Interviewer: Are you aware that our conversation will be recorded and that the tape and transcription will be placed in the Lee College library?
Veteran: Yes.

Interviewer: Do I have your permission to do that?
Veteran: Yes.

Interviewer: Tell me where you enlisted?
Veteran: I enlisted in Baytown, Texas.

Interviewer: Was that the enlistment office out at San Jacinto Mall?
Veteran: When I enlisted, it was out in the Kroger Shopping Center there on Garth Road.

Interviewer: What procedures did they go through?
Veteran: Initially, I had to take a test that tested some basic math and reading and spelling, and things like that. Then I had to go to downtown Houston and take the ASVAB test, which was the military entrance exam, and based on what you scored, that how they determined what career field you’re eligible for. After I did that, another day I had an all-day affair and that was the physical. After that, I got sworn in and I just had to wait until it was time to go.

Interviewer: Can you tell me why you enlisted?
Veteran: I’ve always kind of had a desire to go into the military. Probably the biggest reason though was I was eighteen, and I had just graduated from high school. I didn’t really have any aspirations to go to college, and that seemed like a pretty good career move at the time.

Interviewer: I remember we were there when you were picked up by your recruiting officer. Didn’t he pick you up at your Mom and Dad’s house?

Veteran: He probably did, but when I left to go, my Mom and Dad brought me down to Houston. There was a hotel that we stayed at that night, and then the next morning they put us on a bus and took us to San Antonio. So, my last day of freedom they drove me downtown to a Ramada Inn somewhere in Houston, and then the next morning we went to our basic training.

Interviewer: After you got there and started boot camp, was it anything like you had imagined it to be?

Veteran: Actually, it was probably harder than I imagined it to be. The physical part wasn’t really all that bad. It was more of the mental or psychological part.

Interviewer: And you were in the Air Force, correct?

Veteran: Right. I was in the Air Force.

Interviewer: How often did you get to come home?

Veteran: Initially, I had probably on the average maybe once a year while I was stateside, but once I went overseas, it was probably once in three years.

Interviewer: You said in boot camp that there was psychological hardness there. That psychologically it was more difficult than the physical aspect. Did part of that have to do with leaving your family and friends and going into an unknown situation?

Veteran: That’s part of it, but a lot of it is that they’re testing you to see if you can hold up under mental strain. I remember the first day that we got there they were yelling at us and telling us to do stuff, and telling us we were gonna go home in body bags, and all kinds of stuff like that to intimidate us. It worked for the most part,
and that’s just part of it. They’re trying to break you down and build you back up into a team unit, and made you stronger mentally and physically.

Interviewer: Where did you do your training?
Veteran: I did six weeks of training at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio.

Interviewer: And then what did you do after that?
Veteran: Once I graduated basic training, I went to my technical school which was the military police, which was also there at Lackland in San Antonio. It was also six weeks. I just basically moved to a different barracks down the road a little ways. It was a different squadron. I did six weeks of military police training, and then I had six weeks of air base ground defense training, and that’s basically just army training. That was at Camp Bolus(?), and that was still in San Antonio, but it was an Army installation, and we lived out in the woods in these little Quonset huts with coal stoves. We dug foxholes and did stuff like that out in the woods. We’d stay out there three or four days at a time. We’d learn how to read a compass and things like that. We went through a gas chamber. It was basically just Army-type training.

Interviewer: I know that you’re an EMT, also. Did you get that training while you were in the service?
Veteran: Not to that extent probably, but we did receive basic first aid training on how to stop bleeding, how to stop a sucking chest wound, how to put a temporary splint on someone’s arm for a broken bone. Just some minor stuff to stabilize someone. How to put on a tourniquet. Just some basic things.

Interviewer: Did you feel that your training prepared you for your overseas service?
Veteran: Yes, I did at the time, and I received additional training once I arrived overseas. For the most part, I would say yes.

Interviewer: Did they train you on how to interact with the civilians—you went to England—did they train you in that area also?
Veteran: I pretty much didn’t get that orientation until I got to England.
Interviewer: And they told you what ya’ll could do on base and off base.
Veteran: How British people are, and how to deal with them.

