David L. Jordan
Narrator

Wayne Clark
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New York State Military Museum
Interviewers

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Radisson Hotel
Rochester, New York

INT: This is an interview at the Radisson Hotel Rochester, New York, the 23rd of August 2005, approximately 10:30 AM. Interviewers are Wayne Clark and Mike Russert. Could you give me your full name, date of birth, and place of birth, please?
DJ: David Lovett Jordan; March 21, 1934; Lyons, New York.

INT: Okay, what was your educational background prior to entering the service?
DJ: I was a high school graduate attending RIT on a scholarship, and wasn't ready to settle down. The draft was breathing down my neck, so I didn't want to be in the front lines of Korea so I volunteered for the Air Force [laughs] and went to Sampson Air Force Base.

INT: You decided to go into the Air Force because you didn't want to be on the ground?
DJ: Actually I went to the Federal Building in Rochester, to the Army, and said, "I'm in college but I'm not studying; I'm not settled down. I've got to get the military out of the way. I came down to volunteer for my two-year tour of duty." When you got drafted, that would be two years in the Army, and he said, "You don't want to get killed, do ya?" And I said, "What?" And he said, "The two year guys get sent through boot camp and straight to the front lines in Korea." He took my arm and took me down the hall and said, "I think you should talk to this fella." I remember a lot of stripes and a blue uniform. It was the first blue uniform I'd ever seen, because remember in World War II, the Army and the Air Force were all white. I didn't want to go for four years but I didn't want to be killed [laughs], so I took my best option [laughs]. For about two weeks I was very sorry because I thought four years, that's forever when you're a young man. I soon started adjusting and it was fine. It turns out it was the best thing I ever did.

INT: Where did you go for your basic training?
DJ: Sampson Air Force Base; Geneva, New York; thirteen weeks. Towards the end of basic I got sick and was in the hospital there for three days, and then around February 1, 1953, they flew us down to Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi for electronic countermeasures training, which was six hours a day, six days a week for about ten months with electrical engineers teaching us, so it was quite a thorough education in

electronics. From there, I was sent to a troop carrier squadron in southern Japan, a place called Ashiya Air Force Base. They said, "We don't even know what you are, but we need warm bodies. Would you like to be on air placement, a cook, or a supply?" There were six of us that had graduated in electronics, and we had a big ego about that. We'd been told that it cost $250,000 per man to put us through that school, so we were pretty proud and thought that that's what we would end up doing. It shocked us that we weren't going to be doing that. They said, "We need warm bodies, and we're going to fill you in where needed. Your background means nothing to us." [Laughs]

INT: Did you ever do anything that was connected to that?
DJ: I never worked on a piece of electronics from then on after all that training. The six of us have stayed in touch all these years. A couple of them have passed away, but we have annual reunions. We all ended up in a C-47 troop carrier unit in Seoul, South Korea that made a big name for itself during the Korean War. I got there on Christmas Eve of 1953. The war had ended, but it was a great time to be there because you felt safe but you could see what war does – all the bombed out buildings, and the terrible effect on children, and the streets were full of orphans who were freezing to death. I've been up close to ten-year-old girls in the middle of January that had nothing but newspaper tied around them to try to keep warm [DJ demonstrates wrapping with hands], no place to sleep at night. The first thing our commanding officers asked us to do was to write home, write to our churches, and try to get children's clothing, and we set up orphanages. By the following winter when I came home, life was a thousand percent better in South Korea than it was the first winter that I was there.

INT: Was this something official…
DJ: The war had stopped and the civilians had had a chance to fix up their house, to plant crops, to get the children off the street, find out what happened to their parents. Some were in North Korea and couldn't get back down to South Korea for political reasons, and so on.

INT: What was your actual job?
DJ: My job when I got to the, it was a 6461st Troop Carrier Squadron, which during part of the war was the 21st Troop Carrier Squadron. We were C-47s, and we did clandestine missions. To this day, there's a branch of the Air Force known as the Air Commandos, so we were the beginning of what today is known as the Air Commandos, who were at Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, to be exact, in Florida. These missions ended by the time I arrived there, but I hear about them through the history of the organization and by going to the reunions, [from?] the pilots who were there, when it was hot, when the shooting was going on. For instance when the Marines were surrounded at the Chosin Reservoir, our airplanes were the ones who evacuated the Marines out of there. The other stories that I've heard was equipping a C-47 with guns, and that was repeated again in Vietnam. It was an unusual, the C-47 is just a cargo plane, but they actually used it in Korea in some instances as a gunship. Our outfit was the one that did that. There was a captain at that time, Heinie Aderholt, who is now a retired two-star general – still living – and I spent

four days with him a year ago. He tells of putting napalm on C-47s and dropping it. He talks about the paint that's on the underside of an airplane so it's more camouflaged from the ground. These were some of the first uses of that, and at the time, if you were a captain, you might get chewed out by the general for doing that. It was a radical idea that wasn't, they talked about the brass, the Air Force Academy graduates, people like that who wanted to fight a war by building bigger bombers, dropping more bombs, flying at high altitudes, and the World War II pilots said you couldn't win a war that way. My outfit always believed more in small airplanes. When Vietnam broke out, they proved it again because they went into the Ho Chi Minh Trail and could knock out thirty trucks a night where the B-36s weren't getting that many from thirty-eight thousand feet up or something.

