Alright, we're recording the interview of Cliff Rosenberger. This interview is conducted by Adrian Hill from the Wright State University Veterans' Voices Project.

This interview is being recorded at Wright State in Dayton, Ohio. It is 11:30 on August 25th, 2015. Alright Cliff, when and where were you born?

I was born April 23rd, 1981 in Wilmington, Ohio.

Okay, who were your parents?

My father Mike Rosenberger and then my mother is Sunni Rosenberger and then they met in Korea. My father was deployed there they met over in Korea.

And what branch was your father in?

My father was Army and he was a reservist. My grandfather before him was an Ohio National Guardsmen.

Okay and your dad, was he in the conflict, was he in the Korean war?

No, dad never was in any kind of conflicts whatsoever. He was a Nike Hercules missile operator though, but never was in any of the conflicts. He came a little after that. He's a younger fellow.
Okay so kind of came from a family of military?

Yeah I came from a family of military. My great uncles -- I grew up around it -- my great uncle served in Vietnam so I've got a lot of experience. Like I said before that, my grandfather was in the Army Guard and my dad was active duty Army and then went into the reserve and

so had a long experience of family history of folks serving.

Okay great. So what about siblings, any siblings?

I have a sister, she's five years younger, Megan and she lives in Cincinnati and she's married to a great fella' named Kellin Reeves and I've got a great nephew who they just had named Lewin and he's like seven-eight months old now.

So what about the sister, did she do any time in the military?

Nope, Megan never did any time in the military. So totally, we're both on different tracks.

Right. Okay so I think, you said... let's see you were in... you enlisted in 1999?

Yep I'll never forget it, July 23rd, 1999 at the Ohio National Guard base in Springfield.

At the time tuition was still 60% paid by Ohio State and the day that went in and signed it shifted, the legislature just changed it to change to 100% tuition. So I was lucky.
Yeah

Went in on the buddy program with a guy that was at high school, went through, Steve Ingram, we both went in together and probably met some of my best friends that I still have today through my experiences at basic training.

So what led you to that decision?

Well a couple things: First I was raised with a theory that you have to give back to your community, never forget what where you come from and part of that was you know, listening to my father.

I can remember as a boy going to the reserves base, down near Cincinnati with them for Christmas and other things and Dad always had a huge inclination for our men and women in the armed services, which has carried on with me. So the other issue was you know, Mom and Dad said "hey, we can't afford to send you to college. You've got to figure out your own way and the Guard gate me to be able to do that. And so that was big decision factor for me to join.

Okay so you said there was a base that you went down to in Cincinnati?
Yeah it was a reservist base. It's no longer there.

Well actually yeah it's still a reserves base but I can't remember the unit or exactly where it is. It's near King's Island there, near Mason.

Oh okay got you, I was wondering. My reserve units down in Fort Thomas, Kentucky, just right outside the borders so I was wondering maybe if that as it, but I guess not.

No it's just a little reserves base right there near Mason in the King's Island area.

Sure. Okay so you get to your recruiting station, you enlist you know, you swear in all that what's next?

Well yeah, so I had a little bit of a deferment, because basically I had to wait for my basic training date and you know, knowing that the Air Force basic training's in Texas, I wanted to make sure it was more in the winter than the summer that I was going down. So I graduated, it was '99, had a little bit of a break, went on to become a video store manager actually, and did some regional management for a video company named Video Update, then left to go on my basic training. It was in
February of 2000 and we headed down to Lackland Air Force Base.

00:04:26,540 --> 00:04:35,900
This was a time when you know, Mom and Dad still could walk you to the gateway to send you off and

00:04:35,900 --> 00:04:41,560
I could never... I'm probably one of the biggest babies world so I remember sitting on the plane with Steve Ingram and

00:04:41,560 --> 00:04:47,980
looking through the window there they were waving and starting to all my boohooing and crying at that point and

00:04:47,990 --> 00:05:01,690
saying what in the

00:05:01,690 --> 00:05:07,830
ehell did get myself into? But you know, it was a great experience. Learned what was to be a rainbow

00:05:07,830 --> 00:05:10,710
and transformed from a rainbow flight into you know, a group that all worked together as a team. So it was a fun