Interviewer: Were you stationed anywhere else while you were stateside?
Veteran: My two stateside assignments after I left San Antonio were Blyville Air Force Base in Arkansas, and I was there for about a year and a half. Our mission there was to guard B-52 bombers at a nuclear weapons storage facilities. This was back in the Cold War still. We had B-52s that were loaded down with nuclear weapons on alert at all times, and they were ready to go. They could fly within minutes to wherever if they were needed. They had alert crews, and these were the crews for the B-52s. They had to stay together at all times, so they actually stayed—had live-in quarters—where the alert facilities were, so they could be ready in a moment’s notice. They couldn’t leave base. If they left the facility, they had an Air Force blue vehicle that had little yellow lights on them. They had to be together all the time.

Interviewer: Was your job to guard those planes?
Veteran: One of our jobs was to provide security for the nuclear weapons and the alert areas.

Interviewer: Were you stationed anywhere else after that stateside?
Veteran: After I left Blyville, I went to RAF _____ in England, and after that I was stationed in Grand Forks, North Dakota. In North Dakota, we had actually two missions there. We had missile silos, and I’m not sure what the types of missiles were because I wasn’t involved in that part of the security. I was involved with the aircraft security. We had B-1 bombers, and at that point—it was the latter part of 1991 to 1992—and at one point, they had had their B-1s on alert. The Cold War was starting to decline at that time, so those B-1s weren’t on alert, but we still had the nuclear weapons facility, and we also had the facility where they kept the nuclear missiles. That was probably our biggest mission there was to guard the nuclear weapons facilities, and we also provided security for the flight lines. We also played a law enforcement role for the base and base personnel.
Interviewer: Did you have access to the nuclear weapons facility?

Veteran: I worked inside of it. What we had was fifteen security personnel that were assigned to guard that nuclear facility, and we had various weapons. We had armored vehicles—we called them ‘peacekeepers’—and they were equipped for a four-man fire team. You had a fire team leader, and he carried an M-16 rifle. You had an M-60 machine gunner, an assistant M-60 machine gunner, and he carried an M-16 rifle. Then we had an M-203 grenade launcher person. We had two of those fire teams that were dedicated to protect that nuclear weapons facility, and then we had what we called ART teams. They were armed response teams, and they were two-man teams. We had two of those inside the nuclear facility. They just drove around, and they were armed with M-16s and an M-203 grenade launcher. They would check for alarms that went off and things like that. The bunkers that we stored the nuclear weapons, if the doors were opened for any reason, they would be out there maintaining security. Then we had teams that were outside the fence line. We had a person that was up in the control tower that would monitor all the alarms. We had dual fences—two fences—and there were alarms between the fences and the ground. All the buildings were alarmed, and we had a person that monitored those alarms and the cameras. He was in a big tower that was basically in the center of the area, and we had a supervisor out there. We had fifteen people. We used to have exercises all the time, and they called it 15 and 5. You had to have 15 people on any hostile situation in five minutes. We used to have exercises typically every shift. This area supervisor or flight chief would come out and say, “We’re having an exercise.” You just had someone crawl over the fence, and we’d have to respond to that. Sometimes it would be a hostile situation. You had people shooting at the facility and respond to that. We did a lot of training and exercises like that.

Interviewer: Did you ever have to use your skills? Did anyone ever breach security while you were there?

