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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Frank Walker  
Conducted by Jason Stewart  
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Transcribed by Aaron Kellerhals  
Session [1] of [2]  
Date: June 20th 2011**

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech  
2 University conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Frank Walker. Today is June  
3 20th, 2011. I'm in Lubbock, Texas, in the Special Collections Library on the campus of  
4 Texas Tech and Mr. Walker is joining me by phone from, is it McKinney, Texas, sir?

5 FW: That's correct.

6 JS: Okay, all right. Well, why don't we begin if we could with a little bit of  
7 biographical information. First of all, when and where were you born?

8 FW: I was born in Brownsville, Texas, November the 11<sup>th</sup>, 1939.

9 JS: Okay, yes, sir. Could you tell me, I guess a little bit about your parents? What  
10 were their names, and what did they do for a living?

11 FW: My mother was from a very small village in southeast Oklahoma, Gowen, G-  
12 O-W-E-N, Oklahoma. In fact, my grandfather on her side came from Germany. They  
13 were coal miners and came over before the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He made the last  
14 boomer sooner, it was not a boomer, it was a sooner land run but not a boomer one,  
15 because he made it in 1907 and staked out some of the family land there. Anyway, she  
16 was from there, she was a homemaker. My father was the first to be educated formally on  
17 either side of our family, and he went to Hill School of Business here in Dallas, Texas.  
18 He was from Twitty, T-W-I-T-T-Y, Texas, out in the panhandle. He is—of course I think  
19 my mother was in her mid-thirties and he was in his mid-thirties or late thirties when I  
20 was born, and he was secretary of treasury in Brownsville. There's a famous family down

1 there, they're still there, called Hudson, and Mr. Hudson was his son which would be my  
2 age, became a state senator here in Texas. My father was also president—excuse me,  
3 secretary of treasury of what was called The Texas Railway Association which today I  
4 think is a government, our government in Austin, it's a taxing authority today. So that's  
5 who my parents were. My father died at the age of—I was only five years old.

6 JS: Well, did you grow up there in Brownsville?

7 FW: No, we moved when my father died. I was five, and so we moved, my mom  
8 and I back to Gowen, Oklahoma, and my mother went to Wilburton, to East Texas State  
9 College and got a two-year degree and then finished her four-year teaching degree at  
10 Ada, Oklahoma, at the college there. Then later almost immediately after that went to  
11 Enid, Oklahoma, to Philips University and got her Master's. I lived at my grandparents'  
12 home while she was in college. Then she got me and we moved from Gowen to wherever  
13 she could make the most money as a teacher because back then they wouldn't put a  
14 woman in an administration. They were beyond what you and I would call chauvinistic.  
15 So, any case, we moved to Billings, Oklahoma and Orlando, Oklahoma, Britton,  
16 Oklahoma, which is a suburb of Okie City, and then to Tulsa where I finished junior high  
17 and high school, and entered the university, Tulsa University, upon graduation, and then  
18 transferred to Northeastern in Tahlequah from there. Got three years of credits there at  
19 Northeastern.

20 JS: Let me back up again for just a moment. As a kid growing up, do you have  
21 any memories of World War II? I know that was very early in your life. Do you have any  
22 memories of it?

23 FW: I do. I have my uncle on my mother's side was armorer in the B-17s and  
24 fixed the guns, if they weren't all shot to hell, when they brought the planes limping back  
25 from bombing Europe, the continent there. Then a best friend of our family for four  
26 generations, I gave his eulogy two years ago, was a—he'd made almost eight, well, he  
27 did make eight parachute jumps, and he's in the famous picture of Eisenhower greeting  
28 the Pathfinders, which he was, and Eisenhower's in his Eisenhower jacket surrounded by  
29 about twelve, well hundreds of men, but the twelve immediate and Tommy is the tallest  
30 one in that picture.

1 JS: Okay, I know that picture. I'll have to take a look at that again sometime.  
2 Well, did you have any interest in the military yourself as a kid growing up?

3 FW: I played, myself and an Italian kid who later was in the Air Force, and  
4 myself in the Marines, we played war, and we played—I was born and raised during the  
5 B-movies, all the Lash Larue's and Johnny Mack Brown's and Gene Autry and Roy and  
6 all of them, and I had a steady diet of that stuff. I saw my share of war movies, and  
7 played war and all of that. I did not in college, and we didn't have it in high school back  
8 then. In Oklahoma we had Oklahoma Military Academy, but you didn't have the ROTC  
9 (Reserve Officer Training Corps) programs they have today. They did in college, but not  
10 at Northeastern, as I recall. In fact, I know they didn't have it at Northeastern. But that's  
11 where I got my interest in the Marine Corps, and in flying, and serving was at  
12 Northeastern because I had some recruiters that came back, officer recruiters under the  
13 MARCAD (Marine Aviation Cadet) program, Marine cadet, where you had to have a  
14 minimum of two years college. Then you took the battery of tests, *et cetera, et cetera*.

15 JS: What did you major in there at Northeastern?

16 FW: I changed my major several times. Another reason I wanted to join the  
17 Marine Corps was to find myself, but I was going to be a coach and I remember I was in  
18 a kinesiology class which is the studies of muscles and motion. My mother, being a  
19 schoolteacher in those days and today because I did serve on a school board here in  
20 Prosper, Texas, most administrators around the, certainly in the state of Texas, were all  
21 former coaches. Anyway, my mother told me I was going to starve to death as a coach,  
22 that if you had a losing team, you'd be looking for a job, so I immediately changed to  
23 business. That's what I finally graduated in from the University of Hawaii in business  
24 management and both that and personnel industrial relations.

25 JS: Well, your interest in the Marine Corps, was there something in particular  
26 about the Marine Corps?

27 FW: We were going to school at Northeastern with a lot of guys that had served,  
28 and ROTC was strong in all the major universities in Oklahoma. The MARCAD  
29 program, the NAVCAD (Naval Aviation Cadet) program, and all that in the major  
30 universities. I remember there were two guys I knew from high school that were two or  
31 three years my senior came back and came to our campus recruiting under the MARCAD

1 officer program. One was a wrestler named Tanner and he was a Marine captain by that  
2 time and had his wings, and I thought, “This is for me. This is what I want to do.” Plus  
3 we had a very good friend that played fullback on our football team up there who had  
4 been what we called a “sea-going bellhop.” He had been on a ship’s company on a carrier  
5 and served his time, and then came back and was getting his college degree, was married  
6 and had kids, Paul Payne, and Paul would regale us with stories of the Marine Corps and  
7 I thought about embassy duty, but I wanted to fly. So, Paul was, by the way when he  
8 graduated, he entered the OCS (Officer Candidate School) program and became a flying  
9 officer. So, I took the test at Northeastern and passed it on the MARCAD program. I  
10 finished up that semester, and I joined the Marine Corps.

11 JS: Okay, all right. Was the flying something that you always wanted to do? Or is  
12 that something that came along a little later?

13 FW: No, it was something I always wanted to do because in rural southeast  
14 Oklahoma, Gowen was classified as a village in the state of Oklahoma. We had an airport  
15 about eight miles from us, a very small, rural airport. In those days, let’s see that  
16 would’ve been after World War II, early ‘50s through quite frankly the ‘60s, you’d hear  
17 an airplane engine and you look up in the sky and I mean we were starting to see jets in  
18 the ‘60s. Not jet fighters but you’d see jet commercial aviation, but America was still  
19 flying a bunch of DC-6s or 8s even. But the planes fascinated me, and I thought, “Boy, it  
20 must be great to be able to be up there and see down what all’s going on,” and this one  
21 Marine friend of mine gave me basically it’s a rudimentary book that you studied back  
22 then to get your private pilot’s license. So I studied that book forward and backward, and  
23 I passed high enough MARCAD test that to qualify under the MARCAD program.

24 JS: All right. Once you signed up for the program, what happened at that point?

25 FW: Well, I went to the recruiter in downtown Tulsa, Oklahoma, joined the  
26 Marine Corps formally, went to San Diego to boot camp, and at some point probably  
27 after boot camp I would’ve gone to Pensacola. But this was circa 1962 and in ‘62 it was  
28 still archaic back then. A lot of curse words and not supposed to be hands laid on the  
29 recruits but I’ll assure you they did whatever was necessary, those DIs (drill instructors).  
30 You deserved it, and of course everybody paid for the mistakes of one man. So any case  
31 back then you didn’t dare, every morning was sick bay call, but the rigor was you didn’t

1 ever raise your hand to go to sickbay because you'd be heavily discriminated against in  
2 some fashion. We had gone to Camp Matthews, which was we hiked there as I recall,  
3 which was the firing range. I can't remember the distance, five or ten miles each way,  
4 and there was another guy, Marine from Sweetwater, Texas, and we would take care of  
5 the guys that fall out, that would heat or just couldn't hack it or whatever, and we'd carry  
6 them between us, and anyhow I got a blister. I didn't dare go to sickbay, and I let the  
7 damn thing become infected and I wound up in the base hospital. I missed quite a few  
8 days of training because of that, but I think probably that put me—it changed my date to  
9 go to Pensacola, and back then they didn't send you to the basic school first or any of  
10 that. They sent you to Pensacola, and you would be upon completion of your wings,  
11 you'd be commissioned a second lieutenant and more than likely you'd go to—you know  
12 you'd go to the fleet but you would also then specialize, Marines cross-trained into  
13 helicopters, fixed-wing, and multi-engine. Of course, all Marines wanted to be fighter  
14 jocks and fixed-wing, but eighty percent of Marine aviators back then wound up as  
15 chopper pilots. But I missed that because of being in sickbay, so I came out of there, I  
16 graduated and went to advanced infantry training at Pendleton and I kept asking, "Well,  
17 when am I going to go to Pensacola?" And they said, "Well, we're going to send you to  
18 first permanent duty station," this was probably of '63 I want to say. And so, they sent me  
19 to Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station which was absolutely tremendous. It was in  
20 Waikiki and Honolulu back then was, in all honesty, an extremely small town. We knew  
21 everybody. I went to the night school there at the University of Hawaii, made great  
22 grades there. There were some officers and civilians, and we were told that our B, our  
23 lowest B grade was higher than the day school's highest A grade. I lived off base in  
24 Waikiki. I was a bachelor, and I joined the Elks Club down in Diamondhead which was  
25 right next to the Outrigger Canoe Club which was the swellest private club on the island.  
26 They tried to buy that Elks Club more times than you can shake a stick at, and it was  
27 nestled right between the Outrigger Canoe Club and Michelle's at Diamondhead which to  
28 this day is probably the finest public private-club and restaurant there is and hotel. Like  
29 for instance Rush Limbaugh and those types of people stay there when they go out there  
30 to visit. Then I also joined the Waikiki Junior Chamber of Commerce and I had it made  
31 in the shade. I mean it was gangbusters. So finally, they were getting ready to send me to

1 Pensacola and I only had I think at that time I had about six months left in the Marine  
2 Corps. I had the first sergeant call me in. I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Marines,  
3 Headquarters. I was in supply, a 341 MOS (military occupational specialty), and he said,  
4 “The CO (commanding officer) wants to see you about your going to Pensacola.” So I  
5 went in there, talked to Lieutenant-Colonel Slack—anyhow they had groomed me, they  
6 had—our exec was also named Slack, I might add, a major, and he was the one that did  
7 the grooming. He held school on me on current events and everything else so I’d make  
8 the best showing when I showed up at Pensacola. I had to go in there and see them and  
9 told them that my horizons had changed. Back then they discharged all Marines, officer  
10 and enlisted, at Treasure Island in San Francisco, and I knew I wanted to stay in Hawaii. I  
11 wanted to start my career there. I could finish up the university. I was a member of the  
12 JCs, and I had letters from all these people including the university and it went up all the  
13 way through brigade, endorsed all the way to be discharged there in six months. Went up  
14 to Camp H.M. Smith, which is where the final word rested and some major, and I’ve got  
15 his letters, the same major, Major Bowman, some things like that you don’t forget. He  
16 turned me down three times in a row because the books said, “You can’t be discharged  
17 there.” Now there’s no logic involved there, it’s just the book says. And everybody  
18 supported me all the way up through all three times, in other words the Marine Corps or  
19 the military way went through the chain of command. So I tried it three times, so the  
20 colonel called me yet again. I had been turned down again. I was a lance corporal, and he  
21 said,—in those days they had on your record book, if you had political influence they  
22 would stamp your book in the top right-hand corner, PI (political influence), and  
23 sometimes they would flag it with a red-slash through the damn thing. I had an uncle here  
24 in Dallas, in Highland Park, so you have an idea he built the Parks City Shopping Center,  
25 he built the mercantile, the whole bank building for Tex Thornton. He owned the land,  
26 my uncle did, and he owned a developing company and he built it and then sold it to Tex  
27 Thronton and it became the Mercantile Bank. My uncle sat on the board. My uncle’s in  
28 the book *Who’s Who in the World*, has a longer column than Henry Kissinger. I’ve met  
29 our former governor John Connally and several other wheels at my uncle’s cocktail  
30 parties here in Dallas, and I was just a kid then but you know I did dress me up, trot me in  
31 there and all that nonsense. I was an Okie, by the way so he said, “I know you have

1 political influence. I know you've tried it our way," he said, "I don't blame you if you do  
2 what you feel you need to do." And I always voted absentee even back then in the state of  
3 Oklahoma. Our US senator was Senator Mike Monroney, and so I wrote him and said,  
4 "I'd like to be discharged here. I'd save the Marine Corps money." I attached supporting  
5 documents from the University of Hawaii, and Waikiki JCs and the Elks Club which I  
6 was a member of, and I had job offers. I said, "I'd like to be discharged here rather than  
7 going back to Treasure Island and spend the money to come all the way back to here,"  
8 back to Honolulu. Well, I was standing in line forty-eight hours later, and here came the  
9 first shirt and pulled me out of line and said, "CO wants to see you." He had a letter from  
10 his higher ups that Senator Monroney had written the commandant, the commandant  
11 wrote on down the ladder and said, "You'll be discharged in Honolulu." I thought that  
12 was okay. And interesting thing, Jason, I lived off-base in a place called The Trade  
13 Winds, which was a forerunner—it was a condominium, but it was called a co-op back  
14 then. It was right in Waikiki, across from the Ilikai and across from Kaiser Yacht Harbor,  
15 and I had a good friend who was a lieutenant-commander in the Navy out at Barbers  
16 Point, a flyer. He was my best man and still is my best man and alive and well, and a  
17 good friend who was an Air Force lieutenant-colonel. He was getting ready, we were all  
18 bachelors, and Chris was getting ready to retire from the Air Force, he had been in World  
19 War II, Korea, and Vietnam, and he was in charge, in Vietnam, he was in charge. He was  
20 at Hickam, but he was in charge of planning at Camp H.M. Smith. He kept his wings but  
21 he was no longer in a flying status, and Gene was, so we were going to have a retirement  
22 party for him, getting out party for me, and Gene was just coming to the party with a  
23 good looking gal. Chris kept trying to talk me out of writing my US Senator, I might add,  
24 and he was not successful at it. In any case to continue this part of the interview, I was  
25 told by the Colonel Slack, he said, "You got your wish. You'll be able to be discharged at  
26 Pearl Harbor." So anyway, to make a long-story short in January of '65 we loaded out the  
27 entire 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Brigade on ships, and we were supposed to be attacking the West Coast  
28 of the United States in a war game, but the sun kept coming up over the fantails of the  
29 ships. We went to Okinawa is where we went, took twenty-some days because the Navy  
30 played war games along the way. We hit Okinawa and we were there from late January  
31 until—let's see, we had to beach May the 5<sup>th</sup>. We were probably there 'til about seven

1 days, around April 28<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> we left Naha. Of course, we hit the beach in Vietnam  
2 seven days later. It doesn't take seven days to get there. We had had some time before  
3 that, Diem and Nhu assassinated and we weren't sure who we were going to prop up to  
4 run the country. So, they finally decided who they were going to prop up, the people in  
5 Washington, and they landed us on May the 5<sup>th</sup> early in the morning, and I was the  
6 seventh wave to go ashore. It was not a John Wayne fight your way ashore. It was what  
7 was called an administrative landing, luckily for us and the bad guys, too, but mostly  
8 luckily for us. In any case Chris sent me the, the Air Force light colonel, sent me the  
9 headlines of the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* which I sent you a copy of. He told me, he said,  
10 "I couldn't tell you. I kept trying to talk you out of being discharged in Hawaii because I  
11 was the one planning to send you over there and didn't want you to have to go," because  
12 he knew, he had been in two other wars, he knew what war was. So, it all worked out  
13 famously for me in any case, and we still had the party, I might add, when I got back in  
14 July.

15 JS: At what point in this, I guess, journey to the Western Pacific did you guys  
16 realize that you were going to be going to Vietnam?

17 FW: We were in Okinawa, we were artillery battalion, 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Marines.  
18 We were at an Army artillery base right outside of Kadena. Actually, it was right beside  
19 Kadena but in between Kadena and Futenma, which was a Marine Corps Air Station  
20 down near Naha, the capital of Okinawa. So, we were there on maneuvers and, quite  
21 frankly, staging all the necessary logistics to make the invasion, plus waiting to figure out  
22 who's going to run the country over there. Obviously, we ran the country and ran it into  
23 the ground. But that's my opinion, but in any case, Washington ran it into the ground, we  
24 were never told we were going to Vietnam until the night before we actually landed. I  
25 mean we knew over the—we were in a ship, and I'm not a Navy guy so I don't know, it  
26 had what's called a well deck and since we were artillery we rode ashore on the seventh  
27 wave to hit the beach. We rode ashore and most of us, whether you rated them or not, you  
28 were allowed to have a sidearm as long as you could have ammunition. Well, we were  
29 billeted on that Navy ship, through a port hole was the ammunition supply room. I'll  
30 assure you so we don't get in trouble here, we appropriated enough personal ammunition  
31 where all of us had *beau coup*'s, as much as we wanted. We were concerned, "Would we

1 leave enough to fight the war?" So, they told us, they started holding school on us, "The  
2 following day we're going to be landing, and this is where we are, bla-bla-bla-bla." The  
3 Navy is customary on every ship back then; they showed a movie almost every night.  
4 They showed the damn movie, which was a great movie, I might add, *Wake Island* with  
5 Brian Donlevy which I'd seen as a kid. Problem is every Marine is killed or captured in  
6 that movie, so talk about a morale ballbuster. We watched the movie and hooted and  
7 hollered, we landed the following morning without anybody getting hurt unless they  
8 tripped and stumbled. In fact, part of our outfit landed at Bien Hoa a couple weeks ahead  
9 of us. They pull one of our firing batteries and they landed with some line companies up  
10 in Bien Hoa. They landed, yeah, and I was told they were greeted by Vietnamese girls  
11 with flower leis. That beats the hell out of fighting your way ashore. So anyway we went  
12 ashore there with guns, our artillery battalion, we went inland about I would guess—and  
13 when I went back in '05 I swear I was within twenty-five feet of where our ship pulled up  
14 and let us out, and also where our guns were about two-and-a-half miles inland. I'm  
15 blessed with a photographic memory. So I was pretty sure that was exactly where we  
16 were, and all the supplies, since I was in supply in the battalion level, logistically we put  
17 all our stuff in one dump and moved inland and what was interesting was I wrote in the  
18 paperwork is that we could've followed the grunts with the trail of their, we called them  
19 diapers, they were flak pants and they were a lot different than today's. They were almost  
20 like a diaper, and boy in that heat and humidity they would just chaff the hell out of you.  
21 What we would do, though, we picked them up, as many as we wanted and could throw  
22 in the six-by's or PCs (personnel carriers), because we'd line the floors of the helicopters  
23 for forward air observers and angle it so they wouldn't take any rounds. The only place  
24 armored was right under the pilots. We would line the floors of them with those flak  
25 pants, because they would lay flat. So we moved inland and that's when we knew—you  
26 said, "When did we know?" We knew the night before, at least at our level that's when  
27 we knew.

