

**Oral Memoirs**  
**of**  
**Lawrence “Larry” Paul Levine**

An Interview Conducted by

Mary Hughes Young

April 1, 2014

Community Veterans History Project

*University of Central Florida RICHES of Central Florida*

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## **Interview Histories**

Interviewer(s): Mary Hughes Young

The recordings and transcripts of the interview were processed in the offices of the RICHES of Central Florida Department, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida.

## **Project Detail**

The Community Veterans History Project, a RICHES of Central Florida Project at the University of Central Florida, includes interviews with Central Florida veterans from all branches of the United States military. Beginning in 2010, the UCF Community Veterans History Project is collecting, preserving, and making accessible to the public the experiences of Central Florida's veterans so that future generations will better understand the realities of conflict. It is a collaborative endeavor supported by multiple departments and offices at UCF. The histories, which are collected by students and faculty, are archived and made digitally available through the UCF library. The UCF Community Veterans History Project will also contribute selected veterans' histories to the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress.

## **Legal Status**

Scholarly use of the recording and transcript of the interview with Lawrence "Larry" Paul Levine is unrestricted. The interview agreement was signed on April 1, 2014.

## **Abstract**

Oral history interview of Lawrence "Larry" Paul Levine, who enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in August of 1966, just after being drafted into the U.S. Army. Levine was born in Rochester, New York, on June 8, 1947. Levine served in Europe during the Vietnam War, until he was discharged on August 31, 1970. He received a Good Conduct Medal for his service.

This oral history interview was conducted by Mary Hughes Young on April 1, 2014. Interview topics include Levine's background, his enlistment in the Air Force and drafting into the Army, basic and advanced training, being stationed in Europe, getting married overseas, returning to the U.S. after being discharged, and his life as a civilian afterward.

## Lawrence “Larry” Paul Levine

Oral History Memoir  
Interview Number 1

Interviewed by Mary Hughes Young  
April 1, 2014  
Orlando, Florida

0:00:00

### Introduction

**Unidentified** Recording.

**Young** Today [*clears throat*] is April the 1<sup>st</sup> [2014]. I am Mary Hughes Young, and I am interviewing Lawrence [“Larry”] Paul Levine.

**Levine** Right.

**Young** Who served in the U.S. Air Force [*sniffs*]. Um, This is part of the University of Central Florida – Florida’s Community Veterans History Project, and we’re recording this interview at University of Central Florida in Orlando, Florida.

0:00:32

### Background

**Young** Okay. Larry, tell me first about when and where you were born.

**Levine** I was born in Rochester, New York, in 1947.

**Young** Okay. And did you live there for all of your educational years?

**Levine** Uh, primarily, yes. Yes. I, uh, graduated college in Rochester also, after the – after my service.

**Young** Okay. Uh, do you have brothers or sisters?

**Levine** Yes. I have two brothers.

**Young** Two. So there were three of...

**Levine** Yes. There were three of us in the family.

**Young** Where were you in the birth order?

**Levine** Uh, I’m the oldest.

**Young** The oldest? Okay. What did your parents do for a living?

**Levine** Well, my father had a number of different jobs. Uh, He was a bread salesman for Thomas' English Muffins for a while, and then worked for a supermarket chain as one of their managers of one of their stores. Um, my mother was pretty much of a stay-at home mom. Um, She became very si – very sick, um, at a very young age and – and passed away at a very young age also. Uh...

**Young** Okay. And how old were you when she passed away?

**Levine** I was, uh, 20.

**Young** 20? Okay.

**Levine** 21.

**Young** Uh, Were any of your family members or extended members in the military?

**Levine** Yes. My father – my father was. He was in World War II. He, uh, was an in-flight radio operator in – at that time, was the Army Air Corps, uh, which then became the Air Force. Uh, in-flight radio operator and served over in India, going back from Karachi to Calcutta, India.

**Young** Okay. Uh, tell me about your education before you went into the military.

**Levine** Well, I, um, graduated high school in 1964. Uh, was accepted to Brown University, um, in Providence, Rhode Island. [*clears throat*] Finished one year there, and then my mother became very ill, and I had to come back home, which led me into the next phase of my life of being in the – in the military. Um, so that was prior to me going into the service.

**0:02:38** **Draft and enlistment**

**Young** Okay. Uh, And why did you decide to go into the military?

**Levine** Well, uh, because I came back home and had to help the family out. Uh, during that time, it was the Vietnam War, obviously – back in the – in the [19]60s. Um, in all honestly, I was ultimately drafted.

Now, there was a[sic] interesting – very interesting story that leads up to that. Um, When I came back home, I went to work for the U.S. Customs Service. My background is primarily: I was going to school in business and accounting, and I was fortunate enough to get a job [*clears throat*] with the U.S. Bureau of Customs [and Border Protection] in Rochester. Uh, went to work for them full-time. Did a number of j – jobs for them, primarily in the accounting area, and also, uh, did a few clearances of planes and – and ships and that system, where I need to, in that particular area. But I worked in the, um, government, uh – in the state office building – actually, it was a Federal building. It wasn't even a state. It was a Federal building, because it was U.S. Customs.

