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Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Richard Duckworth  
Conducted by Stephen Maxner  
March 23, 2000  
Transcribed by Tammi Mikel

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

1 Stephen Maxner: This is Steve Maxner, conducting an oral history interview with  
2 Colonel Richard Duckworth. I am located at Lubbock, Texas; he is located at Fort Worth,  
3 Texas. The time is 2:30 in the afternoon on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March of the year 2000. Colonel  
4 Duckworth, if you would begin please by giving us a quick biographical sketch of yourself.

5 Richard Duckworth: Fine. I just clicked on my radio and you'll hear my background  
6 music here.

7 SM: Okay.

8 RD: But my name is Richard Dwayne Duckworth and I live down here in Fort Worth,  
9 and I was born in St. Louis, Missouri on 5 July 1933. And I lived there all my life, the early part  
10 of my life, through high school, in St. Louis, Missouri in St. Louis County. From there I went to  
11 Texas Christian University after graduating from Webster Groves High School in Webster  
12 Groves, Missouri, St. Louis County and it was right during the Korean War. It had started in  
13 1950 and I knew that without going into college, why I would probably be drafted immediately.  
14 My brother was a year older and he'd already enrolled at Washington University in St. Louis,  
15 Missouri and he was in the Army ROTC and he really loved to fly but that was the only  
16 organization over there. My dad had worked for Curtis Right throughout the war and now was  
17 with McDonald Douglas Aircraft Corporation out in St. Louis and so I had a tie in with the  
18 military and airplanes. When I went to TCU, why, I remember walking in the auditorium and  
19 they had an Air Force sergeant and an Army sergeant standing there and one was saying, 'Army  
20 this way, Air Force that way,' so I swerved to the right to the Air Force and that was the first

1 year TCU offered, in 1951, a four-year program in ROTC so I went ahead and enrolled in that,  
2 not necessarily to stay out of the draft but it certainly would help because I had fairly good  
3 grades anyway and I was in...as long as you kept grades you were going to be deferred until you  
4 finished your program, your four-year course. But I wanted to fly airplanes and I thought this  
5 was a way to certainly get access to training and then from there on out we'd see whether I  
6 stayed or whether I became an airline pilot.

7 SM: What year was it that you entered your first year of college?

8 RD: September 1951.

9 SM: Was there any concern on your part that the Korean War would still be going on  
10 when you graduated and that you might find yourself active duty Air Force going over to fly  
11 missions in Asia?

12 RD: I really didn't think that much of it, it seemed like it was just a quick incursion over  
13 the line, we'd send our troops in and take care of this little Podunk country to the North and it  
14 would be over with. But I do remember in the start of my senior year, that summer in June when  
15 they invaded it but it was sort of far from my mind. I didn't think I would really have to  
16 participate and if I stayed four years in college I thought, 'My good Lord,' probably the thing  
17 would be over with by then. But the fear of the Soviets and I mean I became a cold warrior at  
18 that time and my whole career in college was studying about the Soviet expansion, Soviet  
19 economic expansion and how they were going to put us under and all this and so it was, I thought  
20 more that I would be fighting that type of a battle rather than maybe in Korea.

21 SM: Okay. The Air Force ROTC training that you received, what did you think of that?

22 RD: I thought it was, it certainly wasn't anything like when I later taught at the Air Force  
23 Academy to see what these cadets went through, but I figured that this was an excellent way to  
24 get a commission and go through and then go into the military without having to eat square  
25 meals and march around and get up and have square beds and whatever else they had to go  
26 through, we had about a couple of summer camps of that and I decided that I didn't need that. I  
27 was going to be a professional pilot and I didn't need to adhere to that strict of a military regime.  
28 But other than that, the training I thought was good. They just basically gave us...academics we  
29 marched a lot and that's about all we did. First two years they don't pay you, they didn't pay  
30 you to be in the program, and then you made your commitment and what happened beginning of  
31 I guess it was '53, fall of '53 when we had to commit they added another year. They had only a

1 two-year commitment where they would send you off to pilot training and then you were only  
2 going to be in for a year. And they said, 'Well this isn't enough, we can't even get...it's going to  
3 take them a year and a half to even learn to fly some kind of an airplane so we better keep you in  
4 another year.' Well a lot of guys dropped out after that, they just didn't go into it and they may  
5 have had good enough grades that it didn't cause them to be drafted but a lot of them didn't want  
6 to go into flying after that either because that required you another year of commitment.

7 SM: Did the ROTC training emphasize certain things about World War II as in terms of  
8 history, military history and that type of stuff, and tactics and whatnot?

9 RD: Definitely, and did they ever emphasize strategic bombing and the success of it in  
10 Europe, even though there were books out where you could see the strategic bombing! I mean,  
11 they missed targets 5 miles from the altitudes they were bombing at and the saturation type of  
12 bombing that they were going on! But the view was that a strategic air power was going to be,  
13 especially with the nuclear weapons or the atomic bomb, and how it was going to be, the answer  
14 to the future and that was...when I went in they were looking for about, I think it was something  
15 like 143 wings of B-47s and B-52s and we were going to just hold at bay any communist threat  
16 anywhere in the world. So the training was emphasizing air power, air power, air power, and I  
17 totally agreed with that and, 'Do away with the Navy,' and we didn't even need the Army  
18 anymore because air power was going to be the answer.

19 SM: How long did it take you to realize that there were some problems with that  
20 particular philosophy?

21 RD: Well it certainly hit when the situation happened when I was in the military for  
22 about 5 years, when the situation occurred on Cuba and we later found that they had a lot of  
23 nuclear tacs down there, tactical nuclear weapons and other things and we said, 'Oh God, how  
24 close we came,' 'We're not going to be able to use this type of weaponry to solve problems, we  
25 better start developing some type of commando operation,' and that's when Vietnam was starting  
26 up. So the Air Force got itself started in that bay but we still were not nearly as well prepared  
27 because we had no aircraft that were really designed to fight that kind of a war, they were all old  
28 World War II type things and all the new weaponry that we had was designed for guys to go in  
29 and fly and drop a nuke weapon and get the hell out of there. So there was no bombing of trucks  
30 or pinpoint targets. You just area bombed, and got out of there!

1           SM: After you finished your Air Force ROTC training and received your commission,  
2 where did you go?

3           RD: After ROTC, let's see, I graduated on May 29<sup>th</sup> of 1955 and I had interviewed for a  
4 job with Humble Oil and Refining Company which was later on merged with Exxon and I was a  
5 sales trainee here in Fort Worth, Texas or Dallas for two months and I couldn't ever understand  
6 why they'd hire me knowing I was going in the military. I already had my orders for August 4<sup>th</sup>  
7 to report to Lackland and then in September pilot training and so I...but they said no, they  
8 wanted to hire me because they wanted, they were impressed with my background and I guess  
9 my lingo or whatever it was and the fact that I'd been on a golf scholarship and played pretty  
10 well in that sport so I was a well rounded whatever they were looking for chance to be a manager  
11 for Exxon and then they thought that I would get out. Naturally, I would serve as a reserve  
12 officer for a couple of years, be trained as a pilot, and then get out and maybe I could use those  
13 attributes with the oil company. But I went right in on August 4<sup>th</sup> and went to Lackland for 1  
14 month where they gave us a sort of a quick combined ROTC course in a month where we had  
15 our little field trips and things like that down at Lackland where they...and they gave us two or  
16 three physicals. A lot of guys were trying to bomb out of the physicals so that they would not  
17 have to fulfill their commitment, things like that, and I was just awaiting my assignment to pilot  
18 training which occurred when...at the end of that time I went to Moltry, Georgia. Now that  
19 training was a civilian run program at Spence Air Base, they called it, in Moltry, Georgia and we  
20 had civilian instructors and we went through the T-34 which was a Cessna, the little piper cub  
21 had just been wiped out the year before because they said, 'We want a more up to date air craft  
22 that would more simulate the kind of air craft you'd be flying in the Air Force,' and then after  
23 you went through that program for 6 months, you transferred into the T-28 aircraft which was  
24 almost identical to the T-bird, T-33 that we would almost all be going into. It was the new jet  
25 trainer that had been around and it had the same cockpit and they put a very under powered  
26 engine in it so that you would have this long take off run which simulated what kind of a take off  
27 you'd have to engage yourself with when you were flying a jet aircraft. So I went through that  
28 and then you had a choice; you could either, upon graduation from primary training they called  
29 it, you would then go into either B-25s which was basic multi engines, or you would go into the  
30 fighter force which was the jet T-33 and at that time I chose to go the other way. Now my  
31 instructor said, 'Duckworth, you're the only one who can stay ahead of the aircraft far enough,

1 you need to go in jets.’ And I said, ‘But I want to be an airline pilot! I’m going to fly...’ my  
2 wife’s dad had been with American Airlines for some 30 years in the administrative branch, but I  
3 knew that I could get a job with American and I was going to be an airline pilot. So at that time I  
4 said, ‘I want to be a multi engine.’ I didn’t necessarily like formation flying in jets and all the  
5 acrobatics that they did, I was much more enthused with instrument flying and the type that you  
6 would utilize and I felt that a multi engine aircraft carried cargo, and weapons, and people and  
7 that was the real economic benefit of having a real larger airplane. So I stole for that and went  
8 through basic training at Reese Air Force Base then for the next 6 months where upon I  
9 graduated as a pilot in October, on October 15, 1956.

10 SM: The instructors in these various training areas, what did you think about them?  
11 Were they good, was the equipment adequate to the training that you were receiving? Was this  
12 good training?

13 RD: Well I had a guy by the name of Stan Snyder who had, like, 17,000 hours. He’d  
14 been flying a B-17 and he dropped boats for people coming across when they were flying DC-6s  
15 airlines out of, say, Scotland and they would have to come across Iceland and then come down  
16 through Greenland and then come in through Nova Scotia and Newfoundland up there, and so  
17 every time they would have any kind of a problem he’s airborne in his B-17 with a big boat  
18 under it, and I mean it was just...to fly along side those airplanes that had the feathering engine  
19 and maybe make it into Iceland and/or Greenland if they had some problem, because if those  
20 airplanes would have went down, hell, those people had about 30 seconds in ice cold water and  
21 they were dead. But he would fly with this...and he got himself a crap pot full of hours and he’d  
22 been a Navy pilot in World War II and so he was always pushing me. I really liked the way he  
23 instructed. He yelled a lot at me and I said, ‘I’ll never do that,’ and that’s what I turned out to be,  
24 a yeller, and a screamer in the cockpit too. But I liked the way he instructed and he emphasized a  
25 lot of instrument flying because he’d been flying that big bomber and it was almost all weather  
26 conditions over the North Atlantic when he would go out to try to help one of these airplanes fly  
27 support for them. And so he had a lot of instrument flying. He emphasized that to me and then  
28 at Reese I also had pilots who emphasized that. They were all in the military when I got to  
29 Reese but they were fabulous. All of them career oriented, they looked like the lieutenants, Air  
30 Force lieutenants that had either been in Korea...they were a little older than I was and they’d  
31 either flown there or were ready to go or something but they were all interested in instrument

1 flying and that's basically what they were doing in the B-25 versus any type of big formation  
2 flying and/or acrobatics. You just didn't do acrobatics in that aircraft so we were looking to train  
3 people maybe to fly B-47s and B-52s later on, and they were all...I thought that, excellent as  
4 could be, and as a matter of fact they volunteered me to, or recommended, that I be an instructor  
5 in the B-25 and that's the assignment I took. So I was then trained there at Reese for about two  
6 months in what they call Basic, let's see, it was called Basic Instructor School, Basic Multi  
7 Engine Instructor School and so then I turned around and started teaching in January of 1957. I  
8 was instructing in the B-25 for the next two years almost, and I liked that because I was  
9 command pilot and most of the guys, if they went out of there and got some kind of an  
10 assignment like in B-47s or B-52s, hell, even in MAC, if they went MACs, MACs was the  
11 Military Airlift Command where you flew Super Con-Es, 121s or C-54s or something like that.  
12 They still had piston airplanes flying all that way. Well all you did was pull up the gear for the  
13 first two years until you could move yourself over because we had at that time what they called a  
14 hump. All these Korean...the guys that had been maybe at the end of World War II were  
15 recalled for Korea and they were never going to make more than captain or major. They had no  
16 college education but they loved to fly and so there was just this mass of captains ahead of you  
17 and they were all the head pilots on all these airplanes. So if you went in there with any idea of a  
18 career, you figure, 'All's I'm going to be doing is pulling the gear for a long while,' but in  
19 instructing, in basic multi engine, see I was the aircraft commander from the word go and I had  
20 the students in the airplane and took off and I was in command of that aircraft from the very  
21 beginning.

22 SM: So that helped you later on when you moved out of that training environment into  
23 another unit?

24 RD: That's right. When I went down for mission flying in Waco and then when I was in  
25 IPIS. which was an advanced instrument training where we'd take guys with two thousand hours  
26 of flying time and train them how to be stand board pilots to give the instrument evaluation that  
27 every pilot in the Air Force is required to take once a year. You have to go and fly this two-hour  
28 mission where you fly under the hood and/or do all the instrument landing positions that you  
29 might encounter while you were flying in instrument flying with multi engine aircrafts. So I was  
30 in this advanced school and taught there for another two years, and in the meantime I was at  
31 Waco, Texas where I decided, well, I'd get a master's degree. So I went at night school, I picked

1 up my master's in economics. I tried to get into the school of business but they were under some  
2 kind of probation because they didn't have enough Ph.D.'s teaching and so they had the Ph.D.'s  
3 over in the economics department so I just went over there and took it. It was probably very  
4 fortunate for me to do that because later on, three years in 1963 when I was down in San Anton'  
5 flying for this instrument pilots instructor school, IPIS was the name of it, why then they looked  
6 at the record and said, "Hey, we need a guy like that," and besides that I also won two or three  
7 Air Force championship tournaments playing golf and that didn't hurt me because the Air Force  
8 Academy also wanted you to be a rated pilot, they loved if you were academically qualified, you  
9 had a master's at least in the subject you were teaching, and then you were some kind of an  
10 athlete so you could stand up in front of those cadets and say, "This is a great career, and look at  
11 what I've done," see. "I can play golf, I can do all this," we were football players, we had all  
12 these athletes on the faculty there, and they were also intellectual and that seemed to impress the  
13 faculty that we were better suited to teach; I don't know whether the cadets accepted it or not!  
14 But anyway, it made us feel like we were the cream of the crop in there teaching the Air Force  
15 academy students.

16 SM: What did you do right before going to Vietnam in terms of your duty assignment  
17 and your position?

18 RD: I was on the faculty at the Air Force academy...

19 SM: What year was that?

20 RD: Well I started in '63 and in 1965 I wasn't that great of an intellectual and I never  
21 thought I would really have the guts to sit down and do a dissertation and finish it. I might get  
22 the course work out of the way, but I never thought I'd really be able to get the dissertation done  
23 and what happened is in 1965...and we had half the faculty was West Point and Naval Academy  
24 graduates and the other half were ROTC graduates and they wanted to keep that kind of a split so  
25 that they could have that approach and the total West Point story at the Air Force Academy. And  
26 the end result of that was I put in, I said, "Well, could I get a Ph.D. through the sponsorship of  
27 the Air Force Academy?" and they said, "No, no. We've already had guys try that and there's  
28 four or five ahead of you," and so I said, "Okay, I'll go to law school," and I had already started  
29 law school down in San Anton', I had about a year of night school down there and so I  
30 transferred up to the University of Denver law school and started taking some courses there and  
31 on April fool's day after I'd already enrolled at the University of Denver for maybe the...I had

1 about 40 hours of law school towards maybe 120 to complete, but it was going to take me years  
2 to do it, and they indicated that if I would become a lawyer that I would have to give up my  
3 flying so I said, "I don't think I'll do that," but I was willing to go ahead and get the law degree  
4 on my own. So I went in, they called me in on April fool's day and I thought they were pulling  
5 my leg and this general who was running the school said, "West Point has given us a slot, they  
6 decided to send their man over to Vietnam first and so they've got an extra slot with Air Force  
7 Institute of Technology to get a Ph.D. and we're recommending you to go. Do you want to go?"  
8 I said, "My God, yes I'll go," because I looked at 5 more years of trying to get a law degree and  
9 at that time I just went...and I had also had some connections with the University of Colorado  
10 earlier, had some connections with Washington University in St. Louis, SMU, as well as  
11 University of Virginia, but in April I was supposed to go to school in May, and so there was no  
12 way I was going to get into any of those Ph.D. programs but the University of Colorado was  
13 expanding its program and they said, "Come on up," and so I spent the next two and a half years  
14 up at University of Colorado getting a Ph.D. and that was just at the time, you see, 1965, summer  
15 of '65 on when the war in Vietnam was starting to heat up a little bit and so I was there all that  
16 while at a very liberal school and thinking, "My God, this war will be over before I even have  
17 my degree." But by '69 when I returned to the Academy to teach for a year or so, MPC came  
18 around, the Military Personnel Center, and said, "All you faculty members that have kind of  
19 hidden in the woodwork at the Air Force Academy had better get your little ruddy butts over to  
20 Vietnam or you ain't ever going to get promoted," because the people that were on our  
21 promotion board all had a chest full of medals. Some of them had two tours over there already,  
22 but everyone had had at least one tour. And so there was this split where we looked like we were  
23 a bunch of faculty pukes sitting up there at the academy hiding in the woodwork and there were a  
24 couple that denied, said, "I'm not going," and they court marshaled them. And these guys were  
25 against the war. They had sat there and said...I had evaluated it; my God I had sit there and  
26 listened to every briefing. I was teaching Economics and National Security so I knew from the  
27 beginning that this thing was questionable, I've read almost everything historical about it, and  
28 how we got involved in it, and by '67, 8, and 9, this thing wasn't turning...we weren't winning  
29 over there like we thought we were. And so I said, "Well, I'm in 14 years of service, I've got to  
30 go." So in 1969 I volunteered for B-26 training because that was very similar to B-25, same  
31 engines, well, a little more powerful engines, but this airplane was used to bomb trucks at night



1 on Ho Chi Minh Trail. I mean, what a job that was going to be! But fortunately for me, just as I  
2 was getting my orders to report for the next fall because they allowed me to finish my Ph.D. and  
3 get my dissertation completed and that took through November of '69, but in the meantime I'd  
4 gone to survival training in the summer of '69 and that liked to wiped me out. I went up to  
5 Fairchild and that was, like, two weeks long where you go on a creek and eat bugs and do all that  
6 stuff and simulate a World War II type prison camp, and then you simulate a Korean prison  
7 camp, and then you simulate a Vietnamese prison camp. And you've got to crawl through a field  
8 and you've got to be captured no matter how stealth you are, they're going to...you've got to go  
9 turn your self in at the end of the three or four hours that you're crawling through all these  
10 minefields and things and at the end you then get put in this Vietnamese prison camp and get  
11 treated like they, at that time, thought you would be treated if you were captured. So I did that  
12 during the summer, then came back and finished my Ph.D. or defended my dissertation...I'd  
13 already finished my course work before I returned to the Air Force Academy in...let's see, I did  
14 that in January of '97 so I was at the Academy '97 and '98, no, '68, I returned in January '68. So  
15 I was up at the University of Colorado for two and a half years and all the while I was up there I  
16 was flying out of Lowery field to keep my currency as a pilot so I was flying T-29s which I had  
17 also flown at San Anton', at Waco, and so it was the same kind of an airplane so I didn't have  
18 too much trouble flying a bird. I had had a lot of hours, by that time I probably had near four  
19 thousand hours of flying time and an instrument pilot to boot so I was very comfortable in any  
20 type of an aircraft like that and so when I said I'd go in B-26s I thought alright, I'd get over  
21 there, I'd get as many medals as I could and be just like the rest of these faculty members who  
22 are coming back with all these battle stars on them. And the result is they cancelled that in the  
23 summer right as I was returning from survival training. Said, "You got to pick another airplane."  
24 Now the problem with a faculty member like myself, when the Air Force Academy sponsored  
25 me to go to Air Force Institute of Technology to get the Ph.D., I pulled out after two years at the  
26 Academy. Now I really, that was a four-year tour, so when you split your tour like that and you  
27 went off to a Ph.D. you now owed the Academy five years.

