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# Leon Stuart Glancy – Life During the Vietnam Conflict

By Leon Stuart Glancy

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## Box 6 Folder 11

Oral Interview conducted by Summer Glancy

Transcript copied by Devon Robb

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Brigham Young University – Idaho

SG: Please state your name.

LG: My full name is Leon Stuart Glancy.

SG: Where were you born?

LG: I was born in Layton, Pennsylvania June 11, 1944.

SG: How old were you when you first heard about the Vietnam Conflict?

LG: Actually I was in the Navy, and I didn't really know that there was a place called Vietnam, and...well maybe I had been aware of it by that time but I really wasn't aware of that there was a war going on of any kind, a serious war anyways, and I was nineteen years old.

SG: What were your first impressions about Vietnam?

LG: The first time that I was aware that it was a serious thing was when the North Vietnamese in 1964, in the fall of 1964, no I guess it was the summer, they had sent some attack boats of some kind, they sent them out into the Gulf of Tonkin and attacked US ships, and we retaliated by bombing North Vietnam, and that was sometime around August I think it was of 1964. That was my first indication and real knowledge that there was something serious going on.

SG: Where you ever in combat during the war?

LG: Well, I received what they called combat pay, because I was in a combat zone. But I never saw anybody hurt, everybody in our squadron came back alive. I was – by the way it might be good for this recording to know that I was in a squadron, an aircraft squadron of A-3 sky warriors and we were assigned to the ship *USS Coral Sea*. I made three cruises two of them aboard the *Coral Sea* and one of them aboard the *USS Enterprise* and during that time I never knew anybody that did not come back. We had detachments aboard other ships that I understand we did lose some crew members, but I never knew them. I never knew a single person who died in Vietnam. A kid that I went through high school with got shot up a little bit, but that's it. I never knew anybody that really got hurt. So for me Vietnam was kind of a painless experience in that regard.

SG: When you were aboard the *Coral Sea* and the *Enterprise* where did the ships sail to, like, where did you serve on those ships?

LG: Well, we...a standard deployment was to leave San Francisco and go to Hawaii and then go through an operations readiness inspection. And then from there we would go to the Philippines and take on munitions at Civic Bay in the Philippines and then we would go into the Gulf of Tonkin, and we called that Yankee Station. And there we would cruise up and down and do our air operations, from Yankee Station and we would be replenished at sea by ammunition, food, and fuel, and we wouldn't have to go back into

port if we didn't want to. But they would come back in about once a month for some little rest, relaxation to take the stress off of us a little bit.

SG: You mentioned something about an Operations Ready Systems that you would prepare for in Hawaii. What exactly is that?

LG: Operations Readiness Inspection.

SG: Yeah, what is that?

LG: That was war games.

SG: War games?

LG: Yeah we played war games. We'd use, our aircraft would be loaded with target bombs, not the big 500 pound bombs, these things might weigh about, I think they were called a Mark-5, and they weighed about 20-25 pounds, or something like that. And they would be used to test our bombing systems and effectiveness. The type of plane I worked on was a bomber, was assigned a designation of attack aircraft, but this thing was a monster aircraft. Largest aircraft ever stationed aboard a carrier. It had bomb bay doors that would open up and drop the bombs. It could also act as a tanker cause they could put a big bladder up there in place of the bomb, in the bomb bay put a big rubber bladder full of fuel and then they'd have a reel would go up in there with a hose that would slide out behind the aircraft. They wouldn't have to open the bomb bay doors 'cause they had a little device that they would put into the bomb bay door that the hose went through. And so the doors they kept open and the reel would trail out behind us where we could refuel other aircraft. We also had mission[s] of electronic countermeasure so we had those three capabilities of dropping bombs, refueling aircraft and electronics countermeasures. And the refueling and electronic countermeasures end up being our biggest job.

SG: What was your rank and some of your assignments on the aircraft carriers?

