Jonathan Bernstein: This is Jonathan Bernstein conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Franklin Jones. We are in the Special Collections Library interview room in date is February 8, 2002. Time is approximately a quarter after one. Now Mr. Jones could you start with a brief biographical sketch of yourself, where you were born, growing up, etc. up to your decision to enter the military.

Franklin Jones: Well I was born in a smaller town outside of Lubbock named Lockney. It’s a town of approximately six thousand populations and I grew up in a very small place between Floydada and Silverton. A place known as South Plains, population is about ten. After completing high school, I went to high school in Floydada and after completing high school--- the ratio of available men to women in marriage in the county was not real good. There was ten boys to every girl and it seem like the right thing to do was to go somewhere else and Uncle Sam gave me an opportunity to join the Army and to see some other parts of the world. I started the Army off at Fort Hood, Texas. Then to Fort Seal then from Fort Seal to Germany.

JB: What year was this?

FJ: In ’61 I went to Germany. Join the Army in ’60 but in ’61 went over to Germany and spent a tour in Germany and then got out of the Army and was out about ten months and decided to go back in and I went back in and went to the Army Security Agency and after going to school at Fort Davis for a couple of months and I was released
from USAID and was sent back to Fort Seal. At Fort Seal I went through artillery training. So I got assigned to an artillery battalion at Fort Seal. I had training on 105 Haoetas, which is small pieces of artillery and I had worked in the conference section, telephones and I had worked some with repair parts and motor pool. So when I got sent back to Fort Seal, they put me in the communication section again and this artillery battalion but instead of it being two artillery in was a Pershing missile. Which was a very large type battalion and I had been put into the Para-parts section for the automotive repair parts and the unit German to German, the whole unit went to Germany. I spent another tour in Germany and it was about year and half break in between tours in the states and while in Germany I was promoted up to the rank of equivalent to Sergeant which was Spec-5 and I came back home and got married. Married a girl from Hale Center which is just north of Lubbock and went back Germany and spent the rest of my tour and from there was sent to Gordon, Georgia and by mix ups of everything in Germany, they had mixed up considerably on my job titles and things like that and until I got it straightened out I was at Fort Gordon. From Fort Gordon then they sent me to Fort Benning and had been cut for years at Fort Benning--- the Infantry School, the supply section and from Fort Benning I went to Fort Hurlburt. Fort Hurlburt went to intelligence school and from Fort Hurlburt I was supposes to go directly to Vietnam. I got to Fort Lewis Washington and it was the first big troop cut back that they had had in Vietnam. It was about one hundred twenty five thousand troops they cut back. The easiest way to cut back troops is don’t send any more replacements over. So when in Fort Lewis I turned around and shipped back to Fort Knox Kentucky. Had been in Fort Knox for a couple of years, working in the intelligence side with G2 stats at Fort Knox and then I did get orders to got to Vietnam and went to--- well the guy in the department in the Army, he didn’t like the way that I wound up at Fort Knox and he didn’t know it. It wasn’t my fault but nobody told him I was at Fort Knox and wasn’t in Vietnam and one of the guys I worked with got orders to go to Vietnam and he called up the departments Army and I’m not going to Vietnam till he gets these other two guys that worked in the office here that has never been to Vietnam over there first. That was the day my orders were cut to go to Vietnam. But the guy he’s going to make sure I had a real good tour so he sent me to school for six months first, sent to advisors school and language school. I went to
advisor’s school and did that part of it and went to language school down at Fort Bliss and had the short Language School— the eleven-week language school. Then I went to Vietnam and when I got to Vietnam the guy that volunteered me to go, he had beat me there for three months, so he still got there before I did but we worked together. We had worked together at Fort Knox and I stayed in Vietnam till nine days after the cease fire. I got there in ’72 and stayed their till nine days after the cease-fire in ’73 and from there I was sent back to Fort Hood. I spent six years at Fort Hood and went to Germany for another tour. Then from Germany I came to Lubbock and retired from the military and came to Lubbock. I spent a little over eight years in Germany, approximately a year in Vietnam. Various places around the United States.

JB: Stepping back to your decision in going into the military did you have any family members who had served in World War II or anything like that?

FJ: The only family member I had that served that I knew was my uncle and he had served in World War II. He served under Patton in Africa and when they landed on Sicily the ship that he got off of dropped a short round and he had a strap on his back and he was disabled Veteran from World War II.

JB: Did you talk at him at all about going into the military?

FJ: Very little. He didn’t talk much about his military career.

JB: Did you get drafted or did you volunteer?

FJ: Volunteered.

JB: Now going through I guess basic at that point, still fairly early on, how is the training?

FJ: Well our basic training at Fort Hood was quite different than most other places in the military at that time. We went to a tank battalion for basic training. There was one company that did basic training and there was one company that had mortar platoon training and the rest of the battalion was straight tank battalion— T-O-D Tank Battalion. Here we were this independent basic company and the tank battalion. There was a few battalions like that in Fort Hood that was also one training battalion down there that just did basic training. But ours was considerably different to the fact that when we had extra duty on the weekends and things like that, they wanted us to do extra work, we went to the tank motor pool and cleaned tanks. We didn’t go on horse marches and
things like that. We did what marches we had to do for the basic program and one time
we went to the rifle range or we went out to close combat courses, charging the hill.
When we went out there the trucks got stuck. It was wet out there, well our company
commander was a aviator so he got the helicopters to come out and fly us all back to the
barracks, so we didn’t walked back a while, it was quite different as far as the basic goes,
but we did do what we had to do for the requirements to complete basic training. But we
didn’t go no extra mile.

JB: So moving on to AIT, I guess what was your MOS at that point?

FJ: So after going through AIT, we took training on the Toad Howitzer’s, the
105’s and it was a lot of work going through it. One time I was tired and we went out to
the bar one night and we were out in the field firing and I laid back between the trailers
and went to sleep. They were firing and I still went to sleep right behind the gun. Some
of them eight inches they couldn’t do that. From Fort Seal I could go home on the
weekends, it wasn’t that far to home as it was from Lubbock to Fort Seal.

JB: Now at that point was there any talk about Vietnam of things going on?

FJ: Very little. Back in ’60-’61 there was a little rumble but it wasn’t any
headlines. That was very low, hush, hush lips. Cause the Treaty that separated the North
and the South came in ’55. Five years later they wasn’t being Americans being admitted
there, there was some there new where to look for but there wasn’t any committed.

JB: Were you aware of any advisor presence over that at that point that you were
aware of?

FJ: I didn’t even think of anybody being in Vietnam in ’60 – ’61 there were other
things that were just more important after that. After Fort Seal I went to Germany and
they built a wall in Berlin and we went up to sit for a week on the border with our 105
Howitzer’s. We didn’t even know why we were up there for three days. They called an
alert and sent us out in the field and they put us up on the border and that was where we
went a whole lot of times on our alerts the only thing was we got out there and never
shot. Whenever we went out there to train, we’d go up there and start shooting artillery.
We’d been out there three days and not fired anything. One of the guys had to go back
into post to get some water for our kitchen areas, got a newspaper and talking about a
wall in Berlin. We were about four miles from the East German border. Then the same
things happen again whenever they had a missile crisis down in Cuba.

JB: Where were for that?

FJ: At the same place, still in Germany. That is whenever we had a whole lot of
draftees at the stronghold three. They were drafted for two years. A lot of them spent
more than three. Whenever I first got to Germany, there was a tall guy that was there the
night that all of the new people came in. He came around seeing who all was there and
everything. They called him Tex. The next day the mailman came to me and he said I
had a letter and he said by the way the guy we called Tex he is from Floydada too. Well I
had never met him but I went to school with both of his brothers, I knew both of them
very well. Well he got out of the Army and he was telling us he was a short timer by the
time when we got there, he got out of the Army, he came back to Floydada and started his
life over again and then they had this little wall went up in Berlin and he had been put
into a reserve unit so they activated the unit put him back into the Army and they built a
wall in Berlin and he was still in the Army and they just--- I don’t know how many years
he ended up finally wound up spending on the two year draft but it was more than four.

JB: Heard a real interesting story during both of the Berlin crisis and the Cuban
missile crisis, did you think you were going to war with them or were you briefed on the
situation?

FJ: Well, we were briefed to the point that our commanding officer told us that---
he said whenever you go you are suppose to take ten of them with you. Well you are
supposed to hold out for seventy-two hours till they get replacements here. That was our
initial brief. Well we were a detained force. We weren’t there to win no battles and we
were there to detain the enemy for seventy-two hours and to take ten of them with us
when we went. Because they had us out numbered ten to one. Yeah, there was some
concern their but what do you do when you’re eighteen or nineteen years old, you are not
too concerned about everything. You are more concerned about the next good time that
you are going to have.

JB: For the Cuban Missile Crisis, do you know the Pershings there or were you
with the Pershings?
FJ: I wasn’t with the Pershings then. I was still with 105’s. When I was with the Pershing, they pulled a hundred twenty five thousand men out of Germany and they stuck our Battalion over there and they figured we had as much firepower as a hundred twenty-five thousand. Pershing missile did not have conventional warhead.

JB: It’s staggering the amount of firepower.