28 JS: Well, what was your reaction upon hearing that you guys were going to going  
29 into Vietnam?

30 FW: That's why we joined the Marine Corps and as to, quite frankly, what it  
31 offered, it had turned me around my personal life. I saw how the other half lived. I knew

1 what I wanted to do, where I wanted to do it, and how to go about it by then because I  
2 had lots of civilian friends in different companies, and what did I think of that? Well, the  
3 Marine Corps basically is about protecting you and your fellow, whether man or woman,  
4 Marine or serviceman. Hopefully by doing that in the future you would benefit for your  
5 endeavors. You would get out of there and get to apply what you had learned, go back to  
6 school, apply a trade, what have you and do that. We were scared to death, obviously, we  
7 didn't go over the side on the netting, which some of them still did back then, but we rode  
8 ashore and, hell, it was 117, 121 degrees there on that beach. It was hot and I don't  
9 remember the mosquitos particularly, but there were sand flies. It was just damned hot  
10 and of course we fired one mission in my short time, because I hit the beach on May the  
11 5<sup>th</sup> and I think I left country around July 7<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> because I was a short timer and today  
12 they call it—I don't remember what they call it. They've changed the name three times,  
13 back then we called it you were extended convenience COG (convenience of the  
14 government)—no COG, convenience of the government. Then it was called stop loss,  
15 and now I don't know what it's called. But you're there for the duration as long as they  
16 want you. So, I was due to be rotated back. While we were, to digress, where really for  
17 me where the tire hit the road was when we were in Okinawa and we were once again  
18 mostly there for staging of logistics. At the battalion level of supply, I was in and out of  
19 the CP (command post) because that's where office all the time. So the first shirt called  
20 me in and said, "CO wants us, you and I, to go over here to the Army side of Camp  
21 Zukeran," which was this Army artillery base, and they're short on C-rations. I guess  
22 they had an IG (inspector general inspection) coming up and they were short on C-  
23 rations, needed them, and the CO we were long on him by our TO—TA rather, table of  
24 allowance, and he wanted to see if they had anything to trade. The first shirt said, "You  
25 and I are going over there because you're good at that stuff." Marines are tremendous  
26 scroungers because they always get the hand-me-downs. So we go over there, and we go  
27 in this warehouse and there's this Army major over there. So we strike up a conversation  
28 and all that, and the first shirt, I might add, had been a captain in Korea, Marine captain.  
29 But after Korea he was rolled back, and he was just a tremendous individual, father-type  
30 figure. I mean we respected the thunder out of him. In any case we said, "Well, we can  
31 answer your prayers, but what do you have to trade?" So he took us in this other

1 warehouse, and they had *beau coup*'s of weaponry. They had a lot of extra .50 caliber  
2 machine guns, they had some old .30s, not water-cooled but the regular on the frame of  
3 the .50, and they had some Thompson submachine guns, which I wanted but first shirt  
4 grabbed me by the sleeve and said, "Come on, we're getting serious here." They had  
5 cases of hand grenades, the old-fashioned fragmentary type, the "pineapple" as they were  
6 called. They had actually the new ones with the wound wire, and they had cases of—we  
7 had the M-14 still, and they had each by the breech it was a toggle switch but it was a  
8 fully automatic adaptor switch that you just shoved it in there, locked it in, and you could  
9 turn it to semi-automatic or fully automatic. So we took note of what he had, and there  
10 were a couple of strange looking things there, Jason, in boxes and they weren't  
11 cosmoline, but they were in oilpaper and, hell, they were brand new looking. I didn't  
12 even—I'm an assiduous reader to this day of the comic strips, and back then there was a  
13 famous comic strip left over from World War II called *Buzz Sawyer*. *Buzz Sawyer*, he's  
14 actually spilled the beans on the SAM (surface-to-air missile) missiles, because he wrote  
15 several comic strips about it and no one had a clue in the United States, this was before I  
16 joined the Marine Corps, what a SAM missile was. He also spilled the beans on this  
17 particular weaponry. The first shirt noted these two boxes of these, and he said, "I'll tell  
18 you what they are when we get back to our headquarters," and so we went back, we made  
19 a list of what he had and what we thought was good. So we met with the CO and the CO  
20 said he wanted at least four, we only rated so many .50 calibers, not many, maybe two  
21 and he wanted at least four, six, and he wanted one of them mounted on his Jeep I  
22 remember, and he got it mounted on his Jeep. That Jeep shook all over the damn place.  
23 We took cases of grenades. We took enough boxes of fully automatic adaptors that  
24 everybody in the battalion, you only rated so many fully automatic M-14s, but anybody  
25 that wanted one could have one. We got these two unusual boxes, and the first shirt told  
26 me what they were, he said, "Those are called M-43." Now I didn't remember what it  
27 was called 'til a sergeant-major friend of mine just retired from the Marines about two  
28 years ago, he researched it for me and sent me an email of what it was. They were called  
29 M-43, infrared sniper scopes. They allowed you to see out to, they were rated at 150  
30 yards but to me, at a hundred yards they were dead on the money. They were a  
31 contraption about a ten-inch bell housing in the front part of the scope and then regular

1 telescope on your eyepiece end. They'd mount on any type of rifle you wanted to put  
2 them on. So he knew what these were and the value of them, the first shirt did, and he  
3 said, "We want both those." We made the trade for all that junk, and we were still in  
4 Okinawa and so he said, we got two of those and he said, "Walker," he said, "you're  
5 going to be one of our night snipers." Even though—he said, "You got to do something  
6 in-country." He said, "You can't be a supply guy in Vietnam." Back then, the early stages  
7 you got to jump in there and fire the rifle. Trigger puller. And so, I was pretty good under  
8 duress at most things and nobody ever hassled me much. I was a sharpshooter, I was not  
9 an expert, but I was cool under fire so we said, "We're going to make you a night sniper."  
10 So he took me out at night at the rifle range and showed me what to do and how to go  
11 about it. How it worked. I remember I weighed 151 pounds then, and the cartridge belt  
12 for all the batteries, they held batteries on a cartridge belt with suspenders to hold it up  
13 otherwise it would pull everything you had down. The cartridge belt weighed almost  
14 sixty pounds, and it had a bunch of like batteries for Coleman lanterns. They fixed up  
15 those type batteries that we had were rechargeable, so I became pretty proficient at that.  
16 So when we hit the beach in Vietnam, other than doing some basic supply things, some  
17 mortaring occasionally, and when it was my turn at night, I was the night sniper and I  
18 would go out to a forward observation post. The first couple times they sent a guy with  
19 me as a spotter in that, and then after that I'd go by myself or if we had a loose guy he  
20 would come be my spotter. So I'd do that and we'd take the equivalent of cases of those  
21 hand grenades, because we had plenty of them, in fact the first shirt always said, "Throw  
22 the damn hand grenades at them and then shoot." Unless the shot's far enough away.  
23 They didn't tell me that the other side, the VC (Viet Cong) and the NVA (North  
24 Vietnamese Army), with a particular pair of goggles could see the beam. It emanates—if  
25 I'm looking through it it's a green light. If they had these goggles on the other side they  
26 could see the damn beam, and where it emanates from, and then they could home in on  
27 me and ding me. But they never bothered to tell me that, the only thing they told me was  
28 to acquire your target, do your work, and then turn it off immediately. Don't search with  
29 it. If you hear something you can search, but only for a brief period because you don't  
30 want them to get fixed on you. They told me by the way when I turned the weapon in  
31 when it was my turn to leave and come back to Honolulu. But I had it mounted on my M-

1 14, and I could switch from fully automatic to semi-automatic, and it was tremendous.  
2 But when you say, “What were my thoughts of the country?” I remember the first night  
3 out there as clear as a bell. I went out and hide, I had my spotter with me, and we were  
4 both just scared to death. My mom had sent my .45 to Hawaii. I had a Colt .45 model  
5 1911 that I bought as a junior in high school, back then you could order those kinds of  
6 things out of the back of *Field and Stream*. I paid eighteen dollars for it, I might add in  
7 1956. I wish to hell I’d of bought a dozen of them. I probably paid it out, I doubt I had  
8 eighteen dollars back then, I had a paper route and worked at a bakery frying donuts.  
9 Made great money as a paperboy, had a 105-paper route and I made about sixty-five  
10 dollars every month net profit, that’s pretty good in 1956. For a kid, and my motor  
11 transportation was a bicycle until I got sixteen, got a driver’s license and all that  
12 nonsense. But anyhow they had the .45 and we had the grenades and that, and boy it was  
13 quiet as church mice out there. I know one of the things, you know “What do you think  
14 about?” One of the things I remember, it was, other than me being out there and  
15 sometime by myself, sometime with a spotter, and it didn’t make any difference. You  
16 were concerned both ways. Anybody that says different is either a liar or crazy if you’re  
17 not concerned about your welfare. But the Seabees (CBs, US Navy construction  
18 battalion) had dug in the sand, because we went back and in fact there’s a book about an  
19 inch-and-a-half thick. It’s an album of the Marine Corps and it shows all our different  
20 actions and then in Vietnam and it shows us hitting the beach in July and I’ll guarantee  
21 you that one of those guys is probably me out there, because we had our rifles stacked,  
22 and we’d go back to beach for swim call during the day periodically. Just nude as jay  
23 birds, and that’s the picture I might add in the album. The water, the south part where we  
24 were, still the South China Sea or North China Sea, but further up north then it’s called  
25 The Gulf of Tonkin up near Ha Long Bay way up north. So, in any case we go back to  
26 swim call, and the damn Seabees of course they’ve laid the Marston matting, and they  
27 hadn’t started concreting yet when I was there, you know the tarmac. They had dug what  
28 we call a POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) dump, you know let’s see POL, oil and  
29 lubricants—something oil and lubricants. “P” was petrol; petrol, oil and lubricants. We  
30 called it a POL; you know the military’s famous for acronyms. That damn thing, Jason, I  
31 want to say, it was inland and it was only inland though just far enough where they

1 wouldn't hit the water table under there. Hell, I don't think it was two-hundred yards  
2 inland, and it was probably I want to say the damn thing was ten-feet deep and it was at  
3 least one square city block. That mother was loaded with all that stuff, and all I could  
4 think of when I'm in that foxhole late at night is the bad guy sappers coming in and  
5 blowing that thing. Well, they never blew it while I was there, and I was only there May,  
6 June, and part of July, early part of July, but about less than two months after I was back  
7 in Hawaii they blew that POL dump. That must've been a hell of a fireworks display. I  
8 hope none of our guys got killed but there was a lot of ordnance in that devil and  
9 everything. Anyhow I remember that, I was, probably my greatest thought about this,  
10 "Am I going to make it out of here?" Then the only other thing that got me concerned is  
11 when it was my time to go and it was nearing a few days before; well, I guess two things.  
12 One was the extreme heat, and we had a captain and his name was John Hooper, and  
13 John Hooper was a Marine mustang officer, meaning that he had been enlisted. He was,  
14 the only way to put it, he was a hard-ass, and he was this way in garrison. We thought,  
15 "Well, surely being a mustang, we get out in the field out there and the war this guy will  
16 loosen up a little, I mean he's got to have a human side to him." This was way before the  
17 term "fragging" was coined. Now they probably did it in World War II and they did it in  
18 Korea, but I don't think they called it fragging. Anyway, we had this inspection coming  
19 up because General Westmoreland and Secretary of Def, Sec Def McNamara were  
20 coming in, Lieutenant-General Victor Krulak, and they were going to inspect us. Well,  
21 they had us line up the guns, line up the damn GP (general purpose) tents and all that, and  
22 Captain Hooper who was in charge of supply in the battalion level, had us fall out in  
23 starched utilities. God damn it was twenty—the first shirt let us go around, and this was  
24 before the canvas and leather boots, we only had all leather boots. He said, "You can  
25 wear skivvies, wear your cartridge belt, wear your flak vest, and your tin pot, your  
26 helmet. Then you can wear a sidearm if you got one, *et cetera*, in the immediate area." So  
27 here we are in starched utilities, polished boots out your—a-hundred-and-God-awful heat  
28 and you know guys were dropping over like flies, falling out. So as soon as they went  
29 through an inspected us, here came the exec and he says, "You guys get back in your  
30 regular uniforms, get out of those starched utilities." In my GP tent where myself and I  
31 forget how many slept in my GP tent, it's where we did our work too, our office work

1 was right next to the battalion CO's. They had Hooper, this exec came and got him, and  
2 called him in because the CO wanted him. They put him in a Jeep and drove him down to  
3 the beach and put him on the next ship back to Hawaii or whatever, but they got him out  
4 of there because they were scared to death someone was going to kill him. I remember  
5 we were out on that OP (observation post) one night and we had those, what were they  
6 called, PRC-6s (portable, radio, communications), those small walkie-talkies. They  
7 weren't worth a damn. I mean any cell phone today is superior to that. They weren't  
8 worth a damn and that's how we'd communicate if somebody called or we needed  
9 something really bad, otherwise we didn't use them much. But Hooper called and he was  
10 coming up and so we had the sign and call sign, and he was approaching our area there  
11 and he didn't know where we were for sure. He had to try and find us; we were in a hide.  
12 He gave out the sign, and we jacked with him a little bit. Boy, he really got his nose out  
13 of joint over that, because I guess he was scared to death we'd either shoot him or throw  
14 a grenade. But we didn't and he came on up, and everything was cool, but he was taken  
15 back to the rear and sent back home, and I often wondered what happened to him. Then  
16 the other time that I remember that was really of concern to me personally, was I was due  
17 to rotate back and so "How am I going to get out of there?" We're out in the middle of  
18 the boondocks. Since I was supply, being the type of animal I am to this day, I had  
19 ordered some binoculars and field glasses for some of the firing batteries back in Hawaii.  
20 The damn field glasses never came. So all of sudden we're over there in Vietnam, and  
21 here comes this box, master case, and we bust it open and there's all the binoculars,  
22 except they're ships binoculars. They're huge devils that you put on a mount, I guess, like  
23 you see in the old World War II submarine movies, and they put them on there. I admired  
24 one of those pairs, so I sent them all back except for one pair, and I put those in my sea  
25 bag. We were allowed—we were not allowed any cameras so none of us had any  
26 pictures, including the officers, nobody could bring a camera when we hit that beach. The  
27 only cameras were the *Dallas Morning News* guy, err not *Dallas Morning News*,  
28 *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* guy Bob Jones who I knew from when I lived in Waikiki. He was  
29 a great guy. Hell, he was a little older than me back then and he was assigned to us to  
30 write the stories about the Hawaii Marines and take pictures. Bob was a great guy. So  
31 anyway, I pilfered these field glasses and one sea bag was kept in Okinawa when we left

1 Okinawa, and one went with us and so I put them in that sea bag. I also ordered I  
2 remember one officer's mess chest; we rated so many of them we were short one. Well, it  
3 never came back in what we called "garrison," it never came when we were in Okinawa.  
4 Here it comes in Vietnam, and so we bust it open and, God almighty, it was not the  
5 normal officer's mess chest, it was General Krulak's personal mess chest and it was  
6 magnificent, twenty-two karat gold, cobalt blue with gold rings around it, and the Marine  
7 Corps emblem in red and gold in the center. I thought, "I'll never be able to keep this."  
8 So, I asked the first shirt, I said, "What do I do with this?" He said, "Let me go tell the  
9 CO." Well, the last time I saw it, it was in the CO's tent, and I don't know where it went  
10 from there. But I'll guarantee you somebody had a nice set of china and it was service for  
11 probably twelve or twenty, it was a nice deal. Anyhow I'm getting ready to check out, to  
12 bug out of Vietnam, and we're in the boondocks there. I'm having to sign out for  
13 everything and here came the headquarters company gunnery sergeant to check me out  
14 and he said, "Well everything looks ship-shape," he said, "The only thing is, we're short  
15 of one pair of binoculars. You returned five pairs, there's one pair missing, you never  
16 returned the sixth pair, you received six." He says, "You know where that pair is?" And  
17 of course, all Marines know what's going on, and I said, "Well, I don't know gunny." I  
18 said, "I'll see if I can find them, though." He said, "Well, you need to find them before  
19 you can leave here," and I got the gist, his inference, so I found those damn binoculars  
20 and put them out there. I had messed with a Marine captain as a firing battery CO,  
21 Donny, he was killed there, he was the first one of our battalion and, hell, he was loved  
22 by everybody. He was a great guy. Tremendous individual. Anyway, he was getting  
23 ready to check out, he was going back, he was rotating back somewhere so he was  
24 missing a six-by. Well, I knew where the six-by was but he didn't. So, he kept saying, I  
25 said, "Well, Captain," I said, "you're short one set of wheels here." He thought and  
26 thought, he just couldn't figure it out, so I let him sweat it for about one night only  
27 because he was a nice guy, and I says, "Sir, it's down there at the motor transport. It's  
28 being worked on." I said, "You need just check your records and be sure, because you  
29 probably have signed it out down there." So he got it back up there and we got it, and it  
30 all worked out famously for that, so anyway I'm getting ready to check out and I said,  
31 "Well, how do I get out of here?" I asked the first shirt, and I had a—Captain Hooper

