved together?

JAS: That, I don't know because some of these other folks that you're going to interview, they started out their military life with the 1094th. That's all they ever did, and in my particular case, I shifted a couple of times. I went to the air police school, I went to basic training, I went to air police school, then I went to the 1095th, then I went to the 1094th. Some of them went in the service and they went directly to the base and had even their basic training there, and they lived in tents because the buildings weren't even built at the time. So, you're going to have a variety of people who had different kinds of experiences. It's a little bit different, this reunion's a little bit different than it is in other areas where somebody was in a certain battalion and they were all there in a certain period of time, you know, it was in 1949 or it was in 1953, and they were in a battalion. In this particular case, it's the base and it's

whenever you were there. So there's people that came and went from that base that come to this reunion that weren't even there when I was.

SK: Where were you stationed after Killeen Base?

JAS: Manzano Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

SK: And that was with the 1095th?

JAS: No, that was with the 1094th, and the 1094th had moved from—as I say, I was in the 1095th, I went to the 1094th. It's confusing. The 1095th left. They went to Shreveport, Louisiana, [and I was transferred to] the 1094th. Then the whole 1094th base, everybody in the 1094th base in Killeen [Base] went to this Manzano Base and the army took over the Killeen Base.

SK: Do you know what year that was in?

JAS: No, I would be guessing. I really don't know.

SK: How long were you in Albuquerque?

JAS: The rest of the time.

SK: What did you do after you left the military? What's the correct term? Discharged?

JAS: Yeah, when I was discharged, I had worked for a bank prior to going into the service, and it was a bank that I had worked part-time when I was in school, so I went back there with the idea that I'd get my job [back]. At that time there was a law that if you went in the service that they are obliged to re-hire—still is—to re-hire you when you are discharged. So I went back. They had treated me very, very well while I was in the service. They sent me packages. Ours would say, With best wishes from your friends and associates at the Newton Waltham Bank. So I went back there with good feelings, and I never did find anything that I wanted to do otherwise, so—

SK: So how long was that period, from enlistment to discharge, for you in the military?

JAS: Four years.

SK: Did you ever have thoughts about continuing, going on, making it a career?

JAS: Probably if I had had a different assignment, I might have. I didn't particularly care for being in the guards for the rest of my life or for 20 years. Probably wouldn't have worked out that way because eventually that whole situation wound down, but I really felt I wasn't a military type. I was in the service because there was a war on at the time, and that's how I wound up there. Otherwise I probably would have never gone in the service. So I think it was a healthy experience, but on the other hand, I probably could have spent those four years more productively.

SK: You had mentioned looking back and seeing that you were kind of, you know, in a precarious situation at some times. At the time, did it seem like you were a part of something special?

JAS: Yes and no. You realized that it was a high-secret, high responsibility, you really knew that, and you were prepared for the worst that never happened, so after a while, you can't live with that kind of feeling so that you sort of treat it as it's a job. It's just another job, and I think that when they had the alerts, and as I said they were quite infrequent, but they did

have them, and when they had the alerts, that's when you began to realize that this could get very serious. This thing could get bad.

SK: Looking back, do you see your role as a guard in connection with the bigger picture, like the Cold War as a whole?

JAS: At the time?

SK: Yes.

JAS: No. I realized, you know as you grow older you begin to realize. In the first place, it probably was a privilege, not that we looked at it that way at the time, to be selected for something that was as important as that to this country, and it was very important at the time.

SK: And the times of the high alerts, do you think there was something that was going on at that time but just it never filtered down or the military never wanted to kind of release that information? Did you ever get that feeling?

JAS: I don't think so. As I say, a couple of times when there was a red alert, there was enough tension there that you thought that maybe this is real, this time it's not play. But most of the time, you figured, Boy, if I could get out of this, I would. I would get some place to where I can't be contacted and they don't know where I am. And every once in a while, you'd get a hint. You'd think that maybe there was going to be an alert, and if you were on a three-day break, you were gone. There was no way that you were going to voluntarily go back because it was boring. I mean, you'd have three days where you were on duty for three solid days. That's the only way I can word it. I don't mean that you didn't get a chance to sleep or eat, but you couldn't leave the base and everything was high tension.

SK: So you mentioned the ADT room where you were. Was that in the tunnel?

JAS: That was way back in the tunnels [at Manzano Base]. And it was a room inside the tunnel that was behind another very thick steel door, and very few people could go in there. But the ADT [room] itself, the operation, was maintained by a civilian. [It's a long story about secret code words, et cetera.] We were there for security, that was all.

SK: Do you consider Killeen Base everything that was underground or do you consider the things that are above ground too, or mainly just where you were like the tunnels underground?

JAS: Oh no, oh no. There was all kind of duty there [at Manzano Base]. It wasn't just in the tunnels, It was the perimeter road that I mentioned that was patrolled, there was the guard house, there was a gate house, there was communications, the guard house, there was a tunnel, there was the ADT room, and I did almost all of those things at one time or another, but the job that I had, number one, that was the most interesting and probably was one of the longer ones was driving a truck around that perimeter and the ADT room was basically—well, yeah, and then I worked in the guard house for a while.

SK: So when you were in the ADT room, did you just stand guard at attention the whole time or did you make patrols in the tunnel?

JAS: No, this room [at Manzano Base] probably was about the size of this room, and two-thirds of it was taken up by the equipment, and the rest of it was just there, and there'd be a desk and one thing or another, and you'd sit at a desk and you could do more or less what you wanted. What your responsibility was, was to see to it that no one who was unauthorized could get in. So, for instance, when the change of shift for the civilian would come, there was a metal bar

that would hang on the outside of the door and there was a bullet-proof glass window about this big, and they'd slam that bar against that door to get your attention and then they'd hold their badge up to the window, and you'd let them in.

SK: Did anybody try to access it without clearance?

JAS: No, because, in the first place, they had to go through so much security to get there [at Manzano Base]. You had to get on the base, then you had to get through the Q [Area] gate that I mentioned to you, and at that case you had to give up your badge and get a new badge. If you didn't have a badge in the guardhouse, you weren't going to go. So then you got to the tunnel. There was a guard at the door of the tunnel and he did the same thing. If you wanted to come in, he had to hold his badge up to show that he was authorized in the Q Area, so then you let him in. Then he's got to get to the ADT room and he's got to go through that whole process again, so someone fraudulently trying to get into that ADT room was about as unlikely as anything I can think.

SK: Did anybody unauthorized ever try to access at any level while you were there?

JAS: No, not that I'm aware of [at Manzano Base]. No.

SK: Do you think that all that protection was needed?

JAS: Oh, yes. When you read about some of the problems they had with spies during that time, and there were also pillboxes that they built [at Manzano Base]. They didn't have those in the beginning but they did build them later on.

SK: What kind of information, at the time, did you know about the Cold War? Were they feeding you any information?

JAS: About as much as a civilian, yeah. What you knew was as a civilian, what you read in the papers, what you heard on the radio. I mean there were things we would hear and we'd say, That's not so, but other than that, it was a small world.

SK: Did you have any particularly strong feelings about the Korean World or the Cold War in particular?

JAS: Yeah, as a private citizen, probably the same feelings that a lot of people had, that it was necessary, that this was a country that was turning communist. We felt that communism was going to try to take over the world, like now we're concerned about Islam. And as it ground on and on and on, began to say, This is useless. And as a private observation, there's nothing to do with my service area, we've been back to Vietnam twice now and that was—and we'd been to Korea as well—and look at the problems you got with Korea today and Vietnam for that matter, and so it's too bad.

SK: The distance between when you were there and now, you're feeling kind of changed about your involvement?

JAS: No, because I think it would two different times. I mean, it's like the Civil War. Did somebody say, Well, maybe we shouldn't have had the Civil War after all? I mean, you can't. Maybe it's for historians, but it's not for the average person, as far as I'm concerned.

SK: What did you think about civilians handling the bombs [at Manzano Base]? Did you think that there was more risk with them handling them because they were going back out into the world and then coming back?

JAS: Never really thought much about it except for the fact that they were civilians and they were making a lot more money than we were [at Manzano Base].

SK: At the time, did you consider yourself a part of the Cold War even though you weren't in Korea, or did you still consider yourself a part of the war?

JAS: No, I think that I was. I may have thought about being part of the threat of—see, the problem wasn't Korea, as far as we were concerned. The problem was Russia. Now this was the Cold War against Russia, not Korea, so even though, and a matter of fact, even though today they refer to it as the Korean War, it really wasn't classified as that. It was classified as a police action. So, that was just some little affair that was going on in Korea. Our problem was staring down Russia. I got more bombs than you've got. Bad. I don't think I ever really realized until I was much, much older how serious that problem was because in my opinion, and I'm not speaking as a—I was a guard, what do I know? But we had enough munitions there to wipe out half of the world in one base and there were lots of them, lots of them.

SK: Was there ever a scare from just handling the bombs

JAS: Not on my base, not at my time. There were problems. As a matter of fact, they dropped two bombs off the coast of Spain and there's a whole story about that at the atomic bomb museum, and that was a real problem. Those things [were] at the bottom of the ocean.

SK: In some of the reports that I read, it said the U.S. had this many bombs, Russian had this many bombs. Were you ever told how many weapons they had?

JAS: No.

SK: No? Do you think that would have affected your view of them or your anxiety of guarding at all?

JAS: No. When you're young, you live forever. No matter what.

SK: In general, how do you reflect on your time at Killeen Base? Do you have any strong feelings?

JAS: Killeen Base. No, Killeen Base was not a place for an 18-year-old. I mean, it was no fun. There was nothing to do. It was boring. And you can just imagine how—being a New Englander, I was down in this god-forsaken spot in Texas. For instance, when you would walk off the base—let me stop and think about it—when we were in the tents, okay, and it would rain, and you walked in the mud because that's all it was, the mud would grow on the bottom of your feet about that thick. I mean it was hell. Once I was transferred to the 1094th, they lived in a decent barracks and it was landscaped, and it was much more pleasant, but it was still Texas, and we were a million miles from anywhere.

SK: Had that been the first time that you'd been to Texas?

JAS: Yes, yes.

SK: Did you ever go anywhere besides Belton?

JAS: Yeah, occasionally we'd go up to Waco, and did we go down to Mexico. Yeah, we would go down to Mexico sometimes, pretty sure. I know we went down to Mexico when we were in Albuquerque. I'm pretty sure that we went down to Mexico when we were in Killeen [Base] just to do something.

SK: What do you think should be done with the buildings and tunnels at Killeen Base?

JAS: It's so hard for me to really make a decision. You realize we're talking about 50 years, and more than 50 years. If I was 18 it was 60 years ago, and I don't know what it's like now. They told me they tore down the fences.

SK: [Showing photographs of Killeen Base.]

JAS: Now this is the plant. This is the tunnel.

SK: Have you ever been back since?

JAS: No, no.

SK: Ever wanted to go back?

JAS: I would have liked to have seen Manzano [Base] when they had a reunion there and they went up on the base, but I wasn't there at the time. I have no idea what this is. I wonder if that's—oh yeah, is this one of the blast doors?

SK: Yes.

JAS: Yeah, yeah, yeah, now I see the second picture, I see that.

SK: You know it's been abated for lead and radiation and things like that, so there's no radiation exposure any more. The other tunnel—I don't know if we have pictures of it—but it's kind of not been restored, but it's been painted and it's cleaner because they use it for—

JAS: Storage or something?

SK: They use it for training and things.

JAS: Oh really?

SK: Right.

JAS: Who uses it? Fort Hood?

SK: Fort Hood does.

JAS: Are they still an armored division there, do you know?

SK: No, I don't know.

JAS: Because that's all it was, was an armored division.

SK: They do a lot of training, a lot of, I don't know if drills is the right word.

JAS: This one doesn't mean anything to me.

SK: Do you think it holds any information for future generations?

JAS: You'd be better off to answer that question yourself really. You can't—is this part of a diesel? Do you know if this—this is interesting. They used to have big, huge, massive diesel engines

in both plants that would supply electricity emergency, as a matter of fact, the electricity for the tunnels.

SK: The equipment is still there.

JAS: It is?

SK: They don't know exactly what to do with it because it's past the point of it ever functioning again, but they're not really sure how to get it out.

JAS: Yeah, I wouldn't be surprised by what those were put in there before the tunnels were lined with concrete and stuff.

SK: Was everything already built when you got there?

JAS: Oh yeah, they were all done there. Brings back memories [looking at photographs]. You know, I went to a submarine repair base in the Ukraine where the Russians had their submarine repair very similar to this. I told my wife, "Look, blast doors"! Now it really comes home. This is really serious because I said, "This is just like Manzano [Base] and Killeen [Base] with these big tunnels, only they were bigger because they used to bring the submarines in and it was crescent-shaped and the submarines would come in and they'd be serviced and then they could just keep going and they'd go out the other side. All be on these big hoists, just like this [looking at photographs]. That really drove the whole point home.

SK: Where was that, the Ukraine?

JAS: The Ukraine.

SK: When you were at Killeen Base, did you ever think that you'd be going somewhere like the Ukraine?

JAS: Oh god, no, no. No, I never believed I'd do the things that I've been blessed to. We went on a world cruise four times and we saw a lot of this world. And the other thing was to go to Ho Chi Min City now and see that subtle attitude that they have. There's all kinds of captured American planes and tanks and equipment. They got a whole museum and they call about before the unification, and they really rub your nose in it. Ha! Well, thank you for sharing those with me.

SK: Does it look similar?

JAS: Oh yeah, that's it. It's a little dirtier.

SK: Was it wet when you were there?

JAS: No.

SK: Okay, it was really wet there. I mean, the water seeping in and you have that mustiness.

JAS: No, it was—if there was any odor at all, it was the odor of cement, you know, of cement walls.

SK: Did they ever come and clean? Was that routine?

JAS: Good lord, I don't know. That's a good question and I don't know. I really don't. That's inside the end of the tunnel isn't it?

SK: Yeah.

JAS: That's the big, wide room where it opens up and that's where we would stay sometimes. They had cots in there. Well, I don't want to take a lot of your time.

SK: You're fine. Fort Hood actually has people like me on staff that, when they go to do something for the base that might affect something considered historic age, which is 50 years or older, they consult with them just to make sure that the integrity is still there of some of the things that can be considered historic, and these tunnels are definitely considered historic. So that's why we're coming in and doing this because the army feels that this is an important story that they want on record.

JAS: Well, I agree. You know, this symbol here [pointing to photograph]. You notice these fellows in hats and—we had, that was our patch, but we weren't allowed to wear it, and it's only in recent years that they told us its history.

SK: And the guards drew these [pointing to photographs]—?

JAS: I don't know who did them. As a matter of fact, to be honest with you, I don't think I ever saw it. Here are some of the diesels. Yeah, they are big.

SK: Were there areas where you weren't allowed to go into? You had access to almost anything?

JAS: Yeah, I couldn't go through the ABC tunnel.

SK: ABC tunnel, right.

JAS: That was big stuff. I have no idea what was there, to tell you the truth. Some guys have gone there because they say they—I never pulled duty there, but some of the guards did.

SK: What would you want the military or civilians to know about your role at Killeen Base?

JAS: I don't know. I really don't. I think that it's a time of history that's so old now that people aren't interested any more. There's other problems now and I think that it was like saying that you served in George Washington's battalion. I think it's gone, it's history. Even World War II. That was a lot more serious. I mean, we lost a lot of people there. It really kind of lost its edge. People don't think about it and don't really care any more than I was, until I got a lot older, about World War I. I mean, they were just something that happened back before my time. I don't know anything about it. I have developed an entirely different attitude about it, but because it's my age. I love reading stories about World War I and the Civil War, the American Revolution, and World War II, the sacrifice that some of these guys made. I think the thing that hurts the most—okay, as far as my service goes, I've been to the National [Memorial] Cemetery of the Pacific. I've been to the Punch Bowl of Hawaii. The [Manila American] Cemetery is in Manila, the Punch Bowl is in Hawaii and then Normandy is in France, and I've been to all three of those cemeteries, and you see the thousands and thousands and thousands of crosses of 17-year-old kids that never saw another day, and I think that that affects me. And I said to my wife, I said, "I want to be cremated." and—we're off the subject here.

SK: No, it's fine.

JAS: I said, "I want to be cremated," and in Sarasota, Florida, just this past summer. Yeah this past summer, it was in June or July. They had been looking for another site to build a veteran's cemetery, and there's so many—55,000 a day are dying—and Sarasota was finally chosen.

The land was donated for it. It's 4 miles from my home, and I said, "You know, I've got to think about this because I'm not so sure that I don't want one of those thousands of crosses." It won't mean anything, and you go, you look at those crosses and realize that so many of them, I mean, if I die, I was never shot at, but still, like somebody says, when you take that oath, you take that oath to go and do whatever you're told to do. If you're chosen to take a rifle and go out there and fight, that's what you're going to do. So that's what I think now about my time in the service, that I was part of making this country what it was.

SK: I just got back from Washington D.C. and we went to the Vietnam War Memorial, the Korea and the World War II memorials.

JAS: Moving.

SK: It's very moving. We went at nighttime after it's lit up and especially that Vietnam memorial, you just, see all the names that keep going and going and going.

