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The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Michael Morea  
Conducted by Stephen Maxner  
January 25, 2001  
Transcribed by Jennifer McIntyre

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

1           Stephen Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr.  
2 Michael Morea. I am in Lubbock, Texas; Mr. Morea is in Palm Harbor, Florida. It is the  
3 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2001, approximately five minutes after nine, Lubbock time. Mr. Morea,  
4 why don't you go ahead and discuss what happened when you left Duc Hoa.  
5           MM: Okay, I think as I said last time, but just for continuity I was at Duc Hoa,  
6 just really getting my feet on the ground and got a phone call from the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS one  
7 evening, saying that I was to report very quickly to the southern sector of the 25<sup>th</sup> ARVN  
8 divisions' area of responsibility which would have been Long An province and the  
9 airfield there, for reason I don't know was called Tan An. Really just a wide spot in a  
10 highway about a thousand feet long with a very small PAP ramp and some sandbags and  
11 some fifty-five gallon drums that we used to re-fuel our, normally two airplanes that we  
12 kept there, but I'm getting a little ahead of myself. [Note: Transcript is accurate, but  
13 runway was actually 2100 feet long.] So with that introduction at some point in time I  
14 did in fact pack up, I don't remember how I traveled, my recollection is I flew down, no,  
15 I do recollect, Pete Bernstein who was the other FAC down there, flew up and got me.  
16 That's right, a very short flight, flew up, picked me up and took me back to Long An and  
17 to go back again, just for a moment, I think I mentioned, but the reason I went there is the  
18 other FAC who was there with Pete had been very severely wounded and evacuated back  
19 to the States and I don't think ever returned to Vietnam, although he did survive. So my

1 job was to go down and be the other FAC with Peter, and that's what I did and again, as  
2 in the case of Duc Hoa, I anticipated at that point that this would be my home away from  
3 home for the remainder of my tour in Vietnam. It didn't turn out that way which will  
4 come later. So, about Long An, what kind of a place was it? It was certainly a nicer  
5 place than Duc Hoa had been. In that although we flew from the little airfield just outside  
6 town on the road, we lived in town in what I would call rather comfortable  
7 circumstances, I'll try and describe it for you. We lived in a two story, and I have a  
8 photograph of it, a two story villa, certainly a large home, much better than normal  
9 Vietnamese standards, no question about that, we called it a villa and that's where we  
10 lived. When I say we, I mean the entire advisory detachment that was there, of some  
11 reason I have better memories of the Army people there than I do of the folks at Duc  
12 Hoa. I guess maybe I was recovering from the shock of entering combat, I don't know  
13 what it was, but I do have better memories of the people and the situation. The villa was  
14 a two story building as I said, fronted I think facing north, wouldn't bet my last dollar on  
15 that. But fronted on the town's soccer field and across the soccer field, some fifty yards  
16 away were some shops as I recall, toward the left end of the soccer field was a road that I  
17 think went over a bridge. A little river ran through town, I think the Long An river and  
18 took us among other places to the airfield, short drive. At the right end of the soccer  
19 field, looking out from the building again was the province chief's, we called it the  
20 palace. And it was certainly an upscale thing for Vietnam, it was a very large villa on a  
21 good size piece of land with a walled and iron railing fence around it as I recall. It looked  
22 like a small embassy in some foreign country, it looked like what the U.S. embassy might  
23 be in some moderately small country, quite a nice place. So that was the geography of  
24 our situation. The logistics of our situation there was sort of like this, the advisory  
25 detachment was commanded by an Army Colonel, and again as in the case of Long An,  
26 we were nominally, I wouldn't say under his command because that would be certainly  
27 inaccurate, but under his direction, let's say. We were there to support the Vietnamese  
28 through him, I think that's the fairest way to put it and again he didn't give orders and we  
29 didn't say no when he asked us to do something and it was a good working relationship  
30 and that's the way it usually works best in my mind. That's how it worked out. When I  
31 say him, I think there were actually two Colonels. I think there was one just leaving

1 when I got there, I remember nothing more than a short, wiry thin sort of a man followed  
2 by a very large, blustery sort of man kind of on the Schwarzkopf model, both full  
3 Colonels, Army guys, both good people, no problem. My roommate was an Army  
4 captain, I think he was, he may have been a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. I think he was a very junior  
5 captain, black kid, again kind of thin and wiry, don't remember what his specialty was, in  
6 terms of why he was there, what his advisory role was, but we roomed together, up in a  
7 room on the second floor of the villa, quite comfortable, beds, dressers, mirrors,  
8 bathroom down the hall. Very nice place and we got along great, I do not remember his  
9 name, the only thing that sticks in my mind is that he had the same name as a black  
10 basketball player who was famous at the time. I think a college player at NYU which is  
11 interesting, but meaningless, I guess because I just don't remember his name.

12 SM: What time period were you in Long An again?

13 MM: Okay, we're talking now probably mid-March of '66 would be about right.  
14 I got there early February, mid-March maybe first of April, I honestly don't remember  
15 exactly when I made the move.

16 SM: When did you leave?

17 MM: Well, we're going to be leaving about mid-May, so I was only there about a  
18 month and a half, again.

19 SM: Were there any significant operational differences between what you did at  
20 Long An and what you did at Duc Hoa?

21 MM: No, nothing that I can recall, it was essentially the same mission, visual  
22 reconnaissance, keeping the head of the Vietcong down, probably, well there were a  
23 couple of differences now that I think about it. We probably had fewer ground operations  
24 now that I think about it, and we did more air attack of opportune targets, that would be  
25 point one. Point two, I think it's fair to say that the VC controlled most of the province,  
26 but probably the most significant point is it was not, as in the case of Duc Hoa, Hau  
27 Nghia province, Long An province was not a free fire zone. It was agricultural at least in  
28 good part, had been banged up and bombed and shot at for so long that it was pretty well  
29 beat up, but there was still ordinary folks in large numbers out there, farming, trying to  
30 make a living off the land and trying to avoid the Vietcong and us both, I guess would be  
31 the fairest way to put it and just get on with their lives, which wasn't easy.

1 SM: So you had to be more careful?

2 MM: Yes, I had to be more careful on your target selection. The Intelligence was  
3 more important. We did spend some time up at the province chief's villa going over, not  
4 so much plans as strategies I guess, what do we bomb, what don't we bomb, where are  
5 the good guys living, where are the bad guys living, so that we didn't make those kinds of  
6 mistakes. So yes, there were differences, again much more populated, as I said the town,  
7 I sort of glossed over that, but the town was a thriving little Vietnamese town, a market  
8 town, I guess if you were British you would call it. And we got along pretty well with  
9 the local folks, didn't have a lot of contact with them, but we'd go out and play soccer on  
10 the field and we'd shop for little things downtown and that sort of thing. It was a fairly  
11 secure town, as towns went but again out in the countryside, things got different, once  
12 you left the confines of the immediate secure areas.

13 SM: Were there many young men in this town?

14 MM: Yes, good question. I was going to come to that, actually the town was  
15 what was known as a Chieu Hoi center. It was a place where when the Vietcong  
16 accepted the amnesty offers, usually in the form of leaflets and we dropped a lot of those  
17 in the area too. If they came in with a Chieu Hoi leaflet it meant they were defecting  
18 back to their country and out of the VC and there was a center there for rehabilitation and  
19 trying to give them job opportunities and what. So there were a lot Chieu Hois running  
20 around town, driving pedicabs, which was the little bicycle taxi cab kind of a thing and  
21 doing other functions in town. So there were more young men in that town I suppose,  
22 than in most because it was a Chieu Hoi center.

23 SM: Well, did the American personnel, you and other Americans that lived and  
24 engaged in activities with the Vietnamese civilian population; did everybody get along  
25 fairly well?

26 MM: Yes, those you contacted or connected with, you got along fine with and  
27 those you wouldn't have gotten along fine with you never contacted, it was kind of that  
28 sort of thing.

29 SM: I didn't know if there was perhaps any kind of concerns?

30 MM: In town?

1 SM: Well, yes concerns especially if you get a population of young men,  
2 Vietnamese young men, are they going to want a bunch of Americans hitting on their  
3 women, those type of issues?

4 MM: That wasn't a problem, very little hitting on the women to tell you the truth,  
5 to my knowledge none, I'm sure it went on, but no. Later in Saigon it's a different story,  
6 when I get to the Airborne division part of the story, but not in that town, no. I don't  
7 know that anybody ever said lay off the women, but we did, it just didn't happen. Had a  
8 few young girls in the house of course, we had to run a household and we did, it was a  
9 cooperative mess kind of a thing, very informal. But we'd all chip in a certain amount  
10 every month and somebody would run up to Saigon once or twice a month and hit the  
11 commissary and bring back what we needed and we just had a sort of a communal  
12 kitchen, dining thing and a couple of fairly young Vietnamese girls. Who I remember  
13 one of them by as fact Co Lei, which just means Miss Lei, L-E-I, I think who was one of  
14 the girls who worked for us and worked in the house, she was hands off, she was a very  
15 nice young girl and if anybody had tried anything with her, he'd have gotten beaten up by  
16 the rest of the guys so it wasn't a problem. That certainly wasn't a problem; no we never  
17 had that problem.

18 SM: And how about prostitutes?

19 MM: Not in that town. I'm sure again they must have been in one or two, but not  
20 in that town, no, didn't happen. Again, Saigon whole different story but we can come to  
21 that.

22 SM: You mentioned leaflets, did you guys ever get issued ammunition or  
23 waterproof magazine bags that had Chieu Hoi messages on them that you could then  
24 discard after you changed out your magazines?

25 MM: No, that doesn't ring any bells at all. I can tell you a funny story if I hadn't  
26 told you. It's in my memoirs I think.

27 SM: Go ahead and tell it.

28 MM: About dropping leaflets, I was flying up and down the canals one day  
29 dropping leaflets. I was very low in altitude, maybe four hundred feet if I had to guess so  
30 you could tell right away, I guess I never followed the fifteen hundred foot rule. It seems  
31 that way anyway, dropping leaflets. I had a box of them in my lap or somewhere or in

1 the back seat and reaching back and grabbing hands full of them. In any case I had both  
2 windows open and I'm flying up and down the canals and throwing these leaflets out by  
3 the handful but the thing I didn't realize, another one of those things you learn from  
4 experience, there was a light rain, very light, misty rain wasn't bothering me. But as time  
5 went by, maybe forty-five minutes I started to feel like the airplane wasn't flying right, it  
6 was flying very sluggishly and the controls weren't responding correctly and I thought,  
7 what the hell is going on here. This airplane's so simple, what could be wrong and the  
8 typical looking around in the cockpit, looking for something wrong, looking left and  
9 right. Finally I looked back over my shoulder and what I'd done is a lot of the leaflets  
10 were sticking to my tail surfaces and I was in a sense creating a big ball of papier mache  
11 on my particularly on my elevator surfaces and so I was losing control of up and down,  
12 pitch. I was just very slowly encasing my controls in this wet paper. Fortunately I didn't  
13 get to the critical stage and I just stopped throwing leaflets and went home and cleaned  
14 the airplane up, but I think that one's in my written memoir, maybe it isn't.

15 SM: I don't think we've talked about that yet.

16 MM: No, we haven't talked about, but it may or may not be in the written  
17 document, but it's another one of those crazy true stories.

18 SM: Now, when something like that happens, did you guys write up some kind of  
19 a lessons learned after-action report that circulated so that other guys wouldn't make that  
20 mistake?

21 MM: No, unfortunately nothing that formal. We might get on the radio, we  
22 talked at night on the radio net amongst the various sites. Probably, not in the entire 19<sup>th</sup>  
23 TASS, that was too big, but lets say maybe the western side of the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS adjacent  
24 areas would talk to each other at night. Our radio operators would usually do the talking  
25 and we'd just chit chat and we'd tell them if there was something we wanted passed, or if  
26 there was some information we were looking for and they'd try and get it for us. So you  
27 might say hey guys, I made a big mistake today, you might keep this in mind next time  
28 you try it but again. A year later I'm sure the answer would have been different, but this  
29 early phase '66 and just into '67, the thing was just getting going, it wasn't formal. The  
30 FAC School wasn't up and running although it was about to be, the in country FAC  
31 school, so it just wasn't that formal, we didn't have the procedures.

1 SM: And you were still flying the O-1 there?

2 MM: Yes, still flying the O-1, I never flew anything else, different models, E's  
3 and F's and G's, but there are very minor differences to those, just how the propeller  
4 works, basically.

5 SM: In terms of other differences between Long An and Duc Hoa, does anything  
6 else come to mind?

7 MM: There's one thing that comes to mind that I guess I should mention for  
8 historical purposes and again it's in my memoirs later when I talk about being with the  
9 Airborne Division and going up to the 1st Corps Area, because there was a semi-  
10 revolution in progress up there with the Buddhists and the Corps commander and what  
11 not. There was always a nagging suspicion I would say, in the back of our minds, when  
12 we got a target from the Vietnamese particularly, about whether this was really military  
13 or was it political. Or was it even, sort of political, meaning coercive, to be specific if  
14 you got a target that didn't look right it was perhaps – and we bombed villages all the  
15 time. We tried to, by that I mean villages that were collections of buildings usually with  
16 some trees around them, that was the typical configuration, surrounded by open fields.  
17 We would bomb villages, we made a considerable effort to determine that they were  
18 empty and what we, at least the intent was, is we were destroying infrastructure. We  
19 were destroying places where the VC did live on occasion, had lived, had fortified, but at  
20 least in my case and I think in most cases, if I saw what looked like ordinary people  
21 walking around, and you could tell, children certainly, even women and probably they  
22 were VC. But in any case if you saw that kind of people just moving around in what  
23 looked like routine habit patterns for a small village, I wouldn't bomb it and I don't think  
24 most people would have. The ones that we did bomb were empty, lots of obvious  
25 entrenchments and gun emplacements inside the village and under the trees and that sort  
26 of thing and those are the kinds of things that we did attack pretty regularly.  
27 Unfortunately, of course in the process of doing that we were decimating the countryside  
28 and driving what loyal ordinary people there were out there completely crazy, I'm sure  
29 but that had been going on since forever. But back to the point, the point is that every  
30 once in a while you'd get a target that was from the Vietnamese and you'd fly over it and  
31 it just didn't look right, it looked too populated. It looked too prosperous, it didn't have,

1 there was almost like a sinister atmosphere that after a while you got to feel about a place  
2 when it looked like it should be a target and these places wouldn't have that look and  
3 you'd have to wonder about it. Did they not pay their dues to the province chief that year  
4 and he was retaliating? So it was something that was always I think in the back of our  
5 minds, something we were very sensitive to, to the point where I tell you one story, and I  
6 don't think this is in my memoirs, it might be, the written ones, again. In this province,  
7 in Long An province I was out one day visual reconnaissance and I spotted a flight of, I  
8 think four, Vietnamese A-1s up and down, most of these villages were long and thin, they  
9 were built along a road or a track or a canal or something and they would just, the four of  
10 them up and down this one village bombing the hell out of it. And number one, there was  
11 not supposed to be any bombing in the province unless me or Pete was there, Vietnamese  
12 or no. Well it was their country I guess they could do whatever they wanted, but  
13 theoretically we were supposed to be there, and secondly I knew the village and it wasn't  
14 supposed to be a target. So I got on the radio real quick, took me two or three minutes to  
15 fly over there, but got on the radio and called control back at Long An and told them  
16 what was going on and asked them to find out what the hell was happening up at the  
17 direct air support center at Bien Hoa, which theoretically controlled all the air and who  
18 these guys were and how they got this target and how come there was no FAC. And  
19 meanwhile because I just didn't feel right, I just basically dove down to the village and  
20 flew up and down the village at very low altitude, kind of figure eights so that basically  
21 they couldn't drop any more bombs because I was in the way and they could see me.  
22 They went away and that was the end of that, but when I got back, we got some wishy-  
23 washy answer that never really satisfied us and we were suspicious that this was one of  
24 those political retaliation things that I think did occur in Vietnam.

25 SM: And what kind of aircraft was this?

26 MM: They were Vietnamese A-1s.

27 SM: A-1s, just bombing this village?

28 MM: Yes, sad story but true. That's the way it works especially in that kind of a  
29 war.

30 SM: Were those aircraft clearly marked enough to tell that they were Vietnamese  
31 Air Force and not American Air Force.



1           MM: The U.S. Air Force did not fly A-1s, at least not to my knowledge. The  
2 only time you would see a U.S. Air Force guy in an A-1 is sometimes there would be,  
3 well not sometimes, there were U.S. Air Force advisors to the Vietnamese A-1 units.  
4 And they would sometimes fly as one of the flight of four, and sometimes you'd know  
5 that because if there was some verbal confusion between you and the flight leader who  
6 was always Vietnamese, every once in a while, an American voice would come out of the  
7 flight and say, 'This is Gold-3, I understand what you want, hang on a second, we'll get it  
8 sorted out'. We didn't normally have the language problem and that didn't happen often,  
9 but every once in a while the guy would just chime in to let you know there was an  
10 American in the flight.

11           SM: Later in the war, they did, maybe not in '66?

12           MM: News to me, could well be, I didn't know that. U.S. A-1 squadrons.

13           SM: We interviewed a guy just a few days ago that was an A-1 pilot in the '70s.  
14 He was in '70, '71 down there, but I'm curious because even though those aircraft were  
15 probably flown by Vietnamese pilots, Vietnamese Air Force pilots, could someone from  
16 the ground looking up tell?

17           MM: Yes, well someone from the ground, I see where you're headed.

18           SM: Especially peasants, are they going to know that this is their own people  
19 doing this, or are they going to think why are the Americans bombing us?

20           MM: No, I think they know. That would have been my guess. They had been,  
21 this war had been going on for a long time and I think the local Vietnamese knew what  
22 kind of airplanes the local Vietnamese flew and which were the American ones.  
23 Probably, if my guess was right, that was exactly the message that was supposed to be  
24 sent, sadly. And I could be wrong but . . .

25           SM: Either one would be effective because then the province chief would be  
26 able to say, this is what I can bring down to bear on you, whether it's Americans flying  
27 those missions or Vietnamese flying those missions.

28           MM: That's true and he had that power, as I think I mentioned earlier, these  
29 province chiefs, the whole system over there was basically, at least in my mind, the entire  
30 political system was Chinese medieval, an emperor who was the president in Saigon and  
31 four major warlords who controlled provinces and then little sub-warlords who had

1 districts and what not so, four corps and the sub-districts, provinces and beyond. So, not  
2 too surprising, that's the politics over there, always has been and in many ways still is.

3 SM: Now when you were flying your missions out of Long An, what was the  
4 aircraft support you would receive to bomb those, whether they be suspected enemy  
5 villages or infrastructure?

6 MM: Basically the same as at Duc Hoa. A lot of Vietnamese A-1s, a lot of U.S.  
7 F-100s because they were at Bien Hoa which was close. A lot of Navy coming off Dixie  
8 Station, A-4s primarily, those would have been the three primary airplanes I think that I  
9 would have expected to see down there.

10 SM: And what would did you bring in, preferably to take out a suspected enemy  
11 village, conventional bomb, napalm?

12 MM: Napalm to burn down the trees and the buildings, white phosphorus bombs,  
13 hundred and ten pound white phosphorus bombs which the A-1 used primarily but they  
14 could carry a ton of them as I recall, twenty-four of them. A very effective bomb, small  
15 hundred and ten pounds but just the old World War II scene of the white phosphorus  
16 trails. It looks like a flower, very effective weapon, and ordinary five hundred pound  
17 bombs, those would have been the three, and then guns, always, twenty-millimeter guns.

