

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Melvin Lester

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Veterans Remember Oral History project

Interview # VRC-A-L-2016-046

Melvin Lester, who served in the Air Force during the height of the Cold War, including a tour in Vietnam, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Veterans Remember – Cold War* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Oct 4, 2016 Location: Conference room of Baymont Hotel, Springfield, IL

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Paula Seifert, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Transcript
being processed

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 2:02 / 2.03 hrs.

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on January 24, 2017.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

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Abstract

Melvin Lester, *Veterans Remember*, VRC-A-L-2016-046

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Melvin Lester was born on August 25, 1940 in Grafton, IL where he spent his childhood. In 1957, at the age of seventeen, he enlisted in the Air Force, where he served for twenty-two years. During the Cuban Missile Crisis in the fall of 1962 Lester was stationed at Randolph Air Force Base in Texas, where he served as a flight mechanic with the 3300th Support Squadron. He served in Vietnam from September 19, 1963 to September 5, 1964, where he worked as an airplane mechanic with the 34th Tactical Group at Bien Hoa Air Base. He was also stationed at Bienhoa, Soc Trang, Nha trang, Da Nang and the country of Thailand.

After he returned to the United States, he was stationed at Charleston Air Force Base, South Carolina and later Travis AFB, California performing as a Flight Engineer on C-141s, a four engine jet cargo airplane. While at Travis, he participated in the final evacuation of Saigon in 1975. I spent twenty-three days flying from Clark Air Base, Philippines to Saigon and back. Other assignments took him to Guam, Antarctica and various other locations. He is the father of two daughters and grandfather to four.

Subject Headings/Key Words: United States Air Force; Cuban Missile Crisis; Berlin Airlift; 34th Tactical Group; 3300 Support Squadron; air force mechanic during Vietnam War; Thailand during Vietnam War; Guam; evacuation of Saigon, South Vietnam in 1975; Antarctica

Note to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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