

Transcription: Glenn Hoffman

Today is Thursday, August 21, 2014. My name is James Crabtree, and this morning I will be interviewing Lieutenant Colonel Glenn Hoffman. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans Oral History Program. I'm at the General Land Office building in Austin, Texas, and Lieutenant Colonel Hoffman is at his home in San Antonio, Texas. Sir, thank you very much for taking the time to talk to us today. It's an honor for our program.

Glenn Hoffman: Well, it's truly my honor, I assure you.

Yes sir. Sir, the first question that I always start with in these interviews is please tell us a little bit about your childhood and your life before you entered the military.

Glenn Hoffman: Okay, sir. I was born and raised in a little community on the farm near Somerset, Texas, which is about 15 miles south-southwest of San Antonio. My dad was a nurseryman, flower grower when I was a very small guy. We were modest. We didn't have a lot of wealth and the business wasn't big but we felt very secure. I was raised there and went to Somerset High School, played football and ran track and played baseball, basketball on a dirt court. And graduated in 1950, did win the state pole vaulting championship in Class B back in those days. That was 1950. And from there, I was gonna go to Texas A&I University because that's where our superintendent, Mr. Bill James, suggested and kind of paved the road for some of us. I didn't quite make the football team. I was a little bit slow and not quite up to that level, so he sent me to Wharton County Junior College for a couple of years experience but that didn't work out, and I headed home kind of unhappy with the whole thing, and said, "I'm gonna go back to A&I and take whatever they have to offer." Well, my mother said, "Hey, you got a penny postcard here from somebody, and might be interested in ya." I said, "Well, where is it?" And it says, "Glenn, congratulations for winning the state pole vault, and we'd like to talk to you about possibly coming to Victoria Junior College at Victoria, Texas." Well, that was pretty exciting. Of course, I got on our telephone which was a party line, and got a hold of Coach Ed Shinn, and to cut a long story short, it worked out. Went to Victoria and spent two years there on a combination track and football scholarship. Since our family was not wealthy or well off, I either had to work my way through college which I did partially, but the scholarship was just so valuable. We won the national championship in track and field while I was there and did the pole vaulting, and won that too. And I was planning on going to Texas A&M because that's where my oldest brother was a 1939 graduate, from Texas A&M, and the only other member of the family that went to college. And, of course, I looked up to him highly. But Texas A&M had a pole vaulter already that was as good if not slightly better than me so Foggy __, assistant track coach to Clyde Littlefield kind of peppered me with enthusiasm to get me to go to UT, and that's how it worked out.

That's great.

Glenn Hoffman: I went to UT and was their main pole vaulter for two years, and he told me to . . . Immediately he said, "You gotta enroll in ROTC," because, you know, it was during the latter stages of the Korean War. He said, "You'll get drafted or something." Well, I was . . . You know, the Korean War was starting while I was in junior college and some of my classmates and all were dropping out of college and joining the military, and I really honored them and

everything, and I was thinking, “Well, if I don’t get my education with my scholarship now, I probably never would.” And so I stuck with it. And so I went into ROTC and doubled up on it my last year, and fortunately was able to graduate with what they called DMG. Academically, I was never really on the upper end of scale. I kind of struggled through but I graduated DMG, Distinguished Military Graduate, and went Regular Army. That’s up to my military.

So you graduated from UT in 1955.

Glenn Hoffman: That’s correct, sir.

That’s great. What did your folks think about you going into the Army? Were they supportive of that?

Glenn Hoffman: They didn’t support, they didn’t talk me out of it or anything. They were very proud of the two years that my oldest brother was in the Corps at A&M. His picture and uniform was, you know, the highlight of our family photo album, and we were very proud of the fact that my mother’s brother was in World War I as my dad’s youngest brother was in World War I. But we were not a military family per se. My brother that was 10 years older than I went into the Navy in World War II and served on the battleship Alabama, and so he had quite an experience there, and, of course, as a 12, 13, 14-year-old, I really listened to the news on the radio. Of course, we had no TV or anything, and anything we could read in the paper about that. But, no, my folks, I think, hated to see me leave the farm ’cause they could use my help, you know. And I did a lot of marketing for ’em, and I did a lot of farm work, and I got very acquainted with flowers and all so I hated to leave that, but they were supportive. They were supportive.

So when you graduated, you got your commission as a second lieutenant, where did they send you to at that point?

Glenn Hoffman: Well, I was very excited because they sent me to Fort Benning, Georgia, to Audie Murphy’s division. I said, “Fantastic.” Third Infantry Division with TDY en route to Fort Benning to the basic infantry officer’s course. My basic commission was in the transportation corps because I was basically . . . I really wanted to become an Army pilot but didn’t know just exactly how I was gonna get there. Well, at UT, the PMS&T, the professor of military science and tactics, said, “You gotta get in the transportation corps ’cause they’re the proponent for Army aviation.” And so, okay, that’s what I did. So, I said, “Go RA, you have three-year commitment instead of two but if you want to become a pilot, you don’t have anything to lose. Okay.” Well, when I got on active duty, James, I found out that I had to spend two years in a combat arms branch first, and so they sent me to the infantry and yeah, the 3rd Infantry Division, 7th Infantry of the 3rd Division for the first two years.

