

**Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
Research Center**

Transcript of an

Oral History Interview with

LAWRENCE R. MOTZER, JR.

Security Forces Officer, U.S. Air Force, Vietnam War

2011

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**Motzer Jr., Lawrence R.,** (b.1952). Oral History Interview, 2011.

Approximate length: 1 hour 40 minutes

*Contact WVM Research Center for access to original recording.*

**Abstract:**

Lawrence R. Motzer, Jr. an Eau Claire, Wisconsin native discusses his service during the Vietnam War as a security forces officer in the Air Force as well as his experience returning home, and his career in the military which took him to Germany, Guam and Korea. Motzer enlisted in the Air Force in his senior year of high school and went to basic training in 1971. He comments on his father's service in World War II and his patriotism as reasons for joining. Motzer describes his first impressions of Vietnam, the living and working conditions on the base at Cam Ranh Bay, and his assignment as base security guard. He discusses substance abuse, particularly heroin, by other service members and the effects that it had on them. Motzer mentions temporary duty assignments at different bases in Vietnam including Tan Son Nhut Airbase in Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City), experiences of going off-base, and seeing exchanges of North and South Vietnamese prisoners. He talks returning to Wisconsin at the end of his tour and from there being assigned to Whiteman Air Force Base. Motzer describes his various tours of duty in Germany, Guam and Korea before being discharged in 1988. He returned to Eau Claire the same year and briefly talks about his life since leaving the military. Motzer reflects on the lasting impacts of his time in service and carrying coins that indicate his veteran status. Lastly he talks about attending LZ Lambeau: Welcoming Home Wisconsin's Vietnam Veterans weekend, in 2010.

**Biographical Sketch:**

Lawrence R. Motzer, Jr. (b.1952) enlisted in the Air Force in 1971 and served as a security forces officer during the Vietnam War. He served seventeen years on active duty in the U.S., Germany, Guam and Korea, and was discharged in 1988.

Interviewed by Ellen Bowers Healy, 2011

Transcribed by Alison Hyde, 2014

Reviewed by Helen Gibb, 2015

Abstract written by Helen Gibb, 2016

**Interview Transcript:**

[Tape 1, Side A]

Motzer: [inaudible] Larry Motzer, 2011.

[Break in recording]

Healy: Okay. Thanks. This interview is with Larry Motzer who served in the United States Air Force during Vietnam and for about seventeen years. This interview is being conducted at his home at the following address: [REDACTED] Eau Claire, Wisconsin on November 4, 2011. The interviewer is Ellen B. Healy. Okay. Tell me a little bit about your background and life circumstances before you entered the military. When were you born?

Motzer: I was born August 29, 1952.

Healy: And what's your hometown?

Motzer: My hometown is Eau Claire, Wisconsin. I was raised on the east side of town where I entered grade school in 1958. Original grade school was first through eighth grade. This was Black School in Seymour Township, Eau Claire, Wisconsin. I attended junior high at North High School in Eau Claire, and after my freshman year I moved to the south side of town where I graduated from Memorial High School in 1971. In my Christmas break of my senior year in high school I enlisted in the United States Air Force. Once I graduated, second of June, 1971, I entered basic training—second of June, 1971.

Healy: Okay. Let me just interrupt you a little bit before you get into your military service. Tell me a little bit about your family.

Motzer: My father was a gentleman who worked outside the—was the foreman on the mink farm where they raised domesticated mink for furs. He had done this from the time I was born until I was outta high school. He retired off of a mink farm while I was in the military.

Healy: Okay. And your mother?

Motzer: My mom died in 1973, two months after I returned from Vietnam, at age 40 from smoking related illness, so she died quite young.

Healy: And did you have brothers and sisters as you were growing up?

Motzer: I have a brother that is two years younger than I. We have a younger brother who passed away in 1986. And we have a younger sister. The younger two were ten and eleven years younger than myself, so that was basically a second family that my mom and dad raised.

Healy: And do your family live here in the Eau Claire area?

Motzer: Both my brother and my younger sister live here in Eau Claire as well.

Healy: Okay. Now you indicated that during your high school year you enlisted. Why did you decide to enlist?

Motzer: My father was a medic in the Army. He was drafted in 1944 and subsequently went to Europe after the Normandy Invasion and I felt it was my patriotic duty to enter the military. I have relatives in the Army, Navy, and Marines. I just wanted to do something different so I entered the Air Force.

Healy: Okay. Now in 1971 Vietnam was still going on.

Motzer: Yes.

Healy: And you felt it was your patriotic duty. What was the feeling, the talk, the atmosphere? What did others think about your enlisting?

Motzer: Well there was a friend of mine that was a classmate from high school. He and I entered basic training on the buddy-plan [Buddy Enlistment Program] so we had planned to go into the service. I had always wanted to get into police work through the military, but I had wanted to have a career in military so going in the military for me was, I guess an end to the means for me to serve my country. The atmosphere at the time was kind of split half and half. There were people who were protesting the war, and there were just as many people protesting against the demonstrators. And I felt I was more of a mind that I wanted to serve my country. I, you know, thought people who were demonstrating and that had the feeling that they wanted to leave the country. Well, you know, I felt that was their right but I felt they were traitors leaving our country in protest.

Healy: Okay. When you signed up, where did you go to sign up?

Motzer: I went to the federal building here in Eau Claire. It has since been turned into a historical site. It was downtown Eau Claire at the time, and then I was—I went to Minneapolis, Minnesota to go through my physical and to enlist from there.

Healy: Okay. When you enlisted did you have an open contract or did you know what you were going to do?

Motzer: No, I had an open contract. I had indicated on my enlistment that I wanted to be in—get into the military police. The Air Force it's called the Security Police, so once I complete basic I went Direct Duty Assignment to Kincheloe Air Force Base [Kinross, Michigan], I got up to Kincheoloe August 26, 1971, and by October of '71 I had received orders for Vietnam. Once I received orders from Vietnam—

Healy: Let me just—

Motzer: Yes.

Healy: Let me just slow down a little bit. You said you went Direct Duty Assignment to Kincheloe? Had you had military—Security Police training?

Motzer: No.

Healy: No.

Motzer: I was trained on the job—

Healy: All right.

Motzer: —through the OJT [On-The-Job-Training] Program. So upon working through my skill levels, I was sent back down to Lackland Air Force Base [San Antonio, Texas] in October—excuse me, November of '71 to go through two and a half weeks of combat training and familiarization with explosives and heavy weapons. I returned to my original base at Kincheloe Air Force Base and then left there January of '72 on leave and arriving Cam Ranh Bay, Vietnam March 3rd, 1972.

Healy: What was your first impression of Cam Ranh Bay?

Motzer: Mind-boggling. Cam Ranh Bay was an inlet bay, so we had water surrounding and then we were attached to the mainland in Vietnam, but it was definitely a strange place.

Healy: Strange place. Can you describe it more? Why did you say strange?

