Kim Sawyer: This is Kim Sawyer conducting an oral history interview with Frank G. Stone III on March 21, 2001 at 10:05 in the morning. We are in the Special Collections Library at Texas Tech University. Mr. Stone could you begin by giving us a brief biographical sketch of yourself have where you been born and where you grew up?

Frank Stone: I was born in Big Run, Pennsylvania. Which is about one hundred miles northeast of Pittsburgh, seven miles away from Punxsutawney which is the home of the groundhog. I grew up and graduated from Punxsutawney High School in 1958. I then went to Penn State at an undergraduate center in Dubois, Pennsylvania for a little while and I got sick and I had to drop out. I worked on road construction for about five months with a place called Interstate Amacite Corporation and when I completed with that I went on to Kansas City, Missouri and attended a school, an electronic school that is called Central Technical Institute, which is no longer. The address was at 16th and Wyndot Street in downtown Kansas City. As I said the last—I’ve got a friend living near there and he said it is no longer in existence. But I went through that and graduated and I had a ticket in Broadcast Technology so I got an assignment or a job in Aberdeen Maryland as a disk jockey and an engineer for the radio station which they are required to have, so you had so many first class FCC tickets on hand at any given moment. It was there that I started meeting recruiters and a little background, I had built model airplanes for as ever since I was old enough to know what an airplane was and so that was I always
wanted to fly and I was in a position at that time where I felt like the draft was going to be breathing down my neck pretty quick. So after consultation with my uncle who is young, I think he was first Lieutenant in the Army at that time, he suggested that I might go for something, whatever I might like to do. So I all the Armed Forces recruiters would come into the station and bring pies from the mess halls and everything trying to bribe you to go ahead and play their spots for recruiting more often on the air. One of those was the Air Force recruiter and we got to talk and I told him that I always wanted to fly and he suggested that I try to get into the Aviation Cadet program. So he arranged for it, it took the time off went down to Bolling Field near Washington and I took a series of test and didn’t know the results for a long time but through him I completed all the applications and everything for the Cadet program. Then I took--- I quit my job and I went back and spent the summer with my mother in Rhode Island and laid on the beach, became a real beach bum for a summer, got a good tan and had a lot of fun, then I decided well I had to make a move. I hadn’t heard from the Air Force so I went a head and enlisted. So I went to Lackland for basic training and while I was in basic training the word came down that I had been selected for the Cadet program. So I completed basic and shortly there after went on to James Connolly Air Force Base in Waco Texas, now closed and then proceeded through the pilot Cadet program. I couldn’t get into the pilot Cadet program because they were phasing that out at the time but I did manage to get into the Navigator Cadet program. So I think I started that toward the end of November.

KS: Is this 1961?

FS: Yes. Then I went into the program and I think it was about eleven months roughly of, it was a typical Cadet program people screaming in your face all of the time and your running and jumping up in the middle of the night for fire drills and all this sort of thing and that lasted for a year eleven months as I said earlier then some of my friends and I we had to go all of us went through survival school at Stead Air Force Base in Nevada which is just north of Reno and that’s in my bio, I think. The survival school it was rather interesting cause it was in November and of course that is high altitude and ferocious weather up there but it was when I got there I was pretty good shape, I was about a hundred-fifty pounds and of course we had constant PT when I was a cadet so I
was able to stay in real good shape and we ate well, but we got up there and outside we
had to jog everywhere, we were in fatigues and combat boots, so we had to run
everywhere between classes to stay in shape cause some of those guys who came into
survival school were older and more pudgy types that definitely needed the training. So
we finally the three week course collimated in the trek and that was in the Sierra Nevada
Mountains and it was as I said November and that place was very prone to a lot of snow
at that time, so my buddy and I, Joe Simpson, we paired up together and Oh lord! About
the first night out it snowed two to three feet and all we had was a little ejection seat
survival tin of rations and it came across with an occasional rabbit and we had at the
beginning of the trek we were in about groups of six, they gave us the rabbits so the city
guys had to kill the rabbit and clean it and we all cooked it and that was any problem for
me, since I grew up hunting and shooting and everything, that was just a part of life for
me. Some of those city guys hadn’t never even held a rabbit let alone kill it so that was
kind of interesting. We went through and we managed to make and when we got off the
trek I’ve got a picture at home that shows what we looked like and we looked in bad
shape.

KS: How long was this for the trek?

FS: The trek as I recall about five days as I recall. They came across with an
occasional orange or an apple or you know like I said a rabbit. But mainly we were
surviving on the rations in that seat pack. I had lost---when I got back---of course I just
threw those fatigues that I was in, in the garbage because they were in such horrible
shape. I lost. I was down to a hundred and thirty-three pounds when I dropped that trek.
Just lack of food, high altitude, dehydration factor and so on. The comical side note, we
had been going to an little Italian restaurant down in northern part of Reno to eat quite
often and when we got off the trek we went down there and we were starving but of
course at that time our stomachs had shrunk to the point that they were size of walnuts
and that poor mamma mia saw us come in the door and she almost fainted. We all look
like walking skeletons and she plunked she and us down preceded to bring us food, of
course we couldn’t eat nearly all of it. Then it was nearing the holidays and she had
made some Spumoni for her family that is Italian ice cream and so topped it off with
some of that special stuff that she had saved for her family. I thought that was just really,
really nice. Another side note on survival school, when our initial group we had a Danish
officer and I had met with Danes later on when I was navigator when I got assigned to
Dover but we were down I found out from Finn was his name, all the officers mainly
pilots I guess in the Danish Air Force at that time had three letter names and he was Fin
and of course later on when I was broken wheels for that week and that is Tripoli in case
your wondering, I ran across all the Danes. They were down there for the annual shoot
up the sands fighter pilot drill that they normally went through. I went in and said Hi and
I’ve got a friend named Fin anybody know. Yeah, everybody so everybody had a three-
letter name and everybody knew everybody else cause it was a small air force. But he
was really a mess, we went to Reno one night and he thought he was going to be the
gambler so, he lost his money and I got parking ticket so in my Porsche at that time that I
had was towed of somewhere so, we had to rescue it. Anyway after survival school then
we drove back across country and pulled off in Texas and dropped off my friend Jim
True who later on retired as full Colonel, he was a thirty year man and he stayed as
navigator but he got his degree and masters along the way and became a finance officer.
He is now professors at a college at I think Beaumont. So came home on leave for the
holidays and then reported into Dover Delaware at the 39th Air Transport Squadron, ATS
and at that time Military Air Transport Service or MATS and I was assigned to fly 133’s
and which was in the vernacular was know as the Oscar Meyer weenie wagon cause it
was a big airplane.

KS: Was that also known, as a Cargo Master is that the same aircraft?
FS: Yes. That’s correct. I’ve got a cast iron model of it and a picture of it. But
during I think it was the spring of ’65, they had a string of 133’s that simply dropped out
of the air for no apparent reason, it killed everybody on board so they came up with some
ideas and they grounded them for about five months during the middle portion of that
year and so, the navigators of course the pilots were dead in the water, they just got odd
jobs around base, the navigators were formed out to almost every part of the base that
need a navigator. Got one from Dover or Travis at that time, the A-model 133’s were at
Dover the B-models were at Travis and the difference was on the A-model we had a 130
type rear door set up like this and the B-models at Travis they went a little about ten
knots faster and a little different instrumentation but they had clam shell rear doors. They
were able to haul the big missiles that were stored at Hill Air Force Base at that time. So they spend a lot of time on alert to haul missiles where as we got the trash hauling around the world but at any rate I went to, I did a couple of things I wound up initially at McGuire Air Force Base and I had a friend in a 118 Squadron at this was at the time when MATS was in the passenger business and so he got me on a couple of runs with him. I went to round trip to Germany a couple of times and then he got me a trip down to through Rasiti, Brazil to Ascension Island which is out in the middle of the Atlantic about ten degrees south latitude and it was the southern most radar tracking site on the Atlantic missile range and it was maintained by the British and it’s just a volcanic rock but we went out there and came on back and I had been there on a 133 also, broken for about nine days and that was very interesting.

KS: You were moving people and troops or equipment?

FS: 118 were all people. And of course we came through a Rasiti in Brazil and through us each way and but the 118 trips, yes it was strictly people. We flew the class A uniforms and that was a like an airline business. But then I managed to other than 118 I flew a lot of 124’s during that period. I remember one trip in particular somehow I wound up at Hickam and there was a 124 coming through there and I remember it was really interesting because the crew, now there weren’t two crew members on that airplane on the same base, I mean it was composite of everywhere there was a 124 squadron they had a crew member on there. So the pilots were from two different bases and the engineers from load master all from different bases and I was the only navigator and I hated 124’s cause they were low and they were slow and took forever to get anywhere. Anyway I thought that was kind of interesting and all during this time that I was assigned at Dover I think my first trip into Vietnam was in February of ’63 and even then we landed in Tan Son Nhut in Saigon and the whole airfield was full of little green airplanes and people in green uniforms running around. This February of ’63 and I thought boy and it just grew after that. I made it in about once a month during my whole tour at Dover and the place just a lot of Army people there and advisors and Army helicopters, airplanes and what not.

KS: How close had you been following the build up during that time?
FS: I really hadn’t. I was young bachelor at that time and mainly interest in chasing women and so. And we had a good place to do it cause we went down to Rehoboth Beach and Dewey Beach there in Delaware and so we really weren’t that history inclined at that time. It was, but I just noticed this and we got into Da Nang and let’s see I can’t remember those are the two main places because we are flying such big airplanes and most of the other locations did not have the ground equipment necessary to on load or off load so Tan Son Nhut and Da Nang were the two main points of which we flew.

KS: And you were hauling equipment at this point or also more people or?

FS: People and equipment and during the times I remember one trip in particular and we had loaded jeeps in that 133 as I said 133 is a big airplane it had about ninety some feet of useable cargo space, it’s extremely wide and extremely high and watching that thing off and load there in Tan Son Nhut with all those jeeps just like a big ol’ guppy giving birth. Never seem to stop. A lot of times we took helicopters.

KS: How long was that trips typically take and where would you stop?

FS: Well we had to island hop going out to Travis to Hickam, Travis to Wake or Hickam to Wake that was one of the better crew rest spots out in the Pacific by the way. Wake Island, it was run by an outfit contract by the Facilities Management Corporation, FMC and all the housekeeping duties, like running chow hall and taking of the BOQ’s and so on was done by Filipinos and one hoping some other people that might had been in a transport business will back me up on this, but they had a bar there called the Drifters Reef and I’ve got to describe the Drifter’s Reef cause it was really interested it was shack and it had old airplanes parts stacks up against the side and leaky tin roof and it was just as you picture a saucy Island bar. A big ol’ horseshoe bar inside from the Philippians and they had this humongous big nude painting on the back wall. The interesting thing about that place was it was so shoddy, that you could go over there and have a beer and watch the sun go down over the Pacific and it was a sight I’ll never forget. But Wake Island was an interesting story in itself. We would stop there and then sometimes we weren’t to heavy we could make it on to Clark from Wake but most of the times we had to go through Guam and refuel and then on to Clark and then on to Vietnam and then come back either mid-pac back across Okinawa or Tachikawa.
KS: You said you fly at least once a month to Vietnam during this time period?
FS: Yes. Well, there was a lot of selfishness in that. Everybody tried to get on
one trip a month cause of the income tax deduction. Enlisted people spent, paid no
income tax for the month they were the war zones and officers got a five hundred dollar
deduction and of course in today’s dollars that wouldn’t be much, but in those days’
dollars it was significant. Then we would hop scotch on back to and a lot of times we
would leave Tachikawa and we would fly to Midway Island and I don’t whether you’ve
heard very much about Midway Island but it was the home of the Gooney bird’s and they
had a lot, lot of stories came out about gooney bird’s it was just hilarious.

KS: Do you have any for example?
FS: Well, yeah. Some I observed but one of the more interesting ones was, we
had this World War II major this aircraft commander in the 39th squadron at Dover and
he was telling us about the time when he was flying 124’s and he and his crew went out
there, they crew rested and they went out and they were pre-fighting missile 124 and
there’s a Gooney bird sitting out there in the wing and Gooney bird’s don’t get perturbed
at anything and you can walk up to them and they are just not afraid of people but this old
goose sat there and watched everybody do their pre-flight thing and he was probably near
the end of the wing. Well they cranked up the engines and taxi on out and the old
Gooney and looked very unruffled and they went out the end of the runway and ran up
the engines per the checklist and the old Gooney just sitting there watching and pretty
soon he starts going down the runway. As they start going fast the old Gooney starts
leaning into the wind you know and almost before lift off the old Gooney got too much
for him (sound) off the end. It was truly hilarious. My first visit to Midway, I went down
to the beach and I was just looking, I always savored the beach, the sounds, watching the
birds, the sea gulls. Well there was Gooney birds and they are very clumsy when they
are on the ground and there was this golden retriever out there having more fun than the
law should allow and what he’d do is this beach was sloped into several little tidal levels
and he would wait until a Gooney bird went flopping down into the beach to try to get
airborne and he would just pick just the right time because, just before the Gooney had
quite enough air speed he would become airborne and he would run after it and bark at it.
The Gooney would try leap into the air, flap, flap, flap and go splash into the water every
time. I thought boy whoever thought a doggy intelligence really just had witnessed that one. That dog had figured out just right the time. I watched him do it several times so it was just not a one-time accident. But there were a lot of Gooney bird stories that are just, just hilarious. But then we then fly from Midway straight back to Travis. It was a long run but normally at that latitude we had pretty good tail winds in that direction so were able to make it. While I was in Dover towards the, I guess it was about a year before I left, I had applied for you had to be in the cockpit as a navigator so many years, I forget how many that was right now. I think it was three years, I might be mistaken. I went ahead and applied for pilot training. I felt a kind of delusional because we had some really sharp, sharp people there in Dover and the NAV departments apply and they were turned down. But I thought what the hell, so I went ahead and applied and that first time I had taken an AFOQT at Bolling apparently I scored real high on the pilot portion of that test.

KS: AFOQT, what is that?

