

ORAL MEMOIRS  
OF  
EMMANUEL PIERRE

An interview conducted on

May 16, 2017

Interviewer: Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai

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 Emmanuel Pierre are unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on May 16, 2017.

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WONGSRICHANALAI: Here. I'm just going to put this close to you. OK. Well, good morning. This is Kanisorn Wongsrichanalai. We are here in Big Spring, Texas. It is May 16, 2017. And we're here for a *War Stories* interview. So, could we please start with your name?

PIERRE: Emmanuel Pierre.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And where and when were you born?

PIERRE: I was born in the Caribbean, Haiti in 199 . . . 1978. April 15, 1978.

WONGSRICHANALAI: OK. And where did you grow up?

PIERRE: I grew up in Haiti. And upon finishing high school, I was the translator for the U.N. and then the U.S. Army came in to Haiti, and I was their translator. And like they helped me get a student visa. And when they helped me get a student visa, I went to school at Florida Memorial. I graduated and then I went to Daytona Beach, Florida Embry Riddle Aeronautical University. I did my masters, a dual masters, over there. And then I started working. But my calling was to join the military. I tried to join the Air Force but I was not going . . . They couldn't guarantee me any flying hours. And so the Army was going to let me fly. But when I get to . . . to . . . After basic training, I thought I was supposed to go to Officer Candidate School, but the recruiter had messed me up and put me as enlisted instead of . . . instead of candidate to go to OCS. And so, I ended up going to AIT instead of going to OCS.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And now what does AIT stand for?

PIERRE: AIT is . . . It's . . . It's when you go and learn your trade. And like if you're going for a bomber, you go to AIT to learn how to do that. If you're going for . . . Me, I was going for aviation avionics. So, I went there to learn how to do anything electronics in the aircraft and also anything to do with communications in the battlefield whether it was ground or air. So, I learned all that. And then . . . My AIT was at Fort Gordon, Georgia. And after that, after I graduated, I was . . . I was assigned to go to Fort Riley, Kansas. That was in September 2006. September 2006, I got to Fort Riley, Kansas. I was assigned to Bravo Company 601st. They had . . . That unit had just came from Germany at that time. They were stationed in Germany, and they had just got back to the States and they were stationed . . . They were posted at Fort Riley, Kansas part of the Big Red One.<sup>1</sup>

From there in 2007, we get deployed to Iraq, COB Speicher. That was my first deployment. At COB Speicher, we oversee over 150 aircrafts and kept them maintained and kept them flying to push the mission, whether it was medevac, combat. Anything that was flying, we took care of that. And from that, we do the cross training with the other shops. And so, I guess if anybody dropped, next man up, that type of thing. So, we learned everything that had to do with the aircraft. Like this . . . Most of my jobs you had to have a clearance to do. So, I got my clearance while I was in Iraq and so, we take care of almost everything. That was the first deployment. Then we get back. That was . . . That was a 15-month deployment.

And we get back. After less than a year, we had to go back. But this time we didn't go to Speicher. We went to Camp Taji. That was in 2010-2011. Thank goodness it was not a 15-month

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<sup>1</sup> "Big Red One" is the nickname of the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division of the U.S. Army.

again. It was a 12-month that time. So . . . And . . . And Taji, that's when I got hit. I had a piece of metal in my head. There was an explosion of ordinance and I got hit. When I got hit, I put my hands on top of it to stop any bleeding. And when I took my hand off after a couple hours, my skin covered up, and no blood is flowing. So, I just put a band-aid on top of it and take shower, and we're good. I didn't even get to report it, because it was . . . I thought it was just like a scratch. Not until we get back to the States, the thing starts hurting me. And so I went to . . . to the hospital. Took the x-ray. I had a piece of metal in my head all this time. For months. And so I went to Wichita, Kansas, did plastic surgery. They took the metal out.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What was the cause of the explosion?

