The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Roland D. Mower
Conducted by Kelly Crager
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Transcribed by Sarah Tapia

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

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Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an Oral History interview with Dr. Roland D. Mower. Today is 6 August 2013. I am in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of Texas Tech University, and Dr. Mower is kindly joining me by telephone from his home in Mount Pleasant, Utah. Dr. Mower, to begin this interview I'd like to get some background biographical information from you, if I could. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

Roland Mower: Yes, I was born in Mount Pleasant, Utah—84647.

KC: And when were you born, sir?

RM: I was born on the 25th day of December 1928.

KC: A Christmas baby then. Very good, very good. What were your parents' names?

RM: I'm sorry?

KC: What were your parents' names—your mother and father.

RM: I'm missing a word here.

KC: I'm sorry. What were the names of your parents?

RM: Oh, my parents. Okay, my parents. My father's name was Roland Grant Mower. My mother's name was Viola Elizabeth Hansen with an E-N.

KC: Okay, and what did they do for a living?

RM: They were—we were in an agricultural area. Much of their life was spent doing things related to agriculture. However, my father did retire from a manufacturing plant where we he worked—started during World War II, and he worked there until he retired. They manufactured explosives for the war and then after the war.

KC: Interesting. Now, being born, of course, in 1928, this was right before the onset of the Great Depression. What do you remember about growing up during the Great Depression?

RM: I can—yeah, I can remember things. I can remember some of the situations. I remember living out in a rural community where we had dirt and rock roads. Some of those were the main roads. I remember, in association with Depression was the Dust Bowl. That was—I remember asking my parents about it because the air was kinda dusty at times. We were not in the center of the Dust Bowl, but we were on the side, and we got it every once in a while. I remember we never considered our—we never talked about how poor we were. We didn't talk about that. My folks, when I look back at it, I say, "Good gracious, we were really poor." My father and my mother were given a house by his mother, my grandmother, gave them a house and a cow when they got married. That was—and we lived in a small community in a town. His parents had had a large farm not too far away. There were thirteen kids in his family, and there were thirteen children in my mother's family in another—in Mount Pleasant. Everybody was in the same condition, you know. You got one pair of shoes a year and you got one—oh, I don't know—a new pair of pants or something or a shirt or a jacket every couple of years. We seemed to get along fine. We played. We had fun. We never—we were never bored in our life. I never remember—I don't even remember the word bored because we always had sticks and stones and leaves and feathers and all—rocks and kinds of things like that, and our imaginations. So, we always had lots of things to do. We lived in a very scenic area. We didn't realize it was scenic then, it was just an interesting area where we had mountains around us. We had streams around us. We had lots of animals—deer, coyotes, and all sorts of small game. We had pheasants and ducks and things like that. So, it was—it was sort of like living in awful nice place, except we were really poor in that nice place.

KC: Did you have brothers or sisters?

RM: I have three sisters who are younger. One of them is about two years younger than me. One of them about four years younger. The other, I think she was about—probably seven years younger, eight years younger. Something like that.

KC: What sort of things did you like to do when you were growing up? Being in this part of the world did you hunt or fish or take part in things like that?

RM: Say that again, please.

KC: I'm sorry. Growing up in that part of the world, were you into hunting and fishing? Things like that.

RM: Oh, there's was lots of—my father was a fisherman and a hunter. He liked to go fishing every day. We had lots of trout and we had a lot of deer and things like that around us, so there was a lot of that kind of activity. It wasn't a sport; it was to live.

KC: Now also a—obviously a defining moment or defining event during this time out of the Great Depression was the Second World War. What do you remember about the early days of the World War II?

RM: Well, actually I was kind of knowledgeable. As a kid I was knowledgeable. I remember the day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

KC: Tell me about that.

RM: I was standing in a line to go to a movie theater. We had a little theater in the town of Fairview—that's where I grew up, Fairview, Utah. It's just nearby Mount Pleasant. In the afternoon they had a matinee. A matinee cost us a dime to go to. Usually, it consisted of one or two main features with comedies and newsreels and all kinds of stuff like that. Cartoons. We were in that line and one of the boys came up to me and said, "Hey, did you know the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor?" I said, "Oh, my goodness. That's awful. Where's Pear Harbor?" He said, "It's out in the ocean. Hawaii or someplace." Well, now my folks, we didn't take a newspaper. We didn't have a telephone. We had a little Air Castle radio, and we could hear the news on the radio, our programs for kids and grownups. But we also had another thing, and that was *Life Magazine*. The little drugstore nearby had a *Life Magazine*. a new one every week came in. It was the large format. After a while they started having colored pictures in there. They kept us informed about what was going on throughout the world. So, I was aware of the war in Ethiopia. I knew about the war going on in Spain. I knew that in the Balkans—

I knew where the Balkans were and that there was a war started in World War I there. I knew that the Italians had invaded Ethiopia. I knew the Japanese had invaded China. I didn't necessarily know where all those countries were, but there was a lot of information and pictures in that *Life Magazine*. We often talked about it as kids.

KC: That is very interesting. You were very much aware of what was going on.

RM: (speaking at the same time) (inaudible)—very informed about things, I believe, then kids are today.

KC: Yeah, yeah. Absolutely. Now, growing up during the war, was it ever your desire to get involved in the Second World War?

RM: Yes. When the war started, I was about—I was in the seventh grade in high school. Which means I was twelve or thirteen, something like that. Well, it was in 1941, of course. I was just shortly before my birthday. But we had a National Guard in the local area. In the summer of 1941, our National Guard boys were mobilized by the federal government. They federalized, I guess was the word. They were federalized and they left on a train. I remember going up—and we lived right near the tracks. In those small towns, everybody does. We all waved at all these soldier boys—all these guard boys going off to war. They weren't going to war, they were going to—they were mobilizing for training, so they'd be ready. That was in the summer of 1941. In that group I had a number of cousins. The little town of Fairview eventually—it had, oh, 1,000 or 1,200 people. There were, I think, over 200 kids from Fairview served in World War II. Of that 200, there was about a dozen of them killed and lots and lots of people injured and prisoners and missing and all that kind of stuff. So, we had people killed very early in the war. In the Battle of the Coral Sea, that was our first Marine I'd ever heard of was from our town was killed in that. So, we knew about these things. When these guys would come home it was a big deal for everybody to go listen to their stories. They were fascinating. The places they were going and what they were doing and the things they were seeing. And of course, there was a lot of tragedy involved with those who were lost.

KC: Sure. Now with this kind of background, was this something that inspired you to join the services for the Second World War?

RM: Yes, I had several cousins who—it's interesting that in this inland state of Utah, particularly in the area where we lived, none of us knew anything about the ocean

other than what we read in *Life Magazine*. An awful lot of the kids joined the Navy rather than be drafted into the Army. So, we had lots and lots of guys in the Navy, so I wanted to be a sailor. Then there's a big, long story about how I—I was in the eighth grade, the ninth grade. In those grades, an awful lot of the boys were beginning to be drafted at eighteen. So, we had fewer and fewer of those young—of the late teens and the early twenties or around. They were in the military. They'd come home. They impressed us. We heard about all the experiences they had. That impressed us. Then in this *Life Magazine* we saw all these pictures of the wars all over the world. So, we were pretty excited about it. I was the youngest in the town that went in the service, I think, in World War II. I joined the State Militia, which was the State Guard. After the National Guard was nationalized and went off to war, then another guard was formed under the state, and it was called the State Guard. I joined that, as well as my father and one or two of my friends. At the age of fourteen. Oddly enough, we were trained to be strike breakers because we had coal mines nearby. Our government was afraid that John L. Lewis, who was the president of the miners in America, if they went on strike, they would deprive federal interest of energy. We had a big steel plant being built about fifty miles away. We had a big hospital up a little further. That was an important thing. We had a thing called Hill Field was being built for military. We had a lot of government facilities around that needed and used a lot of energy. The government didn't want those organizations to be deprived of energy to do what they had to do. So, the State Guard was supposed to—if there was a strike, the Guard would go in and keep the striking workers for impeding those who wanted to go there to work to keep the coal coming out of the mines.

KC: That is very interesting to be that young to be trained for that kind of duty.

RM: Yeah, at that age, yeah. I'd look at me when I would—when I went in the service a couple years later at sixteen, I look at that picture and I should have been a Boy Scout at that age.

KC: Yeah.

RM: I should have been wearing one of those little neckerchiefs and be working on life scout badge or something like that. Shortly (inaudible) just after I turned sixteen.

KC: Interesting. Now were you ever called into—for any sort of strike breaking duty?

RM: No, we were never. We were just trained.

KC: Now, the war continues on, and you get older. You mentioned you joined the Navy at age sixteen. Can you tell me how that happened?

RM: Say that please.

KC: I'm sorry. The war is continuing on here, 1944, '45 and you mentioned that you joined the Navy at age sixteen. How did that come about? How did that take place?

RM: Well, I was—when I was fourteen, I joined the Guard. When I was fifteen, I decided I ought to go on active duty. Some friends were trying to go in underage, so we tried to join the Coast Guard. We enlisted, and eventually they found out my age when I went up to report to go on to boot camp. They tossed me out. So, that was at fifteen. When I turned sixteen—err, just before I turned sixteen, I decided I'd like to be a Marine. So, it's a humorous story about that. I was sixteen years old. I went to a Marine Corps recruiting office. Right near the front door in that recruiting office was a desk, and it was manned by a lady Marine. They called them BAMS, B-A-M-S. That was the abbreviation for lady Marine. When I walked in that recruiting office she says, "Well, what can I do for you?" I knew I looked awful young. Actually, I didn't start shaving much until I was nineteen and getting ready to get out of the Navy years later. But I looked her in the eye, and I thought, "Boy, I've got to impress her to make her think I'm older." I took a deep breath and in my deepest voice I said, (in a high-pitched voice) "I wanna be a Marine." (interviewer laughs) She looked at me and she says, "Oh, you get out of here. Just like my little baby brother." So, I got tossed out of the Marine office—recruiting office. I felt really embarrassed. So, I wanted to be a Marine that week. (interviewer laughs) About three months later I thought, "Well, I'll try it again, but I'll try the Navy." By golly, I was able to pull it off that time. When I went on active duty, I was on what they called a minority cruise, which keeps you until the day before you're twenty-one. You finish your service—by the way, the people who were drafted into the military, they were given—what do they call it—variable enlistments. Those variable enlistments allowed them to sign up for four years or something like that. Then or, until six months after the war. When the war ended, then they could get out. So, if you were a young man, they drafted you, you were subject to military duty until the end of the war plus six months. So, after the war everybody would get out very quickly. Well, me, I was gonna be in there for

initially a four-year period, we thought. That's what it ended up being. But I was regular Navy. That was the difference between the regular and the Reserves. So, I joined the regular Navy. I went to boot camp. I was a terribly young-looking kid. I worked hard. I was kind of athletic, not very big though. I got through boot camp okay. They tested us and everybody was evaluated to see where they could be used best. They found that I had (laughs) I didn't have enough training to build on. Later on, I found out that kids in my category were called Category 4 or something like that. That means you're untrainable. You're not smart enough to try. So, they would make truck drivers out of you or let you clean toilets or something like that. So, there was jobs for you. So, I went in, took a test, didn't do very well. They said, "Okay, you just have to go aboard ship, then"—in the Navy they have a program you strike for a rate. That's strike, S-T-R-I-K-E. In other words, you identify an organization on the ship that has a certain kind of responsibility. You ask to go into that organization. They accept you or not. If they don't, then you stay a deckhand. Or we called a—you know, you're a gopher. If you strike for something, then you get some books and you start studying in their particular specialty, whether it's in guns or cooking or Corpsman or whatever. You work towards that end. That's just another way of getting advancement is by an awful lot of study. So, I did that. That's what I did in the Navy. I was overseas during the war in the Japanese area. Operating out of the Aleutian Islands. We were up there when the atomic bombs were detonated. Operating up there. Not long after that we were sent to Japan. We were part of the Northern American Fleet, which was gonna invade northern Japan. That's not the main invasion, but we were up there to—Japan is a bunch of islands. We would have been working in the northern islands. We were in Japan. We actually were—our ship went into a Japanese Naval base on northern Honshu Island. We were with—oddly enough I understand there were three surrenders of Japan. They were all on the same day in the same hour. But one was held in Tokyo. That's the one we all hear about and know about. Another one was held in Hokkaido Bay, Ominato Bay in the northern end of Honshu Island. That was for all the Northern Japanese Empire military forces. Then the Southern Japanese empire, which was in Singapore, they had a separate surrender down there, I understand. I never found this in writing, but that's what I understand. So, I was there for the surrender. We were there for a few months. Occupation of Japan. Got to meet the

people and all those kinds of things. Eventually we became involved in "let's get all these Americans home." So, our warship—I was on a cruiser—we stripped away all the guns and ammunition and all that kind of war stuff, and we started hauling troops from Asia and the islands in the Pacific back to the United States. In about six months, most of those people that had been on the warfront, hey, they were home getting ready to—they were out or getting ready to get out. I looked around and said, "Oh my gosh, I want to go home. The war is over." Then we had a little problem. They said, "You can't. You're a regular Navy. You've got a fixed enlisted till you're twenty-one." I said, "Yeah, but my mom needs me." They said, "Well, that's the way it is." I said, "What if I told you I was too young?" They said, "Well, you can tell us that and we'll check it out." So, I said, "Okay, I'm gonna write my folks." They said, "Yeah, that's the thing to do. Get them to request your release from the military because you're still less than seventeen years old." You had to be seventeen to be enlisted. So, I wrote my folks. A couple weeks later I got a letter from my mom and dad, and they said, "Dear son, we're glad you're okay and we're glad the war's over. We're glad you've got something to do since you chose not to go to school. Maybe the Navy can teach you a trade or something. It's sure good that you were able to get in the Navy. No, you wanted to be in the Navy so much, and all those shenanigans you pulled trying to get in the service, we're not going to intercede in any way. You just go ahead. You signed up; you fill your obligations." So, that came back to me. I went back to the skipper on the ship and said, "Hey, my folks said they'd sure like for me to be able to stay in the Navy." He says, "Okay, we'll just ignore the fact that you're too young. You can stay in the Navy until that enlistment. We're gonna have to change the date. That's gonna extend your four years to five years because we'll change the date of our birth." I said, "Oh my gosh, I don't wanna spend an extra year." "Okay, then let's just forget the whole thing and go on with your—what we've already got set up for you." So, I stayed in the Navy for the full—nearly four years. Got out, I was still nineteen years old. Had almost four years in the Navy. I was shaving by that time regularly. That ended my military career with the Navy after that period. In December 1948 I was released from the Navy.

KC: That's fascinating stuff. I wanna back up here a little bit, if I may. Let's go all the way back to basic training in the Navy. First of all, where did you go through basic training in the Navy?

RM: I went through basic training at the Naval Training Center in San Diego, California.

KC: In San Diego. Now, here you are sixteen years old. You're being thrown in with young men who are quite a bit older than you. Perhaps more experienced than you. What was the basic—

RM: —Also, at that time they had upped the draft age. They start off drafting at eighteen years, nineteen-year olds and twenty-year olds. Pretty soon they go through all those. Then they're up to twenty-five-year olds. Towards the end of the war, they were drafting people that were almost thirty-five years old who were married. So, they could get those fifteen million people they needed in the military.

KC: Well, what was that like for you? As a such a young boy, what was it like for you to be thrown in with the rest of these guys and training to fight a war with the Navy? that must have been incredible.