1 after he left, after he was sent back, we had a first lieutenant take over who was always in  
2 our battalion supply. Back in garrison and Kaneohe I babysat his kids a few evenings. He  
3 was a school teacher in his life before he came in the Marine Corps, and he was just a  
4 great guy and his wife was really nice to me. He always saw that I had transportation to  
5 the university if I needed it, and I had my own car back then, too, but it was a junker and  
6 it didn't run half the time. So anyhow first shirt said, "Well," he says, "you got to go over  
7 here across these sand dunes a few hundred yards and there'll be a post in the ground,  
8 there's a clipboard attached to it and you write your name and rank, it's all you do, and  
9 you don't need to put your serial number. Just wait on the next chopper." Well, I'm doing  
10 that and I had my .45 with me and that was it because I'd had to check in my M-14. He  
11 said, "There'll be a chopper coming, you just ask them where they're going, you want to  
12 go to Da Nang because that's where you'll catch your Silver Eagle," and I had my orders  
13 with me. Sea bag would be shipped to me later. So, hell I went out there and God damn  
14 it, you know a lance corporal is a pretty low rank and then everybody that came there was  
15 higher ranking than me, and they'd all bump me and they'd go wherever they wanted. So,  
16 this went on for about two days, and I thought, "I'm never going to get out of here." This  
17 lieutenant's name was Lt. Stanley Shock and he and I were great friends, and I remember  
18 we hit in-country I'd hunted all my life in Oklahoma, I still do. I knew a lot about guns  
19 and everything. When we landed and he was pulling the OD (officer of the day) one  
20 night, and I was headed out to the OP way out there, he was going to pull the guard as  
21 OD and he had a shoulder holster with his .45 in it. The damn thing was so rusted it  
22 wasn't funny because of the salt air and humidity. I showed him what to do, he was a  
23 school teacher he didn't know much about weapons, but he learned. In any case I said,  
24 "Give me that," and I cleaned it, I said, "If the colonel came by and saw that he'd give  
25 you a tough time." So anyhow I saw lieutenant Shaw and he said, "What are you doing  
26 here? You're supposed to be heading home." "Well, I can't get out of here." I said, "I  
27 keep getting bumped." He said, "Come in here," I went into his tent, and he pulled my  
28 chevrons off my collar, back then we still wore the chevrons. They were black chevrons,  
29 but I think today they pull all rank insignia, I've been told they have in different theaters.  
30 So, he said, "Here," and he gave me a pair of blacked-out first-lieutenant bars. "Stick  
31 these on your collar, go out there, don't say anything to anybody, you know what to do if

1 somebody salutes, salute them back, and get out there.” He said, “When you get aboard  
2 that chopper, and when you’re almost in Da Nang pull them off,” and he said, “stick them  
3 in your pocket or do whatever you need to do.” I did that and I signed in as first-  
4 lieutenant (laughs). And so, a couple guys came up, and it was a huge battalion, so I  
5 didn’t know everybody, I knew a lot of people in it. So anyhow I got to Da Nang, and I  
6 pulled those bars off and I still got them in a bag somewhere. In fact, I still have my  
7 utilities that I wore out of there, and they’ve got all the salt stains because they’re just  
8 streaked with white from all the salt that pumped out of your body from that sweat. So,  
9 the only thing I kept in clothes from there. In any case I took them off, put back on my  
10 others, went to where I was told to go, I had to ask where to go to do everything, and  
11 within an hour I boarded I swear it was a C-140 turbo-prop, a Marine plane at Da Nang,  
12 but everyone tells me, “No, it was probably a C-130.” Anyhow, I was the only damn,  
13 other than the crew, pilot, copilot, engineer, and crew chief I was the only guy on that  
14 plane all the way back to Okinawa, to Wake Island, and Honolulu, to Pearl, and we  
15 stopped in Wake Island. So I thought that was kind of interesting that my sojourn started  
16 with Wake Island the night before we landed, and I got to see the real deal, I think we  
17 were there for three or four hours on the island, and it was tremendous. I had never  
18 thought I’d get to see and do all that. So that was my thought process and how it affected  
19 me, came out of there with all my skin, I didn’t get scratched or hurt or no Purple Hearts  
20 or any of that nonsense.

21 JS: Well, if we could digress a little bit, I do have some follow up questions I’d  
22 like to ask you about.

23 FW: Okay.

24 JS: First of all, before you went in-country, had you been paying attention to what  
25 was going on in Vietnam? And if so, what were your thoughts on the war at that point?

26 FW: I really had not been paying attention to what was going on in Vietnam. We  
27 knew, of course, when we didn’t go to attack the West Coast, why are we going to  
28 Okinawa? Of course, being in supply and it was all about logistics, that’s why we were  
29 there is to, the primary reason, was to stage to get ready for war, and the secondary  
30 reason was to decide, whenever our government finally made the decision, who’s the  
31 figurehead they’re going to prop up over there, and they’d send us. We had, let’s see we

1 had 105s, 155s, four-deuce mortars, and those were the only guns we had in the artillery  
2 battalion. But we had linked up from Okinawa some self-propelled tracked eight-inch  
3 guns. That was really interesting because in Vietnam particularly, I never saw them fire  
4 one time on Okinawa, but they joined us when we landed there in Chu Lai and I  
5 remember it was like one was right outside our damn GP tent. Well, they weren't right  
6 outside but I guarantee you they weren't more than a hundred yards away. They had been  
7 dug in and you could hear, when they would get ready to fire, you'd hear the chain  
8 hoisting around up there and you could count exactly how many seconds before the  
9 ground shook and your damn cot jumped around, and they'd fire. Of course, over there it  
10 was so hot that in the GP tents we had the sides rolled up, and so there wasn't a lot of  
11 relief from either the vibration or the sound. If you're out there all night on the line  
12 somewhere, or in an OP, and you're trying to sack out the daytime, tough to do. And the  
13 heat doesn't, you know, it was just damn near impossible to sleep in that heat, and of  
14 course we never had what they later had in Vietnam, the "hooches," as they called them.  
15 We also we never had—I don't think we had not one incoming round while I was there,  
16 either a rifle shot, pistol shot, or knee mortars which they were famous for, for accuracy,  
17 or any of that, we didn't take any fire. I was very fortunate in that.

18 JS: I know you talked about the fact that you guys made—I think you called it an  
19 administrative landing. Did you guys know that that was going to be the case? Or did you  
20 think that there was a possibility that you'd be coming in under fire?

21 FW: Had not a clue, not a clue. When they issued the ammunition the night  
22 before, and I don't recall them even telling us that we're going to be landing, and "This is  
23 where you're landing is a place called Chu Lai." I mean once we got there and we'd all  
24 ask a gazillion questions, and the first shirt and the officers that we'd see in the CP all the  
25 time, and the S-4 shop they'd tell us, "Well, you're at Chu Lai here." In fact, Chu Lai in  
26 Vietnamese supposedly is the Vietnamese name for General Krulak who was our overall  
27 commander. They claimed in the books that's really what that's all about. Did they ever  
28 tell us that we're getting ready for war? Well, no, they really never did but obviously you  
29 know something's up. Not at my level anyhow did they ever tell us. I don't recall one  
30 general meeting. The scuttlebutt was obviously we're going off to war, and actually we  
31 figured—I remember they loaded us out in the port of Naha. We probably went in six-

1 by's, PCs or something to get to the port of Naha to board the naval ships. Marines are  
2 notorious that we were in dungarees, or utilities as we called them, Navy calls them  
3 dungarees, and you're never given liberty, or we weren't in Okinawa, and utilities, or  
4 never in Hawaii either in utilities. That's what they call "cammies" today. You're never  
5 given liberty, well, we actually were and of course everybody was inspected until hell  
6 wouldn't have it, not as an IG type, but in medical, physically fit. You know, "You got  
7 any diseases? You got any syphilis? You got any clap? You got any open sores? Do you  
8 have—are you fit to go to war?" And everybody was. So, we boarded the ships and we  
9 actually hoisted anchor and were getting ready to bug out of the harbor, all of a sudden  
10 the captain turns the ship around and we go back into port. It was because, once again,  
11 Washington was vacillating on who was in charge over there. My personal opinion,  
12 which I put in writing, and I believe as sure as I'm breathing oxygen, we should've  
13 propped up the Dragon Lady, Madam Nhu. She was tougher than nails and she was  
14 smart. Besides that, she was a good-looking gal. But she was tougher than a boot, but she  
15 never forgave us for having her brother and husband croaked. Well, her husband's  
16 brother and the other guy croaked, and she never forgave us for that. But anyhow they  
17 turned the ships around, brought us back into port, and we got dungaree liberty is what  
18 the Navy called it. In other words, we were loose on the town in utilities and probably,  
19 certainly the higher-ups knew this was going to be the last night of fun and frolic for a  
20 while. So everyone of course drank to the excess, most of us tried to get laid I'm sure,  
21 and that's another story I'll have to tell you about. But anyhow we board those ships and  
22 so we're seven days from the port of Naha to actually make it to land. Well, somebody  
23 somewhere picked up a dose of the crabs, and when we hit the beach in Vietnam, we had  
24 a four-whore I remember. Everybody in the battalion had the crabs, officers, enlisted,  
25 because everybody used the same four whore. The corpsman were out of the powder,  
26 then the most famous stuff was the famous blue ointment, and it was pitiful. I mean you  
27 were eaten up with them and I remember this one guy in motor T had gotten rid of his, I  
28 said, "What'd you do?" He said, "Well, I used gasoline." I says, "You got to be kidding  
29 me." He said, "No," and he says, "just take a cloth and dampen it." So I went down there  
30 the following day to motor transport, and I found a cloth and I soaked it in a little  
31 gasoline and I put that on there and the breeze was blowing, and it felt good for about a

1 split second and then I swear they turned black. It was like they were on fire, and I spied  
2 what we called “the water buffalo” which was the drinking water, potable water in a tank  
3 on wheels. I went over there and I opened that petcock, and I soaked my trousers and I  
4 didn’t care, and it was instant relief. But I must admit it did kill those crabs. That was  
5 something to behold, that was. You got to find some humor in all that because it’s way  
6 too serious otherwise, but that was how we knew we were going to war, I guess. As an  
7 aside I remember we had our dumps, our supply dumps, we piled them up there on the  
8 beach, and we went inland immediately to set up the guns and the headquarters. The first  
9 shirt sent me back with a work party, says, “Get you two groups of men, twelve men,”  
10 and he says, “take two six-by’s, go back to that beach and get our gear.” So I picked  
11 twelve guys and we went back to beach and we’re loading up our gear. Of course the  
12 Navy has what they call “beach masters.” They’re supposed to be in charge of all that  
13 stuff sitting on the beach, and there wasn’t a beach master around, there wasn’t a guard  
14 around, there wasn’t anybody around but us. Our dump was right next to the PX (post  
15 exchange) supplies, and they were just piled there. So I thought, “Oh, man, the  
16 temptation is just too great.” So I picked everything I could like soft drinks, and the damn  
17 candy bars were melted like you couldn’t believe, but I picked candy bars and things that  
18 we could use, toothpaste and that sort of thing. Loaded up the six-by’s with all our gear  
19 plus I bet I depleted their supply by at least a fourth, and the first shirt thought I did such  
20 a great job he sent me back. He said, “You got all our stuff?” I said, “Yeah,” he said, “Go  
21 back and get some more PX stuff.” Of course, they had a lot of different stuff that we  
22 didn’t need, but we picked some nice things and it all worked out, and that was a little bit  
23 of humor. But we knew something was up when they gave us dungaree liberty, and when  
24 we boarded the ships because we knew we weren’t when we boarded, and utilities and all  
25 that, and we knew we weren’t going back to Kaneohe Marine Corps Air Station. That’s  
26 kind of what happened there.

27 JS: Despite the crab infestation, how was morale during the time that you were  
28 there?

29 FW: Actually, Jason, it was pretty good I thought. When you’re in a war like that  
30 the only things you really have to look forward to is first, I would say is mail call, and  
31 second is the food, and of course we had C-rations. Now they started about our fifth day

1 in, because them damn Seabees were back there drinking cold beer, they started bringing  
2 in beer. Carling's Red Cap ale was a big one back then, Falstaff which I'm from  
3 Oklahoma, that was horse piss if there ever was, and they had Stag even which is worse  
4 than Falstaff, and they had Carling's Black Label and, of course, back then we didn't  
5 have any refrigeration yet, we didn't have a mess hall. I'm sure if we didn't have one, the  
6 damn grunts certainly didn't. The line company guys you know didn't. So, we had warm  
7 beer, and the mail call, and I've got to give credit where credit is due, they would get you,  
8 back then I think we signed our name where the stamp went, and it was all free. We got  
9 mail pretty often, pretty regular, I want to say every day and being in the battalion CP one  
10 of the great things that we—rank has its privileges. Well, I never had any, but the first  
11 shirt did. So here would come what we call the “care packages” from the Red Cross, the  
12 American Red Cross, and so we would say, “Open those up, Walker, and see what's in  
13 there.” I'd open them up and there'd be an assortment of stuff, but one of the things he  
14 and I both chewed tobacco back then. I only chewed it when I hunt, and of course we're  
15 out there hunting humans so I chewed it, you had to do something to break the monotony.  
16 So they had two packages and every first Red Cross box of Beechnut, so he and I'd get  
17 those and he'd take one and I'd take one, and the rest we'd share it with the troops,  
18 whatever anybody wanted as long as it was there you could have it. So the morale, that's  
19 the greatest morale booster you can have. I would love to have seen, I've been a big Bob  
20 Hope fan all my life. I saw him once live at Oklahoma State University and he packed  
21 them in, and he was an older guy then. Of course, I wanted to see him in Vietnam, but I  
22 was there way too early before even any USO (United Service Organizations) shows  
23 were there. In fact, they had the first really, what did we call it, engagement for lack of a  
24 better word, just south of us about four kilometers was Operation Starlite. Today on old  
25 Highway 1 and in fact they were building it when we were there in 2005, they're building  
26 a damn four-lane expressway off Highway 1 on a forty-five-degree angle toward where  
27 Starlite occurred which is on a beach area, inland, about four clicks south of Chu Lai.  
28 There are so many Marines and GIs that want to go see where that all took place. Of  
29 course, what I wanted to see was when you enter the area of Chu Lai from Hoi An, on  
30 your right of Highway 1 is a memorial to, I'm told it's the only memorial in-country to  
31 both sides. It was dedicated in 1994 which would've been, let's see '65, err '75, that'd be

1 '75, '85, '95—so it was a few years after we bugged out in '75, but it's an obelisk.  
2 There's a picture on that disk I sent you. It's a cross and it's about thirty feet in the air,  
3 maybe thirty-five feet. We're the only, Roger, myself, and our guide and driver, the only  
4 ones there and he shot a picture of us there, and so that obelisk is probably four clicks  
5 inland. So I could look across toward the east, toward where the water was and said, "We  
6 were over there halfway in between that beach and this obelisk here." He said, "Would  
7 you like to go?" I said, "Darn right I would," I said, "Can we go to the beach even?" He  
8 said, "Sure," he says, "you know it's all—you're not supposed to be allowed to go there."  
9 They opened it officially but it was still—the gates were locked and everything, but he  
10 said, "I know how to get you to the beach." He took around the fence, we drove around,  
11 because our concern was we did not want to walk around anywhere where there might be  
12 some mines or unexploded ordnance. That was a great concern. I was probably more  
13 concerned going back then for my welfare and walking out on some land where you  
14 don't know what's out there. I've always been blessed with great luck, but I don't want  
15 any bad luck of stepping on a land mine at that point in my life. So he drove us around  
16 and we drove literally right up to the beach and then we had to walk about two kilometers  
17 down to where the ships came in, and I swear I'll bet you I was within twenty-five yards  
18 of where our ship came in. I couldn't believe it, you know. We go to South Padre, you go  
19 all over the world, the beaches, I dive and scuba dive, and I'm always looking for unusual  
20 shells and I particularly like sand dollars. I'll bet you, you couldn't walk a foot and  
21 there'd be fifty sand dollars all over that beach, because nobody else is there. There's  
22 every kind of shell imaginable, but mostly there's lots of sand dollars. Of course, they  
23 were probably there when we got there the first time in '65, but I wasn't looking for sand  
24 dollars then. I picked up, I don't know a bunch of them, gave one to each of our kids, a  
25 bunch of people, friends. I called my wife from there, I had a cell phone, and Roger did,  
26 and international one, and I called my wife wading in the water, Roger took a picture of  
27 me calling her. Man, flooded with memories.

28 JS: Another question for you, what was—what would you say your routine was  
29 on a typical day, if there was such a thing, while you were in-country?

