

# Stephen Blake

September 2, 2015

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- Webb: Well, we're running a little bit later than I intended.
- Blake: Well, that's all right. Well, that's a good idea. [Laughter]
- Webb: If I could get you to just say something...
- Blake: One, two, three, four—yup, we at Pritzker Museum, Chicago, Illinois....
- Webb: All right, well this is maybe old hat for you, I don't know...
- Webb: Today is September 21st and I'm here with Stephen Blake at the Pritzker Military Museum & Library. They are in Chicago to celebrate their DASPO reunion, so we have this opportunity to sit down with a bunch of the DASPO members and just learn a little bit about their military experience. So, I guess I would just start by asking: when and where you were born?
- Blake: I was born in Springfield, Vermont on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1939.
- Webb: OKAY, and typically this is where we would go into what life was like at that point. But given the amount of time that we have today, I might just ask you then how you found yourself in the military.
- Blake: Well, I had graduated six months before from college. I was working as an accountant for JJ Newberry stores in Massachusetts. And it was getting in the holiday, and we were working late so I was eating in their cafeteria and a recruiter came in and sat down and, I was not an inside person [laughter], I was raised outdoors, and so I said, "What do you got for me in the military?" He asked me what I wanted so-- that was back when you got a guarantee of enlistment-- so I told him I wanted to go to motion picture school. So we did the paperwork and a little while later I was in the service.
- Webb: I couldn't help but overhear some of the stories that you were telling outside of this room now. How did you know about picture--?

Blake: Well, there was a Navy officer that gone to high school with my mother and father, and we'd always called him uncle growing up when he would come back to visit, and he was a motion picture camera man for the Navy. And he filmed the breaking of the glaciers and he'd bring his cameras and his projectors in 35 millimeter stuff and he'd show us movies, all when we're growing up, every time he'd come and he'd film us in our swimming in a deep hole in the rivers. But the... I was always impressed with it so that kind of decided... I used to dabble in still photography but, you know, nothing big. We had a little 8 millimeter camera that we used to us, but nothing major.

Webb: OKAY, and when you were in the cafeteria, when the recruiter came around...

Blake: Yeah.

Webb: What year was that?

Blake: That was 79', the end of 79'.

Webb: 79'?

Blake: Yup, 'cause I joined on 31 December.

Webb: OKAY, so that was over or after Vietnam was already sort of winding down.

Blake: No, I ... 59'.

Webb: 59'.

Blake: 59'.

Webb: Just before Vietnam had started.

Blake: Yeah, 59', yeah.

Webb: Gearing up.

Blake: Yeah, yeah, yup. And my first assignment was out in California after school.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: Where I meet one of the DASPO members, became a DASPO member and I was in California for three years in the testing unit, a combat development command was... I was in a service unit but that was our main work, was filming the testing of military weapons vehicles clothing and in the field mostly.

Webb: OKAY, and that was once you were already in DASPO?

Blake: No, no. This was way before.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: Yup.

Webb: So the 2--

Blake: Yup.

Webb: 21<sup>st</sup>-- is that where you started out or was it--?

Blake: Nope.

Webb: Something even different than that?

Blake: No, I went from California. I went to NATO in Paris, and I spent the four years in Paris. And we got 67' when Charles de Gaulle removed all military from France, we moved to Belgium for a year, and I came back to Virginia for a short period of time and from there I joined DASPO

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: 71'... 71'...

Webb: OKAY, so what unit were you in when you were out in California and then in France?

Blake: Ah, in Paris I was with NATO.

Webb: OKAY...

Blake: Uh...

Webb: ...just NATO?

Blake: Yeah, that was the NATO command. And in California we were actually in a service unit assigned to them, but our work involved testing covering... the test taking of the vehicles and such.

Webb: Was that still photography at that point or that was film--?

Blake: No, that was still motion pictures, yup.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: When I got to Paris, I got run over by a car. We had a... we had to have a stand by photographer to take pictures of accidents after hours and weekends because of the, well, who's at fault? I think was really an in uniform country but we had all NATO nations there.

