

Interview with Mr. Randell Dean Haynes

Veteran of the Air Force

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Narrator: This is the United Methodist Church, Kinsley, Kansas. Our guest is Mr. Randell Haynes who was born April 8, 1960 in Kansas City, Missouri. My name is Kent Wetzel and I will be interviewing him along with the rest of the English Composition II class. Mr. Haynes served in the Air Force from 1982-2002.

Narrator: Mr. Haynes, why did you join the Air Force?

Haynes: I was patriotic and I wanted to serve my country. My plans weren't to stay for 20, but I liked it once I got in. I went to Germany, my first base, spent three years there. I really enjoyed the Air Force. So hung out for 20 of it and I wanted to travel around once I got to. I've been around the world three times and I ended up back here in Kinsley.

Narrator: Where did you live, like after you lived in Germany?

Haynes: McGuire Air Force Base, Wrightstown, N.J. for three years.

Narrator: Did you have a job or were you just in the Air Force? What was your job?

Haynes: Yeah, I was a heavy equipment operator; 8-24 hours a day, 5-7 days a week, depending on what we were doing, and what we were working on, how long we worked. So it was a salary, like it wasn't an hourly wage that I got paid twice a month.

Narrator: Why did you pick to join the Air Force?

Haynes: I considered the Navy and the Marines, but I talked to people and they said the Air Force was a good way of life. So, I'm not a recruiter or anything, but I thought it was good for me. It's not for every body, but it worked out real good for me.

Narrator: Do you remember, your first days of service, what were they like?

Haynes: Yeah, it was kinda different, had to get used to it. I fit right in. So, it worked out pretty good for me.

Narrator: What was boot camp like?

Haynes: Oh, it was a lot of real nitpicky stuff like folding your t-shirts and your underwear six inches, had to be exactly, drawers had to be ground and centered, your boots had to be lined up perfectly. The reason why they did that was to see if you could follow instructions real well...because they didn't want to put you out on an F16, if you were working on a wing and you don't know how to follow instructions real well. So, a lot of people thought it was crazy that

we had to go through so much crazy stuff during boot camp. Once it was all done, I knew why they did all that stuff.

Narrator: Did you or do you remember any of your instructors?

Haynes: Yeah, I remember Staff Sergeant Garcia. He was a real good guy and there was a two striper, an A1C Cane (*Airman First Class*). You know they have to be real mean and yell at you and all that kind of stuff. I guess there are guys you love to hate because I respected them afterwards.

Narrator: You could say they changed your viewpoint on things?

Haynes: Yeah, they did...they did.

Narrator: Did you have very many tough days, like days that you kinda wished you weren't in the Air Force?

Haynes: I don't know. I can't really think of any. The 20 years I was in, I got tired getting up at 0500 and going out and playing war games and stuff like that. I can't think of any. I had some bad days I'm sure, but there weren't really many bad days that I wished, why did I do this, why did I join the Air Force? There's not any that I can think of.

Narrator: Did you volunteer?

Haynes: Yeah, I signed up.

Narrator: Do you feel that you are more patriotic to your country than those that had to be drafted in?

Haynes: I don't know. Course there wasn't a war going on when I joined, and I didn't get the 90 day crash course then run off to a war real quick like a lot of the draftees had to do.

Narrator: You served in Desert Storm, right?

Haynes: No, no, I was in Saudi in 99, Saudi Arabia.

Narrator: OK

Haynes: But, I was an instructor at a heavy equipment school, when the 1991 hundred-hour war there kicked off in Iraq. We did have one group come in; it was 50-hour course on heavy equipment... excavators, dozers, graders, loaders, dump trucks and...I remember a commander calling and I think it was Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. That was that base there, the commander had to call on a Tuesday, and the course was Monday through Friday. He called and said, "We're going to Iraq so I need all my guys back." We had about 20 of his guys in our school. So we had to send them back early, so that was really the closest I got besides going to Saudi Arabia and that was in '99 and that was eight years after that war and a couple years

before the one that's going on now started. So I never got shot at, or never had to shoot anybody, so that was lucky. So 20 years, I never had to kill anybody or get killed.

Narrator: So what exactly did you do in Saudi Arabia?

Haynes: We repaired the runway, and it wasn't from being bombed or anything, just you know, wear and tear. Built some roads, and basically anything they needed. I brought some coins with me if you guys want to check them out. They give you coins for doing jobs real quick, getting it done for them. JP8, is a fuel that they run the F-15s and F-16s on. Had to build some burms and some bladders that they filled—you know—full of fuel for the planes.

