**Okay today is Monday March 14, 2022 time is around 12:30 pm this is Patrick Callaghan, Adult Services Manager at the Westchester Public Library. I’m conducting an interview for the Veteran’s History Project. Today I’m going to be interviewing Lawrence Vaillancourt, resident of Westchester and a library patron. Also present is Ryan Flores, Technical Services manager at Westchester Public Library. We’re going to be interviewing Mr. Vaillancourt about his experience serving in the Vietnam War. Okay, it’s good to talk with you today. Why don’t we start out by talking about when and where you were born, and who your parents were and what their occupations were.**

Okay, I was born in Chicago on July 15, 1945. I grew up in Chicago and I went to public schools, Julia Ward Howe and Austin High School. From Austin High School, I graduated in 1964, I joined the Army. My parents, my dad, Chester Vaillancourt, Chester L. Vaillancourt was a World War 1 veteran. And he served 35 years as a Chicago Motorman for the CTA and my mother was a housewife.

**Okay, and your mother was Italian, is that right?**

My mother was Italian and my dad was French.

**Okay, and your mother immigrated here, is that right?**

No, she was born here

**Oh, she was?**

Her parents immigrated here and they had I think 7 children.

**Okay, so who were your siblings and did any of them serve?**

I have three older brothers, one served in the Air National Guard and one served in Vietnam in the 101st Airborne, and he was in Vietnam, that’s Chester Vaillancourt Jr. My other brother didn’t serve.

**Okay, so what were your parents or siblings feelings about you joining the service?**

They were a little surprised, but then they were pleased and kept in touch with me quite a bit while I was in the service.

**Okay, did you hold any jobs before entering the service?**

No, I went right from high school into the army.

**So, were you drafted or did you enlist?**

I enlisted.

**You enlisted, Okay. How come? Why did you enlist?**

Well, my dad being in World War 1 we talked every once in a while and of course he didn’t say a whole lot about his experiences and I had a buddy of mine that we were talking about what we would do after high school and we thought well why don’t we just go into the army. I mean the draft was coming around. We thought instead of getting drafted and being put into something that we didn't’ know anything about, we decided to enlist and try to get into a job that we would like.

**Oh, Okay. Alright. So when you enlisted what do you, was there anything that you felt like you left behind? Obviously you left your parent and your siblings. Was it difficult to serve and be deployed and leave everything behind?**

Well, not for me. I think it was a matter of, I had a direction in life then. I was going to serve in the military and if I get out then I just depending on what I knew how to do, get a job then.

**Okay**

Inaudible from Mr. V.

**Alright, now we talked about this before we were recording and I omitted it from the introduction but why don’t you describe which branch you entered and why did you choose that branch.**

Well, I served, I was in high school for four years and I was in the ROTC for three of them, and this buddy of mine, we talked about it. We thought well, let’s go into the army and so we did. We decided and enlisted in the army.

**So what type of training or schooling did you have? Obviously, this refers to your training in the army.**

Right, well in basic training of course everybody had the same experience because it was a matter of shaping you into a person that they wanted to have. After basic training I went to Ft. Polk Louisiana and that where I had what they call A.I.T. Advanced Individual Training. I trained as a clerk, and once I got out of that I was permanently assigned to Ireland Army Hospital at Ft. Knox Kentucky in the Medical Records Division Section and from there went to Germany. But before I went to Germany, like I said, they said it was a three year obligation for somebody that wasn’t married and so I had only two years left in my service so they discharged me and reenlisted me at the same breath for another three years but it was actually an extension of one. I went to Germany and was assigned to the ?????? 503rd Aviation Battalion and I was a medical records clerk there at the dispensary for a while and then I took on the job training, O.J.T., and changed my MOS from clerk to a combat field medic.

**Ok, MOS that’s Military Occupational…**

Method of Study

**Oh, Method of Study, OK**

MOS

**Ok, what is your most vivid memory of your time in training? Does anything stand out as, your most vivid memory from training?**

Which training are you talking about?

