Richard Verrone: This is Dr. Richard Verrone. I’m conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Kenneth Craig. Today is July 12, 2004 and it’s approximately 8:32 a.m. Central Standard Time. I’m in Lubbock, TX at the Vietnam Archive in the interview room on the campus of Texas Tech University. And Ken, you’re in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Why don’t we start with some biographical information and tell me when you were born, where you were born, and a little bit about your childhood?

Kenneth Craig: Okay, I was born in Seattle, Washington on July 7, 1938. My father was in the Navy, my mother was at that time living with her parents while dad was at sea or in a different duty station, I think in Norfolk while she had the baby. And after I was old enough to travel, mother brought me to see my dad for the first time across country on a train. And we were in Norfolk for a while and then I believe we moved from there to…let’s see, to Hawaii.

RV: Okay.

KC: And then various other places I guess.

RV: So your father was in the Navy?

KC: Yes.

RV: Okay.

KC: He was a Navy pilot.
RV:  Okay.
KC:  And he was on duty with a squadron out in Hawaiian area, as I understand it.
RV:  Can you tell me a little bit about his career? What was he like?
KC:  He was a very successful Naval Officer who retired as a Rear Admiral after thirty-five years of service. He was a decorated hero in my book, much more so than I. He had been of course…we had been stationed at Pearl Harbor when the Japs attacked, so my parents were living at Ford Island, right on the other side of Battleship Row.
RV:  Wow.
KC:  And when the explosions from the ships rocked [the house]…of course, we were right next door so to speak and Dad before that was a test pilot on one of the…he took the experimental airplane Sikorski four engine fleet plane, which they made…my research says they only made two of them. They were sort of like big huge [air] battle cruisers at the time and there was going to be one on each fleet. Well, he flew the first one, took it through its test program and then flew it out to Hawaii. So, he was the first to make a nonstop flight from CONUS, the Continental United States to Hawaii and that was in the ‘30s, ‘40s. He was, like I said, at Pearl Harbor and then he was on a patrol wing staff at the time of the attack at Pearl Harbor and he spent some time with Admiral Nimitz on his staff at Pearl Harbor and then later was given a command of an aircraft carrier on the Great Lakes called the [USS] Sable. It was one of the converted ore carrying, paddle wheelers.
RV:  Okay.
KC:  It’s kind of a unique part of Naval aviation where they trained these pilots on the Great Lakes on these port converted ore carriers. And then he had a command of a training base in Deland, Florida where they were training pilots. And then after that, he got a command of another aircraft carrier, The [USS] Croatian, which was the ship that had the second highest kill ratio of German submarines doing ASW patrols in the North Atlantic. And after the war, he had various jobs, at Quonset Point; he was the Chief of Staff at Quonset Point, Rhode Island. Then he was at the Naval Academy as Head of Naval Aviation Department. He had various administrative functions in Washington. He was aide to the Secretary of Defense Johnston and Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel. And then went…and so I spent some years in the Arlington Area and then Annapolis of
course. [He was given command of USS Midway, home ported in Norfolk.] And then he was assigned as the head of the [Naval] aviation section at the Air War University of Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, Alabama. Then he made Admiral at that point and his first assignment was [Commander], Alaskan Sea Frontier at 17th Naval District Headquarters, which was in Kodiak, Alaska.

RV: Wow.

KC: And that’s where I spent two years…probably the two best years of my life in high school up there.

RV: Okay.

KC: And then he later commanded a…he went back to D.C. for jobs at the…I believe it was in the…again, in [Chief of Naval] Personnel. He then had a Carrier Division Command and his last duty was Commander Fleet Air Jacksonville, which was commander of all the fleet activities in the Southeast United States, air activities in the Southeast United States.

RV: Wow.

KC: So, very good career. He was a highly decorated person and well thought of. Very competitive individual, a sole of tact, an absolute gentleman. Never knew him to lose his temper. He could get angry, but he never displayed it often in outbursts, he would just get firm lipped and constrained when he was angry. But he was a marvelous teacher, wonderful father. And he met my mother when he made a cruise to Seattle, Washington on a blind date I guess it was and they fell in love and got married and she was hardworking, faithful, beautiful, talented woman. She was a music major; she played the piano fantastically from the University of Washington graduate. She was very devoted to my father and raised the kids without complaint and moved from place to place without ever seemingly to begrudge in anything. It was a beautiful relationship and I’m blessed to have such wonderful parents.

RV: Are they still alive, Ken?

KC: No, both of them are deceased.

RV: Okay. He must’ve been just a tremendous…or it sounds like both of them were a tremendous influence on you in different ways.
KC: Well definitely were. My mother of course was a great influence on me because I was with her for much of the time when he was either at jobs or at sea.

RV: Yes.

KC: But he took his time to you know, to try to teach you things and we always…both of my parents made sure that we had dinner, the family had dinner together. Nothing would interrupt a dinner and it was a time where…they never used it as an occasion to harangue or to harass the children, it was if you’d done something during the day, that was never discussed. It was always discussed afterwards or before or something. But the dinnertime was a time of essentially learning. We talked about every kind of possible subject and got a worldview from my parents of politics, religion, history, art, you name it. It was all discussed around the table and I really enjoyed that part of it.

RV: Okay.

KC: My life, plus my mother was a fantastic cook.

RV: (Laughter) What do you remember about Pearl Harbor?

KC: I was pretty young.

RV: You were probably two and a half years old.

