Richard Verrone: This is Richard Verrone and I’m conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Gary Jackson. Mr. Jackson, you are in New Orleans, is that correct?

Gary Jackson: Yes, I am.

RV: And I am in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of Texas Tech University. It is December 6, 2002 and approximately 1:09 PM in the afternoon. Sir, if we could if you would just give kind of give us a basic background, starting with where and when you were born and what your childhood was like?

GJ: Okay, I was born in Beaver, Oklahoma, Beaver County in the panhandle of Oklahoma on August 21, 1939. My family moved to Borger, Texas in 1940 or ’41. I grew up in Borger. Went to Borger schools for twelve years and went to junior college at Frank Phillips College for two years. And then I went to Texas Tech for a year at Lubbock and then I got married, that was the summer of 1960 got married to Lynda Bonny, who is also from Borger, and transferred to the University of Texas and spent my senior year there.

RV: Where is Borger exactly?

GJ: Borger is about forty-five miles northeast of Amarillo. It’s in the northern panhandle.

RV: So you grew up there, spent your childhood there?
GJ: Yes.

RV: What did your parents do for a living?

GJ: It was the new Phillips Petroleum Refinery in Borger that brought my folks to Borger. My dad had a job there as an electrician, and then he studied refrigeration by correspondence in the evenings. And then eventually started a refrigeration business and then eventually left Phillips Petroleum. And had his refrigeration business until he retired and he retired again and retired a third time I think.

RV: And your mother, did she work?

GJ: Part of that time they had, in addition to the refrigeration business they had a paint store in Borger, and she managed the paint store, paint, wallpaper and custom made draperies, they did that five, six years.

RV: What was your childhood like there in Borger?

GJ: Well it was not real eventful; it was a typical small town growing up. In fact Borger’s main claim to fame at that time was that it was the carbon black center of the world, and there was just a black cloud hanging over the town all the time, you could see it forty, fifty miles away and no matter which way the wind blew there was a carbon black plant that blew black soot over everything. I can remember being black to the knees just from walking through the grass. They began to clean that up by the time I was in high school and it was pretty well cleaned up. It was a quiet peaceful town after, what was Brown V. Board of Education when separate schools were deemed to be unconstitutional. We integrated immediately, and there was not any problems with that.

RV: You remember that specifically?

GJ: Yes, I was a sophomore in high school the year that happened. It was probably a year after that suddenly the Borger athletic teams began to whip everybody in the conference for the first time ever, so that went over very well in our community.

RV: What do you remember most about your childhood; say before high school, what kind of jobs did you have?

GJ: Well it was my job to sweep out the paint shop and help down there. At a fairly early age I was keeping the books for my dad’s business. He didn't like to do that sort of thing. He had a bookkeeping system and taught me how to do it. And so I did that and I kind of enjoyed that. Always have enjoyed that kind of record keeping. I had
cousins that lived on a farm, so I spent a few summers helping out on the farm; enjoyed that. I helped my dad in the summertime, carried tools, one thing or another for him with his refrigeration business. I had two sisters, one four years older and one four years younger, so we just kind of irritated each other but didn’t get involved too much in each other’s activities. My early childhood I grew up in a neighborhood that had five or six boys about my age, so we played a lot of sports in the yard and in the street. When I was about, I don’t remember, twelve, thirteen, somewhere in there we moved to a different neighborhood, and there weren’t too many kids in that neighborhood. So I was kind of left to my own devices those years, and that was the time about then I was getting into high school and starting to do high school things.

RV: Tell me about high school.

GJ: Well, high school, Borger had if I remember seven hundred to eight hundred students; I think my graduating class was two hundred fifty. We had the typical things that teenagers did, looking back on it from the perspective of the way things are now, it was really peaceful and quiet and uneventful. It didn’t seem that way at the time, seemed like there was always some activity going on. Borger was a basketball town, I think all three years I was in high school, Borger was ranked in the top ten in Texas in basketball, and I really wanted to be a basketball player, but there was about two hundred went out for the basketball team when I was in tenth grade, and I didn’t make it through the first cut. I always felt some regret about that, looking back there were some great basketball players there and I didn’t have a shot.

RV: Did you play other sports?

GJ: I played basketball in church league all the time I was in high school and junior college, and enjoyed that, looking back probably our church team could beat some of the high school teams in that area. There was a great rivalry between Borger High and Pampa High. Pampa was about twenty miles away, and they were also ranked in the top ten in the state. In fact they won State one of those years, and they beat us for district the other two years. And then my wife moved from Pampa when she was a sophomore, I was a junior. I was involved in journalism. I was the co-editor of the school paper when I was a senior. I covered the B team basketball team for the Borger News-Herald, the city newspaper, and then when I was in junior college, I covered the high school teams
and the junior college teams, and that year the junior college team went to the National
Junior College Athletic Association National Finals, and I covered that for the
newspaper.

RV: So you were a sports reporter, basically.

GJ: Yes.

RV: What about your favorite subjects in high school?

GJ: Well, I was a good student and a lot of them came easily for me. I liked math,
I liked English, I liked history, kind of tolerated chemistry, biology, physics; especially
liked mathematics and I liked English. At the time had a kind of a germ of a desire to
write, and that was the thing, but anyway those were my favorite school subjects.

RV: Did your parents emphasize education for you and your sisters?

GJ: My father was very adamant that I would go to college. In the Depression he
had enrolled at the University of Texas, and because he didn’t have the money he
couldn’t last a full semester, and he always had regretted that. And he always drummed
it into my head [assumed] that it was something I didn’t have a choice about, I had to go
to college. That was fine, I wanted to, he wanted my sisters to also, but neither of them
went to college. He supported both of their husbands through college, and several
grandkids, it was always a big, important thing to him.

RV: How about military experience, history in your family, was there a lot of
that?

GJ: My mother had five brothers, three of them were in the Second World War,
and my earliest memories are of family gatherings when my uncles were home on leave
or came home at the end of the war, and that did have a profound impact on me.

RV: Seeing them in their uniforms and?

GJ: Yes.

RV: Would they talk to you about what they had done, their experiences?

GJ: No, they didn’t talk about it to anybody very much. In fact just in recent
years some of them have begin to talk about their experiences.

RV: What influenced you greatly on that?
GJ: Well, they were my heroes for one thing. They were all athletic and good looking and married beautiful women and it was just my, they were my role models. So I always wanted to do something to live up to that.

RV: Did you have any inclination at that time to join the military?

GJ: Well, no it wasn’t an inclination it was kind of in the back of my mind, of course at that time everybody my age was, by the time we get out of high school we’re subject to the draft, and almost everybody did either get drafted or took care of their military obligation some other way. So I assumed at some point I would be in the military, and it was just a question of, would I go in before I got out of college and if I stayed until after college then I’d go to some officer training. I didn’t particularly have a branch of the service scoped out, it was just kind of, everybody understood they were going to do some kind of military service.

RV: You said you were interested in history a little bit in high school, that is a good subject for you; did you follow world history and kind of what the United States is doing in the world?

GJ: No, I didn’t really get interested in what was going on in the world until, probably after, well to a degree while I was in college, but to even a greater degree after college when I started keeping much closer tabs on current affairs and how things that happened twenty years ago were impacting what was happening today, begin to tie things together and got interested in it.

RV: Okay, what year did you graduate high school?

GJ: ‘57.

RV: And you went immediately to college?

GJ: Yes, I went to junior college in Borger, and then went to Tech for my junior year, majored in, changed majors just about every semester I was in college. I lectured my daughters about it frequently [when they were in college] but they knew the story so it didn’t sink in too much, but I changed majors quite a bit. I think the year I was at Tech I was going to major in electrical engineering, and ended up changing to English the second semester and when I went down to University of Texas I majored in mathematics because I was kind of burned out on college by then, and I had enough math credits that I
could graduate a semester earlier in math then I could in English, so I got a major in
math, a minor in English.

RV: You said you got married while you were here in Lubbock?
GJ: I got married the summer after my year in Tech. We got married in Borger, and I worked that summer in Borger and then went down to Austin in the fall.

RV: How did you meet your wife?
GJ: She moved over from Pampa, Texas, as I said when she was in tenth grade and I was in eleventh, and went to the same church that I went to. I didn’t make a real great impression on her to begin with, took several months, but we started going together the following January and we went together until after my junior year in college we got married.

RV: Why did you move down to Austin?
GJ: Well, she didn’t like Lubbock too much. She didn’t like the high plains and the wind and all of that and.

RV: I can identify with that.
GJ: Yes, anybody who lives there know about that. And my dad had always had high praise for the University at Austin because that’s where he’d wished he’d been able to go, so we went down there and looked it over and decided we could live there, so we changed.

RV: And how was the year in Austin for you?
GJ: It was good, that was kind of an idyllic year. My dad was supporting us, so I didn’t have to work. Lynda got a job at the Texas Medical Association, and we just really enjoyed it. Austin is one of my favorites cities, and it was a whole lot better then than it is now, like 200, 250,000 people. It was a nice size; a lot of things to do. It was a good time.

RV: What year was that when you finished down there at UT?
GJ: I graduated in August of ’61.

RV: And you’re going to end up joining the Air Force in 1962. What did you do between graduation and joining the military? Did you think that’s were I’m going to go or?
GJ: No. My senior year I’d interviewed with some companies, and IBM had offered me a job contingent on me going on [six months] active duty with one of the branches of the service and getting my active duty commitment out of the way and then do my six years of reserve duty, and they would put me to work after my six month active duty was over. So I had enlisted in the Army Reserve, and then when I graduated in August of ’61 I was supposed to report for active duty on September 1 as I remember. And the evening before I was to leave, for I think it was Fort Leonardwood, Missouri, I got a cable or a telegram that informed me that the Army was not taking anybody on active duty for reserves for at least six months, so my travel was cancelled. So I called IBM, they said they couldn’t hold that job open for me for that length of the time because they didn’t know what their requirements would be six months later, or that would have made it a year later. So I thought well, I can’t sit here in limbo that length of time. I might as well just go ahead and enlist, and if I’m going to enlist I might as well go to officer school. So I went to see an Army recruiter and Navy recruiter was next door, so I went in to see him. He signed me up to go to Dallas to take the officer qualifying physical and I went over to the Air Force recruiter and he did the same thing, scheduled me to go down to San Antonio. So I went to Dallas for the Navy physical, took two days as I remember, and took me by surprise that I was qualified for pilot training. I had worn glasses from the time I was ten years old until middle of my junior year in college when I noticed I could read the blackboard easier with my glasses off then with them on; then I went to the doctor and he took the glasses off of me. But still it just never occurred that I would be qualified for pilot training, passed the physical, passed the written test. Went down to San Antonio and that was a week long physical, written test and physical, and out of thirty that started the week I was the only one that was qualified for pilot training that week. During that week every night, it was at Randolph Air Force Base, and they were training the first instructor pilots in the T-38, which was the new supersonic jet trainer. So we would go down and stand behind the chain link fence and watch them shoot landings in the evening. The longer I stood there and watched them, the more enthused I got. So by the time they told me I was qualified, I was committed; that’s what I wanted to do with my life.
RV: What kind of training did you have in college academically to put you into a position to get IBM?

GJ: Well, I had my degree in math, and that was the main thing, they were looking for math majors and science majors, so I did have a math degree.

RV: So, what was that position at IBM, do you remember?

GJ: It was a systems engineer.

RV: And did the Air Force know about, obviously they knew about your degree, but did they know about your IBM, that a company wanted to hire you?

GJ: Nope, don’t believe that was ever asked and it was not a factor.

RV: And when you took the written test down in San Antonio, was that easy for you?

GJ: Yes, I was always a pretty good test taker; I always did good on the annual achievement tests that we took and this was a similar kind of testing. There was a verbal component. The way they operated those tests, they gave the class one of those tests and then we’d take a break and they’d grade them, and then we’d go back in and they’d tell those that hadn’t made the minimum score that they could leave and come back in six months if they wanted to try again, and then we’d do another test. So we did verbal, we did basic mathematics, which was up through algebra, and then they had some kind of spatial orientation kind of test where they’d show you a picture and then they had a series of aircraft instruments and you would pick out which instrument reflected the aerial photograph they were showing you. They’d show a block and then they’d show different layouts of how that block would look if it were laid out flat. Then they had some psychological testing.

RV: So when you finally joined up with the Air Force, how long did you have before you had to report to your basic training?

GJ: Well there was a period before that on my medical questionnaire I had mentioned some medical problems that my parents were told when I was very small that I had, rheumatic fever and St. Vitas Dance, and so about the time I was expecting to get my class assignment from the Navy I got instead a letter telling me to go take further physical. So I said well to heck with the Navy. I’ll just go with the Air Force, and a few days later I got a similar letter from the Air Force. And ended up having to go over to
Amarillo Air Force Base and take another EKG to eliminate the rheumatic fever as a problem, and ended up driving to San Antonio to the hospital at Lackland Air Force Base to see a neurologist about the St. Vitas Dance. And all this took several months before it was all done. By the time I got it finished then, the Army sent me a letter and says well, report for active duty. So I wrote my Congressman; I did everything I could to try to get out of that obligation so I could go in the Air Force, and I finally had to enlist in the Air Force in order to be on active duty with the Air Force before my time with the Army came up. So that was February of ’62. So I had to go through Air Force basic training, and then I went directly from there to Officer Training School.

RV: Well, tell me about your basic training in the Air Force?

GJ: Well anybody who has been through basic training will tell you that it was a very intense and difficult time, and one of those things that you wouldn’t give a nickel to do again but wouldn’t take a million dollars for. I had a training [tactical] instructor, a TI, Sergeant Martel who I can still picture him just as plain as day. He was a small guy with the iciest, coldest blue eyes I ever saw. I mean he rode us like whipping and spurring the whole way, and his claim to fame was he’d take a flight of sixty basic trainees and he’d wash thirty of them out or wash them back, and so the thirty he had left would be extremely sharp troops, so he could march us around the base and we looked one hundred percent sharper than anybody else’s flight. So he had the pressure on the whole time. When he found out I had orders to Officer Training School, he called me in and told me he could redline me for OTS any time he wanted to, any kind of a bad report from him and I was done.

RV: Wow, that got your attention.

GJ: Yes, it did. So he made me a squad leader, and then if anybody in my squad got a gig then I got one too, so I really knuckled down on my squad.

RV: Now, did he put you in that position to test you, to see if you could handle that kind of pressure or was he trying to make you one of those thirty he washed out?

GJ: No, he--I think it was testing to see what kind of leadership ability I had, and see if I could lead that squad. I did have one guy in my squad that he did appear to be trying to wash out, and this kid was a good kid, but he just kept screwing up. So I finally got the guys that were in, that bunked around him and I said, “He’s going to wash out if
you guys don’t take care of him. So when he says he’s ready for inspection in the
morning, you go through and inspect his area, and then the second one goes through and
inspects his area. Clean everything up, don’t leave anything to chance.” And so he made
it through. Sergeant Martel didn’t have any qualms about washing people out for being
anything but excellent.

RV: Where was thing training?
GJ: It was at Lackland.

RV: At Lackland, and how long did it last?
GJ: Basic training was eight weeks in those days, and I went through seven before
OTS started.

RV: How did you find yourself as a leader? You were put as head of one of the
squad?
GJ: I was pretty good, I thought. I had--I think that came out more in Officer
Training School. When I got there I had seven weeks of military training behind me, and
so I already knew how to do half the things that the new officer trainees were trying to
learn, and so I got put in charge of my wing of the dorm, and frequently the
upperclassman who was responsible for us would let me run the drill and do that part of
the training. Let’s see, what had to do--My squad or the flight leader, the upperclassman
was a psychology major, and he was doing psychology things with us all the time, and he
had us vote for who among us was the most likely to be Air Force chief of staff some
day, and they voted me to be the most likely to be Air Force chief of staff because I was
gung ho as hell. By the time I had got through basic training and had been one of the
elite few that survived that TI, I was really gung ho and I knew I was going to go fly jets
so I really was eager.

