

ATTENTION: © Copyright The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. 'Fair use' criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. All materials cited must be attributed to the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.

Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Chuck Carlock
Conducted by Stephen Maxner
May 5, 2000
Transcribed by Tammi Mikel

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

1 Stephen Maxner: This is Steve Maxner conducting an oral history interview with Mr.
2 Chuck Carlock on the 5th of May, year 2000 at approximately 1:45 p.m. in the afternoon in Las
3 Vegas, Nevada. Mr. Carlock, would you please begin by giving us a brief biographical sketch of
4 yourself?

5 Chuck Carlock: Okay, I was born at Cleburne, Texas and lived about seven miles from
6 there my whole life until I went into the military in a place called Joshua, Texas, went to high
7 school there and then I went to the University of Texas at Arlington to college for about two
8 years and then I dropped out of there and knew I was fixing to get drafted and so I joined the
9 military.

10 SM: And that was in 1966 that you joined?

11 CC: Yes.

12 SM: How much did you know about Vietnam and what was going on in Vietnam when
13 you made that decision to go in the Army?

14 CC: I knew at the time that it was going to take two months for basic training, nine
15 months for flight school, and about a month leave and from what I was reading I knew the war
16 would be over by the time I got out of flight school so I thought I'd never have to go to Vietnam.
17 I never thought I was going to Vietnam until I moved to Ft. Rucker which I had about two or
18 three months left and I thought, 'Holy smokes, I'm going to Vietnam!' I really thought the war
19 would be over from the press, what I'd been reading, that the Marines had went in in '65 and
20 then we were going to kick their rumps real quick.

1 SM: What did, from what you heard on the news and everything else, what did you think
2 was going on in Vietnam? What kind of war was it?

3 CC: More of a guerilla kind of war; no real heavy fighting like skirmishing, stuff like
4 that. Didn't really realize what was going on in the helicopters. Didn't really understand why
5 they needed so many helicopter pilots. That was not too publicized, that kind of war. It was
6 more...the only thing I really remember is the Marines were in Da Nang. That was the...and
7 they were beginning to do some sweep operations. I do remember a - and I've got a copy of this
8 - a *Time Magazine* where the guy got killed in an old CH-34, a Marine pilot which was the
9 famous photo and the crew man was crying in the back and I remember looking at that and it
10 never crossed my mind, I guess, that the Army was going to be doing the same thing.

11 SM: What prompted you to go aviation and was that something you went in as an officer
12 or warrant officer?

13 CC: I was warrant officer. What it was, a guy from my home town had went to
14 helicopter flight school and he was telling me how great it was and as a matter of fact he got shot
15 in the arm and was wounded two or three times over there but anyway, I was really going in the
16 Marines and the sergeant, the recruiting sergeant, was trying to say, 'Hang on, we're pretty sure
17 we're going to drop it to two years of college. You get to fly in the Marines.' And they were
18 saying jet pilot which was hooey because they would have made me a helicopter pilot and
19 instead the Army guy said, 'I'll guarantee it to you right now,' so I had a little contest between
20 the Marines and the Army and I signed up with the Army because they guaranteed it right up
21 front.

22 SM: When you made the decision to enlist you were about to be drafted. Was part of the
23 choice to enlist before drafting the idea that you would have control or more control over your
24 military destiny?

25 CC: Absolutely.

26 SM: Was that common amongst guys that you knew?

27 CC: Yes, I would say so. I saw some people in boot camp drafted that had college
28 degrees and I always wondered, a draftee got two years and where you signed up generally was
29 three. In the helicopter flight school it was, the time you were there which was like 11 or 12
30 months and then three years from the date you graduate so it was like a four year deal. So any of

1 them that didn't do it just made the decision, 'I'll take whatever my lumps are and I'll only go
2 for two years.'

3 SM: So how old were you when you went into the Army to basic training?

4 CC: I would have been 20 years old, 20 years old.

5 SM: Where did you go to basic training?

6 CC: Ft. Polk.

7 SM: What was that like? What was basic like?

8 CC: It was fairly tough. I became the truck driver and there was a kid in there that knew
9 I was a truck driver and he volunteered me so that was an easier job. I got out of a lot of staying
10 out in the field and a lot of the morning runs because I had to go down and pick the truck up, but
11 that was basically it. That's about all I remember. It was strenuous, but I was not in good shape
12 like I thought I was and once I got in shape then there wasn't much to it, you know?

13 SM: What kind of weapons training did you receive in basic?

14 CC: What happened, we went down because I was a truck driver. I kept wondering
15 when they were going to let me shoot a rifle and they were already qualifying everybody and I
16 had never fired a rifle down there and the sergeant figured it out and he said, 'Oh my God, you
17 haven't even fired!' he said, 'Can you shoot this thing?' and I said, 'Yes,' so he carried me
18 down and sighted my weapon for me because he had to give me a few rounds before we actually
19 walked over and qualified and I shot, not the top, but the next. Whatever the middle class was.
20 He was happy I passed. They just skipped it and I never said anything, but I'd never fired a rifle
21 until right before I qualified at the end of boot camp.

22 SM: What weapon was that?

23 CC: M-14.

24 SM: The M-14?

25 CC: Yeah, it was M-14.

26 SM: And when you got to Vietnam did you ever use the M-14 or did you go straight to
27 M-16?

28 CC: No, I never even saw one in Vietnam. They gave us an M-16 as soon as I got there.

29 SM: What did you think about the difference between the two?

30 CC: The M-16 was a piece of junk. It wouldn't fire. You had to clean it all the time. I
31 don't even remember cleaning mine and then we'd pick up these other weapons and we'd carry

1 AK-47s and stuff like that but you heard so many stories about it but we'd go out and we had a
2 shooting pit down at the flight lines so we'd just walk out behind where we slept and just fire
3 into this pit and you'd walk out there after you cleaned them and a day later they wouldn't shoot.
4 They'd pick up a lot of sand inside those helicopters, sand and grit, and it'd knock those things
5 out and they changed them later in my tour, changed the bolt in them and by then we didn't pay
6 much attention to them, you know. We knew it was better to run than it was to shoot back. Most
7 of the time we'd carry AK-47s and I had a sten gun and then I carried a grease gun for a while.
8 Special Forces gave me a sten gun.

9 SM: Special Forces gave you a sten gun?

10 CC: Sten gun with a silencer on it.

11 SM: So there weren't any regulations or orders not to carry weapons that weren't issued?

12 CC: About once every month and a half they'd come through and make you take them
13 all away and you'd hide them for a little bit and then a couple of days later you'd be carrying
14 them again and nobody'd say anything. They had explosive ammo. Supposedly the Special
15 Forces were putting it out and they'd salt up their ammo and then some of our guys would catch
16 one of those rounds, you know, they'd capture it and then it'd blow their guns up. So that was
17 their concern, and they talked about that when I was there but we didn't care. We shot AK-47s
18 all the time.

19 SM: But you could use American ammunition in the AK-47, couldn't you?

20 CC: No, no.

21 SM: You couldn't?

22 CC: No, that round was different. It might have been the same length, but it was
23 different. That was a .223 or something. No, it wouldn't fire in there.

24 SM: No, I meant the 7.62, the American 7.62 for the M-60 machine gun; I was under the
25 impression that that would also fit the AK-47.

26 CC: It might have, I don't know that. We never used it that way. You might ask
27 somebody else, but no. No, the M-16 round wouldn't fit...

28 SM: Right, right, right.

29 CC: ...but I don't know about that other now.

30 SM: What about other weapons as far as would you guys capture and use RPGs and
31 things like that?

1 CC: No.

2 SM: Just the small arms?

3 CC: Yeah.

4 SM: All right, so basic training you completed in two months. Then you went on to

5 flight school?

6 CC: Right.

7 SM: Straight into flight school from basic?

8 CC: Yes. What happened...

9 SM: At Ft. Rucker?

10 CC: There was a little confusion over how long we were off, but I remember being off

11 like 30 days. Somehow the timing was off and they let us go and there was another guy said his

12 class started a certain time. It was around January of '67 is when I got actually into flight school.

13 SM: Okay, so what was flight school like?

14 CC: I started to quit. I need sleep and I studied some stuff about how the German Army

15 trained their soldiers, and this clearly works, is high stress, lack of sleep. It actually, you weed

16 out the guys who had problems and we had some guys who just couldn't take it and I was right

17 on the border because I went and told one of the guys, I said, 'I'm going to quit.' So anyway

18 they called me down there and chewed me out real good. He told the TAC officer they called

19 him and he called me down there and ripped me up pretty good. I could fly the helicopter, but

20 anyway they talked me out of quitting. They said, 'Nah, don't quit,' and it got a lot better when

21 we got to Ft. Rucker. But, they'd come in and harass us all night long. You know, get you up all

22 hours of the night, keep you up working all the time, then you had to study. You actually had to

23 study for some of this stuff and I'm guessing I was getting three hours, three and ½ hours of

24 sleep and I heard they changed a lot of that later on. They figured out some people were

25 crashing helicopters from lack of sleep.

26 SM: I was just going to say!

27 CC: But it worked from the point of view that it was mental toughening. That is a trait

28 of the German Army I've heard, the old German Army where, 'Just don't let them sleep and let's

29 figure out who the tough guys are and get the others to do something else,' you know.

30 SM: Were there any accidents during your aviator training?

1 CC: Not in my flight group, not that I remember. If it was, it wasn't anything major.
2 Nobody that I remember got killed in our flight class, but there were always accidents out there,
3 different mid air collisions and stuff like that, yeah.

4 SM: What was the primary cause of accidents like that?

5 CC: Just guys out there flying. I instructed when I came back from Vietnam and I was
6 nearly killed three or four times. I swore I'd never get in another helicopter in my life. I been in
7 several over 30 years, but that was more dangerous than Vietnam trying to teach these students
8 entering traffic patterns together, 500 helicopters converging at one time and they had this
9 system to do it but that was the most dangerous thing. I say more dangerous than Vietnam, no
10 way, but it was pretty dangerous getting run over.

11 SM: The convergence, this was part of the overall training for all students.

12 CC: No, just to come back into the heliport.

13 SM: Oh, okay.

14 CC: Where would you've launched, you think, 500 helicopters out of here and they all
15 have to be back within four hours because you had to launch them back out again. So, how do
16 you get 500 helicopters landed within just a few minutes of each other? They had these colored
17 telephone poles and you're supposed to be on a certain line of poles and there was three pads to
18 come in. They had 500 coming out of one heliport at Mineral Wells and 500 coming out of Main
19 and they stayed away from us. They were on the opposite side of the road. But, there's just no
20 way you can bring that many in that quick without some danger, especially when you got
21 students flying. When we had instructors it's no big deal. It's very dangerous. Just out
22 instructing you run the risk of crashing but not a mid air collision. I saw a mid air collision one
23 day. My wife was looking straight at it behind the Holiday Inn out at Mineral Wells and we
24 looked up and saw two of them run together and kill three people and I was one of the second
25 guys out there but that happened quite often and out of our class, it didn't happen to anybody in
26 our flight class that went through.

27 SM: But while you were there it did happen?

28 CC: That was when I came back, but while I was there they had mid air collisions too, I
29 just didn't know them. I didn't know who they were and I didn't see them but I actually
30 witnessed one myself.

31 SM: As an instructor back at Ft. Rucker?

1
2 CC: Yes. I was over in my car driving down the road and saw it. My wife was looking
3 straight at it when they hit. It's just dangerous. It's a student; they have trouble flying the thing,
4 much less looking around at the same time.

5 SM: Was flight school effective in preparing you for Vietnam?

6 CC: Yes. You should always have a little more time doing anything but that's the
7 reason they start you out as a copilot over there. In Vietnam, you don't get to make a lot of
8 decisions starting out, but it was good. You had a basic understanding. Probably you had a
9 better understanding than if you went to a civilian school to get a, I can't even remember, 100
10 hours of flight time, whatever we had. I could sort of count it up if I had to. However many
11 hours we had, maybe it was 200 hours when we came out, but you were pretty well trained. You
12 paid attention during that 200 hours. But, you still couldn't fly combat. You just weren't skilled
13 to fly a loaded helicopter. They can't...it's not worth their time and it's too dangerous to load a
14 helicopter up like we did in Vietnam and try to teach somebody to do that. It's better to do it
15 over there gradually because that's quite an experience.

16 SM: You were trained on the Huey at Ft. Rucker, weren't you?

17 CC: Yeah, at Ft. Rucker.

18 SM: What was the other aircraft you trained on?

19 CC: I flew a TH-55 which is a little bubble job. I flew that at Mineral Wells and then
20 when I got to Ft. Rucker I was in another bubble job that was, we call them H-13s and that was
21 for instrument and then after that then we got in the Hueys.

22 SM: And was there anything...when you got to Vietnam, did you ever think, 'Boy, I
23 wish they would have taught me this at flight school.' Were there ever any incidents where you
24 thought of something that they probably should have emphasized, probably should have done to
25 make flight school more effective?

26 CC: Right now, no. We got either 25 or 50 hours of instrument time, I really can't
27 remember, but that's about as much and it was fairly good. I mean, but you can't ever get
28 enough of that. The first time you do the real deal, it is totally different than flying with a hood
29 over your head and there's just no way you can do that unless you just take a student and take
30 him up in the clouds and it's just too dangerous. You just can't take that many students up in the
31 clouds so that would probably be the only thing and I doubt they're doing that right now. It

1 would be a shock if they were letting students go up into the clouds to practice real time
2 instrument flying.

3 SM: Did you have any weapons training, helicopter weapons training?

4 CC: Just a little dab. I was the first class where they actually picked some to go to some
5 gun training but it was really a waste of time. You don't have to be a rocket scientist to pull the
6 trigger on a mini gun or to pop a rocket on somebody. That's the least of the deals, you know,
7 and that's all they really gave us was just we went out and fired some rockets and we might have
8 shot a mini gun, I can't remember what we did, but that's the reason I wound up in a gun platoon
9 when I first got there because I was quote 'trained' to be in the gun platoon.

10 SM: But you weren't taught how to actually alter the course of your rounds going in?

11 CC: Oh, no.

12 SM: How to aim properly, stuff like that?

13 CC: No, you were just set there.

14 SM: Just actually fired the weapon?

15 CC: Right, right.

16 SM: Did you train on the 40 millimeter as well at that point?

17 CC: No.

18 SM: Just the 2.75 rockets and the mini guns?

19 CC: Yes.

20 SM: Did you know, when you were leaving flight school getting ready to graduate and
21 move on, did you know where you were going in terms of in Vietnam?

22 CC: What happens, they cut you a set of orders. Apparently this is fairly standard.
23 They just cut you a set of orders to a company. That means nothing. All that does is get you to
24 Vietnam. They get you the money drawn, they get you all this. They have to say they're going
25 to send you somewhere. Once you get in country is when they decide where you're going and I
26 went up to replace a whole bunch of pilots that had gotten killed, wounded. We'd heard about it
27 while I was at the replacement center and we'd heard what companies it was and I saw the 71st
28 and a helicopter landed out there with a 71 on the door and I thought, 'Surely they're not coming
29 after me,' because I'm supposed to have went to a different place, and they said, they called off
30 the name and they said, 'You get on that helicopter,' and I went, 'Oh...' but that's how I wound
31 up with the 71st Assault Helicopter Company.

1 SM: Okay, so there was actually an assault helicopter, not an attack?

2 CC: Right, Assault Helicopter Company. Now the difference there, I don't know. They
3 just called us that.

4 SM: This unit had both slicks for troop carrying and also the gun ships, the Firebirds?

5 CC: That's correct, and that's the reason they called it assault I guess. I think a tactical
6 company was more of a resupply/troop carrier or something like that and assault had a gun
7 platoon with it so I think that was the difference.

8 SM: So only one gun platoon in the company?

9 CC: Yes.

10 SM: How many ships in that platoon?

11 CC: eight. You tried to have eight ships and we were lucky if we ever got four up at
12 one time. I vaguely remember us getting five flying one time and most of the time if we had
13 three we were very lucky. That's combat damage, maintenance, and structural problems. They
14 weren't made to carry that much weight and be cowboyed around like we used to cowboy. That
15 tissy would tear them up.

16 SM: So let's see, when you first got to Vietnam this was late '67?

17 CC: Yes, September of '67.

18 SM: September '67. And the primary area of operations for the 71st was in Chu Lai, is
19 that correct?

20 CC: Chu Lai, south of Da Nang.

21 SM: So why don't you go ahead and describe the first impressions that you had when
22 you got to 71st I guess fire base, the area in which you were operating from. What did you think
23 when you started meeting these guys you're going to be flying combat missions with?

24 CC: Well, it wasn't a pleasant experience. I was the first guys, the gun platoon, to do
25 that kind of business you had to have this macho attitude and you had to be perceived as macho
26 and they never let a rookie come into the gun platoon and because me and a couple of these other
27 guys had done this gun training, the company commander just put us over there so they were
28 automatically mad at the company commander, plus they were plenty mad at us for coming in
29 there because before they asked the people to come in. It was sort of pick and choose as to who
30 got in the gun platoon and here they took...there was three of us that I remember that just got
31 pushed in there within 30 days.

1 SM: So you weren't warmly welcomed?

2 CC: That's correct.

3 SM: Any particular incidents that you recall?

4 CC: No, just people being rude to you.

5 SM: Any use of the expression FNG or anything like that?

6 CC: I really don't remember that term much. You know, that's always in all the books
7 and stuff but I really don't remember them using that term. I think asshole was more
8 appropriate. You know, 'What's that guy doing living in our hooch over here?' They were
9 really upset. But these guys became my friends shortly, it didn't take long and they figured out
10 who'd hang with them and didn't freak out. They wanted somebody pretty cool in there in case
11 they got hurt or got into the night. We flew at night a lot, so that was...and I can see their point
12 of view. You didn't want some rookie up there up flying in those mountains in the dark that
13 didn't have a clue what he was doing. That jeopardizes everybody's life and because sometimes
14 you could get vertigo and you wanted somebody sitting where they knew what he was doing, so I
15 can see their point of view.

16 SM: Were there both officers and warrant officers, commissioned officers and warrant
17 officers?

18 CC: Yes, yes.

19 SM: Was there a good rapport between the two?

20 CC: I never had any trouble. At the start, I'm talking about when I first got there. They
21 didn't like the captains we had, we had two but I never had any problem with them. One of my
22 letters home, he came in and told us to get out there and clean the beer cans up in front of our
23 hooch and I remember being mad that we were officers and gentlemen and we weren't supposed
24 to be out there policing that beer cans and cigarette butts. I guess we did it or we paid some
25 Vietnamese to go do it, I don't know what happened.

26 SM: So who was responsible for the beer cans and the cigarette butts being out there?

27 CC: Us.

28 SM: Okay. And how about the relationship between the warrant officers, the
29 commissioned officers, and the enlisted men in the unit? How was that?