KC: Yeah, I was three years old at the time and basically my younger sister had just been born, so my mother had an infant child and I had an older sister. She was three years older than I was. So, my mother had quite a load because Dad, of course, had to assume the duty and there was a lot of concern at that time. I don’t remember anything per se. Everything I remember was hearsay that I’ve heard, the tales told again, once again about the time. But basically it was a very frightful time. Our home was taken over by the sailors and Marines who were blown off the ships into the oiled covered waters of Pearl Harbor Bay – not bay but Harbor itself. And they swam ashore and our quarters were right next door and so of course, they came in, they were covered with oil and they were cold and they were in shock and many of them were injured and everything else. And so they used all the bed linens and everything else that we had and the towels and everything to clean themselves, which is certainly not begrudged on. We were taken to an air raid shelter, which is at the base, it was a basement of the admiral’s quarters, which was a couple of doors down from our house as I understand it and stayed
there until the aftershock was over. And my dad would relate stories about his friends
and his classmates. One was a Marine who became a very legendary Marine who’d
blown off one of the ships and his lungs full of oil and everything else, but he wanted to
ensure that my mother was all right. He was a good friend of the family and he was more
concerned with her than with his own thing [injuries]. His name was Allen Shapley. He
was a very highly decorated Marine officer in World War II, a fine person. Anyhow, my
dad, the tales were that everybody was trigger-happy and they really thought there was
going to be a Japanese invasion. So, of course, anybody who looked oriental or anything
was automatically suspected and, of course, in those days, they had lots of labors and
housemaids, which were of Chinese or Japanese descent. And he said that every time he
had a duty off the base, he would stop his car about thirty yards from the sentries and he
wore his white uniform and he would get out of his car and about thirty yards away
because he was afraid that there was so many people who were trigger happy that he was
afraid that they would shoot. So he made sure he identified himself early and got back in
the car and then would proceed.

RV: Right.

KC: But he said that everybody was just terrified that they were going to invade.

RV: What was it like for you, Ken moving around so much? How did that affect
you as a person?

KC: Well, I liked it. I guess because I never had any other life as a young man or
a young person, you know, you just go where your parents say.

RV: Right.

KC: But in retrospect, getting to meet all kinds of various different people from
all over the country and seeing all different parts of the country and the cultural aspects of
the different life and various parts of our country was to me wonderful, I loved it. And I
just made new friends and went on with the…and the next place, as if nothing had
happened. I didn’t resent at all the traveling; I loved it.

RV: You were able to make friends pretty easily?

KC: I felt I had.

RV: Okay, okay. Tell me about growing up as a young boy. What do you
remember as far as your hobbies and things you liked to do before high school?
KC: Okay, before high school, I would say that one of the things I did was I got interested in coin collecting; I did a lot of that. I wasn’t a great athlete before…and I’m still not a great athlete, but I certainly…I was small for my age. It’s kind of strange when a male six feet tall, but I didn’t grow until I was late in high school and I was really a pipsqueak and I thought I was going to remain a pipsqueak all my life. I got that growth period and I grew almost a foot in literally a year.

RV: Wow.

KC: So I wasn’t really a great athlete and I did like to swim and dad would take me to the…take the family to the swimming pool a lot. He liked to play golf and he also taught me to play golf when I was young. He got me some good instruction from some of the pros. He was a very good golfer himself, but he felt that if…as smart as he was, realized that the best place would be have somebody else teach the son rather than he try to do it. So I got a very good fundamental swing from my teachers at an early age, which has really helped me. Let’s see, what else; I liked outdoor activities, I like camping and didn’t do a lot of it, but when I got to do it, I just really loved it, I thought it was neat. I liked to read. I took piano lessons and I wasn’t very successful in those mainly because baseball called at that age and I engaged in playing baseball and didn’t spend enough time on the piano for my teacher and it was my fault, but that’s the way it was.

(Laughter)

RV: What about sports, what were your favorite sports?

KC: I would say in those days baseball was. And then later on it was basketball in high school. But golf and swimming are the ones that I like now, I still do those.

RV: Okay. You went to high school, if I heard you right, in two different places.

KC: Yes, I went to high school in Montgomery, Alabama and Kodiak, Alaska.

RV: Okay, what years were you there in Montgomery?

KC: Let’s see, ’52 to ’54.

RV: Okay, and what do you remember about Alabama in the 1950s?

KC: Well, it was a very interesting time. We were there during the nascent period of the Civil Rights Movement. Martin Luther King was pastor in Montgomery part of the time and they had the bus boycott. Rosa Parks, I believe that was her name, was the one lady that decided she was not going to go to the back of the bus as you may
recall. And so, of course, the typical sentimentality of the southern whites at that time was, ‘No, no you don’t.’ And of course, there was a big hoopla over it and so the blacks who were the main riders of the bus system boycotted.

RV: Right.

KC: When they wouldn’t let them sit wherever they wanted to and Martin Luther King was in town at the time was I believe a minister at the Baptist church there. And so we were there for the Rosa Parks rebellion. We were there for the march to Selma; the great march there. And during the bus boycott, my mother and some others who were very concerned about the civil rights of these people would form ‘taxi patrols’ if you will and help these people get to work. And of course, that was not looked on very nicely by the other whites.

RV: Sure, that’s going against the grain.

KC: Yeah, you know, it’s sort of like against their social conventions and my mother didn’t care because mother was a very staunch one that who believed in rights, the people’s rights.

RV: What did your father think, Ken? Was he telling her…?

KC: Well, he was kind of a moderate person in he understood the implications of these kind of things and he really didn’t want to attract a lot of attention to himself on these things and would sort of say, ‘Mom, now let’s…’, to my mom, he’d say, ‘Now let’s be careful.’ He never dissuaded her outright, but he was very concerned that she would catch the backlash of somebody who were white and would be harmed. But as it turned out, nothing ever bad happened and mother felt that she was doing the right thing, so she did it.