18 SM: In those operations did you ever come under fire from the ground?

19 MM: Occasionally, not often. It was not like up north or later, after Tet '68; they  
20 did not have heavy weapons. When I came under fire it was always small arms, Ak-47,  
21 nothing bigger than that.

22 SM: And you mentioned villages, how about other infrastructure like bridges or  
23 things like that?

24 MM: Again, they would try to build bridges over toward Cambodia and we'd be  
25 more careful, the whole thing was more careful. If you saw a bridge, it could have easily  
26 been a farmer, because we're talking a couple of twigs and a couple of planks when we  
27 talk a bridge. It could have been a farmer just trying to create way across a canal  
28 between one field and another and so we didn't attack willy nilly like we did in Hau  
29 Nghia province because we just didn't have the same authority, number one. And we  
30 didn't have the same situation, so you had to be a little more careful. You'd go back and  
31 say, here's what I saw and somebody would say, no let's don't do that because the

1 situation in that part of the province is okay and it's probably the farmers. So you  
2 wouldn't just automatically attack them, which is what we almost basically did in Hau  
3 Nghia. That question prompted another thought. What we did more often, Pete and I, we  
4 used to do what we use to call dawn patrol. We'd get up very early in the morning and  
5 crank the engines just before daybreak and get airborne just as the sky was getting light  
6 and we'd fly up and down the province. We'd pick a section of the province everyday  
7 and we'd fly up and down very low. I'm talking fifty, sixty feet over little towns and  
8 villages and our purpose was two fold, number one we were trying to send a message for  
9 whatever psychological effect it was worth, that we were there, and so about the time the  
10 Vietnamese are getting up to start their days work we'd come zipping over their houses at  
11 fifty or sixty feet, a couple of towns, or three or four towns every morning, different ones.  
12 The other things was that you could see a lot that way, you could really get at that  
13 altitude, early in the morning when ordinary people in Vietnam are out doing their  
14 ordinary thing, you could get a sense again, of is this village a functional, ordinary village  
15 or is there something strange going on here. You could get that very quickly just by  
16 going down the street, seeing what was happening, the kids out running around. Are  
17 people carrying produce around, or does it look very quiet and do you spot a line of  
18 trenches off on the backside of the village somewhere? We did a lot of that, trying to get  
19 a feel for what really was going on because we had to know that more than we did in the  
20 previous place in order to discriminate between what you did and didn't do.

21 SM: What was Pete's last name again?

22 MM: Bernstein. B-E-R-N-S-T-E-I-N. As I said I think he was a very quite guy,  
23 but very effective. I think he came from a very wealthy Jewish family up in Shaker  
24 Heights, Illinois if I'm not mistaken and I have not been able to contact him, I wish I  
25 could. I've made some efforts but he seems to have disappeared. [Note: Transcript is  
26 correct, but Shaker Heights is in Ohio.]

27 SM: How many villages were in your aerial area or operations, can you  
28 guesstimate?

29 MM: Oh, my God, hundreds.

30 SM: So, you wouldn't be able to do this over the same village very often?

1 MM: Well, in an hour's flight, you might catch twenty or thirty of them; I'm  
2 talking really little tiny places.

3 SM: So over the course of a week, you might be able to get a full spread?

4 MM: A couple of weeks, you might. Yes, a couple of weeks let's say.

5 SM: A couple of weeks, full coverage, go back again?

6 MM: Right.

7 SM: When you would conduct these, what did you call them again, dawn raids?

8 MM: No, dawn patrols.

9 SM: Dawn patrols, when you conducted your dawn patrols, what was the typical  
10 response of the people on the ground?

11 MM: You could see them.

12 SM: Would they stop and stare?

13 MM: They would look up, they didn't seem to be frightened, they didn't run  
14 away.

15 SM: Okay, they didn't scramble.

16 MM: No, not normally, if they did, they were smart enough if they were bad guys  
17 and they scrambled that would be a signal so they didn't. They just sort of looked up,  
18 kind of a curiosity thing, you didn't get any shaking fists or anything either, it was just  
19 sort of an oh, but we still had our purpose in doing it.

20 SM: I was curious, you mentioned one of the big differences between Long An  
21 and Duc Hoa is the more strictly enforced rules of engagement and restrictions and the  
22 fact that you couldn't just, it wasn't like Hau Nghia, which was more of a . . .

23 MM: It was [essentially] a complete free fire zone.

24 SM: Free fire zone. Here in Long An, you've got a significant civilian population  
25 that needs to be taken into account, and of course I'm sure you've heard the comments  
26 and the arguments that one of the problems about fighting the Vietnam War was the  
27 restrictive rules of engagement, but it seems that with your experience in Long An, those  
28 were necessary.

29 MM: Yes, I would not have called them restrictive, necessary, sensible, whatever  
30 word you choose. If you really thought that you were going to win this war someday,  
31 which back then we did, then the whole concept of converting the people to the

1 government's side was viable and if you were going to try to do that, obviously beating  
2 them up unnecessarily was not going to achieve that objective so I think we took it  
3 seriously.

4 SM: So it did not frustrate you?

5 MM: No.

6 SM: Or your fellow pilots achieved.

7 MM: No, I don't think so, no, we selected targets based on what we thought were  
8 real and those we attacked and the others we didn't so I don't think there was frustration.

9 SM: In the same regard, I was curious what you thought about, if you even  
10 thought about the internal inconsistency between your experience and the necessity as  
11 you appropriately stated of having restrictions on your activities in that particular  
12 province, with the overall strategy employed by the American commanders of attrition,  
13 killing our way to victory.

14 MM: I understand the question and your preface was probably accurate. I don't  
15 think, again in '66 I don't think we thought much about that. Everything was kind of  
16 new, I think we still believed that the effort was to win and that we could. I think all of  
17 that probably changed about '68 with Tet and new administrations and when what's his  
18 name got in.

19 SM: Abrams?

20 MM: No, I'm talking on the political side.

21 SM: Nixon?

22 MM: No, Johnson's Secretary of Defense.

23 SM: McNamara.

24 MM: McNamara, there you go. Those days, I think that's when, because I was  
25 home by then and those were the days when I think everybody started to get the sudden  
26 realization that our real intent here is to minimize casualties and get the hell out of here  
27 as quickly as we can, which took years, but still I think at that point it was obvious that  
28 that was our intention.

29 SM: Again, in your area of operation and in Long An itself, did you know that  
30 the standard tactic employed by U.S. ground forces was the search and destroy, the  
31 seeing clear or whatever they want to call it?

1 MM: Didn't have any U.S. ground forces there, so again it wasn't relevant. The  
2 locals did some of that, although I think, and I don't know why, there was less of it there  
3 than there was in Hau Nghia and I think maybe the reason was the higher population  
4 density and the higher difficulty of actually defining where the enemy was.

5 SM: In Long An, versus Duc Hoa, which was a free fire zone.

6 MM: Right, exactly, so I think there was more surgical is not the right word,  
7 because it wasn't that good, but it was more surgical let's say, than Hau Nghia was in that  
8 we did look for specific targets. They had more artillery down there, the Vietnamese did,  
9 105 Howitzers and they used that occasionally to fire on targets. There was one other  
10 things that's of interest that I ran into down there and that was the Phoenix programs, you  
11 familiar with that?

12 SM: Yes, sir.

13 MM: Yes, okay that was a, I won't call it a center, maybe it was, there was a  
14 Phoenix outfit there, very interesting operation, they lived nearby in town, but apart from  
15 us. I gave you a thumbnail description of what I remember of it. It was commanded as I  
16 recall by a slim, trim, taller than average, Vietnamese captain. Story was that his family  
17 was politically out at the time, whoever was running Saigon at the time, his family had  
18 been with the previous government. I think Diem perhaps, I think his family was  
19 connected with Diem, who of course was assassinated and Thieu I think was in at the  
20 time. Although I could be completely wrong on that, and so if that's correct than this kid  
21 was kind of a Diem family and out of power and out of favor in Saigon so as a result he  
22 had to go find something else to do and I guess they told him why don't you go be a  
23 Phoenix unit commander, so he was. His troops were, it was a small unit, if I had to  
24 guess I'd say he had maybe thirty people, I could be wrong. The story is that he did a lot  
25 of his recruiting at the Saigon prison, basically would go down there and I actually went  
26 with him once, and he would just talk to the prison keepers and say have you got any  
27 likely candidates, young tough men in here and he'd talk to them and make them an offer.  
28 How would you like to be out of here in five minutes? I can give you a uniform and a  
29 gun and three square meals a day and a place to sleep. But here's the other side of the  
30 coin, and he would just yank them right out of the jail and take them back to Long An  
31 and train them and they were pretty good. They were very loyal as best we all

1 understood, to him and to the program and they did their job. The only other thing I  
2 remember, I did go out on one patrol with them, one night. You know what their mission  
3 was, it was euphemistically called counter terror, but what it was is we were supposed to  
4 assassinate the VC leaders before they assassinated the few remaining friendly village  
5 leaders. That was I guess the essence of it, went out on a patrol with them one night and  
6 didn't make any contact, we were looking for some guy but we never found him and that  
7 was that. The only thing I remember is I was carrying a Swedish K submachine gun with  
8 a silencer on it and I'd never carried one before and the thing that stuck in my mind was  
9 how heavy the silencer was. It must have weighed five pounds, just the silencer, it's not  
10 like in the movies. The only other thing I remember is that there was an American  
11 advisor with them who was not military. Again as I recall, big bluff Irish cop looking  
12 guy, and I think that's what he was. I think he was a retired policeman from Chicago or  
13 some such thing and he was their advisor. He did live in the advisory detachment villa  
14 with us, but the Vietnamese captain did not, and again this is all best as I recall it. It may  
15 be eighty percent accurate, who knows.

16 SM: And the other side of the coin, as you put it was their mission, which was  
17 Viet Cong infrastructure neutralization, either capture or kill?

18 MM: Yes, that's what I understood, yes. I'd never read any of the books about it,  
19 but that was my understanding at the time, yes.

20 SM: Did you ever witness them, actually bringing back prisoners?

21 MM: No, never. Again, I don't think prisoners was the objective normally,  
22 although it may have been at certain times, but in any case, no.

23 SM: When was the first time you actually heard this referred to as Phoenix?

24 MM: There. It was the only experience I had with it.

25 SM: Any other Americans rotate into that unit while you were there?

26 MM: The Army guys were in and out, and again I just have vague recollections  
27 of people. Pete and I did our thing all day, we were preoccupied is almost the right word,  
28 with the airplanes and the maintenance and the fuel coming in and what our mission was,  
29 and timing and backing each other up and that sort of thing and getting three square  
30 meals and some sleep in between. The Army guys, at night we'd have dinner and chit  
31 chat and have a beer to two, never got close, I don't have any recollection of any close

1 relationship with any of them at all, they kind of were preoccupied with what they did.  
2 We sort of came and went in the building and not a lot of deep socializing.

3 SM: How did the villagers seem to get along with that Phoenix unit?

4 MM: No contact that I was aware of. If there was, no, never made that  
5 connection. Did they know it was there, what did they think about it, never made that  
6 connection?

7 SM: How did you handle maintenance for your aircraft?

8 MM: Maintenance was very simple. We had a crew chief, I think who lived  
9 there with us and it was his job to go out may have been two to tell you the truth, I don't  
10 know, and the radio operators, same thing. A couple and their job was to go out either  
11 with us or just a little bit ahead of us and prep the airplane, make sure it was fuelled, give  
12 it a pre-flight which wasn't very complicated. Standby to untie the airplane or pull the  
13 chocks for us if necessary, pump fuel, very routine, very limited maintenance was  
14 possible if you has a brake that was low on hydraulic fluid and therefore a little mushy or  
15 what not. They could unscrew a cap and pump some more hydraulic fluid in there and  
16 put the cap back on. But on the other side of the coin the airplane was very, very simple  
17 so there wasn't much that it needed. They could do basic stuff, mainly they were there  
18 just to pre-flight and kind of support us with very basic mechanical and ground service  
19 kinds of thing, although we could do it by our self for that matter to, pull the chocks and  
20 start the engine, hold the brakes and taxi off all by yourself, untie it and fuel it and  
21 whatever. Really the maintenance system in a nutshell was that the airplane was to be  
22 rotated back to Bien Hoa every hundred hours for serious maintenance and the airplanes  
23 as best I understand got a pretty thorough going over there. And then you'd get a fresh  
24 one and as you approached a hundred hours, you'd call them up and they'd tell you, come  
25 one, bring it on up and we'll give you another one. Well, sometimes they'd give you  
26 another one. Usually, you had to wait for it. I think I mentioned that because we had  
27 quote our own airplanes and if you had to wait for it, usually it was an overnight stop at  
28 Bien Hoa. Different when I was in the airborne division again, because of Gene  
29 McCutchaon's connections and just his personality, we never waited. When we got there  
30 we dropped one, picked up another one and left, but that's later. I think, not to rush us  
31 along, because I'm not doing that at all, but I think that you're going to find that my, that



1 for whatever reason, just the rapidity of the way things were happening, things were  
2 happening and changing so fast to me that I don't remember a lot about these first two  
3 assignments when it comes to detail, you would think I would remember some of the  
4 Army guys and what not, but I just flat don't.

5 SM: I completely understand, it's a long time ago.

6 MM: Well, it's not the time so much, I don't think I would have remembered it  
7 six months later.

8 SM: Like you said, you were very busy.

9 MM: Yes, and moving fast and then the Airborne division thing I was there  
10 longer, and then more settled and I do remember names and faces there.

11 SM: Well let me, just a couple more questions about your time at Long An. Back  
12 to your village operations, when you would bring in air strikes or artillery or whatever,  
13 into one of those villages, any secondary explosions?

14 MM: Rarely, I don't think they had that level of munitions at the time. I think  
15 what you were really dealing with was small units organized on the village level and  
16 probably armed with individual weapons and that was it. Maybe a few, they had a fairly  
17 effective Russian shoulder-fired rocket, kind of a bazooka kind of a thing, that the VC  
18 had significant numbers of, they may have had a few of those laying around, but even  
19 that's a very light weapon. They may have had a mortar or two, but nothing in the way  
20 of stockpiled munitions at any level at all. You were basically just trying to keep them  
21 disorganized and if they were setting up something that looked like a military camp or a  
22 defensive position, you tried to ruin it for them. It was really about that simple.

23 SM: So, no significant caches were?

24 MM: No.

25 SM: How about the presence of vehicles, anything?

26 MM: In the towns that was about it, in the towns.

27 SM: How about the villages you bombed though?

28 MM: No, I was going to say rarely, in fact to my knowledge never. By vehicle I  
29 mean even something like a cyclo, nothing. No, that's an interesting question, I never  
30 thought about that, but no I don't think I ever saw a vehicle, you would see the vehicles  
31 of any description, and even those were primitive, only in the larger government

1 controlled towns. What they used outside was strictly the water buffalo, hitched to a  
2 primitive but effective plow, that was it.

3 SM: And while you were at Long An did you ever receive any feedback after a  
4 bombing run, where the Vietcong or, primarily the Vietcong but maybe even PAVN,  
5 were trying to use that particular incident for propaganda purposes to try to turn the  
6 population against you, against the American presence?

7 MM: Not specifically, I suppose we were generally aware that that could happen  
8 and probably did happen, but specific instances, no.

9 SM: What kind of briefings would you receive while you served at Long An?

10 MM: Casual, be careful with that word, but they were casual. We would sit  
11 around either at the villa or up at the province chief's place and just in general go over  
12 how have things been, what have we done, how effective have we been, where are we to  
13 be focusing our efforts. Sometimes something fairly specific, but it was not, I guess I  
14 never thought of this way, but it's obvious in this conversation here that it wasn't a very  
15 specific kind of a place. It was a very general, the place was fairly homogenous as a  
16 province and the mission was pretty much find out what's going on, try to locate those  
17 places where there really is VC activity, which was generally trying to build up  
18 infrastructure, defensive and ultimately offensive infrastructure and destroy it without  
19 destroying the local population that wasn't involved in that. And I think as it turns out it  
20 was probably about that simple and I never thought about it that way, but it seems to be  
21 the way it's coming out.

22 SM: Did you ever get confirmed enemy kills that you would send down to Long  
23 An?

24 MM: Down there, not many, again it was only a month and a half, some I think  
25 those that I could reasonably confirm, I probably confirmed myself rather than somebody  
26 later on. On the rare occasion where I did see someone and there were two or three  
27 occasions where there was obviously caught somebody in the act, so to speak of building  
28 a bunker or digging a trench and was able to confirm just visually that we had killed him,  
29 but it was rare, not often. I think more often we were bombing empty villages that either  
30 had been or were being fortified. That was probably our main target.

1 SM: When you were doing your visual reconnaissance how long would it then  
2 take you, if you spotted suspicious activity or a suspicious village, how long would it take  
3 to you to bring ordnance?

4 MM: Oh if we really hurried, if there was no doubt in my mind something was  
5 going on and I made the call back through the channels and I'm not going to describe the  
6 system to you, I know you understand that silence is acknowledgement system which we  
7 had.

8 SM: Well, why don't you explain it for readers later?

9 MM: I will, that was the standard classic system, but using that system, I could  
10 probably have air on station, it depended, if there happened to be somebody near by,  
11 maybe twenty minutes, if not, maybe forty, inside an hour, I could almost always have  
12 something working inside an hour.

13 SM: What would you do in the interim?

14 MM: Try to refine my impression of what it was that I was looking at, just fly  
15 over it, fly around it, see if I could generate any activity either good or bad. If I could  
16 generate civilians then I'd just call it off. If I could generate guys trying to sneak away  
17 into the bushes then it would just intensify my impression that I had a serious target. So  
18 that's a fair description, just try and refine in my mind what it was I was looking at and  
19 how I was going to deal with it.

20 SM: Why don't you go ahead and describe real quickly the process of getting  
21 approval to fire on a target?

22 MM: If I can remember it. Well we had two systems, the pre-planned system and  
23 the immediate system. The pre-planned system basically worked this way, boy you're  
24 really calling on my memory now. I would make a request to attack a target at a given  
25 time with a given, well I would request at least a given airplane, given ordnance for a  
26 given target at a given time. And that request would go in parallel up two chains, it  
27 would go up the Air Force chain, meaning my radio operator to the direct air support  
28 center at Bien Hoa to the TACC in Saigon which controlled all the air in Vietnam and the  
29 request would be dealt with and I would either get an approved or a disapproved or an  
30 approved modified somehow. Maybe, approved it but can't so it until this time, and  
31 you're not going to get F-100s you're going to get something else, or whatever. And I

1 would get the word back down through the same channel that here's your approved air  
2 request, be there at this time and this is what's going to happen. At the same time, that  
3 request was going up through Army channels, and there was a parallel agency at every  
4 level, so at the DASC there was an Army liaison and at the TACC there was and of  
5 course at my working level there was. And that request would go up in parallel, the  
6 significance of that being that at every level, the Army guy could say to the Air Force  
7 guy, yes, we know what your Air Force guy down there is requesting our guy knows  
8 what's going on, they understand it, they approve of it down there and so do we and so it  
9 was a coordination thing, and it worked quite well. It also worked on the Vietnamese  
10 side, usually our Army guys would work the Vietnamese side for us. Well not usually,  
11 always, Army side, so really in a sense it was going up three channels, Air Force channel,  
12 U.S. Army Advisory channel, and the third channel being the Vietnamese Army channel,  
13 and it was that simple. The immediate system worked essentially exactly the same way,  
14 except that if I made a request, well depending on where I was, usually I would go  
15 through my radio operator as I was always in his range and then he would go directly to  
16 the Direct Air Support Center at Bien Hoa and ask for an immediate strike. Which would  
17 mean either a launch of an airplane on alert or a diversion of something that was on a  
18 lower priority and that was near to me and seemed to have the right characteristics to fit  
19 the situation. The difference in the immediate system was very simply that in order to  
20 expedite it, you did not require approval at each level, the only thing you could do at each  
21 level was call a halt. So silence was considered approval so if my Army guy who was the  
22 Army radio operator who was with my Air Force radio operator chose not to tell his boss  
23 that I was requesting an immediate air strike that was essentially approval at that level of  
24 my request. Or if he told his boss and his boss said sounds good to me, he did not have to  
25 chime in officially with that, he just said nothing and it was approval and that procedure  
26 was true all the way up.

