

ORAL MEMOIRS

OF

GARY TAYLOR

An interview conducted on

April 5, 2016

Interviewer: Christine Lamberson

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

“War Stories: West Texans and the Experience of War, World War I to the Present”

LEGAL STATUS: The oral memoirs of Gary Taylor are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on April 6, 2016.

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LAMBERSON: My name is Christine Lamberson, and it is April 5th, and I am in San Angelo doing a *War Stories* interview. So, what is your name?

TAYLOR: Gary L. Taylor.

LAMBERSON: And when and where were you born?

TAYLOR: Black River Falls, Wisconsin. July 1st, 1938.

LAMBERSON: And where did you grow up?

TAYLOR: Black River Falls, Wisconsin.

LAMBERSON: And how did you come to be in Texas?

TAYLOR: Through the military.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: I . . . I was in the Army National Guard when I was 16. And I went through training and stuff, you know, for basic training and the tanks. I had the MOS in the tanks. Then there was a bunch of us decided on New Year's Eve 1957 that we'd all join the military, the regular military. So, we went down to see the Army recruiter, and he wasn't there. So, one of the other guys—8 of us—one of the other guys was like, "The Air Force recruiter's over here. Let's go talk to him." So, we did. And of course, they promised all kinds of stuff, which never came true, but we all enlisted in the Air Force. And all of them put four years in except for two of us, and the two of us made a career out of it.

LAMBERSON: Okay. And so, where were you when you enlisted in the Air Force? Was that still in Wisconsin or were you in . . . ?

TAYLOR: Yes.

LAMBERSON: Okay. And when you were in the National . . . or when did you join the National Guard?

TAYLOR: I don't know exactly.

LAMBERSON: Or how old you were approximately?

TAYLOR: I was 16 years old.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: In '55.

LAMBERSON: And what motivated you to . . . okay. That . . . it was '55 when you joined the National Guard?

TAYLOR: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: And so, just a couple years later that you joined the Air Force.

TAYLOR: Right.

LAMBERSON: And what motivated you to want to enlist in either the National Guard or the regular military?

TAYLOR: Well, our hometown is a farm town. I didn't like farming. But the National Guard, you know, at that time it . . . it probably paid maybe \$30 a month. So, we was just looking for something to pay a little more money, and so that's why we all decided to enlist. And then we went to Minneapolis for induction. And then we went from there to San Antonio, Texas for basic training.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And I was wondering why they were sending me back to basic training after I'd already done Army basic training, which is kind of funny in a way because it's a lot less strenuous and stuff than the Army basic training.

LAMBERSON: Really? What was the training like?

TAYLOR: Mainly marching, you know? Classroom stuff and marching and calisthenics and stuff like that. Make sure you was fit. And of course, we went out for training, for weapons training and stuff, you know . . . and stuff like that. But mainly it was just marching and stuff in San Antonio.

LAMBERSON: And then . . . can you give me just a little bit of an overview since you had a long career? Were you in the Air Force the whole time from there on out?

TAYLOR: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: Okay, so, long career in the Air Force. About your position: so, you started as enlisted. Did you stay as an enlisted rank? Did you become an officer at some point? What sort of arc was it?

TAYLOR: Yeah. No, it was all enlisted ranks.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: In the National Guard I made private first class. And then when I went into the Air Force, they gave me one stripe. I was an E-1 or E-2, and so I went through basic training, and then I got stationed in Lincoln, Nebraska, which is closed now. It's not there anymore. And I worked in civil engineering, mainly replacing windows, reroofing buildings, repairing buildings, and stuff like that. They called it "O.J.T." On the Job Training. So . . .

LAMBERSON: And how long were you there for?

TAYLOR: It was just . . . yeah, it was just routine work, you know, carpentry . . . carpentry work mainly is what it was. And then I met my wife, and I went to . . . 3 months after we got married I had to go to Thule, Greenland. I got . . . which is a remote site and security base, and then I come back 6 months later to see my daughter born. And then I had to go back for another 6 months. But . . . and it was all training, you know, for security. And it was still carpentry . . . all carpentry work, you know? And there I got my secret . . . Top Secret clearance because they needed a construction person up on security hill, up on the mountaintop. And so, I went up there. Whenever they needed some work, I'd go up there, do the work, and all the stuff like that.

LAMBERSON: And that was away from your family? They weren't there with you.

TAYLOR: No, that was remote. "Remote," that's what they call it, "a remote tour."

LAMBERSON: Okay, okay.

TAYLOR: But I made a lot of good friends up on the security hill. I did a lot of work for them. I got some citations from them, you know, stuff like that. And basically, there it was just carpentry-type work, you know? But they had . . . the weather up there was terrible. The best . . . the one summer I was there, it got up to 40 degrees.

LAMBERSON: Wow!

TAYLOR: And so, we—all of us G.I.s—were outside playing football in our T-shirts.

LAMBERSON: Celebrating the heat wave.

TAYLOR: Yeah. But we . . . and then we had . . . the weather comes in what they call "phases." They have a phase one, which you can go outside in a phase one. Phase two, you have to go out with somebody if you're going outside to the BX or commissary or something to buy stuff. Phase three, you stay in place wherever you're at.

LAMBERSON: Wow.

TAYLOR: You don't go nowhere. Well, I was in a phase three while I was there. And we was in there for a week in our barracks. Just happened to be in the barracks. And the barracks are . . . the walls are about a foot thick with little tiny windows in each room. Each room was, say, 9x9 or 9x10, you know, and two people. And we had bunk beds where we'd be . . . me and my roommate were both carpenters. We . . . we made our beds against the wall on each side, and then the closet . . . when you walk in the main door, was a little wall here with a rod for hanging clothes. No place to put your undergarments and socks and stuff like that, so we built our own. And we was pretty ingenious. And then in the back of the room, there was a wall came up and went back like that, and then that's where the window was. And that's where the vent was for heat. No such thing as air conditioning up there.

LAMBERSON: Didn't need it.

TAYLOR: And so, we closed that and built shelves all in that open space for our books and stuff like that. And we made a little table, fold-down table, on the wall. Whenever we wanted to write letters or do any kind of paperwork, we'd lift that table up with little legs. And that was right between the beds. And . . . but we closed the closet where the clothes hanger was. Closed that all and put doors up top, and then the center area was for hanging our clothes. And then we had double drawers on each side, so we could put our personal clothes stuff in. And . . . but it . . . it got pretty good.