RV: Okay.

KC: And dad was a great believer in civil rights as well. He, in 1943, I believe it was, he had a station as 1st Command of Naval Training Stations [Commanding Officer of NAS] in Deland, Florida, he was noticing that when he went to a Navy exchange cafeteria type of thing, it was all Quonset huts or some call them small buildings in those days, but he noticed all the blacks were lined up outside, black sailors, and all the whites would go inside and get their ice cream or confection inside and he asked the supply officer, he said, ‘What’s going on, they’re all sailors, they’re all in uniform, why are
some of them outside and some of them inside?’ He knew why, but he wanted to hear it
from the Supply Officer and this one supply corps officer said, ‘Well, this is the way we
do it in the South.’ And my father said, ‘Well tomorrow, you are not going to be doing it
anymore like that, everybody who’s wearing a uniform will be allowed inside the
building and they will all be served by the same people. In the Navy, we’re not
discriminating. So, a few days later, the Supply Corps Officer came tearfully into my
father’s office and said, ‘The Ku Klux Klan burned some crosses in my yard last night
demanding that we stop integrating the services at the exchange.’ And my father said,
‘Well, that’s too bad. If they come back, you tell them to come and see me.’ And of
course, they never did.

RV: Right.

KC: Because they were cowards.

RV: Did your parents pass that onto you Ken?

KC: I’m a great believer in non-discrimination and everybody has a right.

Mother probably came from more of a Democratic liberal side of the spectrum, my father
was probably conservative Republican side from his upbringing and it was a good mix
because I got to see, you know, I got to hear views of both sides and mother was very
outspoken in any kind of discussion. So, you always got her side, too.

RV: Right. What were your two years of high school like in Montgomery?

KC: Very interesting. Of course, the last was 9th grade I guess and that’s in
junior high school, and then first year of high school was 10th grade and one was in kind
of a blue collar area in Montgomery, Alabama, which is downtown because they bussed
us from the base because of the school. And very interesting because I had teachers, I’ll
never forget them. There were two old May teachers, Ida May was one of them and I
can’t remember what the other one was, but there were two and their parents or their
grandparents had been harmed, I guess you would say, by the group that Sherman went
through or the Yankees went through and terrorized all these landowners and everything
else and they were, you know, they were still preaching the good gospel of the South at
that time, they just hated the Yankees and of course, I was a Yankee and they didn’t take
anything out on me personally, but I sure heard about how bad my ancestors were to
theirs; although, mine weren’t even in the country at that time. But it was really funny.
And it was very….I caddied, I caddied for my dad a lot at Montgomery and all the other
caddies of course were black, so I got to know some of the blacks and they were mostly
poor ignorant blacks, but they were eking out in the existence carrying home the money
to the family or spending it on their own, but basically…so I got to meet a wholly new
group of people that I would’ve never had probably any contact with had it not been for
my caddying. So, it was interesting. I saw some of the most nasty fights I ever saw
between what I call the blue collar workers’ sons who were in my 9th grade class there
right on the schoolyard. They would go to battle and they would really fight one another
tooth and nail and not one of them would ever issue a tear. I mean, it was just a really
knockdown drag out battle, but they survived it somehow, nobody was hurt seriously.
But boy, it was bruises.

RV: Were you a fighter?
KC: No.
RV: Okay.
KC: I was the kind of person who liked to see everything, but I didn’t participate
in those kind of things.
RV: Okay, okay. So you moved in ’54 up to Kodiak, Alaska.
KC: Right.
RV: What was that like? That’s a huge change.
KC: Yeah, it was a huge change, but like I say, it was probably the two best years
of my life. I went to a very small on-base school called the Kodiak On-Base High School
and we had one competitor in town, which was a much larger school, Kodiak High
School, which served the town. But we integrated…we only had one sport in our high
school and that was basketball because we couldn’t field a football team and there was no
place to practice football because there’s virtually no ground that was level and flat
without being totally full of rocks. There’s just no grass up there. And so we played
basketball and we were integrated into the Navy teams. They had a regular intramural
sports program going on of basketball during the winter, various all age departments
would field its own team and we were just another team, so we played with all the
enlisted guys for the various teams. And that was really great because we didn’t beat
them often, but we learned a lot from them and we were able to better perfect our skills by actively playing with people who knew more about it than we did.

RV: Were you a pretty good athlete?

KC: No, I wouldn’t say that I was. I would say I was just a very average athlete. I always enjoyed it though. I liked the idea of competition, but I didn’t feel I was all that well coordinated. Like I said, I had just grown about a foot and I was still trying to get into my body, so I was pretty uncoordinated and not what you call a great athlete at all. I admired those kids who were and I tried to work on my development to get more coordinated, but at that point, I was not really not what you call a good athlete.

RV: Right. Tell me about you as a student. What were your favorite subjects and how were you academically?

KC: Well, academically, I was probably middle of the road or up there. I happened to be salutatorian only because we had ten kids in our graduating class and I happened to be number two on the ranking.

RV: (Laughing)

KC: But it was not because…if I’d been back in a regular high school, I’d been probably right in the middle at some point because I didn’t feel that was necessarily…I knew I wasn’t the brain that a lot of people were. Certainly wasn’t the brain that my older sister was, who was already in college at that time.

RV: What were your favorite subjects?

KC: My favorite subjects were probably history, literature, basically liberal arts. I was not much for mathematics and those other things. I knew they were important and I had to take them, but I didn’t necessarily like them. And we didn’t have any Spanish or foreign language, so my mother, we arranged…they had…the University of Nebraska had a correspondence course that they had for high school and so I did my language with my mother’s help through the University of Nebraska.