FJ: Yes. But we had two birds on count all the time; two on stand by and one company was on maintenance.

JB: So it was just a--- how many missiles were in the ---?

FJ: There were six launchers in the battalion. Later years they went up to eight launchers. Two was home count on hold they were home count. They were counted down to a certain part and inhaled. So they were basically home to go--- not ready to go but home to go.

JB: After the deployment to Germany in ’63, where did you head from there?

FJ: From Germany as I said after that I got out of the army for about eighteen months, I lived either in West Texas or Dallas and then from Dallas I went back into the military and went to Fort Denver Mass and that was when I was with Army Security Agency.

JB: Now, I guess getting out of the Army--- readjusting to civilian life at that point. Were there many major adjustments?

FJ: Well, yes. Because here I was basically twenty-one years old and by virtue of the experiences I had the places I had been and things like that. The group that I grew up with was not at the stage of maturity that I was at and I could associate a lot better with twenty-four, twenty-five year olds, then I could twenty-one year olds cause that is the more of the maturity level that I was at. Yeah it made a whole lot of difference.

JB: Eighteen months later you were called back in?

FJ: I went back in.

JB: I was in the Air Force ROTC in college; I went the Air Force’s version of the OSI. It was their intelligence.

FJ: ASA is--- the area of the big planes with the Frisbee on top of it.

JB: Awax?
FJ: Oh, Awax. Now we are getting somewhere. ASA is Radio Research.

Because of where I had been and what I did in the first tour of Germany and the friendships I had in ASA you had to have top-secret clearance. Well when they started checking my clearance, they said no. Not maybe but no. They wouldn’t even give me a confidential clearance--- they pulled a top secret from me and wouldn’t even let me have a confidential because of the friends that I had in Germany the first time over there. Some of the friends I had had relations in Yugoslavia, East Germany and what used to be Prussia. So the military pulled my clearance and it wasn’t till I was back in Germany the second time and as I said I came back home on leave, I dated this girl from Hale Center, we got engaged, we dated for two weeks and got in engaged and I went back to Germany and then they put me in the clearance again and less than thirty days it came back final. But when it came back the guy that read me in for the clearance he told me where my girlfriend lived and where her dad lived, he told me what type of service record her dad had and he knew more about me than I did at that time. Yes, they had done a whole lot of checking but the basic checks they didn’t have to go back and redo because they did all that on my younger years so all they had to do was an update part of it and they came back and they dumped a top secret on me and anything else they could stick on it. The reason that they wanted me to have a top secret was because a lot of things to do with to do with that missile was top secret and they needed someone to pull the commander relief on guard duty and it took top secret clearance to pull commander leave on guard because commander relief, he’s one of them that carries the keys to the bunkers where the warheads were at.

JB: That would be about 1965?

FJ: It was about 1965-66.

JB: Meanwhile things seem to be getting a little bit more in Vietnam?

FJ: Things started to happen in Vietnam. We had a lot of people who didn’t want to be in the Persian Missile Unit. The easiest way to get out of the unit was to voluntarily go to Vietnam. It had more than one benefit, you got out of the unit and you get to go home on a thirty-day leave. Don’t matter if you had leave time coming or not, they would give you a thirty day leave in the states on the way to Vietnam. Several people volunteered to do that. That was my thought, whenever I reenlisted in Germany--- really
reenlistment bonus, and I came home on my thirty day leave with the idea that as soon as I got back to Germany I was going to volunteer to go to Vietnam, come back home for another thirty days and I was going to party but I got engaged part of that time so that changed up the whole thing. I had enough money to pay for plane tickets here and there, from here and back, buy a nice engagement ring and all that. But looking back it was worth it.

JB: How long were you with Persian Unit?

FJ: About three years.

JB: About ’68.

FJ: Yes. Things were really going pretty good in Vietnam then.

JB: Yes, Tet and everything. After--- what was the sentiment like in the country were you here on the state side at that point.

FJ: Well when I came back to the states, I came back to Georgia and was at Fort Gordon for a short time and down there because of the mix up on when I was promoted and all in Germany, I was promoted under one MOS, but was drawing proficiency pay under another MOS and they can’t change, if you drop proficiency pay under an MOS, they just can’t change it to another. So they had to go back and get all this straightened back out and get me back under the MOS that I had proficiency pay in and during that time they were working that I was working in personnel part at Fort Gordon processing people to go to Vietnam. I was in overseas processing, I was the overseas processor there for a while and then from then finally they got it straightened out and they stuck me over to G2 to post security and supply actually G4 to supply and was under supply inspection team, and I was drawing supply proficiency in supply and from there I went to Fort Benning and went to OCS for a while and both of arches failed so I had to get out of OCS and they stuck me in supplies for the small arms committee. So we were training either basic trainers or basic training--- mainly it was for the OCS force down there for the small arms committee.

JB: What type of small arms committees were using infantry training?

FJ: M16, we had the M16’s the M16 machine guns and fifty caliber machine guns and we worked in conjunction with the mortars and we had all the rifle ranges at Fort Benning, all the rifle machine gun ranges and that is a lot of ranges.
JB: What was your opinion on the M16?

FJ: To me it always worked good. It kept lubed good, kept a can of WD40, as long as you kept spraying WD40 it worked. Don’t put no oil on it and they give you oil and oil it down and anybody who used oil it would quite. Anybody who used WD40 it kept working. The M60 machine gun it always worked well and we had a forty-five or forty eight. Bee Bee guns, we had about three ranges of bee bee guns.

JB: Were used to train in?

FJ: Yes, to train in. It was called quick kill. They would throw something up in the air and you shoot from the hip to shoot at it. Instinct shooting is what they called it. One of the guys I worked with down there, he could shoot an ashtray about eight or ten times with a bee bee gun. Not aiming from the hip.

JB: That is impressive.

FJ: That is instinct.

JB: Definitely. Did you know about everything that was going on over there about processing people who go overseas to Vietnam? Did you want to go or did--- you said you have volunteered previously?

FJ: I didn’t volunteer I was going to but I didn’t cause I got engaged. While I was at Fort Benning I had a little boy a little redheaded kid, I had a wife and kid and bought me a mobile home. No I didn’t volunteer. But I wasn’t fighting it either. I knew that by military careers if you didn’t go it wasn’t too good. You didn’t have the stamp on your record.

JB: Going over to Vietnam, were you aware right away where you were going?

FJ: From Fort Benning I went to Fort Hurlburt to an Intel school. Intel school--- the eight weeks I was there, we studied Vietnam because Vietnam was going so good in ’68 and ’69. So we studied Vietnam it was called Intelligence school and the part that we were studying it what the analyst would do but we were studying in Vietnam, customs, background, history and whenever I left there, my whole outlook on Vietnam was different that anybody else’s that I knew, other than the ones that went through the schools with us. Cause nine out of ten people didn’t know why Vietnam was even there. They had no understanding of why we were even involved in Vietnam.

JB: What was your outlook?
FJ: Just a quick run down, Vietnam starting fighting for their independence back in 1776 from the French. They fought the French up until the Second World War of which the Japanese came in and took over Vietnam. Took it over from the French. So the Japanese had Vietnam. So the Viet Minh of who were fighting the French, the Viet Minh starting fighting the Japanese and the war was over, well Japan lost the war and so we signed a peace treaty, all the Allies signed on the peace treaty and we gave Vietnam back to the French from the Japanese, well the Viet Minh was still left out there. So The Viet Minh were fighting French again and they fought them up to 1955. Then the French did something that they always tell you don’t do from the military. The French went into the Valley of Dien Ben Phu and they blocked the valley, they blocked the entrance into Hanoi basically. They didn’t take the high ground. Military history all the way back to Hanabal says take the higher ground. So these little Vietnamese guys, they go get their artillery and take it apart, one of them takes a hand full of bolts and the other takes a hand full of nuts and the other one grabs a wheel and the other half a dozens grabs a barrel and they take the artillery to the top of the hill and they put it back together and they start shelling the French. By later years even after I got back to Lubbock. Then I made a friend with a guy that was flying in and out of the Valley of Dein Bien Phu supporting the French. Officially the American Army was not in Vietnam in 1955. He was flying in and out of the valley in Dien Bien Phu resupplying the French.

JB: What was his name?

FJ: Bill Bailey. He doesn’t live in Lubbock now. The French got whipped there so they had to go back to the peace table. With the Viet Minh, well the French wasn’t the only the ones in possession of Vietnam. The Allies were. So it wasn’t just the French that had to go back to a Peace table, it was the whole Allies, the French, the English, the British, all of them together and the agreement that was come up with the Treaty was Vietnam would be divided from north to south, for twenty years and at the end of twenty years they would be allowed to establish their own form of government. When you go back and start adding one and one and three. One down the time lines on everything happening in Vietnam, when did we leave Vietnam?

JB: Right about ’73.

FJ: No.
JB: About ’75?

FJ: ’75. ’73, they pulled the last of the troops out. That was the cease-fire was and it had a two years sloppy time there and in ’75, when everybody said why don’t the Americans go back there and stop them from coming into Saigon. We couldn’t do it and we were on the Peace Treaty saying for twenty years, then they would be allowed to establish their own form of government and it didn’t say they had to be democrats, it didn’t say they couldn’t be communist, it didn’t say they could be dictatorship. That is where it came down.