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: But any time one of them was involved we had to film it. And I was filming an accident one night and I got hit by a car and spent 10 months in a cast. So although we didn't really do much motion picture ...there at the NATO headquarters it was all still. They had previously... when the president came they'd covered him before I got there. But I... once I got run over I couldn't really... they didn't want me out on assignment [laughter] walking around in a full-length cast. So I went into the color lab, and after a while a ton of people left and what not, I was left in charge of running the color lab there in Paris.

Webb: OKAY. So I heard you mention something about football when you were with the--

Blake: Oh, yeah. The only motion picture we did there was... they had a very elite football team at NATO, they were find out who got drafted during the year that were either college semi-pros and good players. They'd send their scouts out and so they'd recruit them to come to play on the team and we would follow them into Germany and any place else that'd have games.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: Yup.

Webb: Well-- just to kind of back track a little bit-- when you were taking film in California, what was maybe the most interesting thing, if you remember, that they were testing out that--?

Blake: Well... that was back when they were doing testing, you know, on the M16, the 14 and some other things. But some of the testing wasn't going quite well. They were having problems with some of the weapons but--

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: We used to [laughter]... they'd put us in a tank, then we had these old Air Force gun mounted cameras and we'd have those mounted to the turret and we'd

lined up through the periscope and we'd sit as the troops would advance towards us firing at the... something, you know, there was just some assault position so.... But they were told not to hit the tank and I don't think anybody ever did hit the tank.

Webb: [Laughter] Well, that's good.

Blake: [Laughter]

Webb: What kind of training did the military give you? You said you had a little bit of experience doing still photography prior to the military...

Blake: Yeah.

Webb: ...but what's the training like...

Blake: Well, it was a normal. It had a 16 week, 84c course that Fort Monmouth... and that was like any profession. You learn the basics, but you learn how to do it once, you get out and do the job, you know. You can go to college and learn to be an engineer, but you don't become one till you work in the field a few years.

Webb: Yeah, absolutely. Did they train you on a variety of equipment?

Blake: Yeah, we had Filmos and we had the Walls and we had the Mitchells...

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: Yup.

Webb: Did you have a favorite?

Blake: Well I... I liked the Aeroflex when we got to DASPO. The Aeroflex... and that was a beautiful camera.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: Yeah, the BLs, I loved.

Webb: OKAY. So you were in NATO. You got injured. They sort of put a hold on some of your assignments.

Blake: [Laughter]

Webb: At that point--

Blake: Right, yeah.

Webb: And that's where you first heard about DASPO?

Blake: No, actually, I didn't hear. I was... I had a friend that worked for President Nixon, and he was in NATO with me in Paris, and when I came back to Virginia he contacted me after a... wanted to know if I wanted to come to the White House to work. And I kind of hemmed and hawed whether I would and then went up. And I did some of the screening and the interviews to go up, and so I went back 'cause I was in Fort Lee, Virginia then and he... I was out doing a job and I got a call and they said, "We got you on a special assignment, could you... gotta come back and go to personnel." So I went into personnel the next morning and I thought, "He's put me in going back to NATO." [Laughter] But it was actually the one assignment to go to DASPO in Hawaii. So... and I actually hadn't really heard of DASPO Hawaii.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: You know?

Webb: When you were at the White House did, I mean, you said previously that you helped....

Blake: Oh, oh...

Webb: ...make up President Carter...

Blake: ...that...

Webb: ...who were some of the people that--

Blake: ...those were... that was at the end of mine, after I left Hawaii.

Webb: Oh, OKAY.

Blake: Because of some personal situations with an adoption that we had done... and we had to leave Hawaii after three years. So, I came back to the agency's headquarters there at the Pentagon, and the Navy technically was set to cover the President or take care of his needs, but they did not have the equipment. And this is when the audio-visual aid was coming into being, and with all we had been testing different video equipment and stuff, and we had come up with a setup of that was quite mobile equipment, and they asked us to come and do the rehearsals for the fireside chat...President Carter... and we did them there.