Motzer: Well, home here it was the dead of winter. Over there it was the middle of summer. Being young and not acclimated to tropical climate, I decided to walk down along the beach, because I had never seen the ocean. I got fried like a crispy critter from sunburn. In the military you can get letter of

reprimand or court-martialed for damaging government property, so you had to—I had to wear starched fatigues and it wasn't exactly pleasant but I learned my lesson real quick.

Healy: Okay. What was going in Cam Ranh Bay from a military standpoint?

Motzer: Cam Ranh Bay was a base. The Army had a helicopter company there. It was a jumping off point for Navy Seals. We had a Army and Vietnamese Navy base adjacent to the air base that—probably about the middle of April some sappers [Viet Cong or NVA Commando] come off the water and blew up a big gasoline storage tank. I was guarding our petroleum assets to miles away and was knocked on my back from the concussion from this tank going up. Then I had a front seat view to a Huey Cobra gunship working out on the hill between their base and ours for about an hour. They put on quite a light show.

Healy: Okay. For those people who are not familiar with South Vietnam and the geography, where is Cam Ranh Bay located in South Vietnam?

Motzer: Cam Ranh Bay is located approximately half way between the DM [demilitarized zone] and Saigon. It's more upper highlands adjacent to the mountains of the middle of Vietnam. It is—was a big Navy base as well as an inter-base for the Air Force. The Cam Ranh Bay area was deep enough where Navy could bring big ships in there for operations. It was later used by the Russians for the same purpose.

Healy: Okay.

Motzer: So it was vital.

Healy: Describe a little bit—well, your living situation. What type of barracks did you stay in?

Motzer: We lived in a six man barracks that we called the “hooch”, where it was separated by partitions. Six people to a hooch. I worked a permanent swing shift, which was a three to eleven shift, so after we turn in our weapons about midnight we usually went to the middle of the base where we had a movie theater and we'd watch movies for a couple hours to unwind after coming off post. One of these times that we were watching movies, when we come out of the movie theater we started to get rockets sent our way by the Viet Cong. As we were coming out of the movie theater, trying to get away from the building, we heard this high-pitched whistle. Well that's the time when you play like a gopher and try to dig in the ground, get away from shrapnel. Well once the whistle stopped everybody took off. The next morning, there was a road running in front of the movie theater, and in the middle of that road was a hundred and one

six-millimeter mortar shell that impacted on the road that was a dud. And that landed about seventy-five meters from where we were. Blast radius from something like that was six feet tall full of TNT would have wounded some of us had it went off, so we were very lucky that day.

Healy: You mentioned you were on guard duty. Your entire tour in Vietnam you were on guard duty?

Motzer: We worked base security either in a tower or on patrol. On patrol we were in a Willys Jeep, that was a four-wheel drive Jeep, that was vintage World War II and Korea. There was a driver who was the team leader and myself as a member. I had my M16. I also manned a M60 machine gun that I carried across my lap as we were on patrol. So that was a lot of firepower, but just two people we weren't gonna be doing very much if we got attacked.

Healy: What area did you patrol? How far from your main base were you?

Motzer: We were—patrolled the area that was between the beach and the jungle to the mainland. So we—it would take us probably forty-five minutes to an hour to complete a rotation around our patrol area. As a young man doing this—well the patrol leader usually was a staff sergeant, an older Air Force sergeant who had been in the service a while—two of those gentlemen that I worked with are still today very dear friends. I keep in contact with one of them who lives in Texas who retired out of the Air Force as a chief master sergeant. It's kind of interesting to—when you reflect on the friendships you make in times of stress.

Healy: Certainly. Try to paint more of a picture about what Cam Ranh Bay was in terms of your areas of responsibility. Was it military or was it—did you have civilian populous there?

Motzer: Well there was civilian populous but they were like maids that were paid by the base to clean our hooches and that sort of thing. Civilians, there were not that many. Most of the personnel, as I said, were Air Force, Army, or Navy. We didn't really interact with the Army that often because of the—they had their own base, but Cam Ranh Bay was a point of entry into Vietnam and people were sent from Vietnam out to Japan so we had influx of people on a continual basis. I, myself, flew into Da Nang when I flew from McChord Air Force Base on a DC-8, and when I arrived in Vietnam it was at Da Nang and I flew down to Cam Ranh Bay on a C-130. That is the nosiest plane I've ever seen or rode on and I've rode on a lot of 'em [laughs].

Healy: Did other people from your unit or perspective unit fly with you from Da Nang down to Cam Ranh Bay?

Motzer: No. At the time that I entered—or got to Vietnam I was the only one of the military police. There were other personnel that arrived with me on the C-130 that worked on Cam Ranh Bay, but they weren't attached to the unit that I was with.

Healy: Were they all Air Force or were they a mix?

Motzer: No they were a mix. Air Force, Army, Navy. You know, at the time, everywhere we flew, we flew in uniform, so everybody was in BDUs [battle dress uniforms].

Healy: And going back, you indicated that you joined on the Buddy System. Did you buddy go over to Vietnam?

Motzer: No he was assigned to a tech school in Mississippi where he learned to repair Hound Dog missiles that were put on the wings of B-52 Bombers. He spent almost three years in the Air Force, and then got an early out to go to pharmacy school. He is a pharmacist here in Eau Claire, and we still keep in contact.

Healy: Okay. Well tell me more about your experiences and your memories about Vietnam.

Motzer: Well Vietnam was—it was a lot fun. It was a beautiful country yet it was terrifying because we were always under rocket attacks. Two GIs that were in the partitions right next to where my partition was were heroin addicts. They'd roll out the tobacco out of a Kool cigarette and load it with heroin and this was whiter than white paper. And they'd stay gone for about sixteen hours. The—it was a white GI and a black GI. The black GI went home on emergency leave and never returned. The white guy, one night decided to get high and started shooting South Vietnamese. Our people—the Americans—apprehended him. Put him in leg irons and belly chain and handcuffs. Put him a 1-30 and flew him to Japan, and was subsequently, probably back to Leavenworth for court-martial. People that were—that stuff scared me to death. Coming from the Midwest and never experiencing anything remotely as far as drugs go, all I knew was it was bad and you didn't want to get near it.

Healy: Okay. What was—but you were apparently aware that they were heroin addicts and shooting up before they left and before they got into trouble and shipped out—

Motzer: And so did our people that we worked for, I'm sure, because I was just a young Airmen First Class and these guys were sergeants, so I'm sure



somebody knew what was going on. But I just knew I needed to stay away from it—

Healy: Did you know where the heroin came from?

Motzer: No. I had no idea. It just—

Healy: And they were Security Police also?

Motzer: Yes.

Healy: They pulled their duty?

Motzer: Apparently so. They never worked with me. They were on a different flight, which is a different shift.

Healy: Okay.

Motzer: But, you know, everybody was on a rotating—or permanent shift so there was people sleeping and people working so, I'm not sure where they worked. I just knew that [laughs]—stupid people.

Healy: You think that other folks, or you're sure that other folks around kind of knew what they were up to?

Motzer: I'm sure they had to be, 'cause this was very blatant. I had gotten off duty one day and, you know, knock on the partition and here these guys are getting ready to do this thing, I said, "See ya!" I was gone.

