

ATTENTION: © Copyright The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. All materials cited must be attributed to the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.

**Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Edward Miller
Conducted by Stephen Maxner
August 25, 2000
Transcribed by Tammi Lyon**

NOTE: Text included in brackets [] is information that was added by the narrator after reviewing the original transcript. Therefore, this information is not included in the audio version of the interview.

1 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner, conducting an oral history interview with
2 Mr. Edward P. Miller, Jr. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr. Miller is in Ft. Walton
3 Beach, Florida. It is the 25th of August, year 2000 at approximately 11:10 Lubbock time.
4 Mr. Miller, would you please begin by giving a brief biographical sketch of yourself?

5 Edward Miller: Right. My name is Edward P. Miller, Jr. I was born on January
6 27, 1949 in Levnin, Pennsylvania. I moved to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida when I was
7 approximately three years old so we arrived in Ft. Lauderdale around 1952 and I was
8 raised in Ft. Lauderdale and went through all of my schooling in the local area. I was
9 very active as a youth in sports and football and baseball with our high school. I went to
10 Plantation High School and was the first graduating class out of there in 1967. In 1966
11 the football team which has had some history of why it started was when the football
12 team, we played the state championship final game, the Class A championship which we
13 lost. But, I was hoping to go to college with a scholarship but the scholarship fell
14 through and so I was demoralized in the spring of about 1967 so I started pursuing the
15 military, checking into the military. Well of course this Vietnam issue was very active
16 and high strung at the time so I picked up on the Air Force at that time and enrolled, took
17 the test and enrolled with my buddy who played on the football team also and we signed
18 up for the Air Force, but there was a long waiting list and because of my AQE scores I
19 tried to enter the Air Force under electronics and he was going to mechanics. Well, the

1 recruiter didn't have very many of those positions open for the electronics and he's going
2 on the old buddy system we called it back then so we had to wait and we waited and
3 waited all the way through summer and finally he did get a position open up and I did
4 enroll in Broward Junior College and attended class for about two weeks because it didn't
5 look like at the time the draft was very heavy and going quick, so even though I was on
6 the waiting list for the Air Force I could have been drafted so I was concerned about
7 making sure I got into the Air Force. So anyhow, after I did get the position to go in the
8 Air Force and given an induction date, I started on September 25th was sign in and Miami
9 was the recruiting station in Miami, so I of course withdrew from school and proceeded
10 in. So when we got to the recruit there this was sort of this strange thing. After I took
11 oath, my buddy Jim Work...his name was Jim Workman and they took me inside and
12 told me that I was going to Amarillo instead of Lackland with Jim. Well, I was a little
13 perturbed. I didn't know any reason why I was being diverted but I found out later after I
14 got through basic training and then I made a complaint. They had changed...there was
15 supposed to be spinal meningitis at that time at Lackland and they were required to divert
16 so many people, so what they did, they changed me there. They changed me to my
17 administration field which I stayed in through my whole career later on. So anyway, I
18 went through my normal basic training and then went on to...I was given direct duty
19 because I did have a high admin score, I had a 95 in administration and AQE and 90 in
20 electronics. But, like I said, I was really looking for something for my education and
21 looking for something really important. Anyhow, administration was something that I
22 stayed into really. I have a unique career in the Air Force being in administration. I was
23 given direct duty to Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts which was a SAC base.
24 It was an arc light support base for Southeast Asia. So, I arrived there on station
25 September '67 and then the following fall of September '68 I was on my first arc light
26 deployment which I was assigned to Guam with the 99th Bomb Wing Westover Air Force
27 Base I was assigned to the 99th Bomb Wing and I was in the headquarters group. I
28 worked for the deputy commander of maintenance at the time and I was in reports
29 analysis which I quickly picked up on the data collection, stuff like that, and key punch
30 and that was the beginning part of computers and data cards and so forth. So, I did all the
31 punching and so forth for the maintenance records and the aircraft. But anyhow, I was on

1 Guam and then typhoon evaced. I got to go out a few times and so forth but it was a six
2 month duty and it was sort of unique. The B-52s were very active. I worked with the
3 main permanent duty people there at Anderson Air Force Base and I was sort of left off.
4 I was not worked with my regular unit; I didn't see too much of my regular unit guys and
5 so forth. Everyday I worked right up in the flight lines and stuff like that ad we could
6 always...I was right in the middle of all the takeoff and so forth like that. SAC was not a
7 very pleasant experience and everybody told me that if I wanted to continue, to get out of
8 SAC, the only way to do it was to volunteer. I had put a volunteer sheet in for Southeast
9 Asia, Vietnam, or Thailand before I left. So, fortunately when I returned, that assignment
10 was from September of '68 and returned back in March of '69, and when I returned I had
11 the orders waiting for a classified location. So, they didn't tell me, they just said,
12 "Classified pass code," and then finally I did find out that it was supposed to be NKP,
13 Thailand at that time. So, I had special training required en route at Hamilton Air Force
14 Base. It was weapons training. I proceeded on with that assignment and it was so
15 strange. SAC had put me in...before, this is what sort of again...SAC was
16 administration. The DCM, they had taken special clearance forms for me and put me in
17 for expanded background and I had heard rumored but I had nothing confirmed that they
18 were going to probably move me from the maintenance administration to the mountain
19 sight which was headquarters Air Force, the East Coast command. That's why I had
20 special clearances cleared. Anyhow, the clearance then was granted so I thought that's
21 why I got the assignment to NKP but apparently things were still working or so forth like
22 that with the assignment package, but I went on over to NKP, Nakhon Phanom as I keep
23 saying NKP, I'm so used to it, I'm sorry.

24 SM: That's quite alright. NKP is fine.

25 EM: So anyhow, I proceeded on NKP and I left my assignment date for call on
26 the 1st of July. I left California. The week prior to it I had TDY like for training at
27 Hamilton Air Force Base and most of the guys, most of the people that went training to
28 Thailand or Vietnam got M-16 training right there at the local base, but since they said I
29 was going to this classified place, which was they made it more than it was, NKP
30 apparently was very hush-hush at the time being right on the border and so forth, but at
31 the training it was just a little bit different. It was a week long, we trained on our grenade

1 launcher, and I think it as a .30 caliber machine gun type. I can't remember a lot of this
2 stuff, we don't remember too much. We had a whole week there and we learned how to
3 throw grenades, we did some self defense and stuff like that. It was almost like going
4 through...it was like combat training basically. It was on NKP and another thing that I
5 think sort of changed or wasn't supposed to happen for me, when we landed right at
6 Nakhon Phanom, I was on the...we called it the [?], C-130 and so forth, and while the
7 aircraft was taxiing, one of the guys jumped on with jungle fatigues and stuff like that
8 and I forget if he was our tech or master sergeant, but he says, "How many of you guys
9 are admin type on this plane?" and says, "Admin?" I raised my hand and I think I was the
10 only one, and he said, "When this thing stops, you come with me. So, I was Shanghaied I
11 believe! Then they found out...they took me right up on a jeep and all that and got me
12 processed and they says, "He's going to wing headquarters." So I was assigned right off
13 the bat to wing and I don't even know exactly where I'm supposed to go in the first place
14 with the pass code. But anyhow, because of my experience when they found out that I
15 was keypunch qualified and that I had worked so much with the maintenance and the
16 O26 I believe it was keypunch, they were in the process of changing over to a more up to
17 date flight records, the form five for the air crews. That was where every pilot and every
18 crew member had to log in their forms and kept their personal flight lessons of where
19 they flew, what type of mission, stuff like that, so they sent me...I was assigned to that
20 section. What I did basically was change all their records over to a computer type listing
21 and so forth like that.

22 SM: Let's take a step back real quick.

23 EM: Okay, I was going to say I might be getting too far ahead for you.

24 SM: No, this is good. Now prior to actually enlisting in the Air Force, how much
25 was Vietnam discussed amongst you and your friends?

26 EM: It was a major topic in our area at the time. We had, in my class, I think we
27 had...when a lot of guys like me found out how fast they were going to be drafted, a lot
28 of them were joining and stuff like that. The neighborhood I came from was in the
29 middle to upper middle class neighborhood so a lot of them had colleges paid for and
30 stuff like that, they didn't have to worry about it, but if you weren't in college or 4F at the
31 time, you got drafted pretty quick, as soon as you got out of high school or so forth like

1 that. But at the time in south Florida, I don't remember so much the protest, its just we
2 remember now that there was...all I remember now, the way we recall it was
3 Vietnam...the chances of coming home were against you in other words.

4 SM: And this is in the Ft. Lauderdale area?

5 EM: Ft. Lauderdale; actually Plantation. It was the new area on the western side
6 of Lauderdale. But, the Vietnam War was not looked on very favorably at all by my
7 fellow students and stuff like that. It was talked among the guys especially about making
8 sure you would be in college or whatever or something like that to keep yourself from
9 going.

10 SM: Did you have any family members that were either prior military or had
11 served in other wars?

12 EM: My two uncles were in the Navy. My father was in the Korean and he was
13 National Guard, and because of all the sons like that he was just about ready to be
14 shipped to Korea when the war ceased. He was in the National Guard and he was a shore
15 battalion type. But my other two uncles, they'd come home in the Port Everglades and I
16 remember my uncle, he'd come home in uniform and a lot of times he'd stay with us and
17 so forth like that. They were still from Pennsylvania basically so when he'd come and
18 joined the Navy. I had some exposure to the Navy, and also at the time when I was a kid
19 I remember, this is funny, I think it was called NAS Ft. Lauderdale, I think it was a Naval
20 air station where the famous A-1s I think or whatever those planes were supposedly in
21 the Bermuda Triangle, but anyhow when I was a kid I remember riding a bicycle and
22 where we lived at was pretty close to the flight patterns around where they used to land
23 on their practice fields which was sort of out in the western suburbs in the swamp, it's
24 called Nova area right now, where Nova University and Nova High School is. Anyhow,
25 they used to land out there and do a lot of their...but I used to remember reading...I
26 wasn't really into military but I was very well aware of them. But, that was never my
27 dreams or intentions of ever going in, and in fact being...I'm the only one that did join
28 the service out of any of my brothers or my sister or whatever, and also I don't think any
29 of my further on even my other cousins even joined, so I was kind of unique being in the
30 Air Force. I'm the oldest of the grandchildren. I think by the time many of the other
31 ones became eligible, the draft had started slowing down and Vietnam was over pretty

1 much. My brother was three years younger than me so he was still eligible but he was in
2 college on a football scholarship. Military was...a lot of people looked at it when I
3 joined was they were real proud, but more so they were more happy that I was in the Air
4 Force and not drafted or in the Army. I do remember that being so favorably looked
5 upon.

6 SM: Because they thought your survivability was higher?

7 EM: Survivability, right. That really stood out in my life and remembrance about
8 that. I come back and I had a girlfriend and I wore my uniform around and my Class As
9 and stuff like that. Everybody liked seeing me when I came back visiting. Everybody
10 was proud of it, so I don't think...I'd never experienced when I would come back any
11 bad feelings from the public or anything like that towards me. I was lucky in that area.
12 But, I think the area I lived in was not as what you could say...I could say more of a
13 liberal type of neighborhood, Ft. Lauderdale, because you've got a lot of transplants
14 coming together of different types of nationalities and everything there. Where would
15 you like me to go back?

16 SM: Let's...as far as when you decided to go in the Air Force, you decided on
17 electronics?

18 EM: Electronics, right, yeah.

19 SM: That's what you initially wanted?

20 EM: Right, that's really what I wanted, right, because I thought I was only going
21 to go in for my four years and I was looking to get as much education as I could at the
22 time and get out.

23 SM: Was there something in particular in electronics you wanted to work on as
24 far as flight systems?

25 EM: I was really...at the time what I was looking for was missile technician
26 which was a long tech school at the time, and some of those things, when you looked
27 down the lists and you thought, "Boy, this is a year long tech school!" so sometimes that
28 influenced you where you wanted to do and go and stuff like that. Of course at that time
29 I wasn't even thinking about missile silos. I never thought about it like that that you
30 might be stuck out in a missile silo. I was into space stuff and space type items and
31 science fiction was of very much interest to me, too.