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And, uh, the draft board was right downstairs from my offices. And I became very friendly with a number of the different people who worked in the draft board, and informed them of my situation: that, uh, I was eligible for the draft, because I wasn't going to school full-time. I was going to school part-time. Uh, they had informed me at that particular time that, "No – no worries. No problems." That, uh, I would be safe, because I knew everybody there. And low and behold, before I knew it, my letter from Uncle Sam came and said I was drafted.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** So I went back to the [*laughs*] – to the, uh, draft board and said, "What happened here?" And their excuse was, "Oh, we're sorry. It got by us," and everything like that. So, um, in ess – in essence, I was drafted, but before I was drafted, I enlisted in the Air Force.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Okay.

**Young** Um, and was this before the lottery was in effect?

**Levine** No. The lottery was in effect, if I'm not mistaken. Um, the – there was a lottery, and I had a pretty, pretty low lottery number.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Meaning that I was very eligible for the draft. Uh, I wasn't going to Canada. I wasn't going any place, but I was informed again by the draft board that I'd be safe. And, uh, low and behold, I wasn't.

**Young** Okay. Because of the work you were doing?

**Levine** No. It's just that – because I knew people at the draft board, who said if they saw my name come up, they would pull it [*laughs*].

**Young** Oh, okay. Okay. Well, how did you feel about being drafted then? Um, was it – was it...

**Levine** Concerned.

**Young** A big shock?

**Levine** Concerned.

**Young** Okay. Okay.

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**Levine** Shock. Uh, the first thing, obviously, that came to my mind, was: *Well, if you're drafted, then you're going into the Army. And if you go in the Army, you are going to carry a gun. If you carry a gun, you're going to go to Vietnam.* So, uh, when that—when that happened, obviously, the family was very concerned about it. And, uh...

**Young** And so—so...

**Levine** They didn't want me to go. So I figured it would be best if I went into the Air Force.

**Young** Right. And so you signed up for the Air Force...

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** Right after you were drafted?

**Levine** Yes. That's correct.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** That's correct.

**Young** And So your family was feeling

**Levine** Uh...

**Young** Concerned about the situation too?

**Levine** They were more concerned, obviously, during that whole period of time, but not as concerned if I allowed myself to be drafted in the Army.

**Young** Into the Army. Okay. How about your, uh peers? You friends or girlfriend? How did they feel about you going into the military?

**Levine** Uh, my friends were kind of like, *Better you than me*, at that particular time. Uh, I'm sure most people realized that was not the greatest time in our history for the military. Most people were looked down on in going into the military. Uh, I had some tough experiences myself with that particular situation. Uh, my girlfriend, at the time, was pretty much—said, "If you are going into the military, then I'm not waiting around for you, so," *[laughs]* "I'm—I'm gone."

**Young** As if you had a choice, right? *[laughs]*.

**Levine** Yeah. As if I had a choice. Right. Right.

**0:06:42** **Basic training at Lackland Air Force Base**

**Young** Okay. Uh, well, now you're in the Air Force.

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**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** And where did you do your basic training?

**Levine** Uh, Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. I was there in August of 1966.

**Young** Okay. And, uh, what were your expectations of – being in the, uh – in basic training? Did you – did you have any idea of what was going – what it was going to be like?

**Levine** No. I had an idea, but I didn't – I didn't think it would be as bad as it really was. Uh, I was in good shape at the time, okay?

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** Weighed a lot less than I do now. And, um, expected it to be a little different, uh, physically and mentally. Uh, The aspects of basic training are obviously to get you in a situation to where you are able to accept orders, and you're able to – be able to do things when they're – when you're told to do them. And, uh, I accepted that without any problem. It's just – there's a little more physical on my body than I had anticipated.

**Young** Okay. Can you elaborate a little bit on that?

**Levine** Yeah. The marching...

**Young** What was a typical day like?

**Levine** The typical day is we get up at like five in the morning – 4:30-5 o'clock in the morning, and we'd have to make our bunks and get everything straightened away for the day. We go to me – the mess hall, where we had breakfast. And that was one of the things that surprised me, because we just didn't take our time in – in being able to eat breakfast. We were given a certain amount of time to get in line, eat our breakfast, and get ready to go outside. It was a lot shorter than I had anticipated. So, uh, my eating habits had to change very quickly, because of that.

**Young** Hm.

**Levine** Uh, after that, we would do either calisthenics or marching. Um, go to the gun range, which kind of surprised me, because I didn't think I would be shooting a gun. Uh, had qualified in the – in the gun range.

And had different classes on just general military, um – you know, the way of life of a – of a person in the military. Uh, Things – how to handle yourself, how to be able to, uh, you know, again, take orders, and anything that had to do with the military. Military history, all of that.



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**Young** Okay. And this – how long was your basic training? How many weeks?

**Levine** Uh, wow. You see, I – that – I, uh – I want to say eight weeks.

**Young** Eight weeks? Okay.

**Levine** But it might be a little bit longer than that. I mean, that's 40 – what? 40 – safe[sic] – 48 years ago. And [laughs]...

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** [inaudible]. I really didn't wanna do any...