JAS: They were so critical of doing that and I've been there myself in Arlington. As a matter of fact, I have a friend that's buried there, and it was, it's a perfect memorial, and there was so much criticism about it. It is a very moving thing, and then you see all that stuff stuck in the—

SK: Little crack and crevices. We were actually there for Ted Kennedy's passing.

JAS: Oh, yes.

SK: It coincided with that. We were in the Senate [chamber] and we were up in the gallery, and we were looking over and my husband was like, "Why is that desk draped in black?" And it was his Senate desk.

JAS: Oh.

SK: It was in black crepe.

JAS: Is that right?

SK: And they had a prayer card on there and all of the flags were at half-mast, and you know, in Washington, D.C., there's a lot of flags, so just being surrounded by that, it made me feel proud.

JAS: As I say, everybody should see this and realize how important it is, and I'm hoping that other younger people realize that and that they're here because of all those people that died.

SK: Absolutely. Do you have any additional comments or thoughts that you want to share?

JAS: No, I think I've bored you to death.

SK: No, no, not at all. My experience coming into this, I am not a military historian, so I guess the more light that you can shed on this whole process is just a learning experience for me.

JAS: Yeah, and well, I think we're kind of proud that were part of a high-secret organization that played a, if you will, a behind-the-scenes role in securing this country, and we were ready if we had to, and as I say, it's interesting. I'm glad I've come back to some of these reunions and seen this, and now I'm 78 years old and we're losing guys right and left now. There's four guys that used to come to this reunion every year that are gone since the last reunion.

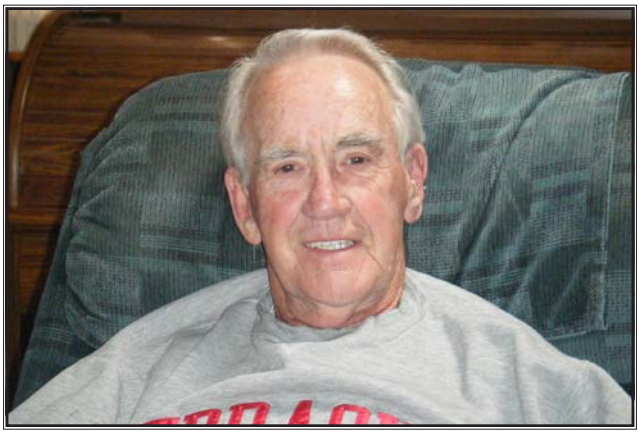
SK: Well, hopefully now that we have your stories, we can definitely make it available to other researchers. Baylor University is on the forefront of the oral history movement and archiving oral history interviews, and people all over the country go there to research their archives, so I think the service that you're doing for us is definitely going to help the future generations understand.

JAS: Well, I'm glad to hear that. Thank you.

SK: No problem.

Herman (Jack) Wallace Jr.

1094th Special Report Squadron
Killeen Base, 1949–1952
Interviewed by Stephanie Katauskas



SK: This is Stephanie Katauskas with Prewitt and Associates. Today is [Wednesday,] March 11, 2010. I'm interviewing, for the first time, Herman Wallace, also known as Jack Wallace. This interview is taking place at his residence in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

How old were you when you became a member of the service?

HW: Seventeen years old.

SK: Where were you from?

HW: Nashville, Tennessee.

SK: Is that where you were born?

HW: Yes.

SK: Were you enlisted or commissioned?

HW: I was enlisted.

SK: What ranks did you achieve?

HW: Master sergeant, an E-7 [pay grade], air force.

SK: Was there any certain reason why you picked the air force to enlist?

HW: Yeah, I wanted to fly.

SK: You weren't afraid of maybe being drafted or anything like that?

HW: No, not at all.

SK: So that was always your plan, was to fly?

HW: Yes, but I didn't qualify. I qualified for enlisting.

SK: Did you serve anywhere else before coming to Killeen Base?

HW: Yes, I served at March Air Force Base in Riverside, California, for a little over 11 months, and then I was transferred back to where I had taken basic training, right across from Lackland [Air Force Base] at Brooks Air Force Base, and I get there after one year at March Field.

SK: March Field was in California?

HW: Yes, Riverside, California.

SK: What were you doing there?

HW: I was an administrative clerk, a typist.

SK: Do you know why they transferred you back?

HW: The headquarters of the air force moved to Brooks Air Force Base.

SK: How did you get from Brooks to Killeen Base?

HW: I flew in a C-47. Oh, to Killeen Base? Oh no, I went by bus from San Antonio, Brooks [Air Force Base], about one year. No it was a little less than a year, and I was transferred to Killeen Base in 1949.

SK: How did you get your orders from Brooks Air Force [Base] to Manzano [Base]?

HW: The air force wrote up the orders right there. After an interview, I was selected for a special assignment but I didn't know what it was or where I was going. I was told where to go, and it was at Killeen Base.

SK: So you knew it was a special assignment. Did you have to take a test or anything?

HW: Well, I was more or less interrogated. I was asked a lot of questions, and they told me they would let me know. Shortly after, they ran clearance on me and found out I was acceptable. The FBI ran an investigation with paperwork and all. I was selected and wound up at Killeen [Base].

SK: Do you think your previous experience in administration in California helped you get cleared to work at Killeen Base?

HW: No, I didn't have that much experience. What got me selected was my background investigation. They needed a typist, and that's what I started out doing in Killeen [Base].

SK: What kind of questions did they ask you?

HW: The history about my family mostly, and where I went to school. Nothing classified or anything like that that I can recall. Just ordinary daily questions, you know, where you from, where—

SK: Did they ask you where your parents were from, if they were born in the U.S.?

HW: I'm sure they did. I don't remember that, but I'm sure they did.

SK: Do you know of any people who did not pass that initial interview?

HW: Oh no, no idea.

SK: Your background check, did they interview your family, previous employers? Did you hear any stories about the FBI going to your hometown?

HW: No, I sure don't. But I've heard of other cases and have been involved with people that did get the assignment, and they asked me about associations.

SK: So, had you ever been to Texas before you had done your boot camp?

HW: I don't think I had ever been out of the State of Tennessee, so the answer is no.

SK: You did your basic training at Brooks Air Force [Base]?

HW: No, at Lackland [Air Force Base].

SK: Then you went to California?

HW: Yes.

SK: When you came back, did you have to do any extra training when you went to Killeen Base, any infantry training?

HW: No, I had already had weapons training at Lackland [Air Force Base], and I was familiar with the type of weapons that we had, which was a rifle and a .45 automatic. No I didn't get into any other weapons.

SK: When you got to Killeen Base, what year was that?

HW: [In] 1949.

SK: So it had already been established for a year?

HW: People had started going there, yeah, about a year earlier. In fact, the security forces that also came from Lackland [Air Force Base], most of them were already there, but not all of them. Probably about half of them, maybe 100 were already there and performing security.

SK: When you first got there, what were your first impressions of Killeen Base?

HW: Well, I know that they had some big weapons. Although there was very little explaining or anything. I knew what was going on, just from observing and listening. I eventually got to go through the plants. My impression was it was an isolated place, and we didn't have any clubs. We had one day room and one pool table, and that was it. No outside buildings or anything, at that time.

SK: When you were back in San Antonio for that second time, did they show you any training videos, or did they allude to anything about what you would be doing at Killeen Base?

HW: Not at all, no. They didn't know either, I'm sure.

SK: They just knew you were selected for a special assignment?

HW: Yes they did.

SK: So when you got to Killeen Base, did anyone tell you that you could not talk about what you saw, or that it was classified?

HW: We had many lectures. Constantly we were being briefed the whole time I was there. Eventually I got to be a briefer.

SK: So what would those briefs consist of?

HW: Well, we were trained not to ask questions about what other people did. Do not give out any information. They told us that the person you're talking to, your friend, may be an agent and would hold it against you and report it. Also, they informed us that if we were interviewed or tried to get information as to what we did from our fellow workers, we had to report it.

SK: Did you ever have anybody who reported their co-workers?

HW: Yes, I worked with the OSI in the administrative job. An additional job that I had was to go into Killeen [Base] and get the mail every day and bring it back. We had boxes that we put it in and distributed it. There were people that would get certain types of mail from certain agencies that I was told and briefed on it, and briefed the OSI. I even gave them some of the correspondence, and then they would give it back to me normally that day.

SK: So they were monitoring people's mail?

HW: Oh yes, yes, they were monitoring it.

SK: You said OSI, what does that stand for?

HW: Office of Special Investigations.

SK: Was that at Killeen Base?

HW: That was at Killeen Base, yes.

SK: Was it housed in the headquarters building?

HW: Everything was in the headquarters building as far as the paperwork is concerned. Only the weapons were inside the hill.

SK: So was there a time limit as to how long you could be stationed, in general, at one facility?

HW: We were on a stabilized tour of four years, unless something interrupted it. You could not request a transfer for four years.

SK: So you couldn't stay at one facility for more than four years?

HW: No, you could stay for many years if you wanted to. We had some people that stayed up to 14 years.

SK: What kind of security clearance did you need to work at Killeen Base?

HW: Top-secret, and if you went into the hills, you had to have what they called a Q clearance, and I had both of those.

SK: So someone working in the administration building or the headquarters building, they would have top-secret clearance normally, but they couldn't access the plants? But you were able to have Q clearance.

HW: That is correct. It was sort of a need-to-know deal, and I don't know how I was selected, but I was selected to have access to the plants. And I did go into them and was briefed. They even held classes in there on various things.

SK: What kind of classes?

HW: Oh, believe it or not, at the time a lot of times we talked about the Korean War and would get political. They would feel you out to see what your thoughts were on certain things, and what you knew. We, it was sort of a group-type deal. We contributed information, what we knew and what we thought was going on, training classes like that. I was not trained in weapons, no.

SK: So where would you hold these classes in the plants?

HW: It was just a room. There are rooms all in there, a vacant room, tables.

SK: Was there a reason why the classes would be in the plants instead of the headquarters building?

HW: I have no idea why that took place. They were scheduled, and we held them there.

SK: What was your initial impression of the four fences?

HW: The four fences? That we had something very secure in there. It had to be secured. There was a total of seven fences.

SK: Can you explain the seven fences?

HW: Yes, there were four on the outer perimeter that encompassed the base administrative building. We housed, in that one three-story building with a basement, from the barbershop to the recreation room to the dining facility to the living quarters. It was all encompassed in that three-story building. We didn't have to go outside for anything.

SK: So did the fences give you an impression of a jail or a prison?

HW: It gave me the impression they wanted to keep people out. One of the fences had several thousand volts on it. With lights, it came on. They were grounded. Then there were three fences behind the administrative building, and one of those, the center one, had high voltage on it. But none of the guards or anything went in that area. That was only for the maintenance people. It was to keep people out that might decide to do something, in other words to get into the Q Area. That was to keep administrative people that had top-secret clearance from getting into the Q Area.

SK: So somebody with base clearance could get through that main gate to get onto Killeen Base. But was there another gate to get into the plant area?

HW: Yes, there was. This is where the three additional fences were located. We had to go through

two guards, and the two little buildings that they were in were probably 30 or 40 yards from each other.

SK: Did you have to exchange your pass for another pass?

HW: Yes, you had to have a pass to get past the first gate to an administrative area, and if you had a Q clearance you would have a photo ID authorization card, and you exchanged this for the badge that they give you from the Q clearance gate.

SK: So it was Killeen Base, Fort Hood, Gray Air Force Base, they were all separate, right?

HW: Yes, they were separate.

SK: But they were all in the same area?

HW: Gray Air Force Base was right outside of our gate, and Fort Hood was about 8 miles to the entrance that we used to go in.

SK: But the army patrolled around those [entrance and fences]?

HW: Yes they did. They had Sherman tanks and M20 with .50-caliber machine guns on them. They patrolled it also. That was called field-force able, [army units from armored division at Fort Hood]. They were separate from us. We never communicated with them other than to show them our badge. They were trained and came out of Fort Hood.

SK: Were they ever told why they were guarding that area?

HW: I have no idea.

SK: Did you have anyone ever ask you what was going on up at Killeen Base?

HW: Yes. In the City of Killeen I would be asked what we do out there.

SK: But nobody from the army would ask?

HW: I don't recall anybody in the army.

SK: So Gray Air Force Base wasn't a traditional air force base, right?

HW: Yes, it was traditional in as far as having a control tower, which it was a small and portable one. They lived in Quonset huts, and we had a runway. So I would call that traditional. It wasn't modern, but it was traditional, yeah. All the places had the same thing, similar things.

SK: What was the purpose of Gray Air Force Base? What did they do there?

HW: It was for aircraft. They had approximately an 8,000-foot runway, equipped to handle the B-29 bomber, which was later called the B-50 bomber if it could hold nuclear weapons because it was modified. They came from all over the world. They left weapons and they brought weapons.

SK: So basically Gray Air Force Base was there to transport the weapons that Killeen Base was maintaining?

HW: Gray Air Force Base didn't come around and bother us at all. We were entirely separate. We would operate on that airfield, and load and unload aircraft. Gray [Air Force Base] stayed away from us, all the people from Gray Air Force Base. Their mission was entirely different.

SK: What was their mission then, again?

HW: To operate the airfield. They had everything that they needed also. They were entirely separate from us, and what type of clearance, I suppose they probably had a top-secret clearance too. At least a secret clearance. But no, we didn't communicate with them on anything that we were doing inside of those fences.

SK: So in your estimation, how many people were at Gray Air Force Base?

HW: Probably around 100.

SK: So not too big.

HW: No, it was very small.

SK: So there was never any cooperation between Gray [Air Force Base] and Killeen Base?

HW: Cooperation, oh yeah we would cooperate if we needed to. We talked. We all went to the same club, and we knew each other. But as far as discussing what we did, no.

SK: So you worked together but your missions were different?

HW: Entirely different.

SK: What was the mission at Killeen Base?

HW: To maintain and store nuclear weapons, atomic weapons.

SK: So they weren't created there?

HW: No they were not.

SK: Were they brought in from somewhere else?

HW: Mostly from Albuquerque, New Mexico. But we could move them to other places in certain situations. We didn't actually know where all they were going, but we knew that they were probably going all over the world.

SK: So they would be made somewhere else, brought to Killeen [Base], stored there, and then if you got the orders to move it somewhere else, that's what Killeen Base would do?

HW: That's what they would do. Our primary source, it came out of Los Alamos, New Mexico, Sandia Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Our weapons were made in the big city of Amarillo, Texas. And still today they're maintaining and building probably the largest in the United States, and maybe in the world, building of atomic weapons.

SK: You said that was Pantex?

HW: Pantex.

SK: And is that a civilian outfit?

HW: I have no idea who's over there. I've never been there. I'm sure it is.

SK: So they would make the nuclear weapons at Pantex, and ship them to Sandia Base in Albuquerque?

HW: Yes.

SK: So would you explain the main activities at Killeen Base? Was it the same as the mission, store and maintain nuclear weapons?

HW: Exactly, maintaining them, servicing them, rebuilding, modifying really, updating, and transporting them to the B-29s, and the B-50s at Gray Air Force Base. They would come in by rail car most of the time.

SK: Why do you think that they moved them around so much? Don't you think that could have been dangerous, to move them that much?

HW: Life is dangerous, driving a car, yes. I didn't put a lot of thought into it. I had confidence in the people, the maintenance people, the handling people, the pilots. When you've got complete confidence in somebody like that, you don't really worry.

SK: Do you think that there was a special reason why they moved around so much?

HW: Even today, they're changing and modifying them daily. Sandia National Labs right here in Albuquerque, they've got thousands of people there that are scientists, engineers, Los Alamos engineers and scientists. They're constantly improving them, updating them, and outdating them.

SK: So, when the army took over, they made some modifications when the air force left. So some of the buildings that are there now were not there at Killeen Base. I'm going to just read you a few of the above-ground buildings, and you can just let me know if they were there when you were there. The storage igloos?

HW: Yes, they were underground built into the hills.

SK: That's where they stored the nuclear weapons?

HW: Yes.

SK: Ammunition storage?

HW: Small arms, but not a mass amount. They were just for the security guards.

SK: Warehouses?

HW: There was one large supply warehouse, yes, there was one. That's all at one time. Before we left there, they build another warehouse. So there were actually two in the administrative area.

SK: Battery charging buildings?

HW: Yes, the base motor pool had that facility. It was a separate building right behind the administrative building.

SK: Assembly training facilities?

HW: Not assembling of weapons. That was all inside of the additional three fences, in the hills.

SK: Pillboxes?

HW: Pillboxes were in the hills, built into the hill, a concrete, oval shape.

SK: Guard towers?

HW: I never saw a guard tower on either one of the bases.

SK: Now, guard tower as a structure that a guard would sit and overlook in, not a guard tower as in a jail. Isn't that the air force word for jail, guard tower?

HW: I never saw a guard tower, and I was all over the place.

SK: Surveillance structures?

HW: Your moving patrols were your observation, and the few pillboxes that they had, they didn't have many, it was very few, but yeah, the people inside of that could look out and observe a specific area. [Pillboxes were manned concrete security structures].

SK: Administration buildings?