RV: Going back to your basic, did you feel like you had excellent training, or fair
training, how would you rate it?
GJ: I’d say it was excellent. I thought basic training was excellent. This guy was
ruthless, but when we got finished we were good at what we were supposed to be good
at.

RV: Can you describe some of that training that you went through?
GJ: It was like, up every morning at five, go to eat, come back and GI the barracks, and mostly it was drill, marching and drill. Had academic classes, several hours a day, a lot of PT, physical training.

RV: How did you handle that?

GJ: Pretty good, I was in pretty fair shape, and about the time that seven weeks was over I was in real good shape because we ran a lot. In the early days of basic training there was a lot of, kind of harassment, middle of the night fire drills, one right after the other, just about time to go to sleep in between, and then here’s another fire drill and a lot of harassment to get our areas cleaned up and straightened up and everything, just exactly in inspection order, down to how many finger widths there was between your towel and the rod it was hanging over, between that and the wall, those things, and the towel itself had to be exactly six inch, folded exactly six inches wide, had to be exactly hanging two inches from the floor and stuff like that. If it wasn’t, if it was a sixteenth of an inch out, well you had a gig. So you learned in the process to follow orders, to listen and get it like he wanted it the first time; do it the way you were told.

RV: What was the most difficult aspect of your training, your basic?

GJ: Well, for me it was the psychological pressure that was put on from the first minute, and most guys gained weight while they were in basic training, I lost seventeen pounds, and I didn’t weigh much when I went. I couldn’t eat, I had no appetite because of the relentless psychological pressure, and then he had me worried about messing me up for OTS. I don’t think he ever intended to but I believed that he could, and I know he could. And all he had to do was give me a bad report and I would not go to OTS. So it was, it was the most difficult seven weeks of my life up to that point for sure.

RV: What kind of weapons training did you have in basic?

GJ: We didn’t have much. We had, I think it was M-1 carbines; we went out and fired those on the rifle range. I think, as I remember, I know later I was an expert with a pistol, but at that time I’m not sure, I think I probably fired expert with an M-1 too.

RV: Had you handled weapons before this, growing up?

GJ: Growing up I’d had a twenty-two rifle at one time although I didn’t spend a whole lot of time hunting or anything but I did have one. I was a pretty fair shot. At the end of basic training we did the obstacle course where we ran through the woods and
jumped over things and crashed through things and crawled under things and climbed down cliffs, one thing or another.

RV: How did you do on that?

GJ: Got through it. That was the objective, to get through it.

RV: Were your parents supportive of your going into the military?

GJ: Yes, they were like me. They knew that it was an obligation everybody had, and we were all going to have to do it. So it wasn’t a surprise and so, I think they were glad I was going to Officer School, going to be in the Air Force, not the infantry. Would you excuse me a second?

RV: Be glad to.

RV: And how much contact did you have with your parents when you were in basic?

GJ: Oh, just occasional telephone call. I was married at the time. Lynda was pregnant, and so I’d call her every couple of days. She was with her mother at Kansas City at the time.

RV: And where did you, tell me about your OTS. You left you said at seven weeks you did basic, and then you took off for OTS?

GJ: Yes, and OTS was just across the base at, also on Lackland.

RV: And what can you tell me about that, what was that like for you?

GJ: It was, we—Lynda was going to move down to San Antonio, but I couldn’t get off base for the first six weeks. It’s a three-month program, so the first six weeks you’re and underclassmen you can’t get off the base. So some time during that six weeks she was going to move down, get an apartment, and I would be able to get off on weekends, from Saturday morning until Sunday evenings. So we were working towards that. Well, actually she came down just about as soon as I got in OTS because they called me one day down to the day room, and she was there, and it was the first time she had seen me since before I left for basic training and I’d lost seventeen pounds in the meantime. She didn’t recognize me; I was in a uniform with a big hat, looked kind of strange, so she didn’t recognize me at first. So, then the training started. We were right adjacent to the last class of Officer Candidate School, and that was—We were in a three-month program, they were in a six-month program, so in the time that we got through and graduated and
got our commission, the guys we started with at the same time, over at the Officer
Candidate School were just halfway through their program. So we were glad that
program was being phased out. We liked OTS rules better. It was fairly, it wasn't the
intense kind of officer training that I had known, that I had read about or seen movies
about or heard about, which was an awful lot of harassment and everything in ridiculous
chicken shit kind of games that you had to play. They treated you more as an adult in
Officer Training School. So as result it was not real intense, but it was, every minute was
crammed with stuff, like we would come in from PT and we had five minutes to shower,
change clothes, get our rooms back in inspection order and fall out on the sidewalk ready
to march to class. So it was, a lot of pressure was on but it was less of the harassment
kind of psychological pressure.

RV: What kind of classroom training did you have?
GJ: We did a lot of Air Force history and Air Force organization. I don’t
remember that there was anything on current events, but it was some leadership classes,
all pretty general.

RV: How was the training that you received there?
GJ: Well, it was, I would say minimal; it was minimal to get you ready for a
active duty Air Force assignment. You were going to, whatever you were going to do,
you were going to get more training on the job, and that’s where you were going to get
most of your training, but it gave you basic military training, by the time we got finished
we could march and we could, we knew how we were supposed to dress and how we
were supposed to behave, and where our place was in the pecking order, which was at the
bottom and that kind of stuff. Advanced training was going to come later.

RV: Did you still want to be a pilot at this point?
GJ: Yes, in fact I thought I was going to go to pilot training until about halfway
through basic training when they told me that I had my class assignment for OTS, and it
was in the weapons controller career field and I said what’s that, is that just another way
of saying pilot training. So my TI looked it up for me and said no, it’s different, but he
told me, what everybody else told me that I ever asked about it was once you get on
active duty you apply for pilot training and they’d take you right on in. That didn’t turn
out to be the case. In the weapons controller career field it was, how did they put it, a
critical resources field, once you got in it, you were in it for three years, had a directed
duty assignment in that field for three years and you couldn’t get out, and they didn’t
make any exceptions. Every year I would go take a physical and renew my application
and request a waiver from Air Defense Command to be released to go to pilot training,
and every year I’d get rejected. So, and as it turned out if I had gone immediately into
OTS after I had taken my physical back in the previous fall in San Antonio, I would have
gone into a pilot training class, but the class that I finally went into was a class that
started at the same time that college graduation and Air Force academy graduation took
place, and that class was full of Air Force academy and ROTC graduates, and they had
priority for pilot training slots. OTS was at the bottom of the priority list. If I had been
in the position to do so, I would have turned that down and waited for a later class, and
then I would have gotten in, but since I was halfway through basic training, I wasn’t
about to postpone that entry into Officer Training School any longer than I had to. So I
took it. And everybody told me, “Oh, no problem. Once you’re on active duty they’ll
bring you right back into pilot training.” I graduated in July, ’62 and I remained at
Lackland for thirty days on casual status until time for me to go to my school, and while I
was there my assignment was in the officer, I can’t remember now what the name of the
office was, but it was the office where they sorted applications for Officer Training
School, and I would sort them out, send them wherever they needed to go and one of my
best friends from high school applied for OTS, and his application came across while I
was there. So, I got on the phone with him, found out when he wanted to start, what class
he wanted to be in, he was qualified for pilot training, got him assigned to a pilot training
class. Just hand carried his application around, got him just what he wanted, then he
called me and said, “Hey, I’m going to get married, I want to postpone it for a month or
two, can you do that,” so I hand carried it around again. Man, I’ll tell you, some guys
have all the luck. Nobody was there to take care of my application, so I ended up going
into weapons controllers.

RV: Tell me about that, what kind of training did you receive for that.

GJ: Went to Keesler Air Force Base, Biloxi Mississippi, and I was earmarked to
go into the semi-automatic ground environment system, which we called the SAGE
system which was the first computer generated air defense system. They were in the
process of—Well they were just completing these big concrete blockhouses at some of the
major cities in the country. There was one at Montgomery, that was Montgomery Air
Defense Sector, and there was Phoenix Air Defense Sector, and Los Angeles and San
Francisco, Seattle Air Defense Sector. Each of these had this big blockhouse that would
control the air defense operations for that part of the country. Each of these buildings,
one floor of the building was occupied by two giant computers, 60 million dollar
computers, two of them, that all of the radar data was fed into them, all of the guidance
calculations for guiding an interceptor against a moving target, all those calculations were
done with these computers, so I was going into that system. I was assigned to the
Phoenix Air Defense Sector, Luke Air Force Base. So I went through the training, and at
that time they didn’t have any actual consoles at Keesler. They had these mockups,
which didn’t really show you too much about what an actual radarscope looked like,
except for the physical layout, here are the buttons and these are the buttons you push but
you couldn’t tell what the impact of your button pushing was. So it was mainly
classroom academic training on air defense tactics and techniques and history, and it
lasted I think three months and then we went to Phoenix.

RV: Was that training good for you, was it adequate?

GJ: It just was the very, very minimum basic familiarization with what we were
going to do. Gave you no feel whatsoever for actually doing it, just kind of pointed you
in that direction. So, when I first walked into an active weapons room, that’s just what
they called the room, the blue room or where the air control activity was going on, it was
like walking to the other side of the moon. Nothing that we had trained really prepared
you for what it felt like in that room. When I got to Phoenix I was about the seventh,
sixth or seventh second lieutenant to arrive, and within six months there were fifty, over
fifty second lieutenants there.

RV: Wow, why so many?

GJ: Well, this was a new system, and it was coming up on line rapidly, so they
were bringing in large numbers of bodies, and the only experienced air defense people
were people who were brought out of the manual air defense system. In other words
people who ran intercepts manually without the computer aid. So they needed a whole
lot of bodies to man all these slots, and I was kind of at the front of that wave, and so
there was a, kind of a--We had a Direction Center chief, he was the guy who was responsible for all of the training and everything that went on, and he was an old Air Defense Head from back in the Second World War who had helped build radar sites when radar was still top secret, and had been involved in air defense from the very beginning, and he believed there was no way you could make a second lieutenant into a decent intercept director. It took years of experience or at least you had to be a pilot before you started the training, and here they were dumping all these second lieutenants on him and he didn’t think we were going to make it. But we did, we did pretty well. It took three months to be a combat ready intercept director. You had to have a minimum of three months of on-the-job training, and you had to be able to control three individual interceptors against one target simultaneously and complete a front attack, a beam attack and a stern attack within three minutes, and that was your combat ready evaluation. Then you went out on the crew as a combat ready intercept director.

RV: How did you do one those tests?

GJ: I did. I made it in three months. I took to the training pretty well, and about three months after that they made me into an instructor, although you were supposed to be a skilled, have a skill level of skilled, and you couldn’t get a skilled-skill level until you had a year experience. And at that time I had six months including my three months of training, but they had all these fifty some new lieutenants and they pressed me into duty as an instructor. So I started training intercept directors, and as soon as my one-year was up I took my skilled evaluation, which was four interceptors against one target with one front attack, a beam attack, two stern attacks in four minutes. They made me the officer in charge of intercept director training about then, and then they sent me to interceptor weapons school. Actually it was kind of one of those cases of get me out of town because I was going to be in big trouble. This was kind of interesting. This was a fun story. They were having this big, joint service exercise called Exercise Desert Strike, and it was taking place all over Arizona, southern California, it had all the services involved. And our job was to provide air defense for Phoenix and El Paso, and there was this one fighter that would come across our sector every morning about four, or five, six o’clock in the morning, he’d come across from Los Angeles, across northern Arizona and then he would turn southeast and head for El Paso for, I can’t remember the name of the
air base there now, and we would scramble interceptors against him and by the time our
interceptors would get up there, he would be so far gone we couldn’t catch him. So the
third night we decided we’d be ready for him, as soon as he popped up, as soon as his
track popped up that we thought was him we scrambled two F-101s out of Davis-
Monthan Air Force Base in Tuscon and brought them up to intercept him. Well, this time
he dove, and got down on the deck and so we had intermittent radar contact with him,
and I lost him, but I finally got my interceptors in behind him. And the computer was
calling for supersonic speed, like 1.1 Mach, because they were behind him, so the pilots
called and asked for permission to go supersonic which was of course against all the rules
to go supersonic below thirty thousand feet, so I told them negative but there was a
Desert Strike Exercise umpire standing behind me who was one of my fellow interceptor
directors, he’d just been assigned to duty as an umpire and he said, “Oh, no all of the
supersonic restrictions were lifted for Desert Strike,” so I said, “You’re cleared
supersonic.” Well they streaked down the main street of Safford, Arizona [at 5:00 AM]
on Saturday morning and just laid all the plate glass in town out on the street, and by
Monday morning I came in fat, dumb and happy, and the DC chief dragged me into his
office and started chewing on me like I had never been chewed on in my life, that I had
violated every local restriction, every ConAd regulation, every air defense command
regulation, every U.S. Air Force regulation that had to do with supersonic flight. So
finally I understood what it was I had done, I said “Well all the supersonic restrictions
had been lifted for Desert Strike.” “Who the hell told you that?” And I said, “Well
Lieutenant Souhrada did.” Souhrada was sitting outside his office, that’s where his
regular desk was. He grabbed Souhrada and brought him in, and as it turned out there
had been early on in the planning or the preparation for this exercise, there had been a
message that came down that said there would be no supersonic flight at all in
conjunction with this exercise, and then the week before this incident happened, there had
been, another twix came down that said those supersonic restrictions had been lifted,
which meant you could go supersonic above thirty thousand feet. It didn’t mean you
could go supersonic three thousand feet above Safford, Arizona. So, the sector
commander had, his phone had been ringing off the hook, he had three thousand dollars
in claims, and that was a lot of money back in ’62 had been filed already before noon on Monday.

RV: Broken windows and such?

GJ: Yes, and he wanted to nail my hide to the wall, and he wanted a reprimand to be written and put in my file and the DC chief said nope he wouldn’t do that. So he called me in and chewed me out royally and said “I think I’m going to send you to Interceptor Weapons School.” So they sent me out of town so the sector commander couldn’t get a hold of me. We packed up and went to what was a really great summer, spent one week, I mean one month in Mexico Beach, Florida, and went to school at Tyndall Air Force Base, and then the next two months at Montgomery Air Defense sector, studying advanced techniques for controlling interceptors. There were four intercept directors and our technicians training together getting just intense, intense training, and it was just excellent training.

RV: This is in 1963?

GJ: It was ’63 or ‘64; it must have been ’64.

RV: Okay, so you spent a month there doing that?

GJ: A month in Florida and then two months in Alabama.

RV: Now, it sounds like you were able to get a grasp of this technology and what the tactics were and what your orders were pretty easily.

GJ: Yes, I was good at that. When I got back, I wrote lesson plans for training intercept directors, and I did--I had an aptitude for it. It was interesting to watch guys come in and go into training in that, because at that time, nobody that came in there had any kind of life experience that even remotely prepared them to do what they were doing. You just started out, and you were totally blank. You’d look at the scope and it was just a lot of gibberish blinking in your face, and within three months you got to the place where you could extract information and successfully control interceptors against targets. Some guys would never get it. It just was impossible for them to connect the dots and dashes on the scope with the fact that they were real airplanes out there, and you were running them towards each other. And so guys, the ones that couldn’t do it, would become tracking officers or identification officers because it didn’t require that much of this--I don’t know what you would call it. I think nowadays you would probably find
better than half the kids that came in would be able to do it, because they’re so used to
doing video games and it’s the same kind of thing--to be able to react rapidly and absorb
lots of information and process it rapidly and act. That’s the kind of thing it was, so by
the time I got through Interceptor Weapons School I was real good at it, and then I took
my expert evaluation, that you had to have three years to do an expert evaluation. You
had to control five interceptors against two targets simultaneously. So I did that. The
day I did that, there were not very many expert intercept directors around. And the two at
Phoenix were both senior captains, one of them was the chief of standardization. The
other one was the chief of training. And they gave each other their evaluations each year
because you had to, if you were doing an expert evaluation it had to be an expert giving it
to you. So they gave each other, and it was pretty, and everybody in the whole building
could watch, because we could all tune up our scopes around the room and watch this
thing take place and it was fairly well known they were kind of scratching each other’s
back. Things would go awry and they would still get credit. But when I was getting
ready to do my evaluation, and it was pretty hard to even get five airplanes, five
interceptors airborne at the same time and we had expanded to take over southern
California, that was our secondary duty if Los Angeles got knocked out, we would take
over their area so we were connected to the Los Angeles fighter squadrons and Los
Angeles radar sites and so forth and we were practicing that, we were in that mode one
time. And one of the guys, I realized that they had six interceptors scheduled all at the
same time out of the F-106 squadron over there, so I wrangled him to let me have them
long enough to take an evaluation, so he agreed and I got everything lined up the way I
wanted it and had the target controller to line the targets up like I wanted them, and I
didn’t realize it then but I learned later, people started coming in from the offices, from
the computer programmers downstairs, the room filled up with people to watch this
evaluation. I had practiced this so many times in the simulator that it just went slicker
than anything, and so I got my expert evaluation. I was one of only a handful of
lieutenants in the Air Force that were expert intercept directors.