JB: What about the --- I think it was ’67, no it was earlier than that where they actually realized if they had the free elections, Ho Chi Minh in ’67--- Ho Chi Minh would have been elected basically it would ruin the chance of the south being democratic government---

FJ: Well it depended on how much you want to look at the south being a democratic government or not. But Diem, he wasn’t to democratic. You get elected and then you get ready to come up and for a name for the election and you just demolished the house and you say I’m the only one and how much democratic do you want there. That is almost like down in Cuba. I think we learned a big lesson in Cuba that is how come we didn’t get our squarles in Vietnam. We are a democracy and it’s best form of government that we could have and that doesn’t mean that is the best for everybody.

JB: Going over to Vietnam been through Intel School, Language School----

FJ: Advisory school, language school, that we studied Vietnam.

JB: So you knew you were going to MACV?

FJ: I was going to MACV and there was no question as an advisor.

JB: Now getting there and arriving in country, what was your first impression?

FJ: Hot. It was in the last of February or maybe March. It was hot. They put us in a barracks type building. It didn’t have no windows in it, it had screens up--- mosquito screens and things like that but it was in days and it was hot at night and here we had just left west Texas where it was pretty cold. January and February are pretty cold. I went to school down in Fort Bliss and believe it or not we even had snow at Bliss while I was down there. It was just going from here where it was cold and all of a sudden zap you are over there and it is hot. Your nights and days are not straightened out. So the first thing
they did was stick us in this place right at MACV headquarters for about two weeks till
we got to climatized which was a big thing. But then every night we could hear bombs
dropping. I don’t know how far from Saigon but we could hear the bombs dropping. We
knew we were there. But because I was the MACV as soon as we got there, I was issued
a rifle. That was one of the big things that were in the news back then but so many of
them who went to Vietnam were not issued a rifle as soon as they got there. So then I
went to the advisor team and was there basically six months and then I knew I was in
Vietnam.

JB: Who was your advising team?
FJ: Ham Tan Province--- Bien Thu Province---- the town was Ham Tan. It was
south of Phan Tiet north of Bien Tau, so it was right on the coast.

JB: Third corp zone?
FJ: I don’t know what corp it was. We were right on the coast. About a mile and
half from the South China Sea and all the battles I fought in Vietnam were there. We
fought the Battle of the Buldge and we had one old woman that was the cook and she
didn’t know how to make less than a three course meal. Then we had an old man who
was a cook, who had been the head pastry chief for the French Embassy in Cambodia for
seven years before he came to Vietnam. We had civilian cooks and fighting the battle of
the Bulge. So every afternoon we went out and played volleyball, didn’t matter if it
rained or shined, we had some of it off. Then about twice a week--- at least twice a week
on the average, me and somebody else would drive into Saigon and turn in equipment.
From Saigon to Ton Son Nhut. Train compound is where we had a lot of stuff to be
turned in the Plantation.

JB: You were over there in February and March--- March of course was the
beginning of the NVA offensive, how was that---
FJ: In ’72?
JB: Yes.
FJ: I didn’t notice anything in ’72. Nothing out of the ordinary because
whenever I got there the American were leaving and it appeared that the NVA and VC
would want to leave the Americans alone, they didn’t want to kill Americans because
they didn’t want the Americans to come back. We were leaving and they were wanting
us to go. Of course they were sending in some mortar’s now and then and rockets and after I got out to the team we had couple of mortar’s came in the second night I was there and that was when I got wounded and I refused a Purple Heart. Whenever I got to the team that sitting at the end of the sidewalk was a trench, go jump in the trench and go to the corner, there is a bunker in the corner and go to the corner if we get any incoming, the second night I was there I had a couple of mortars come in. I never had been down to that trench and they told me but I never looked in it. So I ran out and ran my steel pot, pistol belt and my rifle and run down to end of the sidewalk and hop in the trench and head to the corner. Well about the bottom of the trench was a sewer pipe across that trench, cast iron sewer pipe and I caught it with both shins and I went rolling in that bunker, both shins bleeding. That hurt.

JB: Oh gosh, I can imagine that.

FJ: Then every weekend we go down swimming in the ocean, we all pile on the jeep and go to the Ocean and go swimming and we’d wade out about a hundred yards and stand and look down and count your toes. The water was so clear. One day we went down and the water was just like glass, not a ripple on it. Walk out in there and turned around and walked back to the shore--- counted thirteen jellyfish with in a foot of my leg. One day--- one Sunday went down, there was a Portuguese Man of War that was about two feet across--- big old thing on the beach, so you knew they were out there.

JB: What was the sentiment in the area where you were--- were people sort of I guess the civilian population then military as well, but were they sort of getting nervous that the Americans were pulling out?

FJ: No not really not that team. Because the team is actually winding down all the times that I was there. I got there was about twenty-five or thirty guys on the team. Whenever I left the team there was about four military and maybe four to six civilians that was all that was left. It had somebody leaving they didn’t replace them and it was just wind down all the way through. Now the civilians around there didn’t like us to go because we pumped a lot of money into their economy and we had all civilian guards and we had civilian cooks and we used a lot of daily hire people and everybody that you employ that puts money in the town and so now probably I knew this better than anybody else on the team as far as the military cause I was the only military on the team that spoke
Vietnamese. Now there were all the civilians that were on the team they spoke Vietnamese and our senior advisor was a civilian. We weren’t--- I suppose the civilian side was really under the CIA. The military side we were under the military--- but yep were working for them and our aviation support we had a fix wing that would come out everyday and they were Air America. They had the CIA involved Air America from the Lady Bird and then two days a week, we had Air America Choppers who come work with the team, two days we had military choppers so we had back and forth. Our team had to cover the whole province.

JB: Exactly what were the team’s responsibilities?

FJ: We were to advise the province headquarters and our police advisor was a civilian, he was a retired New York policeman and he worked with the police. Well my part of it because I had the supply background and I had the intelligence background--- the intelligence MOS, the supply and all that. I had a counter part in the police, I had a counter part in the sector S2, which is security, I had a counter part in the G4 of Sector 4, which is the Sector supply. I had a counter part in the sector supply maintenance company, so I had four counter parts, plus I did the supply function for the team and me and another guy a master sergeant, we made water. We had our five hundred gallon to sit on the ground and the town only turned on the water on at certain times in the day, so we had a commode boat float on this five hundred gallon glitter and when they turned on the water well it would fill up and when it would fill up and we had another one up on top of the water tower and when the one up on top would get low, we would go down there and treat the one on the bottom with chlorine and pumped it through a filter that came off the ship and pump it up to the top barrel. So were purified our own water that way. Then every month we took a test over there to Saigon and checked it with the hospital and they said we had the purist water in Vietnam. That’s even what we put through the commodes; we had indoor restrooms and everything. Whenever I got there we had one compound that was pretty good size and had maybe twenty buildings on it. We got down to so many people we didn’t even have a person per building--- we turned that one over to the Vietnamese and we moved across the street to CB’s left, they were there when the CB’s left we took over the CB compound, so that was one building. The very nicely made building--- CB’s made the building and they did a real good job in making
buildings. It was a kind of mortar proof and we got on top of it and put a ceiling in it and
the ceiling was made out of VSP pads and it had eighteen inches of sand bags on top of
that. Then it had a metal roof on top of it--- on top of the building. So if we had a mortar
and made a roof and set the mortar off and it wouldn’t have come through eighteen
inches of sand bags and we had two real nice air conditioners in the building, we had also
a generator--- power compound---

JB: Did you go out in the combat operations with Vietnamese units or---
FJ: We didn’t got out on operations with them, we had one guy that did. He was
the major and he did for a while. His Army career was kind of at a stand still and he was
a major--- he had been captured in the Bay of Pigs, he was reported in Cuba he was
involved in the Bay of Pigs and the Army gave Cuba a bunch of tractors to get him back
after you had been a POW down there because of the Bay of Pigs turned out, he went out
on a few exercises with them out on ground searches and things and I got all the reports
on what supposedly was captured and brought back and things like that and the best I
could tell between the Americans and the French, we talked the Vietnamese real quick
because one time that they picked up eighty tons of rice one day, by the time it gets
turned into Saigon, it is something like five thousand pounds of rice in Saigon real happy
they got five thousand pounds of rice but everybody on the way down the pecking chain
got tons of rice, we are talking real good.

JB: Now, I guess at that point in 1972, there are seventy thousand US Service
men in country roughly, most of them are getting ready to leave of course Nixon is
talking about Peace with honor--- does that hold water?
FJ: Yes. That is whenever they sent me back to Saigon from the team, like I said
the G(?) was not happy with me and so they were going to send me back and they put me
there in Saigon working in the combined Intelligence center. Yeah, I had a lot of good
Vietnamese friends in there but I learned one thing real quick, I thought I knew how to
play ping pong--- you can’t play ping pong against those little suckers. Not on the team I
learned something else you don’t play volleyball with them either. Those guys are four
foot nine and they can jump up to the middle of his waste up to the top the net. They slam
ping-pong balls like you never thought of and they can slam volleyball the same way. It
was quite an experience working there. I was working one side of the desk and right
across from me were the Vietnamese on the other side a lot of times we would get reports
and we’d look at it and pass it over to the next guy but didn’t go across the desk. We
couldn’t share with them.