**Young** It's not for everybody[?].

**Levine** Research on that.

**Young** You know there's an end to it.

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** It's not gonna be forever.

**Levine** That's absolutely correct.

**Young** Okay. Um, what were your instructors like?

**Levine** [sniffs] I thought the meanest people in the world, okay? They didn't take any – they didn't take anything from anybody.

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** Um, which is what they were supposed to do. You were supposed to be there to listen to them. Them – they were, um, NCOs [non-commissioned officers], which is, uh, the equivalents of sergeants, okay? They were not officers, although the heads – some different, um, sections were – were officers – captains and – and, uh, lieutenants and that. But, um, you know...

**Young** [inaudible].

**Levine** I realized after a while, that they were doing their job, and that if they were soft on us, and if we became – a situation, which we got involved in, we couldn't be soft either. So the, um – they did their job, and I think they did it – looking back on it, I think they did a good job on 'em.

**0:10:06** **Sharpshooting and career assignment**

**Young** Okay. Uh, let's back up a minute.

**Levine** Sure.

**Young** You said you didn't think you'd have to shoot a gun

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** But you did.

**Levine** Right.

**Young** And I think I noticed on your paper that you were, uh, a sharpshooter.

**Levine** Yeah. I surprised myself, to be honest with you.

**Young** Had you ever shot a gun before?

**Levine** No.

**Young** Okay. So...

**Levine** No.

**Young** You adapted to that well.

**Levine** I adapted to it. Yeah. Well...

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Which again, kind of concerned me. In effect, if I'm a sharpshooter, they might do something with me, other than what I wanted to do [*laughs*].

**Young** Did you receive, uh, any advanced, specialized training?

**Levine** Not at that time. No. When we, uh—Just To—to go back a little bit, uh, historically, what led up to this: when I enlisted in the—in the Air Force—and I—don't mean to take away what you're—you—the questions you are asking—uh, I had to take a battery of tests...

**Young** Mmhmm.

**Levine** To determine where I was best fit for the Air Force. Uh, and, at that time, I was—I—I actually scored highest in the administrative area. It was like electronics, administrative, mechanical, uh—those I think—and—and just basic—basic air. So I scored highest in administrative, which I assumed that I would, because that was pretty much my background and what I wanted to do.

However, at the time that I went in, and—there were no openings in the administrative field. So I said, "Well, if you don't have anything in the administrative area, send me home. I don't—I don't need to come then."

**Young** [laughs].

**Levine** They said, "No. that doesn't work that way, okay? Now, you're going to be in the electronics field." I said, "Okay. Electronics." "Yeah. You know, putting wires together and all this kind of stuff. Wherever you're needed in electronics." You know, that's a wide area, obviously. I said, "Okay." and they gave me another battery of tests, and one of the tests was called the Ishihara [Color] Test – and I'm not sure if you're fa – familiar with that? That's the one where they have the numbers that are embedded in the different colors, so that if you're looking at it, it is to determine if you are colorblind or not.

**Young** Oh.

**Levine** Well, I really botched that up big time. I think I only got two numbers out of all of them that they showed me. I just couldn't pick out the different numbers in the blocks of different colors. So they sat back and they said "Well, hm. If you can't pick out the numbers, how are you going to put a red wire together with a green wire or with a blue wire, and make sure it's running properly? So you can't go into electronics." So I said, "Good. Send me home." They said, "No. it doesn't work that way."

I said, "Well, how about administrative again?" "No. we still don't have any openings." "Okay. So now what?" "Well, we're going to give you your choice of what you want to do, Okay? This is the career that you're going to have in the Air Force." One: You can become a cook, okay? Number two: you can become a parachute rigger, okay? Putting together the parachutes for the pilots and [inaudible]. Three: you can be an air policeman, because you did qualify that [inaudible]. Or four: you can be an airframe repair specialist.

So I sat back and I thought, *Well, I could kill everybody with my cooking*, because I couldn't cook very well, okay? *If I became a parachute rigger, god forbid if a parachute didn't open when the pilot jumped out of the plane or whatever[?], I'd probably kill somebody that way.* Air police? I says[sic], *Nah. I'm not big enough to be a good air policeman, you know? I could direct traffic, but that would probably be all that I could do.* So that left me with airframe repair, okay? So that's where we're back – that's where – that's a little bit about the background on my next point after basic training.

**Young** Okay. So in basic training, you get your assignments?

**Levine** Exactly.

**Young** And you were assigned to be an air...

**Levine** Airframe Repair.

**Young** Airframe Repair? Okay.

**Levine** That's exactly correct.

**Young** Okay. So that's working on the outside of the airplane.

**Levine** Uh, It could be the inside too.

**Young** Oh, okay. Anything to do with the frame of an airplane?

**Levine** Right.

**0:13:52** **Advanced training at Amarillo Air Force Base**

**Young** Okay, but, um—so where were you assigned after basic training?

**Levine** I was assigned after basic training to advanced training at Amarillo Air Force Base—Texas also. I really didn't leave Texas for my basic training and my advance training. And this was strictly was airframe repair now.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Okay? This was how—to teach me how to be, uh, an airframe repairman.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** I have two left hands, so you can imagine