HW: Yes, they had one administration building, which was also all the facilities, from the barbershop to the dining hall, to the day room, living quarters. It was all in one building.

SK: Were any other organizations, besides the 1094th, part of Killeen Base?

HW: The First Provost Security Squadron, which encompassed all of the security guards.

[Audio difficulty.]

HW: The 510th Aviation Depot Squadron, and the 551st Aviation Depot Squadron, they were all trained at Manzano Base in separate groups and came there as technicians to work on the weapons.

SK: So they came out of Manzano [Base], and they were separate?

HW: They came out of Sandia Base.

SK: How long were they there?

HW: Well, they were still there when I was there, and I was only there one year. But they were not designated. They came in groups, and we knew that they were trained with these two organizations. But they encompassed the 1094th Special Reporting Squadron. They just blended right in and worked with our people. We knew because they told us their organizations, but as far as being officially designated, assigned there as a unit, no, it wasn't.

SK: What was their job?

HW: Maintenance of weapons, and delivery.

SK: So they worked with the 1094th?

HW: Exactly.

SK: And they were there when you left, so they were there until the army took over?

HW: It was never a designated unit, it just blended right in with the 1094th. They moved out just like we did. They became part of the 1094th.

SK: Oh okay, so their mission wasn't different than yours?

HW: No, it was exactly the same.

SK: Were there any drawbacks to having the air force base so close to Fort Hood?

HW: Yes. The supplies and support, although Fort Hood did give it to us, logistics, I call it. They didn't work out as well, being an air force organization, our forms are all different and our thinking was different. So we switched bases with the army. The army was associated primarily with Sandia Base and Kirtland Air Force Base, and it was better for them to be down at Killeen [Base] and us to be at Manzano [Base]. So, we switched.

SK: That was in 1952?

HW: Well, it started out in about 1950 and went through '51. It wasn't a rapid change. Some of them would come down there to Killeen [Base], and then some of us would move up to Manzano [Base]. It took quite a while for it to happen. It was probably 10 to 12 months before it was completely resolved.

SK: So, do you think that there were drawbacks to having the railhead at Fort Hood, about having to move weapons so far to transport them at the railhead?

HW: Not at all, because it was right on [U.S. Highway] 190, the railhead was at Fort Hood. It was just across the road. It was probably 4 to 5 miles. There was no problem. Yeah, it would naturally be nicer if it ran right into the base, but it wasn't convenient.

SK: So they moved them both on trains and on planes?

HW: That is correct, they used both methods of transporting.

SK: Do you know why they didn't use one method exclusively?

HW: No, I sure don't.

SK: And when they were transferred on the trains, were they in crates or covered with tarps, the bombs?

HW: Yes, they were. You didn't know what was on the train.

SK: But they weren't just put in boxcars? Separately, were they boxed?

HW: They were put on flat cars.

SK: Who did the 1094th answer to?

HW: The Armed Forces Special Weapons Project. Main headquarters was at Sandia Base with a two-star general. They came and inspected us, and we sent people to Sandia Base for training and updating. We worked very closely with them.

SK: Did the Atomic Energy Commission ever have any influence?

HW: Yes, the Atomic Energy Commission, as far as I know, was interested in the numbers and what was being done administratively. As far as working on the weapons and all, no, I didn't see them do that. They oversaw, and kept good records. We backed over it with them quite extensively, and there were no problems at all. We would correct each other's work orders, where one had gotten changed due to something and the other one didn't. We worked very close together, and there was no problem at all. It worked very smoothly.

SK: So work orders for Killeen Base came out of Sandia Base?

HW: Yes they did.

SK: And Sandia Base was an air force base in Albuquerque?

HW: Sandia Base was all services. We'd switch commanders every four years, army, marines, and air force. Not the navy because the marines is a subsection of the navy. So yes, we have a navy commander and never a marine commander, because that's the subsection of the navy.

SK: Can you explain a little bit on the organization of the 1094 that Killeen Base?

HW: Well, we had the First Provost Security Squadron, and they eventually became part of the 1094th, and they dropped the name First Provost Security Squadron, and we were all one unit.

SK: It was one unit made up of different flights?

HW: Different flights? The flights were only used for the guards.

SK: And so who was in charge at Killeen Base?

HW: Well, we had several in my year there. I think we had three different ones. One was Jack Armstrong. He was the guy that they had named Jack the All-American Boy while he was in college. He was commander. We had a colonel, Mr. Smith. I think we had one more, Colonel Hoag, and do not pronounce it like it sounds! We were advised on that in our counseling, too. I recall three in one year.

SK: Did you ever hear of a Major Barr?

HW: Barr? Yes I did.

SK: Were you ever involved with him at all, getting orders from him?

HW: I think Major Barr was primarily in supplies. I'm not positive on it. But yeah, I knew a Major Barr.

SK: His name has come up in several of the other interviews that I've done, so I just was wondering if you recognized that name.

HW: I've got a good long-term memory. Yeah, I knew Major Barr.

SK: So, in the organization of the 1094th, there were the colonels, and that's who received the orders from Sandia Base?

HW: The overall knowledge, your administration and all, don't really go to the colonel. Does he know all about what's happening in everything, yes he does. We had one point colonel, but the day-to-day activity, or the colonel in charge, no he doesn't know that. If he's interested in something, he'll call all the officers in. They had staff meetings all the time, with the key operation officers, both in the hills and the ones that were operating Killeen Base. So his staff meetings, he knew what was going on.

SK: Who did you get your orders from?

HW: I worked for Chief Warrant Officer Harmon W. Barbee. In fact, he's been right here in my house. He came to visit me a few years ago.

SK: How many men where in the 1094th at Killeen Base when you were there?

HW: I would say, approximately a little less than 1,000.

SK: Were they all housed in that administration building?

HW: No, not at all. We had people that lived downtown. We had people that couldn't get quarters and they had tents over by what is Kay Bee housing that we later got built and furniture all moved in there. We had people living with their families in tents that they brought out there on the access road to Killeen Base.

SK: Did you ever have to live in a tent?

HW: No, I did not.

SK: So what kind of positions did members of the 1094th hold? We had mentioned guards, administration, what other positions were there?

HW: Well, you had the officers and enlisted work together. They looked at the tech manuals, and they got their orders daily as to what was to be done. They worked together and oversaw each other. The officers naturally oversaw that the enlisted men did the things they were supposed to do, and a lot of them even worked manually with them.

SK: But there were guards, there were supply clerks. Could members of the 1094th be just kitchen patrol or a barber? Were they considered members of the 1094th?

HW: The barber was not. The barber was always a civilian. Yeah, the other people were all 1094th.

SK: But it wasn't just guards and plant people?

HW: The guards were entirely separate, although they worked right with us and they were on the entrances to the facilities. They would check our ID.

SK: Were the guards ever in the plant?

HW: Yes they were.

SK: And who was in the plant, the plant workers, did they have a different title?

HW: No, they didn't have a different title. They had different skills, but their title was their rank. They didn't go by what they did. You had electrical, and you had mechanical. That's the two main units. One guy would strictly be working on wires, electronics, and batteries. The other one was involved in the mechanical and modifications.

SK: So the civilians, what kind of clearance did they have to work at Killeen Base?

HW: They had to have a top-secret Q clearance if they went into the Q Area, just like the military.

SK: Was there any concern that since they were civilians, that maybe they would talk about what they saw because they were going on and off the base?

HW: Not any more than a regular GI, because he went on and off the base, too.

SK: So what was your position at Killeen Base?

HW: Well, I was an administrative clerk, and I worked in documents controls. I made daily runs to the post office and mailed things to Washington, D.C., and to Killeen Base. Classified documents went right through the mail, but they were coded. If you didn't have the codebook or didn't know the code, even if you intercepted a broken package in the mail, which was quite substantially wrapped and registered and all, you wouldn't know what you had.

SK: Were there any special requirements for being in administration?

HW: Requirements that they would observe you and thought that you could do the job, and that's how you were put in the jobs. Your skill qualifications were always measured. We had ones, threes, fives, and sevens, steps of qualification. Over the years and time with training, you could jump from a three to a five and a five to a seven.

SK: So was there a difference in title when you did?

HW: Not on that part of it, no difference. You were administrative, you were supply or whatever.

SK: You mentioned the coded documents. Was there a crypto room or a code room at Killeen Base?

HW: Yes there was, right there in the administrative building.

SK: Did the members of the 1094th work in that room?

HW: Yes they did.

SK: So what title would they have? Administration?

HW: No, sergeant, corporal, whatever. That's the title. We didn't use titles. Well, we did to a certain respect, in charge of security, or chief of administration. But individually you had base commander, administrative officer, that type of title.

SK: When you worked documentation review, what did that entail?

HW: What did that entail? Frequently, and I had one other guy, we would review documents and make sure that they were classified right. This is part of the training I was talking to you about earlier. You have to be trained, and you have to know what to look for to classify a document. We initiated documents that would be associated with other documents, and that's normally how we got our clues as to what that document should be, if it gave out information to the other documents.

SK: So what kind of material were you classifying? Information that was coming out of Killeen Base?

HW: Yes, all of your administration to what is happening to modify weapons, and move them.

SK: That was going back and forth between Washington, [D.C.], Killeen Base, and Sandia Base?

HW: Yes they were.

SK: So, you had mentioned that you did some work with monitoring other people and their patriotism?

HW: I suppose everybody was to a certain degree, more than others. Did I know the OSI agent that I worked with? Yes, I knew him well. I helped him out, and he would take information from me and I'm sure everybody else he had contact with, or associated with. You're constantly looking for leaks in your security system.

SK: So that was part of your job?

HW: That was part of everybody's job.

SK: In your estimation, how many people would you turn in? Do you know how many people you were suspicious of?

HW: Very few, probably less than five the whole time I was with the program.

SK: What was the outcome of that? Did they get investigated, or did they get kicked out?

HW: That was the end of my involvement. I do know of a case where a guy sold a carton of cigarettes for I think at the time they were about a dollar a carton. I think he got a 50-cent profit on the weekend, and they analyzed that. I don't know who reported him. They figured that if he would sell a carton of cigarettes for a profit of 50 cents or a dollar or whatever he got, that he'd also give out information for $5,000 or $10,000. This was the way they evaluated, and he was gone that week. I think by Thursday or Friday he was gone. He transferred out, I guess.

SK: What other kind of things would somebody do to have to be reported?

HW: Ask you questions about your job and what you were doing. The old policy was if the person doesn't know, he doesn't need to know. So you don't tell people anything, because you had to assume that everybody worked together. And we did, we got along just fine. But we didn't want to discuss what we did or anything like that.

SK: So, if a guard, say, would come up to you and be too inquisitive on what you did, you would

write him up?

HW: No, I'd listen to him. But I don't recall it ever happening. We had one guy down at—Bousquet [?] I think his name was, that was stealing ammo and grenades from where they held them in the administrative building for their use, and he was storing them in the hills. Did you ever hear that mentioned by any of the guys?

SK: No.

HW: Well, they know about it. His name was Bousquet [?], as best as I can recall. And he was a guard in the hills, and there was always two of them to an open jeep. And what he was doing, and they found out about it, was storing it underground, not in the regular bunkers. So they got a crew together and they went up there and spied on him. This is just hearsay, I wasn't involved in that, but it happened, I assure you. He was also communicating with outer space, but he didn't have any equipment.

SK: He was maybe a little off his rocker?

HW: Evidently. That was one incident that Reed Cheesman and those guys, they all know about it. We all did general information. They got together and went up there and captured him. See, he had a weapon on too, so they had to be extremely careful. You don't know what a person like that's going to do. Yeah, he was removed from Killeen Base.

SK: So you never heard about him again?

HW: No, never did.

SK: Did you feel like the residents of Killeen were a little too inquisitive sometimes?

HW: Not really. I ran into a couple of cases, mostly in restaurants, somebody would come up and talk to you. I remember two cases specifically, and two in a year's time really is not very many. I would make sure when he went out I would follow him at a safe distance from his vehicle, get his license plate number, and turn that in to OSI. I think they were just salesmen. I would guess that's what they were, but anyway, they were inquisitive. We were trained, when people did things like that, to let OSI know about it.

SK: Do you feel like the FBI ever tested you personally?

HW: I have no idea. I'm pretty sure they checked on me in my hometown and all.

SK: Because we've had some cases of the FBI going back and doing background checks, talking to parents, neighbors, and employers.

HW: Even after I've been out of the service, I've had people that retired from the OSI and places like that to do background cases. In fact, I've got a woman next door that works at a prison. They came here and asked me all kinds of questions about her. That was not the FBI. That was people that were trained back in the OSI, and then they got private jobs that would collect this information. They probably turned it into the FBI. That's probably where it came from.

SK: Do you think it's possible that those salesmen could have been undercover FBI testing you?

HW: Yes, that's a good possibility. Or OSI, Office of Special Investigations.

SK: So what areas of Killeen Base did you have access to?

HW: I normally went to one plant whenever I went up there. The other one, on the backside of the hill, I may have gone to the entrance of that, but I don't recall going in there and seeing anything. It was all in one plant.

SK: And what would you do at the plant?

HW: Well, I talked to people. We had our own power supply there. I knew them. We were all like family, really. I would see them working in there and doing things. I walked right up by them and what they were working on, but I'm an inquisitive person. And mostly just classrooms up there in a room separate from the weapons.

SK: So did you ever have access to the ABC tunnel? Does that sound familiar?

HW: Yes, I'm very familiar with it. I remember the people. There was a good friend of mine, in fact, he was my roommate at one time. I know what ABC is. Do you know what it is?

SK: Not too many people that we have interviewed have had access to it. So if you could—

HW: Atomic bomb control. I had access to their office. Later, at Manzano [Base], I was involved. It was renamed to storage and control.

SK: Did you ever hear of the ADT room?

HW: Yes.

SK: What went on in there?

HW: Well, all the bunkers were wired to American District Telegraph. I think that's what it is. ADT is the communications, which the alarms were controlled. In fact, the ADT used to be mainly all security, but there are so many of them now that it's unbelievable. Sure, I went to the ADT room and observed the facility that they had that told when doors were opened and when they weren't. Yeah, I knew about that. ADTs quite a bit different from the ABC room.

SK: So, did you know who worked in the ABC tunnel?

HW: Yes.

SK: Was the ABC administration office in the administration building?

HW: Yes.

SK: Okay, so they had an office in the building, but also they had a tunnel in the plant.

HW: I guess so. I'm not familiar with it.

SK: So what was a typical day like for you at Killeen Base?

HW: Typing, going down to pick up the mail, bringing it back and putting it in the mail room. That was a typical day. That was only eight hours, and we had weekends. We had a day room with a pool table. We had a snack bar with beverages, beer, yes. A fabulous 15 cents for a Falstaff and 20 cents for Budweiser and Schlitz. I mean that was high price, but the wages we were getting—I learned to drink Falstaff.

SK: So what buildings did you work in? Primarily the administrative building?

HW: Administrative building.

SK: Since you weren't part of a flight you didn't have to be inspected every day like the guards?

HW: No, the guards, right out the front of my window I saw them normally twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. They pulled eight-hour shifts. They would all form out there, normally 40 or 50 of them, the flight formation with the sergeant and sometimes the lieutenant, sometimes a captain. But normally the sergeants just checked to see who was there.

SK: Did you have to wear a weapon?

HW: I had a weapon, yes. Believe it or not, I just kept it in my desk.

SK: But it didn't have to be worn at all times?

HW: I didn't wear it on the base. I wore it when I went to Killeen. In fact, I got an illegal turn ticket down there one time. I had a .45 on, and the guy that gave me a ticket had a weapon on, but everything went okay, no problems. Seemed odd, two people approaching each other, and have guns! Like the O.K. Corral!

SK: What do you think of the layout of the buildings at Killeen Base? Do you think it was conveniently laid out?

HW: I think they did a beautiful job on it, yeah.

SK: Do you think it was efficient getting from one place to the other?

HW: Very efficient, yes.

SK: Do you think it succeeded in preventing espionage, with the fences and the plant back in the hills?

HW: Definitely. And you know during the Cold War that was pretty stringent. All of our training and everything, the guards. But as you look back up on it, you can see it wasn't really necessary. One fence had probably been enough at that time. Now, it's a different situation.

SK: So maybe it's a little overkill. Do you feel like there was any chance that somebody could get through those fences?

HW: We had one incident. The guy did not get through the fence. We had a bus that ran from Killeen out to the base. It stopped running around midnight, and wouldn't start up again until about six in the morning. One night, we had a pretty good load on there around ten or eleven o'clock at night. We went through the first guard gate. The guy came on, went down one aisle, checked them, went in the back and came out. He checked up the other side and went out. He gave the driver the okay to go ahead. We got to the administration building, which was the only stop he could make. We only had one building, one place. I noticed one guy didn't get off the bus. I went over to check to see why he didn't get off, and he didn't know where he was at. I think he had been drinking. So I got him off the bus and talked to him, and found out he was stationed at Fort Hood. He had gotten on the wrong bus. The guard flat missed him. I took him back down to the guardhouse, and there were some people standing outside talking. They said, "Where are you going, Sarge?" I said, "Well, I think I'd better take

this guy back to Fort Hood. He came in on the bus and he shouldn't have." Well, I'd have liked to have been able to do that, but they got him out, handcuffed him, and took him into the guard shack. I talked to the people I talked to that night, and they said they gave him transportation back to Fort Hood. They couldn't find out he did anything wrong. He just got on the wrong bus. So that was not an intentional deal, it just happened. And you will have things like that happen. I don't care how great your security is, there's always a possibility of something like that happening.

