Nate: Thank you for sitting down with us today, my name is Nate. This is Jocelyn, she’ll just be taking notes. Ah were both students here at CCSU, ah I’m a History major with Public History Minor. She is a Psychology major

Jocelyn: with a Minor in Black and Latino Studies

Greg: [ Speaks over Jocelyn] Lots of history in here, from before you were born.

Nate: [Chuckles] yeah so, so ah let’s start with what’s your name?

Greg: Greg Laxer L A X E R

Nate: Okay, Greg what’s your, if your comfortable telling us what’s your date of birth? How old are you?

Greg: I’m seventy-four

Nate: Seventy-four okay! And where are you from?

Greg: Ah from New York City originally. Ah and when things got too crazy to stay down there I moved up here to Connecticut, like forty-two years ago

Nate: Okay. So you spent most of your life in Connecticut?

Greg: [Thinking and muttering]

Nate: So about half

Greg: Actually more than half . You know you are very good at math, you didn’t even use a calculator

Nate: I had to think about it for a second

Greg: For young people that’s impressive these days

Nate and Jocelyn: [both chuckle]

Nate: Ah, so ah, are you, do you live in New Britain specifically?

Greg: No, no not at all, I live way out east from here

Nate: okay so you brought an item for us, can you describe what the item is?

Greg: This is a memoir which is far more than quote *Just a memoir* unquote.

Greg: Ah just look at the table of contents and ah you’ll see that there are nine, yes there are nine appendixes

Nate: [chuckles]

Greg: with additional information

Nate: Well alright, I see that this is about you, this is your memoir

Greg: Ah—

Nate: That you wrote

Greg: Most of the time ah [chuckles] most of the time memoirs are written by people who lived the life in question, yes.

Nate: Alright, so I am just going to say what it is just for the recording its *Take this War and Shove it* [Both Greg and Nate say with and exclamation mark] *A most unwilling Soldier nineteen sixty-seven to nineteen seventy-one* by our interviewee Gregory Laxer

Greg: Yes, sir

Nate: Ah so..

Nate: I think what we are going to go from here is any stories that you would like to tell well about[ah], about I am pretty sure I can tell what its about. You know anything in particular that you would like to share about it, what inspired you to write this book, um.

Greg: Well um, I like to say that the single most fundamental truth that people, especially younger people, need to grasp about this war [pause] and you know what I’m going to extend that to every other war that this country has waged since, um some of them before, utterly unjustified based on a pack of lies. Vietnam was totally artificially divided. There was legitimately never a South Vietnam verses North Vietnam. That was done by the Western Powers, the U.S. and its European allies.

Nate: a hum

Greg: Then they denied the Vietnamese people the right to hold any election, which the UN had scheduled for Nineteen Fifty-Six. And President Eisenhower, you may have seen that name in History books.

Nate: Oh yeah

Greg: [chuckles] he wrote it, his memoir, in Nineteen Sixty-three. And he admitted that in a fair and open election in Vietnam Ho Chi Min would have become the president.

Nate: [ speaking over Greg] would have won.

Greg: But, the United States had its economic interests in South East Asia. They didn’t have ah didn’t have a footprint on the Asian mainland, this was the thinking of the State Department at the time. There were tens of thousands of U.S. troops occupying Japan after World War II.

Nate: Right

Greg: And there still are ridiculous number of U.S. troops stationed in Japan [pause] to counter China. [Pause] ah--- Taiwan was broken away from mainland China, set up a dictatorship there that angered and answered to the U.S. So the U.S. felt they needed a presence on mainland Asia. Taiwan and Japan of course are islands [pause] and Vietnam as well as the neighboring South East Asian countries, they had natural resources that were tempting. Ah when the French occupied Vietnam they set up big rubber plantations. You know rubber trees, and the auto industry [pause] and the auto industry in this country kind of was put on hold during World War II.

Nate: Oh right

Greg: Well all of the factories were making tanks and bombers and everything. So after World War II there was an explosion of automobiles for private citizens. Well they need tires don’t they, so they need rubber and there were other resources in Vietnam. So the U.S. decided Vietnam could not govern itself and that’s how the whole division, totally artificial division of the country came about.

Nate: So can I ask, ah, were you, were you drafted or did you enlist?

Greg: Oh okay, It’s all explained in the book.