**Young** [*laughs*].

**Levine** What it was like to be in Airframe Repair School [*laughs*].

**Young** Okay. And—so how long where you in

**Levine** Uh...

**Young** Airframe training?

**Levine** Six months, actually.

**Young** Six months? Okay.

**Levine** Almost six months. It was—yeah.

**Young** And What was your impression of this a—assignment?

**Levine** I thought it would be just going to school, But unfortunately, it wasn't. It was an extension of the basic training, only, to be honest with you, worse. First of all, the weather in Amarillo, Texas, was horrible. I was there during the wintertime, and it was cold and freezing, and we were doing calisthenics outside and we were running, and we were marching. And I said, *This isn't supposed to be like this. This*

*is like I'm supposed to learn how to work on airplanes, not [laughs] – not – I said, "This was already done in basic training. Why do I – why do I gotta do that again?" "No, no, no." And actually, they – they called them "TIs" – technical instructors – were worse in – in Airframe Repair School than they were in basic training. They were harder on us in – in, uh – in school.*

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** So...

**Young** How many hours would you actually be in – in training for repairs?

**Levine** For repairs? It was about six to eight hours a day.

**Young** So a long day?

**Levine** Yeah. It was just on the repair. Just on airframe repairs. That wasn't – again, the calisthenics or the marching and everything else. So it was a full day.

**Young** Okay. And did it start early...

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** Like in basic training?

**Levine** Not as early, but pretty close.

**Young** Pretty close? Okay.

**Levine** [laughs].

**Young** What did your duties entail as an airframe worker?

**Levine** Well, again, there's another story that goes along with that, okay?

**Young** Tell it.

**Levine** Uh, Well, in – in basic airframe repair, you do anything from sheet metal work to fiber glassing to, umm anything that has to do, again, with – with the frame. Ma – uh, making sure that the – that the actual plane itself is in good shape to fly, okay? From a sheet metal standpoint, and not the electronics standpoint. Obviously, that's in another area.

But, uh – this – this, again, is a – is another story. I had two left hands, as – as I had mentioned. Uh, I couldn't hit a hammer – nail with a hammer great, and they're putting me on working on airplanes. Well, each part of the course was a different thing you did with an – with the airframe. Riveting was one area, sheet met – cutting out certain, uh, pieces on the plane was another area.

Uh, one of the areas that they had, they called them “blocks.” each one was a separate block, and what you did was you learned as part—as in the individual blocks was, uh, fiber glassing, okay? And how to fiberglass, how to use fiberglass, and how to be able to mold it on a plane were necessary things like that. I wish you could’ve seen me doing the fiberglass work. You’d—it’d—it’s a real comedy. It was a real comedy, a real joke.

**Young** What was the, uh, difficulty in—in doing that? I don’t—I haven’t worked with fiberglass.

**Levine** Well, it’s just mixing—mixing the ras—the resin together...

**Young** Oh, okay.

**Levine** So it’s the right consistency. Being able to lay out the sheets of fiberglass on there, and smooth it over, sand it down. All of these different areas are part of the—are part of the fiberglass work, okay?

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** So that—that—that’s—that was part of it. That was one of the blocks.

**Young** Alright. And there were other things, like riveting classes?

**Levine** Yes. Yes. That’s another—that was considered another block. How to use a rivet gun properly. Um, All different types—all different of things on—on, Again, using sheet metal, and using—and repairing aircraft.

**Young** What did you like best about that?

**Levine** Nothing [*laughs*].

**Young** Nothing? Okay. So you kind of felt like you were a...

**Levine** I was a...

**Young** Round peg...

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** In a square hole?

**Levine** Exactly.

**Young** [*laughs*].

**Levine** Exactly. I was not in the proper location.

**Young** Okay.

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**Levine** And unfortunately, the Air Force didn't realize at the time, okay? They put me through it.

**Young** Were your instructors, um, understanding? Or...

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** Patient? Or...

**Levine** They pretty – they were pretty understanding, with the exception of the one from the fiberglass area, because, uh, I ultimately did not pass the test to move on to the next phase of the Airframe Repair School. So I actually had to take a complete week all over – or, em, two weeks, I believe, or three weeks. I had to take that all over again.

**Young** All the fiberglass work?

**Levine** Yes. The fiberglass portion. And the other ones I had passed...

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** But the fiberglass portion, I had a very difficult time with, and, uh, I had to take that part of the program all over again.

**Young** Okay. And then you passed it?

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** Okay. So now are you ready for the next, uh – for your next assignment?

**Levine** Well, again, the reason – now, I was part of a group of students. My class, I think, was like 12 or 14 students in my class. Because I had failed the test, they moved on to the next phase, I had to wait until the next class came along to pick up with them, and to begin the fiberglass portion all over again.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Okay. Which I did. Uh, I think I had to wait a week before the next class came to the point that they were going to do the fiberglass...

**Young** Oh, okay. I see.

**Levine** Block. So I waved goodbye to all of my fellow students. They had gone – they had gone on to the next phase, and started it, and started the next group. Which a second time I did pass, okay? So I finished and graduated tech school, at that point.