But during that . . . that phase . . . after that phase three was done, they called over and said, "Okay, you can dig your way out now." Huh? Well, the doors on this barracks are like big refrigerator doors—real thick. And then we got this closet in the day room where the TV was and stuff like that. And got in there and there was crowbars in there. And we found out the crowbars were to pry the doors open once we released the latch, and then we'd get crowbars in place and pry the doors open. It was just solid—not ice—but crystal-like, hard-packed snow I guess.

So, then we get the shovels and start digging all that stuff out. And then we'd dig . . . dig up . . . a tunnel up until we found daylight. And once you got out, then you could . . . all you could see was just humps, you know. And that's where the buildings were. The low parts are where the road went. But we got out and then we cleaned that area all out so we can get out. And our first job was to go over to find . . . go over to motor pool area where we parked our snow plows and snow equipment stuff. Then we dig all that out and get them out, and then we clear the roads to the runway. That was the first order of business: clear the runways so the planes could land and take off. And then we started doing the streets over to the hospital and the main areas. But it was pretty interesting.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, sounds like an intense experience.

TAYLOR: But . . . and then in the spring . . . you know, these are just some of the highlights now. In the spring everybody would say, "Smoke on the horizon." So, we'd all run down to the docks and the bay area and watch the icebreakers come in . . . bring supp. . . bring supplies and stuff in. When it got close enough, you could see the icebreaker right up front. He'd slice the ice in big sheets. I mean thick, you know, just turn them over. And then the main ship would be

coming in behind. In the meantime, we was clearing the dock area . . . around the dock area so they could come up to the docks and stuff. But it was pretty interesting.

And up there we was about 450 to 500 miles from the North Pole at that point. And it would . . . lost my train of thought. Anyway . . . but the bay area where the ships would come in, there was like a . . . we called it “Mount Dundas” was the name of it. And there was an Eskimo village right beside Mount Dundas. We’d have to take them to the base and take them supplies all the time, you know? So, summertime . . . summer, we’d drive around the edge of the bay over to them and take them stuff, you know? In the wintertime, we’d cut right across the ice—straight across. Take us about 20 minutes to get over there.

LAMBERSON: Nice. Quicker, huh?

TAYLOR: And that was about it at Thule. Of course, there was working all the time and . . . oh! My train of thought was we did have days and nights of total darkness and total daytime.

LAMBERSON: Wow.

TAYLOR: And then in between the slots would be day and night, you know, stuff like that. And . . . but then we got . . . I got shipped out of there and went to Castle Air Force Base, California in the San Joaquin Valley. And then I was able to take my family. And then 3 more children were born out there, and . . . and then I was getting asked for . . . I was there almost 6 years, and I got tired of being in one spot. I wanted to see the world that type of thing, you know? So, I put in for a transfer, and they sent me to . . . and that was all carpentry-work-type stuff.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: Yeah. Repairing buildings and building different stuff, you know. And then I went to Chanute, Illinois, and my wife had to go back early because she was pregnant at the time.

LAMBERSON: Go back to California? Or go back to . . . ?

TAYLOR: Back to . . . she went to her hometown in Lincoln, Nebraska.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

TAYLOR: And because . . . if she wouldn’t have went when she did, we’d have had to stay there extra time because she couldn’t travel after she was 8-months pregnant. She couldn’t drive home.

LAMBERSON: Right.

TAYLOR: So, shipped her and the kids back by train of all things.

LAMBERSON: Sounds like a rough journey for them possibly.

TAYLOR: But we made lots of friends during our time out there, and we still know them. Our babysitter, we still stay in touch with her.

LAMBERSON: Oh, yeah?

TAYLOR: But got back . . . went back to Nebraska and picked my family up and went to see my family in Wisconsin. And then we went to Illinois to the base there. And it was, again, it was all routine-type carpentry work stuff like that. And then I got orders to go to Thailand for 4 months with what they called a “Prime Beef” unit, which is the prelude to the 554 Red Horse outfits. We’d go in . . . and this is Prime Beef. Yeah, that’s the patch we wore.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

TAYLOR: And then this is the symbol of it. US Air Force Engineering Prime Beef.

LAMBERSON: And so, when would that have been?

TAYLOR: That was in ’66.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: Can’t remember exact dates.

LAMBERSON: That’s okay. ’66 is perfectly good.

TAYLOR: I went and we built several single-story barracks and several 2-story barracks and an NCO club and things like that and a road around the base using heavy equipment. I didn’t do that, but I was in charge of building the buildings. All the buildings were what we call “open air.” It was just like . . . you’ve probably seen framework of buildings up. Well, in at the bottom of that wall, you build louvers just for air flow, and then in the center of it, you just put down flaps—big pieces of 4x8 plywood.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: To close it in from the wind blowing.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And then on the top was louvered, and then on the inside you just screened the whole thing from floor to ceiling so the bugs couldn’t get in. And then the 2-story buildings were the same way. We built them the same way, just 2-story. And so . . . but over there you didn’t have to worry about winter or nothing. No, it was pretty hot all the time.



LAMBERSON: What did you think of being over there?

TAYLOR: Huh?

LAMBERSON: What did you think of it over there?

TAYLOR: It wasn't bad. We was able to into town over there and stuff, you know, and shop and stuff like that.

LAMBERSON: Where were . . . what town were you near? Was it large? Small?

TAYLOR: Udorn. Udorn. U-D-O-N.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

TAYLOR: But, we . . . I was there for 4 months. And the way we built the buildings, we couldn't build them flat on the ground. So, we had to make piers, and they were probably like that—solid concrete. And then you set them in the ground and pour concrete and level them all up. And the unique thing like that . . . the military and regular, normal construction people used things for sighting it in with a spyglass and all that stuff, you know . . . transoms. And we started doing that, and the civilian Thai that we had, he says “No, no, no.” He says, “Much easier and perfect we can do.” Okay, so we ask him for some clear plastic tubing—about 25-30 foot of it. Well, what they would do, we'd set the first pier, and then he'd fill that tube with water and take the water level. And then we'd set the next one, get the water level at that height, and had it all perfect. I mean it was just . . . there was no sense in using a transom because it was just . . . water level—it's its own level and gets it just perfect. Then we'd build the buildings on top of that.