JB: Why is that?
FJ: It didn’t look good.

JB: Was there any concern of North Vietnamese or Viet Cong infiltrators?
FJ: Indian---? Nah! They were probably there but they weren’t that concerned
with them. I was in Saigon when they blew up the Ammo dump. They were about
fourteen miles away from where I lived. But I think first rack ammo was about seventy-
eight tons. An eight bomb went up and that made a pretty good boom. I slept through it.
The next one they got me awake for. I was outside whenever it went off and it was just
like twilight. I(?)--- the whole side went off like Saigon, I think the only buildings that
damaged were the American buildings, they only ones who had glass on the windows.
Except the CB, the CB didn’t have any windows on half the building. Flat top building,
no windows.

JB: Concussion went right through?
FJ: Concussion you knocked every light bulb out of every light fixture through
the whole building. Florescent lights and I don’t know how much the root jumped
whenever that thing went off. The concussion hit it. The whole building had to dance.
There was glass everywhere. (?)

JB: I have never experienced anything like that--- It’s just mind-boggling.
FJ: It busted windows in MACV headquarters about fourteen miles from there.
You think the confession. It did knock down a Vietnamese hooch. You take a grass top
house, no windows in them. What happens when the conclusion gets you. Falls out of
the roof. Everybody had lizard. I had two lizards in my room.

JB: What kind of lizards?
FJ: Camellian.

JB: Really.
FJ: They had a different name but I don’t want to say that. They crawl around
the walls, they would eat away mosquitoes. I mean you liked your lizard because they
eat mosquitoes, you had mosquitoes everywhere.
JB: Did you encounter any other types of wild life there--- any other types of wild life--- monkey’s, tiger’s?

FJ: I didn’t personally, but while I was there one day one of the guys went to the ammo bunker. He was going to get some plastic explosives out of them, he was going to destroy some ammunition, he opened it up and there was a sand cobra in there. He let it have some room. On our little compound there where the CB’s had been it had constant tinger wire around it and about once a year you got to spray it down with gasoline and diesel and whatever was left in the drums to burn off the weeds that were through the barb wire. One time we burned them and there was three banana vipers that were dead there. Banana Vipers are not quite as deadly as a bamboo viper. It wasn’t a day that we had a couple of guys that went up to one of the districts to pick up a piece of equipment and bring it back and they were going down the road in there jeep and they were up on a cobra and he was coiled out in the middle of the road looking at him straight through the wind shield. So you can figure he was coiled at about four feet in the air --- that was a king cobra. They had a picked up a baby elephant up there about a year before I got there and brought it back in a chopper. The chopper pilot wasn’t very happy cause the little baby elephant would get excited in the chopper and he messed all over the sucker that was an Air America chopper though. They were paid good for it. Other than the ones that we eat you know our police advisor would go out and buy our sea food and he would go out with check point and the police would go out in the morning and meet the fishing boats coming in and about a red snapper and lobster and shrimp. The freshest shrimp would still be alive and then other would be popcorn shrimp of the prawns that were a dollar a kilo. Prawns you couldn’t put but four of them on the plate. It could cover your plate completely all be good.

JB: Did you ever eat any local food?

FJ: That is where we got our local --- whole lot went through our kitchen came out local cause we had to drive into Saigon and buy all the materials and we bought some--- we wanted Prime rib and they usually came out of the commissary or something like that. The big part of what we got came local. We were off the beaten paths. The QR1 was the main highway which goes from Saigon to Hanoi and we were about seven or eight miles off that to the ocean side. The peddlers were coming down from Da Lhat
going into Saigon to sell our goods. A lot would detour off the road coming to sell
something to us and make enough money to get back into Saigon and so we had
tomatoes, strawberries, celery and anything like that. We bought from those peddlers.
Like the celery stalk we got from the bottom of the stalk would be four inches across and
the entire stock would be as tender as can be. Strawberries were almost about as half size
of your fist--- big--- real good strawberries. Then in the daytime a whole lot times we
would take off during the day, go get in the jeep and go down town and go shopping.
Shopped anywhere we wanted to in town--- jewelry shops. Our military chopper crew
came out to us and they got to where there was a fight who got to come to our team.
Because they had to go to different teams all over Vietnam but it was a fight who got to
come our team. Because they all knew that the Mamasanes were going to cook breakfast
and they could flying to our team and we would give them enough time to go eat
something and they would come in and they could order eggs or whatever else they
wanted and anything they wanted for breakfast--- pork chops and gravy or whatever.
They loved the team and then if we got done early in the day, they would take one of our
jeeps and go down town and go shopping. Well we had a--- something happen and I
don’t know just exactly how it all happened but we wound up there before I left with
every man on the team--- every military guy on the top had a conserved weapon. Either
you had a machine gun or you had a M 79 grenade launcher and everybody had one.
Some of us had two. Yes, I had a case of CS grenades and I had a case of (?) in M 79---

JB: High grown(?)
FJ: No. Low buck—buck(?). Shot them one day and stick a fifty-five-gallon
barrel and the healthy thing waste high and shot at it. First one hit the ground about
twenty feet in front of me and then it just strung them out. I don’t know how many (?)
millimeter rounds.

JB: Do you know it was the steel shot or the lead shot?
FJ: I think it was lead I don’t know for sure.
JB: Early on in the war there was controversy in the North Vietnamese were
claiming about the B-hive double up buck round guys eventually dying of lead poisoning
and so they later on switched it over to steel shot and they got rid of it cause the steel
wasn’t working. So I was just wondering if you were still using the lead shot rounds?
FJ: What ever you weren’t supposing that is what I had. Everybody on the team had a vehicle except for me I had two.

JB: What kind of vehicle?

FJ: I had a jeep and a two and half ton. The two and half ton actually belonged to the district. It had belonged to the Vietnamese but they --- the jeep I had, nobody ever figured out where it came from. You just have to wind up there. 1st Cavalry had been in that area for a while and I think the first cal lost a lot of vehicles to combat loses that we wound up with. That’s a way before report my time ---

JB: Sounds like--- my grandfather was in the 83d Division in World War II and by the end of the war they were calling in the 83rd Mechanize Division because they had borrowed, stolen or just acquired a vehicle for just about every unit in the division.

FJ: I would say every band.

JB: Exactly.

FJ: Whenever I left the team though, we had no property, on the books. We didn’t have any vehicles we didn’t have any weapons. The only thing we had was our classified copier because you don’t borrow somebody crypto set and that is the only thing we had and every man had almost like a hospital bed--- one of those very nice beds and every body had sorry weapons.

JB: Now how did you come to acquire all these crew items?

FJ: That’s what I said it all happened before I got there. I know that the first Cav operated there for a while and I think the 82nd operated there for a while. Because the runway for our airport--- the actual airport we had, it was a very improved runway. There was a terminal building and no windows in it or anything. It wasn’t a very big building but it was actually a terminal building. Taxi stripes coming off the runway the building about thirty yards.

JB: This was right by your own---

FJ: Hill was the there. How things happened during wartime, who knows. Like Sea Land Trucking Company, they had a semi-truck going over there all the time, every shipment over there had a bunch of them. None came back--- what happen to them. Like on the team, I said everything we had wasn’t accounted for it was just above and beyond but whenever I left I don’t know what happen to it. I went into Saigon and I worked at
CICV and that was under USARV that wasn’t under MACV. I spent a few months there
and then they sent me up to Da Nang. At first they said they played (?0 they would have
a job for me and then they sent me to Da Nang. The fortieth comma of attachment who
was with in Da Nang. I thought I was lost whenever I got there cause they told me that
Saigon was going to send a semi detachment to Da Nang---got to Da Nang and the airport
and stepped off the plane and said, “Who are you looking for?” “So and so anti
detachment,” and they said, “They are not here.” I am 40th Commal detachment and that
is what you are going to be called all the time you were in Da Nang.

JB: How long were you there?

FJ: I wasn’t there but two or three months--- it wasn’t long but it was a bad
assignment. I was supply that was actually the first Sergeant and the company clerk---
was the only two people in the whole detachment that didn’t have an MIMOS. But I had
MIMOS but I was there as their supply, well the supply sergeant and supply officer that
had been their before I got there had just got through with their general court martial from
misappropriating the battalion. I had to go in there and pick up--- like I said a bad
assignment. You look in the property books and you could tell what is suppose to be
there, it had been an MI Battalion and they stood it all the way down to a detachment
which was a whole lot smaller than a company and they had turned in an equip

JB: I don’t guess they would be getting a court marshal if they didn’t get away
with it but how did they do that?

