Richard Verrone: This is Richard Verrone and I’m doing an oral history interview with Mr. Charles Hubbs. Today is January 27, 2003. It is approximately 9:33 AM Eastern Standard time. I am in Lubbock, Texas at the Special Collections Library in the interview room. Mr. Hubbs you are in Shalimar, Florida.

Charles Hubbs: Right.

RV: Sir, if we could begin with some biographical information on yourself. Could you tell me when and where you were born and a little bit about your childhood?

CH: I was born in New York City on 1st October 1930. I’m sorry that’s 5 October 1930. When I was not more than maybe a month or two old my folks moved to New Jersey. I spent the rest of my years, up to my teenage years, including high school in New Jersey in a town called Belford, B-E-L-F-O-R-D.

RV: Belford.

CH: Yes, it’s on the waterfront there on Sandy Hook Bay. It’s a little fishing town. I think my father finished 6th grade. My mother finished secretarial school. At the time when I was very young we were on welfare, poor as church mice. My dad was a fisherman and he made a dollar a day. He spent about $1.10 on booze. He got run over by a car when I was about six years old, and he never had another drink again. It was the best thing that ever happened to him (laughs).

RV: That sobered him up?
CH: Yes, it probably saved his liver too.

RV: Really?

CH: Anyway, things turned around for us dramatically after that.

RV: What did your parents do for a living?

CH: My dad was a fisherman. He worked on commercial fishing boats. He was getting a dollar a day on it. My mother went to work for the people that hand out cheese and those things. I can’t think of the name of the organization, but it was for poor people. Got hired on there because she was such an industrious person. As a result, she spent the next 32 years as the assistant, how would you call it? Assistant township clerk, which was pretty big deal in that little township. Very political. In the mean time, I went to high school in what was then Middletown Township High School. From there I had an appointment to Annapolis, which was political gained by my mother, and I turned it down. I went to Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania and proceeded to immediately funk out. Although I had great grades in high school, I found girls and beer all at the same time.

RV: Before we get into your college years, tell me a little bit about your high school years and what are your best memories of those years? Do you remember first of all growing up young with the Depression in World War II?

CH: Oh, boy. Do I ever?

RV: What do you remember about that?

CH: Well, we were poor. We didn’t have anything. We didn’t have much. We were just starting to come out of the woods then. I think we actually got in door plumbing during that period. During my latter 8 or 10 or 12 years old. I can’t remember exactly when. We got in door plumbing and we got another house. I know I’m trying to think. I don’t know. That’s about it. We were getting better off all the time.

RV: What are your memories of World War II?

CH: The thing that I guess made me want to go in the service was, I saw a picture in one of the photojournalists or something. A guy by the name of Captain Art Wehner standing on some sandbags in Iwo Jima I think. With a Thompson sub-machine gun in each hand. I don’t know why that picture stays with me to this day.

RV: Really?
CH: Oh yes. That did it. I said, “I’ve got to be that guy.” Get right out there and shoot all those big guns and all that stuff. Anyway, I went from there to in high school I met a cheerleader, the head of the cheerleaders. That immediately caused me all kinds of grief. I fell madly in love with her. I was captain of the football team, quarterback. What all that meant. We never won a championship. That didn’t fit into it.

RV: What kind of student were you?

CH: In high school I was a good one. That’s why I say I sure went to pot when I turned to college. I didn’t even know how to use the library. I wasn’t fitted out for college at that time.

RV: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

CH: No, I was the single one. The only sibling. The Korean War is what got me started I think. That would be the best jump I could make to it. I flunked out of Muhlenberg, and I got my mother, pulled some strings and got me back in for my sophomore year. And I flunked out again.

RV: Did you really?

CH: Oh, God it was beautiful. I was such a wonderful student.

RV: Was it just a lack of concentration on academics?

CH: Oh, hell no. I was into girls and beer. I had not time for college at all. Event though I was in college I didn’t spend much time there.

RV: What years was this?

CH: Let’s see? I got out of high school in ’48. It would have been ‘49and ’50. Korean War broke out, I immediately signed up. You don’t go in right away in those days. I signed up for the Air Force in August I think of ’50. I didn’t get to go in until February as an enlisted man. Then I went to Sampson Air Force Base, up in New York. When I graduated from basic training they kept me on and I was what they called a TAC instructor. But I wasn’t the kind that went hopping hup, two three four down the street. I was in the train station meeting inbound recruits. Then I would park them on a bus and rode them all out to the base. The sergeants there would take care of them. Somewhere along the line the Air Force was starting to hurt really bad for pilots. They dropped the requirements for entry into pilot school from college degree down to two years of college, and then even less. It was only open for a three-month window. I had a good
squadron commander. He liked my hustle. He put me in for it. I got it. Just as soon as I
got it, the 400 of us that were selected for pilot school were then reselected involuntarily
to go to radar observer school because the F-94 two-seater interceptor was just coming
out. So, I became a radar observer. Well, I was fit to be tied. Anyway they said 13
months and then we’ll put you back in pilot school. The stuck to their word. So I spent
13 months in the 2nd fighter squadron and the 3rd, 5th fighter squadron at McGuire.

RV: What made you choose the Air Force versus another branch of the service?
CH: Well, I had that deal with the Navy but I turned it down. I wanted to fly.

RV: Why did you turn down your appointment to Annapolis?
CH: I wasn’t ready for it. It was a good thing I didn’t go. Can you imagine me
trying to do something with that group? The way I flunked out of college? No, I wasn’t
ready for anything like that.

RV: What prompted you to want to fly?
CH: I had a friend of mine, we were pretty adventurous. One day we drove over
to the Red Bank Airport, and we paid five dollars piece to get into an old steermen. We
were sitting in the back, maybe we were in the front I don’t know. The guy took us up
for maybe 10 or 15 minutes and did some loops and twirls. Came back down and said,
“That’s what I want to do.” That simple.

RV: Go ahead.
CH: That’s ok. From there I went to, I don’t know where I was at.

RV: Tell me about Sampson, what was your basic training like for you?
CH: I liked it. It was probably the first time I really got regimated and given
something to have to follow the rules. It kind of turned me around. I was kind of a
worthless sort of soul. I wasn’t a bad kid. I just didn’t have any idea about conformity. I
really enjoyed it. When I got into the cadets, which was pretty strict, the radar observer
cadets, those aviation cadets I was in that for six months. I came out as a second
lieutenant. I thought boy, I went from $83.00 a month to $483 dollars a month. I said,
“man this is for me. I like this business.” I tried to go to Korea. That was my whole
deal. I wanted to go fight the war.

RV: Why did you want to get into the actual combat zone?
CH: That’s what it was all about. If you’re in the service that’s what you’ve got to be doing. So, I volunteered in radar observer school for Korea. Where did they send me? McGuire Air Force Base New Jersey, 20 miles from home; last thing in the world I wanted. I missed the Korean War. I was a 13 months as a cadet, I mean as a radar observer. Went back to pilot school at the end of that and graduated. When I graduated the Koreans gave up. They knew I was coming (laughs). So I got an assignment to Germany. That was a great assignment. That was really something else.

RV: What year was this?

CH: ’53, ’54.

RV: How supportive were your parents about your military career?

CH: They thought it was great because I’d finally gotten to be somebody. Wasn’t a ner’ do well, just putting their money away. I quit spending their money for a change, and they were getting something back for it. It worked out well. They were proud of me. My dad had been a corporal in World War I. He thought that was neat that I got to be an officer.

RV: How did you take the flying? Tell me what an experience that was for you.

CH: As a radar observer you ride in the back end of an F-94, which is a jet fighter. So I had about 350 hours in the back end of an F-94. All the guys I flew with that were pilots up front were all returnees from Korea. So they were hot dogs. Man they really put those birds though the spaces. By the time I got to flying school, I was just about ready for 1st lieutenant. That made me pretty senior. I also had set of wings and I had those 350 hours in jet fighters. So I went through flying school like a dose of salts. I mean I took to that like there was no end to it. Except that I was in the front of the airplane and not the back. That was great. That was really neat.

RV: Did it come naturally to you?

CH: Yes, no problem at all. Never scratched an airplane in 26 years of flying.

RV: When you got to your assignment in Germany what exactly was your assignment there? What were you doing?

CH: The Germans had been [limited] by the treaties after the War, were not allowed to have any Armies or Air Force. Now, they were getting relaxed. The powers that be were going to allow them to have an Air Force. So, there I was I probably had
120 hours total time and I’m now an instructor pilot in the new German Air Force. I’m going to teach these guys how to fly.

RV: How did you feel about that, teaching Germans?

CH: It was ridiculous because some of them had 4,000 combat hours. Some of them had bailed out half a dozen times. Some of them had shot down I don’t know how many American airplanes (laughs)? And we’re going to teach them how to fly. I learned a lot from them, let’s put it that way.

RV: Tell me what you learned. What did you think you learned?

JW: They were great pilots, the old ones, the ones from World War II. We’re talking Erik Hartmann, Barth and all kinds of fantastic, great aces. That group went through. And then when they went through, they were supposed to then turn around and train younger Germans, new Germans, non-flyers. So we got some of those. That was a rather interesting thing because they didn’t speak any English. So, that was the end of that.

RV: How did you communicate?

JW: Not very well (laughs). No. A lot of it was shake the stick, yell. They knew or “No” or “Nein.” They said that’s not what they wanted to do. A great number of them could speak very good English. But some of them couldn’t speak any. We were learning German at the same time they were learning English. It was kind of give and take.

There’s one word in the aeronautical dictionary that’s called *furgasen heisen*. Probably never heard it. I never had either. But I took off with the first German to fly legally after World War II at a training field called Lanceburg in Germany. Took off with him. I was in a T-6 propeller airplane. Got about 4,000 feet over the field. Before I took off I pointed to the carburetor ice and I said “Do you know what this is carburetor ice?” He said, “Ya, ya.” So we take off get up about 4,000 feet and the engine quits full of carburetor ice. So we start gliding down. I keep saying to him *furgasen heisen*. I mean I’m saying to him “carburetor ice.” He said, “Ya” all the way to touch down. We landed on the same runway no problem. Anyway, when I got to this parking place I just rolled. The crew chief came out and I said, “Do you speak both English and German?” What in the heck in the word for carburetor ice or carburetor heat, I shouldn’t say ice?” Carburetor heat. He said, “*furgasen heisen.*” So I wrote it on my checklist. Never had a
problem again with heat. That was the first time I’d ever heard that word. He didn’t
know what the heck carburetor heat was, and he wasn’t going to admit he didn’t either.
Anyway [except for] a few scrapes like that, after that we got along so well with the
Germans. They were so polite to us. They were good pilots. Boy, they were good.

RV: How long did you stay in Germany?
CH: Three years.
RV: Until 1957?
CH: Yes, ’57, yes.
RV: From there where did you go?
CH: I went from there to jet ferry squadron, which I wanted, which was an outfit
that was ferrying F-100s. They were just coming out of the rack then. They were flying
them to Europe. I got there, and all the choice flights were taken by the older guys there.
What was left was I guess it was the CIA I don’t know. It had to have been the CIA, was
giving away old fighters, F-80s to a lot of people in South America. They had all kinds
of funny little airfields down there that were all camouflaged. You couldn’t even find
them. Anyway what do I catch? I catch what the other operation, 100s going to Europe
was not my flight. I caught low flight going to South America. So I took F-80s to South
America. While I was down there on one of the trips, they closed the [ferry] squadron.
Just flat deactivated that sucker while I was down there. The guys at the squadron had a
nice party on me, charged it to my club bill. That was ok, it didn’t bother me. So I came
back and I found out I had been assigned to Tallson Air Force Base, C-124s, military
airlift command. Well, for a guy who’d been in nothing but single engine in all his life
that wasn’t going to go too well with me.

RV: Why did they switch you from that to different planes?
CH: Because we were having so many accidents in the ferry command that was
under TAC at the time. TAC said we’re not going to have this anymore and they gave it
all to military airlift command. Military airlift command didn’t have any jets, didn’t have
any single engine planes. It just had four engines, big old lumbering mother C-124s. I
made captain on my way between bases. I got promoted between bases.