LAMBERSON: That's great.

TAYLOR: It was . . . it really worked out good. And then we come back from there, and I was back . . . probably, maybe 6 months.

LAMBERSON: And you were in Illinois or . . . ?

TAYLOR: Illinois still.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: Then I got orders to go to Vietnam. That's when I went to Vietnam. That was the latter part of '66 and '67.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And family stayed there while I was in . . .

LAMBERSON: In Illinois?

TAYLOR: While I was in Thailand though, they went to stay with my wife's sister in Southern Illinois. And then when I come back, we moved into a house there. And they stayed there while I was in . . . went to Vietnam. But went over there, and I was with the 554 Red Horse unit, which was all one continuous unit. We had our own doctors, our own cooks, our own supply people and all that. And carpenters, electricians, painters, and all that stuff. It was just a squadron all by itself. And we went in there, and we built. I was there 8 months, and they put me in charge of the concrete crew . . . pouring concrete.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And we built . . . I poured . . . in 8 months, I poured almost 9,000 yards of concrete. Me and my crew, which was pretty fantastic because we started out with a 3/4-yard mixer—cement mixer—and a front-end loader. So, and everything else was handiwork.

LAMBERSON: Wow.

TAYLOR: And the guys would . . . another crew would go ahead and build us the forms for the buildings we were going to do, and then we'd go in there and pour the concrete and stuff.

LAMBERSON: And what sort of things were you building and where?

TAYLOR: We built . . . just about built the whole base. When we got there, they was living in tents. Everybody was living in tents, and they had the runway already built. And then we built sturdy buildings and stuff to sleep in, and then when . . . what the military called latrines—bathrooms. Had the showers and the toilets and everything in one building separate. One bathroom was . . . served about 7 or 8. Barracks is where people slept. But we built wing headquarters and a base headquarters, and those buildings were 100x50 foot wide . . . 100x50 foot wide, 2-story buildings. And we built revetments . . . what they call "revetments" down on the runway to protect the aircraft . . . park the aircraft in besides the hangars. We built roads, and we built our own batch plant where they crush rock and stuff for the concrete to pour the concrete with. And let's see. Like I said, that was all construction work. I'm trying to think of some . . .

LAMBERSON: And where was the base or . . . ?

TAYLOR: Phan Rang, Vietnam.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: It was pretty close on the coast on the east coast of Vietnam about 3/4ths of the way up.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: About halfway up. But then there was Cam Ranh Bay. That's where we got our supplies from. That's where all the ships come in, and then above that was the parallel line for the North and South Vietnam. But we kept on doing that, and then my . . . my roommate . . . one of my roommates . . . there was 12 of us to a barracks-type thing. He kept talking to me about riding shotgun with him up to Cam Ranh Bay to pick up supplies. And I kept telling him, "No, I'm not leaving the base." Then, evidently, he finally talked me into it. So, I went down, we checked out weapons and stuff, and I got in the tractor-trailer-type vehicle. And we was going up to Cam Ranh Bay. It was about, probably about 2 1/2-hour drive up there, you know? We come to this one place where they called "Coconut Grove." It was just palm trees all on one side, and this out here was just rice paddies and stuff like that. We was going along, and all of a sudden we start getting fire from the Vietnamese. "Viet Cong" is what they call it. And I said, "What do I do now?"

And he said, "Just point the gun out . . . the M-16 out, and aim up into the palms where the upper part of the tree was." Because they had tied themselves to the tree and then sniper fire, you know? So, I don't know if I ever hit anybody or not, but I . . . we got through there, and of course, we was going pretty fast for a semi. And we come to these pontoon bridges across a marsh. We are going 40-50 miles an hour with the outside duals of the tractors hanging off the bridge. Going across at 40. That . . . I mean that scared me more than the firing. We'd go up there, and pick up supplies, then we'd come back. I said, "That's it. I'm never going again."

LAMBERSON: Well, did you feel relatively safe on the base itself?

TAYLOR: Yeah, we was pretty . . . where we was at was pretty safe. Like I said, our compound where we had all of our lumber and all that and where we lived was here, and then there was kind of a pretty good-sized hill behind us. And then on the south end we had the . . . and we built barracks and stuff for them too—the Australian Air Force that was there. And then behind us was the 101st Airborne, Army. And then the north of us was the Koreans, ROK Koreans. So, we was pretty well protected at our base.

We'd sit out there at night, and we built our own pad and stuff where we could show movies and play basketball and had our own club right there. We'd sit out there at night sometimes and the Air Force would drive . . . fly a C-47 with the side doors off and open on the side of the plane. And then they had a Gatling gun in there. And they'd fly around and shoot down at the enemy around the outskirts of the base, you know. And you could see that every seventh round that came out of that machine gun was what they call a "tracer"—looked like a fire going down to the ground, you know. And we sat out there and watched them shoot down at the ground and stuff while we was watching a movie. But . . . and then I got orders to leave there and go to Florida.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: MacDill Air Force Base, Florida. We got there, went home, picked up the family, visited my family, and then we went to Florida. While I was there, I was still construction type—repairing buildings and stuff—and they built this command center there. The Air Force built a command center there called “Star Command.” It was a pretty secretive building. But anyway, seeing that I had my security clearance, they had me go over there and number all the rooms and install new locks and stuff—security locks and stuff. And I got all done with that, and they took me off the list to go into the building.

So, this general called me up one day, and he said, “Sergeant Taylor, I’d like to have you come over here. I want you to see something.”

And I said, “Okay.” So, I went over and reported in, and they wouldn’t let me up there because my name was taken off the list. I said “Well, call . . .” I can’t remember his name. Anyway I say, “Call the general.”

They called up there, and he said, “You let Sergeant Taylor up here.” He says, “He knows more about this building than I do. Let him come up here.”

So, I went up there and reported to his office, and . . . and so he took me over to this area with TVs—I mean it was continuous screens all the way around this room—and he said, “Well, have a seat here.”

So, I sat down and, “What is going on?” But anyway, he went back out, and then pretty soon all these generals and colonels and high-ranking people come in there and started sitting down. Then he come back in, and he introduced me to everybody and said, “This is Sergeant Taylor here. Done all the lock work and all that stuff to secure the part and all the rooms and stuff. So, I asked him to come here, and he swore to not tell what he sees up here.” But that was a long time ago, so that’s not an issue anymore. And they . . . but they . . . all these screens started lighting up and stuff, and I watched one of the first space things. A rocket going off and . . .