30 FW: Yeah, there was, it was interspersed with—you got to float by the seat of  
31 your pants to some degree, but you knew which evenings I was going to pull that OP with

1 that sniper rifle. I knew that, but anyhow you'd wake up, you couldn't sleep. Well, I'd  
2 come in early in the morning because I'd come in, I think I would be in by six—yeah,  
3 probably 6:00AM but, hell, it's bright daylight at four-thirty over there in the morning. I  
4 was there during the months of May, June, and part of July so it was light a lot of the day  
5 and night, and light enough to see. So, I'd come in and I'd try and flake out, and then I'd  
6 probably get up about noon. If I wanted to when I came in the morning, I could eat a C-  
7 rat, sometimes I would, sometimes I wouldn't, too damned hot to eat over there. I never  
8 saw a cold beer the whole time. The first time I saw something cold was when I hit Da  
9 Nang around July 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> and I bought a Coke. Of course, we were told not to—and  
10 they were seldom at Da Nang there, they had a huge cyclone fence, and they said the  
11 Vietnamese kids were trying to sell you a Coke and hand it to you through the fence.  
12 They said, "You ought to be careful of two things. Number one, it could be ground up  
13 glass in it, and number two, there could be acid in it." So I wasn't about to do that, but I  
14 bought an ice-cold Coke in one of the huts there, I don't remember, some sort of an office  
15 deal where I took my orders to catch my other bird out of there. But anyhow part of our  
16 routine would be I could catch a C-rat in the morning. I could sleep up 'til about noon if I  
17 could sleep, I rested enough, and then I'd do any paperwork that they wanted me to do in  
18 battalion supply if they needed anything ordered, or if anything came in and nobody else  
19 had taken care of it because there was two of us. Then the first shirt, well, the first shirt  
20 wasn't in supply, he was the first shirt of the entire battalion. First sergeant, we called  
21 him "first shirt." I got to believe we had a sergeant major in that battalion, but if we did  
22 his name is nondescript and I don't even remember him back in garrison. All I remember  
23 is this first sergeant, and maybe that's what we had in lieu of a sergeant major, but he was  
24 a great guy. But anyhow I remember some other stuff we'd ordered came in, which we  
25 could use or we thought we could, I'd ordered what do they call it, not official but—  
26 shaving kits. Shaving kits for the battalion, for battalion barber. Well, hell, we didn't  
27 have a battalion barber. It was whoever wanted to do it or try their hand at it. Of course  
28 there was hand, what do you call them, hand-clippers to cut your hair. Well, I remember  
29 my grandpa used hand-clippers, and my grandmother would cut his hair and I let her cut  
30 mine one time. If you don't know any different, you don't know you got to sharpen those  
31 devils. Where it doesn't cut them it pulls them. That's the good news, the other part of

1 that haircut kit was a straight razor, a strap, and a mug and a brush. I remember a couple  
2 guys, nobody I knew back then ever shaved with a straight razor. I kept one of those for a  
3 long time, I might add, because the handles were bone and they were nice looking deals.  
4 They weren't M. Horner, but they were some German brand of straight razor, and I  
5 recognized they were good stuff but if you didn't know how to strop a razor, because you  
6 got to sharpen them. And a couple of the guys tried it and they looked like they'd cut  
7 their throats, they had more nicks and cuts on them than—and so most of us said, “To  
8 heck with that,” and we had those old double-edged blades, not twin blades in a  
9 throwaway razor, but double blades, Gillette double blades and a regular razor and we'd  
10 use that. I don't recall ever getting a haircut over there, but hell I must have. But it  
11 certainly wasn't with those hand-clippers. So that was kind of fun when we got those in,  
12 and so we'd do that during a typical day. If anything came, we'd issue it, and whoever  
13 rated it would call them up and say, “You got to come over and get this stuff you needed,  
14 you ordered.” A different firing battery or what have you. It was kind of interesting. I  
15 don't ever remember—we didn't order the ammunition or the ordnance. I don't know  
16 who did that. You'd think a battalion supply you'd probably do that, but I can't even  
17 remember in garrison ordering that, maybe they had a separate deal that ordered it. But  
18 that would go on during the heat of the day, and then along about six o'clock they would  
19 start posting, getting the guard together for that night's guard, to post them. Then  
20 whoever was going out that evening, there was myself and one other guy since we had  
21 two of those that would use those night sniper rifles. Of course, he'd go off his way, and  
22 I'd go off mine. When we would come back in early in the morning, what was the normal  
23 routine? The first thing we did was go see the battalion armor and give him our cartridge  
24 belt for him to recharge the batteries because I can't remember one time, I brought a belt  
25 in that they weren't all depleted of all their juice. Then he cleaned the rifle if you had  
26 fired it a lot of times, or he would adjust the scope if it needed to be adjusted. Whatever  
27 needed to be done. That was before ghillie suits and all that. We didn't have any of that  
28 sort of stuff. We'd just get in the best hides we could find, and of course where we were  
29 was, in all honesty there wasn't anything but sand dunes. Of course you'd have to go on,  
30 I got to think on this, on the west side of Highway 1 was the, I get them mixed up all the  
31 time. The Dolomites I believe is the Italian mountain range that runs from the top to the

1 bottom of Italy. The Annamites, I want to say is the cordillera that runs in Vietnam. The  
2 Annamites were probably west of Highway 1—Oh, hell, I bet they had to be at least fifty  
3 klicks if the crow would fly that straight, because just west of us and a little south was  
4 what was called the 13<sup>th</sup> Valley or the A Shau Valley. We never even got anywhere near  
5 that close. So that was a normal day. Once in a blue moon they would have a swim call, if  
6 someone, you know enough guys wanted to go and try and cool off, but I remember that  
7 damn gulf water quite frankly was hotter than bath water that you would normally bathe  
8 in. It was salt water, so you really—you never got cool, and you never felt clean. Then  
9 did we have laundry? Hell, no we didn't have any laundry back then. I guess we just  
10 wore the same old junky utilities, I guess we would take them in the gulf and do  
11 something with them but, hell, it's salt water. The Seabees had dug a "pool," they called  
12 it, a swimming pool, because the water table was so low there and the pool was  
13 probably—it couldn't've been more than seventy-five hundred yards inland. They had  
14 dug it with bulldozers, and of course water would leech through the sand to get in there.  
15 But that wasn't even better than the gulf water out there, same water. There was no R&R  
16 back then at all. I mean, I guess there was R&R if you'd been an advisor because we  
17 were the first official troops in, in-country, everything before us had been SOGs (Studies  
18 and Observations Group) or the Army Special Op groups, or had been advisors, Marines  
19 and what other branches of the service furnished advisors. So that's what constituted a  
20 normal day, except the guns would fire occasionally. Supposedly, and I don't remember  
21 where it was or exactly where the rounds were called into, we fired one mission during  
22 my brief time there, and supposedly it was a village, it had to be within twenty miles, that  
23 our advisors had gone in because we would try and talk to village chieftains to see things  
24 our way and help us out. This particular village had run our advisors out of there because  
25 the other side was putting out better propaganda than we were capable of putting out. So  
26 the word came down to cordon off the village, nobody goes in or out, and we fired on that  
27 village for a while. I want to say we fired for forty-five minutes. That was kind about  
28 what was going on at a normal day there.

29 JS: All right, well, I hate to do it but I need to go ahead and stop for today, but  
30 could we schedule possibly—

**Interview with Frank Walker**  
**Session [2] of [3]**  
**Date: June 23rd 2011**

1           JS: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University  
2 continuing an oral history interview with Mr. Frank Walker. Today is, let's see, the 23<sup>rd</sup>,  
3 it's June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2011. This is interview session number two. Okay, first question I wanted to  
4 ask you today was during the time that you were in-country, did you develop much of an  
5 opinion on the war? What did you think about the war at that point that you were in-  
6 country?

7           FW: Probably in all honesty an opinion of the war. I did not have an opinion at  
8 that point, why we were there, or one way or the other, or did we not deserve to be there.  
9 I had kept up only with the players, but history being, in hindsight, being completely  
10 accurate, I didn't have that opinion yet of whether we should've been there or not. But I  
11 definitely gained one immediately after I returned back to Hawaii where I was discharged  
12 and went back to school, and the war dragged on and I read everything I could get my  
13 hands on. Talked to fellows, because there were no gals basically other than nurses, and  
14 there weren't any male nurses that we knew of that came back that you could talk to them  
15 about it.

16          JS: Right, all right, well, certainly I'd like to hear more about that once we get to  
17 that point.

18          FW: You had asked me at one time, and if this is one of your questions then we'll  
19 just wait 'til you ask it, but you had asked me something along the lines, "Is there  
20 anything we could've used or didn't have that would've helped us along better?" And I  
21 thought about that, as well, and I do have an answer to that.

22          JS: Okay, well, we can go ahead and cover that if you'd like then.

23          FW: Okay, well, some of the things, more than one at least, that we could've had  
24 was we had enough, materially speaking, of manpower, weapons, food, all the support  
25 stuff. What we didn't have was, at least at my level I would say the enlisted level and  
26 probably not even the officers, we had very little, unless you dug it out yourself, on the  
27 history of Vietnam, anything at all about the country, and the ways of do's and don'ts,  
28 mores, culture, *et cetera*. Certainly, now I know the SOG people way before me, the

1 Army SOGs, Special Operations Groups, and probably our advisors might've been  
2 afforded a tour at Monterey, California, at the linguistics school, but we were not even  
3 taught or handed one page with the rudiments of the Vietnamese language. Which all of  
4 that would've certainly put you in a better light, I believe. My generation was different,  
5 enlisted Marines were not thought to be very intelligent. In fact, we joked they wouldn't  
6 dare give us a compass and a map. But I took great exception to that. I served with, quite  
7 frankly in boot camp even, a CPA (certified public accountant) that was an enlisted guy  
8 and he didn't make PFC (private first class) even out of boot camp. I served with other  
9 people that had a lot of college degrees, and they just figured we were all ignorant. "Just  
10 do what we tell you and go dig that ditch," not really that, but you know not a lot of  
11 forethought. If we had been told a little bit about where we were going, then maybe they  
12 didn't want to tell us for a reason way, way above my pay grade, but we weren't told  
13 anything about the culture, about the country geographically. So quite frankly if we  
14 would have gotten lost we'd know which—some of us were smart enough to have a  
15 compass, a personal compass, or know which way north, south, and east and west is. I  
16 hunted a lot so I always knew that, but we weren't even given the rudiments there. Then  
17 if you'd have—and particularly I wasn't around where there was a lot of Vietnamese that  
18 you could talk with, because it was way before as I mentioned the day before yesterday,  
19 way before hooches and momma-sans to do your laundry and cleaning and all that  
20 nonsense. But the language would've helped, as well, just the rudiments, "Hi, how are  
21 you? Good morning. How far? Which way? Thank you." *Et cetera*. I've thought a lot  
22 about that and I think that's necessary quite frankly in any wartime venture. I realize  
23 today's military is different, they do believe in educating even the Marine Corps.

24 JS: Well, I knew you mentioned not being—you were in an area where not too  
25 many Vietnamese are in, and at that time period not much contact with Vietnamese, but  
26 did you guys have any contact with the Vietnamese during your time there, and if so what  
27 was your impression of them?

28 FW: I was told, and this by when I got back, and actually one of my Air Force  
29 lieutenant-colonel friend that was in charge of planning I told you about, sent me some  
30 write-ups or newspaper clippings out of the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* which was a very  
31 good newspaper back then. It told about—jeez I'm trying to think of your question now.

1 JS: Basically your impressions of the Vietnamese.

2 FW: Yeah, that we could've understood a little better, we were told that our  
3 government paid the Vietnamese government several million dollars for that village of  
4 what was later named Chu Lai, as I mentioned it was supposedly the name meant General  
5 Krulak. In any case we paid them several million dollars which no telling where the  
6 money wound up, but in any case we did supposedly air evac, and even my guide when I  
7 went back in 2005 and we had a local Vietnamese guide as well as our main Vietnamese  
8 guide, we had a local one from Chu Lai who was a young boy at the time and his parents  
9 told him that our government had air evac'ed a lot of the citizens of Chu Lai, had  
10 physically relocated them somewhere. So we didn't see a few other than—I'm trying to  
11 think in the daytime. I don't think I saw one Vietnamese anywhere, and at night I saw,  
12 well I heard it first, it was a water buffalo, and I was ready to annihilate it but I wasn't  
13 there to kill water buffalo. I was there to kill humans and I saw one through my night  
14 scope, but I never saw him ever clearly for a clear shot, and he was at quite some  
15 distance, and I believe I only saw one, I never saw more than one. I have no doubts they  
16 were there, and particularly because of the book I was given I told you about, they were  
17 probably all around us somewhere but I never saw one. To tell you otherwise would be a  
18 lie.

19 JS: When you weren't doing your normal duties that you had, how would you  
20 guys spend your free time?

21 FW: Waiting on mail call, rereading letters from sweethearts and family, and  
22 writing letters and reading insatiable—I've always been a reader. There were a lot of card  
23 games I saw going on, not big ones because it was so damned hot over there and  
24 everything was sticky. Then once again we were in—our outfit was quartered in GP tents,  
25 which I think somewhere along the line you get a minimum of twelve to maybe eighteen  
26 men in there on cots. Then you had your rubber ladies, and if you didn't have a detail to  
27 do something, you could flake out. There'd be swim call, not very often but once in a  
28 blue moon, to go down to the gulf and go swimming which I did at least twice. So I said I  
29 think there's a picture of us, our outfit down there swimming in the gulf and that. That  
30 was about it, there was no town, no village to go in and look around or do anything.  
31 There was no picture taking, which we would probably have risen to and loved to have

1 done, but we had no cameras. Somebody way up there decided we didn't need those  
2 cameras.

3 JS: What were your—you talked about you wish you would've been able to take  
4 pictures and all. What was your impressions of the countryside?

5 FW: I thought it was beautiful. I could see the mountains—let's see. I got to think  
6 on this. I always get them mixed up, one's in Italy and one's there, the Annamites or the  
7 Dolomites, and then we could see them from a distance and they looked great. I was  
8 born, or raised rather, in the mountains of southeast Oklahoma called "green country." I  
9 hunted and fished and had the time of my life in those mountains, and always wanted to  
10 get to them although I never was given opportunity over there. Probably a good thing  
11 because that's probably where the bad guys were. But the country I thought was great  
12 looking. The people, as I went through Saigon once as I mentioned to deliver some  
13 messages, and I went to Da Nang as I flew out, then I saw quite a few of the locals. Then  
14 later when we went back in 2005 and I met, they were all locals. I got to believe that we  
15 were the, quite frankly speaking, we were the interlopers in their country. I would hope  
16 we would do and be the same as they were, we would defend it vigorously as they did.  
17 Today is what I'm saying that we would do that. Anyway I think, well, I know when we  
18 went back they are tremendous people. Good people are all over the world, and there's of  
19 course a lot of bad people all over the world, and Dallas, heaven knows, got a lot of them  
20 everywhere. I felt more comfortable in Saigon walking around the streets than I do in the  
21 west-end of Dallas, Texas. I might add I've been the same in Kathmandu; I've been the  
22 same in—I'm trying to think, Bangkok. Although Bangkok I wouldn't stray off the  
23 beaten path where there was a lot of people around, civilians. But I thought the country  
24 had a lot to offer, and as I went back in 2005, they definitely have a lot to offer. In the  
25 south of Vietnam, they have four rice productions per year, maybe five sometimes in a  
26 twelve-month period. In the north they have two to three productions, they grow every  
27 tropical fruit you can imagine very easily. It's kind of like Hawaii, stick your thumb in  
28 the ground and it'll grow. It probably at one time was volcanic soil, but it's very rich soil.  
29 I do remember one thing is we were told when we landed once we got there, is there were  
30 some—I don't recall any hooches anywhere around, but there were some garden plots  
31 and we were told, "Do not eat any of the local fresh vegetables." Well, of course, when

1 the military, or particularly the Marine Corps, tells you not to do that, you're going to  
2 experiment with it. Because I was raised on a farm ranch in southeast Oklahoma and I  
3 saw these huge cabbages, and I recognized garlic because we grew it down there, and  
4 onions, and fresh vegetables and of course I figured out they fertilized with human  
5 fertilizer. But I want to say that was some of the finest looking produce I ever saw, and I  
6 ate a little of it, particularly the onions and the garlic because you wouldn't eat them raw,  
7 you would use them in a cooked fashion. Back then it was C-rats and you would add  
8 them to whatever you were eating to give it some flavor. The fruit, anytime I can lay my  
9 hands on fresh fruit I'll eat it, in just about any foreign country because I know what most  
10 fruit is around the world since I'm in the restaurant industry and the food industry. Also,  
11 the seafood, it was kind of interesting, where we were was not a seafood production area,  
12 that's in the south of the country. But they are a major producer, and used and I'll leave  
13 them nameless, a lot of major restaurant chains, meaning tilapia, red fish or red snapper  
14 or scarlet snapper it's called sometimes, and certainly shrimp. I would say it's been used  
15 voluminously by all major chains in the United States for at least fifteen years. Of course,  
16 they harvested shrimp back when we were there in the '60s, but none of us would've  
17 thought of going in the canals. Of course I wasn't near a canal, but we wouldn't've  
18 thought of probably dipping in and out of there if I had been down there. You know the  
19 old joke in World War II, they would throw hand grenades in a body of water and all the  
20 dead fish would float up and then they would eat them. I don't know if they really did  
21 that or not. I'm not naïve enough to think that some of the GIs, mostly Army types in the  
22 South, probably tried that. Maybe they got lucky. To give you an analogy, when we were  
23 there in 2005 and we went through a fish production facility, we did not go through a  
24 shrimp one but my daughter who is a food scientist and is corporate QC/QA (quality  
25 control/quality assurance) with a breaker, went a couple years after that to go through—  
26 she must've gone through five of their shrimp production facilities. Before they go there  
27 they lowered it to three, well, they only went to one. You could eat off the floor in the  
28 shrimp production facilities, they were that modern, they were all brand new, they were  
29 so clean you couldn't believe it. Like in Germany, you can eat off the floor. But the  
30 shrimp, and I bet it hasn't changed since 2005, are still growing and harvested, they're  
31 commercially grown, but they're still grown and harvested in those canals where they

1   laundry their clothes, where they poop, where they use the water for cooking and I guess  
2   they even consume that water. But the shrimp were huge, and they were good shrimp. We  
3   call them tiger shrimp over here. We ate some in 2005 and I guarantee they were  
4   probably caught that morning and netted, and they were excellent, and you would use the  
5   *nuoc mam* sauce to put on them. We thought it was just great. I never saw a shrimp when  
6   I was there at 1965, though. I did when I went to Saigon, but I just saw one, I didn't get  
7   to eat it, others were eating them.

8           JS: Speaking of your knowledge of the food industry and food, what did you think  
9   of the C-rations?

10           FW: I thought the C-rations actually, and I've been to Natick, Massachusetts, to  
11   the military labs where all the food is developed, and I think the C-rats are quite frankly  
12   better than the MREs (meal, ready-to-eat). I really did, there was only one that—of  
13   course when you're hungry you'll eat anything, but there was in every case, there was  
14   more than one in every case, but in every case there was at least one of what was called  
15   ham and lima beans. It must've had an inch on the top of congealed pig fat. I like lima  
16   beans and I like ham, but I don't—that was the God-awfullest looking stuff. The last guy  
17   to get to the case would get those. The other foods were pretty good, you could doctor  
18   them up with salt and pepper and Tabasco sauce. Most of us had our moms or  
19   sweethearts or whoever send us some herbs and spices that we could jazz up the food  
20   with, it was predominately sauces like Tabasco or Louisiana Hot Sauce which was  
21   available back then. It had to be sent in, though. Anything you probably—Hispanics, and  
22   there were a few back then even, I'm sure got some canned jalapenos somewhere. Of  
23   course, over there they grow the hottest pepper known to mankind, the Chinese Red  
24   Pepper. Those Thai people, I swear they don't have any taste buds. They must put them  
25   in ice cream. I've watched them. I've sat beside them in restaurants in Thailand, and  
26   Vietnam, and Cambodia where they're spooning that stuff on by the spoonful. I don't  
27   know how they do it. I like well-seasoned foods, but I don't like really hot as in jalapenos  
28   or certainly not that Chinese Red Pepper. I thought the C-rats were good. They were  
29   always plentifully available. You could eat them cold or hot. Because of the way we  
30   were, where we were at Chu Lai which later became more or less—it was the  
31   headquarters for different commands over time. So I thought they were fine. Probably the

1 only negative I would say, once again hindsight, is I want to say in every C-rats there was  
2 a four-pack of cigarettes. Of course, back then most people smoked. I never ever caught  
3 the habit, luckily. I'd just give mine away, but hindsight once again, the smoking lamp is  
4 they're trying to get it completely out with all services. But other than that I thought they  
5 were good, and never had a hot meal the whole time I was in-country, in the field. I had  
6 one in Saigon and in Bangkok back then, but I never had one where we were at Chu Lai.  
7 No mess hall was ever set up. It was probably set up somewhere right after I left, though.