SK: Do you think that there was more fear from somebody not associated with the military getting in, or do you think that it was a better probability of somebody who was already in the military who was kind of like a double agent?

HW: I've heard tell that they got through both at Killeen [Base] and Manzano [Base]. I've talked to agents that have retired and I play golf with, and they were telling me stories about they would get through the first gate, but not the second gate. You can't get through there unless you've got a badge. You exchanged badges at the gate. Another badge with your picture had to be at the Q [Area] gate.

SK: Who would they be?

HW: Yeah, they told me that they would see if they could penetrate it.

SK: Like communists or—?

HW: No, no, no, no. They were just OSI agents, to see if they could get in. I've heard they were successful getting past the first guards.

SK: So they would test them?

HW: Yes.

SK: But do you think they were more concerned about someone from the general public getting in?

HW: Yes, that's exactly the reason they do it, to see if they could do it and find a weakness in the system. When you've got humans, you've got weaknesses.

I can't recall anything unusual. It was just the day-to-day, and you eventually got more information. You knew more, and you associated more. I didn't like it being isolated, because we had no facilities there to speak of. We didn't have a club. We got a building from Fort Hood and built our clubs, the sergeants and staff, well, everybody that wanted to would help build it and modify it. We wanted a club, so we got one.

SK: So, you didn't have any awe or disbelief that you were working on a nuclear weapon storage site?

HW: No problem at all. It was just something you got into gradually, very gradually, and then all at once there you are and you learn all of these things. You don't know all of that when you first start. You don't know really what's going on, but you learn pretty fast.

SK: Did you know anything about nuclear weapons before you arrived at the base?

HW: No, I sure didn't. I knew about the two that were dropped in Japan. That was the extent of it.

SK: But they didn't give you any training films or anything like that?

HW: No, I don't think so. No.

SK: How much did you know about the potential use of the bombs, just from World War II?

HW: No, I've seen testing in the Pacific. I worked out at Johnson Island, Honolulu, Hawaii. I've been to Nevada many times to the test site, and observed before the weapon was set up, and observe what it did to the terrain and all afterwards. Over the 13 years associated with it, I knew quite a bit what was going on.

SK: So how were the bombs stored, do you know?

HW: They were stored in culverts around the hill that had a steel door encased with concrete.

SK: Were they crated?

HW: Most of the bombs that I saw were large. Fat Man, it weighed 10,000 pounds. They were on dollies, and they were pushed into the culverts and stored in there. There were smaller ones, but they were in crates. They were always taken out of the crates after they were shipped and stored.

SK: Could a civilian work in the plant? Were there any civilians in the plant?

HW: Yes, there were civilians in there. They came in. You had electricians that did your overhead lighting and your power supplies. We had our own generator under the hill. We had all the water we needed, all the current we needed, and the gasoline to run the generators. Everything went very smoothly. The civilians were no problem.

SK: Could they work directly with the nuclear weapons?

HW: I never saw one work on a weapon, and I do not believe that they did other than observe and accounting to make sure that the work was done and properly reported to the main office in Washington, [D.C].

SK: So would those civilians be part of the Atomic Energy Commission, or would they be affiliated with the government?

HW: No, they were with the Atomic Energy Commission. It was run by civilians. I remember the man's name was H. D. Rheam was the head of [Sandia Base]. It was located right here on Sandia Base, which is now Kirtland Air Force Base.

SK: Were they considered part of the 1094th?

HW: No they were not.

SK: So they didn't answer to anybody that you answered to?

HW: Their chief, Mr. Rheam, reported to the main office in Washington. But the commanding general, who died here recently in Albuquerque, Major General H. C. Donnelly, they worked together and they communicated. To what degree, I do not know.

SK: Did anyone on the base take precautions for radiation exposure?

HW: We had dosimeters or radiation detectors that we wore, and monitors with larger equipment that they could detect radiation.

SK: Would you only wear that in the plant, or would you wear that on a daily basis?

HW: We wore it when we were on base. Even in the administrative area, we kept them with us. No, we didn't have them out when we were down on the main base at Sandia [Base], no.

SK: Did you use them at Killeen Base?

HW: Yes, we had dosimeters there.

SK: Were you worried about exposure to radiation?

HW: No, not at all.

SK: Did your superiors tell you why you had to wear the dosimeters?

HW: We received that in our training, our training classes.

SK: So you knew that you wore them because of—

HW: We knew it was for radiation, yeah.

SK: Was there a limit to how long you could be in the tunnels underground?

HW: I never heard of any requirements that you had to go out after a certain length of time.

SK: What was it like in the plants or in the tunnels?

HW: It was like an industrial complex, the things that went on in there.

SK: Was it well lit?

HW: Well lighted, yes.

SK: Was it dry or wet?

HW: The temperature was always very consistent. They had air brought into the area through the top of the hill, I presume, I didn't get into that detail, but no it was always very comfortable in there. It was probably somewhere around 70 degrees, never hot, never cold.

SK: Did you ever directly work with civilians, as a clerk?

HW: We didn't have any civilians in the administrative portion, none at all. Well, wait a minute, we had a heating and air conditioning man that worked in the basement that ran the furnace. Oh yeah, I knew him really well. I think that was probably only one. He was a civilian from Killeen.

SK: And they had to have Q clearance?

HW: No, you didn't have to have a Q clearance. You have to have some clearance. I would assume he didn't have that.

SK: So, mostly the administration would work an eight-to-five shift or a nine-to-five shift. Do you know how the shifts were with people working in the plants?

HW: Normally eight hours a day, unless they had a movement that involved nighttime activity. The handlers, you had special people that were trained in storing and transporting weapons, and they could work at any time of the night, 24 hours a day if necessary to get the weapons loaded on to the B-50s.

SK: So there would be plant workers working at night only if they needed to finish a project?

HW: I'll put it this way, normally there was nobody working at night inside of the plants. The plants were guarded 24 hours a day by the security police.

SK: So we've heard it termed as an alert or an operation where the base would shut down and security would be tightened. Were you familiar with that?

HW: We had two incidents that I recall. One of them was an airplane that landed between the fences, a small plane. The fog and moisture and all would cause the lights would go off and it looked like a runway. A small plane landed there. The man got out of it. I think there was only one person that got out. There was no problem. It was just an accident. We knew it was an accident. The security people knew it was an accident. You're not going to land a small plane where you've got a high voltage fence. If a person was going to land there intentionally, he would've known that and he wouldn't have done it. That was strictly an accident, and we were all called out one night. They would take the administrative people, and we had, like I say, a lot of us had guns, and we were loaded, and they put us under the lights. When I first got put out there, and I do not know what the alert was for, but when I was put out there, I didn't want to stand under the light. I wanted to stand behind the pole where nobody could see me, but they wanted you to be seen so they wouldn't try to get out. I assumed that's what it was, but as far as knowing what it was, I don't know.

SK: So was there ever a time where you couldn't leave the base?

HW: Never. Others may have been limited.

SK: Where did you stay when you were at Killeen Base?

HW: I lived in the administrative building. We had areas that would probably hold 30 to 40 people at each end of the building. In between the buildings, you had your administrative offices. Like I said, the day room, the dining hall, everything was in one building.

SK: For the year that you were at Killeen Base, you lived in the administration building?

HW: Yes, lived in it and worked in it.

SK: So it was a big room that just had bunk beds?

HW: Bunk beds doubled. It was double-decked throughout the whole building. I know about four or five of those units would hold 30 or 40 men. At one time, we brought in a bunch of Quonset hut floors, and they had wooden sides up about 3 feet and the rest of it was canvas, that we got so many security guards in. I'd been there probably six months when they did that. They built three or four of those things, and they brought the new people from Lackland [Air Force Base], the new security guards, and they lived in there. There wasn't room for them in the administrative building.

SK: Did you work with any of the personnel at Fort Hood or Gray Air Force Base?

HW: No I did not work with them, but I knew about them and I talked to them. I didn't work with them at all.

SK: Were you able to socialize with anyone at Fort Hood or Gray Air Force Base?

HW: Yes, people from Fort Hood found out that we had a nice little club and they would come over in the evenings normally. We'd have a band. Bob Wills even came one time. You ever hear of Bob Wills? He came there. They would come over, and we put a wing on the original long room, we put a wing on that like a T and enlarged it. It probably handled 100 or 125 people, which is not big, but yeah they'd come over. I would sit in their club a few times to stop and have a beer or something, but yeah, they were able to.

SK: And the NCO club stands for non-commissioned officers?

HW: That is correct.

SK: So anybody at Killeen Base could go there?

HW: Anybody could walk in off the street and go there. You're supposed to have a club card, but if you wanted to come in and have a beer or a drink at that time, they weren't strict on club rules. Yeah, you could come in.

SK: So it wasn't inside the fences?

HW: Oh no, it was out on [U.S.] Highway 190, probably about a mile from the main gate.

SK: And who built it?

HW: The people at the base. We had one carpenter that was assigned to the base, and he had some helpers, but that was minor. Fort Hood moved the building over for us and set it up, and then we reconditioned it and made it into a club. Anybody that wanted to could go over and work on it, and get it ready to operate.

SK: Do you think that the military personnel at Fort Hood knew what was going on at Killeen Base?

HW: I have no idea, but I'm sure that the commanding general and his staff probably met with our base commander. That, I do not know.

SK: Do you think that civilians knew what was going on at Killeen Base?

HW: No I don't.

SK: Do you think there were any rumors about what was going on?

HW: Oh yes, there were rumors all right. You know about the two main ones. One of them was we had an underground submarine tunnel all the way to the coast and the submarines came up there for some reason or another. They didn't know why. The planes that came in and set down behind the hills where you couldn't see them from [U.S. Highway] 190, that was an underground runway, which was not true. It was right out in the open. It was just behind that hill, where they couldn't see the plane when it set down. You could see it go down, but they thought it went underground.

SK: At the time, were you allowed to talk about what you did with other military personnel?

HW: Well, in administration I could talk to them and I did talk to them. We would get inquiries from businesses wanting to know if so-and-so was there. They would come through the office that I worked in, and we would talk to them and tell them, Yes, he lives here. And he's so-and-so. If they wanted to know where he was from, we would tell him where he was from. Just with that type of information, yeah, we had contact with the outside.

SK: But if somebody from Fort Hood said, Hey, what do you do over there? You couldn't tell them?

HW: I don't recall anybody ever doing it. No, I wouldn't have been able to tell them anything. Yeah, I'm in administration. What do you do? Paperwork.

SK: So that's what you told your family back home, too?

HW: I don't think I ever discussed it with them at all. I was just in the air force, stationed at Killeen Base.

SK: At what point did you start talking about Killeen Base, you know after you got out of the military?

HW: As I've talked to you in the past, I will tell you that the local media said this and the local media said that. It became general knowledge. We had about six locations—that was real close to the figure, but I'm not positive—around the United States. To even mention anything about nuclear weapons appeared in Congress by mistake. They wanted appropriations for athletic equipment and money to furnish these special sites. Well, some newspaper person got a hold of it, some media person got a hold of this and said, Hey look here, we've got six bases out there in the United States that we don't know anything about, and yet they want appropriations for sports equipment. They need some support. What are they? This is how it got started. It became general knowledge to the news media as to what was going on. Yeah, I've got the articles clipped out. Larry Barker, it's local, Channel 13. There have been many avenues of, you could call them leaks or people putting two things together, and once that started, that initial deal, that appropriation, it just kept—more and more information kept getting out to the public.

SK: Did any of the higher-ups at Killeen Base ever give you instructions on how to answer someone that asked you a question about what you did? Did they give you a special tagline that you were supposed to say?

HW: No, if someone was too inquisitive, whether it was off base or someone that you worked with, got to talking about what they did or what you did, you should turn them in to the people that we were told to turn them into. It was a guy named Smedicke [?], he was an OSI agent, and we would talk to him. It was always covert when you did it. You didn't do it around other people. You would go to his office, close the door, and sit down and talk to him. Maybe another time you'd go in, close the door, sit down and talk to him and have a cup of coffee and that'd be all. You did things like this and it was routine. You got to know the individual. Yeah,

SK: How do you say his name, Smedicke [?]?

HW: Smedicke [?], he came here as an OSI agent to Albuquerque, and he was here several years.

SK: Was he at Killeen Base?

HW: Yes, he was at Killeen Base.

SK: I've heard his name mentioned in one of the previous interviews, that this person that that Smedicke [?] was an FBI agent undercover.

HW: He was OSI, Office of Special Investigations. And I even found out, and you're talking about how things leak, I even found out what his rank was. That made sense to me, because the officers didn't treat him too well. He got promoted from tech to master sergeant, and it came through on a TWX, which is unclassified. And oh, he didn't like that at all when he found out he had been promoted to master sergeant. But we could actually tell a little difference in the way officers treated him, because their club, prior to moving over to the housing area, was right there in the building at one end of the administrative building.

SK: Do you think that in addition to being an OSI agent he could have been an undercover FBI agent?

HW: I've never heard of one being in both.

SK: Do you think that the FBI could have been undercover at the plant?

HW: Oh yeah, they could have been.

SK: Did you ever hear about any suspicions of that?

HW: They're too well covered. No, I never heard of it.

SK: Did you ever hear of somebody named George Jelson?

HW: Are you sure it was Jelson? [I knew a Jack Josserand]. I partied with him a lot of times and went out with him, even after we came to Killeen [Base]. Yeah, he was a staff sergeant. He could have very well been. He was a very sharp individual.

SK: Were you instructed on your uniform? You couldn't wear a patch, right, an air force patch with your uniform?

HW: Well, the air force did away with patches and we did have one. Maybe earlier we had one with wings and all on it. But I don't think so, I think they had done away with the patches in that period. No, the army here, later on, like I said, there was a lot of army here, they had the nuclear weapon explosion patch, which I've got on my gear. No, the air force never had one.

SK: Were you able to wear your uniform into town if you wanted?

HW: Yes, you had an option.

SK: Did you do that, or did you just wear your civilian clothes?

HW: Mostly civilian clothes.

SK: Do you feel like you got any flack from the army guys on being air force?

HW: I know of cases where they would, jealousy I guess you'd call it, they'd wish that they were in it and weren't. They would make remarks to guys, and I've heard some conflicts, yeah, between the army and the air force in Killeen. Personally I didn't have any.

SK: What did you think about the Fort Hood facility?

HW: Well, as I look back up on it, it was archaic. But it was either the First or Second, I think the Second Armored Division was there when I was there. But they switch back and forth to Germany as I understand and they probably still do. It's a very large army outfit that had tanks. I've gone over and watched them go to their training areas.

SK: Did you ever do any training at Fort Hood?

HW: No, I did not. I went to their headquarters about once a day, five days a week. We'd drop off administration materials, and that's how they probably communicated with each other. But I don't recall what it was, generally. I don't recall it being classified.

SK: Did you ever use the facilities at Fort Hood, the recreational facilities or the PX?

HW: I played the golf course there. I had been to a couple of their clubs there. I had been to their gym. So I did use some facilities, but very, very seldom.

SK: And you did not have a family at Killeen Base, right?

HW: No I did not.

SK: So, what did you do in your time off?

HW: Well, I played golf some. That's where I went when I played golf, on the Fort Hood golf course. I'd go to movies. They had one movie theater downtown. I'd go down there sometimes. Mostly, I would go to Temple and party, drink beer, go to movies. And there were the nurses training there. Two of them left there and went to Abilene, and I used to go up there and date one girl. She lives over here in Colorado Springs now. I sent her a letter several years ago with some information on it, but I've never heard from her or anything. But I knew two girls that moved to Abilene. Guys from Killeen [Base] would go over to Abilene and party over there too.

SK: Did you ever go to Mexico?

HW: Yes, yes, I went to Mexico two or three times from Killeen Base. I went to Juarez.

SK: Did you have a car at Killeen Base?

HW: Yes, I did. I had a '47 Plymouth.

SK: Did you have it before you got there?

HW: No, I got it there.

SK: So what were your impressions of Killeen as a town?

HW: Well, they only had two small restaurants, one movie theater, a furniture store, and a bus station, which I went to and made a phone call and they came and picked me up. But they did have bus runs from the base there. It wasn't very modern, and I had very little to do in Killeen.

SK: So you think that Temple or Belton was a better option than Killeen?

HW: Temple was a good party town. Belton wasn't. They didn't have any bars or anything, and we did drink some beer.

SK: When you were at Killeen Base, did you have any interaction with anyone at Manzano [Base]?

HW: No, I did not.

SK: When you were at Killeen Base did you have any interaction with anyone at Clarksville?

HW: I had been there, because I used to fly in there, and I went over to the bird cage one time, but just the administrative office. I had a badge that permitted me there. But I only went over there, I think, one time. Being from Nashville, Tennessee, I used to fly from Killeen [Base] to Clarksville [Base], and then go 50 or 60 miles over to Nashville.