Narrator: How, when you were over there, how did you keep in touch with your family?

Haynes: We had phones. We called it a courtesy phone. You could call anywhere in the United States for free. They only gave you like so many...ten minutes to talk, but we had letters and stuff like that. It was no problem.

Narrator: Were there any down times when you were over there?

Haynes: Yeah, a lot of people brought their guitars and musical instruments and they played. We had a place where they showed the movies. There was a building. Actually Prince Saltun, he was real good to the Air Force then. And since then Saudi Arabia has kicked us out, but they built real nice dorms and had a swimming pool, and B.X. That's kind of like your Wal-Mart, or your Duckwalls. B.X.-Base Exchange. They had everything you need in there. They had all kind of stuff in there. Well, we worked nine, ten hours a day and six days a week, and I was only over there a couple of months. And it was a good time. It was different.

Narrator: Did you feel, like different, when you got home, like back to the U.S.?

Haynes: Yeah, no, well, I don't think so...learned a few Arabic words...that was about it. Every country I went to I tried to at least be able to say, "Hello, goodbye, thank you, and you're welcome," in that language you know. But then once you say that they think you know how to speak it so they start rattling off stuff, and I'm like no wait a minute. That is all I know, that's it (laughing).

Narrator: What other countries did you visit?

Haynes: I went to Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Amsterdam, Belize, Central America, Honduras, Korea, Japan, Saudi Arabia, like I said and England, a lot of other places.

Narrator: Did you do all the same things there?

Haynes: Yeah, the 20 years I've been, heavy equipment operator, repairing stuff, fixing things. Kinda probably, equivalent to maybe city workers, the guys you see repairing, cleaning the roads and stuff like that. Got to use little bigger equipment and probably little bigger jobs than just a pothole in the street, something. Sometimes we'd rip out half the runway and have to, you know, twelve inches thick concrete and pour it again, you know, but it was good times.

Narrator: Were there any coworkers that served with you, like a quite amount of time?

Haynes: Yeah, I ran into a couple of guys that I was in tech school in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, but I haven't ran into anybody. And since I moved here now and I plan on staying here, I probably won't run into any of the guys that I went through busy training with. I remember those guys like it was yesterday. You go through that together and then when you go to Germany and stay three years so the only family you have, is those guys around you. I was too busy touring Europe. I didn't ever come back to the states for three years. I just stayed over there on my leave times. I'd go to Amsterdam or skiing in Switzerland or somewhere like that.

Narrator: So do you still keep in touch with those people?

Haynes: There are a couple of guys, Paul McCartney, not the Beatle (chuckling). He lives in Boston and I've gone up and seen him a couple of times. And not too many other guys besides Sembach Air Force, I still hang out with those guys. I could have retired and gone back there and worked in the same shop that I worked at, but I was an employee, then I was a civilian. I started growing my hair and my beard. I've been out of the service for about this long (referring to his long hair)(laughing) three years.

Narrator: Are you in any veteran organizations or anything?

Haynes: No, but I was talking to some gentleman in Kinsley and I'm getting into the American Legion. I got a little four year old, and I want to do some little league baseball. Tony tells me the program is not going too well right now. But after we get a little more interest and a bit more guys that want to do it, perhaps it will. That's what I did with my first set of sons. I have a 24-year old and two 21-year olds and now I have a four year old. I liked it so well I wanted to do it again, but it's great. He's ready to play ball in a couple of years...

Narrator: How did the service or the Air Force affect your life, like overall?

Haynes: I learned a lot while I was in the Air Force. You're always going to school and always doing courses and things like that. I was a hazardous waste specialist when I was in the service, and storm drain pollution and stuff like that, and always taking courses, stuff like that. And it made it possible for me to retire, retire and just move to Kinsley and I'm fixing up the old Coats' house. You know where that is, at Sixth and Sommers. It's sat there for years, no one has ever lived in it but, I sold my house in Las Vegas, moved out here, start from scratch. I'm starting the wiring next week, got to work, rewiring in the whole thing. That is where I plan on staying, raising my four year old.

Narrator: What does the U.S. flag mean to you?

Haynes: I don't think it means, some people look at it as being an idol that you worship, and when you pledge it and stuff like that. I think it is just a symbol of our country. And I'm always wearing an American flag somewhere on me, a shirt or a...I'm proud of it, and I was proud to serve you know, for the flag. Just a patriotic symbol I think, every time I see it, and I remember standing there, ceremonies and stuff like that and holding the salute for the *Star Spangled Banner*, when they play it, couple minute song. Standing perfectly still, like this right here

(showing a salute). Looks pretty good when you get a 100 guys lined up and they are all doing it at the same time, and they all come down at the same time. I don't know. It looks pretty neat.