FS: Armed Forces Officers---maybe it was the aircrew and officer test, so it had to be the Air Force Officer Qualification Test and apparently the pilot portion I scored very high, cause that got me into pilot training. So I came down to Reese and my last trip to Vietnam with the 39th at Dover was in May of ’66 and my pilot training class started June of ’66. So I came down to dear dusty Reese and got in to pilot training. I felt very fortunate. I had good instructors and the T38 had been in place out of Reese from somewhere between two or three years when I got here so I was able to fly the T38, which is definitely more fun the law should allow. So pilot training went pretty well, this is where I discovered I had allergies coming to Reese. And after Reese I was in a dilemma when it came to assignments, you know they adventure some part of me wanted to go to fighters and the practical side of me was telling me I needed to go back to transports. They had a 133 slot open at Dover and I was very, very tempted but the adventuresome part of me won out and I applied for and got F4’s and the unfortunate thing about that assignment was I got stuck in the back seat. Right after---shortly after graduation of pilot training I got married and she was a Tech student at that time working on her master’s in Spanish. But anyway we got married I first initially had to go to Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson for a six week back seat radar school in the F4 and
we went out there and that was really our honeymoon out there and we got a little
apartment, had a swamp cooler on it, smelled musty all time. Didn’t do any flying out
there just strictly simulator type stuff and then we went on to McDill in Florida in Tampa
and we started into that program, it was a hellacious program cause we were going six
days a week right from the start and F4 was a kind of a complicated airplane to learn and
try to learn in such a hurry and so I was teamed up with a guy that had been come from
Europe, he had been a helicopter pilot, broken leg, the guy was built like a gorilla, he was
a real hefty weight lifter and so on. But he got the front seat and was teamed with him
and we were about half way through the program---let me back up a little bit---as I had
said we were going from early morning to late in the evening, six days a week and that
itself was pretty exhausting.

KS: Did you have classroom training?

FS: Classroom training and then just lots of other things. We didn’t get a ride in
the airplane for the first week or two and that was with an instructor in the front seat. But
like I said it was kind of complicated airplane to learn, especially you know, such an arm
loaded all at once. If you were trickled into it a little more gradually you would have
been far more made a lot more sense but anyway, it was difficult to learn all that. Cause
we needed study time and we were out at the base so often and it was just ten to twelve
hours a day. About half way through that program we were going to the gunnery range at
the Kissimmee Avon Park Florida, central Florida, South central below Kissimmee where
there was just south of Disney world. We were number four in a four ship and for some
reason we had a little problem before we took off and the other, we were number four as I
said so that one, two and three went ahead and took off and we got off the ground and we
were in a C model F4. This is significant because of the type of ejection seat it had, but
after lift off the main gear would not come up and this guy in the front seat really didn’t
have enough experience to cope with that aircraft in that situation because under two
hundred and fifty knots, as heavy as we were, we were going to the race so we had full of
fuel, lots of practice ordinance and a gun center line, so we were heavy and we were dirty
and a lot of stuff hanging. So the main gear did not come up, so mobile control advised
him, us of that fact and so we were coming over the top and he pulled it out of burner,
cause the gear limit speed was about two hundred knots and we were already over that
and so he pulled out of a burner where it kind of coasting over the top and I had my check list under my leg and I was reaching to get that. About that time, he said we are going in, get out. What had happened was, he was the aircraft started rolling at about two hundred knots and the angle of attack was so high that you had to actually fly the airplane with the rudder only because if you tried to use the stick you’ve got an adverse affect in that, it would increase the roll you were trying to come out of and he forgot all that. So he had to try to correct with the stick, which is a natural inclination, but remembering air speed and the fact he just had to hit the left rudder to bring us out of that roll. Well, we are about six degrees, he told me to get out, so I took one flash and had to mentally program myself, the mountain baker in the F4 had two methods of ejecting one was a handle between the legs and it had stirrups down below that keep your feet in and so on. It was built for high speed, high altitude ejections. The other way was a face curtain that you had to reach up and grab two handles and pull down over your face. I had more or less programmed myself out of using that second method because I was afraid as narrow as the cockpit was that I would have my elbows too far out and I would lose them when I went out. So I pulled the handle and it was a boot in a butt, it was eighteen g’s instantaneously, now the reason I say that it was significant that it was a C model was that it was a strictly ballistic seat it had. The equivalent according to the Martin Baker people up an 88mm shell in the seat and it’s from nothing to eight g’s--- eighteen times your own body weight in just a split second. Compressed three vertebrae in my back, I got compression factures on the inner edges and one of the reasons for that was I was bent over. So I went out and I thought I don’t want to forget this, you know, so I tried to keep my eyes open and there was no way I could do that. A split second later, bam! I stretched out again when the chute opened cause it was a twenty-eight foot opening canopy. So then Freddy as I learned later, got out hit about one hundred and twenty degrees and he was built, like I said, a gorilla that seat didn’t bother him at all. But I noticed from my---just talking around afterwards the people that had ejected that had gotten injured were people with a lighter bone structure. I only weighed about one hundred fifty pounds at that time, plus all the gear, so for that ejection seat it was like nothing was in the seat at all. But the guy in the front seat, he was he weighed a lot more,
he was very bulky muscular guy and he had large bone structure. So he didn’t get injured at all.

KS: This is over Tampa Bay?

FS: Over Tampa Bay. We took off to the north over the Bay. So I remember as soon as the chute opened you know, Wow, so I kind of look around and first thing I did was disconnect my oxygen mask and let it hang and I looked down and it’s really wild how what the mind comes across when you are in a situation like that because thing I looked at all that water coming at me and we were only a couple hundred feet so, no altitude to speak of but all along Bay Shore Boulevard from Tampa into the base they had signs all along, polluted water avoid all contact maybe it will help (?) And I thought of that and I went oh! So I went in and I didn’t even have time, well I went in the water and bobbed back up cause I had a G-suit on and must have had some air in it and so I came back up and first thing, we are programmed to do, disconnect the risers of the parachute, which I did and as it so happened there was very strong under current in Tampa Bay and that parachute. I thought maybe being so light but it didn’t it went down and I had a couple of shroud lines caught on one of my feet on my right foot and I remember to this day, how you can just be looking at the instruction manual, picture by picture everything you are suppose to do well I reached down and got, we had a little pocket here in the inside leg for that survival knife and so I got it out, it was a lanyard, untangled it brought it up, unlocked it, pushed the button the blade came open and I had a razor edge on it and thank God I kept that knife sharp and that has been with me to this day. But I locked it, went under water, one swipe and (snap) shroud lines were gone, so I brought it back up, unlocked it pushed the button, fold the knife shut, wound up the lanyard and stuck it back in my pocket and I still got it. So then I thought you know, I got LPU so I grabbed the little deals and I pulled them (sound), so I was floating around and then by that I time I looked over at Freddy and he hollered over, you are okay, yeah think so and so then I said well I’ve got a raft here some where, so I reached around, of course there were lanyard tied to the parachute harness and so pulled it up and there was the box an actual, it was the seat what we were on and so they had--- it’s a nice big handle, like an emergency brake handle and I pulled that and puff out came the raft and everything worked as advertised and so I crawl in it and I’m bobbing around and about that time, what they air
force had some twin rotored helicopters and their call sign was Pedro and so Pedro came
out and they got over me and so I slipped out of the raft over into the water and they
lowered the harness and I crawled into it, winched me on board and then went over and
got the other guy and came back and after that it was a series of laying there, with that
cruddy water all over me and we were in the emergency room and must have been string
of about six or eight full colonels sticking there face in mine, what happened?
KS: What was Freddy’s last name do you recall?
FS: Probably shouldn’t mention it. But anyway, we into the hospital and we
were in the same room, then it was determined that I had the compression facture and he
wasn’t injured see he was in there overnight and he got out and then I was in the hospital
and all this ties in at the same time the USS Pueblo was captured by North Korea. That’s
when I was in the hospital. I remember seeing that on the television news and so on. But
the stay in the hospital was somewhat uneventful and everybody kept sneaking beer into
me and some really high priced hard stuff, so they made sure my stay in the hospital was
comfortable and the one thing about it and this is the difference of people, but I
remember this extremely well, everybody from that squadron came up to see me at least
once except for the squadron commander. I remember his name but again I won’t
mention it, but I thought that was really something. There I was lying in the hospital for
ten days and the squadron commander never came in to see me. Later on he made full
bird and went on--- but after that I was grounded for five months and at which time my
wife and I never had a trip back to meet my side of the family so we had us a new little
Karmann Ghia and so jumped in and we went up and I had a full colonel friend who was
at that time at Langley and I known him at Dover and he was a Porsche nut and so was I.
So we went up---I stayed in touch with him and we had interesting experiences together,
but anyway we went to Langley and spend a night or two with them and then went on up
to Dover and saw some of my old compadres and my grandparents lived in southern
Maryland, a place called Cobb Island, Maryland about forty or fifty miles down Potomac
River from D.C. and so we had some enjoyable days there and we went on up to New
England to see my mother anyway, it was an interesting trip, we went to New York and
made like tourists and so, then got back, back to Florida and I got back on flying status
and they were going to stick me right in the back seat again and at that time, they were
starting to put navigators in the back seat and here I was a pilot, right out of pilot training
and they wanted to stick me in the back seat and I said I don’t think so. I want to be in
command this time. If it’s going to be a screw up I want to do it. So I went to---I talked
with Randolph on the phone and Randolph Air Force Base at the time---Military
personnel center, so the only thing I could get as a pilot was to go to as a Forward air
control, so I was assigned to a O2 aircraft and we went up to Hurlburt Field and we
trained out of a little auxiliary air field out to the west of Hurlburt Field and I can’t
remember be name to save my life, but we were out there and that was where the main
O2 check out was. My wife and I were very fortunate in that it was a little town just
practically nothing there west of Fort Walton Beach called Marietta Florida, we had this
lady who had a palatial estate and we just happen to be sitting in the housing office when
this guy that was moving out of this garage apartment, came in to tell them, so we were
there at the right time. So we managed to get that apartment, it was beautiful. I mean
this lady had money coming out of her ears. It was over the garage that housed her two
Cadillac’s and the place was paneled had solid three quarter inch walnut and it had a solid
stainless kichenette and a solid beautiful tile bathroom. It was just unbelievable, had a
balcony that over look the water way out there over this manicured grass, a little
swimming pool, so---my wife really---it for me to do while I was off flying or doing my
thing. So we had a good stay there, then they were thinking they wanted to send me
through survival school again and I said no I don’t think so. At that time they had moved
it to Washington State. So I kind of reneged on that, but eventually I got my orders and I
went on to Vietnam. I was initially assigned to Da Nang but I---they wanted fighter
qualified people at that time, so I---this other slot came open down at Bien Hoa. That
was the 19th Tactical Air support Squadron at Bien Hoa and it was the 20th TASS at Da
Nang. So I volunteered for it and got the assignment down to Bien Hoa. So I was
assigned to sleep time ops at Bien Hoa. That was an interesting part of the story. I think
I’m going to pause for a moment.

KS: You mentioned several times throughout your training working with people
from other countries, other soldiers or officers, you mentioned the Danish. Was that
common to train with---?
Yes, it was. In pilot training out here we had two Iranians in our group. The one in our half of the class at that time, we had split classes. In our side we had this real sharp kid, Fatahdoum instantly Freddy. Freddy was kind of a neat guy. He flew pretty good and but he did crazy things like when we were flying those little Cessnas out at Lubbock Munie (?) prior to being Lubbock International Airport, I remember old Freddy got a little confused and he said---he took off on a taxi way. Cause the taxi way out there were almost as big as a runway, so he took off on a taxi way and he really got chewed for that. Freddy pulled some interesting stunts while we were there. Then the other part of the class, they had this kid named Hashi Minasot, and Hashi wasn’t to smart but they---because the Shah was paying for at that time they kept washing back, washing back. I don’t whether he hadn’t graduated or not but Freddy stayed with us and he stayed right with our class. He was pretty good, then later on when I was a squadron commander at Shepard, I was living next to this full Colonel and his wife and kids up at Burke-Burnett and it just so happened that he had had an embassy job, Colonel Rogers, in Tehran and he knew Freddy. I said is he still the skinny old runt he was he was in pilot training. Noooo! He had blossomed shall we say. So I don’t know what happed after the Shah fell or where he went. He probably got he and his family out of there, but I don’t know where. I never heard from him again. The Danish officer---while I was a navigator at Dover---this is regression here but---we had a really good officer’s club at Dover during those years in the sixties and we had this major come in the run, we had actual officers running the club at that time, his name was Shawn, he made Lieutenant Colonel out of that job but we had such a fabulous club. It was really the desired place in town to come and eat. OF course it wasn’t behind a gate it was across the highway from the base, main part of the base. But it was over by the BOQ’s. Well one dark foggy night, I’m over there at the club and like I say I was a bachelor at that time, just over having a beer and in walks in this New Zealand crew. They had come up in a 118 from Christchurch and they were on a C130 buying trip and they were into Andrews but they couldn’t get into Andrews because of the fog so they had divert over to Dover, so they walked in real hungry, but typical New Zealanders were thirsty first and hungry second, so I met this whole crew in the bar. I met the aircraft commander and the navigator and a couple of the other crew members, so I had sixty-four Pontiac GTO at the time, so I said well they
finished eating in here but they were going to scrap something to get for them, so I said I
know a better place, so we went down to this other place—I forgot the name, it will come
to me later, but she specialized and nearly half the bachelor’s on base went out there
every night to eat, chicken and dumplings, typical gold old American recipes, so I said
come on I’ve got a treat for you, so we went out there. Well we became friends and
through my navigation years and later on in flying transports as a pilot, I would run into
those guys. At various places in the world, Japan, Germany, Spain, you name it, I would
walk in, New Zealand aircraft sitting out there so I almost could bet who I was going to
run across, so sure enough I did and so we became really good friends. That was typical,
later on when I was a 141 pilot, I got into Germany and no matter what the base was,
usually it was Ramstein, but or Rhein-main at Frankfurt. You see a German pilot in
uniform with American wings, so you walk up and you say where did you go through
pilot training? More often than not it was Reese and so bang you were taken care for the
evening. Connections, connections so---but it was kind of a good brotherhood and the
Germans really like that camaraderie. Regressing again back into war storytime. This
retired major pilot that I knew at Dover when I first started flying there as a navigator, I
forgot his name, but he was telling me this story about this young second lieutenant on a
raid into Germany, you know a P47 the “Jug”----and he just got the hell shot out of him.
I mean there was pieces missing off the airplane---couple of cylinders missing off the
engine, he’s pumping oil and he is chugging on back to England. This German in a ME-
109 came up, pull up along side I’m on the wing, looked over at him and grinned an
pulled on back and just hosed him from one wing tip to the other wing tip and more parts
flew, more oil flew and the German was out of ammo. He expended every round he had
on that P47 and it’s still chugging along and the guys curl up in his Armor, cause it had
Armor plaiting in that fighter, so the German pulls up on the wing again, shakes his head,
salutes him, peels off and goes home. I thought that was always a pretty good one. But
that there was camaraderie there, even between services. Let’s see where was I---

KS: I was going to ask you a little bit on you’re training on the O2, what was that
like? What did you think about the aircraft?

