

Oral History Interview with Larry Wallace, Jr., June 24th, 2020.

Telephone interview conducted by Monica Brown.

Voice of Veterans Oral History Collection,

Texas Veterans Land Board/Texas General Land Office.

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Wallace Jr., Larry

CPT - Army
Iraq/Afghanistan

Biography of narrator: Larry Wallace Jr., a native Texan, served over 18 years of service in the U.S. Army. He started as a private and rose to the ranks of Captain before retiring in 2017. In his last assignment, Dr. Wallace was the Deputy Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command. He has co-authored a book called the Transition: Preparing for Financial Combat and is currently the Mayor of Manor, Texas the nation's seventh fastest-growing city.

The transcript's corresponding audio is available in .mp3 format through Voices of Veterans at <https://voicesofveterans.org/oral-history/assets/wallace/larry-wallace-6-25-20-interview.mp3>.

The audio's length is 58 minutes and 40 seconds.

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Transcription: Larry Wallace, Jr.

Today is June 24th, 2020. My name is Monica Brown and today I'm going to be interviewing Mr. Larry Wallace. This interview is being conducted via telephone. I'm in Austin, Texas. Mr. Wallace is at his home in Manor, Texas. This interview is being conducted in support of the Texas Veterans Land Board Voices of Veterans oral history program. Sir, thank you so much for taking the time to talk to us today. It is an honor for us.

My first question is: Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Born in Corpus Christi, Texas. March 20, 1980.

And sir what were your parents' names?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I was adopted at birth, so I was adopted by Mary and Larry Wallace. And, uh, found out about or got connected with my adoptive parents during my second deployment. Their names are John Hallowell and Judy Heslop.

Did you try to reach out to find your biological parents or did they come looking for you?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No, it was a closed record so, of course, when I got about 8 or so, read the letter that my birth mom had wrote. You want to know where you come from; brothers and sisters, that type of thing. I was a single child and as usual, your parents usually somewhat concerned about you trying to figure out those types of things. They came around. My mother is a radiation therapist and just happened to be someone she was working on or doing therapy on happen to be one of those private investigators and was able to find out the information.

Oh, that's great. Where did you attend high school?

Larry Wallace Jr.: L. D. Bell [High School] over in Hurst, Texas.

What year did you graduate?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I graduated in 1998.

What did you do after high school? Did you attend college, or did you join the service?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I was actually accepted into University of North Texas down in Denton. I did not believe I had the aptitude for a four-year university, so I ended up going to North Lake Junior College [now Dallas College North Lake Campus] out in Irving, Texas. I was a red shirt playing basketball. I had dreams of a career doing that; worked at Papadeauxs off of I-30 in Arlington. [While] watching the NCAA final four realized that everybody can jump, shoot, and dribble. And like a smart kid, I decided to drop out of college and my father probably a week or two afterwards inquired if I dropped out of college. I told him yes. He said, "alright you've got four options: Army, Navy, Air Force or Marines."

And so, you chose the Army?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Well not initially. I chose the Air Force. I wanted to be wanted to be one of those paratroopers. Combat paratroopers. I did all the swimming and practicing and so forth at the YMCA. I did the test. I passed it, but I had horrible eyesight, so I did not hear back from the Air Force. The Army was willing to give me a waiver and so I went ahead and did everything I needed to do in the Army and waited. I had a family reunion up in Pennsylvania around that

time. So, I basically said If I don't hear anything back from the Air Force by the time I get back, I'll sign and join the Army, which I initially did as a 14 Tango Patriot Missile launcher. Got back home and my Dad was upset. Took me right back down to the MEPS [Military Entrance Processing Station] and that's when I switched over to what I actually became, which is a 42 Alpha Human Resources.

And why was your father so upset? He didn't want you to be a missile launcher?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Parents sometimes know things more than you right? My dad was drafted for Vietnam. That's how I ended up getting adopted cause he was stationed at Fort Sam Houston. He really kinda looked at it as what are you going to do after the military with a 14 Tango? I got caught up into the shooting rockets and that fancy stuff, but he says, "so what is your plan afterwards?" With human resources or with some sort of administrative job, you will always be able to find or be able to go work somewhere because that is going to be needed or utilized.

Yes, sir. That's good advice. Before we get off to your training: where were you when 9/11 happened?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I was in Hawaii stationed at Schofield Barracks with 556 Personnel Services Battalion. I was there as, I believe, at that time, I was probably a records clerk.

You sign up for the Army. Where do they send you to go to boot camp?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Fort Jackson. I went to Fort Jackson, did all my training at Fort Jackson as a human resources person.

What did you think about boot camp?