RV: Okay, okay. Well Ken, tell me about your interest in flying because we’re getting ready to embark upon your Naval career. How did that develop?

KC: Well, I really believe that it developed probably when we were in Deland, Florida. I used to love to watch the little yellow airplanes, the Navy training airplanes at that time fly around. They flew very close to our house. In fact, I think they taxied right
by our house in that time. And the smell of that aviation gasoline, that high-octane
gasoline to me is just like a drug. I just love it; I just associated that smell with aviation
and the adventure of getting out of this world and up in the sky. Just it was very romantic
and I just thought it was really neat. The other thing that spurred me on was after the
war, my dad and his buddies would get together and talk about their wartime experiences
and a lot of them were younger than he and while he was the commanding officer, they
were out actually flying the airplanes and I can remember many, many discussed times
where I would get to listen in on these young guys would come back and tell us about
how fighting, what they did, fighting the Japanese and they were real my heroes and I
really wanted to grow up to be of course an air pilot or F6F pilot or something like that. I
really was interested in doing something like that. And of course, my dad was a pilot, but
at that time, he was pretty senior, so he didn’t do much active flying.

RV: Right.

KC: So I really didn’t get to see him as an active pilot, I saw him more as an
administrator or commanding officer type. He was running things rather than actually
doing the flying.

RV: Right.

KC: But up in Kodiak, Alaska, I got to fly in some of the Navy airplanes because
I was a member of Kodiak Conservation Club. They had a small fish hatchery that was
run by the…in those days, the fish and wildlife service because Alaska wasn’t a state yet.
And the Conservation Club would stock all the streams and ponds and everything up in
Kodiak with rainbow trout, which we get from the steelhead runs. A steelhead is a kind
of seagoing trout. It’s a rainbow trout that goes to sea and he gets very, very large, comes
back, like a salmon, and then comes back up in these streams and then you take the eggs
from the fish that come up and incubate them in a hatchery and then you can take them
out as small fingerlings and put them into lakes and other river systems and things that
the rainbow trout would go in and that’s what we did. So, part of that process is the Navy
support is by flying us to in these amphibian airplanes to various parts and we’d land in
the little lakes or go near and then take them [the fingerling] on our backs in these tanks
and put them on our backs and walk them up and dump them into the lakes or into the
streams and things like that.
RV: Was that the first time you’d ever flown?

KC: Don’t think so. No, I think I’d flown commercially maybe.

RV: Okay.

KC: But I don’t recall much of that.

RV: Was it expected that you would go into the military at all Ken, or was this purely something that you could decide on your own?

KC: No, it was pretty much my own decision because my father was not one…he had seen too many people that go onto the Naval Academy and didn’t want to go to the Naval Academy and that was one of his biggest beefs he had. When he was there as a department head, he saw many kids who would come to the Naval Academy only because their fathers had pressured or the family had pressured them to come because it was the thing to do. And he saw that among his fellow officers, children of his friends and of other people who just thought it would be neat to have their son go to the Academy, so he was not at all interested in my going to the Naval Academy unless I really wanted to do it. And I went to after I got out of high school, I went to college in Galesburg for a year and so I could’ve stayed on that track if I had not wanted to go to the Naval Academy, but I really wanted to go to the Naval Academy and I did get an appointment, so I was fortunate enough to be able to go and fortunate enough to be able to stay there with all my classmates who were much brighter and smarter than I was and survived.

RV: Tell me where you went to college before you went to the Naval Academy.

KC: I went to Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois.

RV: Okay, what was that like?

KC: Very good liberal arts school. And of course, my father had gone in there years before…he went there for two years and I went there for one before going to the Naval Academy.

RV: What year was this?

KC: That would be the year of ’57.

RV: Okay, okay. What do you remember about that experience there at Knox?

KC: Well, it was a really neat experience. It was primarily a college that take kids mostly from the state of Illinois, so there were few outsiders, a few foreign students
and myself and I mean, I wasn’t the only outsider. So we got to see a microcosm of the state of Illinois really because many of the kids…it was a suitcase college if you know what that terms means. They pack up and take their dirty linen from the week and go home for the weekend and then come back. But those who stayed there like myself, you know, we just made our own mind. But it was really nice. I really enjoyed the people, it was a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful college. And there was absolutely marvelous instructors there, professors, they were absolutely wonderful. And I really enjoyed my year there, I really wouldn’t have given anything for that one year. I felt I learned a lot and I know it helped me at the Naval Academy, prepare for, help me through that first year that’s so tough at the Naval Academy.

RV: Right.

KC: Because your time is at a premium and you have so many demands on your time that academics usually sort of slips to the bottom sometimes. And I am convinced that that [one year at college] helped me get through the first year at the Naval Academy successfully.

RV: Okay, okay.

KC: And I was a member…I got to pledge a fraternity and was a member of a fraternity.

RV: Which one?

KC: Phi Delt.

RV: Okay.

KC: And I really enjoyed my association with those guys.

RV: And so what changed, why did you choose to leave after one year and go to the Naval Academy?

KC: Because I got my appointment.

RV: Okay. Tell me about going there; tell me about the first year. This is the famed plebe year.

KC: Yeah.

RV: And you had to go first, I assume in the summer.