RM: Well, there was this huge cross section of different people. Most of us were there because we wanted to be. We thought that's where we should be. We thought we were helping our country. We considered it really an honor to serve. As long as they needed us for the war, we were glad to be there. An awful lot of them, as soon as that war was over, they said, "Let's lay down our guns and go home. We've had enough war. We'll go home and try to build lives for ourselves." Of course, I was awfully young even then when the war was over. I didn't have any prospects for going to school or anything like that at that time. I had only completed the ninth grade. Had never gone to high school. So, I was—well, I was one of those guys on that untrainable list. But they always need a few of those kinds of people around. You just learn to get the dirty jobs. Now, I was pretty ambitious. I worked hard while I was in the Navy. So, I was given some opportunities. I didn't get many of those of bad jobs because I—as soon as the war was over, I got out—I was on a gun crew. They were no longer gonna have guns, so I said I need a specialty where I can advance in the Navy. So, I became what they call a quartermaster in the Navy. Which means nothing about supply or anything like that.

Which the Army and Air Force, those people call it quartermasters. The quartermaster in the Navy is involved in working with the officers, having to do with controlling the ship. The captain is the skipper, and the skipper tells us where we're gonna go. There're officers that help him. I was one of the enlisted people that helped him there. So, I was on the bridge where the captain was and had various tasks up there to go on and do. When we were in port I was always on the quarterdeck. I had to keep logs and record a lot of things that was going on there. We'd become nav—assistants to the navigator. We actually steered the ship. There's a wheel—there's a steering wheel on the doggone battleship—the cruisers I was on. You go up there and you guide the ship. You're not commanding it; you're just following the orders of what to do next. Which way to go. So, I got in that. It was a very interesting field because you're there among the officers and you kind of get a—have an idea of what's going on around you. A lot of the people don't they're in other parts of the ship and they're counting supplies, or they're technicians, you know, electricians and carpenters and welders and pipe fitters and all that kind of stuff. They've got specialties. They run the big boilers on the ship. Well, they also have a deck crew. That's what I was associated with. They're the guys that does all the painting and the chipping and they're scrubbing the decks and all that kind of stuff. Keeping the ship painted and looking good and working well. So, we—it was opportunity if you worked hard, and I tried to work hard. But I didn't have a very good base. So, after for years I was glad to get out and try to find some more opportunity.

KC: Yeah. Well, what ships did you serve on during the war?

RM: My first ship was the USS *Pensacola,* CA-24. It was the oldest heavy cruiser in the American fleet. It had a sister ship of the same class, and it was the USS *Salt Lake City*. It was the CA-25. These two ships had an awful lot of action in World War II. They were old. They were expendable. They used them a lot. They were on duty when the war started. They were famous old fighting ships. Now after the war was over, then we had the atomic bomb tests, and I was involved in those. After the atomic bomb test, I had a cruise to China on a new cruiser. So, we spent about six months in Asia. Fascinating being in China at that time in 1947. Then we came back to the states. Got the ship all fixed up again. Next it was gonna go to Europe. Since I only—I had less than a year to go. They let me transfer off and they put me on Harry Truman's yacht. Now not his real

yacht, which was a *Williamsburg*. But I was on the USS *Missouri*. The *Missouri* was BB-63, the Battleship 63. It was one of our newest battleships. And good heavens I got to go to Europe and the Caribbean and other places in that. That was my last several months in the Navy. Now when I was in China I was on another cruiser. My second ship was the USS *Columbus*, named after the Ohio city. It was called the CA-74. It was a wonderful ship. It was a nice, newer cruiser. That was good duty and I enjoyed that. We went to a lot of places and saw a lot of things. So, I travelled a lot in the military. Enjoyed it. I considered staying in, but I would never advance very far because I didn't have the education. Or, I was limited, let's say. My opportunities were less than if I'd had an education.

KC: Sure. Tell me about your experiences during the war. What kind of action, if any, did you see aboard the *Pensacola*?

(Editor's Note: interviewee temporarily halts the interview to adjust his hearing aid)

RM: Now what kind of—what was it about?

KC: Oh, what kind of action did you see during the Second World War?

RM: I apologize, I'm just not getting that sentence.

KC: No, I'm sorry it's my fault. What kind of action, if any, did you see while you were aboard the *Pensacola* during World War II?

RM: In the Navy I never saw any military action. I was in the warzone. I was on a ship that was going—you know, doing things. But we were never in an action—we were never in an invasion. Or we never intercepted any enemy fleets. We fired at stuff in the air. You can't see some of these airplanes that are up there, so you fire into the air where they are. They're not supposed to be friends. Stop that. But that's as close as I'd come to real action. But when we landed in Japan at the surrender time was really interesting. I'll talk about that otherwise if you want to.

KC: No, please, tell me about it. I think this is fascinating information here. Tell me about this.

RM: Okay. I've got dates and all that stuff. I don't have it in front of me right now.

KC: That's okay.

RM: We were in the Northern Pacific Task Force. Gosh, I've even got a communication here some place sitting—oh, I've got piles of—here. I've got a copy of a communication. This comes from an admiral. Our admiral was Jack Fletcher. Vice Admiral (VADM) Jack Fletcher was the head of our particular group. Our group was called—the is September the 8th, 1945. This message was sent. In Navy terms this guy was the commander of that Northern Fleet. We entered the Northern Honshu at noon on September the 8th. Now there's a big bay on the northern end of the main island of Japan. It's called the Bay of Ominato. It was a huge Japanese Navy base. Well, our division—our group. A larger number of our ships went in there. We were among them. They had to lead us through the minefields that protected their country by a Japanese minesweeper. They took us in, and we anchored in the anchorage of this Ominato Naval Base. Then—here I'm trying to find here—anyway. Among the ships there, of course, was the old *Pensacola* and the *Salt Lake City* and some other old cruisers and stuff. Another class of cruisers and other supplies. Then there was a command ship. That's a special ship that usually has your—the big shot admiral on it and lots and lots of communications. That's where this guy was. Now, they held a peace treaty. The peace treaty was signed in Ominato Bay aboard this command ship. It's got a funny spelling. It's the Panamint, but I'm trying to find out—this thing is old. This is a copy of this communication that was sent out to all the ships in the fleet up there. He was—oh heavens, I'm not—it's so doggone—I think if I remember right, it was the AGC-11, A-G-C-11. But it was called the Panamint, P-A-N-A-M-I-T, or something like that. I apologize. I have to get my better glasses out to read it.

KC: No, that's okay.

RM: Okay. Anyways, this was the command ship there. It was there. The Japanese officials went aboard the command ship. They signed a treaty up there. At the same hour they were signing the treaty, and at the same hour they were signing the same surrender ceremony in Singapore. So, there's three of 'em going on. We were in one of them in northern Japan. While we're in there—this is a fairly large bay. But we were, oh, a couple thousand yards—which is a half mile or less from the beaches. We could see the people walking around over there. We couldn't see any people armed because all of a sudden, when we made arrangements for this peace treaty, the Japanese military just

evaporated. It was gone. These millions of soldiers that Japan had available were suddenly gone. Their weapons were stacked. They left their—they abandoned all their weapons, and they went home. So, we sat there and watched those people. A couple of days later they sent us to a northern—an island further north. A great big island up there called—oh, I'll think of it in a moment. Hokkaido. Hokkaido was the capital of that island. Hokkaido is the island, I should say. Hakodate was the capital. We looked at the people up there, then we went around to the west side of that northern island. There's a couple of cities over that way, Otaru and Sapporo. They said, "Okay. Now you guys are gonna be able to go ashore here." So, we did go ashore at Ominato after they signed the treaty. Well, let me just tell you about that. That's quicker. At Ominato they said, "Okay, you can go ashore, but you can't carry any weapons. You can go ashore, but you absolutely will not molest any Japanese people. You will not confiscate any of their materials. If you want a souvenir or something, you have to buy it at their prices. And you're welcome to go over and look around." So, we went over. We got off our landing boats. Walked up and down the streets and we'd pass the Japanese. They were dressed kind of funny because they wore funny clothes. The people wouldn't even look at us. We just walked by 'em. Then after we'd passed, they'd kind of look back to see what you were doing you'd kind of look back to see what they were doing. After a while, somebody finally decided we could smile, so we smiled. They occasionally would smile back. Then we would go in some of the stores and look around and try to talk to the people. We couldn't, but we let them know we were looking for souvenirs. By golly, I bought a fishing reel for my dad and a couple of other things. After a while we got so, we could actually—not communicate pretty well with the people the streets, but we could smile at them and indicate that we were friendly. They would do the same. Now when we went to the next city up in northern Japan, the big one, we started—they told us, "Go ahead." They had an awful good beer up in northern Honshu—err, northern—on Hokkaido Island. I think the beer was called Sapporo, and they still make it today. They boys would go in and start drinking beer. Then they would ask you, "Do you want some of this?" They'd show you what they're trying to sell you in the bar. It would be a dried fish or cheese. The dried fish look awful, particularly with flies on it. And the cheese looked slimy. But you would drink one of these beers, and gosh, they had awfully good

beer. Really good beer. You'd drink one—less than a quart, and oh, you're feeling awfully good. Then somebody'd say, "hey, did you try that cheese yet?" "No, have you tried it?" "No. Let's try some." After a while we were eating that slimy cheese (laughs) and brushing the flies off the dried fish and eating the fish. We were just enjoying ourselves in Japan. I want back a couple years later, and I saw some other very impressive things then. But that was initially where—this is right—the date where the peace treaty was signed and stuff like that when we were over in Japan. The people had been—the war had come to them. They were working hard trying to live and trying to survive and trying to get things reorganized and so on. It was very interesting.

KC: Yeah. Now after the war you're involved in helping move the service personnel back to the United States. You said that was about a six month process you were involved with that?

RM: No, we were at Northern Japan in September, and we left I think about—near the 1st of December. Maybe late November or something like that. Went from there to Iwo Jima, where my ship had been hit pretty bad just before I went aboard it. We brought back a bunch of Marines. That was after the war was over. Brought them back to the United States. I've got stories about that (laughs). I got all these crazy stories that took place. We were leaving Iwo Jima with a load of Marines coming back to the United States. My job was to go through the ship every fifteen degrees of longitude because we're changing the clocks to the local time on the ship. My job was to wind and keep all the clocks on the ship operating properly. I wasn't a clock maker, but I set the times and kept them wound. I was going through at midnight—that's usually when we set our clocks. I was going through and I got sick. I thought, "Oh my gosh, the weather's kinda rough and I've never been seasick before. I don't know why I'm sick." I stopped by the sick bay and knocked on their doggone door. Some guy says, "What do you want, Mack?" I said, "Well, I'm kinda sick. I've never been nauseated like this before." They said, "Well, you're just seasick. Here, take these pills. Come back at sick call if you don't feel well." So, I got a couple of capsules. I had never seen a capsule before. I've seen pills, but not capsules. It looks like it was made out of plastic with stuff inside. You could see through it. So, I went into a restroom—we called 'em heads in the Navy. I looked at that and said, "How in the world do you take this? I guess I gotta break this thing open

and take that powder that's in there." So, I broke this capsule and—I really should have eaten the pill—eaten the capsule. But I didn't know that. So, I broke the capsule. Dumped the powder in my hand and just sort of licked it up with my tongue. Then I went through the ship and a little later on I got nauseated. I did get nauseated. I went up and down. Down in the bottom of the ship, up to the top of the ship, all over. Got all the clocks set. The next morning, I was really ill. When they came around, I said, "Hey, can I stay in my bunk for a little while? I'm really sick. I can't—I can hardly get around here. I'm ill." They said, "No, we've got general drills—all kinds of practice drill all morning because we've gotta teach these Marines that just came aboard what they do in emergencies. You have to be in your station." I said, "But I can't. I can't do anything." They said, "Well, go down to sick bay now because the drills are gonna start in a few minutes." I went down to sick bay again and said, "Hey, I'm sick." They said, "Sorry, we're gonna have drills. You have to go to your stations and when it's over, come back." I said, "I can't. I can't get back up"—we don't have stairways on ships. You have—it looks like a ladder. You go up and down ladders. I couldn't get back up out of sick bay there. So, they started having drills. I just laid on the deck in front of the sick bay door. Which is called a port in the Navy. They had all their drills for a couple of hours, and when they came back, I was laying there on the deck. They tried to wake me up and I wasn't very—feeling very good and I didn't know what was going on. They took me in the sick back. In just a little while they had me on the operating table and I had my appendix out, it was about to burst.

KC: Oh, is that right?

RM: Yeah. So, after it was all over our medical officer who did the surgery was helped by an enlisted man. They did the surgery and then the medical officer came over to me after I woke up. He says, "You know, that's pretty stupid of you not coming down to sick bay when you're sick." I said, "I did." He says, "You know, if you'd waited much longer, we would have thrown you out of the port hole"—meaning throw you over the side of the ship, you're dead— "and kept your appendix." Instead, they threw the appendix over the side, and I got to stay.

KC: (laughs) Well, I'm glad it worked out the way that it did.

RM: I was in sick all the way back to the United States. When we got to Pearl Harbor we stopped there. It takes a few days to go from Japan and the Orient to Hawaii.

They said, “Hey, you wanna go up on deck and see what—have you been to Pearl Harbor?” I said, “No.” They said, “Well, you wanna go up and see what that area looks like in Hawaii?” I said, “Yeah.” So, they put me in a wire basket and carried me up these stairs and let me lay up on the front of the ship called the focsle. I couldn’t sit up. I had to lay in this basket and look over my shoulder. I could see some palms in the distance, and that was my first trip to Hawaii. We got back to the United States, discharged our crew. By then I was getting up. They kept you in the sick bay for a week or so before I was able to get up and get around. I can make that into a big, long hour-long story. But anyway, I got back, and they said, “Well, sorry. You’re ready to go back on duty now. The ship’s leaving tomorrow to go back to Guam, and you can go back with ship.” So, we did. We went back to Guam, picked up another load of Marines. We were in Guam on Christmas day, my birthday. They let us go to shore there. We drank a little beer and looked at—the war had been over there for about six months. We got to see where all the invasion had taken place and all that kind of stuff. The most interesting thing about Guam, I guess, was the fact that the Red Cross was already there, and they had a USO. So, we walked over to this USO, which was right on the beach. They gave us a Christmas gift, a little package with chewing gum and tobacco and a couple of things—deck of cards in it. Then they gave us coffee and donuts. Now, I should say gave it. That’s the term they use. But I got ‘free’ coffee and donuts for a quarter. So anyway, the Red Cross was there to meet us. They were nice. Then I came back to the United States, and that was the end of those kinds of things. Then we go on to other ships and the same things.

KC: You also spent time in China, you said.

RM: I’m sorry?

KC: You also spent time in China, correct?