28 SM: Oh wow!

29 RD: So, and not only that, for every year I went they added three years to my total  
30 commitment so I couldn't get out of the service so by the time I finished they, like two years and  
31 nine months getting the Ph.D., I owed the Air Force, like, eight and a half years! Well I'd

1 already had eleven years by that time, so hell, I was going to stay through twenty, there was no  
2 question about it. And I enjoyed it, my wife loved the service at the same time and the fact that I  
3 was never going overseas anywhere. I was staying either at the Air Force Academy for three  
4 tours or stationed in Texas and so she loved it. But I ended up looking them all over and they  
5 said, and I said, "Well I'd like to go in T-37s or A-37s," which was a Cessna type of a jet attack.  
6 "I'd like to go into F-4s, I'd like to go into F-100s," and they said, "Uh uh," because each one of  
7 those aircraft were basically current in the Air Force inventory and would remain so after the  
8 Vietnam war, or at least what they thought into the '70s, therefore McNamara had applied a  
9 commitment that if you trained in one of those airplanes before you went over you must stay in  
10 that aircraft to recoup the costs to the tune of three and five years sometimes. Well the Air Force  
11 Academy wanted me back and so there were only a few airplanes you could get into like the  
12 gooney bird, the DC, well the AC-47. You could fly B-26s but the wings were coming off of  
13 those so they cancelled that mission and about the only other one was the Caribou which we'd  
14 gotten from the Army in about 1967, it was called the boo boo, it was a twin engine transport and  
15 went around...it was a trash hauler. And the other was a C-123 that was a trash hauler, too, but  
16 specifically a strike mission within that C-123 organization was RANCH HAND, and there was  
17 a guy in our organization had been over there and he said, "Hey, this is a good mission, man.  
18 You get a lot of air medals, you get an air medal every time you fly fourteen air medal days," and  
19 so on like that versus the trash haulers who were never getting shot at. So I said, "Hell I may as  
20 well go into that, Christ, I been in the Air Force for fourteen years and it's time I got my butt out  
21 on the line," and started to experience what all my students that I had been training had to  
22 experience! So I volunteered for RANCH HAND and was one of the last groups that went  
23 through because by that time there was a lot of indication by late '69 and early '70 that Agent  
24 Orange RANCH HAND program was going to be shit-canned anyway, closed down. Excuse me  
25 for using those words.

26 SM: Oh no, that's quite alright.

27 RD: Okay, but it was going to be closed down because Agent Orange had, it wasn't that  
28 effective in curtailing the war although it probably saved a lot of lives, and then there was this  
29 aspect that it might cause human problems, you know.

30 SM: Okay. Take a couple of steps back real quick before we get into your Vietnam War  
31 experiences.

1 RD: Okay.

2 SM: Back when you...let's see, you mentioned the Cuban Missile Crisis, or you alluded  
3 to it briefly. I was wondering, as an Air Force officer, what did you think about both the Missile  
4 Crisis and before that, the Bay of Pigs fiasco?

5 RD: Oh, well I had two or three guys that had gone with me in IPIS that were pulled out  
6 of there and they went to this black outfit flying B-26s down out of Guatemala, so I had infinite  
7 knowledge of these guys. They were my friends. Hell, they went in and one got shot down and  
8 killed down there and it was just one of these... it was the highly classified stuff, you didn't get  
9 too much information on it until all the books...I mean, it's easy now to read all the history  
10 books on it, but at the time they weren't putting out a lot of information how it had screwed up  
11 and what was going on. I know we'd made a commitment in a sense from the Eisenhower  
12 administration and then when Kennedy took over, he walked into it and there it was in front of  
13 him and he had to go ahead and perform. And I guess they'd had the troops trained because this  
14 guy was pulled out in late '59 to go down and start training some Cubans to fly and what  
15 happened is he ended up flying them instead of the Cubans, so we had the B-26 going in and we  
16 lost a couple on that one. So, but I never did really think that I was going to be involved in it. I  
17 was so involved in education, in pilot training, in that aspect of it, and I'd never really been in a  
18 combat operation in an organization that was out, preparing to carry bombs somewhere and do  
19 anything like that. So I figured that I was just going to stay there until one day they'd come  
20 down and say, "Hey, you've got to train in this airplane and you're going to go there," and I'd  
21 say, "Fine and dandy," because I had been in the training command so long I knew how quality it  
22 was. I knew, that you had some crappy instructors but most of them were top drawer people,  
23 and so I had total confidence whatever airplane they put me in, these guys would be able to train  
24 me like I was training my students. And so I was all ready to do what I had to. Matter of fact,  
25 when that Cuban Missile Crisis hit, we were flying T-29s which was a twin engine conveyer, it  
26 was a tricycle landing gear airplane like the airlines were flying and that's what we were training  
27 in, in IPIS. We would train these multi engine guys to use this airplane and then they'd go back  
28 and fly B-52s or whatever, but it was a multi engine aircraft. And when the Cuban Missile  
29 Crisis...I was at a golf tournament and they cancelled the golf tournament and made me report  
30 back down to IPIS because we were going to be a VIP organization flying out of Washington to  
31 Miami, Miami to Washington carrying VIPs down out of Washington to view what the hell was

1 going on down in southern Florida as we prepared to invade them. And so just about the time I  
2 was ready to take off, why they...I mean, they made the agreement or the Russians pulled them  
3 out and that was the end of it so I went back to pilot training or instrument training with the guys.  
4 But as far as that went, that was really my experience in Cuba and we got some briefings at the  
5 Air Force Academy on it, and we looked into it a little bit and we evaluated some things, but  
6 again the view was, "Christ, we would have wiped these people out if we would have ever  
7 needed to!" The only thing we lacked was one Air Force pilot flying a U-2 over the country and  
8 he was shot down by a missile but he got his butt down too low when he was taking pictures.  
9 And so we figured we had the U-2, nobody could touch it, and on and on we'd go with it. I  
10 guess by then the old Powers had been shot down over Russia, but we had no idea that the  
11 Soviets had anything like that. And as a matter of fact, for the first time in the history of all of  
12 this that I've read, McNamara's book on page ten or eleven talks about what they found out  
13 when, this is after the Soviet Union collapsed, and they were getting all this information from the  
14 KGB and other sources over in the Soviet Union, and their first, trading of diplomats back and  
15 forth to verify what was going on, that's when McNamara reports in this argument never ends  
16 book that they had, even though the CIA had told Kennedy and McNamara that there were no  
17 nuclear tipped missiles in Cuba after the Russians turned that boat around and headed back, this  
18 one, he said, "We show now information that they had 147 of them there." And one hundred  
19 were tactical nukes aimed right at the beaches so that if, in fact, the military would have persisted  
20 and we would have invaded, you can see these Cuban lieutenants sitting there with a tactical  
21 nuke? Somebody was going to shoot one of them and we would have gotten ourselves into a  
22 nuclear battle because our airplanes, guys like Herman Gilster who was flying B-47s at the time,  
23 hell, his engines were idling down here at Dyess Air Force base and their target was Russia. So  
24 had this thing happened, we were not only going to bomb the hell out of Cuba, but we would  
25 have bombed Red China and the Soviet Union too, because they would have made aggressive  
26 use of nuclear weapons. So that thing really came close to hitting the head and I've read a lot  
27 about it but I, I still, it was farfetched. It wasn't something I was going to be involved in. I  
28 wasn't in SAC and it took a long while to be prepared and trained in SAC aircraft and most of  
29 the people in strategic air command couldn't get out, so they just kept these guys in there. I  
30 trained a lot of them in IPIS because they never could get a landing. Most of them got airborne,  
31 flew 14 hours, came back, and the pilot landed so if the guy was the copilot the poor guy had

1 2000 hours of flying time but hell, he couldn't hardly touch the controls because the strategic air  
2 command was monitoring their nukes so closely and when the airplane came back in it had to  
3 land, and just taxi in, and then they had to park it in some place, oh God, it was a wild type of an  
4 organization to be with. So I tried to stay away from those and every chance I got to increase my  
5 education or take another course somewhere that would basically keep me out of one of those  
6 line units, so to speak. Strategic air command was the main one because the tactical air  
7 command had been drying up in its place. Air defense command, we didn't need really any air  
8 defense command because the Russians weren't going to fly bombers over here. So the only  
9 thing that was going was strategic air command and I didn't really care to get in that, and the end  
10 result is that's why when we walked into the Vietnam War we didn't have pilots qualified who  
11 could bomb, pinpoint anything. They were area bombers. They figured they would take a 105  
12 which was designed to carry nuclear bombs and all they'd have to do is line within five miles of  
13 the target and then put on the after burner and get the hell out of there. So that's why we then  
14 had to start retraining all these guys in the dive bombing technique that we hadn't used since  
15 World War II or Korea. But other than that, I was completely in agreement with all the training  
16 that was going on because I was pretty well writing some of the syllabuses for it.

17 SM: Now you mentioned Gilster?

18 RD: Yeah.

19 SM: And his aircraft was basically ready to take off and go bomb targets in Russia, if  
20 necessary, during the Cuban Missile Crisis. That was with nuclear weapons he was going to  
21 bomb?

22 RD: Oh sure. Yeah. These guys had B-47s ready to go and let's say refueled over the  
23 top of the country. We didn't know what the hell was going to happen to this thing. Was  
24 Khrushchev really going to turn those ships around or not? And when he sort of turned them,  
25 well then everybody thought Kennedy was a hero. Well later on we found out that we traded  
26 some things, we gave up this, we gave up missiles here, we made some negotiated settlements in  
27 Turkey and other places. But, at the time that was all classified top secret. So, you got to be  
28 around in the business and wanting to study it from a lessons learned point of view which we  
29 were trying to teach at the academy to these guys. Just what we did in it looked like we had a  
30 tremendous victory there. So we were getting ready to go into Vietnam and nail those little son

1 of a guns. I mean, they couldn't stand up to our technology, my God, there was no way, see!  
2 And most of our generals were SAC generals that were over there running it.

3 SM: Do you think that perception, you talked about almost, there seems to be a  
4 development of a sense of hubris here on the part of American forces. We forced the Soviets to  
5 back down in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Do you think that added to some of the arrogance that  
6 was part of the American mentality going into Vietnam?

7 RD: Oh yes, I think, its arrogance and total naiveté that we had no idea of the study of  
8 their history. I know when I was going through the University of Colorado I had a professor, his  
9 name was Leslie Fishman, and he was one of my microeconomics professors and he'd been in  
10 World War II and he told me a tale. Well one day I walked in, I was going back in there to do  
11 something in the afternoon after I'd been to the library and I smelled this God awful smell, and I  
12 said, 'Jesus, somebody left a latrine open and somebody must have had diarrhea in there!' And I  
13 walk by and here's Leslie sitting in his office and I go, 'God, what the hell is that?' And he said,  
14 'Come on in, Richard.' A lot of the people up there thought I was a CIA agent because I was the  
15 only guy with a crew cut running around on that campus! They were all long hairs at that time,  
16 anyway, and I tried to stay away from it and they had some demonstrations in the ROTC  
17 building where I had to go get my mail and things, but I stayed pretty aloof and I was at one of  
18 the, as I stated in the interview thing, I was at one of those whatever they call them.

19 SM: Teach in?

20 RD: Yeah, teach in! And they had it out there and it was pathetic because we had some  
21 people there. We had a man who must have been 90 years old who was head of the draft down  
22 in Denver and I mean, he was so senile, I mean it was pitiful! He was saying, he was talking in  
23 terms of, 'You got to do all this for your country,' and these kids were out there burning their  
24 draft cards looking at him and there must have been four or five hundred and this was late. I'd  
25 been in the library and I come out of the library and this thing had started at 9 o'clock right there  
26 outside the library and went on until about twelve. I stood back and watched them. Well Leslie  
27 was one of them who stood up and he had every copy of Bernard Fall's books right there. He  
28 started through them and said, and he'd hold one up and he said, "Nobody here's read this book,"  
29 and he'd put it down. "Nobody's read this book," he said, "My God, you people have to be  
30 crazy to think we can go over there and do anything," and I was thinking, "Oh Jesus, this guy's  
31 going to be evaluated by the FBI, CIA, Air Force intelligence, and I'm taking his damn course,"

1 see. But he didn't say anything about Vietnam in it. Anyway, he was leading the parade and he  
2 told me during this meeting when I was there and I was holding my nose because what had  
3 happened is he'd walked by a fraternity house as he was leading his parade and what he was  
4 asking me was, "Dick, should I have worn my silver star?" and I said, "Well hell yes, why not?"  
5 He was carrying a banner saying get out of Vietnam and he had as a sergeant in World War II  
6 walked up to a German pill box after the Normandy invasion. I mean he'd surrounded it and  
7 these guys wouldn't surrender. There were like one hundred Germans inside this damn enclave  
8 and he got the white flag and walked right up into it. Now he was Jewish and named Fishman on  
9 there you'd think they'd have shot him but he talked them out of there and for that they gave him  
10 the Silver Star. The Americans were going to bypass it anyway, but they would have had all  
11 kinds of firepower taken on them, so he got that particular award. And he asked me, he said,  
12 "You think..." and I said, "Sure," he said, "Well I didn't want to bring in my history of World  
13 War II which I fought in and thought was right," and so as he was walking by this fraternity  
14 house these kids up in the windows threw prophylactics filled with urine and diarrhea at him and  
15 one hit right on top of him. And so he marched the rest of the parade smelling like dog shit from  
16 there on and so he was almost crying in his office and he finally left. He had one kid had already  
17 gone to McNeal or whatever that school is up in Canada and he finally took a professorship over  
18 in England, so he left the country. That's how dedicated he was to this being a wrong war. And  
19 another professor I had was a Quaker, Kenneth Bolding, and I'm telling you, I was just really  
20 loud. He would just get me and tell me, he'd say, "Dick, this is wrong, wrong, wrong!" And I'd  
21 sit there and I'd say, "But, here I am in the military, what are you talking about? How do we  
22 know it's wrong? What kind of information do you have?" Well, it was just, "It's silly," see, he  
23 couldn't show me anything that we weren't stopping communism in its tracks over there. So  
24 anyway, I was kind of, pushed back and forth, but when I went, I went saying, "Look it, I'm  
25 going to do my job over there and that's what I've spent 14 years. The Air Force has given me  
26 pilot training, a master's degree, a Ph.D., I've had this beautiful career and I'm a major going on  
27 lieutenant colonel and I've got to get my time in and I think I'll do it by doing this mission."  
28 Well no sooner did I get in RANCH HAND that by the time I went to train, and see I finished  
29 my Ph.D. in November of...I think it was November 5<sup>th</sup> I defended my dissertation up at  
30 University of Colorado and my wife was packing our belongings and heading to Texas because I  
31 would come down from Boulder to the Air Force Academy, pick her up, and then we drove

1 down to Texas. I left her here in Texas in an apartment because her parents were here and she  
2 was an only child and I had two daughters and he was going to put them in a school here, a grade  
3 school. I immediately headed up to Richenbocker Air Force Base which is in Columbus, Ohio  
4 and started C-123 training. I had to go through that training program, and I'm just looking on the  
5 wall here, that was called, "Air Crew Familiarization," and then in parenthesis, "C-123K,"  
6 parenthesis. 7 December '69 I completed it and then I went in. Before that I told you I'd already  
7 been to USA Air Force Survival Training Course S-D80-4. Now that was up out at Fairchild Air  
8 Force Base and that was in July.

9 SM: Okay, and that was a two week course, is that right?

10 RD: What?

11 SM: How long was that?

12 RD: That was about two weeks.

13 SM: Okay.

14 RD: You took a trek and you had a lot of classroom and then you went through these  
15 different types of prison camps.

16 SM: Was it hard?

17 RD: Well, I was thirty-six and I mean there were guys right out of pilot training, right out of  
18 college, that I could hear them screaming when they put them in little boxes and left them in  
19 these rooms naked. Oh, they'd put you in a little box and make you strip naked and you'd have a  
20 bag over your head all the time, and the guys that were doing this to us were all DIA and CIA  
21 trainees. So they would be subjecting us to what they thought, and what information by 1969  
22 we'd gotten out of the few people who'd escaped. We just didn't have much escape. Nobody  
23 from the North other than Dangler or somebody else who might have been dropped off way  
24 south and he tried to make his way out, and anyway, our view was from the French. We knew  
25 what the hell the French went through and they were doing the same thing to us that they did to  
26 the French so it wasn't like, "Hey, it was different," and the Koreans did almost the same thing.  
27 So it was a history of just going back and seeing how the oriental treated and what they did with  
28 brainwashing and other things like that and how they tried to break it down. So they tried to give  
29 us that course and I was involved in that during that summer. The trek is what killed me because  
30 I had been in the library, not on the golf course where at least I was somewhat healthy. I mean, I  
31 was a white lily liver going to this thing and Jesus, I would always be one man from the last in



1 the trail and the guy last would always be moaning and sitting down, "I can't go on!" And so the  
2 airman who was leading us, he'd have to stop and he'd always come back to that guy. Well hell,  
3 that just made me...I would flop on my butt and drink all this water and whatever else and try to  
4 stay up and then I'd...and who was leading this were all these young, 24-25 year old lieutenants.

5 They were ready to go over the top climb and what we did, we never went up trails, we never  
6 went up on, when they took us into the mountains just east of Fairchild there in eastern  
7 Washington state, they had all these avalanche slides with the snow and these trees were just  
8 laying and we had to go right straight across them. You couldn't ever stay on the trail, see  
9 because the purpose was, "If you stay on the trail, you're going to get captured." So you've got  
10 to go straight across country and so we'd have to navigate to a point with the compass and go  
11 straight across country which meant climbing over these damn trees that had fallen down, or  
12 under them. And oh God, in July, the ticks, the bugs, the rain, it was just, it was miserable, and  
13 so I would always stay one or two ahead of the guys in the last. And if you [?], and if they had to  
14 pull you out, you had to go back through it again. You couldn't go to Vietnam unless you passed

15 this course and then it was in your record and so on like that and I knew I could do it, hell, I  
16 figured I could always stay up with that. But when we got into the interrogation and areas like  
17 that that's where I excel because hell, it was a mental game and when I walked into the room  
18 with this one DIA agent there was a picture of Ho Chi Minh on the wall behind him and they  
19 said, "Name, rank, serial number," well, they knew from your serial number what state you were  
20 born in, when you were born, they had all this information just like probably they had over there  
21 and they could tell you before you even opened your mouth whether you were going to lie or not.