Veteran: No. To get in the facility, you had to have an I.D. badge. It was kind of a unique system. It was called the Dual I.D. Badge System. For instance, they might issue you a green badge, and this badge would have numbers on it, and depending on
what numbers you had open on the badge that had your name and your picture on it, and typically if you had clearance on the flight line, it would get you on the flight line. If you had a certain number open on this I.D. badge, it would get you on the flight line or the weapons storage area, and places like that. If you went into the nuclear storage facilities, we had a dual I.D. system, and what you’d do is usually go through like a prison almost. Real tight entry procedures. The person would come in a sally port, and they’d basically be locked in a sally port. They’d come up to a window, and there would be a military policeman in that window. They would give them their badge, and they would give them a badge number. The person would have another badge for the weapons facility. The entry control man will find his badge and compare them to make sure they were the same badge. They were typically different colors. You’d put the badge he gave you in a slot and give him the badge that we had inside for him to use in the facility. You’d have a code word that would be on the back of the badge, and you’d ask him what his code was. If they didn’t know their code word, this was a sign they were under duress or they were attempting illegal entry, and things like that. We’d treat all those situations as if they were a hostile situation until we found out otherwise. They were supposed to display their badge while they were in the facility, so if you were riding around and you found somebody that didn’t have their badge on, we called it ‘jacking them up,’ you’d get out and make them put their hands in the air, go through a spiel, and get them identified.

Interviewer: In your opinion with the world as it is today, do you think that’s a good system considering terrorists and terroristic threats that we have?

Veteran: I would say it would be very difficult for a terrorist to make entry. I think it would be very difficult for them to go through the gate and have a false identification. Now, if they wanted to go and blow a hole through the fence and maybe try to get it that way, I still think it would be difficult for them, because then they have to make entry into the bunkers, and it would be very difficult to make entry into the bunkers.

Interviewer: You’ve talked about a lot of weapons that were there. What are your opinions of the weapons that you saw?
Veteran: Our weapons that we used, the Air Force wasn’t up to par with the Army and Marines and units like that. The M-16s we had were old, and we’d had them for awhile. I guess we had the weapons that were suited to our needs, but we definitely didn’t have all the big guns that the Army would have had.

Interviewer: Do you think they would have been reliable if you had to use them?
Veteran: For the most part. I know when we would go out and go to the range, we’d have problems on occasion with malfunctions.

Interviewer: Did ya’ll report them?
Veteran: Yeah.

Interviewer: Were they taken care of when you did?
Veteran: We hoped, but we never really had an incident where we needed to use them, so I guess that was a good thing. Our weapons were probably more used than we would like for them to be.

Interviewer: What was your opinions of your clothing and your equipment other than your weaponry?
Veteran: It was adequate. When I was in Blyville, Arkansas, our BDUs and stuff were used. The Air Force was just making the transition at that time to BDU type uniform, and that was the camouflage uniform that you see is pretty common now with Army units and things like that. Stateside, we were just making that transition. Up until that point, we had been wearing a fatigue type uniform. Basically it was just an OD green uniform. When I got to Blyville, we were making that transition, so we pretty much got some hand-me-downs. I don’t know where they got these BDU uniforms, but they were used.

Interviewer: What about the food—the meals that you were served. What was the opinion on that?
Veteran: Typically, we had a chow hall, and it was pretty much like cafeteria-style. You went through a line, and usually had two or three selections. It was kind of hit
and miss. There were some things that were pretty good, and other times the food was lacking, but I guess for the most part it was tolerable.

Interviewer: Did you ever have MREs? You informed me these were Meals Ready To Eat.
Veteran: We would eat MREs when we went out to do field exercises and we stayed out on the field overnight. Even if we didn’t go, if had training exercises and things where we were away from an eating facility or unable to go somewhere, we would have MREs. They’ve gotten a lot better now, but I remember MREs would have maybe like ten variations. It was kind of hit and miss, because you just got one and you didn’t know what you were getting until you got it. It would tell you on the package, but typically you couldn’t go through them and find what you wanted. They just gave you one, and if you could do some trading you could get what you liked, but mostly you were just stuck. I know some were more popular than others. We had one with a dehydrated beef patty and a dehydrated pork patty, and those weren’t really all that desirable, because you had to add water to it because they were dehydrated meats. It really wasn’t all that great. But they had Chicken ala King, beans and franks, and those weren’t too bad, and then they usually had cheese or crackers in them, coffee, hot cocoa, and things like that. I think they’ve really gotten a lot better since then. I don’t know if they’ve gotten better, but I know they probably have a bigger selection than even we had. The MREs replaced the C-rations. I heard that’s what the Army ate during World War II, during the Korean War, and during the Vietnam War. They were basically the same thing, but it came in a can. MREs were in a sealed plastic bag.

