

Gray County Veterans Memorial & Archive

ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

Roy G. Reed

August 22, 2014



INTERVIEW
YEAR

Roy G. Reed
2013



GRAY COUNTY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: **Roy G. Reed**

DATE: **August 22, 2014**

PLACE: **Cimarron City Library, Cimarron, KS**

INTERVIEWER: **Kathleen Holt**

TECHNOLOGY: **Jorge Martinez**

PROJECT SERIES: **Korean Era Oral History Project for Gray County**

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: **Roy G. Reed, born July 22, 1932 at Dayton, Kansas, enrolled in the U.S. Air Force after his high school graduation in June 1950, knowing that he would have been drafted in August of that year. After four years in Korea, Mr. Reed returned to Kansas and attended college at Emporia State. He joined the Aviation Cadets and eventually served two tours of duty in Vietnam. Re retired a Major after serving in Korea, Vietnam, Libya, Japan and Altus, Oklahoma.**

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: **Enlisting; basic training; flying as a kid; Kalvesta Air Farce; returning to U.S. for college; Aviation Cadets; life of married officer; jungle survival school; disposing of planes after WWII; Strategic Air Command; Libya; returning to U.S. after Vietnam.**

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ORAL HISTORY
Roy G. Reed
Interview Date: August 22, 2014

Interviewer: Kathleen Holt (KMH)
Technology: George Martinez (GM)
Interviewee: Roy G. Reed (RGR)

(GM) - We're recording.

(KMH) - Alright, this is Kathleen Holt and I'm here with Roy G. Reed, of Cimarron Kansas, and we're going to be talking about his experiences in the service. The date is August 22, 2014. It's 11:20 and we are at the Cimarron City Library, in Cimarron, Kansas. Roy, thank you for agreeing to do this. We're, very happy to have your oral history as part of this series. Could you just kind of tell me -- you mentioned that you were born -- Well, let's back up. Already I'm gonna' back up. Why don't you state your name and age and birthdate and where you were born so that we'll have that for the record as well.

(RGR) - My name is Roy Reed, and I was born July 22, 1932 at Dayton, Kansas.

(KMH) - And then when did you go into the service. How did all that happen and what was going on at the time that you joined the service.

(RGR) - Well I graduated from high school in May of 1950. The Korean War started in June in 1950 and I turned 18 in July of 1950 and in August of 1950 they -- she rode in on 18 year olds, so, anybody that fit that category at that time. Well actually 18, 19 and 20 year olds. The people that they started out, sort of, trying to get the people that World War II missed, but then they lowered, you know, kind of lowered the age a little bit.

(KMH) - What was the average age of persons going in at that time? Was it pretty much 18, 19?

(RGR) - 18, 19.

(KMH) - Was that true in World War II? Do you know?

(RGR) - I don't think it was. In World War II they -- It probably started out sort of that way but then they, they kept taking older people I believe in World War II.

(KMH) - So how did you -- did you talk to your parents about this? Did you decide what you were going to do or did you have buddies that were interested? How'd that transpire that you decided this was what you were going to do in August?

(RGR) - Well, I didn't really want to get into the ground war. I was at sort of the top of the list for the draft, so I had a friend of mine that enlisted in the Air Force, and they --

All the services were building up big, you know. It had a pretty big build up at the time. So they -- sometimes, you had a month or two if you enlisted before they took ya'.

(KMH) - So you decided. Where'd you sign up? In Dayton?

(RGR) - Dodge City.

(KMH) - Ah, did you drive there? Did your parents take ya'? How'd you get there?

(RGR) - No, we drove. I was -- I had an old car then and everything.

(KMH) - Yeah, you were 18 years old. Did 18 years olds drive around like 18 years olds do these days or was it common to go as far as Dodge?

(RGR) - Oh, yes.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - See I grew up -- well actually, 27 miles north of here.

(KMH) - Ah.

(RGR) - So that's the area where if you wanted to go anywhere, you had to drive.

(KMH) - Yes.

(RGR) - It was, you know, that's--

(KMH) - You probably started driving when you were pretty young, huh?

(RGR) - Well at fourteen, yes that's--

(KMH) - Yeah, yeah. Did you have to drive in to school? Where'd you go to school?

(RGR) - I went to country school for a while through the sixth grade and then seventh grade. Well, my mother -- my oldest, older brother was a senior in high school -- he was going to high school in Beeler, Kansas. So we moved up there and I went seventh grade at Beeler and then the eighth grade was back at the old Enterprise Country School.

(KMH) - She moved so he could be a senior at Beeler?

(RGR) - We just rented a house up there. Stayed up there.

(KMH) - Ah.

(RGR) - So he could go to school.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And they was having problems at that time keeping those country schools going.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And that was last year. The only people in the school were my two sisters and me, so . . .

(KMH) – Wow.

(RGR) - Then, that was the last.

(KMH) – Wow.

(RGR) - Last time they had school there, but they did move the school.

(KMH) – Huh.

(RGR) - Down to, well south and west, and consolidated it into White Mound School. They called it that.

(KMH) - Oh, I was going to ask you if it was still standing. So you go to Dodge. You sign up. Did you go to the Air Force office? Or was it just a general recruiting . . .

(RGR) - It was an Air Force recruiter.

(KMH) - Yeah, do you remember where it was?

(RGR) - Oh, it was down town where the old post office was. Down there somewhere. I don't know.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - Where they-- Dodge City has changed as you well know.

(KMH) – Yeah.

(RGR) - Quite a lot.

(KMH) – Yeah.

(RGR) - You know, compared to the time -- in fact, they cut out a whole street of it, I think.

(KMH) - Yes they did.

(RGR) – And . . .

(KMH) - Kind of right around that area.

(RGR) - We'll the post office was sort of up on the hill there.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And seemed like quite a few recruiters had, you know --

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - In the post office at that time.

(KMH) - Right, right. So you signed up then. What was the timeline? I think about, had about a month before we left to go to Texas for basic training.

(RGR) - Uh hum.

(KMH) - And so let me ask you this. In that, did you have to take a test or anything at that point, or did you just sign up?

(RGR) - Well, I already took a physical.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And I can't recall whether I took a little test. I think maybe you did but -- Later on they give the old -- after you was in there they give ya' what they call the ole Stanine Test which was kind of to decide what they were going to do with ya'.

(KMH) - Ah, I see. What area you'd go into? Did you -- you flew, right?

(RGR) - Well, not at that time.

(KMH) - Oh, okay. So you, you signed up. You came back in -- What happened in the month then? Did you drive to Texas or take the train? What?