8 JS: Was there a lot of construction going on at that point? Getting things ready for  
9 escalation, I guess? Or not yet?

10 FW: The only construction we could see was back at the airstrip where the  
11 Seabees were where they had laid the Marston matting first. Kind of interesting, in about,  
12 when did we do that—probably about 2000 we took a cruise out of Houston in the  
13 Caribbean there, went to several island groups, and one of them was Panama. That's not  
14 an island group, but we went to Panama on the Caribbean side, and most of us we paid  
15 extra for the dome car and took the train across to the Pacific side. *En route* I met a  
16 fellow, he looked about my age and his wife, and he was a retired Navy captain, an O-6,  
17 and he had been a Seabee. So I asked him when we got to the Pacific side and they took  
18 us on tours and all of that, and we went to what we called Amador which was the  
19 headquarters on the Pacific side for the US military down in Panama. It had, of course  
20 when we gave them the Panama Canal back, that Amador, that base reverted back to  
21 them as well. Well, today that base is owned by the Colombians, and if you recall history,  
22 the Panama Canal, the Colombians had a big hand in that. There's two sides to every  
23 story, is one of them we screwed the Colombians out of their share of the Panama Canal  
24 monetarily wise, and actually we paid so much money to the French who started the  
25 enterprise and then gave it up to us. But anyway the Colombians, what goes around  
26 comes around, they own Amador. They were razing literally all the general officer, flag-  
27 rank officers homes and everything, and I'm sure it was probably—I'm a bit of a cynic,  
28 but I'll bet it was drug money that bought and paid for that Amador, for their purchase of  
29 it, and they were building huge residences and casinos and all of that sort. But anyhow  
30 one of the couples on our trip was this O-6 retired Seabee, and he said, "Were you in  
31 Vietnam?" And I said, "Yeah," and I told him. He said, "Well, I followed you in there

1 about,” sometime shortly after me, sometime between six months and a year, and he said,  
2 “We poured all the concrete for the permanent runways for Chu Lai,” and I said, “How  
3 about that.” Then when we went back, my restaurant partner and I in 2005, you could still  
4 see the remnants of those concrete tarmacs, and the Vietnamese government had rebuilt a  
5 complete, brand new airport, we were there in June, July of ’05, and the airport was  
6 opened in October, November which I understood it did. “Ho Chi Minh,” I said, well our  
7 guide I said, of course this had been cordoned off, the base had, with barbed wire, and a  
8 high fence, and concertina wire. As I mentioned it was only open supposedly sixty-days  
9 before we got there, but I didn’t see anybody coming in there other than us, and the gates  
10 were all locked and barricaded. But in any case, Ho Chi Minh forbid him to use the  
11 airstrips. They couldn’t, they didn’t—in fact in Da Nang, outside of Da Nang, a little  
12 south and towards the water, the Marines had a separate landing area there but it was for  
13 helicopters. There were some huge, and the shield is still there, the logo, Texaco fuel  
14 tanks. These were like you see down in Houston and other places, and that’s the only  
15 thing our guide said Ho Chi Minh allowed his Vietnamese people to use was the fuel  
16 tanks because when we were there in ’05 they still had not one fracking plant in Vietnam,  
17 but they were going to get some, they were going to build them because supposedly  
18 offshore they had geologists that told them they got *beau coups* of oil and gas off there.  
19 So anyhow the airstrip was down there in Chu Lai, so we went walking around it. The  
20 new one, didn’t care about seeing the new old, but the old one, and there were some  
21 Quonset huts—err hangars, I should say, they were built like Quonset huts with bolt ends  
22 out of them and revetments where they had some six-by’s, some PCs, which were ours I  
23 might add. There was one jet fighter—was it a one-seater or a two-seater? It was a one  
24 seater—no it was a two-seater jet fighter. Marine. A helicopter or two, there was one  
25 Huey, there were no H-34s and they were still parked in those revetments, and those  
26 hangars just rusting away. That’s all the construction I saw, and that was in 2005, they  
27 had been built sometime after me because they didn’t have any of that. The jets had come  
28 down and shot some touch-and-go’s on the Marston matting while I was there but that  
29 was it. I didn’t even see a tower or a building or anything.

1 JS: Well, at the time that you were in-country, did you have any idea about the  
2 escalation that would follow? That there would be a major build up, did you realize that  
3 that was happening?

4 FW: Not at all.

5 JS: Okay.

6 FW: Not at all, and of course when I got out and got back to Honolulu and  
7 followed the war assiduously, man, was it a buildup. Real rub comes from that dirty so-  
8 and-so McNamara told LBJ that in 1964, a full year before we made the amphibious  
9 landing, "We'll never win this war." That's in the books, that's a direct quote he made.

10 JS: Is there anything else about your time in-country that we should cover that we  
11 haven't at this point?

12 FW: Let me think here, "time in-country." I was there a short time, I was lucky.  
13 Time in-country. Other than—I don't think I passed on to you, I think I may have written  
14 it up, our first night in-country we were in the area where we were going to set up the  
15 headquarters for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion, 12<sup>th</sup> Marines, and they were posting an evening guard,  
16 first evening. Oh, man. Dropped the phone. Are you there?

17 JS: Yeah, I'm here.

18 FW: So anyhow we're there and it's plenty light outside, and it was getting ready  
19 for dusk, I guess, and we all were made aware of the sign and countersign in case you  
20 went out beyond what they call today "the wire" which we didn't have any such thing  
21 back then. They might've put it up later after I left. We knew that and so I was in the GP  
22 tent next to the battalion CO, that's where they always martialled the guard for that  
23 evening. We're all in there and we're watching what's going on, they're, as we called it,  
24 mounting the guard and going to scatter them out wherever they needed to go. I did not  
25 pull my sniper rifle that first evening. I think I went maybe the second evening, but  
26 anyway the first evening we're there and we all look over this one series of sand dunes,  
27 and we see this lone figure coming in. He's coming toward us and nobody can recognize,  
28 he's far enough away we know it's a human, but we can't tell if he's got on black  
29 pajamas or what he's got on or who it is, and he was challenged. We can hear somebody  
30 challenge him and we couldn't hear a response, and neither could the person challenging  
31 him. Everybody locked and loaded and hit the deck and was homing in on the old boy,

1 and the first shirt came out of the tent about that time and he was quicker than a lot of the  
2 rest of us and recognized that it was a Marine that was just frozen scared stiff and mind  
3 went to jelly and couldn't think of a counter sign. We'd have killed that poor guy sure as  
4 a whirl. In any case he made it in and I'm sure he got a proper ass-eating, quite frankly,  
5 when he got in. But other than that, that's probably the only thing I can think of in-  
6 country. I was just really glad to get out of there.

7 JS: All right, well, what was the journey home like? If you could talk about that,  
8 coming home and your reception upon returning.

9 FW: It was tremendous. We flew out of Da Nang. We touched down in Naha—  
10 err, not Naha, in Futenma in Okinawa, but just for a very short, probably to take on more  
11 fuel or something along that nature. As I mentioned, I was the only passenger on the  
12 aircraft. There was just the crew and myself and we boarded some meals, some  
13 sandwiches and that sort of thing, coffee. Then we leaped off and I didn't know where we  
14 were. I knew we were going back to Pearl Harbor, but I didn't know how, when, or  
15 where and I tried to sleep most of the time. I got, let's see, both my sea bags by then  
16 because I got the other one, they had it ready there at Naha. Then went on to and stopped  
17 at Wake Island, and we came into Wake Island I want to say in the middle of the  
18 afternoon. I don't remember the exact time, but I could see us circling because I asked, I  
19 said, "What's that?" They said, "That's Wake Island." I thought, "Damn, get to see that,"  
20 and of course once again didn't have a camera. But we were there for two or three hours  
21 and that was just delightful. We got off that plane and I swear to this day a good baseball  
22 player could hurl a baseball across that island, but they really couldn't, but man was it  
23 small, it really put in perspective those Marines back there that gave their all when the  
24 Japs conquered it finally. So that was quite an interesting, for me, a living history and  
25 then we flew on from there to Pearl Harbor. We must've landed at Hickam because I  
26 went directly to what was called "Marine Barracks" at Pearl Harbor. I was there, let's see  
27 I got there about—I must've had two weeks left in the Marine Corps and back then  
28 they'd give you up to four weeks an early out, so basically I was at Marine Barracks,  
29 didn't have to do anything but get up every morning and twiddle my thumbs, then I had  
30 liberty every day. Back then you had a liberty card and it was good for however long they  
31 told you. So I was free to come and go, and I got an early out by two weeks, and I was

1 free to come and go so I went and checked where I lived down in Waikiki and renewed  
2 my lease there and started outfitting my apartment there. I enrolled in the university to  
3 finish up, and renewed acquaintances with a lot of friends. Particularly girlfriends,  
4 American girls, round-eyed girls. I've led literally a charmed life. They had a deal over  
5 there, you talk about a coming-home-party, and of course the Air Force light colonel had  
6 retired by then—err, no was getting ready to retire, Chris was. My best man was still  
7 there, Gene, who was a Navy lieutenant commander then and living in the same  
8 condominium together in different apartments. We got together but there was a deal that,  
9 let's see that was '65 and in '62 I made friends fast and joined the Waikiki Junior  
10 Chamber of Commerce. There was a travel agency group called Howard Tours and every  
11 summer at the beginning of the summer he would bring two groups of girls over from the  
12 mainland. He would bring one that was they were just college girls still in college and  
13 they'd be anywhere from usually twenty-one down to eighteen let's say. And he'd bring  
14 another group that were at least twenty-one and older, usually twenty-one to twenty-five  
15 who were all college graduates and some were nurses, some were school teachers, some  
16 were going to be in med school and doctors. He would—anyway he was a different kind  
17 of guy, old man Howard was, but he had a lot of money. In fact, my neighbor's wife went  
18 over there on one of those, she was from the University of Texas, and all his girls were  
19 from the South and boy they would hike that accent up. I remember a gal from Georgia  
20 and I said, "Are you a Georgia peach?" And, boy, she could lay it on. Anyhow their first  
21 night he would bring them over, he wouldn't fly them in, he'd bring them over on a  
22 cruise ship so they were all fit to be tired by the time they got off that ship in Honolulu  
23 harbor there. Later on we'd go dive and actually when he'd bring them when I was in the  
24 Marine Corps, if I was off and those ships would come in, we'd go out and meet them in  
25 a speed boat and we'd water ski out there and they'd throw coins over and we'd try and  
26 meet some of them and meet them when they got off the ship. But anyway, the first night  
27 that he would bring those older gals in, he would rent a lease, a beautiful mansion down  
28 in Waialae Kahala which would be the Highland Park or Park Cities of Honolulu. And  
29 probably still to this day, I would imagine. Magnificent settings. They used a lot of them in  
30 that television series, *Hawaii Five-O*, the new one and the old one I might add. He would  
31 hire for the first evening, and there would be four hours of cocktails, heavy *hors*

1 *d'oeuvres*, and dancing. He'd have a dance combo we called them back then. He'd have a  
2 dance floor set up, and there would be never less than about two-hundred gals. He would  
3 contact our Waikiki Junior Chamber of Commerce for the guys to send out invites to be  
4 sure we had enough guys. Hell, we'd only invite seventy-five guys. I helped control who  
5 got an invite and so we'd take care of that. I'm telling you, and of course you wore casual  
6 Hawaiian clothes to that. It was those girls' first night in the islands and I fell insanely in  
7 love more than once. More than once per year because I dated one of those gals all  
8 summer. Normally they would come and then some would stay all summer, some would  
9 go back after a couple of weeks and they'd always fly back. The one I dated was a school  
10 teacher from Littleton, Colorado, I still remember her name. I'm going to leave that  
11 blank, though. Anyway she stayed for all three months, and back then you couldn't rent a  
12 place unless you had a fulltime job on the islands, and they usually wanted you to be a  
13 professional because they had too many, the people that owned the places, they'd take  
14 hickies on renting because they'd rent it for three months or whatever or maybe three  
15 weeks and then leave after two days. So sometimes I remember a gal from San Francisco  
16 another year that I rented a place and her name, and she stayed for two weeks. Neat gal  
17 and she was a professional gal. I'm trying to think what she did. She worked for an oil  
18 company out of San Francisco. In any case you talk about a welcome home party, I mean  
19 you couldn't beat that. I maintained those relationships, some of them, for a long time. I  
20 dated a couple of Ice Capades that came over there. They would come in and I remember  
21 the Chamber of Commerce, the big chamber not the JCs, would put on a cocktail party  
22 for the—in fact, I was there the first year they ever came over there because they had just  
23 completed Honolulu International Center which were all plays and big names, Elvis  
24 played there. Any case they came and they would have a cocktail party to make the girls  
25 feel at ease and all that, and some of the guys as well, the guys were a little different, I  
26 might add. Kind of like a Southwest pilot that's in trouble right now, and that'll be as  
27 much as I'll say about that. But the girls were always wanting to meet the guys and so  
28 once again we would see to it that we had a good number of people, and we would have  
29 elected officials and all sorts there for them to meet. I dated one of them the whole time  
30 she was there, and then another year I dated another one. Had a great time and it was just  
31 a neat time, and I remember I went over to the island of Kauai with my mother and my

1 aunt came to visit. You were asking, “How was once I got out?” Well, my mother and my  
2 aunt came over my first year there, and they were supposed to be, they were school  
3 teachers from Oklahoma, and they were supposed to be going on an Oriental cruise. They  
4 were going to spend two weeks in Hawaii. They cancelled their cruise and stayed all  
5 summer, and that cramped my style a little bit, but I remember we went to the outer  
6 island, I’d never been to an outer island yet, and I’d probably been there six months well  
7 they came during the summer. I got there in January, they came in 1<sup>st</sup> of June. We went to  
8 the island of Kauai and we stayed at the Coco Palms which a hurricane about twenty  
9 years ago completely destroyed it. It was and still is the oldest palm tree grove in the  
10 world. It was in the movie *Blue Hawaii* if you ever saw that, and it was every bit as  
11 elegant as the movie settings were. We went to a place called the Club Jetty, which is still  
12 around, and it was in *Donovan’s Reef* the movie. They had fist fights in there, John  
13 Wayne and Lee Marvin with a bunch of Hawaiians and all that. But I met a gal there, she  
14 was with her mom, and I’m with my mom and my aunt, and she was from—where in the  
15 hell was, Ruth Guy. Her mom owned a chain of grocery stores called Guy’s down in  
16 Corpus Christi. Time of my life. But anyway it was a great experience for me, it was a  
17 tremendous learning curve, and it taught me what I didn’t want to do the rest of my life,  
18 and what I did want to do. And it even taught me where I wanted to do it. It was a  
19 tremendous learning experience, and to this day I’m heavily involved with the Marines  
20 and help them out all I can. because they took good care of me.

21 JS: I know you’ve mentioned that once you got back you really started paying  
22 attention to what was happening in Vietnam and reading about it and all of that. At what  
23 point was it that you decided, if you can pinpoint if not that’s fine as well, but at what  
24 point did you decide that this is not something we ought to be doing? That we were in  
25 fact from your perspective the interlopers?

26 FW: I saw what was going on in—a big R&R center was Fort DeRussy which  
27 was in Waikiki, near the entrance of Waikiki from downtown Honolulu, and I’d see a lot  
28 of GIs would come back there to meet their spouses or sweethearts or their mother, for  
29 their two-weeks of R&R or however long R&R was. I never had one so I don’t know  
30 whether it was a week or two weeks. One of my neighbors here where I live out here in  
31 McKinney was an Army captain in the Mekong Delta, and he met his wife there. I saw

1 how these GIs were treated when they came back. They were not treated well. Of course,  
2 the local joke, an inside joke, was you know the locals and the military and the twain  
3 never got along supposedly in Hawaii. Now I disagree with that vehemently, but then my  
4 horizons were different than the normal GIs. A lot of GIs would spend all their damn  
5 money on what we called Hotel Street, which would soak you. There'd be watered down  
6 drinks, and the girls would hustle you to buy them a drink, and you'd be broke after one  
7 or two nights. I wasn't that persuasion. I wanted to get an education. I wanted to go to the  
8 nicer places in Waikiki and date gals that were living there, coming there, and whatever. I  
9 kept up through my Air Force lieutenant colonel who was highly instrumental in teaching  
10 me about organizational skills and planning skills. We all went to finish up together at the  
11 University of Hawaii, I might add, he had never had a chance to get a college degree nor  
12 a chance to get the hours. He later became a Ph.D. and was in charge of, appointed by  
13 one of the governors of the state of Hawaii, Director for Secondary Education. Appointed  
14 job in the state of Hawaii and he was also the official director for, what did we call it—it  
15 was the University of Michigan which is where Chris was from. Extension schools out in  
16 the Pacific Rim. Any case, we'd all fraternize with military people because that was my  
17 background, and civilians, and I could get a different perspective and I read the papers,  
18 and I'd look at the news and I'd see how they were rioting back in the mainland here. The  
19 college students, Stanford and—a lot of the West Coast schools, but I mean it was going  
20 on everywhere. Kent State, Harvard, Yale, everywhere. How unhappy the parents and  
21 spouses were with the continuation of the war, and I mean that was the beginning of  
22 seeing live almost the records from that days Westmoreland had instituted of what was  
23 called a body count. Well, the whole damn—instead of whatever we were there for, to  
24 stop the Domino Theory was originally what we were there for, it was all about a body  
25 count. In fact we sarcastically referred to it out of Saigon as the “Five O’Clock Follies.”  
26 The hotel caddy corner from the Rex Hotel was, and it's in those pictures on that desk I  
27 sent you, was where Westmoreland's Army PIO (public information officer) guy would,  
28 and different ones gave him, what we call the Five O’Clock Follies, would give the five  
29 o'clock lies as to the body count and what went on that day and how we're winning this  
30 devil, and we knew damn well we weren't. The conduct of the war is what defeated us.  
31 American fighting men, none better. Those people were fighting for their lives and the