LG: Well, my first assignment aboard the carrier was what a lot of people get. I got mess duty. That means I went to the mess decks and for a couple of days I helped in the kitchen so to speak, in the galley, cleaning pots and pans, pouring big cans of food into big pots to be cooked. I did that for a couple of days then they moved me over into the mess decks where my job was just cleaning up tables, keeping the mess decks clear, milk, and coffee, juice in the dispensers, napkins, just keeping the mess decks clean, swabbing the mess deck. I didn't have to work in the scullery. The scullery is where they cleaned the metal plates that we ate off of, the metal plates, the cups, and the utensils. I never worked in there and thank goodness 'cause that was a stinky hot nasty place.

SG: Did you volunteer for the service or were you drafted into it?

LG: I had actually volunteered. My feelings as a child was that I always liked things military. And as a kid I played Army all the time with my buddies. When it came time I

was a senior in high school, and my brother being in the Air Force, him just being in the Air Force had influenced me to look at the Air Force and I went down to the Air Force recruiter, passed their tests, took their tests, got their qualifications, and I was planning on joining the Air Force after high school but my parents got wind of it and they didn't like it. My brother happened to be visiting and he was an officer and he says, "You don't want to go and enlist in that, you want to go to college." And so they talked me out of it, I went to college, but in the second semester of college I still didn't know what it wanted and I went down to see the Air Force recruiter in Provo, Utah, I was at Brigham Young University. I went down to see the Air Force recruiter, his door was locked, and across the hall was the Navy, and I just walked in there and found out that they had airplanes that went aboard carriers, that sounded like fun to me. And so I enlisted in the Navy and the only guarantee that I had was that I would be in aviation which might mean I might do great wonderful things with the airplanes or I might just be pushin' them. There was no guarantee. But my scores were in the high area, and so I was guaranteed, well wasn't guaranteed, but sent to electronic schools, weapons on the aircraft, and electronic weapons and was trained in that area.

SG: Back home in America, I guess during, when you were out in the war, or overseas, what were your feeling[s] about the drafting process and those who resisted the draft?

LG: Well, I guess, since I had volunteered, it didn't bother me any. And then, we did receive some people in the Navy who were drafted. I had a few of my, by the time I was on the Enterprise, they were drafting people into the Navy also, and so I got some draftees in there and they worked out just fine there wasn't any...around that time there was a lot of people they enlisted in the Navy, so they wouldn't have to be ground pounders in the Army, so they enlisted in the Navy to avoid the draft, then we did get some who were drafted into the Navy, so they wouldn't have to be ground pounders in the Army, so they enlisted in the Navy to avoid the draft, then we did get some who were drafted into the Navy. I had no bad feelings about them. I had no bad feelings about the draft, I still kind of feel that it would not be a bad thing to do. That's how I feel about it.

SG: Did you meet and make any new friendships during the war?

LG: Did I what?

SG: Did you meet and make any new friendships during the war?

LG: Yes, I had, the day that I enlisted, there was a guy, I enlisted in Salt Lake City, and there was a guy from Richfield, not Richfield, but down south of Delta, I can't remember the name, but Delta is good enough...who enlisted who's name was Ray Stevenson. And we went through boot camp together. I ended up being a patrol leader in boot camp and he was an assistant to the boot camp commander, not boot camp, but our company commander, our enlisted company commander, how do you say it, this guy was a recruit, and Ray was a recruit also, and he assisted him. So he was one of our enlisted leaders. And we ended up going to the same electronic schools together in the Navy, and in the middle of electronic schools he was transferred to go to Officer's Candidate School. And

I later ran into him in Whidbey Island, Washington, you were a baby at the time. There were a few others that we met, on active duty, a gentlemen by the name of John Jordan, his wife and your mother were pregnant at the same time and had babies within weeks of each other at the Naval Hospital on Whidbey Island, and John and I ended up being on my last cruise was his next to last cruise, and his next cruise was his last cruise, he resigned his commission and moved to Utah. And our families became friends in Utah.

SG: Besides sending you to electronics school, how did the Navy train and prepare you for combat?

LG: Well, one of the things aboard ship, is that everybody has to defend the ship.

SG: What does that mean?

