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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Paul Winkel Jr
Conducted by Richard Verrone
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Transcribed by Mark Varela**

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

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Richard Verrone: Patten Winkel Jr, today is November 10th, 2005, and we are in Washington DC, in the Crystal City Hilton for the 40th anniversary reunion of the Ia Drang-Pleiku campaigns. Colonel Winkel, thank you so much for doing this with us. We want to talk about 1965 and that, but I want—if you can give us a little background of yourself and what got you into aviation, and then into the unit that support everything going on at X-Ray. So how did that begin? You have some family experience in warfare.

Paul Winkel Jr: Well, I've been army ever since I was three, I think. I just did some ancestral research, I found a great-great that was in the provisional army of the colonies in 1725, and then I had a great-grandfather who was with Washington in the Revolution War—great-great-grandfather. Then a great-grandfather who was a sergeant in the Calvary with Sherman for four years. Two uncles in World War I, my dad and another uncle in World War II. So I enlisted in being army, graduated from high school in Vienna, Austria, when my dad was assigned over there, and became interested in the military academy. Graduated in '56 and having been a private prior to going to military academy for a year and a half, army prep school. Went into Army Rangers, parachute, airborne, army aviation. Then went to Fort Bragg, and Fort Bragg in the late 50s when General Howe came down and he and Gavin had been looking at air assault business, and he sort of used our 82nd aviation company as a test vehicle. I would, after coming back

1 from helicopter school, fix wing helicopters and instruments. Sort of toyed around with
2 us, hopping over trees in our H13, shooting tanks by turning on our landing lights, and
3 then moving troops from place to place, sort of investigating this sort of thing. Then I got
4 another assignment, went to Korea, and then came back and went to advanced course.
5 Transferred to the Transportation Corps because that's where aviation was. Ended up real
6 quickly down at General Kinnard's organization in '64 and we got involved in the air
7 assault business there. I was a helicopter Platoon Commander Operations Officer—
8 Company Platoon Commander and then Operations Officer. Then, because I rode a lot, I
9 got to be a PIO (Public Information Officer) for the battalion during the selling of the air
10 assault stuff. Then within the same year, was a gunship Platoon Commander, went to the
11 Dominican Republic and was the Assistant Operation Officer down with our aviation
12 detention there and came back and got into—they put me into the gunship come in and
13 when we got to 'Nam, they put me into the troop with a Bravo Company. So that's sort
14 of—just had no choice, all of the sudden there we were and Benning, at Benning General
15 Kinnard had us—he was our initiative, that became probably because we using our
16 initiative during the air assault test enabled us to do this sort of thing in the Ia Drang. One
17 example of using an initiative we went to the Carolinas and had practicing the air assault
18 test in the middle of a hurricane. One of our platoon leaders said, “We can't fly anymore,
19 were going to stop, were going to land our ships at the Howard Johnson's.” They put
20 them in the parking lot and they spent the night at the Howard Johnsons. So that was one
21 example of initiative, in support of the whole thing.

22 RV: Right. Tell me a little bit about getting over to Vietnam and getting situated
23 with 229th.

24 PWJ: Well, I was with the 229th for two years, in the 11th Air Assault through the
25 229th. We did a lot of testing down in the air assault test and got—had to go to Vietnam.
26 Got on board this ship, jeep carrier. Went to Panama, two other ships followed us, other
27 ships went through the Suez. Our ship had to refit at Long Beach. Our aircraft carrier
28 with all the helicopters landed first and the officers went to the officer's club and the EM
29 (Enlisted Men) went to EM club. We ate all the steaks, cleaned out the class six door.
30 They brought the EM back in borrowed buses and the port commander says, “Anybody
31 else from the cav, they'll stay at the dock.” Then we went off with our carrier and went

1 adrift in the Pacific about four times and went through a typhoon. Then we landed at (??)
2 and they put the blades on our helicopters and we all test flew the helicopters off the ship
3 two miles inland, and if they worked, they worked. If it didn't work, well we—but that's
4 my boat ride.

5 RV: Wow. That's quite an adventure—

6 PWJ: Panama Canal was pretty interesting.

7 RV: I can imagine, I can imagine. You were attached to Bruce Crandall's task
8 force once you were there—is that correct?