RV: How long were you doing the F-80s to South America?
CH: Not very long because I got back in ’57 mid ’57. In mid ’58 I was in
Donaldson Air Force Base. So about a year. I went to Donaldson. Now I had brand new
captain bars pinned on. When I got there I went in, the personnel guy, he and I didn’t get
along too well. But that was all right. He said, “You’re going over as a co-pilot in a C-124.” I said, “I don’t think so.” He said, “Don’t sass me captain.” He was a major. So I
just went down the hall and looked around and I finally found the general’s office. There
was a general by the name of Wade Hampton. His exec. Was Major Pinson. Went in
and I said to Major Pinson, “I liked to see the General.” He kind of looked at me like,
“Do captains walk in like that very often?” I was pretty tenacious about it. I said, “I’m
not ferocious here. I just want to talk to him.” So he said, “I’ll see.” He stuck his head
in the door and said, “Come on.” So I went in. There was a one-star there, first one I’d
ever met. I said, “I don’t want to throw my wings in the counter here, because I don’t
want to quit flying, but I sure don’t want to fly C-124s.” He pops up out of his chair and
says, “Let me tell you something. In World War II, I was flying Mustang. I didn’t want
to fly them either. Why don’t you go back to your personnel officer and see what
happens.” By the time I got there Pinson had called this personnel guy and he was really
ticked off. So, he said, “I’ll fix you up.” He did. He made me an assistant adjutant to a
bird colonel, non-rated, maintenance type that hated officers.

RV: Gosh.

CH: The guy didn’t have any officers working for him. He had nothing but super
NCOs. Named Floyd Johnson, hell of a nice guy, but boy was he tough. He was an old-
line guy a really old timer. I tried to get to work earlier than him, which impressed him a
little bit. Finally I went in one morning at 4:00 AM and he was in there, he’d just come
in. I said, “Ok I give up.” He said, “I hope you will, I’m getting tired of trying to beat
you.” He said, “I don’t like officers, you know that.” I said, “Yes, I know.” He said,
“Go over to base operations and hang around there with your fly buddies and don’t
bother me anymore.” I said, “Fair enough to me”, because I didn’t know a damn thing
about being an assistant adjutant. I went over to base ops and I caught rides with guys
passing through. So I was still current in jet aircraft about three of four months later.

RV: You were flying them or were you actually in the back seat?
CH: I could fly them because I was a pilot. There was a lot of guys that come 
through with an empty seat they’d say, “Come on let’s go.” So, I’d go with them and I’d 
have to hitchhike my way back some how. It didn’t matter I didn’t have a job anyway on 
base. It was up to me to get some flying time. What it was, I kept myself current in the 
T-33. So, that was fine. I get a phone call one day and it’s from Major Pinson. He said, 
“Charlie you still got your flying gear in the back of that ’57 Thunderbird of yours?” I 
said, "Oh, sure.” He said, “Okay. Meet me at base ops in about 30 minutes.” Ok, so I 
did. He said, “Get you gear.” We jump in a C-47 and he flies me to Shaw Air Force 
base. Let’s me off and said, “You go in there and fill out the paperwork and jump in that 
T-33 and bring it to Donaldson. It’ll be the first jet coming into military airlift 
command.” Oh that’s interesting. He said, “But I’m going to be on the ground to prop 
start it [turn around], and you’ve got to jump in and go back and pick up another one.” 
So I brought two T-33s into Donaldson Air Force base. They were the first jets that 
MAC or MATS ever had, whatever they want to call it in those days. I said, “Ok.” In the 
mean time I meet my redheaded nurse and married her six weeks later. She was a pretty 
nice young lady, second lieutenant. As soon as I get the two jets in there, I’m flying them 
around all the time having a grand time, they call from MAC headquarters. They say, 
“We want you up here overnight.” I said, “Whoa I’m married.” I was able to get Beth 
out of the service, discharged, out, fini. Overnight. She accompanied me to MAC. 
They were setting it up there for super pilots, colonel and general rank officers that had 
ever flown jets. That was our job. There was several of us picked. So, we got to set up a 
jet checkout program.

RV: Where was this again?

CH: Scott Air Force Base, headquarters of MACs Air Force.

RV: What year was this do you remember?

CH: Yes it was ’58. That’s where I spent the next three years. Must have done a 
good job checking out colonels because they were all hammering on me, “You’ve got to 
go to college. Got to get a college degree.” I was having a good time flying. “No, no, 
you’ve got to go.” Next thing I know I had to take a graduate test and a whole bunch of 
stuff. I wind up going to the University of Chicago. Remember I only have two years of 
college and they’re flunking years. They’re not good years. I got up there and I’m in the
graduate program. Boy was that a shock! I went from completely illiterate to double
illiterate at that point.

RV: What kind of graduate program was it?

CH: It was MBA and associate R&D management. Yes. I didn’t even know
how to use the library. So I had one year to do all this. First three months I had two D’s
and a C or something. It was pretty poor. By then I learned how to use the library that
helped. The second one I went three C’s. The next time I had about three B’s. The final
one I couldn’t quite make it. I had no undergraduate. I had to take a whole bunch of
funny little undergrad courses. I couldn’t take them and get through it all in a year. The
Air Force actually took pity on me and they gave me another six months. I had a ball
after that. I didn’t have to take any of the undergraduate stuff, because each one of those
professors took one look at me, I’m up there in a burka [with a crew cut], high and tight.
It’s hippy year. The University of Chicago is definitely not a good place for a military
person to be. They were spitting on everybody. They were having it tough. They [were
chanting to] killed the president, blah, blah, blah. Ok. So I went through the drill. Then
profs also said, “We’re going to give you a comp exams [comprehensive exams].” One
of them said, “Who’s Plato?” I said, “I don’t know is he Greek?” He said, “That’s
good, you passed.” He gave me a “D.” So they gave me D’s for all those courses I
didn’t have [to take]. Glad they cleared that up. In fact when I graduated, which was six
months late, I got an S on one of my grades instead of a letter. If I’d have gotten a letter,
I would have been on the Dean’s list. That’s pretty damn good for a guy who didn’t
know what the hell he was doing when he walked in the door.

RV: Was this in 1962-’63?

CH: ’63. I never did get an undergraduate degree in all the years afterwards. I
still got an MBA and all that other.

RV: Tell me about the Cuban Missile Crisis, what were your thoughts on that?

CH: That was funny. They were scattering B-52s all over the country, B-47s,
I’m sorry. Of course everybody on the block, we lived in an apartment off base. It was a
big U. Everybody knew I was an Air Force guy. They’d never seen me in any [uniform].
Of course I had my uniform hanging on the door of the closet. I had a mauser that was
redoing, reading rifle. So here I got this mauser rifle out on the kitchen table on a sheet.
My uniform in hanging on the door, and one of the neighbors came in, and turned around and ran out screaming, “We’re going to war.” Actually I got the whole damn court over in my kitchen trying to find out what time the war starts. We were going to invade Cuba and they thought I was going to do it. “I’m still in school. This is stuff I wear when I go down to Scott Field.” That was the only reason. It was really hilarious in a way. They panicked. They went crazy. Where did I go from there? Yes, I went to Patrick Air Force Base, central control, Cape Canaveral. That was a good job.

RV: This was in 1963 or ’64?

CH: Yes, ’63. That was neat. I was a young captain. I had a hell of a lot of responsibility. I could blow up anything taking off, firing out. I was right there in the middle of the Polaris program and all that and the first astronauts. It was wonderful. That’s all I can say. It was a great experience.

RV: What were you duties there?

CH: I was a range controller and central control. I had my own console with two little buttons on it. I could blow up anything I didn’t like. I never did. We had range safety guys that would have had better shot at it than me. I still had the option to do it if I wanted to.

RV: So central control as in the space program, central control?

CH: Yes. This was top of the line, big dog stuff. Really enjoyable. I was on call the entire time I was there. Day, night whatever. When I went to the officer’s club, which was frequently, it was practically everyday, with my wife I would take off my hat and put it on the cashier’s table or whatever you want to call it. My hat was there, I was there. They had to come find me if I got a phone call if I didn’t answer it right away. If the hat wasn’t there I wasn’t there. They knew to call the house. It was rather unique thing. I had a lot of fun and it was a great time. That was good. Then I got to fly in a F-104, that was my dream. My buddy by the name of John Kimberly he had the F-104 detachment that was assigned up there. He finally let me fly his F-104, if I would go to Vietnam with him. I signed up for F-105s and he sign up for F-105s and we waited. His orders came through, a ground job in Saigon. He was so mad. He said, “I’m going to quit the Air Force the minute I finish this tour.” And he did. They lost one of the best pilots they ever had. I don’t know what the hell they were thinking of. My 105
assignment which was a fighter; F-105 dropped big bombs up north, turned out the guy
told me over the phone. This is the guy from personnel, “Well Charlie you can go for
your choice here, the 105.” He said, “It will be 18 months before you go, and you’ll go
as Blue 13. You’ll be so far down in the chain of command you won’t believe it.” Or he
said, “I can send you this week as the commander of flying outfit.” I said, “Holy moley,
try me.” Sure. Guess what? C-123s defoliation.

RV: That was your immediate assignment?

CH: That’s what it was. That was my whole assignment the whole time I was
there.

RV: This is what year?

CH: This was ‘65.

RV: ‘65.

CH: But I didn’t get to go. I had to go through cold weather school up at
Fairchild, which was ridiculous. Go from Florida to Fairchild and freeze my butt off.
Then go to Southeast Asia.

RV: How long were you in cold weather school?

CH: It only lasted two or three weeks.

RV: How much had you kept up with American foreign policy and what the
United States was doing in Southeast Asia?

CH: You know I didn’t even care about it in those days. Didn’t care about it
until the end of the war.

RV: Did you understand what the United States was trying to accomplish in
Vietnam at this point?

CH: Hell, no. All I knew was I had a chance to get in combat. Got to go to
combat, no way around it. That’s what it’s all about. I got my fill of that and I don’t
have that attitude anymore.

RV: How did you get over to Vietnam, did you fly commercial civilian air off the
west coast or what?

CH: I’m trying to think. Yes, I guess I did. I believe I went over commercial.

RV: So at this point, you felt that you simply wanted to get into combat and that
was your goal?
CH: Yes, I was going to defend the United States. Help out those poor whoever; the South Vietnamese. Didn’t even know who the hell they were at the time. Even though I have a master’s degree I’m still naive about all this political stuff at this point. Said, “Ok I’ve got to do this.” This will enhance my career and I get to fly combat and test myself. Typical macho, young. Anyway, I got to Clark Air Force Base, was supposed to go through snake school there, which is a jungle school. So I’m getting smarter as I go along here. I call up on the pay phone. I call the sergeant in charge of snake school. I said, “Has Major Hubbs checked in yet?” He gave me long involved thing that went, “I don’t know who the hell’s here. I don’t know who’s been here. I don’t know who’s coming here, and I don’t care. I’m busy.” Bing he hung up the phone. That sounds like I shouldn’t give them anymore trouble than what they had now. I went over and got on the next airplane to go to the war.

RV: You skipped it?

CH: I passed it up. What the hell did I need snake school for? I was going to go out there and fly missions, and I did. I flew more Ranch Hand missions than any other guy for a one-year tour.

RV: Where did you land when you got into Vietnam?

CH: I was supposed to land in Tan Son Nhut, that’s where my headquarters was. I ended up in Bien Hoa. That wasn't the right answer. They lied to me about where the plane was going. Early in the morning I got a chopper flight back to Tan Son Nhut, and a guy by the name of Ralph Dresser, who was the major in charge of the Ranch at that time, who I was replacing met me on his motorcycle. Took me down to flight line and put me in an airplane and we went and flew my first mission, within an hour after I was on the ground.

RV: You’d been in country what 48 hours?

CH: One hour. Well, yes counting Bien Hoa, but that wasn’t where I was supposed to be. That was just wasted time over there.

RV: What was your impression of Vietnam when you first got into country?

CH: Dirty. I thought it was a dirty country. You couldn’t trust anybody. Remember in ’66 we all carried guns all the time, downtown or anywhere. Because they were still throwing hand grenades at us. Buses, everything it was chicken wired.
RV: So you were based in Tan Son Nhut the whole time?
CH: I’m sorry.
RV: You were based at Ton Son Nhut, in Saigon the whole time?
CH: No, that was just the beginning.
RV: How long were you there?
CH: Probably about two or three months at the most. I know that by the end of
the first week I had eight, ten combat missions. I had an Air Medal, a Purple Heart and a
DFC.
RV: After the first week?
CH: First week.
RV: Tell me about that week. What happened?
CH: Well, Ralph said, “Charlie I want to go home and you’re going to be a quick
learn. Watch this.” He started me in the right seat of a number 3; we flew a flight of
threes, in the number 3 airplane. That was the first day. I sat in the middle the first time,
didn’t do anything. Second flight I was in the right seat on the third flight. The next
flight, the next day I was in the left seat of the third airplane. The next day I was in the
right seat. The next mission I was in the right seat of the second airplane. You know
what I’m trying to say. I was jumped all the way up. By the end of the week, I was flight
lead (laughs). I was the commander to be and the flight lead all in less than a week.
RV: Tell me about your first mission. What was your impression of what was
going on?
CH: I didn’t know what the hell was going on. I didn’t have a clue.
RV: Did you understand that you were spraying defoliants and the reasons why?
CH: Yes, we practiced that in the States before I went. I had a one-month course
in Virginia, Langley on spray techniques. We didn’t spray anything but water. We did
spray, but it was for practice. Anyway, Ralph got transferred out. I remember now I
went over to be the commander. When I left, one year later I was number 13 in the chain
of command and I never had got to be the commander (laughs).
RV: How did that work out?
CH: Because every cotton-picking lieutenant colonel in the Air Force wanted a piece of this action because it was a good step up. Get a good ER and get promoted. It was really funny (laughs). Poor young major didn’t have a prayer. Didn’t have a prayer.