(RGR) - No. No, no. I cut milo, helped my uncle cut milo, and that was November 1950. It was probably one of the colder Novembers that, you know -- at least I had experienced. Maybe it was just because I was out in it.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - That, after that, why, Texas didn't look too bad at all.

(KMH) - (Laughter) You were looking forward to that, huh? So how'd you get to Texas?

(RGR) - I took the train out of Dodge.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - To Kansas City and took a train on down to --

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - Texas. That was one of the things that, in that time period, they had trains going just about everywhere.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - In fact, I think you could've gotten on a train in Cimarron here.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And gone to Dodge, you know.

(KMH) - Uh hum. San Antonio? Is that where you were?

(RGR) - Yes.

(KMH) - Uh huh. Let me ask you this, had you traveled a lot, out of the area, up to that point? Or was --

(RGR) - No, no.

(KMH) - Yeah, so what was Kansas City like?

(RGR --) - Well it was different for, for -- well I, kind of hate to say this, but everybody -- They had the physicals up there in -- well everything, physicals and everything was in Kansas City, Missouri, and that's where you stay in --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - In an old hotel up there and everybody went over to Kansas because they sold beer at 18 in Kansas.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - And not Missouri, so --

(KMH) - That was part of the swearing in! (Laughter)

(RGR) - Well, yeah.

(KMH) - The physical, was that pretty much -- how'd you feel like, coming out of a rural area and that was -- was that quite a shocker experience?

(RGR) - No, not really. I kind of, I mean I thought it was just kind of normal for what went on.

(KMH) - Did you, did people in your family serve in World War II? O did people talk about it, or --

(RGR) - Well my older brother served in World War II.

(KMH) - Oh, okay.

(RGR) - Oldest brother.

(KMH) - So he probably had some experiences that you knew about.

(RGR) - Oh, yes.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - And then I had cousins that served in this . . .

(KMH) - Um, so you went from Kansas City to El Paso. What was getting to El Paso like?

(RGR) - Well, well that, San Antonio . . .

(KMH) - Or that's what I mean -- what did -- I don't even know where I'm going. Good thing it's your oral history/ So San Antonio. What happened then? Next? And where'd you stay? What was . . .

(RGR) - Well I, I -- There again, they was building up Lackland Air Force Base. They had too many people there, so we stayed there about ten days I think. And then some people moved to Sampson Air Force Base in New York which they had opened up for basic training and I moved to Shepard Air Force Base in Wichita, Falls which happens to be where my oldest brother took basic training --

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - -- during World War II. Shepard is at Wichita Falls, Texas, which isn't really that far from here, so --

(KMH) - Uh hum. So basic training, anything eventful about that? You kind of knew what to expect or what?

(RGR) - No, not really, but it was just, you know, I mean, a military thing. You know, it was learn left from right.

(Laughter)

(RGR) - Sometimes they'd make you carry a rock in your left or your right hand.

(KMH) - Oh. I imagine growing up on a farm, you knew that, huh?

(RGR) - Well, it was still, you know it was easy. I didn't take band or anything like that, so marching was different for me.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - And some people -- I was one of those people that had probably, that they yelled at a lot for making wrong moves.

(KMH) - Oh, but do you have any, like, most rotten memory of basic training?

(RGR) - Oh not really. I do know that, our, one of the sergeants there broke his leg in football, a touch football game.

(KMH) - Uh oh.

(RGR) - And everybody was happy about it! (Laughter)

(Laughter)

(RGR) - Which is, you know -- you shouldn't be happy about someone breaking their leg.

(KMH) - Anything funny happen then? Any pranks?

(RGR) - No, not that I remember. It was a typical military deal where, you know it started real early in the morning and instead of, you know the later on they used mops and stuff, but in basic training they cleaned with scrub brushes and what I would call uh, grandma's old lye soap, you know? The brown soap that people used to make.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And that's, they, you know, they -- sometimes they'd make you use a toothbrush to clean stuff with. You know, an old toothbrush.

(KMH) - So that was a big part of it? Cleaning and doing the barracks, and then --

(RGR) - Well that, that was a part of it. I don't --

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - Don't know if I can say it was a big part of it, but . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - It was, you know, you went through obstacle courses and, it's what they do in basic training yet I think.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - Firing range and stuff like that, basically.

(KMH) - Uh hum, so you learned how to take care of your weapons and . . .

(RGR) - Yes.

(KMH) - Huh. So, what happened at the end of basic training?

(RGR) - Well, at the end of basic training, I was assigned to go to radio school which I really --radio maintenance school in Scott Field, Illinois. So I did -- they flew us from, or flew the ones going to Scott from, Wichita Falls to Scott Field, Illinois. It was in a C46 airplane, which that was different, not like an airliner.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know it had side seats and just --

(KMH) - Did you have to get like strapped to the side?

(RGR) - No they, they just --

(KMH) - Huh.

(RGR) - Well they did have seat belts over there, but that was it.

(KMH) - Hum, so like that little bench seat that folds down?

(RGR) - Yes it folded. It was a cargo airplane and I had the --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Had the just seats that fold down off the side.

(KMH) - Uh hum. So how many people went with you to that? People from your unit went with you to that? Or was it --

(RGR) - From all, all the units there. I think there was probably 10 or 12 people in the airplane was all.

(KMH) - Uh hum. So then where, where were you then and how long, and what, what did you do then?

(RGR) - Well I was at Scott Field for radio school for nine months, roughly. Radio maintenance school and from there I got a, 30-day leave, and then I shipped over to Japan.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - There again, I went to Camp Stoneman in California for processing to go overseas, which again happened to be where my oldest brother processed which everybody did. That was just a big processing center for --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Army and Air Force. And, then I got on a ship called a USS Randall and went to Japan on it.

(KMH) - Hum. What were you thinking then? You would've been maybe about 19 by then

(RGR) - Yes, I was 19 then.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - But the same lines, you know. I've never been seasick or airsick, which -- I guess that's -- but a lot of people got seasick on that, on it, and, that was probably one of the worst, worst things you know, being it was really cramped on them. They stacked four high and, real close together in them bunks, but, the people on top got sick -- well that's, you know --

(KMH) - Uh oh.

(RGR) - Yeah, but then that -- it started smelling, you know, the ships --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Like them holes started smelling quite a lot.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - And then, we had part of a typhoon and slowed the, slowed it down, going to, Japan. It took quite a while to get there, a little longer than normal, because of the typhoon.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Roy, what were you thinking? I mean I just try to think, a kid who grew up in Kansas, land locked Kansas, and then finds himself first flying around and then taking off on a ship, for, however long!