FS: Well, it was---the training--- we had quite a group going through at that time
cause there was a horrendous need for pilots in Vietnam, since it was limited to a one
year tour. We got into this little field and of course there was some academia but it was
typical little remote field location and we just stayed in our flight suits all the time and
so we had some academics, most of the training courses I had been through as a pilot
were pretty well split out. About half academics, half flying and so we did our daytime
flying, we did our night time flying and one interesting comment that I want to make
about it, the fact that I had done a lot of shooting, guns all growing up and everything.
The O2 had a little heads up display, not really a heads up display, it was a typical gun
sight, clear glass and it had a compass rose on it and then of course you had the pipper in
the gun sight. I remember towards the end, my instructor and I went out and on a training
mission one night and over there on Eglin, they had some simulated trucks parts—you
the whole beat up trucks simulating all of this stuff and I was supposed to meet with this
flight of A1 Skyraiders from some place—I forgot where they were coming from—
maybe Eglin, but anyway, make contact—establish the target area and mark the target
and say okay go kill ‘um. Talk about a golden bb. moment, I rolled in—of course the
O2’s had what we called we the “Willie Pete’s” the white phosphorus markings rocket
smoke marking. I rolled in and I lined it up and I pickled off the rocket—dam if I didn’t
hit one of those trucks right square on—so we pulled off, that made my (?). We pulled
off and he called the set of fighters and says—Roger, target mark you can have the other
three. And those guys couldn’t come close to the truck park, let alone and hit any of the
others and they went home very mad. That was one of my more glorious moments in
training for the O2; I thought that was pretty good.

KS: Now was this training at what they call FAC-U training?
FS: It probably was, that doesn’t ring a bell but it was probably FAC-U. I can’t
remember the name of the field, have you heard that before. I was just west of Hurlburt;
it was a little luxury airfield out there.

KS: I could find out for you but—

FS: I can call Colonel Driscoll, he would probably remember.

KS: At this time you—you knew you were going to be going to Vietnam?

FS: Oh yes, that was a pipeline setup. I mean you go through training and you
know the next stop an airliner headed west.
KS: Had any of your instructors at this point been to Vietnam? So would they instruct you on--- this is how things are over there--- this will help you get through---

FS: Oh yes. The instruction on that was real good. All of those had be there, done that. So as you know from, when you get somebody even in a college situation that has been there, lived real life and has done something as oppose to somebody got everything out of a book, the whole learning experience is greatly enriched, that you get a feel for it, that you don’t otherwise.

KS: You went to Vietnam in October 1968. Is that when?

FS: Yes.

KS: You started--- first you had another jungle survival school ----?

FS: Before I actually got to Vietnam we went to Clark Airbase. We had all the academics there, got introduced to the surroundings, including the bamboo vipers---have you ever heard of those? Well, there was a little green skinny snake about a couple of feet long and they had some in glass cages at Jones Survival School and most of this was on Clark Airbase. I remember they were mean little critters because nearly all of them would rise up in a striking poise and hood out like a cobra and he pound up against that glass until they were bloody in the face, trying to get you. They were mean and nearly all of them were like that. Then they had this big boa--- got it was humongous, that snake was twenty feet long and it was that big round---humongous big thing! They would feed him three chickens every three days. Snakes are like this, almost like a cat, you know a bird, once they know got it, they would----this typical poise thing. But Jungle Survival School was really good. There was a NeNegreto instructors there----they new the jungle. I got an experience to relate to you later on when that assigned me to Clark. Those NeNegretos were sharp, sharp people. That’s the reason McArthur---there is a story about Lilly Hill there on Clark airbase that was full caves and it’s right in the middle of the base and they were working the runway in World War II and snipers kept crawling out of their caves and shooting the guys working on the runway. And the Army couldn’t do anything about it. So finally the NeNegreto chieftain came up---we’ll take care and sure enough they did. They went up and in the next morning they had drug them all out----dead. At that time it was reported it, I don’t know how true this is but McArthur grab the eagles off of that base commander and put them on that Negroto Chieftain and he still
has them or he did at the time, I don’t know if he is still alive. But they had full
commissary privileges and everything after that.

KS: Any particular incidents during jungle survival school?

FS: No other than the fact that you know I was able to hide from the Negreto’s. They weren’t to many outside of the class that were able to do that, like I say there’s a lot of guys who weren’t as young and healthy as I was at that time, you know these older officers that you know they had been behind a desk and you know various things, they weren’t quite in as good of shape but—other than that what I just related about some of the snakes and stuff that nothing really sticks in my— it was more less of a gentlemen’s survival school. It wasn’t the high pressure like we had at Stead, it was—I think it was combination of try and teach as much as they can but doing it in such a way that it is to not make you feel right at---curl your toes and tuck your tail, crawl into a hole somewhere.

KS: Now, did you ever run into any of these dangerous snakes or other wild life during ----?

FS: No, I didn’t before I went over though, there you used to be a guy here in town--- who was a knife maker---his name is Joe Martin--- I remember at the time, most of my life I always carried a good knife and I looked at the air force issues of survival knife---which I still got—and I thought I didn’t know what type of environment I would be getting into if I would crash land an airplane and had to carve my way out of it, so I went to Joe with this premise—you know Joe I laid off the perimeter’s, what might, could possibly happen? He thought about it and he designed me a knife and made it out of--- at that time the premier steel, which was used a lot in the shafts of submersible pumps, it was called 440 Stainless steel—it had a very strong characteristics of good edge holding and you could run a car over it on a curb and it wouldn’t break and it had a lot of--lot of good features about it, so he built me this knife and I’ve still got it also. That’s the one I carried to Vietnam but I had that in the jungle survival school. I’m surprised I made it through, I thought those Negreto’s were going to re enforce it. Went I got there---of course I was issued a AR15, which was a collapsible version of the---short stock and short barrel for use in an aircraft and so I carried that. They issued me a 38 revolver
which I didn’t—wasn’t to crazy about so I had to bribe the guy in the flight line to trade
that for a 45 government model.

KS: And you carried this with you at all times?

FS: You bet. I never turned it in especially during the Tet of 69 when I was
there. Cause I kept all that stuff right with me. Because they had a habit of crawling of
the fences and coming on base. I didn’t want to be sitting there wishing I had my
weapon. In that case I never had to use it.

KS: I just wanted to back up. What—how did your wife feel about going to
Vietnam, your family and your parents?

FS: Typical remorse, sadness. When I climbed on TWA there at Amarillo
headed west it was pretty grieving for her. But then she came back down here and got an
apartment and her sister and brother-in-law were living here with their three kids at that
time and so she had company here in town and her old roommate from college was here
in town, she is married to a rather prominant lawyer here in town. So she had friends
here and so she just spent her time buried in work, finishing her masters.

KS: You arrived in Vietnam in October 1968?

FS: Yes, it was either later October, first November.

KS: At Bien Hoa or did you fly into Tan Son Nhut?

FS: Actually—let’s see Clark, then I went to Saigon and then I got shipped on up
to Da Nang. Then I was at Da Nang for a little while. Then I got reassigned me back to
Bien Hoa.

KS: What were your first impressions? I know you had been down to Vietnam
before, did you—what was the contrast between what you saw back in the early sixties as
oppose to—?

FS: Well, it was just more of the same. I had been there—like I said I hadn’t
sleep there, but you know I got to thinking—well know I get to sleep here for a year.
Saigon wasn’t quite as prone to this as what Bien Hoas was but—Bien Hoa was kind of
known as rocket city. They has a corner in the Dong Ngai river that used to come down
and set up there rocket launchers and launch at Bien Hoa and Sparta this little Army
helicopter base just southeast of us. There were a lot of nights we had run for the
bunkers.
KS: What was your typical day like? I know you flew exclusively at night, so could you take me through that?

FS: Well, most of the time—I tried to get some exercise when I first got there I run across a guy I had flown with at Dover he was in Ranch Hand. Ranch Hand guys their Hootch’s were right close to ours, were all clustered in back of the officers club. Rich—something—his last name was Richardson and I can’t remember his first name at the moment—but anyway he was there and he was jogger and so he started dragging me out, once we had discovered each other in the club. So I was still right after that ejection and I wasn’t—when I went out I not only compressed three vertebrate but on the inner edges like balsa wood, but I had a severe muscle trauma also, so when I started jogging—oh lord it hurt! But the more I jogged the less it hurt and within a month a half, two months I could warm up and go jog and it wouldn’t hurt so I know I was doing a good thing so I continued jogging quite a lot after that. But anyway Rich had to get up—I think they usually took off about three in the morning and they would drop their load right at first light. Then they would get back to Bien Hoa. So we’d meet some time during the day. Now normally, we would take off after sundown till just before sunrise. Then I would come back and we either have a party in the club and that was kind of usual because what we did on the slides that show you, we had—we gotten these blue pajamas, light blue pajamas out of the BX and it had our rank and wings and everything all sewed on them and patches and so we would be partying by the time these guys would be staggering out of bed in the club for breakfast. But normally just go to bed, sleep till about mid afternoon, go out and catch a few rays and go jog or eat and start the briefings for the night mission and so on.

KS: You flew mostly was it three corp or—the area of your missions—what were your missions exactly—?

FS: Our mission mainly was to orbit Saigon and continually watch for incoming rockets. We were mainly a Saigon CAP. Anytime however, having this availability of being airborne all night, cause we normally flew two to three hour missions and before we left the station and another guy would come up and take the station. That was all good in theory but we got called on a lot when things started happening. Other nights we had missions of just recon and our situation was being—we were sleepytime FACs and
we carried a navigator and he navigator would open the window and hook it to the wing
and he would be leaning out with a starlight scope and we’d be looking for a little lights
in the jungle and trees and stuff like that. When I went over there I was having a---my
skin was breaking out. Probably from the stress and the tension but---my wife put me on
some of this vitamin A, this water-soluble vitamin A, so I was taking that and that
combined with sleeping in the daytime and flying at night, my eyesight got unbelievable.
I could tell it was getting better, cause we’d get a new kid in, in the right seat and I’d be
out instructing him, you know showing him different area and showing him little clusters
of lights and so down in the jungle, show him the curve of the river and I’ll see it. Even
on a moonless night, just starlight strictly, you know I could see the reflections of the
river and the woods and so on and the jungle and they couldn’t make it out. Then I told
the flight surgeons about it when I came back and they wrote a few things about it, I
don’t know just the fact that this guy reported that and documented that---but we’d take
them out and I was just so amazed at how well I could see at that time. I’m still pretty
fortunate at age sixty I’m far sighted and I have to have glasses to read now, if I hold it
out far enough and the print is good enough I can do it without that. But I have been real
fortunate for eyesight. Another---am I getting to answer you question? Things are
coming to mind rather frequently. Most of our missions we’d go out and pre-flight the
aircraft, one airplanes---the conditions of the airplanes was interesting. A couple of those
aircrafts had been there for a long time. The O2 was really the Cessna 335 Skymaster
twin engine, push pull situation with a twin boom tail. A lot of those guys flying them
didn’t use to much discretion on the airframe, now remember this was a civilian airframe
that was gotten off the assembly line, loaded with radios and little deals along the wings
to hang rockets on and stuff, but the airframe itself wasn’t really built I didn’t think, to
handle the---you know the G-forces of pulling out after marking a target and stuff like
that, a couple of them were bent. There was one airplane I’ll never forget, that this was
Jim Thorpe was it? All American----it was his great grandson I think was a crew chief for
this airplane---that damn airplane---the problem with it if you lost your front engine, the
rear engine was near center line on the aircraft, so you could fly it without too much
double. But if you lost your rear engine then your dragging this whole airframe through
the air. This one aircraft was bent so bad that I never tried this, but I felt like it wouldn’t
go past ninety-five knots straight down full power. I often thought, if I lost my rear
engine that airplane---I had gone out on a day mission one day and just look places to
 crash landed it cause I knew it wouldn’t going to fly. There of course the Dong Ngai
River was out there going west from the base on the runway. So I had earlier pick up the
landmarks and in this nice sandy little beach---that was less than desirable. But we
mainly took off to the west of that runway at Bien Hoa sometimes, to the east but it was
kind of rare. But then I---just before I came back we got a couple of new airplanes and
god they practically flew themselves and they were just so straight and level and the
endurance was far superior to the old ones and it was just really great. You could fly
three and half-hours in one those new when the old ones, you know you would go not
even near three hours, it was just really wild. Being aerodynamically dirty they didn’t fly
as well. So they consumed more fuel.

KS: Was there weapons on the 02’s? I know you mentioned---?
FS: Only what we carried personally and then the white phosphorous marking
rockets. Then we also carried these Navy log flares they were direct out of the Navy
parts and they were the best I could tell, they were a big white posteriors device inside of
a solid log of hard wood. You could drop them and they would stay lit for quite a while
or as the Willie Pete’s would soon fizzle and die, so it was mainly---you couldn’t put it
out on the ground---there was no way---I mean the white phosphorous just burned with
such intensity that I mean everything around just caught on fire and so, I started quite a
few good jungle fires.