KC: Yeah, you arrive for a plebe summer and plebe summer is basically a time of transition from civilian to a military lifestyle and it happens very quickly. They get you
in there and of course shave your head or get it close to being shaved, teach you how to
dress and how to march and how to respond to orders and all that stuff and it’s quite
quickly paced. It’s hot down there in the summer. It’s very, very warm in Annapolis in
the summers, you know probably. And it’s tiring. You’re up early in the morning and
you go to bed relatively early, but you’re exhausted at the end of the day because you’ve
been going all the time. You learn basic things like I said, marching and military drills.
You do sailing, you go to the rifle range and pistol range; learn the basic qualifications in
those things. You do athletics. And plus in an intense period of time until the major
classes come back, your instructors at plebe summer are upper class, second classmen
and they’re your mentors, if you will, for that time and they run you pretty hard and get
you ready for the classes to come back and when the classes come back, and all the upper
classes come back, then you’re the fodder for the next academic year for them.

RV: Right.

KC: And there’s a lot of pressure played, applied to conform and to perform, but
I personally tried to keep a low profile. Number one, my father was a flag officer on
active service and I didn’t want anybody to know that, so I tried to maintain a low profile
if I could.

RV: Were you able to do so?

KC: I think I was pretty successful in that.

RV: Okay.

KC: A few people knew that my father was in the Navy, but not many.

RV: Okay. How did you adapt to the military lifestyle?

KC: Oh, I had no problem with that. I’d been in the Army ROTC at college.

RV: Okay.

KC: So I didn’t…marching and drill and all that kind of stuff is no problem. And
my father and family had, you know, insisted on a pretty disciplined lifestyle at home, so
I mean, it was pretty relaxed, but I knew when you were given an order, you did it and I
never had any of those kind of issues, I never had any problems with discipline orders.
You know, doing things on time and getting everything done the way that they’re
supposed to be done was always a problem at the Naval Academy because of time and
that was the biggest issue I think we had there; is proper time management.
RV: Right.

KC: But I didn’t have too many problems and the upper class seemed to leave me alone. I was pretty well organized and squared away and didn’t give anybody any trouble or lip and in fact, I used to think some of the ‘running’, what we call ‘running’ or pressure applied by the upperclassmen was a little bit funny and I used to, you know, I’d have to restrain myself from laughing sometimes. And of course, they would get mad at you, not seriously, but they would pretend that they’d be very mad at you if you broke out in a laugh or something.

RV: Can you give me an example?

KC: Well, if they told you to do outlandish things and you’d break out laughing, you’d still do it, but then they tell you to wipe your smile off your face and all that stuff. But what I think it represented for them is they knew that I wasn’t concerned with their motivational efforts. I took it all in good stride and didn’t give anybody a hard time and so they left me alone and the ones who were having a hard time adjusting or who were rebellious or whatever or just couldn’t hack it, those were the ones that they would really target because they wanted to weed out those people who couldn’t respond to the pressure.

RV: Right.

KC: And so I never had any real serious issues at all with my plebe training.

RV: Okay.

KC: Again, I chose to try to maintain a low profile because if you stood out, then you were going to be targeted and targeted meaning you would have to answer extra questions, do more research which increased your time management problems, so my thing was to stay as low profile as possible to try to answer everything to the best of my ability and do my professional questions and all that stuff, but not get in anybody’s way to harass me extra. I didn’t need it; I had had my hands full with what I had.

RV: Did you call upon your father for advice, how to get through the academy?

KC: No, I never did, never even called him.

RV: Why not? Why did you not do that?

KC: Well, I always felt I was expected to learn it on my own.

RV: Right.
KC: You know, I was out of the house now, I was a man and I was supposed to confront some of these issues and my father, of course, told me many tales of his adventures years before, and those I had in the back of my mind as the way he handled things, but I just looked at the situation as it occurred on a daily or minute by minute basis and tried to adapt to it, but I didn’t feel I needed any support or advice on how to handle something. I just did what I thought was right and what was needed.

RV: Tell me about after your plebe year, what academy life was like?

KC: Well, academy life was really in retrospect looking back was great, but everybody hated it. Not hated it I can say, but they, you know, being cooped up all the time was not fun, but I had the advantage of having gone to a civilian college, so I know there are lots of rosy, you know and green…the grass wasn’t always greener on the other side. We couldn’t party in our rooms necessarily, but I used to tell the guys who were my classmates who had never had that experience and they’d say, ‘Oh man, I wish I would’ve gone to college.’ And I say, ‘Well, you know, I think you have to work when you go to college too, you can’t party all the time, so don’t give me that stuff.’

RV: Yeah.

KC: I tried to bring some reality back to the table. But socially it was great. There was always something, there was lots of dating going on. I got to date a lot of neat girls. Sports, I always liked sports, even though I wasn’t a gifted athlete, I still enjoyed the sports programs a lot. I liked going to the sporting events. In those days, it was almost a requirement. Nowadays, it isn’t, but I feel bad for that, but in those days, you just went to support your team and if the Navy was playing anybody else, you went to support them and I used to love to go to lacrosse games and wrestling matches and basketball games and you know, just enjoyed it. I never was big on football, but I obviously went to all of them because that’s what we marched on.

RV: Right.

KC: But the social aspect, the academics were hard for me. I struggled all the time because mostly it was engineering and math and those were not my good subjects. I did really well in things like English and history. I did a lot of reading there, I liked to read and I still do. So, it was a wonderful invigorating time of your life. You’re being pumped full of good information, your bodies are being exhausted from good exercise
and you get opportunities. I was a shot pistol as a freshman, so I liked that. And later on, I went to...between my junior and senior year, second and first class year, I got a chance to go to the Army Airborne School down in Ft. Benning, so I took advantage of that on my summer leave and went down and got parachute qualified.

RV: Now why did you do that?