Interviewer: I’m gonna move on now to leadership—like the quality of the leadership you were under. Do you consider it to be of good quality or poor quality? What were your opinions on that?
Veteran: Well, when you’re at the bottom… {Laughter} We had some officers and NCOs that were pretty good, and we had a lot of confidence in them, but I had other flight leaders and squadron commanders that we really didn’t think a whole lot of and didn’t really have a lot respect for or even confidence in. I guess overall we
had enough confidence in our leadership that we could get the mission done or get the mission accomplished.

Interviewer: Who would have been considered to be the real leaders in your troop?
Veteran: It would have to be the NCOs, the non-commissioned officers. They pretty much kept everything rolling. We had master sergeants, tech sergeants, and staff sergeants that pretty much kept everything running.

Interviewer: As a military police officer you probably saw good and bad. Can you remember any cases of violence against any of the officers?
Veteran: No. It would have been different during a wartime situation, but we probably did a lot of talk about what we’d like to do to ‘em and things like that, but I’d never seen any actual violence or really any threat that wasn’t made in just blowing off steam, and things like that. We were pretty much kept in check, because we knew if we were to do something like that, that we would be dealt with.

Interviewer: And that kind of brings me to the next point is the discipline. Describe that. Do you think it was strict or lax?
Veteran: Being in the military police units in the Air Force, we were probably more disciplined than most of the other Air Force units, because the units were involved in maintenance or things like that.

Interviewer: Do you feel that the discipline that you or anyone else would receive was fair?
Veteran: Sometimes, but other times it seemed like in certain situations the punishment was a little harsher than it had to be. I think overall it was probably meted out fairly. Most of the discipline that was meted out was probably for minor infractions. Sometimes it would just be a verbal reprimand or a letter of reprimand which actually went into your personnel file, and it just went up from there. That’s what it seemed to us at the time. If you didn’t have your boots shined, you might get a little letter of reprimand in your file, and that seemed kind of harsh, or if you didn’t have your hair cut, or something like that. But I guess it’s all just part of the discipline.
Interviewer: What were your thoughts on the military courts?
Veteran: Luckily, I never had any firsthand experience with the military courts, but I know we were skeptical because we were enlisted personnel, because everybody on the military courts works for the military—the prosecutor, the judge, the military personnel, the defense attorney. If you chose to use a military defense attorney, he’s working for the same people that we all are, so we were skeptical.

Interviewer: So you felt like their ideals could be swayed against the person?
Veteran: We felt that way, and I don’t know if that was really the case. We really didn’t see a lot of court-martials. There were a few, and I can remember a few, but it really wasn’t that common to see a court-martial.

Interviewer: What kind of punishments would the courts hand out to those?
Veteran: They could hand out a lot of different things. Typically if you went to court-martial, you were looking at dishonorable discharge or a bad conduct discharge. A lot of times you could actually do prison time.

Interviewer: Were there any cases of desertion that you know of.
Veteran: I remember when I was stationed at Blyville, they had captured a guy that had been AWOL for about seven years. They brought him back and put him in our brig at our base. That was really the only incident I can remember. I know we didn’t have any cases in any of my units of anyone going AWOL or deserting.

Interviewer: What would have been a punishment for AWOL?
Veteran: Typically during peacetime, they would just give them a bad conduct discharge or something like that. Obviously if you’re in a wartime situation, for desertion you could go to prison, you could actually even be executed, but we never saw anything like that.

Interviewer: After you went into the military and your life changed, when you would come back into the world with civilians, how did you and your comrades get involved with those in the civilian world in the United States?
Veteran: Sometimes, there’s maybe a strained relationship between the civilian people and the military people—as far as the civilians that live around the military installations. Sometimes they resent the military people for a whole lot of different reasons. Typically you get the military guys going to town, and a lot of times they run their mouth and talk big, and they’re trying to pick up the girls, so the civilian men, anyway, see that as a threat, and they don’t appreciate it for the most part.