Larry Wallace Jr.: It was different. I went there when they said no snow ever happens and we go snowed on. I got to experience running in the snow. Got the experience of being yelled at. Back then, they still did wall counseling, wall-to-wall counseling; a more firm hand, so to say. But we were mixed with the males and females. Plus, the base is totally different. It is different even when I was a drill sergeant over at Fort Sill where you have the one side that's training and the other side that's a regular permanent party before Jackson is mixed. It was different, but interesting.

Do you remember what kind of weapons they trained you on?

Larry Wallace Jr.: The M-1, you have the grenade launcher, the machine gun, the traditional that every other soldier goes through.

Yes, sir. Now do you remember any incidents that occurred while you were at boot camp? Did anyone get injured?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No, nobody necessarily got injured. People did stupid things as we mostly did. We had one person I remember during advanced individuals training jumped out the second door window using the buffer machine's power cord.

[laughs]

Larry Wallace Jr.: Alright. So, we had things like that, that went on. We had different fights that went on. Always someone playing dice or playing spades or whatever, when they got the opportunity.

How long is boot camp for?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Boot camp was for 9 weeks.

And then you did your training for human resources there at Fort Jackson also.

Larry Wallace Jr.: Correct.

And how long was that training for?

Larry Wallace Jr.: That training was for maybe 8 weeks.

What did they teach you in your advanced training school?

Larry Wallace Jr.: A lot of hard stuff which is this: how fast can you type? We did a lot of typing, practicing, reading stuff and being able to type at the same time. A lot of control F find within regulations. They may have taught more, but that is the only thing I really remember from advanced training.

Yes, sir. Where do you go for your first duty station?

Larry Wallace Jr.: My first duty station was with the 25th Infantry Division over in Hawaii, Schofield Barracks. I lived in a J quad.

That's pretty nice that you got to go to Hawaii for your first duty station.

Larry Wallace Jr.: It was nice until they had us running on the beach and running up hills and...didn't think I was going to see the water from having to run the beach.

Yes, sir. What was your actual job duty while you were there?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I switched over into a lot of different areas; so 556 Personnel Services Battalion. We don't have those anymore now in the military. They've restructured. But at that time the Personnel Services Battalion was the HR arm for the 2-star, so to say. Supported all the brigades, battalions, and so forth; records maintenance, evaluations, actions, all that type of stuff. When I got there, I was a records clerk for DIVARTY [Division Artillery] and a couple of organizations. From there I switched over to the customer service area updating people's records. From there we did life insurance for every month. Units would come in and get their life insurance paperwork updated and uploaded. Then I switched over to be the promotions board NCOIC [Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge]. Doing the filtering of who was eligible based off the new memorandum. Reaching out and coordinating throughout all of the United States Army Hawaii to make sure everybody came in to review their records; updated them. Then I sent them up. Before I left out of there, serving both roles as far as promotions as well as the customer service area as the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge doing that stuff.

How long did you stay in Hawaii for?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Hawaii? I stayed my whole enlistment term. I had four years, so the whole four minus the basic and advanced training.

You finished your four years. Did you re-enlist?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes, a little tricky there. I got promoted to Sergeant. I got demoted the next day through an unfortunate DUI. My battalion commander at the time is now the Army's U1 Lieutenant General Tom Seamands. I got promoted. The day of my promotion was on a Saturday which the promotion regs [regulations] says Monday through Friday is actual days of promotion. They came to me and said, "you are in a gray area, because there is a zero-tolerance for NCOs we are not going to promote you. Otherwise, you're going to get a fill grade, article 15." So basically, I didn't get promoted. That changed my whole life. Up until that time I was very cocky. I was all about getting the awards, getting the training, getting...being better than the next person; never really signed up to go to college and that made me realize I probably need to do some things differently. Started going to school. Thought I was going to re-enlist and stay on active duty. But that really got me thinking about going to college and what else am I going to do because very quickly everything you'd done in the military could be gone. So, I got out and went into the Reserves. I went to college at the University of Texas at Arlington.

How long did you stay in the Reserves for?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I stayed in the Reserves for four years. I got to the University of Texas at Arlington on academic probation. I went into ROTC there. We realized very quickly because I was prior service that first year or two was not beneficial for me to be there. I came back in my Junior year. I was with a drill sergeant unit out in Grand Prairie. The second 354th Field Artillery Regiment, and going through drill sergeant school while also in ROTC and got my drill sergeant hat. Did some time down at Fort Sill for annual training while also finishing up college. Then once I got commissioned, I ended up taking over the drill sergeant candidate battery for the mid-cities areas: Dallas, Fort Worth, Hurst, Euless, Bedford.