INT: Were you a crew member yourself?
DJ: No, when I arrived in Korea on Christmas Eve, I was met at the airplane with my radar credentials, electronic countermeasures credentials, and [someone] said, "Who's Jordan?" [DJ raises had to say] "I am, sir." Then he said, "I want you to work in the orderly room. I saw you had good marks in English in high school. I know you can spell." I said, "Yes, sir, but I don't know how to type." He said, "I'll send you to typing school in Japan." [Chuckles] He never did, and I was frozen in rank. I'm not eligible for promotion because I'm working outside of my career field. Midway through the year, we worked seven days a week. I'm banging away on my hunt-and-peck, with my hunt-and-peck system on my typewriter. I did officers' effectiveness reports. I didn't write them, but I had to type them. They had to be letter perfect with no strikeovers, and of course that's tough to do when you're a hunt-and-peck typist. I'd get all the way through and the last word I'd strikeover [laughs] and I'd have to start over again. It would take me an hour to type a document that a good typist could type in five minutes [chuckles], but that's typical of military inefficiency sometimes. I think that's a very good example.

We worked seven days a week and one Sunday afternoon, the master sergeant who was my boss said to me right out of the blue, "Jordan, you're a good airman. I'm going to see that you get a promotion. You deserve to be promoted." He tore up my records and made me new records, and he took the radar off my records. He said, "Now get your rear-end over to the other side of the base tomorrow and pass the personnel test. Don't let me down." So I did. So I became a personnel specialist instead of a radar specialist – illegally, a court martial offense if the master sergeant got caught doing that, but he knew it was the right thing to do and it was a way around the bureaucracy.

I was a personnel specialist and did officers' records after I came back from Korea, for two more years in the metropolitan area of New York City – first at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, then at Manhattan Beach Air Force Station in Brooklyn. We did overseas processing. My job was to meet the second lieutenant who just got his college degree at whatever university and his gold bar. He'd have to report to – by then I was a sergeant – "You have to go see Sergeant Jordan." I would welcome him and make up all of his forms – his insurance forms, his allotments, next of kin. I would say, "Oh, you have one

gold bar. You need another one. They gave you the wrong color belt. Your shoes don't fit." I mean, that's what I had to do, and then cut the orders to wherever they were going. They might be going to Iceland, to Germany, so we were processing them directly from college life into active duty in the European or North Atlantic region. I also was put in charge of a reserve unit that was called Moars Mobilization Assignment Air Force Reserve, and these were all World War II officers – captains, majors, lieutenant colonels – who were in the Air Force Reserve and had to do two weeks of active duty per year plus two days a week, a month, I'm sorry. I was in charge of all of that, making sure they reported whatever their needs were from a personnel specialist viewpoint. I found that a fascinating job. I knew I was going to get out of the Air Force and go to college. It was kind of neat to have a major who was of Director of Admissions at Rutgers University [laughs] who said, "Jordan, I'll get you in Rutgers if you wanna go there." It turned out that it was a big break for me when that master sergeant tore up my records in Korea. It was a fantastic break for me.

INT: So you did go to Rutgers then.
DJ: No [laughs]. No, I got out in September of '56. I'd been accepted to OCS – by then loved the Air Force – but I knew my parents would be disappointed if I didn't go back to college. I did and I stayed in the active Reserves for eight more years, did some two-week tours to help pay for college. I had the GI Bill, came home and worked in the summertime, and eventually became an optometrist.

INT: You said you spent another eight years in the Reserves. What rank did you finish up in?
DJ: I could never make any more rank. I was a staff sergeant when I got off from active duty after eight years in the Reserves. That's why I finally gave up on it. There was no, nobody was making rank in those days. You had to have a spot to move up to staff sergeant and so on. Once I was an optometrist, I could have gone back in, but by then I had a wife and children. I was taken in as a partner in a large practice here in Rochester and doing well financially. Never looked back, lost all contact with the Air Force for probably the next thirty years and then all of a sudden the Gypsies about ten years ago started having reunions, so I love staying in touch with the guys.