Healy: Okay.

Motzer: I'd rather drink a cold beer than be anywhere near anything like that.

Healey: Now you said you'd work a swing shift three to eleven? And you stayed on that shift all during your tour?

Motzer: I got to Vietnam March third and then was integrated into a flight, and then for March to May sixteenth I performed duties as a Security Policeman at Cam Ranh Bay. May sixteenth, we closed Cam Ranh Bay down and there was approximately three hundred security police, and we were split in half, put on a 131 [C-131 airplane]. One group went to Da Nang and the other half went to Saigon at Tan Son Nhut Airbase.

Healey: And where did you end up going?

Motzer: Tan Son Nhut.

Healey: Okay.

Motzer: We arrived—

Healey: So you were actually only at Cam Ranh Bay for what, two months?

Motzer: Yeah from March third to May sixteenth.

Healey: Okay and during that time you experienced these two airmen that had the heroin problem as well as saw a tanker blown up. Did you see it or did you hear it?

Motzer: Well you saw the end result. The mushroom cloud looked just like what you see in films of atomic bomb going off. It was a great big mushroom cloud that went up with a concussion. As I said, I was about two miles away and it knocked me on the ground.

Healey: Was it in port or was it still out—

Motzer: It was—well see the base was on part of the isthmus that Cam Ranh Bay was that went out into the ocean. So on the side where the Vietnamese Navy Base and Army Base was the deep port for the Navy big ships. They had POL, which we call—is petroleum, and that was their refueling facility I believe.

Healey: Okay.

Motzer: So what I was told by the Army personnel later was the sappers came in off the beach and ran through the hooches, the Army hooches, throwing satchel charges. One of the Army sergeants who was in his hooch run out of his hooch, Viet Cong knocked him over and dropped his AK-47 on the guy's chest and took off and threw satchel charges as they were going back out. This guy woke up with an AK-47 across his chest and a headache. But he was alive. That's the big thing. But it—very interesting to listen to older GIs talk about their experience or what had happened at the time.

Healey: Older GIs? That you had talked to there or since then?

Motzer: Well you know at Cam Ranh Bay because every once and a while we had Army come into our mess hall, you know, in transit or whatever for business and Air Force usually had a better mess hall than the Army or Navy unless you were on ship, you know, Navy's food was very good. I got to experience that while I was down in Saigon.

Healey: Okay. Any other thing that you want to mention about your experience at Cam Ranh Bay before we go down to Tan Son Nhut?

Motzer: Well Cam Ranh Bay was beautiful, I mean, that base was—because of where we were the Air Force had what they called a, "Daisy Cutter," which was a five-hundred pound bomb with a eight to nine foot pole on the end of it that had a detonator that shoved it down into the bomb to explode it. While I was on a sentry post, the Army brought one of those things out as they were getting ready to load it on a C-130 to clear an LZ [landing zone] for the Army. That was the biggest bomb I've ever seen, and have seen since. I mean I've worked around Air Force ordinance for quite a few years, and [laughs] that's the biggest thing I've ever seen. But that was, you know, quite an eye opening for a young man on his first duty station overseas.

Healey: You indicate that in May—May 16, 1973, that the—

Motzer: '72.

Healey: '72?

Motzer: Yeah.

Healey: That the—you left and the Air Force left Cam Ranh Bay. Was the Army still there?

Motzer: I'm sure the Army was. I didn't know because when they cleared out all the non-essential personnel on Cam Ranh Bay, those of us that were security forces were there on Cam Ranh Bay by ourselves for thirty days before we were relieved and sent elsewhere. So I'm not sure as to the disposition of the Army and other personnel.

Healey: Okay.

Motzer: We just knew we were owed out there, and left by ourselves to perform our duties. And at the time when we were doing our duties, we got a lot of rockets and we had some sappers come off the beach try to come in on the air base side as well. So we had a big fire-fight before we left. I wasn't involved in the fire-fight, but definitely you could hear it over the radio net.

Healey: Who was in charge of you at the time?

Motzer: Our flight consisted of usually either a master of sergeant or a technical sergeant, and then our commander for our squadron was a major in the Air Force. With each flight had a lieutenant, usually either a second lieutenant

or first lieutenant as the flight leader, and the flight chief was an enlisted man.

Healey: And just generally what was their experience like overall? And what I'm asking about is, was this their first time in Vietnam, too?

Motzer: I believe so. Well major who was the squadron commander was a seasoned veteran. He had been in the Air Force for many years. I'm not sure how long he had been in the service, but the lieutenants were all either from the academy [Air Force Academy] or OCS [Officer Candidate School] so they were all new troops as well.

Healey: Okay.

Motzer: Their first combat experience.

Healey: When you went over there what was your tour of duty supposed to be?

Motzer: Twelve months.

Healey: Okay. And then you said Cam Ranh Bay closed, and you headed down to Tan Son Nhut. How did you physically get down there?

Motzer: We flew on a C-130. Sitting on the deck of the C-130. That was one interesting ride, because they didn't have any jump seats for us, so we just sat with our weapons on the deck.

Healey: Have all your gear with you, too?

Motzer: Yes.

Healey: Okay.

Motzer: When we arrived in Saigon, they brought us into a cantonment area, and floated us onto some two and half ton, deuce-and-a-half's and took us to a barracks area that was separate from the rest of the base personnel or security personnel. And they—we turned in our weapons. All of us carried either a survival knife or a bayonet. We were told to turn those in, and we were reissued uniforms and weapons and were integrated into the flights for base security. So we got—it took probably about two weeks to get through all the paperwork, and be assigned to units for work, for shifts.

Healey: When you were reassigned weapons were they similar weapons or—

Motzer: Well we all carried M-16s. M-16A1s. We were issued either a survival knife or a bayonet to complement our weapons in case we needed to fix

bayonets. But most of the—by the time I got there in May I did flight duty, you know shift duty, and then approximately first part of July 1972 I was part of a group who was sent TDY—temporary duty assignment—for different assignments upcountry as we were getting ready to close down Vietnam. The negotiations for the Peace Treaty in—

[Break in recording] [End of Tape 1, Side A]

Healey: It is Tape 1, Side B. And you were talking about TDY assignments upcountry.

Motzer: They sent us upcountry to different bases. One of the bases was Phan Rang where they brought in thirteen C-5A Galaxys and offloaded seventy-two A-37 Mosquito Fighters that they were turning over to the Vietnamese Air Force.

Healey: Can you spell the name of that location? Phan—?

Motzer: Phan Rang, F-A-N-R-A-N-G. This was in the northern highlands of Vietnam.

Healey: Okay.

Motzer: It was former Army Air Force Base that they had for fighter—it was an emergency base incase fighters were damaged.

Healey: So what kind of a runway was there?

Motzer: Runway was [laughs] probably about two miles long. It was an emergency runway. It had very little as far as buildings for, you know, to handle fighters usually they would probably use a forward observer from the Air Force or the Army to bring planes in if they were damaged. But during the time we were there, these C-5A Galaxys were running while they were off-loading these planes in case we received rockets so they could depart in emergency take-off. That was long couple days of them bringing in those C-5As.

