

Interviewer: Well first if I could just get you to say your name and your birthday.

Slayton: Okay my name of Aaron Marian Slayton I was born July 5, 1935.

Interviewer: Okay and where were you born at?

Slayton: I was born at a place that doesn't exist anymore Cottonwood Point Missouri in Scoot County Missouri.

Interviewer: Okay what were your parents what were their names?

Slayton: My father's name was Shelby Slayton my mother's name was Minnie Elizabeth Slayton.

Interviewer: What kind of jobs did they do?

Slayton: My mother was a homemaker she raised 11 children. My father was at my earliest memory was a cotton farmer then he went to St. Louis and stayed there several years he worked in factories.

Interviewer: Was that based on like the depression did he leave looking for work?

Slayton: WWII was sent him. My mother came from Tennessee and my father came from Missouri. And my father's family originally was from Dickson County Tennessee. I didn't know that until I came here and I started doing a little research and I found out that well my great great grandfather was the one who lived in Dickson County. He sold the land at Slayton Tennessee and his name was Slayton at that time. And there's a town in Montgomery County right across the line that is named Marion. And his middle name was Marian he was Frances Marian Slayton but he lived in Tennessee.

Interviewer: So he owned a lot of land?

Slayton: No he didn't own any land.

Interviewer: Really it was just a

Slayton: He left Tennessee right after that and he moved across the river. In those days the law couldn't pursue you to another state and so that's how I came and I guess my brothers and sisters came to be born in Missouri.

Interviewer: Well what do you remember about your childhood? Do you remember anything that may have been a cause or affected by the depression and the WWII?

Slayton: Depression I didn't know there was a depression until I was grown because we lived my recollections were of living on a farm.

Interviewer: So ya'll were just kind of raising what you needed?

Slayton: Yes and yeh we always had plenty to eat and we had one team of horses and two teams of mules and everybody else did too and that's how you went places. I think in the first I remember my father having a car was I believe it was about 1942 or 1943. Now other people had cars of course and

the first two schools I went to were one room schools. And the first one burned down and the second one was at the first station. And of course all of the schools were segregated at that time.

Interviewer: Of course

Slayton: And I oh I remember my father telling me about when they drained the land in that part of Missouri it was a swamp and that's why he ended up there because after he was grown and got a job with WPA or I think one of those government agencies. Because he was born in Sikeston Missouri which is up higher and further north it's near the New Mandarin Fault. I grew up there and I got snatched out of that rural area and woke up one morning in St. Louis Missouri lost. I had no idea about

Interviewer: Big change

Slayton: Yeh and so but the thing I noticed was most everybody moved around a lot in those days.

Interviewer: Following work maybe?

Slayton: Yeh or looking for better work that paid better.

Interviewer: What did your dad do that moved him to like what job did he get in St. Louis that

Slayton: He well he had a brother who had lived in St. Louis I guess since back in the 20s sometimes. And my uncle was a street car conductor and he told my dad that things were moving in St. Louis so he went to see and sure enough they were.

Interviewer: Did he start being a street car or

Slayton: No he went to the American Car Foundry which made railroad cars. And he had several jobs I didn't pay much attention to his jobs. But every time he changed jobs he got more money and so he did pretty well I believe for himself. And of course as I said he had a lot of sons.

Interviewer: Were they all sons?

Slayton: No tow girls and nine boys I was the youngest boy.

Interviewer: Well I know you were young during WWII do you have any recollection of big events maybe Pearl Harbor or the bomb or D-Day?

Slayton: Sure I remember the announcement in Pearl Harbor. We had a radio that had a battery didn't have electricity of course. And my father listened to the news once a day and when the announcement came over we were sitting out in an old wrecked car I don't even know what kind of car it was us young ones played you know and the older boys came out and said they bombed Pearl Harbor. And hell I had no idea what Pearl Harbor was or where.

Interviewer: You just knew somebody bombed it?

Slayton: Yeh and of course and I'm getting ahead of myself but when I think of WWII I remember the Italian POWs that came to the little town where we lived.

