

## Ronald J. Coulston

**Interviewer:** Today we are at the Nevada State Veteran's Home in Boulder City, Nevada. The date is May 11, 2006. We are interviewing Ronald J. Coulston. My name is Shannon Berndt and our cameraman is Ed Feldman. Thank you so much for helping us do this project, your willingness to be interviewed. Let's go back a little bit and tell us a little bit about what you were doing before you enlisted into the army.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Driving a truck.

**Interviewer:** Driving truck. What did you haul?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** \_\_\_\_\_ (00:49)

**Interviewer:** [Laughter] How old were you?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Sixty-eight.

**Interviewer:** You were 68?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No. You mean when I went into the army?

**Interviewer:** Yeah. How old were you when you were driving truck?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Hm. Sixteen.

**Interviewer:** Sixteen. You were pretty young to be driving truck.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Well, my dad owned the trucks so I got to drive them.

**Interviewer:** So you got to do it. You learned early to drive trucks.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** So that was your family business was a trucking business?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** What made you decide to enlist into the army?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh, I didn't have a reason. I just enlisted.

**Interviewer:** You and your friends didn't get together and say, hey...

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No.

**Interviewer:** No. What did your parents think?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** They was for it. They had to sign for me. I went in while I was 17.

**Interviewer:** When you were 17. Boy, that is young. Where were you living when you joined the service?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** In Watsonville, California.

**Interviewer:** Oh, Watsonville \_\_\_\_\_ (02:11). How come you chose the army?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Mm, well, they had an enlistment place so it is where I enlisted.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** So I---there---that was the only that I had [overlapping voices] to enlist.

**Interviewer:** That was your only choice, huh. Well, tell me about your first days of the service. Did you think you had made a mistake?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No.

**Interviewer:** You liked it? Boot camp?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No.

**Interviewer:** [Laughter] Was it pretty rough?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** It wasn't rough for me. I \_\_\_\_\_ (03:15). Well, I don't know what to say.

**Interviewer:** Sometimes, you know, maybe I think in earlier times men were a little tougher than they are now, so you just took it with a grain of salt and did what you were told, huh?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yep.

**Interviewer:** So what did you do in the army? What was your job?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Artillery.

**Interviewer:** Artillery—what does that include?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** The artillery handles the guns.

**Interviewer:** Big guns...

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Well, I was on 40 millimeter and machine guns.

**Interviewer:** Oh. Forty millimeter and machine guns. Wow. Did you see combat?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Not the way that you think.

**Interviewer:** Oh.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** I was in Korea and on the DMZ. When you was there they just shot at you.

**Interviewer:** Oh, they did.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah, but we couldn't---we couldn't shoot back.

**Interviewer:** Because this was after---this was after the official war was over and you were...

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** In the demilitarized...

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Right.

**Interviewer:** ...zone. So you were actually in Korea during your time in the army?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** How long were you over there?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Sixteen months.

**Interviewer:** Sixteen months. Were you ever fearful for your life?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No.

**Interviewer:** No.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Well, bullets were going over my head. When they shoot at you, you hear the bullets, but it didn't hit me. They didn't hit you.

**Interviewer:** Well, you are lucky. Did you have any casualties in your unit when you were over there?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No.

**Interviewer:** No.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Not that I know of.

**Interviewer:** Pretty peaceful then. How about the food and provisions? Did you have good food while you were over there?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Right. Most everybody that's in the service complained about the food, but I didn't see anything wrong with it.

**Interviewer:** (Chuckling) Shows you were staunch again. You just---how did you pass the time when you had free time?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Free time?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, like did you work on the weekends? Did you---were you able to have passes to go into town, or...

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh, yeah. We had passes. You would go into this town and order wine.

**Interviewer:** And what did you do for recreation? Did you ever do anything?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** I didn't have any one thing that I wanted---that I could do...

**Interviewer:** You didn't.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** ...in the service because I---most everybody that I knew they had something to do. Well, I didn't have anything to do.

**Interviewer:** You didn't go along with them and do it?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No.

**Interviewer:** Did you make lots of friends?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Do you still keep in contact with them?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No. I met a few here in town.