1 right of their country, so as General Giap said on more than one occasion which Dr.  
2 (unintelligible) and I talked about this, he made the famous statement, “You Americans  
3 were just passing through. We were there for the duration.” They would’ve fought to the  
4 last, as he said, the last man, but they’d have fought to the last living Vietnamese, child,  
5 girl, boy, you name it. I could see that the conduct of the war, I don’t think the term was  
6 coined then but if it wasn’t coined then it damn sure started the trend to coining the term,  
7 “micromanaging.” The war was literally, I mean beyond micro—it’s the greatest impetus  
8 of the definition of the word, literally micromanagement from Washington, D.C. Most of  
9 it by McNamara, which I harbor lots of ill will toward him. Marines notoriously, one of  
10 the toughest battles for us was Khe Sanh. Less than two months after the last devastating  
11 attack by the Vietnamese to take Khe Sanh, Westmoreland says, “We’re giving it up.  
12 We’ve got other priorities. You Marines are hauling ass off of there and you’re going to  
13 be scattered here, yon, and elsewhere.” What was that all about then? I mean what the  
14 hell were we doing here on top of Khe Sanh? It was bloody. I mean we have a Marine  
15 helicopter pilot who’s an attorney now in Oklahoma City, his hand’s over there  
16 somewhere on that, it’s now back to a coffee and tea plantation when we were there in  
17 2005. We went there, Roger and I were the only two non-Vietnamese who were there.  
18 We were there about three hours walking around it and all that. They had a sand table  
19 mockup of what it was like at the height of the Marine occupation of Khe Sanh. But I  
20 paid attention. I thought, “This is a meat grinder,” as in Iwo Jima in World War II, after  
21 the lowest Suribachi and between it and some other hills was a valley, and they called it  
22 “The Grinder” because everybody was, whether it was the Japs or us, they were all  
23 cannon fodder. Basically that’s what it was in Vietnam and nobody wanted to be the last  
24 one to die out of there. My good friend Tony Wood who was the last man on the ground,  
25 officer in charge, communicating directly with General Carey who was the overall officer  
26 in charge. War is chaos, but in an evacuation it’s beyond chaos. The ambassador, I want  
27 to say it was Ellsworth Bunker but I get my names mixed up sometime, pretty sure it was  
28 Ellsworth Bunker. He never knew, no he knew, he never believed that we were giving it  
29 up and packing and getting out of there, and he had to be manhandled onto a helicopter to  
30 be gotten out of there. In fact ,he spent, I believe, sixty days in the Philippines in a  
31 hospital ward to get him where he could meet and talk with people again. Of course, I

1 believe Mr. Bunker, two sides to every story. Mr. Bunker I think had a son that gave his  
2 all in that war. Elmo Zumwalt who came up with, at the time he thought it was brilliant,  
3 Agent Orange, we're all still fighting that. A bunch of serviceman that they claim that  
4 didn't—the Agent Orange permeated the water table, quite frankly. I have a friend that  
5 finally got help who was in the Navy on a ship but came ashore a few times, and they  
6 claimed the water table filtered that Agent Orange even out to the North China Sea. He  
7 finally got help with the VA (Veteran's Administration) on that. But Admiral Zumwalt,  
8 his own son paid the price. He died from Agent Orange. So anyway I paid attention. I  
9 could see the rioting going on in the mainland. It did not go on over into Hawaii I might  
10 add. We looked askance at what was going on with, quite frankly, Watts. In fact, when I  
11 came back to the mainland one Christmas, I think I was still in the Marines and I believe  
12 Watts happened way before the end of the war, in fact I know it did. I said, I had some  
13 civilian friends that picked me up at LA. I had about six hours to kill before my  
14 connecting flight to, my mother was still alive then in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and they said,  
15 "Where do you want to go?" I said, "I want to go see Watts. I want to go see what that's  
16 all about." The Democratic convention in I think it was Chicago.

17 JS: Right, yeah, Chicago.

18 FW: Then Kent State and all of that. If you had served I would think anybody  
19 would've paid attention to what was going on over there. It was just a grinder to chew up  
20 good American youth. One of the things I carry away from there and I get on my soapbox  
21 about, Jason, is aside from losing, just initially having fifty-eight-thousand KIAs (killed  
22 in action), I think you had over a quarter-million severely wounded GIs out of that. Then  
23 I believe the other side had over two-hundred-thousand outright killed. I've got the  
24 statistics, I think I sent you a sheet on them.

25 JS: Yes, sir, right.

26 FW: But in any case, aside from the deaths and the maimed out of there, I think  
27 probably one of the worst things, or the worst thing, to happen to America out of it, is all  
28 of us—I'll say I'm an exception, I tried it one time, I smoked one joint, not over there. I  
29 was back here. I'd been out of the service, hell, ten years, and I tried one joint one time  
30 and never, ever, because I don't smoke, and it didn't do a thing for me. So I said, "This is  
31 bad, don't need it," but I think the habit was brought back by the GIs back to America of

1 the drugs. Because the drugs were a pure escapism over there from the reality of what  
2 was going on. I remember I saw a tanker group that joined us from somewhere in Chu  
3 Lai, and it was hotter than hell. It had to a 115, 117, and these guys were in this tank. I'd  
4 seen them go get in the tank, the crew, and they got in there and they closed those  
5 hatches. Well, they didn't start up the engines, they didn't go anywhere, they're just  
6 sitting there. I thought, "What the hell are they doing in there as hot as it is?" So I went  
7 over there and banged on the lid on the very top, and one of them threw open the hatch  
8 and they're smoking weed. They had a bunch of we call it "smelling salts" but it was pure  
9 amyl nitrate. They were breaking those ampules and sniffing them and they were higher  
10 than kites in there, and of course in that extreme heat and that enclosed area that  
11 intensified it, I guess. I'm not talking about just enlisted men, officers probably—not  
12 probably, smoked joints because it was escapism from the reality of the war. Later a lot  
13 of officers not only fessed up to it, they were so down on serving because of the wasted  
14 manpower, I remember in *Time* magazine and you and Kelly if y'all haven't resources it,  
15 and I'll bet you have, and the article in *Time* was the length of the *Time* magazine page  
16 and it was a column. It was about this highly decorated Marine captain, and if you recall,  
17 you're probably too young but I know you know about it, a lot of people from the draft  
18 went to Canada to escape it. So anyhow this Marine captain from Vietnam, highly  
19 decorated, was being interviewed about, "What would you do if there's another war and  
20 it's like Vietnam?" Of course, they meant if it was run like Vietnam, what would you do  
21 if you had a son? Because I know when the article came out, it's when Jimmy Carter was  
22 president because he pardoned all those guys. The article was written then, and they said,  
23 "What would you do, Captain, if your son was—the draft was still in effect and your son  
24 would've had to go to a war like Vietnam, and it was conducted like Vietnam was?" and  
25 regarding Canada. He said, "Well, I would not only not let him join," he said, "I'd put  
26 him in the car if I had to tie him up and I'd drive him to Canada." I thought that was  
27 really telling. Telling to the degree that I still remember it to this day. I know a lot of  
28 people today, as you know the statistics, less than seven-tenths of one percent, or less  
29 than seven-hundredths of one percent, Americans have skin in the game in both Iraq and  
30 Afghanistan. I know some good friends that said, "I'll never let my son or grandson or  
31 granddaughter go in the war." Because it's endless, this one's been going on for ten damn

1 years. So anyhow I started paying attention because it's our nation's treasure in both  
2 manpower, meaning men and women, and in money. I always thought it would be the  
3 manpower that do us in. Hell, it's the money that's going to do us in. Probably that's  
4 always what it's been about. I just had lunch today with a retired Marine colonel that  
5 followed about five years behind me in-country there, he hit the beach about 1970. He  
6 was in Quang Tri and he was there in some tough times, and we were talking about  
7 Colonel Wood and he said, "Yeah," he said, "when that evacuation was occurring, I was  
8 out there in the gulf on one of the ships." He said, "I wasn't on one of the carriers, but I  
9 was out there with a contingent of Marines that if they had need to land us to help in the  
10 evacuation, we would've been landed." And he had already served in-country, he had  
11 served one tour. So that's how I view all that.

12 JS: What was your reaction to the end of the war and the fall of Saigon?

13 FW: I thought it was the right thing to do, and at the time I thought it was the right  
14 thing to do. I thought it should've been done, quite frankly, a lot sooner. In actuality, we  
15 should never have been there to begin with. But nevertheless we were, and so when do  
16 you cut it off? When do you finally recognize—as we used to joke in business, "It's a rat  
17 hole and you're just pouring money down it," but were not only pouring money, we're  
18 pouring America's best and brightest down it. I thought it was a great thing that we got  
19 out of there. I think we got out of there, quite frankly, with more than our skin. No doubt  
20 there were probably a few Americans killed during the exit, but I thought it was  
21 tremendous. I still remember, because I partied with him, Chris is the Air Force  
22 lieutenant-colonel I referred to, had a lot of friends in the airline industry and aircraft  
23 industry at all in the corporate level as in corporate officers or owners even because he  
24 had served with them over the years. One of them was the guy that was the CEO (chief  
25 executive officer) and founder of World Airways. I remember he and a TWA (Trans  
26 World Airlines) pilot, a senior captain, came to Hawaii and Chris always knew when they  
27 were coming because they'd bring the girls and the stewardesses. Men don't change very  
28 often, and I was single back then. In any case I forget this guy's name, but he was a big  
29 old burly guy and he was as unpretentious a fellow as ever came down the pike. We just  
30 had a grand time in Hawaii and of course back then his company was ferrying a lot of the  
31 troops over there to and from. Also supplies. I was with Armor and at that time we were

1 feeding one-hundred percent of any GI, and we made the frozen pre-plated airline meals,  
2 we fed every GI on a MAC (Military Airlift Command) or MATS (Military Air Transport  
3 Service) flight that went into country or came out. Nobody else shared the business. So  
4 one of the things I remember is during the exit from Vietnam is this World Airways  
5 CEO, and he's hanging on, I don't know one aircraft from the next, but the tail, the ladder  
6 way came out of the tail of the aircraft and dropped down, it was a big passenger plane. If  
7 you recall the movies and outtakes, all the Vietnamese were storming trying to get on  
8 these planes any and every way they can. He had a Thompson submachine gun, and he  
9 was firing it in the air as the airplane is taxiing for its row. You know to ward them off.  
10 He wasn't shooting at any of them, he was a tremendous individual. Those are some of  
11 the things I remember, I still remember that Air Force, can't remember what type aircraft,  
12 but it was loaded with all Vietnamese, "Eurasian babies" as they called them, which were  
13 GI father and Vietnamese mothers, and I think it was mostly all kids as I remember.  
14 Mostly infants. As I recall, it crashed on takeoff. Those are some of the thoughts I  
15 remember. I remember Tony Wood today and a lot of—and I think Tony, you all have  
16 interviewed Tony by the way, it's Col. A. A. Anthony Wood. You need to contact him. I  
17 know he's talked with you all. I don't know what he's filled out, the paperwork, but he  
18 was the officer in charge on the ground of the evacuation. Tony, by the way, just came  
19 back, I called him and invited him, I took a table for ten at our Dallas Military Ball. I got  
20 General Carey and he together, they had not seen one another since that day of the exit of  
21 April the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1975. We went to breakfast at the Original Pancake House in Plano. Tony  
22 and I picked up General Carey, and by the way I've got a picture of the two of them  
23 together. If you ever wanted one let me know and I'll find it and knock you one out and  
24 send it to you.

25 JS: Sure, absolutely.

26 FW: Well, I'll do that then. Let me make a note here. Picture of Carey and Wood.  
27 But you need to get hold of—Tony is going to write a book. General Carey talked about  
28 it, has not done it, but Tony will write a book. But you need to get hold of him, but  
29 anytime there's like on the History Channel or Military Channel anything about the  
30 evacuation of Saigon, Wood has got several speaking parts in there with (unintelligible).  
31 As in—never mind. But we kid him, but he was all business back then. He's just a great

1 friend. We were enlisted men together in Hawaii and then when we finished college,  
2 well, he went onto PLC program and I decided to seek fame and fortune with mother  
3 Armor. The rest is history.

4 JS: I thinking that you were talking about the World Airways CEO, was his name  
5 Ed Daly?

6 FW: I believe it was Ed Daly, yep. To me, I don't remember, he had been in the  
7 service, but he looked like he ought to been a Marine if he wasn't, because he was kind of  
8 semi-bald or almost totally bald, and he had a bull neck, and he was—with us he wore T-  
9 shirts or aloha shirts. He was a pretty gruff individual except when he got a few shooters  
10 in him. He was a tremendously interesting fellow because he was as unpretentious a soul  
11 as ever came around. It was guys like that, that flew by the seat of their pants with  
12 corporations and made them what they are.

13 JS: Before wrapping up, I know we've touched on it a little bit, but would you  
14 mind talking, I guess, a little bit more about your return trip to Vietnam? How that came  
15 about, what made you decide to do it, and I guess your impressions of Vietnam upon your  
16 return?

17 FW: Okay, well, the way we decided to do it is we were going to go—I always  
18 wanted to go back because I believed, as you asked me earlier what I think of the country  
19 and its people, I thought it was a beautiful country more than likely from what I saw of it,  
20 which was a very channeled viewpoint except when we flew to—well, it was even  
21 channeled then, my one day and evening in Saigon and then back to Chu Lai. But I could  
22 tell from the Annamites or Dolomites that I thought it had a lot to offer, and so we had  
23 planned, my restaurant partner and I we're really travelers. We want to go see the world  
24 and places that we've not have, we being the US, have not homogenized it or  
25 Westernized it. The way it was when Rudyard Kipling's time or in the books that we've  
26 all read as kids, because I don't like glass, chrome, and plastic. So we were going to, we  
27 wanted to go there, we were also going to go to Australia and New Zealand, we were  
28 going to go to Bali in Indonesia, and we were going to China which Roger at that time  
29 had never been to. Right he—no we had been to China before in 2000. He hadn't been to  
30 Beijing, that was it. Then we went to Mongolia because I'm a real fan of Genghis Khan.  
31 As a boy growing up you ask how I determined to do all this? As a boy growing up and

1 quite frankly until about 1980 the only book ever written about Genghis Khan was—the  
2 last one written was 1947. So you talk about myopic in its outlook on what Genghis Khan  
3 did and who he was, tunnel vision doesn't even describe it. So a professor at, I want to  
4 say at the University of Minnesota or St. Olaf's, one of the private schools wrote a much  
5 modern book in well—hell, it was probably '90 he wrote the book because he went over  
6 there for five years at different times to study Genghis and his country. As the expression  
7 is, "Any Mongolian will tell you they're all related to Genghis Khan," because of the way  
8 they are. Anyhow we wanted to go back and go back to Vietnam. I wanted to see it for  
9 what it was, and so I'm trying to think how we got this tour guide. Gene Street, you may  
10 know the name or not know the name, he started the Black-eyed Pea, is a restaurateur.  
11 But he owned the San Francisco Rose, the Greenville Avenue Country Club, he owned  
12 the Winepress down in Oak Lawn, Lemon Avenue area. Recently he had owned the  
13 Three Forks and Cool River and Silver Fox, El Chico, Cantino Laredo. Gene and I have  
14 been friends for thirty-five years, and Gene was in the Air Force and was in Okinawa. I  
15 think he was a spook but I'm not sure but he had something to do with communications,  
16 and occasionally he would set foot in Vietnam. In any case he and I were talking one day  
17 over a bottle of wine, and I said, "I'm thinking about going back to Vietnam," and he  
18 said, "Well, if you go," he said, "when are you going?" I told him, "June, July," and he  
19 says, "Well, I'm going to give you a friend of mine's name and address," who is a spook,  
20 and still is, and he said, "If you go to Hanoi," and he said, "are you going to Hanoi?" I  
21 said, "I will now." He said, "He'll set you up if you're going to be there over the Fourth  
22 of July with the embassy crowd." I said, "Hell of a deal." So we got hold of a travel  
23 agent, who as I mentioned the day before yesterday, the guy was educated, one of the  
24 owners of Duke University here in our country, a Vietnamese and his partner had been a  
25 professor at the University of Hanoi in higher mathematics. By the way there are  
26 eighteen, well, when we were there in 2005, there were eighteen sub satellite campuses  
27 scattered throughout the country. Anyway, Cau was our guide's name, C-A-U, and Cau  
28 said that he like starved to death as a prof and so he got into part-ownership of this travel  
29 agency. It's the largest one in-country in Vietnam and Cambodia, and I don't have the  
30 card handy but I've got it all at home if you ever get interested. So anyhow that's how we  
31 decided to go, and we cut out Australia, New Zealand, and Bali because too long a trip

1 and Australia, New Zealand is a trip by itself and quite frankly Indonesia, our State  
2 Department kept telling us, “Do not go there.” So we decided to just go spend our time in  
3 Vietnam, and we allowed eight days, as I recall. We flew into Saigon via Tokyo, and I  
4 got to see Mount Fuji, was the first time I’d ever got to see it. Could see it early in the  
5 morning above the clouds, and then we flew—I think we changed planes, I wouldn’t  
6 swear to that, but then we flew on in to Tan Son Nhut and Saigon, or Ho Chi Minh City  
7 as they call it. I had set up all this in advance. I am a hotel snob. I’m in the hospitality  
8 industry and I like to stay in nice places. When I was there in ’65, I did not stay in a nice  
9 place and couldn’t afford it, and it wasn’t there anyhow. The Rex was, but I was—with  
10 my rank, you weren’t in there. So in any case we stayed at the Rex, and we stayed there  
11 three days and went everywhere, and of course in 2005 they had already razed the  
12 American embassy to the ground. They did not even want us taking pictures. There’s  
13 what they call a consul there, and I shot a couple photographs but it’s not the embassy.  
14 But the old palace is still there alive and well, we went through everything in it. I mean  
15 there weren’t a lot of American tourists when we went in June and July, and it was just  
16 tremendous. I remember I had never seen as many mopeds in my life, and my restaurant  
17 partner has been told by a National Geographic photographer that anytime he wants to  
18 leave the industry he can photograph around the world for National Geographic. So  
19 Rodger took a lot of photos which have won some that did—there’s more than one,  
20 there’s an intersection where there’s a gazillion Vietnamese in mopeds, and they were at  
21 the stoplight and the Presidential Palace is behind them way back down there. The girls  
22 are interesting. They’re in very colorful clothes, only saw two or three sets of black  
23 pajamas and the cone hats, but anyway the girls are colorful and they wear long evening  
24 gloves because they don’t want their skin to get dark. They wear veils and scarves as we  
25 call them so the sun doesn’t beat on their neck. They wear short shorts, extremely short  
26 shorts, skirts, and they don’t care who’s watching. They’ve got nice legs. I’m a leg kind  
27 of guy, in any case I can admire them. So we went back and Rodger took one picture, we  
28 know where we were, we were on the road from Hoi An, south of Da Nang, to Chu Lai.  
29 Here’s this moped passing us or we come up on it and Rodger leaned out of the car and  
30 shot the photographs, and there’s a guy and people over there hanging ducks upside  
31 down, they’re alive, because they’re docile, they go to sleep. This guy’s on his moped,

1 and no moped is allowed to exceed 125ccs or at least it wasn't then. This guy, we  
2 counted them, had over one hundred ducks with him and he had perfect balance. So  
3 anyhow we went back—and your question was once again, why did we go back? And  
4 I've told you that, now what was the other parts of your question?