And then we did them up at the estate the, Oh, up on the... up on the mountain there, wherever the reckel.... I forget where the home was now. But we'd go up there and we'd go in and do them.

Webb: OKAY. So when they finally gave you this assignment to go to DASPO, did you have to do additional training or had your--?

Blake: No, we... I got the, I got into Hawaii and they kind of, wow, you know, this is the kind of equipment that we use. And of course I hadn't used any of the professional, that professional equipment that... hadn't done much double system sound any production works. So, they gave me one and sent me out to do some filming, and I didn't have any trouble at all adapting to it. And it was, you know, once you learn how to operate a camera it's pretty much basic. You can't figure the camera out then you haven't learned how to be a photographer. [Laughter]

Webb: Yeah. When you are assigned to DASPO, do you remember what year that was--?

Blake: That was 1970, I believe.

Webb: Seventy.

Blake: Yeah. I was there 70' to 73' and then I went to back to Washington at the audio-visual agency headquarters where Colonel Coleville was then in charge of the DASPO unit, being at the head of the agency.

Webb: OKAY. So by 70', what kinds of assignments were they sending DASPO out to cover?

Blake: Well, we were still rotating between Vietnam, Korea, and Thailand.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: We used to do a three-month circle and they were... Vietnam. We were filming Vietnamization project... film different scenes... they were covering Sammy Davis' tour, Bob Hopes last tour, they thought but it wasn't. But they did do a film. And I hear that they're finally release the Sammy Davis film that was done.

Webb: Good.

Blake: But the... then Thailand was sort of a pick-up. Like, when I was in Thailand we did a... then they were giving the Vietnamese some... oh, no. The Thais... some patrol river boats. And so I did the filming of them getting those, and then they'd went

back into the back country to drop them into a creek and float them out to the river. That's 'bout basically it.

Webb: OKAY. What was your first impression, I mean, you had been in France, but France isn't so different than the United States as far as culture shock goes.

Blake: Yeah.

Webb: When you first got sent out of Hawaii, did you go to Thailand first?

Blake: No, I went to Vietnam.

Webb: What was the... some of your first impressions of Vietnam?

Blake: Well, I would... I kinda knew what it was a like anyway, you know. I wasn't going in there without, you know... that I didn't have a clue. But I dealt with poverty in other parts of the world and so I was used to seeing the... but the mask infusion of the war, it was quite different, you know, who the enemy was and all. But I adapt quite easily to different situations. I never had a problem with that.

Webb: OKAY. Did the DASPO members that had been rotating in and out for a while give you any kind of advice as to--

Blake: Well, I'll tell you, it was when you got into Hawaii when you first... where the headquarters was that you left from everybody seemed to be a family. And so it was, you know, you'd... they'd say you'd hear the stories of what they were doing and what they had done and the situations but.... So, you were really pretty well informed before you even left country to go to anywhere. What you were gonna see and normally you... the way you get into Vietnam, everybody just sends their group together. It was a close family.

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: It really was that, and close friendships.

Webb: Speaking of family, how did your family react knowing by 70', pretty much everybody...

Blake: Yup.

Webb: ...knew what was going on...

Blake: Oh.

Webb: ...in Vietnam. How did your family react to you being sent over there?

Blake: Well, it wasn't that bad, except... we were in the process of adopting children, so we ended up... we had adopted one just before we left Virginia. When we got to Hawaii they said, "Oh, four five years we put in for one," and within nine months we had another one. And there was an abuse situation that was in the housing projects right next door to us, and they were going to take the child away, the three children, but they were gonna take this one away and the mother knew us and asked if we would take her. So, it was a big, drastic change in our family situation and changes that my wife had to adjust to, so it was really hard on her. And when I would go away and with all of a sudden from we had one child for six years and then all of a sudden within three years we had... there were two and a half years we had three, so.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: But, I mean, the family that actually reached out to help other families when the husband would be away, then all the other ladies would seem to group to see what they needed, and--

Webb: Yeah, I think, military wives...