PIERRE: It was an attack on our . . . on our camp. And we were . . . We were taking blows after blows. Blows after blows. But although . . . All they wanted was to blow up the aviation unit, especially the airfield. But we had a good QRF. QRF is "Quick Response Fire" Team. And those guys were pretty good. And so, even though we get attacked on a daily basis, they never reached the . . . the airfield. But they get close to . . . They get really close, because our CHUs—the CHUs is where we sleep. Sometimes, we get CHUs split in half. Got soldiers sleeping, getting hit. But we get very severe hits but never death on . . . in our unit. But if there was any death, we didn't . . . we didn't know about it. But our job was to keep the helicopters in the air, keep all the communications ongoing. And at a point, I was the only soldier in that region that was fixing a piece of equipment that is essential to the aircraft. And the . . . The next person that could fix them was a contractor with [unintelligible] that was, that was fixing those. We were too, and he was in Germany. And for . . . For us to have an aircraft down for that piece of equipment, we had to go to Germany. And when they found out that I was . . . that I was fixing those, I was getting from every country in the region. I was bombarded with, with that equipment. And I was fixing them and pushed them out by the dozens every day.

WONGSRICHANALAI: But what was it exactly?

PIERRE: It's . . . It's . . . It's basically what keeps the aircraft communicating with the ground. It's essential. And not everybody can fix it, because you have to have a clearance for that . . . for this piece of equipment. So, at that point, I finally get to meet the engineer that designed that piece. He came down and shook my hand and told me . . . thank me for keep the piece going, keep everybody rolling. Because, at that time, he was getting overwhelmed because the piece was designed to work in hardship but it was failing. But I find a way where I could get it to work. Because if it doesn't pass on my bench, it's not gonna touch the aircraft. And the chief not going to sign on it to put it on the aircraft. So, I finally found a way to get this piece to work and install it in the aircraft and make it work. And I got a non-com for that. That was cool.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, is it a piece that's on different types of aircraft?

PIERRE: No.

WONGSRICHANALAI: No. Just one type of aircraft?

PIERRE: It's every aircraft.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Oh, every aircraft.

PIERRE: It has that.

WONGSRICHANALAI: OK.

PIERRE: It has that. And we had a sandstorm, it would go down. It's very . . . The electronic composite of it is very sensitive. And a heavy sandstorm will affect it, and when we get those, we could have tens down. And gotta take them out and bring them in. So, for every sandstorm we survive, we almost get like 10-12 of them. But it's over a period of over how many months the aircraft is in the area and how many sandstorms that we got hit with. So . . . So that . . . That works well for us and for the region. And before I left . . . The unit that replaced us was a unit from Alaska 27-127. And I spent almost a week trying to train one of their guys how to work that piece. And so, when we left, I get back, I only had one year left. And one of the reasons I did not get to report that I got hit when we . . . when we get attacked, I am essential to our mission. And if we do not get the aircraft flying, it could get worse. And at that point I had to put a Band-Aid on it and move on, because mission was essential. And we getting hit every day, if those aircrafts not in the air, we doomed. So, we had to do what we got to do. Get the job done.

WONGSRICHANALAI: How many aircraft were at this base? Approximately.

PIERRE: Approximately 150.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Wow.

PIERRE: Approximately 150, because we . . . We secure whole Iraq. We were in northern Iraq, and then we went to Taji. At that point, we secure everything on the border and everybody, every unit that were doing any kind of convoy, stuff like that. So, we secured all convoy and provide security for camps all over the country.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Wow. So, why couldn't you train other people in your unit?

PIERRE: In my unit we could, but it take . . . It takes time for a clearance to come through.

WONGSRICHANALAI: OK.

PIERRE: So, if . . . If your clearance is not, is not there, you cannot . . . It's not . . . Even though you are in my squad, it's not anything that you can work on because you have to have the clearance to work on certain equipment. And certain equipment we know that so and so is a specialist, is an expert on that. And when we say that . . . When we say that we know the piece, nobody in the world can beat us on that piece. You can come close but if we are the best at it, we are the best at it. And that was the pride of Big Red One If we say we are the best at it, we will be tested everywhere. We were the best at it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And so, how large was your squad?

PIERRE: My squad was 9 guys.

WONGSRICHANALAI: OK.

PIERRE: Nine guys, but we get . . . Every now and then, we have a couple guys attached to us and cross training most of the time. And we also do some cross training with other . . . with other squads also. So, that was it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: And so, you returned?

PIERRE: When, when we returned to Fort Riley, after . . . after . . . I had less than a year left on my contract, my 6th year was up. And so, we stayed in Fort Riley. I went and get surgery done, and after I got surgery done, I never had a chance to get my C1 and C3 looked at because I went to Special Forces training in 2007. Two-thousand seven when I get hurt in . . . in . . . on training, the week after . . . the week after . . . The week after that I was going to go to Airborne school. But because of my injury—I had C1 and C3 collapse—I couldn't go to Airborne school. And so, they sent me back to my unit. And . . . While I am back, we are getting prepared to go downrange. And so, I'm not gonna have a year long surgery. So, I'm going to miss deployment.