00:05:10,710 --> 00:05:15,250
experience

00:05:15,250 --> 00:05:21,630
Lackland was a great place, had some great drill instructors. I'll never forget, the one fella' was shorter than I

00:05:21,630 --> 00:05:26,820
was, but I'll never forget his you know, his drill instructor

00:05:26,820 --> 00:05:33,030
hat came up to right about my nose, but

00:05:33,030 --> 00:05:37,280
I'll never forget he had the brightest big blue eyes I've ever seen in person. You Know when you get someone like that you get a lot of respect for them

00:05:37,280 --> 00:05:42,360
and the other fella' was a taller guy that would always say "outstanding" and that became

00:05:42,360 --> 00:05:48,090
our flight motto, but it was a great experience. Messed up actually, my first experience

00:05:48,090 --> 00:05:53,090
you know, we were on this buddy flight and my father being Army guy said "never volunteer
for anything" and so when we got down there I kind of took it to heart and so they asked us
to pair off with the folks that came in together as a group. I didn't raise my hand and Steve Ingram's

was sitting there with his hand up, because he was part of the program and I'll never forget, poor Steve hearing him get his butt chewed asking him

if was you know, if something was wrong with him, if he could count. I just kept my hands to my sides.

said I hope he doesn't rat me out, but he surely did so it's alright.

Yeah that's I think one of the rules they kind of tell you. Don't volunteer for anything, don't raise your hand.

That's right, that's right

So I know you said you're a baby leaving home, is that the first time you'd really been..?

Yeah that was the first time I had ever been away from home. So it was the first experience being away from not only my parents, but away clear out of Ohio for that opportunity, but you know in a way it was good because I had Steve Ingram you know going in the buddy program, I knew from High School

and it was good to have that opportunity, but you know you are real quick you know,

when you're going to basic training and only someone who's joined the military that's headed to basic training
understands this, you get that manila envelope that you've got to carry with all your data in it.

So I remember landing in Chicago O'Hare and we were headed to the plane to get to San Antonio and here all these guys and fellows and gals sitting around with these big envelopes that can't leave your side and you know, that's probably where I probably met one of my first good friends, Jason Hoffman from Wisconsin, who was going in the Guard. We're great friends still to this day and we just got to know each other real well and matter of fact it was Jason that when we were there in San Antonio finally, remembering that concept of never volunteer, he looked at me and said "hey you know what? You need to volunteer with me for laundry duty" and I said "now why the hell would I want to wash all these guy's skivvies for?" He said "believe me, it's the best place, it's opportunity to do your homework and study and sometimes you get out of some stuff". So true to be told he got me to volunteer with them and he and I became really close and then another fellow besides him and Steve... Well you know everybody in your flight you becoming close to, but another guy named Mark Barnes who was from Delaware, the Air National Guard out there, he and I became really close and until we figured out each others name, everybody called each other by their state. So
it's Wisconsin, Delaware, and Ohio. But it was great, great experience and it's just interesting to... when you sit back and look at

how you know, you go you go from individuals to becoming all one team and then be able to continue that concept throughout your life. It's pretty impressive.

Yeah, okay so how long was your basic training for the Air Force?

We had a... at that time -- I don't know if it's changed, but it was six-week basic training and...

I think it's still the same.

Is it still the same? It was a six-week basic training. I understand now you've got all these kind of... if you're feeling too much pressure you can say "hey let me out".

We didn't have that, but it was a six week basic training. Then I had a thirteen week tech school and I was one of the unfortunate guys that didn't get to leave Lackland. So I stayed at Lackland for not only basic training, but for all my tech school and I was in traffic management elaborations. So that was my MOS and I never changed from that MOS.

So what kind of duties did that entail?

So traffic management in the Air Force basically is part of the logistics supply line and you
know, my duties range from helping folks go TDY and arranging their travel and flights, to helping get large groups processed for TDYs and deployments, right down to the supply lines of receiving and shipping goods and especially mission essential goods and so that was really my biggest job while I was in the Air Force, Air National Guard and I also was hazardous materials certified, because you know you’ve got to make sure when we're shipping goods that you can't mix certain things in certain areas. Probably the toughest class that I can remember having to go through, but it was a great experience to have.