Okay.

Glenn Hoffman: And, I tell ya, some of the cadre there . . . You know, being from a small town with a lot of pride in their sports program and a family, we worked very hard on the farm and we had a lot of . . . You know, we looked up to people who were good people so much, and I didn’t want to let me community or my family down so . . . Some of our cadre at the basic infantry course had, you know, was wearing Airborne wings. I think, “Wow.” And then all of a sudden every once in a while, we’d see somebody that was wearing the Ranger tab on the left shoulder, and I said, “You know, pretty good.” So I was talking to the people. I said, “How can I get that

kind of rating?” They said, “Apply for it.” So I applied for both of ’em, and got orders to go to both of ’em at the same time, so they sent me to Airborne school right out of basic infantry course, and then I went to the 3rd Division and, James, I tell you that was an experience because most of my sergeants and everybody were Korean veterans, just having returned, you know, not too long before that. And so when you come up with a second lieutenant _ with this kind of experience, you know, you learn more than you teach. But they taught me a lot, and it was a very good beginning. Of course, while I was in the middle of that, I did get my second orders to go to Ranger school, so I completed that also, and I was very happy about that.

I imagine. I’ve always heard that Ranger school was very demanding, very difficult. How did you find it to be?

Glenn Hoffman: I found it pretty difficult but it just, it wasn’t too hard. I tell you, a person who is, say, a sports-minded person that plays contact sports or a farm person who is used to long hours and endurance and stuff, it’s still a challenge ’cause you’ve got patrols. You’ve got hand-to-hand combat. You’ve got demolitions and this kind of stuff so . . . And, of course, you had to learn how to endure “torture.” The class before me, they stopped lowering you down into a snake pit upside down to tell you something more than your name, rank and serial number. I didn’t have to experience that but the . . . Something pretty close to that sometime. But it was a good course. Before I left Fort Benning though, they sent me to a rifle marksmanship instructor course because our unit had the mission of training basic trainees, and, oh, we loved to get groups of trainees in there from the southwest ’cause they were conscientious, hardworking and really wanted to learn. Some of the other parts of the country, they were a little above that, you know. So we had to get their attention and it was fun. But I taught ’em rifle marksmanship, and their regimental commander walked up one time while we were right in the middle of a program, and he said, “Hey, that young lieutenant sounds like he knows what he’s saying. I’d like for him to coach my rifle marksmanship team.” And so my battalion commander, a lieutenant colonel, he said, “Okay, sir. You know. What can I say?” And so they sent me to rifle marksmanship coaching course, and, James, I know I’m running off the mouth right now . . .

Oh, no. This is great.

Glenn Hoffman: But we trained like a son of a gun and I had only one experienced shooter on my regimental team, and I was one of the shooters, and we had a team. And we entered two teams, five-man teams, in the division rifle matches. And as you can imagine, as you may know, the infantryman’s primary expertise is their rifle, marksmanship, and their bayonet training and stuff like that. Other regiments had a lot of experience. They had shooting jackets with patches all over and everything. Okay, my first team and second team won first and second in the division matches over about 30 teams, so I was glad that since I was trained to be a coach in college, I was glad to use it in a different way.

That’s great. So you ended up doing two years then as an infantry officer?

Glenn Hoffman: Yeah, I spent two years in the infantry, then I took off my crossed rifles on my collar and put my transportation wheel back on, and went to Fort Eustis, Virginia, to become branch qualified in the transportation course. At that point is when I applied for flight school.

How difficult was it at that time to get to go to flight school? Was that a pretty competitive process just to get there?

Glenn Hoffman: I don't think it was too much. I think because the Korean War was over with and everything. Things were pretty stringent. A lot of people didn't make it because of colorblindness but I didn't see anything particularly demanding about it. I know that I had a slight burn in one of my retinas and I told the flight surgeon when I took my physical that I had it. He said, "You read the charts, you can do it." And it was such that I couldn't shoot the rifle with the right hand. I had to shoot left-handed but it never bothered me in everyday life or anything. So, no, going into flight school, the flight school itself was very demanding but getting approved to go, no, it wasn't too bad.

Where did they send you to flight school? Did you go to Fort Walters or Fort Rucker?

Glenn Hoffman: No sir, no sir. I went to Camp Gary at San Marcos, Texas.

Really, okay. I didn't know they did flight training there.

Glenn Hoffman: Yes. The Air Force had a program there and I think the year or two years before I went there in '58, they . . . They turned it over to the Army, and it was contract. I think it was Southern Airways or something like that. I can't remember exactly who was the contractor but it was all civilian instructors.

So it wasn't a military airfield then?

Glenn Hoffman: Basically, yeah, it was. It was . . . When you say it was, but it was called Gary Army Airfield, and so it was run by the military, by the Army, but everything was contract, I think, the air traffic controllers and everybody.

I have never even heard of that facility. I imagine, I don't know what's there today, do you know?

Glenn Hoffman: Well, because it probably was gone when you were born.

Why it is I never heard of it. I was familiar with Fort Walters being a big center for Army helicopter aviation out there in Mineral Wells, and I had thought that's where all helicopter pilots had to go, was Fort Walters, until they moved them to Fort Rucker.