9 PWJ: No, no. No, Bruce Crandall went over early and he became the company
10 commander of A Company. At that time, we had different names because the companies
11 weren't A, B, and C. They were, I think, Bruce had 7th Special Forces—Aviation
12 Company 7th Special Forces. B Company under Dick Rodgers was A Company the 5th
13 Infantry. C Company under Willard Bennet was 194th Aviation Company and the Delta
14 Company under Major Raydu Cornel, Raydu was the 110th Aviation Company. We had
15 to take names of units already on the rolls until this became finalized as A, B, C, D. So
16 Bruce had A company, Rodgers had B company, Bennet had C company, and Raydu had
17 D company, the gunship company. Each company had 2 platoons, I was in the second
18 platoon of B company of captain Bob Stunet, Captain Bob Stunet. That was all-year
19 around. We come up to the Ia Drang—we move up to the Ia Drang, Bruce sent his A
20 company up there, Willard Bennet had his C company up there and second platoon of B
21 company also went up to Pleiku under Stunet. These three organizations operated under
22 the S3 forward. Dick Rodgers and the first platoon of D company stayed back in An Khê
23 until they came up end of the month in November and we swap. He commanded 229th,
24 and that contention back there. The battalion commander, Colonel Bob Keller, had gone
25 home on emergency leave and signed over the battalion to his second officer, Major
26 David Carol who was brand new to the division, a fixed-wing aviator, and not too—had
27 not experience he should've have as air assault yet. He was the de facto, he was de jour of
28 company commander—battalion commander forward in Pleiku under him. Strange as it
29 may seem, during the battle Vince Panzita, Captain Panzita, was one of the most
30 experienced assaulters that we had. He had been at Bragg when I was there under
31 Howsburg. Major Carol because of his inexperience deferred to Captain Panzita, so

1 throughout all of Ia Drang battle, you see the actual battalion commander de facto was
2 Captain Panzita.

3 RV: Is that a good thing or bad thing?

4 PWJ: This is—it really didn't matter because we were all using our own initiative
5 to do what we had to do and whoever gave us the orders to do something we did
6 something, and Panzita was the goal between the forward S3 operations and Bruce's A
7 company, Stunet's B company, and Willard Bennet's C company. You asked about
8 Bruce Crandall's command. He had sixteen aircraft on the troop lift on the fourteenth.
9 We joined—

10 (Interviewer speaks to third party)

11 PWJ: On the morning of the fourteen, Bruce was in charge of sixteen aircraft. His
12 twelve aircraft and attachment from second B Company which is my flight. His yellow
13 flight, he commanded a sixteen aircraft, a yellow flight of four. His right flight was
14 commanded by Ed Freeman, his flight of four. The third flight, was green flight,
15 commanded by Wall, Jim Wall also of A Company. The fourth flight was commanded by
16 me, in the attached aircraft. That—the balloon went up and General Moore closed the LZ
17 (Landing Zone). Many things happened; few people know about until we researched over
18 the 90s to find out what exactly happened. When Bruce went off on his two ship
19 volunteer flights, he did fourteen into X-Ray along with Ed Freeman as his wingman, he
20 had turned over the command of the troop lift over to subordinate. Emroy Gilson also B
21 Company. So Emroy Gilson was really the troop commander of the troop lift ships the
22 rest of the day, with Bruce doing his volunteer flights. Of course, they were
23 communicating. All under the auspices of Vince Panzita, the de jour Battalion
24 Commander, who got it because the Major Carol had handed it over to him.

25 RV: This is a very—almost twisted command chain here.

26 PWJ: Well, it's fractioned because the way General Kinnard had taught us how to
27 do this in the air assault concept. All for the best interest of the battle we were able to do
28 this. It's a shame that in April of '64—excuse me, April of '66 when we started defusing,
29 new people coming in and old people going out, that this air assault concept dissipated
30 that we had trained on for a couple of years. Dick Rodgers, the B Company Commander,
31 was sent down to Saigon and when he told him the things we were doing, the formation,

1 flying at night, tree tops, suppressive fire, landing forward at a time in the heat of the
2 time, lifting troops up, and meeting them on the battlefield. The Saigon people said, “You
3 are crazy, you don’t know what you’re talking about, you’re going to another
4 organization.” And ignored him.

5 RV: But did this work?

6 PWJ: I have a letter. I have a couple of letters from Dick Rodgers telling me about
7 how people just didn’t know what we were they doing.

8 RV: Why didn’t they trust you at all? Why—

9 PWJ: Well, that’s a good question! That’s a good question. I don’t know. But
10 some of the research that’s come up, one Vietnamese has said that , “Had we been able to
11 sit this down at the Ho Chi Minh Trail at that time, it’s a high probability that the war
12 would’ve ended a lot sooner than it did.” But the politicians back then were afraid of—I
13 assume, were afraid Chinese coming across the border. The Thailand folks didn’t want
14 any more airplanes over there because he was afraid of what might’ve happened, it was
15 just a bad situation and people didn’t want to experiment.