LAMBERSON: That’s great.

TAYLOR: And people in space and stuff like that. That was pretty impressive. Anyway, we got all done with that, and just everything else after that was pretty routine.

LAMBERSON: Okay. That’s okay. So, still in Florida for a while longer?

TAYLOR: Yeah, we was there for about 3 ½ years. And then we got orders to go to Japan.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

TAYLOR: And that was another area where it was security service.

LAMBERSON: So, that would have been like 1970-ish?

TAYLOR: That was in ’71.

LAMBERSON: '71, okay. So, security service. Go ahead.

TAYLOR: Yeah. And we was there from '71. We come back, and we got stationed here at Goodfellow in January '74.

LAMBERSON: Okay. So, were you in Japan that whole time?

TAYLOR: Yeah.

LAMBERSON: For several years. And your family went with you?

TAYLOR: Right.

LAMBERSON: Where were you in Japan?

TAYLOR: Misawa Air Force Base, Japan.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: It's up on the main island, up on the north end of it. But it was security service there, so I was appointed to go up to security hill and do all their work again. But . . . they . . . and then we went up to . . . there was 6 of us. There was another base up on the north island of Japan called Shatosi. And they was closing that down, so we had to go up there and winterize all the buildings so the pipes wouldn't freeze, stuff like that. But we was up there probably a month or so, and then we come back from there back to the main base. And again, it was mainly routine stuff, you know, as far as carpentry-type work, stuff like that. Then we left there in . . .

LAMBERSON: '74? '73?

TAYLOR: '74 we came here.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And that was routine carpentry work, repairing buildings and stuff out there at Goodfellow. And went through . . . let's see, in '85 we had a big hail storm, and knocked half the windows out of the buildings on the base.

LAMBERSON: Oh, wow.

TAYLOR: We was busy on that. But everything else pretty routine, regular carpentry-type work on military stuff, you know?

LAMBERSON: And you were here from '74 to . . . well, I mean you're still here but . . .

TAYLOR: '74. Well, then in '75 I got orders to go to Germany.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

TAYLOR: And wife and I discussed that quite a bit on . . . because if we took the family . . . I could have took my family with me, but like her and our oldest boy and our middle daughter would have had to be shipped away during the week to go to school—high school—and then just come home on the weekends. Well, we seen that happening when we was in Japan that people were shipped there to Misawa, and we didn't care for that at all. Some of the kids got in quite a bit of trouble. Some of the girls especially. And so, we decided, no. We're not going to do that. So, they stayed here. I went and took a two-year tour.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And . . . but like over there it was routine work, you know, construction-type stuff. And I was involved a little bit in security over there too, you know. They had a security unit. I had to go there and do a lot of work for them and stuff, but . . . and then I come . . . I didn't take no vacations before I left. So, after 1 year, I took 30-day leave and come back to the family, then went back and finished the other year, and then come back here. There was some instances that happened over there with a young Airman and stuff, and I decided the military wasn't for me anymore. And so, I got out, and they shipped me back here for retirement.

LAMBERSON: So, when did you retire then?

TAYLOR: 1977.

LAMBERSON: 1977, okay.

TAYLOR: December . . . November 1977. And that was the end of my military career. Twenty-three years altogether with the National Guard and the Air Force. And then I went to work for the city here and put another 23 years into that.

LAMBERSON: And what did you do for the city?

TAYLOR: I run Fairmont Cemetery down here on Avenue N for 12 years.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And then I switched over to the Parks Department and an opportunity for a better job and stuff like that. So, I went over there as an assistant parks director for the Parks Department. And I worked for them for 11 years, and then I decided to retire again.

LAMBERSON: Sounds good. Sounds like you deserve it by then. Okay, great! So, I have a few questions unless . . . if that's okay. So, one thing we're curious about is sort of your interactions with locals in these various places particularly when you were overseas. Did you interact very much with the Thai people or the Vietnamese folks, or . . . ?

TAYLOR: Oh, yes. Yeah.

LAMBERSON: And what was that like in those different places?

TAYLOR: I had it pretty hard at first. I learned a little bit of the Thai language and just enough to get by, you know? And we'd go downtown shopping and stuff like that, you know. And the kids would go shopping, and the older ones got in with bowling. And they went downtown and bowled with the Japanese kids.

LAMBERSON: In Japan?

TAYLOR: Uh huh, in Japan.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: So, and then . . .

LAMBERSON: Did you get much like training on the languages or anything like that, or was it just kind of more on the cultures?

TAYLOR: No, it was just reading the book, you know? Looking at the book and . . . and stuff like that and just talking with them. And not . . . and like on the base there in Japan, we . . . we had a Japanese working force on the base. So, I had . . . like I had a crew of about probably 7 or 8 Japanese working in the woodworking shop doing repairs around the base and stuff. And . . . but as far as in . . . in the States or military part . . .

LAMBERSON: Right.

TAYLOR: Military people are—I learned pretty quick—that they're a family in their own, you know. And everybody gets along real good. We . . . the only . . . the one thing I regret is when we was in Japan we . . . a guy that worked for me—a military guy—married a Japanese girl, and they had a baby. And they asked us to be the godparents of the baby. Well about 4 years after that, we lost contact with them completely. So, I don't know how the girl turned out or what. But things like that, you know. You get pretty close to different people. But . . .

DAUGHTER: How did they treat you in Vietnam?

TAYLOR: Huh?

DAUGHTER: How did the Vietnamese treat you guys being there in Vietnam?

TAYLOR: Pretty good, actually. We'd . . . every morning during the week, we'd go downtown. We'd take a semi-truck with an open trailer in the back. We just built like a cage on it. And then we'd go down . . . they'd go downtown and . . . and pick up these local workers. And we didn't know whether they're Viet Cong or, you know, the enemy or regular people.

LAMBERSON: They were sort of like day laborers? Or are they the same people every time?

TAYLOR: Well, they usually picked up the same people.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And . . . and like I said, they would search them before they got on the truck. And then when they got them out to the base, they'd unload them, and we had like . . . we'd make them go through certain alleyways, you know. And we searched them again and everything. And the same way when they left the base, we had to search them and stuff. But they were good workers—every one of them was excellent workers. But over in Thailand, they just come on the base. You know, nothing to worry about over there. But in Vietnam we had to search them pretty thoroughly.