1 SM: The buddy system, was that an attraction for you as far as being able to go in
2 with someone that you knew? The buddy system meant you were supposed to go
3 through all that training?

4 EM: Right, that was only guaranteed through your basic training they told us and
5 it sort of helped as a recruiting tool. I didn't really know why they really needed any
6 recruiting tools back then but he had to...all I remember is the quotas. He had so many
7 quotas, my recruiter that took us, and just waiting for the two to match up. He didn't get
8 very many electronics I remember, that was the hold...I was the hold up, not the
9 mechanic, not Jim for the mechanical quota.

10 SM: You went to basic training in Amarillo here in Texas. What was that
11 training like?

12 EM: Oh boy. If Amarillo hasn't changed since then, I don't want to go back.

13 SM: Yeah, I don't think it has changed much.

14 EM: The barracks were the World War II type barracks, just like two or three
15 story wooden barracks. They were in like just a square where there was four of them and
16 they make a square and stuff like that in the center part there. It was just a mess. We
17 were...the area that they set up for basic training, it was put together rush deal I guess.
18 Amarillo was normally just a tech school type training base, I think it was for engine
19 shops or engines. We were at the far end of the base so when we left our barracks area
20 you could see for the horizon over and over and B-52s were stationed in Amarillo and
21 you could see their tails pretty well out in the horizon from the flight line real easy, they
22 stuck up above the horizon. But even our TI, I remember telling us AWOL was
23 either...when I got in there it was mostly guys from New York and California that went
24 to basic training with me so they were a lot different in what they did and what I was
25 used to saying or doing. So, our TI said AWOL was a concern to him because guys
26 would get in basic training and they would go and I think...I don't remember us losing
27 any in my class but AWOL was a great concern. He told us the story, he says, "Well if
28 you decide to go AWOL we don't even go look for you for two days because we can see
29 you out in the horizon. We figure two days is enough lead time and we'll get you
30 anyway." There wasn't much around basic training. But, it was really a different type of
31 experience there and I thought I was pretty well trained. At that time I didn't know what

1 I was getting into. They taught us mostly how to wear the uniform, what to do,
2 orderliness, following orders was a big thing, and that's what...I guess if you don't learn
3 it there you won't learn it anywhere, to respect and to follow orders right there.

4 SM: What about weapons training?

5 EM: We went to weapons there. I'd missed marksmanship but we were given
6 some good training, a class, about a half day class first and we had the firing range two
7 days and there was a long walk march out to the training. But, all we got was the M-16
8 training there. They told us, they says, "Now if you listen to us and really pay attention,
9 we can make any of you an expert shooter," which because of the weapon we thought the
10 M-16 at that time was a new rifle out and was one of the best ones out there. I think I
11 missed it just by one outside for myself, but anyhow, somebody said to me, "You should
12 have taken your pencil and poked another hole!" "Nah, I'm not worried about that." We
13 never thought that you'd ever have to hold a weapon or have to take it apart again
14 anyway at that time. The other thing they told us I remember at basic training that was
15 sort of different too, we all got tested to be a linguist, [?] because they said there was not
16 too many at that time. In my class, they said all the people with 5'9", I think you had to
17 be 59 and above, they thought that half our flight would go to security policemen, and I
18 remember that was sort of different. The reason being, we heard that there was really a
19 run on...they were getting short of I guess the canine for Vietnam and the higher attrition
20 rate. Firemen they said were sort of hard to find, so a lot of these guys were in
21 general...and that's what I said they called the general field AQE and how they sorted
22 them out. So, I guess because of me being admin, I took the test just like everyone else,
23 but I wasn't told...and I forget what I said to you, I wasn't told that I was diverted to
24 admin at Miami. I didn't know the reason at the time I was diverted. I found out here at
25 basic training when they put the names up here the people would be going to school, my
26 name wasn't listed. So they put a roster and they said when they could get assignment
27 and they could get this job and you'd be going to Lowry for this and that. Mine wasn't
28 there, and so they said, "Well if your name ain't on there you're going direct duty
29 probably." I said, "I'm supposed to be in electronics." He said, "No," and the TI showed
30 me, says, "No, here I've got a roster that says you're admin." That's when they sent me
31 to [?] said well, so that's when I found out. But after that time after being at Amarillo

1 after about 20 days or so, or 25 days, he said, "You'll be going right to your duty most
2 likely, apparently, because you've probably already met minimal qualifications for
3 administration." So I was happy to be leaving Amarillo and able to go back home again.
4 After I'd only been in basic training about eight weeks, six or eight weeks or so, I guess I
5 left there and was able to go home for a two week vacation and that was a great relief. I
6 mean, basic training was not...even though we can look back and laugh at it and stuff
7 like that, but it wasn't...I lost a lot of weight. I mean, I was always real stocky because
8 of football and stuff, but anyhow I lost weight and they told us that most skinny people
9 gain weight and heavy people lose weight. But, we went through that era that was a lot
10 of force and things. If we didn't do something right we'd have to end up doing 50 or 100
11 push ups or stuff like that or stand there until we practically fell out or whatever, a lot of
12 those old crazy type things that now they don't encourage or don't do as far as I know.
13 Basic training to me was looking back you can see that it was fun. It wasn't say a fun
14 time, but it was...you can laugh at it as you want or you can say how bad it was. The
15 food wasn't very good and we used to always hear the stories that salt peter was put in
16 the food. We never really heard anymore about that but the food didn't taste very good, I
17 know that.

18 SM: You went from basic directly to Westover Air Force Base?

19 EM: Right, I had direct duty.

20 SM: After your leave?

21 EM: Right.

22 SM: What was your position there?

23 EM: I went to...I was put into they put it deputy commander maintenance for
24 administration, okay, and then they moved me over to reports analysis. Everybody had to
25 do their three level training and five level training, and admin was going through there
26 and a lot of times as Westover I remember too a lot of the admins were augmented to
27 bomb loaders on the arc light duty. Sometimes fortunately I had a patch to get my five
28 level before I could go to arc light. Some people used that to go slow and what happened
29 was people were failing the three level tests to make five level, but you couldn't make
30 rank without making your level so I quickly passed it. In fact, I went to the board and
31 they used to back then before you can even go pass it to take the test they were prepping

1 us. They had a board I remember I had to go to and I remember I was one of the first
2 ones to pass it and so forth. So anyhow, I made rank real quick, let's put it that way, right
3 at the very minimums of the requirements normally, but I met all my training. Then what
4 happened was they moved me over to reports analysis and got me on the key punch.

5 SM: That's when you started working with computers?

6 EM: Yeah, right and that's really...see I had computers on my mind, same thing
7 my mind's thinking back to the electronic type thing. I'm thinking ahead that I'm trying
8 to do everything I can or something for the future that will help me.

9 SM: Now the computers that you were using at that point, these are still vacuum
10 tubes?

11 EM: No, I was on actually the data...the cards, and used to what would happen
12 you key punched a card and you had a program, learn how to program the key punch.
13 The better you could make that key punch do, the less typing you typed on the key punch
14 on the forms. I think the aircraft's maintenance form was the [?] form 349s we punched
15 in, and then every maintenance man, when he logs hours, if he turns a nut on the aircraft
16 he has to fill this form out and then we punched it on a card, and then the card we'd take
17 over to data automation we called it and then they ran whatever at that time a computer
18 was the size of a room 20 x 40 size, and they ran these cards through, and the wheels, you
19 don't see them and stuff. All I did was take the cards over right before the run and then
20 when the runs would come back we'd pick up our...and then the other NCO's and stuff
21 like that. All it would do is consolidate all the things that were alike, give them total
22 number of hours of this and then they would make graphs out of this, stuff like that.

23 SM: It produced reports?

24 EM: Yeah, pretty much, that's why they called it reports and analysis. That's the
25 old days how they did it. The computer really didn't analyze anything back then. So I
26 continued to do that same thing all the way through Guam. When we did deploy to
27 Guam, I mean, it was just like going home again except I worked a little longer than
28 normally. I worked a lot of times six days a week and longer hours. Time went by fast
29 because you kept busy. At Guam we were at the old Quonset huts, stuff like that. That
30 was an experience because we had one of the typhoons that I had to stay behind on, the
31 center passed right over Guam and it was the first time in 50 years a typhoon had hit in

1 Guam, and since I'd experienced a few in Ft. Lauderdale already I took it pretty lightly.
2 But those Quonset huts with little pop out sides and its funny was the water passed right
3 underneath there and the guys were panicking. I told them, I said there wasn't anywhere
4 to move us to. We were sort of left out in the open. They brought us some C-rations and
5 some things like that and said...anyhow, some of the guys had to stay behind. I was in
6 the squadron, the way they put us together, they put field maintenance, FMS, and
7 headquarters together which in the barracks that I was in we were just up from the H
8 shop. The H shop was just down the hill. We went down a little bit of a hill down there
9 and right to the flight line. So these guys ran right through the storm and I tried to tell
10 them, "Don't go through, we're in the second part. We're in the eye!" They thought the
11 storm was over and I couldn't explain to them, but anyhow. The typhoon at Guam
12 was...I thought Guam was one of my worst assignments at that time. I mean, compared
13 to even...Danang was close to it but that was about the only thing. Guam was pretty bad
14 back then. There was nothing to do. You could go downtown you'd get in fights with
15 everybody.

16 SM: What do you mean everybody? The military?

17 EM: The sailors. Yeah, mostly military. Guam at that time was a big Navy base
18 on the other end, and [?] was the main center of town. Well you had to be 20 years old to
19 drink downtown anyway and there wasn't enough women to go around. That's mostly
20 what most of them were going for. Anyhow, you'd end up be fighting over a girl.
21 Usually everybody would go in...I went in about one time to [?] and then I took a USO
22 tour around the base and that was about the extent of leaving Anderson Air Force Base
23 other than Okinawa and typhoon evac and to U Taphao typhoon evac.

24 SM: Why don't you go ahead and describe what you thought when you first got
25 off the plane at NKP, when you arrived in Thailand?

26 EM: Well as soon as I got off the plane first of all you heard this plane and when
27 the plane taxied and it hit the runway I can't recall...I just remember the PSP and the
28 boom, boom, boom you know? Since we'd already hit some other bases to drop off
29 people, I think we might have had one other en-route before mine, NKP might have been
30 the first or second it seems like, but that was the only base that had that type of landing.
31 But, when we taxied in like I said it was just so hot and humid and I'd spent two or three

1 days in Bangkok before coming up. So, the humidity, that wasn't the big shock so much
2 to me right then, getting off the airplane, but just looking at the buildings and stuff like
3 that, I said, "Boy, we're in the war right here!" That's what it looked like.

4 SM: So you actually arrived in country in Bangkok?

5 EM: Right.

6 SM: That was your first introduction to Thailand?

7 EM: That was my first introduction to Thailand.

8 SM: Why don't you go ahead and describe that real quick. What type of
9 briefings did you get when you arrived and all that stuff?

10 EM: Well, we got on the base and as soon as we landed off our commercial
11 charter flight they got us all in and gave us a briefing on what hotel they'd be busing us
12 down and then assigned port calls what day, for what day, for what country, what bases,
13 certain days. So I didn't get into right there to...I didn't have to go up country for my
14 flight. The 4th of July weekend was coming up, and you lost two days, so I think I got a
15 couple of days. I was thinking probably of landing in Thailand probably the 2nd of July
16 because I landed at NKP on the 4th of July and that's another story by itself, on the 4th of
17 July. So we went to briefing and they told us the hotels and when our flights would be
18 assigned but we were just anxious to get a little sleep and from there...well, they told us
19 about...right off the bat they warned us about the women and sex, gonorrhea, VD rate
20 and stuff like that, to use a rubber and all this other stuff.