KS: At what altitude did you typically fly out in?
FS: Normally we flew at about twelve hundred feet. We didn’t get down to low
at night because we didn’t want to run into any of the Army helicopters which very often
ran and blacked out. We would support these guys and maintain a CAP on them that they
had an operation I don’t know what they called it but---they would have three helicopters
and one of them with a big ol’ search light on it and they would be down there looking at
the bullfrogs in the eyeballs, those kids---they were past nineteen, they got to much sense
to do what they did but---they had the guy with the light, the guy right above him, a gun
ship orbiting him, then they had a command ship at the third level, then I would usually
mess around with those guys up above them. If I could spot something being higher I
could usually spot it and I really don’t recall of incidents happening there. Occasionally, we went down below in the delta area, south of Saigon into that area was more or less known as IV Corps. Sometimes some of those Navy patrol boats or river boats would run into a lot of fire and they would relay the three dask and the three dask would get a hold a of us and we’d go scooten on south. Mainly when we found a firefight going on or when we marked a target it was usually put in a set of fighters and we were working a lot with the 100s out of Bien Hoa. We had a squadron or two of 100s and we had some A 37’s there, but I didn’t work with them just until the very end. The real good---we adjusted our artillery, we worked with artillery quite a lot. But the guys who really go the job done were the Spooky. Those Spooky guys---they had a commander at that time, Ducky Rowe who was a former aircraft commander out of KC135’s a full SAC tanker pilot. But he had an attitude, oh god he was so good! Every pilot in that outfit, every crewmember of that outfit just shared his attitude, my god if there is a fight going on they wanted a piece of it. And they would go get a piece of it and usually stop it. It got so that the Viet Cong and Charlie would just really---they had captured radios and whenever they Spooky was five minutes out, they would break contact nearly every time and disappear. I got a story about that to. One night there is Spooky and I and we are orbiting around Saigon area, nothing is going on. All of a sudden 3 DASC calls saying this was about two in the morning, there was a little fire support base up near the Cambodian boarder it was under heavy attack. Now Spooky, the C47 was a lot faster than the O-2, so we both roll out balls to the wall and went sailing that direction. He got there first and five minutes out, sure enough just like clockwork they broke contact. So I got there and I was talking to this Lieutenant on the ground, who was in charge of this fire support base, so we orbited and orbited and nothing happened, so I went down and I got directions from this kid as to where I thought they might be, so I went down and I went low altitude, low and slow patrolling. Didn’t catch a round, not one bullet fired. Then start counting light and we were both running on fuel, low on fuel and so we made contact with a guy; we had been in contact with him all this time talking with them. But we told them we were getting bingo fuel we were have to beat it down to the base and he said and Spooky had a full load of seventeen thousand five hundred rounds aboard. He hadn’t expanded a bullet all night. So this kid asks him to hose down this tree line
about a click or two away from the support base. Hose that sucker, he expended every
round on that tree line. I’m not sure if you understand the consequence of this, but one
just few second burst out of those three gatlings in that gooney would put a bullet ever
square foot on average of the size of a football field. So he expended all his load on that
tree line and all that was left was toothpicks. Somebody from the Spooky called me one
night, one day and they were on the other side of the base from us, they were on the east,
southeast corner. We were on the southwest corner and so I borrowed the unit jeep and
went on over their and this kid that had talked to brought down this shot to crap AK47
and he said this is the was the best one. We had two hundred fifty bodies lying out on the
ground. A lot of people, but that Spooky and that attitude of that commander really made
a difference down their III Corps or IV Corps, wherever they went. I mean they were
very deadly, effective. But the attitude was good, they wanted in on it. One of the guys
said---you know---the attitude put forth in a unit by a commander, makes such a
difference. One of our guys he was out in the eastern, the edges, as I recall, it all getting
pretty fuzzy but they were---it marked a target and they were working with a flight of F-
4s out of Cam Ranh and those guys couldn’t get anywhere close to the target, so they
want in---and he came on back and wrote it up and reported it but they couldn’t really---
bull in the ass with a baseball. They got into some trouble over that. They had to go back
and re qualify, bomb drop procedures. But I didn’t have any trouble---the F-100 guys at
Bien Hoa they usually put on the money, they mark the target and that’s where that
bomb, they didn’t have any problem at all about hitting the mark. And of course Spooky,
Oh Lord (?), those guys and they were deadly.

KS: You mentioned triple fire and how often would you receive fire?
FS: You’ve got to make a distinction here, what I ran into down at III Corps was
small arms fire. We are talking about machine gun or less. At that time they didn’t have
any triple a, that was all up near the DMZ. So we never had any problem like that. Many
time I’d roll in mark a target and they knew they had been discovered and just a wall of
bullets would come at us. The O2 was good in respect that you could, since it had two
generators you could turn your lights out and put the props out of synch and (makes sound)
and they couldn’t tell where you were. Then it would just roll off into a wiffier deal or
two(?) and you’d see them firing in some other area but they couldn’t pin point you by
sound at that point.

KS: How well was the plane the aircraft? How well was the plane the aircraft
fortified?

FS: It wasn’t.

KS: It wasn’t.

FS: I was all thin aluminum.

KS: You mentioned working with Navy patrol boats.

FS: This didn’t happen very often but every know and then. If the timing was
right when a patrol boat got under fire on a river somewhere and they needed help right
away. So it was just one of those whoever was closest to action, like a cop around town
whoever is closest goes to put the fire out and so you get down there and at the same time
trying to get Spooky or call to set up fighters and moonshine. Now moonshine was
another C47 that would orbit and throw out flares to mark the target area so we could see
what we were doing you know parachute flares. You try to set something up en route
before you even knew what you were going to be doing. But normally there was Navy
patrol boats, you know they would lay little traps for them and they would try a just blast
them out of the water. But they get on radio pretty damn quick and usually one of us
reacted quite a lot to that. When we get to the point I’ll tell you about my last night, in
my last mission. But we are a little bit premature yet on that. So anyway the daily
routine went pretty much as I said, I can’t think of much else. We all looked forward to
R and R. Of course we---the few nights we had off we would go over to the officers club
and sit around and drink we didn’t---it was rather interesting some of the guys in my
outfit had been very non drinking types and they went over and became sots and then
some of the others who had consumed a little to much before went over and dried out. It
was just kind of weird they way that happened. Couple of the younger guys tend to it
quite a lot. Even on my night off I’d go fly for them, navigator come and get me and let’s
go fly so--- I think I got a little over the vicinity of eight hundred hours.

KS: You mentioned R and R. Did you take any extended trips?

FS: I sure did. My navigator soon---let’s see I flew with quite a few different
navigators but one that I flew with the most his name is Dave Wolsey and Dave was
really sharp. In the months that we flew together, I taught him how to fly and of course
this is an insurance policy for me. But he got to the point where he could take off and
land the thing—but we flew with different people. One night in particular I was up and
that’s where this comes in. I got this Distinguished Flying Cross. I was up near Song Be
in a special forces camp and this is Dave right here---but he wasn’t with me the night I go
this. A navigator by the name of Doc Holiday he was a James H. Halliday was the you---
we called him Doc. He was a major and I was still a captain at that time. But we went up
there and this little LRRP team---I never quite distinguished whether it’s an LRRP team
or just a little special forces team at night was under attack. I took off from Bien Hoa
knowing that I was going up there that night, so I check with the weather man and it was
really god awful weather---I mean thunderstorms it was monsoon season and this weather
man, I really got him by the throat the next day. He said that the thunderstorms were
dissipating, so I went up there and I was with a Shadow gunship, now they were the 119,
dollar 19 gunships. They were out of---I forgot where they were out of---it might had
been Bien Hoa but we really hadn’t had that good communication with him so we went
up there and I went flying low and slow in the area that was indicated to us back at Bien
Hoa and so I got the frequency and I started talking and it was a while before I heard the
whisper, he was whispering cause they were so close. So we set up a deal to go ahead
and have them move from their present position and in some how give me mark so he
gave me a coded flash light, hooded flash light mark and so he said, “They are just to the
north of us,” and so I went in and rolled in and Willy Pete and then Shadow hosed the
area down and about that time the weather had gone to crap. In order to get back, I’d had
to fly IFR, in that little airplane, which I wasn’t crazy about, instrument flight rules. It
was down low level over war zone Deep, which was not a healthy place to fly. So I
elected since I was short of fuel that I was going to land at Song Be. Now Song Be had
two stripes and when I show you the slides---I’ll show you a different set---they had a
little city strip which was the main street of town at that the O-1 guys used based there,
then the Army had a little four thousand foot pierced plate PSP strip over on the
northwest side of Nui Ba Rat which was the mountain right there. So I got the frequency
and I called this kid that more or less maintained the airfield there, the Army strip at Song
Be and they didn’t have any lights and four hundred foot ceiling. I was heading on over
there and I was flying instruments cause even at that low level we were in turbulence, we
were in IFR conditions, but I knew which way to go. So I was flying in that direction and
I’ll never forget old Doc was over there. He had Vertigo; he didn’t know whether he was
sitting on his head or his tail. So we broke in the clear and he got reoriented and I went
over there and contacted this Army enlisted guy and I told him the situation I was going
to have to land and so--- Monsoon season they were expecting major attack by the large,
I don’t know what size, Battalion size or something in VC up in that area. But I couldn’t
go anywhere else so I had to land. So he drove the runway in his jeep so I saw where it
was and they put a mortar flare into the clouds, which just made it hard. So I said cease
mortar fire and so I went on down and he was getting close to the runway---to the end of
the runway and so I turned and went ahead and made a short tight pattern and I aimed
right into his damn jeep. Right as I got about fifty feet I flipped my landing lights on and
he had gone off into the end of the PSP into this bar ditch and I could see him way
leaping this--- cause he thought I was going to hit him and PSP runway is very
washboard, bumpy. I set it down brought those throttle to idle, stood on the brakes and
the rear engine quit and I brought it back. So I knew there was no go around so we were
kind of skating the line and so he drags himself out of that bar ditch. So he comes up in
front of us and motions come on and so I still got the front engine going so I pull up to
the corner of the compound on this PSP with there is mud on it and it’s kind of a grody
area. We shut her down, grabbed our guns and our gear and I threw a couple of rocks
under the wheels and closed up as best as I could cause they were expecting a hellacious
rain storm and we jumped in a jeep within and then I--- that poor guy. So anyway they
take us into the camp and behind the barb wire and we had parked the airplane right
under this big quad fifty they had mounted on the corner of the compound and we went in
and they took us to the VIP bunker and it was mostly submerged and lined with logs and
was all that red dirt and so we got down there. It was kind of late at night and you know
I’m tired and Doc is too, so we hang our weapons on the other side of the logs or
something and it started raining. You had never seen it rain like it had rained during the
Monsoons in Vietnam. It came down in buckets and pretty soon the water started rising.
We were on these little GI cots and Doc looks over at me and he says what in the hell are
we doing here? I said, I forgot what my comment was but it was appropriate at the time
and I said reckon we are going to get our trousers dirty tonight? Then when they left us off before we went into the bunker they pointed out a machine gun right on the edge and they said well we are little short of people so we do come under attack how about coming out and manning this thing for us? So it rained and it rained and sure enough it got to about half inch or so below the bottom of the cot and we stayed in dressed you know we didn’t except for hanging our weapons and I slept with my .45--- but anyway the next morning it was pretty well cleared up and most of the rain up in that area, such a saturation of atmospheric moisture, it build up in the afternoon heat and then during the night it would tend to fizzle away. So it wasn’t really clear there is still haze in the air, but when we out we down to the mess tents and had some their breakfast and because I was starving and so Doc and I trudged on back and this kid met us again and bring us back into the airplane and we did a very careful preflight and we wanted to make sure no booby traps or anything.

KS: The engine was okay you mentioned that it cut out right when?

FS: It had just been setting. It was a fuel-injected engine see and it had little disk and it was just not adjusted quite right. So when I brought it back quickly, why it shut the fuel off completely to that engine and stalled where it has that little device that is adjustable to bring it back to idle position but not cut the fuel off. So I cranked it up and you know the airplane was coated with red mud and we flew on back to Bien Hoa and then I saw--- well I liked flying at night better because it was early in the morning--- it was about seven o’clock and of course I had the controlling agency go ahead and contact the unit and tell them I’m landing and Song Be and so we walked in and everybody is up and we walked in the door and nobody says a word--- you know just look and Doc and I walk in and we were a mess--- you know when had landed and taxied into the refuel area and a crew chief come out--- where the hell were you guys flying? He hadn’t heard, he wasn’t in the communication room and you know he looked at his airplane and it was covered with red mud and---- so went on the jeep and went on back up to the hooch and walked in--- like I said nobody saying anything and our boss at the time was a Major Greenleaf and he says--- I have a lot of calls about you guys last night from MACV headquarters down in Saigon and well---- and Doc was shaking his head to everything I said and I just--- my ass was in a crack so I had to do what I felt like the safest thing to do
and I didn’t want to fly down on war zone D at two or three hundred feet got shot at by
every you know Tom, Dick and Harry that happen to be wondering around with nothing
better to do, so I landed and so I got the airplane back and it was a little dirty but you
know we were back and we were alright. So wisdom took the better part of valor there
and you thought that would have been a hell of a lot of paper work had you beamed in so
I was let off the hook there. But I did the safe thing and that’s where the DFC came from
not so much for the landing, that looked pretty good on OER (Officer Efficiency Report).
You getting pretty savvy of all this lingo?

KS: I’m learning.

FS: But it was helping out that team that we went to support and so anyway.
They’re ten of mine, but if you like we can set up for another time.

KS: This is Kim Sawyer continuing the interview with Frank G. Stone III on
March 30, 2001. We are in the Special Collections Library at Lubbock Texas and Mr.
Stone has brought some slides to show. (Pause)

FS: As you can see there is an awful lot of traffic. This is a slide of near the
Calhoun Ferry or the Star Ferry in use today. A picture of the harbor showing junk and
these are normally all over the place but even at that time in the late sixties, you can see
the sky line is rather humongous and the large adds were all over the place, Rolex and
various other well established world wide companies were there. Again another junk,
this is looking at Hong Kong Island. That sharp peak in the middle is Victoria Peak and
Hong Kong is a very interesting place, you find that you might get six hours of sleep and
it dwindles from there until you finally leave and then you sleep on the airplane going
back where ever you are going to.