KC: I just wanted to do it, something that I thought was neat, thought it was exciting, to be able to jump out of an airplane. I went with a great group of people whom I had a great respect for. One of the most inspiring instructors was Major Moody, who was a Marine officer, graduate of a British Commando School and all that stuff. He was really a rock hard, wonderful, wonderful leader and he took us down there. He was the leader, took us down there to the school and I really enjoyed that. And so then I came back the last year I was with a couple of other guys from that group that went down there, we became the group that had what we called the ‘weak squad.’ If there are freshmen to come in that can’t meet the minimum standards of athletics or exercises, then they make them come out with us and we run them and they can do exercises and toughen them up a little bit during the school year. And then if we did that for, you know, like a couple of months till they could pass all the standards like the agility courses and the running exercises and stuff like that.

RV: Right.

KC: And again, it was a way to have a leadership role without being too oppressive or...pretty good.

RV: Right. Did you assume any leadership roles outside of that?

KC: Not really. I was just a middle of the road guy, keep my head low and try to get out of there with my grades. I was worried at that time, the last three years of my academy experience; I was all concerned about grades, especially the last two.

RV: Yeah.

KC: The second year was probably the easiest for me because the pressure was off being the plebe, no longer a plebe and yet the course subjects were not that terrible. But my third and fourth years there were brutal as far as some subjects and I had to put a little time and then of course probably I didn’t put enough time because I was dating a lot and I hadn’t had any good social time [had a good social time].
RV: Anything you want to relate on the record about your social life there?

KC: Well, number one, it was really great because you got to meet a lot of gals, gals would come down to Annapolis on invitation from friends or from others and then you’d meet sisters or friends from the various towns of people. Other classmates would have their friends come down and they’d bring an extra girl and then you’d go out with the girl. And then you got to meet a lot of neat girls from all over. Most of them really sharp, they were well educated, attractive gals and so it was fun. And the Academy social programs were dances and I always liked to dance, and I thought they were fun. And we didn’t do any drinking, so that was never a factor in the issue because of the rules at the Academy. In my day, I think it was something like a twenty-mile circle from the Academy grounds a midshipman could not drink. So, you were not allowed outside that twenty-mile zone ever except on extended weekends, then you could go to D.C. or any place else on the weekend. For the first two years, you didn’t even get a weekend as I recall it and then the last two years, you got some weekends off, but nonetheless, you spend simply four years without drinking in the immediate area of the academic institution.

RV: That’s no longer in effect is it?

KC: No, they’ve changed a lot of things now. In fact, the law, it was a state law that you couldn’t serve alcohol to midshipman within that twenty-mile thing and they rescinded that.

RV: Okay.

KC: I don’t know why really, probably just to make it more like everybody else.

RV: Now Ken, in the winter of 1959, I guess you were home for Christmas I assume.

KC: Right.

RV: And you met somebody.

KC: Yes, I met my wife. And…my dad that was stationed in Jacksonville at the time and I had gone on my Christmas leave period and when we were down there, one of the…not a classmate, but a guy from the class of ’60 I believe, he lived very close to me. His father was in the Navy and mine of course was, and he was having a birthday, so I had a party at my house for him, you know, in honor of him and I invited all my friends
classmates who were down from the Jacksonville area and various other places and all
their girls and anybody else I could think of. And one of my classmates brought this
young lady to my party and I had been out with another girl or doing something else.
And anyhow, when I walked in from being out in the porch area or outside, I walked in
and this gal was there and boy, she was the best looking thing I’ve ever seen, still is.

RV: (Laughing)

KC: And took one look at her, went over and introduced myself and then I asked
her to dance and we just started dancing and talking and just carried on like this… finally
the friend of my classmate who had invited her to be a date there came over and tapped
me on the shoulder and said, ‘Am I going to take her home or are you?’ And of course, I
was thunderstruck because I first of all realized that I really monopolized the whole
evening with her and I hadn’t given her any break at all and I was kind of ashamed of
myself for doing that, so I said, ‘Well, of course you are’ and let him go. Well, one thing
led to another and we started dating from that point on and it was not what you’d call a
smooth…I was not really smooth in all my efforts with Sandy but we did date when she
was going to Mary Washington College up in Fredericksburg.

RV: Right.

KC: And so she would come to the Naval Academy on some weekends and we’d
get together and do the dating thing at the Naval Academy, which is really probably very
difficult, but it seemed fun at the time, but looking back on it, it was probably very
difficult for the girls because they’d have to travel a long way and then they’d be in these
houses. Fortunately, we had a…we called them drag houses, because drags were the
girls, you dragged, you were dating somebody. So you had drag houses and drag houses
were where the date stayed and these were places, they would rent out a room to the
young ladies and we had a friend who was a widow whose husband was killed in World
War II and was a classmate of my father’s and Mrs. LeHardy had a home there and she
would have various dates, ‘drags’, and she would allow them to come to her place. She
was always like a mother to me and a mother to her girls that would come and give good
advice and tell them what not to do and what to do, you know, if they were having
problems with their midshipman, which they invariably would. And she was just
wonderful, so Sandy would stay there and I would date her and she would get on the bus or go ride back with some of their gals going back to Fredericksburg.

RV: Okay.

KC: I could just walk back to the gate and go inside and it was easy for me. And I never thought of it that way because I always thought it was…you know, I just was pretty selfish I think and just thought about how I enjoyed having her down there.

RV: Right.

KC: We got along pretty well and I really fell in love with her, but I told her I wasn’t sure about the Navy when we dated and I wasn’t even sure I wanted to make the Navy a career, but I was going to have to wait and see and then when I got on my last year there, we had an aviation…we had a graduation physical and that determined fitness for various service type groups like aviation or submarines or whatever.

RV: And you wanted aviation I assume.

KC: And I wanted aviation and I failed that exam.

RV: Okay, what happened?