So, I went to, I went to therapy a couple times and get myself back somehow, and I get deployed. And it was painful getting all my gear on and my rucksack and a duffle bag on top of my rucksack. I mean, it was painful, but I suck it up because I can't miss deployment. Every soldier, you train to fight. There's no, there's no use for you to train and stay home. I was going to fight. So, I . . . When I get it looked at off . . . off . . . off post, I went to a doctor off post and said that if we operate, it's gonna be a year-long recovery type thing because my spine. Well I said, "Don't worry about it, how about we try therapy?" He said "You can try therapy and give you relief, but when you get old, it's going to affect you." I said "Well, I'll take my chances." And I get deployed. But when we get back from the 15-month deployment, instead of going to have surgery, we already had, we already in rotation. So, I said, "I'm going, I'm going." And so, suck it up. Drive on. Go to training and reload. Go back downrange.

Come back, and it was time to get out. I had more permanent surgery to get done than to have my spine. Because I had that piece of metal in my head, and that want to get out. That thing didn't want to stay in, so, I had to get it out. So, they send me to, to a specialist in Wichita, Kansas. Did the plastic surgery. So far so good. Right now, it's just now that it shows. You can see, but it used to be smooth. But I don't know if that plastic wear off and now it just showing scars now. I don't know why. But it was smooth. Yeah. Well, that's, that's basically my story. When I get out of active duty, I joined the National Guard right away, because I was going to OCS. I wanted to . . . I did my time as enlisted, and, and worked my butt off.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, what was your rank as an enlisted man?

PIERRE: I was a specialist. I was a specialist and . . . I get to go to . . . to OCS. When I get to the National Guard, I get sergeant, and then, when I . . . When I . . . When I start the training, OCS training, I got E-6. I was a staff sergeant and I start training. I went to Alabama at first. At Alabama, it was intense. And I got injured in Alabama. So, at that time, it was my hip. I got my hip was swollen . . . Not swollen, was bruised. And because the training is so physical, there was

no way you were going to be able to continue. You would not be able to put any gear on top of it. And I was limping all over the place. So, finally, they . . . They medically dropped me and sent me back to my unit, and the next OCS class I get . . . I jump on it and I graduated OCS and assigned to go to Lubbock, Texas. From there, I stayed a couple months in 2015. Stayed a couple months and then I started BOLC—Basic Officer Leader Course. I start BOLC in January and when I get to BOLC, I get injured again.

But this time we went to a cave. And once we get inside the cave, my gums start growing on top of my teeth. And so, it was the weekend. I was in pain. My gums were killing me, because they grew all . . . They come down on my teeth. And so, I waited till Monday, and Monday I just go to sick call. And they, they did that surgery for me and pushed on my gums and tie them up and, and I don't know how the dentist did it, but it put me straight back again. And so . . . And so, I had to take two days of recovery from . . . from the numbness. And so, they push me back with the next class. I didn't graduate BOLC . . . and I was top of my class. They didn't . . . They didn't let me graduate until with the next class. Because I had already missed two consecutive days of class, they didn't let me . . . They didn't want me to graduate with my class. And I graduate with the next class, even though I was top of the class. But no hard feelings. I . . . Once after I graduate, I get back to Lubbock, Texas and now we planning for AT. Well, from 2006 till now. That's all I got, unless you have any questions.

WONGSRICHANALAI: I have a couple more. So, you said you felt compelled to join the armed forces. What . . . What motivated you to?

PIERRE: Well, my motivation is that all my life I feel . . . I feel like I was a servant. Servant hood is . . . I think it's my calling. So . . . Everybody has a call. Everybody has something to do, even . . . My undergrad is in aviation, my masters is in aviation. I can fly. I can do a lot of stuff. I have a MBA. But, I'm still a servant. I didn't see myself as going and put a suit on every day. I need to do something worthwhile. So . . . But all my friends since . . . I . . . I have a back . . . I have an aviation background. All my friends are in the Air Force. And everybody says, "Come on, Pierre, you can do this, man. It's too easy. We know you. You're gonna kill it." But they won't let me fly. They won't let me fly because, at that time, I did not have a clearance. Because, for you to fly F-18, they said I was already too old. And even if . . . Even if I go in, I do not have a clearance. My clearance gonna take too long at that time. I've gotta pass the flying bracket. It was . . . It was too much. So, I went to see the Army recruiter. "Oh yes, man. We can get you flying no time. Come on." Not. He got me enlisted. How you gonna fly enlisted? You have to be an officer to fly.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Right.