16 RV: Tell me about the fourteen, and how that went down?

17 PWJ: Okay. Got up at six o’clock in the morning—I’ll tell you about my aspect of
18 it.

19 RV: Yes, please.

20 PWJ: Got up at six o’clock in the morning. I had been briefed the night before,
21 that I would have a flag of four and I was to meet and join up with Bruce Crandall’s A
22 company at Plei Me at ten o’clock. We spent most of the morning—I flew 9.8 hours that
23 day and my flight record says I landed fifty-five times. I do know nine of them were at X-
24 Ray and I do know that four were during the time General Moore said, “This is the most
25 dangerous period.” From 1430 to approximately 1630.

26 RV: He just repeated that in here actually.

27 PWJ: Yeah, I do know that. But anyway, from six o’clock to ten o’clock, we were
28 shuttling troops between plantation or in the field, and moving the troops and marshalling
29 the assault troops which was Bravo Company, Herren’s Company of first and the
30 seventh, at Plei Me. So at ten o’clock, threw my four aircraft down and joined Crandall’s
31 fourth lift ship. We proceeded to make our assault, we went off eight at a time and then it

1 was four at a time. Then we got separated by minutes, we had to refuel. A Company told
2 me that A Company 1st through the 7th we were in different locations and we had to go
3 pick them up on one or two ship pickups, and bring them back to Plei Me for his launch
4 and took a lot of time and we got—about 12:30 General Moore was in with Herren's B
5 Company and Summit of the Dulles company, the book will tell you what the time before
6 the first rounds went off. Then some more rounds went off. I remember on my fourth lift,
7 Bruce was in his yellow, Freeman in his white. They had gone in and I was coming up
8 green and I don't know what happened to green, I think he was behind me, we were told
9 by General Moore, "Don't come in, we're on short approach. Don't come in, we have a
10 little problem here." Later on, I found out the little problem was they were being
11 mortared in-field. So I orbited, and with his green we orbited and then Moore said,
12 "Come on in, but when you come on in—."
13 RV: Is this your first time in?
14 PWJ: This is the fourth time.
15 RV: This is your fourth lift in.
16 PWJ: The first one, two and three were no problem. So Moore said, "When you
17 come in on your fourth lift, I want you to go back out the same way you came in.
18 Because we're firing direct fire with artillery. This is with 105s. I read later in the Camp
19 After Action report, that the 105s were kind of erratic in the jungle. Lord knows
20 whether—but they were going up on the hill and around the perimeter. So we came in
21 and we landed the four and so I had my ships rotate, and I said, "Orange four, lead us
22 out." When we came in, I noticed that the lift before had drop pods of troops as if they
23 were in the same four helicopters, they hadn't moved! They were all pinned down to the
24 ground. I said, "This is strange, why are they pinned down to the ground?" But I heard
25 this popcorn sound, it sounded like we were in the middle of a popcorn popper and that
26 was bullets. So we turned around and Dallas Harper was in orange four, he let us out. We
27 went out in formation, that was the four ship, and then I came around and took the lead
28 and on the way back, Bruce said, "Orange, I want you to send two ships for ammunition."
29 So I send Lee Commege in orange three and Dallas Harper in orange four, as soon as
30 they drop the troops off, you go back and get ammo and then come on back. So we sat
31 down, we refueled and I took my other two ships which kind of diked us, it was Neil

1 Parker, they were here before. They landed at the far eastern end because the fuel bags
2 were in the western end and the other ships had to refuel. So I shut down and the
3 mechanic came over to me and said, “You know, my engine is been all shot up, I got to
4 get maintenance and we can’t go anywhere because its been shot, lost a breather tube or
5 something.” So I called back from maintenance and probably called Panzita and we had a
6 B Company maintenance ship come out later and repair it. So we’re sitting there and I go
7 over across the strip to where I think it was D company 1st or 7th was still waiting to go
8 out. We had a PRC (Portable Radio Communication) twenty-five and a two-niner-six
9 antenna hooked together so we hear the battle. So we were listening to the battle in the
10 battlefield.

11 RV: What was that like?

12 PWJ: Well, it was like you listening to John Wayne. You know, I remember
13 Moore saying, “Okay, we’re going to fire artillery! I want you to come back as we’re
14 going to ease up on artillery. March back with the artillery and we’ll get you back that
15 way!” So the artillery explodes, and explodes here, and explodes here, and the troops
16 would come this way. I said, “Boy, this is just like combat!” Then I got a call, “We’re
17 coming back with the ammo. What do you want us to do with it?” I said—I picked up,
18 change frequencies, I had my own radio and I called the flight Crandell was in and said,
19 “Ammos, what do you want to do with it?” He said, “X-Ray.” He didn’t say who was
20 going to take it, he didn’t say where it was going to go. So I call Commege back, “Come
21 back in and land.” We sat down, I went over and unloaded one of the guys who got in
22 and said, “Okay, we’re going to X-Ray, take off.” So two ships went off to X-Ray. This
23 is a little bit before three o’clock. We got—at that time Vince Panzita was in the airborne
24 Charlie-Charlie and said— whatever the book says, “I want you to proceed towards the
25 down A1E.” An aircraft A1E had exploded and the big pillars like an A-bomb had gone.
26 They said, “When you get there, turn left and about ten seconds later turn right and you’ll
27 be right on the final for X-Ray.” Of course, we’re doing this at treetop level.