Healey: And how long were you there?

Motzer: Let's see, we were probably there I'd say about three to four days. When we traded shifts—when one shift was relieved we slept in an old fighter pilot barracks where we slept with our weapons in our room. We were armed at all times. That was quite an experience [laughs].

Healey: I should ask when you were at Cam Ranh Bay and you came off shift what did you do with your weapons?

Motzer: We would turn them into the armory that we had there that was a hardened facility with secure locks and guards. All the armorers when they were on duty were armed with a handgun and they had access to automatic weapons if they needed to. But they could close the windows where they issued the weapons and secure them so you couldn't get into the building.

Healy: And you turned in your knives, too, or bayonets?

Motzer: Nope. We carried those with us—

Healy: Okay.

Motzer: —on our harnesses. We wore a harness that went over our shoulders that attached to our web belts and we had a canteen, our knives, and then ammo pouch that we carried with us all the time.

Healy: Okay, alright. I got a little distracted from your several days up at Phan Rang—

Motzer: Well Phan Rang was, I as I said, was it was a TDY. We were sent, we were issued weapons—we weren't told where we were going until we were in the air. Usually we flew TDY with on either a C-47, which was a two-engine turbo-prop, or a C-54, which was a four-engine turbo-prop. And maximum ceiling on these planes were probably, you know, a thousand or three thousand feet so at any time we could have been shot down, because we weren't flying with an escort or anything. We were just another cargo plane, so we always were armed whenever we flew.

Healy: Okay. Alright.

Motzer: During the time that I was doing these TDYs, on one of the occasions when I returned to Tan Son Nhut was a time when Vice-President Agnew came to Saigon to help with the, I guess the negotiations for the peace treaty. That was very interesting because we had Army all around the base on static alert while his Air Force Two was on the ground. Then we had Vietnamese inside the Army troops, then it was Air Force personnel physically around the plane. I was part of the group when they got ready to leave there was myself and two other people in the Jeep and three other people in the other Jeep that took off. We went down the runway as the Air Force Two was leaving to take-off in case it drew fire. That kind of gave you an unsettling feeling knowing that you could have got lit up real quick by automatic weapons.

Healy: And what type of weapons did you have on the Jeep?

Motzer: We had—all of us were armed with either M-16 or CAR-15 automatic weapons. There was no heavy weapons. We all had M-16s or—CAR-15 at the time was like the Army A-4. Now it's a short barrel, folding stock weapon that is a derivative of an M-16. So that's the only weapons we had against—if the enemy wanted to shoot down that plane.

Healy: And did the—did you happen to see the vice-president's entourage, or no?

Motzer: We were in physical contact with all the Air Force personnel on the inside of the cordon that we provided. We saw them get on the plane and leave. It was at the time of my shift when we saw everybody get on the plane, get ready to taxi, because we were alerted that they were coming to the airport. We were posted out with our weapons to escort the plane to the runway, and as it took off we went down the runway as well. That was quite an experience at the time.

Healy: So are you still serving with some of the people that you served up at Cam Ranh Bay?

Motzer: Yes. We—there was, let's see, approximately about a hundred and fifty of us came from Cam Rahn Bay down to Saigon. We were integrated all throughout all the flights and the Security Police operations at Tan Son Nhut Airbase. Subsequently, as we were, you know, getting later into the fall of 1972 they had the Rolling Thunder Campaign to try to bring the North Vietnamese to the bargaining table, so again a lot of us were sent TDY to either ship stuff out of Vietnam or to have stuff brought into Vietnam. So I was constantly on the move. Being young and single that was just the regimen of things—you carried a gun most your life.

Healy: Now when you were up at Cam Ranh Bay you indicated that kind of your R&R was watching movies. How about down in Tan Son Nhut Airbase?

Motzer: Well we were able to go off-base and go into the city of Saigon, and go—being young men, go to the local bars and interact with young ladies and that sort of thing. We were—always had to be in uniform, so you had to watch where you went and who you were around. It was quite interesting.

Healy: Were you required to go with someone or not? A buddy-system or not?

Motzer: No.

Healy: No. Okay.

Motzer: One occasion I was downtown at a local bar, and was talking to this individual and he indicated that he was an OSI agent [United States Air Force Office of Special Investigations] and I said, "Well, time for me to go

back to base." When you see, you know, federal agents or Intelligence people, usually it was time to leave. And I decided it was time for me to go back to base.

Healy: Had somebody told you that, or why?

Motzer: No. Just because I was in the Security Police it was the unwritten-type thing if you got into a situation or saw something that was unfamiliar leave the situation, return to base rather than get involved in something that you had no control over. We weren't armed when we were downtown.

Healy: Mm-hm.

Motzer: We couldn't be armed, but we knew that there was CID, OSI, and intelligence people downtown that were armed. So we were at a disadvantage. So something like that it just kind of behooved us to leave the situation.

Healy: Have any other contact during your time there with OSI or CID?

Motzer: No. I was fortunate enough to have a friend who was—worked for AFN [American Forces Network] in Saigon, so I got to get a tour of the radio and television station in Vietnam when I was over there. That was interesting. I couldn't tell you—I can't remember the young man's name, but he brought a few of us to walk through all the station and to see what they did. That was interesting.

Healy: Now that's AFN, Armed Forces Network?

Motzer: Yes.

Healy: And how big a complex, or how many people worked there?

Motzer: Oh, it was quite a few people there. I would say I saw at least twenty-five to fifty people working in offices as we were walking through.

Healy: Military?

Motzer: Yes. All military personnel.

Healy: How prevalent was AFN over there? I mean, how'd you have access to it?

Motzer: Well through radios. A lot of us—we could listen to radios when we were off-duty. You know we had radios in the barracks or in the mess halls, that sort of thing.



Healy: Did most you have radios with you?

Motzer: No. Well we could buy 'em at the PX to have in our rooms, but we weren't allowed to have any extraneous equipment on us when we were on duty. That was strictly forbidden, because you can't do your job if you're distracted.

Healy: What sort of things did people accumulate over there in terms of radios, guitars—whatever in their barracks?

Motzer: We—well there was a lot of people who had stereos, um, one young man that I remember very vividly was a staff sergeant who was an accomplished guitar player on the twelve string guitar. We'd get off duty, sit out in front of the barracks and he'd play music and we'd sing to his music. You know, this guy was excellent. I have always wondered what happened to him, because he was a staff sergeant. At the time, we left Vietnam in '73, so I'm not sure if he continued with his career but he was an excellent musician. Made life a little more bearable when you could get a bunch of friends and you know, kind of let the world go away a little bit, you know, where you could think about something else.