RV: Now, if I could interrupt, sir, you had at this point decided to go career Air
Force?

GJ: Yes, from the time I was in basic training, I had decided I was going to career.
RV: Wow, why did you decide that?

GJ: Well, I don’t know, I just felt by the time I got through the first few weeks of basic training and had the really rough weeks behind me, and I found it very satisfying. It made me feel good about myself, and the fact that I had qualified for pilot training and I was pretty sure I was going to eventually go to pilot training. I just felt like I had found my right place in life. So I was still feeling that way. The only frustration was that every year I’d apply for pilot training and every year they turned me down.

RV: How did your wife feel about you guys moving around so much?

GJ: She told me when we got married and we went off to Austin that she’d go anywhere in the world with me, she’d live in a grass shack with a dirt floor, but she wasn’t ever going back to the Texas panhandle.

RV: That’s great of her to say for you.

GJ: So yes, she was always ready, willing and able to go wherever. She didn’t mind moving. She said that was a great way to clean house, and she was highly organized. She could have written a book about moving a household. As soon as she knew, as soon as we had orders for a change, she started writing her list, and when she packed she would have things packed so she knew which boxes she needed to unpack immediately so we could get out of temporary housing, into permanent housing right away. It was just, she was a wonder to watch, and she liked to go live in different places, so that aspect worked out well.

RV: So after you received your expert, what happened then?

GJ: Well, I started immediately training for Master of Air Defense, which was a new skill level that hadn’t existed before, and I was going to be the first lieutenant in the Air Force to make it. To do that you had six interceptors and two targets, and then you also had to go down to one of the fighter squadrons and if it was an F-101, that was a two seat fighter, you had to successfully complete an intercept from the back seat of an F-101 as an airborne intercept officer.

RV: Now, for the record, can you describe exactly what you mean by intercepting the target and how you coordinate that?

GJ: Okay, of course what we were training for was in the event of a manned bomber attack against the United States we would send interceptors out to intercept these
bombers as they were coming in and shoot them down. The interceptors at the time had nuclear-armed weapons that they would use to shoot down the bombers. Our job was to control them, and get them into a proper position to fire that weapon. The computer, once you committed an interceptor to a particular target--Let me back up a page. When a radar data trail began to appear, the tracking section would initiate a track on it, and then the computer would begin to track that track. The identification section would determine whether it was friendly or hostile, or for training purposes it would be a faker. Once it was identified as a faker or a hostile, then the intercept director who had interceptors under his control could commit one of his interceptors against the target, and then the computer would begin to calculate an intercept problem and it would give you guidance to take you to a first offset point. Then at the offset point it would turn you in, turn your interceptor in towards the target and if it was a stern attack, there would be a second offset point, which would turn you in behind the target, and they would fire from the stern, that was the optimum attack. So the intercept director’s job was to make sure that the computer was generating a valid intercept solution, and if it wasn't, to intervene and direct the interceptors manually until the computer started solving a valid solution, and then you could turn it over to the computer. The computer would, the F-101 and the F-106 were equipped with data link, which meant that the intercept solution was transmitted through data lines to a transmitter, which transmitted it to the airplane. So the intercept director didn’t have to give instructions. The instructions would be displayed to the pilots and they would just follow those instructions and fly the direction it said to fly, and look for the target to place in the direction it told them to look for the target, and get into position. So that would be--That’s the way it worked in an exercise environment, in what would happen if there had been an attack. These tracks would appear from early warning sources, and then when they got within our radar coverage then a radar data trail would appear. A track would be initiated on it, our interceptors would be scrambled to go out and meet them, and we’d try to knock them out, as far out away from the targets as we could.

RV: So the more interceptors, the more difficulty, challenge, because you had to coordinate, like you said, four, five and than six, this Master’s level.
GJ: That’s right. That was the idea. And a good SAGE intercept director could manage anywhere from twenty to fifty percent more fighters than a comparably experienced manual controller could. So an expert manual controller could do four, and expert SAGE [intercept] controller could do five. On daily training, the situation was a little different because you’d maybe take a T-33 target and two or three or four interceptors, and you’d go into the restricted area with them, and you’d run the target in a racetrack, and what they call bump heads, and just keep running one intercept after another, just to give them maximum intercept training, and that was a lot more difficult because you had to keep them within the confines of that restricted area, and you needed to orchestrate it so you got maximum intercepts.

RV: So you started this Master’s program, and I’m guessing things got--I’m guessing you got accepted to pilot school?

GJ: Yes, that’s what happened. First of all I got ordered to Vietnam as a weapons controller, and so I immediately raised the alarm and said, “If I go to Vietnam and serve a tour over there, I will be too old to enter pilot training when I get back,” so I said, ”It’s time. I’ve done my three years, it’s time to let me go.” Well before that happened, they changed my orders from Vietnam to Thailand, and then almost immediately I got orders to pilot training, back to Lubbock.

RV: First, what did you know about Vietnam, when you got orders, I mean how aware of you what the United States was doing over there?

GJ: Pretty aware at that point. I can remember while I was at Phoenix, the Turner-Joy incident happened.

RV: August ’64.

GJ: Yes, and so I was like most guys my age in my position was gung ho that we would attack, and was glad to see the Navy bombing and was pretty much--By that time I was starting to pay more attention to what was going on in the world because I had some vested interest in what was happening, so I was well aware by that time.

RV: So you had to come back to Lubbock, to Reese?

GJ: Yes.

RV: And I’m sure your wife was thrilled with that.
GJ: Well I think she was glad that I was finally getting into pilot training, because I think I probably would have been unbearable if I hadn’t been able to do that. So I got down there with the intention of being first in my class because I as such a hot shot intercept director, I knew I was going to be a hot shot pilot too. I remember, there were sixty-eight, sixty-seven of us I think in that class, sixty-six, and we all met one day in this big room and I was sitting beside this guy, turned out to be a graduate of University of Texas, so we struck up a conversation and he was kind of an ascetic [aesthetic] type. He was a poet, one thing or another, and they told us that one out of three of us would wash out. I had him pegged as a--He was almost surely going to be a washout. He and I became best friends in pilot training, and I really enjoyed him because he was such an iconoclast and so outspoken, and just had a whole different outlook on things than all the rest of us did, and he was just kind of refreshing. But he was good-natured, and he did have a lot of trouble. His trouble was mainly that he made things harder than they needed to be. He was always trying to analyze what the Air Force was up to instead of just going ahead and doing what they said and saving himself the trouble.

RV: What was his name?

GJ: His name was Spencer McClure.

RV: Okay, so tell me about your first experience as a pilot?

GJ: Well, we started out--We had thirty hours of training in a T-41, which was a Cessna 172 I believe, anyway a small light plane. We rode a bus from Reese out to Abernathy; do you know where Abernathy is?

RV: Yes.

GJ: There was an Abernathy airport, there was a contractor there who had contracted to do the T-41 training, and we went out there for thirty hours of training, I think it took about a month for us to get through that phase. Then we came back to Reese and entered T-37s, which is two seat, side by side, jet trainer, and that was, we did a hundred hours in a T-37, took about, those two together took about six months.

RV: What was it like when you first actually were able to fly?

GJ: It was, you know the training was so intense and the pressure was there to perform, and I was the kind of guy that, when somebody was observing me I really felt tense and felt a lot of stress, wanted to do good. So the opportunity to really enjoy what I
was doing was intermittent. And it was constant performance evaluation, and so it was pretty rare I got to really enjoy it. One of the things I got to enjoy was I went on a--It was a cross country on T-41s. I went from Abernathy up to Lake Meredith, which was just, it was just beginning to fill up, and turn around and come back, so I was going across country that I knew pretty well, and across Palo Duro canyon and that was really very enjoyable. But most of the time it was, there wasn't really time to enjoy it. It was training and satisfaction came in having a good check ride.

RV: Were you adept at flying?

GJ: I was competent at it. I would study the manual, in T-41s I would get a chair, kitchen chair, sit in the kitchen, close my eyes, and visualize the instrument panel and all the maneuvers that we were going to be doing the next day. I would practice them with my hands, reaching for the knob and pushing the knob in, pulling the knob out, rolling the stick, pushing my rudder this way, pushing my rudder that way, so I would get the motor skills down, so I wouldn’t have to think about that, and then I could concentrate on when I actually got in the airplane. Doing it smooth and doing it right. So I did pretty well, my final evaluation was excellent, was an excellent. You could either get excellent, good or fair, or unsatisfactory. So I got an excellent, got a high grade and got me up close to the top of my class right from the start.

RV: Did you want to fly fighters or were you looking at transport planes like you were going to be flying actually?

GJ: Yes, I hadn’t really made that change yet, but when I was younger, if I’d gone into pilot training when I was twenty-three, there was no question I would have tried to get into fighters. By the time I was twenty-six and a half, had two kids, I wasn't as gung ho about flying fighters. Before that year was over with, one of my classmates was a C-130 navigator, and he could not wait until he could get back in a C-130. He loved the C-130, loved the mission, loved everything about it, and couldn’t stop talking about it, and had me pretty well enthused. So some time in that year I transitioned from wanting to be a fighter pilot to wanting to be a C-130 pilot.

RV: So where did you end up ranked in your class?

GJ: At the time that we made our selections, the way the system worked is if you were first in the class you got your first choice of assignments. If you were second, you
got your first choice unless the guy that was first had already taken it. So I was second in
the class at that time. I was second in the class out of T-37, and I was one fourth of a
point behind the guy that was first, and I was going to shoot him down. I kind of went all
to pieces in T-38s, I ran into trouble on the landing. I tried to land too high, think I was
closer to the runway than I was, and I’d round out and start losing air speed, very
dangerous in a T-38. And so I failed to solo at the regular solo time, and then I failed my
second attempt to solo. If I had not been so high in the class standings I probably would
have started the wash out process right there, but they gave me one more flight, and it
was coming up on a Sunday morning, I mean on a Monday morning so Sunday night I
didn’t drink too much, but I had three beers that night so I would go to sleep and sleep all
night and be rested and I did. Slept well; woke up the next morning feeling good, and it
was a bright sunshiny day with not a breath of wind, it was as smooth as can be and I
went out and greased my three landings and soloed, but I was always deviled with that,
and I couldn’t figure out why. One time I’d go out and fly and every landing would be a
grease job and the next time I would go out and I couldn’t get it on the ground. I was a
problem for my instructors. The first instructor I had was from the old school that
believed in yelling and screaming at his students, and he told me later, he said “I believe
that if I put enough stress on you while you’re in training then if I’m not in the plane on
your solo and later in your career, if you have an emergency you’ll be able to function in
an emergency.” Well, that wasn’t a good technique with me; my ability to function in an
emergency was just fine as long as I knew everything I was supposed to do. And if I was
relaxed I could perform well, but if I was uptight and tense I didn’t perform well so that
didn’t help with my basic problem which was a depth perception problem. I dropped
from second to eighth by the time I graduated.

RV: So you were able to choose your assignment coming up.
GJ: Yes.
RV: Okay, this was 1967?
GJ: We graduated in February of ’67, so we were making that selection in the fall
of ’66.
RV: And what was your top choice?
GJ: My top choice was C-130s.
RV: Okay, and could you pick where you wanted to go?
GJ: Not with C-130. It was a C-130 assignment to PacAF (Pacific Air Forces), that was the only place available. Those assignments went pretty high in the class; the top assignments in the class were F-100s. The hot pilots wanted single seat fighters, and the F-100 was usually the only [single seater] available, and there would be six or seven of those available, and they would go high in the class. C-130s went high; B-52s went at the bottom of the class. Most of the class, probably at least half of them or better went into F-4s, in the back seat of F-4s and the hot pilots didn’t want to go in the backset of anything, so they didn’t opt for those, but that was better than a B-52.

RV: Now, did you get your C-130?
GJ: Yes, so I got the C-130, and my friend the navigator got the C-130. There was four or five of us out of Reese, out of that class that went together to the C-130 school. There was a total of eight in that school.

RV: Where was that school?
GJ: Sewart Air Force base, Tennessee. It’s underneath a lake now, out there by Nashville.

RV: How did you like the C-130?
GJ: Well, when I left T-38s, I didn’t have my confidence back yet. I had managed to get through, managed to get my wings but I did not feel confident. C-130 school was in two parts, there was fifty hours of basic C-130 flying, and then there was fifty hours of C-130 tactical training and airdrops and assault landings and stuff. By the time I finished that first fifty hours, I had my confidence back, and I really, really, liked the airplane.

RV: I imagine that having your confidence, or a pilot having his or her confidence played a great role in your success as a pilot.
GJ: Yes. If I hadn’t been able to get that back, I don’t know. I had an awful lot wrapped up in that; my self-esteem and everything. It was a real blow to me that I didn’t finish first in my class, and I was down on myself pretty hard. But after six months of C-130 training I was on my way back, although when I got to my assignment which was at CCK air base in Taiwan, as a green copilot, there was--It was like being new at anything. It was extremely hectic at times, and you might be talking to three different agencies on
the radio at the same time, plus the pilot talking to you and the navigator talking to you
and new to it all. There was a period there where being a new copilot was, it was kind of
hard on my self esteem there too, but copilots are generally regarded as a lower form of
life, so you get used to being treated that way.

RV: Tell me about the C-130, what were it’s outstanding features?
GJ: Well, let’s see, four engine turboprop, and it is I don’t know, thirty percent
overpowered I think. It’s got way more power than it needs just to take off, so we could
take off and climb for, at that time what looked like just an improbably [steep] climb
angle for a big airplane like that. It had a performance, some of the older pilots said, the
performance of a C-130 was comparable to the old T-33 jet trainer, the first jet trainer,
but it would climb about that rate and it cruised about that speed, and it handled, except
you couldn’t do aerobatics in it, but it was very nimble, and the things we did in it were
really a lot of fun. Assault landings were fun, low altitude parachute extractions, and
troop drops and heavy equipment drops, all those things were fun to do. It was a very
reliable airplane, very forgiving kind of airplane. You could lose an engine and that was
nothing to cause your heart rate to increase at all, it just operated very well on three
engines.

RV: So, tell me about getting your orders to go to Vietnam, what was that like?
GJ: Okay, the C-130 assignment to PacAF was, as I said to Taiwan to Ching
Chuan Kang air base, CCK. And from there we flew missions into Vietnam. We would
fly to either Cam Ranh Bay or Tuy Hoa, we had C-130 shuttle operations at those two
bases. Then we would fly throughout Vietnam for sixteen days, and then we’d come
back to Taiwan. Usually bring an airplane back that needed some major maintenance on
it that they couldn’t do in country. Then we’d turn around and go back, anywhere from
two days to two weeks later.

RV: Now, did you know before going to Taiwan that you would be flying into
Vietnam, into a combat zone?
GJ: Yes, but at the C-130 training at Sewart, there were a lot of men there who
had already pulled a tour of duty. So you had people to talk to that could tell you where
you were going, what it was for, and what kind of missions you were going to be flying.