LG: For me because I wasn't going to man a gun or a missiles system or anything like that when it came to the defense of the ship, you become an assistant to those who are trained to do this. And one of the things that we actually became actually trained on was fighting fires on the flight deck. So I went through flight deck firefighting training a couple times during the Navy. The first thing you are taught, is in boot camp, you're taught how to fight fire. You are put into chambers where there are fires going and there's smoke all over the place, you learn the, you are taught very quickly and easily the dangers of smoke inhalation and to avoid it and how thick and heavy and nasty it can be. It was a day of excitement on that training day. Later on we were trained to fight fires on flight decks on how to control the water, the water will carry the fire, the fuel fires on a flight deck will just roll wherever the water takes it cause the fuel is sitting on top of the water and just rolls with it and so you are taught to control that. And it's better with two teams rather than one, but I went through that fire fighting training a couple of times, I went through biological and atomic warfare training, on how to take care of myself with anti-biological agents, gas mask, things of this nature.

SG: Why did they put you through the atomic and biological training?

LG: Because if you were in an area that if a nuclear bomb were dropped in your area, or biological agent or chemical agents were dropped in your area, you had to be able to take care of yourself, so you were trained on this stuff. I would suggest probably not as thoroughly as the current-day soldiers are but we were trained with what we had. And at sea it could be different than if you are on land, 'cause at sea you can always guide the ship out of the area to where there is fresh air away from the agents, but you still have to take care of yourself and wash the ship down and stuff like that.

SG: So was it really a threat that there would be a nuclear bombing?

LG: Well these were the Cold War days. My plane was designed to deliver a nuclear weapon, it could do conventional weapons, but the original design was to deliver nuclear weapon, so I was also trained on loading nuclear bombs, and how they worked, I was trained on that, I was part of the nuclear weapons loading team also.

SG: Wow, okay, going back to your training here, is there anything you wish that the Navy would have told you before they sent you out?

LG: Actually I think the Navy gave a pretty good boot camp to me. And whatever training I received was a pretty good. You have to remember that my particular job was not to be a hand-to-hand combat job, I did receive rifle training, and pistol training, but it was what they called M1 carbine, and it was what they used during World War I, or not World War I but World War II and Korea. And these weapons were not the M16's. The M16's were in the military by that time, but we did not have them in our training, cause I guess they never expected us to really have to use them.

SG: What was your image of the Vietcong?

LG: My image of them was a bunch of infiltrators coming from North Vietnam. And that was the basic image I had of them. Though that was maybe a false image that was the image that I had, and also I had the image that they were some local people who were rebelling against the government.

SG: What is your opinion of the Vietnamese now?

LG: I have no negative feelings about them. They are a people who deserve to live and have their way of life. And that is what I felt then also. I felt that my service was actually helping them to become free from a communistic regime and though people might say we lost that war I think in certain degrees we won the war. And that is that the western influence on the whole Soviet Union and we outdid them and beat them, which meant that they could no longer support South Vietnam, and they could not put as much funds into that country, that country has a certain free economy, not a total free economy and total freedom, but because the Soviet Union was not supporting them, that they had to do things for themselves and they developed their own form of communism, they are still a communist country but there is a lot more freedom there than one would think so I think we did some good, but not maybe the good that we wanted.

SG: How did your life change as a result of the Vietnam War?

LG: My experience aboard ship during flight operation taught me about team work, cooperation, and having a 'can do' attitude about getting things done. It has affected my work ethic and my self confidence. I work hard and I have confidence in the things that I do and I think a lot of that was brought about because of my experience of working on the airplanes during the Vietnam War, you made things get done, you got things done. And that has affected my whole life.

SG: How did your religious beliefs help you cope with your military experience?

LG: I have always had faith in Jesus Christ. I've always believed in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Its God's church on earth. We had services aboard ship.