21 SM: They didn't tell you not to sleep with the women? They didn't make that off
22 limits?

23 EM: No, they didn't. Not that I recall. I don't recall being told that the bars were
24 off limits. That was the first thing everybody had in their mind was to get to the strip, to
25 the R&R strip on it used to be [Petbury] Road. That was the first thing that most of us
26 wanted to do, and that's pretty much what we did, too. As soon as we went to the hotel
27 we tried to get something to eat that we thought was food, and we hired a taxi, about four
28 or five us together, and it was a wild night; let's put it that way. That was the next day I
29 stayed around the hotel because I think that was the 3rd. I think we got in the 2nd and stuff
30 like that. The next night I didn't go downtown; I had enough the first night. That's what
31 it was because I slept real good on the 3rd. I slept most of the day and by the time I got up

1 I wasn't interested. But, I didn't have any sex or anything like that with the women, just
2 mostly dancing at the clubs and stuff like that and drinking. I stayed pretty clean there. It
3 was an experience. The taxi runner we didn't trust. That was another warning, they
4 warned us about getting in taxis and be careful what they would do. They were very
5 good con artists. They would tell you this or take you there and then they wanted to get
6 there and they would only keep you in certain spots and then so forth like that, and they
7 told us about not buying or giving them anything like alcohol. Most of us didn't...we
8 didn't have ration cards anyway so there wasn't too much we could buy other than what
9 was right at the clubs anyway. Pretty much everybody stuck with beer as I remember.
10 They did warn don't take any cigarettes from them because they'd be loaded, some of
11 them at that time, I think they were talking about the cigarettes might be marijuana, some
12 of them might have the hashish was real big at that time. They'd put it in the cigarettes,
13 little pieces of hashish, loaded cigarettes. Those were the kinds of warnings we got. The
14 more I talk about it the more I think of it. Some of these things I don't recall back unless
15 you really start talking about them. The sex and the drugs, the taxi driver's con jobs,
16 things like that were all their real warnings that we were given. But they just couldn't
17 lock us in the hotel. It just didn't...it was just too hard to do that.

18 SM: What did you think of the Thai people that you met?

19 EM: At the first I really don't recall my first impression. I just knew that they
20 were very happy, and they did warn us about us, the land of smiles, and that they were
21 very friendly people, and I agreed at the time, and since I married one now I know more
22 about it than a lot of people.

23 SM: You married a Thai woman while you were there?

24 EM: No, from NKP which we'll get to.

25 SM: In NKP you married one? Okay. Anything else from your Bangkok time?

26 EM: No, not really. It was an experience, and that stayed an experience because
27 I did have to go back to Bangkok quite a few times from up country so I don't know if
28 we'll get to that or not, if it's important or not relevant.

29 SM: So you arrived at NKP, you're pulled aside, you're told you're going to be
30 working at...

1 EM: Yeah, the Shanghaied me is the way I looked at it. They didn't let me go
2 with the rest of the bus. I was Shanghaied and like I said, I'm not sure. It's very possible
3 that I would have been earmarked to go to TSN, I don't know, but they took me aside in
4 the sea boat pew and said, "He's going to wing headquarters. We need him. We're short
5 so many 702s," or whatever at the time. To me it didn't matter, especially when they
6 started talking keypunch. Shoot yeah, I'd go to keypunch again! That was a pretty
7 decent job. When I got there though, the one thing that was important, like I said, we
8 landed there on the 4th of July. Well, NKP was in a real big hustle and bustle that day
9 because at the time Patrick Fallon was the vice wing commander and had been shot down
10 in Laos. I don't know if you've gotten to any of our other fellows that have told you
11 about this, but Colonel Fallon was shot down and there was a big SAR, search and
12 rescue, going on for him. Of course I didn't know him, but everybody was going and
13 that's all the talk was about and everybody was asking...the comradery of everybody
14 asking, "I'd be with this other sergeant that would take me to CVPO," and the CVPO
15 people were saying, "Any word on Colonel Fallon?" and they said, "No, the SAR just
16 started," and so forth like that. So that was very hot news at the time and it was sort of
17 strange that he was flying on the 4th of July because I think they had some kind of...some
18 of his squadrons had little parties and stuff like that sat up and so forth.

19 SM: Did they ever recover him?

20 EM: No, as far as we know he was killed. The last contact...he lasted I think a
21 day or so, and I believe how it went was that they had last contact on the little radio they
22 had was they heard gunfire and he said, "They're surrounding me," and he was calling
23 me A-1 Sandys was calling them to drop munitions around him as close as possible. That
24 sort of thing was going to save him, and I can't remember right now if he's counted as
25 missing in action because they never recovered him...I think that's how he's listed is as
26 MIA still, Colonel Fallon, that's F-A-L-L-O-N. His first name was Patrick I believe.

27 SM: How many...did that happen very frequently?

28 EM: I got involved with search and rescue because in flight records one of the
29 first things they had to do, because they convene right there...I'm not sure if they went
30 [?] but wing O, safety officer, maintenance, all these guys, crew chief of the aircraft, they
31 would all have to go meet and the flight record was an important part of that because I

1 would have to pull the flight records for anybody shot down and make sure it's all up to
2 date, that any form for flying time was in there because that was something that I guess
3 they submit to headquarters, USAF, anytime a pilot was down or a crew member. So we
4 were always into...how often it happened? Oh, I couldn't give you exact numbers from
5 that long ago, how many were shot down and so forth like that.

6 SM: Was it frequent in your memory or infrequent?

7 EM: We didn't like to hear it and I don't think it was overly frequent, maybe one
8 every three to four months maybe, something like that. Then there was of course a
9 couple that might have been more...there was...while I was there I was in flight records
10 from about say July of '69 to about March of '70 where at that time they moved me into
11 the wing, deputy commander of operations admin section, because again I think my
12 clearance had something to do at the time and they were short manned. When I went
13 over to the building, we were in a new building next to the wing headquarters building
14 we called it and that's where I met my wife. She was a janitor or house girl for the
15 building. She was actually assigned to the 21 SOS with another girl who cleaned that
16 one. She worked for a contractor on base there, and then she cleaned mine and that's
17 where I met her at. But there [?] missions from after form five so many names I
18 remember and are garbled up because everyday I worked with them and when the officer
19 would come in or the pilot would come in they would have to check their flight record if
20 they wanted to change something. They had to process in and out of us too because
21 every pilot had to bring their flight record to us and then process in and we had to process
22 it in. There was some I could remember but the names were so many at the time it was
23 so hard. But, I got familiar ones sometimes about missions or which ones were Laos
24 missions because they were coded different on the machine. I knew how many were
25 going into North Vietnam and so forth like that.

26 SM: So a lot of this...were you doing this also with the special operations wing?

27 EM: Yes, I was.

28 SM: As far as from you perspective and what the Air Force was trying to
29 accomplish, what was the primary goal and the primary mission of the special operations
30 wing at NKP?

1 EM: To me it was at that time in support of mostly it seemed like big heavy duty
2 was search and rescue because we had special...but we also had the Ho Chi Minh...we
3 had special aircraft for bombing the trail and we had the A-26 at the time which was [?]
4 and the A-1 of course, the dive bomber. We'd seem to attack things along the trail close
5 to at NKP. NKP was so close to where the action was because the DMZ...it was the
6 closest place to the DMZ and how the trail, they entered it from north Vietnam down
7 through Laos into Route 9 and 7 and with process go south down and then would turn
8 back and hit the supplies into Vietnam and so forth like that. It was very important they
9 would fly from their type aircraft because the A-1 could carry so much weapons on a
10 short trip and they were slow. They could take a lot of...there was missions that we'd
11 hear about that these guys would come back shot up and we'd walk down the flight line
12 since we were close by and it just amazing that so many aircraft these pilots are brought
13 back. Every mission those A-1 pilots went on their lives were endangered. You could
14 see that very easy. I mean, they took a lot of ground fires a lot of times.

15 SM: What about support for the operations, the specific operations going on in
16 Laos on the ground run mostly by the CIA?

17 EM: Right. At that time, my myself wasn't too much involved. I did get heavily
18 involved in it when I transferred to Udorn.

19 SM: So NKP there wasn't a lot of that going on?

20 EM: Yes, there was, but at that time I wasn't really...didn't know. My
21 clearance...see, I hadn't come into play because what they...see, I think I was really
22 supposed to be in TFA, the Task Force Alpha because of my high clearance, but I did get
23 to go there but that was in support of the trail and pretty much in the sensor program
24 which you've probably had somebody talk to you about already.

25 SM: I'm sorry, the what?

26 EM: The sensor program along the Ho Chi Minh Trail?

27 SM: Part of dropping sensing equipment to detect movement?

28 EM: Right, that was a big operation in Nakhon Phanom was the sensor programs.
29 TFA was the monitoring system and kept very important track of all of the different
30 vehicle traffic. A lot of the targets were based off of that information. Since NKP had
31 quick strikes they could hurry up and hit them. Another thing they had a program on

1 which I did sign up...a little bit but didn't get a chance to fly too much, they had C-123s
2 which was the 606 SOS squadron. We used to call them [?] mostly flew what we'd call
3 candlesticks. They'd drop the flares for some of the night vision for some of the other
4 aircraft, for A-1s bombing or A-26s, stuff like that. I signed up for it but I never got a
5 chance to fly with what we called a flare kicker. But, I was really into it at the time.
6 They also allowed other extra carriers...pilots...people that worked on them during the
7 day at NKP would work on the OV-10s and O-2s and we called them litter buggers which
8 would be you'd go up with the pilot and you'd throw the leaflets out along the Ho Chi
9 Minh Trail for detection. Besides, that was on some of those missions. Of course the
10 OV-10s and O-2s were used a lot more for FAC. But, one of the other jobs was what
11 they called psy ops type program.

12 SM: And you...

13 EM: I processed for it but then they stopped the program and they wouldn't let
14 extraditional people fly with it at that time. I had a bug to fly. I mean, I really wanted to
15 fly or get into it more. But at that time, you signed up...because I had a decent job for it.
16 See, that's the whole thing. Some guys couldn't fly at night because I had a good long
17 daytime job and it was easy for me to fly at night, so that's what...those two squadrons,
18 they had the extra people flying on them. I think they did it, too, down at Ubon to some
19 of the other bases as gunners and sometimes on the gun ships and stuff like that. So
20 sometimes you didn't have to be...and how I found out about it again was being with
21 flight records and they used to put these extra people in there and I didn't know that on
22 the form they'd come back as ZZ and I'd ask about them I remember at the very
23 beginning when I got there, I said, "What does ZZ mean?" Of course I had to know
24 because I had to put it in the...and they said it was for extra personnel that didn't get
25 flight credit but they were there on the aircraft.

26 SM: You worked with the special operations wing through June of '70?

27 EM: Right, I left June of '70, right.

28 SM: Any other interesting events or incidents occur while you were there?

29 EM: Yeah, we had a sapper attack on Christmas Eve, and also I witnessed...at
30 that time a lot of people didn't know it was going on and a lot of people didn't notice and
31 I hadn't seen it, and I thought it was all with the sapper attack but NKP got attacked.