30 CC: They were always saying, 'Don't fraternize with the enlisted men,' and anyway I
31 did. I'd give them my liquor. We could buy two bottles of liquor each month and I could just

1 give that to them and I'd go buy the liquor because I didn't drink hard liquor and I was their big
2 buddy because they always knew each month I'd give them that deal. Then it was sort of like
3 who could brown nose up and get Carlock's deal because other guys wouldn't give it to them
4 because they drank the booze. But I tried to get along with them. The relationship was okay
5 between the warrant officers and the RLOs we called them, real life officers. There was always
6 some conflict there. They just didn't like our attitude and a lot of us knew right up front we were
7 not going to be career military and we joined up to learn how to fly to be helicopter pilots for the
8 rest of our lives which I wasn't so that attitude came back and forth and I got along with a lot of
9 them, you know.

10 SM: There was more conflict between the commissioned officers and the warrant
11 officers than between the officers and the enlisted men?

12 CC: That is correct.

13 SM: Okay, and what about the relationship between the aviators, crew chiefs, the
14 gunners, the guys flying the missions, and the headquarters echelon, the guys back in the rear so
15 to speak, the guys supporting the combat operations? Was there much conflict between those
16 two groups?

17 CC: Not much, as far as the maintenance guys and the radio guys. You had a separate
18 outfit that took care of your radios. You had more conflict with the boot strap hangers, whatever
19 they called them, that would tell us, you know, these goofy rules, well you couldn't fire back
20 until you identified them and stuff. This stuff worked in cycles over there. They'd come in and
21 they'd restrict us from firing a gun and then after a while they'd say, 'Just whack away,' you
22 know and there was always conflict in that kind of stuff, just where they'd come up with these
23 goofy rules on when you could fire and when you couldn't fire. Later on when I left the gun
24 platoon they came in with this stuff. We were tearing up too many tail rotors. Our door gun
25 bullets, the brass, was going out hitting the tail rotors, so they were trying to change the way we
26 flew our combat missions because we were tearing up too many tail rotors and that was a big
27 deal and all the fire team leaders, we'd call it which were the senior guys, there were three of us,
28 we went over and quit. To make an interesting story, the very next day, they go out and get a
29 helicopter shot down.

30 SM: How did that happen?

1 CC: Oh several stories, it depends on who you're talking to as to whether the proper
2 tactics were used or not, I don't know. Let's say they flew into a trap - anti aircraft gun trap -
3 knocked down two helicopters, killed 11 or 14 people on one. As a matter of fact, we're sitting
4 here talking May the 5th? May the 5th, 1968. That's the first day of the TET II. They called it
5 and Cinco De Mayo, and my little friend, he got shot down and got his back broke and a couple
6 of guys are here at the reunion that were on that helicopter. It took us a while to get them out.
7 They were right in the middle of them but it was a trap. They'd started their moving out, they
8 attacked that night. They attacked all the big bases in Vietnam just like they did at TET except
9 they didn't have enough men left to really do it like they did then but that just happened to be the
10 day they got knocked down. Apparently I left the gun platoon around May the 3rd, May the 4th,
11 something like that.

12 SM: Now where do these ideas come from? For instance, you mentioned the rules of
13 engagement. You can't engage certain enemy soldiers in these conditions or, 'We're going to
14 change the way you fly your missions because the brass is hitting the tail rotor.' Where did these
15 ideas get generated?

16 CC: Well, firing, there's no question, and this happens in any guerilla war I think; they
17 would try to get around villages to shoot at us. They wanted us to shoot back. I mean, there was
18 no question, so they would try to shoot at us where you least expected it. They would try to
19 shoot at us approaching our main base because they were trying to get us to shoot back and that's
20 what they wanted. They wanted us out there hammering on those villages, so called pacified
21 villages and you know we're 19, 20, 23 year old guys and they shoot and we want to shoot back
22 and with hindsight as an adult now, you see, 'Hey, what were they really doing?' It's clear what
23 they were doing. They were trying to entice us to shoot up those villages, and what do you do?
24 If a guy's shooting an automatic at you you've got to wag him back. So, that was the problem
25 area; when do you fire, when do you not fire. In my book *Firebirds*, I got one in there, where
26 R.P. Taylor fired back on a village and they were going to court martial him for the thing and
27 they had full automatic bursts coming out of it and the rules were a little bit...they changed the
28 rules all the time. They were continually changing through there. On the tail rotor stuff, the only
29 thing we could figure was you get a new company commander and he's told, 'You go up to that
30 company,' and he says, 'What are you doing,' and, 'They're tearing up too many tail rotors.' I
31 checked the records when I was writing my book and we were shooting about three to four times

1 as many bullets as the other companies in the battalion, so logically we should be tearing up two
2 to three more times...you know, nobody looked at it. They'd come up and first they'd change,
3 and some of the door gunners here were talking about it, they'd start making them shoot their
4 guns upside down so it'd kick the brass a certain way. All that does is just upset everybody.
5 They perceive that as they're endangering our lives. You know, some guys that are endangering
6 our lives for a stupid piece of metal, the tail rotor back there, so that upset people. They put all
7 kinds of screens, and what they were saying was, 'Quit breaking off your target so violent.' In
8 other words, we'd dive onto the target, the brass hulls are flying out of that helicopter both sides,
9 so when you whip away from your target your tail rotor is breaking out of the flow so it's
10 striking into that stream of brass coming out and so they're saying, 'Be gentle with the
11 helicopter,' and that's the most dangerous time you can have is breaking off the target. We quit,
12 we went over there and quit. We told them we weren't going to do it.

13 SM: Didn't they...was there no idea to maybe create some kind of a deflector or
14 something like that?

15 CC: They tried to do that, and as a matter of fact the crew chief said that the new
16 platoon leader, we got a new company commander and new platoon leader at the same time, that
17 he kept saying, 'Y'all go down there and build those deflectors,' and nobody would do it and
18 they said he went and did it himself because he had to get it done and they sort of balked on him
19 and wouldn't do it and I vaguely remember what they look like and that's what they were trying
20 to do. They built a deflector on the gun at one time and then they put a screen up outside the
21 helicopter above the weapons system trying to hold them off.

22 SM: Did those things work?

23 CC: I don't know. They didn't stay on long. You might talk to somebody that flew after
24 my time to see how long they kept them on. I don't think they ever kept them on very long
25 because it slowed the helicopter down. Anytime you put wind drag out there you're slowing the
26 helicopter down and you're straining the helicopters as a matter of fact, so I don't remember
27 them staying on very long.

28 SM: There were already chronic problems weren't they with under powering of the
29 aircraft?

30 CC: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

31 SM: These aircraft did not have the power trains they needed?

1 CC: That's right. We were flying 1,100 horsepower in that thing and with the air hot
2 and thin it just wasn't...it was dangerous to take off. Before my time we had one guy taking off,
3 he had an ant hill, hit it with his skid and flipped him upside down and then we had another guy
4 hang a wire and I think it flipped him or it did some damage to it and I was amazed more people
5 didn't hit in the mine fields because you'd run down to the end and if you couldn't get it up in
6 the air and it wallowed in the air you'd actually crash in the mine fields. We had a troop carrier
7 that did that which is an interesting story in our newsletters. We had an ammo bunker with 105
8 shells in it and they went off for a long time and killed three of them out of four I guess. It killed
9 some guys on the ground too. But, we never had a gun ship when I was there actually run
10 through and that's the reason you want skilled pilots in there because that's highly skilled trying
11 to take off in one of those things overloaded and that's the reason they were objected to us
12 rookies coming straight in there.

13 SM: What do you remember about TET '68?

14 CC: TET '68, I was what I think was one of the few helicopter pilots in the air when that
15 thing started. I explained that in my book *Firebirds*. I figured out what happened later on is they
16 attacked and I read somewhere why this happened, but they staggered their attacks on different
17 days; some people said by mistake or some people said that time changed or something, but they
18 attacked up north of us so we went up to sink their boats. That was one of our missions was fire
19 fly we called it. They had a big light in the troop carrier and we'd spot that on a river in these
20 swamps looking things and then we'd come in. You'd keep a gun ship with no lights on, you'd
21 run in and shoot them up and we sunk 93 one night. Well that night we didn't sink anything, but
22 they had us up there flying trying to catch them when they were retreating out and we just didn't
23 see anybody and we turned around and looked down at Chu Lai and it's probably 30-40 miles
24 down there in the...it looked like, we thought they'd hit us with a nuclear bomb and I read later
25 that one guy said he saw that from 60 miles away. The complete ammo dump went up. They
26 got lucky and put one right in the middle of the ammo dump and that thing went off. It blew
27 down our bunch of hooches. My friend Hannah, it was his turn to go after beer. When you're in
28 the bunkers you took turns over who went after the beer. He went after the beer. When it went
29 off, it blew the refridge over on him and they gave him a purple heart, then they took it away
30 from him once they found out what had happened, they took his purple heart away from him. I
31 remember that, and then I remember we couldn't land. We were up in the air and we called

1 every place that had refueling capability. We had different little fire bases around there. They
2 were all under attack so we landed at a place called Hill 35 and we set there until they pumped us
3 full of fuel. I was in a mini gun ship which took a while to rearm it. We must have fired some
4 already, that's what happened. We went down and there was a province capital called Tam Ky
5 and we went down there and they just direct us straight down there. We put an attack in because
6 they were up in the perimeter there and then we went back and we couldn't find a place to land,
7 went to Hill 35 and years later I asked my crew chief, I said, 'How in the world did you load
8 those mini guns that fast?' Because they had trays of ammo, you had six or 7,000 rounds of
9 ammo in there. What he did, he loaded them in the air and I said, 'What did you do with the
10 cans, the ammo cans?' and he said, 'We just threw them out when we got through. We just
11 chunked them out the door.' So we went back and put in another strike at Tam Ky and my fuel
12 light came on and I told this guy ahead of me and he was bold, he was a very bold guy. He got
13 killed his second tour, and I told him, I said, 'I'm low on fuel,' and we knew we were going to
14 have trouble landing again because every place was being attacked. At Hill 35 we were hitting
15 mortar rounds around us, and so anyway I remember being in a panic running out of fuel,
16 worried about running out of fuel, so years later when I was writing my book I called my crew
17 chief up and I said, 'What did we do?' and he said, 'Well you dumb shit, you ran it all the way
18 down and we decided we didn't have enough to get to Chu Lai so we landed in Tam Ky and they
19 were shooting across the strip and we sat down there,' and he says, and I vaguely remember this,
20 that they stopped firing. Both sides stopped firing. He ran out, he said he only pumped for about
21 two seconds, just enough to get the light to go off. He said he was looking at it and when the
22 light went off. At the light you've got like 15 minutes and he said he knew 15 minutes would get
23 us back to Chu Lai and he said when the when the light went off he said, 'Go!' you know, and
24 off we went. He said the war started again once we took off and that helicopter got shot up on
25 coming out and that day had four shot up.

26 SM: Now who was your crew chief at this point?

27 CC: Joe Bruce.

28 SM: Joe Bruce.

29 CC: And my gunner was Mike Aker who's here. He's missing a leg now and he's here
30 at the reunion. Joe couldn't make it. Joe's had a stroke and couldn't make it.

31 SM: Did Mike Aker lose his leg in Vietnam?

1 CC: He hurt it in Vietnam, he hurt it again right when he got back, and he's worried
2 with it 30 years and I just saw him and it shocked me. He finally just had them cut it off. He
3 said it just hurt him so darn bad. He said if he had it to do again, he'd have had them cut it off
4 right when he left Vietnam because he's been in pain all these years. He says he's a lot better off
5 with no leg than he was with what he'd lived through all these years.

6 SM: So TET '68, pretty active period for your unit?

7 CC: Yeah, we, at daylight I went back and got another helicopter and went back and this
8 is the only time I ever saw North Vietnamese soldiers in the open. What had happened,
9 Americans got lucky and put an APC unit in Tam Ky and they were expecting to overrun the
10 ARVN units, the south Vietnamese and instead they met some Americans in there with armored
11 personnel carriers. They drove them back in, and at daylight we were back up there with two
12 gun ships and the Air Force was screaming at us over the radios to get out, they were going to
13 shoot us down because they wanted in there and we had five to 600, they're saying 600, in the
14 open pulling their wounded. Some of them had two wounded; they had one in each hand
15 dragging them across the open and we jumped them and we stayed on them until they shot me all
16 to pieces. A few of them made it into a creek and they came out of there with full automatic,
17 probably 30 or 40 of them and one of the guys here that's in a wheelchair, Pallazo, he got shot in
18 the butt that day. He's in a wheelchair too, he got hurt over there. That day he got shot in the
19 butt. He was sitting on an armored plate and it blew his head up off the ceiling, a 30 cal round
20 knocked him up on the ceiling. So then we went back and I got another helicopter and went back
21 up there, and I told this story at our first reunion and everybody looked at me like I lost my mind,
22 but since then I've talked to four or five guys, the guy with me naturally but infantry guy and I
23 said they had a parade coming into town and the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were just
24 sure they were going to win that thing right there which they would have. If the Americans
25 hadn't been in there they would have just overran that place in just a few minutes and they had a
26 parade set up to come in and I can describe it in my book. I dove down on them and my co-pilot
27 Hannah remembers it just like I do. He was the co-pilot. I said, 'Put it on hot,' and you start
28 your dive at around 1,000 feet and we're diving down on them and they got signs and banners
29 stretched, and then we were told to shoot them. The air controller said, 'Shoot them up!' and so I
30 go hot and then I said, 'Fire!' and then I said, 'Don't fire!' and he remembers it just like I do
31 because there's kids up in this thing. I said, 'Don't fire,' and then I broke off and I took...I

1 forget how many hits I took. My wing man at that time was a Musket. We were out of gun ships
2 and we had another crew and his name was Gaither and Gaither is not in my book because I
3 couldn't find him. I thought he was dead. Gaither says he's looking up and he sees a black mark
4 appear on his windshield and it's the boot polish off his boot. My book says he got shot in the
5 foot. They shot him through the foot and it blew his foot up and the boot polish put a mark out
6 in front of his eyes and he says he just remembers, 'There's a black mark in front of me and I
7 don't know what it is,' and it was his foot where it dragged the windshield when it went through.
8 He said they shot his tail rotor off and he went back to Chu Lai to make an emergency landing
9 which I didn't know because I was shot to pieces. He went to one end of the place, I went to the
10 other end, and I got another helicopter and went back out and apparently all the senior guys
11 didn't think they'd have a helicopter flying so it had already went back to the company area and I
12 was the only pilot because I didn't want to go back up there and I went back and I got that one
13 shot up. So, I got four shot up that day. That was my opening experience with TET. We went
14 back the next day, slept, and then the next day I went to Hawaii and got married. Then I came
15 back after a week, I guess it was a week, and we were still catching them out in the open. They
16 were still catching those units in the open and we were slaughtering them. I mean, they were
17 boxing them up with these APCs and up against creeks and then we'd catch them coming across
18 the creek and it was just like a turkey shoot and they turkey shot them for like ten days when I
19 was gone and then we were up into February and I mentioned something in my book and since
20 then I've had some guys send me some data and we drew a picture out identical to what
21 happened that day and it was like two and a half weeks later we were still catching them, three or
22 400 in a group because they couldn't get back in the mountains. They had moved all these big
23 units out in this flat ground and they had no chance against us. We out armed them, we...they
24 didn't have anything for these helicopters to finish up, much less the jets once you got them out
25 where you knew where they were. There was a concept trying to find them, you know, and so
26 any liberal press that says we got whooped during that time is crazy and I know, I've heard
27 stories. That happened all over Vietnam, just like turkey shooting, you know?

28 SM: And these were almost exclusively PAVN and not Viet Cong units?

29 CC: The ones I saw that day had green uniforms on. They argue whether that was a
30 main force unit. I've seen some stuff, I think my book says North Vietnamese but I've had a guy
31 come in and says they thought that was a main force Viet Cong unit but at that time there were a

1 lot of North Vietnamese in them and the ones we call VC's the ones that had the black uniforms
2 on. We didn't know the difference. Anybody that had a green uniform, we assumed that was
3 North Vietnamese but I've been told since then that they mix them. You know, some of the
4 main force units had green uniforms.

5 SM: And you could tell the difference when you came up against VC versus PAVN?

6 CC: Yeah, most of the old VC units couldn't shoot. Once you'd box them up, you could
7 finish them off pretty good with these helicopters but you get up against a main force unit, you
8 better watch out, and when I said that I'm talking about the altitude that you got at. You know, if
9 you were against those farmers you'd get down there on low level.

10 SM: How low is low?

11 CC: ten feet, 15 feet, something like that. You're not supposed to do that. You're
12 normal attack tactics, our company, was you start at 1,000 feet and try to break at 500. But, you
13 get up in the mountains, you can't brake that thing and when you do you have to brake it real
14 hard to stay off the side of the mountains so that automatically lost altitude. I been in a lot of
15 them where you'd start at 1,000 and go to five, come back out, try to climb, and after you make a
16 couple of runs you're down around 100 feet and that's dangerous. But, when you're going
17 against a North Vietnamese unit, then that's the reason...the only thing that saved our lives was
18 the fact that we'd get the helicopter shot up and we didn't have any helicopters to fly. Like I
19 said, that's the reason most of us are still around here is you just run out of helicopters. There
20 wasn't anything else to fly, you know? Sometimes in May and on January the 5th prior to TET
21 was a hot time. That's when my friend Anton was captured and then TET was January 31st. All
22 three of those time periods there we just flat run out of helicopters and infantry guys, a year later,
23 say, 'Where were you guys at?' Well, I can answer that question real fine; we didn't have any
24 helicopters to fly. They actually told us at one time not to come below 1,000 feet and you
25 couldn't shoot close to the Americans at 1,000 feet. It was just too dangerous to shoot rockets
26 because they were too inaccurate and they just changed the rules on us because we didn't have
27 any helicopters and they knew they needed to keep some flying and we're talking out of our
28 whole battalion which would have been 32 gun ships, so like four helicopter companies. They
29 changed the rules when you flat ran out of helicopters.

30 SM: What weapon or weapons concerned you the most as a helicopter pilot, enemy
31 weapons?

1 CC: Enemy weapons? They did not have the heat seeking missiles when I was there,
2 but it was the old 51 caliber, the 12.7 anti aircraft gun. It would come through an armored plate,
3 it would knock a transmission out, it would cut an engine completely out. The RPGs, they'd
4 shoot those at us quite often but they were very inaccurate. They would scare the be-Jesus out of
5 you, especially around dark when you saw one come by, and I've got a picture of a helicopter,
6 last day I flew in Vietnam, they hit a helicopter with an RPG and then I was...it's unclear
7 whether I was in this flight or they all told me about it, but they hit a helicopter that was in a
8 flight with us and the cowlings all blew off of it and killed everybody in it. Then, later on they
9 tried to say it may be a grenade that an infantry guy dropped, but it was too violent of an
10 explosion. Everybody pretty well agreed it was a B-40 rocket, RPG or something that hit it and
11 some of the guys here were in that flight and it could be they told me about it and I just
12 remember. I wouldn't even swear I was on that flight. I'd heard the story so many times about it
13 just chunking pieces everywhere, you know, when it went off.

