

**Brian Case
Veteran**

**Wayne Clark
Interviewer**

**Interviewed on January 22, 2008
New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, New York**

WC: Today is the 22nd of January 2008. We are at the New York State Military Museum in Saratoga Springs, New York. The interviewer is Wayne Clark and we are interviewing an Air Force Veteran this morning. Sir, for the record, would you please state your full name and your date and place of birth.

BC: My name is Brian Case and I was born in Trenton, New Jersey, June 1945.

WC: Did you grow up and go to school in Trenton?

BC: Until I was approximately 8 or 9, then we moved to Syracuse, New York.

WC: Did you graduate from high school?

BC: Yes I did. I graduated and I went to school in Syracuse right up through high school

WC: What year did you graduate?

BC: 1964.

WC: Did you go onto college or did you go in the service?

BC: I got drafted and then I enlisted into the Air Force.

WC: When was that?

BC: That was in 1965.

WC: Do you remember the month?

BC: I think it was February, 1965.

WC: What made you decide on the Air Force?

BC: I did some research and it just looked like the best place for me and I guess, to be honest with you, I wasn't really interested, at the time in '65 if the draft came up, it was an automatic to Vietnam. And at that time I decided to enlist in the Air Force because they had a lot of good schooling opportunities and such, so I decided to go into the Air Force.

WC: Where did you go for your basic training?

BC: Lackland Air Force Base in Texas.

WC: Was that your first time away from home?

BC: Yes, it was.

WC: What was it like at Lackland?

BC: Boot camp. It was interesting. I was young and still I was in good shape and the physical part wasn't too tough but I think the mental, some of the mental factors and how you were treated there, that was all new to me. A military lifestyle.

WC: How long was that basic training?

BC: I believe for 6 weeks.

WC: After you completed your boot camp where did you go next?

BC: I didn't go to tech school. They sent me directly to a semi-remote tour in the United States, North Dakota. I was stationed at a radar site in North Dakota. I was a clerk. 7-0-2.

WC: Do you remember where that was... that wasn't Minot was it?

BC: It was a hundred miles north of Minot. Fortuna, North Dakota. There was, I think, twenty-five people up there. That was a fifteen month tour.

WC: Now you were a company clerk?

BC: Yup. Yes I was.

WC: Now, did you have any training or background.

BC: Nope, not then. They sent me directly-

WC: So, it was on-the-job training.

BC: Yup.

WC: Okay, and what was that like? Your day-to-day routine?

BC: That was a pretty confined area. It was right in the corner of North Dakota and Montana and it was pretty much... day-to-day basis. There was nothing around, I mean the only time you could go anywhere if you had transportation to get to it. Ya know if you could get to go to Minot. There wasn't any major cities around. The closest major city was Saskatchewan, Canada. So we used to go there but the daily things were just company clerk, rake leaves and do whatever business that had to be done there in the offices.

WC: Did you have to pull guard duty or K.P. or any of that?

BC: No actually I didn't.

WC: Okay, where did you go for your time off?

BC: Estevan, Saskatchewan or Westby, Montana. It's a long time ago but I remember Westby, Montana. We used to go there on weekends occasionally. And it was really, really out there. There was nothing much going on there.

WC: Where did you get shipped to next?

BC: Next, they sent me to North Africa. It was Wheelus Air Base, Tripoli Libya. It's long since been closed but I was there for almost two years.

WC: Now, to get over there, did you go by civilian aircraft or by military?

BC: We went civilian aircraft and I returned on civilian too.

WC: Now when you were over there did you still work as a company clerk?

BC: Yes. I was a clerk. I worked [unclear]. I was in an air rescue off it.

WC: What was it like in Africa for you?

BC: When I went in the service I felt that I was doing my part and I felt that I was ready and obligated to go to Vietnam if they sent me. And ready to do what I had to do for my country. The only thing that I was very disillusioned by when I got overseas was how much Americans were not liked. Even back then I always thought American was the popular... I don't know why I thought everybody loved Americans but I found out quickly that that wasn't the case in a lot of places. And North Africa was one of them. And I happened to be there during the year that Israel got into the war with the Arabs and the Israelites, the Three Day War. We had some problems at the base there. There was 10,000 people on that base but after that war was over we were getting Molotov cocktail thrown over onto the base and we had to perform permanent guard duty.