KS: Now this is an R and R trip?

FS: Well, this was leave trip. I was very fortunate as I mentioned in the earlier
interview I was actually attached to the unit in Da Nang and they kept all my paper work
but I was actually assigned down at Bien Hoa in sleepy time ops and I had to submit
through channels to get this leave and my navigator and I went up there and we got up
there and low and behold after this leave was over then they had lost the papers so really
the leave was strictly basket only and later went to R and R in Hawaii to meet my wife
and then also later on I took another trip to Hong Kong, so I had the enjoyment of two
trips up there. Hong Kong is a fascinating place, it’s one of the most fascinating places on the face of this earth because it is so multicultural up there. It’s primarily of course Chinese but at that time there was just so many Europeans and you name it they were there. Junk traveling in the harbor and again all the buildings over there on Hong Kong Island. I think they sell real estate up there by the grain of sand; it’s just so expensive. Ships from all over the world are usually at harbor in there. Later on when I assigned to the Philippines, my wife and I managed to take a little trip up to Hong Kong from Clark in the Officer’s Wives Club there at Clark had set it up and it was a Danish tour company and they were flying some old comets and anyway we went up there and we had from the base the general’s aid--- General Manor was in command at the 13th Air Force and Malasai was his name, American Chinese and so we all went up there and we had such a time but what I’m getting to was the Hotel where we stayed had this Penthouse Bar and we went out there at night and over looked the harbor with all the lights and it was just spectacular. Okay now here is the fairy and I think this slide is in backwards because all the steering wheels are on the right hand side of the car. They were typical British there and I don’t know whether they have switched back since they have come into Chinese control or not I would imagine they are leading to that. That is yours truly back when I was about twenty-nine. But my NAV Dave Wolsey took this slide. That’s Dave on the right and the guy in the middle is his nephew and he was in the Army and enlisted out of Okinawa and David communicated with him and yeah, that slide is in backwards to you can see---- but we had a quite a time together and he hadn’t seen this kid in quite a while it was a good trip. Typical Hong Kong street, see the British Double Decker buses and Hong Kong is just fabulous, there is any kind of food and any thing at all that you can imagine on the face of this earth you will find it in Hong Kong. This is a typical narrow street, we are in a cab of course and the driver is on the right and it was just so interesting going around and seeing all these things. I’ve got a few of these pictures. This ally way and this stairway had appeared in quite a few of the movies filmed in Hong Kong, I remember Chuck Norris’s movie and I remember this alley from several movies. Or that stairwell and everything is for sale and it’s usually in open-air vendors out in the streets and that’s one of them. You will notice how the apartments--- you’ll have families living in one or two rooms and usually large families and hanging the close off
the balcony to dry. The shops in Hong Kong at least at the time I was there, they are
normally very deep and very narrow and they will have stuff to the ceiling. Let me see---
there is a later slide that I’ll get into another discussion but this old lady is building a
stove and she is a food vendor, she’s pounding out the remains of an old five gallon can
that the Navy used to ship coffee in aboard ships. There is just some jewelry and various
paraphernalia. A view of the tenants there, it must just be unbelievably crowded. There
is what I am talking about, I went into a shop such as this---- Can you see that?

KS: Yes, I can see it.

FS: In one of these shops where all the carvings and various little statuettes and
so on and I found a what was there was a long elephant tusk and it had been carved and it
was started when this kit, the man had did it--- it was a young man, probably in his early
teens and he continued this through his life, I wish I had gotten a picture of it but you
could see, it was a carving resembling an early, early Chinese river boat and with all the
cabins and you can see where he started he was not as good as when in his middle years
he got very precise and then kept on and the--- toward the end of his work on this was
quite good, he was very precise and very tediously made, I mean all of the little windows
and everything and what really shocked me was this represented this mans life work, it
was for sale for three thousand dollars. Now three thousand at that time would be
considerably more now. But I was just appalled at a mans life work being on sale there
for three thousand dollars cause at that time you could buy a fancy new car for three
thousand dollars. More vendors---most of them, well a lot of them are soup vendors, they
just had their soup and everything. Again the crowded way, the barbers, everything for
sale, fruits, vegetables and usually you could smell the butcher shop long before you get
to it. But I think most of the meat and everything in Hong Kong was very fresh, never
had any problem, well I don’t want to say any problem but you had to be rather careful
with what you ate and where you were eating. Now that represents a tenement and I got
another picture of it here in a second, but the families live in one or two rooms of these
things, hang their laundry out over the balcony and their school for that tenement is on
top of the building and another interesting sidelight, later on when I was flying 141 after
my assignment in Vietnam, I was going to be diverted to Hong Kong one night for a
medical pick up, well they were telling me I might have to use the back to be able to
approach. Now the runway goes out into the ocean at that time, they have built a new
one since then but it goes into the ocean and goes inland, straight into the mountains and
so the back field approach consisted of a big old checker board painted high on a
mountain and you leave. There is an island down south of Hong Kong called stone
cutters and they had a radio beacon there so what the procedure was to fly to stone
cutters, do figure eights while you are descending to a certain altitude, I forget what it
was and then depart to stone cutters beacon, head for the checker board painted on the
mountain and fly as close as you dare at certain altitude, very low, do a hard right with
full flaps and gear and everything ready to land but there is a caution in the approach
plate that I remember watch out for the tops of apartment buildings. Luckily they didn’t--
somebody else picked the guy up and it wasn’t a back field approach it was in off the
water so that was fine, but it made going around from that situation somewhat of a
hellacious situation. We took a tour on a bus and of course everybody is selling tours,
like I said selling everything but anywhere you look over the water, there is usually tramp
freighters from you name it, they are there and this is an approaching Aberdeen and I
apologize for the slide, but as I said I developed these myself in Bien Hoa so my
technique was not the very finest. This is one of the very few places around that area
where they have actually have a beach and people swim, but it’s approaching Aberdeen
and they’ve got a lot of very famous floating rest stripes there in Aberdeen. This is
Aberdeen and more junks; people spend their lives on those things. It is just unbelievable
to me. There is one of the floating restaurants, some years ago I think eight or ten years
ago, one of them blew up and burnt, but there was about four or five as I recall, but you
will notice the junks all around sometimes they will go out fishing and bring it back sell
it, but in back of that floating restaurant they had a Tai pack, I guess that’s the name of it
there. They had a big submerged pen and it had all kinds of fish and they had raised the
bottom to bring them all near the surface so you could pick out what you wanted to eat,
they would catch it, clean it cook it and it’s about as fresh as you can get, however that
water around there, didn’t look all that trust worthy. And there I am again; I’m really
apologetic about these slides the quality of them, but this was during wartime conditions.
As we, on the tour, as we approached the new territories as they called them, up near the
Chinese border, there was this little town and it was build almost from a medieval stand
point with a moat all around it and everything, very interesting, but it was a totally walled
city inside and the alley ways as you can see were, their were no vehicles inside
whatoever and there were a lot of people touring. One of the neat things about this was
all you saw as far as residents when were the little children and old, old people. All the
middle age working group that parted everyday to seek a job somewhere. But this was
typical of and these are all the people off the tour, GI’s on R & R up there. Looking out
toward the new territory, people any kind of structure at all built out of cardboard, you
name it, and they were living in it. Those are all rice paddies and I think I mentioned
earlier, the smell. It wasn’t quite as bad in Hong Kong as it was in Vietnam but the---
looking out and at that time of course, that was China out in the distance and they were
communists and the boarder definitely existed, the British were in control of Hong Kong
so that was kind of no mans land out in there in the middle. This is one of the few hills
around the area where we were and there is a hotel on top there. There is the hotel up
there, it’s just beautiful. Then they had the people in the traditional garb running around,
wanting you take their picture for a few so I just grabbed a couple of shots from a
distance. A lot of Australians were in Hong Kong; they traveled up there quite a lot.
Even those little junks and people were born on them, lived on them and died on them
and it just amazed me with, but they would spend their entire lives on these things. We
are continuing the tour; actually the quality of the slide isn’t as bad as I thought. The
colors are not too faded too bad; of course I kept them in the dark. But everywhere you
look, there is the junk. The British did an awful lot for Hong Kong, they were building
water reservoirs and hospitals and one thing and another. I really had to take my hat off
to them because they did such a fine job. Road improvements, they really tried to take of
everybody, one interesting thing I noticed, I never saw anybody with scowl on their face,
they were all happy. There was food, there was employment, there was everything they
needed and so they had quite an incursion problem from the communist side coming in
on junks, of course trying to control that must had been a nightmare from a logistical
standpoint. There is a new hospital I built and they were just doing an awful lot in the
area to improve life for them. There is another floating restaurant. Different scenic shots
but you will see the shacks down there that people were living in. There is the balcony of
that hotel, it was really nice, we went in and had a cup of coffee and a little snack and
Dave and I and we spent that day just really having a lot of fun. We had a beer and it was a good lowenbrau straight from Germany non-pasteurized and it was fabulous. Now that’s kind of a bleached out slide you’ll notice a couple of story tenements down there that were. Most of those people were shocked in heights that is a little British gal there, we talked to her for a while and Dave and I were just pushing around and would tell what bus was there. We are getting on back to Kowloon and we stopped at some kind of stop on top of the hill and looked down. That city even at that time was so crowded it was just unbelievable. Some of these slides are a little mixed up but I think I might had been out back from where we were earlier in that high up shot. Now we will start the Vietnam shots. This one you’ll notice there is a Huey and it’s carrying a little loach helicopter that had been shot down. Now a couple of things about this, first off you’ll notice there is very little vegetation and you’ll see the bomb craters all around the place there so, there was an awful lot of activity even now we weren’t very far from Saigon at this time but as I mentioned earlier this guy that I was friendly with, his name was Dale, he worked over in Three dask which was the air quarter control agency for three corp. and or one of them. But Dale and I were friendly and he was checked out in the O1 and he borrowed an airplane one day and we just went around and I had, I was sitting in the back and neat thing about the O1 was from back seat you could fold up the windows hook them to the wing and you had this beautiful view out of both sides, well I was back there with my camera just going nuts. I hadn’t seen most of this country. Now this is a little village not again not to far from Saigon but it’s in the middle of a rubber plantation and it’s hard to tell in a village like that what type of hat they wear at night, could there is Viet Cong sympathizers or they might have been friendly I don’t know, but you can see how thick all those rubber trees are? That is the Dong Ngai river and just northeast of Bien Hoa at that juncture and they used to float down the river at night on their sampans and set up little rocket launch positions in that area and fire them at Bien Hoa cause Bien Hoa while I was there is know as Rocket City. Remember I told you earlier about the white phosphorous marking rockets, well that was the simmered there was a pod of four there and we carried those on both wings of the O2 as he did on the O1. We landed at various little bases and these two aircrafts here are the OV10 and they thought they would use those particular aircraft as a FAC aircraft, but they had a difficult time at night and they
used them much over the trails, you know the high traffic areas, but they had a problem
with it because it had the canopy reflected it was more or less a bubble canopy and all the
instrument lights would reflect off of it at night and so you really couldn’t see very well.
But then there is Air America right there, that little tail dragger and chopper in a
revetment but we used to catch rides with Air America there a lot. I’ve flown in that
particular type of airplane; it was an old crumman I think--- a twin engine. The Air Force
used to use one similar to that for pilot training for multiengine purposes. But that was a
newer airplane then what the Air Force had but they were everywhere, Air America was
everywhere. There is a result of several results, you could see the agent orange had killed
the vegetation, the upper level of the triple canopy jungle, you can also see the result of
the arc light, so there was a squadron B52’s and that’s the length of a bomb load right
there or could be one airplane and another airplane following close behind but it was just
truly devastating. As I mentioned earlier, their in Bien Hoa we would, in the officer’s
club, some of the young lieutenants would come out of the jungle and they were just
filthy dirty and we would let them use our shower and bunk with clean sheets and they
hadn’t seen that probably since---- lord knows when. They would say that every know
and then they get to take a bath in a bomb crater, it didn’t really appeal to me too much.
Vietnam is a beautiful, beautiful country---- sorry this slide is a little bit washed out--- but
sometimes they just don’t take the heat from the projector as well. But there are
waterfalls and rivers and jungle and even though that had probably been hit with Agent
Orange it grew back, it seems like it grew back rapidly. Because some of the top layers
of the triple canopy there as you can see are dead or either dying. But it was just so thick;
it’s unbelievable how thick that was. Now that mountain in the distance is, I think that is
Nui Ba Dinh and it’s located--- there are two mountains, one out by the Cambodian
border and I think that was Nui Ba Ra, this one is Nui Ba Dinh and it’s right by Song Be
and we are flying closer to it and you’ll see slides of it. But we are North of Nui Ba Dinh
at this time and Song Be, the army strip is going to be over here and the city strip is going
to be in here. You’ll see that in a second. Getting closer you can see we are just piddling
around there. But you can see the city strip up in the distance. We are Northeast of the
mountain at that time and just like I said like a couple of tourists. Again the thick jungle
that is a better slide from the color standpoint. We are getting closer. Of course they hit
all the area around Song Be there with Agent Orange and pretty well killed the
vegetation. That beautiful waterfall and it's just such a shame--- it will be tourist mecca
in the central highlands there if they could promote it. All the beautiful rivers and
everything. Okay there is Song Be the village and they made the little city strip and that
is where we are about to land. Then over their where I got my DFC is over here on the
other side, that night that I got it. But the Army had the encampment on the Northwest
side of the mountain air and the city was northeast. You can see the nude landscape there
its just pretty well defoliated completely of course they had to. Of course up in the
central highlands it was so thick and of course the Montagnard's tribesman were up there
and you will see more of them here in a minute. But we landed there, we are a couple of
FACs that we knew flying O1's that were based there and so they landed and they kind of
gave us a grand tour. I had this lands, it was Japanese made but it wasn't quite as good as
Russian made but it was bit mirror lance--- five hundred millimeter. I don't know if I
didn't focus it quite right or whether later examples indicate that the lens might have been
slightly off. But I sold it anyway. These are Montagnard tribesman, a lady and her two
kids and they are very primitive. They wear very little, they just haul their firewood, haul
their water it's a very basic existence for these people but they are very, very nice and we
went up there and they are just friendly, happy people. It's amazing to me I thought at
the time here is a culture that promotes getting along and they don't carry grudges, they
just existed from day to day. It's really interesting when a person like us would be in that
and witness it--- it's just quite something. Now that guy probably had his own tiger
stripes that he put on at night was working for the Americans or the Vietnamese
government but during the day he just carries kids around tends for them and sees to what
he can do to exist, I took that again with my long lens. The old swimming hole and that
lady is getting out of it. As I mentioned, it's just a pretty primitive existence. Notice that
little girl her teeth are somewhat black. They chew stuff called beetle nut. They can sure
stink up an airplane whenever, especially after they get sick. This old gal is hauling
water, I guess. That's a babies grave, as I said the mortality rate is pretty high only the
strong survive. When they are born they feed and no shots or anything that we are
accustomed to. But they are tough; they got an unbelievable, unbelievable resistance to
infection. I found that out when I was stationed in the Philippines, we went out on a hick
in outside the base one time with some of our the Negrito guides and we came across this village and this kid had somehow burned his ankle and they had it wrapped up and they were wondering what to do, of course we told them what to do and we had some first aid supplies with us so we left those, but their resistance to infection it would kill us in those circumstances but with them they got over it. A little village part of the village down near the water, primarily Negrito or Montagnard. But look at all the trees how they have been.