**Young** Okay. So you only had to wait behind two weeks, and then do you catch up with your class again?

**Levine** No.

**Young** No?

**Levine** No. Then I'm involved with this next...

**Young** Your [inaudible]?

**Levine** New class. [inaudible].

**Young** Okay. Did you go through all the training you did before?

**Levine** No. No. I just picked it up from the fiberglass portion. I'm not sure if it was the third block or the second block. I really don't remember.

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** But then I just proceeded on with that class. Now, as they had finished block one and block two...

**Young** Right.

**Levine** And they went into fiber glassing. I had finished one and two, and started in with them as part of my new class, and we continued on together.

**Young** Okay. [inaudible].

**Levine** So I had to meet all new students, and – and get involved with the new class.

**Young** Can you describe an event that wasn't typical in this particular time of your training? You're in the six months training now. Is there anything that happened that wasn't typical of an everyday experience or – that you can think of?

**Levine** Mm. Not really. No. It was just pretty much – cou – can't wait to get out and get an assignment type of situation. And, um, I – Like I said, I did the very best I can. I knew I had no choice, and, uh, I was able to pass and continue on. But it was pretty much the same routine. The only difference that we had was that we had, uh, leave on the weekends, and we were able to go into Amarillo, which There's not much there. So we did have leave – we did have leave time then. It wasn't like a seven days a week type of training.

**Young** Okay. So not really anything memoral – memorable during this time?

**Levine** Not really. No.

**0:21:03** **Assignment in Europe**

**Young** Okay. So at six – when you finished that six-month training...



**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** What happened then?

**Levine** ‘Nother interesting point. I guess—I guess I had more interesting points than I thought I did. When I, um, came out of my next—with my new class, my previous class had gone on. And of course, they graduated from the technical school before I did. They all got their orders, and the entire class got orders for Vietnam, okay? So if I was in that class, I would have ended up going to Vietnam, at the time. My situation was, when I graduated and I saw my orders posted, I got sent to Europe [*laughs*]. So...

**Young** That’s interesting

**Levine** It is. It was lu—very lucky. Uh...

**Young** At that point, you weren’t too [inaudible] — too very sorry that you weren’t very adept to...

**Levine** No. Not really. But of course, you know, that can change—that can change at any time also. But, uh, quite a relief on my family’s part, to say the least.

**Young** Right.

**Levine** Um, It—it was—it was very, [*laughs*] very interesting time, believe me. So I was sent to Europe, uh, in what they called a “TDY outfit,” which was temporary duty assignments. Now, I was assigned to work on a [McDonnell Douglas] F-4 [Phantom II] aircraft. they called it the “phantom jet.” I worked on [McDonnell] F-101s [Voodoo], [Republic F-]105s [Thunderchief], uh, various different types of programs.

My basic job was to work on the outboard tanks and pylons. The pylons were, uh, the apparatus that held the bomb racks on. So we were working on putting on bomb racks on the different types of aircraft, and they would then go over to Vietnam.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Now...

**Young** So you were specialized in your duties?

**Levine** Yes. Yes. We were—we became specialized in our duties. Now, the government, at the time—again, we were set up as a temporary duty assignment. We had—had to go from base to base to work on these different aircraft. The government thought that it would be cheaper for us to travel in groups and work on these tanks and pylons, because the point of the—with these jets are: they had the jettison their outboard tanks and their pylon or bomb racks when they took off

after their bombing runs. Because if they kept those on, it would add weight to the plane itself, in which case, they couldn't get away – get away as quick, uh, without them. So they were continuously jettisoning these, and when they would come back to – to Europe, we'd have to refit them with new ones, and make – and – and get them all set up for them to go out again. Even though most of them were based right in Vietnam or Thailand and that[?], um, they still came for – for, uh, overall maintenance back to the, uh – back to Europe.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** So...

**Young** Where in Europe were you?

**Levine** Okay. I was in, uh, Turkey, Italy, Greece, Libya, England, Spain, and my home base was in Germany, okay? That's where we worked out of. We worked out of Rhein-Main [Air Base], Germany, in, uh, Frankfurt [am Main, Hesse, Germany], okay? So that's where my main outfit was. It was Detachment 51.

**Young** Okay. And that's[sic] the ones you graduated with?

**Levine** No.

**Young** [inaudible].

**Levine** Actually, some – Most of them – most of them did go on to that, but I think there were about six or seven that went to different, uh – areas, okay?

Uh, that's another [laughs] – again, that's another interesting point. Uh, When I flew over from, uh, New Jersey – McGuire Air Force Base. I left out of McGuire Air Force Base. It's – it's a funny story. There were like three planes lined up taking all of us over to Europe. There were two commercial airliners, and then there was what they called a "C-141 Galaxy." And I said, "Oh, I'm going to go over to Europe in a nice, uh, airliner," and I ended up going over on a military aircraft, sitting in the seats on the sides [laughs]. So it was kind of a bumpy ride over there.