**Interviewer:** That you knew from...

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Oh. That was nice.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** But I didn't keep in touch with them because I didn't like them to begin with. So I talked to them a little bit and then after that I forgot them.

**Interviewer:** How did you celebrate the holidays like Christmas and Thanksgiving over there?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Well, they fed us good on the holidays. But I didn't celebrate any because I was away from home and it didn't seem right for us to celebrate without anybody to celebrate with.

**Interviewer:** Did your family and friends send you letters and packages?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh, yeah. My mother sent goods and packages, but I don't even remember what she sent.

**Interviewer:** It was probably some baked goods or something.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh, yeah.

**Interviewer:** Something that you needed, too. What skills or lessons did you learn?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Skills. I learned how to shoot guns. That's---what---something they do, and who didn't?

**Interviewer:** Tell me about your most memorable moment.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Most memorable moment.

**Interviewer:** Or most memorable experience.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Hm. Well, they sent me from Fort Lewis up to Yakima. You know where Yakima is?

**Interviewer:** In Washington.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** In Washington and to shoot the guns. It was the only place where you could shoot them. That was my greatest memory, shooting the guns.

**Interviewer:** Did you like shooting the 40 millimeters and the machine guns? Did you learn on other guns also?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Carbine is the gun, the long gun, to carry around on your shoulder. You asked me a question and I don't remember. I am thinking I got---I have memories of it.

**Interviewer:** Fort Lewis is where you were in boot camp?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No, boot camp was in Fort Ord and Fort \_\_\_\_ (11:45) For eight weeks, each one.

**Interviewer:** And then Fort Lewis was just where you were stationed for a time?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** And then you went to Yakima, Washington, to learn, to train on the guns.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No, when I came back from Korea I went to Fort Lewis.

**Interviewer:** Oh, when you came back from Korea, okay. Okay, let's see. Do you recall the day you left the service?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah, it was---I remember when I left. Ain't that something?

**Interviewer:** Did you go directly home, do you remember?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** Were your mom and dad happy to see you?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Well, as happy as they could be.

**Interviewer:** [Laughter] Well, what did you do to get your life going again after the service? What did...

**Ronald J. Coulston:** I went to work for my dad driving truck and I worked there for a while. And I worked in a---I worked at the---I worked on the mushroom factory. All I did was a job. And I worked---they pay---they shovel \_\_\_\_ (13:45). So I did.

**Interviewer:** And how long did you work there?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh, just a few months. I didn't like shoveling so I quit.

**Interviewer:** And what did you do for your lifelong work?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** I found work---I went to work at the Sahara.

**Interviewer:** At the Sahara?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** I worked there for 20 years.

**Interviewer:** What did you do there?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Parked cars.

**Interviewer:** Oh! How did you end up in the Las Vegas valley?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** My brother went to work here at the Fremont marking tickets at keno and he asked me if I would be interested in working there. I said yeah, it was better than what I'm doing.

**Interviewer:** So you were still living in California then?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah. So I drove here and---44 years ago.

**Interviewer:** Forty-four years ago.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Well, I'm sixty-two. I guess that was 44 years.

**Interviewer:** And you have lived in Las Vegas that whole time, or did you live in Henderson or Boulder City?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Las Vegas.

**Interviewer:** So you worked at the Sahara for 20 years. Did you work any place else?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah. I marked tickets at the Fremont when I started here, and the Las Vegas Club, and I drove cab for a while. What else did I do. I guess that's it.

**Interviewer:** And you have family here?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Oh yeah. All the family is here.

**Interviewer:** I noticed the picture. A very nice looking family. Is that a picture---in the uniform---is that a picture of you?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Yeah. That's the only one I kept.

**Interviewer:** The only one you kept. It's very nice looking. Are you a member of any veterans' organizations?

**Ronald J. Coulston:** No.

**Interviewer:** No. All right, well, unless there's any other memories you would like to share with us, that's all the questions I have for you.

**Ronald J. Coulston:** Well, I thank you.

**Interviewer:** Well, thank you for helping us with this. We really appreciate it. It was very nice meeting you.