Augmented security forces too a little bit. That was an interesting job to have. You know, occasionally through my entire career in the guard I would take and do duty assignments whether it was at the base or other places to help and one of them for a while was augmenting security forces. What was that, did you enjoy that or..?
It was a whole different side of you know, the military that I've never seen. You know, in traffic managements you know, in the Air

00:10:21,649 --> 00:10:27,360
Force you're not carrying guns a lot, especially when you're home. So it was a whole different side of things.

00:10:27,360 --> 00:10:33,529
I was appreciative I got the opportunity to do it. You know, I did everything from working the front gate to bringing the cars on to

to watching the flight line. So it was just great experience to have it was good to see and this was right at the height of after September 11th. We had more deployments going all over the place

00:10:33,529 --> 00:10:39,360
and we needed more guys to help augment security at our base in Springfield.

00:10:39,360 --> 00:10:44,199
Right, so that's where your Guard unit was at?

00:10:44,199 --> 00:10:49,309
Yeah that was my Guard unit for the first six years of my career in the Air National Guard was in Springfield Air National Guard Base.

00:10:49,309 --> 00:11:02,620
Okay so you get out of AIT and then you come just straight home?

00:11:02,620 --> 00:11:09,600
Yep, part of the Guard you know, sitting there at tech school you know on a weekly basis you hear all these active-duty folks, where they're getting assigned throughout the world and you know and

00:11:09,610 --> 00:11:14,899
sometimes you think well should you have went that route? It makes you think about it a little bit, but you have a unique ability too as a

00:11:14,899 --> 00:11:22,449
guardsman, serve both at your state level and national level and do a lot of good. So right after tech school
I was right back at home. You know, a lot of my friends, Jason in particular, was going for a longer tech schools.

I think I was home a full almost six-seven months before he ever got home. He was a crew chief. But really, it's just a great experience.

Yeah so when you got home you know, how long had you been gone from home?

Oh let's see, thirteen weeks plus six so about six months or so, six or seven months.

And you didn't have any time in between to come home?

Nope, just went straight home.

Did you have any communication back home?

Oh yeah. Well you know, you don't get a lot of telephone calls. So you know what's crazy is in the day and age all the electronic communications and emails.

and other things. Of course emails still were not that prevalent when I went back in '99 if you can really believe that, but you know I did telephone calls. You know telephone calls were always hard, because it's different, because you don't get a lot of opportunities to do it when you're in basic training. So I can only imagine how difficult it is sometimes for our men.
and women overseas that are away from family for a long time. You know, especially I had an opportunity to fly out to an aircraft carrier and send off some troops for a nine month deployment. You know, you think about those folks, but you know you hear a voice that you're familiar with that you miss and it was good to hear, but you get used to letter writing, which is a long... I don't know what to do today, I don't know if they still write letters but...

We still did. When I was overseas that's what... We wrote letters, but there was a lot of emailing, because you had that and Skype and stuff like that. But you know in basic training, I don't know if they let them go email now or if they still have to write letters, but you know, we have the... it's the one tradition that... like I said, I don't know what goes on, but mail call was important and you wanted somebody to scream out your name for that letter and it gives you a little bit of a sense of history what was like all the way, way back of what it must be like to get that commutation, which is important. But so yeah I had an opportunity to write back and forth. My parents still actually have my letters that I wrote them when I was in basic training. And then of course when I got the opportunity to go on to tech school, you could call home more and you know, you had to go over to the base library to send an e-mail if you could, but always had close communications with Mom. You know my dad, my
grandmother, first time my grandmother ever

00:13:51,970 --> 00:13:57,790
flew, came out for my basic training
graduation and it was a great experience and of course

00:13:57,790 --> 00:14:02,270
I was a heck of lot skinnier then than I was now. So you know, I wish I could go back to those days.

00:14:02,270 --> 00:14:06,080
[laughing] It's hard. Never enough time to get in the gym anymore, is there?

00:14:06,080 --> 00:14:07,200
Nope.

00:14:07,200 --> 00:14:11,800
So your family, did most of you family make it down then for the graduation?

00:14:11,800 --> 00:14:18,220
Yeah my father and aunt and my grandmother made it down. The rest couldn't, but it was great to have them
down and it was just a good opportunity to have them and you know spend some time. Did the Riverwalk. I had to wear

00:14:18,220 --> 00:14:24,420
those nerdy glasses, because I had bad eyes, but it was great to be there and share with them on that experience.