(RGR) - Well, I don't know. I just, you know at that age -- oh you still don't think much about stuff. I it takes, I think, you know -- that's why, probably the military likes younger people because they do, you know, they just -- they, they kind of, accept things as

(KMH) - Yup. About how long did it take you to get to Japan?

(RGR) - I think it was like maybe 13 days, almost two weeks.

(KMH) - Hum, and then what? What'd you think when you, stepped off the . . .

(RGR) - Well, one thing I did think was -- see my oldest brother was in China fighting the Japanese. This was roughly six years later . . .

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - But, I was, you know, going into Japan was fighting the Chinese.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And I know I -- that did go through my mind, you know -- said hey, that's what happened there, you know, but --

(KMH) - Uh hum. That is remarkable. Where did you say, I thought I wrote it down, but I didn't. Where were you? In Japan then?

(RGR) - Yokota Air Base. It's still there. Y-O-K-O-T-A. It's not really too far from Tokyo, pretty close to Tokyo.

(KMH) - Okay.

(RGR) - And I was there for, really, I think. . . People who were married you know, like I told. You know, I was stationed with Harold Ott there.

(KMH) - Oh. No, I didn't know that.

(RGR) - Yeah.

(KMH) - Huh.

(RGR) - But I stayed there. I was there before he came a little bit, and, since he was already married to Virginia, well, he left, you know, quicker than I did.

(KMH) - Did you know he was going there, or he just showed up one day?

(RGR) - No, I didn't know him at the time.

(KMH) - Oh, I see.

(RGR) - Yeah.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - It's just, you know --

(KMH) - Was he from Kansas?

(RGR) - Well, he was from southeast Kansas, and I don't know how, you know, but I think he'd been out. He'd been out here working or something.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And --

(KMH) - Wow, were there other people that you met during that process that were from Kansas, either that you knew or you met?

(RGR) - Well, I -- there was a station, a base that was close to mine. There was a person I went to school with, a friend of mine from school who was stationed there, and, so we were able to get together on occasion.

(KMH) - Uh hum. What did your, your parents and your family think about you signing up and going to Japan?

(RGR) - Well, I think they just kind of accepted that too, 'cuz that's what -- I know, I had a cousin that was killed in World War II. You know, they understood that that was part of what you was doing.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And people accepted the fact that it was probably necessary.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Whether it was or not, I don't know, but, really, they ended up with a truce and I guess we're still at war with Korea.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And, it so happens, I have a son, in South Korea now. He's working as a, for a company that is maintaining airplanes for the Army.

(KMH) - Hum, hum. So were you ever in Korea? Or what did you do when you were in Japan then? What was the --

(RGR) - Well I was, I was radio maintenance, was in radio maintenance and so --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - I just, all the time I was there, I worked with a big transmitter station.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know, huge transmitters, send stuff back to the United States and other places.

(KMH) - Hum, did all of the communications from Korea go through Japan then?

(RGR) - Uh, quite a bit of it; not all of it.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - They -- Korea was like all, all of, most of the bomb, strike stuff -- went through either, either Yokota or they had a, there was two B-29 units flying missions over Korea. One was at Yokota and the other was, oh, Okinawa.

(KMH) - Oh, yes. Did you -- Did you do support for the bombers too? I mean the radio?

(RGR) - Yes.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - That was a part of that.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - A part of it, and then they -- occasionally, you know, they, one of those would, crash, you know, coming in from where they got shot up in Korea. But not often. They didn't really lose a lot of them, but they did lose one occasionally.

(KMH) - Hum, so what was a typical day like for you?

(RGR) - Uh, pardon?

(KMH) - Where'd you live?

(RGR) - Oh it started out living kind of, wasn't, you know, an old Japanese, World War II barracks. Kind of, they even had tents, but they were able not to use them, but then later on they built new barracks, which was pretty nice.

(KMH) - Hum, so did you sleep in like a dorm room with a bunch of guys or did you have private rooms?

(RGR) - No, that, that was -- there again, that was still close enough to World War II that that was all they had. Big, big, you know, people living in double bunks, all lined up. You've probably seen it.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - But that's how, you know, people lived. You had what the military calls a latrine which was a bathroom. It just had a big bathroom, you know, and everybody, you know, one of those big showers with several shower heads, four or five or six shower heads in it.

(KMH) - Uh hum, was that were that toothbrush came in handy?

(RGR) - Well . . .

(KMH) - For cleaning.

(RGR) - Yeah, I, I, but that's one thing you see, that in Japan, we didn't have to do any cleaning.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - But they hired, we hired, you know --

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - Hired Japanese to . . .

(KMH) - Oh, oh.

(RGR) - Clean the barracks up and everything.

(KMH) - Huh, who cooked?

(RGR) - Well, they still had the mess hall.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - They had big mess halls that they, on World War II type deals where they, you know, probably served several hundred people in them.

(KMH) - What kind of food? Western food or?

(RGR) - No, it was -- I never did, a lot of people disliked that food but I never -- I thought it was always pretty good. They served like, mostly, those big mess halls, served mostly scrambled eggs.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - They did, you know -- there's not much of a choice to make, and then overseas, you've got quite a few dry eggs which -- and then the milk over there was all recombined they called it.

(KMH) - Um, uh hum.

(RGR) - Milk powder, then.

(KMH) - What --

(RGR) - Then they always had C and K rations. If you didn't like the food there, why you could eat them.

(KMH) - Did you have much fresh produce and stuff like that?

(RGR) - Oh, that? Not a lot there because of the Oriental system of agriculture. They didn't really use much fresh produce. Throughout the Orient they used human waste.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - For-- and any other kind of waste as fertilizer for their vegetable crops and whatever.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Uh hum.

(RGR) - So, there is a chance that you could pick up some bugs that are not --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - -- conducive to happiness.

(KMH) - (Laughter) Huh, so then you had -- after breakfast, what'd you do?

(RGR) - Well then I worked shift work all the time, so, it was not -- you know -- you didn't eat. Well it wasn't like the farm out there where you got up at a certain time and I worked whatever they assigned you to work. They run it 24 hours a day.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - And . . .

(KMH) - And then were you like repairing equipment? Or monitoring or . . .

(RGR) - Yes, repairing and monitoring both.

(KMH) - Okay. So you might have to go to different parts of the base, or was it in the shop?

(RGR) - No. It was all one. In fact it was way off in a sandbag building on the outskirts of the base.

(KMH) - Huh, so you just went to the same place and they brought the equipment in?

(RGR) - Same place every time.

(KMH) - Huh, okay. So at work did -- were there security issues or were cryptographers in the same building or they were someplace else?

(RGR) - No, they were someplace else.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - And this is what -- They scattered the communications all throughout the base with the transmitter section being on one side of the base, and receiver section on the other side.