KS: Such a contrast to.

FS: Yeah, there is that gal fishing. I had a problem when I was showing this to my eight graders. Most of them were pretty reasonable, they can see the same thing in National Geographic so--- but I thought golly there it is you know she is getting fish and so they make due with whatever they can and their she’s got a bowl I think and kids behind her are about the same way. So they just hunt, they gather and I guess in some instances they are raising some crops. That is Dale in the middle that I was flying with. Those other two guys were the guys based there. We had quite a time. But they got a jeep, one of them, I think the dark haired guy on the left--- I forgot his name. We had all gone through that FAC-U at the same time. Now only these guys went through the O1 of course I was O2. That’s Dale and I. I’ve got a print of this picture but I need to copy all these slides and I want to get a copy to you but----

KS: Now is that your aircraft?

FS: That’s the airplane that we were in that day. That’s the O1 Birddog. That’s a rather good picture of it. I told you about that night that I had made by that guy here. I was carrying that and of course I had a pistol and have course my riffle and the airplane. On the way back, this is a pretty good picture cause this shows you a lot of what we are dealing with as far as enemy is concerned. You can see the hilly terrain, how thick it was, the river in which they used and they could pull under any tree and be out of sight and at that time they didn’t have a lot of the technical equipment that is available today as far as infrared and so on. They had some but that was, really, really thick terrain and very hard to cover and a lot of the Montagnard’s lived down in that area but from a standpoint of actually of trying to conduct warfare in there it was pretty difficult, but then again this is where they stayed and they came out of those of mountains foot hills to wage
the war in the south. Now this again you can see the triple canopy jungle and the hills and down in that valley around that stream is elephant grass and you have heard that mentioned before and it’s very tall, almost as tall as this ceiling in this room and the FACs, the day time FACs when they would spot a wild elephant down there they would kill it because it was said and I have never seen this any other documentation on it that the enemy would get those elephants especially the young ones and use them and train them to haul supplies over the mountain passes and so on. But that is so unbelievably thick that I couldn’t imagine being shot down in that mess I would try to stay in the upper layers of the trees until rescued. We are on our way back to Bien Hoa and I kind of like that picture, I’d like to make maybe make a big one blown up with that. But this is the monsoon season and you can see every afternoon the storms build, so we did our little tour in the morning. We are on our way back. This is another trip here this is Phan Rang and this is own in the southeast corner of Vietnam. This was a very, very weird place. There were people stationed down there of course a lot of people, but both sides took this little area for R & R.

FS: So when you saw a group of young male Vietnamese walking along you couldn’t tell whether they are south or whether they are enemy. But it was kind of as was described to me. I was there on the ground one time spending a couple of days, but it was just kind of an unwritten truce you know, it was a good place to relax a while, so they made it over there. I don’t know what transportation they used, probably walked or by Sanpan or something. But we are flying around; I guess we were in the O1, looking out, yeah that’s an O1. So Dale and I covered a lot of territory that day. But we are scooting along and you can see along the beach and say built there is a lot of shacks available along the beaches and the runway, you’ll see it. That’s a ship that was hit and ran aground on the beach there, and I look at that from the ground that road above it and sure enough it was just a burnt out hole. But you can see other ships off loading out there in the and that’s a little guard post up there. I imagine they got a radar antenna and they have you can see several gun emplacements and but then look along the beach you can see all the shacks living along the beach and they have several restaurants and I made a mistake in eating there one time and I was on the ground, it took me a week and half to
get over that. Some of the biggest prongs I’ve ever they are that big and you know they
but that wasn’t quite the case. I was in bad shape for a long time. Then there is another
little hill again with further built up you can see the radar antennas and back in Bien Hoa.
I told you I think the last time that we had a fly by night party. Well that guy down there
is Army and quite a few of them Army and this guy was in my outfit and we scooted
around. We talked about this for two months, everybody was flying at night of course
and it was a party line at night on the radio and we talked about it and talked about it and
sure enough we managed to put it off and we swap for things and we had more food and
beer available than you can imagine. We had a couple of half engine cans with--- filled
with ice and beer and soft drinks. Anybody flying was limited to two beers. This guy
right here--- I flew with him one time and he is a country boy and it just flips my mind
but he’s just like one of the actors that was in the, played in a military type environment
and it’ll come to me, but not right now but anyway this is over at on the southeast corner
of Bien Hoa and the residence area and these buildings that the Spooky outfit lived in
were called Singapore’s and we all got together Army, everybody and we just went over
there and had a real good time. First time we’d ever met people face to face that we had
worked with at night so much. As I mentioned we had our going away parties and parties
in general right first thing in the morning so--- and this is Dave Woolsey right here and
this guy his name is Russ Rinklin he was out of a tankers, KC135’s and this guy’s last
name was Ormond and he got sick while he was over there and I forget it was something
that grounded him but anyway his tour was cut short and he was sent back. But we had
our going away parties and this guy name, he was a navigator, his name was Hank Cast
and Hank was a clown but I wanted to show you, we all had those little hats made up and
those---- matter of fact I think that was the end door of our hooch, my little cubicle is
right inside that corner and of course you seen sand bags pilled all around but we had just
completed a morning party so Hank’s feeling good. There I am and a couple of our
Hooch mates, the one on the right is from another Hooch, the one--- yeah both of them
are Hooch mate wasn’t in there, but we got these pajamas and had rank and wings and
Sleepytime patch on and that was our partying guard. That is Leah Tran and that’s inside
the little place that where she lived with her parents off base and you see what they use
for all that.
KS: Now is that like a little restaurant type thing?

FS: No, this was their home. She did pretty well cause they had a television and one thing and another and so and it’s an old GI desk as you can see, but this was in her place that she lived. I don’t know where they got the centerfolds to put on this guy on the left is Gary Humble is his name, he was Golden Gloves guy, fighter, and his hands were huge and very strong but Russ was going away this was his parting shot but he was rotating. I think he went to Torrejon, Spain to tankers again. We usually, that’s Hank Cast again but we wound up getting beer and pizza and stuff like this. Whenever we could, pizza makings were hard to come by so.

KS: I was going to say, how be the pizza?

FS: So normally what we do is a couple of us would go down to aerial port and usually use the palm of a couple of these stewardesses flying in on R & R airplanes or so on and they would gather up much of us and bunch of stuff and we would buy from them or from somebody coming back from R & R. Buddy Simms, they guy over on the right, he was kind of a garbage gut but he ordered a knife like mine from the same guy here in Lubbock and this guy over here he was my instructor when I first got there his name is Jay Valentine. I don’t know what to Jay when he left there he I think he got out later and went with the airlines. That guy, that major was another navigator and you can tell we got a little busy at times. Here is a story this guy is Alex and I forget his last name cause it was so long, he was Russian descent. While we were in Vietnam we the MARS radio set up (Military Affiliate Radio System) and some nights the connections were good and they would patch us on back for home calls, the only problem with that you’d talk and say over, and so Alex I talked with my wife several times that way but Alex got through to his mother one night and she heard his voice and she immediately went into Russian, so he had to go back in English and say mom, mom you got to speak in English and of course that was difficult for her but anyway. Another story about Alex was he was flying in 141’s after he left Vietnam and he was a co pilot and they were heading up over North Pac, they had gone to Alaska and were heading through Japan and the controlling agency out of Elmendorf called him and said hey we got a Russian trawler in trouble a guy is about to die and blah, blah and just so happens that they were their and Alex got the frequency of the Russian trawler and well it’s not going to do you any good you got to
speak Russian, I can speak Russian so sure enough he contacted them and they went
down to the lower level and found him and he made contact with the guy and they were
talking and there mission was aborted and they orbited the trawler and he was there until
the helicopters came down from Elmendorf and rescued the guy and took him on back to
the hospital. That was kind of interesting, but Alex was quite a guy and but there are
really a good group of people that I flew with. This was an earlier get together because
this guy was our commander and there is a later picture of him. He was a major and I
forgot his name and he was just really a good guy. This is Doc Holiday and I told you
about that night that was with me when I got the DFC. Cary Sharp that’s this guy name
and he acted just like--- what was his name golly---- but his job is the same and he spoke
the same and he acted the same and it was amazing, the guy had been cloned. I’ll try and
remember his name. This guy’s name is Dawn Chaney, Hank Cass and I forgot his---
and this is Cary Sharp again, see that jaw on him Gomer Pyle, Gomer Pyle that’s who it
was.

KS: He does look like him.

FS: I mean he even acted like him and he talked like him, it was amazing. That
was before the word clone ever came around. But anyway this is a room where we were
at the officers club and it wasn’t much of a club and there are the three navigators and I
flew with all three of them at a time or two and there is our logo. There is the outgoing
and the incoming commanders and I’ve got the slide in backwards.

KS: I can see--- okay, okay.

FS: That new guy’s last name was Greenleaf and it’ll come to me. I think that is
all.

KS: This is disk two with Frank Stone and we were talking a little bit before we
started recording about to your next to the last mission and your last mission?

FS: Yes, the next to the last mission as I said was a rather active night but
nothing out of the ordinary. Now I came on back to Hooch and getting so close I had a
couple two many beers I guess and the next day after breakfast which was late I had
pulled a mission my last one and I seem to forget who was flying with me as navigator
that night. But I do remember that I was in a new airplane, one of the newer ones that
came over and it made quite a difference this was significant because newer airplanes you
could fly cause the endurance was better, they weren’t bent, the airplanes had been in
country for sometime, were really aerodynamically dirty and it--- we would push it to be
three hours or three fifteen on a mission with sufficient fuel and they weren’t as fast and
they didn’t trim up as good but they didn’t fly as good but this new airplane I was in the
very last night, the thing just seem fly itself it was one of those, like the B-17 they
restored back at Dover, it’s entire history it just went together so good and it just
naturally flew, very evenly, very little trim needed and it just--- the endurance was just
three and half hours easy. Well this worked out in where it was rather good for me in a
way that the airplane flew so well, because it had such endurance because it just seem
like the Navy had a night to remember and we were down southeast of Saigon in the
rivers area and Nave patrol boats were heavy fire and I was the one circling Saigon, I was
the one available so guess who got called. So I went on down and Spooky was off
working somewhere else that night so I had to put in a set of A37’s from Bien Hoa and as
I mentioned earlier their the T37’s with the T38 engines in them and made equip for
warfare so they had guns, they had rockets, they had bombs and everything you needed.
Well we got a flight of A37’s down there and we found the areas and it just seem the time
went so quick, it was so busy oh lord it was so busy. We were putting a set of fighters
and I really couldn’t get all details of what went on that night but they were really under
heavy fire. I forget if one of them was sunk or what but I remember I was very, very
busy and the NAV I was with we were working together like quite a team even though I
wasn’t feeling all that chipper. We managed to really quell the fire the A37’s they had
the---they were a good outfit, they could really put it where you needed it and so I had
expended all my marking rockets and log flares and everything and I recall that night, I
remember how I wish could get Spooky on scene cause boy as I mentioned earlier they
broke contact five minutes before Spooky got there and they just disappeared into the
bushes but that night they didn’t, they kept on firing on those Navy boats and so it was
kind of a busy, busy three and half hour flight and due to the fact that it was a new
airplane it had good endurance and everything, I had sufficient fuel to stay on station
quite a while. So eventually, we managed to put that one to bed and the A37’s went
home I went home and taxied in, as was tradition. We had to weave around through
ranch hand and pass a couple of other revetment areas and A1’s and we---- one down in
the center drive to our revetment area, oh lord there was a whole gang and they had a fire
truck waiting down at the end. Oh god, I can’t remember I think it was--- it seems to me
like it was Doc Holiday was my navigator that night. Anyway so I just started stripping
off my survival gear and everything cause I was going to get wet. Sure enough there was
Major Greenleaf down there at the end and he a bottle of champagne so I went--- I got
out of the plane and Doc disappeared into a revetment somewhere and cause he didn’t
want to get wet and they just rolled me down in the ramp of that fire hose and I couldn’t
believe it. Then Greenleaf brought up the bottle of champagne and everybody had
glasses and crew chiefs, everybody so we all toasted and champagne my last night.
While I was there we didn’t loose any of our airplanes my whole year and I thought that
was substantial. Because there was many times when we rolled in on targets and if we
really stumbled on to a real beehive, the bullets would fly. Many as the night and I
thought oh lord what am I doing here. It just seems like a wall of tracers coming at me. I
think I mentioned this earlier but the O2 was a good airplane for that job in that respect
and that you could turn the lights off, throw the props out of sync and do a (?) to where
they really couldn’t tell where you were. So I tell you it was just you know your heart is
racing yet your are doing a job and every nerve of your body was so prime to the
situation. Of course when they start shooting at you then you know you could put in
usually a set of fighter, they would shoot at us when the fighters were on scene. But not
when--- very rarely when Spooky was around they just didn’t want to mess with Spooky.
I just can’t say enough for that particular weapon system and the attitude of the guys that
flew them out of Bien Hoa as I mentioned earlier about Ducky Rowe he was a fabulous
commander for those guys and they all shared his son with it, there was something going
on they wanted to be saved. It really went very well. But then I was able to leave
Vietnam a few days early. I got on the stand by list, I was released from duty so I went
down and stood stand by with all my bags pack, most every evening and one night
Capital Airways out of Wilmington Delaware, a stretch eight came in and I saw some of
the guys--- well the bulk of the airplane was loaded with green uniforms right out of field
and they were ready and so I managed to get on and there was another Air Force type or
two so we sat together and I will never, ever forget till the day I die when that airplane
lifted the ground you couldn’t hear yourself think cause of the cheering. It was
something. So we came back through Yokota Japan, Elmendorf, and Alaska or I can’t remember--- yeah we landed at the commercial field at Elmendorf. I went on to McGuire air force base. Of course traveling that length of time I was in dire need but we got on McGuire and those poor grunts, boy I tell you they really went through them with a fine-toothed comb at customs. Most of the Air Force types they just passed us on through and I felt like that was---- but a lot of those kids were pulling--- bringing pot back and weapons and stuff like that. They took quite a while with them those air force types they made a simulation of inspection but then they passed us on through and then I went and got on the phone and managed to find a flight from--- let’s see I had to take a limo down to Philadelphia and I flew out of Philadelphia to Dallas. When I got to Dallas I called my wife and--- did I mentioned the Braniff flight from Dallas up to Amarillo?