14 SM: So the 12.7 was the weapon that concerned you guys the most because it
15 could...but the stand off for that, that's more than 1,000 feet isn't it?

16 CC: Oh yeah. You, even at 1,000 to 500 feet that thing will just cut you up like cutting
17 through butter so no. Later on in Vietnam, the Marines, even at that time, had a deal. They
18 would not come within a click, 1,000 meters, of an anti aircraft gun. We'd call those anti
19 aircraft, 12.7s. When we were there, we attacked them. When they told us to go get them, the
20 infantry said, 'We went and got them.' Later on in Vietnam, they'd only let Cobras attack them
21 and then I read later they said, 'No more,' and then let jets come in and get them. But, when I
22 was there, we had these old Charlie models that run about 80 knots and we were told to go get
23 them and it was more of an attrition, you know, trying to keep some of these helicopters flying
24 because if a .50 hits through one of them even if it didn't kill anybody, it would put that
25 helicopter on the ground most of the time because it would tear all kinds of junk out of it and
26 we'd keep that thing on the ground a week or two by the time they get parts in. You could run
27 one through one and it didn't hurt anything but usually it would do some...you had to change
28 some structural piece in it and so that's the reason they finally backed them off later on from
29 them. But, we were attacking them when I was there.

30 SM: What was the most effective weapon that you had at your disposal?

31 CC: The mini gun.

1 SM: The mini gun?

2 CC: The mini gun. Those rockets, I just thought they were a waste of time. But that
3 mini gun, you could cut a tree down. When I say cut a tree down you could just shave the limbs
4 out of it, knock the leaves off of it. It just did a real trick on it when you got that thing cooking
5 and the key was to keep it shooting. You know, it's hard to keep shooting in all that sand and all
6 the dirt you were in and then the things wearing out but if you could get them cranking then they
7 were something.

8 SM: These were 7.62 mini guns?

9 CC: Yeah, 6000 rounds a minute. Normal machine guns shoot around 400 to 600 and
10 these things shoot 6000 rounds a minute and I've got some pictures around sundown where it
11 looks like a light coming down to the ground and that's only 1 out of five bullets so you had four
12 leads flying and you had enough tracers coming down it looked like a light coming down to the
13 ground and the infantry would catch them up in a tree line or something unless they had them a
14 hole to dig into the side of something, you'd just kill them all. There's no way they can escape
15 that when you run it down through there and that's the reason January the 5th, '68, my buddy
16 Anton was captured. He was the first Army helicopter pilot that was not executed when they
17 caught him and a guy in my flight class, they say there's several, that they caught them on the
18 ground alive and they executed them early in the tail end of '67. My buddy was captured, he
19 said Ho Chi Minh really put that order out around November of '67. We had heard it was
20 January. I think Anton was the first Army helicopter pilot captured that wasn't shot.

21 SM: Before we talk about the circumstances surrounding Frank Anton's getting shot
22 down and everything, I want you to tell the story of your first contact with the enemy.

23 CC: First contact? They assume you know what's going on and we were out at...I call
24 them boxing missions, I don't know what they really were, but every village generally had a
25 creek or something next to it, very standard for water and washing clothes and stuff so the
26 infantry would get out there and get on three sides and try to push toward that creek and then
27 anybody that ran, they'd drop leaflets supposedly and anybody that ran you shot them. Anyway,
28 these guys had made it. There was a rice paddy between the creek and the little village part and
29 they ran under it and you could see them just clear as a bell. There was three of them out there in
30 black shorts. One or two of them had a top on so they were just sticking out like sore thumbs out
31 there and so we're diving on them and the lead gun ship had already popped over and he said,

1 'I've got three in the open,' and so Anton hollers at me and says, 'Do you see them?' and I said,
2 'Yes,' and all this happens in a second or two. We were already down below 1,000 feet at that
3 time and it all happened in a second or two and boom, we're across them and I didn't fire
4 because you were supposed to be told to fire. Well, his deal was, 'Do you see them,' meant,
5 'Shoot them!' Then McCall came around with his rockets. He had a Hog helicopter and he
6 blasted these guys, put 15 or 20 rockets in there on them and Anton just raised holy heck about
7 what a dumb idiot they'd given him to be his peter pilot and how stupid could anybody be and
8 they used to keep score, and so Anton lost the three kills and he was really mad that McCall got
9 the kills and he didn't when he had them lined up and they were mouthing around about it, you
10 know, and I caught a lot of crap for a month over that.

11 SM: You said they used to keep score. What do you mean?

12 CC: Like big game hunters, like gun fighters. I never kept score.

13 SM: You're talking about kills, as far as Vietnamese people that were soldiers?

14 CC: Right.

15 SM: Yeah.

16 CC: They had the whole body count stuff, but they kept score and I never kept score, I
17 never paid any attention and I think participating in that deal with TET, as far as I know, I don't
18 think any helicopter pilot can say he came as close to getting as many as we got that morning,
19 because I've never heard anybody describe that kind of stuff and that's in a lot of records that
20 they caught them. A lot of them could have already been dead. They used to pull the bodies off,
21 too, so a lot of them they were pulling out of there could have been shot but they supposedly
22 counted five to 600 bodies out there that morning, and there were still some alive when we left
23 because they shot the crap out of me. Then the Air Force got there and finished them up.

24 SM: How would you confirm body count?

25 CC: I'd just guess. Most of the time you'd knock them down, sometimes you could see
26 them, but a lot of times it was just a guess. It was a joke, a running joke. One of the guys, I was
27 flying his wing one time and we shot up this jungle and the guy on the ground says, 'How many
28 do you confirm?' and we didn't say anything and he said, 'Do you confirm five?' and he comes
29 back on the radio and says, 'five monkeys?' and I know the records show there were five that
30 day, so it was a standard joke about the body counts. Come to find out in hindsight we
31 undercounted! The North Vietnamese are now admitting that we killed 1,400,000 and they're

1 saying even if you take our outlandish body count numbers where they were guessing, that was
2 still less than that. Some of that could have been these B-52s that really whacked out big groups
3 of them, but who knows. It was a standard joke, and that's how you promoted people was off
4 that kind of stuff. Not us, we didn't get promoted off of it, but I'm just talking about company
5 commanders and everybody else did, 'How many kills did your group have,' and that's
6 something they totally did away with during the Iraq War for good reasons because that insights
7 some people to do things they shouldn't be doing.

8 SM: Well what did you guys think of that strategy; attrition and body count emphasis?

9 CC: Oh, we didn't think. You know, it was one of those deals. I mean, people might
10 say they did, but nah. If anybody says that I think they're using their 30 years of experience after
11 that. Looking back on it, it was stupid as heck, but back then we knew we only had a year to do
12 it and we tried to do the best we could and we were trained to go do that, so you're looking at it
13 from a one year time line. You weren't looking as to what the overall strategy was, you just
14 want to make that year and get out. That's the way I perceived it.

15 SM: And that was pretty much shared by your fellow warrant officers?

16 CC: That's my understanding.

17 SM: And everybody else as far as the commissioned officers and the enlisted too?

18 CC: Everybody that I... you know, some of them might tell you they had deeper
19 thoughts at that time, but I never heard anybody say anything. It was that 12 months, 'Let me do
20 this and get out alive and go protect my friends,' and that was basically it. That was the way
21 people viewed that thing. It's take care of the guys that you knew and they'd take care of you
22 supposedly and try to make it a year.

23 SM: But sometimes the guys in the back, the gunner and the crew chief, were they
24 always necessarily looking out for your well being as aviators or pilots?

25 CC: No, this guy Foley, he was telling me a story one time. He got this new pilot in and
26 he...they didn't like the new guys coming either for good reasons because if the new guy
27 couldn't handle it, they got killed. They didn't have a chance back there. They could take those
28 guns and I told you they tried to make them shoot them upside down to keep the brass from
29 going in the tail rotor? They could turn them the other way and shoot the brass right up on the
30 pilots and he put quite a few of them down my back. He was telling the story about how he got
31 this new pilot, this new pilot came in and he said, 'I burnt him up good.' He said, 'They looked

1 like ticks hanging off the back of his neck.’ That was me he did that to! So when I got in they
2 didn’t like me coming in there. That’s exactly one of the greetings I got from the crew guys
3 because their lives were in danger. They didn’t like it either to have a guy up there who’d never
4 flown at night in real time weather and stuff like that, so they understood it.

5 SM: Did they understand that perhaps putting hot brass on the back of your neck might
6 make you a less able pilot at that particular moment in time?

7 CC: To tell the honest truth, you were a little intimidated by these guys, even the
8 enlisted men. There was a macho swag in there and that was something you had to have to go do
9 that so how do you get psychologically prepared to go be a gunfighter? This ain’t like a gun
10 fight, you know, and how do you get psyched up for that? So you’ve got to have this macho
11 attitude. For instance, just happened an hour ago, I hadn’t seen this guy in 32 years and he’s the
12 guy who snapped my picture while we were hiding in a Vietnamese grave. He told me he was
13 scared everyday he went out to fly, and so his family’s coming down tomorrow and his two sons
14 and I said, ‘Aker, I hate doing this, but I’m going to tell them that you’re not telling the truth.’ I
15 said, ‘I’m not going to call you a liar in front of your family, but for you to tell me today that you
16 were afraid, I don’t buy that. You never implied anything that would lead me to think you were
17 afraid,’ but it was this macho kind of...as a matter of fact, I didn’t want to go to the first reunion
18 because I assumed they all knew that I was scared. Well heck, they thought I was some macho
19 guy and I didn’t even know that!

20 SM: Well, why don’t you discuss the circumstances surrounding Frank Anton getting
21 shot down and the events surrounding that.

22 CC: Yeah, our scheduling was pretty bad and what’s interesting is I’ve had three guys
23 tell me they were supposed to be with Frank Anton that night and I’ve heard it from two of the
24 others and I thought, ‘You know, that’s really strange because I know the real facts.’ Some of
25 the crew remembers this; I was supposed to fly that night. You had standby off at these other
26 fire bases, but I’d been flying all day with this other guy and they were fixing to make me an
27 aircraft commander. I made aircraft commander and took Frank’s place the next day, so they
28 just technically probably made it at the instant they heard Frank was on the ground, and I’ll tell
29 that in a minute. But anyway, getting out of the helicopter at Hill 35 and this guy said, ‘What are
30 you doing?’ and I said, ‘I’m supposed to spend the night up here,’ and he said, ‘You go tell
31 Frank Carson to stay because they been sitting up here and we been flying all day.’ So we get

1 back in the helicopter, but then there's something wrong with one of the helicopters up there. So
2 we have to get out and move all of our gear over to it, so we take it back to Chu Lai and that's
3 the reason there was a mix of crew and one of the helicopters up there never flew with McCall
4 and the crew chief was a guy named Foley that you talked to and so they were together and then
5 Anton and Carson who I was supposed to have been in there with him and probably what these
6 other guys are thinking, there probably was a scheduling board back at Chu Lai that nobody ever
7 saw because we were up at these fire bases. So that could be where there is some truthful dispute
8 in the story because it could have said that Hannah or Parsons was supposed to have been flying
9 up there but because they never got up there they couldn't replace Carson and I just happened to
10 be there and they told me I was supposed to replace him. I guess they told me on the radio.
11 Anyway, I go back to Chu Lai that night and I don't remember that much more of the story but
12 this crew chief Mike Rogers that was wounded the same day I was wounded, he said they came
13 in and said, 'We got an aircraft down out there in the valley and we didn't get the crew out.' So
14 he and I go down to maintenance and we've got a gunship down there that was in for like a 25
15 hour inspection or something, they have to look at some stuff. Well, we went ahead and put the
16 panels back on and the cowlings on it and we took off, and he said...you know I remember that
17 night or the next night. The next night was really bad. The night before, Sutton gets wounded so
18 we'd just had guys wounded. We been getting shot at big time out there so Sutton had been
19 wounded the night before and I was out there that night so I'd been flying nights for like two
20 nights in a row. So Roger says we go out there, we picked up somebody, I'm trying to think of
21 who he said we picked up, but I was technically co-pilot but I'd become an aircraft commander
22 when Anton went down and I was the aircraft commander the next day. So I go out there, we
23 escort a slick in and the slick gets shot up real bad. That guy's at our reunion now and that's
24 about all I remember. I remember very clearly the next night, because we're at Hill 35 and we
25 had an 82 millimeter mortar round go off right in front of our tent, blew holes in our tent. We
26 actually ran to the helicopters and were cranking it while mortar rounds are hitting around us and
27 I'm sitting here and I was the co-pilot but I swore I was never going to do that again and I never
28 did it again, either, in Vietnam. I never ran to a helicopter when mortar rounds were hitting
29 around me. I decided that's stupid because that's what they were trying to hit was those stinking
30 helicopters. But as far as Frank being down, it put everybody in shock. We just couldn't believe
31 it and it's really shocking we couldn't get him out because that's unheard of and it's a whole

1 combination of factors that overrun an infantry unit out there and it wouldn't shut the artillery off
2 and they had the artillery hitting over all circles around the helicopter, around this infantry
3 company, and they could care less about a crew of four people when they had three or four
4 companies on the ground and had already lost everybody in this one company as far as radio
5 contact and all this and so the crew, they didn't want to hear about them and they did shut it off a
6 couple of times and let us go in and each time the helicopter shot up, they said, 'We're not going
7 to shut off again.' It was nearly daylight and they decided to wait until daylight and by then
8 they'd caught them right at daylight.

9 SM: Was there anything else that happened as far as contact between Anton and his crew
10 and men in your unit, helicopters that were flying overhead? Was there any radio contact or
11 anything?

12 CC: No, we were real poor. We had some of the survival radios. I do not even
13 remember carrying one. They say we had one, I've got one as a display item, but I don't
14 remember carrying one of them things. We were pretty lackadaisical about that stuff, you know.
15 We just never assumed that would happen to us. Like, these guys got out of the helicopter with
16 no guns! I think one of them had a side arm to the best of my memory. You know, they just
17 weren't prepared like it wasn't going to happen to us. It was pretty amazing.

18 SM: Did the whole crew survive?

19 CC: Yes, yes. Carson did something I wouldn't have done is I would have stayed with
20 the helicopter. They teach you in flight school to stay with the helicopter and he escaped and
21 evaded out and that story's in my book. It's a very good story. It was in the Army Digest and all
22 kinds of stuff. But, we picked him up the next day and he was in shock and anemic. All the
23 leeches sucked all the blood out of him and so it took him a while to get going again. Yeah,
24 Frank said that occasionally he'd see us fly over. He could see the Firebirds coming over while
25 he was in that camp and they starved half of them to death and stuff like that so it was a pretty
26 rough time. I could have very easily have been in there with him because I would not have
27 escaped and evaded. You never know what you would do, but I know one thing; I wouldn't have
28 left. I'd have hung around that thing because I knew that was really dangerous; the odds of you
29 getting out after running away from the helicopter is pretty slim. But they were running some
30 companies the next morning. They were fighting it out in broad daylight out there. I say broad
31 daylight; the clouds were down so low they couldn't get jets in. We got under it the next day and

1 they shot all of our helicopters up. This guy wrote a book about it and he called me and he said,
2 'Where were you guys at that day?' and I said, 'I can tell you real easy. We were sitting back at
3 Chu Lai. We had no helicopters.' We were down to zero in there.

4 SM: What book and who was the author?

5 CC: *Through the Valley*.

6 SM: *Through the Valley*?

7 CC: *Through the Valley*; a guy named Humphries wrote it and it covers what happened
8 on the ground at that time. In my book, he said, 'Well...' I said what happened, they got hit
9 when they were opening Christmas presents. It was January the 5th, they'd just had a resupply,
10 and he said, 'Well technically that's not right.' He said, 'What they really had, they told them to
11 get up and move and they had all their Christmas presents under their arms.' One guy told me
12 they were opening presents. You don't get to really open some, you know. Same story.

13 SM: What unit was this guy in?

14 CC: 196th.

15 SM: Oh, he was in the 196th?

16 CC: 196th Americal Division and I don't know what the 3rd or the 21st, don't get me to
17 lying what battalion it was. But *Through the Valley* is a very good book. He interviewed all
18 these guys on the ground and it covers those events in there and it runs for two or three days in
19 there. I have another story in my book where, this was in April which is after this time in
20 January there. They had a unit, some kind of recon patrol, got overrun by the guys. They went
21 to sleep. We heard they went to sleep. This guy called me up and he said, 'Well that's
22 technically not right,' and I said, 'Now look, I just said we were told they went to sleep,' and he
23 said, 'Well, what really happened is the lieutenant had a hammock. He hung the hammock up
24 and he went to sleep and we kept telling him, 'We need to get out of here. This is bad, this is bad
25 location, bad stuff,' and he says, 'He's sleeping in his hammock,' and that's how that story got to
26 us.' You can see how the story got in. It was implied to us the whole crew was asleep. He said,
27 'Heck no, man, we knew they were here,' and then you got wiped out and that lieutenant got
28 killed. He was in his hammock. Pretty cool guy, or stupid. But, that story's covered in *Through*
29 *the Valley* too.

30 SM: There's a fine line between stupidity and...

31 CC: Being a hero.

1 SM: Heroism, yeah.

2 CC: I've always assumed a lot of heroes are suicidal and just a twinge of being suicidal
3 and I've seen some that you call it fearless and then you wonder what is making that guy tick.
4 I've seen some pretty cool guys under fire. Not me.

5 SM: Yeah, I was going to say what is the most impressive thing you saw?

6 CC: Most impressive was when I was flying slicks and we saw the most impressive
7 thing I'd ever saw was convoy get wiped out right in front of us and we were up flying convoy
8 recon. We'd been 50 feet above those trees up and down through there. Nothing, didn't see
9 anything. They got this convoy up in there and they wiped them out and the Marines came out.
10 There were some Marines in it. They hit tanks, they knocked out Army tanks, I mean, Marine
11 tanks and it was a full...it only happened a few minutes. The Marines came out in their
12 gunships. They had men flying them, they didn't have boys flying them and they were up so
13 high I couldn't even find them. I was aircraft commander but I was flying as co-pilot. We'd
14 take turns and we were flying with Special Forces then. This old boy named Kucera, he says,
15 'I'm fixing to go in there and pick those wounded up,' and there's crap flying, there's trucks
16 blowing up, there's artillery shells blowing up in the back of the truck, and they were calling.
17 They needed some boys taken out and he said, 'I'm fixing to go in there and get them,' and I
18 said, 'We can't go in there,' and I'd been there quite a while at that time and I said, 'We can't go
19 in there,' and he said, 'Oh yeah, if these boys are going to die, we're going to go get them.' I'm
20 looking over at him like that and he's supposed to have been here, he couldn't make it, and he
21 went in there and he picked them up. A good story, my gunner that got shot in the butt during
22 TET, he'd been thrown out of Firebirds, Palazzo. He was on the helicopter that day. Palazzo
23 said they're sitting there loading the wounded on, they're throwing them in and crap is flying
24 everywhere and he said we'd been shooting down both sides. We'd been running up and down
25 through there shooting off the sides of the trucks just with our door guns. Palazzo had just
26 changed barrels. The barrels get hot so you get a glove and you put the barrel in. He forgot to
27 pull the lever down to hold it. He says he's sitting there and he's scared and they're throwing
28 people on and he looks around and he sees an NVA step out from behind the hooch with an AK-
29 47 and he says he swings his M-60 and he pulls the trigger and it goes, 'Puff!' and the barrel falls
30 off. He says about that time old Kucera we had a brand new H model, 1300 horses, a brand new
31 engine, and he snatched that pig and we were gone! And this guy, he burnt a whole clip at us and

1 missed us. I think he hit us four times. I believe we took four rounds now that I think about it.
2 It was in the tail, but it was just luck we got out of there at the right time. That was impressive.
3 That guy was really bright and I got a chapter in my book about him.

