

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

Preserving Stories of Service for Future Generations

Interview with

Richard Lindel Jr.

Conducted Kevin Haney

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Part 1: Introduction

Machine 85 uh interview of Mr. Lindel. Uhh we're doing an interview this morning this is August 5th 2006, with Richard Lindel, of Willowbrook, Illinois at the Indian Prairie Library in Darien, Illinois. Mr. Lindel was born on February 1st, 1933 um, and uh he currently resides in Willowbrook. Indian Prairie Library is located in Darien, Illinois and my name is Kevin Haney, and I will be doing the interview. Uh, Mr. Lindel, could you give us an overview of what branch of the military you served in or branches you served in and uh what ranks you held.

Well I served in the Air Force for four years. Top rank there was Airman first class, and well that's it.

Navy, navy.

Prior to that I served ten months in the naval reserve. I signed up when I was still in high school, and I uh looked down, got this charge, and when I was in the Air Force regulars, from then on I don't know where to go.

Ok, what motivated you to enlist first in the Naval Reserves then later on in the Air Force, and what were you doing at that time? You mentioned that you were in high school.

Well, what was causing me to move was we were at a Korean War, and I knew where I was going when I got out of high school, and I wanted to guide myself a little bit not the army but I was young.

Ahehehe

There were different things that were happening, and it just seemed to be the way for me to go. My buddies would join me in the Air Force, and we were hanging. That's the way we went. None of us went together. Once we signed up, it was in different directions.

Ok, so um you enlisted first in the Navy and what was that like?

Well, it was like basic training, there was a lot of marching, classroom experience, naval law, they tried to explain that to us, as in Air Force, there was a lot of that too.

Where were you posted with the Navy?

Randolph Street, and that's where I was once a week and afterwards.

Ok, and after that you decided to enlist in the Air Force, and what was your decision there and where would you go for training and subsequent training?

Well, here again, I was young, and I didn't know exactly what was going on, but I enlisted there, and I was shipped out to oh Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, for part of my basic training, and I remember sleeping in tents, in the Air Force, and wearing all of my clothes using five blankets to get some sleep at night. Then in the morning, in Texas, getting out in the field and there was snow in Texas. I enlisted in December, and that was a shock to me.

What was basic training like?

Here again, it was a lot of marching. Most of it was marching, and there was learning the laws of the service. There was some carting, target practice, but mainly marching.

And uh how did you get selected for advanced training and where did you go for that?

We took a lot of tests, written tests, and apparently they could tell by the tests that I could do one of nine jobs, one of them was not food service ahehehehe. Well, I could drive trucks, working the machinery, and apparently they liked that. They didn't get a lot of people for that.

Ok, and what were you finally selected for?

Um, aircraft and engine maintenance. And then later on, after almost completing that for a year, they selected me along with a few others to, well, they gave me a choice. Either go into hydraulics or jets. So naturally I picked jets.

Now where was your one training, what did that consist of?

Well, that was uh, the one year training was in a separate Air Force Base, Texas. A couple of weeks, we did that at night, because days were too hot. I never went to school at night hah. And uh yeah, we did a few weeks of like any aircraft, there was some fabric, something nobody knows about that anymore, crop work, nobody knows anything about that. Very few. I found out when I got out of service, well, there's sheet metal um a lot of inspecting. You gotta know what a repairable crack is and how to attack it. If it's not repairable, then you gotta take the whole section out. Well the engines, there were reciprocating engines, piston engines, and they had turbine engines. I got involved in turbines.

What is a turbine engine?

Well, a gas turbine is what we have now. That's called the the front piston engines are in probably private airplanes. Well, there's combat, there's five different kinds of jets. There's a poach jet, that's what the Germans in their rockets, and then they had the turbine jet, where there's an air compressor and jet fuel. That's where that's basically it's

about and rocket, that's where you squirt the fuel into a pack and the sides and that's another version. Then the turbo-prop, that's a turbine tied to a prop near the fuel packs and the other airplanes you could tell by the wind. The prop was beating the air, you could hear that oh uh the prop you could expect to break the sound barrier, and there was a line, that's where the turbine wound up by the pilot and that's that.

What was your duty, assignment, basically?

For the most part it was it was uh it was inspecting jet engines on this RB-36 bomber and a pretty high maintenance is what they called it. I remember when they came in and threw one out because it would barely get off the ground, and we'd go looking and look for you know, whatever was the problem or what might be getting wrong.

Ok, describe this RB-36.

The R stands for reconnaissance and the B for bomber, and this was a straight bomber, and because I was in the 99th uh group and this straight bomber was in the 92nd, they had two bombers, and it could drop a truck out of each bomber and uh we only had one. Plus where the other bombing was, it was behind the channels.

These were, you had, this was an observation plane that could drop bombs?

Yes. Yeah, exactly.

Um, how many um, ok, where were you finally posted with the Air Force?

I stayed there until they gave me my papers.

In Texas?

No, in uh Washington state.

Oh ok. When were you transferred to Washington state?

I can't think of the dates because I can't remember them, but it was about a year, it was, less than a year, uh, 1952? In summer.

What base were you at and where in Washington State, and where was it at approximately, coast, inland?