SK: Did you ever hear Killeen Base referred to as Site Baker?

HW: Yeah, Able I think was Manzano [Base], and Baker was Killeen [Base]. Yeah, you had ABCs, Ds.

SK: But that was not really generally referred to?

HW: It was just a general term, people that were really familiar with them usually. Yeah, Baker, Charlie.

SK: Where did you get your assignments from? How did you know what to do every day?

HW: It was pretty routine. Like I said, I worked for Warrant Officer Harmon W. Barbee, Harmon W. Barbee. I worked with him and he told me what to do. We had a Master Sergeant Miller. He was the administrative chief, and I worked for him. Everything just seemed to fall into place and come natural. You didn't have instructions every day. You knew what to do.

SK: So did your assignments change frequently?

HW: It didn't change until I got to Manzano Base, and I moved out of administration. By the time there I was a staff sergeant. I went to work in storage control. This is where the people worked out of and got the assignments as to what to move where, whether to take it out of the bunkers and move it into the plant and move it back, or transport it to the civilian airfield, which is on Kirtland Air Force Base. They're separate, but actually the airfields are partly on Kirtland [Air Force Base].

SK: Do you remember how long you were at Killeen Base before they told you about the mission there?

HW: Yes, one year. I was there one year. I got there in July of '49 and left there in July of '50.

SK: So you were there a year before they came out and said, This is a nuclear storage base?

HW: Before they come out and say it?

SK: Yes.

HW: I don't think they ever really came out and said it, the way you put it. No, I don't recall that being said. It was just something that you learned day-to-day as to what was going on and

what your job was.

SK: So they just told you, they were just vague and said, Don't talk about what we do.

HW: You had special classes and briefings. Sure, you've talked to security people. Someone must have mentioned Herbert H. D. Hoover. He was a major and made lieutenant colonel. He briefed us most of the time. In fact, he was really upset one time, he came in and said, "I have just talked to somebody in Killeen [Base], and we spent X number of dollars building fences around Manzano Base," and he said, "I want you to get it correct! Here's the figure we spent." But what he was trying to make a point of was that somebody had said that, and I'm not too sure it wasn't a civilian that did it.

SK: Because the civilians did a lot of the building and the maintenance right?

HW: Oh yeah, they did. The military did not build the fences, the civilians did. It was either Brown & Root construction or Holmes & Narver. I worked with both of them there, or whichever one was there, and I worked with them at this base here in Albuquerque, and I worked with them in Hawaii at Johnson Island. I get the two names mixed up sometimes, I don't know. But those are the two main contractors. Well, it was four names, but Holmes & Narver were together, and Brown & Root were together.

SK: Yeah, Mr. Cheesman mentioned the Brown & Root construction company that did a lot of the contracting.

HW: I even worked for one of them down there. I did some construction work into the hill, like running the jackhammer. They hired us because we had security clearance, and this was after they built the fences. A lot of people couldn't get in after that. It was pretty general at first. They would run backgrounds on these people and they didn't know what they were building. Yeah, I worked for them and I did some maintenance work in there and construction type material movement. I drove a truck, and hauled debris out of the construction zone.

SK: So you were hired by civilian contractors?

HW: Yeah. They had facilities set outside of the fences. You could go over there and get hired. We'd work for them in our off-duty. Quite a few military guys helped build that facility after the fences were built.

SK: When you left San Antonio, did you have any idea of where you were going?

HW: No, no idea. I had never heard of it.

SK: Did anybody speculate on where you were going?

HW: Not that I recall. I don't think they knew.

SK: In one of my interviews, they were flown in and they went over one of the big lakes, Lake Buchanan, so one of the guys thought that they were going overseas because they were flying over water. So I don't know if anybody was trying to guess.

HW: Yeah, we had a rest camp at Lake Buchanan. But no, I came in by Greyhound Bus.

SK: Were you accompanied with anyone else?

HW: No.

SK: Did your position as an administrative clerk give you access to any information that say just a guard wouldn't have? Were you privy to any special information because of your work?

HW: We would fill in and help the guards sometimes. We would ride with them. We weren't required to. I'd go with them once in a while on their patrols, yeah. They were friends. We got along great.

SK: But since you were in administration personnel, you had access to records, the classified material, so you would have access to material that say a normal person at Killeen Base wouldn't?

HW: That's correct. The guards wouldn't have access to the information that I handled through my administrative duties and critiquing and looking at correspondence.

SK: Did you ever look at any service reports of people who were at Killeen Base? Did you look at any of their service history records? Did you have to do anything like that?

HW: I had access to them, yes.

SK: Did you see any that were ever flagged or that were unusual?

HW: The only thing I was interested in is pertinent data like the Social Security number or something like that, because my section that I was in, we would type up all the orders of movement. They used to put your leave that you took on special orders and authorize you to be gone so long. They don't do that any more. They haven't done it in several years. But they used to put that on a special order. Yeah, I had access to their records but that's all I was interested in, is just getting the information to type up their orders.

SK: So what did you want to do when you joined the air force? You wanted to fly?

HW: Oh, I would have loved to fly, but I didn't have the qualifications. I got into administration and went to typing school, which I didn't know how to type and I went to Fort Frances E. Warren in Cheyenne, Wyoming, for about, oh, I don't know, four or five weeks in administrative training.

SK: So how long were you in before you realized that you couldn't fly?

HW: Immediately. I didn't have the education for it. I never applied, no. I didn't apply and wasn't turned [down] or wasn't accepted. I never did even apply.

SK: Were you ever involved in transporting the bombs from storage to the railhead or to Gray Air Force Base? Were you ever part of that convoy?

HW: No, I didn't get involved with that until I got to Manzano [Base] in Albuquerque.

SK: Were you involved with the move from Killeen Base to Manzano [Base]? Did they just pick up and move everybody, or did they—?

HW: No, I'd say it was at least 10 months between the first one left and the last one left. They didn't all move at one time.

SK: So how were you notified that you had to go to Manzano [Base]?

HW: Well, I knew that the whole outfit was moving. I waited until it was my time, and orders were

cut in the section that I worked in transferring me to Manzano [Base]. This is the type of information I would get a person's records for, so we could make orders for leave or anything. That's how I became so familiar with all of the security guards.

SK: When you moved to Albuquerque, did you move on your own or did you move with the air force?

HW: No, I came out here, again, I think I, yeah, I came out on a Greyhound Bus.

SK: So you didn't bring your car with you?

HW: No, I sold it down there.

SK: So when you got to Manzano [Base], did you just do exactly what you did at Killeen Base?

HW: Yes, for a period of time. I was there about four years. I got out of administration and went into storage and controls. That was still an administrative job. I didn't do the actual manual moving of them, but the people under our section, there were two or three moving groups consisting of four of five men that moved the units either into the plant or to the airfield.

SK: Were you ever at Kelly Air Force Base?

HW: I was never stationed at Kelly [Air Force Base], but I have been to Kelly [Air Force Base] many times.

SK: Did you do any training there?

HW: No, never have.

SK: How do you think Killeen Base differed from Lackland or Brooks Air Force Bases?

HW: Well, number one, it had a lot of fences and it had a lot of security, and you wouldn't find it anywhere else except in a weapons site, I mean that type of activity. We knew we were in the air force, but we worked as a contingent. The uniform didn't really matter. It was just a job.

SK: How much were you paid monthly when you were at Killeen Base?

HW: I started off at Lackland [Air Force Base] at $75 a month. After they took out insurance and haircuts, I probably wound up with about $65. And I think when I made staff sergeant I was making $115 a month.

SK: So your pay differed by rank?

HW: Definitely.

SK: So you are special because you had the Q clearance to get into the plant, but not everyone in administration could get into the plants, right?

HW: That's correct, yes.

SK: If you were a single unmarried male, did you have to live on base, or did you have the option to live off base?

HW: You could live off base.

SK: So people with families obviously could live off base?

HW: Yes, they did.

SK: And you had said that some people with families were living in the tents?

HW: Yes, just off of [U.S.] Highway 190 on the access road to Killeen Base.

SK: So the tent city was not on the base?

HW: No.

SK: So Killeen Base, when you would first go into the gate, there was a guard there?

HW: Two or more, always.

SK: And then, once you got through those gates, the only other place that they would stop was going to the plants?

HW: Not go into the plants, going into the Q Area, which encompassed the whole hill.

SK: So the administration building was not in the Q Area?

HW: No it was not.

SK: Were the storage igloos in the Q Area?

HW: Yes. Now they weren't igloos. They were underground. Igloos would be outside, normally dome-shaped, no.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about the rest camp?

HW: Yeah, we had a barracks. Not a barracks, it was like a barracks up on Lake Buchanan. We'd go up there, mostly on weekends, but we can go up there anytime. We had to take our own food. It was right next to a club, a country club, and they had dances there practically nightly. That's, I don't know, 60 or 70 miles from the base, and people from Fort Hood would come up, single guys and married guys would come up there to that club. And we lived—we had facilities to stay in. Again, we had bunk beds just like we did back in our barracks that we hauled up there. I don't know. Special services hauled them up there, and we would go up there and spend the weekend. But like I said, you could stay up there a week if you wanted to.

SK: So the air force and the army could use it? It wasn't specific to the air force?

HW: No, the army could use the club. The quarters that we had that we rented from someone there, a building that we stayed in, the army didn't stay in there, only the air force people from Killeen Base.

SK: So had you ever heard of the word alert or operation or DEFCON, defense readiness condition?

HW: Oh yes. Yes I have.

SK: Did that ever happen at Killeen Base?

HW: No, that came along later. That came along after Killeen Base, at least to my knowledge.

SK: So there wasn't ever a time when the base would go on an operation or shut down and you couldn't leave, or the guards would have to be on for certain shifts?

HW: The guards probably did, but as far as ever having an alert, there's nothing to speak of. Nothing really. Maybe just to practice.

SK: Do you remember anyone who ever failed to get clearance?

HW: I think anybody that failed to get it wasn't known by anybody around them.

SK: But you didn't have guys that you started out with that you never saw again?

HW: Never.

SK: If your parents were not born in the United States you were automatically disqualified. Do you think that was fair?

HW: I don't even know that it existed. I don't know what they did on the background. I know they did a background check, but the details of it, I do not know.

SK: Do you think that just because your parents weren't born here that that person would be more susceptible to being like a spy or a double agent?

HW: Well, if you're asking for my opinion, then it's yes it probably would be, even more so today.

SK: Was there a feeling of imminent danger from communists at Killeen Base?

HW: No.

SK: So Killeen Base was mostly just worried about maybe their own people infiltrating or sharing secrets?

HW: I don't know. I don't know the answer to that. This communist deal came up after the early '50s. That came in during the Cold War. Senator McCarthy, Are you now or have you ever been a member of the communist party? And boy that blew completely out of proportion. I was really familiar with it, but like I said, in the early '50s I don't think it was prevalent.

SK: So you don't think the nuclear buildup was in response to the Cold War at all, it was mostly just Korea?

HW: Oh no, the buildup of nuclear weapons was the possible conflict with Russia. Because see, they were slightly ahead of us in nuclear research. In fact, it started in Germany. The scientists that we have here in the United States, like Wernher von Braun and those people, [Enrico] Fermi and all those people, they came from Europe to the United States. When they saw what Hitler was doing, they left and came here. You learned that in your college, didn't you?

SK: I used to live near Fermilab, too.

HW: So you're familiar with Fermi.

SK: Yes.

HW: Yeah, he refused to yield to the Hitler sign. And his wife, I don't know if you knew it or not, his wife was Jewish. And so they presented the plan to Hitler, the scientists did, and he turned it down. He wanted a mass ground and air invasion. He didn't want to destroy the whole world, but he wanted to, you know, take over the whole world.

SK: So when you first did your training when you first joined the air force, that was at Brooks [Air Force Base] or Lackland [Air Force Base]?

HW: Lackland [Air Force Base] is where I took my basic training.

SK: And what was basic training?

HW: Thirteen weeks of studying history, politics to some degree, no degree to what it is today. But history, training in using weapons, how to march. We spent more time marching up and down those streets than anything else. We even went to Kelly [Air Force Base] for part of that. That's where our firing range is located, over at Kelly [Air Force Base].

SK: So did you have to qualify to shoot a weapon?

HW: They wanted you to qualify, but you didn't have to.

SK: Did you ever see anything unusual pass through Killeen Base?

HW: No, no I didn't.

SK: Nothing other than nuclear weapons? They weren't moving anything else?

HW: That's all.

SK: Did you have to take any other precautions while on Killeen Base, like was smoking prohibited?

HW: Oh no, they'd give you cigarettes back in the '50s. They'd come and stand at your PX and in the hospital, they'd come around. I was in a hospital out at March Field and they'd come around and give you cigarettes. Oh yeah, they had quite a campaign going.

SK: But since you were working with highly—

HW: Classified material? No, they never came to Killeen Base. They didn't come down that road.

SK: Did they ever give you any training working in the desert, like how to identify snakes or anything like that?

HW: No, none at all.

SK: Can you talk about the Fat Boy? What was the Fat Boy?

HW: Well, it's a 20-kiloton nuclear weapon. It weighs just less than two tons. It was hauled in the B-29, the B-50. B-29, because they're both the same plane. I knew about Paul Tibbets and General Sweeney. In fact, I met General Sweeney. And I seen Paul Tibbets. I didn't get to talk to him, he was signing autographs. I was with the 509th Bomb Wing, and the policy was then, and it'll remain with me today: We will neither deny or confirm that Strategic Air Command, which it no longer exists, had a nuclear weapons capability. I've told many reporters that. It eventually got into public information.

SK: So the Fat Boy was the nickname for the weapons?

HW: Fat Man and Little Boy. Little Boy was the first one that was dropped by Paul Tibbets in Hiroshima, and Nagasaki was dropped by, at the time, Major Sweeney. You know from reading newspapers and all and getting associated, I knew what they were and I knew what was done down at Killeen Base. I knew what they were.

SK: So the Fat Man, that's what they were making at Killeen Base?

HW: They didn't make any weapons.

SK: Or that's what they were storing at Killeen Base?

HW: That's what they were storing mostly, yes.

SK: So were there ever any rumors that went around? You had said about the man who was shot.

HW: Bertie, I think his name was. Any rumors?

SK: Yes, like what happened to him.

HW: Oh yeah, everybody knew it. When you've got a small organization like that enclosed in seven fences, it's hard keeping secrets. Oh yeah, they knew he was killed on the guard gate.

SK: Can you talk a little bit about what happened to him?

HW: Well, one guy had a rifle and the other had a pistol. They got into a debate with nothing to do, it was late at night, there was no traffic coming through and everything was quiet and dark at the gate, and they decided they would see which one was fastest. It is assumed that they were friends, and that they had no grudge against each other. There was no big investigation. A small one, yeah. But one of them outdrew the other one, and I can't tell you which. The weapon went off by mistake. He might have thought he had the safety on. I don't know what actually went on in the interrogation to find out what it was. Yeah, but one killed the other one.

SK: So were there any other incidents like that that happened? Soldiers discharging their weapons?

HW: Oh yes, I recall a few cases where they would see which one could hit the power line. They're on the backside of that hill. It might be late in the day. There's nobody around, and you can't see anybody for miles. Out there they're on the other side of the hill and they would see if they could shoot the wires. Sometimes they did hit them.

SK: What would you do if an animal, a deer or something like that, hit the electric fence?

HW: Well, the people that maintain the fences, they were specialized electricians that can handle that high voltage. They would come out there and check the fence and get the deer out. I never did actually see it, but I knew I heard of it happening. It was amazing that they could jump that high. I often wondered if they didn't come down and come in through the open area. There's an open area where they could have gone in where the guards go in to the fence. I don't know how they got in there. I doubt that they were able to jump that fence. I've thought about that a lot. The maintenance people would check the fence out and reset it. It didn't happen very often, but once in a while I guess it did happen.

SK: Was there an alarm that went off when it was hit?

HW: When that fence is grounded, it will set off your ADT system in the room that you were discussing earlier, and they would know right where it was at and the alert forces would go out. You know, as we sit here talking, you could very easily be an agent to see what I knew and whether I could give you any information. You could be. What I'm telling you is general knowledge now. Like I said, Larry Barker from Channel 13, he's got material that he got off the Internet and put on TV and made a special program of it. I've got copies of information upstairs that has been printed in the paper. What I'm telling you is just general knowledge. It's widely known.

SK: Well, all of this information has been declassified in the '80s anyway.

HW: Oh, I know that it has or I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you.

SK: Well, we had a lot of people that we contacted who wanted to talk to someone at Fort Hood before they would talk to us, you know, just because they never knew that the information was declassified. So yes, we had a couple of people who wanted to know what we were doing or why the army was doing this.

HW: Well, there are things that are going on that I only imagine from what, you know, putting two and two together, that I don't put any validity in. It may, it may not be happening. What has taken place in the last 10 years, that part I don't discuss. You hear things frequently, being so close to a nuclear weapons facility, and the Atomic Energy Commission, which the DOE [Department of Energy], Department of Defense, they've got buildings over here now. What goes on behind those fences, that's on the base where you went by yesterday. What they've been doing in the last 10 or 20 years, I don't know.