But when I landed, my orders were to catch up with my unit in what they called – in a place called Chaumont[, Haute-Marne], France, okay? So I landed at Rhein-Main Air Force Base, Germany, caught a shuttle, uh – a military shuttle. Uh, it wasn't a plane. It was a bus, alright? Down to Chaumont, France. Caught up with my, eh – with my group down there, okay? With my detachment down there. And I noticed as I went into – to the offices to report in, that they're packing up everything. And I went and signed in, and I said to the desk sergeant or whatever his name was, "What – what's going on," okay? "I was told to report here." They said, "Well, we're leaving." I said, "Why are you leaving?" Well, at that time, France was not in the best, you know, of friends with the – with the United States. And, uh, this is part of the NATO [North Atlantic Treaty

Organization] Pact, and we were – we were leaving out of France. And I said, “Oh,” I said, “So we’re not going to stay in France?” “No.” “Well, where are we going?” He said, “Rhein-Main Air Force Base in Germany.” I said, “Wait a minute. I just came from there.” [laughs] I said, “I just took a bus and came from Rhein-Main.”

**Young** Going to your official[?] [inaudible].

**Levine** “Why didn’t anybody tell – why didn’t anybody tell me that I was going to go back to – I would never have left I would have waited for ya there.” Well, as it turned out, we went – we went back to Rhein-Main, and, um, set up shop there, and, uh, proceeded to travel all over Europe, and – and working on these tanks and pylons and – and getting them set, so that they – we can put ‘em on the planes, and they can take off.

**Young** Did you have a schedule for where you would be and...

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** How...

**Levine** Yes. We had orders every – every time. Uh...

**Young** And how did that work? Or – or did you not know ahead of time?

**Levine** Um, when we finished one assignment, we’d come back for a while, and, uh, work around...

**Young** Always back to Germany?

**Levine** Back to Germany. Right.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** And then get our – get our next assignment when we were told to go out...

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Again.

0:26:55

**Relationships with other servicemen and assignments**

**Young** What was your relationship with the oth – other service personnel that you worked directly with on the pylons?

**Levine** Oh, we, uh – we had a good relationship. I mean, we were a unit. We pretty much hung around together. Uh, when we had time, we played softball, uh, on – in a league on base. And again, I was a lot, a lot thinner [laughs] back then. And, uh, we had – we had a good time. I mean, it was pretty much a regular

eight-hour day, okay? Uh, if – whether or not it was at the – at the base that we were at, or at our home base in Germany.

There was – every once in a while, we had assignments. Outside of our unit, was the, uh, uh Boeing 707 – I think it was, um, at the time. It was the General of the Air Force's plane, uh, of Europe

**Young** Mmhmm.

**Levine** Okay. Uh, [inaudible]. It was the General's plane – his personal plane – was out there. Actually, come to think of it now, it was the [Boeing] KC-135 [Stratotanker] – was – which was an inflight re-fueler, where those, you know – the planes come up to it, and they drop the boom in that. Well, this was a converted KC-135 for the General. Really nice, nice plane. And we had work on that every once in a while, changing some things, and, you know, making sure that everything was okay.

**Young** When you were, uh, at base, or on these assignments, were you always busy? Or were there times that you didn't – were waiting for the next assignment?

**Levine** Uh, No. We were busy most of the time. We were busy most of the time. I mean, once again, it was pretty much an eight-hour day, and when we were done, we had – we were free to do whatever we wanted. It was just, uh, like a normal job, except we worked [inaudible]...

**Young** Okay. But there wasn't a lot of just sit around and wait?

**Levine** No, no, no, no.

**Young** Okay. How did you stay in touch with your family and friends back home?

**Levine** Well, at that time, I was – there – there was no such thing as Skype, or, uh, e-mail, and things like that. So it was pretty much by letter. Just by regular letter. Sna – snail mail.

**Young** Snail mail.

**Levine** [laughs].

**Young** Uh, do you believe you were well-trained for your assignment?

**Levine** As best as they could, considering what they had to deal with [laughs].

**Young** Uh, did you always have the equipment and the supplies that you needed...

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** To do your job?

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**Levine** Yes. That – that we had no trouble – we had no trouble with.

**Young** And you mentioned you played softball.

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** How else did you entertain yourself when you weren't on duty?

**Levine** Mm. Well, I'd say drink [*laughs*]. Um, Just going to different, uh – go to the USO [United Service Organization] over there, and saw stag shows, and had one – one or two beers – four or five.

**Young** Was there a USO show that was particularly memorable?

**Levine** Yes. The Platters. The original Platters were there. And, um, I – I liked them from the beginning, and I was very fortunate to meet 'em, and, uh, listen – they put on a great show.

**Young** Uh huh. Was that in Germany? Or in one of your other assignments?

**Levine** No. That was in Germany.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** It was in Germany [*sniffs*]. But When I – I was in Spain, uh, over one of the New Year's [Eve]. I was in, uh, Madrid, Spain, and got and to see a flamenco show there. A real, real flamenco show, which was pretty good.

**Young** Did you take advantage of any, uh, sightseeing, or...

**Levine** Oh, yes.

**Young** Or tours...

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** When you were there?

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** Okay. That would be entertaining [*inaudible*]

**0:30:15** **Getting married overseas**

**Levine** Actually, um, I got married while – while I was overseas.

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** And my wife was in the States. She was a – she was an American. She was German – born German, but, um, I married – I got married. And she was able to come over to Europe and get a job in Germany, while I was gone. Fortunately enough, she, um, uh spoke German. So she was able to get around the economy very nicely while I was gone, because I was gone most of the time.