LAMBERSON: And did you get any sort of different training or discussion of the Vietnamese or the enemy or anything like that when you were going to Vietnam where there's more active conflict going on? As opposed to like Japan or Thailand?

TAYLOR: Yeah. It really was pretty routine-type work as far as conversing with the people and stuff, you know. But . . . and we'd talked about different stuff, you know. When the oil line got hit, blah, blah, stuff like that. But it was just routine-type work—talking. Then when I got to Vietnam, it was . . . the language was different than Thailand. But you had different . . . I don't know. What do they call it? They come from different areas, you know? And . . .

LAMBERSON: Regions you mean?

TAYLOR: They spoke a little bit different.

LAMBERSON: Oh, sure. Dialects.

TAYLOR: Yeah, dialect. There was probably . . . while we was there, there was probably about 4 or 5 different dialects. So, it was pretty hard. But usually we always had interpreters, you know, to talk with . . . through them. But it worked out pretty good.

LAMBERSON: And was your family with you in Thailand as well?



TAYLOR: No.

LAMBERSON: No, okay.

TAYLOR: That was a remote. Just a four-year TDY.

LAMBERSON: Okay, you might have said that. Okay. So, overseas your family only came to Japan, right?

TAYLOR: Yeah, just . . .

LAMBERSON: And then moved around with you within the States?

TAYLOR: Right.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And we . . . we tried to tour Japan quite a bit especially the local area. I bought a local Japanese car and fixed it up. I bought it off a young Airman who couldn't afford the insurance and all, so I bought it off him. Fixed it up, and it was a pretty good car. Drove it the whole time we was there.

LAMBERSON: And when you were traveling around, did the Japanese . . . did you have any sort of encounters? Were they welcoming, friendly towards having American military? Or . . . ?

TAYLOR: Pretty friendly actually. Even the . . . even the local people. The kids would go down and bowl with them downtown and stuff like that. But it was pretty . . . pretty good. And all . . . Thailand and Vietnam not so much, but Thailand and Viet . . .

LAMBERSON: Japan?

TAYLOR: Japan. You had to . . . you didn't . . . they'd say . . . if you wanted to buy something, they'd say a price, but you never accepted that price. You always tried to Jew them down. And it worked pretty good. And . . . but especially in Japan. It was . . . it was lots of fun dealing and buying.

LAMBERSON: Lots of negotiating.

TAYLOR: And they, you know . . . they . . . and buying shoes and clothes downtown, it wasn't a size 9; it was like a size 45 or a 54 or whatever, you know? And . . . but stuff like that you had to get used to, you know.

In Japan we traveled around quite a bit. They had this one place called Lake Towada, and we used to drive up there on the weekends or a Saturday or Sunday. It wasn't too far away. But

what it was, you drive up this mountain, and you get out there and here's this huge lake. And they had stuff all around the lake, you know, for sightseeing. You get your money. But we'd go up there, and what it was . . . I took my boys, and another friend of mine he took his boys, and we went up there fishing. And what it was . . . was an extinct volcano. And you could . . . the water was just as clear as coming out of a faucet. You could look down and see the fish swimming around down there. And you throw a fishing line in, and you'd have a 20-, 30-foot line out there, and you could see the fish swimming around your hook and stuff.

LAMBERSON: Wow, that's great.

TAYLOR: But it was . . . it was a nice experience. And they had a boat you could ride, you know, back and forth to the other side and stuff like that. But . . . and then there was this other place—a town that we used to go over there—and we used to buy their cookies, sweets. We'd go over there and buy some sweets and come back.

LAMBERSON: Sounds good.

TAYLOR: We spent a lot of time on the base. They had everything that you had downtown, you know, movie theaters and stuff like that. Your commissary where you bought groceries and the BX where you bought your other stuff, clothes and stuff like that. But as far as the people, I think we got along great and stuff like that.

LAMBERSON: And what about Germany?

TAYLOR: Pardon?

LAMBERSON: What about Germany? What were your kind of thoughts about Germany?

TAYLOR: Germany was the same way. I . . . I lived . . . when I first got there, I had to live on base. And then they finally come over and said, "Sergeant Taylor, you're going have to move off base."

I said, "Okay." So, I went out and I found this . . . it was a house in this little town about 4 to 5 miles from the base. And I moved in there.

And then a guy . . . another guy that I worked with from the base, he says, "Gary, you got a 2-bedroom apartment, right?"

I said, "Yeah." So, he asked me to move . . . if he could move in there with me. I said, "Sure, if you share the rent and stuff." And we . . . that was funny.

I was sleeping in one Saturday morning. I had a couple of regular jobs, you know, when I was over there. I worked at the NCO club as a bouncer. But I woke up one Saturday morning to this rumbling noise right outside my window. I said, "What is going on?" So, I open my window and here's a big tank, military tank sitting out there. Then it dawned on me that Germany and the US was having their military maneuvers out in the countryside. And they happened to choose my house to set beside.

But . . . and then another morning there was a knock on the door. And I woke up and went to the door and there was the town constable—kind of like a sheriff—and I said, “Yes, sir. What do you need?”

He says, “Oh, you’re American.”

I said, “Yes.”

He said, “Well, you probably don’t know our rules.” He says, “Once a week you have to come out here and clean the street from the length of the building out to the middle of the street.” You had to sweep. That was your job to clean that. People upstairs didn’t have to. The one on the bottom lower floor had to do it. And I done that and stuff.

But over there, the people in Germany . . . the people are really friendly for the most part, you know. And in fact, some of the guys that I worked with, the civilians, they invited . . . they had fall festivals like we do around here. And the farmers, you know, they celebrate after they get their crops and stuff in. So, I was invited out to one, and it’s very rare that you get invited out to one of these festivals. So, I went out there. He told me how to get there, and I got out and went through this gate. I took a car out there with me. I drove over the fields and found the place over there. And it was just a big party. They cooked. All . . . all the women in town, you know, they cooked meals, different meals and stuff like that. And of course, the men brought beer. But they had everything set up. They had tables and bathroom facilities and stuff out in the middle of this field. But it was . . . it was a nice celebration. Other than that, like I said, it was routine work on the base, you know.