27 SM: To include the province chief?

28 MM: Yes, to include him. I never thought about him to tell you the truth, except  
29 that he was the Army Colonels guy and he didn't have the communication, so I guess the  
30 answer to that is if the Army Colonel chose not to mention it to him, then the answer was  
31 yes. If the Army Colonel chose to mention it to him, and he said nothing then the answer

1 was yes. I think to be honest most often the Army Colonel chose not to mention it to  
2 him, unless he sensed something big enough. He probably took that on himself, probably  
3 in fact, the Colonel probably wasn't involved that often. It was probably whoever the  
4 duty operations officer was, who was probably some Army Captain or maybe a Major.

5 SM: What about Vietnamese personnel that were probably monitoring those  
6 exchanges and activities or were they intentionally in the loop, that is a Vietnamese radio  
7 operator listening in for that type of stuff so they can inform the Vietnamese civilian  
8 hierarchy?

9 MM: No, if they were, they weren't officially there. They would have been there  
10 just spying on us, which may be. They may have had people with enough command of  
11 English, radio people listening in on our nets so they could keep track of what we were  
12 doing. I was never aware of that; I don't think they did, particularly not at the tactical  
13 level. If they were doing that, they were probably more interested in what was going on  
14 in Washington. So that's a good question, never thought of it, but no, I don't think they  
15 had a system like that. I've lived in other countries that I won't mention here where I  
16 know that the host government, very friendly host government was very definitely  
17 listening and if I had been them, so would I have been, but that's another story.

18 SM: Anything else that you recall from your time at Long An?

19 MM: If you're interested in just a couple of amusing stories.

20 SM: Absolutely.

21 MM: Okay, I can remember, I'm a very heavy sleeper and we had a defensive  
22 plan for our villa, which was a good idea because if the town got overrun we were going  
23 to have to defend ourselves. And in fact in the front window of our bedroom, my  
24 roommate, whose name I can't remember and I had a Browning Air Cooled, which is the  
25 barrel with the holes in it, thirty caliber machine gun from God knows when. But it was  
26 mounted on a table basically so that it would fire out the front window of the villa. Our  
27 filed of fire in other words was the soccer field, and he was the shooter and I kept the  
28 belted ammunition flowing smoothly. He was the shooter I guess because he was Army  
29 and he was senior to me although I was a better shot than he was. So that was interesting  
30 that we were set up that way, and the rest of the building was defended in various other  
31 ways, anything from passive, barbed wire and things like that, to active defenses that we

1 had located around the building, which is not the point of the story. The point of the  
2 story is one night we did come under mortar attack, the village in general and I think us  
3 and the province chief's place in particular and it's comical because the mortars were  
4 exploding on the roof, light mortars, 60 mortars or something about that size. They were  
5 literally exploding on the roof of the building and I slept through it. My roommate  
6 literally had to shake me awake and get me out of bed and over to the machine gun. He  
7 then explained to me, that hey we're under attack and the plan calls for you to be here,  
8 not in bed so that was kind of amusing, but I have always been a heavy sleeper and not  
9 much bothers me once I go to bed.

10 SM: Did the village only get shelled that once while you were there?

11 MM: Yes, again it was only a month and a half but it was just that one time.

12 SM: Any casualties?

13 MM: No, it was over, just one of these brief flurry things. It was over before you  
14 could think about it almost, there was no ground assault there was just mortar. The other  
15 thing that was kind of amusing, in a way is I have a degree in accounting and I was fairly  
16 fresh out of college back then. My roommate had among many other additional duties,  
17 he was like the unit bookkeeper, he was supposed to keep track of the mess funds and  
18 what not. I saw him one night out in the hall, there was a little hallway behind our  
19 bedroom, there was a little desk out there with a lamp on it. He was obviously pulling his  
20 hair out trying to figure something out and I didn't know what it was, so I said to him, I  
21 said what's going on, what are you doing? And he's showing me these books, it was the  
22 house books so to speak and he said I can't understand it, and I've got to explain it to the  
23 Colonel, we've run out of money. We don't have any money to go to Saigon and buy  
24 any food and he said, I don't understand it. I've been filling out this, and he knew  
25 nothing he was working from the Army how to be an accountant manual, put this number  
26 in this box, add it to this box and that was about all he knew about accounting. But he  
27 said I've been filling this thing out, I know it's right, I've been sending them into the  
28 Colonel, he's been initialing them, everything's okay, all of a sudden we're out of money.  
29 Well, the long and short of the story, which was obvious to me, I looked at it, it took me  
30 about two seconds. He had been very dutifully at the end of each month, putting the  
31 number that was the bottom line in parentheses, which is what the book said to do under

1 these given circumstances. If A is larger than B, subtract A from B and put the answer in  
2 parentheses and parentheses, and parentheses in accounting means it's a loss, so for  
3 months they had been actually spending more than they'd been charging each of the guys  
4 dues, so to speak and they had been slowly but surely operating in the red and running  
5 out of money. But it took up till this month for them to run so far out of money that they  
6 really didn't have any cash reserve to run up to Saigon and actually make the next months  
7 purchase. So I explained it to him, we had a good laugh over it, and then he said, 'Will  
8 you go in and explain that to the Colonel because he will kill me if I go in?' So I went in  
9 and explained to the Colonel that the Captain hadn't done anything wrong. It was the  
10 fact that to be, and I didn't put it that way, that both of them were ignorant of what they  
11 were looking at, the Captain and the Colonel, they didn't understand the parentheses and  
12 I said, 'You haven't been charging enough so here's what you've got to do, you've got to  
13 assess everybody a few bucks to build up the pot again and then you've got to start  
14 charging a buck or so more every month to stay that way', and that was the end of that  
15 problem. I always remember that was kind of amusing, just another bureaucratic thing,  
16 you're the unit accountant, all you've got to do is follow these rules and everything will  
17 be okay and of course it isn't, but that's about it. I don't remember much else about the  
18 place, the friendly atmosphere, I remember that, the Army guys were great, the food was  
19 good.

20 SM: What was the total American presence there, approximately?

21 MM: I don't know.

22 SM: Was it up to a hundred?

23 MM: Oh, no nothing like that, I'm talking maybe fifteen guys.

24 SM: That's it?

25 MM: Yes, it wasn't much more than that.

26 SM: Besides that mortar attack, how about occasional sniper fire, any of that kind  
27 of stuff?

28 MM: Nothing, no. Town was pretty secure as I said. It was a pleasant little  
29 town.

30 SM: What was the, how about the ARVN presence?

1           MM: In and out of town. The Vietnamese I think intentionally kept their soldiers  
2 out of their towns. The soldiers didn't get paid much, they were inclined to steal, just  
3 petty theft, like soldiers anywhere, they go have a couple of drinks and get in a fight.  
4 Nothing unusual about them, they're perfectly normal, just like anywhere else and I think  
5 they were kept away from town, not too far away but away. I'm talking three or four  
6 miles outside of town in a garrison area of some sort.

7           SM: Were there any other particularly memorable operations, that is villages that  
8 you bombed or operations that you engaged in?

9           MM: No, it's a very routine place in that sense, very routine. So, what happened,  
10 to set the stage for the next time, is this. About a month and a half into my assignment at  
11 Long An, I got a message, verbal or whatever, one night, from my radio operator saying  
12 that the Colonel up at the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS, whose name I've forgotten although it's on, I think  
13 one of my OERs, short name like Fisher or Thomas or Thompson or some such thing.  
14 The Colonel had called and he had a new job for me. I was supposed to go to Bien Hoa,  
15 post haste and I was going to be part of the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS infrastructure at Bien Hoa and I  
16 was going to be instructing Vietnamese pilots in the O-1, for the duration of my tour. I  
17 really reacted to that, was not what I wanted to do at all. I'd been to Bien Hoa, it was just  
18 dusty, it was like an old cow town, it was just a dusty place, not much going on, lot of  
19 guys. Just too many people around and it was non-combat, although certainly things  
20 happened there, but basically it was a non-combatant place, did not want to go there and I  
21 made that very clear. I got on the radio and I talked to the Colonel and I told him, I think  
22 I told him initially I'm not coming, to which he said, yes you are and then I calmed down  
23 and I told, hey I volunteered for this, I didn't volunteer to be an instructor in some  
24 garrison for the rest of my life, not what I came for. He understood and he said, well look  
25 he said, somebody's got to do it. You haven't been here that long, so we can get some  
26 longevity out of you in the program, he said you're it. He said, unless you can find a  
27 replacement, somebody who would rather do it and you can have his job, I don't care is  
28 basically what he said. So what I did is I got on the radio that night and I called around  
29 the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS area, I don't think I went outside the TASS and I called all the sites and  
30 basically said, here's the deal, is there somebody that would like to go do this, and I'll  
31 come do your job. I don't care where you are and I got a taker, I got a guy who was with



1 the Vietnamese Airborne Division, Advisory Detachment and see here now my memory  
2 starts to get better, Detachment 192, based in Saigon, collocated with the ARVN  
3 Airborne division which was based in Saigon and we'll get into those details later, but  
4 this guy, very frankly he was a captain. [Note: 192 is correct vs. the transcript, but it was  
5 actually 162.] I think I remember his name but if not I'd rather not say, and he very  
6 frankly said look, I got a wife and two kids at home. He said I am Red Marker Four, the  
7 last two Red Marker Fours within the last six months were killed. He said I'm getting  
8 shot at all the time, I'm not having a good time, I don't want to do this and he said if you  
9 want to come do it and let me go be the instructor, I'd be tickled to death to do that, so I  
10 said sounds good to me and shortly thereafter, I talked to the Colonel again, he said fine.  
11 And so without remembering the details of it, we made the swap and he came to Long An  
12 and worked with Pete and that was the last I saw of Pete and that whole situation and I  
13 somehow I was told by the Airborne Division Detachment to meet up with them at Tay  
14 Ninh, which was the northern as it turned out, province of the 25<sup>th</sup> ARVN division. In  
15 other words Long An, Hau Nghia, Tay Ninh, up north, they just happened to be operating  
16 out of there and the boss there, Colonel McCutchaon said meet me up at Tay Ninh and  
17 we'll bring you into the unit, basically and so I did. I forget how I got up there, maybe I  
18 went to, matter of fact I think I did, I think I went to Bien Hoa, gave my airplane to the  
19 guy who was going back to Long An and then took an Airborne Division airplane that  
20 was there and flew it to Tay Ninh to meet up with the Airborne Division guys. And so at  
21 that point I joined my third and final unit in Vietnam and one where I have probably  
22 more to say and more specific recollection of a lot of things, names and faces and things  
23 that happened and all of that sort of thing, but that's at least the intro into how that all  
24 happened and that's probably a good place to stop. [Note: This all is clearly incorrect,  
25 even if it's what I said. He went to Bien Hoa. Another FAC replaced me at Tan Ay.]

26 SM: Just to clarify, which Airborne Division was this again?

27 MM: This is the Vietnamese Airborne Division.

28 SM: Vietnamese?

29 MM: Yes, the ARVN Airborne Division, so in a sense, a very accurate sense,  
30 similar in many, many ways to the U.S. 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne, kind of a quick reaction, national  
31 reserve strike kind of a thing. Light in terms of armor and weaponry but very quick and

1 it was stationed at Tan Son Nhut for reasonably obvious reasons, that was where you  
2 could marshal a lot of airlift in a hurry if you had to and move them out to wherever they  
3 really needed to be, so that's that.

4 SM: Well, if you'll hold on one second, I'll just end the interview officially for  
5 today. Thank you very much; this will end the interview on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2001.

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The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Michael Morea  
Conducted by Steve Maxner  
February 1, 2001  
Transcribed by Jennifer McIntyre

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

1           Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr. Mike  
2 Morea. It is the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2001 at approximately 9:00 Lubbock time. I am in  
3 Lubbock, Texas. Mr. Morea is in Florida. Sir, why don't we begin by discussing your  
4 time with the ARVN Airborne Division?

5           Michael Morea: Okay, as we'll recall last time I sort of set the stage for this by  
6 describing how I wound up assigned to the ARVN Airborne Division, so we can pick it  
7 up there. Again, as best I recall, I went to Bien Hoa, probably took an airplane in there  
8 for hundred hour inspection. Dropped it, picked one up that was destined for the ARVN  
9 Airborne, we're going to use the shorthand here. The Red Marker FACs, that was our  
10 call sign, Red Marker Forward Air Controllers, we're the Forward Air Controllers that  
11 supported the ARVN Airborne Division, just Red Marker comes out quicker than the  
12 other. So I picked up an airplane as best I recall and flew it up to Tay Ninh airfield,  
13 which is where at least several of them were operating at the time, landed the airplane  
14 and asked around I guess and was told, that I think those guys are having lunch. And so I  
15 made my way to a building which was very close by, hundred yards at the most and  
16 wandered around a little bit until I found the people I was looking for. Again in my  
17 written memoirs I remember the building quite distinctly. It was very, at least my  
18 recollection of it, it was very large for Vietnam, concrete, ugliest thing I'd ever seen, kind  
19 of an ugly rusty yellow color and I described it as looking like something left over from

1 the Maginot line and in fact although I never knew for sure, it could easily have been  
2 built by the French as some sort of a semi-fortress. It was dark inside, thick walls, very  
3 gloomy dingy place as you might expect somewhere in the Maginot line would have  
4 been. In any case, I found the two people, two or three, may have been three people I was  
5 looking for and walked over to the table where they were eating, introduced myself and  
6 sat down and that's how my relationship with these folks began. I have described again  
7 in writing, my first impression, which was almost frightening. They wore the very  
8 distinctive camouflage uniform that only the ARVN Airborne Division wore. I think,  
9 again a leftover from the French foreign legion, it was not the same as what the  
10 Vietnamese rangers or Vietnamese regulars or RFPFs or anybody else as far as I know  
11 ever wore. Strictly the Airborne Division wore a kind of dull red beret, and the guys  
12 were all in the ARVN uniform which I'll explain in a moment. Joe Granducci, a captain  
13 at the time, was one of the people I met. Joe had an enormous handlebar mustache,  
14 fortunately I have a photograph of him from back in those days, which displays it  
15 beautifully. Sergeant Balasko, spelled either with an E or A, B-E-L or B-A-L, I'm not  
16 sure, I think B-A-L, was one of our radio operators. I've always described him as  
17 looking like a Mexican bandit. He was Latino, short and squat and he too had a  
18 mustache. So in the dark room and with the uniforms and the mustaches and what not,  
19 they really made an impression, as I said of walking into a Mexican cantina in a bad B  
20 movie or some such thing. And I was this clean cut twenty-six year old Lieutenant at the  
21 time, was somewhat shocked, but it didn't last very long. They were good people,  
22 actually excellent people; I got along very quickly with them, very well. On that same  
23 day, at some point the boss, who we all had Red Marker call signs, I turned out to be Red  
24 Marker Four. Granducci was Red Marker Two, but the boss who was a Lieutenant  
25 Colonel at the time, a very old man for the job, relative to other people who were in the  
26 job, Gene McCutchaon was in his 40s, may have been as old as 47 at the time, and Gene  
27 was just known as Red Marker. No number or The Marker, that was just a little pride  
28 thing with him. Gene showed up at some point during the day, he had been out on a  
29 mission and we got introduced. I don't think I flew any missions that day or in that  
30 period. I think the whole thing wrapped up, just about the time I was getting there,  
31 whatever the ARVN unit was doing was wrapping up and somehow very soon, I think

1 maybe that same day or the next morning, we made our way back to Saigon, which as  
2 I've said was the headquarters of the unit. Let me touch before we go further on the unit  
3 itself, as best I can. I think I've said before that it was called the ARVN Airborne  
4 Division, although at the time it was nothing like division size in reality. It was probably  
5 a large brigade, relative to say, the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division and had three full-up, maybe  
6 even robust regiments in it, but that was really as strong as it was back in those days and  
7 so although it was always known as a division and all the signs and what not in the  
8 cantonment area at Tan Son Nhut said division, at least in my time it was not. We had  
9 three combat ready regiments, as best I recall. So we can call it the brigade or division,  
10 in fact we used to refer to it both ways, just it wasn't that important, we knew what we  
11 were talking about. The unit as I've said was very similar in structure, training,  
12 equipment, and mission as the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division was and is today in the United  
13 States, that is to say parachute very light. The best of leadership, probably man for man  
14 and the best soldiers probably man for man that the Vietnamese Army had -- I'm sure  
15 somebody would argue that with me, but that's fine -- had the mission of national reaction  
16 force or national reserve which meant that if there was a problem somewhere in the  
17 country. And it could be anywhere in the country, frequently a regiment of the division  
18 was directed to go somewhere to conduct some sort of a mission. It was also, I was led to  
19 believe in conversation with the Army folks who were the advisors there to the unit, the  
20 advisory detachment, 193 I think, 192 or 193, I think 193, I can check that. [Note: It was  
21 162.] Detachment 193 had indicated to me that they were also there as kind of coup  
22 control in Saigon, they were at least theoretically and I think in fact, loyal to whatever the  
23 present government was in the interest of stability. And so they were there to quickly  
24 react should a coup arise either in town or from outside town, one of the Corps  
25 commanders or what not. That's a thumbnail sketch, the leadership I remember almost  
26 no names, although I have documents, awards that I got from them and orders and things  
27 that I could probably glean some names out of, let me stop for breath. There is just by  
28 way of information for historical purposes, a red hat organization and I can give you  
29 leads to that if that ever becomes interesting to you. This is an organization of, it's  
30 actually I think officially called the association of the Vietnamese Airborne and it is an  
31 association that's here in the United States of people who were either in, which means

1 some of the Vietnamese managed to escape here and still live here. Or advisors to,  
2 namely people like myself and others, the division. It's pretty well organized, a couple  
3 hundred members, kind of focuses around Fort Bragg, which shouldn't come as a  
4 surprise, has facilitated a couple of monuments in fact. I think one at Fort Benning, one  
5 at Fort Bragg and maybe one at Arlington to the Airborne Division Advisors, several of  
6 whom were killed in action in the course of the war. They have published a hard cover  
7 book, a little history of the division which I have a copy of, runs \$50 to buy it and there  
8 aren't many left, but I do have one, just for the record, if some years down the road,  
9 somebody is looking for one. That's about it, the advisors were also top of the line, most  
10 of them 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division people, just as a matter of curiosity. Pete Dawkins who  
11 was a very famous football player when he was at West Point, captain at the time, was an  
12 advisor during my tenure there. Barry McCaffrey who is, as we speak, well he's just  
13 resigned, but he was the drug czar under the Clinton Administration after he retired from  
14 the Army. I think he had been the commander so Southern Command down in the  
15 Panama Canal area prior to that. And General Schwarzkopf who, everybody knows  
16 General Schwarzkopf was also an advisor in the unit during my tenure, I believe he also  
17 was a Captain at the time. He may have been a Major, but I think a Captain. [Not  
18 exactly right. Schwarzkopf had left just before I arrived.]