**Your initial, I think training? Upon enlisting**

Oh, upon enlisting. My basic training, you mean my initial one? Well, my most vivid memory is when we got off the buses we were all green, didn’t know what we were doing or where we were supposed to do it and they told us that. I remember the first thing we had to do was get our shots.

**Oh, OK**

First of all, we got a haircut. You sat in the chair and the guy said you want your sideburns, I said sure and he handed them to me.

*All three laugh*

Then of course he gave you the buzz cut and we then from there we went to the dispensary where there was a lineup of medics and we just walked and stood in front of them and they gave us shots in both arms and went down and got no more shots and out the door we went. Another experience we had there was the gas chamber training. They had us put our gas masks on we went into the building, they talked to us for a while and now they said “Now take your gas masks off”. We took our gas masks off and they said now, some of the guys took deep breaths, thinking they could hold their breath while they’re standing there. They said, “Now repeat your name, your rank and your service number”.

*All three laugh*

And by that time your lungs are filled with the gas, the tear gas, and so we went out. Some guys threw up and you know it was interesting.

**Does any particular instructor stand out in your mind?**

Yeah, well it was interesting, our platoon sergeant. See, we were housed in barracks that were made of wood. We were told that if those things ever caught on fire you had about a good sixty seconds to get out of there before it went up like a match. And so our drill sergeant, I can’t remember his name, but he was a young fella. He was in his probably mid to late twenties, maybe early thirties. He was an interesting fella, he didn’t seem to be very, he was overly military at times and then sometimes he wasn’t. I can get back to him a little later on, but our drill sergeant was interesting. He was a black fella and he called cadence and you kept up. If you didn’t keep up, you’d drop and give him ten. *Laughter.* It was a, now I look back and I see that that basic training was just a way of them molding you into a military person. Take orders, follow the orders, so then you can be able, once you get through the ranks, you can be able to give them.

**What was the hardest part of training?**

The hardest part of basic training? I think it was the early to rise and late to sleep. And of course we had backpacks, 40 pound backpacks, hikes that we went on. They had certain names for certain hills and one was called heartbreak. *Laughter* Agony, heartbreak and I can’t remember then other one. But, uh, they were interesting. The final thing that I remember was that we had to, the final physical training that we had to pass before we could get out of basic training and if you didn’t pass you had to redo it was to run a mile in under 8 minutes, eight minutes or under in combat boots and fatigues. And I just barely made it.

**I couldn’t do that with running shoes on.** *Laughter***. So, did you qualify with any specialized equipment?**

Well, we all qualified. I qualified with an M-1 rifle as a marksman and once I became a medic, I had a .45 and I qualified as a sharpshooter with that.

**Did you have any experience with firearms prior to that?**

We had in the ROTC in high school, we had a rifle range down in the basement of the school and that’s where we fired .22s.

**Oh, Ok alright.**

But other than that, no. In fact, I have what they called an M-1 thumb at the rifle range. The M-1 rifle, when you put a round in, the chamber is open. Once you close it, your fire it, it opens again and it kicks out the shell. Well, mine didn’t kick the shell out, so you have to take it out with your hands.

**Oh**

Well you take it out with your hands very carefully because if you don’t, you don’t know when that bolt is going to come sliding forward. And I grabbed it, it caught my thumb, turned it black and blue. That’s what they call an M-1 thumb. Not everybody got one. *Laughter*

**Ok, what was the easiest part of military lifestyle for you to adapt to and why do you think that was?**

The easiest part, huh? I think once you were permanently stationed someplace where you weren’t expected to be in a certain place early in the morning, and all that, you had a job. It was like a job and you were in uniform. Like when I was at Ireland Army Hospital. We got up at reveille, we went to the mess hall and we ate, and we went to work. At a certain time you got to work, go back to your barracks, if there were duties to perform, you’d perform your duties. If not, you had some free time.