Interviewer: There are a lot of stories about POWs around.

Slayton: Well they went to movies on Saturday and all of the people complained because all of the Italian POWs were showing up to the movies.

Interviewer: Seemed like they were having a good time when they should be

Slayton: Well they worked in our school lunchroom.

Interviewer: Really

Slayton: Yeh and it was kind of neat later on I had an opportunity to compare German POWs to German POWs and I can see why there was a lot of hard feelings between the Germans and the Italians. And I tend not to take things too seriously because it doesn't pay because things change so often. And yesterdays enemies are today's friends so if you're not flexible you get caught in that trap.

Interviewer: Well so you remember Pearl Harbor and what about the bomb being dropped you remember hearing about that?

Slayton: Oh I remember that very well but let's start a little earlier. They had just put in electrical wiring in the house we lived in before Pearl Harbor. And they put the poles up and strung the wires and after Pearl Harbor they came back took down the poles took the wires down and opened an air base about 40 miles from where we lived at Malden Missouri.

Interviewer: Did all of that go to that base?

Slayton: Yeh it sure did and we didn't have electricity until after WWII.

Interviewer: That's sacrifice for the war right there.

Slayton: Sure and had a brother who had an old car and he found out how to start it on gasoline and then switch it over to kerosene because you could buy kerosene if you had ration stamps and you had a tractor. And things to that nature and there was my father was also a butcher was the neighborhood butcher. He killed hogs for people and of course that helped out around there.

Interviewer: Were these hogs you raised yourself?

Slayton: Yeh and I remember when the federal folks came and counted all of the hogs and said how many we could kill and how many we had to let the government buy. And there are many things in that time period that have a strange look to them like socialism or some other group effort where the state owns everything even though you have it you cannot do with it as you please.

Interviewer: But it seemed interesting at that time that everybody kind of relinquished control everybody didn't mind it as much.

Slayton: No nobody minded and god yeh we everybody little kids collected scrap iron and paper and yeh and of course my father started planting a lot of vegetables because those were scarce too. And all of a sudden all of the men were gone.

Interviewer: Were any of you brothers involved they were older than you so?

Slayton: Yeh I had one, two I think it may have been two brothers I don't remember I remember the one because he was closest to my age and still old enough. He went into the Merchant Marine and he used to go from the East Coast to Merman's Krishna all during the Second World War. Yeh he he's the one I remember the most because he would actually talk because when you're the youngest kid

Interviewer: You kind of get looked over?

Slayton: Yeh nobody wants to talk to ya.

Interviewer: I'm the baby too so I guess

Slayton: Yeh and so I had several uncles well I had one uncle no a cousin who was at Pearl Harbor he had just gone into the Navy he volunteered. And he was at Pearl Harbor and as a matter of fact he may still be alive. He had an interesting career he used to come home about once a year and there again he was one of them that would take a little time with me you know and tell me about the places he had been. And I don't know I got that wonder lust and so yeh when I was very small I went to school and the constant change in that time period it seems like and of course it might have been my age had a lot to do with it. And ended up as I say in St. Louis and there were people there I could hardly understand the English they spoke and they didn't like us folks that they called strange names. Because we weren't well they called us hillbillies and I never saw a hill until I went to St. Louis. Because if you've ever been to South East Missouri it's flat as a pancake and so yeh it the part that I lived in was where three segments three populations came together. There were what I learned later called different names there were the Shanty Irish who had been in St. Louis I guess from the 1800s then there were the Italians who were well I think of the Italians and I have to think of Joe Geragio when he was young then there were the Syrians. Strange group of people got mixed together there.

Interviewer: Interesting bunch

Slayton: It was and the city hospital was closed the saloons were closed they had bath houses and for three cents you could get a shower and for a nickel you could go swimming on Saturday in the inside pool and things of that nature. I pretty well I believe I pretty well learned how the world worked in St. Louis because I had never seen a lot of the things. I was so amazed and big eyed and I would stand sometimes and just watch because there were street cars you know and buses. And these cars would come you know flying down the road and they were all paved.