28 RV: Right.

29 PWJ: With the bushes. I really didn’t need him because I had been in and out of
30 there all day, I had my finger on the map, I was a watching the contours I said, “Okay,
31 there’s this hill, there’s that thing, there’s that mountain, there’s that thing and Lee is on

1 the controls.” Had I sneezed and taken my finger off where we were, we’d been up a
2 crate. So we did end up—and Panzita says, “After you turn on the shorter approach,
3 you’ll probably pick up fire.” I said “Hmm!” (Laughs). So we did that and we were
4 coming. I just saw trees, as we turned, I just saw trees. I said, “God, I hope the thing is
5 there, I don’t see the mountain.” We were so low, that the trees were going by just like
6 this. (Editor’s Note: The interviewee is most likely expressing how fast they were going
7 with his hands) I think we were about three feet into the trees. The skids weren’t catching
8 on anything. I said—I told Trojan, I said “We’re about three out.”

9 RV: Trojan for?

10 PWJ: Trojan six. It’s Moore. Then I heard him say, “Get that panel out there,
11 wave it around, you won’t get shot!” So we came up, and there that thing was, there was
12 this guy waving this panel and we’re doing about 80 knots, and Commege takes the
13 chopper, and puts it up like this, like a big fan, and slices down a line. He’s an expert
14 instructor pilot. They chose the right guy to fly with. But we were doing this (Editor’s
15 Note: Interviewee most likely showing gestures to interviewer) and the other ship came
16 along. Harper went up into the X-Ray a little bit further and Moore said to him, “Come
17 back! Come back! You’re going get hit, you’re going get hit!” Well he got hit and came
18 back. During research, I never found out who was first in until maybe about two or three
19 years ago. Candyke was in here, he had the ship that he was fixing us in. He said he was
20 watching us go at the same time the rest of the aviators were in a meeting. When—had
21 we landed in X-Ray and somebody else had been there before, we would’ve heard it on
22 the radio. I heard no aircraft traffic. That panel would probably have been stuck to the
23 ground instead of being waved around. I kept asking people, asking people, asking
24 people, and then there’s the story about when Bruce came in with Freeman and pulled
25 Metzger out and Metzger got shot getting on the airplane. Taboada, Raul Taboada, got
26 onboard that aircraft, he was wounded, had been setting up a CP (Command Post). I saw
27 that in the book and I finally got in touch with Taboada, I said, “Do you remember seeing
28 anything happening before you left?” He said, “Yes, I saw a helicopter come in, take off,
29 and go down immediately smoking heavily and then another aircraft coming back in to
30 make the rescue.” That was my two ships. We were the first in, whether that means

1 anything at all is in the term because as General Kinnard says, “A hot LZ (Landing
2 Zone), is a hot LZ, is a hot LZ.”

3 RV: Let me ask you this, what did X-Ray looked like? At this point when you
4 come in onto the new LZ?

5 PWJ: Ashtray. It looked like an ashtray. It was an area with few little scrub trees
6 and trees all the way around it, and a big hill of which the enemy was coming, pouring
7 down of it. Smoke was everywhere, but it was a clearing.

8 RV: Did you see the troopers on the ground quite easily?

9 PWJ: Yeah, we saw them on the ground, they were on the ground. We had landed
10 at—Commege had landed us just off to the west of the CP (Command Post) area and the
11 other ship had gone along. When we took off, my crew chief says, “After you unloaded
12 the ammo, let’s get the hell out of here!” I said, “Fine.” I remember sitting there waiting
13 for this ammo to come off, it seemed to me to be about twelve years. It had sort of tunnel
14 vision. An absurd gray, a green gray. I was thinking, I looked at Commege and Commege
15 was sitting there like that too and I said, “I wonder how long, how soon the bullets will
16 come in and I wonder how long it will hurt before I die.” I will never forget that. Then
17 the crew chief brought me back by saying, “Let’s get the hell out of here.”