PIERRE: Man, he lied to me. But, you know what? I saw him I thank him because make me a better soldier. If I had went straight as an officer, I would have been just like another officer. And since I was enlisted, that motivate me at that time, since I have all credentials to be an officer at that . . . after I get out of active duty. That may give me the qualities to be a . . . to be a better leader. A better officer. Now, today, I'm the CEO of Isaiah 58. [Unintelligible] just a food bank, but we serve the whole county. And so, I serve like 70 people, sometimes 77, per day. And I'm doing something worthwhile. So . . . Yeah, joining the military did a lot for me.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did . . . Did any of your family members . . . Did they have a military background?

PIERRE: No. I'm the only one in my family in the military.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Were they supportive of you joining the military?

PIERRE: Yes, because I was the only one that had the guts enough to do that. And . . . But nobody wants to follow me.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, were they concerned about your deployment to Iraq?

PIERRE: Yes, very. But they know me. At a young age, they said, yes, I was born for this, because I used to fight a lot when I was young. And the only way my mom could control me was to get me to read a lot of books. So, every weekend I have to give her a book report or something like that and, if she ever ran out of books, I had to copy the Bible. And that's the worst punishment. I don't . . . I don't wish that on anybody. You read the Bible, copy the Bible. Oh, Lord! That was my worst punishment. So . . . That controlled my time. So, by the time I was in 9th grade, I was in 3 schools. I was going to plumbing school, computer school, and regular school, because school was never a challenge for me. I can just show up, and I would do good. School was never a challenge for me. So, my mom knew I was gonna be good. But good at what? She didn't want me to end up in jail or die before time. So, that's one thing that she did for me and I am forever grateful for . . . for that. Because she showed me the Lord and she get me book-oriented. I'm always learning, even though if I'm not in school or anything, I'm always learning. Now, today, I'm an MI officer. I do military intelligence. I'm not the brightest in the world but I can hang. And I can hang with the best of them. I was top of my class. I was top of my class BOLC. I can hang.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Well, what about your work for trans . . . translating for the United Nations?

PIERRE: Well, for . . . For them I would translate the letters.

WONGSRICHANALAI: OK.

PIERRE: Letters in Creole, put them in English, or letters in French put them in English. So . . . So, when I get in the military, I did that too, because . . . because I took the test, the DLPT. I took the language test and I was getting paid in the military for language. And I . . . I took the French test, the Creole test. I was going to take the Spanish test but they said they do not pay for that. So, I said "Well, I'll hold on on the Spanish." So, I didn't take the Spanish test, but I was good on multiple languages. And so, when I was enlisted, I was 94L and 94E.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What does that mean?

PIERRE: I was a linguist, I was with electronics/avionics.



WONGSRICHANALAI: OK. So, how many languages do you speak?

PIERRE: A couple.

WONGSRICHANALAI: OK.

PIERRE: I speak a couple. But . . . But the main one that I got paid for was French and Creole. But anything Latin . . . Anything in Latin, I cover that. So, from North America, Central America, all Americas, I got that.

WONGSRICHANALAI: That's terrific. That's terrific.

PIERRE: All Americas. I got that. And some Europes. Some Europe. Yea . . .

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, tell me about your first deployment to Iraq. Like what did you know about your mission there and then maybe your first impressions of the country.

PIERRE: Well, at first, we were ready for anything. We were hungry. I mean we train and train and train and train and train. I'm not . . . I'm not going to say that we were tired of training . . . but we were ready to get our stuff into works. And so, we were prepared to fight the best but there was not really a fight but we were ready. If there was one, yeah, we were ready. That's why when . . . When it comes to books, I'm really good at it and get to . . . get to whatever I read to practice. I'm good at that. And I'm telling you, when I get on the bench, anything electronics, I don't see anybody. I don't see anybody. So, I was the best technician in my shop. So, when my sergeant, platoon sergeant, my squadron was not there because I was a specialist. And I was the oldest in there. So, I get to be the shop chief. That was cool too, because when the . . . Especially when the work came in.

