

**Julius A. Archibald, Jr.  
Veteran**

**Tenefer Scipip  
Interviewer**

**Plattsburgh State University, NY**

TS: For our interview today we have Julius Archibald. He served in the U.S. Air Force from June 23, 1953 to June 22, 1955. The interview is taking place in Yocum Hall at Plattsburgh State University on December 6, 2008. By myself, Tenefer Scipip. Our first question for you today. Can you state your full name?

JA: Julius A. Archibald Junior.

TS: Where were you born?

JA: New York City

TS: What was your pre-war education?

JA: Well I was already a college graduate before I went into the military.

TS: What was your occupation?

JA: I was a student before going in. I was a ROTC graduate, and graduated at a time when everybody in ROTC had a military obligation. I stayed for some graduate school and then went into the military.

TS: How did you first hear about the Air Force?

JA: I heard it when I was a graduate at NYU in the ROTC program. ROTC was a required course at NYU at the time. So there was a choice between being in the Army and being in the Air Force, and by luck I ended up in the Air Force. It was luck!!

TS: When did you enter the service?

JA: In June 1953.

TS: Were you enlisted? I was an officer. Again I was an ROTC graduate, and being an ROTC graduate [unclear] look at it as commission comes with graduation.

TS: What was your branch of service?

JA: U.S. Air Force.

TS: Where did you receive your basic training?

JA: I didn't. I went in as a Cadet already commissioned.

TS: Tell us about that experience and feelings.

JA: Well it was a time during the Korean War. The war had broken out in 1951. I was an undergraduate student, and we were very much of course concerned with the success of the nation in that endeavor. It looked like best way to serve the country. It certainly was a more favorable way of doing it than going through the regular enlisted system..

TS: What was your specific training?

JA: In mathematics. I went into the Air Force as a mathematician, which was my undergraduate [unclear], was in mathematics.

TS: Can you tell us a little more about it?

JA: Undergraduate degree from NYU, Master's degree from NYU in mathematics, and then I went into the service. I was able to use that in the service when I first became involved with digital computers.

TS: What was your unit?

JA: I was with the [unclear] Development Center by Patterson Air Force Base. That was a part of the Air Research and Development Command.

TS: How did you feel about combat?

JA: Combat was per se not an issue. I was not a pilot. At the time I believe my eyesight would have [unclear], but I was not per se interested in flight training, because I had no desire to spend time in Texas during the early fifties.

TS: Did you receive any medals or coins?

JA: I received one ribbon. I think it was called the National Defense Ribbon or something. Something that everybody who served in the Korean War was entitled to.

TS: That's why? Because everyone was entitled to it?

JA: Yes well that was the way it came through. It wasn't the result of any combat experience or anything else like that, but it was the way in which the nation expressed its gratitude to those of us who were in the service during the Korean conflict.

TS: Tell us about your family during that time.

JA: Well I was an only child. My parents were living in New York City. My father was a State Senator at the time I went in. My mother was a school teacher, and I think she was still teaching at the time. No, just grew up in NYC, and my family was in NYC.

TS: How was NYC back in that time?

JA: I thought it was wonderful. My mother said it was even greater during her youth, but I thought it was a wonderful place.

TS: Is it similar today or no?

JA: My impression is no. It has changed a lot, and I would have to say in one direction.

TS: How did you keep in touch with your family?

JA: By mail. There was no email in those days. We were just getting into the computer age so all that we had was old fashioned snail mail. Post-it stamps were 3 cents if you can imagine that, and if I wanted to send a letter by air mail it would cost 6 cents.

TS: How often did you write?

JA: Very frequently.

TS: Did you get homesick a lot?

JA: I would have to say yes, but that wore off. I meant my wife while I was there so that did a lot to change things.

TS: Tell us about that.

JA: Well she was a secretary on the base. I happened to meet her as a result of having visited a church, and meeting someone else. It's a long story, but yes I did meet my wife as a result of being Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, which is right outside of Dayton Ohio.

TS: What was the food like?

JA: Well I was eating on my own. I was not required to eat in the mess hall or anything like that. There were a couple of nights where I had to pull a 24 hour detail, and that came with food, but other than that I ate on my own.

TS: What about supplies?

JA: What kind of supplies are you talking about?

TS: For example personal stuff.

JA: I was on my own. Life as a commissioned officer is quite different from life as an enlisted person. I was given a quarter's allowance, but I was free to select where I wanted to live, and I was able to take care of myself essentially. So I could shop at any other place I wanted. So no problems there.