19 SM: How much interaction was there between you as a FAC and the other  
20 American advisors?

21 MM: God question and I appreciate you leading me. I'm drifting here and I think  
22 I drifted far enough. It's a good question; the answer is that, here's the way it worked. In  
23 Saigon, very little, we the FACs, five of us, [actually four], lived in a villa, a very nice  
24 house, two-story, kind of what you might see in a middle-class Japanese family today. A  
25 two-story stone building, bedrooms, a living room a kitchen, servant's quarters, a  
26 courtyard, that sort of a place. We lived at this place, the five of us, [four], when we were  
27 in town. The Army advisors lived elsewhere in a MACV compound in their own setup,  
28 so we did not have the interaction socially, or time off like we did at Long An and at Duc  
29 Hoa. At work, when we went out to the division area to do one thing or another on Tan  
30 Son Nhut, which was probably a twenty minute drive from the house through town, we  
31 did our thing they did theirs, casual contact here and there. Our only serious contact was

1 when we went in the field, and when we went to the field, they and we, in other words,  
2 the Army advisors and the FACs, would get our heads together with the Vietnamese  
3 commander, usually a regiment and it may be his operations officer and his company  
4 commanders. We would get together somewhere, at an airfield, usually and sit around a  
5 table, get our heads together and plan operations, or coordinate operations. They did the  
6 planning, I wasn't directly involved in the planning unless I saw something that I thought  
7 didn't look right, but then to coordinate what they're plan was with me, so that I could  
8 provide the most effective air support in terms of time and objectives and potential  
9 danger spots and that sort of thing, ordnance and all those kinds of things, plan of  
10 movement. So we would sit around the table and talk about what we were up to until we  
11 had a good grip on what the plan was, and they would go back into the field and I would  
12 go wherever I had set up shop and prepare to provide the support that we had planned.  
13 That interaction, it wasn't particularly exciting, it was very mundane, but it was very  
14 close interaction. Actually, in my mind at least the closest interaction we had was when  
15 we were actually in an operation, and although they were on the ground and I was in the  
16 air, that's when we talked the most. That's when, at least on occasions the  
17 communication was most intense, for reasons of contact with the enemy or other reasons,  
18 typically the latter. When I really did what I was supposed to be doing for them, namely  
19 provide them the kind of support they needed to effectively operate on the ground, so that  
20 is kind of a thumbnail sketch of what we did in one form or another many, many times. I  
21 would say that I and the other forward air controllers, and I guess I ought to name them  
22 for the record right now. The guys, when I got there, Joe Granducci, the captain I  
23 mentioned with the handlebar mustache was just about ready to leave. The guys who I  
24 worked with, we sort of all got there at more or less the same time and they were still  
25 there when I left were a Major names Paul, actually Oliver P., to be technically correct.  
26 Although he always went by Paul and preferred Bud, he certainly didn't like Oliver. Bud  
27 Fisher was a major, fighter pilot, there was also Bill Stewart, who was a Captain. There  
28 was myself, there was Wayne Kanouse, K-A-N-O-U-S-E, and the boss, McCutchaon.  
29 When I left all of those people were still there and I never met my replacement, I guess  
30 he was coming in just a day or so, at least I don't recall. I don't think I ever met my  
31 replacement; he was coming in shortly after I left. So those are the guys I lived with, and

1 we would rotate the duty, if a regiment went out, one of us would go with them, usually  
2 only one so it made it both good and bad for us and I can discuss that in a minute. So we  
3 would stay at the house, a couple of days off if we'd just come in from the field, do not  
4 much of anything. Just take it easy, then if we weren't scheduled to go out immediately  
5 and things got slow we'd go out to the field and do paperwork, performance reports on  
6 the radio operators and the crew chiefs, or small, little things, nothing very earthshaking,  
7 after action reports and things like that. Then our number would come up and we'd go  
8 out with a regiment, typically wherever they were and whatever they were doing. So I  
9 would say on average, I was probably in the field just a tad over half the month on any  
10 given month and probably home just a tad under half a month, say twenty days out, ten  
11 days in, would probably be about right. I have my complete Form Five, my flying record  
12 from those days and if I had to, I guess I could sort of count flights and pretty much  
13 figure out at least how much effort I was putting in on any given day. It does not  
14 unfortunately indicate where I was; I wish it did because I've forgotten.

15 SM: The units that you would find yourself engaging, enemy formations, what  
16 were they principally, Vietcong, PAVN, combinations?

17 MM: Depended on, as a very general rule in the early part of my time as a Red  
18 Marker they were generally Vietcong. Toward the end we did start to make more contact  
19 with North Vietnamese units, I think largely because toward the end we started to move  
20 further north. To put it another way, my early operations and we would have gone up  
21 and back and up and back and up and back on a rotation, were in the area from Qhi Nuon  
22 north to a place called Bong Son and generally mostly let's say, east of Highway 1, which  
23 was the main north/south road. Sometimes operations into the mountains to the west, but  
24 not very far to the west. So there was a sector there in II Corps that the division seemed  
25 to have a lot of missions assigned in and so we spent months I suppose on and off  
26 individually going up there to support the units that were involved. During those  
27 operations the units that we engaged were almost entirely Vietcong. Later in the tour for  
28 both military and political reasons and again it's in my memoir there, but the written  
29 memoir, but I can touch on it at least, we went up to I Corps and we operated say  
30 generally in an area from a place called Hue Phu Bai to well ultimately to the DMZ, but  
31 not beyond. So in the context of those operations, well let me back up, when were at Qui



1 Nhon I operated out of Qui Nhon itself. Qui Nhon city which was maybe a ten minute  
2 drive from the airfield itself, a large MACV compound. Relatively comfortable concrete  
3 building, rooms with bathrooms and all that sort of thing and I kept my airplane at the  
4 airfield. I operated out of Phu Cat, which you have to be careful, in later years, well in  
5 fact while I was there it was completed. There was an airfield that was called Phu Cat  
6 which was very large American airfield, just as I recall, to the west of Highway 1. The  
7 Phu Cat I operated out of was a little tiny RFPF compound, just to the east of Highway 1  
8 and actually within sight of the new Phu Cat, very primitive place. Also operated out of a  
9 place, had so many names up north. It was called Bong Son, I think Dog Field, English  
10 Field, and it was a dirt runway that was heavily used by the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry division, U.S, 1<sup>st</sup>  
11 Cav. There was a special forces camp very close, probably also called Bong Son, it had  
12 its own little runway as I recall and I spent some time in the special forces camp  
13 operating out of there. Just because it was convenient to the things I was doing, oh  
14 maybe a week that I spent with those guys with my airplane parked inside the compound,  
15 used to taxi it through their barbed wire gate and park it and then taxi out to the airfield  
16 just when I needed to go because of security considerations, place was not safe.

17 SM: Again, PAVN or VC threat?

18 MM: Again, VC best I recall and see, I'm trying to think, during operations in  
19 that area, I know I jumped up north and then came back, but during operations in that  
20 area, that II Corps area, we did on occasion engage VC units. A lot of it I would say was  
21 typical of the way at least I saw the ground war, they were milling around, we were  
22 milling around. We were trying to find them, they were trying to either ambush us,  
23 create some casualties, some morale difficulties, some psychological effect and then  
24 disappear. In that area, to my recollection, no what you would call a pitched battle, even  
25 at the low level, company level, that lasted for very long. It was just an occasional  
26 contact, a quick fire fight, maybe some air strikes, and then the whole thing would just  
27 sort of disappear and again, very typical, at least in my experience. Just as an aside, not  
28 that it's directly relative to anything, the South Korean units which had come over during  
29 the same time frame for various political and operational reasons also had operations  
30 within the same general area that I've just described. They had a small AOR, area of  
31 responsibility, north and west of Qui Nhon as best I recall, and of course further west

1 toward Pleiku and into the mountains north of Pleiku was the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry was more of  
2 than a headquarters it was a gigantic AOR with a lot of operating locations within it. So  
3 we on occasion did operate adjacent to and in coordination with both the Koreans and the  
4 1<sup>st</sup> Cav. So, let's see where does that leave me, okay you're question, I guess I answered  
5 it, not a lot of contact occasionally, particularly when I was at Bong Son and there's a  
6 story in there about kind of in my written thing again, sad story of which there are many  
7 about killing a friendly soldier who was stealing fuel. That was at Bong Son, a local, so  
8 much to say that it's hard sometimes not to go forward on six fronts at once. That was a  
9 local regimental headquarters for that province similar to say what Duc Hoa would have  
10 been, I was there simply because it had an airfield and there was a U.S. advisor or two  
11 there and some semblance, well I won't say some semblance, good security, a place to  
12 sleep. So that was the reason I was there and, why did I bring that up, help me Steve,  
13 where am I here? I'm talking about the kinds of operations we ran into, again at those  
14 kinds of locations we did on occasion we did come under probing attack particularly at  
15 night. You almost never even knew the size of the probing force, they were typically  
16 small, they were always repelled rather easily, trip flares would go off in the middle of  
17 the night. We might see a small number of enemy on the perimeter, some shots would be  
18 exchanged and the thing would go away, so I guess that's a big long answer to the  
19 question of what the level of intensity was but I guess in the process I also covered some  
20 other things.

21 SM: Real quick, how close to the Cambodian border would you get when you  
22 operated in II Corps?

23 MM: Not close at all because we were over on the western side of the Corps.  
24 Highway 1 running pretty much up the, I'm sorry the eastern side, east coast in the  
25 coastal plain prior to where the mountains really began to rise toward Cambodia or Laos,  
26 so not close at all. When I was at Duc Hoa of course we would fly right up to the  
27 Cambodian border.

28 SM: When you operated out of your base there in Saigon, the further north you'd  
29 go from there, the more contact with potential PAVN, so I was curious how far that was  
30 from the border in terms of infiltration of the North Vietnamese into South Vietnam?

1           MM: We did not operate much in the highlands at all, and I think there were  
2 probably several reasons for that. Number one, an Airborne unit wandering around in the  
3 jungle probably wasn't going to get much accomplished. The population was highly  
4 concentrated in the coastal plain. I think the effort was at least an attempt to control both  
5 that territory and that population, again we're talking '66 so the political thinking was  
6 still kind of upbeat at this time hearts and minds and all of that sort of thing. We were  
7 going to win this thing, so that's where they concentrated their effort. When we did go  
8 north, and again it's in the written memoir, but my recollection is the first time and the  
9 first reason we went north was because there were two things, and history books may  
10 prove me wrong, but this is the way I understood it at the time. There were two things  
11 going on in I Corps area that were not good. Number one, the Buddhist leadership was  
12 creating a lot of political turmoil. An uprising I guess would have been, it may have been  
13 just short of an uprising, but Buddhist monks were burning themselves to death in town  
14 squares. There was a lot of agitation within the Buddhist church against the government  
15 and so I think the first reason we were sent up there was to kind of put a lid on that. My  
16 recollection is that the unit that went up that time was just a little bit bigger than one  
17 regiment, it may have been two. Although I was the only FAC, so maybe I'm wrong  
18 maybe it was just a regiment. I remember, it was just a regiment but there were other  
19 Vietnamese units that went up as well, Rangers and what have you, but we went first to  
20 Hue Phu Bai. Kind of a staging base, got our act together there a little bit. I ultimately,  
21 and again, there's a story in my written memoir, went in a convoy from Phu Bai to Hue  
22 city, the old moated, medieval city with the moat around it and the old battlements that  
23 really look like something out of the crusades. I operated out of a small airfield that was  
24 inside the citadel, actually, inside the city and then the troops ultimately moved to a  
25 position, somewhat north and as I recall mostly a little bit west of town. The other factor,  
26 besides the Buddhists is, there was some intimation that the I Corps commander was  
27 trying to set up his own little country up there or break away from the Saigon regime or  
28 install somebody that he was more favorable to in Saigon. I don't remember the details  
29 but there certainly was this suspicion that we needed to get more national troops into the  
30 Corps than he could muster on his own and put a lid on that as well. So probably a dual

1 mission and as best I recall it succeeded, certainly things didn't get worse and in fact they  
2 got better, quieter at least.

3 SM: How much time did you spend in Hue Phu Bai and Hue?

4 MM: That's one of those things I don't really remember, a couple of cycles, a  
5 couple of rotations perhaps, twenty, thirty days total, best guess. I sure wish I'd have  
6 written all that down, but I think I told you I tried to send letters to my mother with little  
7 hints buried in them that I could use later, and again, very untypical of my mom, she at  
8 some point got rid of them. So those are gone and she never threw anything away but  
9 those went for some crazy reason, so I've lost that chronology, I wish I had.

10 SM: Well, you mention in the written memoir that you sent to me, that there's,  
11 apparently there must be two because you mention in this written, shorter version, a  
12 larger I guess written version with pictures and stuff.

13 MM: No, the one I sent you should be, what about ten, twelve, fifteen pages, yes  
14 that is it, that's the memoir. Now I have, at home here, of course a box full of other  
15 things including photographs and pieces of paper, award citations, firearms that I carried  
16 while I was there. I've got a lot of things I've collected, but the one you have is it.

17 SM: I just brought it up because you mention in this written version that when  
18 you, I guess when you first arrived there in Saigon to work with the Airborne Division,  
19 that this was, most of the work, a lot of the work, especially I guess for the first months,  
20 was in the backdrop of a civil war in South Vietnam, I guess the Vietcong and as you  
21 spent more time there, slowly increasing amounts so, I guess, northern support, PAVN  
22 and stuff like that. I was curious if that was your perception at the time or is that  
23 retrospect?

24 MM: That's retrospective. I don't think I cared at the time, and it has to do, really  
25 with what happened after Hue and Hue Phu Bai because obviously the closer to the north  
26 you got, we were up in the Da Nang area, the air activity out of Da Nang was very  
27 intense, both in support of us and in support of other things that were going on up there.  
28 The Marine Corps had a very large presence and we were at least, generally aware of the  
29 kinds of things they were doing, and they were deeper in the mountains and the kinds of  
30 intensity of action that they were finding. Time had ticked by and I think that we were  
31 learning that there was a lot more infiltration coming in from Laos through the

1 mountains, the western mountains of extreme northern South Vietnam to be accurate  
2 about it than we had to contend with down in the south. So there was at least a vague,  
3 probably more than vague recognition that we're closer to North Vietnamese units. To  
4 be honest, although probably not accurate, but the only time I actually remember  
5 engaging an obvious North Vietnamese unit was toward the end when we finally moved  
6 out of the Hue context and moved further north to Dong Ha. Now Dong Ha was just a  
7 lovely place, it was just solid mud most of the time, was a functional runway, and it was a  
8 U.S. Marine base for all practical purposes, like a staging area, a holding area, a jumping  
9 off point an operational area. So typically when you got to Dong Ha it had more the look  
10 of a real forward operational military base that maybe a guy like me would remember  
11 from Korean War or World War II films than anything else that I had seen, which was  
12 either small but tranquil to very large and semi-stateside, am I making sense there?

13 SM: Yes, sir.

14 MM: You know what I'm saying like if you went to Phu Cat or Qui Nhon, except  
15 you knew you were in Vietnam you could have been in Arizona in terms of the danger  
16 level or the level of facilities, which were decent at least. Phu Cat, old Phu Cat, the little  
17 place I mentioned was tiny and primitive but rarely seemed to come under any serious  
18 attack, probably because there wasn't enough there to attack. But when you got to Dong  
19 Ha you got that different feeling, maybe it was just because of the Marines were there.  
20 But there was a lot of vehicle traffic all the time, like I said there was mud and rain and  
21 the airfield was busy as I indicated again in the written memoir, we did come under  
22 serious attack there, regularly, not a few sixty mortars, but 120 millimeter rockets and  
23 lots of them.

24 SM: Why don't you go ahead and discuss the events of October.

25 MM: Okay, what is October, you help me?

26 SM: October 15, this was when you were flying a patrol and basically happened  
27 upon a North Vietnamese regiment?

28 MM: Yes, and that's I guess what I was leading to, you're right October 15. My  
29 regiment let's say, was operating north of Dong Ha and there wasn't a lot of room  
30 between Dong Ha and the DMZ, a map would indicate how much it was, but I don't  
31 think it was twenty miles, and they were operating in that area. Doing search missions,

1 trying to just control that territory and I was flying cover over them, had no, I don't even  
2 think I had any air in my pocket, so to speak, nothing pre-planned, nothing in a holding  
3 pattern anywhere. They were maneuvering and I was flying cover over them and if my  
4 verbal story doesn't quite check with the written one we're going to have just, if we care  
5 to, reconcile the details. But verbally, basically they simply made contact very suddenly,  
6 very abruptly as I recall with a North Vietnamese unit, of my recollection about equal  
7 size, fresh out of North Vietnam and just across the border. This thing all occurred  
8 within a couple of hundred yards of the border of the DMZ as best I remember. The  
9 terrain is relevant, it was what I would call almost like West Texas scrub. Not forest or  
10 jungle certainly, nor was it the farmland which was more typical of the coastal plain, it  
11 was probably coastal plain, but uncultivated because of its proximity to the DMZ and my  
12 point being that the visibility was pretty decent from the air, although not necessarily  
13 very good from the ground. If you can imagine hunting deer in West Texas, you don't  
14 see very far in the scrub oak but I could see very well down into it. So they made contact  
15 and a firefight began. They were, I'll come back to this point, but they were taking some  
16 fire, I don't recall any casualties on the American side, at least not immediately but they  
17 were taking fire and there was a lot of initial confusion as there always is, as to where the  
18 fire was coming from, where the main thrust of the enemy force was. I was able to see  
19 that very readily, and to see the maneuvering. Of course by this time I've got an air strike  
20 on the way, I know, I don't think, I know that Ken Karnes was my radio operator at the  
21 time, back at Dong Ha and close enough to where he could hear my FM radio  
22 transmissions, which we've never really touched on, but from ground to air, or air to  
23 ground, we were usually communicating on the FM band because that's what the Army  
24 uses for close in coordination when they're on the ground. He was close enough to hear  
25 my FM transmissions and as soon as contact was made, he and rightly so, didn't even  
26 bother to wait for me. He called a Direct Air Support Center at Da Nang and said, start  
27 getting some air up here. A few minutes later I called him and he said, don't worry it's  
28 on the way. I said, okay or something to that effect and went back to watching what was  
29 going on, on the ground. So, the first order of business and again, it's in the written  
30 memoir was to try to get the guys on the ground to understand what the disposition of the  
31 enemy force was. I think it's in there, I used a very simple technique which I had never