FS: I don’t think I did. There had been a football game in Dallas and I got on Braniff and I had a flight that went----DFW to Lubbock and off loaded all the revellers from the football game, well that left a couple of people going to Amarillo and of course that is a short flight but anyway, the stewardesses were nice and I was in my khaki uniforms at that time and I was looking kind of worse for the weather and there is this old rancher on there and he came back and we got to talking and he says I bet your coming back from Vietnam aren’t you and I said Yes sir. He got to telling me about they had a couple---- he was telling them and they are hippies and they had a couple in Hereford and a couple of good old boys got together and they just laid them down and they sheep sheared them. Right in the middle of the street and he said--- they really chuckled up about that but then the stewardesses found out I was back at Vietnam and they had a bottle of champagne so they went up and got it and so this rancher and I sipped champagne up to Amarillo. Landed--- at that time I had an old ’58 Porsche coupe and my wife had come down from Stinnet where she was living at the time with her folks, came and picked me up, so we had quite a drive back. After Vietnam I was assigned to 141’s and I had to go to Altus Oklahoma to check in the airplane and that was about three months.

FS: Well, very beginning of 1970---
KS: You left Vietnam in--- oh okay.

FS: January, right after the holiday of 69 or 70. I had gotten back in November and I got thirty days leave, so I stayed home during the holidays and I can’t remember if I went over to Altus before the Christmas holidays or not. It seems to me I might have cause I got back in October, yeah I’m sure I did, I was in place in Alta, we got a trailer to live in and it was in this brand new little trailer park not to far from the base. That was kind of interesting cause we had a guy, three--- two other couples that we got friendly with, they were young couples. One couple was out of Hawaii and he was of Chinese descent, Spencer Chang and his little, beautiful little wife Arlene, she was Hawaiian. They were funny, one of the things that bring back to mind was--- Spencer liked his sack time, he was a sleepy head. Arlene on the other hand could do just fine with two or three hours a night. This posed a problem for Spencer cause you know he would go to bed and Arlene would stay up reading or cleaning house, whatever, go to bed about two, get up at five, call Spencer out, fixing this big breakfast, she wouldn’t get much response from him, finally somebody told her Spencer needs more sleep than that. Then the other couple was Mike and Annie Botima and Mike was from LA and he had been to Vietnam also and Spencer had to, we were all out of Vietnam and his little wife Annie was French. Annie, I remember watching her on the phone she was all gestures with her hands. You know how funny--- it’s funny how some of these things stick in your mind. Well anyway after I completed at Altus then we went on to McChord Air Force Base in Washington. I think that is my bio and then I got into the 141 and flew as co pilot for quite a while and then got checked out as aircraft commander and then most of the time there I was on the road about three trips to Vietnam a month and we were all pushing all hundred ten hours of flying time. When I wasn’t flying the 141 I was an assistant ops officer there at the in the squadron at McChord. I was in the McChord squadron. Fourth military lift squadron and at that time they were called MAS, it’s amazing how names change while you are in the military. When I first reported to Dover as a navigator, that was--- it was known as MATS (Military Air Transport Service) and then the squadron I was in was the 39th ATS (Air Transport Squadron) then when I got into 141’s then it was a MAC (Military Airlift Command) then the squadron I was in was MAS (Military Airlift Squadron) and now it
has changed into something completely different again. So I guess somebody gets
another start every time they change names.

KS: Now these trips to Vietnam on the 141 was this transporting people and---?
FS: People and equipment. We had what we were doing normally was flying
from McChord and I never forget we get a midnight alert and we’d be airborne at three in
the morning, which meant you didn’t sleep much before hand, with the neighbors and
kids, the neighborhood and everything. We’d fly usually down to Tinker at Oklahoma
City or Kelly down by San Antonio. We’d unload and then go back and we would
normally be land back to McChord about noon. Then go back into crew rest another
crew would take the airplane and head on west. Usually we went to Hickam sometimes
if we were bulked up but light enough in weight, we would make direct wake and crew
rest. Then from Wake it depends again on the load, sometimes we’d go wake direct to
Clark or we would have to stop at Anderson at Guam and refuel. Then to crew rest again
and we would--- at that time from Clark we normally go in country, Tan Son Nhut, Da
Nang, Cam Ranh Bay was a frequent stop over spot forest but one usually one of those
three places. Later on after I left the squadron a lot of people were going onto smaller
sites at in two corp hauling refugees and so on. Then we would come back in or come
back to Clark or to direct Yokota, if it was air evac it was normally to Yokota.
Sometimes we came--- it was fifty-fifty really either to Clark or Yokota whoever had the
hospital space and I remember one mission that really sticks out in my mind. We were at
Tan Son Nhut, I was aircraft commander then and I think my co pilot was John
McDonald a good friend of mine, young guy he was Lieutenant and I was a Captain. We
were on the ground at Tan Son Nhut we were configured for air evac and we had whole
load of patients on board and we were just about--- we had just disconnected the air-
condition and got the APU running (Auxillary Power Unit) on the aircraft, to keep the
air-conditioning on and we were put on hold by the tower and we got aero back in bound
and so we are sitting right there on the ramp not to far from the tower and so they
plugged the air conditioner back in and we were able to keep the APU running and we
waited for about twenty minutes and looking out over the field we see this Huey coming
in low and they had just shut everything down for the moment for this Huey to come in
and it was a dust off and so they gave somewhere to land right out by the tail and so we
had the rear doors open and they got this young GI had stepped on a mine and they off
loaded him, they had a doctor and a nurse right by his side, got him configured by a bunk
back there and the doctor and nurse stayed with him. He wasn’t on there two seconds
and we shut the doors, cranked up and took off and we direct to Yokota. So from the time
that guy got injured to the time we got them to Yokota was little less than six hours
absolutely amazing. I never did hear any feedback as to whether he lived, died or what
but I know the doctor and nurse were with them and of course we had flight nurses on
board to taking care of the others. We had a lot ambulatory in the seats. But that was a
pretty full load that day, went all the way to Yokota. There was another Air evac flight
and these are the most memorable, there was the head flight nurse her name was Stone
also, so she would come on and give the announcements, the aircraft commander,
Captain Gary Stone and I after---- but her last name Stone so everybody got joshing
about that. But it was that flight and we had a lot of very hurt people and we had taken
off and reached cruising altitude and try to set on the autopilot and then it went (Sound),
the autopilot was in op. so we had to hand fly that thing gingerly all the way to Yokota.

KS: How long of a flight was that?

FS: It was about little over five hours, five, five and half hours so--- we had flew
it all the way to Yokota so the co pilot and I got were pretty tired by the time we got---
cause we were trying to fly it as easy and gently as possible. So another interesting flight
that I was on it was one into Nurembug, Germany, we had taken one airplane and three
crews I believe into what was that Ramstein--- no it was into Rhein-main and we were
there and the co pilot and I and it was the same guy John--- yes it was John but we flew
together a lot for some reason and the navigator was this old retread SAC Lieutenant
Colonel who he wasn’t really used to the NAV system and the NAV system---- you recall
when I told you one time when I was a navigator we got stuck down in Tripoli at Willis
Air Base and I had met this German piano player, Fipps Slingshot and I had said I would
carry on while this was the trip and we went to the officers club and he was up there
playing the piano but Fipps and he had been years since I had seen him, so I went up and
reintroduced myself and refreshed his memory where we first met and he has--- My god
that was years ago--- so we had an enjoyable visit that time. We got back to the room
about eleven and the weather on the east coast was horrible and sure enough at three in
the morning we got alerted so we had to go down and pre-flight the aircraft and they
usually had a support team in on exercises like this and this is what this was an exercise
and we were to haul troops back from Nuremberg back to McConnell Air Force Base in
Kansas and went down there and had a support team hadn’t done that thing and there was
blank sheets of paper that had the flight plan and everything. Well John and I were not
completely on top of it, we were doing pretty good, but the navigator he was still trying
to figure out whether he had his shoes on or his boots on but we went down to
Nuremberg that wasn’t really a problem we got, we made a flight plan and got clearance
and went on down to Nuremberg and of course at that time it was in the DMZ, the Iron
curtain country and so it required a special clearance, special radar tracking, special
everything just to get into that area. But we went down to Nuremberg and landed and
they were a real good group down there. They had a flight plan already for us, they really
had things on the spot and which we appreciated and we told them so and I made a good
trip report on them when I got back. But we took off from Nuremberg with this eighty
some, very tired troops back there and they were just dragging. Took off got to altitude
and we were coming back over Frankfurt and our clearance read that we turn west at
Frankfurt at a certain radial to a certain VOR and on out to the southern England, well
about five minutes out maybe less than that out of Frankfurt, this German controller came
back and it was hard to understand him and gave us a new routing. We had charts and
trying to look out the front and trying to figure it out and the navigator I think he was still
trying to get his seat belt fastened he was just way behind the airplane. So John and I are
up there scrambling trying to find this place on the charts what our clearance read and
just as the needle started to turn as we were passing over Frankfurt, I got it I spotted it.
We made the left turn and headed on. Well went from Nuremberg up over Frankfurt,
over the southern end of England and pick up the regular track back to McGuire.
Apparently the weather had cleared just enough or it was forecast cleared just enough to
where we could get in. So we were one flight, Nuremberg – McGuire, that was difficult
flight as I remember the weather over the Atlantic wasn’t really that bad and the
navigator finally figured out enough, you know got caught up with himself to where he
could navigate us across the pond and so we got back into McGuire area, thunderstorms
and hellacious weather. John and I were pretty tired by this time. So the weather at
McGuire was bad and so heavy rain, fog, limited visibility and so I came in and I remember this that the radar controller was, I guess you are used to these coming out of Germany because he was very smooth and he got us on to the approach course and very good talker and just brought us right in and then it was a near minimums landing. I minimums at that time were two hundred and a half and so I was on a ILS back up and the radar approach and so and finally we broke out and sure enough there is the runway and we landed. We were awfully, awfully tired. We got back to the BOQ and John just didn’t even take off his flight jacket, he just crashed on the bed. So I showered and changed clothes and went to the club and had something to eat. Then the next they called us and we went on to and took another following flight onto McConnell off loaded and on back to McCord. The 148 (?) were good--- we had flights going everywhere. Some of the more memorable ones were down to Australia. The Aussies and New Zealanders like I said were just fabulous people. One trip we went out to Laremouth. We did this normally, the Navy had a big communications tracking site out on the west coast of Australia. Probably a hundred or two miles north of Perth on the coast. We used to go into a little strip called Laremouth and it was normally procedure to come in and buzz run way about fifty feet and scare the sheep off. They had no tower but it was a good runway and there we were out in the middle of nowhere and so we circled and landed and pulled up and normally as about two to three hour ground time. They had a fuel truck there and they refueled us and then the Navy from their comsite north of the runway would bring down food for us and they fed us good. The Navy feeds you well and then all the Aussies came to look Starlifter [said with Australian accent] and these beautiful little kids and they were running all over the place and I remember this little doll, she was a cute little girl, came on up to the cockpit and we were up there eating or something and she sat there in the jump seat and she says, do you have to move them all before you can fly? Those kids were precious and there were so many of them and they were just going all over the airplane. We had to show them off finally when we were ready to go and go through a very thorough pre flight. But we did everybody took it in stride and there were just very, very nice people. Then we would fly on back to Richmond outside of Sydney, refuel on go on to Christchurch in crew rest. Christchurch was interesting cause normally they would put us, there was commercial airport and we had to stay in a motel down off
the grounds of the airport. So we get down and normally the food there was really good.
Typical for that part of the country was a lot of mutton and standing rib and things like
that. I always--- one of the weakness I had for no matter where I flew I always enjoyed
the local food and flying into France when I was a navigator, I just loved the French
restaurant downtown in Chataroo and then flying down to Sydney. Sydney wasn’t quite
as good as Christchurch as I remember. Christchurch had some really fine food and they
had some really good restaurants and Sydney too. Most of the time I wound up going to
this little hole in the wall fish and chips place and eating a lot of that heavy stuff that’s
not good for us as we find out later in years but it was good. The 141 years, the airplane
was great. I only lost one engine the whole time that I was flying it, and that was just a
precautionary shut down, but it was very, very reliable. At that time when I was flying
them, they hadn’t stretch them yet and the airplane, all the airfreight when I left were
getting up in the neighborhood of twenty-five to thirty thousand hours and that was from
the Vietnam hauls. They went quite a few years after I left, this was ’72 or ’73 when I
left McChord and they were at. I had a job as a squadron commander when I left there.
But all the airplanes were getting up about thirty thousand hours and they flew them for
quite a few years more before they stretched them and when the stretched them, they got
an extra three pallet positions added refueling capability and added some other
navigational features, INS and there is NAV system and then I’m estimating those
airplanes before they stretched or at the time they stretching had a in the neighborhood of
a thirty-five to forty thousand hours. Then they zero them out time wise and then they
kept flying them again and then with the gulf thing of course they were refueling in the
air refuel, they put in equal number of hours. So I’m estimating now most of the 141’s
are may retire but I’m sure those airframes had about a hundred thousand hours on them.
In anybody that lost one it was due to a pilot error but they had one incident while I was
at Travis later on and I wasn’t flying them at that time but they has one young crew down
at Richmond, Australia outside of Sydney, heavy load of fuel going all the way to
Laremouth maybe Alice Springs ‘cause I don’t know what his reading was but it was
rather warm season. I think it was our winter, their summer that this happened. They had
a haze layer that about two hundred feet and it was clear above that usually, but this 141
was taking off this one morning and it was just barely airborne. I forget what the altitude
was, I remember the particulars--- well all the details I don’t remember but they were not
to far airborne and #3 engine came unglued, rotor veins nearly came apart. Went in
through the wing, through number four, into the cockpit or into the cabin started fires in
the cargo area and it was a bad situation cause the airplane was heavy. They were in a
populated area so they couldn’t dump and the crew did a magnificent job. The
loadmasters and exterior engineer were back fighting fires in the cargo hold and he only
had two engines on the left wing, one and two that were still running. So he had a
firewall it and they were fighting fires and screaming bloody murder, mayday, mayday,
mayday and he could only turn the right. So they got a little altitude got things under
control, but the haze layer he lost contact with where the base was. The Lord was truly
looking out for them. Cause an Aussie 130 was coming back into the pattern at that time.
Of course they went and just fire walled it, got over and led them back to the base for an
approach and they set it down heavy and managed to stop it. They were no injuries out
of that airplane was saved. But that airplane was down nearly a year. Extensive sheet
metal repair, fuel tank repair, full landing gear change. It was in bad shape but it was
nearly a year down there before they had ready to fly again. Anyway all of the
crewmembers got air medals out of that. The commander at 22nd Line (?) at Travis and
don’t I think it was a Norton crew if I’m not mistaken. But I can’t remember they were
flying out of Norton Air Force Base, which is not closed, but they did a great job.
Nothing else comes to mind in the 141 years. I managed at that time to go operational
bootstrap at the end of my tour up there and to get my college degree at St. Martin’s
College in Olympia. Then I got an assignment to become a squadron commander at
Shepard Air Force Base. So went down there and I was there two years. We bought a
house in Burloe-Burnett and that was quite a tour. Quite an assignment, probably the
most rewarding of my whole career. We had a good squadron, I had good NCOs,
especially First sergeants. Boy those first sergeants were fabulous. We did some good
things down there. I started running my squadron the way that, similar to the training I
had in the Cadet Corp, it was tremendous---spit-shine boots and clean starched uniforms
daily, hair cuts once a week and we gave inspections every time for that. The airman
remembered that for years, but it made a lasting impression on them later on. I would run
into them after that, it was just amazing. I remember when I got reassigned to Clark
Airbase I was out there. I was air terminal officer at the time, standing out there waiting for a commercial airplane and I saw this runway sweeper coming right for me and it screeched a halt and this kid jumps out and it was one of my airmen and I had at Sheppard. But they all remembered me fondly most of them that I ever met after that. All of the did well, but I really tightened the discipline there and it was very rewarding. I had to put a lot of them out for lying their applications or whatever or for pot use but running with that much discipline I had very little problem. I would have maybe, three, four problem areas, all getting drunk or raising hell or smoking a little pot or something. I had only about three or four of those a month, where as most of the medical outfits had three or four a weekend or per night, per weekend. They were just--- it was just unbelievable. They were very proud of themselves. From there I went to Clark Air Base in thePhilippines and I was in the aerial port squadron at that time 374th military left wing 130’s but I was in the aerial port squadron and my AFSC let me see at that time was transportation. So for the first year I was working there as air terminal officer and so I was just that was what I ran and the commander at that time really wasn’t very, he was non rated full colonel, who really didn’t like people with wings on their chest so that was a bit of a struggle that one year. We had a very nice guy at (?) 130 squadron commander, made full colonel at Pope and came on to take over the aerial port and his name was Jim Mayhew and he was a great guy, he was just fabulous to work for. I went up and took over the air terminal operations center (ATOC) for that year and so it was really a nerve center of what went on in the airlift port. From then we went on to Travis Air Force Base and that was my last assignment, I went on to the director of air transportation 22nd air force. That was the first year that I was down in air terminal operations or the--- it was with the main command post function, the transportation portion of the command function there at 22nd air force. Then I got moved up to the reparation analysis for their main department, my tour there. That was the last assignment of my career. Then I came on back down and I had ninety days terminal leave and I was offered an assignment as the chief of the Mack operations at Rota Spain which is Navy based and in way I wish I would have taken it but at that time my kids were just starting their teenage years and I felt like it would be better to retire, come back to Texas and give them some roots. So we landed on our property up there Stinnett. I build a house and they grew up there with
their farm animals and it worked out pretty well and then late 80, well about ’89 we
decided we would pull up there, my sons class in school was rather riff, raff and it wasn’t
a very nice place to live cause it was so far from any restaurants, theaters and anything to
do and so we moved on down here to Lubbock in 1990 and we’ve been here ever since.