4 SM: Did the 1300 horses make that big of a difference?

5 CC: Oh yes. Part of it's you had new horse power. You were pulling the real power.
6 Where there's 1100 horses a bit worn out. They were just old engines and what they'd do is run
7 screwdrivers through them. The crew would leave a screwdriver up in the like a filter, they
8 called them particle separators and they'd let that screwdriver run back through that engine.
9 What you didn't want to do was run it through while you were flying and one of the guys here
10 was a slick driver. He was on take off and the screwdriver went through and you try to get it
11 where it runs through when you're sitting on the ground, and cost the taxpayers 50,000 dollars
12 but that's no big deal for the danger of having a weak engine.

13 SM: Yeah, that old engine goes away and you get a new 1300 horsepower...

14 CC: A brand new one, yeah. And the crew chief, he generally gets an article 15 so it
15 costs him 50 bucks or 25 bucks or something for not making sure the screwdriver wasn't out
16 there.

17 SM: Well, what's sad is they didn't automatically institute a policy where it was obvious
18 they were under powered...

19 CC: No, they couldn't.

20 SM: ...and so we replaced them because...

21 CC: See, here's the key. You've got people who get graded. Their whole careers
22 depend on how many of those helicopters they can keep flying, so they're going to keep any
23 piece of crap out there they can. We had a hot start one day and it got so hot it burnt the paint off
24 the cowling that's around it.

25 SM: I'm sorry, could you explain what a hot start is?

26 CC: A hot start, you've got a turbine engine there and if you're overloaded with fuel,
27 and Frank Anton, the guy that got captured, did it. He got an article 15. This cost him money.
28 You try to start it and if it doesn't start you're supposed to wait so many minutes or seconds, I
29 can't remember and let the fuel drain out, then you try to start it again. Well, we were scrambled
30 out to go support the infantry so we tried to start it and it didn't start so he just set a few seconds
31 and tried to light it again and it built up too much fuel in there and you're getting...the turbine's

1 not taking it out the back. It's internally getting this fuel while this extra fuel all wound up in
2 there is cranking too much heat and it ran past 1000 degrees centigrade and that's when I bailed
3 out of the helicopter. When it went to 1000, you know, *vaya con Dios!* I'm out of that thing.
4 The crew chief took off running and old Anton's just in there trying to shut this thing off, you
5 know, with the engine smoking and everything else. So they took that down to maintenance,
6 checked it, repainted the cowling and gave it back to us and I can check the dates of my book
7 there but it was just a month later something, the whole engine, the hot end they call it, came
8 shooting out and it could have killed all four of us and that's when the guy took my picture
9 hiding in the Vietnamese grave. It was that engine that the maintenance guy signed off on. That
10 night at the club we were taking picks on who was going to shoot him, but everybody sort of
11 liked this guy so we didn't. No retaliation for that, but there was some drunken talk about doing
12 something to this guy for doing that.

13 SM: Speaking of drunken talk and activities, you talk about a monkey in your book. For
14 some reason I can't remember his name.

15 CC: Clarence J. Damnit.

16 SM: Yeah, Clarence Damnit.

17 CC: I don't know where the J. came from, but it was...

18 SM: Was this one of the only mascots that you had?

19 CC: We had a bunch of dogs, yeah. We had dogs and as a matter of fact, there was one
20 dog, I was talking to one of the company commanders later on, apparently that dog hung around
21 there until we left Vietnam. Everybody liked her, she was nice and friendly and all that and she
22 had several names, but she was the dog that we used to hook the...I've got a picture of her
23 mounted over here and she's hung under a flare parachute. We'd take her up, we'd be sitting
24 around on standby with nothing to do so a Slick guy's come by, a troop carrier, and we'd put the
25 dog and the parachute in and let him go up 1,000 feet and out she'd go. Then we'd gather her up
26 and wait for the next troop carrier to come by and let him take her up. That was our
27 entertainment.

28 SM: She didn't mind this?

29 CC: Well, it could be alleged that she enjoyed it. She would urinate most of the way
30 down so it's unclear whether she enjoyed it or not but she didn't fight it. A lot of people knew
31 she enjoyed it. But Clarence J. Damnit, they had him out by the club when I first got there and

1 he was an alcoholic. He basically lived off beer. They had that monkey and then they had two
2 before I got there. They had Clarence and another one and they'd moved up from Bien Hoa
3 down south and heard the story where a guy had a guitar and they'd packed all their living stuff
4 in these helicopters as full as they could so this thing was a spider monkey. They said what
5 happened, old crew chief looked around and that spider monkey got right up there in the middle
6 of that guitar where that hole is in there over the strings and urinated in it and everybody's dying
7 laughing and the monkey's hanging on the guitar and Williams said before he knew it that crew
8 chief took the handle on that guitar and threw the guitar and the monkey out and he says he looks
9 around and that monkey's hanging on that guitar looking at him like, 'My God, don't do this to
10 me!' He says, 'Shoom!' [makes sound], down he goes before they could stop the crew chief the
11 guitar and the monkey both went out the door so when I got there, there was only one monkey
12 left instead of the two.

13 SM: How high were they?

14 CC: Oh thousands of feet. I'm sure they were running two or 3000 feet.

15 SM: Quick question about Mr. Palazzo. I noticed downstairs a photograph and I think
16 it's of him with a pistol to his head.

17 CC: Yes.

18 SM: What's the story behind that?

19 CC: He said he was going to commit suicide if he ever has to fly with me again.

20 SM: Really?

21 CC: I'm the one that got him shot in the butt down there that day! They were all macho,
22 but then when you get shot up then they go back and talk about it and wonder, you know, 'Was
23 that pilot doing something he wasn't supposed to be doing?' And yes, we got down too low.
24 That was during TET and we got down too low and we thought there wasn't any fight left in
25 these guys and I mean they smoked that helicopter. When I say smoked it I mean literally
26 smoked it. They cut some wires in that thing and that's quite often you smell that burning smell
27 as bullets come through it. I mean, it was smoked up good in that thing so he was upset.
28 Allegedly I got a little too carried away and got too low, but he's my buddy and he hadn't said
29 anything since then. Then, I'll tell you this story's in the book, and I asked him about it at our
30 first reunion because I didn't know what he thought about me. I got a Distinguished Flying
31 Cross for that day, okay, and they gave it to me in about September right before I left and they

1 had one of those company deals which is very rare. I don't know why they did it. Somebody
2 said, 'Let's do it,' you know, so they made everyone...because it's hard to get people together.
3 Well Palazzo was standing there and he knew what I got it for because he was out there that day
4 and I walked by him and he said, he says, 'You officers, y'all get all the God damn medals and
5 all we do is get shot up,' or something to that effects, you know, and I never forgot that because
6 he was right. They got screwed over big time and what he said was the truth but it embarrassed
7 me and even at our first reunion I dodged him for quite a while because I didn't know what to
8 say to him. I didn't know what he was going to say to me and finally I walked over there and I
9 asked him, I said, 'Didn't you get shot in the rump one day?' 'Yeah, it was with you,' you
10 know, and we started shooting the breeze and this was a big friendly deal. I didn't know what he
11 was going to say. I thought he might still be offended by that, but I had nothing to do with that.
12 There was somebody else that put me in for that. I think the fire team leader went back and told
13 somebody and wrote both of us up for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

14 SM: Now, speaking of awards; how would the awards for enlisted men be?

15 CC: Oh, they got screwed over. Most of them didn't even get their air medals.

16 SM: Why? What's the story behind that?

17 CC: It was too much trouble to do the paperwork. A lot of them, there's a whole bunch
18 of them sitting out there at this reunion that never got an air medal and you got them for 25
19 combat missions and all that and there's gangs of them out there that never got anything. That
20 really bothers those guys. We heard later that there was so much paperwork down in battalion
21 that they'd just take those and dump them in the trash. We had guys who should have got, like
22 Kucera, I'm sure that day he did the bravest thing I've ever seen which could have ranked up
23 with maybe a Congressional Medal of Honor; I make a joke about whether he was trying to get a
24 Congressional Medal of Honor or a casket with metal handles, one of the two, but I'm sure he
25 didn't even get a medal for that day. I'm nearly positive. That's just the way the system worked.
26 Then you'd have guys getting medals, and I talk about that in a little of my book, for just being
27 the worst mess up you've ever seen and there is so much fraud in that that in my book, I don't
28 even mention a medal I got. I did say I got a Purple Heart, but I won't mention a medal. They
29 tried to get me to put that in my book and I refused to do it as a point of honor, that there's so
30 much fraud in there that I don't even like getting into it. Oh yeah, I got in trouble over it one
31 time and that's in the latter part of my book. I was down trying to scrounge me another R&R

1 and I just happened to see an award for a guy in battalion for doing something that got a bunch of
2 our guys hurt and got some people killed and they were writing him up an award. I go back and
3 I get schnookered and I know who did it. He denied it years later. He passed away with a heart
4 attack, but he said, 'Carlock, you're the man that can go do something about this,' so I knew I
5 wasn't going to be in the military, I was getting out. I go down and turn him in to the inspector
6 general. He gave me the jeep to go turn him in and it's top secret. They're not supposed to say
7 anything to anybody, they're supposed to investigate. By the time I got to the company area they
8 were waiting in the company area for me to go talk to that guy and it was supposed to have been
9 top secret. They weren't supposed to say a word to him until they checked it out. All they did
10 was report me to the guy I turned in. He comes down there and he tried to threaten me with my
11 career in the military and I made it real clear I wasn't staying in the military and that got his
12 attention. We don't know what ever happened to it, whether he got that...I'm sure they pulled it
13 back because they didn't want to run the risk of me really...and in hindsight I would have called
14 the congressman or wrote letters to the congressman to put the fix on him, you know?

15 SM: Who was the commander, the company commander, the first sergeant at that time
16 when you were serving with the 71st?

17 CC: Yeah, when I first got there we had Major Bell and then we had Hillhouse, Sgt.
18 Hillhouse, and he ordered us warrant officers around just like we were buck privates too, which
19 that's the way he had to to get anything done. They liked to maintain a little order and
20 discipline, you know, and then he was replaced by Fitzgerald, Major Fitzgerald, who was told to
21 clean up the tail rotor act and then I don't know how this happened, I don't know, I've heard
22 different stories on why he didn't stay very long but then another guy named McGinnis that
23 came in at the end and I really liked that guy. He was very nice to me. He used to fly with me
24 occasionally.

25 SM: What was Bell like as a commander?

26 CC: Well I tell the story in the book, Clarence J. Damnit attacked some of our guys. He
27 was a fighting alcoholic, the monkey. So, they were drunk, McCall and Wiegand and they put
28 their Army helmets on. They have boots, underwear, and Army helmets. They grab their pistols
29 and they go through the company area trying to get him and they're saying, 'Come out you
30 S.O.B., we're going to shoot you!' so they go back in the officer's club and they're sitting there
31 and Bell comes in. He's got his underwear on and his pistol belt and he says, 'Which one of

1 y'all's going to shoot me?' because he thought they were looking for him! They were out
2 looking for Clarence J. Damnit!

3 SM: Were there ever any incidents of threats or fratricide?

4 CC: No, no. When I said that about the maintenance deal, I remember us talking about
5 that but it was a joke. I mean, it wasn't thought about and there was no serious thought about
6 doing it. People mouth around. Somebody threw a smoke grenade in Bell's hooch. He knew
7 who did it. He confronted him at the first reunion. He remembered the enlisted men. He always
8 knew who did it. He's on our board of directors and he walked up to him and said, 'You're the
9 man that threw the smoke grenade in my hooch aren't you?' And he said, 'Yes sir, and you're
10 the man that shot our pet monkey.' He's the guy that wiped out Clarence J. Damnit.

11 SM: With a shot gun?

12 CC: Yeah.

13 SM: What about that incident where you describe in your book that you had a gunner
14 that apparently shot entirely too close to the aircraft and did some damage to the aircraft?

15 CC: Right, and we don't know who that guy is. We found most of the guys that served
16 in our unit. We haven't been able to identify him. We maybe know. I knew he was from
17 Kentucky, somewhere up in there, but I knew he was strange when he was telling me about his
18 girlfriend that he had down at Chu Lai village which we did not have a village or city around us
19 and all they had down there was one hooker and the only time I ever went down there they had a
20 line running out about a half a mile out of it and that was his girlfriend, okay. So after I heard
21 that, I thought, 'This is a strange kid.' Well anyway, his machine gun wouldn't work and they'd
22 already caught vibes and I didn't know at the time he'd made a threat against one of the pilots;
23 not to his face, but to another guy. So, they had me stand him at attention and I had only been an
24 officer for like a month and so that's...they told me to do it so I went and did it and I stood him
25 at attention and I told him to get his darn gun clean and didn't want to have anymore of that not
26 working because that's just work. They can get out and they can polish that thing down and get
27 it working. So anyway, the very next day he shoots the door pole out right beside my head and
28 I'm shutting down the helicopter and I'm sitting there and I'm looking over there and I noticed it
29 and I don't even look at him. I just sort of look around like this and I mean he just cleaned her
30 out right by my head. Clearly it was intentional and he was out of our company. Bell moved

1 him out of the company that night. They loaded him up and he was gone. We never saw him
2 again and nobody remembers what his name is and nobody wants him coming to our reunions!

3 SM: I don't know if I'd want to interview him. Any other incidents like that where
4 there's...

5 CC: Well when you talk about that, clearly he wasn't trying to hit me because it's pretty
6 easy to hit you if you're working on one of those helicopters. All he had to do was turn a couple
7 of inches more and bingo, he had you. On a troop carrier you couldn't turn them inboard. They
8 had those fixed where they mechanically could not turn those inside the helicopter. On ours,
9 they were on straps. They could take it and move it to the other side of the helicopter and both of
10 them shoot out the same door, so you run that risk. He clearly was not trying to hit me, it's just
11 he was going to let me know he didn't appreciate that. He was very strange and that's when they
12 moved him out. There's nothing else that I remember. Well, I'll take it back. Hillhouse, the
13 first sergeant, they had put a grenade under his jeep and that happened right when I got there or
14 right before and whether that was an intentional deal to get him or not or just to let him know
15 you need to back off a little bit, but he was one tough homare. He's passed away. We would
16 have certainly had him at our reunion just to - because everybody sort of admired somebody that
17 was that macho, you know - to take on these clowns. But that did happen, I forgot about that and
18 that was the only time I heard it. I really don't think that was an intent. I think it was more
19 trying to scare him than do anything else.

20 SM: Did it work?

21 CC: No. He stayed after them.

22 SM: Do you think he was a good first sergeant?

23 CC: Yeah, you can talk to some of the enlisted men. I really didn't deal with him that
24 much. From everything I heard he did the best he could to keep them under control. You know,
25 it's hard to control these guys with these macho attitudes and that's the reason a peace time
26 Army doesn't tolerate guys like that. That's the reason a peace time Army can't go fight a war,
27 you know, because you need some of these rogues, these macho kind of guys, and they don't cut
28 it in a peace time Army. They chunk them out in a minute. I thought he tried the best he could
29 with what he had.

30 SM: Now your time with the 71st you flew exclusively gunships?

1 CC: No, I flew gunships up until they got into that tail rotor stuff trying to change their
2 tactics and we quit. That was around May. I just happened to be the platoon instructor pilot so I
3 wound up flying both gunships and slicks back and forth, back and forth, and I'd run off to Da
4 Nang with Special Forces and they'd send a helicopter up there to fetch me back to get some
5 more time and fly with these guys. What had happened, they were getting them hurt and then
6 some of them got grounded. R.P. Taylor got grounded for shooting at this so called friendly
7 village. I think that's quoted in my book where the guys said, 'You can only shoot back if you
8 had hostile intent coming at you,' or you could clearly see it was hostile intent, and he said just a
9 burst of automatic weapon fire didn't qualify for that, and that really hacked everybody off, some
10 idiot that had never been shot at telling us an automatic weapon didn't mean anything? And
11 you're riding around in a beer can other than those armored plates which were few and far
12 between, you're just riding around in a beer can up there so anyway that wasn't good for morale.
13 I'll put it that way. But, they were continually changing those rules on when you could fire and
14 where you could fire and trying to keep you away from that where they were shooting from
15 around these friendly villages and that's what they wanted us to do. They wanted us to tear these
16 villages up.

17 SM: What other major operations did your unit support while you were there, the 71st, as far as
18 you mentioned TET, TET II. Other major actions or operations that you were apart of?

19 CC: Yeah, we didn't really know what was going on, okay, but doing some reading after
20 the fact, they call them different strategies; going to clean out different valleys and stuff like that.
21 I can't even remember the names of them now, but we didn't know what they were. All we'd
22 get, if it was really big, we'd get a briefing the night before and they'd sort of brief us and say,
23 'Okay, we're going to hit down there with 15 helicopters. We're going to be there at this time.
24 Here's the radio freqs, here's your going to talk to, here's what we think is out there,' and I
25 remember that happening in a year, maybe, I could have been up at the fire base when they gave
26 them, but maybe once a month and then the rest of the time they'd schedule you out. A lot of
27 times you would go to bed, when I was flying troop carriers especially, I'd go to bed and then I'd
28 have them wake me up so I could go over and find out what I was doing the next morning and
29 then I'd go back to bed to know what time you were going to get up and sort of figure out what
30 you were going to do. But they'd wake you up. They had an all night wake up, like if you were
31 leaving, we were laughing about it, the Army took well good care of you. If you had to be

1 somewhere at 4:30 in the morning, they knew what time to wake you up to get you there so each
2 guy got woke up at different times, his crew did depending on who was doing what. But most of
3 the time they didn't even brief us, they'd say, 'Okay, you fly south down here and you call them
4 on this radio freq and they'll tell you where to go and what to do,' and that's probably good
5 enough. What else could they say? They didn't want you too scared so they wouldn't tell you
6 what was out there anyway so all you were going to do is move troops and they didn't even have
7 to tell you where to go. You just followed the lead, you know? They didn't even tell you what
8 coordinates you were going to or anything like that because it wasn't any business. You were
9 supposed to be flying in the flight, just sort of following along.