RV: What did they tell you?
GJ: Well, they said it was trash hauling. That’s what we called ourselves were the trash haulers, and you’d be hauling every imaginable kind of cargo, and you’d be hauling it in from the big bases with the long concrete runways and you’d be picking your cargo up there and you’d be taking it out to the short airstrips in the jungle. At that time there had been a few of the hairy missions that become legendary that people talk about, you’d hear about those, but most of it was pretty routine.

RV: So they didn’t really warn you like this is really a dangerous thing, Gary, you need to really be careful or they say this is a routine kind of deal?

GJ: No, we didn’t, you didn’t really hear that kind of talk. It was, “You’re being trained to go do something and you’re going to put your training to use,” and it will be interesting, and it’s a real good assignment for a new pilot because you are going to get lots and lots of flying time, in every kind of weather, day and night, short field, long field, all kinds of terrain, and you’re going to get a crash course in advanced flying. And that’s kind of the way everybody looked at it. You want to be a pilot; you’re going to really get a chance to learn how to fly.

RV: Right, how did you feel personally about going over there and flying and being involved in a war and things like that?

GJ: Well I had kind of ambivalent attitude about it. I was excited at the prospect, it was going to be the big adventure of my life, and I was eagerly looking forward to that but I had been exposed to some anti-war sentiment. One of Lynda’s brothers was real active in anti-war activities, and they kept me supplied with propaganda from that side of the picture, and so by the time that I went over there, I had a pretty thorough exposure to both sides of that question. In fact a friend of mine that had been a C-130 navigator and I, when we were in survival school together, we had some time to talk, and we both kind of questioned whether what we were doing in Vietnam was what we should be doing, and how we were going to react and one thing or another. There wasn’t any question we were going to go. There wasn't any question that we were both looking forward to it, and looking forward to the flying, but we both had some misgivings about the whole situation. By that time we were seeing television shots of burning down hooches and that kind of stuff. I was pretty idealistic, and that didn’t seem to be in keeping with what I
thought American troops did. So I had some feelings about it, but at the same time I was kind of eager to get over there and see for myself.

RV: Did you know or understand what the United States was trying to accomplish in Vietnam?

GJ: Well, I knew what the official line was, that we were trying to establish democracy there, we were trying to preserve the freedom of the South Vietnamese people from the communists who were trying to impose their will, and that we needed to support them and make this possible for them. I was in agreement with that; I thought that was a lofty ideal that we should be doing that. As I learned more about the situation, it wasn't all that simple. There wasn’t any freedom there to begin with, and they, it was a top down kind of authority that was over the people of South Vietnam. The president appointed the district chiefs, who appointed the village chiefs and so on down the line, and nobody was accountable to anybody under them. They were accountable to people above them, so everybody was gouging the guys below them, and there was a considerable amount of our aid being diverted to Swiss bank accounts, all this was becoming more and more evident by then.

RV: Do you remember what your wife’s brother was telling you about the reasons why the United States should not be there?

GJ: Yes, it was—you know this was a popular insurgency, this was not, it was—What we were doing over there was not promoting the ideals that we said we were over there for. It was to preserve the power elite that was there, and keep the status quo, and that we were doing more harm to the people that we were supposed to be there to help, more harm than help to them. That we were lying, our government, our leaders were lying to us about what we were doing and why we were doing it. So, as a result I, despite myself, would be a little bit skeptical about some of the things that we were being told, because I was seeing both sides of it. Something interesting that happened, the year I was in pilot training there was a pilot who was an instructor at the Air Force academy who was assigned to F-100s and refused to go. So this caused a real uproar in the Air Force, and of course it was a subject of a lot of conversation for us that were in pilot training, and he refused to go because he didn’t believe in the cause that we were fighting for. He said send me to Russia, and I’ll be happy to go attack Russia but I’m not going to attack
the people of Vietnam. So, the speculation, we were constantly talking about it--Was he just chicken, he didn’t want to go because he was afraid he was going to get shot or, in my opinion it took a lot more courage to stand up and say I’m not going than it took to go, so I always kind of admired him, his name was Dale Noyd.

RV: What ended up happening to him?

GJ: He was court-martialed. They finally transferred him down to Cannon Air Force Base where he was supposed to go into training. They said, “Okay, we won’t send you to Vietnam, we’re going to make you an instructor pilot.” And they assigned him a student, they said go train him, and he said I will not train [pilots] to go to Vietnam. And so then that was. They court-martialed him for failure to obey a lawful order, and he was sentenced to a year of hard labor, lost his commission, reduction in pay, and I never heard any more about it. A few years ago I did some research and tried to find out what had happened and I got that much. I found some articles and editorials that were written at the time of the court martial, but I don’t know whether he served the year, I don’t know what became of him after that. He was a graduate of Washington State, and at the time, the book I wrote, there’s a character that takes that kind of a stand, and so that’s why I was doing the research, kind of get a better understanding of why he did it and what happened to him when he did it and what the results were.

RV: What kind of effect did that have on you, when you went over there?

GJ: Well it was just something that, I was more observant than I would have been. Most of the people that I was associated with, the guys I flew with, weren’t questioning about this being the right thing to do, or they took the attitude that my country right or wrong, let’s see how does that go, “My country, may she always be right, but my country right or wrong.” So whatever they were ordered to do, that’s what they were going to do. In fact my friend and I, who had this conversation, he told me later, he said he had a lot of misgivings about it, but the way he got over it was he decided that he would just concentrate on the job, and become as good a C-130 pilot as he could and do everything the best he could and not think about whether it was right or wrong. So that was his approach. There was another guy who flew with me for a little bit, he was a younger navigator who, when he got out of navigator school and was supposed to go to McCord Air Force Base to fly to CCK he just didn’t show up, and went in the next day and said,
“I missed my flight, what are you going to do about it?” And they said, “Oh, we’ll just schedule you for a later flight.” Well he did this about three times and figured out they weren’t ever going to arrest him for that, so he flew on over to CCK, went in to see his commander and said, “I don’t believe in what we’re doing, I don’t want to fly combat missions.” He said, he was like a father, sat him down, talked to him and said, “You know the things we do over here are not, we don’t drop bombs, we don’t set things on fire, we don’t blow things up. We haul cargo and we evacuate wounded, we evacuate refuges. Why don’t you just go down there and fly for a little bit and then come back and talk to me.” So he sent him in for a shuttle and he came back, and he said there was nothing he could really stand up to because there was not anything we were doing that he really objected to, and he went ahead and served his year over there and went back and I think he might even have made the Air Force a career after that. It was, it wasn’t something that he could really stand up to; it wasn’t anything he objected to.

RV: Your wife was able to go to Taiwan with you, is that correct?

GJ: Yes, after I had been there, we had discussed it while I was still at Sewart in the C-130 school, and I found out that there were officers that had done that, and we discussed it and she said she was ready, she wanted to do it, but I didn’t feel confident about it. I didn’t know quite how it was done and I didn’t know what the impact would be. I didn’t know how she was going to live. I knew I was going to be gone most of the time. So I decided against it, and she was disappointed in that. When I got over there and I could see guys that were doing it, so I asked her if she would come on over. So she got the girls their shots and got her shots, and they came over. I got there in July; they got there in September.

RV: Tell me about your girls.

GJ: My two daughters at that time, they were three and five, and they were great little girls. They were bright and lots of fun. So this was the adventure of their life, they just didn’t know it. As it turned out I didn’t get assigned to a crew for a couple of months. I’d be on--I’d have to be the duty officer all night one night and I was off all the next day, and then the next day, for the next two days and then the next night I would be duty officer again, that was all I was doing, I was going nuts. There was an excess of copilots and a shortage of pilots, so I couldn’t get assigned to a crew so I just kept doing
that routine and I was going stir crazy. So that’s when I asked Lynda to come over and as
soon as that process got started, then I got put on a crew and sent to Vietnam and I was
due to be back from Vietnam the day before she was due to land in Taipei. So my
aircraft commander went to the scheduling officer and said, “We need to be sure that
Gary gets back in time, so he can be in Taipei to meet his wife.” And the scheduling
officer says, “Well I think I’m just going to keep him an extra few days to teach him
some discipline,” because he was not in favor of dependents being there. That was kind
of one of the reasons that I didn’t bring them over to begin with, because I knew that they
were not officially sanctioned and there was going to be some resentment among some of
the senior officers that thought that was no place for dependents to be. It’s supposed to
be a thirteen month unaccompanied combat tour, didn’t need to be any dependents
around there. And so I figured that might cause problems for me and for her to, but
anyway that’s what the guy said he was going to do, and as it turned out we got back to
Taiwan the day before and I hopped on a train, went up to Taipei, met her plane, brought
them back to Tai Chung, that’s where CCK is, about the middle part of the island. And
got them moved into a house, it was kind of a townhouse type place. Showed her how to
light the charcoal hot water heater and took her down the alley to the street and said,
“You come down here and you stand on this corner and a little red taxi will come up
within two or three minutes, and they’ll take you to the MAAG Officer’s Club where you
can get something to eat, and there’s a typhoon coming and I have to evacuate an
airplane, so I’ve got to leave tonight.” So, I took off and left them and they went through
a typhoon. She said that they were sitting on the bed one night, and she was reading to
them and the lights went out, so they sang some songs for a little while and then finally
one of the girls burst into tears and she said, “Well, what’s the matter?” And she said,
“Why did we come here?” She said, “Well, so we could be with daddy.” “Well, where is
he?” She said, “Well he had to leave.” She says, “I want to go home.” And Lynda said,
she burst into tears too, said, “I want to go home too.” So they weathered that storm and
after that it kind of went up hill, it just got better and better. After three or four months,
they offered to convert them to government sponsored accompanied dependents if I
would volunteer to extend for an extra year, stay for twenty-four months instead of
thirteen. So I jumped on that; that made things better. Then she could get into the
commissary and the PX and she could get in medical facilities. There were, oh probably at that time there were thirty families there, and they got to be very close. We lived in a compound, most of the officers there were on flight status and were gone most of the time, so the women all kind of bucked each other up and watched each other’s kids and went running around the island together. It turned out to be a real good two years.

RV: What did you think of Taiwan?

GJ: Well, I loved Taiwan. It was, it’s beautiful, beautiful place, the people were very friendly and very welcoming. I think within two or three years that attitude changed because there got to be so many Americans there, but at that time we were kind of new, we were a novelty.

RV: This is 1967?

GJ: Yes. By ’69 it was already showing some strains, and I think probably within two or three years after that the strains were pretty severe, but at that time they just, they just couldn’t do enough for you. They would be, they just enjoyed Americans, they liked us.

RV: Did the Taiwanese at all, the ones that you were around, talk about China and their being one China or were they aware of the political situation, the two Chinas and all that?

GJ: No, I didn’t really have that close relations with any of the Chinese. We had An Amah, who did cooking and babysat the kids and one thing or another. She didn’t speak a whole lot of English; she didn’t speak any when we first hired her. Her husband was an officer in the Chinese Air Force, and every Taiwanese was aware of the situation. It was an armed island [camp]. There were machine gun nests about every major intersection and tanks up and down the road frequently. The word was that the mountains were honeycombed with caves and strong points, and if the Chinese communists invaded they would spend fifteen years trying to conquer the island and not be successful. So they were highly, what’s the word I’m looking for--It was a militarized situation, militarized country, but I didn’t have--I didn’t speak Chinese. I was not on the island that much, and didn’t have a chance to talk to them that much.

RV: Right.
RV: How long did it take you to start getting actually in the copilot seat? You said you were there for a couple months doing deskwork before?

GJ: Well I had that one mission where we were in Vietnam and got back just in time to pick up my wife, and it wasn't very long after that that I was assigned to a crew, that their copilot had just finished his tour of duty, went home. The aircraft commander was Lieutenant Colonel Trusty, and that crew had just returned from ferrying Vice President Humphrey around Southeast Asia. He had come on a tour, primarily to Indonesia I guess, and they had been the support, one of the support aircraft for that mission, and that would have been an interesting mission. But I flew with that crew for three or four or five months.

RV: And what was that like?

GJ: Well, as I said, first, well one of the things that was interesting was the first time I copied an air traffic control clearance. We were departing CCK, and the copilot’s job is to call for the clearance and write down the clearance, and it was just total gibberish, I couldn’t understand a word of it, and I looked around and the pilot and the navigator were laughing at me and they said, “This is typical. First time you hear a Chinese controller giving instructions in English, its total gibberish, but after awhile you get to a place you can understand it. But you’re going to have the same thing when you hear a Japanese controller the first time, a Vietnamese controller the first time, a Filipino the first time, a Korean the first time. But after a while you learn to pick them, you can tell which nationality you’re talking to from the accent, and you’ll be able to understand what they’re saying.” So off we went, went from CCK to Okinawa, Na Ha air base Okinawa to pick up cargo, and as we were approaching it [Na Ha] just seemed like every aircraft in the world had converged on there, and was on the radio with us at the same time, and I was just totally snowed under, but the pilot looking very calm negotiated all this and got in the traffic pattern, landed with very little help from me. And it was like that for the first week or two in Vietnam. I didn’t know where things were. I didn’t know how to get a hold of anybody [I didn’t know where] [to task me to what]. I was supposed to be, but the crew was, they were all experienced, and they could have got along, my seat could have been vacant and they would have been okay. But as the weeks passed and I got more and more competent and got more and more comfortable with the
job, and since my aircraft commander was a very experienced, long time C-130 pilot, he
didn’t mind letting me fly the airplane. So I got to fly quite a bit. A lot of copilots that
got assigned to lieutenant colonel aircraft commanders were assigned to guys who had
been flying a desk for the last twenty years, and they were not so confident. They
weren’t confident in their own skills and they would only let the copilot, land, if they
were going to land on a ten thousand foot runway. So, that was kind of frustrating, I had-
-That was a good crew to fly with, and I thoroughly enjoyed them. Colonel Trusty had
dropped paratroopers on Clarkfield at the end of the Second World War, he’d been an
active airlift pilot ever since. So he had lots of good stories and he was fun.

RV: Now how did you negotiate around those problems? Did it take a couple
weeks to kind of get the hang of the language; you said all the traffic in the air and
everything?

GJ: Yes, for example flying into Tan Son Nhut at Saigon, you would be talking to
air traffic control, they’d be giving you air traffic control instructions. You’d get on the
radio at the same time with a GCI site, which is a radar site. That’s where I would have
gone, to one of those if I had not gone to pilot training, and they would provide you
information about other traffic. Mainly what they provided was artillery information. If
the Army was firing artillery in a particular place, they had that information and they
would help you steer clear of that. Plus they, any other tactical information you need to
know would come through then. Then you would also call the airlift control center at
Tan Son Nhut. They were the ones responsible for all the airlifts in the region, and they
were the ones that gave you your mission assignment. In most cases they would divert
you to some other mission in the middle of it that you kept them informed of where you
were and what you were doing, and they would then give you instructions. So you had
all this going on at once, and air traffic control, as you approached Tan Son Nhut, just got
more and more hectic as there were more and more airplanes, and they were vectoring
you around all over the place to get you into traffic, and once you got in traffic you could
see kind of what the problem was because there would be so many airplanes around that
base and they would be everything from supersonic fighters to World War II C-47s, all
trying to jockey around that air space at the same time, everything from four hundred
mile an hour to ninety mile an hour airplan...
real hectic. Just, the first few times in there I had no idea what was going on. I had no
idea where we were, and suddenly I’d look up and there was a field in front of us and
there was a gooney bird crossing our nose, and there was an F-101 on initial, and another
C-130 coming up, and I didn’t see how we kept from running into somebody, but they
kept it all sorted out and it would be our turn, we’d come in and land.

RV: What was your routine like, these missions you flew. You’ve got the orders
out of Taiwan and you would fly cargo in, and just for the record you say in your notes
you made a hundred airlift missions and flew over eight hundred sorties in these two
years, so tell me what a typical mission was like?

GJ: Okay, well we would get into, let’s say Tuy Hoa and we would land there,
after we bring in the airplane, this would be a fresh airplane that had had major
maintenance done on it and it was ready to go.