Blake: Yeah, yup.

Webb: ... understand better than anybody else and have definitely made that community. OKAY. What were... how do I want to ask this? What... some of the assignments in Vietnam perhaps that stand out to you?

Blake: Well most of them were... we were pretty well guarded or taken care of, or advance protection with other troops, but we'd go into an area and there was, I'd say one of the first assignments I went out on I was on my own. I had a sound band and I was on my own. And for captioning I used to carry a portable tape recorder so I could, you know, just keep going and we'd... I was in a convoy of Vietnamese troops in the back of a deuce and a half. All of a sudden the trucks all come to a stop and the firing started and we bailed out of our trucks, and it took about two or three minutes and all it was... up ahead, saw a water buffalo, and they were hungry so they fired on a water buffalo. And one starts, they, you know... everybody shoots. They don't know what they're shooting at, but everybody was shooting. But I... that's all that was. That, and that I had another incident. We were crossing a bridge and the Vietnamese were guarding on the

bridge, and all of a sudden fire broke out and it was they were shooting carp that were underneath the bridge [laughter], and--

Webb: OK. What was the mood of the units that you were following around, I mean, the jumpy. Because--

Blake: It didn't... yeah, but you didn't really get involved with them as much as what they were doing. You were kind of really... 'cause everything was totally uncontrolled, so you were trying to second guess what was going to come next and just follow it with your camera. And, you know, you were just trying to make your own story of what was going on. And you might not even know why they were going out to a site, but you're tagging along and, you know, through it you just trying to film what you saw, making your own...

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: ...coverage of it.

Webb: I've asked this question of a couple of the DASPO guys that I've talked to. We live in an age where cameras are everywhere.

Blake: [Laughter] Yeah.

Webb: We've got them in our pockets basically. But people still change their behavior when they know that they're on camera. Did you have that experience? Or were the units so focused on their job--?

Blake: Well, yeah, they... way it wasn't so much in Vietnam. In Thailand, because it's... they have a belief that if you're filming you're taking part of their soul so they, you know, it's a real [laughter], you get into real trouble for taking some pictures.

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: But other than that, no. 'Course, everybody does. The kids all gather round and, like any place I mean, they do it here if you walked down on the street with a crew of cameras and everybody just gawking around trying to do their little monkey shines in front of the camera.

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: Yeah, you see it on the news every night. [Laughter]

Webb: Yeah, you do.

[Both laugh]

Webb: Was your job, then, to kind of remain hidden and away from the story?

Blake: No, well...we...we traveled in civilian clothes most of the time, and so that... we were trying actually blend in with the press more than the military so we could actually... some of the military thinking we're, we were press would probably opened up more than if we'd walked in there with Sergeant strips on or, you know, whatever rank the enlisted man was, 'cause we had spec 4s and we had PFCs and, you know, you go into a bunch of colonels or whatever, you know, you have to PFC, you know, just get out of here, you know. And so that was really... really did help us, being able to move in on a situation and be accepted, because not knowing really who we were.

Webb: Yeah, you open up an interesting topic which I've not discussed with anybody. It seems to me that Vietnam and the press... there's a real tight relationship there. Did you have issues with any of the actual press that was over there? Competition?

Blake: No. Actually they were quite accepting of us. They had their own little... we had a villa, but they had their own hotel, and once in a while one of our guys would go down there and spend an evening at the hotel. But no, they were, you know, in fact, you know, if you say what's going on what do you guys know? And, you know, 'cause there were hundreds of press people that were just freelancing and hoping they could make a name for themselves so that after the war, you know, the networks would pick them up in a permanent situation, because everything was temporary and they were making what they could sell to the networks if they could find a story going on, and they'd have a hundred feet of film that they could sell to the network on runnies, so.

Webb: Were they ever in the way?