When did you get commissioned?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I got commissioned in 2005. I got my drill sergeant hat in 2004.

Tell me about being a drill instructor.

Larry Wallace Jr.: Being a drill instructor was very different. Out of all the positions I've served in, whether it has been a non-commissioned officer, whether it's been a commissioned officer, whether it's been a command or some type of informal leadership position. Drill sergeant is probably that one time that, back then, you could say anything. Because it was your job to make people... redevelop them to be able to go into circumstances that you don't know. They could go into combat. They could never go into combat, but you had to built them up in a way to where you almost had to disregard being nice and polite.

Where did you do your drill instructing at?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I did it down at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. It was an OSUT, [One Station Unit Training] a one stop unit. Infantry people, they did their basic and advanced right there.

How long did you do this for?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I did it for about a year.

Tell me the difference for you first being enlisted and then becoming an officer.

Larry Wallace Jr.: It took me about three years once I got commissioned to really figure that one out. A lot of it was how you engage and operate. As a Second Lieutenant, I still had the mentality of a Staff Sergeant. Still directing and telling soldiers what was wrong, what was right, how they're supposed to do it, and guiding and mentoring them right down in the dirt with them. Whereas as an officer it was, well that's my E-5's job, that's my Staff Sergeant's job, that's my E-7's job. Giving them the ability and empowering them to do the job; do it wrong... even if it is wrong and then coming back and talking with them on how to do it better next time.

Which did you prefer?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Initially on, I preferred my way. This is because I was successful doing it that way, right? Any time you are the most junior person and respected by the seniors; anytime you the junior person in senior positions because you are getting the job done and they like that and respect that and they give you a little bit of direct authority on how to do things, you learn that is the right way. And so, when you have to shift into a new environment; a new role which says that's no longer your job to be the go-to person. Your job now is to oversee bigger plans, bigger roles and responsibilities in mentoring your leaders, or grooming your leaders to operate the way you would want them to operate.

After Fort Sill where do you end up going?

Larry Wallace Jr.: After Fort Sill, Oklahoma, I end up submitting in an active duty packet to go back on active duty. By that time, I had finished up my first master's and was having a hard time finding a full-time job and so I filled it out, submitted it in. Both of my former battalion commanders were gate commanders at this time. Again, Lieutenant General Seamands was one, the other one was Colonel David Jones who was the first PERSCOM, personnel commands deputy commander. He is no longer around. I told them I had submitted my packet to go back on active duty and they put in recommendations. I got the call in 2007 that I got selected to come back on active duty. I packed up and I went over to Germany. Colonel Jones said, "Hey, Larry, I need a platoon leader to deploy into south Iraq to take over some post offices. I want to throw your name in the hat." I said, "Sir, you helped me get back on active duty so wherever you need me." Within four months of getting to Germany, I deployed to southern Iraq.

That would have been in 2007.

Larry Wallace Jr.: That is 2007, yes, right when they switched from doing 12-month rotations to 15-month rotations.

Tell me what did you think when you first go to Iraq?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Really didn't have any conclusion of what to think. I mean, when I got the notice, we were going to deploy we did not know exactly where; we did not exactly what role in postal services we were going to do. My team was put together from three different locations that had never met each other before. So, I was more focused on training for the unknown. And then when we got there still just really trying to keep the team from galvanizing themselves.

Right. And getting everything set up. What was the weather like when you first go there?

Larry Wallace Jr.: It wasn't too hot. Probably up in the 80s and so forth, but I don't recall it necessarily being too hot. I also recall there was no grass. That kinda stuck out more than

anything. Plus, we didn't really...other than just doing the initial training when you get on ground. There wasn't that much going on as far as staying out in the heat and what not.

Was your unit a combat support unit?

Larry Wallace Jr.: It was a Personnel Services Platoon. We deployed out of the...I forget which unit we deployed out of. We deployed out of that unit but attached to other units. We were augmentees, so to say.

What were your living conditions like over there?

Larry Wallace Jr.: The tents; that's initially what we had were tents. The big group tents. All the males were in one tent. After we then got established, we were just waiting to move into our pods.

How many soldiers are in a pod?

Larry Wallace Jr.: The pods that I had were two-person pods. It was made and you put the dressers that put our clothes in to give us space in between so I was in a two-person pod for a while before I was able to, fortunately, get my own pod.