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** But it was nice to have her over there. And when – when I was back there, we were able to travel around.

**Young** Oh, nice.

**Levine** We were able to go to Holland,<sup>1</sup> and, uh, visit a lot of Germany. Go around – go around Germany.

**Young** That's a – that's very, uh – very nice thing to have happened...

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** While you're

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** Young, and, uh – and not a lot of money...

**Levine** Right. Exactly.

**Young** You can travel around on...

**Levine** Exactly.

**Young** Uh, Uncle Sam's dime.

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**0:31:09 Rank and discharge**

**Young** Uh, when were you – tell me about your ranking and how that – and how you...

**Levine** Well, actually, I became a sergeant.

**Young** You ended up a staff sergeant.

**Levine** Uh, pardon me?

**Young** You ended up as a staff sergeant. I saw on your...

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<sup>1</sup> Formally called The Netherlands.

**Levine** Yeah. It was a...

**Young** Okay. You start off as a – tell me how that works.

**Levine** Well, you just go in as an airman.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Okay. And then, at that time, it was, um, second class, first class, and sergeant.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Actually, I think I mis – misstated. Um, I was three stripes, which was considered a sergeant at the time.

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** Okay. Four stripes is a staff sergeant, so...

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** I made three. If I had reenlisted, I probably would have gotten a fourth stripe.

**Young** Okay. Alright. So you ended up as a sergeant?

**Levine** Right.

**Young** Okay. And, um, when were you discharged from the military?

**Levine** August of 1970. When I rotated back from the States, I, uh, was stationed in, uh, Shaw Air Force Base in Sumter, South Carolina, which was about 7-8 months. So I lived in South Carolina, outside of Columbia.

**Young** And how long were you there?

**Levine** I think it was 7-8 months. Something like that.

**Young** Seven – okay. Um, how did you feel once you were out of the military?

**Levine** Relieved. Um, Glad I did what I did. Uh, kind of – Kind of upset as to what was going on, while I was in the military, back home with the individual tour – “pacifists,” I guess you call them – or against the war in Vietnam. I mean, I was not all in favor of what was going on, but, uh, when I did come home on leave at one time, uh, it was not ver – it was not a very good situation. I mean, we were – for all intents and purposes, we were spat at, at the airports, when we walked through. Nobody said, “Thank you for your service.” And, uh, they just didn’t like it. They didn’t like anybody in the military, or anybody in uniform. So that – that kind of part was tough.

Um, Again, I was relieved. But on the other hand, I felt that all of my friends—I was the only one of all my friends back in Rochester. I was the only one to go into the military, and felt that I was four years behind them in education and—and, um—and just getting on with my life. So, you know, it—both sides. I felt good with serving, but on the other hand, I felt that I lost some time.

0:33:30

**Life after service**

**Young** Um, once you were out, what did you do?

**Levine** [sniffs] Another good, interesting situation. Uh, when I got out of the service, my wife became pregnant [laughs]. And, uh, it was probably from the week I got discharged [laughs]

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** She—she got pregnant. In which case, if she got pregnant while we were in the military, the government would have paid for it. If she had given birth while I was in, the military would have paid for it.

But I, uh—when I got out of the service, my main goal was to get back to school. I wanted to get my degree in accounting and—and go on from there. But a little s—s—little turn of events when your wife becomes pregnant. Going to day school is pretty difficult. So I took a job. um, and again, I got out in August, and, uh, school was going to start in September, but I was gonna take—go to night school, okay? And—and get a job during the day. But until that time started, I went to work at McDonald's, uh, slinging hamburgers. See, eh, eh, my memory's coming back. I was going to go to day school.

**Young** Uh huh.

**Levine** So I wasn't going to enroll until September, but I needed some—to get some income coming in, uh, for my wife and that. So I went to work at McDonald's slinging hamburgers, which was not a great experience. Because here's an older gentleman, who's, uh, slinging hamburgers with a bunch of teenagers, and looking at me, thinking, *Boy, he must be a real loser if he's doing this*, not knowing the situation. But I got the job in telling 'em that I was going to—I wanted to go to school training to become a manager at McDonald's. This is how I got the job. And, uh, the owner of the place said, "Okay." He said, "But you—but in order to do that, you have to learn all the different areas of—of McDonald's." French fries, working on the grill, the clean-up, the whole bit. . I said, "Okay." Well, that lasted about a week—week and a half—and I just couldn't handle it anymore. I would come home smelling terrible from all the fat that was in the French fries. So that lasted maybe a week—week and a half.

But we managed. Um, and I did start going to school, but things got to a point where I just needed to get money. So I went—I was going back to night school. I went to night school, and got a job. Uh, at that time, [sniffs] I was working, I



believe, at one of the local manufacturing companies in their finance department. I was working in their cost accounting department. Even though I didn't have a degree, they – they put me on as – in a lower level type of position. But it was bringing in income, and I – I was able to go to school at night.