Blake: No, no, no, not at all, no. We never had a... had a problem in Vietnam or any place. You have a big of a problem when you covering around, say the United States or some other where you get, like, the... we covered the prisoner of wars when they were returned. There was a film that DASPO covered on that we had and you'll be interviewing one of them... I think that actually went into Hanoi to the Hanoi Hilton and was there when they announced... they went into the barracks and announced that you were being released. And so it... some of those

guys went into there. We had... when they came out of there, they flew them to Philippines, and we had a crew there. And then from the Philippines they would send them to different areas in the United States, usually to a military hospital that was closest to where their family was. And I was out, I went to Denver, Colorado and covered the prisoners that came there. There was one that was a questionable 'cause, course when they get to the Philippines they all got their promotions and they got anything that there was due to them. And there was one that... I guess there was a question on high patriotism and so he came to our house in Denver, but, but they had a complete wing that they kept him in, just private. We never did get to see him, but we worked very closely with the families of POWs and the POWs themselves, and we interviewed most of them.

Webb: What are those interviews like?

Blake: Quite well, the... we worked twice with the hospital staff very closely and I was quite impressed with his psychological people. The psychologist they had-- a lady psychologist through military-- but I was really, really impressed with more than any psychologist I've meet since, 'cause I've dealt with a lot of them with these children that we've raised.

Webb: Sure.

Blake: But she was really sharp and they were surprised. The biggest surprise was how well off they were medically and psychologically.

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: You know? And they told us the different thing that they were looking for, for them to be able to do things on their own and, you know, when to get up eat. You know, just personal things. And they were quite impressed with that, and we found them very easy to talk to. Some of them had family problems. There was a warrant officer that had a child he hadn't seen. His wife had died in childbirth and his family, and her family had cared for the child for a few years while he was a POW and it caused some situations that we didn't... we wouldn't even film because it was a personal thing, and so... but they were, they were quite well off.

Webb: Were there other circumstances-- maybe even in Vietnam-- where you said, OK, I'm not going to film this, this is invasive.

Blake: No, no, no. They had the... I don't... it was kind of different there, 'cause you didn't really look about, you know, how's this guy feeling or how is this going to

effect, because then it would just more of a catch everything type of deal, document the whole situation. Whereas, when you get into the personal things that after the war was... you know, we just decided we didn't want to get into film the squabbling of the different characters within the program.

Webb: OKAY. I feel like it's not possible to just be a completely neutral observer.

Blake: [Laughter]

Webb: You signed up for the military. Did your opinions of the military change at all during your--?

Blake: None at all. No, no. I was satisfied all the way through and since.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: Sometimes you wonder whether the leadership quite makes a decision but, you know, that's with anything. [Laughter]

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: You know, whether it's military or civilian life.

Webb: Yeah, absolutely. I've asked this question of a lot of the DASPO guys. Was there a sense of competition between who could get a good shot?

Blake: No, that's the amazing thing. You know, as I said, we were a family and you just kind of went in, you know, and tackle the thing as a group. And you didn't say, well, I'm gonna get this, try to get this spectacular situation and, you know, keep everybody out, 'cause I know this... no, no, it was really a... encompassed by everybody that you're all working for the common cause.

Webb: OKAY. Is that why years later you guys are still doing...

Blake: Yeah, I believe... yup. As I said, we were a family and like [person] that just left, I met him in Hawaii and we worked out on the same team couple times, but... and since retirement he and his family-- wife and daughter-- have been coming to Maine to vacation. And the first time it was on the Facebook thing, his daughter had mentioned about being in Maine and I said "oh hoo," so I called him up and we ended up... my wife and I went up and spent a week with him in Maine. Then the next year they came back and so we've really been kind of close even communicating back and forth regularly.

Webb: Has that communication helped process...

Blake: No.

Webb: ...some of the things...

Blake: No.

Webb: ...that you saw?

Blake: No. I've, you know, I've gone through a lot with kids that have bothered me more than, you know, Vietnam or anything any situation is a, you know, I just never dwell on it... that to worry over things like that.