18 RV: What did Commege say?

19 PWJ: Nothing. I didn’t say that, I was thinking that. So we picked up in tandem,
20 that time Smithy immediately said, “Mr. Harper is on fire!” I turn around, looked over
21 here and there was spurts of jet, stuff coming out of his engine. Supposed to come out
22 backwards, not supposed to come out of the side. So whether he was on fire or not, I
23 don’t know, I said “Harper, set her down, you’re on fire.” At that time, Commege starts
24 bending us around and Moore comes up on the horn and says, “Orange one, what are
25 your intentions?” I said, “We’re coming back in, we’re going to pick up my crew and
26 pick up your wounded.” Prior to the party, Harper had picked up some wounded and we
27 had two POWs (Prisoner of War). Moore asked me “Can you take out two POWs?” And
28 I said, “Sure.” We had two POWs; we were told we couldn’t put wounded onboard the
29 same ship with POWs flying infantrymen. So we came back in and circled around and
30 sadistically, I guess, I saw I had not made a bad decision, because Harper’s ship looked
31 like a boiling black smoke coming up like that. I said, “God he must be on fire.” But

1 Commege kept on moving us. Right next to the airplane, I was thinking to myself, “Any
2 closer and if that thing blows up, we’ve had it.” But it was oil. It received eleven shots!
3 Maintenance officer told me it received eleven shots in its engine and had it flown
4 another five minutes, all the oil would’ve gone out and of course they would have had to
5 land somewhere in the jungle and the wounded, and the airship might not have made it.
6 We pulled him on, popcorn sounding like all get out. One of the wounded started running
7 off to the woods, he had red blood all over his back. I told him, “Go get that guy, we’re
8 not leaving until we get him.” Smithy and Newlander ran out about seventy-five yards
9 and dragged him back, got on board our aircraft. Harper got on board our aircraft; another
10 guy got on board our aircraft. It was an infantryman, I called him the “strap hanger” and
11 I’ll tell you why in a minute. I guess he chickened out and wanted to get out of the battle.

12 RV: He was not wounded?

13 PWJ: No, no! No, he wasn’t. I’ll tell you who he is in a minute. We had those four
14 on his ship, we had our four and the strap hanger, and we had two, three, or four other
15 wounded people, the POWs had been taken off. We had anywhere thirteen, fourteen,
16 fifteen people onboard on that aircraft. Fortunately, Commege had not refueled. We had
17 about twenty more minutes, thirty more minutes of fuel left. He picks it up, flutters
18 around and off we go over the treetops and fortunately we were able to carry out thirteen,
19 fourteen, fifteen total—fifteen sounds awful large, but that’s souls onboard. On the way
20 back, I heard over the radio an aviation signal coming in and that was the Gilson lift of
21 the rest of the 1st and the 7th. I heard no more all day long from Bruce. I did not know to
22 take wounded to Falcon. I took my wounded back to Holloway. But I heard nothing from
23 yellow line all day. So there I was sort of reusing my own initiative to support the battle. I
24 heard Moore say, “Don’t come in four at a time, I told you that would happen!” Later I
25 learned that four ships had come in and one had a tree strike and had to sit down in the
26 battlefield. We got back to Holloway, dropped off our wounded and Commege says,
27 “Well, let’s get some more ammo” I said, “Sure! X-Ray here we go!” So we loaded up on
28 some—we got refueled on some fuel homestead, pumped a lot faster than the pumps they
29 had in Pleiku, so we got fuel real quickly. We went over to this ammo dump and the strap
30 hanger was still with us, and we started piling ammo on both of our ships and some major
31 comes from a tent, “You can’t do that! You can’t do that! We got to keep that! Take that

1 off!" I said, "Full pitch!" and we left him in a cloud of dust. We were loaded all the way
2 up to the ceiling, both ships with ammo and the strap hanger was still with us. I said,
3 "What's wrong with this guy? Does he want to get killed or what?" We're flying back
4 with this one ship and I reported over our S3 to let them know I didn't hear from my
5 flight leader, I didn't hear from Moore. At least I wanted to tell somebody where we
6 were, we were going back with more ammo. I said, "We need another ship." About five
7 minutes out, I call on the aviation channel and said, "We need a chase ship to come with
8 us." I thought we heard white one will go with us, which is an error. For years I thought
9 white one was Freeman. I thought it was Ed Freeman, but it was not. Later on, and I'll
10 come back to this, after the battle was over and gone to the officer's club to get my warm
11 beer and Bruce was there and he walks up with a big glass of booze and says, "That took
12 balls." I figured he knew what I did, I don't know if he did or not. But Ed comes in and I
13 said, "Ed, thanks for being my chase ship" He says, "I've been with you." What I thought
14 he said was, "I was with you all day." But he never said that. I learned he had a southern
15 accent and what he had really said was, "I was with Bruce all day." But later on, during
16 research, I found that the chase ship was not white one, it was red one. The guy who said
17 red one also had a southern accent, so white and red sounded like the same thing. Red
18 one was Dwyane Denton from B Company. I further checked that out and I found out the
19 two ships he had, Dwyane Denton, red one and red two, were assigned to the 1st and 7th
20 S4, for bringing in C-rations and this sort, and had been attached to 1st and 7th, those two
21 ships. The second ship which was Bob Kies, he said, "I don't know where Bruce went,
22 but for about an hour and a half he was gone." Ergo, the guy who was my chase was not
23 Freeman, it was Denton. The two ships under the S4 were going back and forth getting
24 ammo and C-rations, and the supply officer was going with them. When my two ships
25 went back to get ammo, the Supply Officer got on board. The strap hanger! That was
26 Rozanski! I learned about that when I they talked to Rozanski in '90, '92 we had a
27 reunion in Montana, General Moore and Joe Galloway brought this fellow over,
28 Rozanski, and he said, "Here's your strap hanger!" I'll be damned! I didn't know until
29 '92 that that guy was not a strap hanger, it was S4 and he had thought he had gotten on
30 his own two long ships, and he didn't, he had gotten on my two combat ships. He stayed
31 with me until we dropped him off at 1700 back in X-Ray, but anyway, as we're coming