SK: Was anyone from the 1094th sent to jail or court-martialed?

HW: Yes, there were some, but I don't think they were necessarily security violations. I don't think that was what it was. I think it would probably be something else. I know of quite a few cases. I know one really specific case, and it happened in Copperas Cove with molestation, and that was the first time I had ever heard of it. I didn't even know those things happened.

SK: Was that someone from the 1094th?

HW: Yes, it was. There was a general court-martial. And then there was a court-martial in there for some fighting at a party inside of the four fences, inside of the administrative area.

SK: Was that routine for a domestic matter like that, for that person to be brought up in military court?

HW: It's very, very unusual for something like that to happen. What it stemmed from was drinking too much. Under normal circumstances, that wouldn't have happened. Yeah, there were people court-martialed, but not for security violations.

SK: So there was not a prison at Killeen Base, but there was one at Fort Hood, right?

HW: Fort Hood, yes.

SK: Did anyone from the 1094th ever have to escort prisoners?

HW: Not that I know of.

SK: Were there any politicians or high-ranking officials that ever came to visit, to your knowledge?

HW: General Curtis LeMay came. He was the chief of staff U.S. Air Force and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon. That's about it as far as I know.

SK: _____ [inaudible].

HW: That may or may not happen, but I've got it upstairs, but I didn't know whether you would be interested or not because it's not associated with Fort Hood. But one of the articles that I've got up there with big headlines [that] one of the world's worst kept secrets [is] Manzano Base.

SK: Yeah, that would be interesting.

HW: Why would that be interesting for Fort Hood?

SK: We are looking at mostly the 1094th, so because they were involved with Manzano Base, we would definitely be interested in that information. We've interviewed a couple people who were just at Manzano Base. Although our interest leans more towards Killeen Base and Fort Hood, we're open to Manzano Base information, too.

HW: I'll show you some of this information if you're interested in it, but I didn't figure you would be. Back to what I said a minute ago about you could possibly be an agent. This guy that wouldn't speak on the record, do you think that maybe he thought that this could be with you?

SK: No, I don't think so. I think it was more of just maybe he just didn't want to participate. There are some people who that was a time in their life they just don't want to talk about.

HW: I've turned people down once in a while, there's an outfit here that wanted me to talk about my military experiences and they've contacted me several times and I haven't participated with them. You were a different circumstance since you had been at Branson. I first thought two things. I thought you got my information from them or somebody that comes through that I've told I was stationed at Killeen Base.

Did you ever see this? You can have that. We've got two people out in Texas. One of them is in Lampasas, a guy named Rodger Payne. He's listed on that list in there. In fact, I put that list together. It took a long time and a lot of contacts.

SK: We've talked to Cal Atkins, Richard Bender, Reed Cheesman, Bill Fogle, Jim Griffin, and Elmer [Hounshell], of course, Ed Holmes.

HW: So you've never seen this list before?

SK: Well, I'm not sure if it's similar to the list that the reunion group gave us. I think Jim Nelson, I think we talked to him too.

HW: You can have that. I've got another one.

SK: Great. Thanks. I had one of my interviews ask me if I was an FBI agent, and I had to tell him no, because I'm not, but I think he was convinced I was. Some people, if you went through that experience, you had to be paranoid about who you talked to.

HW: Do you remember the things that I told you about how we were. Man, I'll tell you, we had Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Remember the building you saw yesterday that said area of laser deal, that building on the right there was coming out? They worked right there in that building. He was more or less an engineer out, but she worked in that building, Ethel Rosenberg. And I knew the guy where they transferred, supposedly transferred secrets between here and Santa Fe. I knew him real well. He ran the bar. He hadn't had it in about 15 years, but I knew him. He used to stop in. I'd go up north and play golf, and on the way back we'd stop in and we'd talk to him, and he showed me right where Ethel and Julius Rosenberg used to sit with these two agents. He didn't know what they were, and he only got that after the trial and all. You know, they killed them both. There are a lot of people that believe, and I've talked to scientists, they don't believe that they're the ones. In fact, we've got one out there that told me he knew who the people were who gave the secrets, and he said it was not Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. There's been a lot written on that.

SK: You had mentioned the one high-ranking official that you knew of that visited the base. Would he have to have Q clearance to get on the base?

HW: A high-ranking official?

SK: Were there ever any—

HW: Dignitaries from the city?

SK: Yes, politicians, dignitaries, senators?

HW: No, no.

SK: Military officials that weren't involved with Killeen Base, did they ever come and tour?

HW: Oh yeah, but I don't know who they were.

SK: Do you know if they already had to have Q clearance to go and visit?

HW: No I don't.

SK: You had talked a little bit about your second job working around Killeen Base. Did you have any other jobs? Your secondary job when you were hired out on your time off, did you have any other jobs like that?

HW: No, not down there, no. Well yeah, I did too, I worked in the officers' club. I was a waiter at night. I picked up a few dollars. Back when you were making $115 a month it didn't go very far.

SK: So, we had already talked about David Schmedicke [?], and he was a master sergeant?

HW: Yeah, he sure was.

SK: Did he live on base, do you know?

HW: No, he did not.

SK: He had a family?

HW: He had a family, and, I think he had about 10 kids.

SK: Oh wow. Did he go to Manzano Base with everyone else?

HW: Yes, he did.

SK: But everyone gave him a hard time?

HW: Oh, jokingly. No, it wasn't a hard time in what you'd call a friendly type. Oh yeah, the officers used to. I could tell they didn't treat him like an officer. And they didn't treat him like a civilian agent, but he was a military senior agent.

SK: And he went from a tech to a master sergeant?

HW: Yeah.

SK: Was that common?

HW: Oh yeah, yeah, you've got people from lower ranks than that in the Office of Special Investigations. They still exist today on many bases.

SK: So it wasn't unusual for a tech person to go overnight to a master sergeant?

HW: No, it was not unusual at all. We had one master sergeant that went to major right there at Killeen Base, leafs and all were pinned on him. But he had prior military service as an officer, then he came back in. See, this is shortly after World War II we're talking about. The war was over in '45. We're talking about '49, and most of them—and they don't do it any more, they stopped it after World War II—but the officers would come back as master sergeants, and they'd fill administrative jobs and everything. What that did, it blocked all the people down that were trying to reach that degree. That put such a block on all these techs that wanted to make master. You couldn't make it because you're only authorized so many of each one. No, you have a lot of people enlisting to go into the officer rank. See Schmedicke [?] never wore the uniform. He never wanted anybody to know what his rank was. It probably had been a different situation if he had been a major or a lieutenant colonel or something. But being a sergeant, he didn't want people to know it because he did not associate with us other than in the building. He spent a lot of time over on the far end where the officers lived.

SK: So what would the OSI agents do?

HW: Constantly on the lookout for violation of security rules and possible sabotage or interdiction. He would do all of those things.

SK: And it was just him, or were there other agents?

HW: He was the only one I knew of.

SK: Was he concerned with personnel on Killeen Base or anybody in Killeen, like civilians?

HW: He obviously had people that he reported to outside, like the FBI, the OSI. He probably did, I have no knowledge of that.

SK: Did any of the service reports for members of the 1094th that you ever looked over, did any seem strange or made up?

HW: No, I can't recall anything like that ever happening.

SK: Did you ever see any badges with different colored bars on them?

HW: Badges with different colored bars. I remember the badges that had numbers, and areas that you weren't allowed to go in they were punched out. But I don't remember the colors of them.

SK: Did any of the members of the civil service work at Killeen Base?

HW: I don't believe they did.

SK: What was the difference between base clearance and Q clearance?

HW: Q clearance authorized you to go inside of all seven fences. Regular clearance did not allow you to go through the second gate.

SK: And only plant workers and the guards who have access had Q clearance, or a couple of people like you?

HW: There were several people, yeah, that's correct.

SK: Were you ever in the crypto room in the headquarters building?

HW: They had a half door. I've stood at the door and they've had it open, the top part would be open. No, I don't think I ever went in there.

SK: Did members of the 1094th work in that office?

HW: Yes.

SK: And they would be considered administration as well?

HW: Yes, they would.

SK: And they were doing codes, creating codes or deciphering codes?

HW: We had what we call TWX, or teletypewriter [exchange] communication. I don't know whether you ever saw a long yellow tape with holes in it, well, this is how we used to communicate. You'd punch a key, and it would punch holes into this tape. You could sit there and send your message, and it would go out over this tape and be received. They were required to report hourly to our headquarters for security reasons. If they didn't get an answer, there would be some kind of action taken. I can't tell you what all, because we never did really have any major incidents.

SK: So that office was running 24 hours a day then?

HW: Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

SK: When the bombs were loaded on the trains at the railhead, did you ever see any trains going in and out of there?

HW: No, we used that same spur that they used at Fort Hood to send troops to Korea. But as far as the weapons on the trains, I didn't see, I only heard about them. I saw them here. I saw them at Manzano [Base]. They used to come right across that road there. The ones they got across the road were the dining cars and the living quarters that supported the train that

hauled them. Because the train used to come right up there. You saw that lift where they lifted them all. Well, that was where they would transport them on out to the base or to the airfield or whatever. But the other car that went across that road, that was a commercial-type. It's where they lived and where they ate. There was a guard and a train. Yeah, they were with the train. Now, the trains after they left here, they would put on a regular run.

SK: The contracting firm of Brown & Root, they were involved with building Killeen Base?

HW: You had mentioned earlier that Reed [Cheesman] said Holmes & Narver. Brown & Root may not have been down there, but there was one construction outfit, they're out of Houston, Texas. I think they still exist.

SK: Were they involved with Manzano [Base] too?

HW: No. Manzano [Base] was finished when I got here.

SK: How many people worked in administration?

HW: Well now, security had their administration, which was right in the hall where we were. I would say probably 20.

SK: Did you have a certain title in administration, or were you just staff sergeant?

HW: I was just a sergeant, yeah. I was buck sergeant when I started at Killeen [Base], and then I made staff sergeant. I just went by sergeant.

SK: They didn't refer to you as a clerk?

HW: No, [no].

SK: And you had said that most of your classes that you gave were at one certain plant?

HW: Yes, that's correct.

SK: When you enlisted, did you have any inkling of what you were going to do? I know you said you wanted to fly, but—

HW: No, I had no idea. They transferred me to California, and then I went to school in Cheyenne, Wyoming, to be an administrative clerk. That's the field I stayed in until I got into public information, because I like to write, I like to talk to people. Later on, well, I ran the base paper right here at Sandia Base. We published that weekly, and I had the photo lab and all that was under public information. They changed us to the Office of Information Services, and that didn't work out because that's all OIS and the OSI is your secret organization. We were getting their correspondence, so the air force said we'd better change the name, so we changed it to information services. OSI and OIS is sort of close, and it caused a problem.

SK: So the people who were working in the plant were considered 1094th, right?

HW: Yes, they were all 1094th.

SK: But civilians were not considered 1094th?

HW: They were considered Atomic Energy Commission.

SK: Did you ever pull guard duty?

HW: I filled in for them a few times at the gates, and more or less for familiarization, not as an assigned duty. It was volunteer. You didn't have to do it.

SK: Do you feel like you lucked out getting your position as opposed to a guard?

HW: Guards, for about four hours, all they had was their coats. They road in an open jeep. No, I had no desire to be a security guard.

SK: Do you think that you would look back on your time at Killeen Base differently if you were a guard as opposed to administration?

HW: Yes and no. We all worked together. They would help us, I guess, and we would help them. We were friends, and we got along really well.

SK: Were there other people that did specifically what you did?

HW: Yes, there were some. Very few, but there weren't a lot of people there.

SK: But they didn't need multiple administration people? You could handle the workload with just a couple of people?

HW: Yeah, no problem there.

SK: You had mentioned the First Provost Security Squadron. They were there before the 1094th got there?

HW: No, they were there with the 1094th. They came from Lackland [Air Force Base]. Nearly all of them except the NCOs came from Lackland [Air Force Base]. The other NCOs were probably selected just like I was, that came in and they were in charge and took over.

SK: But they eventually merged with the 1094th?

HW: They all merged with the 1094th.

SK: You never were on a protective detail to transfer the bombs, right?

HW: Well, I went along as an observer. Yes, I did go with them to the flight line and back. I didn't down in Killeen [Base]. I saw what was going on, and I was supposed to. But here [at Manzano Base], I actually did.

SK: Have you been back to Killeen Base?

HW: Yes.

SK: For that one reunion?

HW: One reunion, yes. And I went back there later. The wife and I went back by there later and I showed it to her, and we went in the club.

SK: How was it different from what you remember? Or was it different from what you remember?

HW: Well, I went down to the base and looked at the end of the runway, which goes right into Killeen Base, and I saw the fences were gone. I believe that was '96 to '94, '96. I didn't go up, and I had been back [in] '94, it was 1994, and I had been back in the administrative building, and I didn't go up into the Q Area.

SK: Did you have any further training when you were at Killeen Base? Extra training as a clerk?

HW: No, no I don't recall anything like that.

SK: No classes that you took?

HW: Not for career purposes, no. You had security briefings, but no.

SK: Do you know if there was any difference between the operations of Plant 1 and 2?

HW: I assume they were both the same. I have no reason to believe they would be different.

SK: And the function of the plants were to maintain the weapons?

HW: Maintain weapons.

SK: Where were you stationed after Killeen Base?

HW: After Killeen Base I moved to Manzano [Base], and after Manzano [Base] I went to Newfoundland. I ran across the order the other day that went to Washington, [D.C.] I was under Operation Carbar, which is a very rare [classified] deal. But it was evidently a classified deal, too. You could mention it, but it was probably—I didn't know what it was, but I know that it involved a lot of people then with the Atomic Energy Commission. I just saw that order the other day when I was going through my files, and before I could be transferred out of Manzano [Base], Washington, [D.C.], had to approve the site that I was going to. After that, I never was stationed in Germany or Japan. I didn't get overseas. I got to Newfoundland, and I came back to the base out here. Then I got another assignment and I went to Panama. When I got to Panama, they got my orders. I didn't find this out until a little bit later, but nobody there had ever heard of Manzano Base. They knew from Washington, [D.C.], that they had a person there that came from Manzano Base, and they wanted verification that it was a valid assignment, and they told them yes. But even in 1962, I was on my way down there when Kennedy got killed, it was still unknown. Now this is '62 we were talking about. People didn't know about that base. Of all the people in the headquarters in the Southern Command, which I worked in the headquarters there as a journalist, by the way. Ever heard of Andy Rooney? I did the same type of thing he did in Germany, and again when I got recalled in 1969 in the Pacific. I went over there and worked out of several bases in Thailand. I went over there for one year. So, I've got a very wide span of activities that I participated in 21 years. I put in 21 years.

SK: _____ [inaudible].

HW: I've got lots of them, the things that I participated in, nuclear tests. Oh, here's what the refueling looks like. I was telling you about the plane running together. I took this picture sitting right between the pilot and the co-pilot.

SK: Oh wow. That's amazing.

HW: This is a base I was stationed at in Thailand. But I was just going to show you some of

the—I've got oh, 10 or 12 of the certificates where I participated in nuclear tests. That's the inside of a bomber, that B-29. That's inside of it. And there's the Norden bombsight I showed you the other day that was one tower. And there it is in flight. Oh they used to come in here, *whoop*, and into Killeen Base. Here's an underground photo of a mile below ground, we were going to set off a nuclear weapon down there, and he's showing us the connection that they made.

SK: He's got a cigarette in his mouth.

HW: Oh, they've got all kind of—yeah, we went a mile underground. And here's another one. I got lots of them. Some out in the garage. I got those. Here's another one. This was Johnston Island down in the South Pacific where we participated. That's how many, almost 100, and these are all—it comes all the way, organizations, universities participated. We can get back to that. You can go on with your questions.

SK: So we talked a little bit about where you were stationed after Killeen Base.

HW: When I left Manzano [Base], it was approved for me to be assigned to Newfoundland, and I went up there and spent two years. I came back and I was stationed at Greenville Air Force Base in about 1955. That's where I met my wife. It'll be 54 years in September. And I got a chance to come back to Manzano [Base], and so I did, I came back here, and I spent about eight more years here. I had a total of 13 years here. I moved down to headquarters on the main base where the Armed Forces Special Weapons [Project] were, which was later named DASA, Defense Atomic Support Agency. From there I got into public relations. Like I said, I had the base newspaper, the history, and the photo lab and all of that. From that, I moved into another unit on base into the nuclear testing program. I went to Johnston Island in the South Pacific, Honolulu, and then several trips to Las Vegas, Nevada. I went out there on visitation, and we would take people that had come out of Washington, [D.C.], and brief them here at Sandia [Base], and then fly them in a C-54 aircraft up to Nevada and take them out and show them various things underground. We had a B-52 come over with 76 of these 500-pound bombs and dropped them out on the mesa for us to show us a display and show them our capabilities. From here, I got sent to Panama where I spent two years down there. Well, about three years. I spent a year before the wife came down, and I traveled all over Latin America as a journalist and writing stories.

SK: So were you writing stories for the air force?