**Ok, Alright, now I know in our conversation before the interview, you’d mentioned your E-5 and it looks like you had a kind of maybe atypical experience. Did you receive any promotions or could you just tell us about your..**

Well, the promotions in the military, when I was in, you had to be in eight months before you could be promoted to a PFC, Private First Class. And then after that, you had to be in a time grade, I think it was another eight to twelve months before you be considered for a next promotion, which would be an E-4, a corporeal or specialist fourth class. An E-4 would be a corporeal or specialist fourth class. Once you were eligible for that, there had to be a slot open for you to be able to take that particular promotion. Then you would be interviewed by a panel of, like, a sergeant or your company commander or something like that. There would be more than one person applying for that spot. Then when you were done with your interview, and all that, a week or so later, you’d look on the bulletin board and see who was promoted. I got promoted to E-4, specialist fourth class, and then in Germany I was promoted to E-5. Are you familiar with what the rank looks like on your arm for specialist?

 **I’m not (Ryan)**

It’s kind of like a diamond shaped patch with an eagle in the middle of it and that’s an E-4. An E-5 has a yellow stripe over the top of it. An E-6 would have another over it, an E-7 would have another one over it; an E-8 would have a yellow stripe going down at the bottom of that point. That’s just how you tell the different ranks.

**Ok, so now we’re going to move on to wartime service.**

Ok

**So, if you don’t mind, where did you serve again?**

I served 35 months, 5 days shy of 36 months, in Germany. I was fortunate not to have to be sent to Viet Nam. Of course, being a combat field medic, they were always in demand, but luckily I didn’t have to be sent there.

**What were your recollections of that and did you feel relieved at the time? How did you feel about where you served?**

I was excited to be serving in Germany, in another country, where there wasn’t war. But that was the frame of mind, that I’m there do to a job and I am representing my country because you aren’t always on post, you know. You get time off, a weekend or 2 day pass or 1 day pass or an 8 hour pass to go outside and wander around the little town of ??? and have a beer or two and stuff like that. So, that’s what some of my buddies and I did. Once you got back on post, there was kind of a switch in your mind “Alright, I’m not a civilian now, I’m in the military”. Yeah, you adapted to that real easily.

**Did you absorb any, like the language or any aspects of German culture at all?**

Yeah, I know. I spoke a little bit of German, but not much. You weren’t in contact with the German people a lot. I do remember it was a good experience where we would go to training with a joint unit from England and the British troops would train alongside of us and it was interesting talking with them and how they dealt with military service. We were on what’s called the wildflickin, it was the name of the town or ???, it was one of the two. We were training with this unit and I noticed one of their sergeants had a couple of guys, digging a trench, and they were about up to their waist in this trench. I said “What are they doing?” “They’re serving their hard labor. They messed up and they were being punished.” I said, “Ok, what’s the trench for?” He said, “You’ll see.” So he had them get out and tell the guys “Now, fill it back in.” *Laughter* I said, “Thank you very much” *Laughter*

**What kind of friendships and comradery did you form while serving? With whom? Was there any…**

Yes, there were a couple of guys that I made friends with. One was Ronald E. Elliott; he’s from Terre Haute Indiana. He was stationed in our unit his job was to land helicopters and biplanes at the air strip that was attached to our group. Once that was over, I don’t know how we struck it up because we were probably just like night and day or oil and water, but we became very good friends and we’d go out drinking together and we’d play different jokes on different people. *Laughter* And then there was Charles Whitehurst, a black fella from Shreveport Louisiana. We called him “Whitey” because Whitehurst, it was just his name, you know. Instead of Charlie, it was Whitehurst, “Hey Whitey”. I remember one time I worked for two doctors, two flight surgeons, and one of them had adopted a German shepherd dog and he had him trained and the Germans would train these dogs and they’d beat them into submission and he said, “Valiantcourt, I’m going to take a weekend pass and would you watch my dog for me?” I said “Sure, I love dogs.” And he says, “The only thing is that he doesn’t like Germans.” Ok, so this other buddy of mine, Leroy Brown, from Pottstown, PA., if he was 5’6”, he was tall. He was built like a brick shithouse, *laughter*, I mean he was, you didn’t want to mess with Brownie. And so he say’s “Where are you going Valin?” I said, “I’m going to the dispensary to get the dog, so I can take care of Dr. Farris’ dog.” I said “Ok, do you want to come with and he had him tied up outside the dispensary by the railing of the stairs and as soon as Brownie started walking up, that dog lunged at him. I said, “Brown, are you German?” He says, “Yeah.” I said, “Get back.” *Laughter* And I had a dog in the dispensary on Friday, Saturday night, and it got too cold in there for me to stay in there because they turned the heat off in the winter time. I said I’ll take him to the barracks, I’ll tie him to the bottom end of my bed and he’ll be fine. Whitey was on C.Q., charge of quarters, that night and he did bed checks every night. He’d open the door, shine a light in and see if everybody’s in their bed. I got my dog on the end of the bed and Whitey opens the door and shines the light in and all he saw were these teeth coming in on him. *Laughter* He goes, “Whatever that dog is attached to he’s going to protect it.” And he was protecting me, all I saw was Whitey’s flashlight and his hat suspended in mid-air, and he was out of there. *More laughter* And he saw me the next morning and he said, “Why didn’t you tell me you had a dog in there?” I said, “You didn’t ask.”