5 JS: Just your impressions of the country and the people, and I guess reaction to  
6 returning Americans.

7 FW: Okay, well, when we hit Saigon, Saigon when I was there originally, I was  
8 told was about a million-and-a-half people. When we were there in 2005 it was five-  
9 million people. Hanoi, I was told way back then in '65, in was probably struggling  
10 between three-hundred-thousand and a half-million, and today it's one-and-a-half-  
11 million. Of course it's like China, the political capital of Vietnam is Hanoi, the business  
12 capital is Saigon. Let me assure you, you know the Vietnamese have physically thrown  
13 the Chinese out of their country four times. There were twin sisters, which you call the  
14 Trung Sisters, T-R-U-N-G, they threw them out the first time I believe in 400 AD. I've  
15 got a picture of those two gals that was done with eggshells, and it's not a true picture  
16 because you can't see their faces but they're twins, they're holding hands like they do  
17 over there and all of that. I brought that back and gave one to every one of our kids and I  
18 said, "Hang that devil up." But in any case, when we were there the Vietnamese were  
19 ostracizing the Chinese when we were there I say in the '60s. They were ostracizing the  
20 Chinese out of there already then and certainly after the war, they're all gone. Now  
21 they're all back though in the Cholon area of Saigon, but the Vietnamese aren't going to  
22 be pushed around. The city, I thought the downtown city of Saigon was—I didn't get to  
23 see much of it in '65 because I went directly from the airport or where we landed to the  
24 Rex and then directly back to the airport, flew back to Chu Lai. But in any case, we went  
25 south to Cai Bay. We didn't pick Cai Bay but we said, "We want to go where the  
26 Mekong Delta is and those famous canals where the swift boat drivers were." Because  
27 Dr. Reckner had got me interested in that. So we went there, and of course you saw the  
28 pictures on the slide of that. That's really neat I thought, but once again those canals are  
29 narrow, boy and you'd be close quarters, it'd be all over you before you could pull the  
30 bolt back on the .50 caliber. Anyway, it was real picaresque down there, and I remember  
31 we were going down one canal, I took a lot of pictures of different ones and I took a

1 picture of this gal who probably caught our lunch that day, the shrimp. She had an old-  
2 fashioned wooden box, I think it was wood. It could've been a metal pail, and had a glass  
3 bottom in it or a plexiglass bottom where she could see, and she would grab the shrimp.  
4 She was putting them in there. We had gone by a *nuoc mam* factory. I never could figure  
5 what they hell they were—the GIs like my neighbor up here talking about *nuoc mam* on  
6 how bad it smelled because we didn't have any around Chu Lai, because we didn't have  
7 any water around there except the gulf. So anyhow that *nuoc mam* factory, it was like in  
8 Italy going through a grappa factory, they both are really stinky. Anyhow I thought the  
9 Mekong Delta area was really pretty. Would I live there? No. I have an aversion to  
10 mosquitos. From Saigon, Rodger and I took a side trip for three days, we flew to Siem  
11 Reap because I wanted to go to the Orient's oldest ruins there at Siem Reap. We stayed in  
12 the Raffles Hotel, and it was straight out of the movies, I mean it was delightful. Of  
13 course, Thailand and Cambodia are known for sapphires and emeralds, so we bought  
14 some jewelry there and bought loose stones, and we know we got good stuff, we know  
15 what to look for and all that. So we did that and we climbed all over those ruins. I  
16 remember we would walk out of that Raffles Hotel and it would be maybe seven-thirty or  
17 eight o'clock in the morning, and we had our private guide and driver and we'd go to  
18 those ruins, and about two hours later here'd come all the tourists, mostly Japanese  
19 flocking in there. I'd swear there were a thousand, it looked like ants swarming all over  
20 those ruins. Within five minutes you were soaking wet, every stitch you got on you  
21 because it's already hot and humid there. Of course, they've got a lot of natural teakwood  
22 forest there, and very aromatic. I like oriental history and they were much more civilized  
23 than us round-eyes were and were a hell of a lot earlier. We're still swinging through the  
24 trees with the apes in Europe while they were eating off of porcelain with fine ivory  
25 chopsticks and practicing some form of calligraphy, I'm sure. Anyhow so we enjoyed  
26 that for three days. There I—knowing the history of Cambodia, I wouldn't set foot in  
27 Laos. In fact, they ask us if we want to go to Laos and I said, "Absolutely not." They're  
28 still fighting a war up there, killing people. I had a comfort level in Siem Reap, but off  
29 the beaten path I would have no comfort level over there. because I still think it's  
30 probably pretty dangerous for a round-eye. In fact, one gal, she's a little older than me  
31 maybe five years, and her husband had come from Cambodia, and they had gotten rolled

1 in Cambodia. She had lost some jewelry, and they'd lost a few credit cards and that sort  
2 of thing. I often—I didn't want to embarrass them, so I didn't ask them, "Well, why did  
3 you go there to begin with for?" In any case that, and then we flew back from there  
4 through Saigon once again, and I don't think we spent that night—maybe we did spend  
5 the night, because one of the things across from the Rex Hotel, I like art, all types of art  
6 usually except modern, I just can't seem to get the hang of it. So, here were these  
7 Vietnamese kids, boys and girls, and I asked them and one was twelve, one was fourteen,  
8 they had stacks of artist books, everything from Andy Warhol to Gaugin, to Matisse, you  
9 name it and they had it. They had some paintings already done hanging up. They said,  
10 "What would you like?" I said, "Well, I like the one Gaugin," in fact I bought it. They  
11 rolled it up, it was about a twenty-inch by forty-inch of the two gals, one with a basket of  
12 fruit. Both topless as I recall. I enjoyed that and I know which Gaugins I like and which  
13 ones I don't. They said, "Well, if you don't see what you like, here's a stack of artist  
14 books, pick which one you want," which is totally legal as long as they don't sign the  
15 name to it. Even in our country it's legal. So I bought a couple—no I bought one Gaugin,  
16 and out of the world's one-hundred most famous paintings, as my son-in-law's a court-  
17 room trial attorney back in Huntington, Virginia. He's licensed to practice in about ten  
18 states, and one of them is Texas now, and he happened to be here now. He has a  
19 tremendous law office and a conference room since he's a court-room trial attorney, I  
20 saw this and said, "I got to buy that for my son-in-law." It's a painting, the name will  
21 come to me hopefully while we're talking, by Repin, R-E-P-I-N. You can look him up,  
22 Google him up, and it's of the Cossacks, and the name of the painting is *The Cossacks*  
23 *have Beaten the Hell out of*—not Abdullah, Sultan, his name may come to me, and there  
24 are about twenty major Cossacks standing around this wooden table and there's a scribe,  
25 and it's way back in the I think 1700s. This scribe, and one of them is sitting on a  
26 whiskey barrel or a wine barrel or whatever they drank back then in those days, and this  
27 scribe is writing a letter to Sultan Mehmed the Fourth and they're having some fun at  
28 Mehmed's expense because they just kicked his ass in the battle and they're rubbing his  
29 nose in it. It's one of the world's one-hundred most famous paintings. I saw also in  
30 Hanoi, because these artists will paint anything you want as many times as you want. But  
31 anyway I bought that, had it rolled up, gave it to my son-in-law and, hell, he spent three-

1 times as much on the frame as I did on the painting, but the painting is probably three-  
2 feet by five-feet. It's on a huge wall. It's just great because it's got one guy, the guy that's  
3 yacking it up the most in the painting, you need to look it up, Jason, because you would  
4 enjoy the painting for all the characters that are in it. One of them you would swear was  
5 Santa Claus. He's got on a red Cossack outfit with a white ermine collar around it, and a  
6 Santa Claus-style hat which was a real Cossack hat, and he's got a magnificent saber on  
7 his waist belted, and it's just a tremendous—you can see all the human pathos and  
8 everything. So anyhow bought that, so then we go, we fly to Da Nang. Da Nang's where  
9 I flew out of, which was primarily an Air Force base back then in the '60s, but it was  
10 used by all services. Well, we boarded our driver and Cau met us there again with a car,  
11 and off the passenger plane and we were staying in Hoi An which is southeast on the gulf  
12 there, and it was owned by the French then. It's a Meridian Hotel, and it was owned by  
13 the French then and it still is. Same outfit I might add. Same people that owned the Rex.  
14 It was elegant and I had never seen that hotel before, but there was a pretty gal,  
15 Vietnamese gal, and her mother shooting pictures on her front steps, and I think one of  
16 these pictures is in there, I took a picture of them. Her daughter's a dentist out of Ohio  
17 State, cosmetic dentist, and the mother paid her way, she was a big business woman in  
18 Da Nang back during the war. She made a gazillion bucks and paid her daughter's way to  
19 come to America, go to school, and become an American citizen. Rodger and I were in a  
20 Russian motorcycle with a sidecar. I'm in the sidecar and Rodger's riding it and we just  
21 took a picture on it, a gag shot, we didn't really ride it. Then we went to Chu Lai from  
22 there. First place we went, I saw that obelisk, I said, "Let's go up there," because Cau  
23 recommended it and he said it's the only memorial in-country to both sides. It was  
24 dedicated in 1994. So we went up there and you could see everything, and from there I  
25 said, "Now can we go to the beach where we landed?" And he said, "Sure," so we got in  
26 the car and drove down the highway, and we could see how the base was cordoned off.  
27 Cau went completely around, which was several kilometers, around a fence and then  
28 went toward the water. Knew where to cut through with the driver, and by a couple of  
29 hooches that were there that the locals live in, and then we went to the beach. He parked  
30 the car and he said, "Do you know about where you were?" And I said, "I certainly do."  
31 We walked up the beach and then Rodger and he stayed in one area, and I went on up the

1 beach a little further where I believe our Navy ship pulled in and disgorged us, we didn't  
2 have to—we rode ashore but out of the front end or back end of the ship opening where  
3 we were on gun crews. So we rode ashore, and we were the only ones there and I called  
4 my wife from in the water, knee-deep water on the cell phone. I must have picked up I  
5 don't know how many sand dollars, I mean they were everywhere. Didn't want to walk  
6 inland from there, we went inland but only as Cau directed us, to about where our guns  
7 were setup and our GP tents, but I'd only go where he said to go. 'Cause the worst thing I  
8 can remember is General Schwarzkopf went back, there was a journalist Smith and he  
9 was an Army private back during the Vietnam War, and he had been there when  
10 Schwarzkopf was a major in charge of his outfit. I remember Schwarzkopf and this guy,  
11 Howard K. Smith, it was his son, his son had grey curly hair and wore horned-rim  
12 glasses. But I remember them both stepping off the chopper and Schwarzkopf said, "The  
13 thing that I'm most scared of is I'll step on a live mine." Of course, this was after the  
14 First Gulf War where Schwarzkopf was in charge of that as a four-star Army general, and  
15 he said, "I don't want to lose a leg now in my life or anything else." So anyhow then we  
16 went around where we could go inland, and Rodger and I walked to where I think we  
17 probably about were in a general vicinity. I'd bet I was within twenty-five yards of where  
18 the ship pulled in, but it was pure guesswork on inland of where we were because there's  
19 no remnants, you couldn't orientate yourself between where the airstrip was because the  
20 airstrip was way north of us. Of course, if the Marston matting would've still been there I  
21 could've come close, but the concrete covered that. Then we did that, and we went  
22 around to where the old airstrip was, the concrete one, and the new airport was being  
23 built. Then from there we drove to—hell, I didn't know any better because it wasn't  
24 around when I was there, China Beach, I thought that was just a TV movie for serious.  
25 That was a real deal. It was between actually Hoi An and Chu Lai on the water. So I said,  
26 "Can we see that?" And they said, "Well, we're happy to take you there but there's  
27 nothing there, there's no remnants of anything." So we went where it was, and there's a  
28 huge billboard a V billboard, two sides, that a Swedish company is building a huge hotel  
29 project there because it's right on the water. Then we went to Da Nang, and all these  
30 pictures are on that disk, and then we went around Da Nang on the Highway 1 and went  
31 up to Hai Van Pass which is the pass just north of Da Nang where our Marine artillery

1 had set up so we could fire both ways. You could see all the way down to the ancient city  
2 of Hue, and where Quang Tri is on north of there, and you could see south toward Chu  
3 Lai. I mean you couldn't actually see it, but you knew it was down there. So we stopped  
4 and had a cold drink up there, cold water or whatever you wanted, Vietnamese beer, they  
5 still have—I remember from the days we were there, we never had it available but I was  
6 always told Tiger 33 Export, or Ba Muoi Ba, the local beer. Well, Tiger 33 Export is the  
7 largest beer sold in the Orient, and in fact we bought some on Mount Everest. I couldn't  
8 believe it. When we went up to the base camp up there, we were headed for the base  
9 camp, on another trip, earlier trip. In any case you could have a Tiger 33 Export. Then we  
10 drove on down to this ancient city and capital of Hue. Went through the ruins there, that  
11 was really interesting. I had never been there and I took a lot of pictures which are on that  
12 disk of they left some of the walls where the NVA breached the outside parapet wall.  
13 You can see where the rounds have hit, and RPGs or whatever they were firing back then.  
14 They restored some of that, when's the last time you were there Jason?

15 JS: The last time I was in Vietnam was in January, last time I was in Hue was in  
16 2004.

17 FW: Okay, 2000 what?

18 JS: 2004 was the last time I was in Hue.

19 FW: You were there a year before us then. So we went from Hue, got back in the  
20 wheels, and we spent the night in Hue as I recall. Great hotel, I couldn't tell you the name  
21 of it, but tremendous, old, refurbished French type of hotel. Then we went to Quang Tri,  
22 and I've got pictures of that where that battle occurred. So we go in, we're walking  
23 around the grounds where all that occurred in Quang Tri. Of course there's a famous  
24 book there about Quang Tri, *Street Without Joy*. That's named after when the French  
25 made an amphibious landing there and got their asses handed to them. In any case we're  
26 going through Quang Tri and so it was about ten-thirty in the morning, and so Cau says,  
27 "Well, we'll go to the museum," which I want to say was—have you been to Quang Tri?

28 JS: Yes, sir. I have.

29 FW: Yeah, it's a two- or three-story museum, as I remember. So we were the only  
30 ones there for thirty minutes, and I think we were there a total of two hours in the  
31 museum. Finally on the second or third floor we see three older Vietnamese men. I say

1 “older.” Hell, they were the same age I am probably, and they’re with a guide. Rodger  
2 smokes, my restaurant partner, or he did then, so he said, “I’m going outside to have a  
3 cigarette,” and it was very hot and humid, oppressive in there. So I walked around and  
4 looked a little more and went downstairs—err no while I was there this guide for the  
5 Vietnamese comes over to our guide and says, “Are any of your two Americans here,  
6 were they in the war?” I raised my hand and I said, “Yes, I was.” They said, “Well, one  
7 of these gentleman was in the war and he would like to visit with you, if you don’t mind.”  
8 I said, “Sure, but I don’t speak any Vietnamese.” He said, “We’ll interpret.” We go  
9 downstairs outside, this fellow and me and we take a picture together shaking hands on  
10 the steps and one in front of a, their trucks like our six-by. It was pretty old, dilapidated  
11 looking devil, but it worked for them. So we talked for thirty to forty-five minutes, and he  
12 was the one, he had been a—he wasn’t really a VC, he was an NVA cadre officer and he  
13 had been just south of Chu Lai when we landed. Once again, they knew where we were  
14 going to land, they just weren’t sure when. He brought up about our toiletry habits and  
15 our fear of insects, and that’s the way he put it, we were scared of insects. I said, “It’s a  
16 terminology. We weren’t scared but we don’t like them.” We talked about the war and  
17 everything, and I asked what he did and he told me, and he asked what I did and I told  
18 him and we exchanged pleasantries, and he was a tremendously interesting fellow. I  
19 could’ve talked with him probably all day, gone to lunch with him and had a great time. I  
20 remember we stopped at a roadside stand to eat and I told Cau, I said, “Cau, we don’t  
21 want the screaming me-mes now.” We were the only two in this roadside restaurant  
22 stand. I ate all the fruit they brought because they cut it right in front of me, and they  
23 brought some mystery meat which I did not eat. Of course, they use a lot of dehydrated,  
24 because they don’t have refrigeration a lot of them, shrimp—yeah dehydrated, dried  
25 shrimp, and they reconstitute it. But it’s really strong when it’s reconstituted, but I had  
26 some of that. Oh, that was the deal in Saigon. I’m sure you’ve been to the marketplace  
27 there?

28 JS: Oh, yeah.

29 FW: Yeah, and my daughters are twin daughters, and let’s see this was a few  
30 years ago, they were probably twenty-five years old, twenty-seven years old, and they  
31 told me to bring them back some Rolexes. I said, “I’m not buying you two girls Rolexes.

1 If you want a Rolex earn it, and pay for it, and buy it yourself.” They said, “Well, would  
2 you buy us a knockoff?” I said, “I’ll buy you a knockoff.” So we were in that market and  
3 so I saw two, the traditional ones that girls like, that gold and stainless steel one. I bought  
4 them one of each of those, and we have a daughter-in-law and she had told me she  
5 wanted one of the new Rolexes which is a new design. So they said, “Well, wait here at  
6 our stall and we’ll be back in five minutes.” He ran around somewhere and sure enough  
7 he came back with one. So we enjoyed shopping around there. I actually ate some of the  
8 cooked food because it looked so damn good it wasn’t funny. They had a lot of seafood  
9 that was still alive that they would either boil it, broil it, or cook it right there in front of  
10 you. I thought it was pretty good stuff, and the bakery stuff was really good. In fact I  
11 liked iced coffee and they make the best iced coffee I ever drank. They make great  
12 baguettes, in fact Cau jokingly could tell I liked that, and he says, “You know Frank,  
13 that’s two of the things the French left us when they left that they taught us well. Is how  
14 to make great coffee,” which they grow their own in the Central Highlands, “and  
15 baguettes.” I said, “Well, from the amen corner, yeah they do.” That was in Saigon in the  
16 market, and don’t you know those watches—I walked into our Dallas jeweler, well,  
17 actually a jeweler in Plano here to have the band size and he called me every name but a  
18 white man. He said, “Damn you,” he said, “you didn’t pay over twenty-five dollars for  
19 each of these. It’ll take me more time and money than it’s worth to size these bands.”  
20 One of the watches never worked. I didn’t bother to wind them or try them there, and one  
21 of them never worked, one of them still has one that runs, and the other one runs some of  
22 the time. But when you buy a knockoff that’s what you get. Anyhow we were leaving  
23 Quang Tri and we hauled buns for Khe Sanh. I had read a book, it was a fiction book,  
24 name escapes me and who it was by escapes me but it’s a well known author about  
25 Vietnam, and it was fiction to some degree. It was a warrant officer that was an Army  
26 CID (criminal investigation division) type and any case we’re going to Khe Sanh, and he  
27 said, “When you go to Khe Sanh,”—well, in the book it talks about how this former  
28 warrant officer CID guy had gone there after the war trying to resource something, and  
29 here’s this guy, three or four busloads of tourists pull up to Khe Sanh and here’s this guy  
30 selling, like a cigarette-girl out of the ‘40s nightclubs, selling souvenirs from the war.

