

Ayinde Budd and Gene Coleman interviewing William Majett clip 1

Topic: Employment

[William Majett discussing his college experience at University of Delaware and mandatory ROTC training...]

William Majett: About ready to graduate in June I said, I'm gonna just joined the military because I know I'm gonna get drafted. So, I joined in March of '65 I joined the Army National Guard and then in June of '65 President Johnson declared war in Vietnam. After that happened everyone was rushing to get somewhere, you know rushing to get into the Guard or something but they shut it down. I just made it through just three months in and I just made it in. So, when I graduated in '65 I had to go take my military training—my basic training—in Fort Knox, Kentucky. Then I spent the rest of the five and a half years in reserve training going through reserve meetings and so forth. So, they gave you—and back then you know all this stuff—we talk about the military saying “oh we appreciate your service, thank you for your service” and all that kinda stuff. Back then in Vietnam, boy they weren't saying that kinda stuff they calling us everything but [?] because they, a lot of people felt that we shouldn't have been over there and they were cursing the military and saying this and that but now it's, fifty-seven years later it's different. But you know, we served, a lot of guys didn't make it back. I didn't go overseas, I just stayed stateside but we were called backup force we were going to go to, later on, if that unit went out overseas we would go in and back them up and run that unit but that never happened. I did get called up when the riots in Wilmington, in 1968 when Dr. King was assassinated, uh

Interviewer: What was that like?

William Majett: Wilmington had some skirmishes, and some burning and lootings so the national guard got called up and we were part of that. I was scared I didn't have to shoot anybody, my own people I know. But we had to patrol the streets and that kind of stuff.

Interviewer: How difficult was it, being there. I'm sure as an African American you were probably going through your own emotions about the situation. How difficult was it for you to be there and see that going on?

William Majett: It was very difficult, it was very difficult. You know, um, I remember Easter Sunday morning, Easter Sunday morning 1968 when the guards were patrolling the streets, up and down with bayonets and rifles, patrolling the streets of Wilmington and seeing that going on, you know, it was very disturbing and you hope nobody would do something that would trigger them to do some shooting but uh, you just had to, you know, hold your course. At least I felt you had to do that, don't provoke anybody uh and you know hopefully this would resolve. But for some reason our governor back then, Governor Terry I think his name was, the guard stayed in Wilmington for the longest time, then any other city in America. They stayed in over a year—where like in Baltimore, Detroit, where there were much more disturbances, their guards were out. But for some reason the governor wanted to keep the guards in Wilmington for over a year and uh, that's what happened but they eventually left. It was an emotional time, you know, we didn't want anybody to get hurt but that's the way it went down. But uh, you know back in the day they would have what they call Freedom Concerts...