INT: Can I go back a little bit… What were your living conditions like in Korea? Where did you live?
DJ: As I recall, there were about 150 Americans. We lived in tents, and we were stationed with the 13th Royal Hellenic Flight. Remember the Korean War was the United Nations war. There were Turks near us; there were English near us; there were Aussies near us, but we actually ate and slept and showered with the Greeks. The 13th Royal Hellenic Flight, now the history is being written of that and we have correspondence. I get email directly from Greece from some of the Greeks who were there. That was an experience, just for a young guy to be exposed, so exposed to another culture. The Greeks threw great parties once a month when their supply ship came in. They had the same airplanes that we had. We know that two of those planes are still flying. We have the

whole history of the airplanes and where they are today. There's some talk of deactivating the two planes, and there's some talk about the American Kyushu Gypsies maybe going to Greece to see that happen. There's some interest in that.

INT: Are those planes privately owned or owned by the government?
DJ: No, as I understand it they're still part of the Greek military. By email, I received pictures of the planes and they have the striped camouflaged look, so I assume…

INT: So you ate with them. Did you have Greek food a lot? What was the food?
DJ: No, I should say that they lived with us. The food was American, typical American chow hall. The chow hall would have an American officer and an American sergeant in charge, but all the work was really done by Koreans. There was a great effort by the United States Government to find jobs for Koreans, and so everyday there would be a long… We were on an island in the middle of the Han River, and there was a long bridge, temporary bridge – the main bridge had been bombed out – and it had a guard shack. Every day the Koreans would line up who worked on the base. They'd have to be strip searched coming on the base, strip searched going off the base, but you could hire a sixteen-year-old boy for about twenty-four dollars a month that would do your laundry, shine your shoes, press your pants, clean your tent, you know. The barber was Korean. The pillowcases and the sheets were washed and ironed. They put as many Korean civilians as they could to work right in our compound, and it would be that way on any base in the Far East at that time. We were in four to six men per tent. They didn't usually have six in there; it was more common to have four. Each tent was heated with a potbelly stove that burned oil in the wintertime. Guys would, I wasn't on flying status but most of the guys were, and they'd go to Japan and back. We were just like what a cargo airline would be in the United States; you fly from A to B to C to D delivering cargo, mail, sick people, dignitaries. We had a plane that was plush that flew Syngman Rhee, the President of South Korea. The Army generals, people like that, who would be coming in and out of Seoul, our airplanes flew them. When Marilyn Monroe came over there, Jayne Mansfield, our planes are the ones that flew them.

INT: Did you get to see any of the USO Shows?
DJ: I did not, but I got close enough to see Marilyn Monroe from a distance. I was picked for an Honor Guard to go to Syngman Rhee's house one day, and that was an experience I'll always remember. I was face-to-face with Syngman Rhee. I have a lot of pictures that unfortunately have all faded out now. Color film was fairly new then; it didn't last. He lived in a white marble house up on the mountainside, and that was considered a no-no. Certain targets in Seoul were off limits by mutual agreement of both sides, and that was one of them. However, there was a camouflaged net over the house. There were other places in Seoul where there was no war damage. There are some historical things, buildings, Changdeok Seoul (?), some place we visited that has lily ponds and a lot of old, I believe it goes back to when they had a king and a queen, the old castles. Some of those things were in perfect condition. Most of Seoul was flattened because it had been overrun by both sides so many times. As I was saying, Syngman Rhee was the President

of South Korea then and we flew him… The occasion when we went up to his house was for the Honor Guard. He presented our outfit with a Presidential Unit Citation for the things we had done when the war was going on.

INT: Did you ever have – I think you alluded to this – much interaction with the Korean people themselves?
DJ: Oh, yes. Everything was off limits when you went off the base except the main road. We were not allowed at that time to stop and buy food or drink or clothes or anything, or go in any civilian house. It was a court martial offense. There were those who did it, especially at night. I mean, the minute you went off base, there were prostitutes lined up soliciting, that sort of thing. People living in tin and cardboard shacks, Yong Dong Po was the village; there was a train station. I understand that the island that we were on is all high-rise today. I have pictures of it from one of my friends who was stationed with me. His son is a career man in the Air Force. He was stationed in Korea and they went over to visit. It is unbelievable the changes that this sandy island that was nothing but tents is now all high-rise buildings, and the squadron area where I lived, they left some of the planes there. It's now a playground for Korean children I'm told. They can climb in and out of these old Air Force…

INT: Do you have any desire to go back?
DJ: I would like to see it again, I would.

