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Interview with Eugene 'Gene' Driver

Julius Eugene Driver

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LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

DRIVER, Gene

DRIVER, Gene

Enlisted: 1951

Interviewed: January 24, 2018

Interviewer: Emily Deinert and Roxann James

Indexed By: Bailey Stewart

Length: 00:47:35

Abstract: On January 24, 2018, Gene Driver, a veteran for the United States Air Force, and his wife Judy Driver sat down with interviewers Emily Deinert and an employee for The Disabled American Veterans, Roxann James, to talk about Driver's past experiences in the Air Force. Driver started off at the beginning at basic training in San Antonio, Texas and was then sent to different bases for the next few years. He started at Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois where he was assigned to air craft weld-men school that lasted for nine months. He was then shipped to Eielson Air Force Base in Fairbanks, Alaska for two years and then went on to training command for crash rescue and fire department in Sacramento, California. He had 90 days to get back into the Air Force from his initial discharge to decide to get back into the military with the same ranking and pay. He decided to re-enlist in the Air Force and was able to regain his previous rank. He went to Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina for six months. While at Shaw Air Force Base, he received a letter from a fake organization, 1007th Air Intelligence Service Group in Washington, District of Columbia, Pentagon. At the time he had no idea it was a fake organization, so he joined and completed certain projects for the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). These projects eventually broke up and he was stationed in a variety of Air Force Bases over the next few years. The Drivers went to Edwards Air Force Base in Mojave, California; Dobbins Air Force Base, near Atlanta, Georgia; Williams Air Force Base in Arizona; Bethel Air Force Station in Fairbanks, Alaska; and a base in Buxton, Mississippi. Driver was in charge of an auxiliary field while in Arizona where he trained pilots. In Alaska, Driver checked on Siberia through radar called White Alice Air Force Station. While in Mississippi, Driver was a training instructor for basic training. Driver was sent to Vietnam from in 1967 and was there until 1968. After Vietnam, Driver and his family then moved to Japan where he was stationed at an Air Force Base for only a little bit of time.

Keywords: Air Force, Basic Training, Chanute Air Force Base, Air Craft Weld-men School, Eielson Air Force Base, Crash Rescue and Fire Department, Shaw Air Force Base, 1007th Air Intelligence Service Group, Washington, District of Columbia, Pentagon, CIA, Edwards Air Force Base, Dobbins Air Force Base, Williams Air Force Base, Bethel Air Force Station, Vietnam, Japan.

Interview Session (January 24, 2018): VLC File

Time

- 00:00:00 *Start of Interview/ Interviewer's Introduction*
- 00:00:30 *Question:* Gene Driver grew up in? *Answer:* Chester, South Carolina
- 00:00:50 *Question:* Drafted/Enlisted? *Answer:* Enlisted in 1951 at Basic Training in San Antonio, Texas, but was then sent straight to Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois right after Basic Training ended.
- 00:03:05 *Question:* What were your duties at Chanute Air Force Base? *Answer:* Driver was assigned to aircraft weld-men school, which lasted for nine months.
- 00:03:35 *Question:* What is so important about aircraft weld-men school? *Answer:* It was Driver's Air Force Specialty Code.
- 00:03:42 *Question:* After aircraft weld-men school, did you begin any aircraft welding? *Answer:* Driver was shipped to Eielson Air Force Base in Fairbanks, Alaska to start aircraft welding. When he arrived, the colonel told them that they were not in need of any aircraft welders there. The colonel said they were in need of people in the fire department and crash rescue, so Driver was assigned to it.
- 00:04:23 *Question:* Did you enjoy fire department and crash rescue? *Answer:* Driver wanted to get out of fire department and crash rescue and get back into his old Air Force Specialty Code, but was not able to.
- 00:04:30 *Question:* How long did you stay in Fairbanks doing the fire department and crash rescue? *Answer:* Driver stayed for two years, then went to Sacramento, California and did their fire department and crash rescue, which was there training command.
- 00:04:50 *Question:* What happened after fire department and crash rescue was over? *Answer:* Driver had 90 days from the time he ended fire department and crash rescue to get back into the Air Force. He already had his four years when he was in California, so he decided to not go back.
- 00:05:00 *Question:* What did you do while you were out of the Air Force? *Answer:* Driver went to work at The Bleachery in Lancaster, South Carolina, but after a month of working he decided to re-enlist in the Air Force.
- 00:05:12 *Question:* Since it was less than 90 days when you re-enlisted, were you able to get back all your ranks and start back fast? *Answer:* Yes, Driver received his same ranks back and they shipped him to Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina.