Nate: Yeah

Greg: I’ll give you the uh, the cliffs notes version

Nate: Yeah, yeah that would be great [over Greg’s statement above] you could give us like the synopsis

Greg: [chuckles]

Greg: First let me remind young people that the draft is not dead it was just put into suspended animation if and if ah the powers that be decide that going to war directly with Russia is a real swell idea I think they are going to revive it.

Nate: [concurrently with the above statement on the draft] I know

Greg: But back in the day here [pause] the options for a young male in this country were: to oppose the war, go to Canada, Sweden, England, and who knows when you would be able to return. You could go to your physical exam at the draft board and get yourself totally messed up. And some prominent people have done that, you know stay awake for a week, do all the drugs and booze you can.

Nate: [chuckles]

Greg: So that when you go in you’re a total wreck. And or when you get to see the head shrinker pretend that your totally nuts. It would be hard to convince me that someone was more nuts than the people running this country at the time. Um other options refuse to be drafted like Mahomed Al-lee did which means your going to federal prison.

Nate: Five year prison sentence, ten thousand dollar fine, yeah

Greg: Right

Greg: Option number four if you’re lucky you might have a genuine physical disability, in that case they call that four f

Nate: uh-hm

Greg: This isn’t in the book but the fifth option is you have a rich daddy he hires a doctor to write a note that you have bone spurs in your heels

Nate: [chuckles]

Greg: And Donald J. Trump enters the picture at that point, that was not an option for me. I’m not a good enough actor to fake being crazy. So if you enlisted the army in theory offered you a choice of what you wanted to do in the army. Now it wasn’t carved in stone

Nate: Of course not

Greg: The fine print is that needs of the army always come first, and that will determine where they will really put you. The only role in which I was willing to serve, and I should say that I totally opposed this war even before the draft was even hanging over me, which it was eminently after I dropped out of college.

Nate: Of course

Greg: [Chuckles] Um the only role that I was willing to serve in was as a medic, and you can see my insignia there. This is my genuine uniform from back then

Nate: Oh wow, okay

Greg: um

Nate: The reason, the reason why I asked if you enlisted versus if you drafted was that its four years there because a lot of draftees were a few years

Greg: Fifty actually represents fifty months five zero fifty, fifty months to finish my thirty six month commitment. So there’s a story behind that obviously.

Nate: So ah, She is going to take a picture of this if that’s alright?

Greg: Yeah

Nate: There you go

Nate: When did you write this, when was this published, when did you publish this?

Greg: Um, I actually started writing this around two thousand twelve

Nate: Okay

Greg: Ten years ago you know

Nate: wow

Greg: And ah it was actually it was a peace activist, an older woman who lives in New Jersey who I only knew from the internet, alright that’s typical these days you meet quote *meet* unquote meet people online. She actually put the boot to my rear end and said you really ought to get this book written. So I started to work on it seriously lets say in two thousand sixteen and I revised it six times trying to pear down the verbiage.

Nate: uh hum

Greg: But I ended up adding page after page so it was like three hundred forty-two pages. I had no intention of writing a book that long initially but you know stuff happens

Nate: Its tough to say

Greg: So I published it myself last year uh the traditional publishing industry wasn’t going to be interested

Nate: Of course

Greg: I approached like two dozen literary agents originally because their the gateway to traditional publishing still, because they have the clout, they can open doors for authors. So I went through a data base and very carefully picked a couple dozen that I thought based on their expressed areas of specialization and interest and thought they might be interested. Nope.

Nate: No dice

Greg: So I said okay I’m going to have to publish it myself. And I did a Kickstarter fundraiser

Nate: Oh wow!

Greg: I got the money from that and it was successful. So this is what I picked as the name of my publishing entity

Nate: Unbearable Truth Publications

Greg: Yes, yes, because this is the unbearable truth about U.S. imperialism and after, since World War II this country has not engaged in any military actions I can approve of. I mean look at the lies that they used against Saddam Husain, weapons of mass destruction. HA, HA, HA

Nate: [Laughs]

Greg: Give me a break

Nate: well alright thank you for bringing this and talking about it uh is there anything else that you would like to add?

Greg: Uh what’s this about you being a veteran? [ speaking to someone away from the microphone]

Nate: Well, thank you.