HW: Yes. And we took our releases and sent them to primarily Miami, Florida, is where we sent most of them, and we had the school for Latin America down there and we trained them in all kind of plane operations, and oh, just about everything that we do in the air force we trained those people from all the Latin American countries in a school for Latin America, which is now on the East Coast. They moved it up there. They still train people in South America. When I finished my tour down there, I was close to retirement so I came back to the States and they sent me to Pease Air Force Base in New Hampshire, Portsmouth, New Hampshire. It was so cold that I was up to put in for retirement in five months and I did. And I had to wait six more months, so I put 11 months in up there. I couldn't get back here or I would've stayed in the service. But that gave me 20 years. I retired in 1967 and got recalled in 1969. I went to Thailand as a journalist, and I traveled all over writing stories. Have you heard of the *Stars and Stripes* newspaper that they always have with the military overseas? Well, I was editor of a paper there at Ubon [Ratchathani], Thailand, and also at Takhli, bases operated by Thailand and the United States. I would write stories and send them into headquarters, and then they would send them back to the States sometimes when they were newsworthy, thought they were newsworthy.

SK: So how does somebody get recalled?

HW: Well, a colonel that I worked for here for years came through when I was a civilian working out at the base. He wanted to know how I liked my job, and I said, "Well, I don't like it too well. I didn't get the job I wanted." He said, "You want to come back on active duty?" And I said, "Yes, if I can be with you." He said, "I'll see about what I can do getting you to recall." So he said, "No matter where you get." He was going to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Vietnam. He said, "No matter where you get, give me a call and I'll get you over." So anyway, I called him up after I got to Thailand and told him what I was doing. He said, "It sounds like you've got a pretty good safe job over there. Before you make a decision to come over here," he says, "give me a call back when you get ready to come over and I'll get you over here." I never did call him back for that purpose. Yeah, we communicated. It was like father and son. He was a little older than me. He was a colonel, Colonel Duke Shearing. Anyway, he came to Bangkok where I was editor one time working there in orientation and briefing people that come into the country. I only worked two days a week, sometimes just one. I'd go out of the country. Well, I just happened to be gone. He came to my office to visit, and he was gone by the time I got back. I was on active duty for one year, and then I returned to Albuquerque. My wife was in Mississippi during the time, and our daughter. So we just came back here. I lived on base, we lived on base. So when I retired, this is where I came back. I came from New Hampshire and came back here to make my home.

SK: So when you retired in '67 and then you got recalled in '69, you were working a civilian job at Sandia Base?

HW: Yes, and that's when he came through. He talked to me and got me recalled. I talked to him several times when I came back to Albuquerque, but I never did see him again. I used to go to his house and have dinner and everything before, while I was on active duty. It's odd how life works like that.

SK: So what was your civilian job?

HW: I worked in the commissary with stocking and I was supposed to do was going to work as a public information officer. I had qualified for GS-12, public information officer. That's what I was trying to get. Well, they had come out with a deal that they had to hire within, the people that were already in the position. They had a guy there that wanted the job, and they moved him into it. When they passed over me and I didn't get the job that I wanted, and I wasn't going to stay in the commissary, I went back on active duty.

SK: So after that year, did you go back to work, or did you just retire?

HW: I came to work. Well, I came back here to Albuquerque. My first job was with the post office. I put 20 years in down at the main office. Here I am, still in the same house 40 years later.

SK: At the time, did it feel like you or other members of the 1094th at Killeen Base, did it feel like you were part of something unusual or exceptional?

HW: Well, we knew that you had to be selected, which was sort of special. It definitely was unusual. But we didn't really think too much about it. I mean we did the job, and it was just like another job to be truthful. You're on active duty for 24 hours a day, whenever they want to call you. There's no overtime pay. We had a good thing going. We enjoyed our work. We never were afraid of it.

SK: Were you ever called to duty at a time that wasn't your normal schedule?

HW: Yes, I sure was. In fact, one of the jobs we had is we have a list of people, and you were given one or two, maybe three people that when you got a phone call, you had to make sure that they got a phone call to come in. The movies downtown had a special thing that they would show on the screen down at the bottom of the screen, and we'd watch for that. If they needed us for an operation to come back, they would call the theater and then we would go in. I would get a jeep sometime and go out and notify people. If I was downtown I would come in. If I needed to go out and get somebody that didn't have transportation, I would go out and get them. We were well organized.

SK: What was an operation like?

HW: We were going to move weapons, and we'd have a big operation to get them moved to the airport. We'd take them about a mile and a half from Manzano Base to the airfield, which is adjacent and now part of Kirtland Air Force Base. We'd load them up or unload them or whatever it was. We would work until the job was complete. Then everybody would go back to their normal eight hours a day.

SK: Did you ever do operations at Killeen Base?

HW: No, I wasn't involved in them down there. I saw them. I couldn't miss them. It was right in front of our headquarters, but no, I didn't participate there.

SK: So you had said at the time it was just routine, it was just something you were a part of. If you were able to reflect now, do you think that you were part of something bigger than just working at the nuclear weapons base?

HW: Well, it worked during the Cold War. That's what the '50s and '60s was, protecting against possible attacks from Russia. Yeah, it was big. It was very big. I enjoyed the air force. I enjoyed traveling and people. It was something special. Special weapons and all is a word that's often used, and that included the people that were involved. But they were selected, every one of them was selected.

SK: Did you consider yourself a part of the fight for the Cold War?

HW: Still today nuclear energy and weapons is to see who can be strong and strong enough to protect this country. We hope, and everybody in it that I know of even out at the museum, we hope that they are never used. But there's a lot of good that comes out of nuclear research. Like solar, that's part of this program out here. Wind power is created right here. So there are a lot of things that come out of it. Nanotechnology is a big part of it. It's located right there by the base, and it's located right next to the museum and across the street. It's a private enterprise that comes in their relations from the scientists that retire and come out of the weapons program.

SK: So do you think that the members of the 1094th fought in the Cold War by guarding and doing the administrative tasks of working in a nuclear weapons base?

HW: Well, you're talking about a fight but there was no such thing as a fight. These are just all preparations for a strong defense.

SK: But these weapons were being stored and they were being created in order to fight the Cold War in the arms race. So, do you think that the 1094th had a part in the Cold War because of that?

HW: Well, definitely. The whole nuclear weapons program is part of the Cold War.

SK: So what do you think about the Cold War now, looking back? Do you think that it was efficient to have that amount of arms? Do you think that we were ever really in any danger?

HW: Well, right now we're in danger, they say, from Iraq and North Korea. As you know, they're firing weapons, they're firing missiles. We have the capability, and did have it in place through the airborne laser program, which you saw the building the other day where the headquarters of it originated. We're in a preventative mode. You could call that a Cold War, and yes, it really is. We want to keep them from attacking us. We want to be strong enough to retaliate, but we never want to retaliate. We never want to have to retaliate. So basically, the Cold War is still there. We have a laser program out here [at Sandia Base], I have no doubt, and this is defense, that we could have shot down anything that North Korea fired at us. I hope there's a lot going on, and I'm not sure there is. I have no idea or imagination what it actually is on building for defense. So you don't use the term Cold War any more, but it still prevails. It's there.

SK: So you think it's still going on then?

HW: Definitely, every day, every day.

SK: What do you think should be done with the buildings and the tunnels at Killeen Base?

HW: You know, I have no idea what they could be used for. I really don't. Storage of material, or whatever. It's on a military-, government-owned operation. I have no idea what it could be used for.

SK: Do you think the public should be aware of what went on there? Do you think that it would benefit history to know that story of Killeen Base?

HW: I think they already know it. The general population of Killeen knows it. The newspaper knows it. The media knows it. Yeah, they know what's going on. It's publicized now. It's common knowledge that we've got a strong nuclear program. Larry Barker, the TV investigative reporter, he runs reports on everything. In fact, the newspaper had, just a year ago, had [a story on] the world's worst kept secret, Manzano Base, the nuclear weapons program. So see, it's common knowledge.

SK: Do you think that Manzano [Base] is more common knowledge than Killeen Base, though? Do you think people know as much about Killeen Base now as they do Manzano [Base]?

HW: I doubt very much if they even think about it, it's been closed so long. Yeah, they've got some of the same ideas, but it still prevails here [in Albuquerque]. Because if we drive down we see the big sign on the building [at Sandia Base] now, it says: nuclear weapons director. So what do you have? Pistons and rifles? You have things like they had at Fort Hood, like the 288-millimeter cannon, which is on display out here. Twenty of those remain. Most of them were transported to Europe. But it was fired at Fort Hood, towards Gatesville, if I remember correctly. It had a range of 16 miles, and that's if their shooting it pretty high and letting it come down or whatever you decide to use. But Fort Hood had that 288-millimeter cannon. That missile is about 3 1/2 feet tall, and it's got an 11 3/4-inch diameter. So that'll tell you. It can be used for conventional or nuclear weapons. So all of this is part of the Cold War to be strong enough to keep somebody from attacking us, because nobody can win in a nuclear war.

SK: What do you want military personnel or civilians to know about your role at Killeen Base?

HW: I don't particularly care that they know anything. I'm just doing this for your historical records.

SK: But do you think that history could be benefited by the story of Killeen Base? Could kids in school today learn something from Killeen Base? The residents of Killeen, is Killeen Base part of their history?

HW: Yes, it's part of history. It helped the economy down there, which military installations do all over the world. It helps the economy. If you learn from history, you learn things to do and not to do. Yeah, it's bound to have an effect on history.

SK: So, because the focus maybe is on Sandia Base and Manzano Base, not a lot of people know about the 1094th at Killeen Base. Do you think that the 1094th should have some kind of legacy in connection with nuclear weapons?

HW: Well, as far as Killeen Base goes, it's all history. As far as Manzano Base, the history has been moved according to local news media just about a mile and a half inside the base. So it still exists today, and we hope it serves as a deterrent against the war.

SK: Do you think that maybe knowing too much could be a deterrent? You had said that there are all these articles in the media. Do you think that's dangerous to know too much, to have too much information get out?

HW: I don't know how much there is. I'll put it this way, I hope there are some secrets that we don't know, and that we have a stronger military. I've got a feeling behind closed doors they tell Iran and North Korea, and show them some of the movies that we show at the museum about what a nuclear weapon can do, and the submarine that holds 24 Trident missiles. Let's see, it's 40 feet long and it can carry up to 14 warheads and hit 14 different targets. I would think that if you showed them that movie or get them behind closed doors and told them what it could do, and they already know. They already know it now. I hope that, and I believe that is a deterrent to keep anybody from attacking us.

SK: Do you have any additional comments, thoughts, or stories that you want to share?

HW: Well, to go back to what I just said, we hope it's never been used. Personally, we have way too many. The President even talks about it. The last President talked about it—reduction. The treaty we have with Russia, it's affected a lot of nuclear weapons. In fact, they have sent some of their nuclear weapons here. They bring them in by plane. We have taken them to Pantex in Amarillo, Texas, and they destroy them. What radioactive material and the uranium and all, I really don't know what they do with it. But I do know that there is Carlsbad Caverns in New Mexico, they've got large underground storage areas for nuclear waste. I would like to see all of them, from all countries, dismantled.

SK: Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?

HW: No, I just hope it'll be useful for you. After 60 years that have gone by, I've still got a good memory of it, so that right there should tell you something as you analyze it psychologically, from the viewpoint that it has a big impression on you of what you did and what could happen, and hope it never does. I hope that we never have to use a nuclear weapon, or any kind of weapon, but especially a nuclear weapon. Because you take 100 million tons of TNT and one explosion, and you've got some real devastation.

SK: So, you know they had so many, hundreds and hundreds of nuclear weapons. Do you think that it was, you know one will take out such a large area. Do you think that we needed so many?

HW: Definitely not. Just to reiterate on it, I would like to see them all destroyed. All of them. In

fact, if you look way back, I'd like to see all weapons need not, well, other than for hunting but that'll never happen, but there is a possibility we can reduce the nuclear weapons. We are reducing. We're cutting down. But at the same time, we're making more, daily. We're working on advanced nuclear weapons. Obama has talked about it, Bush talked about it. They've all talked about it, to reduce it. Now the Trident missile, I was telling you, it could carry up to 14 nuclear warheads and hit 14 different targets. Under the SALT [Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty], we're down that each missile will only carry four. But if you count the 24 Trident missiles that we've got, that gives you 96 cities that can be totally devastated by one weapon. One weapon. Well, one from each silo in the submarine. There are 24 of them. So the Trident missile could, and this is the reason that you'll only find two air force bases active now that still have the B-52. It's the biggest bomber that we've got. They've recently projected that that bomber is the oldest one that's ever existed. It's still flying and capable, and we're going to depend on it for ten more years. As far as I know, they're only at Minot Air Force Base in South Dakota, and Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana, and they used to be all over the world.

SK: So, the B-52 was never at Killeen Base, right?

HW: No, it never was. It wasn't manufactured until about 1953.

SK: Oh, okay. So what kind of planes did they have at Gray Air Force Base?

HW: Only transit aircrafts. B-29s, which is also the B-50. It's the same plane. But if it carried nuclear weapons, it was modified to be a B-50.

SK: How would they load the bombs onto the plane?

HW: Jack up the nose about 3 feet, slide it under, and let the plane down. Rather archaic, isn't it? But they don't do that any more. They don't have to. They've got bomb pits. They put the bomb down, and they've got them small enough that they don't have to do that.

SK: Because they were too big to get on the plane?

HW: Oh yeah.

SK: If you want to take a look at this map, I know that we had talked about how you said that it might not be that way. So these are the plants. [showing map] This right here and that right there, those are plants.

HW: Okay. I knew they were in that location, but I didn't. Yeah, this is supposed to be the security points. You mentioned earlier that you didn't know that they had that many places to store them, and that's not what you've got that marked for?

SK: Those are the storage igloos, which that's where the bombs were stored.

HW: I have to disagree with you on that. No. An igloo would be outside. We never stored any outside, never, not at Killeen [Base] and not at Manzano [Base]. They were all under the hill. It was drilled out, and the perimeter was made that goes around for your internal security with the road, and the material came out of these hill. That's where those weapons were stored. Never in igloos. You've mentioned that two or three times, but there were no igloos other than for gun placements, guys in there with rifles. We didn't have anything else. Oh, well we had .50-caliber machine guns, but they weren't inside of this because they had to fire through a window. As far as I know there was never any in there. The .50-caliber [machine guns] were on the jeeps. This here was for guys to get in, security forces. No bombs were ever outside.

SK: So where would the underground storage be for the bombs?

HW: All around the hill.

SK: Could you estimate how many there were? Did you know?

HW: Over 80. They ran about 40 to 50 feet back. They were encased with a door. The door was probably 10 or 15 feet. The steel door was encased in concrete. They had ADT to each door, and they had a central post that if one was open, the light would come up on the board. They had an inside—they had a mock-up deal of the hill, and it showed the markers all around the hill and in the crevices. They were about 50 feet back under there, drilled out, and that's where they were stored. Never outside.

SK: So none of this was here?

HW: Where was the main gate?

SK: This is Plant 1 and this is Plant 2.

HW: So the main gate is right here.

SK: So this is technically west Fort Hood now, so I don't think any of this—

HW: None of that was there. We had an administrative building right here. I think that's right here. And at one time, there was only one building. These are your fences. We were right inside of the fences, and there were three more fences behind that, and a security gate right up here. There was one vertical building that didn't run like these do. Before we left there they built a second one for barracks. I told you they had men in tents out by the fence. They were right out here by the fence. And they lived in there. They were really nice. They were fixed up well and they had a heater in them with propane gas. That was only two buildings in addition to the warehouse, which I told you they were building the second warehouse while we were there. There was a motor pool out back, and part of the end of the motor pool was where our communications facilities for radios. We had a lot of radios, and each one of the jeeps that was on patrol had a radio. This building at the end of the motor pool is where Rodger Payne was the master sergeant in charge. If they had any problems, we had people living right there in the barracks. They'd call them up, they said they had a problem. We then had another jeep we could give them. The radio repairmen would go out and take them a radio and replace the one they had. They were very primitive. They weren't good. No, none of this was there. There was housing area there right down [U.S. Highway] 190, right in this, this is the road that comes off of [U.S. Highway] 190? Which one comes off of [U.S. Highway] 190?

SK: I'm not sure that [U.S. Highway] 190 is on here. Because this is just the west part of the base.

HW: West part of Fort Hood?

SK: Yes.

HW: Okay, out of fence, that says there on the fence there. And the base road that went into Gray Air Force Base, which is not on here either, would come in here. It was about a mile and a half, it could be 2 miles from [U.S. Highway] 190 to the entrance to Killeen Base.

SK: And this base housing, it was only for Killeen Base?

HW: Yes. No army personnel were there. It was for married people.

SK: So when was the housing project built?

HW: [In] 1949 they started it, and I think they moved into the houses in the early ’50s. Then, when I went back there in ’94, they had enlarged it tremendously, the housing area.

SK: So this is a map that came out of the army, so this is not generated air force or anything like that. This is Killeen Base now, and like I said, when we were there, there was not a whole lot left.

HW: When I was there in ’94 the fences were gone. I had heard about some kind of computer operation in the hills for the atmospheric conditions, but I didn’t know what it was. I had no idea and nobody at the meeting knew anything about it.