22 But anyway, I start briefing this guy and I said, "Oh, I see you got Ho Chi Minh's picture and  
23 Karl Marx," and I had just written part of...I'd taken courses in Soviet Economics and Marxian  
24 Economics. Well hell, I start briefing this guy on it and he finally turned to me and says, "Just  
25 get out of here!" So that was the end of my interview because I knew more about communism  
26 and its faults and its benefits that they were offering vs. capitalism. Hell, I'd been teaching this  
27 for 6 years! So it was really interesting and I played that game and I said, "Now I know it's not  
28 going to be like that if I get captured," because guys like McCain and others in this book *Honor*  
29 *Bound* have stated that they tried to play all kinds of games, and these people just beat the crap  
30 out of them from one end to the other. So, it wasn't any fun if they caught you involved in trying

31 to out think them or out smart them. But anyway, I had been in that program. So when I

1 finished my dissertation and brought her down here, by the middle of November I was up flying  
2 a 123 for about, I think, it was like 80 hours flying time. See you get four hours a mission so  
3 that's only 20 days and we flew every damn day. I transitioned out of that so I was qualified to  
4 be a tactical C-123 pilot. Now that allowed me...that meant I could go over and be a trash  
5 hauler, also, and make assault landings and different things like that. But then we had a  
6 Christmas break and then I had to report to the next course which was called, "C-123 Pilot  
7 Tactical Training Course" at Hurlburt Field at Eglin, Texas (Florida), Eglin Air Force Base, it  
8 was an auxiliary field down there and it's the special operations and that's where I flew. I got  
9 trained again using the 123K as a herbicide airplane and we would take off and then go spray all  
10 the damn canals with water down there because we weren't going to use herbicide, on our own  
11 country! So we'd just fill it up with water and spray and so it was a different mission whereas  
12 when you flew the 123 up at Rickover Air Force Base, we'd come in almost over the end of the  
13 runway and then dive the airplane straight down and make these assault landings and we'd turn  
14 the airplane in and God, we'd use the brakes like we were landing, we had to land in under one  
15 thousand feet like we were landing on some field, unprepared field over in Vietnam. And they'd  
16 load us up with 10,000 pounds of damn junk in the back end on big pallets, they'd put them in  
17 there and we'd offload that and then cram up and head on out of there. And so that type of  
18 training was totally different because when you got in RANCH HAND you made approaches.  
19 We'd take off with 10,000 pounds of herbicide in liquid form in a big tank and we just make a  
20 long take off run, join up in an echelon type formation, and then go in and go at 6,000 feet until  
21 the FAC, forward air controller, smoked the target and once he smoked the target the lead  
22 airplane would say, "Take 'em down cowboys, now!" We'd rack it off, put the props full  
23 forward, and dive that airplane at a 45-degree dive! This was a big piece of crap going straight  
24 down almost and we'd pull out about 300 feet and gradually add power to maximum take off  
25 power and fly the mission for as much as five minutes at 100 feet above the tree tops at 125 to 30  
26 knots. And just suck up bullets like you never saw. And we could go anywhere from two ship,  
27 three ship, to ten ship formation. Everybody's screaming, 'I'm taking hits, number six taking  
28 hits, number five taking hits.' And then the FAC would sit up above and what we did was threw  
29 out smoke bombs. The enlisted guy in the back, we called him a technician, who was running  
30 the pump to pressurize the tank so we could spray the herbicide out, he sat in an armor plated  
31 box back there. We had the two doors, side doors off the airplane that were right next to him and

1 he had a bunch of smoke bombs, and whatever he could hear us taking hits it sound like popcorn  
2 popping. Sometimes when you're flying up there in the cockpit you never could hear it. He  
3 would scream, 'We're taking hits, I'm throwing smoke,' and he would then pull a smoke bomb  
4 and throw it through the door. Well when it hit, then the FAC would call in our fighter escort to  
5 hose down the area about 300 feet behind where that smoke bomb was. Well by then those little  
6 bastards were gone, but at least they knew that if they shot at us we were going to retaliate in  
7 some way or another. And that's why we had air cover. But mainly, mainly we had fighter  
8 escorts in case we went in because if we went in, that fighter escort then, we never carried  
9 parachutes and so if we crashed the fighters would circle until the helicopters could get out there  
10 to maybe rescue us. So that was basically my impression. We flew with the windows open and,  
11 because we were taking hits right through the windows and that would have shattered the glass.  
12 But, also it allowed us an escape way to get out of the airplane. We always had a pilot/copilot,  
13 and then the engineer in the back who was running the technical thing. And on the lead ship  
14 they'd have a navigator. Oh God, this mission was more closely controlled than nuclear  
15 weapons missions because we had to make sure we hit target because this stuff would drift and  
16 there were reports that we, it was harming other areas and doing stuff to crops and things so we  
17 always had to make sure it went in right on target.

18 SM: You mentioned about the faculty at the Air Force Academy and I just wanted to  
19 take one last brief step backwards and talk about the anti war sentiment that existed there and did  
20 you account of that anywhere else? You said that there were a couple of Air Force Academy  
21 officers that were court marshaled because they refused to go and they thought the war was  
22 wrong.

23 RD: Right.

24 SM: What was the premise of that and of that sentiment and how much other experience  
25 have you had with that kind of mentality?

26 RD: Well we had a bunch of Catholic nuns come down! My wife and I were going to  
27 church. We'd go over to the chapel there and that was always a great attraction for the tourists  
28 they'd always go to this beautiful spiraled chapel at the Air Force Academy and we were  
29 Protestant so we'd go in there. Well these people had a standing vigil, and the lecture was going  
30 on or the sermon. They'd all stand up through the whole damn thing! They never did raise hell  
31 and scream and throw things but you always had these Catholic nuns and priests standing up

1 during the sermon and we joked and said, “Well you know what we’re really training at the  
2 Academy, is these cadets are going to be perimeter defense,” because we’re under siege here.  
3 We had the fence and you had to go through the gates like you do at a normal military base, but  
4 there were so many damn tourists you couldn’t keep these people out. And they’d come in and  
5 we had air police at the door to make sure there wasn’t demonstrations and, I mean, it was tough  
6 and the cadets were going through it. A lot of them didn’t understand, what in the hell they go  
7 up on stage; as a matter of fact, we had some of the problems there. It was interesting. One of  
8 the, this head of the commandant of cadets came in one day and he said, “the worst problems I  
9 had,” he was giving us a commander’s call of type, and he said, “The worst problems I had are  
10 over parking and haircuts!” He said, “Jesus, I thought we were training these kids and educating  
11 them along the way to be career Air Force officers!” Not like ROTC which was a reserve  
12 officer, you were just going to go in, serve your time, and get out. These guys were career  
13 because we were spending 100 to 200,000 bucks on each one getting him through and they were.  
14 There were so many of them that just...as a matter of fact that’s one of the problems that I have  
15 today and why I am writing and when people say, “What are you doing this for, Dick?” it’s  
16 because I was so eager as a cold war warrior when I was teaching at the Academy, and they  
17 wanted guys like us to stand up in front of those cadets and not egg them on but, talk patriotism  
18 to them, talk the benefits of Air Force Air Power and how we could win wars and we weren’t  
19 going to have this nation decimated by any communist power. I mean we lost 152 of those kids  
20 over in Vietnam and Fred Hess was one of them and that’s why I write about him because the  
21 nation, when I came back, the nation just wasn’t that happy to have us to have participated in  
22 that wrong war at a wrong time. And I just didn’t think they understood the full impact of it and  
23 right now we’re now getting some revision of the historians who are going back through and  
24 saying, “ it wasn’t a wrong war. It was a right war. It was a necessary war.” No president could  
25 have said, “We cannot confront communism, I don’t care where the hell it is,” at that particular  
26 time in that particular vein in the 1960’s. And so therefore even though we lost, we had a  
27 stalemate in Korea, we lost there. The Soviet’s lost in Afghanistan, and then Reagan’s  
28 administration basically, as many will say, pushed them over the hill with Star Wars and  
29 whatever else, but we won the damn war against communism. It’s over with. We never had to  
30 fight them directly, but we had to fight those limited battles somewhere and the thing is, when  
31 you fight a war you don’t win all your battles. And in Vietnam we just didn’t win a battle but

1 that's beside the point. From what I learned later and how I felt at the time, but it was, I can't  
2 remember what my train was on at the time that I was talking but I got off on that subject and...

3 SM: Well I was curious about the sentiment at the Air Force academy amongst those  
4 professors or those instructors who were opposed to the war?

5 RD: Well I didn't...look it, I didn't...

6 SM: Did you ever talk to them?

7 RD: I didn't, no. I said, "Those guys got their own reasons." One was an F-100  
8 instructor and when they told him he was going to go back over there he claimed conscientious  
9 objection. I know Mel Laiken who was head of the ethics department. We had two or three  
10 cadets who were at that time claiming conscientious objection and didn't want to go. But what  
11 was really funny about it is, in the end, and see I was an economist. Everything to me has not  
12 gone on a religious basis or necessarily political basis, but it's gone on economics. That's why I  
13 tend to go along with Marx in some areas because economic determinism is the important thing  
14 that caused a lot of this. So on and on we go with it but these kids claimed that they did not want  
15 to go and they were seniors. Would we commission them or not? No. And then in the end three  
16 of the four, after Mel Laiken spent a bunch of time, now he was the captain and head of ethics  
17 and English department out of Notre Dame, a navigator. Hell he was bumped over, skipped  
18 lieutenant colonel and made colonel as head of the department and has been up there for years.  
19 He just retired recently, but he interviewed these guys and I remember talking to Mel one day  
20 and he said, he said, "What was funny about them," he said, "I believed that they really thought  
21 they were conscientious objectors" but in the end, when I asked them, "What are you going to do  
22 now that we're letting you out?" They sued them, but the judge said, we sued them for like  
23 50,000 dollars apiece because we said that was the cost of the education. Well in the Economics  
24 department we knew that this was probably costing us 200,000 but we were afraid to say it was  
25 costing us that much because we told congress it was now down to about 50,000 per person.  
26 And so we were caught in some of our own stuff. The end result was that Mel said that, "Once  
27 these kids," three of the four said, "Oh, I'm going to use the GI Bill and go and get my  
28 education." We'd say, "How the hell could you say you were a conscientious objector, then turn  
29 right around and use the military program." After you go two years you don't get any benefits,  
30 but after when you go two more years to the Academy you qualify as if you'd been in the service  
31 for two years somewhere. And so therefore, you qualify for GI Bill or anything else in case

1 you...let's say you got out, your eyes were bad or you flunked the medical before you were  
2 commissioned and couldn't get a commissioning. Why then, you could claim you had served  
3 two years in the military and get the GI Bill from that, and these kids all wanted to take  
4 advantage of all these things that were offered by the government but they didn't want to go and  
5 maybe fight for the government. So that was about it. I kind of stayed aloof from that. I flew, I  
6 was busy as hell writing that dissertation, getting that thing done, starting new course work.  
7 When I came back we were undermanned, we had guys over there, I knew I was going. It was a  
8 matter of time and I kept thinking, "Well the damn thing will be over before I get over there,"  
9 see. And I wasn't saying, "I'll miss it," I wasn't eager to go. My wife wasn't for it at all, and so  
10 I said, "Well, but I got to go, Hon. This is it. It's my job. I spent 14 years in and we've had a  
11 good career and now it's my turn." And so I, I didn't... and I knew RANCH HAND was  
12 probably on it's death throws over there and that I'd probably be in some other mission and my  
13 hope was that I would get over there, fly. It almost was like I planned it. I went over, I'll plan,  
14 I'll get combat qualified, I'll fly maybe three months and then I'll go down to a staff job because  
15 I got a Ph.D. What in the hell, why not use that analytical ability to evaluate the war? That's all  
16 we were doing. Every general down at 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force was sitting there with his butt puckered  
17 every day sending out 500 sorties wondering how effective he was. And the only effect we were  
18 doing was our BDA, bomb damage assessment, we were saying, at that time, was trucks killed.  
19 This was out country because we weren't bombing the north at that time so we were just working  
20 the trail. So our whole analysis was how many trucks we killing every day, and if we kill 300,  
21 God, he can't keep this up. Well, the problem was the guy wasn't making trucks in North  
22 Vietnam, they were shipping them to him free of charge. He could have any number he wanted  
23 and go on no matter what we were doing in our losses. It just, I think in one book I've been  
24 reading lately it said, in Rolling Thunder we cost them 600 million dollars worth of property  
25 damage by our bombs, shooting down air planes, bombing, whatever. They, during that same  
26 period received two billion dollars worth of assets shipped in from Russia and China. So it was a  
27 no win situation from the very beginning, we couldn't attrit, I mean, we were attriting more and  
28 costing more and losing airplanes and not really hurting them in our bombing and whatever we  
29 bombed they just didn't have enough targets over there for our tactical or any strategic type  
30 bombing to go on.

31 SM: So when did you actually first arrive in country?

1 RD: I arrived in country on 28<sup>th</sup> February, took my first flight that day and the very last.  
2 What I did is I left the states on 18 February. Now everybody that was rated did this same  
3 procedure; you would leave country out of Seattle and fly either north to Alaska and then down  
4 through Japan and into Vietnam in a 141 or you would fly in a civilian airliner. Now what  
5 happened to me is I had to go across via Hawaii because I had to go to Clark Air Force Base and  
6 go through what they called 'Jungle, [?] Jungle Survival School,' and on 27<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1970 I  
7 graduated from that course. Now that was only like four days long but when I got there they had  
8 just started the school so I couldn't go into it and so I sat there for four days swimming, playing  
9 golf, hitting golf balls because I was white as a lily liver after coming out of the training I had  
10 been through and it was winter in the United States when I went over and so it was warm over  
11 there and I'd stay at the swimming pool in Angel City and all the whore houses right outside the  
12 gate. Oh God, it was just a cesspool over there and I wasn't going to get involved in any of that  
13 crap because, I was a major going on lieutenant colonel and I had a happy life. I didn't need to  
14 go around all those hooches and bars, and so I said this is, and I read a lot and had some books  
15 that I was still working on and things. I finally went through survival school and they drop you  
16 out and you have to evade and a little Negrito Pigmies come and find you, they can smell you,  
17 and you hide in the brush over night and the God damn rats are as big as cats over there, and then  
18 you, then they get you in a centralized place, they bring in a jolly green giant helicopter and they  
19 put you on the lift and up you go. So you have to guide the airplane in with your radio and then  
20 they pick you up and so you went through an actual jungle extraction. That prepared you to  
21 where, okay you're going to do this. Now once you go through that course and graduate, then  
22 you fly in country and you report to your organization. So I reported to my organization on the  
23 night of 27 and I flew my first mission on the 28<sup>th</sup> of February, a RANCH HAND spray mission.  
24 And, because we were so well qualified after flying what we did, the course we went through,  
25 shit it wasn't hard to get in the seat! Now you weren't the command pilot, I was a copilot on  
26 these to learn the mission under hails of bullets. There were like twenty, we went through like  
27 twenty, let me see, how many did I, well you can see if I flew that, my theater indoctrination  
28 training was finished on 7 March of 1970. So I was qualified, I got a certificate of completion of  
29 theater indoctrination training signed on 7 March of 1970. In literally 8 days I went through the  
30 whole whatever, I think there were like 16 missions you had to fly. But, we were flying two a  
31 day. We would fly two lifts. We'd take one lift, go out and spray, turn around, come back, re-

1 “herbie,” take off, and fly the second because we’d have to be over target at sunrise. The FAC  
2 took off right at night and would be circling over our target and he would smoke it to see which  
3 way the wind was blowing and his estimate of what the wind condition was because we could  
4 not spray over 10 knots or 85 degrees temperature and that meant we had to spray before 9  
5 o’clock in the morning or we’d have to do it at night. Night was no good. We tried that one time  
6 earlier and it didn’t work out so, in the program. Because this was the 9<sup>th</sup> year of RANCH  
7 HAND spray so by this time we had every nook and cranny covered. They had tried everything  
8 five times over and this was the best way to do it. And ,so I would fly two lifts and I got checked  
9 out, then, and later on I was checked out up at Danang as an aircraft commander and I switched  
10 up there. After I checked out, see I was a major going on LC and when I got over there, man, it  
11 looked like everyone in the operation was either a first lieutenant right out of pilot school or he  
12 was a major and a few lieutenant colonels running it. And so hell, they looked at me and said,  
13 “Not another God damn major! What are we going to do with this guy? Well send him up to Da  
14 Nang, he can be the next operations officer when that major leaves.” And so what happened is,  
15 and it was funny going through this training at both Hurlburt and at Rickenbacker. The guy who  
16 I trained with was a guy named Joe Wolusen, or Wojulusen or something like that. He was out  
17 of West Virginia and he had just gotten out of T-38s. He had never seen a propeller on an  
18 airplane before, literally! And he’d sit there and he was almost mesmerized looking at this prop  
19 out there turning. I was thinking, “Joe, get your God damn eyes back in here on these  
20 instruments! You’re going to have to manage my power while I fly this airplane in formation  
21 and use the spray button.” It was on the yoke, and so the copilot would sit there and look at the  
22 instruments and keep the air speed at 130 knots while you went up and down or over the  
23 mountains or turned, whatever else, and also call out if there was any triple A coming up at you  
24 because you were sitting there looking at this airplane off your wing trying to keep in formation  
25 so you didn’t fly through his spray swath to get the right kill down on the jungle. So, but these  
26 guys were funny and the one individual that, now there were four of us in this class. I was with  
27 Joe and I stayed with Joe the whole time and then this other guy named Jim Downs had a guy by  
28 the name of Deas, D-E-A-S, Chuck, I think his name was Chuck Deas, yeah. Anyway, he was  
29 weak and we knew he was weak and the guy that was flying with him, Downs, had already been  
30 one tour in Vietnam in 123s and he literally gave Chuck Deas all of his time when he was flying  
31 up. I needed to check out in a 123 because it flew different than a T-29 and I wanted to fly it so



1 I'd get my two hours and then Joe would get in the seat and get his two hours and I was much  
2 more experienced with the airplane and the engines than Joe had ever been, but still, I had to get  
3 my flying time so I got my 40 hours or whatever it was and Joe got his. Well Downs I  
4 understood only got about 10 hours because he'd flown this airplane for, he had like 1600 hours  
5 in it and so he gave Deas all of his time, the guy would sit in the seat for like three ½ hours and  
6 fly and still he was weak. And I'll be damned that at the end of our tour on February 18<sup>th</sup> of  
7 1971 when I DEROSed out of there, you know what DEROS is, Date of Return from Overseas,  
8 that was my date, I stayed the full year. Nobody else that went over with us stayed that because  
9 RANCH HAND was closing down and they were shipping guys over. A lot of them at 10  
10 months they were letting them come back home. Deas had never checked out in RANCH  
11 HAND but had become a bug bird pilot. Now the bug bird was a malithyon airplane that we left  
12 non-camouflaged because there was like a humanitarian mission. It would fly over the bases at  
13 about 500 feet and sprayed malithyon to kill the mosquitoes, and it had to do this every 10 or 12  
14 days, the cycle of the mosquitoes. They had two of them doing that and they would go TDY, up  
15 the coast and down the coast at different bases. Da Nang, they would spray Quang Tri. They'd  
16 spray Vung Tau, they would spray Tuy Hoa, any of these bases, Cam Ranh Bay, and then they'd  
17 come into Tan Son Nhut, spray there, and then go over to Bien Hoa and they'd always have to  
18 "herbie" up at one place, but they could stay. They only sprayed like 200 gallons at each base  
19 and they could carry 1000. And on February the 8<sup>th</sup>, no, let's see, February the 11<sup>th</sup>, excuse me,  
20 February 14<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, four days before, Chuck Deas finished spraying. They were flying out of  
21 Phan Rang now because they had moved it over there as a flight and they only had like four or  
22 five airplanes over there. He was flying with a young lieutenant, a navigator who was about 40  
23 years old, white-headed guy. They always carried navigators on these, the malithyon mission.  
24 There were two guys checking out in the rear, both master sergeants because they liked this  
25 mission, they never got shot at versus RANCH HAND who was always getting hosed down.  
26 And they said, well Chuck finally checked out as an aircraft commander about two months  
27 before that and he'd been flying the bug bird. On his finny flight, now that's the final flight of  
28 your tour over there. He was coming back across his base at Phan Rang and he was popping  
29 purple smoke off the rear end. There were guys out there taking photos of this because he was  
30 coming. He pulled that airplane almost straight up, both jet engines flamed out because he  
31 pulled it up nose too high right into the end of the run way straight down killing all five of them.