FJ: They court martialed but they did get away with it. The things after talking
and finding out probably, probably they had a real good friend in the Air Force--- load
master, probably on C141 and he would deliver equipment anywhere southeast Asia that
you wanted to pay for. However he got to work that way I don’t know, but evidentially it
worked in there somewhere that way. He was delivering trucks and equipment and
everything by the time we got cease fire notification, I couldn’t tell you what was
suppose to be there and nobody could. Parts that had been ordered you couldn’t tell what
came in and what hadn’t anything. You couldn’t make heads or tails out of the books.
The day they came in with the cease-fire, the day it went into to effect. We were in a
little building out behind this bigger building, bigger building maybe a forty-by-sixty.
But we were in a smaller building out behind it with the rat rig right next to it. That morning here comes the NVA and the VC start moving into the bigger building.

JB: With you still there?

FJ: With us still there. Here were the four powers agreement is in the building right next door to us and here we just pulled the night before all of our agents in off of these little teams around the countryside that their primary mission had been to neutralize the enemy, what was our life worth? If we had been on the same building with the NVA and the VC so they got us out of there that day. They sent down planes from Saigon to pick us up. I know I went out to the airport and had my duffle bag on my shoulder and I had been turning in this stuff I had to get turned in over the book him out deep-water peer. I didn’t have time to ship anything and we had about three days notice about the cease-fire was going to be--- I didn’t have time to ship nothing. I get out to the airport with my duffle bag on my shoulder and walk up to the airplane which is a little scrap pilot there at the bottom, he said Jones and I said yes, he said, you can’t take duffle bags on, I said you better check your manifest again. He looks at his manifest again and he said Jones, bag and baggage and he turns around to this lieutenant colonel standing beside him and said sorry lieutenant colonel you have been bumped by a duffle bag. The colonel looked very happy though. That was our plane. We had our own chopper up there in Da Nang to. I got there the day after we bombed Da Nang. I don’t how many planes it was, there was air force, marines, navy, they got word that the NVA tank battalion refueling in the open and they went on a joint mission and some kid back in Saigon dropped a map designator, like instead of AB he put AA on the map designator which brought it down to exactly one hundred kilometers south of the north end of the runway along the airport. There was one American killed, but one of the five hundred pounders got a direct hit on the 40 foot JB tank it was still burning when I got there. There was hole inside the village that you just could walk through, shrpanel holes. It didn’t knock down any Vietnamese hooches across the fence either. My tour in Vietnam was quite different than most of the guys that were out in the bush and all that--- guess part of that was in the bush but it wasn’t walking out on patrols. Whenever I was first out on the team, I had only three alternative translators assigned to me. Three of them I never talked to near that many people.
JB: Were you advising the Province chief as far as military operations or just
day-to-day?
FJ: Military operations. Which, I really did most of the advising to either my
counter parts or to the senior advisors.
JB: Which--- I guess they were ARVN units working?
FJ: RFPF’s, that’s us. RF is Region in Force; the PF was the village team. One
of our little houseboys that we had there, he got drafted into the PF right after I got there.
I think he turned I think maybe thirteen or fourteen but most of them were so crippled
and crazy. That is the home guard and when I was in Saigon everybody tells us that in
there was one time that we got a real report and NVA regiment that came into the delta, I
had the Delta Region, and the NVA regiment had 25 thousand came into Delta--- twenty-
five thousand. They were seven sisters mountain and we pounded them for two weeks
with B52’s after the end of two. We quit pounding and all twenty-five thousand of them
walk out and they started across the Delta. Every time they would hit one of these little
hamlets the PF flare so they would take off in another direction and hit another hamlet
and the PF flare up and after two weeks of running around in the Delta, the Vietnamese---
I mean the B52’s caught a couple of times out in the open but after two weeks of them
trying to run around and trying to get in to a town all ten of them started back to
Cambodia. One of them, came over to our side cause he wasn’t going back to take the
consequence. Twenty-five thousand--- now the reason the (?) were guarding their
momma, their wife, they had everything in the world that they were fighting for and they
would fight for everything they had and they did. As far as working with regional force
where were at had quite often there were after the airfield cause every body was out
there. See a sparrow fly and take an M16 and he pick the eyes out sparrow and blow his
head off. They loved to eat sparrows. But get sent to a firefight, he’s not going to look at
what he is shooting at. He is just going to make the noise. To make a show.
JB: Why is that?
FJ: He don’t want to get shot--- but because of something that he wants to see the
sucker’s a good shot, every one of them.
JB: I guess that makes sense.
FJ: That makes sense, right? A whole of it you got to use common sense with. Customs in Vietnam--- they got customs over there that you can’t even dream of really.

JB: Like what?

FJ: You go up to a little boy, right--- here you go up to the little boy and you pat him on the head right--- not there a little genie on top of his head and you pat him on top of his head and the genie jump down on you off his head and if you catch yourself then on top of the head you reach down and grab his shoulders, both shoulders before the genie right back on top of his head. If you don’t do that then you just alienate him. You sure don’t take the peanuts out this little thing over on the side of the road looks like a shrine--- you don’t go get the peanuts and eat them. No you just eat God’s food. Some of the stuff that we learned in the schools has very little meaning until you really get to dealing with the people. Where are you going to find out that you--- about the peanuts and about the little bowls of rice? Whenever I first got to the team I had heard so many stories that all of them I didn’t know and first week I was there we got invited to the village chiefs, for a big meal spread--- all advisors and when he had kind of like boxed for lunches that were catered had a spring rose and all, man it was food fit for a king. But I heard of so many cats and dogs that I wasn’t going to eat half of that. After being there a while I found out a whole lot about that. Exactly the same stuff you can’t eat and some stuff you better leave alone. There was one place that whenever we drive back to Saigon there was a little narrow place and road where there had been a fire base and we stop at this little restaurant on the side of the road and get a coke. They should of told him don’t bring the ice, bring the coke out of the bottle. Anything that had name on it like you see in America it was good to drink; there was coke, Dr. Pepper and whatever they had was the same thing that you were buying here in the states it was bottle under the same standards. But no telling where they got that water to make that ice. You’re just flirting with hepatitis real quick. The water puddle out behind the building. They could get the water from where ever they get the water. The big thing that whenever we get fifty-five gallon drops of JB4 to refuel the choppers whenever there were choppers come out, when the barrel gets empty, a lot of times just give it to some Vietnamese that work around there. They are going to cut the top right out of it and put in over by the side of the house and catch water in it. They would use a barrel or two of water a week.
JB: It’s like drinking jet fuel.

FJ: Yeah. That is what they had to wash in Vietnam. They could wash with three days on the gallon. The last Bob Hope show they had over there I was standing in Saigon watching it. I was probably the only other soldier other than the MP’s that had a rifle on his shoulder watching the Bob Hope show.

JB: Why is that?

FJ: I had guard duty after the show was over and that’s when I was assigned to Sigbe, well I got assigned in Saigon to Sigbee, well they issued me a rifle. Well I had done been issued a rifle whenever I came into the country. So I had one in my wall locker and I had one in the arms room. So whenever I got guard duty like that I didn’t go and draw a rifle out of the arms room and hassle them. I just had my own rifle. That morning at nine o’clock in the morning it was ninety degrees and ninety percent humidity. That was Christmas Eve. One other good superstition of the Vietnamese was if you have hair on your face, it denotes wisdom. When I was in Vietnam I grew a mustache, you could just about touch my ears on both sides if I pulled it out all the way. But I had it curled and if I would start talking to someone and kindly wondering about how honest they would be with me, I reach up and start playing with my mustache. Every time I did that their head would drop and their eyes would not look at me. I could tell they weren’t lying to me because they thought I was so smart that I could read their mind anyhow. So to have a handle bar mustache in Vietnam was very much a one step up just to have it.

JB: A lot of the Cav guys must of gotten away with more than they realized then.

FJ: Like I said I had one side, even if I was talking to a women boy she sure wouldn’t look at me, no because they had very much of a sense of women being inferior to a man. And with some of them I had to deal with, it was quite the otherwise. The first place I was at I had one women who was an interpreter-translator, actually she was more than an interpreter, she could type and everything, then she could faster than the men were that were there and whenever we lived in Saigon, there was one girl in there that she had a degree in English and she was extremely smart, she was--- of course a lot of the guys they were smart but I would have to put her above the majority of the men that were there. There was a couple of real big looser to and one Vietnamese guy had Harley 45
where is he going to get a part for it. The police intersector a Harley 45 it had to be a fifty-year bike. There was another one who had Ansel car, another one had a 49 Ford out of those three they either had to make a part or cause there was no place you could buy a part for them. Then there was extremely a lot of people in Vietnam that spoke English. In fact a majority that were educated, either spoke English or French. French had been there so long that a lot of them spoke French. But for any technical field you had to speak French, English and Russian or German. They don’t write textbooks in other languages. So if you were going into a technical field, you just about came done on one of them.

JB: Now as an advisor I guess when you were advising the province chief on his people, was there a sense of them taking your advise or for what it was worth or were they basically going to go about their own thing anyway?