Since you were an officer at this point, were you in charge of a lot of soldiers?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Not necessarily. It was different. For a platoon you are supposed to have roughly about 21 soldiers. I had about 17. Because I was in charge of all of southern Iraq's post offices, meaning, Camp Bucca, Iskandariya, Basra, and I end up taking over FOB [Forward Operating Base] Kalsu. I got stretched real thin and back then Kelly, Brown, & Root...I was the only platoon person that had oversight of about eight Kelly, Brown, & Root employees before they took over most of those types of processes for the military.

You were running the post offices just like incoming mail, outgoing mail to the soldiers and sending out their letters to their families and then packages arriving for them?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Correct. Doing all of that and also coordinating mail to be either flown or through convoy to our outlying locations and rodeo areas.

Did you have to possess a weapon while you were doing this?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Of course, of course. When we are at our home station, and the same thing with my other soldiers that were at the district locations. When they were at their home station, they were able to have their weapons locked up, but definitely whenever it was time to do any type of traveling, had to have the weapon on them.

And what kind of weapon was that?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I had the 9 mm, plus I also had the M-1. The rest of the soldiers had their regular weapon.

Do you remember any incidents happening when you were over there? You said you were there for a total of 15 months.

Larry Wallace Jr.: Right. Definitely a lot of different incoming that occurred. You know we had one incoming time and it tore up all of the tents that were right next to our post office. Could have been a little bit closer or any one of us could have been potentially walking back from the

chow hall during that time. You know, could have gotten hit with shrapnel. Definitely when we are flying because flying in and out of Camp Bucca, you can only fly in and out on a Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. Just because of the distance and so forth. But because of that distance a lot of banking a lot of flares being shot. A lot of different types of opportunities that could occur because we're right next to the largest detainee center, which was Basra. The whole row right there at Camp Bucca was MPs that were rotating to do security at Camp Bucca and Basra.

That has to be somewhat frightening.

Larry Wallace Jr.: To a certain degree. We were there; we knew what was going on. We knew that Camp Bucca and Basra had 4-star eyes on it; had DOD eyes on it. But it was also at the same time leadership tried to protect us from hearing all the stuff that was going on. Every now and then we would get a trickle of information. Sometimes you would just get accustomed to the incoming and outgoing.

Yes, sir. Did you ever keep a journal while you were there?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No, I did not.

Were you married at the time when you were there for your first deployment?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No, I was not married; had a girlfriend at the time who ended up being my wife. But no.

Since you work for the post office, I am assuming that you corresponded with your family, your soon to be wife, and your friends.

Larry Wallace Jr.: I did, but I did more so by telephone. Not really a writing person. Maybe by emails back then. It was more emails; they had the phone cards. They gave you 4500 minutes. It was more doing it that way.

They have USO shows now. Were you able to see one while you were there or was it in different places?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I only recall one where we were at, at Camp Bucca. We only had one. I can't remember who it was. I only remember on making it out my way.

You come back; do you go back to Germany? Is it what now by the late-2008, early 2009?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes. I am getting ready to come back. My tour is almost over. The end of 2008 going into 9, or 2009. I said, "Hey, you know, I wouldn't mind staying out here and doing another tour." I also know that the deployment cycles determine where you go for your next assignment. I put a call in to HRC, Human Resources Command, and "Hey, I wouldn't mind staying out here and doing a double tour." They came back and said, "we have an infantry organization 172nd Infantry Brigade. They need a battalion S-1 with the 228 Infantry and they're getting ready to deploy so once you get back, you'll just jump in with them. They are currently in the field training. You'll be with them for about thirty days to two months before they turn right back around and deploy." So that's what I did. When we got back from my first deployment; took a couple days leave. Drove down to Gräfenberg from Bamberg, Germany. Jumped in...went into the field for thirty days with the infantry.

The 172nd was in Germany as well?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes. Down in Gräfenberg.

Then you turn around and do the thirty-day training and then you go right back over?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes, the thirty-day training in the field. I think they were already in the field for a while. I jumped in, did that for thirty days, and then it was prepping for the next thirty days and then we deployed. We went to FOB Kalsu. One of the locations that I had soldiers at providing postal services.

Is it the same kind of living conditions there for you?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Somewhat. Pods again, by that time FOB Kalsu was a little bit more developed. Early on when we were there when I was a platoon leader, it wasn't developed. It was more tents and no lights. You couldn't see anything. The incoming and outgoing was designating by "superman" as the outgoing; "juggernaut" as incoming. By this time, there were lights; things were reinforced, and they had pods. I stayed in a pod.