00:14:24,420 --> 00:14:32,040
Yeah that's great. So you didn't get to see them there, but coming home after that. after being gone from home for about
six months is still a long time.

00:14:32,040 --> 00:14:40,080
Oh yeah.

00:14:40,080 --> 00:14:41,460
What was that like?

00:14:41,460 --> 00:14:43,460
Oh for me it wasn't too hard. First I was happy to be home and you know as the old adage goes, there's nothing better
than...
you miss all these different things that you don't realize you missed like your mother's cooking or
your grandmother's cooking and all those kind of things and hanging out. I had a great childhood. I got to grow up
good to grow up with my grandparents very close, my great grandparents, great uncles. So I mean I had a
very close-knit family. So getting to see all those was huge, but you know it was great. When I got home it was
time to... you know, September 11th still hadn't happened yet and so I had a lot of time to reflect on you know, school. Where did I want to go, how I want to use my tuition, my GI Bill and those kind of things and actually at the end result, landed hear at Wright State University, because it had that ability for me to be close to home but also close to where I was serving.
Where did you say your family lived?
So my family lived -- and I grew up a little town of called Clarksville, Ohio.
It's in Clinton County, it's about 10 minutes southwest of Wilmington.
Okay sure. So I like that you mentioned that 9/11 hadn't happened yet, but you know, when 9/11 happened with me, I was in fifth grade...
Yeah

So what was that like being in the service during that, I mean..?

Well you know it was scary. I was just starting my first year at Wright State University. I was just in my first.. yeah, first years there at Wright State and you know, I could remember so many things going through your head and you didn't know what that meant for you -- especially as a guardsmen -- of what's going to happen, but you know I was ready to go and do what I need to do if I had to. And I volunteers for extra time at the base if need be and if I remember right, that's when we started augmenting for the security forces and other things. But It was an interesting time, an interesting experience to live through. That's for sure.

Did you see any of the units around you getting called up called up?

Yeah I mean our unit got called up, a lot of the Army units got called up more so.

You know, the Air Force was in this AF cycle where they had missions to go through cycling. You know it was interesting though, I don't really remember... and you know there's a heck of lot more veterans that have done a whole heck of a lot more than I ever could do.
Sure.

But I always remember you know, there was a sums where you could volunteer for and it was interesting conflict right, because it wasn't like there was every unit in the world was being call to go and Springfield had their moments, but it was one to where we had so many people willing to go that we had enough to leave behind and I just never had the opportunity to go there was one time that I was close to going to 'Cutter' or Qatar -- I don't...

people choose which way they want to go -- and there was actually some other folks in my unit specifically TMO, that said "hey I'd actually really like to go". So they went and I ended going up to Volk Field in Wisconsin to help with you know, some training for other units that were about to go and then also do some deployments for Fort McCoy up in Wisconsin. Now hindsight 20/20: I think I would've preferred to have been in the desert of Qatar than in Volk Field, Wisconsin because I don't know which would be worse and I regret, I wish I had the opportunity go and serve time over there, but I never did.
And things just got... You know, the difference with guard life and others, things get rolling and it's just a different way to go about things.

So when they... You said called up certain people could volunteer. Did they come to a unit and say "hey we need this many volunteers"?

Yeah I mean the way I remember it is there was always mission essential folks that need to go and then certain areas there were people asked to augment or go and serve in certain areas and the more rank that you had, the more important was to put you overseas and what was important, I always remember hearing the story, this was when I became first NCO, when I became staff sergeant. You know, guardsmen -- and there's nothing... you know active duty's great, so I don't want anything to disparage it -- but they were always looking for NCOs come over and serve, because you've got a lot of young airman who were in these career fields, but I hadn't had as much experience as maybe some of the guardsmen did, because you're constantly you know, having this turnaround. So it was interesting you know,

there was a couple times that they were looking for NCOs to go over and serve in TMO capacities, but I never had the opportunity to go over.
Yeah I think it's interesting that the Air Force from what I've heard, the Air Guard and the Air Reserve,

it's more of an individual basis whereas in like, so I'm in the Army

Reserve. We have like, it's kind of like your units going.

Yeah.

So I think the Air Force is unique in that way, at least the Guard and Reserve is.