1 in with the chase ship, our chase ship joined us, which is Denton, there's this big cloud of
2 dust and dirt and stuff, he says, "Where's the battlefield? Where's the battlefield?" I said,
3 "I can't find any place to land!" I came along and I told Moore, "We're going around, we
4 can't find you" Moore says, "Stay away from the mountain!" So we make a right turn,
5 and we go in between the battlefield and the mountain, which is not smart. But we're
6 down to treetop and my indicator says we're doing a hundred and twenty. Whether we're
7 doing a hundred and twenty or not, I don't know. We were doing up until the red line.
8 Both of us we're going around to the right. The wind had blown the smoke from the
9 northeast towards the southeast a little bit and I saw the battlefield then I saw the
10 northeast corner, where Moore had set up the small little area we can land. Inside we're
11 going to land. So they gave it to Commege and said, "You land this thing." So we landed,
12 dropped off more ammo from our ships. Both our ships then picked up wounded. We
13 took off and went back to Holloway. I still had not heard that I was supposed to take
14 them to Falcon. I heard nothing from my flight leader, Crandall. I figured we were doing
15 our initiative thing and we went back and dropped off wounded. We loaded up with more
16 ammo, strap hanger is with us and then we're on our way back again. It's about twenty
17 after four. We tell Moore that we're coming back in, and he said, "No, no, don't bring
18 anymore in, we got too much now, it'll be a burden to us taking it back when we end this
19 thing, taking it over the Falcon." Commege and I we're sort of teed off because we're
20 willing to come back and get killed and you're telling us to save your life and you're
21 telling us to don't come in we have too much, so we got a little peeved. So we dropped it
22 off at Falcon, which is about four miles from our artillery base. We sat down and I saw
23 guns going, that's where the artillery were firing. I saw a big pile of cannisters, it must've
24 been ten feet tall, I've never seen that many in my life. I got out of my ship, as we were
25 unloading my ammo, I walked over to the artilleryman, I said, "Wow, some shooting!"
26 He said, "Yeah it is, we've broken one gun and hydraulics on two other guns or vice
27 versa. We've been firing fire for effect for three hours without leveling the bubbles. You
28 need to level the bubbles in an artillery piece to keep it accurate." But having read in the
29 cav after action report, those 105s in the jungle are not as accurate as they ought to be. So
30 they didn't level the bubbles, they're not as accurate, and we're flying under all the
31 artillery stuff going off. It's amazing we're here. About that time, out from the tent two of