FJ: Well, they would take it and they would weight it. I don’t think I really gave much advise to them that well, I would advise some but I wouldn’t tell them what to do there is a difference in advising and ordering and trying to tell somebody how to run their life. I would never run their life. Like I said starting out if it weren’t my battle, the battle was what was going to the final outcome of their system of life and were they going to be democrats and they have already back in early sixties decided they weren’t going to be democrats. The province that I was in was the summer home where President Diem, he made the province and had two other provinces for his summer home. The Province chief house or headquarters was the low presidents summer palace. In front of that summer palace is a road at about half a mile long, actually divided highway and it was divided about a hundred yards and one side went one way and the other side went the other way and out through the middle of it was arbors of ornimental plants, big flower pots out there of different ornamentals, there was a lot of the ornimental rubber plants that were planted out there and there was a lot of palm trees and coconut trees, banana trees and everything that was planted down there for the looks and of course it had been dragged out pretty bad because once the president was ousted and he was ousted the way he was that they didn’t keep it up but you could tell what had been there and it was a show place. This supposedly one of the lakes that was up in the Province was one of the best fishing places that there was. It supposedly had tigers around it. I wouldn’t go no
tigers cause I was pretty sure that that province also had landing spot where the NVA, VC brought supplies into the south. While I was in Saigon where I worked we had the daily flight strike, reports, pictures and everything and had a little kid there one day and he was brand new in country and four and put him in our glass section. They come up one day and flew a B-52s scheduled to come to Vietnam and they didn’t have any target for them. They had to figure out some target for them and they told him find a target on the map and he walks over to the map and says how about right there? He says that looks good, that is pretty far and he picked a free fire place and said that looks good and he went over and drop a flight of B52 bombs on it and something about twenty-five secondary explosions, it was in place that did not have anything. So they went back over for three days straight and they got secondaries all the time and then they found out it was in the parrot’s beak and the NVA was moving it’s headquarters in there and of the rules of the cease fire everybody got to keep what property they owned when the cease went in effect and the NVA had to get it’s headquarters into south Vietnam before the ceases fire went into effect. That is what they were moving the parrot’s beck and this kid just got lucky. Done some of the most damage that he could have done. Especially for the time you know. He didn’t even know the country and he just seen there was some free fireplace and where they could dump a load and then they came home.

JB: Did you yourself do any directing of fire strikes?
FJ: I worked on a lot of reports that went to the president’s desk---
JB: President Thieu?
FJ: No.
JB: President Nixon?
FJ: Yeah. The President. We had reports on what was friendly and what were foes and what was neutralized and what is not. I worked a lot of those reports.
BJ: With the three-day notice of the cease fire being into effect--- other than just rushed to get things prepared to get your own stuff out, what was the sentiment--- were people happy it was over?
FJ: I think generally everybody was happy that it was over because as I said before even the people that I worked with, very few of them even understood why we were there. Who put us there and everybody said well it was Kennedy who got us
involved. No it wasn’t Kennedy. It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Whenever he
signed the peace treaty at the end of the war that’s when we became involved. Now the
involvement changed, at Dien Bien Phu it changed after that, we had one President
ousted and another one get in and then he does away with Parliament and basically
becomes a dictator and but--- they don’t know the history. They don’t know how long
they have been fighting for it. So sentiment, yeah they were glad it was over because
how many people in the United States were at least thrilled. KLLL, the other morning I
was listening to two Disc Jockeys the other morning, were bragging about that they were
against the war. They did their dissident stuff here in the states and they didn’t go to the
war. They were very proud of it. But the night before that I was invited down to the
Golden Corral, they invited all of the Veterans down there for a supper, the whole place
was packed with Veterans and all the way from World War II up. World War I, World
War II, you knew exactly why you were there, you knew exactly the incident that got you
involved and you knew exactly when the peace treaty was signed and it was over.
Vietnam wasn’t that way. When we left, who won? Nobody.

JB: Was there a sense of anything being accomplished?

FJ: You couldn’t tell if anything had been accomplished, but it had. Yes, they
were left to form their own government. It wasn’t the one that the south had had. But
that is not what the treaty said.

JB: Now, with that in mind was there--- I guess--- early on the whole thing was
contained with communisms by the time you were there was there any talk of that at all?
Was there any sort of falling back on that as a reason for being there?

FJ: Well, yeah. We were trying to--- most people think, well were trying to keep
the communist out of South Vietnam, well we were, but--- but to a point. Because no we
couldn’t control the country, we weren’t there to control the country. In fact we did
control the country probably more than what we should at the time. Because our
President’s did control it a whole lot. What was it--- in 1968 what was it a half million
people American’s in Vietnam. Saigon was one of the largest ranking in American cities,
by the amount of American’s lived there. Tan Son Nhut airport was one about the third
busiest airport in the world. Reese was the first in ’68. But see Reese--- they had flights
taken off out there in formation. You take off five planes at a time and you make five
touch and goes that is take off and landing in formation. O’Hare was second.

JB: That is a lot of take off landings.

FJ: There were a lot of pilots who came off there. Just about everyone in the Air
Force to a point. They noticed a lot that didn’t want to leave. Now we had a little guy a
few years ago, Garwood or something like that was his name. He turns up--- he was
MIA and we found a lot of MIA’s and just because they’re MIA don’t mean they’re dead.
Now the last time I was over in Germany, I went down and visited with some people that
were in the unit. I was in the second time and I was told that there was one guy who that
had just been down there to visit with a bunch of his friends that he had been with in
Vietnam and he was listed as a MIA and he was traveling in Germany under a Swedish
passport. Military couldn’t do nothing with him in Germany. He had broken no laws in
Germany. He was a deserter in Vietnam but he had broken no laws in Germany. The
military couldn’t do nothing with him they could deny him entrance to that compound in
Germany but they couldn’t arrest him. Germany wouldn’t arrest him. He was a deserter,
he deserted in Vietnam. We got in ’68 five hundred thousand--- half a million. I don’t
know how many that there was through the whole course in Vietnam, probably about two
and half million at least. For a war that was as unpopular as Vietnam was--- if you get
one hundred of one percent that is a deserter that is not very much is it? How many is
that about two and half million?

JB: It’s a number.

FJ: It’s a number. How many we got that we can’t count for?

JB: I don’t know.

FJ: Doesn’t mean they’re all dead does it? A whole of them--- one of the guys
that I worked with in Saigon, one day he didn’t show up to work. As I said they kind of
worked on ours their, it was not no real big thing. Second day he didn’t show up to work,
it was about the band of it(?), the third he didn’t show up to work, so they sent a bunch of
them down town where he lived. He lived down town and they found him down there at
his girlfriend’s house and he soused, dead drunk if you want to call it that. So they got
him and they took him to the hospital and the hospital medivac took him to Walter Reed,
he was dead drunk--- he was closer to being dead that you might think. Well, Walter
Reed kind of dried him out and they shipped him down to Fort Hood, he was down there when I got to Fort Hood. Here he was a Sergeant first class and his profile said that he was not to be assigned to any job that required to make any decision---

JB: Really, as a Senior NCO?

FJ: Yes. His brain was pickled. He couldn’t make a decision. You could sit him at a desk with a telephone in front of him and tell him to answer the phone and he could answer the phone, maybe he could call to somebody in the room that the phone call was for and maybe he couldn’t. But you put him at a table with a deck of cards and play pinochle and he whip you all over the place. But he knew that very well before he came here. He didn’t have to make a decision playing pinochle.

JB: I actually just saw a movie about a situation like that the other day.

FJ: Well, this guy was there and knew it very well. Also the guy who volunteered me to go to Vietnam, I wound up working with him at Fort Hood when I got back.

FJ: The one that I didn’t tell you about the team--- I don’t think I did--- was about the Montagnard’s. We had a bunch of the Montagnard’s that had relocated down into the lower areas and the Montagnard’s was kind of a different people. They’re to Vietnam what the American Indian is to America. One of the Montagnard’s that they brought down there, they had forced issued us a bunch of supplies, one of the things that they give us on the team was a bunch of combat boots, one pair of combat boots is size fifteen. I thought ain’t nobody on the team can wear a size fifteen. I said something about it the next day when one of the guys brought in one of the Montagnard’s and the boots fit him, size fifteen.

JB: Big feet.

FJ: Big feet. He wasn’t to big, he was taller than most of the Vietnamese but the Montagnard’s within the south part of Vietnam were smaller statute, closer to the Vietnamese. I was told that the Montagnard’s in North Vietnam, six feet and above the average height. They are very tall. Montagnard’s are very much in bred. They had little family groups and that is kind of where their life is revolved around as a family group. Until the American’s were involved over there, they had a statistic that they run whenever the American’s in the early sixties. It’s not accurate but it’s close enough to
get a good idea. The Montagnard’s had never been more than twenty miles from a place that they were born all their life. It’s not accurate but it’s close enough, it will give an idea of how close that they are. When they were moved the whole family pick up and move, they move around on the mountains, in the mountain areas and do a lot of slash and burn and raise crops. The Montagnard’s had been the dwellers down by the ocean and they had been fisherman and all until the Vietnamese came in. The Vietnamese--- they take their name from the region of Viet in China and Nam means south, so people in the southern region of China that moved south down the coast are Vietnamese, that is how the name comes down. One meaning of Nam. These southern Viet, were the warlords--- the warlord’s at Viet got kicked out of China. The Vietnamese language is a simple enough language that you know five hundred words in Vietnamese is equal to about twenty-five hundred in English. Then you turn around and throw all the articles out. They have very few articles. All--- the’s, and, all the articles--- you’ve got a pretty good vocabulary of five hundred words. I came back from over there with a speaking and reading, without a fourth grade level. I couldn’t write it. By the way we went through school we had to learn to read it to be able to speak it. We had Vietnamese instructors. Now, I don’t speak it very good but whenever I was in the hospital a year ago, there was a Vietnamese doctor that was in the hospital, he was doing electro sonogram on my heart and I started talking to him in Vietnamese and he was very impressed that there a round eyed guys in Lubbock who could speak it and we were holding a pretty good conversation there for a little bit and then he got real quiet and I thought--- oh, something bad is wrong and it was---

JB: What happened?
FJ: I had a heart attack; I was having while he was listening to my heart. I just had one artery stopped up completely. One we call a widow maker---

JB: Glad to see that things worked out---
FJ: Everybody said, “How are you doing?” and I said “Well I got up this morning, put both feet on the floor and stood up and took a breath of air.”