RV: Tell me how did you get your Air Medal and your Purple Heart that first week?

CH: Getting shot at. We took a lot of hits. At one point, John Heart did a six-minute interview with me on the Walter Cronkite Show. He spent 10 days with us. If you listened to him, I was the leader of the whole damn world, or the Air Force at least in Vietnam. Of course I wasn’t. He did say I was the world’s most shot at and hit commander. That stuck. There was a lot of Army dust-off guys that deserve that.

RV: What was it like your first time being shot at in combat?

CH: It scared the hell out of me.

RV: Small arms fire from the ground?

CH: Yes, we only flew at 100 feet. Somebody before I got there came back with an arrow stuck in his airplane. I don’t know about that one. I didn’t see that. I heard every round fired that ever went into my airplane. The reason I tell you about the first mission, the first week. I’m flying with Ralph and he’s big guy. He was like an All-American at the University of Texas football player. He’s in the right seat and I’m in the left seat. We’re leading. I’m super guy this time. Boy, we took one in the cockpit and I heard it hit. You know I’d never heard a bullet hit a person before but I knew that hit him. I thought he was dead. So, I’m hanging on for dear life.

RV: Where did it hit him?

CH: It hit him in the arm, but I didn’t know that at the time. I finally got less shaky and pushed on the button. I said, “Ralph?” He said, “What?” “Are you all right?” “Yes, of course I’m all right. Hang in there and get your god damned stuff together.” “Ok.” So I look over at him and he’s got a Bowie knife out, like Jim Bowie did. That big, and he’s picking shrapnel and stuff out of his arm. I almost threw up. That bothered me more than bullets coming in the cockpit (laughs). Anyway he was quite a guy.

RV: How did you get wounded?

CH: It was minor. Just a bullet went through a hydraulic line or something.

RV: It then hit you?
CH: Face full of crap.

RV: It was shrapnel that hit you?

CH: Yes. Minor. I didn’t lose a thing. No scars, no big deals. Sure helped when I got out of the service though, having a Purple Heart.

RV: So that was your first week. Tell me about how effective you think the defoliant spraying was.

CH: Absolutely. We could go back six weeks after we’d sprayed a particular area and it was barren. We did the roads for the first couple of months I was there, all we did was the roads, the trails. I’m sorry they weren’t roads; they were trails. Boy did we open those things up. That was amazing. They had trails that they pulled the foliage and stuff right over the top and made tunnels. So you never would have seen them from the air, never. They were just like highways. They used bulldozers, they had everything down there. If we saw a bulldozer we called in and the Air Force would come in a blow the hell out of it.

RV: How often would you spray a particular area?

CH: Like I say, it took six weeks for it to be totally effective. We flew three aircraft in them every time, never less than three. We only had three when I first started. We had 26 or so when I left I think. Anyway, three aircraft, twice a day, everyday. Everyday, everyday. Went about 36 days straight one time. The youngsters caught me going out the door. I had just briefed the mission, and I was going out the door to get on the airplane, get on the flight line. They lifted me up under the armpits, took all my fighting gear off me and made a little bitty bag and $400.00. Bingo. Here’s your airplane. They put me on a C-121 going up to Tai Pei. I was getting squirrelly. It was just as well. You could only go so long flying in combat, you get a little weird.

RV: What was your typical day like?

CH: Get up at 4:00 in the morning; eat a lousy meal. And sometimes just passing them and go get a C-ration; we always carried C-rations in the airplane. I probably ate about 100 cases of C-rations. I loved them. Then down to the flight line, brief, get that intelligence briefing in. We would brief ourselves. It got to be so mundane. In the later months we’d all go down there, climb in the airplane and go do it. It was pretty much
laid back. They didn’t use checklists. One guy did. Bob Ikelman, he always used a
checklist.

RV: For the airplane you mean?

CH: Yes. We never did. I never did. I hated flying with Bob. He made me use
a checklist. I had to go hunting for mine, I never knew where it was. Anyway we would
take off, and most of our targets were within an hour of the base. Remember we started
in Tan Son Nhut. We always had something going up at Da Nang. I spent the biggest
part of my tour at Da Nang. That’s the only way I could keep my flight together and not
lose it to some lieutenant colonel that just walked on board. None of them wanted to fly
in the mountains, so I was safe up there. I stayed there until the last week of my tour.

RV: So you go out and fly your mission. Who determined exactly what area you
would be spraying?

CH: Sheesh! What a joke that was. Saigon did all this planning. The only
trouble was it was so insecure, all that information. They always knew when we were
coming. So when we got up to Da Nang; I was the head of C-flight. They’re famous. C-
flight is the most famous flight of all the Ranch Hands. But anyway, they said, Pete
Spivey the navigator said, “Charlie there is no sense in us doing this the way we’re doing
it. They’ve got our number.” I said, “Ok, what do you want to do?” We’re going to
make up a tertiary target. A primary target, a secondary target, that comes from Saigon.”
We’re going to make a tertiary target. That comes from us, and we don’t tell Saigon
about it. We cut our hits down 50% by doing that.

RV: Really?

CH: Sure. The VC knew more about us than we knew about ourselves.

RV: How did they find this out?

CH: First of all, they had, all their spies were in the chain of command in the VC
[South Vietnamese Command]. They also had, all of our communications had been
tapped. We didn’t have any of that fancy stuff that they have today. We were sending in
the clear and they spread it in the clear. Well, guess where they’re going to be
tomorrow? An Lo Valley. Ha, ha, ha. Set up a lot of anti-aircraft stuff there.

RV: From Saigon you were there for two or three months, then you went to Da
Nang. Da Nang you stayed the rest of your tour.
CH: I stayed at Da Nang as long as I possibly could.
RV: Why was that again?
CH: I told you so many lieutenant colonels came in. They were taking over all
the spots that had anything to do with getting a title. Well, flight commander is a good
title to have in Vietnam. Well, in that case I kept my flight up there. They tried one time
to send a guy over to take over the flight. I don’t know who engineered this. I assume it
was the guys in the flight. They said, “You’re staying home tomorrow.” We’re taking
this guy on the flight. He’s about to be ‘new flight commander’ and we want to
indoctrinate him.” They picked the hottest target they could find and went in and did
everything wrong to get shot at intentionally. The guy got back, went to Saigon, “Get me
trash haulers. I want to go.” The C-123s are not in the Ranch Hand. I got my flight
back. I was pretty proud of those guys. We’re still sticking together you know? We have
a reunion every year. Then when the Air Force study, the fiscal study came up, we go as
a flight. C-flight goes together, which is pretty neat.
RV: Once you’re up in the air, tell me exactly how you would go about spraying
and just kind of describe that.
CH: That’s interesting too. What we’d like to do, we always had to spray early
in the morning, because wind is a deterrent to spray. You spray in high wind, it just
goes straight up in the air. You might as well have stayed home. So we want to go in in
calm weather, got to be able to see. No fog. We tried to come in with the sun behind us.
We’d get out [take off] and we would orbit at 3,500 feet. We were up at 2,500 and the
FAC would be at 1,500. The fighters would be at 3,500. We all got together and got
everything organized. We would start down and we would go straight down, right on the
red line. Well, [we’d level] at treetop level and go streaming in across the target. The
fighters would be right out there shooting the daylights out of everything ahead of us. The
FAC would be up there telling everybody how good we were doing. That’s what it was.
It only took one pass usually because we only had four minutes of spray.
RV: How much?
CH: 10,000 gallons.
RV: 10,000 gallons per airplane.
CH: Sure put it out.
RV: You would go down one at a time or would all three of you?
CH: No, no, no formation! Always in formation.
RV: Go down three at a time.
CH: Yes, you didn’t want to give them two chances to shoot at you.
RV: Were you shot at almost every mission?
CH: Almost every mission. It was interesting because when I first got there, the first bunch of hits we took were in the tail of the third airplane. That’s the last airplane back. By the time I left, they were hitting in the cockpit of the first airplane. Those gunners had gotten some training somewhere. That’s when it started hurting us.
RV: Sounds like they improved their accuracy.
CH: Exponentially. They really did. We took some bad hits too, when we started coming up front.
RV: Did you ever lose any men?
CH: Yes. We lost 28 guys while we were over there.
RV: In your flight?
CH: Not in my flight, but a guy who had just left my flight got killed. A guy by the name of Roy Kubley was my mentor. He was a captain and I was a major. He was still the best I ever met over there. He was good. He brought me up a little bit to speed. He went over to B-flight, and they turned a corner up there in a quad 50 just blew him out of the sky. That was that. That wasn’t too good. We had an interesting incident. One of our guys, name to be withheld, fell in love with a Vietnamese lady. He got himself an apartment for her or a hooch downtown and then he got her a motorcycle. Then he went to Da Nang. In the meantime, her mother and father moved in with her, so he had to buy two more motorcycles. Then other siblings who were questionable were moving in. So he’s buying motorcycles for them too. Well, he came home, I left out a part here. So when we were flying, I switched lead all the time. Let everybody else get some of the action. If he was flying he never would call for fire ahead of us, air strikes. It was getting the rest of us shot up and we didn’t like it. “All those nice Vietnamese people, blah, blah, blah.” He came home early from Da Nang one time and there’s his girlfriend having a good time with about three other bikers in the sack.
RV: Three Americans or Vietnamese?
CH: No, Vietnamese. That next time I flew with him, he said. We’d just taken off and he said, “Free fire zone. Fire! Strike! Strike! Kill! Kill all of them!” You talk about a personality change. Wow! He was a nice guy. But he didn’t have much sense. So you want to know how we did it in the air? Ok. We always had fighters. Let me give you that point right now before I get into this anymore. Everybody says, “Oh, my God those poor GIs are getting drenched in Agent Orange!” I’m going to tell you straight out as a commander in Vietnam, we never sprayed Agent Orange ever on an American troop or any friendly troop. Reason being and take this to school with you, when we came in on those passes we had a free strike zone wherever we went. We had three minimum, sometimes four fighters shooting up the ground ahead of us, blowing it away. Now do you think we’d be doing that with Americans down there? No. We weren’t allowed to. Wherever we were doing it and shooting there wasn’t any Americans. I want to meet these guys who had it dripping off of them. We’re putting out three gallons per acre. Do you know how much that, how that? Only 6% of it gets to the ground. It’s ridiculous. I don’t know where these guys are coming from.

RV: So the claims of the infantry saying they’d been sprayed.

CH: Only those claims that said we were dripping in it, they sprayed it all over us. That’s a bunch of bull. I’m not going to say it probably didn’t puddle on the ground somewhere, maybe they stepped in it; I’m not sure. There’s a lot of ways they could got it. One way was the Army came and got 50-gallon drums of it from us and then sprayed it around their tents and underneath their cots. No wonder they got sick. That stuff was miserable. It ate your shoes up in three months. Those shoes would fall apart in three months from it. We did one thing that these guys saw and I would back up and agree with them. It was called the Malaria control bird. We flew it over every installation in South Vietnam. We sprayed over every installation in South Vietnam at least once a week. It was silver airplane; it was not a camouflaged airplane. It just pushed out and that was fine, just bug spray. But we did that. They were put there eating lunch when we would spray it on them sometimes. So I could see where they could say, “Oh my God they sprayed it all over us, aaah.” Well, it wasn’t Agent Orange buddy. Anyway that was my soapbox. I didn’t mean to get on that.
RV: No, that’s ok. I wanted to ask you about that anyway. So, go ahead about a
typical mission. You would have the fighters shooting up in front of you.
CH: Yes, the only thing was we learned early in the game they couldn’t use 500-
pound bombs. We were at 100 feet and you know how high a bomb throws stuff? We
were flying thought their debris. No, no, no. So we limited them to rockets; 20mm and
CBU, which was the little round balls that came out of a tube. They were little. They
were about three inches across, circular.
RV: Yes, sir.