WC: Now, you yourself had to perform the duty?

BC: Yes, with M-16's with no ammunition. We were just there for show.

WC: Did you have any incidents with...

BC: Yes I had a couple but I remember a couple times the Arabs would come up to the walls and throw over these Molotov cocktails. Some of them were just coke bottles filled with the gasoline and stuff ya know and pop off. I never got, no one ever got hurt and we were there with M-16's that we couldn't use because there was no ammunition in them. The thing that scared me was the fact that there was so much hatred and I didn't understand it. I really didn't and even as a militant. I understand to hate the Arabs as much as they hated me. You couldn't go downtown Tripoli during that period of time. There were some American soldiers that were killed downtown. Most of the time I was there, I think there was two or three months where you could go down to Tripoli. I went to Tripoli a few times but you had to be with three or four different service people because they had killed some Americans down in the city.

WC: Now, when you went into Tripoli on leave, did you run into any hostilities?

BC: No because I stayed with a bunch of the guys. We went in groups of five to ten but we didn't stay long during the day. It was too nerve-wracking. I guess it wasn't as bad just before we got there. And I only went to Tripoli two or three times. Then, we weren't allowed to go. That was an interesting experience. There was a there was an air force team I got to play on, the United States Air Force Softball Team in Europe. Some of us were out of Wheelus Air Base and were picked for All-Star teams and we played in Germany, Spain and England. That was nice. I got out of there to play softball. But even then I was disillusioned. We weren't that popular in Spain either. We weren't that popular in any of the foreign countries I went to. It was beyond me. I think that's the thing I remember most about the service was... and I know I was in that time where that was the key... unpopular of the military, unpopular of the war. But I was still wondering why they were taking it out on the guys, the military people that were in the service, but that was a great experience for me. That was the only way I would have gotten to see Europe, through playing ball, and I was glad to get out of Wheelus for a while.

WC: How long were you away from Wheelus?

BC: One time was one week at a time; another was two weeks at a time. We went three or four times. Two weeks, a week, depending on where we were going. And I also spent some time in Malta, which wasn't far from Tripoli. It's right off of the Mediterranean. We were right on the Mediterranean.

WC: What was the weather like in Africa where you were at?

BC: Sand storms. Very, very hot. All the time very hot all year long. We were right in the desert. We were right on the Mediterranean which I beautiful but it was desert from the Med to as far as you could see. I wasn't air born but I went on a lot of helicopter rides over the desert and nomads on the cameras. They had some incidences there too where some old [unclear], from the second world war bombs, some people were architects and some of the nomads would set them off and they got hurt and they brought them to the hospital on the base. It was interesting but, I was fairly cautious in North Africa because even on the base, they had Arabs working there. Not all Arabs are bad but I always felt I had to be very careful.

WC: Did you have a problem with the heat? Did you have to keep yourself hydrated and drink a lot of water?

BC: Yes. Drink a lot of water. Stay in and there were some days you couldn't get out and couldn't leave, couldn't go outside. Thank God for air conditioning but it was hot and the sand and the wind. We found sand throughout all the barracks and the buildings. It was so fine it was like dust. It wasn't unusual for it to be over a hundred degrees.

WC: Any problems with scorpions, snakes or anything like that?

BC: There was scorpions there, there was stuff in the water but I never got bit and there wasn't too much problems with it there. Not on the base. We didn't have a whole lot of problems. Just the locals, the people from Tripoli and I don't think they were very happy about having an Air Force Base there either. I can understand that now better than I did then.

WC: Did you get any kind of R and R or leave to go home or anything?

BC: No, I didn't go home. I stayed. I could have gone home one time but I stayed and just went through it.

WC: Once that tour was completed, where did you go next?

BC: Next, I came back and finished up in Omaha, Nebraska Sec. Headquarters off an Air Force Base. I had a year left.

WC: And what year was that?

BC: 1969.

WC: That was during the Vietnam conflict. Did you notice any kind of change in the American population with any anti-military sentiments or anything like that?