(KMH) - Oh. So what happened after work?

(RGR) - Well, they'd read, do whatever you wanted to do. You'd go to town -- the Japanese towns around.

(KMH) - Uh hum. What was that like?

(RGR) - Well, it's typical kind of Oriental towns that had bars and places like that, you know.

(KMH) - So you're not going to tell us your bar stories? (Laughter)

(RGR) - Well, I probably ought to leave that out!

(KMH) - Oh, I see. You don't want to get that down on paper! So you weren't ever under attack, but it sounds like you had sandbag safety things.

(RGR) - Yes. That was -- well it's just the way they done that, that they . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - They did have some, some people that was against, you know, the, United States being in the conflict with the Koreans and the Chinese.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - But, but, this was the Japanese. They all had -- they handled all that.

(KMH) - Did the -- was there resentment of the Americans there? From, on the part of the Japanese since it was so soon after the war?

(RGR) - I never -- really, there probably was, but they kept it to themselves.

(KMH) - Huh.

(RGR) - I'm sure there was resentment. They -- I don't see how there couldn't be.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Was the area you were in rural or was it just another town or kind -- you said close to Tokyo.

(RGR) - It's close to Tokyo and . . .

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - That's -- anything close to Tokyo is not completely rural.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Even though it has --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) – Farmers. I mean, it's pretty heavily populated.

(KMH) - How did you get around there?

(RGR) – Trains.

(KMH) – Trains.

(RGR) - Or bicycles. You could --

(KMH) - Oh yeah?

(RGR) - buy bicycles and ride around.

(KMH) – Did you bring anything home that -- any souvenirs or send anything home? Anything like that?

(RGR) - Well, I was able to send dishes. Most people did send dishes, and then -- and that was probably the main thing that people sent home from . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Japan was dishes and, sometimes you know, similar little trinket things.

(RGR) – That the Japanese built.

(KMH) - What'd your mom think while you were there. How'd you communicate with your family?

(RGR) - Just by letter.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - I don't think she was terribly bothered by it, you know. There again, that's kind of figured that that was the way it was.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Did you get letters from home?

(RGR) – Yes.

(KMH) - Care packages?

(RGR) - Oh, not often. Maybe occasionally. A lot of things at that time was, like they'd send cookies. They was pretty well crunched up by the time they got there.

(KMH) - What about celebrating holidays?

(RGR) - Ah, there again, the military basically is not, at least the part I know, not are not holiday oriented.

(KMH) – Uh -- hum.

(RGR) - Although they do give time off for Christmas and stuff like that, but they still run it. You know, they run it during 24/7 is what . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - What they, some of that is . . .

(KMH) - When you look back on that time, do you -- how do you feel about it?

(RGR) - Well, I enjoyed it. I really did kind of. I didn't mind it at all.

(KMH) - Uh hum, have you been back to Japan since then?

(RGR) - Yes, I've been back several times. In fact I, as a matter of fact, I left Japan in 1954. Then it was a little over ten years later, before I got back and I opened the left window up on the airplane and you could tell you was in Japan, you know, because of that using human waste to --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - -- to fertilize their . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know, I guess the closest thing you could say it smells like an old outdoor john, basically.

(KMH) – Hum.

(RGR) - Like the country side did.

(KMH) - Uh hum; uh hum.

(RGR) - And that's true a lot of Orientals did that.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - They did that.

(KMH) – What -- Did you go back to the base or just go back to visit Japan?

(RGR) - No, I -- later on, I was flying in and out of Japan.

(KMH) – Oh, okay.

(RGR) - But, on -- you know --

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - Go to Southeast Asia.

(KMH) - Uh huh. So this was kind of like a phase of your life that was like, maybe the, introductory level, would you say?

(RGR) - Well, I didn't consider it that. I just, you know, it was just a -- I went. I did get out and went to the jucco and then, I applied for Aviation Cadets and was accepted and . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - I was able to get through flying school without . . .

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - . . . getting washed out.

(KMH) - So in '54, the conflict was over.

(RGR) - Well the truce was signed.

(KMH) - Oh yeah.

(RGR) - In '53.

(KMH) - Okay and then did your higher up come to you and say sign up again or you're out. You're ready to go home or . . .

(RGR) - Well, no. No. They could have. I could've, re-enlisted again, but they was, you know that, after every war they, they built up, build up, and then try to, you know then, kind of go back down, except they didn't, in actuality, uh, we would've had a lot more problems in the Korean War, had it not been for World War II.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And having all kinds of equipment over there.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Because we, the United States was, when peace was, had arrived and at the end of World War II and they didn't really have that much stuff to fight with, really --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Then, they didn't have that many people in the service. It's, that's why they recalled people and tried to build up real quick. I know like, like B-29s they, they, most of them, had been, you know stored in Arizona. Then they had to, they got a lot of them,

a lot of air planes out of storage. And then they had to run factories in Japan that refurbished tanks, trucks, jeeps, all kinds of stuff like that.

(KMH) – Hum.

(RGR) - That they, had stashed around in, either Japan or on, some of the Pacific Islands, they hadn't, hadn't got around to dumping into the ocean yet

(KMH) – Hum. Wow, so '54 -- you came back home, or did you move straight to Dodge?

(RGR) - No, I still had, I spent like six months in the service after I came back from Japan, at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma which is just south of Dodge.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know, I got out and enrolled in college and spent two years at the community college in Dodge, then one year in Emporia, and then I went into Aviation Cadets.

(KMH) - And how'd that happen?

(RGR) - Well I just took some tests and I qualified for that.

(KMH) - What made you want to fly?

(RGR) – Well, I always kind of wanted to fly.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And in fact I flew some. My brother, oldest brother had an airplane, and I -- a kid, you know . . .

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - High school, so I had flown in that and had took lessons in it over in Dodge.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - So I had flown some back when I was a teenager.

(KMH) - Was that very common?

(RGR) - What?

(KMH) – To fly or have a brother who had a plane?

(RGR) - Well I don't know. For Kalvesta area up there, for some reason, they had -- in fact Garden City and Dodge City airports kind of made fun of it. They called it Kalvesta Air Farce. (Laughter)

(KMH) – Oh! (Laughter)

(RGR) – But several planes up there. At that time they, later on the bankers kinda got -- but they were good, you know, for checking cattle. They're really nice.

(KMH) – Oh. That's interesting, that something that would be practical to check cattle might turn into a career for ya'.

(RGR) - Well, I didn't do the checking, but they used, they used the --

(KMH) - Uh hum. Uh hum.

(RGR) - Go out and you still need the -- or you can kind of see from there is that they're there. You can't tell if they're sick or in --

(KMH) - Oh, sure.