Interviewer: I guess where you came from everything was dirt.

Slayton: Dirt or gravel yeh that was it and so the WWII era in St. Louis was a real real eye opener for me. And of course that's again in school we collected paper and we collected scrap iron well everybody did

and everybody was happy to so it and we called our enemies by nasty names yeh. And you know the Germans had names and the Japanese had names and so yeh that period of my life and every time you turned around they were selling war bonds and the patriotic thing was to buy war bonds. And stamps you could buy ten cent stamps and when you got a book full of stamps I think they had I think I didn't know they had series at that time I think it was a war bond and when you got \$10 worth of those ten cent stamps you could get a war bond. And yeh its and I watched I used to sneak around at night in the summer time it was so hot you couldn't sleep you didn't have air conditioning nobody had air conditioning. And watch those factories going at night and that was really neat they were building barges they were building I believe they built some tanks in St. Louis as I recall it. There again I don't think they were heavy tanks they were light tanks and you had to had to if you were going into a factory you had to have someone there that knew you to get into a factory. And they had what they call the small arms plant there I have no idea what they did there but by the time the war was over I had no interest. But yeh St. Louis was a neat place and as I say I came from that backwoods place into civilization and my god I soaked up stuff I got so I would read every opportunity I ever got. But I had teachers who encouraged it and I don't know why and I started asking a lot of questions and I found out if you ask the right questions people don't mind giving you answers.

Interviewer: Well did you complete school did you graduate from high school?

Slayton: No I didn't as a matter of fact.

Interviewer: What was your last grade you completed?

Slayton: Continuously I went into the ninth grade. I now have a master's degree. But at that time I didn't feel that I fit in because I had to go back to South East Missouri from St. Louis after the war was over and I didn't fit in there either.

Interviewer: Well getting closer to your Korean War experience what led you to join into the service?

Slayton: Two or three things I suppose. One was I didn't fit in because I had been in St. Louis too long and when I got back to those little towns where they was suspicious if you checked out more than one book at the library. And I had radical ideas in the 9th grade I won a contest for the whole high school for general knowledge and research and I got the hell whipped out of me several times for that by guys who thought they should have won. But researched well and I did by then I had organized my thoughts well enough that I could state objectives and then go back as Mark Twain always said I will tell you what I am going to tell you I will tell you then I will tell you what I told you. I had that one down pat and as I said I didn't fit in so by the time this was after the war ended. Now the thing that ended the war I remember that day we skipped over that. We thought we had been attacked or something because all of the firehouse sirens went off when they dropped the nuke. And they cranked that ole siren out and of course everyone went to the firehouse the general store and everywhere and they found out they had dropped the nuke and that the war would probably be over in a week or two.

Interviewer: Was that the first one? The first bomb they dropped?