1 What it was basically was I had met my future wife at that time and I'd given up the Bob
2 Hope show to take her out on my first date. So, I didn't go to the Bob Hope show there
3 in December of '69 and finally got her to go out with me for a movie and dinner and stuff
4 like that. That was a couple of days before Christmas. Well, on Christmas Eve I had
5 gone down to her village to try and see her and stuff like that. Of course it was sort of
6 unsuccessful and I had to stay up a ways with some of her friends getting a little bit drunk
7 drinking some Thai whiskey with them. So I left the village since it was about 9:30 or
8 ten o'clock, close to that time and stuff and I had to return to the base because where she
9 was at, it was known that a little further away was some CTs, communist terrorists, and
10 [?] in Thailand. So anyhow, when I came back to the base we were driving, I caught the
11 bus and stuff like that, and everybody was kidding me about what was I doing out in the
12 boonies at this time of night so I told them all and so we [?] base and next thing we
13 know...she only lived about three or four kilometers from the gate that you turn in and
14 you go past the perimeter. The road ran right along NKP and they asked me when I
15 recognized...you knew you were in a combat area as soon as you saw the perimeter of
16 NKP. I should go back. You asked me earlier about what did I think of this thing. You
17 really know you're in a combat environment when you leave NKP the base of the
18 perimeter. It was clear, it was concertina wire, machine gun revetments, you could see
19 the stuff out there on the...but on Christmas Eve though whenever we returned we saw
20 there was flares going up and the next thing you know we heard [makes machine gun
21 noise] you could hear the machine gun fire and stuff like that and someone hollered at the
22 bus and says, "The base is under attack!" Anyhow we got on the bus and they were
23 telling us...the security police, there was a big old truck up there with the machine gun
24 off the gate and all the security police were in their flak vests and stuff like that and they
25 were hollering at us to hurry and get to our squadron units and report to our shelters or
26 our bunkers for extra instructions. At that time we were going down the base and when
27 you looked back toward some of the base area you could see over the base because it was
28 sort of hilly and you could see looking out towards the east towards Laos the sky was all
29 lit up and not everybody was paying attention to it because they were all flaked out there
30 but there was a B-52 strike against a north Vietnam division that was very close and later
31 on which I found from another member that actually what happened on that mission was

1 that the plan was that north Vietnam was planning to attack NKP because of TFA, and
2 that's where the sappers approached. Apparently there was about between 10 and 13
3 sappers or something like that and I think they retreated about after they lasted about an
4 hour. But on Christmas Eve they armed the whole base and these guys, a lot of them
5 were coming back. A lot of them were drunk from the base and didn't get very
6 well...some of the older guys didn't get very much weapons training so I'm at my bunker
7 and I have my weapon and my helmet, flak vest, and they're asking me questions and I
8 was helping them how to put the safety on, take the safety off, and things like that on the
9 M-16. I remember that pretty distinctly. In about an hour or so after they got us all
10 armed they told us to report back to the armory and turn in our weapons and stuff. But,
11 that was a very something...I mean the attack I think one of our members, I don't know if
12 I can say anybody else's name on here or not?

13 SM: Oh absolutely.

14 EM: Yeah? I think John Sweet can give you more...

15 SM: Yeah, in fact he's filled out some of the questionnaires and I should be
16 interviewing him soon.

17 EM: On that particular mission at that time it was really highly classified. They
18 didn't want to panic and get everybody to know about it. I didn't know that it was the
19 division until John told me that I was aware that I saw the sky lit and so forth. See, we
20 could see that. In fact, for some of the humorous things we'd go down town right on the
21 river called Monty's Ice Cream Parlor and we'd sit there and have...you could have some
22 of their lousy ice cream but normally we loved their beer and we'd have a beer and we'd
23 sit there and we could watch the lights flash up from the bombs striking, and B-52s
24 sometimes would strike them there and you'd hear [makes strike noises] when a B-52
25 strike got close by. The action was very hot and heavy close to NKP, you could see it
26 often. But, that particular night which I did not know because I wasn't down town and
27 I'm not sure if anybody...they said a lot of the strikes were...the first ridge was on the
28 west side which would be closer between Tonkin and the River because that's where the
29 division had moved up to supposedly to cross the river into Thailand. But some of that I
30 found out like I said from John. You'll get that in more detail. That was the big
31 significant but it was common for us to go down there and watch them, observe those

1 strikes and bombs and stuff like that and we'd just sort of...but that mission I remember a
2 lot with the sapper attack really reminds me...and then from all the...I was also then sent
3 from TDY. When I got out of flight records I moved into the DO, the director of
4 operations which was operations, aircraft ops, and I got sent to Danang TDY for manning
5 assistance and that was just about the time I was getting ready to get married to my wife
6 in a Buddhist ceremony but we were getting married to keep her faith and I was going to
7 go ahead and reenlist at that time since I'd met her and just figured I'd stay around
8 Thailand a little longer. You're allowed to take an early reenlistment they called it and
9 that way you got a little bit of bonus money and that's what I was looking forward to
10 getting married and getting the money and stuff like that. That was what changed me to
11 stay in because I really had no intention of staying in the Air Force until I did get married
12 and was over seas in Thailand. But I went to Danang to DET 156 SOW so the admin
13 clerk there could go...this was in May I went over there and I went over there for
14 manning assistance so that the admin person could go on his R&R, his in country R&R
15 he was entitled to. So, I had to staff that for that time. The Sandys there was busy there
16 and my last night there was Danang got a rocket attack.

17 SM: What was that like?

18 EM: That was...being right on base at Danang I couldn't tell too much difference
19 than being on base at NKP. I mean facility wise and what was available and things like
20 that, I didn't think it was too much...but at Danang they had a thing they called I guess
21 giant voice or big voice, I'm not sure, and it would come on and usually it would come
22 on about the time rockets were hitting and would say, "Danang is now under attack, take
23 cover. Danang is now under attack, take cover." That was some experience. The night
24 that we got attacked was my last night at Danang. So, I was at the club and I'd drank a
25 little bit too much and instead of going down to my shelter I just rolled underneath my
26 bunk and grabbed my flak vest and helmet and used it as a pillow and slept through the
27 darn thing, and that was about all I remembered. Then when I had to walk in to go to my
28 unit, to work, I had to walk right past...our barracks was right on the perimeter road and I
29 mean fortunately my barracks was on the southwest corner of the base and it was very
30 swampy so that area was not a very good area for the VC to try to even attack they said,
31 to come in the base. But, you could see claymore mines and everything right there facing

1 out towards there was an advancement. But anyhow you had to walk down this road and
2 it went right past the Vietnam Air Force, Vietnamese Air Force, and they took the rocket
3 attack. They lived in worse conditions than we did. One thing I commended them for
4 was they were in tents and we were in at least wooden barracks, a little bit nicer than that.
5 But, they had taken the rockets and as I recall there was about 17 dead that morning. So
6 when you sleep, and it was very early in the morning and then they were still cleaning up
7 and it's...when you see that, the blood and everything like that and people laying around
8 it's really shocking.

9 SM: Did any Americans get hit in that attack?

10 EM: In that attack, no, not that I recall. There was only most of the rockets a lot
11 of times fall short and stuff like that, but that one did hit and it was just barely inside the
12 perimeter because of I think the end that they tried to shoot it from, and the VC when
13 they shoot they have to be careful because they have aircraft above...they had them in
14 Danang all the time apparently a spot for type like that they have certain recons around
15 the base and Danang was so active anyway, so that was constant. The other thing was
16 that I did get out Danang and got to see China Beach a little bit. The first day I arrived
17 they took me on a run. They were getting ready to have a squadron A-1 party or
18 something right there for the A-1 pilots, a squadron party, so we had to go trades. They
19 bartered. We needed beer, we have cokes, so we go see the Marines and we trade them
20 heads up. They have too much beer, we have too much coke. So, it was an experience
21 seeing that. Here we've got to go out the base loaded down with 20 or 30 cases of
22 different cokes and stuff like that, coke or Pepsi or whatever and we come back with
23 steaks and beer. So, it all worked out. They got some soda, we get some steaks and beer,
24 and everybody's happy. But, it always seemed like someone had something of too much
25 or the other. Those were like our rations and entitlements I guess when we were in
26 'Nam. The squadron was giving so much of everything for each individual counted.

27 SM: Were you ever short of anything at NKP?

28 EM: At the chow hall, I had a mess guard. They used the Thai nationals cooking
29 with supervised by the Air Force guys. The barracks I was in, I was with a bunch of guys
30 from finance. I was in headquarters group, headquarters squadron, which means mostly
31 we had guys, you know, CVPO, personnel, finance, all these support type people. Well,

1 we'd always have in our barracks our refrigerator was always stocked because it seemed
2 like, again, these guys took care of each other. If they needed something from the chow
3 hall they would let them have it and then if we had any cookouts we'd have some
4 hamburgers or steaks or stuff like that. But when you went to the chow hall the food
5 was...I didn't try to eat there too often, let's put it that way. To survive I had to eat, but I
6 went downtown quite a bunch before I met my wife and stuff like that. I ate on the
7 economy a lot, and many nights even after I met my life I would come back to the base
8 and it was a curfew on base no matter what happened so I'd return to the base and there
9 was a little Thai restaurant just inside the gate and I'd stop and have a coke and plate of
10 plain rice. I'd just want to get something in my stomach. That would cost me a quarter I
11 think it was back then. A coke I think was three bot and the coke was two bot, and the
12 rice I would just put fish sauce with hot peppers all over it for flavor and that was it, and I
13 ate that a lot of times at night before I went to bed, unless I had more money than the
14 hooch bar, but there was no food in the hooch. A lot of the squadrons had what we called
15 hooch bars. The only thing they had in there was mostly what I can remember was they
16 might have had...I don't even think they had...because we didn't have microwaves back
17 then so it was mostly cold things, something like that, beer and coke and stuff like that. I
18 don't even remember if we had crackers, or we might have had pickles. The food at NKP
19 was not known for being very good, but they did institute something I thought was...I
20 remember it seemed like it was sort of new and it was pretty popular for a while. They
21 figured they couldn't mess up the hamburger, right, because there were cases of it so the
22 hamburger short line we called it was more my favorite line so I ate a lot of hamburgers.
23 Milk was powdered milk mixed with water there, so milk was terrible. Things I also
24 remember, every once in a while we'd have steak and around Thanksgiving,
25 Thanksgiving they would always try to out do it and we always did have a good meal on
26 Thanksgiving and Christmas time. The food, when I say good, it's good compared to
27 what it normally is. The other times, sometimes it didn't resemble...they would tell you
28 it was this and it was hard to believe it was. Breakfast was another because eggs you
29 couldn't mess up too bad either, eggs and toast, and I remember when I was at wing since
30 I worked at flight records and when I was in wing admin, DO admin, there was a snack
31 bar right across and in front of it they had an A-1 even...it was right there across near

1 civil engineers and again mostly the thing you could get there was hot dogs and a coke,
2 stuff like that and a hamburger, stuff like that. I guess I could say I lived pretty much on
3 hamburgers and hotdogs there at NKP! When I was downtown I got mostly...then I'd
4 get chicken on a stick or fried rice. Fried rice was pretty favorite and I'd eat a lot of...I
5 ate on the economy a lot since I met my wife then, too, I learned a lot of dishes and I eat a
6 well known hot papaya [?] it was called. There was a lot of guys that ate downtown but I
7 think I probably lived...pretty much of my NKP was beer. If I wouldn't have had beer I
8 would have never survived.

9 SM: All right, now where were you when you participated in Project Heavy
10 Sand?

11 EM: That was at Udorn.

12 SM: Why don't you go ahead and talk about that.

13 EM: Okay, let me get you over there. Before I left NKP I was selected to go to
14 Project 404 but then what happened...