BC: I hadn't been back in two years. I had come to peace with why the people in other countries were against the military, against our particular military, but it was a big shocker to me to come back and find out that the attitude in the United States was much different. It was my last year

and I was coming out and I was in Nebraska, in a college town and there was all kinds of protest marches and more than one time hollering “baby killer”. I made it a point when I wasn’t on duty in Nebraska to wear civilian clothes. I even changed into civilian clothes at the airport coming in when I got released and went back home to Syracuse. It wasn’t everyone was like that but it was a big, big difference. As I look back on it now, I don’t think it was necessarily... They just took it out on the soldiers because of government policy. They took it out on the people that were in the military. So, I was one confused fella.

WC: Now, when you were in Nebraska were you still a company clerk at that point?

BC: Yup and I had one year left and I worked in a unit that was a special ops unit but it was an air base with an airbase underneath it. It was very secure. You had to have top secret clearance to work in anything in that place. And I worked there for a year and I enjoyed that last year.

WC: And how was the food state side?

BC: Oh yeah!

WC: Good?

BC: Absolutely! It was a very nice base. A lot of generals around and you had to salute all of them but, it was a pretty good year there. I enjoyed it and I had even contemplated reenlistment but I just couldn’t go through the... Even at that time it was just never ending. I got a job part time off the base at a place where college kids hung around and I was just torn between. Because I had spent four years in the military, I had military viewpoints but I also had viewpoints of peers my age that weren’t in the military. I basically turned to drugs and alcohol. That’s what I did when I got out.

WC: When you were discharged, what rank were you?

BC: Sargent.

WC: Once you were discharged, you went back to Syracuse?

BC: I went back to Syracuse.

WC: Did you make use of the G.I. Bill at all?

BC: No. Nope, threw my uniform away, grew my hair and fell into drugs and alcohol for quite a period of time. It was my fault. I didn’t fit in anywhere because like I said, I had military background but that was popular then. Since then, it’s been incredible since I’ve been up here. The last ten years, the support that the veterans get now... they are incredibly lucky there. They should have it and they do have it. The out pour has been incredible for the vets.

WC: During that time period with the drugs and alcohol, were you employed?

BC: Yes, I worked. When I got out I worked for a friend of mine. He had an installation business for Sears and I worked for him for about ten or twelve years.

WC: What were you installing?

BC: Installing fence, chain-link fence, wood fence, stuff like that.

WC: Did you join any veteran's organizations at all?

BC: No, not that.

WC: Did you maintain any contact with the guys you were in the service with?

BC: Nope. I never did.

WC: Then, eventually, you came up to this area?

BC: What I had done when I was in Syracuse, and when I worked ten, twelve years, maybe even longer for my friend, my drinking and drugging was so bad that he had to let me go. And I ended up going through rehab locally. I went back to school through the rehab and I got a job with the rehab. I got an associate's degree in recreational leadership and the rehab just built a gymnasium and they put me in there as soon as I graduated. I started working there running the gym basically. I had some good years and then I went back to the alcohol. Eventually I ended up in Gloversville, NY then, to the vet house here in Ballston Spa. That was quite a few years back. I've been in and out of alcohol, relapses for a number of times. I've been sober now a year. I've had up to six years, I've had four years. I'm just getting to the age now where I can't... They sent me to the vet house in Ballston Spa here, this is years ago, I haven't been there in the longest time. This is my second time through there. That place really saved my life. That program took me in. I went through that program originally and I got a job, as a matter of fact, there. I worked five years at the shelter in Saratoga and I worked for them part time. And I got a lot clearer look at the service and my military service and became more aware. It came gradually, and not ashamed but proud to have served for my country. When I got out in '69, I wasn't that proud but through education and through realizing. And through the people there, they have been a big help for me.

WC: This program you're in right now, any idea how long it'll go?

BC: I'm ready to go! I'm trying to get find an apartment now. I've been there, the first time I was there for a year, and I stayed sober for a long period of time. Got drunk, ended up go back to another rehab then back to the house. I haven't got enough time left to be fooling around. I've done enough of that so, I'm trying to get an apartment now and get out on my own. I'm retired, I've got social security and I get disability, not service connected.

WC: Well, I wish you the best of luck and thank you so much for your interview.

BC: Thank you.