We also had lot of people that we had to watch over. One in particular that I remember, this young man was a heroin addict in Saigon. He was a GI in the Security Police. I remember seeing this young man in the barracks shower, he looked like a skeleton. He eventually was sent back to the States. He was on patrol one night and run into an electronic warfare C-130, and they told him, "Either you go back rehab or you go to Leavenworth. You don't have any choice." So they discharged him and sent back to the States for rehab, but this man was—he looked like a skeleton. He was scary, just to look at him. But you know people over there either got hooked on drugs, hard stuff. I had friends that I worked with that would go downtown and get a clear ampule of speed, put it in a sixteen ounce can of coke and half a dozen of them would drink this and speed for long time. Scared me to death, I just—for me coming from—

Healy: Off duty or on duty?

Motzer: Off duty.

Healy: Off duty. And the impact, would it be on duty?

Motzer: I would think it would be. I never worked with these guys, they were in the same barracks but we all worked different shifts.

Healy: What were your worked schedules at that time in terms of on, off?

Motzer: You either worked a day which was from seven to four, or three to eleven or midnight from like ten to seven in the morning.

Healy: And you worked seven days a week or?

Motzer: Yep.

Healy: So really no weekends off or three days weeks or something like that?

Motzer: No.

Healy: It was just on and then—

Motzer: You worked constantly and you were always—and when you were working you were armed. You were either on patrol on an entry point or on a bunker. Anything from a jeep to armored personnel carrier.

Healy: Anecdotally, I want to go back to the drugs. At the time that you were there in '73, '72 and then I guess into '73, I don't know if you can put a percentage on it, how would you describe the prevalence of drug use?

Motzer: Oh jeez. I would say probably anywhere from forty to sixty percent. I mean, it was prevalent. There was marijuana all places, there was heroin, any type of drug that you could think of you could find there. Those that didn't—

Healy: More so there than in Cam Ranh Bay or about the same?

Motzer: Well it probably—I wasn't that aware of the drugs in Cam Ranh Bay other than these two individuals but going into Saigon people were either high or they were drunk. That's the two distinctions. Like I said, a cold beer tastes a lot better to me and was legal at the time versus those who abused illegal drugs. They scared me to death to be around it. I mean, we had an incident where this young man was either coming down off of being high or was high. Came to work, got his weapon and decided to cut loose in the air with his weapon, he fired his weapon. There was—all you could hear was the M-16 charging handles, pull it back, put a round chamber, they had to tackle this guy and disarm him.

But it was scary time because back at time—let's see up until the time of fall of '72, once the peace treaties were on track and they were working pretty hard on that. Lot of deserters were coming back through the main gate at Tan Son Nhut, we had a young man that had come back and they put him in a holding cell to detox. Well somehow he got out and made a beeline for the main gate to get a fix 'cause he was, you know, hooked on heroin. They caught him and put him in pajamas and leg irons and put two of the biggest staff sergeants I've ever seen—these guys were good six

foot tall and this guy was maybe about five-two—and they shipped him back to the states under escort. I mean it was a scary time, these people coming back from the gates.

Healy: Were these folks that—were they Air Force or all branches?

Motzer: All branches. One of the incidences of TDY where I went on a convoy, I was riding on a truck with A-70 Remington shotguns with a Vietnamese driver. We took a convoy to Bien Hoa Air Base which was one of the big fighter bases. As we were going into Bien Hoa we passed Long Binh jail which was a federal prison in Vietnam for armed service personnel. Their jail cells were Conex boxes with holes cut out of them to see out of and to get air—that was their cell. That was the scariest thing I've ever seen, you know, we just went by it, we didn't go anywhere near it but it was enough to make you pause and think about things.

Healy: You never pulled a pull of guard duty, guarding prisoners?

Motzer: No.

Healy: Okay. Did you ever have the opportunity to talk to any of those service members who were coming back as deserters?

Motzer: Uh-uh.

Healy: Okay.

Motzer: No. At the time, as I said, the middle of '72 when all this process was going on to either ship stuff out of country or bring stuff in for the Vietnamese—when the peace treaty was almost a sure thing at the January of '73 to late January '73, I witnessed a Russian plane landed Tan Son Nhut Air Base that was almost a carbon copy of a C-130, the only difference was it was black and it had a red star on the top and tail. They were brining—exchanging prisoners. We were—

Healy: Exchanging what kind of prisoners?

Motzer: Well exchanging South Vietnamese prisoners for North Vietnamese prisoners. We were tasked with providing security in all this transition when they were doing all this. January of '73 was a very hectic time for us because of all the things that were going on. A group of GIs, security police I worked with, there was about 150 of us, that were given three days' notice that we were leaving country the 1st of February 1973. We were told to pack our bags and go through customs. Once they relieved us of duty and we packed our stuff and they put us through customs, they put

us in a cantonment area at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. We waited for a Pan Am 747 to come take us.

Healy: So you left a little on the early side, short of twelve months.

Motzer: Yes, that's correct but I was credited with a year tour. Yeah we left out of there, we were very happy campers.

Healy: Did you go back with your unit? Did you unit go back intact on your flight or not?

Motzer: Well, no. They were returning people in increments. Those who had been there previous to us were relieved and sent back. Being that we came to Tan Son Nhut later, we weren't sent out immediately. Everything was done in increments as they were closing the base down and everything. Tan Son Nhut finally closed in 1975.

Healy: Before we leave Vietnam, before we turned on the tape this morning, you had indicated that one of the things that you observed while you were there in country that some of the uniformed personnel were recruited for OSI or CID duty, talk about that a little bit.

Motzer: The latter part of 1972, special forces attempted to rescue US prisoners of war at a base called Sanh Te [sp??], subsequent to that, once this was released to the media some of these GIs came back into Saigon and were relieved of their military duties and given civilian papers and were tasked to work for the CIA up-country and one of the individuals I happened to run into was an Army Ranger that was a very decorated individual from what he had on his uniform blouse. But he told me that because of being Special Forces he was going to be going on a special assignment and couldn't say where he was going—

Healy: Where did you happen to run into him?

Motzer: This was on base. I'm not exactly—I can't remember exactly where I ran into him. It was probably around the BX cafeteria complex. I was off-duty being that I was in uniform he didn't recognize who I was because he was an Army Ranger and he didn't know much about the Air Force but we start talking and he said "Well you heard about the Sanh Te [sp??] raid", I said "Yeah" "I was one of the participants." "Interesting." But being a young man and doing the job that I did, I knew enough not to ask a lot of questions. You ask a lot of questions you don't want answers that you're gonna hear.

Healy: Describe the base a little bit in Tan Son Nhut. What type of buildings were there, how many personnel were there?

Motzer: Tan Son Nhut was, oh, there were thousands of Air Force, Army, Navy, \_\_\_\_\_[??] force headquarters was at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Tan Son Nhut Air Base consisted of—it was a fighter base, a big airport base, both civilian and military personnel worked there. They had military operations out of there as well as civilian operations. Saigon, Tan Son Nhut Air Base was where people left Vietnam to return to the states.

Healy: How far was Saigon from Tan Son Nhut?

Motzer: Right outside the gate.

Healy: Did you walk out, did you taxi out?