15 SM: What was Project 404?

16 EM: Project 404 was the Air Force support in Laos, okay, and normally you
17 needed the clearance back then. That's why I thought some of the clearance had...I had a
18 consecutive overseas tour for Udorn and when that happened my clearance was
19 automatically...they knew that I had high special clearances, so when I got my
20 consecutive that threw me out the door. So another friend, which I later met back at
21 Bangkok, he ended up taking that assignment to Project four...his name's Steve
22 Urbanetti. He left the wing admin and he went to 404 and I left and went to headquarters,
23 7/13th Air Force. So, I was going to Udorn. Going from Udorn from NKP was like going
24 to a big town. I mean, it was so much more modern. And, being a newlywed, getting
25 married, getting processed for being married was sort of unique. When I got there they
26 sent me...I knew I was going to headquarters 7/13. I was specially selected and they told
27 me I had a special project. Well, they took me and briefed me what I was going to do and
28 asked me if I had problems with it and I told them I was getting married to a Thai, and
29 they said, "No problem, you'll help with cover up, you'll live downtown, we got a place
30 that's mostly a compound where we recommend you staying, one of the compounds we'd
31 recommend you stay in which we checked it out and it was a good compound close to the

1 base.” So anyhow, that’s where I was assigned. It was at headquarters 7/13th Air Force
2 and the director of operations, special activities for the whole...special activities just
3 meant what it said, special, so anything dealing with special, we were somehow involved
4 with it. Now headquarters 7/13th which was actually the main overseer of the war in Laos
5 as we called it, the secret war and so forth, that was the primary mission to support
6 almost everybody at 7/13th Air Force, okay? In other words, the units, almost all the units
7 that we could get...a lot of missions that came out of Ubon and Korat, it didn't mean they
8 all flew or any of those missions. That might mean that they flew...maybe they did fly
9 just in Laos but what happens is that when missions at headquarters 7/13th or that we
10 would request are directly supported to Laos and which basically in support of CIA in
11 support of the ambassador and the current government of Laos. Well, Heavy Sand, that
12 was the project name for support, what support the Air Force provided the CIA in Laos
13 and stuff like that. We provided mostly...primary support that we were providing of
14 course was air support. When the CIA had already set up missions they were on a daily
15 basis of regular air support and stuff like that, but when they needed...we dealt primarily
16 with putting insurgence in and out, putting mercenary teams in made up of Lao’s, Thai
17 nationals, foreigners, and some Americans that were covered, were not military at the
18 time. We also were involved but not directly with the [commis] MACV, MAC SOG
19 which was American Green Berets, Special Forces, that were inserted into Laos also.
20 Now these insertions were all used by our Air Force units which were assigned at NKP
21 and Udorn. 20 SOS was the official unit for the MAC SOG, and DOSA which we called
22 DOSA was an abbreviation for my special activities office, D-O-S-A, and everybody
23 knew it as DOSA. Anyhow, 20th was phasing down and combining with the 21 SOS at
24 NKP. NKP was doing DOSA missions before, too. Besides that, we also supported TAC
25 hands in Laos and Thailand with the helicopters with the 20 SOS and the 21 SOS. So
26 most of the DOSA missions would originate really at NKP, go to a pick up point to pick
27 up the team, sometimes it might be at Long Chin, Pakxe, Savannakhet, Takhet,
28 somewhere in Laos, sometimes even in Thailand for unusual missions and so forth. But,
29 the teams would be inserted wherever the CIA wanted them basically. These projects,
30 they planned them themselves and they would come to our office and we would sit there.
31 I was in administration, I was the only admin, so I had to type all the mission requests up,

1 everything that was prepared was prepared by me. We had two lieutenant colonels
2 assigned to the office there, and we also the one colonel would also be TDY. First he
3 was there from the 20 SOS which was a support officer we called him. He would be
4 from the helicopter squadron and he would basically help in the planning of those
5 missions. Now he was not trained, he was not briefed on Heavy Sand. Heavy Sand was
6 very restricted who knew exactly what Heavy Sand was. Now most people knew what
7 the Air America was but there was more to Air America, the cover up of that about being
8 CIA. A lot of people, like we told them, everybody knew that Air America was CIA but
9 we just couldn't confirm or deny it. That was a lot of it there. But, there was a lot of
10 other things people weren't aware was going on but was going on, so what happened was
11 that...so when we saw...there as very restricted who got briefed, so in headquarters
12 7/13th in other words, I was probably the only...I was the only administration person as
13 I...of course I proceeded another person of course like that was on there. Now, of course
14 I had to give support for controlling all the messages, picking up messages, everything
15 was top secret, for your eyes only, had code words for the con squadrons which we called
16 flag. We used to call it guarded messages which mean they had to be picked up
17 personally by only me or Colonel Burger or Colonel Wentzel, one of the three of us only.
18 Most of these messages every time would go to JCS, joint chiefs of staff, headquarters
19 PACAF, and something I can't remember, depending on some of the other addresses of
20 Comis MACV if we were involved at MAC SOG at the time, if we had to go in and help
21 support Vietnam on the side. But when we fragged a dosa mission they were pretty well
22 set up pretty standard when I started doing them and stuff like that, but say they wanted
23 to move 200 mercenaries from us location to point, [CAS] we used to call them which
24 was more known to people that weren't in project, everybody was a customer was a [?]. I
25 used to always think it stood for something else but I could never figure out what it stood
26 for. But anyhow, most everybody referred to Air America or CIA as CAS and anyhow,
27 he would come to our office and say, "Well we need six CH-3s and we need two
28 missions to go back and forth and we need so many A-1s," and stuff like that. If they
29 needed preparation before the unit come in we might have to go to 7th Air Force and ask
30 for some missions, strike missions before to soften the area or whatever like that. So all
31 that was initiated and then I'd prepare the messages. Now a lot of these weren't

1 exactly...didn't have to be so much guarded. What happened there, we kept them in
2 regular traffic. Some of those would be top secret, some would only be secret, dealing
3 with once they got through to that point most of the time they were just secret. The
4 Heavy Sand and guarded messages a lot of times were dealing like when the CIA had
5 special requests and I think [?] special requests when they asked for B-52 strikes. We
6 had B-52 strikes in northern Laos and stuff like that which we did have a senate
7 investigation on at the time when I was there. My names were on the...of course the
8 cover sheet and I was interviewed when the senators committee and so forth like that.

9 SM: What was the purpose of the investigation?

10 EM: Why we bombed...I think we were...I can't remember the exact parallel.
11 We weren't supposed to be bombing above a certain parallel, the 17th or 18th parallel or
12 whatever it was. We did bomb. Some missions were up in the barrel roll, up into
13 northern Laos and were pretty far from really Vietnam. Normally the B-52 strikes were
14 either in north Vietnam or down in steel tiger which was the down the part between
15 Vietnam and Thailand, the long part. But anyhow, these strikes were more or less
16 requested from...they couldn't see those messages and we couldn't tell them about it, and
17 all I could tell the senate investigation why didn't I...somebody at 7th Air Force I
18 understand blew the whistle, some enlisted personnel blew the whistle that we had strikes
19 going somewhere. Of course they had to be aware of them because of the traffic. See,
20 that's the whole thing. Once we put some of this stuff into regular Air Force channels
21 and stuff like that, 7th Air Force, the control people had to be...the aircraft control,
22 ABCCC we used to call them. Well they had to know those strikes were in the area so
23 they knew that they were friendlies and stuff like that and if there were any other kinds of
24 rescues going on. So anyhow, once the missions were issued they flew but we were cut
25 off on the B-52 strikes at a later date but there was missions flown and those types of
26 special missions the CIA requested numerous times. They'd also come back and request
27 sometimes where they need...we'd call them heavy hook...not heavy hook, sky crane,
28 and we'd have to move some 105s around and stuff like that. So we'd get a sky crane and
29 they'd come to us and we'd put it into channels to the Vietnam [commis] MACV and ask
30 for a CH-54 to come for support. Like I say, the biggest part of our activities was with
31 the DOSA missions and that goes back to the 21 SOS which was at NKP primarily.

1 SM: Now you mentioned on the questionnaire that there were other missions that
2 were flown during the period, let's see here, SR-71 flights in particular. Now where do
3 those flights originate out of?

4 EM: I'm not sure exactly where the origination is sometimes but the main
5 purpose was to over fly the southern border of China, and Laos. There was an ongoing
6 border war between north Vietnam and China and what a lot of times, we were
7 trying...the CIA wanted the info on and the poop on that stuff. They were trying to...and
8 also the Chinese Rho which was pretty well known. The Chinese Rho was coming in
9 from the north of the China border all the way down through Laos and was within...that
10 was very heavily monitored. A lot of times that area we'd over fly that with SR-71s or
11 U2s. The U-2s were flown pretty regular and we could get a lot of the Chinese Rho
12 because it was mostly over Laos but I think there was more to it than I was aware of that I
13 requested when they would come to us and want a special SR-71 flight of southern China
14 area, I think in current Air Force, I'm not exactly sure where the flight path was, but we
15 would get the message after. All it was was longitudes and latitudes a lot of times on the
16 message and stuff like that, and I didn't worry about it or keep track of it other than some
17 of the areas I knew that was the restricted and stuff like that. The colonel, I remember
18 asking, we talked about stuff like that and he said, "That was pretty far up in North
19 China, up in China!" he'd say. Basically I knew they were in there. All I remember
20 typing a message request...the message for support, SR-71 support of South China. Intel
21 would take care of...we had people clear it and Colonel Burger would go to intel and I
22 think they did the final preparation of exactly what area flew into. But, it was over flying
23 the south China area and along the borders of north Vietnam all the way through Laos
24 into Thailand and Burma. It was more than sweep zones, and I think they had to use the
25 SR-71 because China did have the capability of missiles, and of shooting it down or the
26 U-2s.

27 SM: Yeah, the U-2s would fly lower.

28 EM: Fly lower, right. So U-2s were quite frequent. I didn't even request the U-
29 2s and stuff like that. The SR-71s was special and were originated from as far as I know
30 is they only originated from Beale Air Force Base. I take that back, they were sometimes
31 refueled at Kadena Air Force Base on Okinawa. I would think that that's where they

1 originated from. I mentioned back when I was at Guam and was typhoon evaced and I
2 went to Kadena and I remember an incident when I was walking to the chow hall I saw
3 an SR-71 and it was shooting up like a rocket and I said to my buddy walking through the
4 chow hall, I said, "Look at that? Ain't that an SR?" He said, "Nope, you're not supposed
5 to see that. It's not supposed to be there." He said when that thing would land it would
6 be covered up and go right to the hanger; you couldn't get close to it. Basically, that shut
7 that off right there. That's how things got word around sometimes and the same thing
8 with the CIA and stuff like that that we weren't there or at Udorn that we just weren't
9 supposed...everybody sort of knew we just weren't supposed to confirm or talk too much
10 about that. But, you could talk around it and when you say the customer and stuff like
11 that, we knew who the customer...most everybody knew who the customer was. Also I
12 did see U-2s land at Guam too sometimes. We recovered for U-2s coming back. But,
13 that was just seeing them land. Go ahead, Steve.

14 SM: No, I'm sorry, you go ahead.

15 EM: I was just going to try to get back to Udorn again because what I did was so
16 unique and different and stuff like that but it's so hard and so many things in particular,
17 that's what's killing me right now. I knew what we were doing, and some of the stuff I
18 wasn't too proud of it. It caused my personal problems. I became a heavy drinker pretty
19 much after that. I drank over there and it started and stuff like that but...

20 SM: What were you not proud of?

21 EM: Well some of the things I knew, especially after like the senate investigation
22 and stuff like that. The B-52 strikes in areas that we weren't supposed to. You feel that
23 you're sort of somehow responsible even though you didn't, of you killing possibly
24 innocent civilians and stuff like that. Some of that stuff you hear rumors about and you
25 don't know, you hear intel and stuff like that. Some of those, the B-52s hurt me more, I
26 think hurt me more than anything. I guess that was stuck with me and then also there was
27 an evacuation of the north Vietnamese and the Pathet Lao was bearing down on the
28 H'mong tribes, and since I was there at 7/13th I got a few of the bennies [benefits] was I
29 got helicopter rides back to NKP and I did...so you know one time we had a mission,
30 they were forcing down on the Plain of Jars. We had to pull the H'mong back. So, we
31 scheduled a heavy air lift and they needed extra people to fly. What they needed was

1 flight crew members to be like guards so I volunteered. The colonel said, "Yeah, you can
2 go if you want," so for a couple of days I stayed, I did RON. I flew up there and they
3 manned me on a machine gun and gave me...and actually later on they just gave me the
4 M-16 and I had to stand in the doorway, and it was hard going up there to the landing
5 zones there and the Plain of Jars and hold these guys back and holding guns on these
6 people, and after being married to a Thai there I couldn't tell no difference. Looking at
7 them and looking at my wife would be the same thing. So that's what I thought when I
8 saw these women with children holding them and we were getting a lot of them off as
9 fast as we could but we had to keep guns on them just to make sure they wouldn't
10 overload the aircraft, and that was tough. That always stuck with me a little bit. I didn't
11 talk a lot about it like that and we weren't supposed to, again, you know, so I kept that
12 hidden inside me for a long time. It was in actual combat you could see in the far
13 background you could see the troops were there when the fighting was going on and here
14 we're evacuating and everything was going on around us, it was a hot action. So, it was
15 just stressful on me at that time. I knew about these things and some...I had nobody to
16 talk to. I couldn't go home and even talk about some of this stuff to my wife. My wife I
17 guess knew that I was something that I was doing and knew that I couldn't talk. All I
18 could tell her, "I can't talk to you about it," and she understood. I was sort of surprised
19 that she did, but I think that the Thais in the community, they talked about what they...I
20 think they knew about as much of what we were doing as we knew ourselves. A lot of
21 times that's what used to upset you when you'd read the Bangkok Post newspaper and it
22 would have the stuff that was in our classified messages a few days ago. It was really the
23 Bangkok Post and it was really something. They would say, "The Americans took a
24 setback on the PDJ," or something like that, "Lost a helicopter," or stuff like that.