**That’s great**

And there was one fella, Tom Cruise, who volunteered to go to Vietnam and I never heard from him since. We were a pretty close knit unit.

**Were these other fellas that you mentioned, are you still in touch with them?**

I haven’t been I touch with them, with Ron Elliot, for a long time. When I went, when I got out of the service and got married, I drove down and met him. It was interesting, he’d told me that his son, Ronald III, Ron Elliott III, joined the army and was stationed at the same casern in Hano as he was.

**Oh Wow**

That was a coincidence, that’s special.

**So, how did you keep in touch with your family when you were…?**

My dad had this old typewriter and I still have it, it’s an old upright underwood, a solid iron thing. He’d type messages to me on postcards and mail them out to me. I think I got one almost every week. My mom would write a letter. When my brother was wounded, he was wounded in Vietnam; he got shot in the butt. He was crawling on the ground and some snipers saw his butt going up and down and they shot him. He wrote me and he says, “I got wounded, it’s in the butt, but don’t tell mom, I want to tell her when I get home.” *Laughter*

**You mentioned earlier about you and some of your buddies going out when you were off post and maybe going to have a couple of drinks or something like that? Anything else you did for recreation?**

I went on a religious retreat to Burgess Garden with another member of our unit, he spoke fluent German and he had a little Volkswagen and we drove up to Burgess Garden and stayed at the General Walker Hotel in Burgess Garden and it was ¾ of the way up the mountain and on top of the mountain was Hitler’s teahouse that they talked about a lot. And so we went from there to, we stayed at that hotel and when our religious retreat and classes and stuff was over, we drove over to Salzburg Austria and a little bit around different places that he knows, so yeah, that was a great experience. Then,on the outside of the post there was an American Legion Post, we’d go over there and we’d have a drink or two.

**Ok, we’re going to move on in a minute to the end of your service. But before we do that, if you could pick one thing, what would you say was the best part of your wartime service?**

The best part? It was all good, I mean, getting to know, I like people. I like to get to know people and I was in the perfect job to do it. Yeah, I think just associating with the different races and ethnic people that were in our unit and different units. Yeah, that was kind of neat. Oh, I even met Don Defore, do you remember Don Defore? He was an actor; he came on our post and was at the USO club.

**Oh, cool**

I got some pictures of that, shaking his hand and his wife was with him. He’s the only celebrity that I have ever met. *Laughter*

**Ok, now for the end of your service, do you recall the day when it was all over? The last day of your service?**

Yeah, we had short timers, calendars, that were 30 days and we’d mark them down. I remember going to Frankfort and getting on a military MATS, military air transport service, and landing in New York, where I out processed, that’s where they had us sign papers and stuff and turn in your and stuff like that. I kept my dress uniform and I think I have a set of fatigues. But, anyway, yeah and then my family met me at the airport and they waited for me to get out processed and we drove to Massachusetts to see my uncle that I had never met who, I have his middle name, my dad’s brother. From there we went back to Illinois.