CH: They were miserable little bastards, shrapnel. We were on a mission one
day when they had a brand new wing commander of an F-100 outfit. He gets in his
airplane, he meets up with us, and we’re flying along in our three-ship bird. He goes
right across the top of us. Then he drops his CBU. I think he thought he was going to
fire his 20micmic,but he fired off his CBU. If you think Palestie was something over in
Europe in Word War II, you should have seen those thousands of little things going off in
the air. Then they hit our airplane and blew up. We took over 400 hits. We landed and
said, “Oh shit, this is going to hit the fan you know?” Friendly fire and all that. All I
know is that suddenly there appeared a whole bunch of these mechanics there and crew
chiefs that could do fuselage repair. They came from all over Southeast Asia. The next
morning we flew them same three airplanes. So the old colonel figured out he blew it, so
he gave us a hand and he fixed it right up. So we claimed it was enemy fire.
RV: No one reported what really happened?
CH: Why not? Who the hell cares? 400 holes were fixed. Two windscreens
knocked out, two engines knocked out. That’s normal flying.
RV: Approximately how long would your missions last? I guess it would depend
on how far out you had to fly.
CH: Yes, but normally unless we went to Laos or someplace, if we went out of
country. Way up in the Laos run the carce up there. We’d go up there and do crop. If
we did crop that was a lot longer because you only pissed out a little squirt, reach a little
plot of rice. You spread out for that. You kind of went individual. Kind of hunt and
seek.
RV: So you would go out and find rice paddies?
CH: Yes, we’d get in the valley for example and one guy would go up each side and one guy went up the middle. We’d just weave along. We had a good spread between us because we were afraid we were going to run into one another. Those missions could take quite a while because you weren’t putting out on the full gamut of spray. You were just piddling it out.

RV: This is you said in Laos a lot of times you would do this?

CH: It was primarily in the rice bowl up in northern South Vietnam. But we did it in Laos and everywhere.

RV: About how many mission did you fly in Laos?

CH: Not very many really; I’m trying to think. I flew 411 missions. I’d say probably 20 of them maybe were in Laos.

RV: Was it any different flying in Laos than over South Vietnam?

CH: No, well the country was totally different. The country was full of karsts little things stuck in the mountains, mini-mountains [they were called karsts]. But the trail, we did the trail in Laos. We did a lot of that. I’d forgotten about that. Maybe I did do more missions in Laos. I’d probably say 50 of them were out in Laos.

RV: Did you take a lot of enemy fire in Laos?

CH: No, not really. Although that’s where Kubley got shot down; he flew by; he got creamed by a quad 50 they call it, a 450 cal sitting on the back of a truck. He came around the corner and they just blew him out of the sky. That was in Laos. That was unusual.

RV: Were you aware that the United States said that, no foreign troops including United States troops would be in Laos?

CH: Oh, hell we had four countries’ insignias that were interchangeable on our airplanes. I could go into Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, or Vietnam.

RV: So you would put on the Royal Laos government’s insignia and fly into Laos?

CH: Sure, hell yes. No question about that.

RV: Same thing for Cambodia?

CH: Yes, but that was spookier. When we first got there, we didn’t exist. We worked for the ambassador. We had no identification on us. If we went down they
would not acknowledge us. After that they decided to stick a Vietnamese numb nose in
the airplane and that made it legal. We were always flying. The problem with that was
the Vietnamese that they picked to go with us on these flights would go in one door and
he’d jump right out the other side. They wouldn’t go with us. Hell no, they were scared
to death. They knew what the mission was.

RV: So they would on paper assign a Vietnamese to go with you?
CH: Yes, he was on the flight plan.
RV: He would rarely go with you?
CH: He didn’t go in the air.
RV: How many missions did you fly over Cambodia?
CH: Not many, that was real touchy. I think we did just a little trail stuff going in
there. I did one mission up north and that didn’t work too well either.
RV: Tell me about that, what happened?
CH: It was the “secret mission.” They had tried it way back in the beginning of
the war and they tried to get to the Maceo pass. They never got there, they got shot up
bad. So they dumped all their spray and hauled ass back to, they were coming out of Da
Nang. Anyway this time out of Da Nang they were going to do the DMZ. Well that was
kind of worthless, now looking back on it. Because the DMZ was just dead. There was
nothing there. The B-52s had just obliterated everything up there. There was a tree
stump that was about all. Anyway they wanted to do it. I think that was part of
McNamara’s wonderful dream. Which was stupid, nevermind (laughs).
RV: We’ll get to that.
CH: Yes, we’ve got to be careful I get a little carried off on that one. Anyway we
did it, and it was supposed to be secret. It was so secret I must have had 10 news people
hanging around us. We had to wait 10 days because the weather was so bad. We found
out later that we had 16 fighters, Navy ships off the coast with 16 inch guns. Four
helicopters, two medevac helicopters, I can’t tell you. You never saw such a, it was an
armada.
RV: Sounds like it.
CH: John Hart was on my airplane, that’s how secret it was. He was a reporter
for NBC or ABC for Kronkite. He was in the back of my airplane. We got two hits,
that’s all we took the whole time riding through that DMZ. They’re just above his head.

The poor bastard that shot off those two shots; he got, I think he had, I don’t know, we probably spent half the ammo that day fired at the enemy, was dumped on them. Another one like that, while we were doing crop we had B-57s on that run. There were three of them. A B-57 if you don’t know what it is, is a twin-engine jet that has a bomb bay and carries bombs on the outside too. So, they each carried sixteen 500-pounders. In the C-123 you could look up, it was a glass top. You could look up through the roof as well as look out the windows of course. We always flew with the windows open because of ground fire. Anyway we’re doing crop and lead goes around the corner, and he says, I was number three on that one. He said, “Hey, there’s a guy down there with a rifle.” They didn’t think about him shooting. So number two goes around the corner and says, “Hey man, he’s working the bolt on that. He’s going to shoot number three.” About that time I hear this voice say, “Number three get out of the way.” I look up through the glass, and here are three B-57s vertical, coming down, bomb bay is open. I couldn’t move fast enough to get that bird out of the way; they salvoed every one of their bombs on that poor old farmer that never did get a shot off. My God, was that an expensive kill!

RV: So this mission, you flew it, you dumped your stuff and you went back without any major incidents?

CH: You mean the one?

RV: The one in the DMZ.

CH: No, we kind of thought it was a gravy run. It was minor, just two hits and nobody hurt. We got our spray out and everything went fine. I don’t remember any significance about it.

RV: Was there any mission that you remember specifically besides the one you just told me about and the others that stand out in your mind? Any interesting things happen?

CH: I’m trying to think. Yes, but it would be more humorous than anything else.

RV: That’s fine tell me.

CH: Ok. We had an antenna that went from the tail of the aircraft to the top of the canopy in the front where the pilot sits. It’s outside, way up high. It’s an HF antenna. High frequency antenna, we very seldom used it. Anyway, we were going to go do what
they called the chicken foot. It’s a three-valley affair that comes into the A Shau Valley, so it looks like a chicken foot, three things [valleys]. We had an intelligence briefing. Quiet, nothing up there. Ok, so we go up. I’m leading the airplane. I led most of the time, but a lot of the time I let the other guys lead just to keep them sharp. Anyway, we’re going down this valley and I couldn’t believe the ground fire that opened up on us. It was fierce. One of the shots that came through came right through my left engine.

That’s next to where I’m sitting. Big holes blown out of the side, crap flying inside the cockpit, inside the airplane. I figured we’re dead. Bob Ikelman was sitting there next to me. I said, “Bob, what do we got?” He said, “Everything’s fine. It’s running like a champ.” It did. The sound never changed from the engine. Well that’s pretty damn good. We’ll get out of this valley though. So I pulled up and went into the next valley.

They must have just goofed up a little bit down there in intell. Went to the next valley, and we got the daylights shot out of us again. This time, we’re going in to the third valley. I look back while we’re coming in; we’re in trail one behind the other. Here is number two. He’s had his antenna shot off at the top of the cockpit and it’s trailing behind him. Number three feeling sporty that day had got his cockpit stuck right up to the trailing wire. It looked just like number two was towing number three. I said when we came back, “I guess the VC will probably go back up north and said, ‘Man you shoot up those ranch hands and they come tow the airplanes over the target.’” There was one other funny incident along that line. That was when we were up at Da Nang, we lived in tents up there for a long time. Finally we got into, to share a cement building with the Jolly Greens, the guys that pick up pilots when they get shot down. So, we’re in there one night, boy the Jolly Greens came home and they were yelling and screaming and laughing. They woke us all up obviously. We said, “What are you guys laughing about, you never have anything at all to laugh about?” They said, “Yes, we did. This time you won’t believe it. Had an F-4 go down, two pilots come out [eject]. So we get over to the first one, put the hind [penetrator] down, picked up the first guy. Moved over to the second guy and this guy in a black pajama jumps out and [while] we’re hovering.” He said, “We’re dead. The guy points his AK-47 up in front of the chopper. Fires off a whole banana clip.” So the door gunners cuts this guy down [with the door gun]. They put down the PJ to get the last guy out. When he comes back up he said, “Let’s take a
look at this.” He had the guy’s AK-47 and anything else he had in his pockets. He said, “Hey let’s take a look at this.” They said, “I’ll be damned. We’ve got to get this faxed or copied and get 10,000 copies made.” It showed an American chopper and it had three circles in front of it. That’s where you were taught to shoot if you were a VC. So this one is sitting there hovering and where does this guy go? One, two, three, up front [bfff]. Of course it didn’t do a damn thing was chopper guy. So they said, “We’ll get that copied and dropped all over the place.”

RV: How many people were on your crew?

CH: On the lead airplane, there were four. Then everybody else had three.

RV: What were their duties specifically on the plane?

CH: Pilot, co-pilot and then they put a flak vest over the radio in the center and the navigator sat there. There was no navigator position per se. Then in the back there was about a three foot high, it was made out of some kind of composite. Supposedly bullet resistant, square box. About 4x4x4. Loading that [flight mechanic or] flight engineer he could be anything you want to call him. He was a hell of a good guy. He was an enlisted man. He was in there running the pump for the big tank. He also was the guy that had the door opened right in front of him. When we called “smoke out”, when we were taking ground fire, he would put smoke out, which would be a red canister, fired that [thrown] out the door. That would be where the fighters would know to go blow away some more. So there were four of us. On the lead airplane, three on all the others. Occasionally if a new guy was being checked out, there’d be five. Actually if you had an extra navigator on board. Wouldn’t you know, the one airplane that got shot down over Laos had five guys on board?

RV: Did it really?

CH: Yes, what a shame. That was a heart breaker.

RV: How much contact did you have with the other crewmembers?

CH: Who me?

RV: Pilot and the co-pilot could they talk to and see the navigator?

CH: Sure. Hell, we were all shoulder-to-shoulder.

RV: Ok, it was that close.
CH: Yes, cramped quarters. As far as living together, we all lived together. We partied together. The enlisted guys would steal some beans and stuff from the mess hall and we had a contact with a Navy guy, that Navy re-supply ship that was upon the beach, and we could take them 50 pound boxes [of steaks] for about eight or nine of us that’s way too much. We would get the steaks and take them down behind the barracks and we’d all sit around and do our thing together.

RV: Tell me about base life, what was it like? Like where you lived?

CH: At Da Nang there wasn’t any. There was an officer’s club and there was a lot of drinking and the slot machines.

RV: Slot machines?

CH: Yes, we had slot machines sometimes. Go to bed [about 8PM] because we got up at 4:00 in the morning, 3:00 in the morning.

RV: Where did you live exactly? What was your hooch like?

CH: Up north; you mean at Da Nang?

RV: At Saigon and then at Da Nang?

CH: At Tan Son Nhut we lived in town, downtown. That didn’t last long. At Da Nang we lived in tents almost all the time. Finally got into a cement building. It was reasonable, that was pretty good. Had good showers.

RV: What was living in Saigon like?

CH: Strange. I got a motorcycle as soon as I got in, I bought from a guy leaving. It was a Harley Davidson, it was the only one in Vietnam so nobody ever stole it.