Narrator: Do you think that now the Air Force has changed from when you were in it?

Haynes: I think it has a little bit. May have got a lot easier, by the end of my career I think there was no more, wall to wall counseling and stuff like that. You know what I'm talking about...taking the air men in the back room, and smacking them around a little bit, throwing them against the wall and telling them to straighten up or he is out of here. They don't do that any more...in basic training, they had just stopped it when I went through in 1982, the instructors can't touch a trainee, you know. I guess they used to be able to kick you around and push you around and stuff, but all they can do now is yell at you. They can't, but some people can't handle that. It's just part of their job and part of my job was to listen to them and do what they said.

Narrator: Do you think it is important to tell us about your experiences and somewhat influence us to be patriotic?

Haynes: I think so. I mean we all live here in the USA together so. But like I said earlier, the military is not for everybody, but if you think about it, it will pay for your college and stuff like that. If you want to go to school, yeah, you have to put up with some crap, but that is just how the military goes. They don't have time to sit down and explain it to you, so to make it short and sweet they yell at you real loud and it gets through your head quicker. So you go do it instead of sitting down and explaining, okay we need to do this because. That's the reason they did it, boot camp, yelling stuff like that to get it in your head quicker, and for you to move quicker. But it wasn't too bad. I say that now but when I was in there it was like man they do yell a lot. But ever since I was little I was always, everything has to be in a row. You know. My mom tells me that I aligned my toys up in my toy box. So I think I was destined to go into the military because when I got there it was easy. Ok yeah, fold okay I can do that. I've done that all my life. I've always put everything back where it goes and stuff like that. The military just kind of fit for me real well.

Narrator: Do you still like, practice things like that?

Haynes: I still roll my t-shirts and my socks like I did in the military. My wife, she is also in the military. She's got 17 years in the three years to go. She enjoys it pretty good.

Narrator: What is your opinion on the war right now?

Haynes: Oh shoot, I don't know. I wish we could get out of there right now, because I got probably 20 buddies over there right now that were in the military when I was in there, you know younger and over there now. They come back on the fifth of April. They are almost done but. Yeah, I wish we could get out of there. I think if the government is going to stay in, I think they will stay in without us holding their hand and say okay this is the way democracy works and that kind of stuff. I wish we could go ahead and pull on out of there. Got to go along with the general and the presidents. They know more than I do about the situation. We just look at it, the newsstand point. Our guys are dying, and there, they got kind of a chicken way of fighting the

battle. Some guy with a bomb drives through and takes out a few people behind the cell. But when you go to another country you see how the whole thinking of everything is different. Like the Arabic countries you know, with the God Muhammad, they would give their life in a heartbeat for him. They wouldn't think twice about it. That is the way they were raised, and I found that out by traveling from country to country. You have to remember their traditions and things that they do because you go over there trying to act like an American, you'll stick out like a sore thumb one thing and you might contradict something. I remember one girl in Saudi Arabia when we were there. We were down town for a minute and she had to wear a veil because she was a woman and that is their custom, and there are certain places you can take it off, and in the train station is one place where you can take your veil off, but she was going towards the door, and she took her veil off too early, before she got inside. And an old Saudi Arabia guy with a stick started hitting her, started beating her with this stick. She punched him; she was an S.P. She was a cop. She punched him in the mouth (laughing) and about knocked him out. But she got in trouble for that because she took her veil off, and that is just one of the customs you got to do. There's a lot of weird stuff that, like the bottom of your shoe. You can't sit here like this you know, and show someone sitting next to you the bottom of your shoe. It is the most disrespectful thing you can do in the world. They brief you on all this because before you go somewhere like that months before. They brief you on things. You know you can't do this; you can't do that; you can't say that. Like you know when somebody pulls out in front of you and in some place instead of giving you the bird they go like this (making sign with hand against head), and that means the same thing. Like in Europe that meant the same thing, so it was different, and they always briefed you before you went, told you what you can do and what you can't do. But it was different. You got to remember all that stuff. I didn't want to offend anybody while I was over there so I got to think okay I can't cross my leg, I can't you know, do things. It was interesting.

Narrator: Did you try to learn about other religions while you were over there?