(RGR) - So you still need to either --

(KMH) – Yeah.

(RGR) - Go ride a horse out there and look at them or --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) – Or --

(KMH) - Get a --

(RGR) - Take a vehicle out and look at them or something.

(KMH) - Huh. So you spend a couple of years. How did you pick Emporia?

(RGR) - My sister went to Emporia.

(KMH) – Ah.

(RGR) - I thought I'd, you know --

(KMH) - Did you have a goal in mind?

(RGR) - Well, I was gonna' -- I started out, I was gonna be an engineer, and then I went into teaching, and that's why -- I didn't know if I wanted to be a teacher or not.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - I ended up getting a license to teach science and math. Never did do much of it, but I had a license for it.

(KMH) - Hum, I hear they're looking for a math teacher. (Laughs)

(RGR) - Well.

(KMH) - Is it too late, Roy?

(RGR) - Yup, they don't want me.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Okay. So let's kind of move forward into that area then when you got into the Cadets. You stated Emporia and then you were in the air cadets there? Or did you --

(RGR) - No. No, no. I went there again.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - It was a deal they had. You had the pre-flights, pre-flying. I went pre-flight back in Lackland.

(KMH) - Okay.

(RGR) - And then through primary flying school in Hondo, Texas, which was about -- to the, west of San Antonio, about, I don't know, 50-60 miles, west of that, and then basic flying training was at Reece Air Force base, at Lubbock, Texas.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - Which Reece is now closed, but as I was telling you, to regress back a little bit, the ship that I came back from Japan on . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Was the same ship my oldest brother went overseas on in 1943.

(KMH) - Oh my goodness, you just practically followed in his footsteps, didn't you?

(RGR) - Yeah, yeah, but it also was one that I, they, had a raid on a prisoner of war camp that they got in the Philippines. And they put them prisoners on the U.S.S. Anderson was the name of the ship, and brought them back -- so you know.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - I was able to see that on the -- they showed that on the TV sometimes.

(KMH) - Oh my.

(RGR) - That ship was the same one I was on for, it was probably ten days it literally floated.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - Was . . .

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - You know, coming back was quicker than going over, so --

(KMH) - Do you keep in touch with any of those people that you knew in that, from Japan, Yokota?

(RGR) - Well there was -- just Harold Ott was all. I kind of kept in touch with him. Otherwise, why, I don't. I do keep in touch with some of the people I was in the Bomb Wings with and flying school. We had, you know, reunions.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - I am in touch with some of them.

(KMH) - So, if you fast forward to Lubbock then, what happened after Lubbock? Any adventures in your flight training?

(RGR) - Oh it was just, you know. It was, kind of a, tough course. It's, they ended up, they washed out over half the people, or over half the people, that started it, but after I was commissioned as Second Lieutenant assigned to 310 Bombardment Wing at Schilling, up at Salina, and a KC-97 co-pilot.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - I spent three years there and then I went to KC-135s which was a new airplane at the time at Blytheville Air Force Base, Arkansas. I spent four years there and then went to C-141s. Excuse me, C-141s at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, and, from there to Libya till we got kicked out of there. So, and I was supposed to come back to the United States, but I got an in country Vietnam assignment.

(KMH) - Wow, what year was that?

(RGR) - 1969.

(KMH) - Hum, so you went from Libya to Vietnam.

(RGR) - Yes, yes.

(KMH) - Goodness, were you married?

(RGR) - Yes, over there. I, my wife was, they -- we were supposed to be accompanied over there, but they was having trouble with the Arabs at that time, so she was delayed for like several months, and they wouldn't let anybody live off the base anymore, which they did before. They brought in a bunch of trailers from Algeria or somewhere from a base over there, small trailers and --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Set them up and that's what we lived in which was right on the Mediterranean Sea. I could throw a rock into it from my trailer.

(KMH) - Wow, wow. Now how was that different from Japan?

(RGR) - Well that's, a completely different country.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - There's no doubt about that. You know Japan is kind of wet and humid, to a point and, Libya is about the most severe dessert there is in parts of it.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Uh hum.

(RGR) - But I started out, and when we got to Libya, well I was supposed to fly the base flight, C-54 which was General Douglas MacArthur's old air plane.

(KMH) - Um.

(RGR) - It was nice, you know. Hopefully somebody put in a museum somewhere, but they, probably didn't. And then they run short of seaplane pilots, so I got to fly seaplanes for a while.

(KMH) - Oh, I have to say, that just amazes me that, landlocked people would end up flying seaplanes.

(RGR) - Well that's it. I didn't, have much choice in it. I didn't really.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - Want to do that one, but they said, you do it. I hadn't been kind of scared for a long time in the airplane. That airplane kind of hardest landing -- seaplane landings are hard.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - They're not like landing here on, on land.

(KMH) - What's hard about it? I mean just controlling that large of . . .

(RGR) - No, just, when, actually you think water would have a lot of give, but it doesn't. You see the airplanes have all these old struts and stuff like that.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - And see -a seaplane goes, you know -- it stops when it hits the water, when it comes down and hits the water --

(KMH) - Rather abruptly?

(RGR) - Rather abruptly, yes.

(KMH) - Wow

(RGR) - You think of water being soft, but at a certain speed, it's not.

(KMH) - How did you learn to do it?

(RGR) - Well they, well it's just, you know, when you fly airplanes, you're expected to be able to fly about anything that they give ya' or assign you to.

(KMH) - Did you ever fly as a hobby then?

(RGR) - Oh, not much. My wife didn't like to fly, so she, you know that kind of -- but our son, when he started flying, well she would fly with him, but she didn't really like flying with me!

(Laughter)

(RGR) - She thought I was dangerous, so --

(KMH) - It was those seaplane landings! Let me ask you this, when you were in all these different places were there sites that you took in while you were there? Or things that you saw that you remember specifically?

(RGR) - Oh yeah. Well, see one thing about flying big jet airplanes, you get to go to a lot of places, I think.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - I landed airplanes in like three dozen countries.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - And it doesn't really take a, long time to get there, you know.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Like, one time it took -- well the, old KC-97 was a propeller driven airplane. It took a long time to get, but it was fairly fast for a propeller driven airplane.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - Jet airplanes flew twice as fast, so --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Then you know, one of the things I tell people -- see we used to go to Spain from Blytheville, Arkansas, and, it's closer to fly up over Greenland than it is to fly straight east to Spain. They were about on the same --

(KMH) - Wow, wow.

(RGR) - You know, latitude.

(KMH) - Wow, wow. What's the most memorable moment you've had in an airplane?