There was a chief petty officer who was designated by the Alameda Stake to be our group leader aboard ship and he organized us, and we had our regular sacrament services. They had a little lounge aboard the ship where there was a piano, some relaxed areas and current magazines, a small library and that's where we had our services. I attended services in Hong Kong one time in the LDS branch in Hong Kong. I've always had my faith. My faith sustains me in everything, my whole life, it wasn't like all of a sudden I'm gonna get religious because I'm in the military. It was just me; I was there all the time. There were things I did that perhaps I shouldn't have done, but I still do things I shouldn't do, but my faith has always been there, I believe in Christ and the church. I did a little missionary work by just telling people about the church. I did a little missionary work by just telling people about the church all the time. Actually helped one guy who wanted to get the lessons, unfortunately I guess this guy ended up being a little unstable, and he was actually taken off the ship in a strait jacket the next time we pulled into port, so much for that. But I met other LDS guys aboard ship and we associated together, we had a few of them in my squadron and so it was good. I did have one religious experience aboard ship. I had received my patriarchal blessing while I was still at BYU and it said I was to go on a mission for the church. I was in a situation, I was engaged to Dorothy, and yet I had this mission. So one day while I was waiting for the planes to come back so I could debrief the crews, I sat in the waiting room, got into a corner, and over against the wall, and I had a little prayer session, a private prayer session of whether I should marry Dorothy or go on a mission when my enlistment was up. And I received a very strong confirmation that I was to be married and not to serve a mission at that time. And so for me my mission is yet to come. It may be in this life or in the next, but I still have a mission to perform. I have been ordained a Seventy and I've been involved in missionary work in the local levels my whole life. I still think that there's a bigger mission waiting for me.

SG: According to your understanding what were America's goals in the Vietnam War?

LG: Well there was the big thing called the Domino Theory, that once one country would be communist, then the next one would go, then the next one would go, then the next one would go. Our job was to fight communism. And so our engagement in Vietnam was not only to try to help make those people free from communism which was invading their country but it was also to fight communism in general worldwide. So that was our job there was to fight communism and to help preserve freedom.

SG: How did the war affect the community that you came from?

LG: Well if you want to call them a community, Grayson, Kentucky, I don't know that it affected it all that much. It did 'cause I know that there were young men who came out of that area of Kentucky who died just like anywhere else in the United States. I think that part of Kentucky was more pro-America and supported our government's efforts. I don't think there were too many protestors from that part of the country.

SG: Did you hear about the anti-war sentiment that was going on in America while you were aboard ship?

LG: Oh yeah, that was there, but you have to understand our news to a certain extent was filtered. I guess for moral[e] purposes, so we didn't hear all the things that were happening. But again you have to remember we would see this when we were in California at Alameda. I mean right across the bay was San Francisco, and just up the bay from us, we were at Alameda just right north of that was Berkley, that's the University of Berkley, it was a big center for protest. And so we were in this anti-war environment to a certain extent there in California, and...I could never understand it, I thought we were trying to do good things. And so I did not understand this. The only thing that they were saying that might be true is that the Government didn't tell us the truth. And that's true. General Westmoreland, who was in charge of the Army in Vietnam, they would lie about their statistics on how many enemy killed and how many of our men were hurt. I guess that was for political purposes for him, for maybe to justify his commands, I don't know. That was the parts that I didn't find out until later were lies. But it didn't effect how I felt about the war. I still felt that we were trying to do a good thing and I'm proud of my service for trying to do a good thing. The actions against soldiers and so forth I never felt that and I never saw that. When we came back from our cruise, my cruises plural, we would go up to Whidbey Island, Washington, which was a Navy community. And so we never saw or felt it there. I was never in uniform outside of that area except before Vietnam really broke out I was never in uniform anywhere. Nobody ever attacked me because of my uniform or anything. They might recognize that I was military by my haircut because everyone else was starting to grow long hair. But I never felt any personal repercussions from it.

SG: Did you see a lot of drug use among soldiers during the Vietnam War?