1 used before, I thought it up on the spot, but it worked like, great. I could see one of the  
2 Army advisors on the ground, I could tell who he was, and I just told him simply lay  
3 down on the ground and I made him squirm around on the ground until his feet were  
4 pointing at the main thrust of the enemy. I think he had a map on his face, just so I could  
5 see which end of him was which, it wasn't that hard anyway. But I think I told him, put  
6 the map over your face and squiggle around until I tell you to stop and I said okay, you're  
7 feet are now pointing at the enemy. And so they were able, because of that to concentrate  
8 the force and the fire in that area and they really did stop the NVA long enough for the air  
9 to get there. There is one funny story I do remember, funny, sardonically funny perhaps,  
10 but I don't think this one's in the memoir, I do recall throwing a red smoke grenade out  
11 of the airplane, again trying to mark the enemy position and it went into a foxhole.  
12 Foxhole I guess is the correct term, it was more like a small, it was like a grave almost in  
13 its dimensions, probably about six feet long and a couple of feet wide and not quite as  
14 deep, maybe three or four feet deep, pre-cut had been there for a while, by the NVA or  
15 the VC. But there were a couple NVA in it and I threw the red grenade and it actually  
16 went in the foxhole where they were. Now this thing, if you've never seen one, it doesn't  
17 look like much from a distance, but it is sputtering smoke and fire pretty vigorously and  
18 so they bailed out of the hole and were immediately shot by the guys on the ground. I  
19 don't think that ones in the memoir, but it's a true story. I was getting by that time, of  
20 course near the end of my tour, at least well into it, getting pretty good with smoke  
21 grenades and as you can tell, both from this narrative and from ultimately when I got the  
22 DFC and from the Air Force side, the Air Medal with V from the Army guys, through  
23 Army channels, because the Air Force doesn't do an Air medal with V, but the Army  
24 does. So they put me in for that but that narrative suggests correctly that when I get shot  
25 up a little bit there, that I had wandered rather low in the course of this thing, stupidly,  
26 but I did, I'd gotten down to, I don't know, maybe five hundred feet, maybe four, I don't  
27 know. I was really into the fight, but I wasn't watching myself so I was able to toss a  
28 smoke grenade with pretty good accuracy from that altitude so the long and the short of  
29 that story of course, is that they were under some considerable fire and in some danger, it  
30 was getting late in the day. We'd been there a while, I was running out of gas and best of  
31 my recollection I did not put in an air strike, a local FAC, whose name I had not known

1 until the FAC reunion, this recent past up at Hurlburt. I met the guy just by casual  
2 conversation we were talking and it turns out that without a doubt, this is the guy who  
3 actually, a local FAC who actually relived me as I was running out of gas and put in most  
4 of the air strikes. In fact I think all of them to settle the area down while I flew back to  
5 Dong Ha and got my airplane repaired because it had been shot up a little bit, actually  
6 mostly just checked it to make sure it was still flyable and then came back to relieve him  
7 as darkness was setting in. I think the NVA had pulled out by then, although we never  
8 really knew and most of what I did on my second flight back in that area was to set up  
9 defensive positions for them, find some likely looking spots where they could put people  
10 and make sure that there was a flare ship on station for the night, a C-47 Spooky and then  
11 put them to bed and then went back to Dong Ha, and the next day back to normal. We  
12 never made a contact like that again. I do remember certain things about that particular  
13 thing very vividly because it's probably the closest I ever came to getting killed by the  
14 enemy. I probably came closer doing stupid things by myself in the airplane, but as far as  
15 enemy action is concerned it's probably the closest I came. I do recall vividly one NVA  
16 soldier stepping out from behind a bush wearing khaki shorts, flip flops, a straw hat with  
17 a silver finish on it, I think, painted silver finish on it, probably to reflect the heat. A  
18 khaki shirt and an AK-47 and he opened up on me at reasonably close range for an AK.  
19 I'd say maybe four hundred yards [I said yards, but I meant feet] and hit the airplane two  
20 or three times, shattered the left rudder pedal, stripped the manufacturer's label off the  
21 generator without actually hurting the generator, put a dent in it, and one came through  
22 the window and there was a huge amount of Plexiglas, actually broke both windows,  
23 came in the left window, went out the right. So broke some Plexiglas and had a lot of  
24 Plexiglas and dirt and dust in the airplane which is another story. That was obviously  
25 vivid in my mind, again, the only thing I remember saying was I'm hit and before I could  
26 even explain that I meant I, the airplane, which I considered part of me, Karnes had  
27 already called again. A rescue service was on their way, or rescuer helicopter was on its  
28 way from Da Nang before I could turn it off, so he was good like they all were, he did  
29 what he needed to do without a lot of guidance.

30 SM: Why is the Plexiglas and dirt another story?



1           MM: I'll get to that, because let's see, let me finish here and then I'll come back  
2 to that. The other things, what else do I vividly remember about that? Well the guy with  
3 the machine gun who by the way, was killed as soon as he stepped out and fired at me  
4 somebody got him. I guess the point is this was fairly close, I mean this was very,  
5 everything was very visible, not just a bunch of little dots running around on the ground,  
6 these were real people on both sides and very obviously so. There was something else I  
7 was trying to say, I've forgotten, it doesn't matter. The thing about the Plexiglas is when  
8 the bullet came up, and I don't know that this is in my memoir either, but when the bullet  
9 came up through the floor and broke the rudder, because there's just a lot of dirt and  
10 debris on the floor, not a ton, but enough and the Plexiglas flying around. Later that  
11 night, I kept seeing something wrong with my left eye and I presumed that I had just  
12 maybe a piece of dirt or a piece of glass or something in my eye and it was of some  
13 concern to me. So that when I get back to Saigon, I went to see the flight surgeon, I said  
14 there's something wrong with my left eye, and he, good examination at the hospital there  
15 which was probably the best one in country. Well that and Da Nang and couldn't find it,  
16 the ophthalmologist or optometrist, ophthalmologist, I guess, couldn't find anything. I  
17 said okay, that's fine if you can't see anything, I'm happy. He said no, I'm not happy, if  
18 you're seeing something, there's something wrong. They sent me downtown Saigon, this  
19 is very interesting to me, female Vietnamese optometrist. You've got to understand that  
20 we had this, sadly in almost every case, third world country kind of an attitude about the  
21 locals and being sent to a Vietnamese eye doctor wasn't my idea of a great idea. What  
22 the hell is this guy going to do to me, turned out to be a woman educated in Paris, very,  
23 very good optometrist. She couldn't find anything either, so I said fine, great, we'll call it  
24 a day, but the system now was in full swing and it wouldn't stop. I actually got  
25 aerevaced, if you can imagine, out of Vietnam to the U.S. hospital at Yokota in Japan for  
26 a week while they looked at me there, and it was misery because it was Yokota. I'd been  
27 there many, many times as an air lifter, it was a pretty good place to relax and have a few  
28 beers and something good to eat in total peace and comfort, they wouldn't let me out of  
29 the hospital. Although I was ambulatory and the only problem I had was this maybe eye  
30 thing. Well, the long and the short of it is, it was finally diagnosed as something called a  
31 vitreous floater, which everybody has, they're just little things inside your eye, like the

1 little hard white part of an egg white that you get when you're separating an egg. There  
2 are things like that floating around in the liquid part of your eye and they sometimes  
3 obscure your vision or what not. You don't seem them unless you look up at a clear sky  
4 or swim underwater with your eyes open, normally and it had always been there is the  
5 long and the short of it. It's just that I'd never noticed it until this trauma of getting shot  
6 at and hit, so that's the point of the story about the debris flying around the cockpit.

7 SM: Now who was the other FAC?

8 MM: I think the other FAC, I have his name somewhere, if it's not in the  
9 memoir, if it's not in the version I sent you, it is in my absolutely most recently updated  
10 version, I won't take time now, but I'll look at it and I'll get it for you next time, his call  
11 sign and his name are in there.

12 SM: Oh, Dan Riley.

13 MM: Yes, there you go, right, so it is in there, good. I thought I sent you the very  
14 last update that I did. So and he told the story absolutely perfect, he knew every detail,  
15 and I hadn't a clue who he was until the reunion.

16 SM: Now a couple clarifying questions, back to II Corps real quick, when you  
17 were down there near the Bong Son plain and that area, did you ever fly into or hear  
18 about a place called Two Bits?

19 MM: Two Bits, no, means nothing to me.

20 SM: Also, quickly back to the civil war issue, even though a lot of what you  
21 talked about today and what you've written in your memoir seems to be retrospective,  
22 when you were there what was your impression in terms of who you were really fighting?  
23 Were you really fighting against North Vietnam, or did you feel you were fighting  
24 against an internal threat, helping the South Vietnamese?

25 MM: Oh, we knew, when we went it I Corps that time, the Hue Phu Bai, Hue  
26 thing, we knew we were fighting two enemies at that point.

27 SM: Two enemies?

28 MM: No question.

29 SM: And that was?

30 MM: Maybe three, the VC, Vietcong as one, in one lump, the North Vietnamese  
31 forces, whatever size and style, and the Buddhists and the Corps Commander. We knew

1 it. It was all very subtle though, I think probably the commander of the Airborne  
2 Division unit that went there was probably a little more senior than he had to be. They  
3 probably grabbed at least a full colonel, maybe the most senior full colonel, and these  
4 guys all knew each other, they'd been fighting in Vietnam for endless years. So this guy  
5 was no stranger to the I Corps commander, nor vice versa and I think when he went up  
6 there, there were meetings and it was all very cordial and lots of smiling and bowing, and  
7 all that sort of thing. But everybody knew what was going on, that's not unusual, you can  
8 find that in corporate America, everybody's having a drink and dinner and smiling and  
9 being charming and they hate each other, or at least they're trying to cut each other's  
10 throat in a business sense.

11 SM: Now, did you have an opportunity to talk about these types of things  
12 amongst other FACs or with the Army advisors that you worked with?

13 MM: No, not those kinds of things. When we had a chance to talk, my  
14 conversation with the Army advisors was generally strictly operational, and that's the  
15 only time I ever really saw them. Once in a blue moon the division would have a party,  
16 some sort of a party in Saigon. They'd bring in some local girls of a better quality than  
17 the normal and they would be there to dance with and that's all. Just female companion,  
18 somebody to talk to, and the conversation during once of those evenings might drift a  
19 little bit away from operations, but they were rare. And at home in the villa on Yen Do  
20 Street there in Saigon, I forget the number, I have it written down somewhere, number  
21 three or number thirty-four Yen Do was the address of the villa. We tried, I almost think  
22 now unconsciously, it's a good question, I never thought about it. Unconsciously, we  
23 didn't talk much about operations unless something really worth sharing came up. The  
24 operational discussion was when we passed the baton, if I was leaving say Dong Ha to go  
25 back to Saigon for my break and Wayne or Bill was coming up. I'd certainly give them a  
26 very good operational baton pass, the terrain and the threats and what we'd done in the  
27 past and what it would look like into the future and where you could get good support  
28 from the Marines and maybe what the DASC was doing well and maybe where they  
29 weren't doing so well. A good operational pass of the baton but once we got back to  
30 Saigon, it was like trivial almost, just casual conversation about this and that. That was  
31 about it. It's funny because we spent like a full day, I think we slept a lot to tell you the

1 truth. I think we probably got up late in the morning, maybe ten o'clock, remember it's  
2 hot as blazes all the time, no air conditioning, we did have fans and what not. So you got  
3 up late, you didn't move very fast, might have had a light lunch, read a book, take a nap,  
4 read some mail, write some letters, a little conversation in the afternoon, have an early  
5 dinner, go to your room. Read some more, get to bed, it was pretty mundane and the  
6 conversations were very general and usually more about home and the future, what's  
7 your next assignment and that kind of thing, than operational.

8 SM: Were you able to develop strong relationships with your fellow FACs,  
9 friendships?

10 MM: Strong, funny word.

11 SM: Was it avoided?

12 MM: No, it was not avoided, how do you put it? The opportunity was limited to  
13 get a very close relationship and since we rarely actually worked together. Like for  
14 example I read Charlie Pockets book, *Viper Seven*, and Charlie's situation was closer to  
15 what I had at Duc Hoa and Long An, but never long enough to get involved. His  
16 relationship with the one or two other FACs that were collocated was obviously much  
17 stronger. You came home every night, same guys, same Army guys and you had a whole  
18 year there. With us, we rarely functioned operationally together and so just a friendly,  
19 more than casual friendly relationship I guess is as far as I would go with it.

20 SM: Another question about ARVN, what was your assessment of the ARVN  
21 units you supported down in Saigon and then in I Corps?

22 MM: Well, the ARVN Airborne Division was excellent in every respect. You  
23 couldn't at least, within reasonable limits fault them on anything as far as I was  
24 concerned. Their leadership was hand picked from the best of the Vietnamese military  
25 leadership, had been in the division, it wasn't like the U.S. Army or the U.S. Air Force,  
26 where you got a new assignment every three years. These guys had been with the  
27 division since forever, the senior people and the young guys I think anticipated staying  
28 and growing in the division. The troops were good as any troops will be if they're  
29 probably led, they'll do their job. The American advisors were, I won't say a cut above,  
30 that wouldn't be fair. I mean the American advisors who came to go to the Ranger units  
31 or even just the ordinary Vietnamese units were probably very good, but I can tell you

1 that the guys who came to the Airborne division were, from personal experience, I mean  
2 guys like Schwarzkopf and I think I mentioned Colonel LaBrozzi, who had a battlefield  
3 commission in Korea, strangely for just reasons of rotation I think I seemed to find  
4 myself in the field with him more than most of the others. I'm a kid and he's an old man,  
5 it was another one of those father-son relationships almost like I had with Gene  
6 McCutchaon. I mean Gene was twenty years older than I was for crying out loud, and  
7 LaBrozzi with a battlefield commission from Korea was probably right up there too. So  
8 those are the people I remember best, but if you went to the unit area, the division area  
9 there at Tan Son Nhut it was well maintained, it was kept clean, it was good. I certainly  
10 never found fault with them. Oh, this is the thing I was going to touch on and drifted  
11 away from, we drifted back. There is, and we may have already discussed it, but it's a  
12 fact, it's just a matter of history that because of the strength of U.S. air power and the  
13 effectiveness of U.S. air power generally in the south, and the availability of it, and the  
14 fact that these guys had been fighting since long before we'd thought about getting over  
15 there. There was a tendency I think in all cases, when contact was made, to hold rather  
16 than attack and just hold position, sort of pin the enemy until the air could come in and  
17 destroy them. And frankly if I had been a Vietnamese division platoon leader or  
18 company commander and I knew that was the situation I can't imagine why I'd go  
19 charging in with rifles. I'd be dead today, theoretically or perhaps, whereas I know I can  
20 get the enemy destroyed, probably better than I can do and I'll be there to do it again  
21 tomorrow. So there was very definitely, at least in my opinion, that tendency and I think  
22 that tendency also applied in the division. The story up where I got my DFC is classic. I  
23 told them where the fire was, they held the enemy, didn't retreat certainly, but they're not  
24 going to do a cavalry charge like in the movies. Hold the enemy until the air comes in  
25 and destroys them. So that's probably a point, that's significant. I know you've been  
26 probing with a lot of your questions through the course of these interviews, so you  
27 obviously have some thoughts in mind where you're trying to fill in some blanks and I  
28 know at least my experience, I haven't been very helpful in most of them, but this one I  
29 think is significant.

30 SM: My question about ARVN, my interest is not so much in clarifying or  
31 verifying anything in particular, but there's already assessments out there, and some of

1    them are not very glowing or very positive. I want to know what you think because  
2    based on what you said already I thought that it seemed like the Airborne division and the  
3    units that you were fighting with, were pretty good, they were doing a great job.

4           MM: Yes, there was no question. I'll be honest with you, what little I knew of  
5    the U.S. units, particularly the 1<sup>st</sup> Cav., because we worked adjacent to them very often,  
6    was that they were as inclined to do that as anybody else and for all the same good  
7    reasons. If you've got a company of NVA out in front of you, and you know exactly  
8    where they are, you've got to be semi-suicidal to go charging into them when you know  
9    you can have napalm and five hundred bombs all over the place in ten minutes. It makes  
10   no sense to me, there is an element of human survival even in the craziest soldier I think,  
11   or maybe not in the craziest. But I think that again it's a question of leadership, I'm sure  
12   there were U.S. units with some Chargin' Marvin in front of the, as the company  
13   commander who did things that were very brave and probably unnecessarily brave at  
14   times. But again, generally I would say that's the way the war was fought, find the  
15   enemy, pin them, locate them and let the air destroy them, at least whenever possible, and  
16   I think, why not?

17          SM: You mention in your memoir another interesting incident, a personal attack  
18   against you when you were driving through a city.

19          MM: That was when we went up to Hue, when we went to Phu Bai and then as I  
20   said, we sort of got our act together there, I think is the phrase I used and then we  
21   convoyed up Highway 1 from Phu Bai to the Hue citadel and then beyond. We, now  
22   meaning the entire package, the ground units, myself, my radio operator, my crew chief  
23   wasn't with us. I don't know how he got there, or the airplane got there, now that I think  
24   of it because I didn't fly it in. I don't remember that part, but the airplane ultimately got  
25   to Hue. I did not fly it into Hue, I may have flown it into Phu Bai, or you know what we  
26   did? I remember now. We literally stole it from the local FACs, in the sense that  
27   McCutchaon got the TACC down in Saigon to order them to turn loose one of their  
28   airplanes for us, that's right because it was too far to go, too quick to get our own up  
29   there. So I think they probably positioned it for us and I think my crew chief probably  
30   flew in a Caribou or some such thing and then my radio operator and I went with the  
31   Mark 108 Jeep to Phu Bai and then we convoyed. The thing was that I had to get into the

1 Citadel which is where my airplane and I guess by then my crew chief was, and where we  
2 going to, again camp out and bunk out. I would up, now that I think about it, bunking out  
3 with an Australian captain who was the advisor to a local APC, armored personnel carrier  
4 unit. I have no idea what his name was, but typical Australian. He had a bunk so that's  
5 where I wound up sleeping, but I'm drifting. The story was yes, we had planned, using  
6 the maps that at a certain point as this convoy was heading north to a position northwest  
7 of Hue that I was going to have to break out of the convoy alone and go to the citadel.  
8 Now, I've described in the memoir that, as best I remember, practically speaking all the  
9 way from Hue Phu Bai to Hue city, which is a considerable distance, the road was lined  
10 with local people, stirred up by the Buddhist. And had their, the thing I most vividly  
11 remember is that they had their little home altars, or shrines, which every home has, no  
12 matter how small, just a table, foot and a half by two and a half or so, but a little altar  
13 with symbols which don't mean anything to me, not understanding Buddhism. But  
14 incense burners and pictures and little statues and what not and has to do, I know enough  
15 to know that it has to do with ancestors and what not, but these were all moved out of the  
16 homes and lined the roads and then people standing there as well, watching us go by,  
17 obviously making a statement. I don't remember any really belligerent or hostile looks,  
18 but sort of making a statement's the best I can do. We'd just as soon you weren't here  
19 and we want to let you know that, we're not going to get hostile and they didn't. The  
20 thing again in the memoir, I remember it has to do with the Buddhist colors, gold and red,  
21 very predominant, banners and things like that, or at least that sticks in my head. A lot of  
22 gold and red cloth, tapestries and altar covers and little flags and what not lining the  
23 route, and there were lots and lots of people. The long and short of it is that at the  
24 appointed point, adjacent to Hue citadel, I and my driver, who I've chosen, not to name,  
25 broke out of the convoy. Just very quickly made a right turn out of the convoy down a  
26 street, almost a boulevard actually. I can see it, it looked a little like Paris in Hue, making  
27 it for the military portion of the citadel. That sort of break in the pattern agitated a lot of  
28 the bystanders and we wound up being chased by a mob of a couple hundred people  
29 probably. And again the amusing part now is that my radio operator, who was not one of  
30 the brighter ones, reaches for his revolver which we all carried and he's, almost before I  
31 can stop him, he's leaning out the left side of the Jeep trying to drive it and playing

1 stagecoach shotgun kind of guy with his revolver. He didn't fire it and I just quickly told  
2 him to put it away, drive, and don't miss a gear because they're going to eat us if we miss  
3 a gear. And so we did, very quickly, this whole thing took seconds probably before we  
4 finally outdistanced the mob and got to the citadel but it's very vivid because I really  
5 figured although the crowd had been peaceful. Things like this changed the nature of the  
6 crowd and just the fact that they were running and now getting in a physical mode, if they  
7 had caught us I think we would have been in serious trouble because we were absolutely  
8 alone at that point.