Slayton: Yeh and of course I guess my whole life is kind of strung together as you'll see as this unfolds. And yeh and when they dropped the second when it was over and we got out of school for the first one and it was in August as I recall. And when they dropped the second one we didn't get out of school and by then they were trying to estimate when the war would be over. And the Second World War was a thing and that second the official announcement came all the airplanes from the Malden air force base flew over in formations just kept flying around and around because the war had ended. And by that time they had a bomber training base about 40 miles from there in Arkansas at Bidville Arkansas and everybody was flying around. And so then there was that period where my father decided we should go back to St. Louis again after the war had ended because they were going to let him go ahead and finish up all of the things they were doing in the war. And the company he worked for happened to also be involved in civilian manufacturing so we were one of the good ones he didn't get laid off so he took us all back to St. Louis again and there it was again. And I was in the 9th grade and I just gave up on school I said the hell with it and went back to St. Louis and things didn't turn out well for me at in St. Louis that time. Because I had well I had changed my attitude because I had gotten some self confidence when I moved back down to the country. And when I got back to St. Louis again I saw that my father didn't believe in high education and he wanted me to go to work when I was 15 and didn't want to go to work. And so things didn't go well I decided I needed to go somewhere else. So I had a sister that lived down at that place where I keep telling you I went back to in South East Missouri Edna. I went and stayed with her and that's for the sake of being the only white chicken in the black flock of chickens happened. And by then I had just turned 16 and I decided I had to go somewhere else then the folks in that little area there there was an Army National Guard unit and of course it was peace time then and they needed people to fill out the ranks. And they said tell you what we can do for you and I will not tell you because of the machine but I ended up in the Army National Guard when I was 16. And the Korean War started and everyone was activated at that National Guard unit and I had taken infantry basic training in the Army National Guard then I confessed to my part. And I had a choice I was not old enough to be in the Army National Guard they said okay we'll make a deal with you. Your going to be old enough to legally get into the military after we are activated if you will enlist when you get legal we will count the time that you were in when you weren't legal. Well I went ahead and did that but I had already been through army basic and I had a brother that had gone in the Army Air Force and he bent my ear about how much easier the Air Force was than the Army. So I went down to you know fulfill my bargain in the basement of the courthouse there was Army and Air Force and Marine and Navy recruiter there. And I just casually mentioned to this Army recruiter the Air Force didn't even have a recruiter there. I said I'd sure like to get in the Air Force if I could he said well it could happen he said everybody's doing this everybody needs people. So I signed up for the Air Force and this friend of mine who went wanted to go in the Navy well they hood wiggled him in a way and a way they didn't because they said tell you what we'll put you into the Navy but if you want to fly you have to get into the Marines and he got into the Marines.

Interviewer: Did you have any interest in flying or anything before you went or you just?

Slayton: I had no interest.

Interviewer: You just thought it might be the easier way out with one of your friends?

Slayton: Well I always thought airplanes were neat but you know what the hell I just wanted to get away from where I was. And I thought about it later and as a matter of fact while I was in basic training in the Air Force they selected me to go to control tower operator school and I didn't make it there I didn't even make it through Keister Air Force Base. I right diverted myself before I got there.

Interviewer: Where did you do your basic training?

Slayton: At Lakeland Air Force Base and that was during the Korean War build up. And hell we didn't get uniforms for two weeks after we got there and we lived in pup tents for two weeks. And we finally got into a barracks and we got uniforms and it was a mess. We didn't know who was supposed to do what or where or how and every so often they would just send a group out. And I found out later they had sent some of them to California and some to up state New York Samson Air Force Base and Marks Air Force Base because they had too many people at Lakeland. And yeh I took basic training that's all I took because I had an army MOS in my file by that time for crew serve weapons and they figured I didn't need to go to school for anything.

Interviewer: Did you do any kind of specialty or anything did you?

Slayton: In the Air Force I had three different specialties. In the United States I was with law enforcement except certain bases in the United States. And when I was overseas I was always assigned to a unit that had crew serve weapons. Which is nothing more than a fire team anything from 50 caliber machine gun to a 75 millimeter rifle to a mortar and so that's how that happened. And so the Air Force was neat it was the Air Force never interfered with anything I ever wanted to do I don't think as far as I could tell. And they allowed me access to anything I wanted just about any time I wanted and god if you had a question there would be some civilian who could talk two hours on the answer. And that was so neat and but I got sucked in as usual and I did go to Korea I think at the time perhaps some just experimenting but then I think now that's stupid in the end they screwed around with everybody. Because when I got to Korea

Interviewer: When was this?

Slayton: Okay 1952 I went in in 51

Interviewer: So you were doing basic training in 51?

Slayton: Yeh and in 52 I went to Korea well I spent 6 months in Wichita Air Force Base Walton Municipal Airport. Because at that time the Air Force was building they didn't have anything to speak of.

Interviewer: Well at the beginning of the war the Korean War there were a lot of rumors about not a lot of rumors a lot of stories about out of date weapons and a lot of things that were left from WWII.

Slayton: Had trucks that had wooden steering wheels.

Interviewer: And you remember a lot of that?

Slayton: Yeh god yes some of that ole rattle trap junk we had for equipment. We wore WWII coveralls instead of regular BDUs they call them now. Yeh one piece coveralls the Air Force did.