Webb: OKAY. You know, the Pritzker Military Museum & Library is putting on this exhibit and we hope that it lives on even after the exhibit is over on our website. As a member of DASPO, what are some of the things that you hope that the community sees or understands about DASPO from this exhibit?

Blake: Well, I've seen some of the shorts been produced and I think that... gonna see a reality of war. 'Cause they saw it during the era of Vietnam on the news every night, and every day probably twenty out of twenty-four hours [laughter] it was saturated, but that generation is kind of gone now and it's gonna give these newer generation, the younger generation, the chance to actually see what, you know, what transpired in Vietnam. Sort of an education, a visual educational history for them.

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: Which is what you are?

Webb: I, you know, before this project even started had not heard of DASPO. I get the sense from some of the people that I've talked to that that's not uncommon.

Blake: It isn't because we were a very short-lived unit. It was set up in Vietnam, after Vietnam it was disband. You know, one of the things we did in... when I was in California in that testing unit was it was the beginning of Laos and Cuba and the government was doing testing on arming helicopters with machine guns with rockets and they were running tests in a testing area in Honolulu... how effective they were. They were also testing aircraft for short landings and take offs. They had different fixed wings that they were testing and then how effective, you know, what a helicopter could see and fire upon, for they'd have different sites throughout the terrain, and they'd have a helicopter fly a certain... and they'd

time them out if they could visually see them and then fire and, you know, on them afterwards, so.... And we did a lot of that. It was kind of a... they set it... but we were down for one thing and then they set it all on, on the back burner to get this done. And they were also testing drone... the first drones that I'd ever seen. Quite primitive from what they have now of course [laughter], 'cause they the first one I'd filmed. They'd had civilians in the... were gonna put a demonstration on and they had... the drone had taken off and Paul looks at me and says, "We're in the bleachers now, we're gonna bring the drone in for a landing." And it kind of missed and he landed right on a flatbed [Laughter]... flatbed truck and crashed into the front end of it. That was quite comical but, well, especially when you're trying to impress the public, of course they were probably, you know, politically probably funding, you know, involved in these new things. You know, we want to, you know, it's like a new aircraft we got to sell the people to give us the money for the new jet fighter or whatever.

Webb: Yeah, one question that I wanted to ask and didn't.... You've talked a little bit about, you know, dressing in more civilian style clothes or having the leeway to travel quite a bit more than others in Vietnam. Did you ever have issues with some of the other units or anything that...

Blake: None at all.

Webb: ...they felt--?

Blake: Nope, nope, not at all. Back in near the end in Saigon they had put the order out that the troops couldn't appear off-base in civilian clothes anymore except your legal investigations, CIAs and Ds. And, well, if we'd go out into the public to... for some spirits in the evening, you go into a bar and immediately all the military people would leave [laughter] 'cause of things that were going on within the bar and, they thought, you know, they took us as, you know, these guys are legal people, you know, and we can't get caught being here, so.

Webb: OKAY.

Blake: And so we were asked very politely to go away [laughter] 'cause you were bad for business. [Laughter]

Webb: Have you been back to Vietnam?

Blake: No. The DASPO did but I... my wife didn't really want to handle that one and so I didn't go on that. They went to Thailand then into Vietnam. In fact, the CNN did

the documentary on that and aired it when they followed them into Vietnam and things. They did the bunkers, they went into... I've seen that film.

Webb: There was a gentleman from DASPO that ended up working for...

Blake: [Laughter]

Webb: ...CNN, is that--?

Blake: Yeah.

Webb: Yeah, OKAY.

Blake: Yeah, he started with Bill Gates.

Webb: Is there anything... as you were kind of thinking about, oh, I've gotta sit down with these guys and talk... that you thought that we would discuss that you wanted to tell?