RM: Oh my. I just—I’m not making that—

(Editor’s Note: interviewer temporarily halts the interview to adjust his equipment)

RM: Okay, after World War II we did have a bunch of atomic bomb tests. There were a bunch of it. We had two atomic bomb tests at Bikini. I was there for those. Then when we come back from Bikini, the next year, in 1947 our ship—and I was on the USS *Columbus* at that time—was told that we were gonna go to China on an Asian tour—err,

Asian assignment. It included China and Japan. So, I was on this new ship—err, not a new ship, but with a new crew. We prepared for and we went to China. It was a fascinating thing. We were gone for about six months. Our initial station was in Shanghai. Now, I didn't know—I didn't know much about China. But Shanghai is not on the Yangtze River. It looks like it is when you look on a map, but Shanghai is not. The Yangtze is a huge, long river. Major river in China—one of them. You go into the Yangtze estuary and go up this Yangtze a short distance and you come to a small river. This small river goes over and serves Shanghai and some places above it. Shanghai was a huge city. I can't remember how large it was at the time, but I think I've heard the term five million or something like that. This was 1947. The communists were on the offensive throughout much of China. They were not too far from Shanghai, but they hadn't taken Shanghai. There were lots and lots of people that were fleeing from the community. These weren't just Chinese. These were—Shanghai was famous for its huge Russian colony. Later on, some of us sailors found that, and we used to like to go to the Russian clubs because they had American music and orchestras, and a lot of good vodka and things like that there. So, we liked the Russian clubs there. But Shanghai was—the streets were filled with people living in the streets because of all these people that were fleeing from the communists into Shanghai. It was still under control of the Nationalist Forces. The skipper of my ship had been the Navy commander of China during World War II. He had spent a dozen or more years in China in that area. He was a specialist in China. Many of his assignments related to China. His name was Admiral—err, when he first went to China, he was a captain. He was CAPT Milton E. Miles. Later on, he became Commander of the US forces in China for the building up of the Chinese Army, which would fight against Japan. Now, there was a big political deal going on at the time. Like so many times we have things going on that are just ridiculous. But at that time the Army and the Navy were at war with each other. We were at war with the Japanese, but the Army and Navy were against each other almost. The Army wanted control of China and all the Chinese military that were against the Japanese. And this Navy guy, this Navy captain was given this assignment by the American forces in Washington. So, the Army was working out of Burma and out of—well, other countries in that area. I'm trying to think which ones especially, but Burma was one of them. The Army had control of

essentially all of the military flights that were going from India—India was the one I was trying to think of. We would send supplies to India. They would truck 'em over on the Burma Road. Or fly them over the hump into China, and we're building up military there. But since the Army was flying all the supplies in, they wanted to send them to Army bases. They wanted to have Chinese Army people assigned to them. So, we had this fight between the Army and the Navy about who's in command. This Admiral Miles then, was caught in this thing. He was a pretty competent guy. You'll find if I talk very long that I really admired him. Tremendous guy. But he was there. They were fighting against the Japanese in various places. Our Army and the Army Air Forces were all under the Army, which was out of Burma and India. So, this was an awful mess over there. Well, this Admiral Miles, after the—well, just before the war was over, they transferred him back to the United States. General Marshall, who was one of our top military people in Washington, came up with a great idea. When Japan surrendered at the end of the war, I understand that General Marshall made arrangements with Mao Tse-Tung, who was the head of China, and Zhou En-lai I think was the other guy. That they would—the Japanese would surrender all their weapons to the communists. General Chiang Kai-Shek was the head of the Chinese forces which were allied with the American forces, would not get those weapons. So now that's just completely contrary to any common sense. But that's one of the reasons, I guess, that we such a mess right after the war with—the Communists were able to do much better than the Nationalists because the Communists got the weapons from the Japanese. So, this Admiral Miles was the commander of the Navy during the war. Just before the end of the war they sent him back to the United States. They let the Army have the run of things over there. I guess Miles kinda came back. The Navy lost face and a bunch of things like that took place. After the war, two years after now, the same captain—now, this Navy admiral. He'd been promoted to admiral. When the war was over, they made him a captain again. That was his permanent rank. So, he became captain of the ship that I was on. We went back to China for this six-month tour. He was really at home in China. He spoke Chinese. He had spent all these years in China. He knew the Chinese people. He knew all these people that were involved. He had family members on the Communist side and on the Nationalist side. They were cousins—through all that mess over there. He was—this Admiral Miles was familiar with all this

stuff. He talked to us—our crew about how he liked the Chinese people, and how he thought we ought to treat the Chinese. Never treat the Chinese bad. So, as sailors we were impressed with this. Because we're—you know, we start to go to a foreign port. That foreign port wants our money. Guys, do what you have to do, but go easy on us. We want your money. That's Panama and that's wherever you go in the world, wherever the Navy goes a lot. But Admiral Miles was a great guy. We were there with him for those six months. So, I was there in China. We were able to run around Shanghai and visit a lot of things and see things and do things. The United States military had taken over a great big racetrack in the middle of Shanghai and made that our military recreation center while we were there. That was being run by the US military for our recreation. Gold courses, soccer fields, tennis courts, bowling alleys and all that kind of stuff was taken over by the US military for the advantage of sailors like myself. So, we went over there. China was a fascinating place to be and see and do and wander around and look at all the things going on there.

KC: Yeah, I bet.

RM: So, this captain had a great influence on his crew. We respected him a lot. He later on became an admiral again and was an admiral in Europe doing things over there after he left that ship. Anyway, that was the Chinese thing in short.

KC: I wonder if you might also tell me about another incredibly interesting piece of history in which you're involved here. And that is the Bikini Island atomic test. Can you tell me about that? How did that take place and that you were involved?

RM: Say that again for me, please.

KC: The atomic test on Bikini. Can you tell me about this?

RM: Okay, the atomic bomb test. It was after the war was over. The United States had dropped a couple of atomic bombs in Japan, and they had exploded one prior to that in New Mexico. That was a test thing. Then when we dropped our two bombs, that just about was our arsenal. But the Japanese surrendered. So, after the war, we're demobilizing. We've got this huge military investment. We haven't settled things with Russia yet. They're our ally, supposedly. We hadn't really conquered—well, we had defeat Japan and we had defeated Germany and Italy, and those that were associated with them. But we wanted to demobilize. We wanted to not just throw all this military

equipment away or give it to our enemies. So, they decided we need to determine how effectively these atomic bombs can be used against a modern military like we had at the end of the war. So, we took many of ships—we had seventy-five target ships were identified and sent to Bikini. Oh, I've forgotten the number of thousands of people that were sent over there to support this huge test thing. Initially it was set up as three different tests. There would be an air blast. There would be a slightly underwater blast. Then there was gonna be a third test, and it was gonna be in the summer of 1946. So, after we came back from carrying troops, we took our ship into Long Beach, where we normally were, and they sent us soon thereafter to the San Francisco area where our ship was stripped and made ready to become a target ship for that test. It was one of many. Then we left, went to Bikini. We were put in a target area where they stationed these seventy-five ships in this big bay area—in this atoll, Bikini. In July, the first test they dropped an atomic bomb from an airplane. It went off about 500 feet above the water in the target area. We were probably—oh, I don't know—twelve, fifteen miles away. We were not allowed to watch it because of the brilliant flash and the radiation from that. So, the bomb went off. It did a lot of damage to some ships. The USS *Nevada* was an American battleship. It was the center of the target area. My ship was not very far from *Nevada*. There were other big ships there. There were German ships that we had taken and captured. There were Japanese ships that we had captured and took there and tested them on them too. After a few days, they found that some of those ships, people could go back on them. So, part of our crew from the *Pensacola*, we went back and lived on the *Pensacola.*

KC: Is that right?

RM: Yeah. We went back and stayed on the doggone thing. There was no cooking or anything there, but we stayed on the *Pensacola* for a period of time. While the whole fleet was getting ready for the second test. Then they were evaluated what was happening on the first test during this period of time. The second test they positioned an atomic bomb—I think it was ninety feet under the surface in the lagoon, where those ships were in the center. It was detonated. We got to watch it. I think we were about twelve miles on that one. We saw this huge shaft of water come up out of where those ships were. You could see ships actually in that huge tower of water. It sunk a bunch of ships. It radiated

the water real bad. After a while, some people went back on the ships. Now, we didn't go back to live on it. I think I went—I can't even remember whether I went back on the ship now. I'd have to go back and read my things, I wrote about it years ago. Anyway, we were there for that. Then they got so much information they decided, "Hey, we don't even need a third blast. We'll be years analyzing all the data we've got." So, all of us were exposed to some radiation. They were very careful to try to avoid anyone being over radiated. They had some pretty ideas how much radiation a person could take and what the results would be if you got over exposed. We wore what they called a dosimeter that recorded the amount of radiation that you had received while that dosimeter was around your neck. So, we went through that kind of thing. We eventually came back in August, I believe, of 1947—err, in August of 1946. Then whenever we got back to the states, why I was transferred to a new cruiser in Long Beach—err, yeah, Terminal Island, California. Then I was on a new ship. Then that new ship is the one that went to China. So, that was 1946 for the atomic bomb test. It was pretty exciting.

KC: Yeah, yeah.

RM: Some of us are still probably affected some way by that. I've been lucky. A lot of people died. They didn't die—there was not many—well, I shouldn't even talk about it because I don't know. All that stuff is released. I'm involved in a Million Man Group that's being checked to determine how that radiate affected this whole group of people.

KC: Now, have you had any sort of negative effects from this?

RM: I'm sorry?

KC: I'm sorry. Have you had any negative effects from the radiation to which you were exposed?

RM: Well, we don't know. What is your—I was also exposed to that Agent Orange in Vietnam.

KC: Right, and we can get to that later too when we get to Vietnam.

RM: (speaking at the same time) (inaudible) my experience over there. (inaudible) not long after they came back. But somehow or another I didn't get exposed to the same amount they did, so it hasn't—I don't think it's bothered me. But on the other hand, I have some physical things. Like this hearing thing. We're not sure whether this is from

flying jets or bombers, whether it's some way affected by atomic energy or radiation or Orange or whatever it was.

KC: Okay, when you're finished with your time there in China you come back to the United States. What's the next step in your career?

RM: Well, we came back to the United States. We went to Seattle, Washington. Spent a winter there in Dry Dock. We were informed that our ship would be going to Europe. Mediterranean duty. We had to be—you have to overhaul these doggone ships every once in a while. It had to be brought up to standards. So, then we—after the winter in Seattle, we went to Panama. Into the Caribbean. Operated down there for a while. Then we went into Norfolk, Virginia. I was transferred from the *Columbus* to the Battleship *Missouri* in Norfolk, Virginia, because I only had about seven months or so to go. Six or seven more months to go in the Navy. So, I was on the *Missouri*. She was the prize of Harry Truman, who is from Missouri, of course. He came aboard the ship. Everybody liked him. He was quite a guy. Even to an old conservative like me, he was one of the best presidents we ever had. (laughs) He didn't put up with a lot of nonsense that other people gave us. But he played cards and was rather outspoken on a lot of things. But anyway, we were on the Missouri. We went as far north as—along the East Coast of North America. Up between Greenland and Canada. Oh, Davis Strait is up there. We were there one day, and we measured the temperature of the water. I think it was twenty-nine degrees or something like that. Then they turned this battleship around and made a highspeed run for the Caribbean. A few days later we got down in the Caribbean, the temperature was up close to eighty in the water. So, it was—go from one contrast to the other. It was rather interesting. Then we went back into Norfolk—err, went back to Annapolis. Picked up a load of Navy Academy plebs—err, not plebs. That's a first year. Anyway, they're cadets. We took them for their summer cruise to the Mediterranean. Where we went, we visited Portugal. We visited North Africa and Southern France. From there we went back to the Caribbean. Now, all these little funny things happen to a person when you're traveling like that. About midpoint in the Atlantic Ocean, the captain of the Missouri said, "Okay, avast all—stop the ship here. Stop the ship right here." He sounded swimming call. There's a bugle—there's a bugle thing they play when a swimming call is on in the Navy. So, that meant that we stopped of the middle of the Atlantic, and that we

all had to go down to find our swimming suits. We could go up and go swimming. It was a beautiful day. The water was just like a mirror. And we did. We went swimming in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. It's always fun to add a little bit. Sometimes it's not exactly the way it happened. I was standing up on the side of the ship and they say, "Oh, you can jump." I said, "Ooh, it's a long way down there to the water." "Ah, go feet first. Make sure you don't jump on somebody that's already in the water." So, I finally decided "well, I'll jump." So, I jumped, and I went down. I don't know how deep you go, but you go down a few feet below the surface. When I came up, I of course was splashing around there and getting my head up so get to breathe and trying to get the water out of my eyes so I could see. Right there in front of me was a Lincoln log. Now, a Lincoln log in Navy terms like that—you have to dispose of your waste on those warships. They don't carry around big septic tanks and then go back to the land someday and dump them someplace. In the Navy, you just dump it in the water. You don't save it. Unless you're in a port, then you have to save it for a while. Then when you go out of the port you dump it in the ocean. Our great cesspools, the oceans. So, when I came up there was this Lincoln log—feces. (both laughing) Right in front of my face.

KC: Wow.

RM: That was my experience in the middle of the ocean.

KC: (laughs) Well, certainly a very memorable, if not particularly positive, I guess.

RM: Okay, then we went back to the Caribbean. We were down in the Virgin Islands and swimming and stuff. There we had sharks around us when we were swimming off ship. They had these gunnery ranges around the world. You go over and you come to one of these areas and you shoot into an abandoned island someplace and run through some of your military exercises. So, back to the states again. I was in the states in midsummer on one of those trips and decided to take a leave to visit a cousin of mine. Now, he and I grew up together in Fairview, Utah. We went in the Navy about a week apart. We went to boot camp at the same time. Just about. We weren't in the same group, but we were just a few days apart there. We both were assigned to cruisers our first ship. He went to the East Coast, and I went to the West Coast. He served his minority cruise as well, but he was older. So, he got out before I did. He was in Florida

then. He met a girl and they got married. So, in the summer of 1948 I decide, “Well, I’m gonna go down and visit this cousin of mine down in Florida.” I hadn’t been to Florida yet. So, I took a week off, or ten days, and took a bus and went down to Florida. They say—his wife was a telephone operator. She says, “You come down here and visit us. I’ll have you a different date every night.” She was a telephone instructor for the women. So, I went down there. By golly, to make it short, they introduced me to a girl. We spent almost every evening together. By the end of this vacation, we had made plans that by the—when I get out of the Navy in December, if we still felt so inclined, I’d go back down there, and we’d get married. Boy, this is fast. But anyway, I did. I got out of the Navy in December in 1948. Immediately went down to Florida. About three days later, my wife—this young lady and I went to Georgia, got married. Met her family and all that kind of stuff. I went to work in Florida. Worked in a paper mill down there. But one of the first things she asked me, she says, “How are you going to support me?” I mean, “how are we gonna live?” Here you’re out of the Navy—you get a little money when you got out. I had been saving my money all the time I was in the Navy. I said, “Well, I’ve got a few bucks.” She says, “Yeah, but how you gonna make enough money for us to live? I have a family.” I said, “Well, gosh. We can go back to Utah, and I can be a farmer.” She says, “Well, I grew up as a sharecropper’s daughter in Georgia.” The joke is—her brother was killed in World War II. So, her father needed help on the sharecropping. So, her brother had been the one that did all the plowing for the cotton and all the stuff they raise down south. But he joined the Army and was killed. So, when he died, dad says, “what are we gonna do now?” He was beginning to get crippled from sugar diabetes. She says, “Well Dad, I can plow.” So, she started plowing. The joke is she used the mule’s ass for a compass until she was eighteen years old. (both laugh) Well, that meant she worked on the farm. She did a lot of plowing and working there. When she finally got to be eighteen, she told her dad, “I’m going to go get a job down in Florida and become a telephone operator.” So, she did. That’s how I met her is through this cousin’s wife who introduced us. We’ve been married for sixty-four years now.

KC: Oh, that’s outstanding.

RM: Sixty-four years. My gosh. My wife is my age. So, we’re about the same age.

KC: That's incredible. Well Dr. Mower, why don't we stop there for today. We can pick this up at another time.

RM: Yeah, yeah. I'm worn out (laughs).

KC: Sure.

Interview with Roland Mower
Session [2] of [3]
Date: August 14, 2013

KC: This is Kelly Crager continuing and Oral History interview with Dr. Roland Mower. Today is 14 August 2013. I am in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of Texas Tech University, and Dr. Mower is kind enough to join me by telephone again from his home in Mount Pleasant, Utah. Dr. Mower, when we left off last time you had just separated from the Navy and were recently married. If you would, pick up the narrative at that point. What happens next in your life—in your career?

RM: Okay, well as soon as I was discharged from the Navy, I—which was the 17th, I think, of December in 1948. The next day I was on a bus on my way to Florida. I got down there the next day and met the young lady I was engaged to. We reconfirmed that we planned to get married as soon as we could. So, we had some friends down there said, "Well look, the easiest way to get married down here is you just drive from Jacksonville, Florida up to Folkston, Georgia. Because they have a guy that's got a little booth there on the road. You just drive up to that booth and by golly, he'll marry you in about ten minutes and"—he charges you quite a bit though. It was a high price. It was ten dollars to get married. So, we were married. We went back to Florida. We had—in a day or two preparing for this, we had rented an apartment that belong to the mayor of Jacksonville. So, we were living in one of his apartments. So, we had an apartment. That's where we stayed for our honeymoon. My wife was working still. She continued to work. I started looking for work. That's the way things started out. On the 23rd of December we were married.