**Okay, what was it like coming home home in Illinois? How were you received by your family?**

They were elated to see me of course, and I was glad to see them. I got off the airplane and squatted down and kissed the ground, *Laughter*, because when you came off the planes and came down the stairs instead of right into the terminal. My parents, when I went into the military, my parents sold their house in Chicago to my brother, my oldest brother, and he consequentially then sold it after a number of years. Anyway, they moved to Wisconsin, just outside of Burlington Wisconsin and I was home for a year when my dad passed away. He was 74 ½ and I stayed with my mother for another year, she lived alone. She passed away when she was 76. But, when I got home, I was proud to have served my country and I was proud to wear the uniform and I’m a 53 year member of the American Legion and there were a lot of people that did not experience the grandiose return like maybe the World War II people did right after the war was ended. I’m sure there’s people from Desert Storm and Iraq and all that stuff that didn’t get any accolades either, but I felt that, well I wasn’t in combat, I don’t deserve a big fanfare coming home but, you know, I served my country for four years, away from my home and family, my country for three of the four years and I was proud of the fact that I did that. I think everybody should have that opportunity.

**So, after returning did you go back to…**

Excuse me (Incoming phone call to Mr. Valiancourt, must have muted the phone). I should have turned it off.

**That’s ok. Did you return to school? Did you go right to work?**

After my dad passed away, I stayed with my mother until 1970 and I moved back into Chicago in 1971. I went to college. I went to Rosary College, which is now Dominican University. I was the 13th male student to enroll when they turned co-educational. It took me six months to find the rest room, *laughter*, the men’s room you know. But, that’s where I met my wife, after that I went to Waterloo Ontario Canada for my Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and became a Lutheran pastor. I was a Lutheran minister from 1978 to 1996, eighteen years.

**Yeah, so just to digress a little bit, Germany is kind of the birthplace of Lutheranism, right? Martin Luther.**

Martin Luther, yeah, sure, yeah.

**Must have been a special experience for you being there?**

Well, I didn’t have any aspirations of becoming a minister at that time.

**Oh okay**

It was something that the pastor in my congregation in Chicago, after I got out of the service, we became close and I would assist him in worship services from time to time and he said, “Well Larry, why don’t you think about going into ministry,” and I said “OK”, but I had to go to college first. I got my bachelors in sociology and then went to Canada for seminary. There’s a perfectly good one down in Chicago, but I wanted to go to another, being my dad was in the Canadian expeditionary forces during World War 1, I thought “Oh well, that the heck .” They received me and I went up there for a visit and they received me very warmly and so I thought “Oh well”.

**Ok, just a couple more about the end of your service.** OK. **How do you think it affected the way you relate to other people? I know that you said that you enjoyed kind of the diversity, the meeting of people that were different than you, is that something that you’ve carried with you? Is it something that you’ve carried with you? How do you think it has affected that way you relate to others?**

I think, when you’re in the military, of course, basic training you’re in a two flat structure that there’s 40 bunks on the top floor and 40 on the bottom floor, you know, bunkbeds, and you know you’re showering with guys, you’re going to the bathroom with guys. But when you become permanent party someplace, you have a little more privacy and you have a little more time to relate on different levels with different people. When I got to Germany and left the one place, ???, and went to the other one, being the second chief, I was put in a room probably the size of this room here. There were two bunkbeds, four lockers, and four footlockers. That’s for four grown-ups. Three of the guys in there were black fellas and same rank as me. I didn’t know how to relate to them, you know because you don’t know who they are or where they’re from, what their idea is of a white person is coming in their area, but I treated them just like I would treat anybody else and they did the same to me. I think how you first come across to somebody leaves an impression on them about how you’re going to be treated and what you think of them. I’ve always enjoyed, since then, I’ve always given a person the benefit of the doubt until they prove otherwise.

**That’s great. Now, you mentioned the American Legion, are there any other veterans organizations that you belong to? Do you attend reunions?**

No, I don’t attend reunions. That’s the only veterans organization that I can join, I guess, because I’m not a veteran of foreign war, a VFW, or DAV, disabled veteran. I’m not a disabled veteran. All of those people can join the American Legion and those other groups, but if you’re not wounded or a veteran of a foreign war, the American Legion has been fine.