Motzer: Walk out, taxi out to Saigon. You didn't want to go too far into Saigon, you tried to stay around the base as much as you can. The main thoroughfare in Saigon was called Tudeau [sp ??] street and that had all the bars and other places of ill repute. It was a conglomeration of many, many businesses and thousands and thousands of people. You go in to Saigon, it was like going into a carbon monoxide cloud. Cause it just—it would choke you just to go down the street because of all the vehicles. Usually they had what they called cyclos which was a tricycle contraption where you sat in the back and it was a motorcycle basically. There was no air purification it was pure exhaust. Saigon was a beautiful city, it has some beautiful churches, Catholic churches. You know, it was just a beautiful place because it was—you were in a combat zone, you didn't let you guard down anytime.

Healy: How secure did you feel aboard the base?

Motzer: Well we knew that we would be in serious trouble if we were ever attacked because the base had been attacked in 1968 and many GIs were killed. They killed thousands of Vietnamese, North Viet Cong and North Vietnamese in '68. But you've—you carried a weapon because that was your lifeline. You weren't very secure, I don't think. But that was the nature of the beast.

Healy: Anything else you want to mention before—you indicated that in February of '73 you got notice to leave there, anything else that sticks out in your mind. Any particular best buddies that you made there or did you see USO shows, what did you do for—?

Motzer: Well I was part of a group of individuals who saw the last Bob Hope show in 1972. He came to Vietnam for the last time in the fall of '72. I have a good friend who—his name is Gary Sleight, S-L-E-I-G-H-T—he retired from the Air Force as a chief master sergeant after 26 years. We still

communicate today. He looked me up online, I got an email and this individual asked me if I was the Larry Motzer who was stationed in Saigon in 1972. Coincidentally he was my supervisor, I was A1C, Airman First Class and he was a staff sergeant and I was on a bunker one night and they were handing out a bunch of ammunition boxes. Well, being a little on the short side I went to grab for a box and missed, hitting him in the head with a 40 mike mike box, a 40 millimeter grenade box and knocked him out, he's got a scar to this day from the box. He always reminds me of it too. But made some very great friends over the years in Vietnam and elsewhere. Coincidentally, when a group of us left Vietnam, February 3, 1973, thirty-six of us were reassigned to Whiteman Air Force Base, Missouri, that had all worked together in Vietnam. The married personnel were reunited with their families but there was thirty-six of us GIs that came back and were stationed together in Missouri, 197—

[Break in recording]

Healy: Larry Motzer, this is Tape 2 and it's being recorded on November 4, 2011. Alright.

Motzer: We returned from Vietnam to Travis Air force base and then we were bussed to San Francisco International [Airport]. As we were coming to the airport I met an air force captain who was returning to the Midwest as well as myself and we went to the bar and asked to be served, well because I was not 21, I was six months shy of 21, I was not allowed to be served so the captain ordered 7 and 7 and I ordered a 7Up and we switched the drink he give me, the 7 and 7 and ordered another 7 and 7 for him. The waitress looked at me, looked at him and shrugged her shoulders and said "Okay." But I was in uniform—we had to fly in uniform at the time. Once we boarded the plane from Minneapolis the airlines provided free drinks for us all the way home because we were returning from Vietnam.

Healy: Okay. And then did you go into Eau Claire from Minneapolis?

Motzer: Yes, I flew into Eau Claire. My mom picked me up, first thing I said—I took a deep breath of the air and said "Man, this is fresh air." She cracked up—she didn't realize that I'd been over in a polluted environment for a long time. But it smelled good just to be home, you know, free of Vietnam.

Healy: In February, it was good to be home in Wisconsin? [laughs]

Motzer: Yes

Healy: Did the cold hit you?

Motzer: The cold didn't bother me. I was home, I didn't worry about that. I mean, I had my uniform and everything so—

Healy: How much time were you allowed on leave?

Motzer: Thirty days. Let's see. I got home the fourth of February and then reported the first part of March 1973 to Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri.

Healy: Where's that near?

Motzer: That is sixty-five miles south of Kansas City, Missouri.

Healy: Okay. And how long did you spend at Whiteman Air Force Base and what was your job there?

Motzer: I worked security police, patrols, and worked in our special weapons storage area. I spent thirty months there and subsequently there I was assigned to detachment in Germany.

Healy: At Whiteman you mentioned that many of the Air Force men that you served with came right back to Whiteman?

Motzer: Yes, there were thirty-six of us.

Healy: Very familiar I take it. Almost like coming home.

Motzer: Great friend were developed.

Healy: Alright. And then you went to Germany. When did you get to Germany? What year or timeframe is that?

Motzer: I got to Germany in 1975. I was at a detachment that was on a German air force base where there was American assets and—let's see here it was very interesting. I learned to speak German over there. I speak it fairly fluently, being that's my heritage.

Healy: Had you taken German classes before you went or anything?

Motzer: No.

Healy: You mentioned you were at—well you're looking through your paperwork, you were at a German Air Force base, I take it that there weren't too many Americans on the base?

Motzer: No there was approximately 265 Americans, with dependents. We were two kilometers from a fourteenth century walled city. The base—the name

of the base was the 72 61<sup>st</sup> Munitions Squadron. It's a NATO base in Bavaria, right smack dab down in the heart. I could look out my windows and see the Alps.

Healy: So which German town were you close to?

Motzer: We were south of Stuttgart. The name of the little village was Memmingen. Let's see, M-E-M-M-I-N-G-E-N.

Healy: You mentioned that you learned to speak German, how did you learn to speak German?

Motzer: Talking with the people. When I got to—I flew in to Frankfurt, Germany and took a train from Frankfurt down to the village next to the detachment and run into an older gentleman who was middle fifties at the time and he helped me find the detachment. I run into him a year later and addressed him in German and thanked him for helping me. He said "Well, how did you learn how to speak German?" I told him in German, "Sprechen mit die Leute." or "Speaking with the people". You have to speak to the people. I was always taught—I have an uncle who was a Korean veteran that was in the Marines who told me five things I needed to do was: remember where I came from, use my manners, keep my mouth shut and eyes and ears open. All the time in the military—by virtue of what I did as a military policeman, there wasn't a lot of places I could go in Europe because of the communist countries so I developed a sense of being able to watch people. You listen and when I travel I try to learn enough about the country and the customs to be polite, to be—where people don't know that you're there. To be non-existent, to be like a fly on the wall because most of the people that I worked with were typical, young Americans who were rude, crude and typical American. If you travelled to a foreign country you are the guest so you should adhere to their rules and their customs.

Healy: When you travelled in Germany, were you in uniform or not in uniform?

Motzer: When I took the train down to my detachment I had to be in uniform but after that I travelled extensively with friends or—at the time I had a German girlfriend, the second year that I was there. This was a two year tour so I did a lot of travelling where we visited her relatives and they all spoke German. Germans are taught British English, proper English. American slang is very hard for them to speak because there are so many idioms in our language. It was interesting for me to be able to immerse myself in my heritage and learn a language because I had my brown hair and blue eyes, they didn't know I was American. I have an American accent of course but I speak well enough where I'm understood and can converse very well. That's thanks to the United States Air Force.