Interviewer: I’m gonna skip on over to when you went overseas. Where did you go?
Veteran: I went to RAF Lakenheath in England.

Interviewer: When you realized and learned that you were going to go overseas, what was your reaction?
Veteran: I was a little nervous. I was a little scared. I was excited on the other hand to go to a different country and see something different, but I was a little apprehensive.

Interviewer: What mode of transportation did they send you on?
Veteran: I flew on a commercial jet.

Interviewer: What information did they give you on the country in which you were to serve?
Veteran: The way it typically worked for us was that each squadron or unit had a person that their job was to help people that were coming to your base from different locations to help get you orientated, so they would send you a packet. Everyone would get a packet from whatever base they were assigned to go to. It would have all the information about housing, the community, and things like that, so you could just read up on and find out what to expect. I know I went in and bought a lot of books—travel books mainly—about England, and things like that.

Interviewer: What were your impressions when you first got there to service abroad?
Veteran: I think my first impression was I was just tired when I got there. {Laughter} But it was a shock, I think. Kind of a culture shock. Most of the people you’d run across on the base were Americans, so it wasn’t that big a shock to be on the base itself. I was probably a little apprehensive about getting off the base, because I
wasn’t familiar with the money or just how things worked—transportation and things like that. But, you slowly venture out and you get more comfortable with how things work, and plus you hang out with people that have been there, and they know what to do. That was probably the biggest thing, just being apprehensive about getting out into the community and trying to interact.

Interviewer: How did you and your comrades get along with civilians overseas?
Veteran: It was pretty much the same as it was stateside. The civilian populace that was around the base was probably more resentful of the military—American military anyway. Overall, I think the British people are a little stand-offish with people they don’t know—probably Americans especially. We had our good experiences, and we had some bad experiences.

Interviewer: What were the civilians like during Desert Storm while you were there? I know nowadays with the war in Iraq, most of the British people are very resentful of the American ties that they have over there. What was it like then?
Veteran: We didn’t really have any specific problems at our base. I know at other locations during Desert Storm, they had set up a base in England, and some of our personnel went to provide security. They set up a base there with B-52 bombers, and they were flying missions from England all the way to Iraq and they were bombing Iraqi soldiers with these B-52 bombers. I know at that base they received a lot of anti-war protestors at that location. We never had any specific problems while I was at Lakenheath as far as protestors and things like that.

Interviewer: During the Iraqi war, did you ever read any of the newspapers in the area or hear the radio correspondents? Were they anti-American?
Veteran: Most of the news-type publications that we read while I was at Lakenheath was *Stars and Stripes*. I believe the public support for Desert Storm was pretty strong. I don’t remember seeing a lot of anti-war-type things for Desert Storm, but also it was over fairly quickly. We also had the Air Force Radio Network, and we would watch the news when we had cable.

Interviewer: You said that you read *Stars and Stripes*. What did you think of it?
Veteran: I don’t remember it being bad. I remember we read it quite a bit, and it seemed like a fairly good publication.

Interviewer: So you felt that the material was pretty straight-forward and truthful? 
Veteran: It seemed to be, and plus it was maybe geared more to a military person.

Interviewer: Did you take part in any combat action? 
Veteran: No. Actually, during Desert Storm I never left RAF Lakenheath. While I was there, we had F-111 fighter bombers. During Desert Storm, they shipped our whole squadron of F-111s to Saudi Arabia so they could fly missions.

Interviewer: Did security tighten? 
Veteran: Oh, yeah. During Desert Storm, we actually sent a flight of people to Saudi Arabia to guard those F-111s. A flight is basically a fifty-man security team. The Air Force is a little different. We’re not like the Army. They have battalions, and companies, and platoons. We don’t use that same terminology for our organizations. We have flights, and that’s basically about a fifty-some one person team, and then you have a squadron, and groups, and things like that. We also formed another flight, and I was assigned to that flight, and we were supposed to have gone, but we never had to go.