RV: Was it empty, usually?

GJ: No, usually we would go, most often we would go to Okinawa and pick up
cargo there, and bring it in country because that was an intermediate shipping point, and
we’d get--So we’d bring that in, bring the new airplane in and go into crew rest. At Tuy
Hoa that usually meant you go into a tent for a few nights, so it was an Army tent and had
concrete floors and electric lights. And you’d stay there for a day or two until a hooch
became available. Then you would move over to one of the hooches, which were
concrete floors with louvered sides with shutters that could be lowered in the event of a
typhoon, and bunk beds, two tiered bunk beds and some wall lockers. The flying
consisted of--At Tuy Hoa you started, your first mission was early morning takeoff.
Your crew duty day was ten hours. That meant from the time you reported to pre-flight,
which was three hours before takeoff, until you finished for the day was supposed to be
no more than ten hours. In that seven hours of flying time, you would probably make five
or six flights, and you would leave out of Tuy Hoa with a cargo for someplace, or you
would fly someplace to pick up cargo. Sometimes we’d pick up cargo in Qui Nhơn, that
was a port, and Cam Ranh Bay was of course a port. You’d pick up cargo there and
you’d haul it someplace. Within a typical day you would land on a long, concrete
runway two or three times and you would land out in the jungle, two or three or four
times.
RV: What kind of cargo would you carry?
GJ: Just about anything you can imagine, from shower clogs to potato chips to
beer, to artillery shells to artillery barrels, I think they were 170 millimeter artillery pieces
that we could carry, halftracks, jeeps, troops, passengers. We’d evacuate wounded; we’d
evacuate refugees. We’d evacuate troops and haul troops in. Produce. The town of Da
Lat was about fifty, sixty miles due west of Cam Ranh Bay, and it was in the mountains,
about five thousand foot elevation. A lot of produce was grown around there, pineapples,
lettuce the whole thing. We’d fly in there and load the airplane up completely with
produce and then haul it around to the different bases.

RV: Did you ever evacuate KIAs?
GJ: Yes.
RV: What was that like?
GJ: Well, that was not pleasant. The first time that I did it, the copilot’s job was
statistician, we had this long form that we filled out that had column after column of
information to do with the flight, and for KIAs you used a letter K to indicate you had
KIAs involved and we had fourteen. And at some point in the flight I needed to go to
the, use the urinal, so I started to go to the back and they were laid out in the floor on
litters in body bags, and the body bags were kind of extended from gas, and every little
bump they’d quiver, and the odor was—Oh, it was atrocious. Bathroom deodorant kind
of odor, and I smell it every once in a while, kind of. Canned Lysol smells that way and
it still brings up these images. I was kind of horrified. That was—When you’re flying
you’re insulated from all that, and it doesn’t get—You can fly a whole Air Force career
and then never get close, and that’s the closest it got for me, that and the hauling
wounded. It was just, fourteen. That doesn’t sound like very many, but when you see
them laid out on the floor like that, that’s a lot of bodies, that’s a lot of dead guys.

RV: How about flying wounded, what was that like?
GJ: The first time I did it we had flown into Da Nang and we were stopped to
have cargo unloaded or we were waiting for cargo to be loaded. The navigator and I
went over to the snack bar to get us a sandwich and as we were walking back, there was a
lot of activity going around the airplane, and he recognized that they were getting us
rigged for emergency medical evacuation. So they rigged the airplane up so that litters
could be brought in and stacked on stanchions, as many as we needed. And so we got in
the airplane and jumped in the seat and called for clearance and we took off. We flew up
to Dong Ha, which was marine base just south of the de-militarized zone and it was after
dark when we got there, and we stopped and we left the engines running because they
were under threat of attack, and they loaded--brought the litters on. Of course I was--
Since the engines were running I was in the seat the whole time, so I didn’t, didn’t
observe this. Then one of the nurses came up and told the pilot that they had some head
wounds. When they had head wounds you had to be real careful with the pressurization
because that could make the problem a lot worse, and we had been having pressurization
problems with that airplane all day, so we decided that we would just stay at low level,
not getting higher than three thousand feet all the way back. So we took off in the dark
and flew low level to the beach. It was just a few miles and then turned and flew down
the coast into Da Nang. After we’d landed at Da Nang, shut down the engines and I got
out and watched them. As they, as soon as we landed there were these big ambulance
buses that pulled up to the back of the airplane at the same level as the ramp of the
airplane, and they just carried people directly into the buses. Stood there and watched
them unload for a while. The one that got me was, he was going feet first. They were
carrying him feet first out. There was this muddy boot, muddy fatigue pant leg and then
a bright white bandage around the stump. It was very quiet; nobody was saying anything.
You didn’t hear any moans or anything. It was just very orderly, and there was this
contrast between mud and jungle fatigues and bandages, bright white antiseptic bandages.
After that we--In the two years I flew, I probably did a medical evacuation three or four
times; hauled KIAs maybe three or four times. We had one medical evacuation that was
one man, hauled him from Da Nang to Tan Son Nhut. He had, I guessed stepped on a
mine and it blew one leg and one arm off. They amputated the other arm and the other
leg, and he had a severe stomach wound. So they scheduled one airplane just for him and
took him to Tan Son Nhut. I have no idea, of course you never heard any more, never
knew what happened afterwards. That was part of flying those missions. You’d be in the
middle of something and you never knew how it ended.

RV: That must have been tough for you guys.
GJ: Yes. Fortunately we were very busy, so we didn’t have to dwell on it too much.

RV: Did you ever receive ground fire while you were flying these missions?

GJ: A few times. It was a case of coming in and somebody saying, “Hey, there’s a hole in your wing root.” You’d go out and look at it and say sure enough. We had one mission, kind of a dumb ass aircraft commander, who was real gung ho, real cowboy, and we were flying into this one field and the usual procedure to go into that field was, you would fly up the coast to the mouth of a river, then fly up the river fifteen or twenty miles to this field. But it was shorter to cut across a peninsula, but we didn’t ever do that because it was enemy held, and subject to getting a lot of ground fire if you went that way. Well, it was going to save ten minutes so he decided he would go that way. And we were going fairly low level. When we put the landing gear down, we could hear bullets hitting the airplane, “Bam! Bam!” A couple of them, two or three, and the loadmaster said we’d been hit a couple of times, but nothing major. We landed and discharged or picked up our cargo, whatever it was, and we got ready to take off. We were doing our pre-takeoff checks and my flight instruments were out. And he looked at his, the pilot, and his were out. Well, this just never happens, they’re powered by totally separate systems, they’re supposed to be independent, so if one goes out you’ve always got the other one. Well, they were both out, that was unprecedented. Well it was fortunately a bright, sunshiny day. We were able to fly home without the instruments. We got back to Tuy Hoa and I crawled out of the airplane and crawled up into the nose wheel well, which is. The nose wheel is just directly under the pilots in the C-130, and right under my seat I found a hole, bullet hole. So I told the crew chief about it, and the next day he told me that [they hit between], above the wheel well, the nose wheel well there’s a, its where all the electronics are housed, the platform, its just full of electronic stuff, and that bullet had gone up and it had penetrated a bundle of wires and in that bundle was the wiring to the two instruments. So although they were powered from separate sources, the wires went through that same bundle, and that bundle got clipped and put our instruments out of business. We’d have been in serious trouble if it had been a wetter day.

RV: Did you ever lose any planes from your squadron?
GJ: Yes, our squadron lost several. It was operational accidents, mostly. There was I think maybe one that was suspected it was enemy action, it was shot down. Our hazards were operational hazards, I didn’t worry too much about the Vietcong, I worried about the Army. They had helicopters operating all their airfields, and they didn’t seem to have any kind of air traffic control about them at all, so you were always concerned about them getting in your way. There was army artillery flying all over the place, and then there were short runways and dark runways and bad weather and hazardous cargos, those were our hazards. And periodically somebody would lose control in a bad crosswind on a short runway, and the next time you went into that field there would be this pile of burned rubble and a tail sticking up out of it. Tails never burned but everything else did.

RV: Why is that?

GJ: I don’t know. They’d put the fire out and the tail would not be--It was far away from the fuel and it was kind of sticking up; it just didn’t burn. So you would find tails of C-130s sticking up beside the runway at ten or fifteen different fields, as time went on there was more and more of them.

RV: Did you know any of the men who were killed in these wrecks?

GJ: One of the guys I went to the C-130 school with. His was kind of a sad case. He was another navigator who went to pilot training, he was a single guy, and he fell in love, got married while he was at pilot training. While we were going through C-130 school his wife was pregnant. So when we, the rest of left to go to Taiwan, they kept him behind for a month, six weeks until the baby was born, and then he came over. So where I had been for the first couple of months, couldn’t beg, borrow or steal a trip as a copilot he was assigned immediately to a crew and immediately went to Vietnam. And it was probably their second day, they were making air drops at Khe Sanh, and the way they were doing it, the weather was socked in, so they were flying GCA approach, Ground Control Radar Approach to the runway, and then they would level off, drop altitude above the runway and then drop on the runway. For whatever reason, they went through the GCA minimums and hit the end of the runway. Everybody on the flight was killed except for the pilot. He was the only survivor. The guy I knew was the copilot on the mission. Then another guy I knew who was--When you upgraded from copilot to aircraft
commander, they would send you in country as a new aircraft commander with an experienced aircraft commander flying with you, and you’d take turns being pilot and copilot, and the guy that I went in, made that mission with, called it the Cherry mission, he was an instructor pilot, and he was killed in a crash at Tainan on Taiwan. He was giving some instrument training and they had a pitch lock prop, which just meant the prop went out of control; they couldn’t control it. And they were not able to control the airplane. They fought it around the traffic pattern but they couldn’t keep it from turning. It finally turned upside down and they crashed. I think that’s the only two, to my knowledge, that I knew.

RV: The thought of crashing, the thought of being shot at, how did you deal with all that?

GJ: Well, I think if you thought it could happen to you, you probably would find some way to get out of doing it. I saw this happen in pilot training with a couple of guys, they’re doing fine, they’re going through pilot training, and suddenly you see that its occurred to them that they could get killed doing this, and something scared them. Something must have happened that made them feel vulnerable, and they would find a way to wash out then after that. I think, that’s the way you would do if you felt like it could possibly happen to you. You’d find some way to get your end of it done quick and get out. But most pilots, about every pilot I ever knew was just, it might happen to somebody else but it can’t happen to me. So when you got, when you armed with that kind of armor, that’s not one of the things you worry about. So the things that stressed me were making right decisions, going the right place at the right time, not landing at the wrong field, not putting on too much fuel or not enough fuel or running out of fuel, or running afoul of some regulation somewhere.

RV: How long were those missions, you said there were two-week missions, is that correct?

GJ: Sixteen days, we were supposed to be in country sixteen days. Most of the time that would get extended for one or two or three days, and then we’d go home. For those of us that had a wife at home, it was different than the ones whose wife was back in the States and it was thirteen months before they were going to go home. We would get,
to say the anticipation was building the last week would be an understatement. It was
like; I think seventeen honeymoons in twenty-four months.

RV: Every time you came back?

GJ: Yes. And the way the women would work it was, I’d get back, and the
neighbor across the street, her husband would be gone so she would take the girls, and
she’d go spend a day or two with them, they’d go do all kinds of stuff and have all kinds
of fun, and we had the time to ourselves and then when I was gone, her husband came
back, Lynda would do the same. When I was gone Lynda would go--I bought her a
sports car, a Datsun Fair Lady, and she and a friend would get in that and they’d drive all
over that island. This was before they had English language signs up anywhere, and they
just, they’d get them a map that had English and Chinese place names on it, they’d head
down the road when they got to an intersection they didn’t know which way to go, they
would stop and people would just gather around them and they’d point where they
wanted to go and there would be a confab about which direction they should go, and
finally there would be a consensus, they’d point one direction and off they’d go again.
And so they’d see all these neat places like this giant Buddha in Changhua, and the
feather flower factory and the lacquer factory where they did lacquer ware. The neater
places then Lynda would take me when I got home. Sometimes I’d be home a week, two
weeks, and sometimes I would be home, there was one time it was twenty-four hours.
Landed one evening, and was airborne again twenty-four hours after that. From Tet, I
was there for Tet in 1968, and for the first six months of that year I was home I think
nineteen days.

RV: Wow. What was that like, you guys were probably extremely busy.

GJ: You mean at home or on the other end?

RV: On the other end.

RV: Well you can talk about both actually.

GJ: Yes flying was, it was very busy, especially during Tet it was hectic. They
activated some C-130 squadrons in the States and brought them back over; people who
were at the end of their thirteen-month tour got extended, and got extended again. And
where we were supposed to fly ten-hour crew days, it was extended to twelve and you
had to call--In fact it was just automatically extended to twelve. You had to call for
permission to extend beyond twelve and permission was always granted. So we just kept
flying longer and longer missions. As I started to tell you about Tuy Hoa, your first
mission would be an early morning mission, next day you’d take off an hour later and the
next day you’d take off an hour after that and eventually you get the place where you’re
flying late into the evening. When you started flying night flights and sleeping during the
day, they would move you from the hooch into air-conditioned quarters, and I can’t
remember, this was, Tuy Hoa was one hundred percent CCK operation, Cam Ranh Bay
had pilots from or crews from the Philippines and I think Okinawa as well as CCK. Tuy
Hoa was kind of a club. That was our people, and it was--We enjoyed that mission
better. But we’d get up to where we were flying all night and then after Tet, with the end
of fourteen, fifteen-hour day, you’d be exhausted, and this would go on day after day
after day. And so exhaustion got to be one of the hazards we had to deal with, and you’d
read articles from the flight surgeon saying these are the effects of fatigue, and this is
what you need to watch for, and you need to get rest and commanders need to schedule
you so you can get rest. But commanders kept scheduling us to fly. Sooner or later
somebody would have a crash, and then it would be his fault. There would be an
investigation, and there would be letters posted on the bulletin boards that aircraft
commanders were supposed to evaluate the situation and evaluate the condition of their
crew and not fly into a situation from which they could not recover, and if they did it was
their fault. That always irritated me.

RV: Were you carrying more ammunition after Tet or was it basically the same
stuff, but just more missions?
GJ: I would say yes we probably did. We probably carried more small arms,
more flares, more troops that were going into combat situations.

RV: Did you ever, I’m sorry go ahead.
GJ: No, go ahead.

RV: Did you ever interact with those troops that you were carrying?
GJ: Not usually, particularly after that time--When we landed in a remote airfield,
we kept the engines running, so we were sitting in the seat and they were on board and
off board, so there wasn’t much interaction from my point of view. I think the
loadmasters in the back were—They interacted with them quite a bit. I think to the troops
to the troops we were just a bus service, and not a particularly comfortable one.

RV: Right. I’ve actually talked to a few veterans who loathed C-130s, and they
would say that the pressure, they weren’t used to flying, and the pressure would hurt
them, and these were people who really had never flown before, so, and they just had a
hard time dealing with that. How many people were on your crew?

GJ: We had a crew of five; it would be an aircraft commander and a copilot, flight
engineer, a navigator and a loadmaster. If we were doing airdrops it would be two load
masters.

RV: What, describe an airdrop to me, what would you do?

GJ: Well, there were various types of air drop but on a typical air drop that we did
in Vietnam was called a CDS or container delivery system where you would approach
over the drop zone at five or six hundred feet and open the ramp and door, open the ramp
and door and these containers were stacked on small pallets, and at the appropriate
moment you would accelerate and pull the nose up and they’d slide out the back and
there was just about time enough for the parachutes to open and they would hit the
ground, and it would be for small arms and rations and stuff like that. To do that you
would, this would be a planned mission, there would be an IP or initial point, and you get
the initial point and you would open the ramp and door, slow down to the proper speed,
descend to the proper drop altitude and when you got over the drop zone, which
frequently was an airfield that you couldn’t land on because it was surrounded or
something and then you would pull up and drop the containers and close everything up
and accelerate.

RV: And the containers were attached to parachutes?