1 So, I'm sitting there after all my IPIS, pilot training, stand board training, I'm sitting there  
2 saying, "How in the hell could they have let this guy ever have control of that airplane." But, he  
3 was over there, they figured, "He won't pull something so stupid as that," but he pulled the damn  
4 nose up too high trying to do a complete 360 turn after he had come across the field about 200  
5 knots at maximum power on. But what happened is if you pull the nose of that 123 up too high  
6 both jet engines flame out on you and so it just stalled out and came right straight back down.

7 SM: Oh goodness.

8 RD: Killed five of them right on the end of the runway. And so those were the five guys  
9 that made up five of the twenty-six that we lost over the seven or eight-year period we were  
10 spraying over there. Five dead on the runway right then.

11 SM: Wasn't that aspect of the aircrafts, wasn't that well known amongst the pilots, that if  
12 you pulled up too high you would flame out?

13 RD: Yeah, but guys were, we were trying to dog it. I mean, he was trying to make a,  
14 coming across with that kind of air speed, he figured he could pull up like a jet. He'd been  
15 trained in a jet. And you pull up a jet like that and the damn thing is still screaming way the hell  
16 up as you climb back up from 100 feet or 50 feet above the deck to maybe 500 and start your  
17 downwind leg so you can make your 180 degree turn final and drop your gear and come in for  
18 landing. The one thing also that contributed, he had filled up with malithyon before he went  
19 over to Cam Ranh Bay to spray. Okay, he only sprayed 200 gallons. Now that meant he still  
20 had 800 gallons in his tank and that weighed about twelve to thirteen pounds per gallon, which  
21 was about four pounds more than the herbicide we sprayed. So he still had about 10,000 pounds  
22 of shit in the back end of his airplane. That was the most you could carry in a 123 was about  
23 12,000 pounds and it was over grossed. Who knows, but this was one you write up to total pilot  
24 error and five guys paid the price, or four others for a guy who was weak. And other than that  
25 during my tour we didn't lose anybody. We had a lot of them shot up, guys were wounded but  
26 we didn't lose any airplanes because in 1968 they put these two jet engines out there on the wing  
27 and made the C-123D, they made it a C-123K which meant you had two more jet engines sitting  
28 out there that gave you, like, four motors on that airplane. So at two engines it was, that's why  
29 they lost several before that, I mean, if they take a hit that airplane would go down see, and but  
30 when they put those jets on it we never lost one until Deas went in on that last one and that was  
31 just, I mean, it's like something you do at an air show. Why did that guy just die from [?] here in

1 an F-16? I don't know where he was but I think some place in Texas and he didn't pull out of a  
2 loop, and I talked to him at 10<sup>th</sup> Air Force the other day and I said, "What the..." and he said,  
3 "When you pull over the top," these were four F-16 guys sitting there, all colonels with over two  
4 thousand hours in the bird. They said, "When you pull over the top, you got a certain altitude  
5 that you better be at. If you don't, you abort the airplane right there," and this guy didn't. They  
6 could tell from the pictures he was at that minimum altitude and he never pulled out. Now why  
7 this guy had umpteen hours in this airplane I don't know what the hell happens. Maybe he just  
8 forgot at that moment and it cost him his life and airplane. But, when you're flying a multi  
9 engine airplane like we do you got a crew in there and my object was you always were more, you  
10 had to make sure your crew was taken care of. And you were so careful with it and you stayed  
11 up on all these procedures and stand board things and watched your engines, and I mean I flew  
12 with puckered asshole every time I flew because I never knew when I was going to have to  
13 punch one out and I wanted to be alert and ready to do it instead of getting this get-home-itis,  
14 sleep in the cockpit type stuff that I'd see a lot of guys participate in. Anyway, it kills you in  
15 combat because there you better know how to fly that airplane because when the bullets start  
16 flying you can't be sitting there flying like you're sitting, flying some nice smooth ride  
17 somewhere. You're jinking and doing all kinds of stuff but you don't have, the jets always had  
18 the power. They could always kick in that after burner and get themselves out of there. We  
19 never did have that. It would take us four minutes to go from 130 knots when we kicked the jets  
20 in to get us up to about 220. What we'd do is we'd finish our spray run and then the lead guy  
21 would say, "Cowboys," we were all called cowboys because everything was RANCH HAND,  
22 the corral and all that kind of crap that went on, so they'd say, "Okay cowboys, max power."  
23 And so we'd push up the jets that were staged already at 95 percent, we'd push those in. Well  
24 they'd give us a jolt to about 140 knots and then we'd gradually pick up. That thing would start  
25 shaking because it wasn't used to flying at 200 knots. It was like it shook itself apart. At about  
26 220 we would still be skimming right on the treetops by now to keep down some ground fire.  
27 About that time he'd say, "Cowboys, take them up now," and we'd just pull the yoke right back  
28 in our guts and that airplane would shoot up to 1,000 feet and then almost go into a stall but we  
29 could at least get the hell out of the ground fire. I think 85 percent of the aircraft lost in Vietnam  
30 were lost under, when they were under 1,000 feet. And so we would get out of that ground fire  
31 and then we would be ready to come on back. We'd then close down the jets and fly with the

1 resets because the jets ate way too much fuel, I mean, they would just really suck the fuel out of  
2 that thing and the airplane was never designed to have jets on it. So they were just auxiliary  
3 aircraft engines and when Chuck Deas pulls up like that and flames out two engines when he's  
4 almost going 30 degrees nose high or 40 degrees, whatever the hell he was at trying to turn back  
5 180 degrees in a turn, he lost all his lift off his wings and the engines just couldn't hold him and  
6 he just went straight down with all that load he had in there. So anyway that was one, I wasn't  
7 up there, but when I got to Hawaii I was saving a seat for him to go home. He was going to fly  
8 down from Phan Rang to Ton Son Nhut and we were going to fly back together and I kept  
9 saying, "Well that son of a bitch has been at a going away party and he's probably drunk on his  
10 butt and he didn't make it!" And then I got to Hawaii and I said, "I'm going to call back and  
11 check it out," and they said, "Oh hell, two days ago he pranged in with four other guys." So I  
12 said, "What a hell of a way to finish a tour," see. Four days short of a year and he's on the end  
13 of the runway. And his family, I ran into somebody who knew his family down at Maxwell, I  
14 think the mother had already died and the father was dying of cancer. The sister wanted to talk  
15 to me about it and I told the guy, I said, "Look it, as far as I know it's a footnote in the official  
16 history of the Air Force by RANCH HAND, *Operation RANCH HAND* by Buckingham." What  
17 he said is that they could not find any ground fire that hit that airplane and therefore they  
18 assumed that, because they were probably trying to figure why he didn't get a bunch of air  
19 medals or some kind of a medal for doing this. Well how the hell are you going to give a guy a  
20 Distinguished Flying Cross for pranging in four other guys?

21 SM: Right.

22 RD: But yet at the end, he gave his life in Vietnam for whatever reason. There you go.  
23 That's how it works out.

24 SM: So your first missions with RANCH HAND as true defoliation missions, how did  
25 that go?

26 RD: Well as I said in my questionnaire there, one of them, they were good. There were  
27 no problems because by then there wasn't that much going on in country. You remember 1970,  
28 see TET had already occurred. We'd wiped the hell out of the VC down there, there weren't a  
29 lot of North Vietnamese regulars moving into that area, so we were spraying the same targets  
30 that we had sprayed in the past. The Army was saying, "Hey, they're growing up." Every target  
31 we had, the Army had to, one of the reasons the Air Force didn't really like this mission too

1 much but we wanted it because we didn't want the Army to be flying fixed wing airplanes and  
2 that's how we'd gotten the C-7s away from them. We said, "You can have all the helicopters  
3 you want but you're not going to fly fixed wing airplanes." And when they said, "Who's going  
4 to fly the herbicide mission," well RANCH HAND was already doing it. We said, "Well we're  
5 going to take it," and but we would defer to them on targeting. Now this is one thing that you  
6 will find, God no Air Force officer went to Army target. Hell we're going to pick our own  
7 targets through intelligence and so on. We'll support you but only in close air support where  
8 there's a FAC flying over and even that's an Air Force FAC picking the targets and calling them  
9 in although sometimes on the ground the Army would put smoke out and they'd say, "Hit that  
10 target out there," and we'd do it because this was close air support. But, on almost every other  
11 target, we wanted our own. The Air Force found in World War II, and that's what I learned in  
12 ROTC, that you did not tie an Air Force down to each Army unit. You had a centralized Air  
13 Force, we had a centralized command, and then we would then say, "Hey, that threat's greater  
14 over here, we're going to do that with all of our forces and we'll leave this guy without an  
15 umbrella over him." I'm sorry, but there's no trouble over there. Why should he have a force of  
16 airplanes sitting on the ground just in case something happened? So anyway, when I got down  
17 there to 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force I found that the Air Force was just, they were saying, "We're going to be  
18 blamed for using all this herbicide over here and we want out of this mission," and the RANCH  
19 HAND is too damn eager to fly every mission the Army wants because these guys were over  
20 there, they were professionals. By God, if the Army said, "Hey, we need to spray that," we  
21 didn't go in and say, "Are you sure? Are you sure? Are you sure?" We said, "You damn right,  
22 we'll go in there with any number you want and we'll spray the shit out of them!" We were so  
23 eager to get these missions, we got medals for it, we got...had big parties over it, and so there  
24 was a spirit of...just like we were going North and bombing Hanoi, I'm telling you. And I kind  
25 of questioned that and said, "God, are these targets really that necessary?" But after you worked  
26 your tail off as a targeting officer you began to believe this is the most important target in the  
27 world. And so everybody went out there eager to do their job.

28 SM: I'm sorry, let's talk about the targeting process. You mentioned in one of your  
29 answers on the questionnaire that all of the missions had to go through province chiefs?

30 RD: Yeah, right.

31 SM: To get their approval?

1 RD: Uh huh.

2 SM: So one of the interesting things about Operation RANCH HAND and the use of  
3 defoliants and the particular Agent Orange in Vietnam, all the allegations that American soldiers  
4 were sprayed over and all these other things. But from a military stand point it seems like, well,  
5 obviously there would have been some kind of a check system in place to make sure that not  
6 only weren't the herbicides used improperly from the Vietnamese prospective but also so that  
7 our soldiers wouldn't be sprayed.

8 RD: Right. Well you see, what I liked about my tour and I think I said it in that  
9 interview sheet a little bit, is that I was able to go three months as a combat aircraft commander.  
10 Then I went down to 7<sup>th</sup> and saw what the view was from 7<sup>th</sup> for this operation that was closing  
11 down and I virtually had to close it down. Then I went into the analysis shop and analyzed the  
12 whole Commando Hunt operation which was our interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail to keep  
13 the North Vietnamese out long enough for us to get our damn troops out. Then it was going to  
14 turn it over to the Vietnamese. That was the name of the game under the Nixon administration in  
15 '69 and '70 and so what I was doing down there as the herbicide project officer after I went to 7<sup>th</sup>  
16 was I was fragging the missions. Now fragment, that means that there's an operation order sent  
17 out each day covering all the 500 or 600 sorties you're going to send out. How they should  
18 be...what weapons they're going to carry, what their target is, where they're going to go, have  
19 they clearance and all this kind of stuff. But when you fragment it, what you do is you pull a  
20 fragment off and it goes to your organization. So that's what we called ourselves, the fraggers  
21 and as a matter of fact I've written a national piece and I'm looking at the title now. It's not  
22 published yet, it's just in my archives here that I'll send you. Hopefully, I thought that you  
23 people might start publishing some things up there, actually printing them up and having little  
24 booklets on it under the auspices of the Vietnam Center. But you're not to that yet, but we'll see  
25 what happens on this. It's called, *The Fragging Ranch Hand: Trail Dust in the Halls at*  
26 *Headquarters, 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force*. And this is, "The responsibilities of the herbicide project officer at  
27 the special operations branch, herbicide operations, current plans division, tactical air control  
28 center, headquarters 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force, Republic of Vietnam, as remembered by the last trail dust,"  
29 and then in quotes, "Fragging Ranch Hand in Saigon; a personal perspective." And what I've  
30 done is written about 25 pages taken from all the memos that I was able to collect when they  
31 closed RANCH HAND down and put them all together and said, "This was what we did as the

1 RANCH HAND fragger down there.” And what I had to do is, the missions, the targets were  
2 chosen by the chemical officers with the field forces and they were either, and they could be  
3 offered by the province chiefs or the commanders in the Vietnam, VNAF commanders in that  
4 area, and/or the Army. And then they would go up the Army chain of commands all the way to  
5 the ambassador. They would go up the Vietnamese chain of commands all the way to their joint  
6 staff. They would be decided upon and by that time then they would come...once said, “Okay,  
7 it’s all right to spray it on,’ they were then sent to the CONUS MACV, General Abrams or  
8 Westmoreland, he would approve it. Then they would go to our Ambassador and we had a  
9 group of AID, CORDS, everybody was in on this to approve it. Then it would go to J309, the  
10 chemical corps, they would get this list of targets, send them over to RANCH HAND through  
11 TACC, the Tactical Control Center there at 7th, of which I was the officer, and we would tell the  
12 RANCH HAND to spray it. The only thing they could do was pick the day they wanted to spray  
13 it and the direction they were coming from. And so we went in knowing every time we went in,  
14 the damn province chief, all the Vietnamese in the area knew we were coming, they just didn’t  
15 know exactly when. And when we took off we’d generally have four or five different, we’d  
16 have a primary, secondary, tertiary, a fourth and a fifth target because General Brown, by that  
17 time, said, “I don’t want you bringing any of this shit back in here. We’re going to spray it.”  
18 When we really decimated anywhere it was the rung sat. That was our dump area if we couldn’t  
19 get on target for some reason and those reasons would be friendly forces in the area that they  
20 hadn’t cleared or they sent in a team and they found out, or the province chief would just say,  
21 “Bullshit, you can’t spray this! I’m trying to pacify this area. What the hell are you doing  
22 coming in here and spraying it?” But with defoliation, we were trying to hit the enemy way out.  
23 Now with, when we sprayed around bases the Army generally did that with their own helicopters  
24 and stuff so the Army sprayed ten percent of the stuff. We used orange, blue, and white. Orange  
25 was the main one because it was least expensive and did the best job. Then we would put white  
26 in there which was a...that was an oil based herbicide and so we’d put a little kerosene in it to  
27 give it the right droplet size. Then we would, every once in a while, use white herbicide which  
28 was the same herbicide they were using in this country. I can’t think of the name, it was dolified  
29 or something like that, but it was the same stuff used in country. Then that would also, and it  
30 didn’t drift as much as our orange because we had some targets where they said it drifted and  
31 caused kill over here. Some rubber trees in Cambodia went under and so they said that you can’t

1 have a drift, and so anyway we went to this white and you'd almost have to do that because the  
2 only way you could put blue in which was used for crop and narrow leaf herbicide. We were  
3 always spraying broad leaf with white and orange but with blue which was arsenic based, and we  
4 thought that would be the one that would be the one that would come up in the news. Hell no,  
5 it's orange because in the heating process of mixing 24D and 245T together, they had to heat it at  
6 a temperature and it caused a dioxin, a minute, I mean it was parts per millions in there, or even  
7 billions in some cases. And, so it was so minute nobody thought this was ever going to cause  
8 any problems. The early renditions of it, it was pretty dirty. It might have had parts per million  
9 of .2 or .3 or something like that, but later on when they cleaned that up and when I was over  
10 there in '70, what we were spraying was pretty damn clean. But anyway, what we would do  
11 then, and to get to the blue and crops would only come in in certain seasons, so we wouldn't be  
12 spraying any crop for a while until it started to come, it had to be where the leaves were showing  
13 or it didn't do any good to spray it. What we had to do is you'd have to put blue...somehow the  
14 mixture was you couldn't go from orange to blue without contaminating the spray nozzles, so  
15 you'd have to run some white through it. So we had white in there to clean out the system before  
16 we could go to blue. We had to watch and we had to coordinate this and that's what they did at  
17 the RANCH HAND organization, trying to figure out when they'd spray, get the targets in. So  
18 we always couldn't respond to the Army exactly when they wanted it. The Army'd say, "We  
19 got to have it this week," well, we may do it in three weeks. And so, but in most cases they were  
20 very happy with us. The Army chemical corps, that was the only mission they had by 1970.  
21 They'd lost noxious gas; they couldn't use tunnel rats and gas with it and so these guys that were  
22 out in the field forces as chemical officers, this was their weapon. If they didn't have this  
23 weapon they weren't needed out there. And so we had pressure from the Army to keep this thing  
24 going. The Air Force said, "Bullshit, we're going to get caught with our pants down, we're  
25 going to be the ones blamed for this damn mission even though we're doing it for the Army  
26 chemical corps." We were responding to them, and then the headquarters people, the generals  
27 down there said, "RANCH HAND is kissing the Army's ass too much. They are responding to  
28 every mission. We want you to survey the hell out of these missions and say, 'No,' and tell  
29 them, 'We're not going to spray because it doesn't look like it needs it.'" Well then the chemical  
30 officers from J309 would call me and he'd say, "Major Duckworth, you know what my rank is?"  
31 I'd say, "Yes sir Colonel Whiteside you're a Colonel." He'd say, "Well God damn it, you don't



1 have authority over what I tell you to spray! When I tell you to spray that target you spray that  
2 target!” And I said, “Well sir, all we’re doing is trying to make sure that we’re not wasting  
3 herbicide on it,” or some damn argument. I mean it was inane to get into this kind of crap. We  
4 were trying to close it down and then finally DOD at south came with a message from Packard,  
5 Assistant Sec Def Packard, and he said, “You’ll quit spraying orange because we don’t know  
6 whether it hurts humans or not!” So we sprayed out a white in about three more weeks and we  
7 were done. That was the end, that was the last mission of defoliation. But we had to agree with  
8 the Army that we would keep seven. We were short a 123 so that released about seven or eight  
9 123s into the air lift mission and we had to keep six of them configured with the spray boom so  
10 we could spray for crops and so for the remainder of ’70 from July on we sprayed just crops and  
11 in January of ’71 we sprayed our last crop target and that was the end. Now we still kept the bug  
12 bird going because that was a mission under the Army Medical Corps and the Navy Medical  
13 Corps and we still sprayed that. What my view is that most of these guys would look up and say,  
14 “I was sprayed,” they were sprayed. They were sprayed with malithyon because we didn’t spray  
15 our own troops. Now I can’t tell you for a fact as the fragger, and I would look at the targets, we  
16 could not clear these targets. One of the main reasons why we could not spray our own troops  
17 was because we always carried fighter escorts. This meant we had to get province chief and field  
18 forces with Army people in the area, their permission before we could spray because if we took  
19 hits we shot back. So Jesus Christ, why would we spray our own people and then shoot at them?  
20 But there may have been a team down there, I can’t tell you that, but I mean all the guys when  
21 you talk to them and they hold up their...and you say, “How many of you were sprayed with  
22 Agent Orange,” every damn hand will go up. And I’ll sit there and say, ‘Where the hell were  
23 you stationed?’ “Cam Ranh Bay.” “What were you, a typist? ‘Yeah.’ ‘Well bullshit!’ ‘Well, I  
24 saw the airplane go over!’ Well hell they weren’t out in the field because when we sprayed  
25 defoliant we were out in an area that was enemy Indian country. Now I can’t be sure that all the  
26 time we were there somebody wasn’t observing this, the drift came over them, who knows. But  
27 even in our briefings and we gave one up there in April of last year, you know Jack Spey stands  
28 up and he holds a square foot over his head and says, “The amount of herbicide that would be  
29 sprayed on this man per square foot,” because we knew we sprayed at three gallons per acre,  
30 that’s what the nozzles were set for, and this was a slight little fog that would come down and

1 anybody underneath it would get, I think he showed .009 thousandths of an eye dropper of  
2 herbicide on him.