KC: What is your wife's name?

RM: Her name is—well, she has a long name. Her first name was Nona. Her second name was Iva. Her third name was Lee. Her surname was Hall. So, she had the four names. Then we added Mower to that. So, we're all set up.

KC: (laughs) Right. Well, what kind of work did you find?

RM: Well, it took me about a month to get a job. I went to work at a paper mill. I've forgotten the name of the paper mill, but it was located on the outskirts of Jacksonville. I didn't know what a paper mill was. But in order to get a job down there, you just about needed to know somebody. Well, it turned out that we knew somebody

that worked in that mill. He says, “Oh, I can get you a job.” So, he went over and talked to ‘em. Next day I get a call and says, “Hey, you’re hired. Report for duty.” So, I started working rotating shifts in a paper mill. Actually, the paper mill—there’s two parts to it. There’s a pulp mill, that’s where they grind up the trees and make the pulp that they make the paper out of later. Then there’s the board mill. That’s where they actually make the paper. I worked in the board mill. I just wanna say that was a real experience. It terrified the dickens out of me.

KC: Why’s that?

RM: Oh, it was (laughing)—first of all, the place smelled terrible. If you’ve ever driven through the south and gone by a paper mill, maybe thirty miles from it, all of a sudden there’s a terrible stench and you wonder what in the world is that awful smell? Well, that’s the paper mill. That’s actually the pulp mill where it stinks so bad. But they’re right next door to each other. But it overwhelms your sense to the point where after a while you don’t even notice it. But it was a terrible smell. My job was—I was the gopher on about a seven-man crew, something like that. We run the mill. That included taking the pulp from the pulp plant. Running it over to the board mill. Running it through all of the big machines that eventually rolls it out. We were making paper—the width of a sheet of paper—oh my gosh. It seems to me like it was about twelve feet. Twelve feet across this thing. It run continuously. It came off the end. They take this pulp, spray it on a big belt. The water that’s in the pulp starts to drain out of it. Then the pulp begins to—it’s hard to—begins to adhere to itself. It becomes matted. As it goes through, eventually they end—it enters a bunch of huge rollers. Great big rollers that are sometimes three high. It goes through these rollers, squeezing out the water and heating it, and forming it into paper. After it’s gone through several of these stacks of rollers, it comes out of the end awful fast. So, they have to have a way to have that machine running continually. That’s where the crew of men are standing down there and they’re running the darn thing. Now, about the first thing I noticed, all the men on my crew were missing fingers. Some of them were missing whole—all their fingers. The reason for that is they got their fingers caught in these huge rollers. I don’t know, they’re maybe four foot in diameter. It’s, oh, fifteen feet long or something like that. You get your finger caught in there and it just yanked everything off till it came to a big, thick bone. Usually the end of the hand—

usually where the fingers fit in onto the hand. It'd pull all the fingers off up to there. And usually take the thumb with it. I didn't like that. They told me, the said, "Hey, when there's a problem and you have to go between those big stacks of rollers and you're moving paper trying to get it either into the basement because you've got a break in the continuous flow, and you have to restart it again. Or, when you're in there checking things, never put your hands up very close to those rollers because those rollers get a finger and they're gone." So, it scared the dickens out of me. There was a lot of static electricity in there. And it was awfully hot. Those rollers were steam heated. So, you're sort of baking the paper as it goes through these rollers. Every once in a while, this big, long strings of paper would break. They wouldn't even shut the machine down. They'd just get pushing all that material trying to put it through the rollers. If the rollers broke, then you had to push it into the basement under you. In the meantime, you had to start a new—the roller again. You had to get a start and get it through the roller. Then thread it through all those doggone rollers again. So, it was pretty terrifying.

KC: Yeah, I would bet so. How long did you have this job?

RM: (speaking at the same time) (inaudible) one time, after I had been there a few days. We just got out of one of those things. He says, "You look like you're scared to death. I says, "I am. I am scared." He says, "That's good. You won't get hurt if you're scared." Once you start going in there and thinking you know what you're doing and you can master the thing, why then that's when you take a couple of chances and then you have an accident. So, he made me feel real good. I was the guy with the fingers. The newest guy on the crew.

KC: How long did you—

RM: About three months.

KC: Three months. Did you—

RM: Yep, about three months. We rotated shifts. So, we were working about seven days, then we'd have a day or two off. Then we'd work—change shifts and work another shift. Work a week, then we'd change shifts again. Then we would have maybe three days off in a row. Then we'd start with another—with a third or fourth. There were three shifts. You just switched from shift to shift at the end of each week. That's not my idea of how I want to spend my life, working in one of those things. So, my wife said,

"Well, what are you gonna do?" I says, "Well, you know, I don't like this. Let's go back to Utah and farm." She says, "Well, I don't want to farm. That's where I grew up as a sharecropper's daughter down in Georgia. I don't want really to be a farmer's wife." That's hard, hard work. They'd gone through the Depression and everything like the rest of us in the country. You know, I didn't realize that we were all so poor. But we were poor. We didn't have a car. We had to ride the bus wherever we went. You don't have much in the way of—we were poor. With both of us working we began to save our money for whatever we were going to do. She suggested— "What are you doing?" I say, "Well, we can go to Utah and farm." She says, "I don't want to farm." I said, "Well, my dad's got a farm out there. We can work on that." No, she didn't want to do that. "Why don't you go to school?" I says, "Well, I dropped out of school, really. I only finished the ninth grade. I'm not too good of a student." She says, "Well, you ought to be able to find something you can do. What did you do in the Navy?" Well, I reviewed that. I used to drive battleships and cruisers. I was a helmsman. I was actually—the title was quartermaster. I assisted the navigator and did a few things, but I didn't get much training that was—you could use on the outside. Because there were no civilian battleships or cruisers. Thought about going in the Merchant Marines, but that's an awful lot of separation there because you're gone around the world on those merchant ships. I decided not to do that. The Army offered me a job being a sailor on an Army ship. Heck, that's—I may as well stay in the Navy if I was gonna do that. So, we started looking in the newspaper there. We saw there were ads for kids going to school using the GI Bill. One of the ads talked about a school in Chicago, where they had—let's just call 'em three different majors. Three different emphases. I remember the one I took was called Aircraft and Industrial Instrumentation. That was a school for technicians.

KC: What was the name of this school?

RM: Refrigeration, and then they had other specialties. I don't remember just what they were. But that one, aircraft instrumentation sounded like a pretty good one. So, we checked into it. By golly, the school said they would accept me. We decided we can go up and go to school on the GI Bill.

KC: What was the name of the school?

RM: The name of the school was Industrial Training Institute. It was in Chicago, Illinois. It turned out to be a pretty good school. I went up there and—well, after—we took about a three month wait for the next class to begin. Vacation to Utah, so she got to meet all the Utah folks and see the farm. She was glad she was leaving that. We went to Chicago. I remember we took all of our stuff—everything we had was in a suitcase. We bought a bus ticket at Jacksonville, Florida and rode it to Utah. Oh, that's a long trip in a bus.

KC: (laughs) Yes, sir.

RM: That's the way we travelled in those days. Enjoyed it. Then we went to—after our visit in Utah we did all kind of interesting things there. But we got on the bus and went to Chicago. When we got there, the school had an apartment for us. A little one-room apartment with a private bath in a four-story building. Showed us how to ride the Elevated (the "L", rapid transit system). It was very inexpensive to ride around Chicago. It cost very, very—let's just say it almost cost pennies. There weren't pennies, but there was not very much. The fare was low. You could go anywhere in Chicago for, I don't know, a quarter or something like that. So, we started school at the Industrial Training Institute. It was just under a year of schooling. I met a young man who was loading his car. He lived in the apartment building where we were moving into. I say, "Are you graduating from that school?" He said, "Yeah, I just graduated. I'm in the graduating class." "Well, what did you do?" Well, he went through in refrigeration. He said, "I like the school. I feel pretty good now I'll get a good job someplace working in refrigeration." I said, "Oh, that's good." He says, "What are you gonna do?" I told him and he says, "Well, that sounds like a good one. I don't know anything about it." I said, "You know, I'm concerned because I don't have much formal education. I actually completed most of the ninth grade." He says, "Well—" he says, "You're dealing with a bunch of GIs that are going to school. Many of these GIs were not particularly good in school. That's one of the reasons they joined the military."—The other reason was that we had a war going—"But what they do is when they get in this school up there, they spend their time studying rather than goofing around." I say, "Well, I'm pretty good with the goofing around." He said, "Well, okay. That's not what you're there for." He says, "I was not particularly a good student," but he says, "I graduated number one in my class." And I—"oh, gee, that

gives me some hope. Maybe I can get through it." So, he says, "Sure you can, but work hard. Study every damn day. Just study, study, study. That's the secret." "Oh, okay." He says, "You're gonna work?" I said, "Yeah." "Whatchu gonna do?" "I have no idea what I'll do. I'll just have to find something kind of supplement my income from the GI Bill." So, I went to school. First day of class the head of the school came in and talked to us and says, "Okay, you're here. You're all set up now. When you came in, we had an apartment for ya. Here's the schedule and you know what you're gonna do. Now, is there anyone in this group who wants a job?" We all raised our hand. They said, "Okay, we don't have but one job today to offer you. It's not ours, but the community knows there are good students here and that they wanna work. But I've got one job and it's to be a pizza cook at a pizzeria"—they called them in Chicago. "Anybody here have experience as a pizza cook?" Nobody raised their hand. "Anybody wanna go try this out?" I said, "What's a pizza cook?" They said, "Well it's a person that works in an Italian restaurant and cooks a particular thing called pizza. It's usually kind of a showy thing. In Chicago you work out in the front window of the restaurant and people can stand there and watch you make pizza. Then when they finish—when you bring it out of the oven, they go back in and sit down and eat their pizza." I said, "I don't know how to do that. I don't even know what it is." Nobody wanted that job. The guy said, "Gosh, this is not a bad job. We've had a lot of students go to this place and work, and they were all satisfied. You sure none of you want the job?" I finally raised my hand and I said, "Well, I need a job, but I just don't know a thing about that. I was a baker for a short time in the Navy." They say, "Well, this is not like that, but you learn. You learn fast. You'll be learning from an old master Italian restaurant owner." I said, "Well, okay." So, I went out there. I took the job. It was fun. It was not hard. He showed me—you know, there's a few steps to making pizza. We only made three different kinds. I learned that pizza was awfully good to eat. I could work. I'd get off work, catch a doggone bus or—there was all sorts of transportation in Chicago. Go up from one side of the town to the other pretty quickly. It was a big city. Inexpensive. There was Elevateds and there were subways. There were busses, and well—so, I could get to work pretty quick, and I could work until after midnight. Get home and go to school the next day. So, I started that. I was kinda terrified, but my wife said, "I'll help you." She did. She had me studying every doggone day. When she wasn't

in the telephone office working, she would go directly out to my place where I was working up in the north end of Chicago. Go sit in the kitchen and talk to the people who owned the place. We'd go home together. She took a lot of interest in—my wife did—a lot of interest in what I was doing. It was just another honeymoon. Another good working honeymoon. So, we had a good time for the year in Chicago. I felt pretty good about the classes because I started doing fairly well on the tests. Actually, when I graduated, I graduated number one in the class.

KC: I wonder if you might tell me about the—

RM: (speaking at the same time) I couldn't believe it.

KC: I wonder if you might tell me about the schooling itself. What kind of curriculum. What kind of classes were you taking?

RM: Now, say that again, please?

KC: I'm sorry. I wonder if you might tell me about the school itself. What kind of classes were you taking? What was the curriculum.

RM: Okay, the school itself. It was an accredited school for technical training. I think there were different schools located across the United States. I think it was probably established during the war to train technicians for the military or something like that. Then after the war it seemed like a good thing to be doing to put—I don't know. Maybe one of the things was electrician. Maybe one of them was welding or something. I don't know what the other specialties were. But when you came out of it, you were a working technician. You could work in your field. I had to learn how to use all sorts of equipment. First of all, instrument technicians are involved in a lot of smaller instruments are used to control and monitor machines. A watch is an example of an instrument. So, one of the things we had to do, we had to make all the tools we would use to work on something like a watch. So, we had to make the tools that we were going to use. We had to learn to use the equipment to make those tools. So, for example, tweezers. We had to make a very, very fine pointed tweezer that you could use to adjust hairsprings inside of a watch. Because these same kinds of hairsprings were found in some of these instruments. We had to learn the theory with some of our electrical instruments. Some were pressure instruments. Some were temperature instruments. Some were—all sorts of instruments like you might have in the dash in a car. Those kinds of instruments would appear—a

version of them—in an airplane. We also do the—for a lot of controls and things like that like they would use in a steel mill to control the temperature or the speed of conveyor belts and things like that. So, they were going to automated production at that time. They had done some for some time during the war. Trying to automate a lot of production. You need a lot of controls. You had to have instruments to measure what was going on. We were involved in trying to maintain and adjust and monitor all of these kinds of instruments. So, it was a pretty good school. Later on, after I graduated from school, I got a pretty good job pretty quick.

KC: Where was this job?

RM: Well, I graduated from the school. Now, we were—I was telling you how poor we were. By golly, while we were in that school in Chicago, we saved enough money to buy a car. It was an old 1942 Plymouth. This was 1948—err, 1949 when I graduated. We took that car, went to Florida on a vacation. Went back to Utah and drove it around up there for a short time. It served us. So, you know, kids who didn't have much could actually get ahead if they work hard. That taught us some really good things. When we found we could learn and we could save and we could—we did a lot of things in Chicago, but we didn't spend much money. There were such things as a Museum of Science and Industry. There was—oh, we lived right near Wrigley Field. We knew that after the seventh inning, we could go over and we could go to the baseball game and watch the last two innings for free. They'd just open the gates, let people in in the seventh inning. They did the same thing in Salt Lake City when we moved there. So, you learn where things are. There's, oh, the Chicago Art Museum. The Chicago Aquarium. The Chicago—well, I can't even remember. The Soldiers Field. There was two football teams and two baseball teams. It was very inexpensive to live in Chicago at that time.

KC: Yeah, great city.

RM: So, we enjoyed. It was a great deal.

KC: Where did you go when you finished school? What kind of job did you pick up?