Interviewer: What were you thinking at the time when you were gonna be heading over there? 
Veteran: I was really apprehensive. I was nervous. I know being in the military you always know that’s what you’re there for, but when it actually happens, it’s still kind of scary to think you might actually be in combat, even though the Air Force was not typically on the front lines of the action, but still you could be in a combat zone. Being the security for the Air Force base, you were going to be the front line of the base if anybody were to take the base. The security at the base was tightened a lot. I know England had a large Middle Eastern community, a large Iraqi community, so we didn’t know if we were gonna have problems from local sympathizers to the Iraqi’s cause. We went into twelve-hour shifts. We set up bunkers and things at the entry gates to the base. We had M-60 machine guns and everything else mounted at the entrance points. We were searching
everything that came into the base—a lot of vehicles. We had augmentees in the Air Force. Basically, in a civilian sense, they’d be like the police reserves, and they were typically people from supply and jobs like that where they didn’t have a big roll in the wartime mission, and they would augment us during the wartime situation. They’d make them military police, but they really didn’t have a whole lot of training—maybe just some firearms training. They would implement these augmentees, and we basically set up foxholes all the way around the base, and we’d put people in these foxholes, and sit there and watch the fence line to make sure no one was trying to get in or do anything like that. Other than the long hours, it really wasn’t that bad.

Interviewer: I remember you telling me something about something that you saw inside an airplane hangar during the Iraqi war.

Veteran: During Desert Storm, at our base we had a big hangar that they had set up to take casualties if we had gotten any. We were out at that hangar one night, and went inside, because we had heard about this hangar, and inside they had set up a morgue. They had tables and things like that set up to embalm people and get them ready to be transported back to the United States. I guess what their thought was was that the people that were killed in Iraq and Kuwait, they would fly ‘em back to our base, and then the people there would embalm them and take care of all the things they needed to do. I don’t know everything that they do, but there were tables set up with embalming equipment, embalming fluid, and they had ten individual tables like this that were set up. They had body bags, and they had different stations set up. I guess one for property, so they could take the property off of the deceased person to get it ready to send to the next of kin. They had other stations set up for a lot of different things. They had these big metal coffins that they used to transport the bodies back home that they had stacked up along the walls. You don’t really think about that part of the war—the casualties and people dying, but that was kind of an eye-opener to us. Fortunately, we didn’t take a lot of casualties during Desert Storm, so they never used that facility, but I remember it was just a really eerie feeling to go in there and see all that stuff, and realizing this is the result of war right here.
Interviewer: Can you estimate how many coffins they had?
Veteran: They had ‘em stacked all the way up to the ceiling, so there were probably hundreds.

Interviewer: I’m gonna go on and ask you about your experience after you were discharged from the service. What did you do after you were discharged?
Veteran: After I was discharged, I came back to Baytown, and I found a job working security. I went to Lee College part-time and worked part-time, and did that for two years. After that, I got a job with the Baytown Police Department, and I’ve been there ever since.

Interviewer: Did your military skills that you learned while in the service help you make a transformation to civilian life?
Veteran: I don’t remember it being a real hard transition, but the military had services to help you make that transition. I think the main thing I was interested in was in the job-type services they provided.

Interviewer: Did your skills that you learned as an MP {END OF SIDE A}
{SIDE B BEGINS}
…did they help you to gain a job when you were discharged from the military?
Veteran: I believe it helped me get my job as a police office. Police departments look for that type of training and those kinds of people to hire.

Interviewer: Would you recommend service life to anyone who is out of high school, such as yourself? You said you really didn’t have any aspirations for anything.
Veteran: Sure. I would probably do it all over again if I had to do it again. The military helps people who don’t know what they want to do, and maybe they’re not mature enough to go to college. I believe it’s not a bad option.

Interviewer: Well, thank you, Larry. This ends our interview.

{TAPE STOPPED—END OF INTERVIEW}