Glenn Hoffman: Stay tuned, stay tuned. I graduated in class of what they call 58-17, the 17th class of 1958. Went to Fort Rucker, Alabama, to finish the tactical part. All of this flying was in the L-19, Bird Dog. It's like a Cessna taildragger with a very high-powered engine. We learned how to go in and out of confined areas, and land on roads with a curve in 'em and all that stuff. That's where I got my wings, at Fort Rucker, Alabama, in '59. And they put me . . . Since I was Regular Army, they said when I took Regular Army, they said, "They're gonna really give you a lot of schools, you know, 'cause they figure you're a 30-year man." And I didn't tell 'em that I was planning on just going to 20 and getting out, or maybe less. 'Cause I wasn't really military career oriented or minded, but I did like to spend the time as a pilot. So they left me there at Rucker to finish the instrument school so I could fly, you know, without reference to ground and do all that stuff. And then I went to Fort Walters, and this is, of course . . . It was big then, it was

very big but it was not as big as it was during the Vietnam War when they really exploded it to train warrant officers and stuff. But out of Fort Walters I went to my first aviation assignment which was the 81st Transportation Company. Back in those days, they were transportation companies, light helicopter. Since that time, of course, the designations are more aviation oriented but it's H-21s, and you don't know what the H-21 is either, I bet. You've probably seen pictures of flying bananas?

I have. I know what the flying banana is. I've seen that.

Glenn Hoffman: That's the H-21, and that was our unit up there. I spent two years with them.

Oh, that's great. What was the most challenging part of flying a helicopter?

Glenn Hoffman: Well, with the H-21 it was the power versus weight ratio. You had to be very, very careful in everything you did or you would diminish your, you know, your positive lift on your choppers. So the biggest . . . Just like my instructor told me when I was first learning the H-21. He said, "Lieutenant." This was a senior warrant officer, transitioned me into H-21. He said, "When you want to turn, you think about turning. Don't try to turn, you think about turning and it'll turn." And that's how sensitive the controls were on that chopper.

Wow.

Glenn Hoffman: Of course, the H-21 had a . . . It's like the current Chinook. It had a big rotor on front and the back, shaped like an Oscar Meyer wiener. They called 'em grasshoppers back in those days kind of but . . . That was one of the most difficult things, trying to pick up a Jeep. We couldn't pick up a Jeep sling load with the 105 Howitzer or 105 recoilless rifle. That was a little too heavy so they'd have to take that off and make it have two choppers to lift the Jeep and the recoilless rifle on another package. But the most interesting mission there that I was on was high altitude test program by the Air Force out of San Angelo, highly classified.

Was that Goodfellow Air Force Base?

Glenn Hoffman: It was Goodfellow Air Force Base, and they put these balloons up, they go up 100 and . . . I understood it was 100,000 feet or maybe more. They were real big on the ground but when they got up there, you can see 'em, look like a little marble so we had to track 'em by instruments. But they were testing the atmosphere or something. I don't know. It was above my pay grade. But our unit supported the building of the Minuteman and other missile silos up in Wyoming, the code reference stuff. So we had choppers up there all the time.

When was the first chance you got to leave the States on any sort of a tour?

Glenn Hoffman: To leave the States?

Yes sir.

Glenn Hoffman: My three-year tour at Fort Riley, Kansas, was cut to two years because I was due for an undesirable, unaccompanied tour, and so I went to Korea for one year.

For one year in Korea. What year was that?

Glenn Hoffman: That was in '61, '62. I was going to another H-21 chopper company, the 13th, but there was a staff officer at I Corps headquarters that was biting his bits to get to that company, and he talked to people to divert me to Corps headquarters. So that was good though. I was able to see aviation throughout the whole 8th Army area, and was on the IG team and all that stuff so it turned out good.

Were you still flying, sir, when the Vietnam War started?

Glenn Hoffman: Oh, yeah. From Korea, I went back to Fort Eustis for an advanced course, and then from there, aircraft maintenance, and went to Germany for supposedly a three-year tour. I became the commander of a couple of aircraft maintenance companies, and got that tour cut off one year because they were building up in Vietnam at the time, and so a three-year tour was cut to two years, and we came to Fort Hood, Texas, to form up a helicopter company to take to Vietnam. So that was in '66, and we formed up a UH-1H model helicopter company to take over.

What were your experiences like in Vietnam flying a helicopter? I know a lot of people have seen movies and read books about it, but what are some memories you would want to share with people about it?