1 the fifth, Bob Tully's two of fifth was CP (Command Post) was in Falcon. Bob Stunet,
2 my platoon leader, was supporting him with two ships. He'd been shuttling troops back
3 and forth out of the jungle area over to a place called Victor, which was three clicks from
4 X-Ray as a blocking position. But he got with those two ships he got a hundred—I don't
5 know how many troops he got in from the battalion. A hundred and seventy-one troops I
6 think research says by those two ships alone. He had to wait because Tully's C Company
7 was buried deeply in many places in the jungle, and they had to blow out trees so they
8 can make some space for the chopper to come in and land. He had nothing to do. He says,
9 "I'm going in with water to X-Ray, you coming?" I said, "Shit." (Laughs) I could go
10 back to colors. I said, "Crank her up." So they loaded her up with water. Now, Stunet is
11 leading me, I'm his second ship and I'm thinking to myself, "I've been in and out of X-
12 Ray all day, it's a hectic place, and I'm going in with some—even my leader hadn't been
13 in there, I don't feel very comfortable about that." But we went in and we dropped off
14 the—even though Stunet wasn't supposed to be with the 1st and 7th, he was the 2nd and
15 the 5th, but he had nothing to do. There you go again, with Kinnard's initiative, we're
16 going to do it, the battle needs it. We took in water and we brought wounded and then
17 they called for all the ships to go take in Bravo company 2nd and the 7th, with the movie
18 people, and we helped on one lift on that and the movie people got out. I'd forgotten,
19 when Stunet let us in, the pathfinders—Bruce had brought the pathfinders at about 1630
20 and this is about 1640 or something like that, pathfinders had just gotten setup. Stunet is
21 coming in, and Stunet says, "They went off the air." I learned from the pathfinders later
22 what had happened. Tift, who is deceased today, Bear Tift who, was the lead pathfinders,
23 had said in a meeting Fort Hood base later, that he was bringing two ships, just after he
24 got there. He got his radio that was on his back, shot. So we had to find another radio to
25 bring in the other two ships which was Stunet and myself. He came back on the air and
26 he says, "Sorry about that!" Bob said, "Glad you're there!" and landed us. But that proves
27 that Stunet did go in at that time and we're still within the end of Moore's two-hour
28 period of heroic action.

29 RV: Let me ask you, was there some doubt that Stunet did not go in that time?

30 PWJ: Well, you can listen to people and have them tell you something, then you
31 got to find some other research to validate that. Otherwise you'll just hearsay. So you

1 find other research to validate this, and once you get it validated then it's more likely to
2 be true. This is in the research. I've done that with all the research. Having of course
3 research methods along the way.

4 RV: Let me ask you this Colonel before you continue, how tired are you now?
5 What are you feeling? I mean, you're doing multiple lifts, are you thinking about that? Or
6 are you just going?

7 PWJ: You're just going. You're just going. You go. You sometimes—in a book I
8 read about Geronimo, you put on a shirt. If you get through a battle, then you're not
9 going to get shot again because your wearing your shirt. I felt invincible. I said, "No
10 problem at all."

11 RV: You've done it this many times, let's go.

12 PWJ: Yeah, it's a strange adrenaline, the feeling of adrenaline. There's no fear
13 anymore. I got rid of that fear that first time staring down that tube, wondering how
14 long—from then on, it was just business as usual and get the hell out of my way. We're
15 going to get those guys; we're going to keep those guys alive. But that's the feeling.

16 RV: Where was Crandall? I mean, why the silence?

17 PWJ: I have no idea. I have no idea. I don't know.

18 RV: Was he—

19 PWJ: I do know from research where he was, what he was doing. But at the time I
20 only knew this other ship, who I didn't know was Red one. I only knew Stunet's ship and
21 I knew my ship. I knew Harper, we dropped him off back there because his ship got
22 destroyed and my other two orange people had joined and stayed with the Gilson A
23 Company Troop lift. But we're there sort of like we were doing our thing and a lot of
24 people saw a lot of airplanes doing a lot things. Airplanes crews saw a lot of airplanes
25 doing a lot of things, but to put names on those airplanes, it couldn't be done until we
26 found out who was in the battle thirty years later! Then based on that, a lot of
27 recommendations have been made, Congress has allowed the department of the army to
28 do this sort of thing.

29 RV: Where was Crandall? Now that you know.

30 PWJ: He was flying his own missions from Falcon to X-Ray, to Falcon to X-Ray.
31 Taking ammo, bringing wounded back, taking ammo, bringing wounded back, he

1 continued, continued, and continued. We had one more lift to make after—no we did not.
2 The 2nd of the 7th, Stunet and I and the chase ship helped with that. But then we went off
3 back to the 2nd of the 5th because my platoon leader told me, “You’re now with me.” I
4 said, “Yes sir.” So I stayed with him and we delivered the rest of the 2nd and 5th out of
5 those jungle positions, C Company two of the 5th has made space for us over to Victor.
6 Which was unprotected place, but it was three clicks away from X-Ray from where Tully
7 would walk the next day and reinforce General Moore. From my research, Bruce and the
8 rest of his task force had been released at 1800 and that’s when Rozanski went back, we
9 dropped Rozanski off in that water run. He was still with me, the strap hanger was still
10 with me and got off and then he stayed—he was the S4 of the 1st and 7th. Then he went
11 back with the 1800 release. But Bruce and Ed had stayed on. They made two—or three
12 more—night flights and the last flight was when they brought Dillon, the S3N and
13 Galloway on the C-rations. They could see lights all over them. Then Bruce after that, it
14 was about 9:30, he broke off and he came home. I got home after the Victor sortie with
15 my platoon leader. Closed out my flight and stopped off. I was going over to get my
16 warm beer and I stopped off at the chaplain tent for about fifteen minutes to talk to a big
17 guy about what was going on today and kind of how wild it is.