LG: I didn't see it. Part of it might be that I was naïve. I did not grow up in that community, was not aware of that stuff, and I didn't see it until, Vietnam was still on, but it was towards the end. By that time I was in Dallas, Texas, I was at the Naval Air Station in Dallas, I was in fighter's squadron VF201 at the time, and I was in charge of the repair of our weapons systems, in charge of the maintenance shop. And we had a Marine in there that seemed just a little too happy, which I didn't quite recognize, I saw all these little seed[s] laying around, which I did not recognize what that was, I was really dumb and naïve, I received no training from the military to recognize this stuff. After a while I became smart that he and a couple of others Marines in our facility were smoking pot and but it wasn't until after I was out of the Navy due to my injury that I began to recognize. So that's what in the world was going on there. I was really, really naïve.

SG: You mentioned an injury. What injury was that?

LG: I had gotten fed up with the attitude of reservists. When I was in VF201, that was a reserve squadron, and I was in what was called the TARR program, the Training and Retention of Reservists, which meant that I had no sea duty except for maybe two weeks a year and no reenlistment bonus either. But I was with reservists who didn't want to be there because they had been drafted, and they were just doing their duty. I was with old equipment and I just wanted to work somewhere where there was a more of a positive 'can do' attitude like I told you earlier. The Navy taught me about being 'can do' and



working hard and accomplishing things. And I just felt that it was not happening where I was in the TARR program. And so I had put in for reenlistment back into the regular Navy and I was a specialty, so I had a \$10,000 reenlistment bonus, which back in those days was a lot of money, and I had received orders to go to Japan to be stationed aboard the USS uh...oh boy...not the *Roose*...there was the *Coral Sea*, the *Roosevelt*, and the *Midway*, they were all sister ships. It was the *Midway* that I was to be stationed on, which is headquartered in Yukasuka, Japan and I was going to be able to take my family with me, and I thought was a great opportunity. So I went up to Kentucky to visit my parents before I went overseas because I would be gone for three or four years. And while I was up there I was helping my brother clear some land using a tractor and the tractor overturned on top of me and ended my Navy career. That's the accident. So I am disability retired from the Navy.

SG: When you were in the Navy, did you feel that the military was engaging the best possible strategy to bring the war to an end?

LG: I had faith in my leaders, political and military. And so I thought we were doing the right things. I wasn't on the ground, I wasn't a strategist, I didn't see the things happening, I just saw it from out on the ship, which was we sent planes off and they bombed North Vietnam. We were involved, on my first cruise, we were involved in the bombings of North Vietnam on a regular basis. Like I said earlier, when the North Vietnamese sent some boats out to attack Navy ships, we did [unintelligible] raid against them. And after that there was no more bombing of North Vietnam. Until the North Vietnamese were involved with sending regular troops into the south, and it got quite serious and so there was a physical need to bomb North Vietnam, and when that happened I was still on my mess cooking duties. But I remember one night that the mess decks were cleared of the tables, there were elevator doors on the side of the mess decks which opened up and guys came up and started pushing tables back out of the way and then they started rolled bombs out and made an assembly plant where they put the fins on the bombs, armed them and took them to the flight deck on another set of elevators 'cause right below the mess decks were the places where they stored the bombs. And they bring them up and assemble them and put them on the elevator and take them up to the flight deck and they put them on the planes. This happens late at night, and in the morning I went up to the flight deck when I got off duty, I work from six at night until six in the morning and when I get off shift I went up to the flight deck to see what was happening and these planes were loaded, every plane up there was loaded down with bombs and later in the day they all took off and returned empty. We stood down for a day or two I think it was, we loaded them again and away they went again, and again, and again, and again, it went on until the end of the war that process was going on. Shortly after that happened I was transferred from the mess decks to my squadron where I started working the job that I was trained for. Everybody does a ninety day duty of mess cooking or cleaning cubicles, cleaning cubes, cubes are sleeping compartments, so everybody does this service for the ship because we can't afford to hire maids out there, to hire butlers you know, we have to do it ourselves. But that's when it started and it went on and on and on. And our planes have black stencils of bombs on the side of them for each bombing raid that they made. They started collecting the stencils on the side.

SG: What were your feelings about the final “peace” settlement?