RM: As soon as we were through messing around after visiting the south, where my wife was from, we went to Utah. The next day my dad says, "You gotta have a job." "Yep." He says, "Well"—he says, "I don't want you driving that old wreck of a car. You

go down and get you a new car." I said, "Dad, I don't have any money." He said, "Well, use that one as a trade. Did you pay for it?" I said, "Yeah, we paid for it." He said, "Use it as your trade. You'll have a job in a few days." Well, I didn't know this was kind of a very slow economic period in 1950. But we went out and had started hitting the industries in Utah. We hit Kennecott Copper, Geneva Steel, we hit lots of power plants. We hit all kind of interesting places. They weren't hiring. Things were pretty slow. But I finally went to an electronic firm. I didn't know anything about it. They manufactured picture television tubes. I went in there and told them I was an instrument technician. They say, "Hey, we're hiring. We want you to come back. What are your qualifications?" I told them instrument technician. They said, "We don't need one of those. What did you do?" I says, "Well, I learned about all kind of theories concerning how instruments work and so on." He says, "Okay. We're gonna consider you for our maintenance and construction crew. You'll start at the bottom of the crew, but you'll be able to sort of pick what—you wanna be an electrician or a machinist or a painter or a carpenter, or what would you like to be?" I go, "Well, I don't know. Whatever you got. Let me see 'em." So, I went—after about a month I had a job with that company. I was hired at an advanced wage compared to the production people. They started me out above those, so gosh, that was nice. First thing they did was have me work with the plumbers. Going around cleaning—stopped up toilets and stuff. Then the next week they had me working with the carpenters. The next week they had me painting. The next week they had me working with the electricians. The electricians would say, "Hey, we've got a lot of work here to do. We're building—expanding the plant. So, you can work with the electrical crew." I got with a bunch of good, young guys. They were enthusiastic. That's where I primarily worked. I enjoyed the work. I was learning all kind of new stuff. How do you make a picture television tube? Well, I got involved in all sorts of things they were doing to produce those things. I worked on the equipment in that plant. Either worked on the equipment or were actually expanding the plant. So, it was a learning thing for me. After a few months—we didn't have any engineers, oddly enough, in that plant. We were a subsidiary of a California company in San Bruno, California called Eitel McCullough who made a big name for themselves during World War II manufacturing power tubes to support radar. Radar was a new thing, and they needed an awfully high-powered tubes power those systems. So,

they decided that going to the TV business as well—the TV tube business. That's just the picture tube. But that's what our plant was going to do. So, we started that. Gosh, I was one of the first people employed as we got into that. So, I was very early in the group. Was there, had a great time. The engineers would come up out of California and tell us, "Okay, we've gotta have a new machine do this kind of thing. The engineers who go out together designed one. We've built one that we think will do the job. You guys are gonna have to implement the darn thing." So, we would take that machine in the plant, and we'd try to make it do what it was supposed to do. We often found that they were deficient. They were not—theoretically they were good little engineering pieces, but they were not production qualified. You didn't—weren't able to produce stuff fast with 'em. So, we had to modify those darn things. Just a bunch of young guys with not a great deal of experience in any of fields. Some were electronic technicians and other kind of things like that. We got together and we modified this equipment. Before long, we had that plant running and we were producing a tremendous amount of big television tubes. Nineteen-inch, circular tubes in 1950. So, the company was booming. The engineers come up and said—err, the company said, "Look, we don't have engineers here. Why don't you go to school at night at the university in Salt Lake City?" I said, "Well, I don't think I can get in a university. I never graduated from high school." They said, "Well, go up and talk to them." So, I did. Then that's another big, long story. So, I worked there. I worked a shift. Before long I was—I had a swing shift. My job was to keep all the equipment in the plant running—all the production equipment running during my shift. Holy smokes, it was a lot of different kinds of things there. But lots of practical things. Well, you just learn fast when it's there and you get to work on it. So, it turned out pretty good. I did have an experience trying to get in the university. They had a counselor interview me and said, "Fill out this form and come back." So, I filled out the form and went back. Application for entry to the university. There was a lady PhD counselor got me. She says, "What do you wanna go to college for?" I say, "Well, because I've got a good job at this company, and they would like for me to go ahead and get some engineering training while I'm working there because it would help me in my job." She says, "Well, you know, we have a rather prestigious university here. We don't just let anybody off the street into it. Into our engineering degree programs." I says, "Well, I would like to try." She says, "Well"—

says, “You didn’t finish high school.” “That’s right. But I did go to this technical school.” She says, “Well, technical schools, you know, you learn how to use a welding rod or something there.” I said, “yeah, I learned that. But I also learned some other things.” We had a long, serious discussion, and more than one time. She had lots of arguments why I would not be admitted. We talked and talked and talked, and finally she said, “You know, I’m gonna give you a chance. We’re gonna let you take an examination, which we would typically give to one of our graduating students and see how you do on that.” So, I do this entrance examination, they called it. When I went back, she says, “Did you ever consider being a policeman? Why don’t you be a highway patrolman or something like that?” Well actually, I told her I couldn’t because I was too short. I wasn’t big enough. You had to be big out in Utah to do those kinds of things. Fireman, the same thing. she says, “Well, we really were trying not necessarily to discourage you from going to school, but what we don’t want you to do is to lose your enthusiasm for working and all that kind of stuff. But you just don’t have the prerequisites to go to college.” I said, “Don’t you have some courses that I can take? Or aren’t there some schools—high school courses that I can take or something like that to prepare myself?” She says, “Well, we could.” Finally, she suggested that I, “instead of trying to get in a four-year program, why don’t you get in a two-year program? We got a special program in surveying. A special program in mechanical drawing. Another one in—well, several of those kind of engineering related programs. You need some engineering background to work and get a two-year degree.” I thought, “Well, maybe that’d be alright.” Because you take basically the same basic courses. So, they let me in as a—oh, they had a term for it. Anyway, I was on probation. They would monitor me and see what went on. So, I entered the university and started taking night classes. Looked like it’d take me ten years if I wanted to go for a four-year degree. It probably would take me four or five years to get through a two-year program. So, I started taking the basic courses. And enjoyed them. They were pretty difficult. Really difficult, some of them. The math, the physics, the chemistry and biology and some of those things were—because I had nothing—none of the pre—none of the prerequisites for them. But I stuck with it and continued working and things worked out pretty well.

KC: Did you get your two-year degree there?

RM: I'm sorry?

KC: Did you get your two-year degree? Did you finish your degree?

RM: Okay, now I didn't quite hear what you said there.

KC: I'm sorry. Did you finish your degree?

RM: (speaking at the same time) After about three—nearly three years at the university—and I would go summer. They were in quarters. So, I could go four quarters a year. Not take a full load but take a half load or a quarter load or something like that, depending on the course and what they were offering and what I needed. I went to work one day, and they say, "Okay, come on in." They met me at the gate at the plant and said, "We're gonna go back with you." I thought, "Oh, what's going on?" They say, "Oh, well come on back." So, I went back. Here's my bosses sitting all around me. We went back in, and they say, "Where's your tool cart?" I had a special cart with lots of tools on it so I can move it all over the plant, then work on whatever equipment needed to be worked on. They say, "Okay, we're gonna have to turn in all this company stuff here." I said, "What's going on?" They say, "Well, the company just lost two million dollar contracts for tubes, and we were retooling the plant to go to twenty-four inch tubes." They had to redesign the plant to do it using as much mechanization as we could, because twenty-four-inch TV was so big and so heavy, and you had to handle that thing when the temperatures about 500 degrees. So, you couldn't handle it with just a pair of asbestos gloves. It was too heavy. We had a lot of women working in the plant, and they had to move these tubes from one machine to another machine to another machine to do all the kinds of stuff that had to be done. So, we had to fix it so where we could do it mechanically. They say, "We thought we could have the plant tooled up in a year or so. We haven't been able to. We had these huge contracts with RCA, and RCA says 'we need those tubes', and we didn't have them. We were producing, but we couldn't produce at volume. Lots of little glitches and stuff you have to get worked out. It just wasn't working. We're gonna let two shifts go." I was on a swing shift. They say—I said, "Well, are you firing me?" They said, "Well, you're just being discharged from our company. You can go out and get yourself a job. In fact, we've got a company that wants you to come over and talk to them. General Electric wants you to come over and go to work for them." I said, "Well, I don't know. That sounds good, but I like this company." "Well,

you know, we may get this all solved, and we could everybody hired back in year, but right now we've gotta get the plant up to speed and we can't do it with people producing tubes that we can't sell. We're not producing the quality tube yet." So, there I was without a job. I went home and talked to my wife. "Hey, I lost my job today, but I gotta go tomorrow to General Electric." So, I went over to General Electric, and they gave me a job as an electrician. I was supposed to work on mine shuttle cars and 500 horsepower electrical motors, and turbine locomotives in Salt Lake City. Of course, I knew nothing about any of those, but you don't usually have to know much about it other than the electrical components. So, I went to work for General Electric and still went to school. I found I would not want to work for General Electric. This company I'd worked for was absolutely fantastic. This General Electric was a union shop. The union was more important than the worker. More important than, I thought, customers. I didn't wanna work for a company like that. So, I quit. In the meantime, I talked to friends who had been at the university and had graduated. They say, "Why don't you consider going in the Air Force and switch your degree to something where you can graduate in a hurry, rather than sticking with this tough engineering program you're in and have a career in the Air Force?" One guy he said—I said, "You want me to go in the Air Force? You were a prisoner of war in the Philippines. You were captured there by the Japanese." He says, "Yeah, and I worked for the coal mines in Japan all during the war. But I like the Air Force and I'm gonna go back in. Not as a pilot, but as a supply officer." You gotta be nuts. So, we talked about it. I talked to my wife jokingly. We checked with the university and found that I could switch from the engineering program into another program where all the courses I'd taken in the engineering program would count, and I could graduate in a year and a half. With my original entering class. And go in the Air Force. I had an age limit I had that I was working with. Because I thought maybe I wanted to fly. I'd never considered that before. So, we put all those things together and by golly, they worked. The Air Force let me join their ROTC (Reserve Officer's Training Corps). I passed the physical for pilot training. I worked with the university, and they found that I could—oh my goodness. I was in an engineering school at the university. I was in the college of mines and mineral industries at the University of Utah. I had to have fifteen extra hours of credit to graduate as an engineer at Utah—err, from the engineering school. Over what

you would if you were in the university college. We got checking and heaven sakes, I got credit for all my old Navy time through the university. They gave me a bunch of credit for that. I ended up with fifteen hours more than I needed to graduate after a year and a half. So, I graduated from the university then in a new field. My major was actually called geography, but it was in the college of mines and minerals. The Air Force accepted me for pilot training. Heavens, we graduated from the university with my entering class in 1950. I graduated in '55. The Air Force sent me orders and said go to pilot training.

KC: Now let me—

RM: So, things changed rather quickly in the last year and a half. After all that working with this wonderful company. By the way, it's still there. The company is called Varian Industries today. They're still a major producer in Salt Lake City in their specialized fields and their very high-level electronics. Their klystrons and all those kinds of things. But it was a good, very find company. But they—I got a good attitude working for those folks, because they gave me every chance, they could to do all kinds of interesting things. But there I changed from being a company man to try this Air Force thing and see if I wanted to fly. So, in the autumn of 1955 the Air Force ordered me to active duty to go to pilot training.

KC: Now, let me ask you this, Dr. Mower.

RM: Yes, sir.

KC: What did you know about—because while you're here in Utah doing all of this really interesting technical work, we also have the Korean War taking place. What did you know about what was going on over there? Did you follow it closely?

RM: Oh, I followed it. As a matter of fact, when I was in the Navy, I was looking for jobs down in Jacksonville, Florida. I had been in the regular Navy and when I was discharged, I was completely through with the Navy. I didn't have any connection with the Navy other than I was ex-Navy. But in looking for the jobs, I found they had a Reserve fleet located near Jacksonville, Florida. Somebody told me, they said, "You go out to that Reserve fleet. They've got all these ships out there and you were a quartermaster." One of the requirements for the quartermaster was you had to update all the navigational charts on the ship periodically as there are changes in the world. In the ocean and in the waterways around the world. You have to keep all these publications up

to date. “They have all these ships out there and they have to have all these charts—these chart pools up to date. They have people doing that now, because they may call all those ships back to active duty later.” I said, “Well, that’d be alright.” So, I checked it. It sounded like a good deal, so I joined the Navy Reserve. That’s a forever thing almost. Then I went out to Green Coast Springs, which is not far from Jacksonville, and said, “Hey, I’m here. I wanna work in your chart pool.” They said, “The what?” I said, “The chart pool. I’m a quartermaster. I wanna work on the charts.” They said, “Oh, we don’t have any real problem with that. We don’t need anybody.” I says, “Well, I talked to people that are in the Navy, said you guys do this out there.” He said, “Nah, we’re not doing anything in that line. But since you’re in the Reserve, you might check around later in a couple years and see if we need anything.” “I need a job now.” They said, “Sorry, we don’t have anything for you. We can’t put you to work.” So, I said, “You guys lied to me.” “Eh, we didn’t lie to you. I’m telling you the truth. We don’t have anything for you.” So, I wrote the Navy an awful, blistering little letter from a ninth-grade dropout and said I felt really bad that the Navy would tell me a lie and get me to join the Reserve and then not have anything there for me. They said, “Well, you’re in the Reserve. You can be in the inactive Reserve. Maybe someday it’ll pay off for you.” I said, “No, I wanna get out.” So, they finally decided, “Okay, we’re gonna give you a discharge from the Naval Reserve.” They let me out and that was in—I have to think for a moment. I got out in ‘48. In ‘49 I had joined the Reserve. By about the middle of ‘49 the sent me a discharge from the Reserve. Not long after that, the Navy started calling back Naval Reservists for the Vietnam Program. I missed the Vietnam War. I was working and going to school

KC: The Korean War.

RM: Yeah, I’m sorry, the Korean War. I had lots of friends—kids my age was all—that was my age group that were in Korea. I still see them in the VFW (The Veterans of Foreign Wars) all the time. But, yup, so I missed the Korean War. I followed it very closely because I had so many friends there. But we have guard units, and all that kind of stuff were activated. I had lots of cousins that were my age that were in Korea. But I never went. I didn’t—Korea was over in about—oh, I don’t know, the end of ‘53 or ‘54. Something like that. I didn’t get out of school until ‘55. In the summer—err, spring of

‘55. So, I missed the Korean War completely. I was not in the Reserve except for about three months.

KC: Okay, now let’s pick up the story with the Air Force. At this point you’re joining a whole new service. The Air Force hasn’t been around for very long at this point, and you’re—

RM: No, 1947 I think is when they—

KC: Yeah, yeah. So, you’re gonna go into the pilot program here. Had you ever considered flying before?

RM: No, I had had one ride in a little airplane down in Florida. I had a cousin down there who was taking flying GI Bill. He got so he could carry a passenger, so he took me up flying one day. I wasn’t too excited about it. I was a sailor. I liked the ships. I wasn’t much interested in flying. Never even thought about it. But after—oh, after the war, talking to all my buddies that had gone in the Air Force—in the Army Air Corps, they kinda liked the Air Force. Then this one guy, who was a prisoner of war (POW), actually talked me into going into the Air Force. He was a machinist—err aircraft mechanic or something like that. So, that was the influence there. We had a big airbase in Utah. Hill Air Force Base is still there. Lots and lots of people work there. It’s one of the largest industries in the state. So, I was around a lot of people who were involved in aviation, but I wasn’t involved personally. But I didn’t know whether I was gonna be able to fly or not. You know, some people are kind of adapted to things like this, other people are not. So, I was a little apprehensive. What do I do if I get into the pilot training, and they wash me out? Ugh, I don’t wanna be ground pounder in the Air Force. I wanted to be—if I’m gonna be in the Navy, I wanna be on a ship. If I’m gonna be in the Air Force, I wanna fly. So, I was a little apprehensive. But in the Air Force, it didn’t take long. I had some good instructors. Oh, for example, one instructor we go up and fly the assigned lesson for the day. It might involve a lot of aerobatics. That’s one of the things they hit you with pretty hard very early is trying to learn to do aerobatics, because that’s an extreme. You don’t have any background. It’s really extreme to do all these flip-flops in the air. So, we’d go up and we’d do the kind of thing. He’d say, “Well, you did okay today. What do you think about this?” I’d say, “Well, it’s really strange when my butt is over my head. You know, it’s above me and I can see the world looking down.” He says,

"Well, keep your mind on what you're doing. Don't worry about where the world is and all that stuff. Keep your mind on what you're doing in the airplane. There's some G-forces and centrifugal forces and things like that that are—and pressure and temperature and all that kind of stuff that's impacting your body. But you gotta concentrate on what you're doing. But you'll do alright." So, I did it. He said, "Okay, we've got five more minutes. What do you wanna do?" I said, "Let's do a couple more flip-flops here." That's what I called—there's a whole bunch of aerobatic maneuvers. I put 'em all as flip-flops. I was doing loops and Immelmanns and all that kind of stuff. After a while I got so, I enjoyed them. I got to enjoy it. But it was really strange for the first few times I tried to do that stuff. And flying itself became more and more exciting. When I finished—when I got my wings after a year in the Air Force, I was invited to stay as an instructor. So, I did.