Healy: So for that entire two year tour you were at the same installation?



Motzer: The base was two minutes flying time from the Czechoslovakian border. So we were close enough to, well, you know, be in harm's way if there would have been any type of conflict.

Healy: How did you get around, for transportation?

Motzer: Cars, trains. I took a week's leave and we from my detachment in southern Germany all the way to Amsterdam in eight hours to visit a friend who was a buddy from Vietnam that—his family was Dutch so he was stationed in Holland. So I visited him and his family and you know, got to tour around Amsterdam, see Rembrandt's house and different museums. I'm a student of history, I love history. Air force was another vehicle for me to experience life.

Healy: So by this time had you decided that you were going to stay in for life?

Motzer: At the time I went to Germany, let's see, I had eight or nine years in—

Healy: Were you on your second or third enlistment by then?

Motzer: Yes, I was. So I had decided I wanted to make a career of it. Travelling for me was just another vehicle not only for my job but for me to experience the world, 'cause I think between—I spent five years in the orient by the time I had seventeen years in and two years in Europe.

Healy: I do want to go back to your Missouri experience just to ask this question. You talked about the prevalence of drug use and overuse of alcohol while—that you observed while you were Vietnam and then you mentioned that the fairly cohesive number of people, I don't know if they were cohesive or not but a fairly large number went from Vietnam to Missouri, the same base with you. Did the drugs and alcohol transfer, or what happened?

Motzer: Yeah, a lot of the guys would be—would smoke marijuana or they would be—drink. When I came back the first eighteen months I was back I'd go through a case of Budweiser bottles in a weekend myself. Because when you come back—for me coming from the Midwest I was scared out of my mind. I meant I didn't know—I was glad I was home, I was alive but a lot of people had families that they come back to and it was kinda hard to explain to people what you'd experienced or saw. It took me a while to come to grips that I was back in the states and alive to where I come full circle. I drink at the most three or four beers and then switch to soda water. I don't like the feeling of being out of control. But my younger years from the time I was—my twenties up until I came back from Germany in '77, I was a pretty heavy drinker, usually get off duty go grab

a beer, whatever, go party. It never transcended to my job because I was always taught that a gun is there for work - it can kill you—it's not the gun that kills you, it's the people that kill you. I'm a firm believer that there is no such thing as a weapons incident or accident. It's carelessness. That is why people die from weapons.

Healy: Did most of the people that you knew, that transferred from Vietnam to Missouri, did they make it through their first enlistment?

Motzer: Yes. Quite a few were career, you know, sergeants. Staff sergeants, tech sergeants that continued on in the military. The alcohol and drug use kind of went by the wayside as people matured, got into their work. Course, you know young people that worked for us, that was a whole different generation. By the time we got to be NCOs, those who were smoking marijuana were either caught or discharged. Those who were alcoholics, were either you know hurt in some way from car accidents or were discharges because of their lack of duty. It was a—

Healy: And the hard drug usage?

Motzer: That went—I didn't see that once I got stateside. That I never ran into again. The occasional marijuana or in Germany people smoke hash but nothing major that I ever saw, it was mostly just alcohol.

Healy: When you left Germany, what rank were you at that time?

Motzer: Staff sergeant.

Healy: And you've been in nine years by—

Motzer: Nine to ten years.

Healy: Where did you go after Germany, where were you assigned?

Motzer: I was assigned to Luke Air Force Base in Phoenix, Arizona. And I spent probably about three years there and then I met my first wife and went into the reserves for about eighteen months, then returned to active duty and was reassigned to Keesler Air Force base in Michigan. Not Keesler, K.I. Sawyer, I'm sorry.

Healy: How much time did you spend in Luke Air Force Base?

Motzer: Three years.

Healy: Then you went back to Michigan?

Motzer: Mm-hmm.

Healy: To Sawyer.

Motzer: And then from there I went to Guam for three years. Then—

Healy: Did you request that?

Motzer: Yes. And then—

Healy: Was it your time to go overseas, or why Guam?

Motzer: Well, it was—I guess, yeah, time for rotation. The security police, you're moving about every three years so when I was assigned to Anderson Air Force Base in Guam I worked security police there until probably 1985 where due to a medical condition with my feet, my feet went flat from wearing combat boots. I was cross trained into the transportation—

Healy: You cross trained while you were still in Guam?

Motzer: Yes. Then—

Healy: Tell me about Guam a little bit. What was you experienced like in Guam?

Motzer: Guam was unique because Guam is nine thousand miles into the south Pacific, you're at the very end of the Marianas Trench, the island of Guam is about thirty two miles long it's nine miles at its widest point, about three miles at it nearest point. The island sits on a dormant and extinct volcano. Right after my wife and my son and I got there in '84 there was a six point five earthquake. That's the first time I've ever experienced an earthquake so I wasn't real happy. But Guam is tropical. The north end of the island is all Air Force base and housing. The south end of the island is Navy and Marines barracks and operations. The government of Guam and people live throughout the island but it's—it was interesting, a tropical climate any type of tropical fruit you could think of from star fruit to avocados, coconuts. Anything that you could think of as far as tropical went.

Healy: How were the quarters, living conditions?

Motzer: Quarters were interesting. They were—for a family of three we had a two bedroom quarters and it was adequate, very comfortable but it was a concrete slab with a house built over it, basically.

Healy: You were there on a two year tour?

Motzer: Three year.

Healy: Three year.

Motzer: Once I had cross trained to transportation I was reassigned to Korea and at that time my wife had requested a divorce but because of federal law, divorces cannot be granted to military personnel while they're overseas so I went to Guam for a year, then came back to California to Castle Air Force base and signed papers three days after I got back. I spent three years at Castle Air Force Base and then I was discharged—

Healy: How long were you in Korea?

Motzer: One year.

Healy: One year. And you went there by yourself?

Motzer: Yes. It was a remote tour.

Healy: Okay. Where did you serve in Korea?

Motzer: Kwangju air base. It's K-W-A-N-G-J-U.

Healy: Okay. And where in South Korea is that?

Motzer: That is in southern Korea on the western side of Korea. Almost along the western coast basically, of Korea.

Healy: Tell me a little bit about your Korean experience

Motzer: Korea was interesting 'cause it's a world unto itself because they're either poor farmers or rich people. There is no in-between. You either out in the fields in your rice paddies or you're in big cities. It was a very dirty country. The people were okay, I mean, like I said I learned enough language to be polite wherever I go, so I communicated okay but it just—it was different from Vietnam. I mean I've been to the Philippines, I've been to Japan, Guam and you know, and each culture has a different feel. In Korea—the feel in Korea was like they knew you were American, so you were always being watched. But being that close to the DMZ didn't help the situation either. Korea isn't that big of a country and you can go from where I was in Kwangju to Seoul in an hour and a half. You were right there in the middle of everything if you needed to be.

Healy: What's the size of the Kwangju Air Force Base?