10 SM: So would you brief your crew chief and gunners?

11 CC: No. Now you always briefed them on firing and that's very critical. Before you'd
12 let them you'd get an affirmative response. I never had a gunner or crew chief fire into the
13 friendlies and that did happen and I never did and I was very careful. I said, 'Okay, now they're
14 down here in this tree line right here. Does everybody understand which tree line I'm talking
15 about?' We'd orbit out away from them back out away and make sure everybody understood
16 where the Americans were and I said, 'Now you understand you do not fire into that position?
17 I'm going to be breaking to the left,' or if I'm going to break over them and I made sure they
18 understood, 'You cease firing until we break out of that position. You can fire back over here,'
19 and so you did brief them while you were out here as to where they shoot because that was very
20 dangerous.

21 SM: What friendly fire incidents come to mind when you think of those kind of
22 accidents?

23 CC: The funniest ones were when we would drop brass on them. We had
24 Americans...one time I had a LRRP team down and it was dark and rainy and whatnot and I
25 couldn't see. I was flying the lead and I wasn't qualified to be flying the lead. I had this Gaither
26 that got shot in the foot at TET. He was back flying, he was back flying at that time because this
27 was later than that and he was...this was after that. It was three or four months later and these
28 guys been shot up and two or three of them are wounded out of five or six out there and this kid
29 was crying over the radio and you know, he'd shoot a tracer up and I just couldn't see it. I just
30 couldn't pick it up. So finally, I said, 'Okay, I'm coming down this tree line,' I was right above
31 their heads, and I said, 'You tell me when I'm over you,' and so he did that and when he did that

1 we opened up the mini guns out in front trying to scare them, you know, let them know we were
2 out there, and he starts screaming and crying, 'You're shooting us, you're shooting us, you're
3 killing us, you're killing us,' and it was our brass falling down on him because can you imagine
4 6,000 rounds a minute? That's a lot of brass falling down to the ground, and then earlier on we
5 ran across an APC unit and I mentioned that. That was Thanksgiving Day or right around
6 Thanksgiving of '67 and we dropped brass on those APCs and some of the crew allegedly shot at
7 us. We told them, we said, 'You guys better not be firing at us.' They were talking about it,
8 'You're shooting us, you're hitting us,' and you know, 'That's our brass, you better not think
9 about firing or busting a cap on us because we'll bust one on y'all.' I had a grunt one day
10 coming into LZ ROSS, he shot a round through my helicopter. It came right out of the bunker, I
11 saw where it came from, and I was screaming at them over the radio, 'I'm fixing to...I know
12 exactly which bunker it is, I'm fixing to blow it away,' and old commander, he jumps on that
13 thing and he says, 'Firebirds, Firebirds, cease fire, cease fire! We'll take care of it. Tell us
14 which bunker it is! Tell us which bunker it is!' because he knew we'd shoot them and I said,
15 'I'm fixing to get him! I know which bunker it came out of!' He said, 'We'll take care of him,
16 we'll take care of him.' I'm sure he told them it was an accidental round or something but that
17 kid shot at us, and what he was thinking I don't know, but we were real low and slow, coming in
18 to land and refuel and then bing! I saw it come out of there, you know? Saw the flash when it
19 came out. It went through the tail boom.

20 SM: What action did they take? Do you know?

21 CC: I don't know. Never heard any more. That commander was sure worried that I was
22 fixing to blow that bunker away. We didn't jack around. We'd go for it. That's what they
23 wanted, too.

24 SM: What about actual incidents where there was the accident of killing the friendlies?

25 CC: Let me think through. I, now the 198th Infantry, which Schwarzkopf was in later
26 on, General Schwarzkopf, they were notorious for shooting artillery on their guys. I mean, they
27 were just notorious. As a matter of fact, they talk about having a stand down to just revamp all
28 their command structure because they were just blowing...and that movie you see on TV about
29 the mama, 'Friendly Fire,' that's the 198th Infantry as a matter of fact. There's a movie, TV
30 movies, [?] or something like that and Carol Burnett played the mother in the movie, TV movie.
31 That was the 198th Infantry and I don't know if that incident happened, but they were just

1 notorious for it, getting their artillery out of whack and shooting their own guys. I saw a short
2 round hit Kenlee went in to pick up some wounded one day and that was a short round off of one
3 of our artillery things and something they never tried to do was to move where they had to shoot
4 over the heads of the friendlies, and they had done that. They had penetrated up in the valley and
5 had to shoot over their heads and a short round had got in there with them and I'm sure there's
6 some others that I'm just not thinking of right now. As far as I know, I'm not aware...we had a
7 firebird rocket hit close to the slick and blew a piece of shrapnel up in one of the guy's arms. I
8 had one where I was flying slicks. I know who shot it, Frank Carson shot it. He denies it. He
9 shot a rocket out there by me and it blew the door handle off my door on that thing and the crew,
10 they wrote it up as combat damage, that somebody shot us from the ground. I just have this
11 feeling that it was his rocket because he hit them right out beside us. I mean, they'd...it scared
12 the crap out of me because I knew what it was, I knew it was a rocket that hit, not a mortar round
13 and that door handle was gone and the crew said that it had to have been a bullet that knocked it
14 off, not a rocket chunk, but who knows. It just happened that rocket hit right next to me and the
15 door handle was gone when I got back in.

16 SM: Now when you were on night operations, you didn't have any kind of night vision
17 devices, did you?

18 CC: Oh no, no. We used, and this is in my book, we used what we called a swish boom
19 method of night navigation and I explained this to these Apache pilots nowadays. The Firebirds
20 are still in the military. We'd get out in those mountains and when it was raining you'd lose the
21 horizon and when you don't have a horizon to look at then you're in a world of hurt, and I saw
22 this two times that I remember and you just turn and you had a general concept of where the
23 valley leads out of the mountains. You'd just pop two rockets and as long as they just kept
24 going, you knew you were right. You pop two rockets and you see them explode, that means
25 you're turning the wrong direction. That's mountain out there in front of you. That's where the
26 swish boom came from. You heard the boom, then hey, you better watch out. There's
27 something out there. You just turn and fire that and then just rack them off in pairs. When you
28 saw them keep going you knew where the valley was and [makes rocket noise], out you went. I
29 got later where I could fly through the valleys. I knew where I was at the whole time I was out
30 there and it was still scary as heck but I, like those guys on the ground that night, here I was a
31 rookie, shouldn't have been out there. It's complicated trying to tell, you know, how to line up

1 out there in the dark and all this and that night I flew to the west because I knew where the valley
2 was to get over that mountain. I was down too low and I flew west and cut to the right and I told
3 this guy what I was doing and he said, 'You're going west?' which is towards the enemy, you
4 know? I said, 'Yeah, I know where the valley's at out here,' and I brought him out of there, too.

5 SM: What about...

6 CC: That's dangerous, you know. A lot of these Cobra drivers, they wouldn't even fly
7 at night and we're out there putting in strikes in the rain at night. Pretty dangerous stuff, you
8 know? I thought it was crazy when I first got there. We had units that would call us when the
9 monkeys would scare them and they'd be out in that jungle out there and they'd call us and we'd
10 go out there and we'd go out there and you know, 'Are you receiving fire?' and then we hear,
11 'No, movement; we've got movement out here,' and after a couple of nights we'd figure out
12 they're afraid of the monkeys and so we'd find something wrong with the helicopters. Anytime
13 that unit called we'd make them tell us which unit it is and we'd say no, we didn't have any
14 helicopters flying that night. We'd say something to them. It endangered our lives to come out
15 there when they're not getting shot at. Getting shot at, that's one thing but when they just hear
16 noise out there and wanted us to come out a couple of nights, we wouldn't go out which is rare
17 but we knew what was going on, you know.

18 SM: Well actually, why don't you go ahead and discuss the circumstances surrounding
19 you getting injured.

20 CC: Getting injured?

21 SM: Yeah.

22 CC: There wasn't really a lot to it. We were out in...I didn't even know where I was at.
23 It happened the December the 3rd of '67 so I got there in September and we hadn't really flown
24 south that much and we were flying south of Chu Lai and later on I found out it was pretty close
25 to where we were at. We were putting this strike out there and there were some infantry guys
26 already on the ground. We were inserting troops and took an anti aircraft round up through the
27 rocket pod and set a rocket off, exploded it, and it blew the oil cooler off the engine. The engine
28 was technically still running. It wasn't going to run long, but it blew the whole side off and the
29 gunner, I was pretty sure that he was dead. I'd just never seen anything like that and we hit the
30 ground on a dike and I jumped out and went down the skid. It was rainy season, mud and water
31 and everything and the dike was pretty wide and the belly was down on it and I grabbed him out

1 of the back because you always think about it exploding. You assume the helicopter's fixing to
2 explode. So, I grabbed this guy named Fox and Rogers was in there that's at our reunion here.
3 He was the crew chief. He wasn't hurt as bad. He was in the hospital like a month. But Fox
4 was smoking and you know the smoke off the fire they're flashing a rocket or something and I
5 saw his foot was nearly gone. It looked to me like it was gone so I threw him over my shoulder
6 and stepped back away from the helicopter and when I did I buried up in the mud right up to my
7 mid thighs and I just stood there. I couldn't move. So then Weigand, our wingman, he comes in
8 to pick us up and McCall apparently got a radio call off, he was hurt too, that the gunner was hurt
9 bad. And Weigand, he's sitting on that dike there screaming. You could see his mouth moving
10 because he was getting shot at and I was on the side away from the enemy down in the mud and
11 started using Fox, the gunner, as a shield. I moved him over and wingman's mouthing me,
12 motioning for me to come over there and it dawns on him that I can't move. Before he could get
13 a crew guy out an infantry guy broke out of the woods, apparently a medic, and he broke out of
14 that woods and I mean he was running. He just scooped by me and he grabbed that guy and
15 threw him in Weigand's helicopter and he took off. He knew he was hurt bad and then that guy
16 comes back to me and he cuts my shirt off. I had a brand new shirt, I just got it, a T-shirt and he
17 cuts the sleeve out of that thing and looks at my wound and just sort of snickers and off he goes
18 and I had one drop of blood come out and then years later we tried to chase this...his name is
19 Carl Fox and I talked to him on the phone and finally ask him, I said, 'Well Carl, you still got
20 your legs?' He said, 'Yeah, they work good!' He was in the hospital a long time, but he's got
21 some real problems, you know, mental and physical problems all over because he had shrapnel
22 all over him. But his legs and his foot were the thing he really hurt but he said he could walk
23 around pretty good on it.

24 SM: Did you have much opportunity to work in support of ARVN units?

25 CC: A little bit, a little bit. Or I say that. Okay, I worked early on, but when I became a
26 slick driver I flew for like a month with the...it was either the 5th Regiment or the 2nd Division or
27 the 2nd Regiment of the 5th Division, can't remember which...it's in my book, but I can't
28 remember which one it was but it was one of those and I flew with them for like a month. It was
29 quite an experience.

30 SM: What did you think of ARVN?

1 CC: Terrible, terrible. They, like when the Americans would sweep a valley just in the
2 nature, even draftees and guys that don't care, they'd put them on a line and sweep the valley.
3 Take ARVN and sweep a valley; they were like crawling across there. There's just one line,
4 they're sweeping it three foot wide, and their commander's riding on my helicopter and he's
5 screaming over the radio at them to scatter them out and all that and they just won't do it. There
6 was an attitude in there and you didn't see that with the Viet Cong or the NVA and whether it's
7 leadership, training, corruption, graft, I don't have a clue but when I saw that I was shocked. It's
8 just the nature. They didn't want to get hurt and they knew if they walked down that main little
9 dike, one dike across this big valley, and they were just going down that one dike like a stream of
10 ants headed down through there and that was them sweeping a valley. Naturally they had no
11 contact. They could move into areas where we'd go out there and we'd get in a fight in ten
12 minutes and they'd move in an area and they'd sit out there and they'd be fishing and cooking
13 and stuff like that and they wouldn't fight each other.

14 SM: What about other country forces? Did you get to work with say Korean or
15 Australian?

16 CC: No. The Koreans were it close to us and I really had no dealings with them, but the
17 Australians were around. They were at some of the Special Forces camps around south of us,
18 but we really had no dealings with them. I dealt with some of their...they had bombers over
19 there, Canberra bombers, and I remember one day out there talking to some of them. We were
20 on the same mission together, a sniffer mission they called it.

21 SM: What was that? What's a sniffer mission?

22 CC: That's a machine that would pick up...it wasn't heat, it was urine smells and smoke
23 and I don't know exactly how it worked and it was debated whether that worked or not but some
24 of our guys swore up and down it worked. They actually asked this guy, they'd fly him over
25 water buffalo and they'd ask him, 'Did you get a spot?' and he'd pick it up. But I always just
26 assumed it never worked. But what you do is you put one helicopter down low and you'd fly
27 along low level with that thing and two guns behind it, two gunships. They were down low
28 trying to follow. Then you had one troop carrier, a slick, up top and he's directing them on the
29 ground and then you had two either two phantom jets or Canberra bombers or you had somebody
30 hot to go in and hit them right there on the spot and they'd pick up a good strike. They'd let the
31 Firebirds, the gunships, work them over. If it was something really hot, they'd go ahead and pull

1 the gunships out. All they're supposed to do is just escort and protect the troop carrier. Then
2 they'd bring in the bombers to do a trick on them. We flew those a lot, a lot, and based on the
3 body count apparently it worked. We never knew. I mean, you're striking jungle that you can't
4 even see into and apparently we were getting a bunch of them. But, that was dangerous because
5 that's the concept. They'd fly you up in these dead end valleys because a guy's just reading a
6 map up top and talking to you on the radio or watching you on the ground trying to tell you
7 which way to turn and he wasn't following elevation he'd turn you up in a draw and you'd look
8 up and it's 200 feet up the side of a cliff and you don't have enough power to crawl over it. The
9 troop carrier could get up over most of it, but the gunships didn't have a chance. They'd either
10 have to get out of that valley or...I've been on both ends of that deal, I've had it happen both
11 ways, you know. You get killed up in those things. But, I've been up and you knew when you
12 went into Laos because you'd fly about 45 minutes west of Chu Lai and you're in Laos and I've
13 seen, I always like looking down and keeping your eyes ahead and then you're trying to look
14 down and see what you can see and I saw metal bridges out there, I saw a French villa built on
15 the side of a mountain once, I saw stretchers with bandages laid out on them. It's fascinating to
16 see what you can see. In a lot of trips you'd take trip after trip and never see anything; nothing
17 but green jungle. But, you can actually see junk out there flying at a real low level. You're
18 flying two or three feet above the trees and occasionally in that jungle you can see down and see
19 something.

20 SM: Why would you fly into Laos?

21 CC: Because they told us to. But in my book I explained. I wrote home and I told my
22 parents and I said, 'I've heard they're sending these guys into Laos now,' and that was earlier in
23 that and we always assume we're in Laos but we didn't have maps. I mean, we didn't even have
24 maps that even went as far as we went and they'd just tell you, 'Keep flying this direction,' but
25 we heard they were inserting troops over there and all kinds of stuff and I swore that I wasn't,
26 because it was a neutral country, I said, 'I'll be court-martialed before I'll go in there.' Well it
27 wasn't but a month later I'm flying into Laos with Special Forces. You sort of did what they told
28 you to.

29 SM: And what about Vietnamese civilians? How much interaction did you have with
30 them?

1 CC: None, none. We just had a few hooch maids that worked around the club and
2 they'd fill sandbags for us but that was basically it.

3 SM: Any problems with them?

4 CC: No, you had the cultural problems. Where we were at there wasn't much water.
5 That's the reason there wasn't a town there. It was a little village there but they didn't have any
6 water and during the rainy season it would flood around there but they couldn't take baths so
7 they had a smell that was terrible and that caused cultural whatever you want to call that. We
8 looked down on them, there's no question about that, but the reason was there wasn't any water
9 there for them to take a bath. We would catch them in the creeks, the young girls.

10 SM: These were the PL missions, is that right?

11 CC: Yeah. The young girls would, they'd always try to take a bath and this was out
12 from Chu Lai where you had some actual creeks and they'd always try to bathe around sundown
13 and that's the time where if we hadn't flown much that day we'd like to go out and test
14 everything out so we'd go out and call them P and L missions, peep and lust. We'd chase the
15 little babes around, you know. It was pretty tacky.

16 SM: How old were you then again?

17 CC: About 20.

18 SM: Understandable. What about other potential problems in the unit, things like drugs
19 and racial tension and stuff like that?

20 CC: No, we didn't have that many blacks in there. I just heard a story a minute ago and
21 I'll...I guess I could relay that story but I just heard it. But drugs, they say that...my guy that got
22 wounded, the Fox, the day I got wounded, I was from the country and they said he used to come
23 up...he was from New York and he was one of McNamara's 100,000 by the way which was very
24 rare, but they brought in 100,000 that couldn't pass the IQ test and he still worries over that that
25 they graded him as being dumb. But anyway, they used to...I remember some of them, but I
26 didn't remember his smoking. I thought, 'Well these guys are so broke they can't afford
27 cigarettes,' because they had homemade cigarettes and they said Fox used to get up in my face
28 and blow marijuana smoke in my face and then he'd go back and laugh and he'd say, 'That
29 hillbilly from Texas doesn't have a clue what I'm blowing in his face,' you know. I don't
30 remember that per se, but I remember them coming up with these homemade cigarettes. But
31 other than that, I didn't even know what marijuana was and they started giving us lessons and

1 apparently it got real bad later in the war, but as far as I know...I think we had a night operator
2 that ran the radios at night that something about a scab on his face and he'd lift that scab up and
3 he'd put...that's how they caught him. He'd put his heroin or whatever it was under that scab
4 and then push the scab back down. It kept getting bigger and bigger and they finally took him
5 down, they knew something was wrong. They took him down and I do remember that. As far as
6 racial tensions, we had one black pilot that came later to the company. We had one there that
7 was there nearly the whole time I was and he was a very brave guy. As a matter of fact he
8 rescued...there's a book out written by Liz Trotta and she was one of the first female reporters
9 there and it's called *Fighting for Air* and it was to deal with her being a reporter but it talks about
10 Vietnam and she talks about a helicopter crew being killed in front of her and she's got a film of
11 it and I got this briefly in my book and this guy said he was watching TV one night and he saw
12 that film and he thought, 'My God that looks familiar,' and it was him, and he crashed. They
13 shot him down and he crashed over the side of this Special Forces camp and old Rex Robinson,
14 the black guy, they've got a film of him coming in rescuing him and Liz Trotta thought he was
15 coming to get her but he wasn't. He was coming to get Ericson who was in the back. She said
16 that crew got killed. Her book says they were killed as it crashed over the side. Well they didn't
17 die. They came out of the helicopter and ran back up the perimeter and came right around and
18 they got on the helicopter with her. They were on the same helicopter she was and Rex, the
19 black pilot, was the one flying it. There were mortar rounds hitting around it and all kinds of
20 stuff.

