

Transcription: J.B. Anderson

Today is Friday, November 30th, 2012. My name is James Crabtree and this morning I'll be interviewing Mr. J.B. Anderson. We're at the Courtney Veterans Home in Temple, Texas, and this interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. Sir, thank you for taking the time to let me come talk to you today.

J.B. Anderson: You're more than welcome.

Yes sir. All these interviews I've always done, the first question I always start off with is please just tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you went into the service.

J.B. Anderson: OK, I was born and raised in Coryell County.

In Coryell?

J.B. Anderson: And I went through, well before I went in the service, I wasn't very big for my age, and I tried to play football and got myself bugged up, but track I was pretty good at. But I went to Fort Worth and worked a few months, and then I was drafted into the service. That was in '43.

Drafted in 1943. Did you grow up on a farm?

J.B. Anderson: No, my dad of course done a little bit of everything, and his name was Cambridge, but everybody called him Boss. He was the baby of the family at that time, and I don't know, I guess maybe his brothers and sisters begun it. But even before he died, everybody called him Boss. They'd mention Camber Anderson, and they'd look at him and say who's that?

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, the first one died as a baby, and then the next two was girls, and I was the oldest boy, and then altogether there were four boys. There are three of us living yet.

Were you the first one to go in the military?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, my dad was of course during World War I, and then I was the first one that was drafted in, and then Davis, the next boy, and I think he was drafted in, I'm not sure. But anyway he went in the Army.

Did your dad talk to you much about his time during World War I?

J.B. Anderson: Not very much. He was a bugler.

What branch was he in?

J.B. Anderson: He was in the Army.

Did he go to Europe? Did he see combat in Europe?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, I think he did. They was in Camp Walters, that might not have been it either. They was in Fort Worth out on the Bowie. You may remember that old Army camp out there.

I know out in Mineral Wells was Camp Walters.

J.B. Anderson: Camp Walters now might've been out at Mineral Wells.

It is, it's out in Mineral Wells.

J.B. Anderson: OK, because when I was drafted in, I was in Fort Worth and we went to Camp Walters, and of course we got our clothes and shoes and all that, and then there were 12 of us picked to go Air Force, or the Army Air Corps, and I happened to be one of them. So I didn't really get into anything bad.

When you got drafted, did you expect to be drafted at that point or was it a surprise?

J.B. Anderson: Oh yeah, I was waiting for my time to call me.

So when you got the notice how long did you have before you had to report?

J.B. Anderson: I think I went right on in.

The next day?

J.B. Anderson: Or within a week I would say, yeah.

And so then at that point, you got to request what branch if you wanted to be in the Army Air Corps, or you got lucky enough to get picked for it?

J.B. Anderson: Well, they picked out 12 and I just happened to be one of them. But I remember they gave us our shots and all that, showed us dirty movies and what have you, and I learned right off, well my dad had told me how to get by with a bunch of them and junk. We had to go on a hike out in those hills, and the next day was going back, and anyway it was a group by us that they was going to be able to do something else there, so I just fell out of my bunch and got in the other one to keep from going on the walks.

Nobody noticed?

J.B. Anderson: No, they just had us out doing something. But we went to Miami for our basic training.

Miami, Florida?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah. And then we went all the way to California for our training and ordinance, and we was at Santa Ana race track.

So they trained you in ordinance?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, I was in the 12th service group.

What do you remember about the training, what in particular stands out about the training they gave you?

J.B. Anderson: Well, we was sent to China. Of course I was in mostly demolition. We'd have duds fall or something and we'd have to take them out in the mountains and blow 'em up. I was lucky there. I never did get hurt bad.

Even with all that unexploded ordinance and that sort of thing. So they sent you to China after you finished your training in California? How did they get you there?

J.B. Anderson: We went by boat, and I don't remember the name of it. It was a big cruise ship. I think it was, I don't remember how many thousand, but there was Army people and most of them I think went to Burma, and I got up on the deck as much as I could. They had us way down in a hole, you know. Anyway, going over we went to an island and waited there for an escort to go over with us, but we was there at that island about a week and they would have a barge that would take us. We had to dock way off the bay, and they'd take us over on the island to kill time and we'd find grapefruit and different things on the island. There was a pineapple I seen. There was a bunch of brush and you had to get down to get under it, and as I went under it, I raised my arm up to get by, and a big old wasp's nest, and of course I just rolled on the ground to get out from under it. There wasn't a wasp even got me, but I bet that nest was that big around.