18 RV: That’s important for you to do?

19 PWJ: I felt like it was. I mean there was a tent with this little table, had a cross on
20 it and I went to talk to the old man. Then I went to the office to get my warm beer. I
21 walked in, and there was Bruce with a drink in his hand he came over and said, “That
22 took balls.” And as I said before, Ed came in and said, “Thanks for being with me all
23 day!” He came back with what I thought he had said, I’m repeating myself here, “I was
24 with you all day!” I said, “You weren’t with me all day, you were just there for about an
25 hour.” But he had actually said, “I was with Bruce all day!” So later on in research—well
26 if it wasn’t him, who the hell was it? Then I found out later that it was red flight. Why
27 did—red two was Bob Kies, his radios went defuncted during the day, so he had no
28 communication with red one. So Bob Kies stayed with the Gilson contention to let the
29 troops in. Then went home at 1800.

30 RV: Why did Crandall, even in the movie it’s depicted, he gets some hot water
31 there with his I guess his CO (Commanding Officer)—

1 PWJ: Bruce Crandall's CO?

2 RV: Do you remember this in the movie? When he comes back the first night, he

3 has made numerous night flights and he's getting grief about doing this—

4 PWJ: Doing what?

5 RV: Making the night flights.

6 PWJ: You mean the medevac people?

7 RV: Yes.

8 PWJ: The medevacs, General Kinnard says the medivacs weren't trained yet to do

9 what they were—they were new people on board. They had—we had no guns. We had no

10 guns. The guns we had were M16s for suppressive fire. We did not have machine guns

11 yet. We did have some machine guns hanging on bungee cords. But I mean it had no

12 chest protectors yet and the medivacs were unused to air assaulting. When they came in,

13 they really got close to another aircraft. Bruce brought the medevacs in one time and they

14 aborted, and they never came back in again. We weren't really too pleased with the

15 medevacs. But the medevacs later on became marvelous, wonderful people to have

16 around.

17 RV: Can you describe General Moore briefly for me?

18 PWJ: Yeah, yeah. Man is ten foot tall. Big boots and follow him anywhere. When

19 he came on and talked on the radio, he doesn't come like—he came on like John Wayne.

20 He didn't come on like (Makes mumbled-yelling noises) he says, "Okay guys, just hang

21 in there." That taught me a lesson my entire life. Whenever you get into a bind, slow

22 down! Just get back to normal—happens on a volleyball court. You get in a volleyball

23 court; the game is going really hectic. Slow down and get back to the basics. Then you

24 begin to use your skills again. So the man is ten foot tall, gets you calmed down and able

25 to remember the basics, remember the professionalism, and it works.

26 RV: Okay. We have a few more minutes before we have to end, we have gone for

27 an hour almost.

28 PWJ: Oh god.

29 RV: Tell me a little bit more, the next day and what happened?

1 PWJ: Well, the 15th there was log missions. 16th we extracted the 1st of the 7th.
2 Then the 17th was Albany, I was in Albany in the 18th but not that night, well that's
3 another story.

4 RV: Tell me about Albany, briefly tell me about that experience on the 18th.

5 PWJ: Well the 18th is when we had to go bring the troops out and take them over
6 to LZ (Landing Zone) Crooks and the guys we were picking up in the morning from
7 Albany looked like death warmed over. The ten-mile stare, the "Why am I here" sort of
8 thing. Then we dropped them off at LZ Crooks in another little battle. But it wasn't
9 anything going on too much around LZ Crooks except artillery.

10 RV: How does it affect you as a pilot to see these men over and over and over?

11 PWJ: How did it affect me? Later on, I started logging in troops and when we
12 brought wounded out, I logged this cargo. I did not log troops coming out. Which in
13 1983, I was diagnosed with PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), went to six years
14 counseling. First wife went mentally ill because of the kids and Vietnam. Second wife
15 and my kids didn't work out too well. Finally, after counseling, I met my wife at a
16 volleyball court, and we've been great. But six years of counseling.

17 RV: What's it like now forty years after the fact, for you to be here?

18 PWJ: I'm writing a book. I'm writing a book about—

19 RV: Is that cathartic for you and getting this out?

20 PWJ: Yeah, yeah. Writing a book about the chopper guys, which is taking about
21 seventeen years to find out who did what to whom and when.

22 RV: What's it like being around the men again forty years later? I know you all
23 had previous reunions, but on this 40th anniversary what's it like seeing them?

24 PWJ: Like brothers.

25 RV: Well, thank you very much Colonel. I know we need to talk more, and I hope
26 we will in the future, but for now, we will have to end the interview. Thank you very
27 much.

28 PWJ: Thank you.

29 (End of interview)