21 SM: This reporter, the aircraft she got out on, had the crew of the aircraft that crashed
22 and she still reports in her book that they got killed?

23 CC: Yes because...and we've talked to her and she wrote the blurb on my book. She
24 said, 'Yeah, guys got on,' but she was told, and she saw the helicopter go right over to the side
25 and they knocked his tail rotor off with a mortar round. Apparently he was spinning when he
26 went over the side so he crashes over the side and she was just told they died. Instead they beat
27 feet right up the side of the deal. He came back around with her and they were right behind her
28 getting on Rex's helicopter.

29 SM: Didn't she interview the guys that were on the helicopter with her?

30 CC: Apparently they didn't have time. I'm sure they didn't talk. Yeah, I'm sure
31 everybody was just glad to get out of this place and I know where it was, I covered it in my

1 book. It was a Special Forces camp that laid in the main flow where the enemy used to come
2 into Da Nang, out west of Da Nang, and it was a real hot area out there. I nearly got killed out
3 there a lot of times. But, that was the story of Rex. He got his helmet cord shot off one day, and
4 he and I were pretty good friends. He won't come to the reunion. We don't know if he felt
5 discriminated against. No telling what some...back then, no telling what some people said to
6 him. I don't have a clue. He never said anything to me, but he used to drink out at the bar with
7 us and all kinds of stuff. But I heard one of my crew saving down there a while ago and I'd
8 never heard this before, that one of the black pilots, and I think it was the other one that came
9 later named Suber, and he's died in a crash since then I've heard, but he came over there and told
10 them to quiet down their music. He was trying to sleep, and they said, 'You go over and quiet
11 down the black hooch!' All the black enlisted men lived in a hooch by themselves and he said,
12 'You go tell them turn their radios off,' so anyway they put shoe polish on their face walking
13 around and said, 'Now we got us a black hooch and we can run our music as loud as we want to.'
14 Just heard that a few minutes ago.

15 SM: You didn't witness that yourself?

16 CC: No, I never even heard it until 32 years later. So that was the only time, and the
17 crew said that was the only racial incident. We had black crew chiefs, like Anton got captured, a
18 black crew chief. Lewis was the crew chief on that and we never had any problems that I'm
19 aware of. They all rode in the truck together, you're getting killed together or nearly getting
20 killed together so I saw no problems. The real combat units like the Americal Division 196th I
21 went to their reunion a year or two ago and they had blacks and Puerto Ricans. I bet there was a
22 third Puerto Rican, a third black, and a third white and they were all in there drinking and raising
23 heck together and the Puerto Ricans couldn't even speak English. There wasn't a Puerto Rican
24 there that didn't have a picture of a Firebird helicopter. Every one of them came out there the
25 next day, you know, it was daylight and they saw the helicopter and they all had a picture of one
26 of them that went and bailed them out so many times. They were out there laughing about it.
27 They came all the way from Puerto Rico for that reunion. I was amazed how many of them
28 showed up after all those years.

29 SM: Now you mention in your book a lot of drinking.

30 CC: Yeah.

1 SM: When I say drugs maybe we should also include alcohol in there as a coping
2 mechanism. Was that pretty prevalent in your unit?

3 CC: Yeah, I would say, it's easy to say, ask some of these phonies out here drawing this
4 money from the government and all this. Our fear was a temporary kind of deal. You spend the
5 night out there and you're afraid all night long that somebody's going to get you where in our
6 outfit it was stark terror for a few minutes and then it's not too much longer and you're back at
7 the club, drinking beer, laughing about it. So it's hard for us to judge what really happened to
8 those guys that had to stay out there. Now these phonies that sat around these bases and sat there
9 and said, 'Vietnam made me crazy,' that's a bunch of hooey. If anybody's going to be crazy it's
10 those front line guys out there and there were very few of them. I ran into a bunch of them at that
11 first big grunt reunion I went to and there wasn't many crazies there. They were just average old
12 schmucks, you know, just average guys and they were the front line guys, none of that phony
13 bologna stuff. We really shouldn't be judging them from our perspective because our terror was
14 a little different. It was a stark terror and then ten, 15 minutes later you're sitting on the ground
15 laughing about it, you know, like, 'Holy smoke, look what happened,' you know? So it was a
16 different kind of fear.

17 SM: What other ways did you and your fellow aviators cope with the stress?

18 CC: This macho kind of stuff. You go out to the club and go to sing. I had a guy come
19 up and give me the words to a whole bunch of these songs that we sang and I haven't had a
20 chance to look at it but we had all different kinds of songs. You know, like you'd get drunk and
21 you'd start singing, 'Drop the napalm in the school yards, watch the kiddies run and shout, you'll
22 really laugh your butt off when they try to put it out.' You wonder about songs like that, like,
23 'What in the heck's that mean?' Well, that's getting you immune to any kind of feelings. It was
24 just like, 'Hey, they're coming after me? I'm going after them,' and it's the same concept being
25 a gunfighter. Probably to get somebody to really shoot at the enemy you've got to get them really
26 psyched up and I know the infantry guys did that too. You've got to get them psyched up. The
27 average guy won't go out and shoot at somebody, you know, and so you've got to do a special
28 kind of training and that kind of macho kind of stuff, that swagger kind of stuff. Some people
29 did it and that's the reason they didn't like us coming in the gun platoon because they didn't
30 know what we were like and apparently they thought I was pretty macho but who knows. I was
31 not macho for sure.

1 SM: I guess we should probably turn to the question of strategy and what we were trying
2 to accomplish in Vietnam and your response to that question, 'What was your evaluation to the
3 American strategy employed during the war?' Idiotic. I was wondering if you would elaborate a
4 little bit. What do you mean?

5 CC: This concept of search and destroy, you can go read. I've read probably as many
6 books on the Germans fighting the Russians in World War II as anybody around. They had the
7 very same problems of fighting around these forests and these swamps and stuff in Russia and
8 you just can't do it. You can't go in there and try to root them out and swap them man for man,
9 you know, and that's what it was getting down to. Most of the contact over there that I
10 witnessed were ambushes and these guys were just walking, they're tired. You wouldn't believe
11 some of these guys how tired they are. They'd have those stinking packs on their back after
12 walking in that temperature. They used to have me, I've got a picture where this guy took them
13 out some food and water and some socks and he asked me if I would hover my helicopter to cool
14 them off while they were changing their socks and I took a picture of it and I told him, I said,
15 'Let me tell you something,' and they were covered top to bottom, just soaking wet, and I said,
16 'You get me shot and I'm going to be plenty mad,' and he said, 'Oh, don't worry. There's not
17 anybody around here. We're just going to sit down and change our socks, cool us off a little bit.'
18 But that was the concept; you can't fight when you're that tired and that hot and it's just like
19 using them for booby traps or bait, throwing bait out there and you know, the Germans finally
20 figured out they're better off putting a little perimeter out here of different little units, have a
21 back up unit behind them, and once they hit one of them before they could do much damage,
22 bingo! You throw the big stuff at them and overrun them and you let them come at you, you
23 don't go after them, especially in that kind of terrain. It's stupid, bizarre, idiotic, and there was
24 this body count stuff. That guy was there for a year, they weren't even there for a year. Most of
25 the commanders were there for, like we had three company commanders in a year and the
26 infantry guys six months at the most is what I've heard out in the field and they were in there and
27 how do you grade a guy in six months? Body count. That's all he wanted and they didn't really
28 count the guys against him unless he got his whole unit wiped out, so it's really body count on
29 the other side. You get a few guys hurt, as long as you don't get them slaughtered, you're okay.
30 It was just crazy, bizarre, if you ask me. All I had to do was read a history book; read about the
31 French, read about the Germans. Germans had the same exact thing in World War II and they

1 figured out they couldn't get up in there with them. There was no way you could do it. You get
2 in that kind of terrain and its just ambush city and they'd lose whole units. People would have
3 100 men out and all 100 would disappear. You'd go up in those whatever the big swamp is that
4 covers about the size of Germany up in Russia and they'd try to root them out of there and they
5 just couldn't do it so to me, anybody that had a lick of sense could have read a history book and
6 figure out you couldn't fight the way they were fighting and there was this short term kind of
7 nature. You just grade the guy on six months worth of stuff and the way you do it is let him
8 guess how many he killed. That's crazy, and the Army was smart enough to get rid of that.
9 They would not tell you how many they killed in Iraq and I know why; they're never going back
10 to that as long as you got some of these old Vietnam vets around. They'll probably go back to it
11 next time they get in some kind of brush war, who knows. People get too smart to follow a
12 history book, you know? History doesn't mean anything because we're a smarter generation,
13 and it's all the same. It doesn't care what happens. So, that's our views on our tactics and it was
14 outrageous. I saw the Marines, Oliver North. I met him a couple of times. He was going to put
15 a blurb on my book until he read what I said about the Marines. I saw them get on line just like
16 they did in the Civil War except instead of being shoulder to shoulder they'd put about five yards
17 between them which over compensates for machine gun going at you and they did the same
18 thing. I'd see them sweep a tree line, they knew the enemy was there, and they'd go straight at
19 them. I'd fly over them, I was flying Special Forces and Marines were all around there and
20 somebody was fixing to get killed. I mean, you could sit there and just watch it and you knew
21 somebody was fixing to get killed right there before your eyes and we tried to get back around
22 there and watch because, 'Holy smokes, look at these guys,' because they had these kids trained
23 where they'd just...they called it getting on line, and go at them. It's crazy. They should have
24 lined up the commanders and shot them all, the way I look at it.

25 SM: Did you see...did you and your fellow officers talk about that stuff in Vietnam, how
26 the strategy just didn't seem to make sense?

27 CC: No. I saw some stupidity. I knew...maybe we did talk. I don't remember having a
28 lot of conversations on it, but I'll tell you another one. They had a...they knew where the
29 artillery was set up. These people were smart people and anybody that was fighting us would
30 have to figure this out real quick. There's certain places they can't drop artillery in from the
31 existing places. They'd shoot her up, and if you've got a mountain with the right kind of slope to

1 it you can't get it to hit on the other side of the thing if you're far enough out. The artillery is too
2 far away. That's where they would build their little base camps and I talk about one time in my
3 book where a wounded black guy grabbed my arm in the helicopter and I'd just went in there and
4 got them out. It was a scary deal and he was in the back and he reaches up there and grabs my
5 arm and it scared the crap out of me because nobody's supposed to be touching you. Not that I
6 cared, it's just nobody's supposed to touch you and an arm grabs you and you think, 'Holy
7 smokes, what happened,' and you were shaking. But that was one, and I don't even know if it
8 was in my book, but that's one where they got up in there and they couldn't get artillery to them.
9 I figured that out myself. I'm 20, 21 years old and I said, 'That damn unit, they can't get artillery
10 in there to them,' and what happened was they should have picked that artillery up with
11 Chinooks and moved it where they could have shot up into that area if they'd put some rounds up
12 in there but they couldn't get to it. And to have Americans out there in that triple canopy jungle
13 and just got them, you know, I say slaughtered. I hauled out a load and somebody else took out
14 another load and that load I took out, I had a new H model and I bet it had nine to ten on that
15 thing wounded on that thing and I know another one came in behind me to pick up a load, too.

16 SM: What did the soldier grab your arm for?

17 CC: I don't know. I'm sure he was morphined up and whether he was trying to say,
18 'Thank you,' or say nothing, I don't know. All I know is it scared the hell out of me.

19 SM: Well, you have both hands on...

20 CC: Yeah, I'd just given the controls over to the co-pilot. I'd just got out and I said,
21 'Take the controls,' and I just put my arm down and I was trying to stop shaking and then the
22 next thing I know he grabs my arm. I was like, 'God!' out of the seat I was going except I had
23 straps on. I'll never forget that day.

24 SM: Well, so when did you leave Vietnam?

25 CC: September of '68 and we went down and flew a combat assault and me and this old
26 boy, we stopped down...I'll tell you the story of the last day I flew. We stopped down at this
27 other company called the Minutemen. That's where my buddy Gaither was that got shot in the
28 foot at TET. He was a Musket down there with them, the Minutemen and the Muskets.
29 Anyway, we landed down there first for some reason. They told us to go down there and we're
30 going to do a big combat assault and I'm sure Colin Powell was out here this day, nearly
31 positive. He was with 11th Brigade at this time and then he moved up to Americal headquarters.

1 It was 11th Brigade we were supporting. Anyway, I asked where my buddy Connors was and
2 they said, 'Oh, he's in the hooch asleep. He doesn't fly anymore,' and me and Dillard went to
3 Vietnam the same day he did so we wanted to not fly ourselves and so we're sitting there talking
4 and this company's already let them quit flying and we had ten or 12 days to go or maybe 15
5 days, I don't remember, but we were getting close. So anyway, the story was they sent out 15
6 guys or 30 guys, I can't remember, and they lost radio contact with them and assumed they had
7 all been shot and killed. We were going in no fire. There were 15 helicopters going to land out
8 here where they'd lost those people and weren't going to fire a round. Well right off the bat old
9 boys been around a long while like me and we're not liking this and so anyway we're heading,
10 we run down to Quang Ngai, we pick up some beer and then we're heading out down this river
11 and then the crew chief says, 'Look down at the riverbank,' and let me see, we've got a gunship
12 laying down on the river bank smoking so then we start our turn and we're going up back to the
13 north and we're going to turn and come back in to the south and they actually told us which way
14 we were coming in and they were waiting on us. We're in an ARVN area so they knew we were
15 coming because they had to clear it through the ARVN down there. Now where we were at,
16 further north, we didn't have to clear anything with them. We went down in that area, Quang
17 Ngai, now that was Division headquarters for ARVN Division in there and they knew we were
18 coming and then we turned and we're coming along there and somebody in the flight says, 'Look
19 down there,' and there was an H, we call them 13's, an old Bell bubble job. It's laying down
20 there burning. They've already knocked down two, just people out there sort of snooping
21 around, you know? So we turned final, no fire. We're sitting down and a machine gun goes off
22 and I turn my head and I said, 'Cease fire!' I thought it was my guy. I'd already told him not to
23 fire. The machine gun was that close, he took the helicopter ahead of me, he was right outside
24 my door. I was tail end Charlie because I was the most senior guy down at the end. You could
25 get where you wanted in the flights and a lot of guys wanted up front. I wanted the back so I just
26 took that helicopter and man, I just went out of that thing sideways, man. I just [noise] and out I
27 went. I kicked her out and I didn't give a rip what they said with that machine gun sitting right
28 there beside me. I forget the numbers, it's in my book, I found how many got shot up and I don't
29 even know how many guys got killed that day. Me and old Dillard, we go back to the company
30 area and they were trying to get us to go somewhere else, we still had some flying time left in the
31 day, and me and Moose, we just went in. We called him Moose Dillard. We just went in and

1 landed. We shut down and I said, 'Are you going to quit with me?' and he said, 'Yeah,' so we
2 went in there and told the company commander, we just went straight to the company
3 commander and we told him, we said, 'We quit.' He said, 'You can't quit!' We said, 'Sir, we're
4 not going to fly again. That's it. They make us fly in these LZs with no prep,' we called it prep.
5 They don't bomb it, they don't do artillery, and I said, 'The idiot did that and we're not going to
6 do it again.' And he looked at us a minute and he sort of liked me. I got along with him. He
7 says, 'Okay, I'm going to send you down to Cam Ranh Bay to pick up a new helicopter,' and he
8 took two senior aircraft commanders and let us go boondoggle the rest of our career in Vietnam
9 and we spent five days I think. We should have been back the next day and we were gone five
10 days and he met us at the flight line and he was mad and he said, 'You should have had the
11 courtesy of sending word to me,' because he was afraid if we went down somewhere that we'd
12 be on the ground out there, he'd been in trouble, he was going to have to go through the big
13 chain and we did get word to him out of one place. Somebody was headed north and we said,
14 'Call him when you go by,' and he'd heard from us after about the third day and we said we
15 were having maintenance problems. We'd stop and drink at every place because we had buddies
16 at every place. We'd land and I'd say, 'How long we going to stay here, Moose?' and he'd say,
17 'All night, man! I got a good buddy here!' so we'd drink all night with those guys and then get
18 up the next morning and fly about ten miles up the beach and spend a few hours and then go up
19 the next beach, you know, the next place.

20 SM: Speaking of entertainment and stuff like that, what about R&Rs?

21 CC: What happened, right after that TET Offensive that day I went to Hawaii and got
22 married and then later on...that's sort of what got me in trouble. I mentioned the story about
23 these medals. I went down to get me another R&R and which I got one. I went down there to
24 get it, the guy promised me one, and then I went and turned that guy in for that phony medal.
25 That's where I was at. It was laying in his office and I wasn't supposed to be reading it. They
26 took it away from me. Then I was flying with the Special Forces and the colonel out of 5th
27 Special Forces out there sent word to me and he said, 'You boys are doing a good job,' and I sent
28 word back through this sergeant or somebody and I said, 'Could you get me an R&R to Hawaii
29 to see my wife?' and the 5th Special Forces arranged it and then I had to clear it with my platoon
30 leader down and he snuck me out. There were no more second R&Rs and my platoon leader

1 down there snuck me out. He passed away of a heart attack not too long ago and he was a
2 captain and everybody liked him.

3 SM: Who was...what was his name?

4 CC: His name was Castle, Captain Castle, Herman Castle and I've never got to lay an
5 eye on him. I've talked to him on the phone a hundred times and he was coming to our reunion
6 and died of a heart attack. He was the guy who got me out because I came down there and I had
7 all the paperwork done and I said, 'Is there some way you can sneak me out of here?' and he
8 said, 'Carlock, I'll cover for you. Get going.' But 5th Special Forces really got it for me.

9 SM: Now when you say you worked with Special Forces, you were still with 71st, just
10 acting as support of the 5th Special Forces Group?

11 CC: Right. We kept two helicopters sitting at Da Nang all the time and when one would
12 go down for maintenance or something they'd send another one up and replace it and then if a
13 pilot wanted to stay up there, generally all we had to do was ask. There wasn't...some people
14 considered it dangerous and some people thought, 'Well I'd rather live up here.' We had a
15 French villa with a flush commode and air conditioning and it was like going to heaven
16 compared to where we were at so we sort of liked it. They fed us good and treated us like kings.
17 Man, they loved us. We'd go in the bar and everything was free. It didn't cost anything to get
18 drunk anyway but at least they'd serve free stuff to us you know because we were their guys.
19 They had to count on us so I enjoyed going up there just to get away from the company area and
20 all the different stuff.