It's inland, it was uh I can't get it all together. I'm bringing this memory that is short. Really short. (tape is stopped then resumes) I was stationed on Fairchild Air Force base in Washington State. We had two wings of, one wing of bombers and one wing of reconnaissance bombers.

How many planes in a wing?

About 30. And uh they uh they had alerts, they always, see I was married when I was in service, so it wouldn't count. When they would call us up at 3 in the morning, and they had uh a saying which is to say "hello this is so and so" and then say "alert" and that means the were headed towards the base.

Ok and what was in the alert, and were you living on base or off base or a barracks or an apartment or what?

An apartment off base and well we would sit around and get our tool boxes and things and calipers and all that and decide to this edge of the field or that edge of the field, and we'd pretend they were weapons and all that.

Ok, what was an alert? Specifically.

That was well, from what I understand, they would take a day, and we'd get this alert, and that would be one of the first bases that would be hit. Those guys would be the ones with the bombers, the right ones, well, the passion and hate so um from what I understand, they could see our bombers on the ground and in the air. They knew exactly what we had. Apparently what we had was visible to them, of course, I didn't care, just more problems.

And you were there for several years?

Several years, yes. And um what else did we, um,

Ok, and did you have any dealings with regard to the Korean War that was going on at the time or?

I never went over there.

Ok.

I have a buddy from Hawaii my first uh he lived in Hawaii, and he was telling me all kinds of stories how he'd drive around the island and then he'd help me home trying to get up the island, and usually the United States gives overseas pay and probably something came up, where he wanted to go to Japan for overseas learning, and he died, and I don't know exactly why he wanted to be somewhere else.

Ok, what was entertainment like, what was average conversations like at that time all that sort of thing with the folks you were with.

We were all the young people, most of us, however, there were was drinking in town, and uh we uh morale was good, and we managed to keep ourselves busy, and they kept us busy, and I guess there was someone always watching, someone you could be with.

How would they bring morale down?

Well on Saturdays we would have, we'd go out marching for our generals and that. Generals. And that was supposed to bring up morale, killer walking on a Saturday. I remember that. There was always something like that.

Ok, what was an average day like for you?

Well, I'd get up in the morning, early enough to you know get dressed and eat breakfast, and when I went down same way get over to the chow hall.

And you lived in a barracks?

I lived in a barracks when I was on the base.

How many people were in a barracks?

About eight as I remember, well, maybe eleven, later on there were a lot less than that. That was one of my basic training groups, three bunks high and all that times 3, and we actually had rooms, and there was two to a room, so I don't know how many people there were.

Ok, now when you were at Fairchild, you were actually in a two to a room?

Yeah, yeah, and well it was nice. We had our library and all. We'd go there and, you know, keep going with what we had a lot of manuals to read about this aircraft, and we had to keep this man over here in the picture happy, the chief yeah, but he was good.

Well, after service, what did you uh what was your last day of service like, and what did you do after that?

Well, probably like we went out to eat and had a coffee or something, and they said you know that you're lucky you made so much a month. And "hey I already got ten bucks before I came here," and I don't know how you got it.

What was the mood when the Korean War ended?

The mood? Well I think I was off before it happened, no? When was it?

'53

Oh, I don't even remember, I think it was more like this you know. The camp was not the problem, it was a soldier yet, there were feelings because they were helping themselves out, and this guy harassing us with our aircraft as we found out later and well that's why. The war never ended, for Korea yeah, not the real war. It just ended when things went belly-up, backwards, you know.

You mean it was the same as the beginning?

Yeah, exactly. Then we got this other war, in the Mid-East.

And uh what did you do after your military experience? Did you get any educational benefits or?

Yeah, I went to school with DeVry Technical Institute with electronics, and that helped me in my job. I had a job before, but in the beginning before I got this job, I remember all kinds of places, applying for jobs, and they called me in, and I was reading meters for the electrical company. That was good for me. I was jumping over fences, they told me not to do that, but when nobody was looking hehe, and uh as I went along, I told you I was married, my wife says, "Hey you got these benefits, why don't you use them?" Well, I was kinda lazy, but I finally signed up for this DeVry outfit and went to night school, and that was tough, but the company let me go a little early in the afternoon, and then I'd go down there back to Chicago, and it was interesting. I learned a lot there, and I uh wanted to uh go into engineering, and uh I was not really in engineering, but I was looking, and there was drawing and there were draftsmen and a few months after I graduated, my boss comes up to me and he says, "Hey, did you go to school?" And I says, "Yeah, I did." "How come you don't have your paperwork completed?" I say, "Yeah, I did," and I got my stuff, and they checked it, and the day after that everyone said you're not going to be with us very much longer are you? Nobody told me about that in that department. So my boss says to me go down to see so him in our personal analysis department. I say, "Why?" and they say I'll find out.

Ok, so how do you feel that your military services and experience affected your life? Has it affected your life?

Oh yeah, I think how in many ways, ways that I don't even know about. I started out as a high school kid and getting brought up here, and they put you through school, something you don't want to do anyhow. And uh maybe a few more things.

So it was a positive experience?

Oh yeah, oh yeah.

Ok, anything else that we haven't covered yet that you'd like to mention?

Well, I don't think so. I think this is done.