Interviewer: Did ya'll have a lot of planes left over that ya'll were

Slayton: Oh we had P51s P82s C46s of god some of those T6 we had a lot of those T6 Texans those were 1930s trainers.

Interviewer: So there was very few things that you had that were really new or

Slayton: Right until I got to Wichita Kansas. Now the Boyd airplane company was there and that's why the Air Force was at Wichita Municipal Airport initially. Except the B46 that was the first jet bomber you know we had except for the B45 which wasn't worth a damn. That was slower than a B26 but it was a jet fighter bomber.

Interviewer: What was your job at in Wichita?

Slayton: In Wichita nobody knew what we were supposed to do there again we were just opening an airbase.

Interviewer: It kind of felt like ya'll were just moving around just

Slayton: Well we kept people from stealing stuff we made sure that all accidents were reported. It was kind of like policemen or night watchmen or security guards. They were called air police in those days.

Interviewer: Just around the base?

Slayton: Yeh and everybody wore class A uniforms unless you were on flying status. Yeh or you were an aircraft maintenance man.

Interviewer: Were ya'll kept up to date on what was going on in Korea?

Slayton: Had no idea had no idea because we had half of the base was air reserve and half was regular air force. And we had to guard the reserve space with their OT6s and they had P51s and T33s the jet trainer. And we had to guard those we saw no reason to guard them so guess what. We didn't commit ourselves 100 percent to those roles. And it was just as well of course we used to watch airplanes crash when they'd take because I think three B47s crashed. They were still getting the kinks out of the bomber.

Interviewer: So a lot of Wichita a lot of it was a kind of training?

Slayton: Yeh it was training strictly training.

Interviewer: And testing the bowing things and

Slayton: Yeh and then all of a sudden had to go to Korea.

Interviewer: So when did they tell you that you or that your unit

Slayton: After about six months.

Interviewer: About six months was the still in 52 or was that in 53?

Slayton: 52 and I got to Korea and just in time to go into an air depot wing and that was another new innovation that the air force had come up with. It had many names it was on the coast of Korea at Shinhan which is south as far south as you can go in Korea. Then we had detachments that went out from there.

Interviewer: So what was your job when you got to Korea what were you doing? Were you still doing the kind of policing thing or?

Slayton: Then they said no here's is a half track with four 50 caliber machine guns mounted on it on an electric toric that's yours. Because I had a weapon MOS Military Occupation Skill and so yeh the North Koreans or the Chinese I don't remember who it was had an ole Yack propeller driven airplane that would come over every evening just before sundown and drop hand grenades out. And I was the antiaircraft gun and hell you know he'd throw his hand grenades on the runway and then you know he would bank as sharp as he could back in the hills and leave. So it really wasn't much to do there. And then they said well okay these guys are not doing anything down there by the water and there were only 24 of us in that little unit down there. So they said we're going to let you see Korea so they farmed us out to different units.

Interviewer: So they split your entire unit up into

Slayton: Yeh and I had an opportunity to work with the Australians had an opportunity to work with the British. And I had somewhat of an opportunity to work with the Korean military and at one time I even helped guard the president of South Korea Sigmund Reed and he didn't impress me too much.

Interviewer: Every time you got moved were you still doing your MOS?

Slayton: This kind of thing because of that army MOS that I had I the air force said we've only got about 60 or 70 of you guys in the whole air force that know about crew serve weapons. And the rest of them all they know if 45 pistols and carbams that all the air force training they had. So it started getting neat when I left Korea. And I went from Korea to Walker Air Force Base.

Interviewer: After the Korean War was over?

Slayton: Well I was there when it was over and then after it was over.

Interviewer: Well your in Korea let's talk about this a little bit more.

Slayton: Sure

Interviewer: You were doing the MOS were you kind of guarding still? They were giving you the guns and saying this is the base?

Slayton: Then they put us on trains and they tried us on trains to see how that would work. It worked real well unless you were going through a tunnel or something. And all the Korean trains were steam engines coal fire steam engines and the ones that I rode on we only came under fire actual fire once. And that was near Suwon south of Suwon between Tahu and Suwon and come to find out it was a renegade South Korean army.