GJ: Yes, there was, static lines were connected so as soon as they cleared the
airplane the ripcord was pulled. I didn’t do a whole lot of drops. The Distinguished
Flying Cross I got was for airdrops that we did, dropping gasoline.

RV: Tell me about that.

GJ: Well, I was copilot and I think the name of the place was Cao Lanh, and it
was in the Delta and it was a Special Forces camp, and they couldn’t get fuel in by the
road so we were air dropping it to them. There was, I think we were third of four ships
going in for the first mission, and the first drop was uneventful, we flew back to Bien
Hoa and landed and got on another load. Second time through, that’s when we were
third. First airplane reported a little bit of ground fire and the second one reported a little
bit of ground fire, and we got a little bit of ground fire, and the fourth one through; they
got hosed down good. They just, the got shot up pretty good. Didn’t do any particular
damage, they just had lots of holes in the airplane when they got back. I was going to tell
you about a drop mission that I wasn't on, but I heard about. I can’t remember what I was
going to tell you, it will come to me in a minute.

RV: What do you think was the most common cargo that you carried?
GJ: That would be hard to say because we carried troops with their equipment a
lot, we carried small arms ammunition a lot. We carried, there was a scheduled
passenger run where they had the airplanes rigged with sling seats, and you went, just
like an airline. So we carried a lot of passengers. It would be hard to say what the most
common was.

RV: Did you ever carry any famous people?
GJ: A famous reporter, it wasn’t Morley Safer.
RV: Dan Rather?
GJ: No, he wasn’t that famous, but it was a guy who at the time was equally well
known as Morley Safer, I can’t remember his name right now but he was with us one
time.

RV: Was it Peter Arnett?
GJ: No, it would have been before Peter Arnett’s time I think, I think he may have
been in Vietnam, I don’t know.

RV: He was there.
GJ: Was he.
RV: Yes, sir.
GJ: Nope, it wasn’t him.

RV: But no one else besides this guy?
GJ: No. Our squadron had the mission of hauling the Bob Hope group around
when they were in Vietnam, but they always used single guys for that operation so I
never was assigned to that.
RV: Why did they use single guys for that?
GJ: Too many beautiful girls. They stayed in Bangkok and they’d pick them up early in the morning, fly them into Vietnam and then get them back in the evening, and it was always real, real late. The guys that flew those mission; the girls were exhausted by the time they got back on the airplane. They didn’t want to do anything but sleep, so it was exhausting for them. The guys didn’t know how they could go out and perform after doing this day after day after day, and then having to end it all with a C-130 flight for three or four hours back to Bangkok. So I was always pretty impressed with them. I hauled a bunch of prisoners one time.
RV: Did you really?
GJ: Yes, it was kind of interesting, we were parked at Da Nang, and the airplane in front of us was loading North Vietnamese prisoners, now these were in uniforms, short pants and shower clog type sandals, but they were uniforms, and they each had an ID card wrapped around his neck and they had bags over their heads, and they were wired together at the wrist and they would--No they weren’t. They were individuals, singles, and they’d take them in the airplane, up on the ramp, one at a time, take their hood off, look at their ID, identify them, make sure that they guy they were looking at, I assume this is what they were doing, doing an ID check on them. Half the time they would bring him back out, put him back in line and it took them about an hour to load fifteen or twenty guys. We were kind of fascinated with this procedure. Later that day we flew into Cu Chi, is that the city down in the Delta?
RV: Yes, just north of Saigon, kind of north, north and due west of Saigon.
GJ: Okay, so it wasn’t Cu Chi it was on down, farther down south in the Delta.
RV: Can Tho?
GJ: Can Tho. We were flying into Can Tho, and they told us we were picking up prisoners, they wanted to know how many we could carry. They said they had 150 Vietcong prisoners and we were restricted, we were not supposed to carry more than 125 Vietnamese, this was using combat loading techniques, so we said well we can only carry 125. They said well, we’ll discuss it with you when you get on the ground. So we landed, taxied over to where they told us to taxi, and an officer came up, he said okay here’s the deal, we got two guards that can travel with these guys, if you take 150 the guards go
with them, if you only take the guards have got to stay with the twenty-five that are left behind, you don’t have any guards then. What kind of deal is this?

RV: That kind of made, that’s tough.

GJ: So it didn’t take us very long to make that decision. So we said okay, well bring them on. And somebody whistled and I never saw so many people in my life, they were out there in the weeds and they stood up all at the same time, and they started bringing them in. They kept them standing and they just kept packing them in, packing them in, packing them in. Got all 150 in there and we closed the ramp and the door and then they could kind of scatter and sit on the ramp, sit on the door, but that plane was just packed full of people. Some of them were dressed in slacks and sport shirts, some of them in black pajamas, some of them were in, I think there were a few that were in uniform.

RV: Did they have hoods on?

GJ: Nope, nobody had hoods. I think these were the group that were wired at the wrist in pairs. We flew them from there to Phu Quoc which is out in the Gulf of Siam, Gulf of Thailand, an island, which was where their prisoner of war camp was.

RV: Was that the most interesting cargo you hauled?

GJ: That probably was the most interesting, I didn’t haul any elephants, some of the guys, sometimes there were a few elephants that were hauled. There was, I don’t know in your interviews if you’ve talked to anybody who was at Kham Duc the day they did an emergency evacuation of Kham Duc.

RV: No.

GJ: Well one guy in my squadron, or crew in my squadron was, and the way I first heard about it, I was assigned [to a crew] as a copilot to fly, to replace the regular copilot that was in the hospital with malaria, and we flew to Thailand and were flying missions out of Udorn, Thailand. And one evening I went to dinner with the navigator and he asked me about moving my family to Taiwan, and I told him what I’d done to do that, and he was wanting to bring his family. He said, “I’m a little reluctant to do that because if something happens to me while I’m over here,” and he had just been there for a month or so “then my wife is ten thousand miles from home and doesn’t know anybody and that just would be bad thing.” And I said, “Well, yes that would, but I’ve been flying
here nearly a year and I haven’t even been badly frightened, so I don’t think that is really anything you should base your decision on.” And he said, “Well, let me tell you a story.” And a few weeks before when this crew was on their first in-country shuttle mission, second day, they were flying northbound off the coast, making a routine cargo haul, and they were told to divert into Chu Lai and rig for a combat evacuation, and in that case you get everything out of the airplane, you put empty cargo pallets on the floor to provide smooth seating space, and you run cargo straps back and forth from wall to wall and that is the seating restraint for people seated on the floor. You get maximum people on board doing it that way. So they did. They landed and they rigged, and they were told that they were going to Kham Duc, which was about sixty miles west of Chu Lai on the Cambodian border; maybe it’s the Laotian border. So anyway they said when they got airborne they looked over that direction and they didn’t need any nav aids because they could see the smoke and they flew on over there and they arrived about ten thousand feet above and tried to contact the combat control team. There always was supposed to be a combat control team controlling traffic if there were C-130s going to be operating on the field, and they couldn’t raise the combat control team, they could see helicopters burning on the ground on both sides of the runway, and there was a C-130 on the ground and it was taxiing into position to take off, it taxied down to the south end of the runway and backed up and back and forth and back and forth until it got turned around, backed all the way to the end, big cloud of red dust as it ran the engines up and then took off. They got a mile off the end of the runway, and the right wing exploded and it turned upside down and crashed. Then it was their turn to go in. So they circled down right over the field as best they could, steep as they could, the fighters were following, making gun passes and bombing passes on all side of it. The sky was just full of airplanes and about a quarter of a mile out on the approach a rocket skipped across the runway in front of them, they landed, got stopped, pulled over into the cargo area and there were about eighty troops huddled against this red bank, embankment, red dirt embankment, and while they were loading, this navigator was telling me this, said he was standing behind the copilot looking out the window, said there was a squad of North Vietnamese at the perimeter wire with wire cutters, and then an A1E Skyraider would make a gun pass, these guys would run off into the woods, as soon as he was gone, as soon as the plane was gone.
they’d come back and they’d keep cutting wire. Mortars were going off all around them; rockets were flying over their heads. They got everybody on board and took off, that was the last of the group and they got them out of there. Flew back to Chu Lai and landed while the troops were getting off, they were on the radio reporting in to Tan Son Nhut and filling out their paperwork. When they got finished they got off the airplane and all these troops were by that time loaded in trucks and they let out this great cheer when the crew got off. Somebody had taken some black spray paint and written down the side of the airplane, lucky duc, spelled D-U-C, the same way as Kham Duc, and nobody--They didn’t ever paint that airplane as long as I was in Vietnam. I flew it several times, it was Lucky Duc, we knew which one that was. Shortly after that I started my upgrade training to aircraft commander, and my instructor pilot had spent that day on the cargo ramp at Da Nang loaded with small arms ammunition ready to make an air drop. If they had made the decision to try to hold the field that night, they would have flown in right at dark and made an air drop to get them some ammunition, so they were grateful the decision was made to evacuate, so they didn’t have to go in and do that.

RV: So this guy told you the story, he said, “No, I am thinking about something happening to me.”

GJ: I said, “Well, you know, the year I’ve been here I haven’t heard a story even close to being as hairy as that, and I think you will probably be able to go another year without having to do anything like that again.” So he went ahead and brought his family over.

RV: Do you know if he made it through?

GJ: Yes. He, well, he extended for an extra year, and he was still there when I left, so I didn’t hear otherwise anyway.

RV: Inside your plane, did you guys up there in the cockpit, could you turn around and look back into your cargo bay, was there anything separating you from the cargo bay?

GJ: Yes, there was a bulkhead between the cargo bay and mounted on the bulkhead there were two bunks. The lower bunk was a place where a couple people could sit during flight, had seat belts and everything. To the right, the right hand side was the navigator’s station. The flight engineer, he was elevated about a foot above the pilots, he
was in between the pilots and behind them. The stair down to the cargo area was on the left side.

RV: How much cargo could you carry, what was your tonnage?

GJ: The number that sticks in my mind was thirty thousand pounds, that was pretty much a full load for a typical Vietnam mission. We had, we took off heavier out at Udorn. When we were flying out of Udorn we were doing airborne command and control center missions, we had a communications pod in the back, and we’d fly these fourteen-hour racetrack patterns and they were controlling--From the back they were controlling air strikes into the north. When we took off we had a full load of fuel and that thing in the back and we took off with 160,000 pounds as I remember, which was slightly above emergency war orders maximum takeoff weight, so we had to have a waiver to take off every time. Most of the time we weighed 130,000 pounds when we landed on an assault runway.

RV: Can you describe to me your tactics about approaching a runway, how you would actually come in and land?

GJ: We called it a PacAF random steep approach, PacAF being Pacific Air Forces, and the object was you approached the field from five thousand feet or higher elevation, and then you just circled down as steep as you could go. What you’d do, you’d slow down at altitude, you’d lower the gear, you’d lower the flaps, get a hundred percent flap, slow down to final approach speed, and then drop the nose and come down just as steep as it would come down, the heavier you were the steeper you could come down. The object was, you would finally roll out on final approach about half a mile or so off the end of the runway, transition into a normal approach angle. Touchdown zone was painted on the runway. It was like a twelve inch wide white stripe that was painted across the approach end one hundred feet up from the approach end and then another one five hundred feet from the approach end. So you have this four hundred foot touchdown zone. If you touched down before the first one, you were supposed to add power and make a go-around, if you touched down after the second one you were supposed to add power and go around. So you would hit between those stripes, you’d immediately drop the nose gear, the pilot would switch his hand over to the nose wheel steering wheel, the
copilot would control the ailerons to keep the wings level, reverse the props, maximum
anti-skip breaking and bring it to a stop.

RV: And taking off what would you do?

GJ: Taking off you’d back up as close to the end of the runway as you could get, and [then run in] full power with brakes locked and check your instruments, be sure everything was okay. Then release the brakes, accelerate to the max effort take off speed which was faster than normal takeoff speed and then you would haul the nose up to a twenty degree nose up, until you had cleared any obstacles, and then you would lower the nose, accelerate to, I believe it was 145 knots, climb speed and raise your gear, get the flaps up to fifty percent, and that was about the maximum speed climb you could make.

RV: What was your, go ahead?

GJ: And if you were in an area where it was necessary you would turn ands keep close to the field all the way until you got above small arms range.

RV: What was your max, or I guess your average cruising speed?

GJ: En route as I remember it was in the 280 to 300 knot range, and I don’t remember what that came out in true air speed. We would cruise in Vietnam, if we were going any distance we would get up around fifteen thousand feet. The latter year I was there, most of the time there was just a haze, a yellow smoky haze everywhere when you were up at fifteen thousand feet it was like a blanket under you. You get down in it and visibility was restricted. In the two years I was there, my first impressions of Vietnam were that it was just incredibly beautiful from the air. I mean the greens just so vivid you couldn’t believe it, and at the coastline it was brilliant blue and then the azure and then the white beaches and then the brilliant green. The longer I was there, the more that changed. There was heavy defoliation operations going on and lots of B-52 strikes, they’d left a trail of white blotches across the countryside, and you knew that each one of those holes was big enough for a home in the suburbs. A whole lot of it was being paved for airstrips. All the major roads were completely cleared out for a mile on each side, and it just, and the fires and smoke and everything, they would just, kind of sad watching that happen. You knew we were just destroying that environment.

RV: What was the hardest place for you to fly into?
GJ: We had several pretty hairy places to go into. There was one called Bao Loc which was across the back of a ridge, across the backbone of a ridge, and it was a steep approach, you’d come in and down into this kind of a canyon, gorge, and then you’d have to add power and climb and you’d be climbing when you touched down. Then you go up over the backbone of the ridge and down the other side. Watching this from the cargo area which was right at the middle of the runway, right at the ridge, you’d see a C-130 come in and they would go completely out of sight before they touched down, the forty foot high tail and everything was gone, and then they came roaring up the hill with all this red dust billowing behind them and they’d roar past and then they’d roar down the other side and they would go completely out of sight down the other side before they got stopped, it was tail and everything disappeared and then here they’d come rolling back up, taxiing back up after a while [the runway was built at the foot of a mountain]. That one was an interesting on to get into. Han Khe was built headed into a mountain. So you landed with this mountain in front of you, and again you had to be climbing pretty good before you hit the runway or you’d hit too hard. That made it--If you had to go around you had an interesting problem there, because you had the mountain in front of you. There was just a lot runways that were so narrow that your outboard props were swinging over the dirt when you were in the middle of the runway. There was one Dong Zwai, that was a highway that they had commandeered and turned into a landing strip, landing on this, it was paved high way, they cleared the trees away from it for a quarter of a mile on each side and we’d land on that. Qui Nonh was interesting to get into because it was a fairly short runway, it was right on the edge of the water and you had to approach, you had to drive right at the mountain, and when it looked like you were about to hit the mountain, you’d make a sharp turn and that would get you angled towards the runway and you’d continue on that course until you could make another sharp turn that lined you up on the runway. Then the crosswinds off of those mountains would just start dancing you around all over the place. That was always interesting.

RV: Did you ever have any close calls, landing?

GJ: I guess the closest call was on a takeoff one time out of Tan Son Nhut and taking off, climbing out and I was setting the power on the throttles, and took a little bit longer than I should have to do that, and when I looked up my copilot yelled and pushed
the yoke forward, there was a little blue light airplane sailing right over our heads that we just came very near hitting. It was an Air America airplane. We never did almost lose one on a landing

RV: Was that your closest call in the air?
GJ: Probably the closest call in my entire flying career that was.
RV: Really?
GJ: Yes. I had one in pilot training that was; do you know what the corealis effect is?
RV: I’ve heard of it, yes sir.
GJ: Well, it was the, you just feel completely out of control with your equilibrium and it was my first night solo mission. It was an out and back mission; we flew down to Fort Worth to Carswell Air Force Base in the afternoon and then we flew back at night. And coming back into Reese, it was dark and I came in on initial and pitched out, at Reese, it was out there in cattle country, so off to my west it was just total black, there was no horizon that night, no stars, it was just total black. To the left was all the bright lights of the airfield, so as I was pitching out to the right, about halfway around my turn I glanced into my rearview mirrors. T-38’s got two rear view mirrors up at the top of the windscreen, one on the left, one on the right. So my body was rolling to the right and all these bright lights were going the opposite direction in the mirrors, and I just went head over heels, I felt physically like I was tumbling. So I instantly went on my instruments and it instantly went away. So I finished my turn, did a touch and go landing, came back out on initial again, telling myself the whole time I will not look in those mirrors, I will not look in those mirrors, and I couldn’t keep from looking in the mirrors. I pitched out again, I did the same thing again. Soon as I got on my instruments it only took an instant and I was back under control again and well, that time I did a full stop landing and I didn’t try that again, but that is the wildest physical sensation I’ve had of just physically feeling like I was tumbling through space.