That was on Hawaii?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah and I guess maybe, I thought why in the heck didn't those people just coming down off the mountain get that pineapple. But after I got into them wasps I knew why. So I found another way out anyway.

So when you got over to China, your boat landed in Burma?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, we went into, well we went into Bombay, India, and we went by train over to Calcutta, and then up to an Army base and went over that hump there, and went into Kunming.

So it was quite a long journey then for you, from when your ship left, I guess your ship left out of California?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, San Diego.

How long did it take before you finally got –

J.B. Anderson: 40 days going over. It was a heck of a long time.

And that's just on the boat, right?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah.

So then once you got to India and you had to take the train, and then you said you had to fly also over the hump into China – how long, probably a couple of months total before you got to where you were heading to?

J.B. Anderson: It was probably a couple of months before we ever got to the base where we wanted to go, and that was way in.

What were your thoughts, because at this time, you really hadn't been outside of Texas, had you?

J.B. Anderson: Well, only in basic training when we went to California.

When you went into the military, you hadn't left Texas, so here you are a young kid and you're seeing –

J.B. Anderson: Fort Worth was about as far as I had gone.

So what impression did it make on you? What are your memories of India and China and these foreign places?

J.B. Anderson: Well it was all new to me and it was kind of fun to me, but I never worried much about anything because I had it in my mind that I was going home one day, which I did. I was lucky. I came back in one piece, but the demolition work, now that was rough. And at Quaylin, we didn't have much to do except we'd take the ordinance out to the aircraft and there was another bunch that loaded it, and one day I just happened to be down on the air base itself – where our barracks was, you could look down on it, and there was a cave in back of the barracks, and every time there was an air raid, we'd go in that cave. But the Japanese bombers, when they opened their bomb bay doors, there was a light that was always shining in it, and why they had that light on I'll never know, but you could see it and if we could see that light before it got to us, we went in the caves. But if they waited to open the bomb bay doors until they got over us, well we knew we was safe. We just, we'd wait outside the cave and watch the fireworks.

Interesting. How often did you have air raids? Was it pretty common?

J.B. Anderson: It was quite often, but they was usually early at night, very seldom during the late part.

Did you ever have to deal with any unexploded Japanese bombs?

J.B. Anderson: Oh yeah. I know that I was working with a guy and we had picked up one small bomb, 100-pounder I guess, it might've weighed a little more, but when it dropped, it didn't go off, it had busted. It had a big crack in it. And it was during the rainy season and but we picked it up. We had a little trailer with straps going across like a cradle and we'd lay it on that, so it could kind of rock, not much danger of it going off. But we went back up to the mountains with it and we had place up there that their old ammunition, we'd burn it, and there was a pit dug with a pipe coming up, and we'd build a fire down in that thing and we'd close the door, and then we would drop the old ammunition down that pipe.

How long was the pipe?

J.B. Anderson: Well, it was high enough over us that anything coming out would have gone out the pipe.

Would blow out the top, OK.

J.B. Anderson: And the dungeon thing or the pit, it was about half as big as this room probably.

So it contained most of the blast, then the excess would go out the pipe, kind of like a smoke stack I guess.

J.B. Anderson: But the bombs, we blew them up out in the open. But there was a big rock that was about half as big as this room, and we'd set our charges and we'd use TNT because it was safer than the dynamite, and we was talking and we said hey, we'll never get this thing to go off, as way as it is, but when we pushed down on that thing -

So you had a plunger, you'd push down on the plunger?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, we'd set off the cap that set on the bomb. That thing sounded like a 1,000 pounder. It shook all around. We tried to get under the rock. Of course what would hit it would bounce off anyway.

When you were dealing with all that unexploded ordinance, was there ever a time that you or someone else was injured by one that went off?

J.B. Anderson: Well, we were sent to another base. That was before the war was over. And the Japanese had begun further east and the railroad tracks went up that way, and everything went in by train from back at Kunming or somewhere. The coolies we called 'em, the Chinese, they done all the loading and unloading when the train come in.

My question more sir was about the unexploded ordinance and the danger of dealing with the unexploded ordinance. Was there ever anyone that was killed or - ?