INT: With the help you did with the orphans and so on, was that official or unofficial when your officers asked to get in touch with your churches back home or was that just something an officer decided?
DJ: Well, we were, as I recall, five miles to eight miles outside of the center of Seoul, and the orphanages were more in Seoul than out where we were. There were no orphanages on the island. Once you crossed to the mainland, Yong Dong Po was like a suburb of Seoul. I don't know for sure of any orphanages there, but in downtown Seoul I visited two different orphanages. That district then was 8th Army, under General Maxwell Taylor as I recall. I believe it was the policy of 8th Army to get the… Seoul, that's where the general was. That's where the headquarters was, so we had to get these kids who were starving and freezing, we had to get them off the streets. Yes, I think it was probably a policy maybe all the way down from Washington.

INT: When you left the service, you said you used the GI Bill for college?
DJ: Yes. Four years.

INT: Did you join any veterans' organizations at all?
DJ: No, I never have joined any veterans' organizations.

INT: And you said you have kept in contact with others who served with you?
DJ: Well, with the exception of the Kyushu Gypsy Squadron Association, but if you're referring to VFW, then no.

INT: No, just anyone that served with you. Well, yes, I was but…
DJ: There was no opportunity until about ten years ago, but the way I heard about it was when Bill Clinton was President and they dedicated the Korean War Memorial in Washington, D.C. One of the fellows – he lived in central Pennsylvania – called me and said, "Why don't you drive down, stay all night with me and we'll drive into Washington and see the President dedicate it." So I did, and there were tremendous crowds there. There were lots of Koreans there, too – Korean veterans, Republic of South Korean Air Force, Army personnel. When the President came, people were packed tight as sardines trying to push up and get closer to the platform where he was speaking. I'm seeing all these veterans with their ribbons, with their hats, with their t-shirts, and I kept looking for something that said 'Gypsies' or 'Kyushu Gypsies', and finally about twenty-five feet away I saw a t-shirt that said 'Kyushu Gypsies' on it, and I hollered out, "Kyushu Gypsy!" And there were so many people, I mean we're only about twenty feet or so apart, but there were so many people packed between us, it took a while before we could meet each other. It turned out it was Roland Miller from Las Vegas. He was an insurance man there and had been a Gypsy, and he told me, he said, "You know we have reunions now." I said, "No, I didn't know." So once I found that out, I got my name on the list and paid my dues [laughs] and enjoy going to that every year.

INT: How often have you gone?
DJ: I've made every one. It's in San Diego in September and I may have to miss it this year – not sure my doctor is going to clear me for that trip. We'll see what he says.

INT: How do you think your time in the service changed or had an effect on your life?
DJ: I probably would have been a farmer I would guess if I hadn't gone in the military.

INT: Do you think even going to RIT…
DJ: I was not ready to be a student at all. No way [laughs]. I came from a long line of farmers, and my father wanted me on the farm. He had put that work ethic into me, and I really, I was confused. I really didn't know what I wanted. It took me a long time after I started college, even after the Air Force, but I started meeting people in the Air Force that I looked up to tremendously – to this day made a tremendous influence on my life, some of the people I met. They taught me not to waste your time, not to sit around in the beer gardens every night, to go to church on Sunday, to work two jobs if you have to to get ahead. I said that's what I'm going to do, and once I got a taste of college I didn't know where I was going to get the money. One summer I had three jobs I worked – anything I could find part-time all during college, from raking leaves to cleaning gutters to planting strawberries, you name it. That's why when kids today say college is expensive and those kinds of student loans, [shrugs] none of them want to really work either, not the way I did. I'm not bragging, but that's the only way I got through college was because I was a farm boy with a work ethic. I finally found something that I liked, and it was a fit for me. I wanted to be self-employed, that was instilled in me by my father. Yes, the Air Force has been an advantage to me all my life, and every single time that I put a patient in the chair to do an eye exam, there's something about my Air Force experience that has

helped me. Being a doctor is being a people person, and when you're in the Air Force you're exposed to people, people, people from all over, from every walk of life, from all over the world. I would not trade my Air Force experience for college. My Air Force experience was more important in, you know, a well-used phrase: It made a man out of me, made me appreciate what you should do to get ahead in life. You see the people on the Air Force that are getting ahead are the ones who are opening the books and studying and furthering their education whether they're a pilot or whether they're an airman. The ones that go out and get drunk every night in the bars, today they weed them out. When I was in the Air Force, there were a lot of, we called them rum-dums. They were alcoholics who were hiding. I hear today you can't be that way and stay in the military. It was a good experience to see both sides of human character.

INT: Would you hold that photograph up?
DJ: [Holds up black and white photograph.]

INT: Now where and when was that taken?
DJ: This was taken in the capitol building, South Korea in the summer of 1954.
INT: Okay, got it. Thank you.
DJ: Yep. [Reads writing on the back of the photograph]: 'Anti-communist meeting to delegates to Seoul meeting'. The building actually had been bombed and so on, but apparently some of it was still in use. You could see the black smoke coming out where it had covered some of the windows and so on.
INT: Thank you.
DJ: Okay.