LAMBERSON: Right. So, by that point . . . I mean, by the mid-1970s, the Cold War, you know its detente is happening. There certainly, in Germany, had been some disruptions and protests in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Did you ever run into any of that sort of . . . those sorts of politics? Or was it not really where you were?

TAYLOR: Well, when I come back from Vietnam, I didn’t come back with my unit because I only served 8 months over there. And I come up . . . come back with some Army people. And when we landed, you heard about people getting spit on and called names by our own people. That happened when we were at the airport and stuff. But . . .

LAMBERSON: Okay. Were you on a civilian plane—a commercial plane?

TAYLOR: Yeah, we come back on a chartered civilian plane.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: Military charter plane. And . . .

LAMBERSON: Were there very many people there?

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. It was pretty crowded. I mean there was a lot of people angry with us for being over there killing Vietnamese, and . . . and that was all because . . . a lot of that was

because of one person. You probably heard about her. But, anyway, that's mainly because of her, you know. And it's what excited all that, but we got . . . and we was told not to say nothing. Just keep walking, you know. And we got out and ordered busses to go different places and stuff.

LAMBERSON: Where did you land?

TAYLOR: Huh?

LAMBERSON: Where did you land?

TAYLOR: We landed in McChord Air Force Base, Washington.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: But once we got through that and got on the busses, all the guys said, "I felt like punching that guy in the mouth." And I said, "I know, me too." It was . . . it was pretty sad, you know, to go through that. And especially for the Army guys who had been out there in the field fighting, you know. It was pretty bad. But . . .

LAMBERSON: Did you or very many of them have much of an opinion about the war in Vietnam itself?

TAYLOR: Not while we was there. And it was . . . it was something that we knew we had to do, you know? So, we . . . everybody done their job. And it wasn't talked too much what was going on or why or none of that. It wasn't discussed too much while we were there.

LAMBERSON: Was it when you got back?

TAYLOR: Yes, different guys . . . some guys would talk about it. It took me a while to talk about it. And there's some now today that they don't want to even think about it. In fact, there's a guy that goes to church . . . we go to church out at the base. There's a guy that goes out there. I started talking to him one day, and then I mentioned about Vietnam, and he said, "I don't even want to talk about it." He said, "That's the worst part of my life." He said, "I don't want to relive it." So, okay. So, I didn't . . . I didn't question him no more on it.

But there's several . . . lots of guys who've done that. My family's a military-type family. My wife's dad was in World War I. And my dad didn't have to go in because he was a farmer. But then I had 3 brothers that were in World War II. And two brothers in Vietnam or Korea. And then I was in Vietnam. There was 12 boys and 1 girl in my family.

LAMBERSON: That's a lot—big family.

TAYLOR: It was his, hers, and theirs.

LAMBERSON: Gotcha.

TAYLOR: My dad was married before. His wife died of pneumonia or some complication of some illness, and they had 4 children. And then my mother was married before, and her first husband got killed during a hunting accident.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And she had two boys. And then the rest of us came along. Dad had three boys and 1 girl, and that was the only girl in the whole family.

LAMBERSON: Wow. All by herself, huh? So, when . . . so, did you have much kind of sense of patriotism or sense of kind of your mission as being part of the military as . . . as you're going to these different places? And did that change over time?

TAYLOR: No, I've always been strong for United States. I get a little sentimental, especially at military gravesites and stuff and they blow "Taps" and I see the flag coming by. I get a little emotional.

LAMBERSON: Sure. Absolutely.

TAYLOR: Like now talking about it.

LAMBERSON: Okay, and then how did you . . . how did the kind of treatment of the military or the view of the military change during your period of time? I mean you talked a little bit about kind of that moment in Vietnam. But otherwise, did you see a lot of change from the beginning of service until the end?

TAYLOR: It was . . . it was all gradual change, so you didn't notice it too much. But then you stop and think about, you know. And during the early days, it was pretty simple, pretty routine stuff that you expect, you know. And then the rules and regulations started changing, you know, over the years. And you couldn't . . . before, you could tell a young guy to, "Get your butt out and do that job," you know? But you say that later on and they would call their mommy at home, and she would talk to congressman, and then pretty soon you was getting chewed out for chewing them out and stuff like that. It just kind a got worse over the years.

And like in Germany there, I had two young guys that I wrote their APRs where there's . . . it's actually the yearly report on them—what you've done over the past year. Well, the way I filled them out, no way they'd get promoted, you know. And they called me in. The first sergeant and the commander called me in and talked to me about it and wanted me to change it, their APRs. And I said, "No, sir, I'm not going to change it. If you want to change them, you can and put your name on it." But I said, "I won't sign one where they get promoted because they don't deserve it."

Well, maybe a month later, I get a call about two o'clock in the morning; it was the German police. They said, "I got two of your young men down here in jail." They said, "We caught them out in the woods, and they had a target up on a tree and target practicing with a .45. And they're high on marijuana." And I knew they smoked marijuana and stuff, but there was nothing I could do unless I caught them, you know.

And anyway, they . . . so, I said, "Well, I'll call you right back." So, I hung up the phone and called the first sergeant—the one that tried to get me their APRs seen. I told him. I said, "Sergeant," I said, "our two boys are down in German jail." I told him what the situation was and they said . . . and I said, "We either let them prosecute them, and you probably won't see them again. Or we can go down and pick them up, but they have to be out of country within 24 hours."

He said, "Go down and pick them up."

So, I went down and got them and brought them back to the base and turned them over to the Air Police on the base. And by noon the next day they were gone. Then they tried to get me to . . . during that little, short span I went to personnel and put my paperwork in for retirement. I had enough. That was enough for me. And . . . but then they called me and tried to get me to rescind it, you know.

"Well, you know you're up for master sergeant."

I says, "Yes, sir. I know that."

And he said, "You'll be sewn on at the end of the month." And he said, "We can pull them papers."

I said, "Yeah." I said, "And then I'd have to spend two more years in the military, right?"

"Well, yeah."

I said, "The best thing you can do for me is to send me back to Goodfellow for retirement." And they did. But it just, you know . . . the rules and regulations, you know, they were always there, but they just kept tightening them up, tightening them up, tightening them up, you know, where you really didn't dare to do anything, you know. Sometimes you're afraid you'd get court martialed or something. But otherwise . . . overall, I enjoyed my career.