KC: Did you take this training at Hill Air Force Base?

RM: No, I moved around. The Air Force had a bunch of training bases. They'd call you in initially. You go one month to Lackland Air Force Base. Still, I think. I think it's still the same program now as it was in the '50s. You go down there for one month of preflight training. If you're an ROTC guy like I was, they didn't feel you learned to do anything other than just march in ROTC. So, you had to learn a whole bunch of things about military customs and how to march and how to act like a military person. So, you get a month of that. Then they send you to what they called the primary base. The primary base was where they put you in a cheap little airplane. They're not cheap and little, but they're not high-powered airplanes. But they're pretty good ones. They teach you how to fly. Then they let you go up and fly that airplane by yourself and do a whole bunch of prescribed maneuvers and go through a bunch of academics and stuff like that to support understanding all of how an airplane fly. The aerodynamic of it. All of the mechanics of it. Then the actual flying. It's a pretty comprehensive program. After you finish your first base—and it takes about six months in that first training. It's called primary. It was then. You graduate from that then you go to another base where they have high-performance aircraft. You spend about the same time, about six months there learning to fly jets or something like that. You're still a student. You don't have your wings yet. You're in what they call basic pilot training. After six months there now you're safe to get in a jet and go fly. Now, you can't just go get in one of these hot new

ones, you have to go through another training program to qualify for them. You had to qualify for every airplane you flew. You had to go to another school to learn that airplane and learn all about them mechanically and electronically and all the missions it flies and stuff like that. So, I finished that second program, and I was flying B-25s in that program most of the time. Matter of fact, all the time I was flying B-25s in that program. Then I stayed as a B-25 instructor. Just had a great time. Then the Air Force decided they needed to have—every pilot had to be a jet pilot. You can always transition back to reciprocating aircraft. It's probably easier than transferring back from a reciprocating aircraft, multiengine to a single engine jet. So, they decided everybody should go to the single engine jet program. So, then they upgraded me from a B-25 instructor to a jet instructor. So, I had to go get a bunch of jet time. Then I was a jet instructor the rest of my career in the Air Force. So, I spent my whole career flying—almost all of it flying jets. Except for the first couple of years. It was pretty exciting. I became—I got to the point where when I was assigned to a squadron, they'd say, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I wanna fly." "Well, you can't just fly. You gotta do other things too." I said, "I know, but I'm a—flying is awfully important to me." Okay, so they'd say, "What do you wanna do?" I'd say, "Well, what do you have?" So, I would pick those things if I had choices. I picked those things that gave me lots of experience. One of them was being an instructor in that new airplane I went to. So, I'd go through their—oh, I've forgotten what we called it. Anyway, it's an upgrade to instructor level in that aircraft. Then I would fly not only the missions, but I would fly as an instructor for other people that were flying that airplane. Then I went out and I went to an advanced and became an advanced instructor. Where I was in the top instrument flight program in the United States. Where we developed all the flying techniques for instruments. We taught the people how to be instructors and evaluators for instrument pilots. So, it was really heavy on the airplanes. Then all the time I was in the Air Force, I was also going to night school. Everywhere we went I found where the local college was and went over and started taking night courses. So, I was able to do a master's degree in the Air Force when I was in Oklahoma. Later on, I did the PhD at the University of Kansas, and the Air Force paid for me to go do that. All that time I was flying, that was my primary responsibility. So, I had just a wonderful career. I had a wonderful Air Force career which involved lots of responsibility and lots of good—I

spent five years at the Air Force Academy as a faculty member up there. While I was a ground instructor for the cadets, I was also a flight instructor for the guys that were flying up there. I flew jets and different aircraft up there. So, I hit it pretty hard. The joke was, hey—they would call up the base and say, "Hey, you've got this mission to perform. It involves taking these VIPs from this base to this base, and you have to do it on this day. Do you have an aircraft and pilots that can handle this?" I said, "Yeah." So, then that day would come and come to find out it's a terrible, stormy, awful weekend. These VIPs would say, "I don't know. Can we fly when weather is like this?" "Well, sure you can. We're an all-weather Air Force." "Well, I know, but you've got icing conditions and you've got ice on the runways. You've got all these problems." "Well, now we don't encourage people to fly for fun on those days, but if a mission has to go, usually we can make it." "Well, do you have pilots that will fly when it's like that?" "Well, we have some." So, I would get a call that said, "Hey, we need somebody. We had a crew set up to go to Green Bay, Wisconsin to take a VIP out there. Our other Air Force guys said, 'Hey, the weather's too bad. We're not gonna go up and fly into those kinds of conditions.'" I mean, a guy has the right to decline because he doesn't feel that that's the kind of weather, he ought to fly in. Then after a while they'd call me at the Air Force Academy and say, "Hey, Mower, can you fly tomorrow?' I said, "Yeah, I guess I can, but why?" "Well, we can't find anybody else that can fly this mission. Will you take it" "Well, where to?" "Green Bay, Wisconsin." "Oh, yeah. They got a big storm up there." "Yeah, they got that big storm up there. Do you think you can handle that?" "Let me check it out." I check out all the weather and stuff and I'd say, "Hey, I think I can handle that. But if I decide not to go, it's because the weather's not—it's really bad." They said, "Well, if you wanna take it, you've got the mission." "Okay, I'll take it." So, I would take the mission. It would be a real bad weather situation and I'd go to Green Bay, Wisconsin. I did that with, for example, the Bart Starr.

KC: Is that right?

RM: Bart Starr was the quarterback of the University of the Alabama. Was drafted by the Green Bay Packers. He won the first two Superbowls.

KC: Yes, sir.

RM: With Green Bay. So, he came to the Air Force Academy to motivate our students at the Air Force Academy. He was there about a week and then he had to go home because he had another thing, he had to go to beginning the Monday. This was a weekend. He had to get home to see his kids. He hadn't seen them. "Oh, I've got to see my kids." I said, "Oh, Bart you know that if the weather's too bad we're not gonna go. But it appears to me that it might be okay, and we can have an alternate. I might not be able to get you in to Green Bay, but I can bet you someplace in that general region, where if you have to you can ride a bus all night and go home and see your kids." So, he says, "Okay, we'll go." So, Bart went with me. We went up there. It was really quite bad. I told him, Bart, I'm not sure we're gonna be able to land and stay on the runway. So, I'm going to attempt a landing. If I find that the runways are too icy and we can't stop on the runway, we just make a touch and go out of it. We just touch down and say, 'ope, it's too slick to land.' Then we just take off and we go to someplace where we can land." He says, "That's okay, but I sure hope." I said, "Well, we're not gonna jeopardize you or this airplane just because you have to be with your kids. I mean, that's important, but we're not gonna jeopardize anybody or anything here." So, I went up there and yeah, it was a piece of cake. I touched down on the runway. I recognized that I did have sufficient braking and everything and heck, we stopped, dropped him off. So, if you have a mission where nobody else wants to go, they'd call Mower. I enjoyed that.

KC: Yeah, I bet so.

RM: I flew lots of generals and stuff like that too. They had to make it back to Ohio or they had to get someplace. So, they'd say "let's see if Mower can get some time off and go fly with you." I appreciated that kind of thing. It wasn't reckless. You're a damn fool if you go out and kill yourself. So, you have to—you've gotta be pretty good. You've gotta be pretty good. You have to exercise good judgement, and I was fortunate enough that I was able to do that.

KC: Yeah, yeah. That is really interesting stuff there. Now, you're with the—

RM: I loved flying. It tickled me. I went down to Florida one time and picked up a general down there. He had to get back to Wright-Patterson (Air Force Base). We had a great big storm over Wright-Patterson. When the general came out, I said, "General, we can take off and we'll head for Wright-Patterson, but if the weather is really bad up there,

we're not gonna be able to land there. The weather is so turbulent it'll be dangerous to try to land into those conditions." "Well, I need to get back. I'm important. I'm a big wheel. You can change the weather." I said, "I can't change the weather. We'll see what we can do, and if we can't go, I'll have to take you someplace else." Well, he finally agreed that's the thing to do. We went to Wright-Patterson. I made an approach. That was so turbulent this little—the nice jet I was flying was just getting thrown all over the sky. He says, "Are you gonna try to land?" I said, "General, I've gotta get down out of all this turbulence and see whether it's too turbulent for us to land down at Wight-Patterson. But I understand there's turbulence down at runway height as well." He says, "Well"—he was concerned then because it was awful. It was about as bad as I've ever seen it. We were just getting tossed all over the place. So, I get down to about 300 feet and it was still bumpy down there. We're on our approach to landing at Dayton, and he says, "Are you gonna land?" I said, "General, I'm gonna take it down so we're maybe twenty/thirty feet above the runway. We'll see whether or not the winds become less down there." So, I went down there. It wasn't quite as bad. It wasn't quite as bad, so I kept going a little lower, little lower. I got down, oh, maybe ten feet above the runway and I looked at the co-pilot with me and I said, "ugh, this is terrible. We're gonna have to go around." So, I had my hands on the throttles, and just as I started adding power to go around and go fly someplace else, our wheels touch the runway. We had a ten-foot drop. Turbulence just dropped the airplane about ten feet. It dropped it so that the tires just barely got on the runway. If you just barely touch the runway, it goes squeak, squeak. That's what we call a squeaker. Your wheels are on the runway. We didn't bounce. When it went squeak, squeak, well, I was just in the right spot I could pull the power out very quickly and we made a nice, smooth landing. We taxied in and when we get off the airplane the general looked at me and he says, "How in the hell did you get that kind of a landing when it's so doggone turbulent? It's almost too turbulent to fly." "Oh," I said, "really I didn't notice, General. That's the way I always land." (both laugh) Now, that isn't the truth. That isn't the truth. I was just doggone lucky that it didn't—that there wasn't enough drop there that I would have damaged the gear or something. But we didn't. It was almost a perfect landing with awful, awful turbulence. So, I lucked out. I smiled and said, "Gee, I didn't notice anything different than what I usually do." Pilots have got big heads and egos.

KC: (laughs) Right, right.

RM: Hopefully you got the common sense too.

KC: Right. I wonder if you might tell me about some of your other assignments. I mean, you join the Air Force in 1955. Of course, you don't go to Vietnam until 1967—late 1967. What other things were you doing during this time? Are you strictly just a—

RM: Well, 1955 I went through pilot training. I graduated in 1956 and became an instructor pilot at the end of 1956. I stayed at a particular base for about three years. I was an instructor there flying B-25s and jets. In 1959 I was going to school in my spare time at the nearby Oklahoma State University. I got a master's degree while I was still flying those airplanes at Vance Air Force Base in Oklahoma. Then I was transferred to Waco, Texas to a place called—oh, let's see. Oh, what the name of that place? Anyway, there was a nice air base at Waco, Texas. All of a sudden, I can't even remember the name of the base. That shows ya I'm getting old. I went down there to be an instructor. I stayed there. After about two years there, I was instructing in instruments in this instrument instructor school. They said, "Hey, we're gonna move the school and change to new airplanes. We're gonna go to Randolph Air Force Base in Texas—San Antonio. You're gonna be flying—we're gonna have two new airplanes come into our squadron. Both of them are new. We're gonna develop instructor programs so we're teaching the Air Force to fly more modern stuff than we had been." So, I went down there. I was one of those guys picked there. I was just at the right time at the right place where I got to be one of the principal instructors there. I got to help develop a lot of the procedures we followed. I flew at Edwards Air Force Base which is a—well, it's where they test a lot of aircraft. At Edwards Air Force Base in California. I was involved in going out there and helping to set up the procedures for this new aircraft that I was put in. It was a wonderful airplane. I just loved it. It was called a T-38 Sabreliner. We were one of the first groups in the Air Force to get it. We got a bunch of them. We got that program going. While I was at Waco, I was also going to school. I was attending Baylor University. I was working on another master's degree there in international affairs because we were very much concerned back in those days with Russia. We needed to understand Russian people, Russian culture, Russian military capabilities and all that kind of stuff. I was learning everything I could about Russia. I did that at the University of Utah, as a matter of fact.

While I was there, I had real experiences at (University of) Utah. Anyway, I was working on another master's degree at Baylor University. Then I went to San Antonio and flew these new airplanes there. Since I had a master's degree I thought, "Well, if I go to the Air Force Academy, they'll send me out to get a PhD." Well, I tried that approach, and it didn't work. They had a lot of guys that were graduates of military academies and they kinda get preference on a lot of that stuff. So, I wasn't gonna be considered, they told me. So, I say, I'll just go up and if they have a need, they try it. I went up to the Air Force Academy and they said, "Oh my golly, where have you been? We need people with your specialty right now." So, I was transferred to the Air Force Academy. It was a—they called it a controlled five-year tour. You go up there and teach for five years. Well, so I went to the Academy in 1963. Vietnam was starting. Well, it had actually started, you know, back in the '50s. But our involvement was in the '60s. So, we started having our graduates from the Air Force Academy eventually were being moved and go through Vietnam. They'd come back and tell us about what they were doing over there. So, I stayed at the Air Force Academy. I was going to school at the University of Colorado and Colorado College in Colorado Spring, and Colorado Southern College, Pueblo. Taking lots of—I finally was admitted to the PhD program at the University of Colorado at Boulder as a part-time student. That's something they hadn't done much of. Then later, after I got in—I was the sixth person admitted to the University of Colorado as a part-time student. I was only the third as a part-time student admitted there. Then they came back to me and said, "you know, our graduate school has just thought about this, and they've decided we just can't do that. We can't give a guy a doctorate if he hasn't at least spent a whole year in residence on our campus. It just doesn't look good. People will talk down about and say we don't have a real program." So, they said, "We're not gonna let you get your PhD through our school unless you can come up here and spend a whole year in one stretch at our campus. Get the Air Force to send you up." I said, "The Air Force won't." "Well, we're gonna withdraw our—we're gonna drop you from that program." I said, "Well, golly, I spent a lot of time coming up here going to school, driving back and forth." They said, "Well, you know, the Air Force"—I said, "The only way I can get up here is if you give me—if I earn some sort of a prestigious scholarship or fellowship at your school, the Air Force will let me accept it." They said, "We don't

have any money for those things. So, we can't do it." I said, "Well, I'll just do what I can someplace else." Well, they say, "Why don't you check with the University of Kansas? Because the University of Kansas has a tremendous amount of money for research and development programs. They've got one in a thing called remote sensing." I say, "What's that?" They say, "Well, that's using sensors to look at the earth. Radar, cameras, infrared, and all kinds of stuff. They're using it to—their looking at the earth using satellites, and aircraft is the platforms for these. I said, "well, that sounds interesting." They say, "Well, here's the guy's name. The geographers down at Kansas have joined with the engineers down there, and they've got this huge program starting. Why don't you go talk to them?" I went down there. By golly, Kansas says, "Yeah, we want you to come to our school, but we want you to start doing your part-time work with us." So, they started letting me do research out of the University of Kansas. I was doing research in Central America—err, in the Caribbean.

KC: What kind of research? What did this entail?

RM: I was doing—well, actually part of it was classified research on the use of radar. Vietnam was going then. One of the problems we had in Vietnam was that the enemy would go into a French rubber plantation and build a big nest of tunnels under that plantation. Then they would come out at night and go out and attack the South Vietnamese or the Americans. Then we'd try to follow 'em in there. And the French government said, "if you guys go in there and ruin our French rubber plantations—you kill any trees, you have to pay for them. You can't go in there and just bomb and raise hell with those French plantations." But the Vietnamese live under them. They say, "Well, that's your problem, but you can't come in there and raise hell unless you're gonna pay for the plantation itself." The United States government wasn't gonna go back and do that. So, we couldn't go into those damn plantation areas. We needed some sort of an instrument we could fly over and look down and actually see where those tunnels were. So, they were doing part of that radar. Trying to find out how much ground penetration do we have of radar in Puerto Rico. Another young fellow in Kansas and I had to go down there and use a bunch of classified imagery that they had collected and go out in the field and try to find tunnels, if we could, by looking at that imagery they had given us. And see what else we could use that radar imagery as a special kind of radar.