J.B. Anderson: There was a lot of danger to it. But of course we played it safe and before the war, the Japanese began to take it over the base, they sent some of us down to another base and I don't remember the name of it, but we waited until they gave us the word the Japs was coming in. They had us already assigned to different areas to do. The guy that was working with me, we had an ammunition dump blow up, and then the gasoline, we had to burn that up, and that was where I almost got it because -

So the Japanese forces were advancing so you had to get rid of all the stuff. What happened with the gasoline?

J.B. Anderson: We had walked back in a place that we thought was clear, but we didn't realize there was gas soaked in the ground, and dumb boys like we were, we had our M16's with us, and we'd shoot a hole in the barrels that was full, mind you, and when the gas would come out on the ground, we'd light a match and pitch on it and then run. When we began to run out about that far, it came around this way on us, and the only way out for us was out over the barrels. And by the time we got over there, pants legs was burning, we fell on the ground and each one of us throwing dirt on the other guy's legs to put the fire out, and you know, I didn't get a bad burn out of it? Neither one of us did.

Pretty lucky then.

J.B. Anderson: We were darn lucky. Someone up there was watching after us. But the bombs, when we set them off, we had rolled the big bombs around and we'd taken the cap off and we set our charge in there where they usually put the fuse, and that was like a booster. We had this thing setting with the others up with the nose facing us, and anyway when that one bomb went off, it just blew the other bombs out. They didn't even go off. And we had to go back in there and do our work all over. But when we got caught up with a bunch or back where we was supposed to be, they gave us an old Army staff car to drive out and there was a Portuguese boy that was with us that rode out with us. We had a little old trailer on the back and he had a suitcase in there, and then he'd ride up there with us. But after we got back to where we was supposed to meet to go out from there by truck to go back to Kunming or near Kunming...it was pretty rough, that demolition part.

I think most people when they think of unexploded ordinance, unexploded bombs, they probably think the most dangerous part would be the first time you pick it up or handle it being afraid that it might go off. Was that a concern?

J.B. Anderson: It really didn't. We didn't have enough sense I don't guess.

You didn't have any sort of protective –

J.B. Anderson: We were trained pretty well for it.

And you didn't wear any sort of protective gear, did you?

J.B. Anderson: No.

So you were just in your regular uniform going out and picking up unexploded bombs and putting them in a cart.

J.B. Anderson: But when we got in burning that gasoline up, it burned the hair on my arms, but I didn't get a bad burn from it. And our pants legs, it didn't burn them enough to really bother too much. I don't think the other guy, and I don't remember what his name was, but before I went down there to the other base, I was down on the field one day and the guys that was loading the aircraft, they were running off from their aircraft. I asked them what was the matter, and they said we accidentally pulled the wire out of one of the bombs, and they was personnel bombs, a little ol' thing that would've been about that long, and that was a bomb. I told them well let me see if I can get it out of there.

Once the wire was pulled, that activated the bomb, right?

J.B. Anderson: All it had to do when it hit the ground it would go off or if it got a bump. But anyway I worked with it and I got that one out. It was on a B-25. Anyway the bomb bay was up about yea high off the ground, and I was holding the bomb, where the little fan thing would blow, to keep the bomb going this way, and it was like a gun. It kind of had a plunger, when it hit the ground it'd go off, or get a bump, and I was holding it with this hand, and I was holding the bomb with the other arm, and I dropped from up there because my feet wouldn't touch the ground without dropping, but I made sure I was holding that thing where it couldn't go off, and

anyway I walked over in the weeds and I waved for the guys to come back, and then after I got over there in the weeds, I got to thinking about what I done.

Yeah, jumping down a few feet -

J.B. Anderson: Then I got sick. And the ordinance officer, he had gotten word about it I guess by then, and he come driving up, him and one of the sergeants, and anyway they took over from there.

Because you realized then you could've blown yourself up.

J.B. Anderson: Well I realized then that I could've blowed myself up.

And the whole plane, too.

J.B. Anderson: And the whole damn plane. But anyway I saved the airplane and I was put in for the medal of honor, but my captain that was over our group, when he called me in and he told me, I turned you in for the medal of honor, but they wouldn't give it to you because there was no enemy, so they gave me the soldier's medal, and I was the only one in our outfit that ever got anything like that that I know of.