TS: What was your most memorable experience?

JA: Well I think the thing that made the biggest difference in my life other than meeting my wife was my exposure to digital computers. That's why I became a computer scientist, and well [unclear] a computational scientist. That's what lead to my lead to my faculty relationship here at Plattsburgh State. I'm a retired professor of computer science.

TS: That's a hard subject.

JA: No it's not a hard subject. People try to make it a hard subject.

TS: I took a class in that and oh my gosh it's hard.

JA: It's related to mathematics, and regretfully Americans have a hard time with mathematics. I think that's unfortunate. You're giving me a funny grin.

TS: Yeah.

JA: You must not have had any good mathematics courses.

TS: Yeah [unclear].

JA: You're interviewing me so I won't ask you about any of your mathematics courses. I did serve two years as acting chairman of the math department here.

TS: How did you feel about military experience?

JA: I think it was very beneficial. [Unclear] always ask questions about the war and how that came out. Technically we still don't have a peace treaty with the North Koreans, but in terms of what it did for me. I thought it was a marvelous experience. [Unclear] It did a great deal for me. This is one of the reasons why I was in support of establishing a ROTC program here at Plattsburgh State.

TS: So you thought it was a great experience?

JA: It was a great experience. It was one of the best experiences of my life.

TS: Why was it so great?

JA: Well I wouldn't have become involved with digital computers had I not done that. I was assigned to a unit where we were dealing with a mechanical problem, a problem concerning [unclear] on a nose gear of an aircraft. We needed to do a computer analysis of it. That put me in line with civilian work at the [unclear] laboratory in Schenectady, where I developed as a computational scientist. So I would say that it was a life changing experience. Not only personally having met my wife, but professionally. In terms of what I did, how I learned, and how I built upon my undergraduate work at NYU.

TS: Is there any memorable stories that you have?

JA: Well having not seen combat I'm not sure what you classify a being a memorable experience.

TS: An everyday story that happened while you were enlisted.

JA: I wasn't enlisted. I was a commissioned officer.

TS: Commissioned officer, excuse me.

JA: No I cannot recall that. It was a good experience. I recommend the ROTC program for undergraduate students generally. This might be a political statement, but despite the fact that our present President has abused his power as Commander in Chief. I think it's for the good of the nation that ROTC be part of what is regularly expected of students going through undergraduate programs. Particularly publicly supported institutions like this.

TS: A lot of students think we have ROTC on campus, and a lot of students are afraid to join it.

JA: Yes, I fully understand that. [unclear] President Bush who unilaterally created a war. [Unclear] a lot of the nation into a war. I could understand they are apprehensive of that. I think with a President who follows the constitution to the letter, and [unclear] it is a good thing. I think our nation depends on it in terms of its own survival. We just cannot afford the kind of President that we recently had. The President we still have. I wouldn't want to be a part of that.

TS: So advice to them you might say?

JA: Well now that the end of the Bush administration is within sight I would say get yourself fully prepared to be able to use you education, your background, and so forth to the best advantage of defending the nation if it becomes necessary. I think the ROTC program does that. This is an Army ROTC program. Mine was the Air Force, but I think the same logic prevails.

TS: What did you do when you arrived home?

JA: After the army?

TS: Yes.

JA: I went to the [unclear] laboratory in Schenectady where we were building power plants for the U.S. Navy and my Military even though it was more civilian in terms of what it was. My experience with computing was of great benefit to myself and my employer in that stead.

TS: Do you belong to any veteran's organizations?

JA: I do not belong to any veteran's organizations.

TS: Have you attended any reunions?

JA: Of military nature, no. Again I wasn't really part of a functioning unit per se. In fact my military experience was more like going to a job in the morning and coming home in the evening, like any other professional positions.

TS. How did your experience influence your life?

JA: Well I got into computer science as an aspect of mathematics, which I would have never done otherwise. I think that if I had stayed with NYU doing graduate work on a full-time basis I would have become involved in computing, because they did have and still do have a large computing section as a part of their mathematics department. In fact I spent time working in there for my employer using the computer facilities at NYU. They were one of the few really big Univac sites in the late fifties. Going back to 55, 56, and 57.

TS: Well let's say that concludes our questions for today.

JA: Ok

TS: I just want to say thank you so much for being here with [unclear].