When the work came in, we separate the work. We put somebody there on each thing. And if I give everybody a radio and three left, I'm gonna do all three. They said "No, you don't." Because, we get so good at it, we want more. Everybody would say, "Give me two radios." "Give me three radios." "Give me the ALQ." "Give me this, Give me that." So, we would do . . . We would go beyond, because that keep us sharp and that keep us . . . our time occupied. So, once you're on the bench, you work and you do . . . You do your MOS. You do . . . You are performing what you were trained for. So, you don't have time to go to DTL and stuff like that.

And so, when I was in Ir . . . Iraq the first time, I had three . . . Three duties. I had additional duties, two additional duties. I has . . . I was the motor pool supervisor. Everything that goes out, all our vehicles, all our generators, I took care of all of them. Make sure that everything was maintenance, everything was ready to go. And every week I give the commander a report how ready we are. And I was never under 90% ready, mission ready, mission capable. I was never under 90%. Because at the motor pool, I would push those mechanics. Say, "If you're not doing it, I'm willing to do it, give me the wrench, I'll show you how to push it." And they would say "Man, get out of here, Pierre. You think you go and tell people. We're not in your shop. You're not going to come tell us what to do here." I say "Man, if you're not gonna work, I'm ready." And so . . . And so, I give them a hard time when I get to the motor pool, but at the end of the day, I get all my stuff. Everything that was on the line, I push everything through. They got serviced. If I'm . . . If I'm missing part . . . I was . . . I was the . . . the mail clerk. I

knew exactly who I'm addressing. I say "I need this part by tomorrow." And so I go to the SSA and say, "Hey, I need to push . . . I need you to push this for me. I know you got things in . . . in line. But I need this part." And my stuff always come quick. So, like this I keep all my vehicles, all my generators at least 90% always mission capable. And the commander . . . The commander loved me for that. And get the mail. After I finish in the motor pool, go get the mail. Bring the mail in. And every unit get . . . get their mail and then I go to the bench and fix radios. I keep . . . My whole time there was a breeze because I was always busy. I did not have any lapse time. When I get off work—we do 12 on 12 off—I just go to the gym, workout, watch a movie maybe. And everybody . . . Well, we do in electronics, everybody bring me their externals. Fuel up with more of this. I have more that 4,000 movies and one . . . and one 2 terabyte. Everybody would bring their externals, we load up, and we ready. We never had a down . . . I mean we were down. Moral always up.

If . . . If a fourteen days, they give us a day off, we go to the MWR and play cards, play pool. And me . . . Mostly you find me in the little library with the audio books learning new languages, listening to new languages and stuff. Especially Arab. And . . . I don't know, I didn't pursue. I could have been fluent by now. But . . . But mostly when . . . On my deployments, I had enough to get me out of a mess if I would ever be in a mess. But I could live. I could survive. I had just enough, but I was not fluent. But . . . But it is . . . It is not a gracious language. If you stop practicing it, you forget it. Just like Chinese. [Unintelligible.] If you stop practicing it, you will forget it. And because the dialect is so different from the Latin. If it was from Latin, it could stick a little bit more. But since it is . . . the dialect is kind of different . . . Yeah, if you don't practice it, you're gonna lose it. That's just the way it is.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did you interact with any Iraqis?

PIERRE: I'll say yes and no. But we didn't have a lot of Iraqis. We have a lot of Turkish. The contractors. Most of the contractors were Turkish. Every now and then, you have an Iraqi in between, but really . . . Because on our side it is too mission essential. It is sensitive. So, it was kinda . . . not really to find an Iraqi. But our contractors were like mostly Turkish or from other countries.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Did you communicate with your family when you were over there?

PIERRE: Mostly through emails and sometimes Skype. Sometimes Skype. But . . . If . . . If our Internet is down, we are an electronic unit, we are a high-tech unit, and that's . . . We are barely out of Internet, our system barely go down because we know how to maintenance it and keep it going. And if the other units are down say, "Well, go to the nerds. Go . . . Go to the nerds and have them come fix this." Man, they used . . . They used to call me nerd but I didn't mind. So, everybody in my shop used to call me Pee Pee Boy, that cartoon from . . . the nerdy cartoon. I was Pee Pee Boy. But it's OK. It's OK. But we had . . . We had a good time. We had a good time. We barely have lapse time. But at this fall for my squad, because we are always busy.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you remember the first time you were under fire?