Glenn Hoffman: Well, we were just a little big rank heavy. I was fortunate enough to be the second ranked guy in the company so I was executive officer. So we took it over in '67 when things were really hot over there, and because we did have a little excess rank, we had about three or four majors, and we had a good company. We flew very heavy. Flying in Vietnam, of course, being in . . . One thing they do, some people wonder . . . A new company that goes over there, they're green, they don't know what they're doing. They're gonna get annihilated they think, but what they do when you first get there, 50 percent of your company leaves you, goes to other companies in Vietnam, and those companies in return will send you the like number of people. It's called the infusion program. They send you the like number of pilots or crew chief, mostly pilots, that have already had at least six months in country, and so immediately you do have 50 percent of your company that's pretty experienced. And then those of us in command positions, they'll send us for one week to fly with a company that's been, you know, flying there for months or years, and that scared me 'cause I didn't know what the heck is going on. And they had procedures that I thought were risky like smoking _ and all that kind of stuff. But flying in Vietnam, I can't say enough about the nerve or the courage and the bravery of the average helicopter pilot. Those that graduated, as you mentioned, out of Fort Walters. I mean, some of them were sergeants. Some of them were civilians right out of civilian life. They go up there and they go through the warrant officer program. If they pass through that thing, they go to flight school, they go to Vietnam, and very eager, very professional. I tell you, I don't remember any pilots that froze up. The biggest problem when we had an emergency is to hold back my crews to keep from going in to rescue the infantry under stress or another pilot or an aircraft that's been downed or something. So, but flying there is . . . It takes a lot of courage and you can imagine when you're in a flight of 10 choppers in formation, you gotta land in formation so that the infantry will have the major advantage whenever they hit the ground, and if those choppers are getting rounds shot at 'em, and still hold their position in a formation, you can imagine the nerves that they have. But one thing that we have, James, you know, we had the gun platoon. Our gun platoon, if you've seen the movie, *We Were Soldiers Once . . . And Young*.

I have, yes sir.

Glenn Hoffman: Mel Gibson, you can see kind of the climax of that one, what those Miniguns can do. Each one shoots 2,000 rounds per minute, got two on each chopper in the gun platoon so when we put infantry on the ground, they're trying their best to keep the enemies' head down as we land on the ground to drop off the troops but . . .

Sure.

Glenn Hoffman: It was shortly after I left the company, little over 30 days, is whenever they started operating in Cambodia quite a bit. You know, not publicized but later on unclassified. And our company was the one that supported the Special Forces, the Green Berets into Cambodia. And if you'd heard of Master Sergeant Roy Benavides . . .

I have, yes sir.

Glenn Hoffman: Well, so it was our company that flew him, flew the group in there and later on flew him in there to try to recover his Green Beret buddies, and we lost a crew in the process too. Very courageous crews.

Yeah, you know you see the documentaries about landing in a hot LZ and that sort of thing, and it is pretty amazing. So I was curious to get your take on that and your memories of those men that flew there.

Glenn Hoffman: Well, I don't know if I've seen that particular documentary. I've seen a few things that show some of that but, oh, I tell you. It was just like one time whenever we put a . . . We supported primarily the 9th Infantry Division out of Camp Bearcat which is the Delta region of Vietnam. And, of course, we were there during the Tet Offensive. But it was . . . When the infantries got their heads pinned down and you gotta come in to evacuate wounded or resupply 'em or something like that and the infantry is shooting over the parapet or over the rice paddies, it's kind of hard to land there, you know, like a duck in shooting gallery but you had to. Well, you took your chances. The infantry is basically in charge, you know. I got the infantry colonel in my command and control helicopter. He leans on me to run the air show and puts his unit on the ground, but after he got his unit on the ground, then he's kinda in charge. You know, occasionally they have to say, "Well, major, we gotta go down," and, "I gotta do this or that." "Okay, sir, but our chances maybe might be less than 50 percent that we're gonna get out."

Yeah.

Glenn Hoffman: So anyway, they make that decision and, "Yes sir." I guess the average helicopter pilot is probably . . . And the crew chiefs, you know. You got two door gunners on your troop-carrying Huey, one crew chief, one gunner, but they're both gunners in your operation, and then pilot and copilot, and all four of 'em are brave. I mean, they're very courageous.

Did you ever have any flights yourself that you weren't sure you were going to get out of the situation you're in?

Glenn Hoffman: I guess one of 'em down in the Delta when we put a . . . I don't know if we put a company or battalion of infantry down, and they got pinned down, and some key elements of that unit was mortally wounded, and that's the time that this colonel asked me to evacuate 'em.

And you know, you got Dustoffs which is the medical evac helicopters. You know, they got the big red cross painted on the side of 'em and everything but it's kind of a joke because Dustoff pilots says that just gives them a target to shoot at 'cause the enemy doesn't honor that.

No, exactly.

Glenn Hoffman: But, no, the colonel asked me, "We gotta go down and pick up captain. I got his replacement on our aircraft and I gotta drop him off and pick up the wounded." I said, "Okay." So, you know, we got down to about, I guess you'd call banana tree level, I mean down to the level of the small trees in the rice patty areas, and went and evacuated 'em, and we got hit. Our chopper got hit but the infantry was shooting, doing their best. I didn't have gun coverage at that time by my gunships. They were back rearming and refueling at that time but, thank goodness for the infantry had enough fire to protect us. And there's others. I mean, I hovered into an area 'cause we had a ship to go down and crashed and burned in the jungle, and I wanted to see if we lost any, I mean, if we had any survivors. And I went down in no-man's land, you know, the blades chopping bamboo, a few things, kind of scared me a little bit. And there's been other scares. I flew 16 hours on the day of the Tet Offensive. That was pretty nerve-racking, especially after dark.

I bet.