21 SM: What kind of operations would you support them with? Was this primarily a
22 gunship or troop carriers?

23 CC: No, these were troop carriers, this is troop carriers. Most of the missions, there was
24 really two camps up there. You had the real sneaky petes and then you had the guys who run the
25 Special Forces camps. We were at the Special Forces camp guys and there were the sneaky
26 petes. I forget what they were called but they were right next to each other. When they need
27 somebody they'd just grab us across, too. They were running...a helicopter unit out of Da Nang
28 would support them but they actually used ARVN helicopters some and we just snatched over
29 there but most of the time we we're just supporting into the different Special Forces camps.
30 There were like...I could count them off here if I wanted to, but six or seven that we'd support
31 into and then those guys, if they could scrounge us with time, and they'd say, they'd call in and

1 say, 'Can we have this helicopter four hours or three hours, we want to go out here,' we'd
2 actually do insertions with them and they'd keep us and would actually... and that was
3 dangerous because the single ship stuff and when it really got dangerous then we'd demand two
4 helicopters; one guy to go pick that guy up in case something happened. But a single ship, out in
5 the boon docks like that, uh-uh. We didn't like it. Most of the time when we flew, you could
6 look around and see another helicopter; physically see them and that's what made you feel
7 comfortable that you had somebody that could pick you up on the radio and get you out of there.

8 SM: Did you ever help relocate a village or hamlet?

9 CC: No. I hauled, well, maybe...I don't know what I was doing, okay. The Special
10 Forces, somehow, beside their Special Forces camp, they'd lend us across and we'd go into the
11 Marines. Like at Hoi An was the name of it, we'd pick up villagers there; pigs, chickens, you
12 know, people, kids, and everything else. They'd just tell us to go over there and pick them up.
13 Now I don't know what the relationship was between the Special Forces and I assume that was
14 some ARVN troops there, but it was a Marine base and we were picking civilians up there and
15 hauling them to Da Nang. You know, they couldn't drive over road or anything and we'd pick
16 them up and take them in there.

17 SM: Is this Hoi An?

18 CC: Yeah, Hoi An. Well, excuse me, it was An Hua. Hoi An was on the beach and
19 then An Hua was the big base on the same river and it was inbound and it was a Marine base but
20 we'd land there and pick up some people for the Special Forces, you know, civilians. I don't
21 know the relation.

22 SM: Was it Montagnards that you were picking up?

23 CC: No, no. Just regular Vietnamese.

24 SM: Vietnamese peasants?

25 CC: And maybe they were, you know, the Special Forces camps had south Vietnamese
26 out there, so it was very possible these were their relatives or something. I never did know.
27 We'd just go haul them wherever they told us to. But I never moved any villages that I'm aware
28 of. Anything I picked up, I'd pick them up just around there. Now we'd do a snatch mission
29 occasionally.

30 SM: What do you mean?

1 CC: You'd go out and they'd, just at random, snatch Vietnamese out of rice paddies and
2 you just land, they'd point a gun at them, get them on the helicopter, a couple of guys would
3 jump off and grab them and chuck them up on the helicopter. The first one I ever did we picked
4 up five or six in different places, took them in, and I took off. I was doing something else,
5 hauling supplies. They called me after while and said, 'Come back and get them,' so I loaded
6 them up and there were Americans with them. There were two. They said, 'Okay, take them
7 out,' and I said, 'Where to?' And the guy looked and he said, 'That's not our job, that's your job
8 to figure out. You're supposed to mark where we got them at,' and I said, 'Nobody ever told me
9 that because I never flown these missions,' so the crew and I, we tried to figure it out and I think
10 there was five and we knew where we got three of them, we could identify the three. The last
11 one, we land and he's sitting there looking around and he's shaking his head no and the
12 American says, 'Is this the right spot?' and I said, 'Yeah, I'm sure this is the right spot,' because
13 we didn't know where to take them to! So on out he goes and we figured he had a long walk to
14 get home because we'd snatched them out over about a ten, 15 mile area out there, just at
15 random, just out flying around. So, we'd head on out this direction and they'd bring them in and
16 interrogate them, trying to just pick up movements. After I did it once I knew how to handle it
17 from then on, but that happened, oh, once every three or four weeks, something like that. We'd
18 do a snatch mission they called it.

19 SM: Just go out, snatch some Vietnamese, take them to...

20 CC: You're snatching them out in the boonies. You're getting out where no friendlies
21 are or nothing. These are, call them Viet Cong. You didn't shoot them, but clearly they knew
22 where the enemy was. The question was would they talk about it or not.

23 SM: Would the intelligence gathered from those snatch missions, are you familiar with
24 anything that was used for a particular operation?

25 CC: No, nah. They kept us like mushrooms, you know, kept us in the dark and fed
26 us...manure, you know? But no, we really didn't know. Occasionally I remember them telling
27 us on the big combat assaults they'd say, 'Guys, we think there's four anti aircraft guns out here.'
28 You know, they wouldn't tell us that and everybody'd roll their eyes like, 'Holy crap,' you
29 know. But other than that, I don't remember us much, us getting much intelligence. You could
30 hear them talking about it. There was always scuttlebutt around as to what unit was moving in
31 the area. The North Vietnamese moved different units in. We fought the North Vietnamese in

1 there. We did have some main force VC but most of the time in this one valley it was the North
2 Vietnamese big time big units, you know, fresh out of the north. I saw them bring some
3 wounded in one day. They had starch; they had pleats down the front of their pants. We were
4 sitting there looking at that and we couldn't believe it, you know, like, 'How in the world are
5 these guys this clean,' you know? Here we looked like grease monkeys with grease all over us
6 and stuff.

7 SM: What about the briefings that you received prior to the missions. Did you find that
8 the intelligence aspects of those were accurate?

9 CC: Oh, when they expected something we always got shot at, it was one of those deals.
10 The first time I flew into Laos with Special Forces, I've got the story here, it was May the 20th of
11 '68. I'll never forget that day. We go into this bunker and the guy says, 'Leave your wallets and
12 your dog tags and any other identification there on the table,' and I look around and they'd
13 already lined up, before we walked in there, they had like ten or 15 helicopters lined up. Us old
14 boys, we didn't pay much attention to that. We just walked on in and this guy gets up there and
15 he's CIA because he had no markings on, no nothing, and he's got him a chalk board in here and
16 he gets up and he tells us how we're going to fly like World War II bombers. We're going to go
17 out and we're going to fly and he even told us what formation we were going to fly in out here
18 and we're going to use our machine guns. You know, that's how they protected the World War
19 II bombers. They'd use the machine guns to do all this and he's sitting here telling all this stuff
20 and we're all sitting here and I knew a few of the other guys. There was only two helicopters
21 from our company, the two that were coming out of the Special Forces area, and the rest of these
22 guys...I knew some of these cav guys when they were in the 1st Cav and we're sitting there
23 looking at each other and everybody's looking around like, 'God darn!' Then he tells us, he
24 says, 'We don't have any radio contact with them. We lost radio contact out there this morning
25 and they were throwing hand grenades up in the LZ,' and we're sitting there looking and I had
26 just moved across and at that time I was really a peter pilot. I wasn't an aircraft commander, but
27 I had been one and I wasn't about...I think in my book I said, 'He had about as much a chance of
28 getting me to go out there as he would telling me to ride a donkey to Hanoi,' and I looked around
29 and luckily one of these cav guys jumped up and he said, 'Sir, we don't land in LZs unless we've
30 got radio contact,' and this old boy was cool. He said, 'What do you suggest?' and he said, 'I
31 suggest we have somebody go drop a radio in there and see if there's anybody there,' and he

1 said, 'Well, let's do it.' And I don't know who said, 'Let's draw straws,' and we drew straws as
2 to who had to go take that radio in and the old boy that got the long one or the short one that had
3 to go, one of his buddies said, 'I'll follow you out there,' and I say in my book, I say, 'Now
4 that's what a buddy is right there,' because he didn't have to go and he said, 'I'll follow you out
5 there and pick you up if something happens.' Two of them went out and we got radio contact
6 with them and then he'd already marked off the 37 millimeter all anti aircraft guns and they'd
7 already knocked down a couple of helicopters and been shooting holes in all the jets and they
8 declared it apparently, we didn't know at the time, a prairie fire and that was the code word for
9 dragging all aircraft. That takes command over all your other missions, and when we showed up
10 out there we were the second helicopter in and I looked up and I saw teams of jets, and they had
11 them stacked ten, 12 high out there. Not a round was fired at us because they knew the first guy
12 that fires was fixing to get burnt and we went in there and all we wanted to do was pull the dead
13 and the wounded out and we got them out, too.

14 SM: With not a single shot fired?

15 CC: Not a single round was fired at us. Not to my knowledge.

16 SM: Not to your knowledge?

17 CC: Yeah, and they knew we had arrived with the heavy stuff when you had all those
18 phantoms up there circling, just waiting, just, 'Aim me at them.' I'll tell you an interesting story
19 coming up. We had, we were the second ship in and Americans wouldn't get on the helicopter
20 and we were demanding the Americans get on the first helicopter. They wouldn't get on, and
21 they loaded bodies. We were madder than heck and these were Cambodian mercenaries and we
22 were flying back in and the crew chief says, 'Look back here, you're not going to believe this,'
23 and they had gold teeth and that was their savings accounts. I didn't know that until we landed
24 and this crew chief said, 'I might take me one of those,' and I said, 'You leave him alone and get
25 back there where you're supposed to be,' and so we landed and I walked over to one of
26 these...and the widows were there. They already knew who was dead and all the widows were
27 there screaming and hollering and raising heck and they told us to get off the pad and shut down
28 or something so we pulled over there and shut down and this old sergeant was standing there and
29 I walked over there and I said, 'What's with all that gold, their gold teeth?' I mean, some of
30 them just the whole top was just solid gold, and he said, 'That's their savings accounts,' and I
31 said, 'Well my crew chief was going to take one,' and he says, 'Good thing he didn't because

1 they'd already radioed in how many...' you know, if one had some shot out or something and
2 they already knew and he said, 'Boy there would have been some big time trouble! I told my
3 crew chief, I said, 'You idiot, you'd have got killed right here!' He was like, 'Oh my God!' But,
4 I didn't know if you'd ever heard that story. I read somewhere else they paid them in gold which
5 is consistent with the gold teeth, that we had to pay those mercenaries in gold because they
6 wouldn't take money. You know, South Vietnamese money, they didn't want it.

7 SM: Well, when you left Vietnam where did you go and what was the reception like?

8 CC: I went home to my home town down in Joshua, Texas and then I was stationed in
9 Mineral Wells, Texas which is only about 50 miles away. Down in there, I hear these stories
10 about everybody getting spit on and stuff like that. I question those stories. I mean, if you're
11 some rear echelon schmuck, you might let somebody spit on you. The guys I know, you spit on
12 one of them, you're taking your life in your hands and I haven't heard one of them say anybody
13 spit on them. I don't know if that happened or not. It could have happened but it certainly didn't
14 happen to me. I was received very warmly by everybody and I never, ever had anybody say
15 anything derogatory to me. The only thing I ever had said to me, right when I got in, they
16 interviewed me at the base newspaper. They were interviewing new arrivals back out of
17 Vietnam, and they asked me what the worst thing was and I said it was going in and picking up
18 the wounded. So, I go to my flight...they assign you to a flight and I taught new students how to
19 fly helicopters and this idiot is in there, a pilot, warrant officer, and he said, 'Read your interview
20 in the paper. You're whining like some sissy or something.' I asked him, I said, 'What did you
21 do in Vietnam?' 'Don't worry, I did the same thing you did.' So, I snooped around. He flew
22 generals around or something. I wanted to kick his butt. That really made me mad when he said
23 that. They just asked me, 'What was the worst thing you did?' and I said, 'It was hauling the
24 wounded.' That shocked me, and I remember that being said to me and that was the only thing I
25 thought that was really bizarre. I didn't even know where this guy was coming from. But no,
26 that was the only thing I remember of anything said because I was lucky in that area there wasn't
27 any war protestors or anything like that. They'd have gotten killed down in Texas.

28 SM: Were there any particular experiences that you recall that prompted you to say that,
29 that that was the worst part of it, carrying back the wounded?

30 CC: Oh yeah. I've got this in my book. The day Weigand and I, we were in a gunship
31 and we went in and picked these 1st Cav wounded up. This guy was crying over the radio and

1 what happened, all the Medevacs had been shot up that day and the 1st Cav was out there moving
2 through this unit. This was before Americal got formed. This guy was crying over the radio and
3 he had to withdraw, he had to pull back out of this area and if we didn't come get him he was
4 going to have to carry them and he said, 'My boys are going to get hurt if we have to carry these
5 out,' and he had some bodies too. Old Weigand, he says, 'I'll go in and get them,' so he
6 jettisoned his rocket pods. He's the head of aviation for the state of Virginia now. He
7 remembers this sort of the same way. I said, 'What are you doing this for?' because we weren't
8 supposed to do this and you darn sure weren't supposed to eject your rocket pods because those
9 were hard to get, and he said, 'I'm fixing to leave Vietnam and I don't have a distinguished
10 flying cross and they'll give me one for doing this,' and that was the day without me going into
11 the story, it scared me so bad I tensed up and I apparently pulled a chest muscle. I thought I had
12 a heart attack. Years later he and I talked about what happened and the first time we talked his
13 story was totally different than what I remembered and when I was writing my book I decided,
14 'I'm going to straighten this story out because it's not correct,' and Weigand's got a pretty good
15 memory. What had happened, I misunderstood. The infantry guy was crying over the radio and I
16 understood him to say that once we landed, the friendlies would be to my left. What he meant
17 was the wounded and the dead were to my left. We're sitting in there, both of us on the controls,
18 Weigand's already said, 'Now, I want you flying this helicopter for me if I get shot. I expect you
19 to get us out of there.' I look up to my one o'clock position, I see three people standing in there
20 with guns and it looked like they were aimed at me and it scared me so bad I tensed up and tore a
21 chest muscle and Weigand later on, I wrote this up in the book, he said, 'Carlock, any idiot
22 would have known they were Americans because if they were enemy you wouldn't have had a
23 chance to see them. They'd have shot the heck out of you!' and I said, 'Yeah, you're really
24 right,' but that was the first rice paddy I'd ever landed in. See, I was a brand new rookie. I
25 hadn't been there long and it scared the crap out of me. He never got a medal for it! He got
26 chewed! He nearly got court-martialed for it!

27 SM: For jettisoning his rocket pods?

28 CC: Right, and Parsons went down...one of the guys went down the next day he was off
29 and he went down to the hospital to see what happened to him and one of them lived, and boy, he
30 was hurt. I remember the crew chief said, 'Don't turn around and look,' and naturally I turned
31 around, once we got up in the air I turned around and looked and I mean it was the goriest mess

1 you've ever seen. That's the first time I ever seen anything like that. I'll never forget that. You
2 can't look at that without remembering it, you know, and how some of these medics do I'll never
3 know. I don't know how they train them where that doesn't bother them.

4 SM: All right, this is CD number two of the interview with Chuck Carlock. All right, so
5 were there any other operations that stuck out in your mind as far as reinforcing that aspect of
6 how difficult it was to pick up wounded?

7 CC: Let me think. I remember looking around at this guy that got hit with a landmine.
8 That was pretty interesting. He had no clothes on. They threw him in there with no clothes on
9 and he looked like he had little red spots all over him. You know, the guy, I think he was sitting
10 there smoking a cigarette. I can't remember. Maybe laying there smoking a cigarette like there
11 was nothing wrong and I knew that boy was in big trouble. I remember looking around at him,
12 but most of the time I didn't look around. I hauled a lot of them I never looked around. Right
13 now that's about the only ones I remember looking around but I didn't like it after that day in
14 that gunship. That was the worst thing I'd ever seen. When we seen them, we used to camp next
15 to the medic tent up at Hill 35 and this Doc, he had this bizarre sense of humor and he'd get the
16 guys over, I didn't go over there very often, but he was always trying to gross them out and stuff.
17 But we saw some stuff over there that was shocking too. Just bringing in wounded and south
18 Vietnamese. They'd bring in Vietnamese wounded trying to keep them alive long enough to
19 interrogate them a little bit, North Vietnamese soldiers, you know, they'd grab them and try to
20 get them in before they died and see if they could get any info out of them so they were...you'd
21 wonder why they'd bringing more Vietnamese soldiers in over there. I stole one of them's belt
22 buckle one day. The only thing he owned was...and I've got it mounted up over here, a wire, a
23 piece of wire, and that was his belt buckle and he was still alive. He was laying there and he had
24 this scared look about him and I was trying to get me a souvenir and I thought, 'Well that's the
25 only thing that old boy's got,' so I pulled out my knife and I cut off his belt buckle. He was
26 looking at me like, 'I'm going to get you, boy!' I'll never forget that. I started to give it back to
27 him.

28 SM: What other trophies did you bring back?

29 CC: That was about it. I had a bunch of stuff. I was going to bring my sten gun back
30 with a silencer, I've told this story a couple of times at the reunion; they'd let you bring a box
31 home. So; this guy that was in charge of putting the bands on the boxes, he's supposed to check

1 it. Well, I knew him real well and so anyway he came over and he put the bands on it and he
2 said, 'Now listen, if you got anything in here illegal, they're going to catch it down here at the
3 port and then you're going to get court-martialed and you're going to spend another 30 days over
4 here,' and I didn't say anything so he left. I sat there and looked at that box a minute and I had
5 my sten gun with silencer and I had a grease gun in there, .45 caliber grease gun, and I thought,
6 'I really don't care anything about those guns,' so anyway I cut the bands, took them out, and I
7 went over there and I said, 'Hey, you need to come back over here and put the bands back on my
8 box,' and he was laughing. He said, 'I knew you had something in there you weren't supposed
9 to have! What did you have in there?' I said, 'Oh, don't worry about it. I got to sell it, I got to
10 find a buyer quick!'

11 SM: Were there actual cases where guys got court-martialed for that that you were aware
12 of?

13 CC: I've heard rumors of it but most of the time they're sitting...my box never got
14 opened. I actually marked on it to see if they'd put new bands on it as to where they were. No,
15 they didn't even look in that box. It was a random kind of check, so that box, I could have got it
16 home. I heard of guys, I know a guy that's got an AK-47 and he told me he'd give it to me, you
17 know, a full automatic. I said, 'No. I don't want it, don't even want around it.' I don't need
18 stuff like that and he sent it home.