PIERRE: First time . . . It was scary. We pulling . . . pulling 360 security. Man, telling you, we lay down, taking cover, ready to fight anytime for hours. For hours because . . . It was at a point

those guys would come and attack us, right? And they go under the sand. And so, when we finally discovered that those guys were on tunnels . . . we blast them. But those guys were . . . They come, they attacked us, and QRF get there, and we cannot find them. We couldn't find them. We couldn't find them because those guys were digging holes and come up and attack us and get down and bury themselves under the sand. And so . . . We had to get our aircraft straight with the proper equipments to get to solve that problem. And I don't have to tell you what we put in there but . . . Our . . . Our radars get more sensitive. So, we get our stuff fixed and . . . and we come up with a lot of good ideas.

WONGSRIVHANALAI: You adapted.

PIERRE: Yes. We adapted to that, to their, their tactics, because they wanted to play ghost. So, we had to put eyes on our head, eyes behind our heads. So . . . we fought it. We survived.

WONGSRICHANALAI: What did you understand about the United States's role in Iraq? What was the United States supposed to do there?

PIERRE: Well, our role was to bring peace to the oppressed. To bring some change to those that were persecuted because it was a dictatorship of countries. So, therefore, the mass was always oppressed. And one of those tactics of keep them under, keep them oppressed, was to use weapon of mass destruction to put fear into them. And so, by us taking over that country was to bring peace to the oppressed. And that's . . . That was my feeling. My feeling was that I was helping a mother to raise, to raise her son, and her son can become somebody without having to choose to be bad. Her son can choose to be good. So, me giving that mother that opportunity was worth it. That's my take of it. And so, yes, when I make sure that the radars work, when I make sure that the automatic system can unleash hell to my enemies, yes, I feel that I was doing something right. Even, even somebody might say we were never supposed to be there, whatever. But me, first of all, it was a dictatorship country. So, the dictatorship . . . I'm from a country that were ruling by dictatorship. So, I can tell you about dictatorship. So, who . . . Whoever is in power will get the mass oppressed. So, by that, mothers will have that insecurity that they cannot raise their kids to become whatever they dream for them or what the kid wants. So, by me fighting over there, no matter what it is, I believe that I have give hope to somebody else and, if I could bring hope to somebody else, it was worth it. That's my take.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you have any advice for young men and women who are joining the armed forces now?

PIERRE: They have to. Don't ask what the country can do for you but what are you doing for your country? At least 3 years, at least. At least give it a try. I know it may not be for everybody but at least give it a try. It may not be for everybody. But me, I embrace the United States and I serve my country, and I serve my country well. I am well-decorated. I cannot ask for more. Not that I will not take it but I will not ask for more. But I am well-decorated. So, if every . . . any kid would have a chance to serve their country, they should, because the freedom that we are enjoying is not free. So, don't take it for granted. At least, you do your part. It is not for everybody, don't get me wrong. The military is not for everybody, but I would ask, give it a try at least. Maybe 3 years. I think that's the minimum contract. At least do the minimum, and if you

don't like it, yes, you did your 3 years. OK, you can get out. That was . . . That would be my advice to them. At least give it a try.

WONGSRICHANALAI: One more question, you first came out to Lubbock. Was that your first time in West Texas?

PIERRE: No. I . . . I was moved here by . . . by Weatherford. When I got out of active duty, I was in the National Guard. I was stationed in Westheimer. I was in an intelligence unit. So, for my civilian job, I was working the oil and gas for Weatherford and Weatherford had a plant that they were going to shut down, but they sent me here to save the plant. So, when I get here, I did some changes, and the plant is still going today here in Big Spring. This is where . . . This is how I get to be in Big Spring because of Weatherford that brought me here. But when the oil and gas take a hit, Weatherford could not afford to pay me . . . to continue paying me. So, I . . . I got let go with the other 60% of the workforce. And it was devastating for the city and cities around Big Spring.