Interviewer: It wasn't actually it wasn't the North Koreans?

Slayton: Well they were shooting at us Yeh but it wasn't

Interviewer: Hey but it wasn't the enemy you had though

Slayton: We thought it was it was an enemy but wasn't the ones we thought it was.

Interviewer: So that was the really kind of armed battle you were apart of?

Slayton: Yeh at that time the air force didn't get involved in battles. We always tried to have some army unit close by.

Interviewer: Now were you ever involved when the air force had planes going up on mission or anything?

Slayton: Oh god yes.

Interviewer: What were your duties if they were running night raids or bombing what would you do then?

Slayton: The closest unit to the base I was at was a B26 unit 17th bomb wing and they mostly carried a bomb. And they flew night and day and they flew a lot of night missions mostly night missions I guess. But in the daytime they also did they weren't they couldn't carry a lot of bombs. They had a lot of automatic weapons on board. I think they had probably 16 weapons I think all of them forward facing on a B26. And they had a gunner and I think a three man crew and sometimes I think they had four men crew. But these folks yeh there were three squadrons of them and they were good air planes and they were well adapted to use against people. Now the B29s came from Japan or from Yukota Air Base and now they were high altitude air planes. They dropped their bombs way they usually flew way north of the 38th parallel and dropped their bombs. Then of course the navy would come along and screw a few things up no really they did well. And I was stationed with a marine unit in Mason Korea for awhile and they I found out that the marines do not do anything unless they have orders to do it.

Interviewer: Kind of like sit and wait kind of thing?

Slayton: Yeh and if you get incoming fire if somebody doesn't give you permission you don't shoot back. And that bothered me and I tried never to get stationed with the marines again.

Interviewer: Now if you would if you would describe like a normal day when you were there like what getting up and?

Slayton: Mostly work nights that's the first thing when the sun went down we went out. We also had military working dogs and that's one of the things that I did I had a military working dog. And if you did that you had a little different job you formed a perimeter and then the other folks got inside the perimeter.

Interviewer: Now what were these dogs trained to do?

Slayton: They were attack dogs.

Interviewer: And were you in command were you saying go get that person kind of thing?

Slayton: Yeh that's the only military working dog it was that kind of thing it has to not bite until it's told to bite. It's not allowed to leap up on somebody and bite them in the face or wherever it is they want to bite until they are told to. That's a military working dog and they also detection dogs. They could hear things and smell things you know that would let you know that somebody was there outside of your perimeter.

Interviewer: So did you kind of watch the dog as much as you watch you're

Slayton: Yeh that's all you did

Interviewer: Wait for their ears to perk up maybe and

Slayton: Yeh and the body to tense and sure yeh that was a neat job. And we had a concept we had two people assigned to each dog each one had half the night and of course the other one slept while he was off of his shift. And yeh it was really neat that working dog thing and we the air force tried a lot of things in Korea. IN fact the air force tried a lot of things every where they went as a matter of fact everybody especially the 101st knows that the air force got the M16s before they ever even saw one. I had to do that. But anyhow back to that we yeh the Korea War was kind of fun got throwed out of Japan while I was there on R&R we got threw off of the base. Because we were radicals we went as a group there were 12 of us went together and we went to Tachikawa Japan and they after three days they cut our seven day R&R short.

Interviewer: Were you too wild?

Slayton: I'm afraid so because that was another thing about the air force and I guess the air force still has that county concept. Is that they allow a guy to make as many decisions as he's capable of under as many different circumstances as possible without hurting anybody else. And but you have to pay for it the army kind of eases you into decision making the air force promotes you puts you in a slot and says there you screw up we'll put you back where you were. As a matter fact our fearless leader General Lemay is famous for that.

Interviewer: Drawing people

Slayton: Put them in charge and say run it the way I want it run or I'll come back and put you back where you were. And may a Coronel had to go back to where he was.