(RGR) - Well I don't know. I had some in the sky, you know. The KC-97s tended to lose engines once in a while but that was kind of certain times I, actually kind of wondered if the airplane was gonna stay airborne or not, you know.

(KMH) - Wow, did you ever have to do an emergency landing?

(RGR) - Well yeah, we done quite a few emergency landings at the -- The Boeing for a long time had, crank down gears, you know, they --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - On their propeller driven airplanes and the co-pilot got to crank the right main gear down. It took 105 turns on a crane to --

(KMH) - Oh, my gosh.

(RGR) - Get it cranked down the right gear, right main --

(KMH) - Did you see your life flash before you? (Laughter)

(RGR) - No, I never really did.

(KMH) - You just figured it'd get there?

(RGR) - Yeah.

(KMH) - Mechanical, um? Did you have a, favorite? I mean, when you look back on it, the favorite base that you --

(RGR) - Well yeah. That's -- I was -- overall I liked the KC-135 and I liked the base it was on, which was the old 97th Bomb Wing which had really quite a history to it.

(KMH) - Where was that?

(RGR) - Well it was at Blytheville, Arkansas, at the time.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Had B52Gs and, and KC135s, which they were -- well I, hate to be political but in February they just got done chopping up all the B52Gs.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - And you know, threw their SALT thing and I think that, maybe that was a mistake to do that.

(KMH) - Hum. Just part of the arms reduction, is that what it is?

(RGR) - Yes.

(KMH) - Uh huh. So I thought they'd just like warehoused them, but they just chopped them up, actually?

(RGR) - No, those treaties, they have a big, big axe thing that actually chops them up and the problem is the United States is doing that, and Russia, they don't have some trouble. They're supposed to chop a bunch of their bombers up, but they didn't do what they say, as far as I know. They disassembled them and then now they're putting them back together again, is what I'm saying.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - Probably not a --

(KMH) - Huh.

(RGR) - But the -- all those airplanes are, KC135s is what they have at McConnell . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And that's probably some of them that I've flown, but they're a really old air plane and so is the B52s.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Hum, so what did you, then how did you get from Libya to fly to Vietnam?

(RGR) - Well, yeah. We took a chartered airplane they had.

Uh hum.

(RGR) - We went back with -- from Libya, those charters then, they had an airplane that had a lot of room, you know, with the seats wide. . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And we went to -- from Libya to Rhein-Main in Germany and then they put a box --base board seats then you got to put them real close together like you fly now, you know.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know, kind of packed in like sardines and then I had about a, I think, a month's leave or something. Then I went to San Francisco and then I had to go -- I went -- they sent me through jungle survival school before Vietnam. So I went to the Philippine Islands. There's something that was interesting to me, that I talked to my grandmother about and she knew about it, sort of, which is kind of strange, but where the survival school was, Philippine Islands, they had these little Aborigines people out there that are -- I didn't know they, they didn't live in villages or nothing. They just, you know, lived out there in the jungle.

(KMH) - Really?

(RGR) - Yes.

(KMH) - They were there when you were there? When you encountered them in the jungle?

(RGR) - Well they actually, what they done, they paid them in rice if they caught you.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - You know that was supposed to be a part of the survival and the escaping invasion courses.

(KMH) - Uh huh. Did they catch ya'?

(RGR) - No, they never did catch me, but they caught a lot of people. And then a lot of people just, you know, when they towards the end, they just, gave them some chips. I probably should've done that.

(KMH) - Huh.

(RGR) - We had little white aluminum deals and then a red one if you got in trouble out there, where they could get help for you.

(KMH) - Oh. What was it like when you came back here? Did it, was it different? How were you treated? What was the . . .

(RGR) - Well I didn't, particularly -- I'd never go back to San Francisco again.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Because that's, all those people out there, spitting and yelling and, you know, all the hippies.

(KMH) - Uh huh. What year was that?

(RGR) - Uh that was again -- was 1969.

(KMH) - Uh huh. What made you pick San Francisco?

(RGR) - Well that's just where they came in to.

(KMH) - Oh I see, that's where they took ya'?

(RGR) - I come in -- they was commercial, they --

(KMH) - I see.

(RGR) - You know --

(KMH) - I thought maybe you went there on R&R or something.

(RGR) - Oh no, I was --

(KMH) - Yeah?

(RGR) - Didn't -- but I always liked San Francisco, but I --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know, that was, different deal.

(KMH) - Did you encounter a lot of that during that time?

(RGR) - Well the only place I ever encountered it was in San Francisco.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - But a lot of places was mad at the war and they kind of blamed the people who was in it for --

(KMH) - Uh hum. So '69 you went from San Francisco to where?

(RGR) - Uh, I got out in 1969 again.

(KMH) - Okay. Well, when were you in Vietnam?

(RGR) - Uh, 1969.

(KMH) - Oh, so you went there and then to -- then out?

(RGR) - Yeah, after Vietnam. Well I released while I was -- released from active duty they called it then.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Well, where were you in Vietnam, and what -- that was in '69?

(RGR) - Yes.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - I actually, you know, in '68 that was when I went through survival school.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - But they, I only spent like nine months in Vietnam, and I was mostly at -- I was assigned to what was Operating Location One they called it at the Joint Search and Rescue Center.

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - And this place they called Monkey Mountain which was north of the Grand, Vietnam.

(KMH) - So is that what you did? Search and rescue?

(RGR) - Yes. I didn't actually do it. I just, you know, called on radios and stuff to . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - For the people to do it.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Did you do any radio repair and stuff like that too, or you were solely --

(RGR) - No, no. No, no. That was after, when that, I never done that again after. Except I kind of fooled with, you know, radios and TVs a little bit on my own, but . . .

(KMH) - Yeah, huh. So you came out in '69 from Vietnam, went to San Francisco, then where?

(RGR) - Uh, well I was, got released from active duty, went back to Emporia, went to school . . .

(KMH) - Okay.

(RGR) - And then, I just, went to the Air Guard in Topeka as a base operations officer.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - That's where, then I went back to flying old airplanes again.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know, that's, oh -- but they were pretty nice. In fact some of them were really excellent airplanes.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And then well in 1973, I got an assignment to Air Command Staff College at Montgomery, Alabama, which is a nice school but it's a general-want-to-be school. That's what it is.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - It was, you know, for the era, that's pretty nice.

(KMH) - What was your rank then?

(RGR) - Major.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - They, they -- one of the things that's changed is that I was able to fly two new airplanes, high dollar airplanes actually, and now, hardly nobody gets to. I mean they don't hardly build any new airplanes anymore.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Uh hum.