Glenn Hoffman: The infantry of the enemy will shoot, you know, tracer bullets at ya, and you can see 'em coming from, you know, maybe a mile away. They look kind of small but when they pass your chopper, they look like basketballs, you know. But, no, I tell ya. I can't boast of any bravery that would even approximate the guys, my warrant officer and young captain lieutenant pilots that would fly into LZs every day, roughly 28 days a month, you know. Being the commander, I would direct the missions, make adjustments en route and all that kind of stuff, and sometime land with 'em, but they're the ones that I really salute.

Yes sir.

Glenn Hoffman: And the infantryman who actually stays there and fights the battle. Oh, we'd see 'em all the time as they'd jump in our choppers, when we extract 'em or when we take 'em in.

I'm sure they were always glad to see you guys when it came to getting them out of there.

Glenn Hoffman: They like that whop, whop, whop, whop, whop. The two-bladed chopper has a distinct sound, and back in the garrison we could trade flights for just about anything. You know, maybe two days of grater work on a road or whatever. Over there, choppers are just everything to everybody just about.

During that time you were there, sir, were you married or writing to family back home, that sort of thing?

Glenn Hoffman: I was married with one year to go at University of Texas. And we had our first child about three or four months before I swore into the Army.

So you had a family back home while you were in Vietnam. Were you able to send letters home pretty regularly, that sort of thing?

Glenn Hoffman: Yeah, we wrote letters back and forth, and one of the little things we did. We had these little, what, two inch reel-to-reel recorders. It was before the cassettes, just a little reel-to-reel thing. And they'd last about 10 minutes, and that's where we communicated quite a bit when we really wanted to get romantic or something.

So you would be able to record a message and then mail that tape back home.

Glenn Hoffman: Yeah.

How long did it take for you to get mail there when they would send it? A couple weeks?

Glenn Hoffman: I really, I can't remember checking the date that it was mailed versus the time I got it. Probably less than week.

That's not bad.

Glenn Hoffman: They sent it to an APO in San Francisco, and they collect it and then they fly it over. Yeah, probably a week.

That's not too bad.

Glenn Hoffman: No. My wife, Lillian, from Cuero originally, would play these tapes sometime to members of my family who were from this area. She, Lillian, and my two children were living, that's David and Glenda, were living here in San Antonio. They'd play these tapes and they could hear the guns go off in the background, and they'd say, "Woo, ooooo." I had to tell 'em, "Don't worry about those guns. That's friendly artillery going out."

Yeah, okay.

Glenn Hoffman: Out of Camp Bearcat.

What was it like when you were able to finally come back home? How long did you end up spending there in Vietnam?

Glenn Hoffman: Spent a year. Yeah, when you're in a . . . I don't know if it was the same all over but I know the 1st Aviation Brigade that had all . . . They had all the nondivisional aviation units in Vietnam which was, gee, I guess, close to 100 units or something, maybe more. Once you had six months as a commander, that's what they say is the minimum amount of command time for you to actually get credit on your record as being a commander in combat. So I had two months to go in Vietnam when my six months as a commander came up, and the battalion commander tried to get an exception to the rule but they said, "No, we have too many career-minded people that needed the command experience to either make 'em or break 'em." And so I went to the next higher headquarters for the last two months. Coming home, the only thing we were advised, James, was that once we hit Travis Air Force Base, when we were going down to the international airport or somewhere to catch our connecting flight home to where we're going, we were advised to be in civilian clothes. But I didn't personally experience the prevalent antiwar demonstrations at that time.

Well, that's good. It's kind of sad though, that they would just tell you that you shouldn't be in your uniform just for fear of that sort of thing.

Glenn Hoffman: Yeah, like right now, you know, here at San Antonio airport, guys come in from a flight in uniform, the people who are just around there waiting for a flight to come, a lot of times those guys are saluted, hand clapped, and . . . Yeah, our country has a soul and they recognize what happened in Vietnam, and whenever somebody is introduced at our church that he served in Iraq or something, they get standing ovations. And I'm just as teary-eyed as that guy is when that happens because I'm so proud of our country and our citizenry that supports the military now.

Yes sir. I think that's the way it should be.

Glenn Hoffman: That's right.

Unfortunately, I've heard stories from Vietnam veterans who didn't always have that welcome which was pretty tragic.

Glenn Hoffman: That's very tragic, yeah. And, of course, you know, when you really sit back and think about it, you say, well . . . Of course, you've heard nobility spoken many times to say, "Well, we fought so they have a right to voice their opinion." Which is true. We can speak out in our country as long as we do it peacefully, it's okay. But we certainly did not honor those people who were vocal against our country 'cause we knew that was just gonna prolong the war, and it's gonna take that much longer for the enemy to give up and all that stuff.

Sure. So when you got back, where were you assigned to then at that point?