So, we were doing that kind of stuff in the summer times. So, I was going down to Puerto Rico and places like that. They wanted me to go to Guiana and South America and work on soils problems down there. But from the air using remote sensing. They were flying to Congo—I mean, the Amazon Basin using radar at that time. There was a lot of interest in having the Air Force become involved in its mapping. Mapping the Amazon Basin. Because it's always cloudy. You can't fly over it with photo aircraft. You can't get pictures. You can't see it. It's clouds. Much of that is in several countries, but primarily in Brazil. But the countries around Brazil are. So, there was a whole bunch of things going on down there. So, I was able to get into the University of Kansas. They had a center for research there, and its specialty was remote sensing. I was admitted eventually as a—later on, I was in Vietnam when I was admitted. But I was setting it up so I could be admitted into the remote sensing program at the University of Kansas for a PhD. That's how I did that.

KC: That's fascinating work.

RM: (laughs) You gotta have fun. I was working with the Army Corps of Engineers at Wright-Patterson, and they are out of Ft. Belvoir, Virginia. We were doing a lot of stuff with them. There're just opportunities all over the world if you start looking around and seeing who's doing what and can we work with them. I was giving professional papers at National Symposia in the United States. There were major companies from around the world that would come to these symposiums to see what we were doing in the unclassified section. Now, there was also a military classified thing, and they kept me just on the periphery of that. The Air Force wasn't admitting that they were doing a lot of that kind of stuff. They didn't want us doing very much. They were very careful about letting us become involved with it. But they wanted us to know what was going on in their areas, so incidentally we could talk about stuff in a non-classified sense. So, it was very interesting.

KC: Yeah. What is the time frame for all of this? When were you doing this?

RM: I'm sorry?

KC: When were you doing this? Was it '63, '64, '65?

RM: 1963 I went to the Air Force Academy. I was an instructor primarily in flying then and taking classes at the University of Colorado and other schools in that area.

In about 1966, I was working with the University of Tennessee Space Institute writing papers for their annual symposia and some of their publications. This was based on some remote sensing stuff that I was doing with the University of Kansas. So, I was working with Ann Arbor—the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. They had a big remote sensing program. Purdue University had a big remote sensing program. UCLA had a big remote sensing program. Berkeley had a big remote sensing program. I was going to those symposia and actually presenting papers at those kind places at—another one would be in Boston. We were up there giving papers at an Air Force facility up there. I just got to go around to all sorts of places where people were involved in this field of remote sensing. Remote sensing was sort of academic term that we used in non-classified senses. It was satellite or aircraft reconnaissance when we talked about the military application.

KC: I wonder if you can explain to the listener what the state of this field? Of this science at this particular time? What kinds of equipment are you working with? How is the field of this remoting sensing working at this time?

RM: Okay, well one of the things I did—I had research—well, I didn't have a research grant. I was a party to a research grant for my senior—my thesis of my dissertation advisor at the University of Kansas. He had a huge NASA grant, which involved taking lots of pictures and reconnaissance in Puerto Rico. So, I became involved with going down and doing all the groundwork—err, doing a lot of the groundwork in Puerto Rico to support the aircraft that flew. Then later on, after we got into this program, then I actually went—excuse me, I'm losing my voice here. Another student and I—and this other student was my assistant. We went to Puerto Rico, and we flew with NASA. The NASA aircraft were flying and collecting this data. The NASA stuff was unclassified. So, we were using unclassified radars and infrareds and all sorts of camera systems to fly over the island of Puerto Rico, and other places as well. But I was only involved with NASA in the Puerto Rican thing. We were down there with the aircraft flying and collecting the data in the aircraft. Later on, when I got back to Kansas, then I got a copy of all the stuff we had. I had to analyze these—all this film we got in trying to show what we could see, even when it was cloudy down there. So, we—so I conducted research on certain topics like that and presented information to NATO and to the Army

Corps of Engineers and these other schools that had huge programs, like the University of Michigan and Purdue—and I can't think of them right now. Kansas was one of the key ones. Berkeley, we closely with the aerial photography people out at Berkeley. And Santa Barbara. University of California, Santa Barbara. We worked with those folks. University of Tennessee had a huge Tennessee Space Institute, which specialized in remote sensing. I was working with them as well and doing papers for them.

KC: You know, that's not too bad for a ninth-grade dropout.

RM: Well, I was lucky. It's just a matter of luck and being in—getting in the line. By golly, that line goes some place that's interesting. It worked out pretty well.

KC: Yeah, yeah. Well, Dr. Mower, why don't we stop there for today, and we can pick this up at another—

RM: —I'm losing my voice.

KC: Yes, sir.

Interview with Roland Mower
Session [3] of [3]
Date: September 30, 2013

(Editor's Note: Roland D. Mower was interviewed orally via telephone by Dr. Kelly Crager beginning in mid-2013. This material is in response to questions sent by Dr. Crager to Mower via e-mail because of the latter's inability to adequately hear by telephone.)

KC: Please discuss your experiences during your tour in Vietnam, as both a Scatback pilot and at the Vietnam National Defense College. Please provide as much specific detail as you can about both of these assignments, how you came to receive these assignments, and the major events/issues that you encountered.

RM: During the mid-1960s, when many of my fellow Air Force pilot friends began to be sent to Vietnam to fly missions against the Viet Cong and NVA (North Vietnamese Army), I had very strong feelings regarding our nations stand against the communists and the "Domino Theory" which was used to explain our enemy's intentions in SE (South East) Asia. I felt that we needed to stand strongly against the USSR (Soviet Union) and China and their expansionist plans. Since I was on a controlled assignment to the USAF (United States Air Force) Academy, I expected to remain there until my five-year tour there ended; then, I would be reassigned to Vietnam as a pilot. During the interim, I would continue serving on the USAFA (United States Air Force Academy) faculty; and, during my spare time, I would continue to enroll in graduate courses at the University of Colorado to prepare for an eventual PhD program. Yes, I strongly supported our intervention in Vietnam, as well as our troops who were there fighting against the aggressive communist insurgents. After leaving the Air Force Academy in October 1967, and having completed two survival training courses, en route, one near Spokane and the other in the Philippines, I arrived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base (TSN) in Saigon, Republic of Vietnam on December 11, 1967. I was immediately settled into some great living quarters in a Saigon villa located off-base at 292/5A Hoang Dieu. The villa was owned by Vietnam's Prime Minister Loc. Seven other USAF officers, and I lived at the villa for the next several months as we worked on, and flew missions from TSN, where most of us were assigned to the 7th Air Force Flight Operations unit known professionally as "Scatback." In our unit, we had several different types of aircraft that

flew a very broad range of daily missions throughout South Vietnam and South East Asia. I was soon checked out to fly most of our T-39 missions. Perhaps half of our flights were scheduled to depart TSN at scheduled times (usually at night), fly specific routers, and land at a series of designated air bases in Vietnam and Thailand before returning back to Saigon. Many of our other flights were rather random with regards to time, place and purpose. However, most all of our flights were scheduled as priority missions by 7th AF, and many carried high level military and political VIP's. So that was what I volunteered for? Well yes, and I enjoyed the flying part of my assignment. However, when we were not flying, we were often required to remain nearby on standby, readily available to fly at a moment's notice. The latter got old very quickly. As a result, many of us kept ourselves busy when we could, doing all sorts charitable or volunteer projects, but that also got old after a while. Some of the more adventurous pilots in our unit began to fly with other units whenever they could find an opportunity. I liked that option. One Sunday, while at Church at TSN, I encountered an Army helicopter pilot from my hometown in Utah. I soon learned that he flew Huey Gunships for the 120th Aviation Company (the "Razorbacks") which were also based at TSN. I asked if it would be possible for me to fly with him sometime on one of his missions. "Of course," he replied, "if some of us can fly on your jet missions." Oh boy, that was an exciting deal I had made with Lt. Burnside, and later with Capts. Payne and Shibao. Actually, I had no idea that flying gun ship missions in a UH1B could be so interesting; however, we occasionally encountered moments of absolute terror that left us wondering why the hell we were there. During my year of flying in Vietnam, probably sixty-five percent of my missions were flown at night to airfields at the larger military bases in Vietnam or Thailand. Most of my 275 hours of combat time was logged in the USAF T-39, as were most of my 355 hours of logged combat support time. In addition to the T-39, I flew with the US Army in C-21s and Huey Gunships, the VNAF in C-47s, the USAF in C-21s, O-1s, Hueys and other helicopters, and with Air America (CIA) in C-45s and C-47s. The combat time we logged usually involved our landing and departing while servicing airfields that were under attack by VC (Viet Cong) or NVA military forces. Two of the most memorable flights I can recall occurred during the late afternoon on Tet Eve. I had joined a two Huey gun ship formation that was to patrol an area southwest of TSN looking for large

formations of enemy troops moving over-land toward Saigon. VC flags were to be seen flying everywhere, but the large groups of men had apparently dispersed into small clusters of unarmed individuals. Finally, we spotted a large plantation house located deep in a swampy area that showed considerable tracks to and from the house. Try as we might, we could not draw fire from anyone in the immediate area; so, Capt. Payne decided we should withdraw and return to TSN to refuel. Shortly thereafter, our birds had been refueled and manned with new crews, except for me. I joined Capt. Shibao in the lead Huey, and we returned to the swampy area where we had seen the large house. This time, we drew fire on the very first pass over the area. The VC should not have done that. Two Hueys can do a lot of damage when they are challenged by "bad guys" on the ground. After making several firing passes using gun fire and rockets, the house was essentially destroyed. Not long thereafter, as we departed the area, there was no longer any return fire from the nearby area. We didn't realize it at that moment, but actually the famous Tet Offensive had just begun.

KC: Please discuss the Tet Offensive of 1968, especially what you witnessed and your role during the offensive and counter-offensive.

RM: Speaking of the Tet Offensive, many strange and unexpected events took place during the next month or two in and around Saigon. However, many years earlier, while I was in the Navy, I had witnessed the Tet celebrations held in the Shanghai region. In China, I had been greatly impressed by their massive public celebrations, day and night, and their continuous fireworks. However, I really thought that the streets in Shanghai were filled with people at all hours because of refugees fleeing into the city to escape threatening nearby communist armies. In 1947, I could understand why there were hordes of people in Shanghai's streets, but the continuous fireworks displays were a surprise to me. The greatest threat to those of us who were actually staying at our villa during Tet was unknown to us until a month or two later. It seems that during the lull in fighting just before Tet, masses of villagers had made their way into Saigon carrying their dead in caskets that were conveyed by whatever vehicle they could find. Their intent was to bury their deceased in one of the city's large cemeteries. In reality, as later discovered, those villagers flooding into Saigon were members of the VC and NVA who were carrying caskets filled with weapons and ammunition to selected cemeteries where they

were buried. Later, on Tet Eve, those cemeteries became staging areas in Saigon for VC forces to attack their military and civilian targets. There is one more step in this drama that could have drastically impacted those US military members living in our villa and in nearby villas. How? Here is how: On our street, about two blocks from our villa, a large brick church had been constructed years earlier to serve the neighborhood. Just prior to Tet, it had been selected as the assembly point for about 50 VC guerilla fighters who were supposed to quietly gather there awaiting Tet. In order to avoid attracting the suspicion of local residents they carried no weapons. On Tet Eve, while large masses of people were on the streets watching the ongoing fireworks, a truck was loaded with guns and ammunition at a nearby cemetery and dispatched to deliver its weapons to our neighborhood church. En route to the church, the truck was stopped and searched by a Vietnamese National Police group. The truck was seized, the weapons were confiscated, and the trucks crew captured. Thankfully, the weapons did not reach the church. Meanwhile, the insurgents at the church waited for their weapons, but they never arrived. After a few days, church members alerted the police about the large group of men who appeared to be hiding there. The VC were soon apprehended and never had the opportunity to kill all of the Americans living in the nearby villas and rented quarters. Quite some time later, we in our villa learned about the enemy in the church and their loss of weapons. We were also informed that the VC who were slated to attack our neighborhood also knew that essentially all USAF residents in the neighborhood would be unarmed and easy to targets, whereas, members of the US Army, who lived nearby, were armed with some light weapons. The VC apparently was preparing for a bloody victory, but it failed because of the actions of the Vietnamese National Police. On the other hand, why didn't we Americans have weapons for our protection? How about this? It was because of General Spike Momyer's policy which prohibited USAF military members from having weapons in their quarters nor on their persons when they left TSN en route to their off-base residences. With a leader like that, who needs enemies? I have another short comment regarding the impact of the Tet Offensive and subsequent rocket attacks on the Scatback missions. To the best of my knowledge, Scatback's missions were not seriously impacted by the Tet Offensive actions nor any of the major rocket attacks on TSN during my tour in Vietnam (i.e., December 1977-December 1968). For

example, on 18 February 1968, Major Broussard and I were scheduled for an Alpha mission, so we elected to stay in the Scatback lounge (bunkhouse) near base operations at TSN. At 0102 hours, while we were still sleeping, a major rocket attack began. We received about 100 incoming rockets during the next ten minutes while we huddled under our mattresses. After the last rocket hit, we carefully went out onto the nearby ramp to help the ground crews. There were many wounded and major damage to several aircraft on the flight line and ramp. After about an hour of assisting in damage control, we left the mess to prepare for our scheduled flight. Fortunately, there was not a scratch on any of our T-39 aircraft. At the scheduled time, we taxied out of the ramp parking area trying to carefully avoid all burning and damaged aircraft and potted taxiways. Our takeoff was at 0303 hours, within a minute or so of our scheduled departure time. May I repeat my earlier remark: I am not aware of any cancelled T-39 mission that was cause by an enemy action during my tour at TSN.

KC: What were your thoughts on why the US was involved in Vietnam? What were your thoughts on the way the war was being conducted?