25 SM: Wouldn't there be investigations as to how they got that information?

26 EM: I never thought about it. The only investigation...everybody knew that the
27 Bangkok Post had their sources. We always had communications security and normal
28 military training, even in the Thailand area I remember that we were told about how...but
29 some of these missions were so hot and heated up real quick. I'll give you an example;
30 on our DOSA missions, it got to the point that we'd use a regular telephone to give our
31 missions. I'll tell you how we did it; we'd come in and say there was a team in real bad

1 trouble and the CAS wanted us to get them out, well he'd come over to us and tell us,
2 "Hey, we've got to get this team out. They're at LZ 19," or whatever, I'm just picking
3 out a sight, so we would look at the thing and say, "Okay, this..." and we'd get the maps
4 out and we'd start looking at it. Well the colonel would get on the regular phone, and
5 we'd say, "Go to DOSA mission 113." Okay, then the ops officer over at 21 SOS at
6 NKP would get their message out there, and then what they would say, on line one, or
7 paragraph one, say it said, "How many helicopters," say it said four helicopters, we'd
8 say, "Okay, that's the same or we'd say, "Plus two," and if you didn't have the
9 paperwork right in front of you, you didn't know what we were talking about. That's
10 how some of the planning had to be done real quick over the line. Then we confirmed it
11 with a hard copy then later after that. So, in there again, are we violating [?]? We're
12 more worried about getting...

13 SM: Get the help out there.

14 EM: Get the help out there and not worry about that. That's always what made it
15 interesting some days of our job. Sometimes I'm running around there. Like I said, the
16 admin, some people say, oh, I was so much aware of what was going on and really
17 helpful as much as I could be to help them get stuff like that. Those are the things that
18 went on with those missions. A lot of the planes, as far as we know that team could have
19 went in there and blew up the village to get out, I don't know. The traffic of the CIA as
20 far as we knew everything was going on was going on for the positive of doing disruption
21 of the supplies, stuff like that, supporting Van Pao and the Lao government, Ambassador
22 [?] at the time was in there when I went there. So, I got to go to Laos only a couple of
23 times in country. One time I went to Vinh Chin mostly for shopping real quick while the
24 colonel was in a briefing. I went to the store and came back with a bunch of silver and
25 stuff like that. I couldn't afford the gold bracelets so being an enlisted, a junior enlisted, I
26 had to buy the silver stuff. We had to use kip, a whole lot of kip. Then I got in Long
27 Chin just [?] and then another unique thing the Ron some of the humor that went with it
28 and some of the guys didn't like the story I posted not too long ago on our brotherhood.
29 One time the CAS, customer Tom, I remember these two names and I've tried to confirm
30 and I think one guy finally confirmed one guy's name with me, but I knew the CAS, my
31 CIA contacts, only as Tom and Lee. Those were their first names. Tom had an accent,

1 sounded a little British type accent, a little shorter guy, and Lee was a young normal
2 looking American guy, good looking young fellow. So, anyhow, one time Tom came in
3 here with a request and says, "I need a special request." I said, "What do you need?" and
4 then he said, "I need 20 tennis rackets and some balls." I said, "What for?" and he said,
5 "Savannakhet, has just finished building a lighted tennis court." That was in
6 Savannakhet." I said, "We can't get no...they built it to help morale," and stuff like hat
7 and I think it might be the Wimbledon was going on so everyone was hot on tennis. It
8 needed a special rations form to get anything more than one [?] so I said, "We need you
9 to purchase the items for us so we can get them through our channels fast enough," so the
10 colonel says, "Yeah," checked out the message [?] and said, "Yeah, go ahead and support
11 them if they provide the funds. No Air Force funds invited." So we typed up the ration
12 form and the colonel calls up the general because I couldn't tell nobody else and he says,
13 "General signed this request," so he said, "Sgt. Miller's on his way over and he'll brief
14 you on the situation." So I'm getting past the exec officer and he said, "Well you've got
15 to see the general for," and I said, "He knows I'm coming," so General Evans waived me
16 on in and I reported and told them all, and said well this is, you know, briefed them about
17 how they've got this and they need the morale, and he says, "What do they got down
18 there? Don't they know a war's going on?" He said, "That makes the best target.
19 They'll turn those lights on and they'll have a target and the VC can hit them with
20 everything," or the Pathet Lao or whatever. So, it was sort of...he signed it and said,
21 "Whatever." I tried to...to the general I said, "Sir, they need some type of recreation.
22 They've got to do something to keep their sanity." He said, "I guess so," and he signed a
23 form. The next stop the base commander, now since the general signed it like a unit on
24 the ration form the base commander had to sign these special ration. So the group
25 commander was right across the street I went in there and told the secretary or the exec
26 officer again and said, "Let me see them," and I told him I had this form and I said, "I
27 can't tell you about it." "We need to know what this is for." I said, "I can't tell you, it's
28 classified." We just went around and around. I said, "I'm sorry sir, I cannot brief you.
29 You're not cleared for this." "I'm cleared for top secret." I said, "I'm sorry, this project
30 you're not clear for." So, I said, "You have a choice of either signing it or you can see if
31 General Evans signed it or you can call General Evans and ask him to come over and

1 explain it to you,” so he didn’t. He didn’t want to push that issue. He signed it
2 reluctantly and said, “Next time you bring any of that stupid stuff over to me you better
3 brief me!” Of course they all liked to know what was going on, and that was a lot of
4 times...that’s why I say we couldn’t tell them, even though they were supporting it and
5 they didn’t even know they were supporting it a lot of times at the base when we were
6 getting supplies and things like that. So anyhow, I pressed on the BX manager and I
7 called Tom, well I didn’t, Colonel Burger over to Air America and called them up and
8 said, “Hey, we have your form ready, and we’re ready to go to the BX. We just need
9 some money.” So he come over and he gave me a lift up there and he gave me \$500
10 bucks. I think the tennis rackets were about \$15 bucks a piece or something like that.
11 Well the BX manager, I mean Lee went right for the throat and said, “Let me have the
12 BX manager,” and they said, “Okay,” so they took him back there and oh, he flipped out.
13 Oh, he said, “I ain’t selling y’all my tennis rackets! I just got this stock in!” I said, “You
14 see who’s signatures are on there?” “I don’t care, I’m calling my headquarters.” So he
15 called his headquarters and pulled a couple of phone calls and next thing you know, he
16 told me, “Well they told me I don’t have to deplete my stock under this regulation,” and
17 so forth and so forth, “That I only have to sell you half of the stock.” So I ended up
18 walking out of there with ten tennis rackets and some balls. Well, I’d asked Tom, “Hey,
19 since I did all this, you think I could maybe help deliver them?” and he said, “Yeah, I
20 think that’ll be all right.” So here I was happy, I was going to get a ride in a porter which
21 we fly to Savannakhet and the porter, he said, “Well, we’re scheduled to go out on...” the
22 next couple...day or two later and says, “I’ll let you take them on over and come on back.
23 It’s just a regular courier run.” So I was all excited about that and then all of a sudden
24 something hot got going up north, I can’t remember what it was but they cancelled their
25 flight. They cancelled their flight out and of course I was involved in some business with
26 them anyway, because usually when they were hot, we were hot and busy. So then I
27 asked Tom a couple of days later, “When are we going to get to take those tennis rackets
28 back over to Savannakhet?” “Oh, the air ops officer came in, flew in from Savannakhet
29 the other day and picked them up.” So, I didn’t get my lift and they were that hot item.
30 So anyhow, but some of the Air America there, I put that story in the brotherhood and
31 some of the people didn’t like it because they can’t believe that some of that action really

1 happened like that. One of the other Air America guys did confirm that just like in the
2 movie about the miniature golf course, there was a miniature golf course up south of Vin
3 Chin at [Won TA] airport. But anyhow, that was some of the humorous stuff. Seemed
4 like the military or even the CIA or anything always sometimes found some type of way
5 to find some humor and do some crazy things and stuff like that.

6 SM: Let's switch back to a serious subject though. You mentioned on your
7 questionnaire the question about racial discrimination or problems as far as racial tension.

8 EM: Oh, after coming home? Yeah.

9 SM: Well you just said you didn't want...you wanted to discuss it during the
10 interview.

11 EM: Okay, yeah.

12 SM: Did that happen over there? Were there any incidents of racial
13 discrimination or anything like that?

14 EM: No, not over there.

15 SM: Or tensions among the Air Force personnel you worked with?

16 EM: No, it wasn't over there. It was in the States.

17 SM: Oh.

18 EM: It was in the States. That was on post. There was another important thing
19 that I needed to stay on there is about...which we've been in some discussion on my
20 brotherhood network is this silver sequin 30 when we flew logistics support into Laos.
21 We were in charge, and we called it salt and pepper. What happened, we flagged and
22 requested the C-130 support and the aircraft came out of CCK. Well this aircraft, we
23 called it silver C-130 had no markings whatsoever. There might have been a very small
24 tail marking, a tail number on the aircraft, but you could not see it hardly at all. What
25 happens is when the aircraft would come in and when they would run salt missions, salt
26 missions is like food supplies; rice, meat, sodas, things like that. Pepper was munitions.
27 Well, the munitions, what type of missions that would go would be the 75 Howitzers,
28 105s, stuff like that for ground support. So pepper was a very hot item we used to call.
29 At Udorn Air Force Base on the other side of the base at the far end of the base we called
30 it the pepper grinder, and basically what the pepper grinder was was where it would
31 palletize and prepare the aircraft for departing, all the supplies would go on the aircraft

1 back there and it was kept away from everybody else. So, that was a very important part
2 of our mission there. The C-130, the Air America had their own airlines they carried a
3 lot of stuff in, stuff went in through truck I believe through [?], through Thailand, through
4 USAID and stuff like that. But, to get to the other up country spots quick the C-130 was
5 the biggie. It could get so many more supplies in so much quicker. When we flew
6 pepper which was munitions, apparently I had [?] backwards I think I confirmed with one
7 of the Air America guys that a pepper was flown...we'd turn our aircraft, the Air Force
8 aircraft, over to Air America crew over to Air America crew and they would fly the
9 pepper missions into the locations and sites and stuff like that, Long Chin, what was
10 some of the others, Savannakhet, Pakxe, Muang So, and some other areas. So anyhow, it
11 was mostly, like I said again, ground support weapons. It wasn't like we were taking the
12 bombs in for the T-28s or anything like that. A lot of that was taken I think from Din
13 Chin. But, we got the pepper wasn't an everyday type operation. It was really during
14 critical time frames that they request a salt and pepper missions. When salt flew, the Air
15 Force crew flew in but all the pepper missions we had to report to JCS tonnage and
16 number of missions flown in support of pepper and so forth. That was a very important
17 subject at the time, too, going in and stuff like that.

18 SM: They flew a lot of missions like that?

19 EM: Yes, they did, yeah, and I worked from Headquarters 7/13 Special Ops was
20 from July of '70 to June of '72. I was...colonel tried to get me...I was there during the
21 build up. They started to open up Lam Phong and we sort of oversaw moving the units
22 into Thailand for the upcoming Linebacker...was it Linebacker II? I forget the last one
23 where they forced Vietnam into...

24 SM: Yeah, Linebacker II during December or during the winter.

25 EM: Anyhow, that was the biggie and we had opened up the Lam Phong. Takhli
26 had reopened. Takhli had closed earlier, I don't know if you were aware of that. I don't
27 know the exact date. So headquarters 7/13th of course oversaw the logistics for the bases
28 in Thailand since it was primary support of everything else. Anyhow, I'm not sure. In
29 my area I also then...we had consolidation of headquarters 7/13th. They closed down our
30 command posts and so on like that, but our operations stayed open and we had a

1 reduction of personnel and I had to play both ways. I had to do regular operations and
2 administrative support plus my special ops.