- 00:05:20 *Question:* What did you do while you were stationed at Shaw Air Force Base and for how long? *Answer:* Driver was at Shaw Air Force Base for six months. While he was there, he was sent a letter from The 1007th Air Intelligence Service Group from Washington, District of Columbia, The Pentagon. It said that he had been assigned to this group and his military personnel will contact him and for him to also not tell anyone about this letter or group.
- 00:05:35 *Question:* How and when did you start into The 1007th Air Intelligence Service Group? *Answer:* Driver was contacted and so he went down to military personnel and they told him that it was a bit unusual since there were no orders but they had a letter assigning him to this group and to wait on further instructions.
- 00:06:30 *Question:* What happened next? *Answer:* Driver received a second letter stating that he was officially assigned to The 1007th Air Intelligence Service Group. This letter did not tell him where he was going or what he was doing, so he was very confused. He then received another letter telling him after he got his orders of being assigned into this service group that he will be sent airline tickets.
- 00:07:16 *Question:* Where did you go? *Answer:* Driver was sent to California from Charlotte, North Carolina. When he arrived in California he was ordered to call a number and then an Air Force car came and got him. He was brought to Palm Dale in California, which is a part of Lockheed Air Craft Company. He arrived and still did not know any information about what he will be doing or where he will be staying.
- 00:08:30 *Question:* When you arrived, what did they make you do? *Answer:* Driver spent the night at the Lockheed Air Craft Company and left the next morning on a C-131 aircraft. An hour later, he arrived in the middle of a desert, still not knowing what was going on. He was a part of projects and was put on lie detector tests, not knowing that he was really a part of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). For over a month, he was in Area 51 in Nevada and was completing spy missions the United States government.
- 00:13:30 *Question:* What did you do when you found out that you were a part of a spy mission for the United States government? *Answer:* Driver ended up staying in the spy mission for the United States government and flew in and out of different countries. Around four years later, the project broke, which broke up the whole group.
- 00:16:30 *Question:* What did you do after The 1007th Air Intelligence Service Group broke up? *Answer:* Driver went to Edwards Air Force Base in Mojave Desert in Mojave, California for three years. This is when he gradually went from the CIA to the Air Force taking back over, which he then trained Air Force Pilots.

- 00:20:10 *Question:* What did you do after Edwards Air Force Base? *Answer:* Driver was sent to Dobbins Air Force Base in Georgia. Driver and his wife adopted their daughter while he was stationed at this base but then all moved to Arizona.
- 00:20:21 *Question:* What did you do in Arizona? *Answer:* Driver was stationed at Williams Air Force Base and was in charge of an auxiliary field, which is where he trained pilots.
- 00:21:10 *Question:* What happened after Arizona? *Answer:* Driver went back to Alaska for the second time but went to Bethel Air Force Station. He was a part of a team that were checking out Siberia in a radar called White Alice Air Force station.
- 00:23:47 *Question:* Were there any important jobs that you were a part of? *Answer:* After Arizona, Driver went down to Buxton, Mississippi for three years to be a military training instructor, which is where he taught basic training.
- 00:24:00 *Question:* What did you do after your three years of being a military training instructor? *Answer:* Driver went to Vietnam from 1967-1968 and when he got there, he says there was a lot of bombing and fighting. When he was leaving, there was still a lot of bombing and fighting. Driver received the bronze star “V” device while he was in Vietnam.
- 00:44:10 *Question:* When you left Vietnam, what did you do? *Answer:* Driver, his wife and daughter moved to Japan. Driver had a career in Tokyo and him and his family loved it there.
- 00:45:12 *Question:* Was there anything else you did that was big after leaving Japan? *Answer:* After Japan, Driver retired. He and his family loved Japan so much that they had a Japanese exchange student live with them for two years in Rock Hill, South Carolina.
- 00:45:25 [no question] Gene and Judy Driver, Emily Deinert, and Roxann James last minute conversations before end of interview.
- 00:47:35 **End of Interview**