LG: I wasn't all that happy. I wasn't happy that we lost the political will to win the war. I was glad that our prisoners of war came home. I was glad for that. I was glad for perhaps the healing of the nation. I was sad that we lost the political will to win this war. 'Cause when that happens ya know, when there is no political will to win the soldiers lose their desire, “Why am I here?” ya know?

SG: Uh huh.

LG: 'If I'm not here to win then I don't want to be here.' So it was definitely a morale problem. I was disappointed that they had lost the political will.

SG: How were returning veterans treated after the war?

LG: Well as I said earlier I received no negative treatment for it. There were some who were treated negatively. But I think they were mainly at places where they were released from the military or maybe around a large Army or Marine base. But the Navy was basically isolated from that I think. At the present time there is a political contest going on between President George Bush and John Kerry, a senator from Massachusetts. George Bush never served in Vietnam though he was in the country's Air National Guard, there were National Guard units that served in Vietnam, but his unit was not called up and so he didn't have to worry about it. John Kerry was I believe a Yale graduate. And served I believe probably honorably in Vietnam. And he came back and he joined the anti-war movement and actually said some things which I believe hurt our soldier's. Recently I have learned that he is in a museum in North Vietnam that pictures a photograph of him, honoring him for helping end the war because of his anti-war protests in the United States which I thought very interesting. There were some soldiers who turned against the war. And I don't quite understand the reasoning behind that because they were doing nothing but hurting their fellow soldiers who were now having to serve there. There were ways to serve against it, but there were protestors definitely hurting the soldiers. During this war not everybody felt the pain that the frontline soldiers felt. You have to understand that frontline soldiers, those guys actually do the combat, were very few compared to the rest of the military that backs them up. There are people in supply areas that may or may not be in Vietnam, they may be in Okinawa, Philippines, Guam, Japan, Hawaii or back stateside there are so many people supporting those front soldiers. The front soldiers received the brunt of the problems and terror. They are the ones that suffer the most, the rest of us don't suffer like they do. I was in advanced electronics school for the Navy in Memphis while the Vietnam conflict was still going on and one of the guys in there made a true comment he says, “War is hell and I love it.” That seems a strange comment but what he was referring to is that we were in combat areas or we were off the coast of Vietnam we were receiving combat pay though we were not a direct threat, thought they could send something out against us, it was very unlikely it would ever get to us, so we received combat pay there. We received flight deck pay, when you work the flight deck it is a hazardous duty so you get paid for that. We got paid sea pay which meant that when you are out on the ocean the sea, you got a few extra dollars a

month just for being in that separation mode like that. So that is what he meant when he said, "War is like hell and I love it," was the extra pay we were getting out there. It was gravy to us until we realized that there were people who suffered on it. I can remember sitting out on the flight deck one night off the coast of Vietnam and I could see flashes on the horizon from other ships who were sending out planes dropping bombs along the coast of Vietnam. We worked twelve hours on twelve hours off. During that time our planes were going crazy they'd be out, come back, go out, come back, we'd have about three sets of flights that day. Then we stand down for 12 hours, where we would prepare our planes and have some rest and prepare for the next day's operations, we did that, this was 24 hours a day this was going on and the ships would rotate the day or the night ships. We had 2 or 3 different carriers in our battle group so there were planes going all the time to North Vietnam, all the time, there was no rest for them. Wave after wave after wave every 3 or 4 hours here came another wave of aircraft into their county, so they received no rest for several years like that and they were bombed heavily so their country was torn up from what we were doing. In political decisions, there was a political decision not to bomb the Vietnamese government. And I think that was a mistake, if you're talking about things we should have done I think we should have bombed their government headquarters. We bombed their bases, but we didn't bomb their head of government buildings which we could have easily done but did not do. I think we should have, I think we should have destroyed their government as much as we could have to have destroyed all means of communication to support their troops. I think that would have helped. We didn't hold back the trigger when we bombed Germany and Japan and I don't think we should have held back on North Vietnam.

SG: Thank you so much for letting me interview you.

LG: Okay.