3 SM: Now how would you...another question kind of off the subject but relevant
4 to your overall tour of duty in Thailand. You talked previously about drinking; what
5 about drug use? Was there much drug use amongst the Air Force personnel where you
6 were working?

7 EM: It was an ongoing use. It was so relevant on base that they started golden
8 flow. It was random, every time you left Thailand you had to take a golden flow test.

9 SM: I'm sorry, the what?

10 EM: Golden flow.

11 SM: Oh, urinalysis?

12 EM: Urinalysis, yeah.

13 SM: What were the drugs of choice?

14 EM: The drug of choice mostly was marijuana and hashish. That was the two
15 easiest ones in Thailand.

16 SM: Or heroin?

17 EM: Or opium or heroin or any of those. I didn't observe any of that use of
18 opium or heroin. I observed hashish and marijuana usage pretty common. Like I said, it
19 was...since I dealt with it, and I always a respected authority, I just...they told me don't
20 do it and I didn't do it. I stuck with my booze. My booze was my drug of choice.

21 SM: Was it primarily beer, or also...

22 EM: I drank everything. A lot of times Jim Beam and coke or Jim Beam soda
23 mixed easy in Thai, you can get that downtown. So alcohol was...beer was like having
24 coke. That was just having a soda during lunchtime and stuff like that. Speaking of
25 lunchtimes, we used to go over to the NCO club. I used to go with this one fellow, and I
26 cannot find the guy's name or confirm his name with some of my brotherhood members,
27 but I used to go with the guy from intel and a lot of times since we'd have to we'd have a
28 long delay during lunch period because in the morning time the intel, they would be
29 working up the information of yesterday's missions and we'd be working off yesterday's
30 missions. In other words, we'd have from maybe like 11 to one there was nothing
31 happening so usually around two o'clock we'd start working our next day's missions frag.

1 So sometimes we'd take a couple hour lunch break and we'd go up to the NCO club and
2 we'd play slot machines and drink beer and watch the go go girls.

3 SM: They had slot machines?

4 EM: Yeah, we had slot machines at Udorn NCO club. Most of them were nickel
5 and dime.

6 SM: Did they pay off much?

7 EM: Yeah, they paid off. I think a jackpot was about \$15 back then, but my
8 buddy and I, we'd play the machine together and we'd buy a roll of nickels. That would
9 be two dollars, a dollar each, and we'd sit there and it would just keep us amused for a
10 couple of hours. They had some other pinball machines that I used to like to play. This
11 one you bounce the balls around in numbers and they pay off in points. Each point you
12 got was worth a nickel or something like that. It was a form of a little bit of gambling
13 that the club made money on. I think the club must have had a couple of expansions
14 while I was there but seemed like it appeared that they were putting the money back into
15 the club because of what they were providing us. But later on, and I'm not sure exactly
16 when it was, but the slots were removed and I think it was...my two oldest sons were
17 born in Thailand while I was stationed there at Udorn also and I got to evacuate to
18 Bangkok to 5th Field Army Hospital they were born at. But, those were significant things
19 in my life at Udorn there. Anyhow, the drinking and drugs, I didn't smoke. I was a non-
20 smoker back then so I really didn't mess with the hashish and marijuana and stuff like
21 that and it didn't turn me on. You sort of just hung around those guys. It was on the Thai
22 economy it was...heck, my brother in law grew the stuff! So, I knew definitely when I'd
23 go back and sit around and drink beer with them sometimes they'd be smoking and I'd
24 get a little whiff of that and get a little high just sniffing it while they were blowing it
25 around. I had to be careful then, too. I didn't make them feel uncomfortable, I always
26 would stay around.

27 SM: Now is there anything else you want to talk about with regard to your jobs in
28 Southeast Asia and Thailand?

29 EM: Let's see, I'm not sure if I covered the DOSA missions...

30 SM: Yep.

1 EM: For the specific emissions is just something that I just didn't recall. Don't
2 worry. It's a lot different than being a pilot. When they go in there, they remember when
3 they turned left, just stuff like that. But the point of planning them and where they
4 originated them from and why was important.

5 SM: When did you find out that you were leaving Thailand?

6 EM: I found out my normal time frame. What happened, I was supposed to
7 be...I got a COT which another consecutive assignment back to NKP to the Stingers, to
8 the I think it was...I forget what the unit number was, all I knew was 119 aircraft
9 squadron. I wasn't a volunteer, I was a volunteer for long tour. Well the colonel had told
10 me, he says, "These people, they'll look out for you. You'll get a special assignment,"
11 stuff like that. He says, "Your name is asterisked and whatever like that so that they
12 know to look out," whatever it was, I forget, but they told me I would be looked out for.
13 So when I got the assignment I was a little displeased so I ran to the CO and said, "I was
14 not supposed to go back to another assignment to Thailand." I said, "I'm a volunteer for
15 Thailand long only." He said, "There's no long tours in Thailand," and I said, "Yes,
16 there is, in Bangkok. I'm supposed to be going and they're supposed to give me a special
17 assignment to Bangkok." "Oh, it's too late. Those slots are all filled up." So after they
18 finally realized that they goofed they said, "Where do you want to go?" so I put in and I
19 went to Homestead Air Force Base. That was my first choice which was close to home
20 and that's where I first experienced some racial discrimination there too.

21 SM: So you put in for Homestead and when did you leave Thailand?

22 EM: I left Thailand the first time in June '72.

23 SM: Did you have any problems leaving with your wife and children?

24 EM: Yes, I did. Headquarters PACAF had just made the rule that anybody with a
25 Thai wife couldn't stay more than two years consecutive. They were forcing people out
26 of the country. They said that what they were finding out supposedly was ones that were
27 married to Thais were either getting into trouble either with the drug market, black
28 market, or whatever like that. That's the reason they said you had to go after two years.
29 Well I was ready to go back anyway because I'd been three years consecutive anyway, I
30 hadn't been home for five years. So, anyhow, when I got the orders to Homestead I was
31 happy but when I went to Bangkok they also said...what happened, I had a wife and two

1 kids. That's four seats. But, I had a port call and it didn't matter about my wife. I was
2 not on a command sponsored tour we called it back then. A command sponsored tour
3 means the government paid for your transportation and packing and stuff like that. So,
4 that was a big problem and I didn't have the money. I was an E5 at the time and family
5 of four coming back and our wages back then weren't so good. When I got down there
6 they said, "If you missed your port call at Bangkok you'll be given an article 15." In
7 other words, they were saying you had to leave your wife and she'd have to follow
8 behind with space available. So, anyhow, when I was down there I ran into...we got
9 there with a wife and two small children and then I ran into my old buddy at NKP. Now
10 I have suspicions that Wayne, we used to call him Bailey, even though he was military
11 uniform I sometimes had suspicions that he was tied in with the CIA, and I sort of believe
12 that today how things happened. He caught a hold of me, I was in the MAC terminal at
13 Bangkok. He said, "I was sent over to look for you, Ed." I hadn't seen him since I left
14 NKP. Well, he ended up marrying...he had a Thai, one of the girls that was his secretary,
15 I think he married his secretary when he worked at base ops. We had become pretty good
16 friends at NKP back then. But, that made me suspicious because I said, he said, "When
17 you're ready to come back to Bangkok or Thailand, here's the phone number, here's the
18 name, and here's who you call at MPC." He gave me that information, and I said, "What
19 about getting home right now?" He said, "I'm something like 70-71-72-74 on the space
20 available list and there's 100 and something people on the list. No problem, wait here."
21 He went over and next thing you know he comes back with the NCOIC of the MAC
22 terminal there at Bangkok, at Dong Long. He [?] and his name was Freeman, his last
23 name was Freeman, he was a tech sergeant, he was an NCOIC. He told me, "Don't
24 worry, I just got a changed message in. The PACAF wanted us to move some of these
25 space A's out because we were backlogged so long, so they sent us a stretch eight," I
26 guess they used to call it instead of a regular 707, they would call it a stretch eight or a
27 stretch nine, so he said, "I think we have over 100 seats extra right now," so that was a
28 relief. When Bailey gave me this information and told me he would sit there and look out
29 for me it made me wonder. I didn't catch on. Well about 18 months later...well, after
30 about a year at Homestead my wife got home sick and I was ready to come back to
31 Thailand and sure enough I had saved that number, and I called and told them I wanted to

1 go back to..."I was told to call you all and said that you'd get me back to Bangkok." And
2 he said, "When do you want to go?" and he says, "As soon as possible." And he says,
3 "I'll go." I guess this is about June or July, and he said, "Well how about December or
4 January?" and I said, "I think I've got a slot in there for you." He said, "Can you go
5 postal courier?" and I said, "Yeah, sure, I'll go postal courier." Postal courier is special
6 duty, and I didn't even put no special duty forms in. Anyhow, he said, "I have an E4 slot
7 at Dong Long," and I said, "That's fine." It's a command sponsored tour. So everybody,
8 when I told people at the States, "I'm going back to Thailand and Bangkok," they didn't
9 want to believe me. I said, "Well, you'll see the orders come down." So anyhow, I went
10 back and I got my port call in January of '74. I returned to Thailand with my wife on a
11 command sponsored tour. When I lay in at the airport, guess who's meeting me there?
12 Wayne Bailey again and tech sergeant Freeman. Well, Bailey got me out there and
13 whisked me off..."I got a special job for you to do." I said, "Oh no!" He said,
14 "Freeman's going to stay here with your wife. He brought his wife down, they're going
15 to talk and tell you about what hotels to stay in and stuff like that." Well they took me
16 off and they got me in with the OSI, right off the bat they wanted me to be an OSI
17 informant because they figured they could trust me and dealings with the CIA so I was
18 going to be working in the air mail terminal and what I was going to end up looking for
19 was drugs. They had an inside, they had people they figured were smuggling drugs
20 inside Air Force into boxes and containers right in our own postal unit. So, in other
21 words, I was supposed to be an informant for other and it turned out true. But, I don't
22 think we want to cover that area right now, do we?

23 SM: Sure!

24 EM: Okay, well I was there for a two-year tour but I sat in the airmail terminal
25 and the drug traffic, I got involved a couple times on drugs from Thailand. But, on that
26 particular case in the air mail terminal what happened is it was just a three shift type
27 work, 24 operations, all the mail came in and out of Dong Long. It would be brought
28 over...incoming would be brought over from the Pan Am and Tiger airlines and TWA,
29 those three airlines. Anyhow, it would come to us and it would ship out in those airlines,
30 also. Tiger Airlines, of course that was freight mostly. Pan Am did have a freight but
31 TWA was mostly first class mail and stuff like that. What happened was on the floor all

1 this would come in and we'd offload it and have to sort it out by APO and there'd just be
2 big piles of mail. So if you were like a person up country and would send a parcel out
3 with drugs in it, you see, you'd be a contact up there. Say you were sending some
4 marijuana or opium, or whatever like that in a package, it would be...somebody would be
5 mailed. They would coordinate their mailing and when it got down to the air mail
6 terminal it would be singled out by that person somehow during his shift while he was
7 working there. Then after...what happened, that mail would be taken out of that pile,
8 moved to another area, and then after we closed that igloo and had a dog inspect it, we
9 had dogs go through our pile going back to the States, this package would be inserted into
10 the igloo. Once that igloo was customs free, it wouldn't get hit again. Well, so what
11 happened a lot of this stuff was being smuggled in and stuff with the packages like that
12 and the guys at work there, there was more than...you couldn't do it with just one. There
13 was a few of them, okay, so this was an ongoing thing. So anyhow, we caught a couple
14 of packages after that but we couldn't prove who did it. Finally we did get some leads
15 and they used many different things, and at that time the fluoroscope was sort of new and
16 they were fluoroscopy packages, but the dog was the main thing and it was amazing to
17 see him track things he'd find regular, but he wouldn't find the big shipments. He
18 wouldn't find those packages that were stuffed with marijuana or opium and stuff like
19 that. But people were stupid; they sent a birthday card and sent them back a Thai
20 cigarette which had marijuana in it, things like that. They would open up...it was process
21 of elimination. It would be orange sack, the dog would alert to that bag, they would open
22 it up, break open everything, pour it out on the floor. We had to be out there. We called
23 ourselves mail guards, and whoever was on mail guard duty during the inspection would
24 have to certify their...in other words, if we weren't loading up the igloos or offloading,
25 most guys would be in the break room sitting in the break room or in the registry cage
26 working the paperwork. So anyway, you had to be there. It was amazing watching these
27 dogs go through these and they would narrow each bundle of letters down to one letter
28 and get that one letter out. Anyhow, but the dogs never found the big things. They only
29 found those little things. So anyhow, what it turned out to be, after we...I had fingered a
30 couple people and they moved me from their mail terminal to the headquarters postal
31 division, and I guess that was all in the intent or the plan after they had to get me out of