9 SM: Now was this the time when someone hurled a grenade at you?

10 MM: No, that was different that was in Saigon, going from the house at Yen Do  
11 to Tan Son Nhut, just a perfectly routine morning, just jumped in the, we had a couple of  
12 Jeeps and drivers, the FACs had a driver, his name was Phoung, just a young enlisted  
13 man out of the division and his duty assignment was the FACs driver. I have  
14 photographs of him and McCutchaon had his own. Phoung served the four of us and  
15 Gene had his own driver, named Loung, L-U-O-N-G, I think, I also have a photograph of  
16 him. So Phoung I guess had picked me up, I think it was just the two of us at the house,  
17 to take me out to the base to do something. As I said OARs, or after action reports or  
18 something, just because I was bored and wanted to go out there, and we were driving  
19 down one of the main thoroughfares that led from the house to the main gate at Tan Son  
20 Nhut. I picture it in my mind as an intersection, fairly broad, again almost Parisian kind  
21 of a boulevard, lots and lots of people around, cyclos and people on foot and bicycles all  
22 over the place and a hand grenade was thrown from, we were heading north if I  
23 remember right, that's the way the road went to Tan Son Nhut from the house and the  
24 hand grenade was thrown from the left of the Jeep somewhere. I never even saw who  
25 threw it at us, I'm sure but it sailed over the Jeep and landed on the sidewalk to the right  
26 and exploded and I'm sure, in a little market area, which was typical, something for sale  
27 on the street kind of a place, fruit or coffee or God knows what, could have been anything  
28 and it exploded. And we didn't blink, we just kept right on going. I wasn't about to stop  
29 and render aid or see what the heck it was all about, that was just pure survival at that  
30 point, get the hell out of here. I'm sure there were people injured if not killed, but that's  
31 they way it went, again, one of those over before you can think about it and it took less



1 time than it takes to tell about it, stories. And it happened occasionally in town, times  
2 like that.

3 SM: Would you guys report that to anybody, it seems like that would be great  
4 fodder for Americans and Vietnamese both working on counterintelligence?

5 MM: You know I think I mentioned it when I got to the base but it was  
6 understood that those kinds of things would happened and probably generated almost no  
7 interest other than, oh, wow.

8 SM: This will end the interview with Mr. Morea on the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2001.

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The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Michael Morea  
Conducted by Steve Maxner  
February 15, 2001  
Transcribed by Jennifer McIntyre

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

1 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr. Mike  
2 Morea. It's the 13<sup>th</sup> of February 2001 at approximately five minutes after nine, Lubbock  
3 time. I am in Lubbock, Texas, Mr. Morea is in Florida. Sir why don't you go ahead and  
4 talk about your final impressions upon learning you were leaving Vietnam and as you  
5 were getting on the plane to get back to the United States?

6 MM: Well, that's interesting, because I hadn't really thought about that but I  
7 think I can sort of dredge it up from memory. I guess again, I've probably overused the  
8 word, but it is the thing that sticks in my mind most about the whole experience is this  
9 aspect of surrealism that surrounded the whole experience of being in a war and I think  
10 what happened is that, past the six month point, you begin to realize that you really are  
11 there and you really have been doing certain things and you really have been fighting a  
12 war and more to the point. You actually begin to realize, that I could get killed here, but  
13 I'm halfway through and I just might survive this thing and that sort of starts to dawn on  
14 you in an indirect, probably subconscious sort of way. But it also starts to dawn on you  
15 that if that's the case you've got to start planning for the future, I think when guys go to  
16 war, it's almost like everything stops in their mind, at least it was with me and you just  
17 sort of get on with it. Being a bachelor, maybe it was more that way, I didn't have family  
18 and kids to worry about, but it was sort of like the whole world stopped and I'm just  
19 going to do this and maybe I'll survive it and then you start to get this feeling, by golly I

1 am going to survive this. I've got experience, I haven't done anything terribly stupid yet  
2 and I've got less than half the time to go, so you start to think about the future and  
3 assignments and all that sort of thing start to come up and I think probably, I think I went,  
4 I'm jumping around here a bit, but I went on two R & Rs while I was in Vietnam, I think  
5 the rule was you were allowed big one, and the married guys typically went to Hawaii or  
6 someplace and met up with their wives and the single guys like me took two shorts ones,  
7 like a week each, I think we were allowed two total weeks. I went somewhere, I forget  
8 when, but I think probably in about October or thereabouts I went to Bangkok by myself,  
9 ratted around town like a bachelor will in a place like Bangkok. Had a good time, drank  
10 way too much and got back on the airplane and came back to work a week later. Then in  
11 December I remember more distinctly, I took my second one, which was to Hong Kong.  
12 And by the time that second leave rolled around, I was only two months from leaving  
13 Vietnam, thoughts of assignment and a new life and going back to normality and  
14 civilization and all of that sort of thing were definitely beginning to take over a lot of  
15 your thinking. Particularly your spare time thinking, and I think that was the case with  
16 me. So you start thinking, well gee, what am I going to do, and you start thinking  
17 assignment and the interesting thing about that and I think this is also in my memoirs is  
18 that being an air lifter, C-133s at Travis before I went to Vietnam, I pretty much knew I  
19 was going to go back to air lift and the assignment came down, my assignment came  
20 down, probably about December there, I think I had a couple of months to work with it,  
21 that said I was going to go to C-141s at Norton Air Force base which was in San  
22 Bernardino, Southern California and of course that was a real plum assignment because  
23 the 141 was new in the inventory. It was a jet as opposed to, it was the first real jet  
24 transport airplane and it was going to be a great thing to fly that thing as it was almost  
25 brand new in the inventory and sort of progress through my career with that airplane. So  
26 I was pleased at that with one exception, problem was that I had at some point, and again  
27 I think it ties into this, I think I'm going to survive thing, at some point I had started  
28 writing to, I wouldn't even call her my girlfriend, a girl I knew back at Travis who I dated  
29 occasionally, rarely I would say is more accurate and saw at clubs, bars in San Francisco  
30 and parties in the bay area and at Travis. We sort of seemed to be compatible, and I had  
31 started writing her and she wrote back, and we both I think thought there was something

1 cooking there and I knew very well that if I went to San Bernardino that was going to be  
2 the end of that relationship. So in the back of my mind, I had this idea which I didn't  
3 bother with while I was in Vietnam that I needed probably to get my assignment changed  
4 and go back to Travis if we were going to explore this relationship. The long and short of  
5 that story, I'm jumping way ahead now, is that when I finally did get back in February I  
6 stopped in to see my old squadron commander whose got an interesting piece of history  
7 associated with him in Vietnam, which I think I will mention because it is public record.  
8 But I went to see him and I told him the story and asked him to get the assignment  
9 changed while I was on leave back in New York, which he did and so I ultimately  
10 reported back to Travis rather than San Bernardino and I ultimately married the girl and  
11 she's still living with me here, so that worked out fine, but that is kind of an interesting  
12 thing. I know I haven't directly answered your question Steve, but you so start to think, I  
13 think it's the opposite, it's not so much what you start to think about as what you weren't  
14 thinking about up to a certain point, at least in my mind, you sort of close everything out  
15 and you just say, this is it, I don't want to talk to anybody, I don't want to know too much  
16 about what's going on anywhere else. I'm just doing this and if it's over and I survive  
17 then I'll get back to the normal world and that again, is that, we used to call the States the  
18 real world. There were phrases that we used that I think unconsciously suggested that  
19 that's how we thought about things. I don't think I was any different in that regard.  
20 Again, just to reiterate, sort of as time ticks by and you become more and more aware of  
21 the fact that you probably are going to leave this place and go somewhere else, you start  
22 coming out of that cocoon kind of a situation and starting to think about the broader  
23 world and reality again. That's probably not as well as I could do if I sat down and  
24 thought about it for two weeks before I said anything, but that sort of was the feeling that  
25 I had.

26 SM: Now you mentioned that the commander, squadron commander you  
27 approached?

28 MM: Name was Jerry Kehrli, K-E-H-R-L-I, and he was a hell of a nice guy. He  
29 was a damn good commander, but he made a big mistake and people my age remember it  
30 because it was very public. He was a commander in Vietnam of one of the units there, I  
31 think at Tan Son Nhut, aerial port squadron if I'm not mistaken although I could easily

1 be. A full Colonel and he got caught smoking marijuana, which of course today is a joke.  
2 People say so what? But back then a commander in Vietnam in the '60s, it was a major,  
3 major deal and he wound up getting convicted and winding up in Leavenworth, believe it  
4 or not, five years I think, court martial, the whole deal. Yes, honest, it's hard for guys  
5 your age to believe something like that but is absolutely true, Jerry Kehrli was his name,  
6 good guy. He got out afterwards and I don't think they hammered him too bad in terms  
7 of retirement and all of that sort of thing. He might have lost one grade or gone back to  
8 Lieutenant Colonel for retirement purposes or some such thing, but sad story in a way  
9 because he was really a good guy, but he made a mistake. He wasn't drinking, he was  
10 smoking a joint every once in a while at night. It was illegal, you could get plastered  
11 every night at the bar, but you couldn't smoke a joint and that's just the way the rules  
12 were and he broke them.

13 SM: How was he as a commander?

14 MM: Oh, super guy, terrific. He was the 84<sup>th</sup> Squadron Commander at Travis  
15 there for years, wonderful guy, great.

16 SM: Competent?

17 MM: Yes, completely competent, personable, everything, he was a good  
18 commander.

19 SM: What a shame.

20 MM: Yes, it was kind of sad, but again, I'm not telling any tales out of school,  
21 that's public record.

22 SM: Yes, sir. Now, when you arrived in the United States what was that like,  
23 getting off that freedom bird?

24 MM: I think, actually I'm going to have to back you up to answer the question  
25 correctly. I think it started sooner than that, it started when the airplane lifted off from  
26 Saigon, it was like day and night. Like the whole thing almost disappeared from your  
27 mind, at least temporarily. It's over, that whole thing is over, I'm out of here, I escaped, I  
28 survived, I made it. It was almost instantaneous when the gear came up on the airplane  
29 and you could feel it in the airplane, it was not just me it was everybody. You really at  
30 that point realized, I made it, I'm going home, and then you start to think almost as if it  
31 didn't happen, at least for a short while. In my case probably for quite a while, it was like

1    okay, that's done. The guys I knew back there, they're going to continue their job, I  
2    probably will never see them again. Although that turned out to be fortunately not  
3    correct, at the reunion I saw several of course, but it was just an instantaneous sharp  
4    break, like somebody hit you upside with something and snapped you back to reality,  
5    almost that sharp I think in my case. Funny thing, I remember Phil Teague, who I think,  
6    you met Phil at the reunion. If you don't remember he was a kind of a boisterous isn't  
7    quite the right word, very, had an aura about him almost, a really outgoing guy. He was  
8    walking with a cane, a little hunched over, not old but I think he'd been in an accident,  
9    Phil Teague. Phil and I sat next to each other on the airplane coming home and the funny  
10   thing I do remember is Phil had this enormous bottle of Lavoris, green mouthwash with  
11   him and we drank the thing all the way home. Of course it wasn't Lavoris, it was crème  
12   de menthe, believe it or not, an enormous bottle of the stuff and we just quietly sipped on  
13   that all the way back to the States and of course the stewardess knew what was going on.  
14   It was a Continental flight if I remember, she knew what the heck was going on, but we  
15   were behaving ourselves and they didn't care. Kind of funny, but again, that does really  
16   in a way tie to your question, it was like, okay it's over. Let's have a drink and by the  
17   time we get home we won't even remember it happened. I think, when I got off the  
18   airplane, to answer your question directly, I think it was at San Francisco, I think it didn't  
19   land at Travis, it landed at the international airport, San Francisco and I don't even think I  
20   spent the night. I think I caught a flight, I honestly don't remember, may have spent one  
21   night. If I spent a night it was in the Jack Tar hotel, that's a vague memory or else I just  
22   caught another airplane and went straight to New York, I honestly don't remember. No,  
23   that's not true because I went down to Travis to see Kerhli before I went home, so I  
24   honestly don't remember, I don't remember how it all evolved.

25       SM: What month and year is this now?

26       MM: This would have been February of '67.

27       SM: February '67, any kind of anti-war protesting going on?

28       MM: None that I saw and again, you've asked that question before and I guess to  
29   answer it again, we were vaguely aware through the *Stars and Stripes* and radio programs  
30   that there was a protest in progress, don't think we realized how intense it was, don't  
31   think we cared much.

1 SM: Well, I meant at the airport?

2 MM: At the airport, nothing that I recall.

3 SM: Did you ever have any run-ins with anti-war protestors?

4 MM: No, I subsequently came to know a few people socially who were very anti-  
5 war. We had conversations, they had their opinion, I had mine, it never got angry or  
6 anything as best I recall. The society that I lived in was not the, I was past the college  
7 thing and I was past the hippie thing. So that group of people was probably a subculture  
8 in a literal sense to me, in that they were younger, poorer, less worldly wise perhaps.  
9 Didn't really know what they were talking about, was probably my bottom line opinion.  
10 If they knew what was really going on they'd understand better but they didn't because  
11 they were just kids. That was probably my thinking and just leave them alone and they'll  
12 go away or whatever. I think the only one that sticks in my mind in a different way  
13 would have been what year would it have been, '68, probably, the '68, was it the '68  
14 Democratic National Convention in Chicago where they had the riots and all of that sort  
15 of thing, I think that's correct.

16 SM: I believe so.

17 MM: Yes, and of course that was nationally televised and very intense, the  
18 politics within the democratic party with McGovern, who was considered a real peacenik  
19 for lack of a better word, was making a run for the presidential nomination. And there  
20 were a lot of people of that persuasion who had a lot of influence were getting a lot of  
21 television time. I remember there was a Catholic priest, Berrigan, Karragin, Garagin,  
22 [Berrigan is correct], some such name who was very politically active and very anti-war  
23 and there were. What's his name, Jane Fonda's ex-husband whose now a Congressman I  
24 think from California, who was very young, very active, anti-war protester at the time. I  
25 want to say Bruton, that's not it, but it's something like that, but again it's easy to say  
26 Mayden, or find out who I'm talking about. He's still out there and of course times have  
27 changed for him too. Although I think he's still a very liberal Democrat but in any case  
28 that whole '68 convention Brouhaha was brought the thing home in a different way. It  
29 was sort of like, holy smokes this is serious. This thing is really becoming a national  
30 problem here rather than just a bunch of flower children romping around in the park in  
31 San Francisco somewhere. So that I do recall as maybe an awakening of things to come,

1    which of course did come later, primarily through the Johnson administration because I  
2    guess he won that election and became the president. No, that's not.

3           SM: That would have been '64.

4           MM: No, that's not possible, Johnson became president when Kennedy was shot,  
5    and then had a second term, so this may have been into that time. I don't know, who won  
6    that election?

7           SM: In '68, that would have been Nixon.

8           MM: Yes, actually Nixon beat the Democrat. That's exactly right and Nixon  
9    then was almost in the process I think from that day on, I think he made a half-hearted  
10   attempt to take a look at the war and see if it was winnable. Realized it wasn't under the  
11   political circumstances and probably from early in his administration, the philosophy of  
12   the U.S. government, although it may have been a secret philosophy was let's get the hell  
13   out of here as quick as we can. And it took years and years for it to happen, but I think at  
14   that point, probably that Chicago convention was where the thing went over the hump.  
15   Everybody said, and of course TET had happened in January of '68, TET Offensive so  
16   combination of those things I think you could probably call that the point where we went  
17   from seriously thinking we could win to seriously thinking we ought never have started  
18   as a nation.

19          SM: Well, just out of curiosity when you got back in 1967, and then you found  
20   yourself back at Travis, I assume you were back, what were you flying C-130s?

21          MM: 133 again, yes.

22          SM: 133, okay. What did you hear in terms of the progress of the war throughout  
23   the rest of '67 and especially leading up to Westmoreland coming back to the United  
24   States and giving his progress report that basically the war was almost at an end?

25          MM: My recollection is very little. I think I was busier, see two things happened,  
26   well several things happened. Now I'm dating this girl with some seriousness, I am now  
27   back with enough flying time in the 133 from my previous tour to where I'm sort of in a  
28   fast track to become aircraft commander, which is a biggie, the pilot in command and of  
29   course there's an awful lot of studying and training and what not involved in that, in  
30   addition to just flying the missions. We were flying very heavily into Vietnam, I was  
31   flying, pilots don't believe it today, or they believe it but they find it hard to imagine, I



1 was flying a hundred thirty hours a month or so, regularly. Which was over the  
2 maximum by a few hours and usually wound up flying on a waiver, because we were  
3 supporting Vietnam so heavily and a combination of all of those things. I don't think I  
4 paid a lot of attention to be honest with you. It was like I did my part, and the war is  
5 continuing. I think in the early days I probably still thought we were going to win, in '68  
6 probably, but by '70 I knew we weren't, but I didn't pay a lot of attention.

7         One thing does pop into mind though, that might be of interest, during those days  
8 the black population in the military was becoming very agitated, very belligerent.  
9 Obviously not every person, but particularly the young enlisted blacks were becoming  
10 very agitated as a group. There were people within the groups that were stirring them up,  
11 anti-war, black power. You're talking about the period of time where black power was  
12 big, where the Afro haircut was big and of course you couldn't wear an Afro in the  
13 military so there was agitation about that. The Black Muslim thing was starting to occur  
14 and that included a beard and you couldn't have a beard so there was a lot of agitation  
15 about that. There were, Travis in particular, there were some riots in the dormitories,  
16 which is historic. You can go back and discover the details from newspaper and that sort  
17 of thing, but there was some level, relatively low level rioting in the barracks, amongst  
18 the young blacks. That obviously got our attention and I guess we sensed that it was  
19 somehow war related, but not necessarily directly. It was more related to the burgeoning  
20 civil rights movement, which of course was in full steam by then, with a lot of Stokely  
21 Carmichael, Malcolm X were all prominent figures of that particular period in time. So  
22 that's something that I do recall and do recall being very concerned about because of what  
23 it might portend for the future, you know where the hell are we going? We're losing our  
24 integrity, we're no longer one any more, Air Force, now we're a black Air Force and a  
25 white Air Force and that's not good. So that was a matter of real concern I think to just  
26 about everybody. And kinds of attitudes among the white guys, hey if you wanted to be  
27 in the military you knew you needed a haircut, what's this with the Afro and you can't  
28 wear your hat on top of an Afro, you look like an idiot. But there was on the black side,  
29 this need to, when they got out of uniform and went down to San Francisco identify  
30 culturally within their culture. So very bad situation in terms of trying to sort it out. It is  
31 to my mind, comical, maybe not to everybody. There was a disease which appeared

1 during those years that had never been anywhere before. That disease that struck black  
2 men only, or largely which came, was epidemic at that time and has disappeared since,  
3 and I say that somewhat tongue and cheek, because it was quite serious. It was called  
4 *Pseudofolliculitis barbae*, and the disease basically was ingrown hair on the face, as a  
5 result of Negro physiological characteristics, particularly curly hair. The theory was that  
6 because their hair was curly, it tended to curl and in-grow and infect, and I think there's  
7 probably some truth to that. If you think of maybe black men you've known, frequently  
8 they do seem to have like an acne problem around their beard area, but this thing became  
9 an epidemic in the Air Force and the reason, at least a lot of us white guys thought, the  
10 reason was because if they'd get the doctor to declare that they had this disease, then they  
11 could get a beard. Because you wouldn't have to shave, because you'd let the beard grow  
12 out and this in-growing would stop. So it's a little interesting point of history, this whole  
13 thing about this *Pseudofolliculitis barbae*, which again, you've got tons of black guys in  
14 the military today and they seem not to be suffering from it any more. So it was a thing,  
15 it was an interesting cultural thing, unfortunately of course created division and that's the  
16 bottom line and that's why I say it's funny, but it isn't funny. It's got comic elements, but  
17 it certainly wasn't funny in the long run.