RV: Did anything like that happen over in Vietnam?
GJ: No, nothing like that happened.
RV: Gary, what contact did you have with Vietnamese civilians?
GJ: Almost none. I never got off base I think except one time in Saigon, and that was in the early part of my tour.

RV: What was your impression of Saigon and the folks that you were around there?

GJ: Well, it was just like one evening anywhere in the world I guess. There’s not enough time to really learn much, just went to a hotel, went somewhere and ate and went to bed. My impression of Saigon was not much different than my impression of Taichung, Taiwan.

RV: So you found them pretty similar?

GJ: Yes in that they were--There was a lot of activity a lot of people, a lot of motorcycles and bicycles and kind of, neither seemed to be very prosperous, but then they didn’t seem to be poverty stricken either, it was kind of in between.

RV: Did you have any contact with the indigenous military forces in Vietnam, the ARVN or the Air Force?

GJ: No, the only contact would be when we loaded some on our airplane and took them someplace, and there really wasn’t any contact there either.

RV: Did you ever see any tension between the career military, the lifers, versus the draftees?

GJ: Well there was a lot of humor, a lot of comments from one toward the other. From my observation I didn’t see a lot of tension between them, no. Most of the guys on an aircrew, enlisted people on an aircrew were usually career.

RV: Right, and I take it you probably did not take any R & Rs because you were able to go back home to your wife and everything.

GJ: That’s correct.

RV: Were you ever offered any R & Rs to take?

GJ: No, that wasn't part of our package.

RV: Okay, did you ever attend any USO shows?

GJ: Yes, there were USO shows pretty regularly at Cam Ranh Bay and Tuy Hoa, plus there was other entertainment, groups were traveling that were not sponsored by the USO, I don’t really remember quite what their sponsorship was but there was other entertainment besides USO.
RV: Kind of like the Filipino music groups and things like that?
GJ: Yes, and there were some American groups that traveled. I don’t know whether they were on their own hook or whether there was some agency that sponsored them too.

RV: Did you feel like the C-130 performed like you thought it would, once you were in the combat zone?
GJ: Yes, that was just a wonderful airplane to be in that environment, it was just, it was forgiving, it would take a lot of punishment, a lot of damage, and it would forgive mistakes in judgment. I think as the years go by, I remember it more fondly.

RV: So the only experiences you had with combat were basically being shot at by small arms fire?
GJ: That’s correct.

RV: That was it. You never encountered any enemy forces besides that?
GJ: No.

RV: How many times did you fly into Laos or Cambodia, I know you said you were at Udorn, Thailand for awhile, is that when you were flying over Laos when you described earlier, when I was asking about the weight, the tonnage you could carry in the airplane?
GJ: We flew across Laos, any time we were flying into Thailand we went across Laos, but I never landed in Laos. The closest I would have come would have been Nakhom Phanom air base in northeastern Thailand, just across the river, and then we would fly over Laos on the AB triple C mission, we’d orbit over Laos. Never went to Cambodia or over Cambodia. We also had shuttles in Bangkok. That was kind of a plum deal, if you could get a Bangkok shuttle and I probably got more than my share, I think I got four and a lot of guys felt lucky to get one in their one year tour. Flying out of Bangkok you had a sixteen-hour crew day, and it was pretty grueling and a lot of guys after they did it once were not really interested in doing it again, but I always enjoyed it because Bangkok is Bangkok--good places to eat, sleep in a bed that didn’t have a lot of sand in it. I took my wife to Bangkok close to the end of our tour, spent a week.

RV: How did y’all like that?
GJ: We enjoyed it. We had a baby while we were over there. She had a baby in a missionary hospital in Chunghua, Taiwan.

RV: Wow, was it a girl or boy?

GJ: Another girl. That was quite an adventure. Most of the women that were going to have a baby, they would go up to the Navy hospital in Taipei to have the baby and they had to go up there thirty days before their due date and check into the hospital and live there until they delivered, and Lynda wasn’t going to do that and leave her two girls at home so she scouted around, found a Presbyterian Missionary Hospital about thirty miles from Taichung, went in and talked to the obstetrician who was an English lady who had delivered, I can’t remember how many thousands of babies, so they made arrangements to do that, to check in there, and since my schedule was as unreliable as it was, we decided we would schedule the delivery. They decided on a certain date they would induce labor, and then I could tell my scheduling people when I would be available to fly, but the baby had her own ideas so they started, induced labor on Tuesday and the baby wasn’t born until Saturday night at ten o’clock, so that was along, long ordeal. And now Lynda calls our daughter every year five days before her birthday to remind her that’s when she went into labor. Incidentally that was Lynda that answered the phone, she works for me here.

RV: Oh, really. Okay. Let me ask you about something that you described in your questionnaire, what was the bravest action that you witnessed while flying in Vietnam?

GJ: Bravest action I witnessed.

RV: You talked about an incident in May 1968, the evacuation of some Army troops from Kham Duc, was that what you described to me earlier?

GJ: Yes, that was that. That was part of an operation, there were a number of incidents, there was one Congressional Medal of Honor that came out of that, the crew I was describing, the aircraft commander got an Air Force Cross, there was, if you, sometime in your investigations that’s worth pursuing with somebody because it was quite a day.

RV: That was Kham Duc?

GJ: Kham Duc, K-H-A-M D-U-C.
RV: May 1968?

GJ: Right. So like I said, most of what I observed, what I was involved in was, it was a routine day to day operations and there were a lot of hazards associated with it but it wasn’t, it wasn’t combat hazards particularly.

RV: Right. This incident that you describe in your questionnaire, you mention it was one of your classmates from your C-130 school and this is his first mission as a newly upgraded aircraft commander.

GJ: Yes, Pat Hatch.

RV: Yes, what happened there?

GJ: Well, Pat was a, he was a natural pilot. He was pretty phenomenal. By the time he was, had had--The rule was you had to have a thousand hours in the C-130 before you could upgrade to aircraft commander. For most of us that meant we flew a thousand hours and then we started upgrade training. Well they started Pat early because he was so good, so that when he reached a thousand hours they upgraded him immediately, and in most cases when a lieutenant, when a first lieutenant upgraded to aircraft commander, he continued to fly as a copilot until he was a captain, but with Pat they gave him a crew right off the bat and it was, they referred to it around the squadron as the great American experiment. And he had a second lieutenant copilot and a second lieutenant navigator and an experienced flight engineer and loadmaster. I think it was their first mission as a crew, on their own, that they were either approaching or taking off from a field over there north of, is Tay Ninh in, west of Saigon.

RV: Yes, west and slightly to the north.

GJ: Tay Ninh, then that’s the city that’s got kind of a big mountain.

RV: The Black Mountain.

GJ: The Black Mountain stands out by it, okay. They were north of there somewhere, and it happened, I was flying that day and I was doing an air drop, I can’t remember if it was the one I described to you earlier, it was another air drop mission but we were in formation and we were flying along and we heard on emergency channel a rescue operation getting set up. There was a C-130 that was on fire that was headed for Tay Ninh, and they were trying to get helicopters to cover the ground in case they crash landed and fighters to cover them, so we were kind of intrigued in listening to this. I had
no idea it was anybody I knew flying it. But they had taken a lot of small arms fire in the
wings and it had ruptured the fuel tank and they had a wing fire, so they headed for Tay
Ninh, that was the closest field that had any kind of runway length and also had crash
crews capability. They lost hydraulic power to the, from the left side, and that meant
they couldn’t lower the landing gear by hydraulic so they sent the flight engineer to the
back and he had to crank down the landing gear. He could only get the gear down on one
side, he couldn’t get the landing gear down on the other side because it was jammed, and
by this time they were approaching the field, so Pat called him back to the seat, get ready
for landing. They were going to land with gear down on one side and up on the other,
left wing was blazing furiously and he got it on the ground, got it on, and held it off and
held it off and when he finally let the left side down, that wing fell off or burned away.
So they slid along the runway for several thousand feet, the cargo was black powder, they
had about five thousand pounds of black powder in the back, so as soon as they slid to a
halt everybody jumped out and got away from it and I guess it burned all the way down
to the tail. But the flight engineer who had twenty to thirty years flying experience said it
was the best piece of flying he ever saw, said there weren’t very many pilots that would
have got that airplane to the ground safely.

RV: What in your opinion made a good pilot?

GJ: Well, a good pilot had to be confident, had to have the training, had to have
all of the technical skills, and then didn’t overreact, keep calm, needed to be aware of his
surroundings, his situation, be aware of--In Vietnam I thought it was especially important
to be aware of your limitations, and be aware of the fact that your limitations could
change from one day to the next. Fatigue, you needed to allow a little bit more allowance
if you were fatigued, give yourself, don’t take on quite as much cargo because you might
be getting real close to your limits when you’re landing on the next runway. You need to
give yourself a few hundred more feet by leaving off a few thousand pounds, thing like
that. I think a pilot needed to exercise that kind of judgment.

RV: Is that all?

GJ: Yes, the skill part of it, by the time the lowest guy in the class got through
pilot training he was skilled, he was a good pilot. From that point on, your judgment
counted more for, or was more of a differentiator. As a copilot I liked flying with an
aircraft commander that was confident. You could feel it when you were with one who
was not confident, and it always made me a little nervous.

RV: Did you try to demonstrate that confidence outwardly to your crew when you
were upgraded to commander?

GJ: Yes, I did. I consciously tried to project that. It wasn't totally an act, because
I did feel confident, for a couple reasons. One of them is, like I told that other guy, that
navigator that time, I didn’t have an incident when I was badly scared the whole time I
was over there, and it was like that. I don’t know, I don’t remember now whether I’ve
told you this, the story about my first trip into Vietnam, and how when we were two
hours out from Da Nang we called for approach instructions into Da Nang and they said
Da Nang was under fire.

RV: No, you didn’t.

GJ: And it turned out, well we had started out, we were an hour later [that night]
getting off the ground at CCK, we were delayed an [another] hour at Na Ha, Okinawa,
and then we were two hours [late and when we were two hours] out [of Da Nang] we
called for landing instructions and Da Nang was under fire, so we diverted and went
somewhere else. It was at that time the most damaging attack on an American facility of
the war. I think it was 125 million dollars worth of airplanes were damaged or destroyed.

One C-130 was damaged and two or three others were, I mean one was destroyed and
two or three others were damaged on the ramp where we would have been if we had been
on schedule. That was the story of my life. I kept a little diary or just a log of the day’s
activities through the two years I was there, and this just happened over and over again.

I’d be five minutes out for landing in a field and they’d come under fire so I’d divert and
go someplace else, or I would be just after takeoff, wheels up and they would call, they
were under attack. I flew back and forth one night between a field that was called
English Field and Qui Nonh, and every time we landed in Qui Nonh they were just
coming out of the bunkers because they had just been attacked again, and we landed in
there I think three times that night and they had just finished having an attack every time.

And this kind of stuff happened over and over again, one time my copilot was asking me
what we would do, we were sitting out in the ground somewhere out in the boonies with
the engines running and he said, “What if we had a mortar attack while we’re sitting
here?” So we went through the process we would follow and I said, “But I don’t think
that’s ever going to happen, it just doesn’t happen when I’m around, those things happen
after I leave or before I get there.” And I got the place where I just expected that that’s
what was going to happen.

RV: Do you think that was just pure luck, pure chance?

GJ: I did when I first got there, but by the time I was finished from there I no
longer believed that, I believed I had an angel or something, because there were guys that
were just the opposite. If there was a hot mission with lots of battle damage then there
were some guys that were always close to one of those. I was out of country the evening
that the Tet Offensive broke, and I was out for two or three days and I was back in, so I
missed that. The biggest air drop of the war was in the A Shau Valley, I went home to
Taiwan on a Friday, they had I think thirty C-130s did air drops at A Shau on Saturday,
one of them was shot down and one had to crash land on an abandoned air strip and
several others got battle damage, they were firing thirty-seven millimeter anti-aircraft
guns down from the mountain, down at them while they were on their runs. I was back in
there on Monday. I would have, if I had been there I would have been flying in that one,
and you know things like that just kept happening over and over again, over and over
again I was scheduled to go into Khe Sanh and diverted somewhere else. One time at
Tuy Hoa, there were eleven missions scheduled, ten of them were scheduled to go into
Khe Sanh at some time during the day, and we were the only ones that were not. So I got
to be a little spiritual at that point.

RV: Had you not been before?

GJ: Definitely not, just the opposite.

RV: How much contact did you have with your parents while you were there?

GJ: Just letters, once a month maybe.

RV: Did you write Lynda while you were?

GJ: Yes, we had a regular, we had regular mail running back and forth because
there was a plane leaving for Taiwan just about every day, maybe two or three, so mail
service was pretty good between CCK and Cam Ranh Bay, so I’d write her several times
a week. We had a lot of free time to do that.

RV: Tell me about your free time, what would you do, how did you use it up?
GJ: Well, there were, we’d go to the officer’s club and drink, write letters. There were places to go, they were quiet, get under an air conditioner you write a letter. One thing that I really enjoyed that they had both places in Vietnam was a place where you could go in, they had records and they had tape recorders where you could pick out a record you wanted and tape record it on seven inch reel to reel tape recorders, and so I brought home a collection of all the music I wanted, and while you were doing that you could sit there and write letters. That was as nice respite. Both places, Tuy Hoa and Cam Ranh Bay both had nice beaches. Cam Ranh Bay had a beautiful beach, Tuy Hoa’s was kind of coarse sand and was not as nice, but it was a beach. Movies, both places had movie theaters, and I hear a C-130 going over right now.

RV: Do you really?
GJ: Yes, I can.
RV: You can tell it.
GJ: I can pick it out of anything else, yes, its just kind of the way the whole earth just vibrates well one is going over. Yes, there’s a National Guard base down here at New Orleans somewhere, get one every once in a while across here.

RV: How does that make you feel when you hear that?
GJ: Well it just makes me feel good, I enjoyed it. There was a good many years when I got real nostalgic about it. I had an opportunity to get into the Reserves about a year after I got out, I was just getting started on that first attempt at a book, and I finally decided not to sign up and for five, six years after that there were moments I regretted it. By the time I left Vietnam I was pretty much disillusioned with what we were doing. Didn’t want to have any part of it. I finished out my Air Force tour at Pope Air Force base, became an instructor pilot there, enjoyed doing that, but when my five years were up I got out.

RV: Before we get to how you felt in your post-Vietnam days, let me ask you a couple of other questions about Vietnam itself. What did you think of media coverage of the war, while you were there and then since?
GJ: Well all we saw was the *Stars and Stripes* and there was one other newspaper that was military affiliated newspaper, so that’s what we got. That was the view as seen by the military and as censored by the military. I, my first copilot was kind of like me, he
had, was kind of skeptical of our motives and what we were doing, and he found a couple of books that I read, one of them was Bernard Fall’s *Street Without Joy*, and *Hell in a very small Place* and that gave me a slant on it that I had not had on, kind of like we were making the same mistakes as the French had made, only maybe worse, and there was a book by a Marine Lieutenant Colonel, can’t remember the name of it but he was criticizing the way the war was being run from Saigon. But what I knew about what was happening stateside, I think maybe I was subscribing to *Newsweek* at the time, must have been because I was getting some, and I was not one of those who felt like reporters who were reporting the bad side of the war were doing a disservice. I thought that was probably something that we all needed to know, and later I read David Halberstam’s book, *The Best and Brightest*, where he talked about how the reporters in Saigon were going into the briefing at MACV every morning and then they went to the bar every evening and filed whatever report they’d been given at MACV until some of the more junior officers that were out in the field with the Vietnamese said, you know you need to be getting out in the field, seeing what’s really happening, and so they started to do that and that’s when the reporting started turning a little bit sour. I always thought that was probably a service that needed to be done.