**Ok, we’re coming to the end here. A couple more questions. Let’s see, so not in just in how it relates, how your service help you to relate to other people, but just in a broader sense, how do you think your military service or experience has affected your life? You know that a lot of people that we’ve talked to say “I’ve done a lot of growing up” and things like that.**

Well, you’ve got to understand that I turned nineteen when I was in basic training. I got out when I was going to be twenty-four, twenty-three, something like that. I don’t know, I think how you go in with it in your mind, how your mental attitude is towards being in the military. I think people that were drafted when I was entering the service, the draft was still in, people were being drafted for two years, and others were enlisting. People that were drafted were probably the ones that didn’t want…”Well, I’ve got to go, but I don’t want to” type of thing, some went to Canada and avoided the draft. Some became consciences objectors. Some got deference for college, you know. But, I think that people that enlisted, like I did, we went in with an open mind and saying, “Well, here we are, take me as I am and make me into what you want me to be. “ I think with the training that I got, the experience that I had with the people helped me better relate to people on a level of respect, more respect for other people.

**That’s great. Can you sum up any life lessons that you maybe learned in your military experience?**

I think somebody asked me one time, “Were you a prejudice person when you went into the military, I mean growing up in Chicago?” At Austin high school, when I was there, I think they just started having it be integrated, black people coming in and we weren’t sure who they were or what they were like, but they asked me you know, “Were you prejudice?” I don’t think so. I think that’s because my parents raised us to be respectful of people and when in the military, like I said I gave people the benefit of the doubt until they proved otherwise. If I gave them respect, they gave it back to me.

**How has your military service impacted your feelings about war or the military in general?**

Well, war is never a good thing. It’s obvious, look, considering what’s going on in the Ukraine right now, but…did it again

**How has it impacted your feelings about war or conflict and just the military service in general?**

First of all I think every young person, eighteen and older, male and female, should serve in the military for at least two years. I’ve always said that if they reinstated the draft, half of these problems with these gangs would go away. Or most of it would anyway, because they get these people off the street, they would get them into an environment where they’re cared about, they’re provided for, you get your food, you get your clothing, you get paid, you get medical. I mean that they don’t have to worry about anything, but doing a job and get the responsibility given to them that they probably didn’t know before, you know, while they were growing up in the streets. Some of them grew up without parents, some of them grew up with only one parent and I think that military service would really help the youth of today. As far as conflicts and wars go, they’re heartbreaking when you look at them, I mean, if I was younger I wish I could do more.

**It’s interesting that you say that because there’s some countries that, Greece I know used to have compulsory two years for everybody to serve.**

I think in the Netherlands too, somewhere everybody has, every man, every household has a weapon and if they’re needed, I think they have to go through a training once a month or once a year, whatever it was, and in case they are ever called up, grab your gun and go. It’s just a matter of that’s what you have to do.

I think Israel too

**Ok, so as I said, this interview is going to be your oral history is going to be a permanent artifact in the Library of Congress American Folk life Collection. So, with that in mind, what message would you like to leave for future generations who will hear this interview?**

*Pause*..That’s a heavy question to ask. I think, if I could talk to young people and have them take something away from this, be proud of yourself, be proud of the country that you live in, because there’s no other country like this, be proud of that fact that you have the freedoms that you have because freedom of course is never free and if you have the opportunity to serve, in some capacity to help humanity, do it.

**In a couple of years…**

Yeah, I don’t know how interesting it is…

**Oh no, it was very good. Is there anything that you would like to add that we haven’t covered?**

Well, I think one of the saddest experiences that I had was that I worked for two flight surgeons in Germany and one time one of them was called out to go to a helicopter crash. And to see a white sheet on the ground that looks like a pile of charcoal was two bodies. That has to change somebody and it changed my feeling about life. Your life is precious and don’t waste it, you never know when it’ll stop.