18 SM: Tragically comic.

19 MM: Yes, exactly, but again understandable in the context of 1968 and what was  
20 going on in the black community. So anyway, those are some things that do pop to my  
21 mind, but direct confrontations with anti-war protestors, no. See, another thing happened  
22 to me, which I think, no you don't know from the biography because I didn't send you  
23 that part. I was only home one year, February '68 I got home. I'm sorry '67 I got home  
24 and February '68 I'm sitting here now trying to, I think I had just become an aircraft  
25 commander in the 133. I'm getting more serious with my girlfriend and the Pueblo crisis  
26 kicks off in Korea. The North Korean Special Forces made a raid on the South Korean  
27 White House, called the blue house but their White House in Seoul, an armed raid, trying  
28 to assassinate President Park, which failed. But as a cover for that then the North Korean  
29 government ripped off the Pueblo which was a U.S. Navy Intelligence ship which had  
30 been sitting off the North Korean coast for endless years. But the next day they seized it  
31 and this became an enormous international incident and almost precipitated the third

1 World War. Although it's not all that well document in history but I think people who  
2 know will tell you how close we came, so we deployed an enormous force almost  
3 overnight in February of '68 now to Korea and I know because some of the things I did  
4 there, how close we were to war, again. So here now you're fighting in Vietnam and you  
5 got this, probably more serious potential war, regenerating in Korea because of the  
6 nuclear equation, the Russians were still powerful then. The Chinese of course and I got  
7 deployed for that, after being home a year to be Forward Air Controller in Korea, should  
8 the war start. So again I was very busy, probably too busy to worry about politics at the  
9 time.

10 SM: Now for the year, the year from '67 to '68 that you flew support, you said a  
11 lot of missions you flew for that year were support for Vietnam?

12 MM: Right back into Vietnam, usually once a month.

13 SM: You were flying back to Vietnam, landing in Tan Son Nhut basically or?

14 MM: Yes, once a month frequently Tan, the big airfields obviously, we weren't  
15 going any little places any more. Tan Son Nhut, Da Nang, Qui Nhon once and that was  
16 dicey because that airfield was really too short for a 133, but I did manage to get it in  
17 there and get it out. I remember another not so funny, funny thing, but I remember  
18 having to back the airplane. We'd back up because of the propellers you could reverse it  
19 and back the airplane right up to the fence at the very end of the runway for my departure  
20 and then ran the engines right to max power with the brakes set, which isn't normal, but  
21 to get everything as powerful as possible before I let go of the brakes and roared down  
22 the runway and just literally blew half a village. Of course the village was made out of C  
23 ration boxes, but must have blown the thing to three hundred yards from where it was  
24 sitting when I started. That's sad, these people, they're used to it. They probably picked  
25 up and put everything back together by evening, but I do remember blowing the place all  
26 over, not intentionally. I didn't realize it was happening until it was too late to stop, so  
27 Qui Nhon once, Da Nang frequently. Tan Son Nhut frequently, and probably Cam Ranh  
28 bay once or twice, delivering cargo or picking up. Actually the primary mission we had  
29 for the 133 was helicopter rotation, we would typically fly either five or six Hueys or two  
30 Chinooks, I think it was two, I think we could carry two into -- here's how it worked, let  
31 me start at the beginning. A typical mission would be to go from Travis to Harrisburg

1 Pennsylvania, which was a big Army depot for helicopters, repair and preparation. We'd  
2 land at Harrisburg, we'd pick up new helicopters, either refurbished or brand new. Go  
3 back to Travis and then head out to Vietnam and take them wherever, Tan Son Nhut, Da  
4 Nang or what not and then we would pick up beat up ones, shot up ones, crashed ones  
5 and bring them back to ultimately through Travis to Harrisburg again. And that was one  
6 of our primary missions in addition to installing the Minuteman missile during that same  
7 time frame and it was because of the size and weight capacity of the airplane of course.  
8 So, typically during a month I would probably make one circuit from Travis to Vietnam  
9 and back. About sixty flying hours, one trip over to Harrisburg, maybe another ten and a  
10 couple of short trips within the United States, running missiles and that sort of thing.  
11 Sometimes they'd squeeze two Vietnam trips out of you in one month, which meant you  
12 were gone for the whole month because they typically took two weeks to make the circuit  
13 and that was generally what we did.

14 SM: Now when you would land in Vietnam, how much time would you spend  
15 there and what kind of information were you able to get?

16 MM: Nothing and again because, the time would be always short, you only crew  
17 rested there in an emergency which is to say the airplane broke on the ground in Vietnam  
18 so badly that you couldn't stagger it out to the Philippines which was the next stop. You  
19 know a couple hour flight to Clark Air Base, so you were there for minimum ground time  
20 trying for two hours, total and during that time of course you had to debrief your flight.  
21 You had to get something to eat if you could, get your weather briefing, file your flight  
22 plan, get an intelligence briefing, which normally just consisted of the essential  
23 information. Departure safety kinds of things, take off, climb immediately, turn left, turn  
24 right, avoid this area, and that was it, you didn't get a lot of detail, so and you were in and  
25 out before you knew it basically.

26 SM: Any time when you were flying back into Vietnam that you were shot at?

27 MM: Not that I know of, no, probably was but unless you got hit, which I don't  
28 think we ever did, you didn't know it.

29 SM: Other pilots that flew in, were there ever any stories circulated that there  
30 shot at or shot down?

1           MM: Not often if at all. The biggest concern actually was friendly artillery. We  
2 were much more concerned with that because at the altitudes we flew, enemy ground fire  
3 in the south was essentially a non-factor until you were extremely close to an airfield and  
4 we evolved procedures to defeat that. We evolved a very steep approach angle on final  
5 approach, so that you could approach an airfield much higher than normal, much closer in  
6 and then make a very steep descent to the runway. I think four, four and half degree glide  
7 slope, which sounds very shallow, but for an airplane is actually double normal.  
8 Normally you're on about a two-degree slice, coming in and we were on a four, four and  
9 a half as I recall. So that wasn't the problem, the problem was that while you were  
10 coming from the coast let's say to Saigon, which might have been a twenty minute flight  
11 or so, and then maneuvering in the traffic pattern, we knew that there was a lot of artillery  
12 flying around and not ever really controlled in any sense. We always said if you could  
13 see. If every artillery round that the friendlies were firing had a tracer on it, we probably  
14 would have never entered the country, but never again, never had an incident where we  
15 hit or anything, but that was our concern, that and just traffic density. I, going into  
16 Saigon would have myself, the copilot and everybody in the airplane who wasn't doing  
17 something, standing behind us, the two seats, looking out the windows. That was the  
18 biggest concern was just running into something because the traffic density, particularly  
19 as you approach the big airports, you got fighters, you got transports, you got little  
20 airplanes, big airplanes, helicopters, that was the thing we were concerned with, was a  
21 mid-air collision. Very definitely, the big concern, so we had eyeballs all over the  
22 cockpit looking.

23           SM: Did that ever happen to your, do you know?

24           MM: Not in the 133, now I had a couple of close calls in the O-1, but.

25           SM: No, I mean flying those operations, other C-133 pilots?

26           MM: Again, nothing that I ever heard of where there was an extremely close call  
27 but we were taking the precautions to avoid it.

28           SM: Any other types of support missions that you flew during that year, just  
29 primarily bringing in and taking out helicopters?

30           MM: The helicopters and as I said, the airplane, the 133 was really designed to  
31 take the Minuteman missile from, I think I've told you this, from the factory up at Hill

1 Air Force Base in Ogden, Utah where Thiokol put the solid propellant in the missile at  
2 the factory. Of course at that point you had a very heavy object, a hundred thousand  
3 pounds or so, that had to be delivered to the missile fields up in the northern tier, in the  
4 northern states and a lot of research had been done about doing it by truck and by train  
5 and various ways and ultimately they decided that the safest way was by air. Less likely  
6 to crack the solid propellant through repeated shocks that you might get on the highway  
7 or a railroad and so the airplane was basically designed and built to carry those thousand,  
8 ultimately what amounted to I think a thousand some odd Minuteman missiles from the  
9 factory to the various sites. So we were always doing that in between doing other things.  
10 We always had a couple airplanes up running that route, you might put, depending on  
11 maintenance and things. Winter was very bad if you're trying to get to Maelstrom Air  
12 Force base in Great Falls, Montana in the middle of the winter. You might spend all  
13 week trying to make one run, but over the course of many, many years we put the whole  
14 thousand in, that one squadron did. That and some other space support, we'd  
15 occasionally go to Denver pick up a component, take it down to Cape Canaveral, things  
16 like that. We did not do a lot of ordinary cargo hauling during those days just because of  
17 the priority of the other things and our capacity to do them.

18 SM: What did you think when you heard about TET, '68?

19 MM: TET, umm.

20 SM: Remember?

21 MM: Yes, I think I knew it was coming. Actually I hesitate to say this because it  
22 really sounds overblown but I'll say it because it's true. In my memoirs there, and I  
23 won't, the last battle thing that's in my memoirs there where I was, Colonel McCutchaon  
24 had said no more combat for you. You're going home in a few days and I was taking the  
25 airplane, ferrying it over to Bien Hoa for maintenance, I presume you've read that and I  
26 had the Vietnamese Lieutenant in the back seat. He was just along, not a joy ride exactly,  
27 but for an orientation and just trying to get a look at the terrain around Saigon and we  
28 accidentally ran into a battle just to the north and west of the airfield. We were able to  
29 coordinate the ground troops and other things to basically destroy the enemy attack, had  
30 quite a few kills on that one. Subsequently somebody told me, somebody in the  
31 Intelligence business told me that that attack was actually a probe, a test, of an intended

1 1967 TET Offensive and that when it failed by virtue of that little accidental encounter  
2 between the Vietcong and the Airborne unit that was out there patrolling that the TET  
3 Offensive was actually put off for an entire year and didn't occur till '68. Now, that  
4 sounds a little crazy to me, that one little confrontation could have actually had that effect  
5 but I was told that. So I guess to answer your question when the TET of '68 I don't think  
6 I was too surprised.

7 SM: What did you think when you heard President Johnson decide not to run for  
8 re-election?

9 MM: That's an interesting question. I don't recall having a reaction; I think I just  
10 felt sorry for the guy. I knew the kind of circumstances, pressure he was under, actually  
11 when I was in Korea during the Pueblo I was involved with something I can't even talk  
12 about, even today. It was a reconnaissance mission, I can tell you that much, but I  
13 actually was the action officer for it as a captain and I talked to Johnson every day,  
14 personally. He called and he was, and this is not necessarily to his benefit, but he would  
15 call on the old Donald Duck secure telephone that we had and, KY3, I think it was called.  
16 Your voice was distorted, I don't know if you've ever used one but you sounded like  
17 Donald Duck a little bit on it when you were talking and he would call every day, I think  
18 at about three in the afternoon, and he personally wanted, he didn't want any filters  
19 between him and the data. He wanted to talk to me personally because I had the  
20 information. So every day at three o'clock I had to be by the Donald Duck phone booth  
21 there waiting for his call. I thought it was kind of pathetic in a way that he would have to  
22 do that. It was good in a way that the guy was that interested and that involved and had  
23 that kind of energy I suppose to be able to function that way, but I also thought it was kind  
24 of sad that he had to do it that way, and I think, you could see on television as things  
25 started to deteriorate, the physical toll that it took on him. I mean the poor man looked  
26 horrible so when he decided not to run, I was certainly wasn't surprised and I think I just  
27 felt sorry for the poor guy. That was my basic reaction.

28 SM: Now, when you were flying in Korea during the Pueblo incident, how long  
29 did you stay there?

30 MM: No, I was not flying.

31 SM: Oh, you weren't flying?

1           MM: No, I gave you that impression, I'm sorry. I went there as a forward air  
2 controller, that's a true statement, but the sad story was that when we got there, we  
3 discovered there was no close air support system of any kind and there were no airplanes.  
4 The country had evolved since the Korean War into an almost completely air defense  
5 orientation. There was a, what the hell was it called? ADCC, Air Defense Coordination  
6 or Control, I don't know, Air Defense Control Center at Osan there, which is where I  
7 would up in the 314<sup>th</sup> Air Division headquarters, again, pathetic. World War II  
8 technology, grease board with guys drawing tracks on the backside of it with grease  
9 pencil. It looked like something out of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in England in 1945, but that was  
10 the state of the art there and no close air support system whatsoever. So I and several  
11 other guys after, and again, this is in my memoirs but not the portion I sent to you. They  
12 sent ninety forward air controllers over there and all we could do is get drunk, there was  
13 nothing to do in the dead of winter, February, Korea, it's cold. And some of us after  
14 about two weeks decided that was enough of that and we went looking for work, literally  
15 and I found a, long story, but I found work in the headquarters and basically I and some  
16 other guys who I knew, drifted over to the headquarters and formed a little nucleus. Kind  
17 of sub-office, under the guy who was DOCP, Director of Current Plans, but he sort of had  
18 a plans and operations job, full Colonel by the name of Alva P. Wilkerson. Very, very  
19 wonderful man, very brilliant, had just come from the Pentagon when the war started. I  
20 think he'd hardly gotten off the airplane when the whistle blew and he walked into a  
21 disaster. An area that had been neglected for twenty years and all of a sudden he's got to  
22 fight a war from this office, but I worked for him for the whole duration of the six months  
23 I was there. What we did is we tried to create a close air support system and we did a lot,  
24 writing documents, concepts, philosophies, structures, regional geographic structures,  
25 equipment requirements, communications networks. Started the ball rolling to getting  
26 some airplanes, which after I left showed up from Vietnam as I understand, the O-1s as  
27 they were replaced by O-2s in Vietnam were moved up to Korea to create this close air  
28 support system which didn't exist. So that wasn't kind of an interesting phase in my life  
29 too, but how did we get on that, you asked me?

30           SM: Well, I was just curious how long you spent there?



1 MM: Oh, six months, six my was a TDY, it was a six month TDY that was  
2 almost over night, just got a phone call one morning in February and said come get your  
3 combat gear and stand by for a call to get on an airplane.

4 SM: Now, you mentioned earlier that there was obviously some reconnaissance  
5 going on, was the U-2 still the primary platform for that, especially in that type of  
6 environment?

7 MM: No, I guess I can probably tell you that the platform was an F-4, that's  
8 probably all I can tell you. I think the U-2s were probably flying, but I think that was  
9 probably, the results of that were probably going straight back to Washington.

10 SM: Well, so after you got back from Korea, mid to late '67.

11 MM: '68.

12 SM: '68, excuse me.

13 MM: Yes, now we're in August of '68 I think.

14 SM: Well, August '68 getting geared up for the election.

15 MM: That's right, the election was just about to occur wasn't it? So I must have  
16 just got home when all of that hubbub was really going on the news in Chicago. I hadn't  
17 thought about that, but that's got to be close, that's right. But again I think I was back  
18 from Korea, back in the squadron, back trying to get the rust off the edges in terms of my  
19 flying and, I'll tell you again, one funny in a way. I use the word funny in a lot of  
20 different contexts, but at that point I decided this relationship with my girlfriend had got  
21 to go one way or the other. We've either got to quit this foolishness that's been going on  
22 for years and years now, or we've got to get married so I think I proposed around  
23 Christmas. It was a couple of months later and we didn't have a long engagement  
24 because we knew where we were going. We were married in April of '69, so it wasn't  
25 too many months after Korea that I just said let's get on with this, or call it a bad idea. So  
26 it did have that effect, but again, so busy with other things. Keep trying to reorganize my  
27 life here every time I turn around that I don't think I was, I was obviously saddened by  
28 what I saw in Chicago and I knew at that point that we were in trouble, but I guess in a  
29 sense not much I could do about it, so I didn't worry about it too much.

1           SM: Actually, one more question about Korea, was there a point during your six  
2 months there, that you realized that what was happening was not going to escalate into a  
3 significant war?

4           MM: No, I think when I left we were just as likely to go to war as the day I got  
5 there, if not more so.

6           SM: Why's that?

7           MM: We had built up a force and things have a certain momentum of their own.  
8 The Pueblo, if I'm not mistaken was still in North Korean hands. Just the general  
9 atmosphere there was, the day we got there the atmosphere was we've got to like hell to  
10 take the sleepy hollow backwater of the American military up to war footing as quickly  
11 as we can and I think that atmosphere was just as intense the day I left there. Every day  
12 was like, okay there's still a few more things we've got to do and it could happen  
13 tomorrow. We knew that a MIG could get from the nearest MIG airfield across the  
14 border to Osan, with two five hundred pound bombs and be back across the border and I  
15 think the whole thing didn't take five minutes, we were that close. So it was still very  
16 intense when I left. I think that politically, if you could talk to the right people or read the  
17 right books, you'd probably find that the burden on Lyndon Johnson just must have been  
18 unbelievable. Between Vietnam, trying to do the Great Society, his real priority on a  
19 domestic level, trying to make that happen, being completely frustrated I think, or not,  
20 being frustrated largely by having to focus on Vietnam and then Korea and then having in  
21 a sense probably the people he thought were quote his own people, namely liberal  
22 Democrats really turning against him, you could imagine what the effect on the guy must  
23 have been.

24           SM: Now, what about the nuclear threshold, was that always an ever-present  
25 threat while you were in Korea?

26           MM: Absolutely.

27           SM: And after?

28           MM: Yes, that was still, we were serious Cold War and so that was always very  
29 close to the front of your mind and again I can't talk too much details there. But in Korea  
30 we knew what they had, we assumed they knew what we had and the impression was that  
31 the willingness to push the button was fairly high, at least on the Soviet side.

1 SM: They hadn't bought into MAD?

2 MM: I don't believe MAD, that's a whole history book. What time frame was  
3 which philosophy the one that was driving the train? And not having been a SAC guy, I  
4 just have peripheral understanding of how that all worked, but we didn't assume that they  
5 had bought into MAD, I think you can say that. For a minute I thought MAD, what the  
6 hell's he talking about, Mothers Against Drunk Driving? But I do remember what the  
7 other one meant too, Mutually Assured.

8 SM: Yes, Mutually Assured Destruction. Let's see, I want to say that was  
9 McNamara that tried to implement that and so by the time you got to Korea MAD would  
10 have been a tenet, a belief.