JB: Just a couple more questions. How soon after the cease-fire did you leave the country?
FJ: Nine days. The reason it took so long was I had some paper work I had to get straightened out in Saigon and the personnel sergeant, who told me one day--- he said Jones you better get the next flight out of Saigon that you could get on or you are going to be here for a while. He said I already got a verbal that you are supposed to stay. He said I wouldn’t keep you until I get in writing, he said but once I get it in writing you’re going to stay. Everybody who could speak the language was supposed to stay behind. Go onto full power teams so you had four power teams and then you had the recovery team, you had two different teams there. The Recovery team was going around and looking for remains and they had to have people who could speak a little bit of Vietnamese around those teams and then the four power teams, of course you had the VC, the NVA, ARVN’s and American’s. They flew around country quite a bit to get to it. That’s how come it took me so long to leave over there, although I left the team, the day of the cease-fire. I had to get some of the paper work straightened out in Saigon; of course I had to study for the pee test. You had to take a test before you could leave.

JB: Now, coming home--- first of all how long did it take you? And second of all what was it like coming back to the states at that point?

FJ: I don’t remember just about how long it--- we probably flew from Saigon to Hawaii, then in Hawaii there long enough to refuel the aircraft and we got out and looked around the airport and never left the park and flew on into California. I kind of (?) after that. It was about it seem like it took us twelve hours to fly and don’t remember just how long--- whenever we went over there, we went from California to Alaska to Japan to Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines and then into Saigon but coming back even when I came on R and R we came from Saigon to Hawaii to California and that is no shorter that going around to Alaska and down. Like you think from here to Vietnam, you think you go west and Vietnam you go southwest. Now what would it be going home? It’s shorter really, but whenever you look at a map you always look at it laying down, you take a globe you can picture it out there.

FJ: That is done by the leg from Hawaii to Chicago and that was murderous--- your legs cramp you know really cramped up--- of course whenever I went to Vietnam there was a bunch of guys on the plane, they were all crazy. Somebody on the plane had a recorder--- tape recorder and markings on it. The German commodes flushing and a
whole bunch of sounds like that and you go over there and all of a sudden start rattling
down through the cockpit of the plane. You land in Clark and go in the snack bar in the
airport and start hearing a mocking bird sing. I guess Clark now is an amusement park.
Covered with volcanic ash at an amusement park.

JB: Some of them are not to happy with US Troops there again.

FJ: When I was in Vietnam I did capture a Japanese (?)

JB: Actually, I haven’t read his book yet but he actually wrote a book called, “My Thirty Year War” or something like that. So now, arriving back in California, first
and then coming home, it was the end of the war but did you see any anti-war
demonstrations, feel any anti-war sentiment or anti-military sentiment?

FJ: After--- there was still some, there are still some today but not that much, not
like there was before. There was a lot of people that would do anything they could to
keep from going to Vietnam. One of my best friends, he was--- he wasn’t really a draft
dodger, he went to Canyon and went to West Texas State and he took ROTC when he
was up there and he got commissioned in the ROTC, well in ’60 there was nothing going
on in Vietnam to be shook up about, I think it was ’62 wasn’t it when those two
American’s got killed over there. When he graduated from Canyon there wasn’t a whole
lot going on but he knew there was enough that he didn’t want to go into the military and
risk going to Vietnam. So he came down here to Tech, he got his master’s degree and
things were going a whole better over there and he wasn’t going to go to Vietnam. He
got thinking what do you do with a doctorate in English besides teach and he didn’t want
to be a teacher, so he switched over to Psychology. Then he got his Doctorate degree in
Psychology. The Army had said nothing to him but when he got his Doctorate degree,
man it was going real good in Vietnam it was around in ’68. So he goes to the state
capital moved down to Austin and did his intern work at a state hospital. Psychologist
with an internship at a state hospital. When he got his year of intern work in, then the
Army called him. They said would like to come in as a First Lieutenant or a Captain,
First Lieutenant MI or Captain Medical Corp, he said what are the commitments and he
said well MIs two years or medical corp four year, he said how about if I got in about for
two years and if I like it, then switch over to the medical corp and stay. They said okay.
He went to the Army at Fort Knox, did his officer’s basic and then they shipped him to
the Pentagon. They didn’t even shipped him to branch training and he worked in the
Pentagon with a Colonel out there and an Army Psychology Department. That was the
only two of them that were in there in the whole department. Then he got a six months
early out of the Army. The only reason he wound up with a Doctorate is cause he didn’t
want to go to Vietnam. Now, he dodged the draft and he did a completely did a legal
thing around and everything else and he didn’t even have to go to England to go to
college. Wouldn’t say he went to England to go to college. But he didn’t have to and he
did his commitment to the military and everyone was happy and really him being in the
military for that year and half was probably the best thing that could happen to him.
Because when he got out then he got a job with a company that he decided was a field
that he really liked and he went and set up his own company in Dallas as a business
consultant agency. He didn’t want to work with sick people no more and he didn’t want
to be a teacher. Last year he sold the company under condition that he had to go to work
for the two years after he sold it and I’m pretty sure that last year when finished up his
house, he was going to be about two and half million dollars and it would be paid for.
But he didn’t want to go to Vietnam. And he didn’t want to be no dirt farmer out in West
Texas. His little brother did go to Vietnam though, his little brother, went to playing with
a band and he was very good with and does real good with the band and he got orders to
go to Vietnam and he came back home just outside of Lubbock here and he was over here
in Lubbock one night run into a movie and sat in the Lindsey Theater and all of a sudden
all kinds of trash started coming in the vents and everything like that and somebody
winded in the back door and said hit the floor, there is a tornado and he said he got down
between the seats and the only thing I could of was, boy I hope I get to go to Vietnam.
He did after the tornado came through. You probably heard about the tornado that took
half of Lubbock?

JB: No, I haven’t.

FJ: You haven’t heard of the tornadoes. It wiped out a whole bunch of town. It
started about Jones Stadium and went down town and then went out to the airport. You
know the Ranching Heritage Center, you know the burns around it, that’s the trash, books
and trash from the tornado, and they had to do something with it. And they burned
something with it. He did his tour in Vietnam and came back and his band was waiting on him (?) couldn’t make to them and guitar player (?)

JB: Does he still live in Lubbock?

FJ: He lives up in Floydada still and he went back with band and they did really did pretty good and then he went down to Dallas and set up his own recording studio and from there he went to Nashville and played as a pick up player—guitar player. He retired (?) they live here or their (?) he lives in Ruidoso in the summer.

JB: Anything else you want to talk about your experience you would like to talk about?

FJ: Don’t know a whole lot more. You know that is one of those years that things come back to you a little bit at a time and something might pop up anytime. I told you I think, kind of had my opportunities different. The way people I thought when I went there. The thought that I was there. I didn’t go fighting the war for someone (?) and wasn’t--- that was my thoughts because you can’t fight somebody else’s battle. They have to fight their own battles, now you might could help them or something like that but you can’t do it for them. While I was there we had no ground troops, the only ground troop was a FCAT. It was that Tan Son Nhut it was at Long Ben, guarding the airport. While I was there, there had an airport at Lon Ben that got hit one night; somebody zapped it with a (?) blew up some of the JP tanks(?) About two or three days later when the chopper crew came in off commission, he walked up on up back on the hill, went home for the night and one of these other (?) down in the low lands, lot of racquet going on, you think there was a pot party going on--- which was very common. Drugs (?) he went and told the MP’s he thought there was a pot party going on down there, so the MP’s like the police would hop on their jeeps and they go there and down the hill and circle the building and go up kicking and down a whole sack of platoons (?) living in Long Ben (?) The Long Ben was one place and then right next to it was a plantation,, the plantation was really our headquarters and the plantation, Long Ben and plantation both had been a rubber plantation. When I was there, there was maybe four or five trees that were growing under the gutter between the two. Defoliated(?) Probably with the nice little thing what they call Agent Orange. Now was I exposed to Agent Orange? Who knows? I drank the water.
JB: They are saying now a day if you were in Vietnam at any point you were probably exposed to it.