Couldn’t get parts for it. It would stick out like a sore thumb. One night my motorcycle stalled on me. I couldn’t get it started. It was hot bedding. You did that when somebody else is up at Da Nang. I would take his bunk. Anyway I was coming back, pushed the motorcycle back, pushed it back in the yard, closed up the yard and put my hand grenade [chicken wire] stuff up. Started back down the street, and here comes about four guys on motorbikes. They started circling me. Uh-oh. They were the cowboys. We called them cowboys. Their hair was greased back and they had little ducktails. They were about 20 years behind the time, but that’s what they were. So I got my back up against a street light post. What they didn’t know was I had a .38 in my belt under my jacket. So, they didn’t think I was armed. So, they kept circling me and then finally they got their knives...
out and tried to jump a curb and slash at me at the same time. That gave me plenty of
time to get out of the way. I finally figured out who the leader was. When he jumped the
curb he had to get both hands on his handlebars to keep the thing straight. I jumped on
behind him. That got his attention real quick. So, the 38 it stuck in his ear. Well, he
couldn’t see that so I put it under and stuck it up under his nose. I don’t know what he
was yelling, but boy they backed off pretty quick. I said, “We’re going to the base now.”
“We di, di now to the base.” He knew what I meant. So they started down the road and
got to the base. I kicked him and his motorbike into the ditch at the entrance to the gate.
By then I was a little hyper. I was telling the guard, “Kill them all. Kill them all.” Well,
I didn’t shoot any and he didn’t shoot any so that was the end of that. That’s what it was
like. You had to be careful in town.

RV: What was your impression of the Vietnamese civilians?
CH: Thieves. Of course I only saw the bad ones. I didn’t see the good ones.

RV: Did you have any one working in your house, doing your laundry, doing
your housework for you?
CH: Every hooch wherever you were, even if you had a tent you had somebody
to do your laundry for you and stuff. You would buy the wash stuff, the suds for them.
Then they would just wear it out. I got a hell of a rash one time because they used so
much soap. Way too much, double everything.

RV: What kind of quarters did you have in Saigon?
CH: Like I said, we lived downtown.

RV: What was it a house and apartment?
CH: Yes, it was a big house.

RV: How many men lived in it?
CH: Seven, eight, ten maybe. I never knew how many we honestly had.

RV: Were they all Ranch Hand folks?
CH: Yes. We were the same outfit.

RV: How much free time did you have in the city itself?
CH: None, only nights.

RV: I’m sorry.
CH: Only the night, so I didn’t have any free time. I was flying everyday.

RV: What would you do during the night?

CH: Drink (laughs). Did a lot of drinking over there.

RV: Did you have a particular club that you went to?

CH: No, I wasn’t down there that long. Tu Dho street I just tried every one of the bars probably along the way. That was that. I wasn’t a Saigonier. I was there such a short time. By the time I was getting ready to come out of Da Nang we were now living down in, we were at Bien Hoa. You didn’t even go in town there. At Bien Hoa we were put up in an old French cavalry whatever they keep horses in. What do they keep horses in?

RV: A stable?

CH: Stable, yeah. It was a big one. It would house about 12 guys. So I went down and flew down to look it over. I kicked everybody’s bunk out about a half a foot. It fixed me up pretty well. I had a nice area there and I went and got some lumber, closed it in. I had a box that had been sitting there for about six months. It was the air-conditioner, which is illegal over there. I went down to supply and I got 100 feet of cable and cut a hole in the back of the damn stable wall and shoved the thing [the air conditioner] in there. Ran the cable and buried it in the sand, ran it over to the club. There was this bored in hole [and I was able to plug it in] plugged in behind the jukebox, so nobody knew what it was connected to. I had air and then we had some other deal going where we picked up strange things. One of them was we picked up all the acoustical tile type stuff. It’s not tile, it’s like beaverboard that was meant for some colonel’s trailer somewhere. I did my place in that. So, now I had a closed in almost a sound proof thing. It was only about 6’ x 9’. Then I had a chair that I bought up at Taipei, a lamp I bought up in Taipei, stand up lamp. I got a colonel’s bed from the [supply] sarge for a bottle of booze. I got sheets from home. I got myself a wall locker, with a big lock on it. My folks, my mother and my wife were sending me all kinds of wonderful canned salamis and cheeses. So I was living pretty good. It was called the Taj Mahal, East.

RV: Your stable or your quarters itself?

CH: This was in the stable.
RV: Right.

CH: I was the only one that had it closed in and had an air conditioner.

RV: So you called your quarters the Taj Mahal East?

CH: Yes, and it was just driving the other guys nuts. Remember now, these are all also officers. They were living in the stable but I was living in the Taj Mahal.

RV: Why was the air conditioner illegal?

CH: Power. They couldn’t afford the power for the runway. Anyway they got back at me. Every once in a while one of them would go by and drop a smoke bomb right in my air conditioner. I’m telling you whatever color it was is what everything in there turned, me and stuff in it, everything. If it was a green one, it was all green. It was funny. I never got mad about it, because I was living pretty good anyway. I gave that and my motorcycle and everything else away to the next guy behind me, $250 bucks.

RV: How much contact did you have at home while you were there?

CH: With?

RV: With home, with your wife and our parents?

CH: None, just mail. I made one phone call home, but I got cut off. They shut me off as soon as I said hello to my mother. Everything is all right. Click, they shut me right off. I didn’t even try anymore.

RV: How often would you write letters?

CH: I wrote a lot of letters. I tried every three of four days. My wife the same. Very little. I never took an R&R with my wife.

RV: But you did take an R&R to Taipei?

CH: No, I took it to Hong Kong. I got food poisoning the day I got there. I crawled back on the airplane five days later. I never went out of the hotel.

RV: Really?

CH: I was a sick dog. I wrote back to hem later and I asked them to send me some brochures so I could see what the hell the town was like. I’d never seen it. I took my wife back there many years later and did enjoy Hong Kong.

RV: How often were you able to keep up with the news back in the United States?

CH: We got the *Stars and Stripes*, the paper. I don’t remember anything else.
RV: Did you have access to a television?

CH: That’s an interesting thought. I don’t remember. If we did I don’t remember it now. No, I don’t think so. I’m sure they may have been one someplace. I didn’t see it. We weren’t hurting too bad over there. Don’t get me wrong. We were living pretty good. We had a club, we had plenty of booze. We had a lot of lousy food.

RV: What would you do for entertainment for example?

CH: Play slot machines.

RV: Would you actually win money on them?

CH: Sure.

RV: Were these U.S. government slot machines?

CH: Of course they had to be; they were in the officer’s club. One of my pilots was an absolute genius at throwing the dice.

RV: Really?

CH: I stood behind him one night and just bet around him. Small stuff, and I made $2,000.00.

RV: In that one night?

CH: Yes (laughs). God, I couldn’t believe it. I don’t know how much he made. He was gambling every night, I wasn’t. I wasn’t that good at it. I played slot machines though. Got to love those slot machines. That and cheap, cheap VO, .25 cents a shot.

RV: Was there any tension at all between you, someone who was an officer and then those who were being drafted?

CH: My guys were all double volunteers. In order to get in the outfit that I was in you had to volunteer to go to Vietnam, and then you had to volunteer to go to this outfit. I had some pretty motivated people.

RV: It sounds like it.

CH: The esprit d’corps was head and shoulder above anything else. Maybe there’s a Marine outfit that might be as good. Like I say it’s 30 some years later and we still meet.

RV: So good morale amongst your men?

CH: Yes, higher than a kite. What the hell’s the general I forgot his name. He’s right her in the States now. Out of their Air Force. I can’t remember his name. We were
stationed right next to him, our airplanes were. He had his coup group there of six A-1s.
On stand by all the time around his hooch. He liked our esprit d’corps and our morale.
Gave us all purple scarves. Oh, boy was that a big deal!

RV: Did he hold a ceremony for you?
CH: Well, yes. But it wasn’t a big thing out in the field. Right there with him.
Ky, General Ky. Anyway he gave us these purple scarves and we were pretty damn
proud of them. In the mean time we were wearing side arms and carrying M-16s,
whatever. Thompsons, whatever we wanted to carry around with us. We had baseball
hats and we had some wild insignias, patches. We had some lusty ones about what Jane
Fonda could do, things like that. This guy Momyer came in as general. He said,
“Everything goes. Baseball caps go, scarves go, side arms go, blah, blah, blah. We’re
going to beautify the area. Everybody’s going to clean up the area. We’re going to paint
up everything.” Anyway, I’m up in Da Nang and I’ve got my purple scarf on. The wing
commander up there is a bird colonel said, “You’ve got to take that scarf off.” I said, “I
don’t take this scarf off for anybody.” He said, “Well we’ll see about that.” So he calls
down to Saigon and I don’t know who he talked to; I have no idea. He said [grumble,
grumble, grumble]. Pretty soon he hangs up the phone and slams it. He said, “Get out of
here. I don’t want you in this briefing anymore.” I said, “What happened?” “I don’t
want to hear it.” So I called my boss down in Saigon and said, “What the hell happened
down there?” He said, “This guy, this colonel up there called down to Saigon and told
him he was wanting us to take our scarves off.” The guy down in Saigon says, “I
checked with General Ky, he said ‘If you take the scarves off them I’ll close the gates’.”
To Tan Son Nhut, the biggest air base in South Vietnam. That was the end of that. Had
no trouble with that. We never did get our cowboy hats back or anything. But we did get
our scarves.

RV: Did you take that home with you?
CH: The scarf?
RV: Yes, sir.
CH: You bet you. Every one of us still have them.
RV: Still have it.
CH: Go to a reunion, you’ll see them. They’re all wearing them.
RV: What kind of contact did you have with other Allied Forces, like the South Koreans or the Australians or the New Zealanders?

CH: Nothing to do with the South Koreans.

RV: Why not?

CH: There was nothing to do with them. They weren’t doing anything for us. Their Air Force had given up on giving us top cover. They wouldn’t go down through the clouds.

RV: They wouldn’t go down through the clouds?

CH: No, they were worthless to us. We gave up on them and we got regular air cover from the other U.S. things, we had Navy. We never saw these people; we talked to them over the air.

RV: Never saw them in base camp or anything?

CH: No. They all had their own little enclaves and different places.

RV: How about the South Vietnamese military forces? What kind of contact did you have with them?

CH: Zero. They were worthless too.

RV: Why do you say that?

CH: Well, we were Air Force and they were ground. We didn’t have [anything in common] over doubles.

RV: How about the South Vietnamese Air Force?

CH: They wouldn’t come down through the clouds so we wrote them off as a total loss.

RV: So, the Koreans and the South Vietnamese Air Force were both. They would not help you out in the air, is that what you’re saying?

CH: There was no Korean there.

RV: Ok, I had asked you about the South Koreans.

CH: Oh, I’m sorry. That went right over my head. No, no, I’ll tell you what they were a ground force, and they were some sort of a formable group. They were the nastiest bunch of people. They would skin the people they caught.

RV: Yeah?

CH: Yes, ewww!
RV: Did you ever meet any of them?
CH: No, no.
RV: You just heard stories?
CH: I saw one in the middle of the street one day, got hit by a car. He got knocked about 10 feet down the road. He rolled and rolled and rolled. Got right up and brushed himself off. Looked like he was one of the toughest mother’s in the valley. But he took a heck of a lick from the car.

RV: Tell me about the South Vietnamese. In the air they would not provide you cover that you wanted?
CH: No. If it was cloudy they wouldn’t go through the clouds.
RV: Why not?
CH: I guess they don’t know how to fly on the instruments, I don’t know.
RV: How about on the ground, did you ever have any contact with them?
CH: No, in fact I didn’t want any contact with them on the ground.
RV: Why not?
CH: I figured half of them were defectors or what do you call them? Infiltrators. They were the ones that were giving away all of our targets.

RV: The South Vietnamese forces who were working for both sides?
CH: Sure.
RV: Do you think that was common that they were giving away information?
CH: There’s no doubt about it. The thing is maybe it wasn’t just that long. I think the North Vietnamese had a tremendous take on our communications facilities. In other words, they could tap in everywhere along the way. After we opened up some of those tunnels they were massive. They had hospitals down there, chow halls. It’s hard to believe that they could do all that.

RV: How would you describe the enemy?
CH: I’m sorry?
RV: How would you describe the enemy, the VC?
CH: Boy that sucker was something else. He was a real enemy. He was a formidable enemy. He was using bulldozers and road graders and I don’t know what all
way down in South Vietnam. He was building roads at a [great] rate. If we’d build roads
like that in the United States, we’d be pretty clean. He was very, very versatile, very
versatile. And he had thousands of people involved. We saw where they; we’d open up
a road, they’d bomb it and before we ever got back there again it was just like nobody
had ever been there with a bomb.

RV: Did your impression of them change, once you got in country? Or did it
evolve?