3 SM: Wow.

4 RD: And, now then, but they'd say, "Yeah, but walked in the area." Well, they didn't  
5 clear to go in. I mean, the herbicide took a week to kill! Now why the hell would you spray it  
6 and then send a team in there? You're not going to do that until you get defoliation, the FAC  
7 flies over the area and sees where the hell the enemy hooches are down there, or the trails. That  
8 was the whole idea. Now I'm not saying that people didn't go in earlier, that they didn't get  
9 sprayed, but in my opinion it was mainly malithyon and that's the same malithyon we use for the  
10 med flies down in Southern California or in Southern Florida. And those people get sick? It's  
11 the same crap that they sprayed from the back of all these bases if you lived on any of these  
12 bases in the south in the '50s. They used to have this little car driver with this guy pumping out  
13 all this smoke behind him and it was the bug bird or the bug wagon or whatever, and they had  
14 kids running behind it. Swishing the stuff and on and on because the view was this was not  
15 harmful for humans. But it's taken on a life of itself. We called it orange herbicide, white and  
16 blue. Immediately in '69 when a group of scientists went over there they start calling it "Agent  
17 Orange" and that made it look like Agent 007 or some nefarious thing and then it was also  
18 claimed to have this effect on humans which was, it was biologically...they did this in a  
19 laboratory, Beltway Bannet Laboratory, and about '67 they hid it. Whether the agriculture  
20 department hid it, whatever it was, they didn't publish the findings but they got...the people  
21 were injecting this amount that would take...I mean a human could never be exposed to the  
22 amounts they were putting into these mice and rats and the result was a tarategenic effect which  
23 means harelips and cleft palates and so once that happened the Army could not say, 'Hey this  
24 stuff does this,' here's a scientific study that shows that it does it! So then they started screaming  
25 bloody murder, "You guys didn't test it quick enough," but most of our results in the RANCH  
26 HAND, the RANCH HAND has a position, basically, and they presented this up there at the, at  
27 your place last year, that for decades we used this stuff, most highway departments did, we're  
28 talking about common 24D, 245T. The Air Force chose it because it was effective. It had no  
29 effect on animals or humans. Its effectiveness in exposing guerillas was great, relied on stealth;  
30 they relied on stealth and ambush. This was proven very early by '65 though the controversy  
31 spread we were involved in chemical and biological warfare. This unit, also, we sprayed 90

1 percent of the herbicide in Vietnam. We were exposed to it. A guy, his name is Cecil, Paul  
2 Cecil, his book is *Herbicide Warfare*, he got his Ph.D. down at Texas A&M on this book and  
3 he's the historian for our organization and he's quoted in there and I think I quote in one of my  
4 articles, the one in Vietnam magazine that we were exposed 1000 times greater than anybody on  
5 the ground so the perfect people to look at that knew we were exposed, knew where we were,  
6 knew when we were exposed, I can show you when I was flying, when I was in the airplane,  
7 every day. The Army never could do this and so we were the ones chosen to be in this Air Force  
8 health study that's in its 19<sup>th</sup> year now. We'll take our last physical in the year '02 and I've got  
9 the health organization sending you all the data up there to Texas Tech too, and we have only  
10 found the one disease that might be appropriate, it shows exposure to dioxin, is onset diabetes,  
11 adult onset diabetes. But none of these other diseases, and the government has gone ahead and  
12 said, 'Well 10 diseases are presumptively caused by Agent Orange and they're going to go ahead  
13 and pay for it regardless.' Prostate cancer being one, spinal bifida being another, non Hodgkin's  
14 lymphoma, Hodgkin's lymphoma, soft tissue sarcomas, chloracne, a couple of periphara, I can't  
15 even think of the name but it's a weird one.

16 SM: Anuropothes?

17 RD: Yeah, and see Admiral Zumwalt, before he died he was our arch enemy on this  
18 because he came into that briefing, they briefed Arnold Schlechter and other guys briefed right  
19 after we did up there. He came in and it was the first question, held up his hand and so they  
20 recognized him and he said, "I think you guys did great, you had four presidential unit citations  
21 in five years. You had three Air Force outstanding with V; you had three Vietnamese service  
22 crosses with palms given to you. You were heroic. You had more hits than any other squadron  
23 in Vietnam, you flew with heroism, you lost 26 men and 10 airplanes in this mission, and I think  
24 you did great but I am diametrically opposed to your view!" Because the view that the RANCH  
25 HAND said, here's basically, the difference in the RANCH HAND position and many others is  
26 we want to see indisputable scientific proof; no emotion, no hidden agendas, just the facts. For  
27 this reason 80 percent of the RANCH HAND unit has volunteered for the Air Force health study  
28 by offering our bodies in a 20 year, double blind study conducted by one of the most reputable  
29 civilian research and that's Scripps Lo Jolla, California. Until these facts are clear, the RANCH  
30 HAND organization avoids sensationalism and dramatization which seem firmly embedded in  
31 media hype. I like to quote the former secretary of defense James Schlesinger, he took this from

1 my article, "Everyone is entitled to his own view, but everyone is not entitled to his own facts."  
2 And so what we're trying to do is say wait long enough. But, I also have sympathy for the  
3 veteran who has these crazy damn cancers or whatever else and wants to be helped by them. Of  
4 course through the VA, for some problem that he thinks, and I stood up and ask him at my  
5 briefings, they'll jump on me and say, "Well Colonel, you flew over us and you weren't down in  
6 the grime and you weren't bathing yourself in these puddles and you weren't drinking out of this  
7 stuff," and I say, "Okay, just wait a minute. Let's have a game of hold up your hand." I said,  
8 "How many of you took the malaria pill regularly?" I hold up my hand. I was a 36-year-old  
9 major who did not want to come back with malaria. I hold up my hand, none of them. These are  
10 all kids that were over there, 20, 19, 20, 21, helicopter pilots, Army and that. And I say, "How  
11 many of you did not eat off of the economy," meaning hepatitis. I never ate in town on Tu Do  
12 Street or anything over there because those people fertilize with their own crap! Then I say,  
13 "How many of you didn't fornicate with the local population?" I hold up my hand, all them are  
14 giggling like hell thinking of all the whores they screwed. Then I say, "Alright, how many of  
15 you did not take drugs?" I'm the only one who holds up his hand. "How many of you did not  
16 smoke?" I'm the only one who holds up his hand. And by the time I say, "What's happened is  
17 we have not taken responsibility for all these things we did to our own body." The easiest thing  
18 is to blame this chemical because somebody came up with a study and said, "It might, it might in  
19 the rarest of cases affect the human body." It's taken on a life of itself. Agent Orange is now,  
20 and I saw this in a recent article, this is called "The most hideous crime we committed on the  
21 Vietnamese." And most of them that are interviewed are North Vietnamese that came south over  
22 the DMZ when we were spraying the hell out of that to keep it so the guys could see where the  
23 enemy was crawling. Now these were our enemy, we weren't spraying our own people. So and  
24 now after Colin just went over there they came up with this new statement and they've got a new  
25 considerate joint study. In this it continues, it was in the *USA Today* last Thursday, "Countries  
26 consider joint study of Agent Orange, the effects of toxins sprayed during war continue to  
27 linger," and in this, the writer who's Julian Smith, *USA Today* says, "This was the most hideous,  
28 drastic thing we did in Vietnam," and I'm sitting there saying, "Shit, we saved a lot of lives but  
29 nobody will admit that." A lot of people weren't ambushed because of this stuff, and Admiral  
30 Zumwalt says that, he basically states that before we start spraying heavily the mangrove along  
31 those little creeks because his boy was in the riverine force and he's the one that died from non

1 Hodgkin's lymphoma, and what happened is that they were taking, like, for every sortie, every  
2 time they launched one of those crafts, they were taking like an average of .07 casualties per  
3 sortie and after we sprayed and moved the mangrove back about 200 meters on both sides of  
4 every river they went up, they were only taking like one casualty every 35 days or something like  
5 that. So he knows and he stated right then, he said, "If I had to do it over, I would do it, but the  
6 one thing is we should have known before we did it what the causes were." And we had 20  
7 years of spraying that crap in the United States and never had these kinds of problems. And  
8 today you can go out, I've got some friends that went to TCU with me that were ranchers out in  
9 West Texas that used to stand under the damn thing and then flag it and then run over the 50  
10 meters and then turn around and get the little spray guy as he came and did his turn and came  
11 back down because it cost them beaucoup bucks to spray their cotton crops out there and those  
12 guys cannot understand how the veterans are getting out all these benefits off of this herbicide  
13 that they used out there in that country. But it's a political thing now, and it'll never be solved  
14 like probably the Vietnam War or the Civil War, we're going to continue to have that kind of  
15 stuff going on. But anyway, I've got a nice article here that it tells all about the fragging and  
16 how we did it at 7<sup>th</sup> because in this Operation RANCH HAND book by Buckingham which is the  
17 approved history written in the Air Force history office from all the memos, and it's a great book  
18 and it covers everything, and then Cecil's book mainly covers in Herbicidal Warfare, he covers it  
19 from the operator's point of view. He sent out interviews to all the guys and so he put more  
20 personal things in it, but they never did cover the fragging down at 7<sup>th</sup> because they felt they  
21 were aloof from 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force, they were running their own special operations organization out  
22 there and they could do what they want. Then they never did cover this aspect of the F-4 spray  
23 which I felt was hidden because what I thought was in both books they mentioned this as a test  
24 or as an experiment or as R&D and working for General Brown down there, one of the questions  
25 that came in from that study that they wanted him to participate in was, and the question was,  
26 and I had to respond to this, it was, "Use of combat theatre as a test arena," and boy, I looked at  
27 all the memos and I said, "Jesus Christ, there was no testing going on in Vietnam!" These were  
28 all combat evaluations meaning we tested all this stuff somewhere else; out over the Bay of  
29 Tonkin. If we were trying a new herbicide we went out and sprayed the ocean and then we  
30 turned around and came back and said, "Hey, the spray works. The tanks work," and that's  
31 exactly what they did in the F-4. They did all the spraying out, I've got photos of it and I've got

1 a reel, a 6 minute, 16 millimeter film of it where they sprayed out over there. They said, “Hey,  
2 we can get this working, now let’s go in country and spray the damn Ho Chi Minh Trail.” And  
3 they did that for like 30 sorties, three airplanes each so 10 or 12 missions and then they, and then  
4 Fred got shot down. When he got shot down and I wrote that article that you said you just had  
5 read a portion of, you’ll see that I kind of leave it like, “Well, the product was rescued but not so  
6 lucky was the rear seater. He was never heard from and he was declared MIA and 10 years later  
7 KIA and I start to say, “Jesus, Dick, you just can’t leave this guy, he gave his life over there on a  
8 mission that we don’t hardly even recognize and where we have to back into a way to even be  
9 proud of what we did,” and so I started digging into it and that’s when I found out that he was  
10 MIA and he was a student of mine at the Air Force Academy. So, it was really close. I’ve  
11 gotten now to where, I call the wife all the time, and she sent me everything. I got the  
12 microfiche that has a whole, that’s when he was only over there for nine days so you don’t have  
13 a hell of a lot of history him. But I got every memo, every message that was ever written on him  
14 with the redacted portions and things like that, and it has to all be given to an MIA wife now. So  
15 I’ve gotten myself so deeply involved in this and that’s what I said, this letter just came from the  
16 brother today or yesterday and it proudly says to me and, it makes me so damn happy I can’t  
17 hardly stand myself, but it said, “They have forward articles and drafts of articles that you have  
18 done. Your knowledge and patience on these topics is obviously deep and true.” Then he goes  
19 on and he says, “I appreciate your work because I am younger than Freddy by nearly 18 years  
20 and was quite young when he was lost. So, though over time I gained a basically accurate  
21 understanding of that day’s events, I always feel that there is something perhaps important about  
22 it that I don’t know. Through your work I have come to find out the mission that Fred was  
23 carrying out and the larger, perhaps faulty, effort the Air Force was pursuing. It’s always good  
24 to know the context of events. I wear his POW/MIA bracelet during March to keep me close to  
25 him,” because he was shot down March 29<sup>th</sup>, 31 years ago. “Occasionally people inquire about  
26 it. Some understand and are sympathetic. Most don’t know how to respond to MIA and usually  
27 focus on the politics of the war, etcetera. In contrast to people like yourself who work to  
28 maintain loyalty and honor for these men who served us, most people today, I think, would  
29 rather forget the wrong war and just move on. I think you understand the difference between  
30 moving on and remembering. Thank you very much for honorable work.” Excuse me for  
31 breaking down.

1 SM: That's okay. You want to take a minute?

2 RD: No, no. That's okay, I just wanted to read that. But as I say, that's how I feel about  
3 it and that's why I'm writing and that's why I think your center up there is going to be the  
4 greatest thing that we could leave to these guys. We really need to recognize that they saluted  
5 and went in and 152 of these kids that I worked with and, put the tiger in the tank. They all  
6 wanted to go front line, they all wanted to fly F-4s and go kill the damn commies. We lost them  
7 over there and a lot of people when I came back, now I wasn't involved in any spitting or any  
8 disastrous things but I just came home and when I went I told my wife, "Honey, if they ask  
9 where I am, I'm serving a tour in Vietnam but don't tell them I'm with RANCH HAND,"  
10 because they would call her. We had calls like that. Not my wife, but people were calling them  
11 and saying, "Hey, what's your husband doing over there killing..." this and that. Now it seems  
12 like every veteran that's come back was spit on or had a coke thrown at him. This is bullshit, I  
13 mean probably one in a million did that! But the story gets taken over and all of a sudden  
14 everybody was sprayed with Agent Orange and everybody had a coke or somebody pissed on  
15 them when they came back. I came into the airport, changed clothes, got on my civilian airplane,  
16 flew to Fort Worth, Texas, got out, and had one month of great love making and rest and  
17 recreation here in Fort Worth, Texas before I went back up to start teaching at the Air Force  
18 Academy. And then after that I finished, I made lieutenant colonel on the faculty and all of a  
19 sudden they said, "You people that think you can homestead at the Air Force Academy are  
20 wrong! You better get your ass out of there!" And so I went down to the political science  
21 department and Perry Smith who retired two stars and he's been on CNN as a consultant for the  
22 Gulf War and all the rest of it that Perry had just come back from the National War College and  
23 he said, "They need an economist up there," and we'd already sent one a couple of years before  
24 that and so I volunteered to go to the National War College and by going as a faculty/student you  
25 get a certificate of completion just like you graduated with the rest of them. And so I was a  
26 faculty member and a head of scheduling and whatever else they had me involved in, and then  
27 after that I said, "Well you know the trouble with the National War College is it's Kissengerian."  
28 I mean, it's all political science bullshit. Everybody here is a political scientist! I want to go  
29 over to ICAF which was right across the street and that was the Industrial College for the Armed  
30 Forces and they were totally economic. And I said, "That's where I belong!" And at that same  
31 time Admiral Vane who was our commandant was becoming head of the National Defense

1 University, they were combining both the National War and ICAF together and he was going to  
2 be a head of both of them which meant another general slot opened up because now they'd have  
3 not only a commandant of the war college and a commandant at ICAF, both two star generals,  
4 but they'd now have a three star over both schools! So he allowed me to teach economics  
5 courses at the National War College while I was over at ICAF and he released me and I spent  
6 three years over there and then went to Penn State, they had the ROTC and for three more years  
7 and then I went back down to the Air War College and after two years retired. So that's what  
8 happened to me and all the while I was in the education business and teaching and doing all that  
9 business and the tour in Vietnam just really set me up to have, the reputation that I was a combat  
10 pilot, air craft commander, I'd been through the bit. I did those and you saw the studies that we  
11 did over there. The cover sheet? The first one was the economic analysis of steel tiger. Now  
12 after I left the RANCH HAND and the fragging shop they closed down and a guy said, "What  
13 are we going to do with this guy?" Sent him over to DOA, director to tactical analysis, and the  
14 first job I got was that one that I sent you, "Command Correspondence Staff of General  
15 Brown,"? That in June of '70 Ginsberg asked for a study, and you can see from those topics  
16 that's the war! That's the air war in Vietnam! So hell, I was involved in coordinating every one  
17 of those topics, getting all those organizations that are in there to pass on it because this is the  
18 staff's view of what General Brown did from '68, August of '68 to August of '70 in his two year  
19 two year as heading 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force and directing air war through COMMANDO HUNT I and II  
20 and III. So I, my God, going through this I learned the whole history, everything about the war  
21 that you could write about from staff officers positions who were, and one thing Brown did  
22 which was so much different than Momeyer, see Momeyer was the four star Air Force from '66  
23 to '68 and he had his finger on everything. I mean, this guy never let anybody do anything that  
24 he didn't know about, and so when Brown took over he went in and said, "Look it, the staff are  
25 the people that run this war. By God, I don't want to hear from you unless you got a big  
26 problem!" And so he just said, "You do...you run the war!" And so when we went and did this,  
27 this is really a more accurate picture of what was going on in the two years than what General  
28 Brown would have written himself. And what I found after I went and looked around, this is  
29 what I want to use as the source of my book if I write one on Brown. I want to use this, plus I've  
30 got two interviews; one that was accomplished by Operation CHICO in the last day of March of  
31 1970 before he left. It's only 25 pages long, and the other one is about 150 pages and it was



1 done along with this. What happened is Brown took this package that we gave him, it was the  
2 only one that was in existence, and I only have a copy of it because it was my proof, before we  
3 put secret on the damn thing and typed it up and I made the last corrections on it before it went to  
4 him and so I kept a copy of the damn thing myself in split form. I've got all the sheets and  
5 everything there, some of them need corrections on, and we wrote it up and gave it to him and  
6 those signatures on the front, like, "Thanks B," that's Brown's signature. He read through it  
7 before he took it home with him. Now he used this to do that two-day interview with Operation  
8 CHICO when he got state side and he was head of systems command. So in October of 1970  
9 after he left, he was interviewed for two days by the historical people down at Maxwell. They  
10 came up to Washington D.C. and interviewed him and he was using...and then I don't know  
11 where it went. Nobody can find it. I've checked through all the systems command in his own  
12 personal file and so I suppose I have the only copy of this thing in existence, and so I wanted to  
13 go ahead and maybe write a book and say, "Hey, this was General Brown's staff's view," and  
14 here was General Brown's view over here as he interviewed these things on the same subject.  
15 On the interview it covers each one almost, and so I was trying to combine those together and  
16 have a book out because of this latest book by Sorley on Abrams called *A Better War*, Sorley  
17 wrote that book *A Better War* and he was one of Abrams aids and he is very little on the use of  
18 air power during that period when Abrams was, the first two years of Abrams when he took over  
19 from Westmoreland, and a little before Brown got there but then we started our air operation on  
20 COMMANDO HUNTs I, III, and V. So what...and then what happened after I did that, that was  
21 my first project, I was still working on some things for RANCH HAND, I mean, yeah, well, they  
22 were closing it down and they said, 'Take this and take six months to do it,' and then they, the  
23 general called us over and said, 'Hey, General Brown's coming through, let's get that done  
24 before he...and give it to him when he goes home,' and we said, 'How many days?' Three days!  
25 So we all, about 25 Ph.D.s that were in there in Operation CHICO and up in DOA, we all went  
26 ahead and took two or three subjects and wrote, and then I had to coordinate each one of these.  
27 So I was jumping through my ass like you never saw, and then after that I started this economic  
28 analysis of...General Clay came in and he said, 'Herman,' to Gilster, and myself, there were  
29 three economists there, all of us Ph.D.s with the Air Force Academy going back to it as faculty  
30 members, he said, 'Is there another way to analyze the war? Is there another way we can look at  
31 whether we're effective in this operation over COMMANDO HUNT on these interdictions' And