(RGR) - Which, the old KC135 that I flew is still flying, probably will be for another 15 or 20 years.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - Which makes it possible for getting down to the point to where people who flew them originally, their, great grandchildren could be flying them.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Wow, wow. So the, your whole service career really did have an influence all the way across your life.

(RGR) - Well, it did.

(KMH) - Uh huh. So is your son in the service?

(RGR) - No, he, he works for a contractor.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - He spent, I think ten years in the Army.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - Well, four in the Army and six in the Army Guard here at Dodge.

(KMH) - Uh hum. What's your take away? What'd you, when you look back on it, how do you feel about that whole period of your life?

(RGR) - Well I, I, you know I thought I was doing some, you know, real things, a little bit, you know, kind of, but I kind of wonder if it was worth it or not.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - Any of it.

(KMH) - In terms of what?

(RGR) - Well in the terms of the way things are going at this time.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Maybe I'm just pessimistic, but, it doesn't look like nothing ever got solved; that's for sure.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Well, certainly if you look Korea, Japan – no, maybe not Japan -- Korea, Vietnam, Libya.

(KMH) - Yes.

(RGR) - Yeah. And I probably was then you know -- I met Gadhafi a couple of times.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - I might be the only person in South West Kansas that --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - -- ever met him.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Wow. Yeah, if you had to sum it up, what'd you, what do you think was your most profound understanding, view point, lesson from all that?

(RGR) - Well the -- I think probably is that, things change rather rapidly, hopefully for the better but sometimes for the worse and people that -- the country needs to be aware of that. I think, if they could --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - I mean -- it's -- now then there's a lot of political correctness. You're not supposed to say things, and I'm not into political correctness, and I can and will say it, that, that, the Middle East is gonna, is gonna be, it's going to be a big problem for this country.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And, I mean that the United States has always been kind of on the negotiation, uh, thing, in my opinion. That's part of the country I've been in. Those people do not, they're not interested in negotiating.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - So, what does that leave ya'?

(KMH) - Uh hum. Uh hum. Do you participate in any veterans groups or things like that anymore?

(RGR) - Well I, belonged to the American Legion.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - After Vietnam, I quit all of it. You know I didn't have any -- I was mad at the American Legion and VFW too, so --

(KMH) - Oh. Was that comeback from there difficult? The back -- when you got back to Kansas?

(RGR) - Well it -- there was. By going to school, it was probably one of the -- but it probably was different then. I mean, there was a lot of people that -- but, if you had -- went, took a class. I had a good adviser there and they said -- just pull you out of the class, if they figured out because of being a Vietnam veteran, they was, going to flunk ya' and some would, you know.

(KMH) - Really?

(RGR) - Yes.

(KMH) - Wow. Huh, but the adviser kind of watched that?

(RGR) - Yes. They had a -- I had a very, two very good advisers at that school, when I was there. The head of the science department had been there for years, pretty well, a person by the name of Dr. Cram, and, then I went into the business school there and head of that was pretty good too, so --

(KMH) - Hum. What degree did you end up with?

(RGR) - Well I got bachelors in science in education and then I never did. I was working on an MBA when I got that assignment to Command and Staff College.

(KMH) - What'd you do after that?

(RGR) - After Command and Staff? Why I moved to Topeka.

(KMH) - Hum.

(RGR) - I lived in Topeka for, for oh let's see, three years I guess. We moved to Garden City.

(KMH) - Uh hum. And what'd you do in Garden City?

(RGR) - Um, I farmed some and substitute taught and taught school for a while.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - My wife, she always taught, you know. I mean she got a Master's degree in special education, so --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - It was, you know, she could get a job really easy anywhere.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Uh hum.

(RGR) - I could too, but that didn't really -- I really didn't, I wasn't a teacher so much.

(KMH) - Uh hum. When did you move to Cimarron?

(RGR) - 1999, I think.

(KMH) - Huh, so you retired then? Kind of?

(RGR) - Well yes. I was retired out of the military when --

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - We moved.

(KMH) - Now you mentioned SAC. Did you say you were in that for a bit?

(RGR) - Seven years.

(KMH) - Oh, I missed that part. Was that out of Topeka though?

(RGR) - No, this was -- Schilling was a Strategic Air Command base and --

(KMH) - Oh.

(RGR) - So was Blytheville, Arkansas.

(KMH) - Huh. Did you fly one of the SAC planes then?

(RGR) - Yes, that's --

(KMH) - Now tell us about that a little bit. I think I know a little bit, 'cuz I think my father-in-law was a SAC pilot too.

(RGR) - Well SAC was one thing that was different. You know the other commands-- a lot of them, like, put your name in the paper. SAC didn't want your name anywhere.

(KMH) - Right.

(RGR) - They wanted, you know, just -- if they started getting local paper, they didn't want, anything publicized, which may or may not be good. I don't know. I, that's open to debate, but they had the, you know SAC kept things -- you know, they recently -- they've had problems with like not taking care of nuclear weapons and stuff.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - That doesn't happen under SAC.

(KMH) - Now what was it? What was the purpose of it?

(RGR) - Well, SAC was, at one time, the -- had all the nuclear weapons. And then later on the Navy got the nuclear submarines with nuclear weapons on them.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - But for years and years, SAC was the only one that had charge of nuclear weapons.

(KMH) - So did they send people down to those silos? Or the missiles, were those the strategic -

(RGR) - Yeah, that's --

(KMH) - -- missiles so you went and --

(RGR) - That was Strategic Air Command part of it.

(KMH) - Did you, was that your job?

(RGR) - No. I was, I was a pilot, so, I didn't . . .

(KMH) - Uh huh. Didn't they fly continuously?

(RGR) - Yes, at times.

(KMH) - Uh huh. So I, I understood there was like a Strategic Air Command plane in the air all the time. So one took off --

(RGR) - There were several of them, yeah.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - See that's out at Blytheville I got on some of those missions. They were 24 hours and 30 minutes long.

(KMH) - Really?

(RGR) - That's a long time to be in an airplane.

(KMH) - I guess. I wouldn't -- that seems like that'd be dangerous -- falling asleep and --

(RGR) - Well.

(KMH) - How many years did they do that? Do you know?

(RGR) - Well I don't. The airborne alert started probably about the Cuban Missile Crisis.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - That's one thing in a KC135 mark, they used to give out -- SAC used to give out -- letters of commendation they called them. And, see my crew was the first KC135 crew to make the turn inside Diamond Head. We got a letter of commendation for that.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - There was noise abatement -- which sits -- that's -- it really is not, not a thing that's -- I mean the air plane would do it. It just -- but to take a 150 ton airplane off and make a turn with it right after it gets off the ground, it's different.