Were you doing the same thing?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No, this time I was human resources battalion S-1. Managing the leave. Managing the R&R, the rest and recuperation program. The awards process; filing all the purple hearts, action badges. Managing and tracking where everybody was going. Because with the infantry unit; by this time they went from doing the fighting to doing the training along side with the Iraqi forces and the others. This was also when the brigade ended up taking over the division's footprint. My battalion took over the brigade's footprint and I became the administrative and logistics commander because we had to split into three different entities to be able to manage that bigger footprint. In addition to that, served as the funds operating officer for our local area there and we didn't have an education center so I also served as an adjunct professor for a junior college, central Texas college as well as a proctor for five different colleges so people could be able to take testing and as a battle captain as well since we needed to assistance to assist our HHC [Headquarters and headquarters company] commander.

What does a battle captain do?

Larry Wallace Jr.: As a battle captain... for my role as the battle captain, it was more or less being the personnel person who was there to make it more simplified as far as where our people were at, where they were going, how they were supposed to be coming back since I already have the track the movement of all 1200 people out of the 34 different units allocated to us. So, it was really just flattening the communication system.

Goodness. You mentioned managing R&R and awards and purple hearts. Did you ever go on R&R while you were in Iraq?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes, everybody did. Back then, it was 18 days for my first deployment because of the 15 months and I think it was 12 or 15 days during my second deployment, so everybody did, even our battalion commander.

Where did you go?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Back home to go see Mom and Dad and the girlfriend.

Did you guys get hit a lot at that base as well?

Larry Wallace Jr.: That one, by that time there was a lot...it was significantly different in stress level as far as incoming and outgoing. I don't know if it was just a thing that they were getting them or counteracting them before they got closer to where you could hear them or not. My biggest stressors then were doing more convoys. We had the big MRAPs. Not the tanks but the big armored vehicles because our battalion commander and executive team were at a different location because of the bigger footprint, I had to do more convoy.

When you did convoys were you guys ever hit?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No. Fortunately not.

Were you ever injured?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No. No, I was not.

What do you think and feel about you experiences once you left Iraq?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I, of course, enjoyed all of the experiences because they are different. A different level of thinking, a different level of environment and situational awareness in operating, right? A lot of that has filtered over into the things that I do now and how I operate. What really matters more than other things; when you, potentially, could be losing your life, or you have to make a decision to take care of someone else over yourself. I would also have to say that I was fortunate to never have to see someone die or lose a close friend. But I did have the unfortunate job to read all the incidents and to have to process them. I also had to assist in the memorials and so forth. I also had to serve as a sounding board and a shoulder to lean on to some of my peers; where the ones did lose their lives were their soldiers. That part did hit, you know...

Yes, sir. Most definitely. So that tour was 15 months as well?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No, that one was the original 12 months.

Do you go back to Germany and stay with the 172nd?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Right when I get back from Germany and about a week after we do our reintegration, I fly off to the Captain's course down in Fort Jackson.

So back where you started.

Larry Wallace Jr.: Back where I started. I did the Captain's course for about 5 months and they said, "Hey, since you did 27 months deployed back to back, you got first pick." I said "so what are the options?" I don't like any of them. They have something for NATO and by the time I decided I wanted to go to NATO listed, that was no longer available. Then sooner or later my branch manager finally called me back and said, "Hey, something just came up with NATO. You'll be at the brigade level serving and working in the G section but it's going to lead to a command position because they are not too happy with the person that is in command right now." I said "okay" and I went back to Germany kicking and screaming because I did not get to experience Germany the first time when I was deployed; the whole time. I got there and my second time in Germany I loved it. I was with NATO. I served as a deputy G2/G3. When I left that position in a couple of months to take command of the National Support Element for the

Land Commander, they split my position as a deputy G2/G3 into two positions. That must mean... I take it as a compliment that I must have done a great job in that position before I left. The company that took over, Bravo Company, Allied Forces North Battalion, was the National Support Element so I had it as not only just taking care of the Army soldiers under the US Army NATO brigade but also asked through the NATO lens to take care of all armed service members. So, we had a 3-star that was in charge of the NATO Land Command. We had the Air Command that was down in Kaiserslautern that was ran by a 4-star and I had about 120 soldiers mixed between Army, Air Force, and Navy. I had one Marine at the time. I had Colonels and Lieutenant...I had six Colonels. I had a lot, a whole bunch of Lieutenant Colonels, a whole bunch of Master Sergeants, a Sergeant Major and I was a Captain.