1 the area which I came into headquarters and later before I left there we had the main
2 strike. We caught something like we arrested 18 military people and 11 were assigned to
3 the Bangkok area. The night they went down the captain and the OSI and all this, we all
4 knew...only the captain went out with the operations officer and our headquarters and
5 stuff like that. We were told to stay home and not to go nowhere at night. They were all
6 arrested and shipped out the next day to courts and stuff like that. One of the guy's name
7 I remember was Martin and Houston, last names, and they were...now I can figure out
8 how they had so much money all the time. Activities for recreation was bowling and
9 they did a lot of gambling and card playing, and when they were arrested I was told after
10 the fact I remember is that they had rolls of money, and for some of these guys just a
11 couple of them were E5s, and more money than you would ever think about having as an
12 E5, myself. So we broke the biggest sting operation and supposedly it was all run
13 through another well-known criminal, somebody that had been arrested that was a flight
14 engineer that used to smuggle heroin back through Air Force aircraft. He was a flight
15 engineer but he was back from Atlanta but supposedly his sons, his sons and daughter
16 were running it from there and it was mostly, I hate to say, but most of them were black.
17 The ring happened to be that guy who was in prison from the States and maybe Martin is
18 the main name, maybe that was what his name was. So anyhow, that was the biggest
19 sting operation. We did have one other big bust that was the biggest hit in Nebraska that
20 was traced all the way back. We got an arrest for it at the end. The guy at the APO down
21 at Dong Long, not Dong Long APO but Bangkok APO, Clong Toy APO we used to call
22 it, he was the main guy that got that hit. So, anyhow, on drugs though, so I was well
23 aware of the drugs involved, and that's why I said it's funny how things when I start
24 looking back about why some things happened and then when I left Thailand again in
25 '76, July '76, I even had a car. These guys fixed me up with a car when I got there. I had
26 a car pretty much the whole time I was there at Bangkok which was unusual. But
27 anyhow, when I got back to...I got Cape Charles, Virginia, which was CONUS isolated,
28 would later become CONUS isolated Virginia but our whole space was Langley Air
29 Force Base, the home of the CIA of course. Langley, Virginia was headquarters on the
30 other side of the base. So, I said, "I wonder if that's some reason that they want to keep
31 track of me?" I didn't want to go there. I didn't select that at all. Coming back from a

1 long tour, you didn't get good assignments anyway. But, it wasn't a good assignment.
2 You had to go across to Cape Charles over the bay, Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and
3 all that, 18 miles. That's why I became CONUS isolated, but it sure did seem funny to
4 me how I got that. I sometimes felt that I was being monitored pretty much.

5 SM: Now do you think that your service over in Thailand helped you later in
6 your military career?

7 EM: No, not at all. I'm in the US Postal Service. A little bit of the postal
8 background probably helped a little bit, but what really got me in was my mind, my
9 memory mostly. It seemed funny that numbers and things like that I can remember real
10 quick, and then some stuff like that. I usually do remember things real quick but like I
11 said, the drinking, I drank so heavy there early, I think killed a lot of it. It was drummed
12 in my head so much back then, that not to talk about this, don't tell nobody about this,
13 don't confirm this, so I didn't take my business home. That was really a big thing, and
14 like I said, I was the type of guy that followed orders normally. I was quite a few
15 decorations every year from there and stuff like that, and so I mean I don't know, but I
16 think the drinking...and then I did finally...I say I drank to forget because I didn't want
17 to remember anything.

18 SM: What did you take away from your service in Southeast Asia personally?
19 Did it make you a better person in any way?

20 EM: Make me a better person? No, I don't think it made me any better person,
21 but I don't think it...probably if anything I was a worse person if anything.

22 SM: How so?

23 EM: In the ways of I just didn't think I was...it's just hard to describe. Just
24 something sticks in me that I didn't think I was the best person away from there for many
25 years. I didn't think I realized that then, or after even when I came back to Virginia and
26 on, because my career was still outstanding and I still did stuff like that, but a lot of it
27 again, goes...I covered everything up. So many things was a lie to me so I guess I got
28 used to lying and that's how I kept my drinking covered up for a long time. From Cape
29 Charles I went down to NAS Jacksonville, Florida, and I was 20th Air Division. At Cape
30 Charles I earned the Meritorious Service Medal which was the highest piece that's
31 equivalent to Bronze Star, and that was pretty significant for an enlisted...I was the only

1 staff sergeant ever to get an ADC at the time. Anyhow, because of how much I did...and
2 the drinking wasn't really that bad there yet, it was still going on. But they continued
3 using me as manning assistance. I was always on special deals. When I was at
4 Jacksonville they sent me down to NAS Boca Chica down there in Key West and then
5 they sent me back to Virginia Beach to open up the new radar sight and closed Cape
6 Charles down even. I was always selected by 20th Air Division for manning assistance
7 for administration, opening and closing bases and so forth like that. I mean, I had a good
8 rep and everything, and it always seemed like...looking back, I seemed to get special
9 treatment it seemed like. At that time, I thought my career was going...people used to
10 say I was going to be the most decorated admin person in the Air Force, I was going to be
11 chief master sergeant in the Air Force, and I just laughed and said, "No way." When I
12 left Bangkok in '76 I was really serious about wanting to get out with 10 years of service.
13 I just wanted to let go of it. That was a real big thought, and again, my parents talked me
14 into it, and then I saw a little cartoon on the walls making fun of the postal service and
15 since we were postal courier and guys cut this out and put it on the wall and said, "Let's
16 retire and go to work for the postal service," I said, "That's what I want to do, I want to
17 retire," and they were making fun of the postal service, didn't do any work, anyhow, but I
18 said, "That's what I want to do, I want to go ahead and retire," and so I extended and then
19 reenlisted later. But right there when I saw that cartoon, that really was the deciding
20 factor. I knew how probably this would be the last time I ever came back to Thailand,
21 and it was. I didn't go back to Thailand until 1995.

22 SM: Did your wife make periodic visits back herself?

23 EM: She didn't until 1990 was her first visit back and that's after I started
24 working postal courier. Like I said, my last seven or eight years were so rough and tied
25 up with alcohol that I lost a lot. So, financially we were stacked and so we lived a hard
26 life those years and stuff like that. I threw away a lot because of alcohol and drinking
27 and stuff like that and raising a family and stuff like that. I recovered in 1985 I sobered
28 up and finally asked for help and went to rehab at Eglin Air Force Base and at that point
29 there I haven't drank since. Also, the weight problem; my weight problem was really
30 associated with I call it my liquid diet, drinking. There's so many calories in there that
31 you can make bad decisions, you just don't do the right things, and I was lucky my wife

1 stood by me and I didn't lose my family which it was about to do that probably. Deny,
2 my fourth son, I don't think I was even sleeping with her anymore, and so I did a lot of
3 hurt. The real nasty stuff came out of me at that time, but I've gotten through it and my
4 life has become really great, and the TLC brotherhood has really helped me. It's a
5 cleansing, getting rid of it, and knowing that what we did was not bad. We were just
6 doing what the stupid congress allowed us to do. They tied our hands, and that's what's
7 the sad fact. If we could have fought that war, which we had the capabilities, like they let
8 Desert Storm and that hurt me more when I saw these guys come home from Desert
9 Storm and the treatment they got and how we got treated and cared when we got home.
10 It hurt.

11 SM: Well did you...when you came back, when you were in the Air Force, you
12 mentioned earlier that you ran into some discrimination and your first experiences with
13 it...

14 EM: Was at Homestead Air Force Base.

15 SM: At Homestead?

16 EM: Yeah.

17 SM: Did you continue to experience those kinds of things?

18 EM: Yeah, some in Jacksonville, but mostly at Homestead during the war. There
19 was women there who's husbands, the pilots, and some of the crew members, they would
20 go TDY there and they knew their husbands...they were discriminatory towards my wife.
21 They blamed my wife. Their husbands were gone, they blamed us for it. They really
22 took it out on my wife and they called her gooks and stuff like that and she wasn't a
23 Vietnamese. But they didn't care. My kids knew that they were asked about it, that they
24 were different, and kids would tell them there in school. They got used to be fighting.
25 They fought together as brothers. If there was a fight in school it was usually my two.
26 So they would take no name calling and I told them to stand up and fight for what they...

27 SM: Did that kind of stop when you left Homestead?

28 EM: Yeah, I think it was more at Homestead. We experienced it again I
29 remember at Jacksonville, NAS Jacksonville. I was there in Jacksonville from '78 to '81
30 and then that was part of the reason I didn't want to come to Eglin Air Force Base in the
31 Ft. Walton Beach area. It was too close to Alabama, and I was that conscientious there,

1 Steve, I was that conscientious of the discrimination and I felt that Alabama...I got along
2 in my Air Force community, it was great. I mean, I really didn't have an experience. I
3 worked for a lot of black supervisors and some great ones, my wife and I, we socialized
4 with everybody, we got along with everybody, we had a great time normally with
5 everybody. Everybody loved my wife, everybody loved me pretty much, I think, and
6 anyhow, but as soon as you get into outside, the Air Force I think was more of a family
7 than the Navy that I was in. We lived in base housing so it's most of the time [?] Navy
8 wives of military, but they were white mostly. I guess that's why sometimes more of our
9 friends maybe were black at the time because we were sort of thrown in that pot just like
10 they were. But the Air Force I felt was much better about handling it and like I said, the
11 Air Force was a family and we stuck together in the radar units on the Navy base
12 together. We did softball together, we ate together at the chow hall and stuff like that.
13 My wife, she worked [?]. She fit in with the Navy, she fit in there with so many Filipinos
14 that they have that I don't think she was Filipino, but on a Navy base it's pretty common
15 for them to have lots of Filipinos.

16 SM: Is there anything else you'd like to discuss today?

17 EM: Not that I can think of right now. I can say the brotherhood, the TLC
18 brotherhood I mentioned to you about the cleansing, I think it's helped talk about it and
19 helped remind me and the more and more you talk about it I know you get it out. So my
20 life has turned around and I'm still happy and still go back and visit Thailand and I
21 respect and love what we try to do for the Laos. It wasn't just for Vietnam it was Laos
22 and Cambodia.

23 SM: And Thailand.

24 EM: And Thailand, right, and the old Domino Theory that they thought. At the
25 time, the theory looked very real back then during the Cold War and the Soviet Union
26 and China and stuff like that. So, I mean, back then, now, I'm glad we're a strong nation
27 now with a military. We need to stay strong. Some authority has to be in this world
28 unfortunately.

29 SM: One last question; what do you think we should take away from our
30 experience in Southeast Asia as a nation?

1 EM: Well, the biggest thing I think we should do is if you're going to put our
2 Americans in harm's way, let the military fight the war the way it's needed to be fought
3 or how they think it's fought. You have to leave politicians out of it. Nobody wants to
4 be involved in wars. Wars aren't good. People are going to die. That's plain and simple.
5 So, I mean I think they learned that so the quickest, best thing is not to go to war. I
6 always believe in talking things out in politics but you can only go so far. Sometimes, a
7 lot of times, you've wasted politics. I don't think politics are fair and that's what's
8 happened. When you go there thinking you're talking politics, the other person's not
9 playing fair and you're trying to be the nice guy and they're behind in getting all set to do
10 something that you should have done first. So I sort of believe that to continue quick and
11 first strike is important, and I think that, again, keep the military strong and allow the
12 military to do what we're trained for. That's what we spend the money for.

13 SM: Let me go ahead and stop this real quick. Thank you very much. This ends
14 the interview with Mr. Ed Miller.