1 Herman said, 'Yeah, I just came out of Harvard with a Ph.D. in econometrics, we can use  
2 production function theory, we can use regression analysis, we'll take all the data that's in the  
3 computers and evaluate it and see whether we're effective on allocating our sorties over the trail.  
4 Whether we're putting them in the wrong place, the right place, when the enemy moves,' all this  
5 kind of crap. And so he said, 'Okay, do this on General Brown's campaign but don't let anybody  
6 else know you're doing it, because a general doesn't do it on another general's campaign!' and  
7 so we did five copies of this damn thing and that was called an economic analysis. Well Gilster  
8 had already gone home and Greg Hildebrandt had left so I had to get it published and all that in  
9 the five copies and hell, I'd kept them around and I sent a jerry rigged copy to Herman so he'd  
10 have something back at the Academy to see. What he did is he went to Washington on some  
11 kind of a study and he ran into General Clay when he was there and Clay said, 'Hey, I liked that  
12 study you did. I read it thoroughly and I got the TAC people working on it and seeing if we  
13 can't come up with something.' He said, 'How about doing one on my campaign,  
14 COMMANDO HUNT V, when I finish in June?' So I was ready to come home in February, I'd  
15 written my wife, 'Boy this place sucks honey, I don't want anything more to do with it  
16 economically! This is the pits! They got so much resources over here and we're wasting them.'  
17 As an economist, I just thought it was ludicrous what the hell we were losing, and leaving  
18 equipment sitting around and all that, and when I get back to the Academy I find out Herman's  
19 volunteered me for the three months over the summer to go back and do this study called *An*  
20 *Econometric Analysis*, and that was Clay's campaign and during it, the data that came out of it is  
21 in his book *Selected Studies* that Herman put out, but it shows we killed something like 20,000  
22 trucks damaged and destroyed during COMMANDO HUNT V versus 10,000 during  
23 COMMANDO HUNT III versus 6,000 during COMMANDO HUNT I, and these numbers are  
24 probably fairly correct in the sense that we had gun ships over there that were so effective they  
25 were blowing the hell out of everything in sight. So one of the things I say in your questionnaire  
26 is what was effective, well I think Agent Orange was damned effective and the other second  
27 thing is that we, our interdiction program was only effective when we used something like the  
28 gun ship because it could blow trucks up and we were using F-4s to dive bomb from 7,000 feet at  
29 night to try to hit a truck? That was a joke, you know! But we had to do something because the  
30 Air Force had promised General Abrams that we were not going to let any trucks come down the  
31 trail and bring any rockets into his country, into South Vietnam that could rocket and attack our

1 bases with rockets and so we, we said air power can do it and I think that was probably faulty.  
2 They knew that it couldn't do it, but the Army kept saying, "Well you got all these airplanes over  
3 here, why can't you stop them?" And like wise we turned around and said, "Well hey, you got  
4 all these soldiers over here, why can't you stop them?" So they were just a group of people who  
5 wanted to unite their country and they were going to take tremendous losses in doing it. And our  
6 attrition policy just never did seem to work out. But those are the things that I did over there, and  
7 that's finished my tour and then I went back for those three months and again, that was right  
8 after General Lavelle had been fired over there and I'm telling you when we went in there, I'll  
9 never forget, we went in this General's office, Boots Wilson, he was the DO, director of  
10 operations and Herman, and I was sitting in there and we said, "Well sir," he said, "Who the hell  
11 sent you over here?" and we said, "Well General Clay asked us to come over and look at the data  
12 and evaluate it." This is after Lam Son 719 had failed and all that crap and they were still  
13 arguing over how many helicopters we'd claim and what I had first indications of the Army lost  
14 over 600 helicopters in there, but they claimed only 107 because they would take out pieces of  
15 the damn thing, bring them back, stick numbers on the Vietnamese helicopters that they'd said  
16 were shot down and change them so they didn't look like the Army helicopter wasn't going to be  
17 totally wiped out because see, the air argument from then on out back at Pentagon and elsewhere  
18 was shouldn't the helicopter, I mean, we shouldn't use the helicopter in close air support. The  
19 Air Force had to use fast movers in this mission and the Army was trying to keep the helicopters  
20 on their side and show that they weren't that vulnerable to small arms fire. But anyway we set  
21 down at this general's, and he said, "Jesus!" He said, "Man, we've kind of fudged some  
22 numbers around here. We've claimed everything we were doing was going into the box program  
23 up there and yeah, we were bombing other," and I don't know if Abrams really knew that. Well  
24 now he was hiding that from us because see, that was all during Operation MENU. He had all  
25 those sorties going into Cambodia that were being claimed going into Vietnam and Laos with the  
26 B-52s and so there was all kinds of crap. And what happened is we started this econometric  
27 study with all these numbers that they were producing and the pilots in the area knew these  
28 numbers were phony! Now I don't know what percent were phony, maybe only 5 percent, but if  
29 you've got 5 percent of the numbers that are wrong, even though the 95 percent would probably  
30 equate and throw, you could almost throw those 5 percent out, they're not going to make that  
31 much difference in it. Well what happens is they all think every number you talk about is wrong,

1 and so when we briefed these studies later on, on how efficient it was to use a model like this and  
2 maybe allocate your resources if you ever have to fight a war like this again, which we know we  
3 probably won't directly but on and on it went. We thought we did a seminal study on how to  
4 direct tactical air power on interdiction campaign and everywhere we briefed this, later on at the  
5 war college and God you hear guys hissing in the background, 'Hiss, you guys are a bunch of  
6 phonies, what the hell you trying to do?' Because they didn't believe...they believed when a  
7 pilot said he was lying on a number he reported. If he said he actually killed 12 and he said 24,  
8 they immediately assume that if you came up with a number like 20,000 they really only killed  
9 10,000, the other 10,000 were phonies. And so no matter what the hell happened we never were  
10 able to convince these people that this was the kind of an analysis that was really effective and so  
11 while Herman Gilster's written a book, *The Air War in Southeast Asia, Selected Campaigns* and  
12 he's got these in there. What Herman's really trying to prove is that when we came up and said  
13 we could supply/deny the tactical air, it is phony. You cannot supply/deny. The only thing you  
14 can do with tactical air on an interdiction program is area denial, mobility denial. In other words,  
15 after NORMANDY, Operation SHRINGLE in Italy, the Korean Peninsula, and even LAM SON  
16 719, whenever you've got a [?] going in, you can then use TAC air and deny him his mobility  
17 because what Herman has proven over a period of looking at three or four different air wars, is  
18 that every time you hit a truck, they'll supply another truck. If that truck isn't supplied, they'll  
19 put it on their backs, they'll put it on bicycles, they'll float it down a river. They will find some  
20 substitute way to put their weapons down in their territory where they can fight you, and it may  
21 be delayed but their view of time is a hell of a lot different than ours and so they didn't need to  
22 complete a campaign in one year, they could do it in ten years as long as they won in the end,  
23 and so over and over again Herman's whole book basically is about mobility denial and that one  
24 historian that keeps analyzing it and telling us what a bunch of jerks we are, he made a speech up  
25 there and Herman's so damn pissed off at him he can't hardly stand it.

26 SM: Who was this?

27 RD: Oh this was, he was up there at that last briefing. His, oh here it is, *Air War in*  
28 *Southeast Asia*. It's old Tilford, Earl Tilford.

29 SM: Earl Tilford, yes.

30 RD: Tilford he was in the Air Force for a long while and then he's now at the Army  
31 because he is so critical of the...but he even says, 'The air war in Southeast Asia case studied the

1 primary value of this reprint of several articles published in Air University in the late '70s is to  
2 help one understand the mindset of senior Air Force officers. One can then begin to comprehend  
3 why they were unable to devise a strategy.' Then he goes on by this one saying, 'One is  
4 compelled to ask why, in 1993, would the Air Force publish a volume such as this? The mind  
5 managerial ethos that turned warfare into production line affairs, particularly during  
6 COMMANDO HUNT, has been well documented, critiqued, and assigned it's proper place in  
7 historiographic,' historiographic...whatever it is, 'and is not an air campaign.' And so he is just so  
8 critical, and Herman says, here is what Herman wrote to me, he said, 'Dick, this is what your  
9 friend Tilford thinks of our work over there. Chip Francis from the Air Force Academy called  
10 this review disgusting, I agree. Tilford misses the whole point of the book, which was long term  
11 supply denial doesn't work.' I mean, he knew that, But Tilford was just looking at the fact that  
12 you had to use numbers to come up with something to evaluate a campaign. The problem is this  
13 general told us to do this, now what the hell were we to do, stand there and say, 'Well General,  
14 we're not going to do this!?' we thought we had techniques of economics that could really  
15 evaluate whether a campaign was successful in terms of the objective set and the objectives were  
16 never to win the war. It was to stop the trucks from coming south so that Abrams could get his  
17 Army the hell out of there and we could give this damn country back to the Vietnamese so they  
18 could Vietnamize it. And that was the mission and we had...our guarantee that the North  
19 Vietnamese through our use of air power would not have another TET during this period, which  
20 they didn't have. But again, somebody looking at the [?], 'You lost the war, didn't you?' 'Hell  
21 yes.' Well then what was the value of Agent Orange, herbicide, COMMANDO HUNTs I  
22 through V and all these other operations, and Army was trying to say, 'Jeez, we ought to take  
23 some lessons learned out of this and realize...' and see, one of his critiques over and over again  
24 is that they wanted, we even within the Air Force and I think I sent you that in one of those  
25 letters to Gilster in one of those emails that he had where he said, he made the statement in there  
26 that both Howie Fish and Keagan, they were intelligence people over there, they viewed...and  
27 Abrams had this idea that to cut the roads cost us only 1,000 dollars per ton denied in the south  
28 and Gilster said, 'And it cost us 12,000 per truck to destroy that,' But Herman said, 'Yeah, but  
29 then they know that just to cut the roads these people had umpteen ways of getting around that  
30 damn road.' they bypassed it, they floated it, they carried it on their back, they would stop at  
31 one side like the Panama Canal and disembark all of it carried over by hand and then embark it

1 again. I mean, they knew how the hell to get their supplies down there, and he said, 'The only  
2 way we could guarantee the heavy stuff not coming in was to destroy trucks.' Well, that costs  
3 more and Abrams says, 'I don't want to pay that cost,' and Herman said, 'Jesus, what the hell  
4 does that do for the war effort,' see? So anyway he was critical of some Air Force people who  
5 decided that the Air Force intelligence said, 'You know somebody came up with a number  
6 before we ever got over there. Said it'd only cost 1,000 dollars per ton to bomb the roads and cut  
7 the roads.' And so we had this massive effort about using mark 36 landmine bombs that we'd  
8 put in and then they would go off after we left, hoping that when the coolies came out to repair  
9 the march that the bombs would go off. Well that didn't stop them! Shit, they would either  
10 bypass it or they'd let a few of their casualties go and then they'd fill up the holes and the truck  
11 would come right through again. So what the hell was the purpose of the whole thing? But  
12 when you got a group of guys, and Herman almost got his butt fired over there because he told  
13 them as a lieutenant colonel, he wasn't a full colonel yet then, he told them, he said, 'This is  
14 screwy,' he said, 'You're going after the wrong target. These mark 36s are worthless!' And  
15 Jesus Christ the intelligence officer, he was a one star general, he liked to shit in his pants, he  
16 just, 'Who the hell are you to tell us that? We been dropping these bombs...' like that! And  
17 they're much less costly than going after trucks but by the time we got there literally in the  
18 late...in the '71, we had these gun ships that were so effective, that surprise package, those 130s,  
19 God they could just hose down an area and really work with 20 mike mikes and 40 mike mikes  
20 and then we finally put a 105 Howitzer in the son of a bitch and I mean they could stand off and  
21 just pump these ships. Everything was computerized. I flew on one of the missions and the back  
22 end of that air plane was like walking into a boxcar and they had four lieutenant colonels sitting  
23 in there reading Black Crow, low level light TV, [?] equipment, they had every piece of  
24 equipment in there to look for these damn trucks down there and then the pilot would just swing  
25 his seat over and the copilot would put it on auto pilot and they'd start a circle and then they'd  
26 just start blowing the hell out of these trucks down there.

27 SM: And you're talking about C-130 specter gun ships, is that right?

28 RD: Yeah, and we had...well the first one was surprise package, But it was only over  
29 there in grounds campaign in about, they only had like two or three gun ships and then in the  
30 second campaign they had upwards to 6, and then we said what we need to do is have more gun  
31 ships, well then the CIA said, 'Okay, then get rid of your F-4s. If the gunshots so expensive

1 we'll get rid of your F-4s.' And then we had to change the whole concept to what we called a  
2 team effort. In other words, the only way the gun ship could survive in that triple A environment  
3 was to have F-4s circling with triple A and CBU bombs so that it could drop them on the triple A  
4 sights when they start opening up on a gun ship because the gun ship was circling, for Christ's  
5 sake, at 180 knots up there. They didn't have any radar down there or they'd have shot them all  
6 out of the sky, so they were just shooting at sound. That's why we couldn't fly with a moon, we  
7 had to fly, only on dark nights, and on and on it went but we then ended up evaluating, and  
8 you'll see in these studies if you get the full run of them, the information. You'll see we call it  
9 the gun ship team, which was one 130 plus three F-4s flying escort with it, and they would work  
10 off and this was the whole team effort and when they'd block a load and maybe they'd get 6  
11 trucks in a row they'd call one of the F-4s with hard bombs and they'd let him go down and  
12 bomb these because then blowing up with a 500 pound bomb's a hell of a lot easier than shooting  
13 it with a damned 40 mike mike shell. So they could get kills on the F-4s and that made us look  
14 like not only were the gun ships effective, but the F-4s were also getting like every sortie that the  
15 Air Force F-4s flew they would get like two trucks per sortie which meant that they were truck  
16 killers as well as our gun ships were. But they were only truck killers because the gun ships  
17 could back them all up, stop the whole convoy going down and then just hit the first one and the  
18 last one, and then let the F-4s dive-bomb and bomb the rest of them. So it was kind of that kind  
19 of an effort and we had to evaluate whether that was really true or not, how effective? I don't  
20 know. But you know you've got to play some of the games to make the Air Force look good and  
21 some of this you needed to put it in there or we'd have never got anything published, you know.

22 SM: So part of the studies, the economic analysis and the econometric study, both of  
23 them by what you're saying, they include this information as far as the effectiveness of the gun  
24 ship team to go in and kill trucks...

25 RD: Oh hell yeah, yeah.

26 SM: ...but at the same time you say on one of the questions, and in particular, 'What is  
27 your evaluation of military leadership and of your immediate commanders in the field,' you say,  
28 'Professional, but ineffective due to lack of attainable objectives and they would not admit that  
29 air power was ineffective interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail.'

30 RD: Yeah, well it wasn't...it was ineffective in a sense that it did not stop the supply  
31 movement down the trail.

1 SM: Right.

2 RD: In other words, what we needed was a blitzkrieg in there. We tried it with LAM  
3 SON 719 and it was ineffective because it was Vietnamese run. Shit, the only thing they had  
4 was a few, well, a hell of a lot of Army helicopters flying in and they all got their ass shot off and  
5 we sent a lot of air, tac air in there but we never were able, really, to attain that objective. We hit  
6 Chapone, they had a few guys in there, and then they came running out on... it was almost like a  
7 mass evacuation. Lam Son turned into, LAM SON 719 matter of fact, Nixon wanted...what the  
8 hell's his aid, that general that, Christ I can't think of it, he was a one star...he wanted him to go  
9 over, Hade, he wanted Hade to go over and replace Abrams because he thought Abrams had  
10 been, done such a shitty job on 719. Well the trouble is, when you went after the throat by that  
11 time all the market time had...there were no ships coming down. The Navy had totally wiped  
12 out any movement of junks to bring any supplies down from the North and there were no ships  
13 coming down from the North, okay, to supply anybody in the South. By that time we'd closed  
14 the port over Sihanoukville and the Cambodian incursion had already occurred so that country  
15 was under [?] control or with the other communists fighting him, but so the only thing they had  
16 open was the Trail, and they had stated, I've seen some articles on them and matter of fact,  
17 McNamara's book covers some where they said, 'It didn't matter what you did, we had 7  
18 different ways to get our crap down through Laos and across the border.' So, what the hell, I'm  
19 saying we were effective in what we saw. But my article also covered the fact that...Herman  
20 was never able to agree with me on this, that in 1971 we asked Air Force 7<sup>th</sup> Intelligence, we  
21 said, 'What is the length of the Ho Chi Minh Trail that we are working on?' and it was 3,500  
22 kilometers of motorable roads and trails that were defended by some kind of triple A, heavily  
23 defended to beyond belief in some parts because we weren't going north anymore. When they  
24 knew we weren't coming north they moved, hell, all of their equipment down south. And there  
25 were places where you couldn't...well, we couldn't even get an F-4 doing 600 miles an hour in a  
26 herbicide mission through there without getting shot down. And so, and then what we found as  
27 early as 1972, a Canadian went in there, I think he wrote the book The 10,000 days...what the  
28 hell's his name, Michael McClare, he went and he said, 'They have 12,000 kilometers,' or he  
29 said miles. Now if that's true, and in fact the Vietnamese later on substantiate that through a  
30 bunch of historical things, miles he was saying, that means they had about 18,000 kilometers of  
31 motorable road and we were looking at 3,000. So even though we had sensors out the ass, we



1 had recce flying up and down during the day, we had gun ships at night, B-57s with all these  
2 super sophisticated electronic equipment in it that could certainly do it's job, these people were  
3 absolutely adept to moving this crap no matter when we moved. And they would set out  
4 derelicts, they said they used all kinds of camouflage, they would set derelicts, one truck would  
5 pull three others at night and the guy would think he had a four-truck convoy. Well these were  
6 derelicts, they didn't even have wheels on them, some of them, and shit that [?] truck was a  
7 fabulous truck to move down the highway at night and those guys would...and then the first guy  
8 would jump out and run and this gun ship would shoot up four trucks now. We got four trucks  
9 destroyed. And they did a study right after I left at Bien Hoa where they brought surprise  
10 package down, set out Army trucks on Bin Hua, the CIA demanded this because they didn't  
11 believe the 20,000 trucks damaged or destroyed that we claimed in this study. And so surprise  
12 package...these were Army trucks, they had one supplied with gasoline, and I read the memo  
13 later when I went over there again during that summer because I went over to my old shop and I  
14 was looking and I said, 'Whatever happened to all that study?' I was down there reading it. They  
15 had one truck with fuel, one with ammo, one with rice, one empty as if it was a return truck on  
16 backup, and one with just junk on it. And this gun ship put a thing over its hood, a hood so that  
17 the pilot was looking like he was at night in the cockpit, they put curtains all up. He just used 40  
18 mic mic and only from about 6,000 feet and they would generally get a little higher than that  
19 when they shot, and he shot every one of them. The data on the airplane showed that they  
20 destroyed every one of them. And the Army goes out there and this guy, there's one steering  
21 wheel completely missing, all the wheels are off, he gets in there with a monkey wrench, puts it  
22 on the damn steering wheel, the whole cab's burnt up, he turns the key and the damn key works,  
23 the engine starts on battery but it won't run because the fuel tank's burned, and he drives the  
24 damn thing off on battery power and he could drive it a couple hundred meters. Another guy put  
25 one truck that was empty, had just a bunch of holes in it, but had, through the cab and the seat the  
26 guy put a board over where he was sitting and he could start that and drive it off and he pulled  
27 three more off the road so they were able to pull these into little caverns, or whatever they had,  
28 right off the road and repair them right there. So we don't know how many trucks we shot up  
29 over and over again but those people...one thing I never did see in all of my tours of Da Nang,  
30 Bien Hoa, Phan Rang, [?], Ban Me Thuot, Saigon, or Bin Hua as I said, whenever I toured any of  
31 these I never saw, when I went outside the base, you never saw a junkyard anywhere in Vietnam.