CH: No, of course I never talked to any of them. They were just somebody on
the ground I had to get rid of. I knew they were shooting at me, but I didn’t shoot back.
That was the only, that was really the big gripe I had with going over there. I wanted to
go over as a fighter pilot and blow them away. I couldn’t do it. We did have free fire
zone so I could call in air strikes. They had a CBU, a particular CBU. It was called
CBU-24. It looked like a football when it exploded in the air it made a pattern that
looked just like a football. Pointed at both ends. It was devastating. I was the most
devastating armament that we could call for. We went down and across the river one
time and they blew the daylights out of us. When I got on the ground I said, “I need
some CBU 24 for the next time you go there.” They said, “You know you can only have
that with troops in contact.” I said, “What the hell do you think we are? We’re in contact
all the time.” Somebody up there finally realized, “Yes these guys probably could use
this thing.” I set it up so that we could start out and get way up in the one end of that
river coming down. This one F-100 with four CBUs on it would start ahead of us and
he’d pull up and drop one. Go down, and drop then next one, next down, next down. He
took out four towns, leveled them, knee high. I don’t know how many people we killed.
It didn’t bother me, they were shooting at us. That was a mess up there. Whoo! That
was great.

RV: Did you call in ordinance a lot?

CH: Yes, did I ever? I didn’t have to. All we had to do was get a shot fired at us.
We would yell, “Ground fire right, left” whatever. Those guys would really take care of
it.

RV: Did you try to discriminate between shots being fired and then the civilian
population that was in the area as well?
CH: Hell, no. Why? They were all VC anyway.

RV: So you would just take out the whole area if you could?

CH: I hope so. I had a mission down in the flat lands one of the times I was down south. South country was just flat. You could see for miles and miles, no hills there. Nothing to stop you. We always came in from the water there. Low on the water, pop up on the beach and start spraying. We came up on this line of hooches one time. There was a lady in the door with a baby in her arms and a guy behind her with an AK-47 on her shoulder. He’s blazing away at us. Sheesh! About that time I guess we had F-100s then. I don’t know what we had, A-1? I don’t know. Anyway whoever our top cover was just flashed underneath my wing and blew this guy and the gal and the baby and everything all to hell. That was fine

RV: Did he drop a bomb?

CH: No, 20 mic mic [millimeter].

RV: 20 mic mic machine gun.

CH: We went right over the place and kept right on going. I guess it was, how long did we normally wait? Well, it wasn’t that long, we came this way again. I’ll be darned if the same, not the same guy, obviously not. Same situation as if it was déjà vu; guy hanging his AK-47 over a gals shoulder blazing away at us. This one got chopped down just as quick as the other one did. Hell, I don’t know about that. That’s what it was like. You just didn’t know who the hell. There wasn’t any good guys over there.

RV: Was there any discussion about trying to distinguish between the civilian population and the enemy?

CH: No, we never talked about the lateral pitch. Never gave it a thought.

RV: Was that true for all the Ranch Hand missions do you think, or the ones in C flight?

CH: I would assume it was everybody else because we all had the same marching orders.

RV: In your briefings in the morning did they talk about there were a couple town here in this area?

CH: No, they just said, “This is a hot area. There is no intelligence.” They were right about 10% of the time.
RV: Really?

CH: Oh, terrible. Intelligence was terrible.

RV: Bad intelligence?

CH: It was really bad. Like that three-valley thing. On the third valley I’d [been] shot up so bad, I said, “I can’t go in.” We had one mission over in the pineapple forest. I was going to lead it. John Beakley said, “No, I want that mission. I want that mission. I haven’t got it. You’re getting more mission than anybody else, blah, blah, blah.” So he got me drunk and he said, “I’m going to take that mission.” I said, “Ok, John you take that mission tomorrow.” Sure enough he went over the pineapple valley and they shot one through the canopy and shot him in the head. It didn’t kill him. It went into his helmet, around his helmet and stuck in the skin of his head, to the left side of his forehead. I left out the part that intell said this was a quiet run. So John gets the daylight shot out of him. So, they put the thing on the runway, chopper waited for him to take him over to the Marines and fix you up quick. They wrap a bandage around his head, back to duty. Anyway to make a long story short, John gets to the club and we’re all partying because John got shot at, which was about John’s third time. He says I want to dance with the intelligence officer. I couldn’t believe what the hell he was talking about. He did. Threw him right up against the wall and broke his arm. Which was a good idea. We all agreed on that. It was good.

RV: Did you complain about the lack of good intelligence?

CH: No, who are you going to talk to? There was nobody to talk to.

RV: I would think the intelligence officer then, on up the chain. But apparently that was not possible.

CH: Not at all. Nobody ever asked us either. So that was the way the world went. You just went on what you had. But you finally became like I said, we went to tertiary targets. When we did that we cut our hits in half. That should tell the people down in Saigon something.

RV: Did you tell that that you were doing this?

CH: Sure.

RV: And they approved?
CH: No, they said, “You’ve got to stick to what we tell you to do.” “Sure, sure
colonel we’ll do that.” Like hell (laughs). We had a winner and we were going to leave
it a go.

RV: Your tour was for one year is that correct?
CH: Yes.
RV: You went in 1965 and you left in ’66?
CH: No, no I didn’t get there till ’66.
RV: ’66-’67. Did your impression of the war change from when you first arrived
to when you left?
CH: No, was there right at the peak of what we were doing. We sprayed more in
that one-year period than they did in any other, probably combined two or three others.
We took more hits and we took more everything. But everything stayed the same for us.
It was a continued operation. Nothing changed. It didn’t seem like we were winning the
war or losing the war. It was static.
RV: So you couldn’t really gage the progress of the war?
CH: Not a bit. Never had a clue. The only impression I got was my father died
while I was over there. They brought me home on emergency leave, which was fantastic
how they did it. They had me home from like 18 hours from the time they told me in
Vietnam to get out of the cockpit. To the time I drove a rental car up to my house.
RV: Did they tell you?
CH: No, he was critical that was all. He hadn’t died yet. He didn’t die until I got
into the States but I never got home in time. That’s ok. While I was home, now I had a
reprieve. It was pretty good because I was getting pretty flaky. I’m looking at the
newspapers. Remember I’m at Da Nang and that’s one of the body places where they pile
them up and send them home. I was at Tan Son Nhut of course, another one. The other
one was Pleiku. I saw at least 125 a week going out of Da Nang. I get home and they’re
showing less than 125 for all Vietnam each week. That was a bunch of crap! I don’t;
know what the media was doing with that information, who was feeding it to them, but it
was all wet. They were all young kids, that was the bad part.
RV: You said you were getting flaky. What do you mean by that?
CH: You get combat squirrelly. You got to where your right was wrong, left,
right. Everything was screwed up. You’re just running on adrenaline. You don’t even
know what you’re doing.
RV: Was that true for the other members in your crew?
CH: Oh, sure. Two of them had a gimmick they were working on me. They’d
get themselves shot in the face. That was a big problem flying in those birds. We had
armored plate around us on our shoulder, eye and seat. But the windscreen and the
windows were all trouble. If you got hit in the windscreen you got all this glass in your
face and your face blew up like a balloon. You looked like hell and your arms.
Whatever part of you was exposed. So two guys John and Clyde got shot together. It
seemed like every other day for a while. The first time they got shot I said, “Take off
three days, get yourselves healed up. Go on up to Touc Ko [Tokyo] and drink booze at
the bar and act like a human being.” So off they went. Well, they came back it happened
again. I said, “Well do you want tachi?” “No, no, no not going up looking like this.”
Wait until we heal up and then we’ll take out three days up there.” They were funny they
were something else. The fun stopped when Clyde took a .50 through the bottom of the
airplane, up through just above his heel and went all the way up to his knee. That was as
far as it went. That wasn’t funny, that wasn’t funny at all.
RV: What happened to him?
CH: We sent him home. That was his third or fourth Purple Heart. That’s
enough. He’d had enough.
RV: Was there a number to where you would get three Purple Hearts, four Purple
Hearts and then you would go?
CH: No, there was nothing like that.
RV: Just the seriousness of the wound I guess would dictate that?
CH: Well, in our case we always had the option to send them home. Nobody
argued with us but that was enough of them. He ultimately recovered fine. He’s a city
commissioner in Ft. Worth there right now. Nice guy, nice guy.
RV: How much direct exposure did you have to Agent Orange?
CH: Well, now I’m glad you asked that. Right now I’m considered the most
highly exposed person in the world to Agent Orange. Ok?
RV: Ok.

CH: I have served on the White House committee. I have served on the VA committee. I went to Australia and testified before them to their Parliament and on and on and on. Anyway, when you’re flying the airplane, you fly with a pressurized tank. 80 PSI. A bullet hits that and it’s coming out in a cloud. If you’ve ever driven in a station wagon and had the back open, those fumes come in. It’s a physical thing. So when this tank got hit, which gets hit frequently, it sprays out and it comes right up in the cockpit and it just envelops us. We got soaked in it regularly. Next GI tells me I’m soaking him, he’s got another thought coming. Anyway we really took a licking on that. Our crew chiefs took it even worse. They were further back and right by the tank. One of them one day for example, they were flying and they lost an engine. They were so heavy they could never get out of the valley. Stepped off of the side with his M-16 and just shot holes all through the tank. That’s one way to drain it. He pulled the dump valve and nothing happened. Said ok bang, bang, bang and blew it away.

RV: So you had a lot of exposure to Agent Orange?

CH: Sure.

RV: Everyday.

CH: It showed. Everybody knew it. The medical world has acknowledged it.

RV: So what kind of side effects have you experienced from exposure?

CH: Zero.

RV: Except having your boots eaten away after three months.

CH: Yes, I had to get new boots that’s all. Now at this point in my life, I’ve lost a lung. I have diabetes, secondary diabetes; number two whatever that is. I am 72 years old. Glaucoma. But none of them are directly related to Agent Orange that I know of. Although I’ve got 100% disability I am not going to turn that down. I smoked for 47 years. So blame that on the chest and the lung problem.

RV: What about your diabetes, is there any linkage that you’re aware of?

CH: They say there is. It’s amazing so many of us do have some form of it.

Usually the older guys we have the number two, stage two.

RV: So there in some side effect then?
CH: Possibly. I don’t know I’m not going to deny it. But I’m surely not going to endorse it either. Remember we’re tested by the Air Force. Are you part of the Air Force study?

RV: Am I part of it?

CH: Yes.

RV: No, not personally.

CH: No I didn’t mean you, yourself. I meant is your information part of it?

RV: Yes, we’ve interviewed veterans who have been part of that and we’re aware of it.

CH: Yes. I just wanted to be sure you knew about it. There’s plenty of information there. My goodness gracious.

RV: Do you personally think that there's no side effect at all, just from your own experience?

CH: I’m here talking to you.

RV: What about those who do claim there is a side effect?

CH: I don’t know. I don’t want to badmouth them. They probably have a real problem. I don’t know what it is, and I don’t know if Orange even did it. Once they’re on the ground, now if they’re Army there’s a very good possibility that they were spraying it themselves all over the place. I think they said there’s 2% of the spray that we sprayed in the Air Force, Air Force sprayed that was passed off to the Army. It was pushed out in huge quantities by trucks with sprays on the back all around the camp. Jesus, of course you’re going to get a problem there. I’ll tell you that. Now, Malathion has probably got some problems too. They were using that under their cots. They’d spray inside the tents, underneath their cots.

RV: How do you think the government has treated it’s Vietnam veterans over the years?

CH: I can say I got treated all right. Everything I asked for I got. I’d love to see that double, whatever the hell it’s called, double dip thing go through if I could get both my disability pay and my retired pay. That would double my income right there.

RV: Why do you have 100% disability?
CH: Because I’ve got a lung out, and because I’ve got stage II diabetes. They’re both compensable. Remember now I smoked for 47 years.

RV: Today looking back on when you left Vietnam, how did you feel about your service there?

CH: I was proud of it. I saved all my Medals and had one great big ceremony when I got back. I had my wife there, had two generals there. I was the hero of the day. It was funny because the general came up; the first medal was in DFC, Distinguished Flying Cross. There was a big board on an easel; all these medals were on it. He went and got another one. The guy read off all the citations, what a wonderful guy I was and all that, hero of the year. He pins that one on and I whispered to him, “General, all of them are mine. Why don’t we just say thanks and goodbye?” He looked over at the other guy and said, “Is he right?” The guy said, “Yes.” “And so Colonel Hubbs, blah, blah, blah.” I saluted him and he saluted me. We called it off. 23 medals!

RV: 23 medals?

CH: That’s absurd.

RV: How much did people ask you about the war when you arrived home?