1 He's missing a leg and he's got rusted dog tags, rusted this, rusted that, and so we—have  
2 you been to Khe Sanh, as well?

3 JS: Yes, sir. I have.

4 FW: Yeah, so we pull up, well, we're the only two there. And I'll be damned if  
5 this guy is not standing there, and missing a leg, and he's got the tray and he's selling  
6 souvenirs. We didn't buy anything but we gave him some money. In fact we were told  
7 before we went to take postcards, that the Vietnamese kids really love postcards of  
8 anything in America. So we took a lot of Texana type postcards, and they did like them.  
9 But we gave this guy a couple dollars you know, and he said, "Don't you want  
10 something?" "No, no we just want you to have this." So we enjoyed looking around Khe  
11 Sanh, and of course it's a coffee and tea plantation again. Or it is now anyhow. So from  
12 them there we went across the bridge on the, help me out, was it the 17<sup>th</sup> parallel?

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 FW: 17<sup>th</sup> parallel, stopped and had our picture taken there. Crossed the 17<sup>th</sup>  
15 parallel into the area there and so Cau said, "Would you like to see a rubber plantation?" I  
16 said, "Yeah, I've never seen one." He said, "Also there's some caves over here you'd be  
17 interested in, some tunnels." So we went to the rubber plantation and it was interesting,  
18 and I whizzed there I remember. Not on a rubber tree because they're too expensive, but  
19 then we walked over to where these caves, they called them caves and tunnels, and they  
20 were dug the depth from the top of the cliff down to the bottom where we came out, had  
21 to be sixty to eighty feet deep. It was solid granite. It was where, according to Cau and  
22 the local guide that would take you through these, where the local folk would go when  
23 Curt LeMay's people were doing the carpet bombing. They were hand-chiseled and they  
24 had rooms where surgery rooms, hospital rooms, dorm-type rooms to sleep in, kitchens.  
25 Then you'd go on down and come out the bottom by the gulf there. We thought that was  
26 tremendously interesting so we got back up we said, "Well, what was the most feared  
27 thing by the Vietnamese?" They said, "Well, there was two things, one was napalm."  
28 Which anybody in their right mind would fear that. The second thing was, and they even  
29 said him by name, "General Curt LeMay's carpet bombing." It was just incessant, and  
30 they dropped so many of them that they were—it wasn't a square foot that wasn't hit. So  
31 they'd get down in these granite tunnels which Rodger and I, Rodger is 6'4" and I'm

1 about six even, you could bend over a little and you could get down through those tunnels  
2 all right enough, and they were cool. So that was kind of interesting. Then I'll give you  
3 an aside story. We didn't go there because I wasn't going to set foot into Laos, but on the  
4 20<sup>th</sup> parallel due west inland across the border from Vietnam to Laos, yeah Laos, this is  
5 another friend of mine, trying to think of his name. He's a fellow Rotarian and he left  
6 Rotary about three years ago, and he preceded me in Vietnam, he was there in 19—his  
7 pictures on those disk. His pictures in there in the beginning, and there's a helicopter in  
8 OH-19 lifting off the deck of I want to say the *Kitty Hawk*. He hit the beach in Vietnam in  
9 1958 and was there through '61. He was a crew chief on the H-19 and the picture of he,  
10 another crew chief, and two Marine pilots. The two Marine pilots resigned their  
11 commissions, these two resigned their contract in the Marine Corps and they phoned up  
12 some reason and they were liaison'ed or TDY (temporary duty), seconded to Air  
13 America. They went over to, they called it LZ (landing zone) 20 Base, or Sam Thong,  
14 you can look it up on the computer, Base and basically what it was, is General  
15 Eisenhower—well, President Eisenhower had set it up. You know the Dulles' brothers  
16 had his ear, they got us involved in Vietnam, everyone thinks it was Kennedy, it was  
17 General Eisenhower. The two Dulles brothers talked him into setting up—that we need  
18 this because of the Domino Theory. So General Eisenhower was heading for Korea on a  
19 fact-finding mission, but he took a side trip to LZ 20. He was there when my friend and  
20 the other Marines, because they flew the two helicopters back then, and basically Sam  
21 Thong was a base, a CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) base, it's all declassified now,  
22 just been declassified in the last seven years. Five to seven years. because I've got the  
23 paperwork on it that he gave me, my friend gave me, we had coffee and he said, "Here,  
24 you'll find this interesting reading." Anyway they would do insertions and they would  
25 rescue downed pilots when for instance the Air Force wouldn't go in and get their own  
26 pilots because it was too risky, these guys would go in and get them. Of course, the story  
27 was, which my friend really, beyond took exception to, was that they got 1500 bucks  
28 each cash from our government for rescuing those pilots. He said, "That's bullshit," he  
29 said, "we did it because we got a salary and that was it. Now," he said, "we got a much  
30 better salary than we were making, any of us, in the Marine Corps." But he said, "There  
31 was no bonus or any of that kind of stuff." He did that for three years, and if I think of his

1 name, I've got all your data, I'll email it to you because I don't know if he'd be willing to  
2 talk about it or not. I'm seventy-one and he's seventy-five now, now he's seventy—he's  
3 seventy-four, seventy-five. He still races motorcycles at 210 miles per hour, and he does  
4 it all over the United States mostly in Florida, he lives in Fairview, Texas, a suburb of  
5 McKinney. He's a great guy. But anyhow what made me think of that was Khe Sanh, and  
6 so then we left Khe Sanh, went across the DMZ (demilitarized zone) there in 17<sup>th</sup>  
7 parallel, went to the rubber plantation, then we boogey on up to Hanoi. No, let's see—  
8 yeah, we went to Hanoi but didn't spend the night there yet, we went to—help me out,  
9 the port, the famous port at—

10 JS: Either Haiphong—

11 FW: Haiphong, we didn't go into Haiphong, hit the outskirts because we were  
12 going for two or three days R&R as we called it in Ha Long Bay, have you been there?

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 FW: Isn't that something?

15 JS: It is. It's beautiful.

16 FW: We had the time of our lives there. I understand Hilton and Marriott are  
17 building lots of hotel properties on that bay.

18 JS: I wouldn't be surprised.

19 FW: We thought it was just tremendous. We hired us a junk for an all day and all  
20 night cruise, and slept aboard and ate like kings, saw life. I remember I said, "This is  
21 where one of the James Bond movies was shot, *The Man with the Golden Gun*." He said,  
22 "Yeah, that's the island right over there, you'll see a lot of tourists over there," and I'll be  
23 damned if it wasn't. As an aside we have a place down in South Padre Island and so  
24 there's a consignment shop down there. I like art, and I'm down there always cruising it  
25 to see what they got, it might be something I can't live without. There was a damned,  
26 about a thirty-inch by fifty-inch oil painting of Ha Long Bay framed, and the price was  
27 right and I asked the lady, I said, "Do you know what that is?" Before I ask her the price,  
28 she said, "I have no idea. We've had it a couple years, but we've had it back in the back,  
29 we just put it out." I said, "Well, I've been down here often and I've never seen it." She  
30 said, "I have no idea what it is, it's a beach somewhere," and I said, "It's Ha Long Bay,  
31 it's in the North China Sea," and I said, "it's a magnificent tourist area, and those

1 outcroppings and all that.” So I’ve got it now here in our office. So anyhow we spent a  
2 couple days there at Ha Long Bay, then we went to Hanoi. My friend Gene Street as I  
3 mentioned had set me up with this CIA guy since we were going to Hanoi, and we did all  
4 of this before we left the US, I might add. He said, “Well, you’re going to be up there on  
5 the Fourth of July. How would you like to celebrate it with the American embassy  
6 crowd?” And I said, “Gee, I’d love that.” I said, “In 1965, who would’ve ever thought?” I  
7 said, “Why sure, by all means,” so he said, “Well, here’s the name and phone number.  
8 They will have your name and they’ll have Rodger’s, they’ll have some particulars about  
9 you so they know who you are. You just call them when you get to Hanoi. Don’t wait ‘til  
10 the fourth, and it’ll all be set for you to join them at the American embassy Fourth of July  
11 celebration.” So I call them and they said, “Yes,” and I got hold of master gunnery  
12 sergeant in the Marine Corps who had our names and everything, and I said, “Well, is it  
13 at the embassy?” He said, “No, it’s at the American club a few blocks away.” I said,  
14 “Well, would we have a chance to come in the embassy?” He said, “Mr. Walker,” he  
15 said, “you can’t come in the embassy.” He said that they’re locked up tighter than a damn  
16 drum. He said, “If you had a need or a need to know,” he said, “we would’ve made  
17 arrangements,” but he said, “I can’t do it on this short of notice.” But he said, “I’ll be  
18 there this evening with my family.” Well, there were seven-hundred Americans, mothers,  
19 fathers, and their kids. It was at the American club and the current ambassador was  
20 Michael Marine who was a Marine who was a Marine officer. He followed me in-country  
21 a couple months behind me at Chu Lai, and he is the ambassador and he gave a welcome  
22 Fourth of July talk and I shook his hand and all that. It was hot dogs and chili, and  
23 hamburgers, and it was a Vietnamese version but it was close. We had a tug of war, and  
24 that was neat. It was the Marines which they told Rodger and I to get in there and help  
25 them. Rodger’s about 6’4” and big old’ boy. I can’t remember who won to this day, the  
26 losers got drug through some wet mud. It might’ve been us, the Marines might’ve lost. It  
27 was a bunch of civilians against us and I bet there was at least twenty on each end of that  
28 rope pulling. But it was a lot of fun, they were tremendously hospitable, in fact we  
29 became friends that master gunnery sergeant and myself, and Rodger and I being in  
30 restaurant business we said, “What do you miss about home?” And he said, “Good  
31 steaks. It’s all New Zealand, Australian beef and it is what it is, it’s Australian, New

1 Zealand beef.” We said, “How many do you feed?” And he told us, and we said, “Well,  
2 we’ll see what we can do when the Marine Corps birthday comes, when it gets closer.” It  
3 was that or it was something that was coming up, Christmas time, some celebration. So  
4 we communicated with him via email and telephone when we got back here and we sent  
5 him enough steaks for two-hundred guys. As it worked out we never sent the steaks  
6 because the days of when you could put it aboard space available on a military aircraft  
7 are gone with the wind, and we couldn’t make the connections. We even tried it out of  
8 Alaska. So one of them’s mother was coming from Alaska over there to visit him for this  
9 occasion, and she worked for Safeway up in Anchorage. So being the slow souls that we  
10 are, we called her, we said, “Ma’am, we’ll pay for the steaks if you’ll buy them there at  
11 Safeway. You tell us how much they are, we need two-hundred of them, we want rib-  
12 eyes because that’s what they want, and would you take them as luggage?” And back  
13 then they didn’t charge for extra luggage. She said sure, she’d be glad to. So we bought  
14 them two-hundred steaks, she took them as luggage, frozen, and they ate US choice beef.

15 JS: I’m sure they enjoyed that.

16 FW: Yeah, and so we, oh let’s see we went on—there’s pictures on there. In fact I  
17 think it’s my final picture on the disk is Graham Greene the British novelist, and he was a  
18 spy for MI-6 I think on the street and the boulevard where they refilmed the movie, oh  
19 man—Graham Greene wrote the novel, *The Quiet Man*.

20 JS: *The Quiet American*?

21 FW: *The Quiet American*, yeah. We shot a picture there, and we went to his hotel  
22 where Graham Greene stayed and it was pretty expensive so we didn’t stay there, we  
23 stayed at the Hilton, but if I had a do-over I’d stay where he did. It’s a common name,  
24 can you remember the name of the hotel? Was it (unintelligible)?

25 JS: Yeah, that sounds right.

26 FW: In any case we had a drink there, but we enjoyed Hanoi, we shot a picture  
27 where our first ambassador, Pete Peterson was shot down in the lake there where his  
28 plane crashed. That’s in there but I screwed up, I didn’t set my camera right, the focus  
29 went on to the bamboo I was shooting through and the tail section of the aircraft’s kind of  
30 obliterated. Of course we went to the Hanoi Hilton, enjoyed that, very educational. Got  
31 John McCain’s brain bag and his flight suit he was rescued in, in the picture there. We

1 went to everything they had to show us in Hanoi. We just thought it was a tremendous  
2 trip, a lot of my contemporaries won't return. Some have and some—you know  
3 everybody handles their wartime experiences and their demons differently. I don't appear  
4 to have any demons, unless I wig out sometime later on in life. But on the other hand, I  
5 was there in a different time as well, and I'm damn glad of it. I can only imagine how hot  
6 and heavy it must've been. Then we exited the country, and from there we flew to Beijing  
7 and Rodger had not been to the Great Wall, we did that and toured some things. Then we  
8 went to Ulaanbaatar from there, Mongolia, and went to the Gobi Desert and rode camels,  
9 did everything—Mongolia's a fascinating country. The only negative about it, the people  
10 were tremendous, have you ever been there Jason?

11 JS: No, sir. I haven't.

12 FW: It's really an education, no matter what they tell you you're having to eat for  
13 the protein course, it's going to be mutton and it's not sheep or goat, it's mutton. There's  
14 a German that owns a restaurant there that you can get a great New Zealand, they're  
15 aging their beef now, steak, or you can get the best pork schnitzel and French fries you  
16 ever ate, and German beer that he brews. But Mongolia's tremendously interesting. What  
17 we didn't know which we found fascinating, was that once you leave Ulaanbaatar the  
18 capital, and when I say leave it I mean no more than three kilometers outside the city, and  
19 usually it's probably not even three kilometers outside, probably a kilometer-and-a-half,  
20 there are no paved roads anywhere in the country. The driver just knows from dead  
21 reckoning and he hauls ass across the steppes, just hauls buns. We came up beside a, it  
22 wasn't an impala the animal, but it's that type of deer, and supposedly the books say that  
23 deer cannot run more than twenty-five miles per hour. We were in the backseat of this  
24 Jeep Cherokee and looking over at our driver's shoulder, and we were doing eighty to  
25 ninety kilometers per hour, and we got right up beside him and Rodger took a lot of  
26 movie film of him. He was running for sustained at least five minutes, and all Rodger and  
27 I could think of, "If we hit a ditch, we're dead meat." We were belted in but at that speed  
28 out in the middle of the boondocks. Then we saw a herd of wild asses which Rodger  
29 knew about, I did not, that we couldn't get closer than, I'll bet you, never got closer than  
30 three miles from them. We could see the dust stirred up and then we had binoculars, and  
31 we could see that. It was just trem—and we went to Kublai Khan's palace. We went

1 everywhere. It was a tremendously interesting country. Very pretty, and we went to the  
2 Gobi Desert because that's what I wanted to go for. Next time we go, we go to the north  
3 and the east, we went to the south and the west. The north and east is where Genghis was  
4 born, and he was born at the intersection of three major rivers. It's very picaresque, it's  
5 like the mountains in Colorado in the north. It was just great.

6 JS: It definitely sounds like it. It sounds like it was an amazing trip.

7 FW: Yep. We're going to do one, we did one in 2007, one of our Rotarians here  
8 in McKinney was born and raised in Kerala, India, which is the southern tip, and he's  
9 connected at the highest level of his former government, India, and he's an American  
10 citizen, a restaurateur, retired, good friend of mine, lives down about five minutes from  
11 me. We're going to take another group of Rotarians, we took ten couples in '07, we're  
12 going to do the same thing in January. We went through Dubai last time, we're not going  
13 to go to Dubai this time, were going to stay in—we went to five major cities where all the  
14 history and antiquities are in India. We're going to substitute what used to be called  
15 Bombay, it's not Mumbai, which is the financial capital of India, and we're going to take  
16 a group and we've already got commitments from quite a few people. I like to go see and  
17 do, and hopefully not get the screaming me-mes too bad.

18 JS: Right, exactly. Well, before we wrap things up here with the interview, is  
19 there anything else that we haven't covered?

20 FW: Not that I can think of. You've covered Vietnam pretty much, or at least my  
21 time there. I just think it's a tremendous experience. Do any of you people at Texas Tech,  
22 do you or Kelly or anyone else, come out and talk to Rotary groups or anything?

23 JS: Steve does. Do you know Steve Maxner, our—

24 FW: I've written Dr. Maxner, but I've never—and I've spoken with him, sure.

25 JS: He's a Rotary member, so I believe he does. But I don't believe—well I have  
26 never done, and I don't believe Kelly has either. I'm not sure though.

27 FW: I believe that about covers it. Oh, I finally got my medals and my awards, it  
28 only took—and General Carey, General Carey and I are very good friends. He lives in  
29 Plano not too far from me. I talk to him at least once a week and see him at least once or  
30 twice a month. Either he or Mike McCollum I think, neither one will fess up to it, but I  
31 think they were instrumental in finally getting me my awards. Ray got me more than I

1 ever thought I deserved. I thought I'd get a, you know I was there in May of '65, I was  
2 there for a short time, and General Carey laughed and told me one time, he said, "Frank,  
3 we've got guys that still want awards and medals from Korea and World War II." In any  
4 case all of a sudden probably six months ago here they showed up out of the blue. It was  
5 official Navy stationary that they were on, and I got about, quite frankly, five to seven of  
6 them, that I thought I only had three coming. I asked them both, I said, "You two must've  
7 had something to do with this." They both said, "No," they said, "you earned them, you  
8 rated them, you got them." So I said, "Well, thank you in any case." That's about all I can  
9 think of. I'm not like John Kerry. I'm not going to go throw mine in a pile somewhere. I  
10 honestly believe John Kerry earned his, no matter what the other party said. At least he  
11 showed up, I'll put it that way. A lot of them that should've showed up never did. But in  
12 any case, Jason, I appreciate it.

13 JS: All right. Well, I certainly appreciate it, as well. I've enjoyed talking with you.  
14 Let me stop the recording.