1 Every truck that the Vietnamese, and these were South Vietnamese who I don't think were as  
2 efficient as the North Vietnamese, but every truck looked like it was a piece of crap. It had no  
3 sides, the engines, the hood was wide open, it smoked like hell, but it ran. And so therefore they  
4 could make anything go and I think that if the South Vietnamese could do that I know what the  
5 North Vietnamese did, so I really feel that we were only looking at probably 1/4 or 1/3 or at the  
6 most, maybe 1/5 of what the hell they were moving down the trail. And they only needed, I  
7 think the analysis was they only needed 25 tons a day to subsist in the south. So, that meant you  
8 only needed like, what, 12 trucks to get through! And my God, if they sent three, 400 a night,  
9 they were bound to get some through and therefore they were able to have what they wanted in  
10 the south. Now they were...see because in the end what Tilford says is, 'Well, if you were so  
11 effective on these missions, how the hell were they able to mount these massive attacks down at  
12 An Loc and other places way down in the south Vietnam when in 1972 they unloaded that Easter  
13 invasion?' It's because they could move stuff down in parts. They saw people in one article that  
14 showed you what those women were carrying on their backs up there, that ambassador that was  
15 captured at...I sent you a copy of that letter. What he saw, that's in 1968. Can you imagine  
16 what the hell they were doing by 1972? Shit, they had highways going up and down there and  
17 we hadn't been bombing it that much more after that. So whatever we put in they'd fix up. They  
18 were just adept at being able to move stuff on a transportation, logistic manner so it was, we  
19 were fighting a losing battle so when I say that, what I mean is if we would have gone for a full  
20 all out victory, air power works if you hit the people. Now how the hell you going to bomb the  
21 people in today's military? But if you bomb the dikes and bomb the people like we did in World  
22 War II, maybe strategic air would work a little bit better. I don't know that that would not have  
23 brought the Russians and the Chinese in. The information in some of these...in McNamara's  
24 book shows, and others, that if we'd have crossed the parallel with an invasion, the Chinese were  
25 coming in, so it had been Korea again. Now after all the generals had said, 'Don't ever get  
26 bogged down [?] in Vietnam,' here we are, for what reason? We were never going to defeat the  
27 north anyway, we just wanted to punch him in the nose and say, 'Don't keep supplying these  
28 people in the south!' And finally when TET wiped out the Viet Cong in a sense, TET '68, they  
29 start sending their own people down and from there on out it was an end result because we were  
30 pulling out after that, we just couldn't stay. I think in the war colleges later on, a lot of the  
31 majors like myself and captains and people that flew with lost crew members over there, every

1 time they'd have a general stand up, boy I mean these guys would hold up their hands and say,  
2 'Why didn't you fall on your God damned sword? Why didn't you go in and say we couldn't  
3 win this thing?' They never did. They all went and said, 'I won't do what my predecessor did, I  
4 can do it differently and we're going to win,' because we all had that view that my God, we were  
5 the mightiest force in the world. How the hell couldn't we beat these little piss ants over there?  
6 But, if you've got a group that will take umpteen casualties just to get one body bag sent back  
7 here, I don't see how you can win unless you go after the people in some manner or format and I  
8 think that is an objective that is probably totally out of line like us using nuclear weapons. So  
9 here we are trying to fight in Kosovo and other places by just hurting the guy enough to make  
10 him back out and that's what we did there, I think. we bombed over there and finally when we  
11 start bombing targets that hurt the people like the bridges and their television and other things,  
12 that they start saying, 'Hey, this isn't worth what the hell we're doing down there in Kosovo,  
13 let's pull out.' Mahalivichta or whatever his name was pulled out of the damn place, but not  
14 before he killed a bunch of Albanians. So did we win there with air power successfully? I mean,  
15 God, there's one article that says, 'This proved that air power finally did it, we never had to send  
16 in anybody,' and the Army sits back and says, 'The only reason he pulled out is because we were  
17 circling him.' We had them with all the black hawk helicopters were ready to go in and kill him.  
18 So you tell me, I'm at a stage now where I'm looking at it and I just know that we're probably  
19 going to have to participate in these. You ask those questions, 'Will we ever be in another one?'  
20 I think because we're the world power that we're going to have to do this, but I don't think we're  
21 going to find any satisfaction like the Great War and World War II, you know. The objectives  
22 are not ever going to be that great and we're just going to have to go in as the power and try to  
23 fight for economic and maybe we're going to fight against nationalism and terrorism and other  
24 things like that but try again. But anyway I thought my career was fabulous because I was able  
25 to go over there in that year and do that and then what really makes me sad is when I write about  
26 a guy like Fred Hess because here he went over there and nine days after this guy's in country, as  
27 eager as he was to be a gun fighter and known as an F-4 pilot, he's gone, and he's been gone for  
28 31 years, and for what reason? And his wife keeps asking me, 'Why did he do it?' 'What was  
29 the good of it?' and what the hell did you tell her? The only thing I can say is, 'Well, some  
30 people go in harms way and that's the way it goes and all's we can do is be around to honor  
31 these people and hopefully we'll do that by a school like yours taking it by the balls and saying,

1 'We're going to be the center for the study of this damn thing and whether it was right or wrong  
2 we're going to study from all aspects, we're going to have all kinds of arguments.' Tilford can  
3 come in there and criticize the hell out of Herman Gilster and Herman can stand up and tell him  
4 where he's wrong or Tilford can tell us where we're wrong. We can say RANCH HAND did  
5 great or Admiral Zumwalt and his crew can come in and say, 'You decimated a whole nation,'  
6 who knows. But at least we're not going to hide it and we're going to talk about it and hopefully  
7 we can come up with something out of it that will be productive in the future.

8 SM: Let's take a quick break, I've got to switch out my little CD here.

9 RD: Alright, I'm still talking on this phone, I guess we had a lot. Okay.

10 SM: This ends CD one. This is CD number two with...during the interview with  
11 Colonel Duckworth. Sir, real quick question about the activities of, let's see, COMMANDO  
12 HUNT three, Cambodian Incursion, COMMANDO HUNT IV, COMMANDO HUNT V, LAM  
13 SON 719, and COMMANDO HUNT VI. Were you actually flying in those missions...

14 RD: No.

15 SM: ...those operations or these were the things that you were evaluating?

16 RD: Yeah, I was evaluating those and what happened is COMMANDO HUNT III was  
17 Brown's last, they called it the dry season in Laos and that was the monsoon, a northeast  
18 monsoon coming across. North Vietnam was socked in but it was dry and so they'd stack  
19 everything up against their passes, [?] pass and Ban Rivine Pass, and those were where we'd  
20 bomb and we'd wait until the stuff start coming in. We couldn't bomb North Vietnam, so what  
21 did that do? Hell, our whole air power thing is based on bombing their supply depot. But we  
22 had to wait until they brought it out in little trucks or ran it down on people's backs on bicycles.  
23 Some of those bicycles I think in [?] book On the Blood Trail show that, I think the record was  
24 1,100 pounds they could carry on one bike. So you can see...well anyway, that campaign, that  
25 first one that Brown ran as I said in Herman's book it shows that they had, and this is his analysis  
26 on page 20 of his shows that we flew, like, this number. Like in COMMANDO HUNT I which  
27 was between November '68 and '69 and April of '69, that was Brown's first campaign. We  
28 averaged 400 fighter and attack sorties, only two gun ships, 22 B-52 sorties. This is a daily  
29 average we were running and the enemy put in 45,000 tons of input and got out 8500 tons for a 1  
30 to 5 ratio. Okay, then we had to go through COMMANDO HUNT II which was the wet season  
31 where they never ran. They didn't move anything, so that was just a number that we put on it.

1 Then COMMANDO HUNT III started in November '69 and ran through April, 30 April of '70.  
2 Now I was there and they also had the Cambodian Incursion at that time so I was there on the  
3 staff. I also flew RANCH HAND missions, but I was not flying out country and these guys were  
4 bombing the trail, this was the Ho Chi Minh Trail they were bombing. And, they averaged  
5 only... what they did was they were able to drop from 400 fighter attack sorties a day to less than  
6 300 because they now had eight gunships instead of two. So the gunships were that much more  
7 effective and we still averaged the same B-52s. Well they put in via intelligence estimates  
8 54,000 tons of input and they got out 20,000 for a 1 to 3 ratio and we had enemy trucks  
9 destroyed during COMMANDO HUNT I of 6,000. During Brown's second campaign we had  
10 10,000. Now that's the one we evaluated in that economic study. It was that second campaign  
11 where we claimed they destroyed 10,000 trucks, damaged or destroyed. Okay, then when Clay  
12 took over, then we had COMMANDO HUNT IV and see each one of these campaigns, when  
13 they listen to campaigns, you get a little button on your ribbon because you were in country  
14 during that campaign so I was in country when they were running COMMANDO HUNT III, the  
15 Cambodian Incursion, COMMANDO HUNT IV which was just a summer operation of a very  
16 few, we ran recce up and down the trail but very few in there. Then I was there for  
17 COMMANDO HUNT V, then I went back for COMMANDO HUNT VI which was just prior to  
18 VII because I was over there during that summer months see. And I was also there for the first  
19 three weeks of LAM SON 719 and did an evaluation of it then as well as we did during that  
20 summer evaluation because we tied that in with COMMANDO HUNT VII to evaluate, with  
21 COMMANDO HUNT V to evaluate what a blitzkrieg did in terms of the trucks damaged and  
22 destroyed. And so during that campaign we now dropped to about 250 fight and attack a day, so  
23 see the substitution principle. We weren't using as many fight and attacks versus 400 in the first  
24 campaign. In COMMANDO HUNT V we used only 250 but we had 11 gun ships now and 30  
25 B-52s, they put in 61,000 tons of input, they got 7,000 through for a 1 to 9 ratio and that's why  
26 Colonel Gilster went from lieutenant colonel to colonel because I mean, we told General Clay he  
27 did the best campaign. There was like five percent over run, cost over run on this campaign and  
28 we killed 20,000 trucks damaged and destroyed. Now the result of that test that the CIA had us  
29 run showed that we had to change that figure to like 16,000 because they claimed after the Army  
30 pulled off these other trucks and showed that one ran, a couple of others were...when you really  
31 walked out and looked at them even though up from the airplane it showed these were destroyed

1 trucks. They were direct hits with 40 mike mike shell, these trucks were still useable! And so I  
2 think three of them were useable out of the six so that meant Jesus, you killed 20,000 trucks well  
3 you really only killed 10 and they got a few back on the truck trail. The CIA always told us they  
4 never had more than 6,000 ever in country at once, but, once you killed two they could ship one  
5 in through Haiphong Harbor for Christ's sake. But the ships were coming in with [?] trucks out  
6 the gazoo and it just took them to drive them down to the central point, load them up, and start  
7 them in country, so we were never going to run, we were never going to kill all their trucks and  
8 that's what I meant by, we had intelligence saying this but the Air Force was not going to admit  
9 we couldn't do our mission over there, mainly because I really think and in the case of the B-57,  
10 I remember this general came in, he had nothing on. I mean he had a sort of tan outfit but no  
11 rank on his shoulder and they all called him general and he briefed us on the B-57. Now that  
12 was a [?], they brought 12 of them over there. They reconfigured this thing. The B-57 had been  
13 just a straight iron dive-bombing jet airplane, that's all it was, straight wings [?], nothing. It was  
14 just a dive-bomber. And when they brought this baby over they could put I think 6 or 8  
15 television guided bombs on it and the guy never dive-bombed after that. The pilot would set it  
16 on auto pilot and fly up and down the trail and when he'd see a truck they'd pick it up by  
17 forward looking radar, he'd do a 180, come back from the North, the navigator would put in the  
18 damn coordinates and the bomb would drop automatically and guide right in 500/700/50 pound  
19 bomb right in on a truck, 1 or two. So this airplane itself was getting like three to four trucks  
20 every sortie it flew so it had become tremendously effective. It was all night operation, nobody  
21 saw anything. But the problem was when I flew up to [?] for an evaluation of the gun ships, they  
22 wee having a big party because one B-57 with the squadron commander had just collided with an  
23 OV-10 over there, a FAC who was flying and they just had a mid air collision and the big  
24 argument that was going on was, 'We don't care about the damn ground fire, its we don't know  
25 who in the hell else is flying our same altitude out here,' I mean because you were flying off of a  
26 TAC [?] that was no...when an airplane was up there it wasn't like what we have on these  
27 screens today where you can see where every air plane is flying. Jesus Christ these guys were  
28 flying at night with everything out, pitch black, and this was the big argument; see when we talk  
29 about gun ships we could, we figured out that in the area where they were moving, we could only  
30 at a max have about four gun ships operating at any one three or four hour period and when they  
31 would shoot all their ammo or run out, come back for fuel, we would send four more out and

1 they would go out at say 7 o'clock at night to 11:00. Then one from 11:00 to 3:00 in the  
2 morning, and one from 3:00 to 6:00 in the morning. And then the enemy quit running. The  
3 sensor said there wasn't anybody on the trail. But these guys had to fly about 10,000, the FACs  
4 were coming across either above us or below us. There were Air America CIA helicopters on  
5 the ground, these guys spotted them. I was on one mission where we saw a damn helicopter and  
6 we said, 'Should we hose him down?' The guy said, 'Nope, that's one of ours.' I mean they  
7 didn't know he was in there for Christ's sake! Then we would be flying at about three or 4,000,  
8 maybe up to 15,000, a fighter escort would be circling to come in and dive bomb any AAA that  
9 we might pick up. We had B-57s making runs in there at about 12,000, you had FACs flying  
10 around there, we had Army helicopters coming in inserting teams and taking them out, and at  
11 this time the biggest fear in 1971 was, 'Are we going to run into each other over there?' because  
12 we were operating in an area that would be no wider than about 25 miles. It would be from  
13 maybe the north loop of...let's see now, where are you? You're up in Texas Tech? Okay, it  
14 would be from maybe the north loop to the south loop, from Reese Air Force Base just to the  
15 other side of east, maybe twice as far out, maybe from Levelland to the east side of Lubbock.  
16 Now you're putting in as many as 400 sorties into that area in a 10 hour period because they  
17 already ran at night, so what the hell you flying during the day? We may [?] at the day, so what  
18 we're talking about is we had an airplane in that area every minute or so and then flying around  
19 off of a TACAM looking at a ground they can't see anything on unless they got their scope on.  
20 They got to have some kind of sensor or some kind of radar that's showing them where the hell  
21 anything is over there. I mean, you can't see anything at night unless you got these scopes on.  
22 And that was...so the biggest fear ended up being, 'My God, we're going to run into each other,'  
23 as far as they didn't fear so much the triple A coming up at them as they feared they were going  
24 to have mid air collisions. This guy had just been rescued. The FAC had been found strapped  
25 over his wing and they knew this was a set up because the radio was on but nobody was talking  
26 on it, so they disregarded a rescue effort on the FAC, he was...and they figured how the hell  
27 could he be stretched over his wing like that, laying on his back. But they did rescue the two  
28 guys in the B-57. They both bailed out, the airplane went down in another valley. The story was  
29 they were both old men. One was 54 and the other was like 49 because he was the squadron  
30 commander and his navigator in the back seat was another old coot. They were the oldest guys  
31 in the operation and I mean their pants were wet when they came back but this one. They had to

1 stay over night on the ground and this guy, he wakes up, he's huddled against a tree and he  
2 wakes up and looks straight up and he sees two boots hanging over a fork in the tree, right above  
3 his head. Maybe 10 feet. And he's fumbling around for his .38 to get it out and he says, 'Oh shit  
4 what do I do?' and he said, 'I sat there,' and he said, 'I know I pissed in my pants. Finally I  
5 decided God they're not even moving, what the hell's going on? Well I'm going to have to...'  
6 he finally rolled away and they still didn't move and when he took a stick and poked them they  
7 were both empty boots. And what he figured was this had been a sniper or an observers spot, a  
8 North Vietnamese observer had been in that tree but because the B-57 went down in the next  
9 valley all these guys went from this valley over to the next valley searching for the rescue,  
10 where these guys were if they ejected and trying to find the airplane. He had come down on this  
11 other side of the valley and so he got on his radio and they flew over and they came in and  
12 picked him up. But he said, 'Oh my God,' he said, 'I puked,' and I looked at him, here he is big  
13 old fat belly on him, you know he's the funniest guy you ever saw but he was rescued and so was  
14 the squadron commander. He was about a half a mile away somewhere in another tree hiding.  
15 But mainly they were saved because everybody in that valley had gone over to the next one  
16 looking for them because when they flew over the FAC said, 'Jesus, there must be 200 guys  
17 scouting the hills in this next valley where the airplane crashed.' So they were lucky and got  
18 away. But anyway, that's why I was in those commands and when I say I wasn't in each one but  
19 I ended up evaluating them and so when I left Vietnam for Christ's sake I felt I was a regular  
20 history book. But mainly from an economic, econometric analysis point and what we did when  
21 we start briefing this at the air war college and we set it up. I've got some syllabus that show  
22 how we used it as a problem for the cadets in the national security course, analysis course. We  
23 actually used them and made them figure out how they would allocate their sorties based on the  
24 information that was coming in and it was like real life information, I mean this was the stuff we  
25 were working with. And so the cadets had a chance to sit there as if they were down at 7<sup>th</sup> Air  
26 Force trying to be a general trying to say, 'Well, I talked to my pilots and they tell me they are  
27 killing everything in sight! I look at my low level light TV and all my returns on my electronic  
28 equipment and it shows us blowing the shit out of everything.' Well why in the hell are we  
29 losing this war? How in the hell are they moving this stuff down here? And you didn't know  
30 that during that campaign because what had happened is they'd move stuff in and they'd stock  
31 pile it, and so the name of the game was for Abrams to get his troop, instead of search and



1 destroy, what they were supposed to do is go out and search and capture so that was the whole  
2 change from Westmoreland to Abrams. Push, push, push, get all these supplies and they'll never  
3 be able to come in, we'll be able to pull our troops out, we'll have time to Vietnamize, and then  
4 south Vietnam will be saved. Well the damned South Vietnamese weren't ready for that, they  
5 couldn't handle it, and we weren't stopping enough of the traffic coming in and these people  
6 were willing to sacrifice every damn thing, go down to the last shell, to take out an American or  
7 an organization just to unite their country. So those were the campaigns and that's how I was  
8 involved in it and as I said, when I did that study for General Ginsberg for General Brown to take  
9 back, Jesus in about a week or four days I learned more about the two years of General Brown's  
10 operation than anybody in Southeast Asia because I was sitting right on. Did you look at those  
11 topics? Did you see that page? Command arrangement, civil management of the air, Air Force  
12 internal management, bombing of North Vietnam, air support of ground forces, interdiction,  
13 reconnaissance, Vietnamization, use of the combat theatres of test, counter insurgencies, special  
14 air warfare, gun ships, restraints, rules of engagement, ammunitions, air strike, accuracy,  
15 intelligence, air lift, lessons learned, assessment of Air Force effectiveness, impact of Southeast  
16 Asian conflict on USA Air Force. What other questions could you ask me, about the air war  
17 going on during that two-year period? This came right out of the top historian, General  
18 Ginsberg, was collecting all this data under what they call Corona harvest and he was putting it  
19 all on tape. And General Brown says, 'Look it, I'm through with this God damn war, it's Clay's  
20 campaign from here on out, I'm not going to interfere with it, I'm not going to do an end of tour  
21 report.' Well Ginsberg said, 'Like hell you're not! I'm only one star but you're going to leave  
22 us something because we want to know what the hell you did, how you operated with Abrams  
23 and what happened and what the campaign did to you and how you felt about this and that,' and  
24 all these other aspects. So we went to the staff and every one of them had to submit at least a four  
25 or 5 single spaced, no it was double spaced, up to six or seven pages I think, what we compiled  
26 and this amounts to over 95 pages, and I've got that right now. And that's what I'm going to try  
27 to do, to write a book about...because this is the staff's view of what General Brown did for two  
28 years and then I've got General Brown's view based on his energies and hopefully I can quote.  
29 If I don't, I'm going to give it to you guys to write. How about that?