CH: Nobody asked me anything. Wait, yes they did. I’m sorry. The Navy had a program. McNamara was still playing around with the stupid goddamn wall. They had me go over to the vice president’s supporters over in the Naval observatory. Of course I was in Washington at the time. I said, “Ok.” I went over and they said, “Ok, here’s what we’re going to do.” We’re going to take Navy P2-V airplanes, which dispense buoys in the water, and we’re going to seed the whole trail. Anytime we hear footsteps we’ll bomb it. I said, “Gee that’s crazy!” They said now the reason we asked you over here is because you know the terrain. We want to know how to bring these airplanes in, up the hill. Whoa right off the bat! “You don’t do nothing up the hill!” They shoot an engine out, you won’t be able to keep going. Well, yea, yeah. I said, “How much G forces are these planes? What are they listed at?” They’re P2-Vs. They said, “Oh, 1.6, 1.80 Gs.” Good grief man, if you had 6 Gs with the goddamn [wind] gusts up there. You’ll pull the wings off.” It was ridiculous. And I guess, I don’t know if they ever went through with it or not. I’ll never know. They were honestly going to go up hill, getting ground fire. It
was stupid. Then they were going to use an airplane that couldn’t take the gusts in the
mountains. Only the Buddha [Navy] knows about that one.

RV: Was that a one-time consultation you gave them?

CH: Yes. Although I did a lot of talking to various committees I was on. The VA committee, the White House committee, all those.

RV: When were you put on those committees?

CH: ’67.

RV: Right after you came back?

CH: Yes, oh yes. That was a hot item.

RV: The Agent Orange?

CH: Yes. They brought me back. They saw the film that was six minutes on Cronkite. They saw this clip and the flying and the guns going off, bullet holes in the airplanes and the sound of the bullets hitting the airplanes. Some general said, “My God that guy.” In the mean time, John Hart, just wonderful said, “This is the most shot at and hit commander in Vietnam.” It wasn’t true because there’s dust off chopper guys that took a hell of a lot more than I did. I get these orders back to the States, right directly to systems command to take care of shot down pilots. I said, “What do you mean?” I never got shot down. I got shot up; I never got shot down. I don’t know squat about this. I don’t know anything about it. Well, you’re it. That put me in the Washington area and that was when everybody could get their hands on me, so they put me on all these committees. Blah, blah, blah. End of story for that, anyway.

RV: How much difficulty did you have or any at all transitioning back into life in the United States?

CH: Only one well two incidents. One when I hit the States, I landed in San Francisco, I got spit on.

RV: Was this at the airport?

CH: Yes.

RV: You’re in uniform?

CH: Yes. It was amazing because there was a policeman that saw it happen. He went over and he got the guy and had his arm up behind up and slung him in to the men’s room and he beats the crap out of the guy. I said, “I appreciate that.” He said, “Third
Marine Air Wing.” He said he was a returnee too. That was pretty nice. Then the other
time my wife and I were over in Stranton, Pennsylvania at her mother’s house. I was
driving and we were going down a small alley in Stranton. All of a sudden there was a
guy with a jackhammer [and he] fired it off. Fired it off, I drove under the thing. I was
driving and I went underneath the dashboard.

RV: Did you really?
CH: Oh yes, that just really got me. One other time, one other thing. In our car
back seat we had ashtrays with the lids on them. The kids seemed to just enjoy snapping
those lids. It sounded just exactly like a .30 cal going through the skin of an airplane. So
we had to stop that right away. Other than that I still jump a lot at loud noises.

RV: Do you?
CH: That’s about all I can think of. I don’t know of any other. No other
noticeable things anyways. Wife still lives with me. I guess we’re all right.

RV: How many civilians asked you about Vietnam experience when you
returned?
CH: I didn’t have that many friends that were civilians. I was a regular officer
and I hung around with officers and military. I don’t think there was any civilians at all
or anything. None of them ever asked me anything anyway.

RV: Really? Why do you think they didn’t ask? Was it such an unpopular war?
CH: I don’t know. I have no way of telling. There was so little contact. I don’t
think that would ever come up. If I had any contact with it, it was probably to do
something, get something done and that was it. There was very little sitting around and
philosophizing.

RV: When you came back did you keep up with what was happened in Vietnam,
U.S. policy for the rest of the war?
CH: Oh, yeah. I read the "who got shot down thing" regularly. My best buddy
got down. I knew we were in trouble.

RV: What did you think of the rest of the progress of the war the United States
was prosecuting there?
CH: It was deteriorating at a rapid rate. Not immediately. Then it got really bad. We should have been out of there a couple years earlier than we were. We weren’t going to win it. Not with the mindset that they had in Washington.

RV: What was that mindset?

CH: It was never bomb the dykes, which would have ended the war immediately. The dykes were the most important targets in all of North Vietnam. The other was to bomb the rail line right up to the Chinese border.

RV: So bombing the dykes, meaning flooding out Hanoi and that area.

CH: You bet you would have wiped out their food supply for years to come.

RV: Why do you think the United States did not do that?

CH: Because we’re such a loving, gentle group of people.

RV: Ok. What about not bombing the railroads?

CH: Again it was too close to China.

RV: Why do you think the United States was prosecuting the war in that fashion?

CH: I’ll never know but it was stupid. It was probably one of the worst scenarios I’ve ever seen in my life as a military person. They had so many restrictions on those poor guys up there flying fighters and bombers. I can’t believe it. It was unreal. I didn’t have that problem. I had the problem initially when we got there. We we solved it by tertiary targeting. We were able to get around it, but remember, we were a little bitty outfit and nobody would get wise to us goofing off.

RV: What did you think of the United States Vietnamization policy of turning the war back to the Vietnamese to let them fight their own war?

CH: I think we should have done that about 1966 (laughs).

RV: Really?

CH: Well in hindsight yes. I don’t know. Probably a good idea. No sense in killing anymore Americans. We were wasting lives over there. They were all kids. Everybody that killed over there was a kid.

RV: Do you think the Vietnamese were capable of fighting their own war against the North?

CH: No, no, hell no.

RV: Why not?
CH: The ones up North are militarized and they're regimented. That’s the way they lived. The ones down South are sloth. Stumbling on their own way.

RV: Have you though t about going back to Vietnam?

CH: I wouldn’t go back on a bet. I never left anything there. I don’t want to go back. You mean to visit like John McCain?

RV: Sure.

CH: You know I know John. John’s a good guy. John and I were at Bud Day’s Medal of Honor ceremony. John of course was Bud’s cellmate. Bud and I have been together for 40 something years. I couldn’t believe John went back, and he’s pacifying those bastards. I can’t believe that! Bud’s not very happy about that.

RV: Really?

CH: They were cellmates for many years.

RV: What do you think about Vietnam today?

CH: Today?

RV: Yes and about American policy toward Vietnam today.

CH: Christ, we’re giving them the goddamn keys to the kingdom I think. If I read it right in the papers, we’re doing al kinds of things to help them. Now if we get their oil, maybe that’d be worth it. We’ll have to see. It’s a little bit above my pay grade.

RV: Have you talk to Senator McCain about it?

CH: No, not about his trips.

RV: No, just about American policy.

CH: No, Bud does all the time, but I don’t.

RV: What do you think of the media coverage of the war?

CH: Terrible. Those lying bastards. They were terrible. Goddamn left-wing sorry bastards. I hope you’re not. If you are I don’t care. I mean that.

RV: I know that. Explain what you mean by that.

CH: They’re still a left-wing bunch of bastards. They are so bad. It’s so obvious, yet nobody can figure them out.

RV: What was done inaccurately about the Vietnam War?
CH: Body count for openers. I know they had access to better than that. In fact,
they were anti-war to begin with and they stayed anti-war. It wasn’t anything to buy a
newspaper during the Vietnam War; they should have outlined it in black.
RV: I’m sorry, what?
CH: Outlined the paper in black, the front page, like an obituary. You know.
Nevermind.
RV: No, I want to know what you think. Tell me about today’s media coverage,
looking at American military policy. For example the media coverage of the Persian
Gulf War.
CH: The fact they’re prosecuting two pilots for dropping a bomb. There were so
much friendly fire deaths in the last bunch of years; you can’t believe it. Why are you
prosecuting these two guys?
RV: The press is getting these two guys you think?
CH: Yes, but they’re following it like it was a done deal. I don’t know. I’m say,
yes, that’s right it is the government that’s doing that. That bugs me too. I know what
friendly fire is. I’ve probably killed a zillion civilians over there. I sleep well at night. I
don’t have any problem with it. They shouldn’t be after those two pilots. They aren’t the
government. That’s my grump on that.
RV: What do you think about the United States government prosecution of the
war, just looking back at it?
CH: Which one, the war coming up?
RV: The Vietnam War.
CH: Oh, Vietnam. I think they started out with good intentions. We let the thing
get away from us and we let the White House start dictating how to fight a war. That’s
why we’ve got generals. It just got kind of messed up. I think they started out right. I
was all for it. I couldn’t wait to get there. In hindsight, terrible, terrible.
RV: Have you read books about the Vietnam War?
CH: Yes, I read all about 105 guy that got court marshaled for blowing up a
freighter that was shooting at him in the harbor. I couldn’t believe that. Yes, I’ve read
just about every book I can find on it.
RV: What do you think about them?
CH: Book writers are pretty honest. I haven’t read any left-wing book writers.

Most guys are just like me, telling it like it was. You’ve got to quit calling me sir. You see in 1976, I quit being sir or colonel or mister even. I became Charlie.

RV: Became Charlie.

CH: I became Charlie. It’s real easy. I answer to it a lot better.

RV: Ok, Charlie.

CH: That’s it.

RV: Looking back at your service, is there anything that you would change about your experience there in Vietnam?

CH: Yes, I’d like to have been a thud pilot [105]. I probably would have been shot down on my first mission too. I wanted to shoot at them. You know Richard it’s really funny. Fighter pilots are strange people.

RV: How’s that?

CH: They’re macho. If there’s a job to be done. They go out and do it. Shooting guns at bad guys is the answer in war. To go out there and let them shoot at you and not shoot back, frustrating!

RV: Sounds like you fit the criteria of being macho and confident. You wanted to get in the fight and you were in the fight.

CH: Just wasn’t in the piece of machinery I wanted to be in.

RV: Right. That’s something you would want to redo if you could?

CH: Yes, I’d go back in the blink of an eye as a thud pilot, which is the 105. I’m using jargon here and I should clarify. If I ever use a word that you don’t understand just ask me. I’m sorry.

RV: I’ve heard most of them. It’s good for you to use that jargon, because that’s your recollection. That’s how you talked, that’s your experience. That’s fine. For folk who listen to this interview in the future, they’ll be able to look that stuff up.

CH: Well, do a little editing though (laughs). Cut out some of my cussing there.

RV: No, no, no. That’s not necessary sir. This is who you are.

CH: Charlie.
RV: Excuse me, Charlie. That’s right. This is your experience. That’s what’s important here. Do you think the United States learned any lessons from the Vietnam War?

CH: Yes, they learned that the next time they go to war, like the Desert Storm, be ready have everything in place and go. Then they quit before they won the war. Now, they didn’t learn anything did they? They learned how to prepare for a war, but they didn’t learn how to win the war. That’s the thing that make me unhappy.

RV: What did you learn in Vietnam, yourself that one year?

CH: I learned a lot about myself.

RV: Such as?

CH: I found out that I could drink an awful lot. I’m serious. I could drink an awful lot and get up ad fly without any problems. That’s not a good idea. It just shows I must have had a pretty strong constitution. I also found that I was relatively fearless in combat. Which you never know until you go do it. I know that sounds macho, but I enjoyed flying in combat and getting shot at.

RV: Did that surprise you?

CH: I had no idea. I didn’t know how it was going to go. I had never really been frightened of anything in my life. I was the captain of the football team. I don’t know. I had good training. I only applied my training to what I knew. Then when it came time to get shot at, I walked right into it. It just seemed relatively ok to me.

RV: Did that surprise you about yourself?

CH: I don’t know. To be honest with you, not knowing what was going to happen and it went right is good. If it had gone bad I probably would know a lot about it.

RV: What else have you learned or did you learn?

CH: I learned how to be a commander in the sense of, boy you just look the other way for a lot of things. You accept a lot of things in other people. You respect a lot of things in other people. I had an excellent relationship with my flyers. Another excellent relationship with my enlisted men. In fact, we still meet every year. I guess that’s about it. I learned I could stay away from home for a year, I wasn’t too happy about that.

RV: How did your wife do during the war?
CH: Her mother died while I was over there. That was kind of a tough break for her. My dad died while I was over there. She was a nurse. She was surrounded by two kids, about 11 months apart. They were almost like twins. They were in there like 6 or 7 years old at the time. She had her hands full. Never griped, she never griped. I never heard a bad word, and I never heard a bad word when I got home. Very fortunate there.

RV: What other lessons do you think the United States did or did not learn. You mentioned about the body count, but you didn’t expand on that.