KC: Well, they sent me to see [a flight surgeon]. They said, ‘Well, you can’t go into aviation, but you can go into submarines or surface Navy.’ And I said, ‘Well, I’m not really interested in submarines, so I’ll go to the surface Navy.’

RV: Ken, what happened, what medically was the problem?

KC: Well, I had esotropia, which I’d been doing so much studying there in the last two years that my eyes had a weakness of tending to cross too easily. And when you age, your muscles in your eyes diverge anyhow. So esotropia is when they are inward, they cross, they allow the eye to cross and there’s little…you know that stick they put on your nose and then they run it back up and forth and you’re supposed to watch it. And they watch your eye, your pupils and if they tend to cross, you know, you’ll get a double vision; you’ll…they can detect it. And there’s another…I think it’s called a Farnsworth test. It’s a little three objects in a lighted box and they are three like sticks.

RV: Yes.

KC: And you have to see which one of them stands out among the other two or there can be two out and one back or two out and one back or something like that, and you have to tell them what that is and I never got that right after my eyes had this
problem. So, I was doomed as far as I was concerned. I was very disappointed, bitterly unhappy that I was going to be deprived of going into Naval Aviation because that’s really all I wanted to go to the Naval Academy for.

RV: Right.

KC: I mean, it was nice to be…my father said, ‘If you want to be an officer in the Navy, the best place to go is to go to the Naval Academy.’ And I liked the idea because when I lived at Annapolis when he was stationed there, I thought, ‘Well, that’s a pretty neat thing that those guys get to do.’ And I thought, ‘Yeah, that’d be alright.’ But my intent was only to go to fly; it wasn’t to do anything else. So I was very disappointed and so I told Sandy, I said, ‘I’m not sure I’m going to like the Navy, it’s not what I really signed up to do to go drive ships.’ So, most of my classmates who had a steady girlfriend was getting married as soon as they were allowed to, the day after graduation. But, I told Sandy that I have to put it on hold and we came to an agreement that she could date and I could date and I wasn’t going to put any because I had orders out to a ship home ported in San Diego and I knew that, you know, long distance relationships normally were not favorable, but I wasn’t going to try to tell her to be faithful to me, that I was going to be waiting for her blah, blah, blah when we’re two thousand miles away and we’re young adults and we have raging hormones.

RV: Right.

KC: And all that stuff, so we just left it at we would date other people and that we’d see how things went. Of course, I was going to go sea anyhow and one, I didn’t have much time to date and so I went out there and reported aboard my ship. I was picking up a ship coming right out of the yards in Bremerton, Washington and then we sailed the dam [shipyard period and] after various trips to Vancouver, Portland Rose Festival, and the Olympic Rose Festival and places like that, we ended up in San Diego and then we made shortly after that, I got assigned to you know, the ship was assigned to a cruise. And then we came back from that and we were assigned to the atomic test in the Pacific and the backup shooter for the ASROC system, which was all very interesting.

RV: Right.

KC: But in the mean time, I had seen a friend of my father’s who was a physician out in San Diego and he was retired or something. And anyhow, my dad told me to go
around and talk to him about my eyes and so he was an Optometrist so I went over and got an appointment with him and he said, ‘Well, take this graduated prism and see if you can get to work this prism.’ So, on every evening on the ship, I would spent about fifteen to twenty minutes, no matter what time I got off watch, it might’ve been in the middle of the night, it might’ve been at four o’clock in the morning, whatever, I’d do about twenty minutes of working with this prism and it was like lifting weights for your arms to increase your strength. Well, this was the same thing doing it with my eyes and sure enough, the esotropia was mitigated and I had good eyes. Well, my CO at the time said that I improved hated Naval Aviators. He just did not like Naval Aviation.

RV: What ship was this?
KC: This was a destroyer, the *USS Richard B. Anderson*.

RV: Okay, and you’re on Crew [board] ’61 to ’63, is that correct?
KC: Yes.

RV: Okay.

KC: Right. And it’s a name that you know, Admiral Tidd.

RV: Yes.

KC: He was a CO, but he did not like aviators.

RV: Why not?

KC: I have no idea, but he really had something against them. I don’t think he liked their prestige or whatever. But he made no bones about it, he just didn’t like aviators. Of course, he would probably tell you differently now, but in those days, he made no bones about it at the fact that he just didn’t like aviators.

RV: Okay.

KC: But when I told him that what had happened about that I really wanted to go into aviation, but I couldn’t, therefore I was on his ship and he treated me very well to begin with and then everything else. I was one of…I worked real hard and I tried to do the best job that I could in every effort in every area and got along I thought really well. Well, he asked me one time, he said they sent a message over from the ship, the *USS Bonhomme Richard*, is a carrier, they want an officer from each of the escorting destroyers. We were out in the Western Pacific at this time, to come over and hold a court martial, and I said, ‘Well gee, that’s strange. They’ve got two hundred and fifty
officers over there, how come they can’t constitute a board [i.e. courts martial board] themselves?’ He said, ‘Well, I don’t know, but you got to go over there or do you want to go over there?’ And I said, ‘Oh yeah, I’d love to go over.’ So, they came by in a helo and picked us up and transferred us across to go to the attendance court martial, so I was over there for a couple of days with this court martial and it turned out, the reason why they didn’t have their own officers on board ship was the enlisted man that they were trying had hit an officer in a bar. Well, we after much ado and deliberation and not much smarts on our part, didn’t realize why we were over there, and the reason is was because this guy had done it about three times and he’s always gotten away with it because it was always, you know, without or beyond a reasonable doubt. He’d always pick a time to clock one of these officers in a dark area or who started pushing, you know, one of these kind of things. But this guy was obviously, this enlisted guy, liked to hit officers and start fights with officers and the whole ship knew it. All the officers on the ship knew it, so they couldn’t form an unbiased board.