And that's for that one incident.

J.B. Anderson: That was about it.

How long did you spend in China all tolled?

J.B. Anderson: I was there almost two years.

So I guess you were there up until the end of the war then?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah. Of course we were sent down, they were trying to send bombs out of China to an island that the main Chinese leaders went to -

Yeah, Taiwan, Formosa?

J.B. Anderson: And danged if I can remember the name of it. Anyways there was a big air base built there later.

Yeah, they called it Formosa and now it's Taiwan today.

J.B. Anderson: But anyway I got to go back in there after the war was over and I went to Vietnam. It wasn't when I went to Vietnam either. It was when I went to Thailand, but I had gone into Vietnam. I was in the Army, or in the Air Force air command of a bunch out of Florida, and we went in for six months. Then another group would go over.

What year was that?

J.B. Anderson: That was '62.

So you stayed in the Air Force then after - ?

J.B. Anderson: I got out after World War II. And I was out for almost 10 years, and I had gotten married in '49. The girl that I married, she had a little boy that was 5, and I raised him like my own. But he never did change his name. He never did really want to change his name. I told him Charlie, that's all right. I raised you just like my own. Then we adopted this girl that was where she graduated from Abilene High, not Abilene High, but Cooper.

OK, so after the war was over, you came back to Texas and got married.

J.B. Anderson: Back for 10 years. My wife was having all kinds of troubles. She had lost babies. We never could have one of our own. That's what caused us to adopt a girl. But Charlie, our boy, he was killed in a car accident when he was 21, and then we adopted the girl about two years after.

So that was part of the reason you went back in the service?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, my wife was having so much trouble, we was living here in Temple at that time, and I told her, Lara Lee, the only way that we're going to be able to make it is for me to go back in the service. You can have your doctors and everything taken care of, because gosh, I was in debt for medical bills until it was pitiful. But we finally got everything paid off after we went back in.

So it was about 1955 or so, mid-50s?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, that was '55 when she really got bad.

Did you go back in with your same rank and that sort of thing or did they make you start over?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, I only got to PFC when I was in because the outfit that I was transferred in to go over to China, they was already trained, all the ranks filled, and there wasn't hardly no rank in our outfit. Only way if a guy that was above me -

Yeah, there weren't any positions to get into.

J.B. Anderson: I was on the totem pole. Before we went over to China, we went to New Mexico, Albuquerque. There was an ordinance outfit there out of town about 10 miles and we had an old Army general that was called back in the service, and he was put over our group. Of course he wanted to make Army men out of us and we got to China and that didn't work. General Sadal, he got him out of there, got another guy in and we were there forseeing Army Air Corps. There wasn't none of that hiking junk and all that. We done our job and that was it.

Sure. When you went back in in '55, how long did you stay in at that point?

J.B. Anderson: I was in for 20 years, 1 month and 1 day.

Wow, so you stayed in, that included your time, the 2 years previous?

J.B. Anderson: Of course that was counted with it.

When did you get out of the Air Force, late 60s?

J.B. Anderson: '72. Just before Christmas.

So I imagine then you had a chance to see quite a bit and really see the Air Force change quite a lot from World War II until the early 70s.

J.B. Anderson: Of course after I got back in, I was then able to go up in rank. I got out at a Tech Sergeant. If I'd have gone back overseas, I would've made Master.

What is Tech Sergeant? E7, E8?

J.B. Anderson: Well it went from Tech Sergeant to a Masters Sergeant, then E8 and E9, and I don't know how far it goes up now.

So you were at E7?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah.

I'm in the Marine Corps, so that helps me know the ranks better. The Air Force rank structure is all the different Tech Sergeants and that sort of thing.

J.B. Anderson: It was odd, I got back home after World War II about 9 o'clock one morning. My dad met me at the bus station. My brother was in Germany, and he got in that afternoon.

Same day?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, same day.

Just by coincidence then.

J.B. Anderson: It would never happen again. But my brother got hit in the arm.

In Germany?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah.

He was in the Army?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, he was in the Army. But he was lucky. He just got shot in the arm, but the bullet went in and then out. It was along down in this area somewhere.

Did it do much damage or was he able to recover?

J.B. Anderson: No, he got over it. Oh yeah. He re-upped because of his arm and then when his time was up that time, he got out.