CH: That was terrible. Somebody was lying through their teeth. There’s no sense in doing that. First of all the media has to be in cahoots with them. Secondly the government is lying to the public. Now over in Afghanistan or wherever, we lose one or two, they tell about it. When you’re talking 125 or more every week they’re going to start running to hide. They’re scattered all over the country, nobody will ever know and they don’t count. I almost wrote a letter to the editor of the *Newark Star Ledger* about that. I thought if I do that, I’m just going to stir up a pot that I can’t cover up. I won’t be able to stay her to fight it, so go back to the country and that’ll be it. But I didn’t do anything about it.

RV: Do you distrust the government?

CH: As far as lying to the public, sure. Why not?

RV: I’m interested because you’re talking about the fact that you feel like there’s really been no side effects too much from the Agent Orange exposure and the government told you that it was safe for you to be around and spray and use and you served on these committees.

CH: Then they did.

RV: What do you think now? Do you think the government was maybe not telling you the whole truth?

CH: I was 27. When did we start ’80? 22 years of Air Force steady physicals. We’ve been going to California to Scripts-Howard [in La Jolla] and getting these completely honest physicals. The best we could come up with and them too, and they have no reason to lie that I know of.

RV: This is the Air Force, the government?
CH: No this is Scripts-Howard. That’s a civilian organization. They do the
physicals. The Air Force releases the data. While we’re there we’re talking to them all
the time. We know what’s going on and they know what’s going on. They have
suspected diabetes, nothing else. Of course it’s something or other, none of us seem to
have. Carcogenics, I don’t know. Funny word or something.

RV: Carcinogen?

CH: Yes.

RV: Carcinogen exposure?

CH: Yes, I hear that a lot. I even donated and a lot of us did, fat samples to see if
our dioxin levels were high. Some of our enlisted guys were. Remember that they were
in the back of the airplane. They took the brunt of the spraying tank, they tank that would
spray out when shot open. We’re all still floating around. Not too many of us have died.
As a matter of fact, the results at one point, we’re matched against a control. Or we’re the
control. Anyway, we’re matched against another person, similar in as many ways as
possible to ourselves. Air Force pilot, flew the same kind of airplanes, but never was
exposure to Agent Orange. We have turned out to be slightly healthier than they are.
They follow them exactly as they do us. They intermingle us when we’re out there going
through the thing. Expect when we go out as C flight there ain’t no question about who
we were. We’re wearing our hats, we’re not supposed to tell the doctors that are seeing
us if we were Ranch Hands or non-Ranch Hands. Here comes C-flight, you know
wearing t-shirts and hats and all that crap. Purple scarves. We don’t skew the results I’m
sure.

RV: You mentioned we talked about the media coverage of the war and how you
thought that was pretty poor.

CH: Poor is right.

RV: What about the way that Hollywood has portrayed the Vietnam War in
movies?

CH: What a heroic bunch of mothers? I never was a grunt. Although I went
through jump school and I have 107 jumps. I’ve jumped with the seal teams and all the
rest of them. I’ve never been out and rummaged around in the Ranger camp or the seal
business, so I can’t honestly say. Maybe these guys did live like that, I don’t know.
When they get to the Air Force part of it, bull. Have you noticed not too many things on the Air Force happened before. They have no way of putting it out. The other thing is I don’t think much of it happened there.

RV: Do you think the public is misinformed about the Vietnam War?
CH: I think they were when it was going on. I don’t think the public cares much one way or the other about it right now. I think they’re more concerned about Iraq.

RV: If you were to address a group of young people today bout the Vietnam War what would you tell them?
CH: About everything I told you. We killed 58,000 youngsters unnecessarily. That’s it. I just don’t feel like we ever. We did not follow our own intentions. In fact we gave up. We literally lost the war. That’s all I can say I guess. How else to say it?

RV: So you do feel like we lost that war?
CH: Well, obviously. We made the North Vietnamese the fifth largest Air Force in the World from all the choppers and fighters and everything else they took over. Tanks, my gosh. They became the fifth biggest armed nation in the world.

RV: Looking back what do you think the United States was trying to accomplish there in Vietnam?
CH: Probably, again it’s above my pay scale. I would say they probably thought the Domino theory was valid and that if they didn’t stop communism there it would continue to infect the rest of Southeast Asia. I think they really had a valid outlook on it and thought process. They just didn’t prosecute it, that’s all. There’s a good word. I like that. I’m going to use that. I think they prosecuted the war poorly. How’s that?

RV: Ok. Did you at the time believe in the Domino Theory?
CH: I don’t know. I just wanted to go fight a war. I know that sounds kind of naive. If they say there’s Domino Theory. Ok, go ahead whatever it is. Start the war and let me get into it. I wasn’t big on that stuff in those days.

RV: Charlie, have you visited the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C.?
CH: One time and it broke my heart. I would never go again.

RV: Why is that?
CH: First of all I think the monument itself; the Wall is a disgrace. It’s black, it’s in a hole. It should be in white and it should be up above the ground. Then nextly all the
folk of the 28th that I lost over there are on that Wall. I dislike the Wall obviously as an edifice or monument or something. Bummer.

RV: Was it an emotional experience for you?

CH: Oh God, yes. It really ripped me up. I just wheeled about and headed right out. Remember I was right there in Washington I could go to it in five minutes anytime for the three years I was working there.

RV: Why just one time?

CH: I don’t know somehow or another I knew it was going to hurt me, and I knew I wasn’t going to like it. I gritted my teeth and tried it. Everything I thought was right there. I really am disappointed with the Wall itself. That thing is like a tomb. That’s exactly what it makes it look like anyway.

RV: How do you think the Vietnam War has most affected your life?

CH: It got me promoted and I got a lot of medals that looked good on my uniform. Other than that, like any other guy that’s been in combat I can hold my own. Chat and talking. It’s a good feeling in that sense to know you’ve been to war and you’re back home. When you get a bunch of others that have been there and done that, you can mix right in with them. I don’t think it changed me much. It didn’t change me family wise. It didn’t change me political affiliation wise. It certainly didn’t endear me to the media. Didn’t endear me to my own government as far as that goes forward. Those folks are all gone. They’re not there anymore. McNamara, foolish man, as we called him. Sorry, sorry, sorry Secretary of State.

RV: What did you think when he went back to Hanoi in 1995 and tried to kind of reconcile his role in the war?

CH: Political B.S. No interest in it what so ever.

RV: So when you came back, you were in Washington you said for three years, is that correct?

CH: Yes.

RV: From Washington, what was your duty in Washington?

CH: I was in charge of life support. Chief of life support for all the stuff that we build up and do up for Air Force. Ejection seats and rafts and helmets. Thousands of pieces of equipment. It was a good job. I enjoyed it.
RV: Did you make lieutenant colonel in Washington?

CH: Yes. There was a brigadier general who came in from Tac Li, a thud wing. Willy Chairsey, what a nice man. He came to his first briefing. Remember now I was in the systems command, in systems command headquarters; quite a few generals in that building. Here comes one-star, new Willy Chairsey. He had a meeting and I have to go for command performance. I’m, standing in the back of the room and Willy’s up there. He’s briefed on minutemen missiles and all the things that are going on, wonderful things. I see him look over at me a couple of times, and he kind of winding down. He said, “Come over here when you got a chance” type of thing. So when it was over and I said, “Hi.” He said, “You’ve been to Vietnam boy.” He said, “You’ve sure got a chest full of medal.” I said, “So do you sir.” He said, “What do you think of that briefing they just gave me?” I never batted an eye and said, “They’re full of shit.” I said they blew it right in your ear. He said, “Well, by god, I liked the way you talk.” I mean at the time now I was a brand new major or something. I don’t know if I was that. I might have still been a captain. No, I was a major by Vietnam. The next day I went to work I had a yellow telephone on my desk. My boss didn’t have a yellow telephone, his boss didn’t have a yellow phone, but I had a yellow phone. Every time Willy would have something come up, we’d have a staff meeting he’d call me up later and say, “What do you think?” I would say, “This guy was pretty straight. This guy was a pain, he just lied to you.” He said, “Thanks. You’ve got the same thoughts I have.” Two years later I was a lieutenant colonel, regular officer and a pick of my assignment anywhere.

RV: Where did you go?

CH: Eglin, where he went. But he retired. I would have made bird colonel if he’d have stayed in service. He was a good man.

RV: How long were you at Eglin?

CH: Just two years then we got a unit moved to Albuquerque. Then I spent that next couple years out there waiting to retire. I retired with 26. Came right back to the East coast, right back to Washington. Went to work for the NTSB, National Transportation Safety Board. I was the dean of the accident investigation school for one year. Went over to the “Go Team” and spent the rest of my four or five years or six whatever it was as a ops group chairman [On The] Go Team. Which was a good job.
Then I wanted to fly some more. I quit them and didn’t take retirement, just took the money. Went to the U.S. Department of Agriculture as chief of international air operations. That meant I had to go to Mexico and work down there for about three years. But it was fly down Monday, fly home Friday. I had some thing like 800,000 frequent flyer miles by the time I quit that job. I quit it too because I couldn’t stand the bribery that was going on in that operation. State Departments are bummers. They are really bad.

RV: Why do you say that?

CH: Bribing. Bribe, bribe, bribe. I wouldn’t bribe so they sent a guy down with a black bag so he walked around behind me and did all the bribing. That really turned me off.

RV: What were they bribing for?

CH: Everything you do in Mexico, you’ve go to bribe. You’ve go to bribe.

RV: Why did you decide to get out after 26 years?

CH: Looking back I wish I’d have gotten out at 20. Only because if I could have gone right to the NTSB. Boy I liked that job. I know it sounds bad. But I was doing accident investigation in the Air Force. So it was no change for me. Hell of a big pay raise. 26 was the year to get out. There was a whole bunch of things that came together right then and there. First of all they bumped up all the retirement end of the year, cost of living things. It went up to 9% in the Carter years. I got out my retirement pay when I got out almost doubled in the next couple of years. It was really amazing because of the colas that were coming out. In the meantime, another guy sat down there with his calculator and figured it all out, and said “26 is the time to get out.” A whole bunch of us got out at the same time (laughs). Those were the guys that pushed the figures around. Wasn’t through any great thing. I guess there is one thing. I was flying. I was attached to the test pilot school at Edward’s Air Force Base as an instructor pilot to get my flying time. When the F-15, the F-16 came out they would allow me to chase them. Photo me and let them show pictures of me. They wouldn’t let me fly on it. I said, “Why not?” They said because “You’re not going to be flying after you turn 45.” I said, “You’ve got to be kidding. I’m just getting the hang of it.” They said, “No.” At age 45 they shut me off, within a month I was out of the service.
RV: Was that a standard age limit?
CH: I don’t know. I know that was for me. That’s the only thing I know. I know a lot of guys have flown later than that. They probably were wing commanders or something.

RV: Could you comment on the role of the Air Force in the military today?
CH: I like the airplanes they’re flying, the 15 and 16. The A-10 for the job it’s got to do is a good airplane. This F-22 just looks like it’s going to be a better replacement than the one it’s replacing. What am I trying to say? It’s going to be a good airplane. That’s encouraging. I know that the chiefs and the super chiefs are having a hell of time with their enlisted guy.

RV: What do you mean?
CH: Those guys can tell them to go kiss their butt to day and nothing happens. They don’t have any power. Used to be a sergeant in the Air Force, any service was God to the younger troops. Today, he has become very, very there’s word there.

RV: The discipline has changed?
CH: Yes, has it ever?

RV: What about the role of the Air Force and air power in warfare, has that changed a lot since the Vietnam War in your opinion?
CH: I think now we’re the primary doer. You’ve still go tot have somebody walking us down. I’ll never take that away from the military, the Army. The Air Force is the way to go right now. Go in the dark at night, nobody sees you. Blow up whatever you want. Stand off shore in the Navy can drop harpoons or tomahawks or whatever they’re throwing. That’s great. What else? We’re got Marines. Marines can go anywhere and they do anything. And they are something else too. I think we’re in good shape. I like it.

RV: How different is it in your opinion?
CH: We were pretty diversified before, but we seemed to be working together a lot better now. Am I saying that right?

RV: Yes, there’s better cooperation between the branches.
CH: Cooperation. Yes.
RV: So there was less cooperation between the branches in Vietnam in that era versus today?

CH: That’s the only thing I ever dealt with was the Air Force. Though I did get top cover from the Navy. Usually we couldn’t talk to them, different channels. You know how that works.

RV: Charlie is there anything else you want to add to our conversation today?

CH: Nope, nothing. I’m happy.

RV: Very good.

CH: Sorry I beat your ear so much.

RV: No, no. I appreciate your time very much. We’ll stop the interview now.

CH: Ok.

RV: Thank you sir.