Blake: Nah, no, I think you're gonna get pretty much common attitudes for that when it comes to DASPO as a family that... I don't know of anyone that really didn't really get drawn in, in the family concept. And, you know, you really enjoyed your work because of it. You know, everybody pitched and did their little part, and even traveling with thirty-five pieces of luggage in airports and customs and [laughter]... but it wasn't made... wasn't difficult.

Webb: Yeah. Is that maybe because of the more, I hate to say artistic but, you know, you weren't carrying nuts and bolts.

Blake: No, you know, we didn't really... I never really looked at it as being artistic, you know. I really looked at it... that it was a great opportunity. And doing something that I loved, you know. I mean, I enjoy the cameras, I enjoy the filming and, you know, just even today, you know, I saw boy I love to throw one on my back and take off and do something.

Webb: Do you do that kind of thing?

Blake: No. When I retired, I retired up in New Hampshire and we were kind of in the woods and the closest TV station was about an hour away, and I went up. It was a very small one and I had made up two portfolios. Anyway I... but... and I had sent the lesser one that glorious to the station and I went up for an interview and the guy, very serious. And when we finally got done he finally says, you know, he says, "You gotta go to Boston or you gotta go to a network," he says,

"'cause with what you have on your resume they'd probably fire me," he says, "'cause I haven't had this experience that you've had," you know. And I said, "Look," I said, "I'm retired, I just want a job," I said, "I'm not going anywhere. I'm not looking to better myself in the world or bigger stations or that thing," and he says, "Well, no." He says, "I just better not." And then Manchester considered me as too far away cause I was about two hours away for a daily task to go to work and--

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: But, you know, they--

Webb: Well, if you don't mind me asking, once you were out of DASPO 73', that's about the time that DASPO was--

Blake: Yeah, I was in... I went from there to... [Laughter]. What I really kind of considered DASPO, because they were the headquarters, the outer visual agency was the headquarters of DASPO, and I went back there in Washington at the Pentagon and so I really... and course the film was coming in and the stills was coming in, the motion picture was coming in, so to me, I really wasn't plucked out, like gone to a new station, although it was in actuality. So I was... I never really felt I left it. Plus, the personal contact that I've had with those, you know, that I was with--

Webb: OKAY. Once you exited the military, what kinds of things did you?

Blake: Well, [laughter] I had all the equipment, I was going to open a photo studio. But in 1980, the economy was not good, and I looked around for floor space for leasing for a studio, 'cause I had all the equipment. And prices were quite high, that people were trying to get for for spaces. And I had a friend that had gotten out of the Air Force that I grew up with and he said [laughter], "No, don't." He says, "I tried that." And he says, "People just don't have the money to, you know, to do weddings." He says, "They don't have a thousand dollars, they want to give you a roll of film and," [laughter] "and give them the pictures." But... so I didn't do that. I ended up working for a newspaper and they had... they were looking for pressmen. So I went in and I ended up operating as offset pressmen, and I worked for them for twenty-two years, and I just retired from the newspapers.

Webb: Well, congratulations...

Blake: Yeah. [Laughter]

Webb: ...on retiring.

[Both laugh]

Webb: That's really all the questions that I have for today. We'd love, you know, the opportunity to talk to you at more length if you're ever willing. But I do want to say, thank you, for your service

Blake: My pleasure, glad you're doing it. And I'm sure it'll be... when we were here two years ago it was interesting watching Rupy who going through the books and finding photographs from his Second World War and being able to tell what happened right after the pictures and things like that, so--

Webb: Yeah.

Blake: It's... I don't know what you get for people coming in here on a daily basis. Hopefully it's used well.

Webb: Yes, it's always something, you know, whether it's somebody that's just looking for information on their own career, a family members career, or--

Blake: Yeah.

Webb: Occasionally we get those that come in and can point to directly being involved in something, and it's always--

Blake: Yeah, you'll interview Rupy, who's ninety-two.

Webb: Yup.

Blake: And he's terrific. Terrific information.

Webb: OKAY, well, I want to thank you, Sir.

Blake: OKAY and thank you.