Wonderful. What did you think about being in charge there?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Being in charge was interesting and it built upon the unique experience that I got when I was with 172nd. The disperse locations, having to track and manage everybody who had different responsibilities, different needs, because of where they are at. But then also the similar needs of what I'm supposed to provide. The different egos, right? Because of the different ranks and different things. I had the same thing when I got to NATO. I had a 3-star that I had to support. I had Colonels, Lieutenant Colonels, Master Sergeants, people that had already been Battalion Commanders or Battalion Sergeant Majors and I'm supposed to be their company commander. You know how that goes over. They're in different locations. They're in Germany, they're in France, they're in different places; seven different locations, three different countries for 120 people that serve three to four different NATO entities. Having to learn... and I had a Chief Master Sergeant from the Air Force that said, "Hey, recommend you learn how we operate in our organizations, our units, and figure out how you need to work within that versus trying to make Army happen in a NATO environment." That is one of the smartest things he told me that made me successful to turn around that organization. Instead of amongst one of the worst out of 10 companies to one of the best.

Wonderful. So you are there for how long?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I was supposed to be in command for two years; I did almost three. I did 33 months because that is when Germany and NATO did its restructuring. Germany did the base realignments and NATO also did an organizational restructure. I ended up staying and deactivating my company support in assisting with the closure of Mannheim and Heidelberg.

What is this, about this 2013 or so?

Larry Wallace Jr.: That was 2013. My wife was pregnant with our twins and I did not get a chance to be able to partake in my deactivation ceremony because my wife had a flight date. We flew over to Fort Bragg, North Carolina where I was assigned with the USAOC, the US Army Operations Command. Got there and they said, "Hey man, we love you. You've done some great things. We need you to go over to the US Army Special Operations Aviation Command. We just stood them up three years ago and they need a deputy G-1 and with your experience from NATO and all these other organizations"...because the G1 as USASOAC at that time had been with NATO. So, she said, "You are exactly know how to deal with the different entities and the different things that have to be worked out with a new organization that there is not another one like it." I said, "Great." So, I walked across the street and reported to my new job.

Can you tell me a little bit about what your day to day was like?

Larry Wallace Jr.: At USAOC or USASOAC I served as the...they call it the deputy G1 because I was the next highest-ranking officer. Although we did have Mr. Hopkins who was the actual deputy G1 civilian. I was the HR plans and operations officer. I managed everything. You know most civilians are usually...even though they are deputy, they are the continuity piece. Our SOAC was...the level of people we had, the G1 only stayed for one year before they got picked up and promoted to go somewhere else. That is a high level of turnover, but the high level of people that were coming into that organization that I served with. It was putting in the systems; tracking systems, operating systems while at the same time when I was the HR plans operations person that is also when they came down and said, "Hey, the formerly combat positions restricted to [from] females are now open," our SOAC was the first organization to build a tracking system because we were the pilot. Most people think of the Rangers but no, actually I had to create the tracking pipeline for females coming in to the Green Platoon which is the assessment; going through the assessment phase, going through Green Platoon which was the training phase; once they graduate that, then they go to one of the battalions within the Special Operations Aviation Regiment, the 160th. I had to create that tracking pipeline because we had to report who was selected, who didn't make it, why, why they went to certain battalions up to the Department of Defense. That was almost similar to when I was in NATO they repealed "Don't ask, don't, tell" phase 1, 2, and 3 indoctrination of that new repeal of the policy.

Did you finish your career there at Fort Bragg?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes, I did. They decided to phase out my role as a deputy G1 over the HR plans operations officer and swing me over to be the secretary of general staff. They needed assistants to make sure the executive team could stay up and out and not have to get in to the down and in, day to day stuff. I had to create that position, the role responsibility of it which was the gaps filler then right before I retired, I also served as their alternate aide-de-camp to give our aide-de-camp's some additional time off because he'd just had some kids and was also serving as the executive officer to USASOAC because we were the only aviation rotary-wing asset within all of SOCOM [Special Operations Command]. I served as executive officer to them and I retired out with my last year as the deputy chief of staff. My boss had retired just right before I did, and I got some there.

The rank when you left the service, you were a Captain?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes, so that makes it amazing. How in the world does an AG Human Resources 03 serve as deputy chief of staff for a special operations aviation organization?

You spent 19 years in the service. What was your motivating factor that kept you in the military?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Early on, I put time in and I don't want to lose that time. That is why I went into the Reserves. Then it was it looks like it is easier to become an officer through ROTC versus trying to go through West Point, trying to do Green to Gold and compete with a bigger crowd. And then it was I wanted to do command. From there it went to, I wanted to do my eye surgery, which is what I did when I got to Fort Bragg. Then, it was like I have already hit the milestone here I might as well finish it out. The goal always changed.

Yes, sir. What medals, and citations and awards did you receive?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I got about 21 certificates of appreciation throughout my whole time. I got four or five Meritorious Unit Commendations from the back to back deployments. Through that, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal. I got the drill sergeant badge, air assault, airborne. I think I have five or six AAMs [Army Achievement Medal], about two ARCOMs [Army Commendation Medal], Meritorious Service Medal. And a slew of other things.