LAMBERSON: I have one more kind of general question about time in the military, and that is about race relations. Did you see much change in terms of having . . . ?

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah, a lot.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, and what was that like?

TAYLOR: Well, when I first went in, you know, you didn't associate too much with . . . blacks and whites didn't associate together too much. And growing up in Wisconsin, we never had that—any racial problems. So, for me, that wasn't a racial problem, you know, at the time. And we finished basic training in San Antonio, and there was . . . I think it was 26 of us all decided to charter a bus to go back to Minneapolis when we got finished with our training. And one guy was a young black guy, and he went with us. And that was the first incident I ever had. We got to Oklahoma City and got off the bus and went in to the . . . they had a big restaurant in the bus

station. And we all—26 of us—took up several tables and started ordering our dinner. And the young black guy was sitting at our table.

And the restaurant owner came over and said, “Well, he can’t eat in here.” He says, “He’ll have to go over to the other side and eat over there with the black people.”

“Huh? Why?” Well, a lot of us was questioning why because, you know, in the northern states, you know, upper . . . upper United States, we didn’t have no racial problems at all. In fact, we only had one black family in my hometown, and he was a farmer.

And we got in there and they started arguing with us and says, “Well . . .”

And one of the other guys stood up and said, “Hey, Airman Joe . . . whatever his name.” Says, “He can’t eat in here. He’s got to go over to the other side and eat with the blacks.”

Says, “Well, we’ll all move over there.”

“Well, you can’t do that! You can’t do that!”

I said, “Well, we’ll just find someplace else to go eat.” You know, because we had about an hour layover. And of course, a lot of the guys had already ordered food, and they’d already turned their things. He relented and let him eat in there with us. But that was our . . . that was my first experience, you know. Then after that we heard a lot. But the military, they always had race relations classes. You had . . . you had to attend race relations classes.

LAMBERSON: From the beginning when you were there?

TAYLOR: Not from the beginning.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: No, from about . . . oh, probably in the late ’60s . . . mid-’60s. Then you had to go to race relation classes and learn how to get along with each other.

LAMBERSON: Was it useful?

TAYLOR: It was pretty good. People stood up in the classes and asked about different things, you know. And so, it went really good actually. And the blacks did not like the saying of . . . when I first started about, “Well, so-and-so is a black guy, and he’s one of my best friends.” Well, you didn’t say, “My best friend was a black person.” I never did figure out why. But I had several best friends. And it was just little things, different things. And . . . and I don’t know who instigated the name changes, you know, it was “negro.” Of course, a lot of people interpret it different when you said that word. And . . . but . . . then they changed to “Black American” then “African American.” That was a little strange, you know. Why? I didn’t ever find out why.

LAMBERSON: And did they talk about that kind of thing in the classes?

TAYLOR: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, all the time. That was . . . that was the main topic of getting along between the white and blacks.

LAMBERSON: But they talked about like the language, you know, that sort of thing?

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. Yeah. And it was just . . . and my thoughts about it was probably, “Those name changes come through the younger people.”

LAMBERSON: Sure.

TAYLOR: You know, them wanting to change things not to be this way. They want it to be that way, and you know. And it was discussed a lot in the classes.

LAMBERSON: Did it seem like within the actual military, like among people that were in the military, that race relations were pretty good, generally speaking, while you were there?

TAYLOR: Yeah, I . . . I’m . . . it was . . . I never had a problem, you know. It was just everything seemed to go good, especially after the classes, you know. So, like I said, I was a bouncer in a club where everybody was drinking and stuff. It got out of hand, you know. I’d call the Air Police and say, “Take them out.” Whether he’s black, white, whatever; it didn’t make any difference. They cause trouble; they went. But, that’s . . . like I said, I never really had a problem with it at all.

LAMBERSON: Okay. So, you touched on the . . . well, actually, one more question. Sorry, I keep saying one more question. But . . . so, how did your time in the service affect your family? Are you away from your family in some cases? You know, did you keep in touch?

TAYLOR: We were separated for a total of three years out of . . . out of 20.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: It wasn’t too bad at all. But we, as a family, you know, we got along great.

LAMBERSON: Good.

TAYLOR: I think. Didn’t we?

DAUGHTER: Why don’t you talk about what you had to teach mom before you went to Vietnam.

TAYLOR: The what?

DAUGHTER: What you had to teach mom before you went to Vietnam. Where you taught her to drive? Where you taught her to drive? You had to teach mom to drive before you went somewhere.



TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. Yeah, she didn't drive.

LAMBERSON: Your wife?

TAYLOR: Until we got to Illinois.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And I went . . . when I went to Thailand, she went down and stayed with her sister, because she didn't know how to drive. Well, when I got back from Thailand, I started teaching her how to drive, especially when I found out I was going to Vietnam. Within, I don't know, maybe about a month's time I taught her how to drive. Bought her a new car—little station wagon—and I'd take her out . . . out in the country, and we'd drive the back roads and stuff, you know. So, I says, "I got to get her in town somehow," and she didn't want to drive downtown. So, I said, "Okay, take a left here, and we can go down this road." I said, "Okay, take another left. Take a right." Ended up right downtown. She got all excited. I said, "No." I said, "Just like you've been driving out here in the country. You just got a little more traffic is all." So, she done that, and every time we'd go somewhere, I made her drive. And then I ended up leaving. She did good. Never had an accident or nothing.

DAUGHTER: Then you went to Kansas to process out.

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. That . . . I went to Kansas for training, hand-to-hand combat-type training . . . combat training.

LAMBERSON: Before going to Vietnam? Is this . . . ?

TAYLOR: Before I went to Vietnam.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

TAYLOR: And Thanksgiving come, and I couldn't go home. She says, "Well, I'm coming to see you." So, she drove all the way from Chanute, Illinois—which is Rantoul, Illinois—all the way out to Kansas—Topeka, Kansas where the base was at. I can't remember the name of the base, but she drove all night long with the kids.

DAUGHTER: With five kids.

TAYLOR: With five kids in the car.

LAMBERSON: Wow.

TAYLOR: And . . . but there was one incident on the road. A semi-truck driver was kind of flirting with her. All the kids were in the back of the station wagon laying down, sleeping. And then . . . but he was kind of harassing her, you know, along the highway. And then, I guess it was Alan got up and asked, "Where are we, mom?" And I guess the truck driver just seen that and he took off.