I guess you were in China when the war ended, right?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah.

Do you have any memories of the day you learned that the war was over, that the Japanese had surrendered?

J.B. Anderson: Oh, they wouldn't let us go into town or anything because the Communists was already taking over.

So there was already a lot of issues then in China. Were you able to celebrate though? I imagine it was a pretty euphoric day to learn that the war was finally done.

J.B. Anderson: Well, it really wasn't too much because I was TDY again. I was TDY most of the time I was in China. But we went, we was in a convoy, part of us was. We had to bring trucks and things back to a Japanese base that they had given up, and we went over an old bridge, a wooden bridge that the Japs built, and I was about the third one over, and the next guy over, apparently he was trying to take it easy, but his truck was going this way I guess, and the whole thing caved in with him, or at least that section, and the water wasn't very deep. It was a dry season. Anyway, the rest of them had to ford that river and came over and of course we was late getting in.

Was he OK, the one that had his -

J.B. Anderson: Oh, the guy that caved in, the truck and all just settled down and I guess the bridge was about 12 feet off the water, but as the bridge went down, well they went down with it. But I don't remember whether they ever got that truck out or not, but the rest of them though they was all right.

Interesting. What all did you do in the Air Force after you reenlisted from '55 to '72.

J.B. Anderson: I did no more of that ordinance, so I went back into maintenance. I was a specialist, and I tried to learn everything about that I could.

Where all did you get assigned? What were some of the different bases?

J.B. Anderson: China. Well a lot of them I don't remember the name, but there was one time I went TDY to a place they called Red Dust Tail, and they sent me up there to inventory all the ammunition involved and everything, and the same ordinance officer that was over us, he came up there to I guess to check on me.

Now this was during World War II?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah. And he had gotten hurt when we were back with the whole outfit, but he was a daredevil. He asked me one day, he said Andy, we got a bunch of fuses in but we don't have no paperwork on it. They're time delayed. And there was a mountain in back of where our office was, and he said let's go up there and we'll bring one and we'll set it off. And I told him, the only way I'd go if you ordered me to. He wanted to volunteer to go with it. Anyway he talked a couple of other guys to go, and they got up there and there was a big rock with a cliff thing off of it.

Why did he want to set it off?

J.B. Anderson: Just for the fun of it. And anyway he walked over to the edge of that thing, or was going to walk over to the edge, and the deckist dropped it, and somehow it went off. There wasn't no time delay on that thing. Anyway the fuse itself isn't just but a little bitty thing. When he dropped it, it went off and little pieces got in his legs. One got him in the eye or right next to the eye, and he was sent back to the Philippines I think.

Were any of the other guys with him hurt?

J.B. Anderson: Anyway he was sent back to, there was a hospital and they worked on his eyes, but they saved his eyes. But anyway, I was having the cataracts real bad, and he told me, when I get back to the outfit I'm gonna see if I can't get them to send you back to the hospital, and get that cataract out of there. Of course I never did get to go.

Interesting.

J.B. Anderson: And I didn't get that cataract out of there until I got out.

Really. Out of China.

J.B. Anderson: Yeah. Well even out of the service.

Really, they wouldn't take it out the whole time you were in the Air Force? I'm kind of surprised that they wouldn't fix that for you.

J.B. Anderson: Well, they couldn't over there in China. There wasn't a doctor.

Yeah, they couldn't fix it in China is what I mean, but you got fixed when you got back to Texas I guess?

J.B. Anderson: I think I was out of the service even when I got that cataract out.

But you had it fixed before you went back in in 1955, yeah. Where were some places that you were stationed in the 50s through '72? I know you mentioned Abilene.

J.B. Anderson: The first time I went to – what the heck was the name of that base – it was right out of Saigon, and that was when we went to Vietnam the first time, and we went to Vietnam and went back in '65, and while I was there, they came out with the deal that if you had been in Vietnam before TDY, that would be taken off of that year, so I was in Vietnam twice, but only one year altogether. The next time they sent me to Thailand and I was there for one year. Then when I got back, they sent me to Abilene.

So you were at Dias AFB? And that's where your daughter graduated from high school, right?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah. She begun her first year there in Abilene. We adopted her while we was in Amarillo.

Was there an AFB in Amarillo?

J.B. Anderson: There was at that time. They closed it and I was sent down to Wichita Falls.