(KMH) - Pretty, pretty good feat, huh?

(RGR) - Yeah.

(KMH) - I wonder if it was all that seaplane experience! (Laughter)

(RGR) - No, no. That was before the seaplane, but --

(KMH) - Oh. Oh.

(RGR) - But it's just a -- they said it couldn't be done and then, during the Cuban Missile Crisis we had to refuel a RB47 about twelve miles off the coast of Cuba.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - And, I, you know, it's kind of a fun mission.

(KMH) - Kind of fun?

(RGR) - Well I mean, but I --

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - It was just something that you didn't do all the time. That's different.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Did you know before those missions that you were going to be doing them? Like did they say next week we could have a mission? Or was it like, go now?

(RGR) - Well some of them was go now and others were planned, but, you know SAC, what SAC people do, they spend a lot of time on alert.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - That's what, you know --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - About half your time is spent, on alert.

(KMH) - And that's -- then what, what are you doing when you're on alert?

(RGR) - Well the, they get all the airplanes off in 15 minutes. That was their deal.

(KMH) - Wow.

(RGR) - The ones that were on alert . . .

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - That's kind of a fun thing in flying is when they had like they what they call a "MITO" [*minimum interval takeoff*] or MITO interval take offs.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - When they run all them airplanes off at one time, that's --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - That's a different deal.

(KMH) - Hum. What year, range was this?

(RGR) - Well I was in Blytheville from '62 to '66.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - 1962, '66.

(KMH) - Did you do refueling in air refueling?

(RGR) - Yes. Yes, we did.

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - Then I was, you know, was -- well it just, you know, they picked you then, to --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - To fly third pilot on what they called a "chrome dome" mission. It was the 24 hour Airborne mission.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - They had a southern and a northern. The ones on the southern would, went from United States to across the Mediterranean. That's what they had -- KC135s at both Madrid, Torrejón, Madrid, and Seville -- were on the Seville air, Spain route to refuel the B52s.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And then they would go, I don't know, back up, over in the Mediterranean in orbit. But the B52s, one of the reasons they was a problem, they had a lot of range, and they could just penetrate like Russia. They went to war for many about anywhere they wanted to which --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Presents a problem for, for, the other little, you know, refueled quite a bit because we had high speed booms on our airplane. You know, some of them didn't. Some tanker squadrons didn't -- was the B58s, but the one of those things that was their problem, was that they had -- they couldn't really -- There were corridor limited, so to speak. They couldn't --

(KMH) - Uh hum. So these were the ones they just chopped up?

(RGR) - No. This was a B58 -- a supersonic --

(KMH) - Oh, okay.

(RGR) - It was a supersonic bomber.

(KMH) - Okay.

(RGR) - No, these was the B52Gs was what they had at Blytheville, and they lost two of them during -- when they was bombing Vietnam.

(KMH) - Did you see combat in Vietnam or the remnants of combat with the rescue missions?

(RGR) - Well, Vietnam was to a point combat everywhere.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know that was one of the things with Vietnam, that it was never probably in a lot of occasions, you wasn't in that much danger, but you was never safe, and all these wars in the Mid-East are the same way.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - You know, no safe spot, when you're --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - A little bit of a -- you know it wears on people.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - When you have to be --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Careful and aware of what's going on around you all the time.

(KMH) - Uh hum. Anything we haven't talked about?

(RGR) - Well, I think I've talked, you know, about everything. I --

(KMH) - Well, I sure have enjoyed it. I thank you very much. It's going to be a good interview, isn't it?

(RGR) - Uh hum. They -- one thing I might talk about was when, during jungle survival school --

(KMH) - Uh hum?

(RGR) - When they had all the snakes on exhibit. That was in South East Asia --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And they had a little Philippine cobra. You know, it's -- every time they walked by it popped the glass you know and I was out there. You know, it was kind of some grass. Trying to get some sleep and it was silent, you know. It was sometimes -- and I

could hear a mouse or something over there, and pretty soon it went “Eek!” and killed him. A rodent jumped across me. It run right across me, so that was -- well, what the heck is it running over there? (Laughter)

(KMH) - Oh no! Did it try to eat you?

(RGR) - No, no. But I was thinking about that little Philippine cobra that was . . .

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - Was -- he was -- he didn't like people, so --

(KMH) - Uh huh.

(RGR) - So he was, you know, trying to --

(KMH) - Get the mouse.

(RGR) - -- pop every person that walked by.

(KMH) - Oh my gosh! Did you ever -- did you have to learn to eat snakes?

(RGR) - Oh, we ate some snakes. There again in flying school -- had a little survival school in Texas.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And then, see this was, I'm not -- They tell you like in survival school not to wait. You know, to start eating that stuff. Supposedly it was, with few exceptions, you know other than carrion and stuff like that. You could eat about anything that any other animal can eat.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - Which that gets into some stuff, you know --

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - But you can eat bugs and stuff like that, and . . .

(KMH) - Uh hum. Did you?

(RGR) - No, I never did do it because I didn't -- I figured if I had to do it, I would.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - But they say, you know, don't wait till you get starved down before you start eating -- stuff like that.

(KMH) - Hum. Hum, are you an adventuresome eater?

(RGR) - Oh, I don't -- I will -- I like about any food. That's kind of amazing that --

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - In fact in one of the psychology classes or something that I took in college they asked about different foods and ended up -- about me and one other person -- we was the only person who had our hands up. Now they were just talking about cabbage, you know the, things that people eat.

(KMH) - Huh. Uh huh.

(RGR) - There's a lot of people who are kind of picky eaters on some things.

(KMH) - Uh hum.

(RGR) - And I never was. I mean it's just -- well I guess for one thing, my parents wouldn't let us be.

(KMH) - Oh yeah. They just made you eat what they put on the table?

(RGR) - Yeah, cooked turnips.

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - Cooked carrots. I didn't like them.

(Laughter)

(RGR) - But I love them now!

(KMH) - Well, thank you Roy. Okay. Kathleen Holt with Roy Reed and we are at the Cimarron City Library, on August 22, 2014.

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(KMH) - Oh yeah? Yeah.

(RGR) - That's kind of crazy that --

(KMH) - Yeah.

(RGR) - I like raw carrots but not cooked carrots.

(KMH) - Oh really? Wow. Yeah, parents have a lot to do with that I think. Spell that is it Koyota, or Yuka. Yukota. The air force base in Tokyo for me again, Y-O-K-O-T-A? K-O-T?

(RGR) - Yokota.

(KMH) - Okay. I wrote it down. I wrote, Koytota. Okay I got it – Good. Anything else?

(RGR) - Well that's it. That's – that's --

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