LAMBERSON: Moved on.

TAYLOR: But she drove all night and got there at like 7:30 in the morning. And she asked . . . she asked some of the guys coming out of the barracks there, "Where's Sergeant Taylor at?"

They says, "I don't know. He's not in his room."

She says, "Well, you tell him that I'm going down here to the laundromat. We're going to wash some clothes, and I'll be back."

So, I was . . . me and another guy was over at the chow hall eating breakfast. I come back. They says, "Sergeant Taylor, your wife was just here looking for you."

I said, "My wife?!" I didn't even know she was coming.

LAMBERSON: Wow.

TAYLOR: And I said, "My wife?" And he said, "Yeah!" So, I sat there on the steps waiting for her to come back in.

LAMBERSON: Quite a surprise then.

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah, big surprise. And then we got the base housing unit to sleep that night and stuff. And then she drove all the way back to Lincoln.

LAMBERSON: Oh, wow. That's a lot of driving. Did you guys keep in touch by sending letters or . . . ?

TAYLOR: Letters. And . . . well, and then like when I was in Germany, I'd call her by phone. But Thule, Greenland I wrote her all the time. Any time I was away like that and stuff, I'd always write her. And we got . . . here's this story. We got married and her dad . . . well, before we got married, our first date I went down to the house and knocked on the door. He came to the door. I said, "Mr. Linney," I said, "I'm here to pick up Pat."

He said, "I don't have nobody by the name of Pat." And slammed the door in my face. So, the start off wasn't too good.

But when I left for Greenland, he told my wife . . . he says, "You'll never see him again."

And we was married, and she was pregnant with her. "What do you mean I'll never see you again?" And, and it took about 2 weeks and the letters started coming in. And he just . . . dumbfounded. I wrote her every day. But he was . . . he was pretty surprised. That was the first place I come when I come back from Greenland.

LAMBERSON: Okay. So, looking back, how do you . . . you talked a little bit about this already, but looking back, how do you feel about your military service?

TAYLOR: I actually enjoyed it. I really did with the people I met over the years and stuff like that. Still in contact with some of them. But I . . . I actually enjoyed it. Even after I retired I kept going out there for coffee breaks talking to them, you know, and stuff like that. But I just . . . I actually enjoyed it overall.

LAMBERSON: And do you have any advice for young men and women who might be entering the armed services about now?

TAYLOR: I encourage . . . I'd encourage them to enlist, you know, because . . . and it depends on the circumstances at home—where they're at, you know. If they didn't go to college or something like that, yeah. Go in the military. It's free education . . . education for them, you know. It's . . . they make pretty good pay now compared to when I went in. But, no, I . . . I highly recommend it. It teaches them manners, how to take orders, and stuff like that. But it's . . . like my oldest boy, he joined the ROTC here, and they went up to Denver, Colorado to the military base up there. And they went through some training while they were up there and stuff. And of course, it was military-style stuff with ROTC—shining shoes and all that. He come back from there and he finished that year with ROTC, and he just . . . “Dad,” he says, “I'm just not cut out for the military.” He said, “This shining shoes and all that.” He said, “It's not for me.”

LAMBERSON: That was the end of that, huh?

TAYLOR: And I talked to some of the young airman and stuff out here at the base, you know, different times. They all seem to enjoy it—what they're doing. I recommend it.

LAMBERSON: Okay, great! Is there anything else you wanted to share that I didn't ask about? Anything I missed?

TAYLOR: I don't know. I think I've said about everything I can think of.

DAUGHTER: Where was that church you talked about building overseas?

TAYLOR: Oh, that was in Vietnam.

LAMBERSON: Okay.

DAUGHTER: I think that's a neat story just because of the lumber and stuff you guys used over there.

TAYLOR: Yeah. All the lumber we had to work with was completely different from how it's built in the States. They . . . they had . . . and I don't know where they come from. I think it was from overseas somewhere, but it was all redwood.

LAMBERSON: Oh, okay.

TAYLOR: The 2x4s and . . .

LAMBERSON: In Vietnam specifically it was all redwood?

TAYLOR: Yeah, it was all red . . . even the plywood was made out of redwood. But this church . . . the base commander wanted to build a chapel.

LAMBERSON: On the base?

TAYLOR: Yeah, all they had was a couple little places around the base where they would worship at. And so, he said, "I want a big chapel . . . community chapel where non-denominational could go to church at." Well, this one guy had it in his mind. He says, "I know what to build." So, he drew up designs for it himself and everything, and he was in our unit.

And we went over and started. We poured the concrete for it. I can't remember. It was like 80 foot wide and probably 120 foot long—somewhere along in there. We built it the full length of the pad all out of redwood. We built the pews, the whole works. And the altar and built everything for the altar—the podium and all that stuff. And built the crosses for the centerpiece of it all. But the center . . . the peak of the roof was like 45 feet in the air. And we had . . . when we got all the framework built for that, we went to put the roofing on it. We had to throw ropes over it and then the ties would tie the rope around their waist and then they'd climb. It was just so steep. They'd just slide off otherwise. And they'd get up there and put all the roofing on and finish the roof. But then when the roof come down, it sloped out like that five foot outside the walls of the church. And it was, you know, about eight foot.

Now when it rained, there wasn't room in the church. Everybody would get in from outside and get protected from the rain. But like I said, it was all out of mahogany. And they worked and finished that stuff and sanded like this, and it was beautiful. I never got a picture of it.

LAMBERSON: That's cool.

DAUGHTER: And then that base just got turned over to the Vietnamese when you guys left?

TAYLOR: Do what?

DAUGHTER: You just turned the base and everything over to the Vietnamese.

TAYLOR: Oh, yeah. When the Vietnam War was over with, they just left everything. The base I was at that we built, it was \$176,000,000 we put into that base. Just up and left it.

LAMBERSON: Wow.

TAYLOR: I'd like to go back there some day and see . . . just see what it was. But it's all North Vietnamese now.

LAMBERSON: Yeah.

TAYLOR: But we done a lot of work.

LAMBERSON: Yeah, well that's great.

TAYLOR: Quite an experience.

LAMBERSON: Sounds like it. Sounds like quite . . . quite a career. Well, thank you for talking to us.