Yeah you know, the Air Force when you look at it, the manpower isn't as big of need I think as maybe an Army or Marine unit and maybe for that matter, even the Navy. I have had no idea what... I have friends that are Navy Reservists, but I don't know how that equates or what they do to make that work, but you know in the Air and Force especially when you're on the end of helping units meet mission essential tasks you know, it's just trying to get the folks in the right place and put them in the right holes there. So it's a little different.

Sure, so what is some of those drill weekends like or the ATs maybe?

Yeah.
Could you just talk a little bit about that?

Vastly different and you know I'm very blessed you know, in the 178th there's a lot of emphasis on doing a lot of training and so you know, sometimes you don't get it, but it's never, was never a dull moment of sitting around doing nothing you know.

Your always training, you're always trying to make sure your upgrading your career field until you get a 7 level or higher and that's what I always was focused on, dealing with our CMOS system, which was our shipping you know, how we actually put our documents in to ship them for supply management issues, crating boxes, crating mission essential things, seeing how we could get a package from Springfield to the desert quickly and overnighted and you know they would keep some of that stuff back for us to actually process and do. And you know, the greatest thing that you learn from militaries, weather it's your Marine, Navy, your Air Force, Coast Guard is always there's an attention to detail factor that if you...
mess up somebody could die because of it

or you could critically impair a mission, because you didn't happen to ship

something correctly. I remember when I was in the 113th Fighter Wing you know, there was some missile components for a F-16 that needed to be shipped to the desert and they shipped a crate out with nothing in it. You know, that's where you've really got to remember what you're doing and the attention to detail's huge and so you know I really appreciated that repetition to go through those things and as I started getting to the end of my six years with the Ohio Guard at 178th it was starting to slip into operational readiness inspection. So there was a lot of OREs, dawning the gas masks and going through the drills and doing a full deployment schedule with you know, shipping pallets and troops out. And so that was a very interesting experience and then at that end of that six years I went to a whole different unit, the 135th Fire Wing D.C. and I don't say this to be disparaging, but training's
totally different you know, you had more down time there, there wasn't a lot of emphasis on getting something done per se, but that was an air combat command.

When I joined the 178th in '99 they were air combat command still, they had been bracketed and changed their mission to ADTC. So when I returned from basic training they were ADTC and then when I was leaving the Guard unit in Springfield they were bracketed once again and changing their mission and as I went to D.C. it was now ACC. Total different mission. You know, now you have alert pilots and other things and constant operations, but totally different operations and I truly appreciated my experience with the Ohio Air National Guard more so than at the D.C. Guard level.

Why did you make that to D.C.?

I did it because I accepted a job with the White House at the time in the office of political affairs in a civilian capacity. And so it was extremely difficult to drive back and forth and you know it gets hard to say "hey you know, I can't get to this drill unit and I can't make this two weeks" and so I just made the decision to make the switch. Now Ironically not long after... So I was at the White House or maybe a little less
than a year and I decided to then a position Governor Romney's 2008 presidential bid and I moved to Boston and had some consideration of switching my affiliation once again to a Boston, Massachusetts Air National Guard unit, but did not. Figured D.C. was the best place. Hindsight 20/20: it was, because I accepted another position back in D.C. as Special Assistance U.S. Secretary of Interior and so was able to kind of make that work and then as I transitioned out of the guard -- excuse me -- transition out of the the Bush administration because it ended, which ironically was the one time I was ever actually called up for the Obama administration's first inaugural. There was a lot of folks put on active duty to help with that and all the D.C. guardsmen were activated for that event, but... So you were apart of that then? Yeah I was part of the facility, getting things ready and security for first Obama administration's inaugural, but as a kind of transpired and I started to run for public office -- now I'm back, I
moved back to Ohio I never switched back. So getting back and forth was really difficult and

after I was elected state representative shortly thereafter, I had a few more months to go

and I made the decision then to separate from the Guard.

Sure. So how did you get into that, the running for political office? What made you..?