**Wow! Okay, is there anything that you’ve always wanted to share about your service or veteran experience that you never have before? You don’t have to.**

I think the military today, if I would ever have to criticize something, is how they promote people. It’s too fast. I mean it took me my years in service to get to the rank that I was, E-5, and I’ve heard in the past years ago that people going into the military, they get PFC and they get F-4 and then they get E-5 within like 15 or 18 months within being in the military, they’re getting E-5 which took me almost 4 years to get and they’re there in a year and a half. That’s not doing them any good, I mean as far as working towards promotion, I mean you people didn’t get where you are at without starting someplace at the bottom and working your way up. There should be certain distances between the rungs of promotion that people have to, I think people should have to wait longer then you can appreciate it more.

**In a general sense, what do you wish more people knew about veterans?**

That it never gets old hearing “Thank you for your service”.

**Well, thank you for your service.**

And that is something that has only started in the last few years. That when the campaign Thank a Veteran, thank, thank the police, thank a fire…I have gotten more thank you’s and handshakes and pats on the back in the last few years that I’ve had in the rest of my life you know, and it’s just, it never get tired of hearing “Thank you”. I think I said in my interview somewhere that I didn’t get the feeling that I was deserving of going on that honor flight because there were people that served in combat zones and war zones that deserved to be on that flight. I mean, yeah I served, but I committed four years of my life away from my home, family and country, but that’s what I felt was my obligation, my duty to do that. I almost felt like I was not deserving of that high honor and that flight was a high honor for me.

**Yeah, I was going to conclude with that. I have it right here, but I was going to conclude by mentioning that you were, what was it in September, September 16, 2021 Mr. Valiancourt was honored by being included in on the Honor Flight Chicago.**

Flight Number 97

**Flight number 97**

Yeah, that flight was unbelievable. From being dropped off at Midway Airport at 3:30 in the morning and being dropped off at Midway at 8:30 that night, you were treated like you were the most important person around, I mean when we got to Dulles Airport I met my guardian that was with me the whole trip there, walked through the lobby of the terminal of Dulles and there in a lineup was about 15 or 20 people in uniform; police, fire, military, full dress with their flags out for us, for me. Getting on these buses, there were six buses, I was thinking I was on the window on the side and here are these motorcycle police, escorted us down the road, down the highway. They’d race ahead of us and block off the highway so that our buses did not have to stop and got us to wherever we went in Virginia, they were there. Once we left Virginia we didn’t see them, but that’s OK, because that’s when we went right into the Washington D. C. and to the Monument and on to the WWII Memorial site. It was a humbling and honoring experience for me.

**You deserved it. Ok Mr. Valiancourt, that wraps up all of our questions here. It was great, it was really really great conversation and an honor to talk to you.**

Thank you

**It’s going to be a really great addition to our collection and also to the Library of Congress’s collection. Anything else? Any closing remarks?**

When you say that, it sounds like how did I warrant such an acolyte? To be included in the Library of Congress and to warrant this interview? It is still humbling to me to be able to have that brought upon me, you know I’m just Larry Valiancourt, a little overweight and a little snow on the roof. I gave shots in the army, you know, but I am proud of the fact that I have a dad that served in WWI and you know he should be in the Library of Congress and the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He was born in Massachusetts, and when he was a young man they were given land grants in Calgary, he went up there and got a land grant and was on a ranch when war broke out and he joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force and he was (Inaudible) brigade and he was a blacksmith at one time, got wounded there times.

**Wow**

He would come home, I’ve got to tell you this story. He had a coiled up snake on his arm, a tattoo, ever since I was born he had that. When I was old enough I said “Dad, what is that tattoo?” He said, “I got that while I was in the army. All of the guys in my unit got that in the army, in the service.” I said, “Why did you guys be stupid enough to have a tattoo on your arm?” He said, “In case any of us got hit by a mortar or something like that and blown up, at least if they found the arm they would know what unit you were in.” (Laughing) I said “OK.”

**Wow**

Yeah, but he didn’t talk a lot about his experiences in the trenches but it was difficult.

**And this is Chester Valiancourt?**

Chester L. Valiancourt Sr. He was born in 1894.

**That’s quite a biography. Well, thank you for sharing your stories with us today.**

You’re welcome

**We will, when this is complete, you’ll be hearing from us and we will give you a copy.**

Very good, thank you

**Thank you!**