Interviewer: Well what rank did you obtain by the end of your

Slayton: Why hell I, I have to explain that too.

Interviewer: Okay

Slayton: I re-enlisted when I hit 20 years and I got assigned to Goose Bay Lab

Interviewer: Now was that after the Korean War?

Slayton: That was way after the Korean War.

Interviewer: So let's finish the Korean War. Is there anything else you want to add any experiences that you had?

Slayton: Oh God there was so many the fun part didn't start until after the Korean War. And then ended up in Vietnam and then ended up in all those other places and oh my God kept running into air borne people and army people well paratroopers everywhere I went. And there's not much to say I guess except

Interviewer: Were you there at the end when troops got pulled out of at the end of the Korean War?

Slayton: No

Interviewer: You left before then?

Slayton: Yeh as a matter of fact I yeh and as I look back I think of all the different little segments that happened and God that was miserable getting back to the United States. Hell we got to Korea in 12 days it took us 18 days to get back. I came back with the 173rd regimental combat team and we had to go to Okinawa and then up to the great circle by Alaska and freeze and then down to Seattle to Fort Lewis. Oh God as I said they got us to these places in a hurry but they were slow bringing us back.

Interviewer: Looking back what is your overall perception and attitude about the Korean War after enlisting being there how do you feel maybe like the way it was run the politics of it things like that?

Slayton: The politics of Korea weren't much different than the politics of Vietnam they weren't much different than the politics of any other monument of war.

Interviewer: So you felt like it was not the best interest in going?

Slayton: It was something that we thought was a good thing at the time and well dog on it I don't really like to get into politics when it comes to military and politics.

Interviewer: I understand

Slayton: Because you're not seeing the whole picture when you're in the military no matter how much piazzas you get you don't see the whole things. You don't get to see the mind of the folks you don't know what all of the resources are you don't know what so many different things are. And I think that

military people shouldn't make political decisions. I think General MacArthur made that mistake and I think President Truman did the appropriate thing when he relieved him and I think any time a military man you asserts politicians prerogative he should be called a task. Now I firmly believe that I can't under any circumstances see how a military man knows what's best for the United States he has no idea a military man has no idea what's good for the United States. He knows what's good for the troops under his command he knows what's favorable for the advancement of his career and things of that nature.

Interviewer: Do you think MacArthur might have been taken a little too much

Slayton: He was an aristocratic military person from another era who outlasted his era. He came from the First World War the Second World War hierarchy of our military. And you know there was a MacArthur in the Spanish American War there was a First World War Second World War and when Korea came he thought he could walk on water.

Interviewer: He was untouchable the decisions he made should have been golden maybe?

Slayton: Yeh and he didn't believe President Truman was smart enough to wage the war and he wasn't that's what the military's for is to wage the war not. The President sets the policy for the war.

Interviewer: They were crossing over a little too much trying to do the politics and

Slayton: Yeh MacArthur was trying to get into the political arena and that didn't suit the president.

Interviewer: Well do you think the president was trying to kind of get in on the military side of things?

Slayton: Well you see he followed Roosevelt and he had to establish his reputation of course. And MacArthur established his reputation that's all it did and that's all there is to that. I had the good fortune to shake hands with Harry Truman once when I was about that tall.

Interviewer: Really

Slayton: Yeh in that country place when he was in Missouri yeh and yeh me and this other little kid got shoved up to the limousine and he got out and shook hands with both of us and got back in the limousine and went on about his can't I forget what year it was 48 maybe.

Interviewer: That's pretty interesting.

Slayton: Yeh but I had no recollection of what he looked like or anything. I remember much better what JFK looked like because I was closer to JFK than I was Harry Truman.

Interviewer: Well do you remember a lot of things maybe your fellow soldiers and air force did they have a lot of grumblings about the war maybe there weren't happy about it or?

Slayton: I don't think no not during the Korean War that didn't happen until Vietnam.

Interviewer: Of course everyone was coming off the high maybe of WWII where the whole country had come together and now there in this war that is not as appeasing.

Slayton: And we didn't want to call it a war.