Motzer: Kwangju was a small fighter base that was leased by the American government for American fighters and then A10 Warthogs - they were

close ground support fighters that had a thirty millimeter cannon in the nose of the vehi—of the plane. They used—they call them tank busters.

Healy: And you were serving in transport at that time. What was your normal?

Motzer: Normal duties were to maintain vehicle readiness for—in case we needed evacuate or provide vehicles for troops from NATO forces, the army. The 8<sup>th</sup> Army is in Korea and then of course the arm of the Air force was the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force, that's the Southeast Asian configuration of the Air Force—that command structure there. The headquarters for the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force was in Hawaii, we were a satellite from that.

Healy: You went to Castle Air Force base after Korea? And Castle is located where?

Motzer: That is central California. It's near Merced, California. It was a B-52 and KC-135 training base. It has been since closed. I was part of a group of people that learned to haul B-52s around on great big tugs, to be able to back them into a parking space—interesting. While I was there I experienced not only a B-52 crashing and blowing up but a KC-135 going in and blew up and burnt.

Healy: As it was landing or somewhere else?

Motzer: Mm-hm, as it was landing.

Healy: Were you working on the runway primarily or not necessarily?

Motzer: Yes, primarily on the runway. Merced is central California so it's very warm in the summertime, usually gets about 102 [degrees Fahrenheit] but with the concrete it gets a lot hotter. But it was interesting, it was a nice base. At the time I was working there I was still recovering from the divorce and my career kind of nose-dived because I just—I had been in so long I just felt it was time for me to get out. I was given an administrative discharge under honorable conditions because I couldn't maintain the PT with my knees gone. I was discharged for being five pounds overweight.

Healy: Okay.

Motzer: The Air Force forced reduction in 1988, May 16, 1988

Healy: Okay, that was when you were at Castle Air Force base. Where did you go from there? How much notice did you have that you were getting discharged?

Motzer: Probably about six weeks. Went through administrative process, I just couldn't run anymore, couldn't do the PT to qualify to stay on active duty. I was notified that because of my inability to maintain weight standards I was going to be discharged administratively with a general under honorable conditions.

Healy: You enlistment wasn't up at that time

Motzer: No, it was not.

Healy: Alright. Where did you go after your discharge?

Motzer: Well I stayed in California for a little while and then I came home to Eau Claire in August of 1988. Back home, here, to Eau Claire and I've been here ever since.

Healy: Why did you decide to come back to Eau Claire?

Motzer: Well, at the time, my present wife and I had been dating. When I had come home in July of '87, my father had had a stroke and we had met here at a local watering hole. I had been downtown with some friends, classmates from high school and run in to her and we've been together twenty-two years, married June 2, 1990. We just celebrated twenty-one years.

Healy: And since 1990 or 1988, what have you been doing?

Motzer: I've done everything from courier to security guard to truck driver. In nineteen—no, 2007 I was awarded my 100 percent disability for my knees because I'm 80 percent rated with unemployability. So I'm rated at 100 percent. I've been retired since '07.

Healy: What do you do in your spare time now?

Motzer: Well I volunteer at the Chippewa Valley Museum here in town. I also volunteer with the Bureau of Tourism for the state of Wisconsin.

Healy: Right here in—?

Motzer: Right here in Eau Claire. I also volunteer and work with the American Cancer Society. I am an advocate for them. I am one of a group of people who helped pass the no smoking law in the state of Wisconsin.

Healy: When you came back to Eau Claire, I don't know how frequently during your service you came back to Eau Claire?

Motzer: I think out of the seventeen years that I put on active duty, I think a cumulative time probably maybe about two and half years. I'd get home for fifteen to thirty days at a time. I would run into old friends from high school and this sort of thing.

Healy: I often ask people when they came back, what's changed after their service? But you sound like you had good contact, well go ahead—

Motzer: Well what changed, when I went into the military in 1971, Eau Claire had a population of about 37,200. Now it is 70,000 plus, as of 2011. The Eau Claire area has expanded tremendously, every time I would come home on leave, if I was driving at night, I'd get lost because I wasn't familiar with the area. It's—times and people change and I know I've changed over the years. You know, but I think that the military was very good for me. I had a very good time in the military; I grew up in the military so most of my adult life was spent in the military carrying a gun. I am a deer hunter but I have yet to shoot a deer. I just like to sit in the woods, it's peaceful. I know what it's like to be shot at. I don't need to be proving anything to anybody.

[Break in recording]

Healy: —being conducted November 4, 2011 and we're talking now about coins.

Motzer: When I was down in Madison I went to the Veterans' Museum in Madison and discovered the medallion coins that they have for every conflict we've been in to. This last May I was down in Branson, Missouri to a reunion with the 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron personnel and received from them a coin that represents the unit that—our unit in Vietnam. I also carry a medallion from the Veterans' Museum in Madison that indicates that I'm a Vietnam veteran.

Healy: And the unit you were with in Vietnam is the 377<sup>th</sup> Security Police Squadron, US Air Force.

Motzer: Then I also received from them a coin that represents the badge that I wore in Vietnam as a military policeman. I carry these with me at all times.

Healy: It says "Defenders of the Force for outstanding service and duty, honor, country, we take care of our own. Air Force Police Security Forces."

Motzer: Every member of the personnel that was at that reunion has one of those.

Healy: How many folks were at that reunion in Branson?

Motzer: There was at least, probably a couple hundred, about two hundred people I would think.

Healy: Then your third coin is a "Vietnam veteran 1959-1975. United States Armed Forces."

Motzer: Multi service coin.

Healy: Have you been to any other reunions?

Motzer: No I have not. That was the first one, it was kind of surreal for me running in to people that had served in Vietnam in the same unit. Most of these individuals that I met were older. They had been part of the first contingent who entered Vietnam for the Air Force in 1965 and '66. So they were just a little bit older than I. Fascinating people. Many of them are professionals, the organization head is an optometrist, he is a doctor so he heads the organization and put the reunion together. The next reunion in two years will be in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania so I think seriously about going. That would be very interesting.

Healy: And you mentioned that you went to LZ Lambeau a year ago.

Motzer: That was amazing. They did an excellent job with putting that together. I—we—I was told that eventually out of all three days there was over one hundred thousand people there and I could where that's a very good estimate because what they put forth was excellent, they had map of Southeast Asia where people could sign the map where they had been stationed. Run into a lot of people from all branches of the military, Marines, Army, Navy, Air Force. It was a very, very nice time. I had heard that they might repeat it in the near future but I haven't heard anything since. I receive an email from LZ Lambeau periodically so I think that would be a very good thing to make that an annual event.

Healy: Anything else that you would like to add, to this oral history, concerning your service experience or your Vietnam experience?

Motzer: I think I would definitely do it all over again if I was asked to. Military is a very good venue to grow up in. Of course, as I said before it is not for everyone, you have to want to join the military. You have to be in it, mind, body and soul to serve your country. Thank you.

Healy: Okay and I thank you. Appreciate you taking the time and your candid comments concerning your experience. And thanks for your service.

Motzer: Thank you very much.

[End of interview]