19 SM: Without a Class Three license?

20 CC: Yeah, right. I didn't want it and don't need that.

21 SM: Well, in what ways did the war affect you most?

22 CC: My wife and I have different stories on this. My idea was I was trying to do
23 something in my life and I didn't have time to think about it. I went to work. Being an
24 instructor automatically went into training school, I can't remember how long, two weeks for
25 something and then training those students and then I started to college. So, as a flight instructor
26 you worked half a day in the mornings one week and then in the afternoon the next week and
27 then I took classes at the local college out there gave them to us. I went right into staying real
28 busy. I attribute some of that to the fact that I never even thought of it. People say, 'Oh, I had
29 nightmares,' and all that. I never even thought about it. I was too busy getting on with my life.
30 I have heard a whole bunch of guys tell you that. If you just got going, and at that age you're
31 supposed to get on with your life and start doing something and so I'm convinced that's what the

1 vast majority of them did. You have some guys that might have had problems anyway. We had
2 some that are drawing that PTSD and more than just some, that we know, were whack before
3 they ever stepped foot in Vietnam and just percentage wise you're going to have some anyway.
4 They're blaming it all on Vietnam and all that stuff. I question that. Then some of them maybe
5 couldn't get on with their lives for some reason, IQ wise or something like that, and maybe they
6 had trouble sitting around thinking about it. I have mixed views on that stuff, whether it really
7 affects them because you have to look, and I was telling this to a doctor one time, he was a
8 pereodontist, a gum doctor, and he says, 'You have to remember some people are pretty fragile,'
9 and he said, 'Fragile person, it doesn't take near as much to drive them over the edge,' and he
10 said, 'In our training, there wasn't any fragile people left in that group. They were all long
11 gone,' so maybe some of the other fragile guys that didn't do a lot, maybe they do have some
12 excuse for what happened, but I think a lot of them are phonies when you want to get down to it.
13 We're going to have trouble anyway and we assist our guys. Anybody that wants to draw that
14 government money, we help them. I won't get into some of the jobs. We've got a bunch of
15 them drawing it who were not in a combat situation and we assist as best we can to help them get
16 their stuff.

17 SM: You talking about guys that belong to the 71st Attack Helicopter Company
18 Association?

19 CC: Right. They worked different jobs. You had all kinds of jobs around the company
20 area and I won't call off their skills because they know who I'm talking about but they never went
21 outside the base camp and they're drawing it and they technically qualify and. Help them get the
22 money. I'd rather them get it than some phony get it. We actually know they were there. We
23 did get shot at. They'd shoot rockets at us and stuff like that in the company area.

24 SM: How often did they?

25 CC: During TET, that May the 5th, and then August. TET III they call it was in August
26 and I was down there. I went down to get a new helicopter that day and that's in my book and I
27 saw a gun fight going on right out there with a jet in broad daylight and I said, and this guy on
28 the flight line says, 'Word's hit us they're going to try to overrun us tonight,' and I said, 'I'm out
29 of here, man! Give me that helicopter.' So I went to Da Nang and they overran the place. I'm
30 going to get killed at Da Nang but I wanted to get out of that place.

1 SM: Well speaking of problems that veterans have faced since the war, what about the
2 Agent Orange controversy and was your unit ever in an area that they supposedly used Agent
3 Orange?

4 CC: Well I have...oh yes, I've got mixed views. I'll tell you the story on that. We
5 had...I know some people that were in that Ranch Hand test. They used to drink and all kinds of
6 stuff and I can...I go to the assumption that whenever you offer money out there there's going to
7 be people lining up to get the money, just off my experience with human nature. But, I told this
8 guy, I said we only had one guy that I know of that sprayed Agent Orange. He was the only guy
9 in our company that did it and you'd spray it out of that helicopter and you'd get it all over you.
10 He has two different kinds of nerve diseases. He came to our first reunion in Dallas which was
11 really our second but our first big one, and he couldn't stay long and I didn't get a chance to see
12 him. Well I saw him up in St. Louis. He said that if he watches his diet, he only eats the stems
13 out of plants. He can't eat anything that grows underground, he can't eat anything that grows on
14 top of any kind of plant, and he eats a plant out of India and he said they found for his whatever
15 he's got that he doesn't have an attack. He's skinny as heck. He was skinny in Vietnam but this
16 guy's in bad shape and he was our Agent Orange sprayer and he said that he told some of the
17 guys that it was a nerve disease which is what they're trying to say Agent Orange causes. He
18 told us he thought it was something to do with diabetic, he was a diabetic along with it. But, he's
19 got something bizarre wrong with him. He came and stayed with us for about four or five hours
20 out there and he said, 'I've got to go, I'm so weak,' and he's got to be weak. He doesn't eat
21 anything. But the docs have figured that out, that if he'll stay away from whatever's in potato
22 and whatever's in leaves like lettuce; he can't have lettuce. It sets off some kind of nervous
23 thing.

24 SM: What about meat and stuff?

25 CC: No, nothing. No, he can't...

26 SM: He can't eat it?

27 CC: He can't eat anything. We were at the restaurants and he couldn't eat anything.
28 There was nothing on the menu that he could eat. I think he said he can eat asparagus.
29 Asparagus is the...

30 SM: Yeah, it's almost all stem.

31 CC: Stem, stems is what he can eat. Strange deal.

1 SM: Do you know if he suffered from the neurasthenic disorder where he can't feel the
2 extremities; fingers...

3 CC: I didn't get into it. I didn't want to grill him too much because you could tell he
4 was in bad shape and some of it could be mental too. I bet it was a strange deal. He spent some
5 time with us but he was our guy that sprayed Agent Orange. What that means, I don't know, but
6 I found that pretty interesting that there was something bizarre wrong with him.

7 SM: How did they rig up a helicopter to spray Agent Orange?

8 CC: Put arms on the side and then put a tank up on the back and you can imagine when
9 you're putting it in the tank, it's everywhere, but that helicopter doesn't trim out right so when
10 you're making a turn you're getting all the spray back in the thing and nobody liked doing it
11 because it just covered the whole...it's like diesel oil so you've got diesel oil all over that
12 stinking helicopter. So, you've got to clean that thing from top to bottom. I never sprayed it. I
13 saw him spraying it before. They spray it around these fire bases and instead of bringing in one
14 of those great big planes, they'd use these helicopters to kill it around. Sometimes they'd spray
15 stuff out there that would start fires. They'd spray it and then light a fire to it. I don't know if it
16 did or just killed everything, but later you'd find that it burned everything around. But he was
17 our guy and he's jacked up.

18 SM: Did most units have that, as far as someone who would fly the Agent Orange and
19 spray it?

20 CC: I don't know. I imagine most units did. We were flying for the 196th at that time.
21 Now whether he went down and did it for the whole Americal Division, I don't know. The only
22 time I ever saw him spraying it was out for the 196th. If that's all he did it for, then they had
23 somebody doing it for the other regiments and the deals, but I'm not positive on that.

24 SM: Were there any other ways the war affected you, affected your life?

25 CC: Oh yeah. I have no regrets about what went on. I can be in a business meeting and
26 I'm bored and I'm sitting there and I'm looking at these other guys and I've told this out here a
27 couple of times already, I said I can sit there and think how boring their lives are. They have a
28 bad day playing golf and that's traumatic to them. But, that's a big deal. I sit there and I look at
29 that like, 'My God, man, if that's all you've got going wrong in your life or that's the only thing
30 that excites you,' a guy coming in and saying, 'Man, I shot a two...' I don't even know the rules

1 out there, but say they knocked a hole in one. I've never known anybody to do one, but that's a
2 big event in his life. I think, 'Hell, that's nothing!'

3 SM: So I guess it gives you a different perspective?

4 CC: It gives you a total different look, and like we got one of our guys that's a big
5 business consultant, and decision making; you can make decisions a lot quicker than other
6 people can and I've seen that in my career that like yesterday I was on a big conference call and I
7 said I'd poll everybody, I said, 'Can anybody find anything wrong with this decision?' because
8 the decision had to be made and they know they can always call me and I'll make a decision.
9 You can argue which ones are right but you always get everybody's opinion on it and see if
10 anybody says, 'No, you're flat wrong,' and everybody said, 'Well, that's alright with me.' They
11 know I'll always just make a decision because it's no big deal. What are they going to do, send
12 you to Vietnam? Shoot you? No.

13 SM: What are the major lessons you think we should take away from the Vietnam War?

14 CC: Two things; number one, the military shouldn't be run by a bunch of screw balls
15 that get into something, and you're seeing this and I think you're going to see it go away. Once
16 you Vietnam guys get out of there, just never go anywhere unless you intend to win. You've got
17 to have a winning strategy or you shouldn't put a guys...because the American people will
18 support it, so that's one thing. You need to have a plan to win. The other thing is, and this is
19 what really hacks me off and I want to just throw it in the interview, maybe it shouldn't go here,
20 is these wild-eyed, bomb-throwing liberals that got us into that war and then I sat there and
21 watched CBS news the other night and they said, 'The war America lost.' Now anybody with an
22 ounce of sense knows that who lost that was this liberal congress that shut the money off from
23 the South Vietnamese in 1974 and 1975. When you go to rationing an Army down to 12 bullets
24 a day per man, you can't hold off guys that have AK-47s with full packs of ammo and no
25 artillery shells and especially when they're fought to fight like we fought with using up that stuff.
26 Those guys didn't have a chance. They say America lost it, and that's been my views, and then
27 the Wall Street Journal ran a deal about old Webb that used to be under Reagan, the DA or
28 something, and he says he thinks public perception is changing over the years and that they're
29 going to finally come around to that, that you're looking at what the Vietnamese are doing. The
30 more you look at the winners, they call them the winners, what they've done to that country over
31 there and how those people live. They're a 4th world country and that's what communism

1 always does. Power, absolute power, corrupts and that's what you have when you have a
2 government like that. So I blame it all on liberals. I had to get that in here.

3 SM: Oh absolutely.

4 CC: American soldiers didn't lose that war. As I saw a T-shirt one time, 'When I left,
5 we were winning!' I say that. I wrote home. That's unfair; that's an old man's perspective. I'll
6 tell you this; in my letters I wrote home and I told my mother I said, 'Tell my brother to get out
7 and start protesting this war. We shouldn't be over here,' and then I think in another letter I said,
8 'I should have went to Canada,' so I was not a big fan of this deal. I don't think that's
9 inconsistent with what I just said about the Army shouldn't have got in without winning, but I
10 was prepared to get out of that place without really knowing the total concept; who the south
11 Vietnamese were, what the strategy was. I figured out real quick we're in a situation where
12 we're not going to win it the way we were doing it, so it's unfair. That's what causes wars is old
13 men like me sitting around and we start thinking, 'Boy, we were pretty macho back then. We'll
14 go out there and kick some butt,' and that's what they do to get the young boys out there and get
15 them killed. That's what leads to war.

16 SM: What led you to write those letters? Do you remember what sparked those
17 opinions?

18 CC: Part of it was after I saw what the South Vietnamese were doing. They were
19 stealing everything. Like when I needed socks, I sent a crew guy down - we were talking about
20 it - we sent a crew guy down to their village to buy my socks, Army socks.

21 SM: So you witnessed corruption?

22 CC: Witnessed, heck yeah! That's where we had to go get our supplies and our food.
23 They were starving us to death. I mentioned that in the book. I don't know if you ever heard of
24 a Westmoreland's top sergeant over there, they caught him stealing all the money. He was
25 stealing a lot of the PX money, or the fund money for food at Chu Lai where I was at. One of
26 the places they were stealing a lot of money was where I was at, and our food was horrible. The
27 biscuits had weevils in them, the meat was green. I talk about that in my book. One day I was
28 fed, we went out to a fire base to eat, but I had roast beef three times offered to me that day and I
29 couldn't eat this stuff. It was horrible. It didn't even taste like meat they had so much chemicals
30 and rot in it. The food was terrible over there, and come to find out they were stealing our
31 money for the food there. But, that was probably the attitude that we shouldn't be there because

1 I didn't think our side was doing enough, the South Vietnamese. They were standing around and
2 watching us fight is what it really got down to and out where old Anton got captured they had a
3 South Vietnamese base out there, a RFPF camp, and they never fought each other. They just
4 paid them off and they were just right out there and they were right out there. We didn't even
5 want to fly around this place and here they had a RFPF camp right out in the middle of nowhere
6 where we'd want to go and they never even fought each other. That's where Carson walked into.
7 That's how they got him, he made it back to that camp.

8 SM: What do you mean they paid them off?

9 CC: Apparently somehow they had some deal cut where they didn't fight. But, there's
10 no way to explain. An American base would be out here and they'd attack it and fight each other
11 and then so these old RFPFs over there, all they had to do was cut the strand of barbed wire
12 around them and they could have wiped them out in two seconds and they just let them go. The
13 only thing we could figure was they were giving them medical supplies or something like that.
14 That was just talked about and that's the reason you say, 'What are we doing over here?' I've
15 heard, and a lot of this was this crazy culture stuff that they had that you couldn't say anything to
16 insult them and all that. Well like the Koreans, I heard in the Korean War we took over and
17 appointed their generals. Those generals were actually under our military structure and
18 Westmoreland, I read somewhere where he said he wouldn't want to do that because of their
19 type of culture they had which is a bunch of crap. They should have run all those sorry generals
20 off and got them some good ones and they had good ones, I'm sure they did. They had good
21 fighting men I'm sure, but it really come down to the sergeant level and if they see so much
22 corruption up above them, they're not going to fight. They're not going to lead those guys to
23 fight. So, I blame it on maybe that was the problem. That was my attitude on getting out. I
24 didn't like what I was seeing of the south Vietnamese do on our side and we certainly looked
25 down on them as to we make jokes about them, call it racist, call it whatever and these guys were
26 on our sides. But, part of it is the fact that they weren't doing anything and our guys were out
27 there getting killed and these guys sitting there doing nothing. Anytime we worked with them
28 you could count on getting in an ambush because they'd tip the other side up. The joke was,
29 'Well they might as well put billboards or drop leaflets out there; here we come!' Strange deal,
30 so there was no love lost between a lot of people and them, but I'm not saying that's true of all of
31 them.

1 SM: Was that opinion shared by other aviators in your unit? Did you talk much about
2 this?

3 CC: We made jokes about it, but I would say that opinion was pretty clear and you
4 could talk to some of our other people and I think you'd get a consensus there that that was the
5 true state of things. I know some of the Special Forces guys liked the guys they were with, a lot
6 of those Montagnards and stuff. We were not impressed at all. I'll tell you a story; my father
7 was shot and I had this in my book but I took it out myself because I knew they were going to
8 read it. I had sponsored some Vietnamese after Vietnam fell. So anyway, I took my students,
9 and I had an all Vietnamese class, I had three students, I took them to my hometown and
10 introduced them to my dad and we were doing something, we went to a ball game or something,
11 and he asked me, he said, 'Well, why'd you want to be a helicopter pilot?' and he said, 'Well,
12 what happens, you can make a lot of money selling kerosene. You buy it in the city and take it
13 out to the villages and you sell it and you make three times your money on it,' and this was the
14 number one student in his class, a very brilliant guy, and I sort of respected this guy, and he said
15 that and my father just darn near fell out of his chair and I did too! There was nothing wrong in
16 his culture, when he said that, there was nothing wrong with that. He couldn't see anything
17 wrong with that. He wasn't embarrassed. He didn't think anything about it. To an American, I
18 nearly fell out of my chair. My dad, he was like, 'My gosh!' He didn't say it, he waited until
19 they left and then he said, 'Holy smokes!' Pretty strange deal. How you root that out of a
20 culture? They're saying that's a Mandarin culture, a Chinese kind of governmental thing that's
21 pushed down through there and the North Vietnamese purge that out with their communist
22 propaganda at that time and who knows. But, that shows you the attitude of some of those big...

23 SM: Well one of the big problems now is corruption.

24 CC: Yeah, right. And I guarantee it's north and south. I've been over there so it's just
25 as bad up in the north as it is now. I can't see how they, with what's going on over there today, I
26 don't see how they fought a war against us as good as they did.

27 SM: What did you think of the Paris Peace Accords of 1973?

28 CC: Well, I say in my book there, and I believe it was March of '68, I ran through the
29 company area. I heard it on radio Vietnam that they were going to have peace talks and I ran
30 through the company area telling everybody, 'The war's over! They're fixing to have a cease
31 fire!' and then they fought for months over the shape of the table! Give me a break. That could

1 have been when I was saying, 'Tell my brother to get out there and peace protest.' I was just
2 shocked, like, 'What in the world?' They should have taken North Vietnam and put them back
3 in the Stone Age and that's what they did later on when Nixon finally turned on them. Nixon
4 apparently cleared that with the Chinese and the Russians and he said, 'I'm fixing to blow these
5 guys away,' and I don't know if he had real permission from them but he went in there and
6 smoked them. They were crying uncle in about 12 days or something and we were just fixing to
7 put them to the Stone Age and they cried, 'Uncle!' That 12 days could have happened a lot
8 easier, a lot less people killed, back when Johnson was there except Johnson was probably
9 worried about the Chinese coming in. In hindsight, I don't think they would have come in.
10 Based on them fighting the Vietnamese, they weren't prepared to come in other than us
11 slaughtering them.

12 SM: How about the importance of the Vietnam War on the context of the Cold War?

13 CC: Well I've read all of that. I don't think there's any doubt that, based on their...I'm
14 talking about the Russians and the Chinese, there was limited stuff that they could produce.
15 They pumped a lot of their economic output into that war because we were pumping a lot of ours
16 and they were pumping a lot of theirs and theirs wasn't near as big as ours, so there's no doubt
17 that the AK-47s that they were trying to use on us would have been in these other countries and a
18 lot of their other armaments. They laugh about that. The liberals have written history where
19 who knows what would have happened. They're saying, 'Well, it wouldn't have been a domino
20 effect, but North Vietnam would have took the south and then they went in and took Cambodia
21 and Laos and who says what would have stopped them if they still had the backing that they
22 had?' They have like the fifth largest Army in the world or something and it was armed up and
23 well trained, so who knows what would have happened. But, I really haven't thought about that
24 that much as to whether that was any good coming out of that. I'm convinced, you know, they
25 blame it on the politicians. I blame it more on a liberal congress. The war was technically lost in
26 1975 and it was lost when they cut off the supplies to those people and the people that cut it off
27 were these darn war protestors that got elected to congress. You go and you count some of them
28 that were in there and they were the ones doing it and they swung that vote and cut that aid off.
29 Most people didn't have a chance then. You could have defended some of those cities over
30 there, Danang and some of those others, with just a few good artillery pieces. There wasn't this
31 flat ground when they run in on you. They can only come in from one direction, and it only took

1 plenty of artillery shells and they'd still own, today at least, I don't know about some of the
2 others. Probably Chu Lai, they could have held Chu Lai forever too with some good artillery
3 couldn't have rooted them out of that place, either.

4 SM: So what did you think when that happened, when the decision was made not to
5 continue supplying Vietnam?

6 CC: I really wasn't...you know, I was working for a living and I really wasn't in on
7 that. I remember when the thing fell apart, but I still blamed our allies. I still question what in
8 the world we were doing supporting those guys. If they didn't want to fight for themselves, what
9 in the world were we doing over there? So I did have a negative attitude toward them and like I
10 say, I had some stuff in my book, I cut it out myself because I just didn't want to be derogatory
11 to them because it's not fair. There's some people that fought. There's no doubt there was a lot
12 of them in there that fought for what they thought was right, but anytime you have a culture that
13 gets that corrupt, nationality or national pride, who knows what was going on, but it's hard to get
14 that when everybody's stealing everything and hitting the boat dock, you know.

15 SM: Anything else you'd like to add?

16 CC: Nope, I think that's it. I talked long enough.

17 SM: All right, well then this ends the interview with Chuck Carlock.