Interviewer: A conflict?

Slayton: Yeh and we were trying to limit who our enemies were. And we didn't want to have to cut back on civilian good production and that went on for a long tie and even during Vietnam we had that problem. The equipment we got to Vietnam with was worn out when we got there. Yeh and nobody wanted to say hey we need that equipment same thing that happened in Iraq. The same thing that happened in Yugoslavia no matter where you went and of course that's the way life is. In a democracy you're not always prepared for a war that's why we call our citizen soldiers minute men. You know

Interviewer: Got to be ready?

Slayton: Yeh sure well kind of ready there's two kinds of ready and hell Americans are supposed to be sloppy and slip shot. And I've seen enough foreign military people, people who can goose step real well people who can click their heels and you can hear them clicking for a half a mile and they can't think. That's the advantage Americans have nobody can stratify our mind and channel it in one small direction. An American fighting man will not give up his right to think. Now you may lead him and convince him that your way is as good or better than his but you will not make him to it your way. You can't do it it's not in the American military man to do that. And I've seen that too many times in too many places and at times we may loose more people but in the long run original thinking has won many a battle many a war for the United States and I'm all for it. I've known I remember working with the Italian military and there's another example they do what they're told precisely what they're told. The South American armies they do exactly what they're told when their told and only that. If they're told to go ten kilometers and stop they will measure that ten kilometers and they will stop. It doesn't make a damn if the enemy is running a hundred miles and are trying to get away they will not go any further.

Interviewer: Talking about other armies you said you got to work with the South Korean Army.

Slayton: Yeh

Interviewer: Did you feel that they were happy that you were there or they felt like you were kind of prying maybe?

Slayton: The South Korean army was tickled to death that we were there. We were doing most of their fighting and there again I had an opportunity to work with the South Korean army in Vietnam and they were a lot better in Vietnam than they were in Korea.

Interviewer: Do you think they benefited a lot from American influence?

Slayton: Yes yes indeed because they were as I said they were like the Japanese army during the Korean War. And by the time they got to Vietnam they were like the American army. They would argue with you if they thought a decision you made was wrong they wouldn't have done that in Korea because the officer would have hit them right in the mouth and make them stand at attention and hit them in the

mouth again. And that's not right the Japanese did that for years and years to their soldiers and the Koreans too.

Interviewer: So the two armies could work well side by side?

Slayton: Sure I when I was in Vietnam I tried to always stay behind the white horse division because they were a bunch of criminals' malcontents but they were mean as a snake and they knew how the Americans fought. And we could go with them in fact every once in awhile we would kill a water buffalo because they weren't allowed to and we'd give it to them to barbeque then we would chare it. Yeh but then I remember one other morning we looked out in the rice patties and it looked like a bunch of scarecrows out there and it wasn't it was BC hanging out on crosses. Because you know the Koreans are Christians they hung the BC and crosses out on the rice patties. And they are very good

Interviewer: So overall just like a brief thing of how you kind of feel about your Korean War experience.

Slayton: I didn't much care for Korea in some ways I didn't like living in a tent I didn't like getting soaking wet I didn't like cold but I had fun a lot of times.

Interviewer: Did you feel like your friend that told you it was a whole lot easier was right or?

Slayton: No because the guys in the Army Guard Division were sort of the 45th division and hell they were about 30 miles from where I was the only difference was in the winter time I was able to requisition two sleeping bags and they could only get one. And yeh and I always made sure that I got my case of beer every ten days and didn't cost anything. And I was always able to hitch a ride to a house of ill repute. And the navy had a club now they didn't allow anything but beer cans for mixed drinks because the guys kept throwing the glasses at each other and hurting each other with them. And it was a quarter for a mixed drink that was the difference the army guys didn't have that and we had we had sand about six inches deep in the bottom of our tent. And the guys in the army didn't have that and that was the same in Vietnam as it was in Korea. The army never changes and the air force had several sayings and one was do things for people not to them. And I think the other services are starting to kind of realize that too you get a lot more out of people if you do things for them.