**Young** And where was this, Larry?

**Levine** Rochester Institute of Technology.

**Young** Oh, you were back in...

**Levine** Yeah.

**Young** Back in New York.

**Levine** I was back in Rochester. I went back to New York.

**Young** Okay. Were you – were there any G.I.<sup>2</sup> benefits

**Levine** Yes.

**Young** That you were able to take advantage of?

**Levine** Yes. Absolutely. I was on the G.I. Bill.<sup>3</sup> Helped me pay for my schooling. Yes. Definitely.

**Young** Okay. And so you're working in the daytime and...

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** And going to school at night.

**Levine** Right.

**Young** Okay.

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**0:36:28 Treatment from civilians**

**Young** And, uh, we talked about how you were treated...

[background noise]

**Young** When you came home, and that, um, there was, um, uh, disrespect...

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<sup>2</sup> Government Issue or General Issue.

<sup>3</sup> Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944.

**Levine** Mmhmm.

**Young** For you as a soldier. Now...

**Levine** Right.

**Young** Was that set across the board every time you came home on leave? Or, uh, did you notice that when you would go to New York? Or when you would go—when you came back to South Carolina? Was there a difference in the way the local people treated you?

**Levine** Not really. No. Not that I can remember. It was just an area that they didn't go out of their way to—to do anything. More like they were trying to ignore us, then, um—like we were the—the plague.

**Young** Mmhmm.

**Levine** Okay. And just no—no respect. No respect for anyone. And that's what makes me feel so good now is that you're seeing these, uh, individuals in the military, and people are giving them respect and thanking them for their service. So that's one of the areas where I—I felt cheated out of also—is not getting the respect and that, because it was four years of my life, and that's a long time.

**Young** It is a long time, especially at that age.

**Levine** Right. Exactly.

**0:37:29** **How service affected civilian life**

**Young** Uh, did your military experience affect your civilian life in any way?

**Levine** I became more appreciative of life. Um, More appreciative of the things that I—that I was able to get, uh, of—of my family at the time. Because being away from them most of the—now fortunately, like I said, my wife was able to come with—to come with me over to Europe, but, uh, I missed my brothers and my—and my father. My mother had passed away prior to that, so, uh—but, yeah. Uh, a lot of things, uh—a lot of things that I was more appreciative of, at the time.

**Young** Do you think that you were more serious in your education than you would have been as a 20...

**Levine** Most definitely. Most definitely. That's a very good point. I looked at my education totally different. Uh, more—I—I was more involved with history. Um, I—I didn't feel at the time—you see, there was a lot—a lot difference in going to school and being, pretty much, made to go to school, or that—that was the norm. You—you went to high school. You finished high school. You went to college and then you went on from there.

And because of the interruption, I looked at it from a different stand point that, you know, this is an opportunity. This is a great opportunity, and, uh, the government is helping me with this opportunity, through the G.I. Bill. I'm going to take full advantage of it. So I took full courses. And if anybody knows about Rochester, New York, and going to school at night in Rochester, New York, in the middle of winter is not easy. Okay. It was cold. It was freezing. It was snowing. But, uh, I had a family to support, and I wanted to be able to get my education, so Luckily, I was able to complete it.

0:39:15

**Closing remarks**

**Young** Okay. Looking back on it all, can you describe about how you feel about your service? You said that you were glad you did it...

**Levine** Mmhmm. Mmhmm.

**Young** And anything else you want to add to that?

**Levine** No. Other – other than the fact that, um, I personally think that it makes a – a person better going into the military. And I for one, feel that it should be mandatory, because there's a lot of kids that are going to – to education and that, because they don't know what else to do.

**Young** And so you feel it...

**Levine** Okay. And I think when they say it – when they say...

**Young** Gives them time to mature and...

**Levine** I'm sorry. What's that?

**Young** It gives them time to mature...

**Levine** Absolutely.

**Young** And to learn...

**Levine** Absolutely.

**Young** A little about the world and...

**Levine** And to grow up...

**Young** And to grow up.

**Levine** And to grow up...

**Young** And to learn some discipline [*laughs*].

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**Levine** Yes. That's the other area. That's the other area. Like I said, so many don't know what they want to do with themselves, and they end up in the military. Although they didn't give me the opportunity to go in the direction that I wanted to. It certainly opened up my eyes to a lot of things. And one is independence. You know, being independent, being able to do things on your own, uh, washing your own clothes, making your own bed, uh, choosing the right things to do.

**Young** Did you become more adept to working with your hands?

**Levine** I wish I could say yes [*laughs*].

**Young** [*laughs*] Some things you just can't learn.

**Levine** Some things that you—you have a difficult time doing. That's correct. Um, I think I'm a little better with a hammer and nails now than I was. I wouldn't go as far as work with any kind of sheet metal or anything, because I'm sure I would cut my fingers up in shreds, but Yeah. I think I'm a little bit better. I can—I can...

**Young** Well, Larry, I thank you for your service. And I thank you for this—for you doing this...

**Levine** Well, it was a pleasure.

**Young** With us.

**Levine** Very enjoyable. Very enjoyable.

**Young** And, uh, I enjoyed talking with you about it.

**Levine** Mmhmm. Thank you. Thank you.

*End of Interview*