RM: The Vietnamese National Defense College (NDC): After about five months in-country, I met some old friends from the USAF Academy's Economics Department who were TDY (temporary duty) to Vietnam to monitor and learn what and how things were progressing. They were scheduled to participate in a seminar which was to be held at a downtown Saigon location. I didn't have a conflict with my schedule, so I agreed to accompany them. This was a whole new experience for me. The NDC was to provide a War College level, resident training program for Vietnamese Colonels and Generals, and high-level civilians in Government positions. At that time, the NDC was in the process of being designed and developed for the Vietnamese Military. During my visit, I met many of the Vietnamese faculty and some of their students. Likewise, I also met some of their US military advisors, when I attended the scheduled seminar. I was surprised when I learned that although the NDC was still undergoing development, course materials had been developed for students who were then enrolled in the first block of instruction. Following the scheduled seminar, I was introduced to a US Army Colonel who, I later learned, was the senior American advisor to Vietnam's NDC. We had a long, interesting discussion about NDC, its missions and its progress. When I expressed some interest in

the program, the Colonel immediately asked, “How would you like to be a faculty member and course advisor here at NDC?” Well, I was too surprised to know just how to answer his question. Finally, I told him that it looked like a wonderful opportunity for a major such as myself. “I’ll give it some serious consideration,” I added. “That’s fine, he responded, “I’ll give you a call tomorrow afternoon for your answer. In the meantime, my staff will interview you and answer any questions you might have about the job. I’ll call MAC-V (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) today to get their approval, and I’ll get the results of your interview from my staff tomorrow morning. Tomorrow afternoon, I’ll get back to you to set the deal if we decide it, is a go.” Wow! Was this all for real? It was a bit too fast for me to give an immediate answer. One of the major concerns I had was whether or not I would be able to continue flying with Scatback on their T-39 missions. The immediate answer from 7th AF Operations was yes, but I could no longer fly as an IP (instructor pilot). A day later, I was found acceptable by the American Advisory Staff and the Vietnamese Director of Academics. I accepted their offer and, and very quickly found myself working at the NDC as a faculty advisor for their proposed Course VI (Nation Building). When the USAF Major was selected to become an advisor for Course VI at NDC, things seemed to become somewhat awkward for the other course advisors who were all US Army Colonels or Colonel selectees. As one would expect, it would take some time before the professional relationships would evolve to the point to where jobs came first. In reality, each American course advisor was responsible to a Vietnamese faculty member for the development, preparation, and presentation of a specific course in the curriculum. In theory, the Vietnamese officers were in charge and the US advisors were to assist them as they worked to develop a quality academic program to meet Vietnamese needs. However, I very quickly learned that the Senior American Advisor, Colonel Brier, and the other US Army members of his staff were determined that a working model of the US Army War College’s curricula was what was needed at NDC. Basically, I disagreed with my Army colleagues’ views, but my views mattered little to them. Still, I took the title “Advisor” literally. As an NDC course advisor, I felt that my primary responsibility was to support Vietnamese needs rather than those promoted at the US Army War College and by my US Army colleagues. Collectively, how did the US Military Group impact the development of Vietnam’s

National Defense College? First, I should acknowledge that my colleagues were top notch Army officers, selected by Colonel Brier and his predecessor at NDC. They were well trained and knowledgeable about those factors and policies that had led to the success of the US Army War College. As dedicated career professionals, they were determined to see Vietnam's National Defense College follow in the footsteps of the US Army War College. My problem was to work with my American peers, while at the same time, performing as an advisor to the Vietnamese Course Director as he tried to recognize Vietnam's problems and address their specific needs. Of course, one might wonder how the Vietnamese would react to advice given by their American advisors. I'm certainly convinced that they understood what was going on; however, they needed much of the advice they received, so they played their cards very carefully. In summary, I would simply say that working effectively with the Vietnamese faculty and my US Army colleagues was a tremendous challenge for all concerned. However, because of everyone's dedication and professionalism, our tasks were completed in reasonable fashion and our goals were generally achieved.

KC: What were your thoughts on the way the US ended its participation in the fighting in Vietnam?

RM: As a kid growing up on the farm, I always seemed to support the notion that the USA should have a strong military so that they could protect their interests in world affairs. Likewise, America should choose to support those other countries who had similar world views. My reasons for joining the USN (United States Navy) in WWII was because I wanted to support the good guys against the bad guys. We would also help those who were too weak to defend themselves. Of course, I came out of WWII with an even stronger feeling about America being a leader with a sense of responsibility to the world. During the Korean Police Action, I was very disappointed that our political leaders were not dedicated to winning that war. Why sacrifice thousands of lives and destroy our economy if you are not committed to victory? We needed political and military leaders who knew what to do in a very complex world. When Japan surrendered French Indo China and other portions of Asia at the end of WWII, they left one terrible mess. The USSR and China both recognized their opportunities for the expansion of their versions of communism. Likewise, the former colonial powers such as France, Great

Britain, USA, Portugal, Holland, and others, expected to reestablish their former interests in the region. Nationalism was another powerful force that demanded consideration of its needs. The presence of many rich natural resources and illegal drugs provided some very complex opportunities for those with regional economic and political ambitions. Indeed, how can any country or block of countries sort out, solve, and implement solutions for any or all of the problems identified above? Many have criticized actions taken by competing political powers immediately following WWII, during the Korean War, and prior to the Vietnam conflict. In the early 1960s, South East Asia presented a host of lingering conflicts as well as some newly emerging problems that called for the attention of the world's power brokers. I was increasingly confident that the USA could use its strength and alliances to bring increased stability to the region. Initially, I was eager to right the wrongs that were being imposed upon the people of Vietnam by friends and foes alike. I was a hawk, and "can do" was our motto. However, once in Vietnam, most of my colleagues and I were constrained by time. More specifically, our tour duty was for one year; what could we accomplish of value in that short time? Sadly, we soon came to believe that we had to accomplish something fast if we wanted our efforts to count. As a result, some very strange thinking began to evolve among those in my peer groups. Some of us had seen our senior officers move from one assignment to another in such a way that they were exposed to several challenges and opportunities during their tour in Vietnam. They seemed to benefit greatly from such exposure with regards to future assignments and promotions. Should those of us who were just mid-rank pilots in Vietnam not devise some system that would enhance our career opportunities and future promotions as well? One possible solution seemed to offer some benefits for those who felt unrewarded. If an individual, upon arriving in country could quickly identify an important organizational need that was unfulfilled, that person had a starting point. The next step was to carefully envision a possible solution to the problem. A likely third step may involve developing a plan or program that would achieve the desired goal. As a fourth step, an innovator may have to submit his idea to a supervisor to facilitate the plans possible implementation. If the program was initiated and achieved the desired success, that fact needed be prepared in a final report and submitted to higher echelon leaders for their review and evaluation. Of course, it was important that the recognition of

an individual's outstanding contributions to the unit's mission be completed prior to the end of their Vietnam tour of duty. If my observations regarding mid-ranked pilots is valid, it would seem that they too were motivated toward self-serving activities in the war zone. With all things considered, is it any wonder that the Vietnam War ended as a loss for both America and Vietnam.

KC: How did your experiences in Vietnam most affect your life?

RM: In my view, the Vietnam War was a great turning point in the character of America. Historically, Americans have been proud to point at our flag and identify ourselves as patriots. We took pride in pointing out that we had served under the flag, and that we would do it again if our service was needed. Another group that developed during that same period of time was the hippies who seemed to have no positive goals in life. They seemed to be dedicated to their own downfall. They were dirty, lazy, and only served themselves. They seemed to disrespect all others and the laws that others lived by. They refused to serve in the military service of the USA, and many left the country for Canada to avoid being drafted for service during the Vietnam War. Most of them appeared to have been addicted to illegal drugs. Some would suggest that they were the predecessors to those who prefer to live on today's government dole. My service in Vietnam has caused me to look critically at those who will not provide for themselves nor their unwed families. In short, their only sense of responsibility seems to be for themselves.

KC: What do you believe is the lasting legacy of the Vietnam War?

RM: In Vietnam, the cost to America in terms of blood spilled, lives lost, and resources consumed, was a terrible waste. Who benefitted from the war? Generally, only those who served themselves, and they were found throughout our culture, ranging from the White House and political halls in Washington down to the fox holes in the jungles of Vietnam. The moral fiber of Americans was tested then; we didn't do well in Vietnam, and we are certainly doing less well today in America.

ROLAND D. MOWER SEP 30, 2013

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1) Please discuss your experiences during your tour in Vietnam, as both a Scatback pilot and at the Vietnam National Defense College. Please provide as much specific detail as you can about both of these assignments, how you came to receive these assignments, and the major events/issues that you encountered.

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So that was what I volunteered for? Well yes, and I enjoyed the flying part of my assignment. However, when we were not flying, we were often required remain nearby on standby, readily available to fly at a moments notice. The latter, got old very quickly. As a result, many of us kept ourselves busy when we could, doing all sorts charitable or volunteer projects, but that also got old after a while. Some of the more adventurous pilots in our unit began to fly with other units whenever they could find an opportunity. I liked that option. One Sunday, while at Church at TSN, I encountered an Army helicopter pilot from my home town in Utah. I soon learned that he flew Huey Gun ships for the 120th Aviation Company (the "Razorbacks") which were also based at TSN. I asked if it would be possible for me to fly with him sometime on one of his missions. "Of course," he replied, "if some of us can fly on your jet missions." Oh boy, that was an exciting deal I had made with Lt. Burnside, and later with Capts. Payne and Shibao. Actually, I had no idea that flying gun ship missions in a UH1B could be so interesting; however, we occasionally encountered moments of absolute terror that left us wondering why the Hell we were there.

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Shortly thereafter, our birds had been refueled and maned with new crews, except for me. I joined Capt. Shibao in the lead Huey and we returned to the swampy area where we had seen the large house. This time, we drew fire on the very first pass over the area. The VC should not have done that. Two Hueys can do a lot of damage when they are challenged by "bad guys" on the ground. After making several firing passes using gun fire and rockets, the house was essentially destroyed. Not long thereafter, as we departed the area, there was no longer any return fire from the nearby area. We didn't realize it at that moment, but actually the famous Tet Offensive had just begun.

2) Please discuss the Tet Offensive of 1968, especially what you witnessed and your role during the offensive and counter-offensive.

Speaking of the Tet Offensive, many strange and unexpected events took place during the next month or two in and around Saigon. However, many years earlier, while I was in the Navy, I had witnessed the Tet celebrations held in the Shanghai region. In China, I had been greatly impressed by their massive public celebrations, day and night, and their continuous fireworks. However, I really thought that the streets in Shanghai were filled with people at all hours because of refugees fleeing into the city to escape threatening nearby communist armies. In 1947, I could understood why there were hordes of people in Shanghai's streets, but the continuous fireworks displays were a surprise to me.

The greatest threat to those of us who were actually staying at our villa during Tet was unknown to us until a month or two later. It seems that during the lull in fighting just before Tet, masses of villagers had made their way into Saigon carrying their dead in caskets that were conveyed by whatever vehicle they could find. Their intent was to bury their deceased in one of the city's large cemeteries. In reality, as later discovered, those villagers flooding into Saigon were members of the VC and NVA who were carrying caskets filled with weapons and ammunition to selected cemeteries where they were buried. Later, on Tet Eve, those cemeteries became staging areas in Saigon for VC forces to attack their military and civilian targets.

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3) What were your thoughts on why the U.S. was involved in Vietnam? What were your thoughts on the way the war was being conducted?

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faculty member for the development, preparation, and presentation of a specific course in the curriculum. In theory, the Vietnamese officers were in charge and the US advisors were to assist them as they worked to develop a quality academic program to meet Vietnamese needs. However, I very quickly learned that the Senior American Advisor, Colonel Brier, and the other US Army members of his staff were determined that a working model of the US Army War College's curricula was what was needed at NDC. Basically, I disagreed with my Army colleagues views, but my views mattered little to them. Still, I took the title "Advisor" literally. As a NDC course advisor, I felt that my primary responsibility was to support Vietnamese needs rather than those promoted at the US Army War College and by my US Army colleagues.

Collectively, how did the US Military Group impact the development of Vietnam's National Defense College? First, I should acknowledge that my colleagues were top notch Army officers, selected by Colonel Brier and his predecessor at NDC. They were well trained and knowledgeable about those factors and policies that had led to the success of the US Army War College. As dedicated career professionals, they were determined to see Vietnam's National Defense College follow in the footsteps of the US Army War College. My problem, was to work with my American peers, while at the same time, performing as an advisor to the Vietnamese Course Director as he tried to recognize Vietnam's problems and address their specific needs.

Of course, one might wonder how the Vietnamese would react to advice given by their American advisors. I'm certainly convinced that they understood what was going on; however, they needed much of the advice they received, so they played their cards very carefully. In summary, I would simply say that working effectively with the Vietnamese faculty and my US Army colleagues was a tremendous challenge for all concerned. However, because of everyone's dedication and professionalism, our tasks were completed in reasonable fashion and our goals were generally achieved.

4) What were your thoughts on the way the U.S. ended its participation in the fighting in Vietnam?

As a kid growing up on the farm, I always seemed to support the notion that the USA should have a strong military so that they could protect their interests in world affairs. Likewise, America should choose to support those other countries who had similar world views. My reasons for joining the USN in WWII was because I wanted to support the good guys against the bad guys. We would also help those who were too weak to defend themselves. Of course, I came out of WWII with an even stronger feeling about America being a leader with a sense of responsibility to the world.

During the Korean Police Action, I was very disappointed that our political leaders were not dedicated to winning that war. Why sacrifice thousand of lives and destroy our economy if you are not committed to victory? We needed political and military leaders who knew what to do in a very complex world. When Japan surrendered French Indo China and other portions of Asia at the end of WWII, they left one terrible mess. The USSR and China both recognized their opportunities for the expansion of their versions of communism. Likewise, the former colonial powers such as France, Great Britain, USA, Portugal, Holland, and others, expected to reestablish their former interests in the region. Nationalism was another powerful force that demanded consideration of its needs. The presence of many rich natural resources and illegal drugs provided some very complex opportunities for those with regional economic and political ambitions. Indeed, how can any country or block of countries sort out, solve, and implement solutions for any or all of the problems identified above? Many have criticized actions taken by competing political powers immediately following WWII, during the Korean War, and prior to the Vietnam conflict.

In the early 1960s, South East Asia presented a host of lingering conflicts as well as some newly emerging problems that called for the attention of the world's power brokers. I was increasingly confident that the USA could use its strength and alliances to bring increased stability to the region. Initially, I was eager to right the wrongs that were being imposed upon the people of Vietnam by friends and foes alike. I was a hawk, and "can do" was our motto.

However, once in Vietnam, most of my colleagues and I were constrained by time. More specifically, our tour duty was for 1 year; what could we accomplish of value in that short time? Sadly, we soon come to believe that we had to accomplish something

fast if we wanted our efforts to count. As a result, some very strange thinking began to evolve among those in my peer groups. Some of us had seen our senior officers move from one assignment to another in such a way that they were exposed to several challenges and opportunities during their tour in Vietnam. They seemed to benefit greatly from such exposure with regards to future assignments and promotions. Should those of us who were just mid-rank pilots in Vietnam not devise some system that would enhance our career opportunities and future promotions as well?

One possible solution seemed to offer some benefits for those who felt unrewarded. If an individual, upon arriving in country could quickly identify an important organizational need that was unfulfilled, that person had a starting point. The next step was to carefully envision a possible solution to the problem. A likely third step may involve developing a plan or program that would achieve the desired goal. As a fourth step, an innovator may have to submit his idea to a supervisor to facilitate the plans possible implementation. If the program was initiated and achieved the desired success, that fact needed be prepared in a final report and submitted to higher echelon leaders for their review and evaluation. Of course, it was important that the recognition of an individuals outstanding contributions to the units mission be completed prior to the end of their Vietnam tour of duty. If my observations regarding mid-ranked pilots is valid, it would seem that they too were motivated toward self serving activities in the war zone. With all things considered, is it any wonder that the Vietnam War ended as a loss for both America and Vietnam.

5) How did your experiences in Vietnam most affect your life?

In my view, the Vietnam War was a great turning point in the character of America. Historically, Americans have been proud to point at our flag and identify ourselves as patriots. We took pride in pointing out that we had served under the flag, and that we would do it again if our service was needed. Another group that developed during that same period of time was the hippies who seemed to have no positive goals in life. They seemed to be dedicated to their own downfall. They were dirty, lazy, and only served themselves. They seemed to disrespect all others and the laws that others

lived by. They refused to serve in the military service of the USA, and many left the country for Canada to avoid being drafted for service during the Vietnam War. Most of them appeared to have been addicted to illegal drugs. Some would suggest that they were the predecessors to those who prefer to live on today's government dole. My service in Vietnam has caused me to look critically at those who will not provide for themselves nor their unwed families. In short, their only sense of responsibility seems to be for themselves.

6) What do you believe is the lasting legacy of the Vietnam War?

In Vietnam, the cost to America in terms of blood spilled, lives lost, and resources consumed, was a terrible waste. Who benefitted from the war? Generally, only those who served themselves, and they were found through out our culture, ranging from the White House and political halls in Washington down to the fox holes in the jungles of Vietnam. The moral fiber of Americans was tested then; we didn't do well in Vietnam, and we are certainly doing less well today in America.