RV: Right.

KC: And so I went over there. But in the mean time when I was over there, I got to talk to some classmates who had been through the flight training system and come back as fighter pilots in their squadron and I went over there and talked to them and they said, ‘Oh, we’ll get you a flight physical with one of our flight surgeons.’ And I said, ‘Oh great.’ So, while I was over there attending this court martial, on my off time, they got me this flight physical and I took it and I passed it and my eyes were great and I came back with my results typed up and went down to the ship’s office in the destroyer and typed out my own request for flight training and I sent it up via my chain and this CO just exploded. He was furious. He was just madder than a wet hen.

RV: Did he call you into his office?

KC: Oh no, oh no, but you knew because his attitude immediately changed and of course, everybody knows the CO, how the CO feels on a small ship like that. You know, and just everybody told me that he was furious and I could tell by his mannerisms toward me. It was like night and day. Before I was his young protégé who could do nothing wrong and after that, I could do nothing right. So anyhow, we sent this thing off and he put on there, and this is another determination, he said, ‘Forwarded.’ And you
know, usually you’d say, ‘Forwarded, this officer would possibly make a great pilot, blah, blah, blah or whatever.’

RV: Right, right.

KC: And then all it said was ‘Forwarded, relief required.’ And that’s about as brutal in the Navy hierarchy of writing, that’s about as cold as one can get.

RV: It’s like, get this guy off my ship.

KC: Yup, absolutely.

RV: Yeah, not like he’s trying to...

KC: And the only reason I wouldn’t let him off right now is because I need a relief for him.

RV: Right.

KC: So, I knew that when I saw that, I said, ‘Oh, it’s not going to be fun for the rest of the time onboard.’ But I said, ‘Well, I don’t care, I’m going to Naval Aviation.’ Well, things dragged on and dragged on and I got a little card back saying, ‘Don’t call us, we’ll call you, you’re under consideration for flight training.’ So I thought it was a matter of just figuring out what class date that I was going to get at Pensacola. Well finally nothing happened. So, I wrote to my brother-in-law, who is also in the Navy and I was going to go talk to the bureau and I said, ‘Will you check on my orders?’ And he went up there and he said they told him, they said, ‘Well, oh yeah, Craig, Craig, oh yeah, the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery says that his eyes couldn’t have improved that much and they’re not considering him any longer.’ So that forced the ship to write, when I heard that, by then [Cdr] Tidd had been relieved, I had a new skipper, Commander Peterson was a great guy and he said, ‘Well, we’ll just find out what their response is because otherwise, you’re in limbo here because I’m not going to advance you to any department head status or anything else if you’re going to be leaving us.’

RV: Sure.

KC: So I said, ‘Great’, so he sent a message back to bureau saying, ‘What the heck, over?’ You know, what’s going on. And so they sent back a message saying, ‘Go have Craig report to the nearest Naval Hospital, have eye test A through Z, send him the results to the Bureau of Naval Personnel. So I did that because we were going to be in Yukosuka, [Japan] and I went up to the Naval Hospital Yukosuka took this message and
they gave me a test and they said, ‘Oh, your eyes are great.’ So, we sent that [the results] off and right back we got a response saying, ‘Your reporting date is humpty dump.’

RV: Wow, how did you feel?

KC: Well, of course I couldn’t have been any happier. That was the greatest thing that ever happened to me at that point, you know, that kind of thing.

RV: Right.

KC: I was elated.

RV: Right.

KC: And that was the time that I asked Sandy to marry me.

RV: Right, 1963.

KC: Yeah.

RV: What was your experience with the surface Navy? I mean, obviously you had some good and bad times, but overall?

KC: Oh, I had a lot of good times. I learned a lot. I would say that the thing I learned, the bad things, the negative things were, I thought, the leadership of the surface Navy at that time was abysmal. I saw it not only in Commander Tidd, poor example of leadership, but even worse, my executive officer on the ship was just an alcoholic and a pervert and just an awful person and I saw too many of those similar types of people in the surface Navy in San Diego in our little microcosm of division of ships and things. I just saw too many examples that…see, my problem was I had a very good father.

RV: Yes.

KC: Who I idolized and I knew from his conduct and when he talked about the Navy and what he did and how he led people and I’d seen a lot of aviators because we lived in aviation communities and they all lived basically the same ethics. Ethics of that period were you look after your men, you’re good to your men, your men come first, and all this kind of stuff and then I got to the surface Navy and all that was thrown overboard. They didn’t look after their enlisted men, they treated their enlisted men horribly, they worked them like fiends. I just was appalled at the treatment of the enlisted people and it was all because of the cultural aspect, I thought, of the surface Navy and then the people who were leading were not icons of behavior either. So, I just was really turned off by my experience and in that time from the Pacific Fleet, first time officer
enlistment, in other words, when your service obligation came up, they were leaving,
they had a loss rate of ninety-five percent in the Pacific Fleet at that time.
RV: Wow, wow.
KC: It was a little bit better in the Atlantic, but the Pacific Fleet had ninety-five
out of every hundred officers at the end of their obligated service were leaving the force.
RV: That says a lot.
KC: Yeah, told me a whole lot. It was pathetic and I have cousins who served in
the Pacific Navy at that time too and they saw the exact same thing I did and they got out.
They were…one of them was a University of Kansas graduate, a real sharp guy, but he
got out for the same reason. Leadership was just pathetic.
RV: Wow. Ken, why don’t we take a break?
KC: Hey, I was just going to suggest that.
RV: Okay.