And . . . And so I got a job with a bank. I was the branch manager. And so, when the oil is picking back up, the bank wants to open another branch in another city and they didn't want to pay me more. So, I couldn't do two branches for the same pay. And so, I start volunteering. While I was working for the bank, I was the CFO for the . . . for the food bank, for the Isaiah 58. And then I become the executive director. And a couple months ago, they elected me CEO for the . . . for the food bank. Everything that I . . . that I do, I try to give it my all. Don't do a half-ass job, so to speak. So, and if you do your best on everything, people will notice. But I am not the type to work for the award. The awards will come. That's why I don't . . . I don't work for the money. I just study, I study, I study. The money will come. Because the more I study, the more I'm worth. So, the money will come. I don't have to worry about it. Either way, any way I go, I will make six figures easily. I don't have to worry about that. I just have to keep studying. I have 3 master's degrees. I have a bunch of certifications and stuff like that. I don't have to chase the money. The money will come. So, like this . . . in the military . . . I don't have to chase the awards. The awards will come. So, when I was fixing all the equipments on the, on the bench, I didn't ask to be the only one in that region to know how to fix that piece of equipment. It just come. It just follows. Just keep studying, add value to yourself, and everything else will follow. But in everything you do, make sure you give God the glory, because he allowed you to have that intelligence and understanding of stuff. That's about it.

WONGSRICHANALAI: So, you've lived in Florida and Kansas and Alabama and now here. Is there anything special or unique about West Texas, in your opinion?

PIERRE: Well, West Texas is its own monster. Everywhere else . . . Everywhere else is different. But in West Texas, man . . . I love West Texas because of small communities and stuff like that. And I like that. And the other cities like Florida, I lived in Miami, all . . . All the major cities, traffic is a big deal, and I think Florida incarnate in myself to hate traffic. So, small cities always make sense to me, because I don't have . . . I don't have to deal with the traffic and what time I gotta be there and I can just take off and be there. I don't have to have . . . I was in Houston. Sometimes you have to have an hour commute. I can't live in Houston. It still Texas, I cannot live in Houston. So, over here, the commute is good. I need to go, I'll be gone. West Texas was ideal for me. So, I bought my house here, I plan to stay here.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Do you miss the trees and the rain?

PIERRE: Not really. The reason I say that because West Texas is unpredictable. Whenever you feel like you miss it, boom, there it is. Unpredictable. So, like we haven't have rain for a week, don't be surprised tonight, boom, there's the rain. So, the weather forecast as an aviator, I'm telling you. The weather forecast, we just say we see how it goes. Let's see how it goes.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Fair enough.

PIERRE: Yeah.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

PIERRE: No, if you have anymore questions, I'm game.

WONGSRICHANALAI: I think we're . . . I think we're pretty much . . . Well, I suppose, did you face any challenges returning to civilian life?

PIERRE: Yes, because I'm facing challenges right now. Because at first, it's hard to . . . Even though everybody say that they are military friendly, veteran friendly, not really. Because that skepticism behind their head "Are you getting any VA benefits?" If you say, "yes," you getting any kind of VA benefits, it's . . . That's a low blow for you to get hired. Oh, somebody . . . "He's not straight. Something is wrong with him. Something has to be wrong with him." But nobody wants to bring somebody that's crazy to work. So, not . . . Like me, I got 10% disability because I got hit, I had surgery, but I'm not mentally affected. I don't have any nightmare or PTSD or whatever. But . . . If they ask me that question, I answer it honestly. It's a problem. So, that's a challenge. The barrier is there that . . . You know, it's only 1% of the population to be in the military. So, therefore, it's hard to overcome the 99%. You will overwhelm easily. So, the education for you to educate the 99%, it's pulling teeth. If you're a dentist, you got work to do. Man, for you to educate the workforce, the private sector, it's going to take times to educate them to let them know even though somebody's receiving benefit, that doesn't mean that they are PTSD or mentally challenged or whatever. But . . . And now that I do intelligence, everybody that interview me, at the end of the interview, I feel that they scared of me . . . There's no need. I don't want your job. But . . . My pattern is that I always start low and end up gradually. So, We . . . I don't . . . I don't go to get people's jobs. It's just that once I get to know the job, I will do it to the best of my abilities. And if I'm doing it to the best of my abilities, it's a world-class service you're getting, and I can stand with anybody in the world. So, that's the challenge.

WONGSRICHANALAI: Alright. Well, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us.

PIERRE: Hey, you guys welcome. Anytime.