Glenn Hoffman: Well, from that point we got assigned to Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I became the Simmons Army Airfield operations officer under Colonel Forehand, and spent one year there. I had the very interesting privilege of going around to the various universities in North Carolina, you know, Wake Forest and I think, I don't know what all for right now, University of North Carolina, presenting a dog and pony show about what a good life it would be for them to join, speaking to the ROTC people, about going into Army aviation. And so that was fun, and attending meetings at the Fayetteville airport. Anyway, from there, that was one year, and then I went to the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. That was a stepping stone for the career people. We say that everybody that retires as a lieutenant colonel or something like that, they've got 101 reasons why they didn't make three-star general. Well, the advice I would have to people that really are interested in their career over everything else is to listen to your career management people. We call 'em career manglement people in the Pentagon, 'cause they know how to groom you for future things, so Leavenworth, they said, "We got you identified to go to the Pentagon and serve there for . . .," you know, whatever. And both of our parents were getting up into their 80s here in San Antonio/Cuero area, and so an old boss of mine was the, 4th Army at the time, aviation officer, and he said, "I'd like to get you on my staff down here." I said, "I'd love to be on your staff." And so he took me off the Pentagon orders, brought me to Fort Sam, and that was strike one. I should have gone to the Pentagon but, anyway . . .

Oh, I don't think I've ever talked to anybody, sir, that served at the Pentagon who said they enjoyed their time there. It's always talk about it being the puzzle palace, and immense

bureaucracy, so I guess if you wanted to pick up general, you might have been right but otherwise in terms of enjoying your tour, you might have been lucky to have dodged it.

Glenn Hoffman: It was probably pretty demanding, and then there's some cases where if they could just . . . They got Mickey Mouse in some areas but, no, I think, if anything, what I've heard from people is that it's very demanding and it's so far-reaching. I mean, you influence policies that affect the entire military or the Army, so, no. I came to the 5th Army, it was 4th Army then, and 4th Army deactivated and 5th Army that was located at Fort Sheridan north of Chicago, they deactivated, and the 4th Army converted to 5th Army here in San Antonio at Fort Sam.

I was going to ask you about that, sir, because I know when we spoke the other day, I wanted to ask you about your involvement with the funeral honor details for President Truman and President Johnson when they passed away. I was wondering if you could share some of your memories of that.

Glenn Hoffman: Yes, I was tremendously honored. I was in the Aviation Division of the 5th Army, and the 5th Army, like all the other Army areas at Fort McPherson, Georgia, and California, whatever, they had . . . One of their responsibilities, one of their missions is to provide the command and control over former presidents' burials, funerals, and maybe four-star, five-star generals and their burials and stuff. So, yeah, we had two people, I think we had three when I first got here. I think Curtis LeMay was living in El Paso someplace, but anyway . . . Yeah, we had to be familiar with the burial plan. We had to write 'em on LBJ but we picked up President Truman's from 5th Army Chicago, and a little side note on this thing. The officer that was in charge of his . . . A lieutenant colonel up in Chicago, Fort Sheridan . . . When they went down to Independence, Missouri, to brief former President Truman about his burial plan, I mean he had little mock-ups of the Truman Library and everything. Truman made a little comment. He said, "Damn that looks good. I'd sure like to be there to see it." But that became sort of his trademark when we had our rehearsals and stuff, and we'd repeat some of it. Yes sir, I was privileged, honored, I guess you would say, that I was able to have a part in each one of 'em. We, mostly lieutenant colonels, we fill position called the sight control officer. I think that's it. Yeah, sight control officer. Like each funeral has, you know, different sights. Okay, in the Truman funeral, he died on December the 26th, the day after Christmas, and so we, a bunch of us flew up in a C-130 and set up shop in, I think, Truman's old national guard headquarters in Independence, Missouri. My position, my responsibility was the ceremony of where President Truman would be carried out of the Carson Funeral Home and placed, originally placed on the caissons pulled by horses to be taken to, well, the original was to be flown to Washington. They had a pretty elaborate plan for that, but the Truman plan scaled down quite a bit. This was to take him to the Truman Library to be buried. So my job was to make sure that everybody was present, the joint honor cordon which was made up of all services or the Military District of Washington, MDW, casket came, it carried the casket from Carson Funeral Home down to the joint honor cordon and then into a hearse over to the library for the formal funeral. So that was basically a simple one. Made sure everybody was present, everybody knew what they was gonna do, and the timing with the world media watching and taking pictures and everything. So that was the Truman. I was reading something on the Internet the other day, "Why didn't Truman want to go to Washington, you know, like all the rest of them did?" Like Reagan has since that time and everything. Mrs. Truman was pretty frail at that time and she could not go anywhere but we were

told unofficially that the Truman family chose not to inconvenience so many people between Christmas and New Years.

Oh, that's interesting.

Glenn Hoffman: That's what we were told because they knew families all over the country would be celebrating Christmas and everything so make it as simple as possible. In the Internet they say it was because of the health of Mrs. Truman as reason why they didn't have a more elaborate funeral but we were told it was more humane, I guess you would say, or considerate of the hundreds and hundreds of people that would be involved in a formal state funeral. It was formal enough as it is from the Carson Funeral Home to the Truman Library.

How many days in advance were you there before the funeral was held?

Glenn Hoffman: We probably were told maybe one day.

Yeah, so pretty quick.

Glenn Hoffman: One or two days. Yeah, it was quick. Let me see, he passed away on the 26th, and the funeral was the 28th. I think we flew up probably the day or the day after that we heard that he had died.

Very quick and a lot of personnel to put together and plans.