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Appendices

Appendix A

INDEX OF HISTORICAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND EPHEMERA

Appendix A: Index of Historical Photographs and Ephemera

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
adkins		adkins.jpg	Calvin Howard Adkins	9/14/2009	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins1.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins2.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins3.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins4.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
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adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins9.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
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adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins26.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph

Appendix A, continued

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins27.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins28.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins29.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins30.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins31.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins32.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins33.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins34.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins35.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins36.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins37.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins38.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins39.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins40.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins41.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins42.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins43.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins44.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins45.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins46.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins47.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins48.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins49.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins50.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins51.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins52.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins53.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins54.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins55.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph

Appendix A, continued

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins56.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins57.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins58.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins59.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins60.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins61.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins62.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins63.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins64.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins65.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins66.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins67.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins68.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins69.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins70.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins71.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins72.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins73.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins74.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins75.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins76.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins77.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins78.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins79.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins80.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkins81.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook1.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	ephemera
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook2.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook3.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph

Appendix A, continued

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook4.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook5.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook6.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook7.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook8.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook9.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook10.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook11.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook12.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook13.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook14.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook15.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook16.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook17.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook18.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook19.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook20.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook21.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook22.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	photograph
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook23.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	ephemera
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook24.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	ephemera
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook25.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	ephemera
adkins	adkins photos and ephemera	adkinsbook26.tif	Calvin Howard Adkins	unknown	unknown	ephemera
bender		bender.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	2/22/2010	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender2.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	2/22/2010	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	article.pdf	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		ephemera
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender1.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph

Appendix A, continued

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender2.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender3.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender4.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender5a.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender5b.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		back of bender5a.jpg
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender6a.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender			photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender6b.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender			back of bender6a.jpg
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender7.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender8.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	bender9.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	KilleenBase.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		photograph
bender	bender photos and ephemera	KilleenBase2.jpg	Richard Augustus Bender	unknown		back of KilleenBase.jpg
cheesman		cheesman.jpg	Reed Cheesman	9/13/2009	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1-28-1949.tif	Reed Cheesman	1/28/1949		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman2-7-1952-1.tif	Reed Cheesman	2/7/1952		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman2-7-1952-2.tif	Reed Cheesman	2/7/1952		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman2-7-1952-2.tif	Reed Cheesman	2/7/1952		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman3-14-1949.tif	Reed Cheesman	3/14/1949		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman5-17-1948.tif	Reed Cheesman	5/17/1948		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman10-27-1948.tif	Reed Cheesman	10/27/1948		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman11-6-1951.tif	Reed Cheesman	11/6/1951		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-1.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-2.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-3.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-4.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-5.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera

Appendix A, continued

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-6.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-7.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-8.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-9.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-10.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1950-11.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/23/1950		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1951-1.tif	Reed Cheesman	9/26/1951		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1951-2.tif	Reed Cheesman	9/26/1951		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1951-3.tif	Reed Cheesman	9/26/1951		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1951-4.tif	Reed Cheesman	9/26/1951		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesman1951-5.tif	Reed Cheesman	9/26/1951		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanhistorypage1.tif	Reed Cheesman	unknown		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanhistorypage2.tif	Reed Cheesman	unknown		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanhistorypage3.tif	Reed Cheesman	unknown		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmaninsignia.tif	Reed Cheesman	unknown		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanmilitaryjusticetraining. tif	Reed Cheesman	unknown		ephemera
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanphoto1.tif	Reed Cheesman	summer 1949		photograph
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanphoto2.tif	Reed Cheesman	summer 1949		photograph
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanphoto3.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/1948		photograph
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanphoto4.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/1948		photograph
cheesman	cheesman photos and ephemera	cheesmanphoto5.tif	Reed Cheesman	6/1948		photograph
conder		conder.tif	Dave Ennis Conder	7/19/2010	Sunny A. Wood	interview photograph
fogle		fogle.jpg	William Jonathan Fogle	9/14/2009	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
fogle	fogle photos and ephemera	fogle1094 insignia.tif	William Jonathan Fogle	unknown		ephemera
fogle	fogle photos and ephemera	foglephotos1-2.tif	William Jonathan Fogle	2/1951		photographs
griffin		griffin.jpg	James Leroy Griffin	9/15/2009	Amy E. Dase	photograph

Appendix A, continued

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
helms		helms.jpg	Rodney G. Helms	9/15/2009	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
helms	helms photos and ephemera	helms5-26-1952-1.tif	Rodney G. Helms	5/26/1952		ephemera
helms	helms photos and ephemera	helms5-26-1952-2.tif	Rodney G. Helms	5/26/1952		ephemera
helms	helms photos and ephemera	helms5-26-1952-3.tif	Rodney G. Helms	5/26/1952		ephemera
helms	helms photos and ephemera	helmsnews1.tif	Rodney G. Helms	unknown		ephemera
helms	helms photos and ephemera	helmsnews2.tif	Rodney G. Helms	unknown		ephemera
helms	helms photos and ephemera	helmsnews3.tif	Rodney G. Helms	unknown		ephemera
helms	helms photos and ephemera	helmsnews4.tif	Rodney G. Helms	5/26/1952		same as helms5-26-1952-1.tif
hern		hern.jpg	Abe Hern	9/15/2009	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
hounshell		hounshell.jpg	Elmer Hounshell	9/14/2009	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
kindard		kinard.jpg	James C. Kinard Sr.	9/15/2009	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
lehman		lehman.jpg	Harold Andrew Lehman	9/15/2009	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
lowell		lowell.jpg	Elton J. Lowell	2/11/2010	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
lowell		lowell2.jpg	Elton J. Lowell	2/11/2010	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
mccoy		mccoy.jpg	Jack Lee Mccoy	9/14/2009	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napierala2-25-53-1.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	2/25/1953		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napierala2-25-53-2.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	2/25/1953		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napierala2-25-53-3.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	2/25/1953		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napierala2-25-53-4.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	2/25/1953		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napierala2-25-53-5.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	2/25/1953		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napierala2-25-53-7.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	2/25/1953		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralamap of tunnels.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	unknown		ephemera

Appendix A, continued

Folder	Subfolder (when applicable)	File Name	Donor	Date	Photographer, if known	Notes
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralareunionlocations.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	9/12/2009		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralaxmas1948-1.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	12/25/1948		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralaxmas1948-2.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	12/25/1948		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralaxmas1948-3.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	12/25/1948		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralaxmas1948-4-5.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	12/25/1948		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralaxmas1948-5-6.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	12/25/1948		ephemera
napierala	napierala photos and ephemera	napieralaxmas1948-7.tif	Ronald R. Napierala	12/25/1948		ephemera
nielsen		nielsen.jpg	Engward William Nielsen	9/16/2009	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
nielsen	nielsen photos and ephemera	Figure1.tif	Engward William Nielsen	unknown		note regarding Figure1a.tif
nielsen	nielsen photos and ephemera	Figure1a.tif	Engward William Nielsen	1/8/1951		ephemera
nielsen	nielsen photos and ephemera	Figure1b.tif	Engward William Nielsen	1/8/1951		ephemera
nielsen	nielsen photos and ephemera	Figure2.tif	Engward William Nielsen	unknown		note regarding Figure2a.tif
nielsen	nielsen photos and ephemera	Figure2a.tif	Engward William Nielsen	2/27/1951		ephemera
nielsen	nielsen photos and ephemera	nielsenphoto.tif	Engward William Nielsen	6/1951		photograph
nielsen	nielsen photos and ephemera	nielsenphotoback.tif	Engward William Nielsen	6/1951		back of nielsenphoto.tif
priester		priesters.jpg	Guy Barr Priester Jr.	3/15/2010	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
rasmussen		rasmussen.jpg	George Andrew Rasmussen	9/13/2009	Amy E. Dase	interview photograph
stedman		stedman.jpg	John A. Stedman	9/13/2009	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph
stedman	stedman photos and ephemera	stedman1.tif	John A. Stedman	ca. 1953		photograph
wallace		wallace.jpg	Herman Wallace Jr.	3/11/2010	Stephanie Katauskas	interview photograph

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPH DOCUMENTATION FORM

KILLEEN BASE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
PHOTOGRAPH DOCUMENTATION FORM

Owner of original photograph: _____

Date of photograph, estimated or actual: _____

Photographer, if known: _____

Names of individual/s in photograph:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Description of photograph (include location, identification of buildings, activities depicted, etc.):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

STANDARD AGREEMENT FOR RELEASE OF DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS

PREWITT & ASSOCIATES, INC.
CULTURAL RESOURCES SERVICES
Since 1979

2105 DONLEY DR., SUITE 400
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78758-4513
FAX (512) 459-3851
(512) 459-3349
www.paiarch.com

STANDARD AGREEMENT FOR RELEASE OF DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS

Because of the potential historical, educational, and scholarly significance of the materials collected from me, including audio tapes, transcripts, personal papers, photographs, and other documentary materials, I, _____, authorize Prewitt and Associates, Inc., under contract to U.S. Army, Fort Hood, to copy these materials, archive them on their premises, make these materials available for research use, and later curate them at an appropriate repository, such as the Texas Collection at Baylor University, Waco, Texas. I, as donor, give permission for the materials to be used for scholarly and educational purposes and for general research, and give Prewitt and Associates, Inc., under contract to U.S. Army, Fort Hood, its appropriate repositories, and users of these repositories, permission to cite, quote, and publish these materials, and to copy them so that they can be made available to others for research, instructional use, publication, and related purposes.

Donor signature: _____

Date: _____

Collector: _____

Appendix D

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR POTENTIAL INFORMANTS

KILLEEN BASE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
PREWITT AND ASSOCIATES, INC. (PROJECT NO. 209016)

1094th U.S. AIR FORCE SPECIAL REPORTING SQUADRON

Full name: _____

Street address: _____

City, state, zip code: _____

Area code/telephone: _____

Electronic-mail address: _____

Date of contact: _____

Location/event of contact: _____

Date of birth: _____

Place of birth: _____

To Killeen Base from what location/station: _____

Dates at Killeen Base: _____

Age when assigned to Killeen Base: _____

General description of duties at Killeen Base: _____

_____

Impression of Killeen Base: _____

_____

Information/stories about Killeen Base: _____

_____

Other military facilities/dates stationed:

_____

KILLEEN BASE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
Information Form

Full name: _____

Street address: _____

City, state, zip code: _____

Area code/telephone: _____

E-mail address: _____

Birth date: _____

Dates at Killeen Base: _____

What was the highest rank you achieved at Killeen Base: _____

Organization affiliated with at Killeen Base:
____Military police, Company C ____8462nd Special Weapons Unit ____Other
If other is checked, please explain: _____

_____

What position/s did you have at Killeen Base (check all that apply):
____Guard ____Administration ____Tech Supply ____Plant Work ____Other
If other is checked, please explain: _____

_____

Briefly describe your duties (for example, if you were a guard, what was your usual position; if you worked in the plant, what was your assignment, etc.):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have any photographs from your time at Killeen Base? yes_____ no _____

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW PREFACE AND QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW PREFACE

Explain that each interview will be transcribed and the transcript will be sent to the informant for his review. At that point, he can remove, add, rephrase, correct, and change any content.

Complete information form with informant.

Have informant read and sign release form.

Check recorder status.

Let the informant know that if he wants to stop at any point for any reason, especially to take a break, to indicate that.

Let the informant know that he should indicate if there is any question he prefers not to answer.

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW INTRODUCTION

This is name with Prewitt and Associates, Inc.

Today is day, month date, year.

I am interviewing for the first time Mr. full name.

This interview is taking place at the location.

This interview is sponsored by the U.S. Army, Fort Hood, and is part of the Killeen Base oral history project.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

GETTING TO KILLEEN BASE AND/OR OTHER FACILITY

How old were you when became a member of the service?

Where you enlisted or commissioned?

What ranks did you achieve?

Did you serve elsewhere before coming to Killeen Base? Where? How long? (repeat as necessary)

Did you serve in any other unit, division, battalion, or group besides the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron?

Were you involved in any overseas duty?

Did you serve at any of the other national or operation storage site facilities?

Did you receive any medals or special service award?

KILLEEN BASE

When did you arrive at Killeen Base?

How long were you stationed at Killeen Base?

Was there a time limit as to how long you could be stationed at the facility?

How did you get posted to Killeen Base?

What kind of security clearance did you need to work at Killeen Base?

How did you get clearance? Did the FBI talk to you? Your family? Others?

What were your initial impressions of Killeen Base?

What did you call the area officially—Killeen Base, Fort Hood, Gray Air Force Base, or something else? Did it have a nickname?

Did the tunnels have a separate name or nickname?

Was the facility known by another official name?

What were some of the other buildings at Killeen Base? Above-ground buildings—igloos, ammunition storage, warehouses, battery charging buildings, assembly training facilities, pill boxes and towers, surveillance structures, gravel gerties, administration buildings. Below-ground buildings—bedrock structures and buried structures. See map.

What was the mission at Killeen Base?

Will you explain what the main activities were at Killeen Base?

What, if any, organizations other than the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron were part of Killeen Base?

The 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron was considered air force, but was housed at Fort Hood, an Army facility. Were you considered air force? Did that have drawbacks? Did it lead to any predicaments?

Who did the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron answer to? Was it the Atomic Energy Commission, air force, or another entity?

How would you explain the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron organization?

How many men were in the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron at Killeen Base when you were there?

What different kinds of positions did members of the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron hold?

What was your position or positions at Killeen Base?

Where there special requirements for being a guard?

Did you have any training while at Killeen Base?

What areas of Killeen Base did you have access to? Did you have access to the ABC areas? Did you have access to the ADT room?

Will you give a general description of your duties at Killeen Base?

Who did you get your orders from?

What was a typical day like for you at Killeen Base?

Where did you spend most of your on-duty time?

What other buildings did you work in?

What did you think of the layout of the buildings and tunnels at Killeen Base? Was it efficient? Did it seem dangerous?

What about specific buildings? Did you think they were structurally sound? Or did they seem dangerous?

Did you walk or drive between buildings most of the time?

Did you walk or drive between Killeen Base and your barracks?

What was your first reaction upon knowing you were working with or protecting bombs?

Did you know anything about bombs before you arrived?

How much did you know about the bombs and their potential use?

What happened to unused bombs?

How were bombs stored?

What did bombs do?

Did you handle the bombs? Did you know others who did?

Were you part of a convey to move the bombs to the railhead or Gray Air Force Base? Daytime or nighttime? How did that operate? Where were the bombs going?

Could a civilian handle the bombs?

Were you worried about exposure to radiation?

Were you told about possible radiation exposure?

Did you take any radiation precautions?

Was there a limit as to how long you could be in the tunnels during a work shift?

How would you describe what it was like in the tunnels? Was there any difference between the two tunnels?

What was the function of the tunnels?

Were there guards in the tunnels? How were they armed? Where were they positioned?

How would you describe the guard towers?

How long would a guard shift last?

What exactly did you do while guarding?

Was there a difference in guarding nuclear and thermo-nuclear bombs?

Were you ever on high alert?

Did you work directly with civilians?

Were you concerned about sabotage? From within or from outside?

Were you housed in barracks? Where were they? Were they separate from or part of the larger of Fort Hood installation?

Did you work with other military or civilians from Fort Hood or Gray Air Force Base?

Did military and civilians at Fort Hood know what was going on at Killeen Base?

Could you socialize with others outside the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron?

At the time, were you allowed to tell other military what you did?

At the time, were you allowed to tell civilians what you did?

What were you told to explain about your position to outsiders? What did you tell those outside the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron about Killeen Base and your work there?

Did you discuss what you were doing with others in the 1094th U.S. Air Force Reporting Squadron?

What were your impressions of the larger Fort Hood facility?

Was your family at Killeen Base?

What did your family think of Killeen Base?

Where did you spend your off-duty time and what did you do?

Were you allowed to go off base?

What were your impressions of Killeen?

What kind of interactions, if any, did you have with soldiers at the other Manzano Base in Nevada and Clarksville Base in Kentucky?

Were you stationed elsewhere after your time at Killeen Base? Where? How long? (repeat as necessary)

What did you do after your service in the military?

BROADER QUESTIONS

At the time, did it seem like you and people at Killeen Base were part of something unusual or exceptional?

At the time, did it seem like you and people at Killeen Base were part of something bigger?

At the time, did it seem like there was an immediate threat?

At the time, what did you think about civilian involvement with bombs?

At the time, what did you know about the Cold War?

At the time, did you consider yourself part of the Cold War?

Looking back, what do you think about the Cold War now?

Looking back, what do you think about your role in the Cold War now?

How do you reflect on your time at Killeen Base?

What do you think should be done with the buildings and tunnels at Killeen Base?

What do you want military and civilians to know about your role at Killeen Base?

Do you have any additional comments or thoughts you would like to share?

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Can you explain that?

When did that happen?

What are the steps to doing <u>an activity</u>?

Did that happen to you?

What did you think about that?