Well you know, that's a good question. I mean I was a behind the scenes guy, worked for President of the United States, did a presidential campaign, worked for a cabinet-level

secretary and really I had some downtime in between the Romney campaign and before I went to the

administration again at the U.S. Department of Interior and when I came home I'm never one

sit around and do nothing those surrounding nothing and realized that Clinton County did not have a veteran's memorial and

I start an effort to get a veterans memorial built. We raised over $250,000

got a beautiful veterans memorial started and then I'm taken away again. I go back to D.C. to work

for U.S. Department of Interior and I come back in November of '8 to dedicate the memorial and at that time

Commission Randy Riley who now is mayor of Wilmington said "hey you really should think about running for state representative. I was 28, didn't know if it was the right thing in the world.
Wilmington was suffering from DHS pull-out, my mother was laid off shortly thereafter. and you now, so I thought about that I said you know, "I want to go home and make a difference" So that's what

lead me back to Ohio to really do something. You know, you see a lot of folks,

you see a community hurting and you want to do something and that's why I went home and so I decided I would run

and took a lot of time thinking about it and ask some folks for advice being, one being

Dirk Kempthorne, at the time Secretary of Interior asking if he felt I was ready and he always said one thing I thought was really important.

He said "if you have to ask the question no, but do I think you're capable, yes". And you know so I said "I'm going to go home and do this".

Okay so you said you go out, you separated from the Guard? It was 2010?

Yeah it was '10. I had served twelve years; two six-year terms

And what led to that decision?

Well part of it was you know, the dedication level of not being able to get back to the unit. I mean, I was at that time still associated with D.C. guard. The Ohio Guard you know
that time guard units were pretty full up with manpower. Matter of fact, they were over a lot of their quotas and TMO itself was starting to merge with supply and was going to require some more additional training and I was already an elected official. And so determined is you know, probably the best thing to do is I'm still serving the public in a capacity and if I could do that, that's great and I had decided just not to re-enlist after that point and that way I was honoring still a commitment best I could and at the same time still in a capacity to serve the public. Now I've got to tell you, I miss it greatly and I took about two months to look around to see if something else can work. I mean Ohio was really full and of course at that time Speaker Batchelder and Governor was very helpful to say however we can help you do anything, but I'm kind of a determined guy. If I can't do it myself, I don't want someone else doing it. And so I took the opportunity to look at Indiana units, Kentucky units, even West Virginia units and just nothing really... at that point it was just a really saturated... I mean the guard was really full and just decided that there was nothing that was really there.

Some of the areas required me going back to tech school to do some more
training and again, serving the public I'm just going to take that opportunity. I had twelve good years, to get out. Now I wish...

I think, let's see that was twelve years ago, so we're now in 2015.

I'd probably have almost what, eighteen years in right now if I'd stayed in, so.

Be close to retirement.

I know, but you know I miss it, I do. I miss it a lot.

So what was that like you know, you got out, there wasn't much of a transition because you're doing the civilian side along with it the whole way, but you know, was that hard for you to kind of say I'm making the separation?

Yeah in the Guard it's like you said, you're you're used to it already, because you're doing civilian already and you're doing the track and like I said you know, there's a lot of other guardsmen that served a heck of a lot more than I ever had the opportunity to serve, but you know it was tough not think about going for a drill weekend or having to schedule your two weeks out of the year and you know, what was probably the toughest was the realization of putting that uniform up for good. I mean because you know, maybe I'm a little corny, but having the opportunity to
put on any of the service uniforms is an extreme honor. no matter whether there's bars on your shoulder or you've got chevrons on your side. I mean so that was probably the hardest thing was realizing those were getting put up for storage and I wouldn't never be putting them on again.

Sure. So how have the experiences that you had in the military, how did they affect your life then?

Oh hugely. I think my staff who's here, they're probably extremely annoyed with the fact that you know, I am an attention to detail guy. I'm a timely guy, so I show up on time. I tell folks, now it's kind of funny, because military's hurry up and wait, but it's funny the amount of things that rub off from my military experience that I practice everyday in real life, especially leadership and part of that is you know, the leadership aspect of working as a team and especially now Speaker of the Ohio House of Representatives you know, I don't become speaker unless those members that are part of that 65 member caucus, work as a team to elect me as speaker. And then it's going out and getting everybody -- you've got a lot of alpha males and
females out there -- pushing them in the right direction to work together and I think that comes a lot form my military experience.

Sure. Okay, well I think we're about at time. So if you've got anything else you want to throw in there?

No, thanks for having me.

Yeah.

I appreciate the opportunity.

I appreciate you coming out and thank you. Thanks for your service.

Yeah thank you.