Glenn Hoffman: Well, I tell ya, the Corps headquarters at Fort Hood, they have a lot of troop involvement, and, of course, the Air Force, Navy and everybody has, you know, to make up members of the joint honor cordon and everything, so there's a lot of midnight oil burned for when they first hear about somebody dying. Now I don't know, it could be that they knew that his health was failing so bad that maybe there were some . . . I can't remember this long afterwards. We may have been alerted and that we were getting ready, you know, a couple days before he actually passed away. He was 88.

You were involved as well with President Johnson's detail.

Glenn Hoffman: Yes sir. My immediate boss and I was on a staff visit to Fort Bliss, Texas, and we were gonna go up and check ROTC programs up in University of New Mexico. But anyway, we got the word there that LBJ passed away. He died on January the 22nd. He was age 64. So we couldn't get out that night because, man, ice storm. Even commercial, everything was shut down. I got out the next day and got home, went to my office at Fort Sam and they said, "Well, your assistant up there can take care of it." But, see, we had so many plans. The Johnson family did not really . . . They left a lot of alternatives that was available. One, having a service at St. David's Church, lying in state at the LBJ Library, and all kind of stuff. Well, some of the things were modified, canceled and added, so my good job that I was involved in, James, was to make sure that everybody was present and make sure the ceremony of loading him on Air Force One to be flown to Washington to lie in state, at Bergstrom Air Force Base to depart from, make sure that everything was in order. My immediate boss at Fort Sam says, "Your assistant can take care of it. He rehearsed yesterday while you were still, before you got back from El Paso." And I said, "I think I better go up. I have my dress blues on and I'm all ready to go." "Well, if you think you need to go, go on." And so I drove up there and, of course, this was before cell phone and all that

other stuff. So we had to find out what was going on and they said, "Well, he's lying in state at the LBJ Library and the next ceremony is to, you know, transfer him in a hearse and take him out to Bergstrom." And that was my ceremony, at Bergstrom. So I went straight to Bergstrom, and Colonel Young was there, responsible for the whole funeral program, and Billy Graham and Hubert Humphrey and all press and everybody. Joint honor cordon and everybody. We were all getting ready for it, and I asked Colonel Young, I said, "Where's the casket team?" He said, "Well, that's MDW." That's Military District of Washington. I said, "Yeah, but there's supposed to be a team here." And he says, "Hoffman, that's not our responsibility." He said, "It's probably the same team that loaded him in the hearse up at the LBJ Library is going to be in the motorcade and they'll take him out and put him on Air Force One." And I said, "You're supposed to have a second team here." He said, "What do you propose to do?" And I said, "Well, we got about 40 people here or 30 that's lined up in uniform with rifles forming the joint honor cordon to where the casket gets marched through to put him on Air Force One." I said, "I suggest we take the, get the first four on both sides, get rid of their rifles and I'll give them about a five-minute briefing on what to do." Well, James, this is new territory for me.

Sure.

Glenn Hoffman: And I didn't, I've never been in charge of a military burial team, casket team and everything but, you know, common sense takes over. So there was an air policeman there. I said, "Do you have contact with the main gate at Bergstrom?" He said, "Yes sir, I sure do." He said, "Can you have them to check every car as it goes through to see if there's a casket team in one of these cars?" He said, "Sure. Will do." So I told the sergeant in charge of my casket team, one of the eight, I said, "If I give you this little signal with my finger," I said, "You take charge in slow cadence, you know, just barely at your breath." I said, "You bring this casket team over here and when the hearse comes in, we're gonna unload the casket and put him on Air Force One." And, sure enough, the air police said, "No casket team, sir."

Jeez.

Glenn Hoffman: So I gave the little signal and we, my team worked perfectly and they were lined up there, the casket, as the hearse pulls up, and the hearse driver opened the door so I stood right by the door and mumbled instructions, and then whenever they pulled him out, I think the casket or the hearse kind of shaped, arranged the flag a little bit on it so it was okay, and I stood behind the casket and counted cadence, left, right, left, you know, slowly as we marched into the joint honor cordon and put him on a hydraulic lift, you know, 'cause the cargo door is real high, no ladders or anything. You couldn't put him up a ladder anyway, and then got him up to the level of the doors and put him in. Just went off without a hitch.

That's great.

Glenn Hoffman: With one exception. The full colonel from MDW saw that the casket team chief didn't have his belt on, me. I didn't have a white belt on my dress blues, and he said, also we put him in head first, I think that's what it was. He said, "You're not supposed to put him in head first. Supposed to put him in foot first so he comes out head first." I don't know what it was. So anyway, our three-star general at 5th Army didn't have anything to have to apologize for. Otherwise, we almost did.

It's great that you were able to pull that off. I think that's a story most people probably didn't know. I guess the first casket team, they must have just thought they were done and just left for the day?

Glenn Hoffman: Well, the casket team showed up about 100 yards down the ramp, and their transportation didn't show up. It wasn't their fault, it just . . . Something happened, and Murphy's Law. That's why you have Plan B, you know.

That's right, yes sir.

Glenn Hoffman: We didn't have a Plan B in our plan. We just . . . Anything MDW does is theirs. A little bit too wordy for a short story but anyway.

No sir, that's a great story. That's the first story I've had a chance to hear from somebody that's actually been on a presidential funeral detail like that. So it's interesting to hear that.