Haynes: Yeah, I always ran into people, locals that would speak good English. Seems like all over the world English is spoke pretty decent by everybody and shoot I was curious about how they did stuff. And then, I found out some other things that the Air Force might have not told you before you went over there, not to do, because, kind of like Southern United States and Northern United States you know, they have different accents and do things different. Same way in Germany; they have North Germany and South Germany, they said certain words, and I learned German and certain words that I said, they said that was southern or something. Like saying "you all" instead of "you guys" or something different. I liked it.

Narrator: Were they open about telling you things like that or were they kinds like?

Haynes: A lot of times seem like people 40 and younger, they spoke pretty good English because they had to take it in school. I think in the entire world they take English. They have to take a course, and I met some Germans that didn't. You know they slept in English class or whatever you know, and spoke a little, so I tried to lean a little German to I could speak to them myself, but they were friendly for the most part. Our landlord, our '*vermieter*'; it means landlord in German. He fought in a war against the Americans and he had half a knee blown off and half his foot blown off. He walked with a cane. That was when the Americans were bombing Germany in WWII. He greeted us real nice, and he was like my father while I was over there,

him and his wife were both very nice to us and did anything in the world for us. So they kind of forgive and forget. They forgot all about the war even though he fought in it probably against the gentleman out here the two other guys that were WWII veterans. So that was different, but nice, and plus we paid high rent as Americans, so he was making some pretty good money, too. But he was a really nice person.

Narrator: Did you have like bad experiences there, some?

Haynes: Yeah sometimes, I might get to a sight that you got to set your tents up and everything, and I put my cot right on an ant hill one time. So, I woke up the next morning and had ants covering me because they got on my cot and got all on me and had a fight with a raccoon, hiding under a bush trying to shoot some guys. I had my MRE (*Meal, Ready to Eat*), which is, I don't know if you ever seen them, they come in a box. Sea Rations is what those guys ate out there, the WWII veterans, they came in a can, and we had the envelopes, you just open them up and the food was all ready, and me and another guy was eating, we kind of sat our MRE's back here because the enemy was coming and we was shooting and the raccoon came up behind us, scared us because we thought the enemy was behind us too, but he came creeping up, he was already grabbing it so we was trying to get this raccoon away from us. He was a big raccoon. I think we were in Florida doing some was training.

Narrator: What was the food like?

Haynes: It wasn't too bad really. They gave us a little heater and you pour water in it and it starts boiling, just the water and the chemicals, and you put your food beside it and that's the way you warm it up. I still call it chow hall, but they changed it to dining facility, there trying to do away with a lot of those old words, like boot camp, chow hall, and dining facility, Air Force training, they changed a lot of words. In all the chow halls I ate at in the Air Force it was real good food they did a real good job, because they had air men cooking it and they went to tech school for it and they learned how cook and that was their job. So, I think the food was really good in the Air Force.

Narrator: Why are they changing those words, do you know?

Haynes: I don't know, just the change in times I guess. They, the new recruits coming, they had a lot of different words. The Air Force is great for acronyms, like on my hat it says REOTS, stands for "Regional Equipment Operating Training School." They just shorten everything: COMSAT, "Computer Security"; OPSAT, "Operation Security." They have a lot of acronyms for everything, which makes it quicker. My wife understands when we talk because she is in the Air Force too, but when we get in another group of people, and we start using acronyms to shorten things, they don't know what we're talking about. So the Air Force has a language all to their selves.

Narrator: Is there any advice that you could give to someone who was looking to join the Air Force?

Haynes: Yeah, I think it was a good career for me. I was living in Kansas City at the time and had a part time job and wasn't making very good money and I thought the job was going to come

to an end anyway. I was poor. I didn't have any money to go to college or anything so I thought, "I am going to join the Air Force." I was long haired and long beard, all my friends were, and I told them and they were "like what," no way. Yeh, I got to join the Air Force, and once that popped in my head, because I had my 24 year old, he was one year old then, and I thought I had to do something. I had a child and it would make life better for him, so I joined the Air Force and never had any regrets for it, so I think it was a good deal for me.

Narrator: Did something influence you?

Haynes: Yeah, probably just, like I said I not having money to go to college, get a better job because I worked for that minimum wage you know, and I was only working part time and the job was slowing down, and I knew it was going to come to an end, so I thought I needed to do something, so I cut my hair an went to the military.

Narrator: Well, we would like to thank you for coming and allowing us to interview you.

Haynes: Sure, no problem, appreciate it.