Do you keep in touch with any of the soldiers that you served with?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I do stay in touch with some more than others. Recently, I've been staying in touch with one of my E-7s. He is now a first sergeant within the Syracuse MEPS. He's been asking for me to provide some assistance and guidance and some of the training that they are doing there. More or less, most of them, I usually communicate through Facebook or whatnot, maybe sometimes through LinkedIn. We all kind of follow each other.

Yes, sir. Did you join a veteran's organization at all?

Larry Wallace Jr.: Post-military, you mean? I did a lot of things in the veterans space. When I first got out, I was executive-in-residence of an organization called VETTED, which was focused at trying to say [that] it doesn't matter what education, it doesn't matter what service branch, it doesn't matter what rank...we all have skills and so there is the executive residence trying to help promote that and we had a first class that went through the University of Texas at Austin. Forty individuals. I was one of them that were people of different diversities to highlight and show it isn't just about rank when it comes to service members capabilities. From there I worked at UT System under Major General Tony Cucolo as the director of veterans' support and leadership programs overseeing all things veteran for the 15 different campuses. That is when I had created the veterans leadership task force. That was comprised of middle level leaders who were the veteran leads within the different state commissions: Health and Human Services, Veterans, Workforce Commission, etc. That organization is now chartered with the VA as a Community Veterans Engagement Board. I chair that. I was also very active with Texas Veterans Commission Coordinating Council for Veteran Services while I was at UT System. I was asked to submit my name in to become an advisory committee member for their Employment and Training Advisory Committee. I did that for about two years.

When you got out of the service, did you also go back to school?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I was in school the whole time. I got my first master's while I was still in the Reserves. When I went back on active duty I was with Northcentral University where I am [on] their advisory committee... their school of business professional advisory committee. I was doing the MBA on the way to getting my doctorate. I got my MBA during my second deployment and the whole decade left I was working on my doctorate. I got my doctorate...I was working on my doctorate even in Special Operations. I got my doctorate right before...right after I got out. I got it here in 2019. January. I had retired June of 2017.

Congratulations. I also saw where you were an assistant professor.

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes, when I left, or when the Veterans Department got disbanded by the new chancellor, I was filling out different applications and the Dean of Business, Dr. Steven Edmond reached out and said, "Hey, I would love to have you because of your vast experience, work history. We are creating an MBA program. I would love for you to be the architect in launching this." I was there for about a year during my contract. Unfortunately, I had to resign

from that position due to the Covid-19 situation and me serving as Mayor for the City of Manor, which is the 7th fastest growing suburb; top 20th best small suburbs to live in America. My focus was needed here based upon my obligation to take care of this community.

Did you know you wanted to run for Mayor at some point?

Larry Wallace Jr.: No, not really. When I got out it was just trying to understand this new environment I'm in. My assumed success from military service was reading all the regulations. Even when I became an officer my First Sergeant sat me down and said, "You need to read all of the operation regulations." In every unit I went into. That was the first thing I did I read all their policies and procedures and so for. So, I had a basis of how to operate. I didn't have that coming out here into this civilian sector. I brought my wife and kids to this environment. And it was like, "did I make the right choice? Did I make the right decision?" As I started making my network of friends to lean on or advisors, so to say. Most of them said, "Hey, if you really want to get to know how to understand how a city works, planning and zoning is the place to go." I submitted my name to fill a slot on the planning and zoning commission here. I got appointed by city council. Then the next year there was a position open for city council. I asked them if I had to resign from planning and zoning to run for city council. They said no. So, I said, "I have nothing to lose." I put my name in. I ended up winning city council and I did city council for about 9 months before I stepped down to run for Mayor. The only reason I ran for Mayor was because there was an open seat and where we needed to go this decade because of the growth and because of the status of the City of Manor. I would be a hypocrite if I'm saying doing this to make my city better. I'm doing this to make the environment that my family and kids are in better. If I sat in this warm and cozy seat for another year and keep doing what I'm doing and know I could get re-elected but then I'm also looking at this new Mayor that's there and complaining about what they're doing. So, I said, I can't have that double-standard. I need to at least offer my services to the community, and so I did, and I end up winning.

Nice. What year did you become Mayor?

Larry Wallace Jr.: I became Mayor, November 2019. I became the first African American mayor for my city. Back filling the first Hispanic female mayor for the city.

Tell me what it is like being Mayor of Manor.