Glenn Hoffman: It was a great honor I had. And I was able to . . . I have one of these extended 105 Howitzer canisters for both the Truman and the Johnson Library, I mean the funeral. I don't have 'em engraved or anything but I'm proud of that.

Yeah, that's great that you have those, sir. That's really neat. So when you got out of the service, then I guess you decide to retire there in San Antonio?

Glenn Hoffman: Well, we got orders to Germany. I haven't reached my retirement yet, and, of course, Germany would have been good but we already was stationed there, so the career manglement people said, "I need an answer by in the morning." So I talked to Lillian and she said, "Well, if that's where we need to go, let's go." And so I picked up the phone and called my management officer in the Pentagon. A guy in the office there had orders for Hawaii, and he said, "I'll be thinking about you." And so I told the career officer, I said, "Well, we accept it if Hawaii." Okay, it's Germany. "Oh, you want to go to Hawaii?" I said, "We just got an opening." So we went to Hawaii, the whole family, for four years.

Oh, that's great.

Glenn Hoffman: On CENPAC staff. It was a great job, James, 'cause I got to go to the Orient probably a dozen times.

That's excellent.

Glenn Hoffman: Workshops and conferences and everything. And then came back to the Defense Language Institute English Language Center, at Lackland Air Force Base, and that's where I wound up my last five years.

That's great, and what year did you retire, sir?

Glenn Hoffman: In '83.

Eighty-three.

Glenn Hoffman: Yeah, and Lackland dedicated one of their Air Force basic training parades in Lill's and my honor, even played Army tunes with their drum and bugle corps, and let me have the VIP stand for my friends. So, what a send-off, golly.

That's great. That is great. Well, sir, it's great to be able to hear these stories from you and to record this. I don't know. I think I might have mentioned to you the other day when we spoke but here at the Land Office, we have archives that go back to the 1700s. We have the original registro that Stephen F. Austin kept of the settlers who came to Texas, and we have the land grant that David Crockett's widow received after he was killed at the Alamo. So our goal is to take these interviews and save those in that archive, save them for posterity. So we're going to send you copies of this interview on CDs along with a letter and certificate from Commissioner Patterson. It's just a small token of the State of Texas' way of saying thank you to you for your service to our nation.

Glenn Hoffman: Thank you so much. I really appreciate it very much. This is quite an honor.

Oh, it's an honor for us, sir. And I'm really glad that, I believe it was Lieutenant Colonel Donatucci, was that his rank?

Glenn Hoffman: Say again please, sir.

Mr. Donatucci, I forget what his rank . . . Was he a lieutenant colonel?

Glenn Hoffman: Yeah, lieutenant colonel, uh-huh.

Lieutenant Colonel Donatucci putting me in touch with you, that's how we find veterans to interview. He said, "You need to call this gentleman." And so I'm glad we were able to do that, and it's been our honor to interview you today, sir. So I really appreciate it.

Glenn Hoffman: Well, I just feel so honored and, of course, my brother who was in World War II on the battleship Alabama, we looked up to his military service so much. When you came from that, he knew Admiral Byrd, and Admiral Byrd tried to get him to reenlist in the Navy to explore the South Pole but he turned it down, and, like me, wanted to come back to Texas.

Yes sir. I've seen that Alabama. I've not toured it but I've driven right past it there in Mobile, Alabama, sitting right there.

Glenn Hoffman: Yeah, yeah, he was a navigator. He steered that thing during World War II most of the time.

That's great, and I think Bob Feller was on that ship.

Glenn Hoffman: That's right. They knew each other.

Yeah, I'm a huge baseball fan, and I've read Bob Feller's autobiography, and remember him being very proud of that service.

Glenn Hoffman: Oh my gosh, yeah.

He wrote about the Alabama.

Glenn Hoffman: My brother, Adolf, joined the senior men's baseball league at age 80, and he's 91 now and he's played up through 90. Last year they won the world series out there at Phoenix.

That's great.

Glenn Hoffman: So he's really into sports right now but he kind of hurt his shoulder. He's had to lay off for a bit.

That's good stuff, excellent. Well, sir, again, I want to just thank you. It's been our honor. You have my number as well so please call me anytime for anything, and then in about a week or two, be looking in the mail and hopefully we'll have the package of the CDs and everything to you by then.

Glenn Hoffman: Thank you so much, Mr. Crabtree. We just appreciate what you and the Land Office is doing. I've played one of your interviews already, just great.

Oh, good. And if you know anybody in Texas that's a veteran that you think we should interview, please let me know because that's how we find them really. It's about 95 percent of it is word of mouth and people contacting us.

Glenn Hoffman: Since my brother is a World War II veteran, he has breakfast with a group of 'em here once a month. My brother invites me every time so every time we go I try to sit down next to one of the different veterans and say, "What did you do in World War II?"

We'd love to talk to all of them if we can.

Glenn Hoffman: Oh, I tell you. It's great. Okay, sir.

All right, sir. Take care and we'll talk to you soon.

Glenn Hoffman: Mighty fine, and thanks again.

Yes sir. Thank you. Bye-bye.

Glenn Hoffman: You bet. Goodbye.