RV: What did you think of the leadership in Vietnam, I guess starting with your immediate commander, supervisors, and then on up the chain?

GJ: The squadron commander we had most of the time I was there I thought was really, really good. We were kind of in a unique situation; we were away from home so much that we didn’t really have a lot of dealing with our staff at home. One thing I loved about flying C-130s was you were out on your own, kind of autonomous a good bit of the time. When we were in Vietnam we were under the operational control of commanders there and they had different priorities. Where our commander at CCK was responsible to deliver us in good health and properly trained and safe, the commander in country was not responsible for that, he was responsible for getting missions hacked, and so he was less concerned about whether we did it safely, unless we screwed up and had an accident and that reflected badly on him and we’d hear about that. But we were mainly pressured to make our takeoff time, on time takeoffs I think is what they were graded on. That’s kind of a tough question, I, at the time, felt like that it was bureaucratic, it was top down,
everybody in the chain of command was looking to please the guy above him in the chain of command and cover his ass, so if there anything that went awry, it was the guys down at our level that were going to catch the flak for it. That was one of my major peeves when I left the Air Force and that first book I wrote kind of dealt with that, that attitude that they pushed us and they pushed us and they pushed us, but if anybody landed short or ran off the runway boy, the letters from the commanders all up the line clear up to the commander of Seventh Air Force would be on the bulletin board, saying how we told you don’t, you’re responsible for not getting into those situations. I still have a lot of resentment about that. Well, anyway.

RV: What about the leadership in the United States?
GJ: Political leadership?
RV: Yes, sir.
GJ: Well I had gone from being an enthusiastic supporter to being anti-war, having anti-war feelings, and I thought just about everything we were doing in that regard was wrong. When I was back in the States and flying out of Pope, at one time we hauled troops into Washington to have them there because there was a big anti-war demonstration getting ready to happen, there were riots in the streets in Detroit and Los Angeles and other places, and something was wrong. We were almost at civil war in the country. I’ve got a lot more balanced view now than I had at the time, but at the time I thought we were just being insane, and our leaders were isolated and were not getting the real information from the field because it was being distorted and we were not doing smart things, we were not doing the right things.

RV: When you finally were able to leave Southeast Asia, come back and work at Pope in North Carolina, did you have any problems transitioning to the United States again, back to American lifestyle and then I guess subsequently two years after that, into a civilian life?
GJ: Nope, I didn’t really have a lot of difficulty making that transition, not that I remember.
RV: Okay, do you feel like you’d suffered from any post-traumatic stress disorder from your service there in Southeast Asia?
GJ: No, I don’t. For one thing, the service itself was not that stressful. I’m kind of ambivalent about it, always was kind of ambivalent about it. Probably the two most enjoyable years of my life up to that point; I just thoroughly enjoyed the flying, I enjoyed the back and forth between home and going to war every two weeks, and just but my attitude about the war I was in was, steadily got more and more negative. And so, no there was no post-traumatic stress disorder for me. It was, whatever frustrations I had I worked them out when I wrote that first book. It was therapy, that’s about all it amounted to.

RV: You’re referring to The Trash Haulers?

GJ: Yes.

RV: Is it a fiction account or is a non-fiction?

GJ: Yes, it was fiction, loosely based on, well no not on me, but based, it was a character that was much like me; I’ll put it that way.

RV: Okay. When you got back to the United States, did you follow what was happening in Vietnam and the United States policy? This was, you came back in ’69 and we started the Vietnamization policy a year or so after you get back, did you follow that at all?

GJ: Yes, I did and while I thought Vietnamization was a good idea, but we didn’t really do it, or I guess we didn’t do it successfully. Things didn’t end over there the way I thought they would. I would have predicted that it was going to end up into decades long civil war, just guerilla war with us being the guerillas or our side being the guerillas. I didn’t expect that Saigon would collapse immediately like it did.

RV: How did you feel on April 1975 when that happened?

GJ: Well, I felt, I was kind of shocked and surprised, and I felt a lot of regret for all of those Vietnamese who had helped us who I figured were in for a bad time. Many of them, those were the people I felt bad for all along, they were the ones that had the least control over what was happening to them and they were the ones who got the brunt of it, if they supported us.

RV: Even though it was their own country?
GJ: Yes. Yes, we were tearing up their country. If they didn’t help us we would
punish them. If they did help us the communists would punish them, and all they really
wanted was to raise rice and be left alone.

RV: Did you feel like they were capable, the South Vietnamese, capable of
successfully defending their country from North Vietnam?

GJ: Well, I think I thought that they would have done it better than they did. I
think I underestimated how quick the political leadership would collapse. Well, I don’t
know that I was that surprised come to think about it. They were, my feeling was that
they didn’t have much to fight for. That they were being abused by their leaders and they
were going to be abused by the communists, and they weren’t being paid--Talking about
soldiers now, they were frequently not being paid, they were just kind of cannon fodder,
so I guess I wasn’t surprised when they collapsed.

RV: As far as the United States withdrawal from Vietnam, it was said to have
been done, peace with honor, do you think the United States achieved peace with honor?

GJ: No, because I don’t think on the whole our whole operation in Vietnam was
honorable, and the collapse and evacuation was just that much less so. Now that I’m
older I don’t know what I would have done any different, I don’t know if I had been in a
position of responsibility at the time, I got a little bit better idea what it’s like to be
responsible and try to make things happen when nothing works. Another thing I have
had, years later that I’ve reflected on is that after we left the NVA went into Cambodia
and cleaned out Pol Pot, ran the Khmer Rouge out of power, which I think was a good
thing and then they didn’t do anything else, and I think that they were exhausted, I think
that the years of fighting the Americans had exhausted them and they didn’t have the
stomach for any more war. I think if we had not fought them in Vietnam the way we did,
and they had had all that pent up energy and all the ambition that they have, I think they
would have overrun Cambodia and Laos and threatened Thailand, and we would have
ended up having to fight for Thailand, so looking that in retrospect, I’m not sure that we
did the wrong thing. At the time I felt like it was wrong and immoral and contrary to our
ideals, right down the list, but looking at it thirty years later I’m not so sure about that.

RV: Do you think the United States learned any lessons?
GJ: I think a lot of Americans learned a lot of individual lessons, some of them were probably the wrong ones, but I’m not sure the lessons that we get out of Vietnam are lessons that we can apply. I think we did for many years, and probably it was, there may have been times we should have been willing to use military force that we didn’t just because of the legacy of Vietnam.

RV: What do you think was the most significant thing that you learned while you served there?

GJ: Well, I would have to say that it would be personal things, like I learned how I can function under stress, or at least when I was that age I could operate under stress. I could do complex tasks. So my feeling about myself improved during those years. I don’t know that I learned any life lessons out of it.

RV: Thirty-three years after your service ended in Southeast Asia, how do you think your life has been most affected by the war?

GJ: If it hadn’t been for the war, I probably would have continued an Air Force career.

RV: Really?

GJ: Yes.

RV: You got out nine years into your service, right?

GJ: Yes.

RV: And what made you get out instead of waiting for your ten-year mark or further?

GJ: Well it was, the feeling that as long as I was wearing the blue suit I was a volunteer to go anywhere, drop anything on anybody any time I was told, and I did not feel that, I didn’t feel like I could escape the moral consequences of that by saying, well I was ordered to do it, it wasn’t up to me. As long as I, if I stayed in the Air Force I was volunteering to go do that, and at that time I didn’t trust that my government would always use me in a way that I could support morally. So, that was one reason, that wasn't the only reason, but that was probably the driving thing. Then there were the other reasons that people get out of the service, the family separation, the stresses and just get fed up with military bull shit, add all those together, I decided I couldn’t take another eleven years of it.
RV: So your life was most affected basically, if it wasn’t for that you would have been in the Air Force?

GJ: Yes, I would have gone a different direction, and then the other thing it it’s kind of a touchstone. Sixty-three years old and that two years in Vietnam is still probably the most intense memory that I’ve got, most intense activity I’ve had. Can I put you on hold for a second and answer this phone.

RV: Of course. Okay, go ahead. We were talking about your change of career if it had not been for the war.

GJ: Yes, and how it affected my life since then. I didn’t come back with any wounds, psychic or otherwise, and my life just kind of went on. I didn’t–Well I dropped out, that’s really what I did, right after I got out of the Air Force. I dropped out and went up in the mountains and became a horse shoer and wrote that first book, and when I got that done and then I went back to work and spent the next twenty years as a roofing contractor, and did ordinary things, raised a family, got them through college, had some pretty good times, because I enjoyed what I did. In the early years I had some regrets that I was not still flying, but I don’t have those any more. But anyway I can look back over the years and the years that are still most vivid in my memory were the two years I was flying in Southeast Asia.

RV: What do you think about Vietnam today?

GJ: Well from what I read, that’s not one that I keep real close track of, but I’m glad to see that we’re–We have trade relations with them now, we’re kind of normalizing things. Every once in a while I’ll read about some veteran who has gone back to Vietnam to revisit something and I think that’s always a good thing. What was the program, oh no it was the book, the book, We Were Soldiers Once and Young, which involved some of the adversaries on both sides of that battle reminiscing about it. I think that’s good, that needs to get healed.

RV: Would you ever want to go back?

GJ: Yes, I would like to go back, yes.

RV: What would you do?

RV: Well, I’d like to go to Kham Duc; I’d like to see what’s there. The airplane that was shot down at Kham Duc was full of Vietnamese refugees, and I wonder if it, if
that is, if there is any kind of memorial, what have the Vietnamese done about that?

These were obviously American sympathizers, so have they just let the jungle take that
over or is there any kind of commemoration of that, I’d like to go to that place. My
experiences were not on the ground. There’s not any particular place that I want to go to,
other than I’d just like to see that historically, but I’d like to get an airplane and fly
around. It used to be I could find my way from any spot in Vietnam to any other spot just
almost instinctively, in the air. I’d like to just go see that country again from the air, and
just kind of see how things are.

RV: Have you had much contact with Vietnamese in the United States?

RV: A little bit, limited. There is one fellow in particular I remember. He was an
engineer at the Pantex plant near Amarillo. It’s the final assembly point for nuclear
weapons. A friend of mine--We lived in Amarillo for awhile, and a friend of mine was
visiting, and this guy was with him, and we didn’t particularly get on the subject of
Vietnam but it got started somehow and boy, the personality change that came over this
guy was amazing. He is still carrying a lot of anger and hostility over that whole
situation, and I think he had escaped with his family when he was young, and his hatred
for the communists, its palpable. The guy was ready to deliver a nuclear weapon on them
any day. I was reading something in the Los Angeles Times on the web just in the last
few days about the newspapers in Los Angeles, Vietnamese language newspapers and
their anti-communist rhetoric that’s very, very strong, and trying to keep that community
ready to go to war, go back and retake the homeland. So I think maybe those guys are
probably affected by the war thirty years after more than most Americans.

RV: Have you ever been to the Wall in Washington?

GJ: Yes.

RV: What was that experience like for you?

GJ: Well, that was pretty emotional. As far as I know nobody I know is listed
there because the people I know who died, well I take it back, I know one guy who would
have been considered a combat loss, but anyway it was emotional none the less. It had
greater impact on me than I had expected that it would, hard to explain, but you go there and you understand why it has such an impact on people.

RV: Did you go alone?

GJ: No, I was with my family.

RV: Are there any good books that you read on Vietnam, or have read on Vietnam?

GJ: I haven’t read any in a long time, and that one I just mentioned I thought was a good one. In the first ten years afterwards I read The Best and the Brightest and Fire on the Lake, two or three others, I read all of Bernard Fall’s books. I haven’t read any recently.

RV: How about movies on Vietnam, do you see Vietnam movies?

GJ: Yes, that’s kind of the same thing. I haven’t seen the movie on We Were Soldiers Once, I saw Platoon, seemed very realistic, and again that was, I don’t have any personal experience of that end of it, so it seemed realistic, Full Metal Jacket, Apocalypse Now.

RV: What do you think of those movies; does it bother you to see them?

GJ: No. I’m not bothered by them. And again I think that’s because my experience was insulated by fifteen thousand feet of air space. I have some acquaintances, some friends, people I went to high school with, one was an infantry captain and another one was a Marine officer, and they’ve got very intense feelings about that. Incidentally, it’s kind of interesting, they have kind of the same attitude I have about it, which surprised me because I found myself in a very distinct minority most of the time, but these two guys ended up kind of feeling the same way I did before they were finished.

RV: Did you ever take part in any of the anti-war movements, in the rallies?

GJ: No, I never did. I considered joining the Vietnam Veterans against the war, but I thought that it was more important to write that book, and I think maybe that was a way of avoiding doing that. My conscience told me I should but I didn’t have the courage to do it.

RV: Do you regret that now?

GJ: What’s that?
RV: Do you regret that today?

GJ: No, I don’t because for, I guess for several reasons, one of them I don’t think I needed to disrupt my family that way, and I think some of their tactics and some of their stances were not any closer to being mine than the pro-war people. I’d say from all of that, I’ve got a tolerance of both points of view.

RV: What would you tell young people today about the Vietnam War?

GJ: Well, tell them one thing is you’ve got to be careful about believing your own propaganda. You need to educate yourself. You need to listen to both sides, and the louder the rhetoric around you, the more you need to be looking to hear the other side. I guess the thing I would tell a young person, and this applies through life is, in this life you make your choices and you enjoy the consequences. So sometimes you’ve got to make a choice and there are going to be consequences, and that’s kind of what life’s about, is accepting the consequences and making the best of it. So we had choices to make at that time, in those years and probably more than most generations the consequences were life changing.

RV: How do your daughters feel about your service in Vietnam?

GJ: My daughters have never been as interested in history and what was going as I was. They enjoyed listening to some of my war stories, and they’re kind of—Well one of my granddaughters, [my daughter sent a letter that she wrote], wants me to come to her school on Veterans Day and talk to her class.

RV: What age group?

GJ: She’s third grade I think, she lives in Kansas City. I think they’re—That’s history to them, they don’t remember that period and they don’t remember me during that period very much, and so I’m kind of a historical character. I was at this place and I think probably by the time they were studying history in high school and college, it wasn’t yet history but it wasn’t still current events, it was kind of in a limbo there, and they don’t know too much about it.

RV: Are you going to go do it?

GJ: It was not possible for me to do it this year. Someday I’d like to do that if the invitation is still there. I’m not sure what I’d tell third graders.
RV: Yes, that might be a difficult crowd. You said, you mentioned when you were, had some down time on the bases that you would go in and record some of the music. Today when you hear particular songs or musical groups, does it take you back to Vietnam?

GJ: Oh, it really does. I was a Petula Clark fan in those days, and just about any of her songs, when I hear one of them it takes me back to that era, one hundred percent. There’s a few others one those tapes that I’ve listened to through the years that really does, kind of like my uncle’s generation is taken back by the big band [sound].

RV: Any songs in particular?

GJ: No. Downtown, Don’t Sleep on the Subway, what’s that one, Detroit City, We’ve Got to Get out of this Place, if it’s the last thing we ever do. Every time that song was played at the Officer’s Club everybody joined in at the top of their voice. There was one other that was popular in those years that kind of expressed the, I want to go home attitude; I can’t remember what it is right now. Any time I hear that one I think of Cam Ranh Bay.

RV: Well, Gary is there anything else that you’d like to add to our conversation today?

GJ: Nope, that’s pretty exhaustive interview, I think we about covered everything that I’ve got. Its always kind of enjoyable to reminisce.

RV: Well, we really appreciate your time, and we’ll go ahead and conclude the interview now. Thank you sir.

GJ: Okay, thank you.