FJ: Depending on where you were at, chances were better than other places. Like down in Da Tang there was a lot of woodcutters, around there and the triple canopy jungle, which you heard, I never normally teak or mahogany. They go down there and cut teak and mahogany log, which is about as long as you cross this road. It’s as big around as this room is tall and you put it on a five ton truck and it is all that truck can do to get up the hill cause that sucker was so heavy. There in the Province there was this bright idea one time that there were going to wreck those logs, float them into Saigon with a barge. It’s a good idea and they rode them off into the ocean and sunk. The teak and mahogany were too dense to float. The thing would float but it’s took heavy it won’t. The little crates that had put something the stuff in to ship back, it was made of mahogany plywood. That was the cheapest material they had over there. A Catholic Priest that was there in the province he made some furniture out of some of that wood, boy it was beautiful.

JB: Of course as we are going on other questions are popping up you mentioned drug use. Was there a lot of that over there with US Serviceman that you were aware of?

FJ: Yes and no. There was but then on the other hand a lot of it stopped at one try. If a kid had been seen doing a little bit of heroin or something, say, from New York or California and he goes to Vietnam and he could go down to any corner and buy it. Pop the same amount he did at home. He’d be dead. He could get ninety-nine percent pure stuff in Saigon and what he got at home is probably a stepped on about eight or ten times and all he is getting is just a little bit and he gets over there and he gets the same amount of stuff and he OD’d. That’s for the big drugs, they didn’t do that much. Cause---- you know one of the guys on the team. I’m pretty sure that he was on some of his own morphine but he knew what he had. He knew pretty well tripped on that a lot of the times. There was one night I had the duty during the night, we always had one American awake all night long, check the guards and things like that, I went out and took a walk around the compound checking the guards and I found this little guard with a pipe, well he was zonked about two o’clock in the morning, I went and opened the gate and kicked off the compound and went and walked up to a commander of the guards the head
Vietnamese and told him he was going to walk to the guard for the rest of the night. See
that is open season and anybody on the streets after ten o’clock at night, it was curfew at
ten and it was two o’clock in the morning when I kicked him off the compound so he
really had to pick his way back home, being tripped out at the same time. But the senior
province advisor, he called me in the next day and said man we just can’t fire one of
them, we got to community relations we got to keep up and we have to put him back on.
Well, you are going to put him back on and said well you’re the boss and took him and
took the guard and we went down to the compound and I took him back to one of the
back bunkers that night, I said anytime you are on guard this is your bunker and I said see
that snake crawling in the wire--- there was a bamboo banana viper just almost six feet
long and he crawled around and crawl up there and catch bugs it was right in front of the
spot light and said that is my snake and you kill that snake and I kill you. But any time
you are on guard this is your bunker. After that anytime that he was on guard duty, he
might not have known what was going on ten feet away from that bunker but he knew
where that snake was. The whole time. We had guards posted about to the two back
bunkers, away from the road. The two bunkers on the next to the road, one of them was
closest to we didn’t have anybody and the other one wasn’t a mane but I told you about
the water tower and water at the bottom and water at the top. Went up to the top of the
tower and that is where they kept a bunch of the rounds for the M79 up there and there
was a cling clapptor up there also. That cling claptor(?) was in that corner bunker and the
bunkers were made of artillery canisters and metal canisters that laid on top of each other
and about six feet of dirt between them and the outside, well all the inside of those
canisters was laced with explosives and shratnal and robs, nails and anything else the cb’s
could throw in there and they went back up to that water tower. They figured anybody
got into that compound that was the bunker that they were going to get into and that is
where we kept our small arms ammunition and all the extras were in there. But we
figured if anybody got in there, that is the bunker that was going to get into, that is all it
took was somebody to get a hold of that placer off that bunker and that bunker would
explode. That bunker would implode and there was a palate on torpedoes that could cb’s
were up there to(?) and I don’t know if they were buried. Do you know what a bankrupt
torpedo is? Pallet(?) six foot long pieces buried in the yard. They may had been next to that bunker or under even.

JB: I don’t want to find that by accident.

FJ: Cb’s they knew what to do with them. Before they left all the stuff that they had couldn’t get rid of or didn’t have time to get rid of and you run and just leave it behind or whatever, they took a little boat and took it to the ocean and kicked it over the side. I know they did that with a lot of torch outfits and welders.

JB: They were doing that with Hueys to.

FJ: They had--- they left a steam shovel type deal on the front yard. Finally somebody from Saigon came up and picked it up and took it out but every trip to Saigon-- I made two, just an average of two trips a week for about six months into Saigon. In front of me or behind me on the road, everyday somebody got blown away. But I had to gimmick and I think I would say it worked. Like I said before they weren’t trying to kill Americans. I was going to make sure that they knew that I was American. So this I drove the gas stations here they were giving away little Texas flags--- those stick on deals. I had one of them stick on each side of the hood (?) although I had Vietnamese bomber markings on the thing. They knew what a Texas flag was. They may have been dumb Vietnamese but they knew what a Texas flag was. I’ve had being this old metal, we take off early morning and sometimes five or six in the morning and hit the road going to Saigon and get back up that night and there was a couple of times we went to Saigon, either the check point going out of town or else the road clearing crew got hit behind us we had already gone down the road before they got blown off the road. We probably went by before the VC went out and set it up.

JB: It’s got to be a little unnerving.

FJ: Yeah, but you know they handed--- it’s make you want to get out early and (?) there for a long time and every time we went in Saigon and back out had to take a it over maintained and had to put some new injector lines on it and vibrate (?) the only way that thing would run to me was get in it and put on the floor. Try go through town and hit the horn and couldn’t get it work (?)-------- (?) It wouldn’t regulate the air it would just went the tanks would pop off and that is too much air pressure for to work. Stopped it had good air breaks. It would fly through those towns though--- slow down (?) he
usually had a forty-five underneath his jacket and I carried my M16 and I had my grease
guns stuffed under the seat. That was another thing I had that nobody would sign for---
35-caliber grease gun, with two-twenty round clips taped together on it. That always
stayed on my seat cause if I drive and take time to reach up for life. Me and the other guy
went into Saigon one day and we went into headquarters there one--- of course we had
our rifles with us, piston belts on and walk to the snack bar, MP’s said, you can’t come to
the snack bar with rifles, I said where are we suppose to leave them, he said--- well I got
clips on it--- he said you got that rifle loaded, yeah, I don’t carry around a rifle that is not
loaded and he said well you got to clear your weapons to come to the snack bar, I take
mine down and this other guy takes his down, pull the clip out and stick the clip in our
belt and reach and pull the bolt out, shell goes flying across--- What, one in the chamber,
too? I don’t care if it’s the headquarters and he guys there they didn’t even know what
was happening ten miles down the road, like I said people got blown off the road. There
was one day we went out the team and we were driving down the highway and this little
A10 flying over the road and flies down into the woods and hear rat-tat-tat and bomb-
bomb-bomb! Come back over and fly back over the road and back and make another
straight run(?) You see it and one day we went down the road and there sitting on the
road with a (?) a half with a twin fifties on the back of it and shells all over the road and
they had been driven up to the wood line and you got so far into the woods and they
returned the fire. But the beehive round was a really good with the artillery. Know that
was that used it mostly and that strictly a defensive weapon and as all the beehive round
is. I think a 105 Howitzer has forty thousand nails on a beehive round. Two penny
finishing nail is, you take the back and mash the back end of that nail into a pin and that
is what you got in a beehive round. I told them I never seen one before but I told that you
could laterally you can nail a guy to a tree. I did do some direct fire at Fort Sill with the
other (?) training on the (?) but I was firing in a six by six target and wasn’t no big thing
hitting the target it was good day. Like whenever you go to range in Germany--- well all
the Germany was KD ranges and full targets and it wasn’t nothing to shoot the bullets on
the targets and too many of us farm boys raised shooting rifles, the thing was when you
put the spotter to show you where you hit--- shoot the spotter. The ideal thing was to hit
the wooden sticker that was in the middle of the spotter.
JB: So they couldn’t let that go---

FJ: No, it rattles, you hold that stick and it hits a stick and you hit the stick. Boy, it vibrates the heck out of you. You hit the metal and you hear the (sound) but it doesn’t go through stick, (?) The last time that I went to the range, I was--- I must have been in there (?) first class—everybody had to pull targets--- you shoot half and the other half in the pits and I had to go full target and we go out to the pit and this guy comes down and he says who was shooting on the number so and so and I said I was and he said every one of those shots you put on that target I covered with palm of my hand.

JB: What range were you shooting at?

FJ: It was seventy-five hundred--- hundred and fifty--- two hundred--- at three hundred. That day we went all the way to the three hundred. I grew up shooting prairie dogs and they just stick their head out of the hole.

JB: After returning home, how long did you stay in the Army after that?

FJ: After I came back from Germany?


FJ: From Vietnam, I was stationed at Fort Hood for six years and then back to Germany for another three years, all together I spent a little over eight years in Germany.

Then I moved to Lubbock from Frankfurt, Germany. Moved back to Lubbock and finished up my leave that I was on and I had to go to Fort Seal on the 31st of December to sign out up there and come back---

JB: That was ’81?

FJ: December 31, 1981. I have been retired twenty years and one month.

JB: Terrific. I will go ahead and end this.