11 MM: Yes, I think it probably was, I think you're right. I can't really confirm that  
12 just from my own memory.

13 SM: The rest of '68 unfolds, what did you think of Nixon's secret plan to win the  
14 war, that is Vietnamization?

15 MM: I don't think I thought about that much. I was more inclined to think about  
16 McNamara's strategies and tactics, not so much the political overlay which was the  
17 Vietnamization, but McNamara's drawing lines and fences and controlling key areas.  
18 And I knew that was a hopeless idea from having been there, absolutely hopeless. I think  
19 within the military community in general, by that time we were beginning to express the  
20 view, either privately or publicly that there's only one way to win this war. You've got  
21 to fight, the whole concept actually of, and this is a Morea-ism that's probably worth  
22 going down in the books is, the whole concept of a limited war is a mistake. There is no  
23 such thing. If there's a war between me and my neighbor over our flower garden in the  
24 context, it's a full scale war and if you think you can fight a limited war, the lesson of  
25 Vietnam is that you're mistaken and you will lose. Because it's a very simple, while we  
26 were fighting a limited war by definition. The enemy was fighting World War III by  
27 their definition and that's why they won. Put it the other way, the only way we could have  
28 won, was to have fought the war within the context of one or two countries as an all out  
29 war, it's the only way to win. I think we who were there at the time knew that, the  
30 memory is probably fading as time goes by and we'll probably make the same mistake  
31 again as people traditionally do. They forget history after one generation or so, and make

1 the same old mistakes over again, but that is probably the one political – military thing  
2 that I understood better than anything else by the time it was all over, is limited war  
3 doesn't work. So when we couldn't do certain things in the north and we're afraid of  
4 what the Chinese might do and decided to pull out and let the Vietnamese do it, which  
5 was what Vietnamization was, and was really nothing more than, in retrospect and if  
6 anybody had a real brain at the time, could have seen it in real time. It was nothing more  
7 than the beginnings of the surrender, the pullout, you knew it wasn't going to work. So  
8 certainly by that time we knew it was, forget it. And I felt pretty sorry for guys who were  
9 still going over at about that time because I knew they were going into a futile effort, at  
10 least when I went I thought that we were going to win the war and that certainly helps  
11 sustain you, but the guys who were going over in '70, '71, and what not, they were just  
12 holding the fort until somebody could get out the back door in my opinion.

13 SM: What did you think of the Kent State incident?

14 MM: Very sad, but I'll tell you by that time I was mad enough to – I didn't feel  
15 very sympathetic about the students. They were rioting, they knew what they were  
16 doing, sad mistakes – what's the word I'm looking for- kind of a house of cards in  
17 reverse kind of a thing. Just a series of blunders on both sides that escalated into a  
18 terrible thing but my attitude by then was, hey if you want to riot on campus, you better  
19 understand, and if you're going to taunt guys with weapons and throw things at them, you  
20 could get hurt. I see it on television, you see Palestinians throwing rocks at Israelis with  
21 guns, well Palestinians are not stupid people. Certainly they know that at some point  
22 some of them might get shot and that's the way that goes and if you feel strongly enough  
23 about what you feel strongly enough about, fine, but don't come crying to me when you  
24 get shot. I think that was my bottom line, so I didn't have a lot of sympathy for the Kent  
25 State crowd. I still don't, they had a memorial there a couple of weeks ago, believe it or  
26 not, they still haven't figured it out. They're still talking about the wonderful liberal  
27 principles they were upholding against the National Guard SS or whatever the hell, but  
28 that's always been a very liberal school anyway.

29 SM: And what were your thoughts as the war wound down and finally in 1973  
30 we've got the Paris Peace Accords after the Christmas bombing and April of 1975 the  
31 capture of Saigon?

1 MM: Well, even then I felt like we could have negotiated a better deal than we  
2 did.

3 SM: What did you think of the Paris Peace Accords?

4 MM: Well, it was obvious we were just surrendering, we were in such a hurry to  
5 get out of there we'd have given them anything they wanted. By that time it was just a,  
6 once you... I'm trying to find an analogy but it's like you know you've only gotten, the  
7 thing is deteriorating so rapidly that you know you've only got a very short amount of  
8 time to even make it appear like things are in control. So you've got to move very  
9 quickly to get out before all the obvious flaws are detected and the bubble bursts and it  
10 just becomes total chaos. So I think, it was obvious to me that at Paris, we were just  
11 okay, whatever you want, please, come on, can we get on with this, can we get out of  
12 here, before somebody notices? But again, that was, I was aware of what was going on I  
13 watched the TV. I read the newspaper, but I had another life at that point. By '70, we  
14 had three kids in a hurry so we had one in January of '70, the next one was in January of  
15 '72, and the next one was in October of '73. So they weren't even six years apart, three  
16 of them, so now I have other things to occupy my time as well. And I think I felt like,  
17 look I did my part, this isn't working, it's obvious and is too bad, but it's time to get on  
18 with it.

19 SM: What were your thoughts, feelings, when news broke that Saigon had fallen  
20 in 1975?

21 MM: I remember it again, as to the question of feelings, I think it was ugly. It  
22 was just so pathetic, it was sad. You'd have wished that in the end it could have been,  
23 it's a hell of a word, but it's one that comes to mind, more dignified, like it could have been  
24 done like with a, like Appomattox or something. Rather than this ugly scene of buildings  
25 burning and helicopters crashing and people running around frantic and all of that sort of  
26 thing, so that was certainly one thought, it was like rubbing it in. Like did it really have  
27 to end this way, okay guys we surrendered, did you have to do it this way. The other  
28 feeling of course, which was, thoughts about Vietnamese that you'd known and I wonder  
29 what going to happen to them. Did they get out, did they get killed, where are they, how  
30 are they faring? Anything from military guys just like your housekeeper, you've got to  
31 wonder, somebody had worked for the Americans for years and years, once the new

1 political machine moved in from the north, what kind of treatment were they going to get  
2 because people were certainly going to know that they had worked for Americans, things  
3 like that, thoughts like that. Of course there was a great tragedy which, from an air lifters  
4 point of view, maybe even... Well this is a terrible way to put it, but it sort of put the lid  
5 on the thing, it was just like the ultimate tragedy was when that C-5, are you familiar with  
6 this story?

7 SM: No, sir.

8 MM: They were evacuating the city, out at Tan Son Nhut and they were  
9 evacuating Vietnamese, just loading them up and there was a C-5 that took off out of Tan  
10 Son Nhut with a load of civilians, maybe some military too, but Vietnamese. Just sitting  
11 on the floor, hundreds of them, none of this seats and seat belts and all that sort of thing  
12 and I don't remember the details. But somehow the back doors came open in flight and  
13 literally, half the load of people went out the door. It's something, again, that's sort of  
14 my recollection, it was just like, after everything else, this. Kind of a feeling that I  
15 remember having, again, a guy in your position could I'm sure, find the newspaper  
16 reports and the official reports on the whole thing, but it was just like not this too, kind of  
17 a feeling ultimately. I think at that point, I think we psychologically, many of us just  
18 turned our back on the thing and said I don't want to talk about it any more. I don't want  
19 to look at it, I don't want to talk about it. I don't want to hear about it, it's just tragic  
20 beyond description for all kinds of reason.

21 SM: Before that had you talked much about your Vietnam experiences from the  
22 time you got back until the end of the war?

23 MM: No, surprisingly not, not even amongst military guys, flying transports  
24 across the Pacific, you take off from Hawaii heading for Wake Island and it's eight hours  
25 of just blue sky and boredom and we didn't talk about it even then.

26 SM: Was there a reason?

27 MM: No, it's just, it's not normally done. I think guys only want to talk about it  
28 to people who shared the experience or people like you who are rare who actually show  
29 some genuine academic or other interest. But for example, I can tell you that when I first  
30 joined the 84<sup>th</sup> as a second lieutenant, brand new green bean trainee pilot basically, I  
31 mean not a trainee literally because I was out of pilot training, but trainee in the transport.

1 Huge numbers of the people in the squadron, the senior guys, were World War II  
2 veterans, the officers and the enlisted people. They never talked about World War II, not  
3 a word, you couldn't get a word out of them, and if you really pressed them, you'd get a  
4 three sentence something or other and then they'd drop it and go back to something else.  
5 Now, I think only amongst themselves, I think World War II bomber guys alone  
6 somewhere would have talked a blue streak, like the FAC reunion but you get out of that  
7 context and it's nope, it's not so much personal or private. There's got to be a better  
8 word, but it's, kind of like you get the feeling there's only a few people would understand  
9 and nobody else is worth talking to, I guess that describes it pretty well I think.

10 SM: Did you also have a sense that, not so much that no one else is worthy of  
11 talking about it, but also most people just don't care?

12 MM: No, not to not care, just would never understand and it's not worth trying to  
13 explain it. I think that's more accurate and I think the World War II guys, even talking to  
14 a guy like me, a young officer, a pilot and all, trying to explain what flying, B-17s over  
15 Germany was like and living in England and having you're squadron decimated daily.  
16 They can't explain it to me because I'm not going to understand it because I wasn't there.  
17 I think that's a fair assessment, so they just never talked about it.

18 SM: Well, after the war was over in terms of the fall of Saigon, how was the  
19 Vietnam War important to you personally in terms of you over all development, as a  
20 pilot, as a person?

21 MM: Very good question. I don't, I can't answer it literally in the context you  
22 asked it because it wasn't after the war was over. It was after my experience, I think – a  
23 couple of things, I guess. I think first of all it was and again, I've said this, you have to  
24 be very careful who you say things like this to, because it wasn't always the same for  
25 everybody, but for me it was the adventure of a lifetime to be perfectly honest. I was  
26 young, I was in perfect health, I was probably at the peak of my flying skills, or almost. I  
27 was doing something that I really got to be just unbelievably good at. I got to do it with  
28 almost no interference from anybody, it was just on your own for a year doing your own  
29 thing. So in that sense it was great in a way, again you've got to be careful how you use  
30 these terms but for me it was, it was just exciting, I was doing exactly what I wanted to  
31 do, doing it well, having a good time doing it, to tell you the truth. And I think in terms

1 of flying it certainly, not so much matures you, because it was such simple flying, but it  
2 did give you a lot of confidence in yourself that you could do probably more than you  
3 would have otherwise thought you could do. Because you'd done so many things, many  
4 of them stupid and survived them and learned from them that I think I really felt like I  
5 was a hell of a lot better pilot. Ten years better pilot after one year in Vietnam, just from  
6 the experience. I certainly learned, I think I learned that despite the old adage that war is  
7 too serious a business to be left to soldiers, it's certainly too serious a business to be left  
8 to politicians solely. The answer had got to be, in my opinion that politicians obviously  
9 have to make the decisions, but they need to listen to military people a lot more than they  
10 did in Vietnam, that hasn't changed either and probably never will. You can see that  
11 today with Clinton Administration and now Bush trying to take over and fix some things  
12 and even in the case of Bush, not fixing things that people necessarily thought he was  
13 going to fix. Or at least in the way that they thought he was going to fix them, and  
14 frankly I think he's right, but there's an awful lot of pork, for example, in the defense  
15 budget. I think times changes, threats change and we're still building a military based,  
16 still in a lot of ways, still of World War II kind of a scenario and really based on whose  
17 district the factory is in. More than what the real military requirements are, but I  
18 definitely learned, I guess in a sense, mistrust is too strong a word. But the mistrust, I  
19 mean I've got a Master's degree in political science too, so I tend to think politically  
20 maybe more than most people do, but I won't say I mistrust politicians. But I certainly,  
21 they weren't George Washington any more, I'll put it that way. They were human beings  
22 who made a lot of mistakes and that was something I learned from Vietnam, certainly.  
23 The biggest effect is I really don't think I ever have since really trusted my non-military  
24 fellow Americans any more. Because of the, either because of what the protestors did  
25 and what they were allowed to do by the rank and file and it continues to this day, with  
26 the Clintons. And again, I obviously have opinions there, but the American people just  
27 don't care about their country any more, enough to get excited about anything if it  
28 doesn't effect whether they're going to get home in time for the ball game tonight. And I  
29 think that was very clear with the entire Clinton Administration and I think it began,  
30 probably in Vietnam. So I just, my opinion of the average American is extremely low  
31 and I think it began back then. I think they're lazy, they are uneducated and uncaring



1 about almost anything unless it puts twenty bucks in their pocket and that's obviously a  
2 gross generalization, but I think probably the Vietnam experience taught me that more  
3 than anything else, sadly, but it's true.

4 SM: You mentioned earlier, that you didn't, in terms of your concerns or your  
5 comment about limited war and then some of the stuff that you said recently in terms of  
6 politicians involvement and things of that nature, I'm curious what you think about some  
7 of the recent deployments.

8 MM: That's what I'm getting at.

9 SM: That are limited in the context of limited war.

10 MM: Well, they're not even limited war. What I honestly believe is in most  
11 cases the recent deployments were smoke screens to get Clinton out of trouble. But  
12 soldiers are not trained to hand out box lunches to little kids, as nice a photograph as that  
13 makes on the evening news. Handing out candy bars and box lunches in Kosovo is not  
14 what militaries are constructed for and I think we make enormous mistakes when we do  
15 things like. Among other things because of what it does to the soldier himself in terms of  
16 how he perceives his real mission, and in peacetime what it does to the family of the  
17 soldier and ultimately to the military structure. I mean our military is in disastrous shape  
18 right now. You can't retain the right people and it's not money and if George Bush  
19 thinks that by raising their pay he's going to solve the problem he's as stupid as the rest of  
20 them, I hope he's smarter. I hope somebody is whispering in his ear, although it should  
21 be obvious to anybody who reads the newspaper. The problem with the military is not  
22 money, yes, give me a few extra bucks I won't turn it down, but that's not the problem,  
23 the problem is trust in the leadership, which isn't there. When Clinton says I want that  
24 guy fired because he made that phone call and that came up in the newspaper and the  
25 General says yes, sir instead of saying I resign, you've got a problem and we have that  
26 problem right now. The other problem is going all the wrong places and sitting on your  
27 ass to be blunt, doing nothing, for endless periods of time. Guys say no, it's not what I  
28 signed up for and they leave. Sadly, what's even worse is that the ones who stay are the  
29 ones who, in the gross sense that just perpetuate the problem so you wind up with a  
30 descending spiral of leadership and morale and everything else and that's where we are  
31 today. It's just too coincidental that every time Clinton got some bad press, some bombs

1 fell somewhere. In Somalia at the pharmaceutical factory and at Bin Laden's camp in  
2 Afghanistan and Kosovo and a half a dozen other places. It just, you've got to be real  
3 stupid to buy that story, but the American people bought it, lock, stock and barrel  
4 obviously. Now again, that's sadly the biggest result I think of those years is this  
5 cynicism on my part about an awful lot of things. Whereas I think in 1960, when, bright  
6 and shiny graduate, I probably, I came from a '50s, World War II, post World War II,  
7 we're on top of the world mentality and there really is an Easter Bunny and come to find  
8 out that if he ever lived he's dead, but that's life too, you learn.

9 SM: Now, in addition to what you've already discussed, are there any other  
10 lessons that we as a nation should take away from the war experience.

11 MM: Well, nothing that hasn't been said a million times before I don't think. I  
12 think it's pretty obvious. When you go to war and involve a nation in a war, first of all  
13 you've got, to one degree or another involve everybody. You can't give college  
14 deferments to kids with money and send all the poor black kids from Tennessee to go  
15 fight the war. You have got to build a consensus so that at least the vast majority of  
16 people in the country understand why you are in the war and believe that it's necessary.  
17 And then once you've done that you've got to go finish it quickly because Americans are  
18 inherently impatient people and get back to the business of America, which is business.  
19 Those are simple lessons, but they've been written about a million times, I think they're  
20 true. We did, I think generally follow that philosophy for example in the Gulf War, the  
21 consensus was built, very quickly, needs to be done. We did it with forces that were  
22 onboard at the time, we won it handily and we got the hell home. I mean there's still  
23 people there and that may or may not be a subset mistake but in general we did it the  
24 right way. That's the way Americans like to do business, understand that there's a real  
25 purpose, get the tools on the table, finish the job and let's go back and have a beer, so I  
26 think we need to learn those lessons.

27 SM: How long have you been involved with, and how has it been important for  
28 you in terms of the FAC Association and the FAC reunions?

29 MM: Well, that's just very recent. I don't think I had heard of the FAC  
30 Association much more than a month or two before the reunion.

31 SM: This past year?

1           MM: Yes, right and so really my involvement was going to the reunion and then  
2 subsequently, I volunteered to write a piece of that history book and we're not sure where  
3 we're going right now. The thing, unless, and I hope I'm mistaken, a lot of the  
4 enthusiasm seems to have waned since the reunion. It's either that, or it's this reticence  
5 thing, you can't seem to generate guys to tell the story, for one reason or another. We  
6 chose consciously to wait for the first newsletter which is supposed to be in my mailbox  
7 today, coming out of Claude Newland and others up there in the Fort Walton area and  
8 then once that hit the street, we were going to use it as a springboard to open the door to  
9 this. Hey we want to write a history book, guys start sending us your... Ideally if every  
10 FAC we contacted sat down and wrote twenty odd pages or so that I gave you, and  
11 mailed it to me and other guys. We've got this thing pieced out by geographic region and  
12 time frame and things like that, but if they were to sit down and do that and then we could  
13 compile it into a book. That would be the fruition of our effort, but some tentative efforts  
14 in that direction, you just don't even get responses, the guys don't want to bother. I don't  
15 know what it is. You may know better than I, you probably have more experience with  
16 that than I do. You talked to a ton of people at the reunion, it seemed like you were  
17 generating tremendous enthusiasm, but I don't know if it's sustained or if I'm the only  
18 guy that's talking to you.

19           SM: I've talked to other FACs, it's been mixed results. How has this been  
20 important for you in terms of, I mean you mentioned before that you haven't really had  
21 too much opportunity to talk about your experiences, has the reunion helped you and has  
22 becoming involved in this project helped you in any ways?

23           MM: Well, at least temporarily it's regenerated an interest and it caused me to  
24 do, look and see some things I had, photographs and what not, and organize them a little  
25 bit and make some folders and what not and the interview here and that sort of thing, but  
26 not, maybe just a consolidation kind of a thing, trying to get it all organized, but no going  
27 back and re-thinking or anything of that sort. I think the memories are fairly clear in my  
28 mind, they're either clear I guess it's one or the other, so I haven't gone back and tried to  
29 re-think it anyway, I'm too busy.

30           SM: Is there anything else you'd like to talk about today?

1           MM: Let me think, not really. I think the only thing I would say to, well I do.  
2   You never really did tell me exactly what is the purpose of this thing, where does it go  
3   from here, what do you do with this, the interview?

4           SM: Oh, the interview. Well, we'll transcribe it, send you a copy of it and  
5   eventually hopefully we'll get it posted to the internet and it will also become part of that  
6   ongoing project to write that FAC book, that is the transcript and recordings if you want  
7   them are available to you for your project.

8           MM: Now, let me ask you this, when you transcribe, do you make some effort, I  
9   hope you do, to clean up the English? Typical American, we talk in half sentences and  
10   change subject three times in one sentence, do you just go with a literal translation or do  
11   you try and turn it into something somewhat literate?

12          SM: Well, before I answer that question, if there's nothing else you want to talk  
13   about, I want to go ahead and end the interview.

14          MM: Yes, that was it.

15          SM: Well, thank you very much. This will end the interview with Mr. Mike  
16   Morea.