What questions could I answer?

KS: Yes, if I could back up a little I had a few--- you mentioned in your slides the
Air America planes, how much contact did you have with Air America, were you aware
of their operations essentially or?

FS: No full. They more or less spooks, they did what they needed to do. Other
than catching rides back and forth from Saigon to Bien Hoa or seeing them up that place
was like the slide depicted it and I really didn’t have much contact with them. We didn’t
work with them at all, but they were there. As I mentioned I think in that area that I was
living in Bien Hoa we had CIA guys living there and they were friendly, we talked but
we really never talked that much about what they did. They were into a lot of very
classified stuff. To this day I don’t really know what all they did. I know they seated the
trails and I know they--- and the guys I knew at Bien Hoa that were CIA, they were non
flyers, they didn’t really get out and fly any. But they were in the ground. But what they
did was all classified. I know later they had sensors they dropped along the trails and
gravel and I’m sure you know what that is.

KS: The trail sensors that?

FS: Well, they were trail sensors and a lot of their operations involved seating the
trails of gravel

KS: I’m not aware of that.

FS: Well, gravel as I understood it and I never saw any and never handled it so
this was all hear say but it was the rocks that one stepped on would blow up. So I think
they were involved in some of that to. But we were kind away from trails and so more of
there operation was local and they never told me and I never asked.

KS: What about contact with South Vietnamese soldiers or military?

FS: I didn’t really have too much contact with the military. Most of the ones that
I had contacted with were just the civilians around where we lived. I had very little
contact with them. My friend down in California, Nick he was a ground pounder but he
was in transportation over there and he was mainly around Saigon and he traveled to
different bases, but he worked very closely with the VNAF. He has a lot more stories
about that than I do. I had very little contact with them.

KS: You mentioned you had civilians working on base, your hooch maids and
was there every any concern for your safety with civilians on the loose or?

FS: No. We didn’t have much concern on that because I knew they were pretty
well screened but this one time I remember we had a barber near the officers club and we
would go in there and he would start poking us for us a few questions and we’d pass on
to the CIA guys and you know they would check it out. Whether it was idle curiosity or
what but he’d probe, trying to find out what we did and where we were going and stuff
like that. Later on I remember we had a newspaper that came on, the military published a
newspaper and it had a joke in there one time about this Vietnamese barber back there
where the sharpening is and this guy is sitting the seat and he was sharpening his razor
and mounted on the wall was three ears(?) But no I didn’t have much contact with them.

KS: You mentioned also the monsoon season; I was curious how much did
weather effect your missions or your tactics?

FS: Surprisingly not very much cause normally since we flew at night most of the
stuff had dissipated enough where the majority of the time we got airborne and managed
to go do the job. It was the heat of the day that brought this up and really made them
boil. But by the time that we got ready fly at sundown or later, usually later in the
monsoon season, why it didn’t effect us all that much and I was really surprised by that.
A few instances like that night I got stuck out and that lasted all night but a lot of times it
would disband enough to where we could get airborne and go do our job.

KS: What about allegations that American soldiers used drugs, I know you
mentioned it a few times, was that or did you see that as a big problem?

FS: In my particular unit there at Bien Hoa, I don’t think drugs really came into
play all that much. The one instance I told you about landing that night in Song Be, that
kid, it was obvious--- he was smoking when he walking down the runway checking it out,
next day we took off. Doc and I looked at each other and we knew exactly what he was
doing, but back in our unit we didn’t have that as a flying unit, we didn’t have that much
trouble. We had more trouble with alcohol. Several of those guys they hit it pretty hard.
Normally they would be rearing to go come mission time. But there is was no(?) they did
drink to much and I guess we all did really.

KS: Do you think ever effected anybodies capabilities or?

FS: Well like I say, we didn’t loose any aircraft while I was there. It wasn’t
really that bad and usually the navigators were the determining factor you know. If one
of those, usually the pilots were younger and the navigators were older and more
experienced and higher rank and so usually with the nav’s saw that somebody wasn’t
quite fit to fly that night, I got called in a lot cause I didn’t really take that much. I did
some nights but as a general rule, I didn’t. I thought it’s easy to get killed around here so
I thought I didn’t really want dim my chances of survival by taking too much. I usually
ate right and I as I told you I was getting over that aircraft ejection so I was running quite
a lot and so I started staying fairly decent shape.

KS: How close did you follow what was happening with American politics for
instance, Johnson’s decision not seek re election, the bombing in North Vietnam, how
close did you follow those types of things?

FS: What were told was what we got off of Arm forces network radio and out of
the stars and stripes and that was pretty heavily censored, so we really didn’t know all
that much. Guys coming in that were new to the unit or that we would stumble across in
the club, they would inform us of what was really going on. But we really didn’t know
all that much and we were just there doing our job day to day and the working of politics
really didn’t come that much into play. Our main thing was to watch AFA on TV and
Rowan and Martin hour was just really our biggest deal of that we could wait for. We
really enjoyed watching that, it was a good show. Everybody got a big charge out of that.
I remember that was the main program everybody wanted to watch and sometimes
football or other sports would come on and we’d watch it. But the Rowan and Martin
Laugh In that was the--- that left everybody in a good mood. Goldie and Artie and those
idiots on there, they really had a good program.

KS: Did you get to see any USO shows while you were there?

FS: Oh yeah!

KS: Do you remember any of the performers?
FS: A lot of the people that came to Bien Hoa, we had a lot of little bands would come there and they usually had good looking women dressed very scantily and I remember a lot of Aussie outfits and I remember quite a few of those. None really struck me as you know more than the others. I think I ran into USO outfits when I was flying 141. I remember one time we landed in Wake Island and there was Bob Hope and Joey Heatherton and that team particular year and everywhere they landed of course they gave a little skit, not a show per say but a little skit and they would go around hugging everybody and tell them what a fabulous job that they were doing. But Bob Hope was a fabulous entertainer and he just really got people in a good mood.

KS: So you say he boosted morale definitely?

FS: Oh yeah! But I never witnessed them except that time at Wake Island when I was going through they’re on an Air Crew. While I was in Vietnam we just had entertainers of a smaller element come through? They tried to hire as many that tried to provide a consistent system of entertainment and of course they had a lot of little outfits coming around different places. So we had some going on in Bien Hoa quite often. But nothing really comes to mind being more spectacular that any other.

KS: What about racial tension was that an issue?

FS: We didn’t have anybody in my outfit and like I said we were kind of close knit in the outfit of a minority cause we were pilots and navigators and at that time in the North getting into those really--- and we knew we that it existed in the enlisted ranks in the Army quite a lot. We didn’t really have contact with any units that were having the problems.

KS: What about lessons learned from Vietnam, what do you think we in country or the military should take?

FS: Well one of the things that is probably predominant that I think most leaders in Washington should acknowledge, is that you cannot war such as that with a fifteen thousand mile screwdriver. I can’t remember if I mentioned earlier or not but I feel like President Reagan and later President George senior did the right thing at Grenada and the Gulf War and they said, “General, go do your thing,” and the generals went and did their thing with very little oval office interference. I also feel like and this is my own opinion and I can’t remember if I mentioned and stop me if I did but I strongly feel that in the
election of ’64 if Barry Goldwater would have been there we wouldn’t of had a Vietnam. He was at that time a reserve major general in the Air Force he was a pilot and he knew exactly how things fell down. That is my personal opinion that had he been elected Vietnam would not have come up and as we have known. I feel like the lives lost would have been very minimal, I don’t think he would have take this concept of gradualism at all, I don’t think at that time we really had much worry out of Russia or and we would have just bombed them into oblivion immediately, he wouldn’t have done this gradualism stuff that proved so costly for our country. Another thing and this is not going to Vietnam, but I think in the gulf situation, was also my personal opinion I want to qualify this, I feel like they stopped short of Baghdad because the Arab, we had been trying find logistical supply areas in the far east a long time. I feel like President Bush, even though I’ve never heard any reference to it, but I feel personally that the Arab coalition sent word to President Bush that if, they wanted him to stop short of taking out Saddam. Being a very practical man I’m thinking that he realized that if we ever wanted to get a logistical supply area over that area of the world, it would probably be better to eat their wishes. I’ve never seen anything to prove this, its just personal opinion and anything else that you might have questions about.

KS: I don’t have anything at this moment. Is there anything else you want to add?

FS: Yes, there is something that I wanted to add. I can’t remember if I told earlier---?