Larry Wallace Jr.: Honestly, it is like being in the military all over again. It's fun. Because you get to dive into a lot of different things. Not just the business side, not just the regular day to day administrative side, but also the livelihood of the people you are supposed to be assisting. You can get into education. You can get into businesses. You can get into non-profit stuff. You can get into housing developments. It is a wide range of things to be able to do, to learn about, to figure out how to make better, enhance so that it almost feels like being back in the military when it was, 'how do I change the worst staff section to the best staff section' when I was with the infantry or 'the worst company to the best company' when I was with NATO. Or 'how do I make this unit that for 17 people from three different locations that don't even know each other or respect each other work as a team' when I was a platoon leader.

I also saw that you co-authored a book called, "The Transition: Preparing for Financial Combat?"

Larry Wallace Jr.: Yes, my old boss when I was with Special Operations; my actual Chief of Staff. He reached out to me and said, "Hey, I got an idea about a book. I would love for you to help me co-write it." I said, "Hey, I've been doing all this stuff in this space, the veterans space with UT System and all that. I said definitely." We wrote it together. We think one of the most successful things about it was we wrote it in a way that we are not talking from a subject matter expertise area. Like most books. What we're doing is 'I wish I would have known this' or 'why didn't I find out about this earlier' tidbits and saying, 'think about this' and 'now that you have that idea in your head, there are probably more things you could think about. Now go find those things out' right? So, the first 70 pages is nothing but straightforward, easy to read, tidbits. If you are going to do interviews on... video interviews, make sure you have enough lighting, make sure you plan for Murphy's Law. If you are going to do face-to-face interviews, make sure your not wearing the competition's colors, or have something on that hints towards the competition of that person, or that business right? Those subtle things. The last 70 pages is nothing but an annex of resources, whether it's entrepreneurship, whether it's firms, whether it's trades, vocational, break down all the different DI [Disability Insurance] benefits. It is that kind of almanac where people say, "I didn't know all that stuff was out there" and "when they said it to me like a fire hose there in my retirement phase or during my transition phase out, I didn't really get it, I didn't really understand it and when I try to research it myself, it's all over the place." At least here it is consolidated. It's not a book that tells you how to save money. It is a book that says how you operate and navigate by preparing yourself for your transition and how you think about things the same ways you prepared for that new unit, the same ways your prepared for that new job, the same ways you did the research to be successful at that next phase in the military. It is that same vigor you are going to have to do. The difference is there are systems already in place that we're accustomed to in the military [and] you have treat those systems to be successful in the civilian sector. This book more or less, gives the correlating aspects for you to be able to build those systems and that mentality from. Because every good and bad decision you make has a financial implication. The difference between the hard book and the electronic book, the electronic book has the hyperlinks to everything that is in the book.

What message or advice would you like leave for future generations that will hear this interview?

Larry Wallace Jr.: The advice is: take every opportunity whether good or bad as a learning experience because you never know. When you finally transition out into the civilian sector, one of the successful things you can do is be able to put people in boxes based upon the experiences you had to overcome in the military. Unlike the civilian sector [where] you can just quit, or leave, or be fired. In the military, you have to deal with it and you always have to be on. And on, meaning, you always have a new boss coming in, you always have a new peer coming in, you always have a new subordinate coming in, so you can never get complacent on demonstrating your technical and professional expertise. How you dealt with those individuals to be successful for your evaluation, for the schoolings you wanted, for the awards, for the promotions, for the next assignment, those are the very same tools you're going to have to use to be successful in the civilian sector.

Yes, sir. Good advice. Now is there anything else you would like to add to your interview or something I may not have asked or a certain situation or memory you would like to share with us?

Larry Wallace Jr.: The biggest thing for me is: I never had it easy when it came to the jobs. I think that is one of the unique sayings that has probably helped me during this time as Mayor in

one of the most unfortunate tragedies of Covid-19 plus the social injustice reform right now. The military was definitely a place when I didn't know who I was, when I was trying to get out of the shadow of my parents who were great individuals that were respected by people. I had to prove myself in the military. They didn't know what my name or anything like that meant. Because I had those hard times. Because I had those uphill battles. Because I had those people that didn't want to see you succeed. Because I had the people that brown-nose and got the awards or the write-ups more than me as a silent professional. All those things, although I didn't go as far as I wanted to in my military career, those things have propelled me to where I am now in my civilian career.

Yes, sir. I really appreciate you taking the time and sharing your story with us.

Larry Wallace Jr.: Appreciate it. Thank you.

Thank you, sir. You have a good day. It has been an honor to speak with you. And on behalf of Commissioner Bush and the Texas Veterans Land Board, we appreciate you taking the time and telling us your story.