To Shepherd AFB?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, and then they asked me to go TDY to San Antonio, Randolph, and I told them no. If you'll send me permanent, I'll go, but I ain't gonna volunteer to go down there. And they wanted to send me 'til they could get another man in down there.

So it sounds like you were able to stay, be in Texas some though –

J.B. Anderson: Well I didn't get to be in Texas except for basic -

But you were at the AFB in Amarillo and then Wichita Falls and Abilene.

J.B. Anderson: I went to San Antonio for one year, but then they grabbed me and sent me to Thailand. And then they sent me back to Abilene. They wanted to send me back to Florida back in air commandos, and that was where our boy was killed, and I told them no, and I told them why. Then they gave me Abilene.

What AFB was that in Florida? Were you in the Panhandle?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, I was in the panhandle.

Egglund AFB?

J.B. Anderson: Damn, I can't remember anymore.

Kind of over by Pensacola.

J.B. Anderson: No, down below. Anyway that base had a bunch of bases around it and when I was in, before I went to Thailand, they sent me back down there for training on the QU22's, those little Piper-like things, just a one-man deal. They were supposed to be remote controlled. The pilots would go out to the end of the field, line up and get out, and then they would take over from the ground. But when they got over there they found out – well they sent me over early, and I was put in field maintenance in Thailand, and I never did get out of it. I never did get to go back with the outfit I was supposed to be in because they found out before they got over there that Thailand had a deal that no airplane could be up without anybody in it. And so they had to train more pilots down there.

What were they going to use those planes for? For observation missions?

J.B. Anderson: They was just taking pictures. Of course all that was supposed to be automatic and anyway they had to box these airplanes up and send them in by air, and then we had to put them back together. Of course the body was there, the wings was taken off, the propeller was taken off. I don't think they even took the engines off, just the propellers. I had to put the propellers, fix it all back and mount them. So I got to do that while I was there. But they said nearly all the crew men, they took them up one at a time with a pilot, crowded them in, and they would circle the field to come back in. But I was busy that day back with the field maintenance. I was over at the propeller shop there. I had taken over with a guy that I knew that was an instructor. In fact, I went through one of his classes when I went to Vietnam with a C123, and I knew more about that than that old boy did, so I got out of most of that.

What was the most difficult part of your job in the Air Force?

J.B. Anderson: Well in the Air Force, seemed like every time we had an airplane go down out in the boonies, I was the one that would go fix it.

Were you able to fix it most of the time, or did you have to usually bring it back to the air field?

J.B. Anderson: I went one time that another crew had gone in and changed the engine, and they changed the prop also, but it was left there, and that was where I was sent out with another guy and we had to fix all that up to send back. They were supposed to come after us that afternoon, but the airplane never did show up. Another crew come in bringing mail for the Army that was there, and I finally talked them into taking us back. They wanted to bring us back but not the cargo, and I told them no, I can't do that, but I don't want to be up here overnight.

Where did that happen?

J.B. Anderson: That was in Vietnam. They finally said OK, we'll take you back. We got the thing loaded and we got back and I got off that airplane and went by the shop and then went on back to the barracks. We worked 12 hours on and 12 hours off. We worked six days a week while we was there. We got one day off, and I took Sunday's off. So I'd get to go on USO, no it wasn't the USO either. It was the activity bunch there on the base. I'd go on nearly all their trips.

Then you retired in 1972?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah.

Did you come back to Texas at that point?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, I came back to Texas. I went to work in Dallas. Well I first worked in an Army camp out here.

At Fort Hood?

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, and we was in the north camp, and anyway they began to cut back, and of course I was one of the first men they cut out, and that was when I went to Fort Worth again. We went to work for Chasfault it was named then. I think it was some other name at that time, but they were putting the B-36's, making them there, and I got into the upholster part there.

So you stayed involved in aviation even then after you got out.

J.B. Anderson: Yeah, but anyway on their contracts, they've got to catch up and they left some of 'em off, and of course I'd be one of the first men let off, and I was an upholster before I ever went in the service, and anyway I'd go back and work at it. That was where I met the woman I married. She was an Arkansas girl. They had moved to Texas way back. In fact she was born in Albany, Texas. You may know right where that's at.

I do. I've got an aunt and uncle that live not far from Albany. They retired out there. I know that's kind of out by Abilene. That's great.

J.B. Anderson: Her granddad was the barber, and he used to love to come and visit with us, and we was living in Weatherford at that time. Anyway, my wife was the timekeeper and she'd come around and check all the guys and see if they were workin', and of course the company had guys that would come around and they would check us. As soon as they left though, we'd get over in the corner and take us a nap. A few of the guys would work. But they wanted to take their time because the company were getting paid, if it took longer building their airplane, the more money they made. But everything is that way now, and I don't like it.

So it slowed down work quite a bit then I guess. I bet.

J.B. Anderson: But they had an experimental building and I was put out there in it after a long, long time, and I remember one winter, gosh it was cold. Lake Words was even froze over. Of course the air base, Carswell AFB is right there by where the bombers were built and they had one, they had tanks set in it for the water. They would fill one of the tanks, and in the air they would shift that weight around in the bomber, back in the bomb bay.

See just how it would do.

J.B. Anderson: We was wrapping the pipes in that thing and we was wrapped up as much as we could to try to keep from freezing in there. Of course it was setting on the ground while we was working. We had lights we would put in between our legs to try to keep warm and wrapped in those pipes. But I never will forget that winter.

What year was that? Do you remember the year?

J.B. Anderson: It was about '51 or '52. It wasn't very long after I was married. Anyway I had worked down in the valley at McAllen for an old man that he kind of took over with me, and I told him I'm going back home, and back up to the other central part of Texas. Anyway, my wife at that time was working, well she worked for Sears Roebuck down there and she got transferred from there to Temple.

That's kind of what brought you back here then, Temple is kind of home.

J.B. Anderson: Of course I went to work for Brown & Cheryl, it was an upholstering place on East Adams. You went over the railroad track and we were doing OK there. Then the wife got worse and worse and that's when I went back in the service in '55.

Well sir I really appreciate you taking the time to let me come and interview you today.

J.B. Anderson: I just wish I could remember the names of the bases.

Don't worry about it. We've got a pretty good interview here and I think especially hearing about your time in China and dealing with all the unexploded ordinance, there's not a lot of folks that –

J.B. Anderson: One thing I got to tell you about China.

OK.

J.B. Anderson: When I was up there at TDY to this Red Dust Hill they called it, the end of the runway had a bluff and when the airplanes would take off, some of the times they would dip down to where you couldn't even, nose to 'em, and then when they climbed up we could see 'em again, see if they was all right. But one evening there was a Chinese guy that was working with me, helping me with inventory, and he was pretty good at English, and walking back that evening, we went by some Chinese guys that had a dog hung up, and had a fire going, and I asked him, what are they doing with that dog hung up like that? And he said we'll they're going to barbecue him. I told him you got to be kidding. And he said oh no, we love dogs, and the cats also. We eat the cats.

Yeah, that's pretty horrible. That shows how –

J.B. Anderson: I almost lost it before I got away from there.

Yeah, I guess they really didn't have much to eat when you're eating dog and cat, that's pretty horrible.

J.B. Anderson: But can you imagine the people eating a dog?

No, but I guess if you're hungry enough you would. That's pretty horrible.

J.B. Anderson: I guess maybe they tasted like a possum, but I never did eat a possum either.

I guess if you're starving, I guess if that's your alternative –

J.B. Anderson: But in Arkansas now, they eat possum quite a bit.

Yeah, people shoot and eat it, that's right, squirrels, all that sort of stuff.

J.B. Anderson: I have my chewing tobacco and I forgot, I got to dip.

OK, yup. Well sir, again, I really appreciate you letting me interview you today.

J.B. Anderson: You're more than welcome.

In a couple of weeks or so, we're going to send you copies of this interview on CD's and we're going to send you a nice letter and certificate from Commissioner Patterson in a commemorative binder. It's just a small way for the state of Texas to say thank you to you –

J.B. Anderson: Well I'll give it to my daughter.

Let us know, we'll get extra copies, too, if you want more for her or whomever else, we'll give you what you need.

J.B. Anderson: I just need to have one because she winds up with everything anyway.

Well that's great. We'll make sure to get that in the mail to you. We'll send it here and then you can give it to her when you see her. But again sir, thank you very, very much. I appreciate it.

J.B. Anderson: Oh, you're more than welcome James.

Thank you.

[End of recording]