30 SM: Sounds good.

1 RD: But at least you'll have something that I really don't think is anywhere else in the  
2 archives. I haven't been able to find them and I've been through the systems command, I've  
3 been through Maxwell, the historical, they looked at all the files, they said, 'We don't know  
4 where else to look.' General Brown probably took this and shit canned it after he'd finished  
5 using it in that interview. He looked at the answers that we gave him, read them over, then when  
6 they asked him that question he either referred to these as he went through them or he just off the  
7 top of his head said, 'This is how I feel about reconnaissance.' And he would then answer that  
8 and they would go on and they taped them all and typed it up and there's a beautiful...here's  
9 General Brown's view of reconnaissance. But at the same time here is what his reconnaissance  
10 people said he did. So does that sound like that may be a good book? I mean, for somebody? I  
11 don't know who. Who the hell would publish it? That's the problem, it's such a limited  
12 audience. It would have to be just a minor little booklet that would say, 'Published by the  
13 Vietnam Center on General Brown's air war campaign in Vietnam,' because I don't think I can  
14 get anybody else to publish the damn thing. Maybe you'll do that one day for me, we'll see.  
15 Okay, what's next?

16 SM: Well, is there anything else you want to add?

17 RD: Oh man, I think I've just about covered everything; my whole career. If you have  
18 any questions on that Air Force health study I've got detailed information on all that. I told you  
19 that we go out there for about three days, two ½ days and they give us a psychological test, they  
20 give us...while they've got us they tested us...I'll tell you some funny things about it if you've  
21 got a minute?

22 SM: Oh sure, go ahead. This is to clarify.

23 RD: On the first study, the first one we did in 1982, now we've done one in '82, that was  
24 baseline, then we did one in '85 for our third year, then we did one at 5<sup>th</sup> year '87, '92, '97, '02  
25 and that'll be 20 years. Now they wanted to do this for 40 years to start with and somebody said,  
26 'Shit, they'll all be dead!' And we will be. I don't know how many of us are going to be alive  
27 during this next one. What we're being hit with right now is the San Diego paper's got an editor  
28 out there who's calling this whole study a fraud and that we've hidden data and all that and  
29 we've responded as best we can to it. But what we show, and there may have been some kind of  
30 funny little fidgeting at the very beginning of this thing because what they had is cancer was  
31 showing up more prevalent on RANCH HANDers than on our shadow group. There was about

1 1200 RANCH HANDers over this period that we sprayed, and so we're all, about 95% of us  
2 were in this study. So we had about 1100 people in this damn study. And then we are  
3 compared, our shadow group is 130 pilots that were never exposed to Agent Orange while in  
4 Vietnam. They flew over there out of Thailand and they'd come in and then turn around and go  
5 back and things like that. So they were never exposed to it. And anyway, that's our shadow  
6 group so for every Colonel Duckworth who was, like, 35 years old when he was over there,  
7 there's another guy who's a colonel flying 130s who flew 130s over there that's about my same  
8 age and so on like that. They try to keep that going. We just don't show anything; we're not  
9 dying at a quicker rate, we don't have cancer at a quicker rate, all these diseases as they said.  
10 And the one disease that we're showing that might be appropriate in our group is this onset adult,  
11 adult onset diabetes in guys that have a tremendous contamination of this dioxin in their blood  
12 system and its...what the average American has is about four parts per trillion in their blood and  
13 this can only be accomplished if you do this blood test through Center for Disease Control at  
14 about 2000 bucks a blood test. That's why you can't just go out and grab every veteran and say,  
15 'Well we're going to give you a test,' because Jesus Christ it would cost a fortune to have...you  
16 know we only had probably out of the 500,000 guys there in 1970 or '69 when the most people  
17 were there, 530,000, probably only 40,000 were fighting the enemy. The rest were in BXs and  
18 behind enemy lines supporting us with all the massive supplies we had over there, so there  
19 weren't a lot combatants. Now in the Air Force nearly every pilot was a combatant because he  
20 was flying a mission out over enemy territory somewhere. The Navy was sitting out there in the  
21 damned Bay of Tonkin so every one of those sailors. One of the reasons that non Hodgkin's  
22 lymphoma came up as an accepted disease is because the Admiral's son died of that, plus the one  
23 study that showed of all Vietnam veterans, there was a higher incidence of non Hodgkin's  
24 lymphoma but it was only in one group; chief petty officers on ships in the Bay of Tonkin. They  
25 had a 50% higher risk of this disease, but nobody in country. So they went ahead and said,  
26 'Well, that's okay because these were veterans of Vietnam War,' and what we're saying is, 'Shit,  
27 how the hell did they get sprayed with Agent Orange out in the middle of the ocean?' They  
28 didn't! So what it is and what they've now tied into that out of a California study is that out of  
29 diesel fuel, the fumes from diesel fuel are carcinogens and these guys were all running diesel  
30 ships and so maybe that's the answer. But it's easier to blame Agent Orange because everybody  
31 else runs diesel and stuff, so we're not going to do that. But anyway, this study, the 1<sup>st</sup> one we

1 went down to Kelsey Seabold Clinic in Houston because it was a skin cancer clinic and therefore  
2 we thought that the one thing that's going to show up will be cancers and birth defects in the  
3 RANCH HAND group over the other group. Well when we get down there, and I'm still in  
4 uniform at that time, I hadn't quite retired yet, and this colonel, I can't think of his name...Doc  
5 Blanchard or something like that stood up and he said, 'Gentlemen,' I was in about the 4<sup>th</sup> group  
6 that went through and he said, 'Gentlemen, we're going to have to ask you something that wasn't  
7 published. We said this would be non invasive in any manner or format and that's going to be  
8 hold true, but we'd like to ask you to do one further little test for our study down here.' He held  
9 a little paper bag he was holding up and he said, 'We're going to need a sperm sample.' This is  
10 the first time we'd gotten together in a long time, some of the guys had, maybe I knew three or  
11 guys in the group because half the group was 130 pilots that I didn't even know and so there'd be  
12 a few ranchers in there that I knew or flown with some other way and all this talk was how  
13 many gals they had taken in Vietnam, how many of these little 15 and 16...'Oh man, I had a  
14 time, boy, they were, my mamasons were coming in and doing all this to me,' I mean, the same  
15 old crap that goes on with pilots talking or in any locker room and all of a sudden he holds this  
16 bag up and says, 'I'm going to need a sample.' There was dead silence! You could have  
17 dropped a pin in that room! And all of a sudden everybody's looking at each other and saying,  
18 'You...' and so finally I said, 'You want us, the RANCH HAND pilots, to masturbate for  
19 science?' Again there was dead silence because I don't think half these guys knew what...I  
20 think they thought that we were going to get a prostate check, somebody was going to press on  
21 our prostate and we were going to dribble a little out. That was going to be...but he said, 'No, I  
22 need a full load,' and so what they did is called us, we had to be in there at six in the morning the  
23 first day because...and we had to no smoking, no drinking, and you had to fast for, like, 10 hours  
24 before that because they were taking all this blood out of us and they did that for two days and  
25 then we could finally, the last day, do what the hell we wanted, and these guys that smoked, my  
26 God they were dying. You know they were just...they couldn't wait to get that blood test so  
27 they could get that cigarette in their mouth. And I was not a smoker or drinker so it didn't bother  
28 me at all, but anyway, at 4 o'clock, they said, 'We'll ring you at five.' They get you up. You  
29 couldn't eat anything so all's we'd do is shave and go in, catch the bus. But he said, 'Come on,  
30 what we're going to do is ring you at 4:15 and there is an X-rated movie on channel such and  
31 such,' and I'll be a son of a bitch if it wasn't. You press that button and turn that thing on and I

1 mean they had a guy laying there and he was being done! His toes were being licked, his ear  
2 was being tongued, I mean there were four women on him and they were giving him everything  
3 and you could not help, I don't care how the hell old you were, without being stirred somehow.  
4 And low and behold at about 5:15 all of us came walking out with our little sacks and we had a  
5 little container in there. Really to get a perfect sample they have to be body temperature and  
6 they have to be done two of them within 24 hours. Well, they didn't even do that. Shit, we  
7 carried them in and another funny thing that happened, everybody's walking down the hall  
8 saying, 'Hey Duckworth, how heavy's your load? How big's this?' And stuff like that. Then  
9 we got on the bus. Now the bus was taking us up to Kelsey Seabold, about a mile up the road,  
10 and just as we were waiting for the last guy to come on, it was in February down in Houston so it  
11 wasn't too bad. The windows, we could crack the windows open and we were in little jackets  
12 and stuff. Two busloads of [?] stewardesses came in from Houston International Airport. They  
13 were all staying in the motel down there, and you can't believe, as soon as they start getting off  
14 the bus these guys, 'Hey baby, I got a load for you! Hey, hey, hey!' All this joking like all of a  
15 sudden this macho crap comes out because we were asked to partake in this kind of a scientific  
16 inquiry. And after it was over with, oh about a year later, I called and I said, 'What have you  
17 done with that damn stuff?' Well, he said, 'Look it, I have to admit to you Dick.' He said, 'We  
18 didn't do it right. We were supposed to do...it had to be body temperature. Well by the time  
19 you guys brought it in it may have been down a few degrees but it sure as hell wasn't 98  
20 degrees.' And he said, because we took it in and they grabbed our little sacks right away, as  
21 soon as they could tear them away from some of these guys. I think some of these guys fell in  
22 love with their own semen for Christ's sake! Anyway, he pulled them away and the end was he  
23 said, 'We needed a second test within 24 hours to get the right amount to analyze this so what  
24 we've done is just froze it and sent it down to Center for Disease Control.' I said, 'Jesus Christ,  
25 you mean...' and they had like 98 percent participation. The only guys were two or three  
26 religious people, Quakers or something, that said they just wouldn't do it, partake of it. And why  
27 they had to kind of slip it into us this way was they ran a test on the people who devised the  
28 program and they ran three groups through prior to our first group, to get...so you wouldn't  
29 have hang ups waiting in line for this test and this test and they actually gave these guys  
30 physicals and stuff just like they would us and they only had 30% participation and so they said,  
31 'We can't tell the RANCH HAND guys or the other people that they're going to have to do this.

1 Who's going to come in here and be told they've got to sit in that little cubicle or in their room  
2 and masturbate for science?' So what the end result was those particular, within the next 7 years  
3 they devised a new technique where they could take sperm that was frozen, even though the  
4 temperature hadn't been at 98 when it was collected, and they could analyze it to see if the sperm  
5 was weak due to any kind of an onset of a dioxin in system. And so they used that for a study  
6 that showed that there were no birth defects possible in the RANCH HAND people! So the  
7 new... you say, 'What's this with you taking a blood sample? What are you going to do with it?'  
8 'Well, we'll just save it for the future,' and by God they devised a way to go ahead and analyze  
9 that and then come up with an acceptable scientific study that showed that the RANCH HAND,  
10 sperms weren't defective in any way do to this or that or something else. So it did prove to be  
11 effective, but when he first called me I said, 'Well you rotten son of a bitch!' Then we had our  
12 balls, our testicles, sonogramed because somebody came up and said, 'There may be an effect of  
13 dioxin on testicles where they shrink,' and so I had this Indian, 'Muahalahula,' standing over me  
14 rubbing my testicles with this sonogram and you could see them on television, the size of them,  
15 and he was measuring them. And so we had that done, oh God, we had all kinds of crazy things  
16 done. Balls we'd roll under our feet to see what our feeling was, if we were losing neuralgia.  
17 Then this guy would sit there with a magnifying glass as big as your head and he would look at  
18 every little thing in your body. Behind my ears, any little wart, any little growth and see because  
19 mainly they were dermatologists. And so we really had one absolutely helacious study and it's  
20 cost, the total cost will be over 200 million dollars for just 1000 RANCH HANDers. What  
21 Zumwalt said at that study up there where we were talking, he said, 'Let me tell you what's  
22 wrong with the RANCH HAND study,' he said, 'There's only 1000 of you in there, and he said  
23 that these cancers sometimes only come up in groups of, like in my son's case, non Hodgkin's  
24 lymphoma and lymphoma only appears in one in 100,000 people. Therefore your study is totally  
25 obsolete.' And we're sitting there saying, 'But wait a minute, Admiral. For Christ's sake, we  
26 were exposed 1000 to 2000 times greater than anybody on the ground; doesn't that count?' We  
27 can show how we're laden with this dioxin, but what's happened is the body is able to take those,  
28 and the blood system is able to take things in parts per trillion. Now we're even able, they just  
29 told me last week when I talked to them, they're almost able to measure in parts per quadrillion!  
30 And you know when they get to that stage they're going to find every damn thing that man has  
31 ever devised as a chemical in the blood because they're going to find some part of it. You see,

1 one thing is that because of the scientific, the development in technology and science, we were  
2 only able right after the Vietnam war to measure in parts per million so none of this stuff showed  
3 up. Then when we measured in parts per billion to trillion, or million to billion, all of a sudden,  
4 'Hey, there's a couple other things here.' Then in parts per trillion, and now in parts per  
5 quadrillion for Christ's Sake. They're going to find everything in there, from smoking, you  
6 can't have stuck a cigarette in your mouth without partaking some little bitty chemical that's now  
7 in your blood, but the liver is able... Now were not only living, at the turn of the century the  
8 average age of a male was 48 years old. Now it's 76 years old, so what the hell, in all that period  
9 of 100 years, we have probably sucked in more chemicals than man has ever devised because of  
10 our technology and what's going on in our society so I don't know whether we're ever going to  
11 prove that this stuff is bad or not but that was the result of that kind of test and that's why we're  
12 kind of so bociferous about hey, let's wait, as I read to you before, I said that RANCH HAND  
13 avoided sensationalism and dramatizations which seem firmly embedded in hype. Anybody that  
14 mentions the word orange, if you ask half these people, 'What do you remember about the  
15 Vietnam War,' whether they're young, old, or what they'll say, they won't recognize the word  
16 Westmoreland. They'll remember My Lai and Agent Orange. And that was such an  
17 insignificant part of that war. I mean, we bombed that country for 10 damn years! Jesus, Laos  
18 was wiped out! We flew more sorties, dropped more bombs, sent in more troops, sent in more  
19 supplies than you can believe on and yet the thing that they remember is this Agent Orange stuff.  
20 And so that's what Texas Tech needs to do is get this data and say, 'Wait a minute, maybe this  
21 isn't the whole damn story of the war. Look at these courageous things this guy did,' or even  
22 Freddy, just sitting in the back seat of an F-4 and being told to fly up the Ho Chi Minh trail at  
23 100 feet spraying Agent Orange. I mean, God, you've got to have balls of steel to do that. And,  
24 somebody's going to say, 'Well, he shouldn't never done it because it was the wrong situation.'  
25 Well, second sights always for the best but anyway, I've talked forever and ever and you'll  
26 realize if you ask an economist, I don't know that Herman will because you'll probably get him  
27 on the email, he's an email idiot. Everything he sends is in email. But those little things that I  
28 sent you, that's little segments of...I think he'd really be a hell of a good source and I know that  
29 H.T. Johnson you'd get him to do it, and this Lawson, this brigadier general Lawson down here,  
30 the way he talks. Now he told me the other day, he said, 'Ducky,' he said, 'I'll tell you one  
31 thing.' He said, 'If we would have closed Haiphong Harbor, the war would have been over.'

1 And I'm sitting there saying, '[?], your ass sucks!' I said, 'Man, if they could they would have  
2 done anything to substitute for those ships coming in there. They would have built railroads  
3 coming out of China and if we'd have bombed those the Chinese probably would have come in  
4 with missiles and guarded them.' And I said, 'They would have not given up because Ho Chi  
5 Minh was never going to give up on that damn unification of his country. They would have all  
6 wiped themselves out.' And we were never in the job to kill the North Vietnamese for that state.  
7 We were never going to defeat that nation, we were just punching them in the nose and saying,  
8 'Don't keep supplying the south because we want this country, this dictatorial country or this non  
9 democratic country to...' and most of our objectives, you go back and read them now, whether  
10 they were from whatever administration, they never said our job was really to save it. It was to  
11 avoid embarrassment to not let the cold war get out of hand, to avoid the domino principle and  
12 all the rest of that stuff. Those were our objectives, and I guess as McNamara says in his book,  
13 he basically says we both won because North Vietnam united their country and we never had the  
14 domino theory take over, and I'm sitting here saying, 'Jesus, after all this costs, three million  
15 dead, 58,000 Americans dead, unlimited sorties, bombs dropped, wounded, casualties, people  
16 wondering about Agent Orange and all the rest of it, and we both won?' But we never could  
17 settle it amongst us because we hated each other so much we never could talk to each other. So  
18 anyway, but listen, if there's anything else that you come up with, you need a memo sent to  
19 clarify it, a set of...

20 SM: Let me go ahead and end this real quick.

21 RD: Okay.

22 SM: This ends the interview with Colonel Duckworth.



1 **Interview with Richard Duckworth**

2 **February 29, 2012**

3  
4 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an oral history interview—continuing, I  
5 should say—oral history interview with Colonel Richard Duckworth. Today is 29 February  
6 2012. I am in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of Texas Tech University. Colonel Duckworth is  
7 joining me by telephone from a home in Lake Elsinore, California. Colonel, you wanted to add a  
8 bit of an addendum to the oral history interview you conducted with us back in 2000. You  
9 wanted to discuss the issue of Operation Ranch Hand as well as Agent Orange and some of the  
10 fallout from that very controversial topic in the Vietnam War. I'd like to turn it over to you for  
11 right now so you can let me know what your thoughts are on this particular issue. So please go  
12 ahead.

13 Richard Duckworth: Okay thank you very much, Kelly, I appreciate that and giving me a  
14 chance to do this. I want to read a little note from a general that is stationed right out here where  
15 I'm located, James Mullins. He was the head of the Air Materiel Command and he had a couple  
16 of tours in Vietnam. He read one of my articles here that I'm going to comment on. He said,  
17 "Richard, thank you for the opportunity to review your article. Well written and documented  
18 coverage of a very controversial subject. In fact, the best I've seen to date. It deserves to be  
19 widely read especially by those directly concerned." So anyway, I'll carry on. I'll read a couple  
20 of others. Mainly, I'll start with the explanation of my interest in the Agent Orange controversy  
21 and then get into a couple of articles that were in the *Dallas Morning News* about it, which  
22 always makes me happy to see this area of Agent Orange discussed. Then I'll finish up with my  
23 paper as titled "Old Ranch Hand Pilot's Concern about the Agent Orange Controversy." First I'll  
24 start with an explanation of the interest in the AO (Agent Orange) controversy. Ready to go?

25 KC: Whenever you are.

26 RD: "In early '59 I volunteered for a tour in Vietnam. I was a major in the Air Force and  
27 an instructor pilot and economics professor at the Air Force Academy. I was committed to a four  
28 tour at the Air Force Academy since they had sponsored my PhD degree in economics.  
29 Therefore, my choice of flying assignments was limited to obsolete prop aircraft without follow  
30 on flying commitment. I chose the A-26 strike mission which bombed the trail, Ho Chi Minh  
31 Trail at night. Before training could begin in mid '69 the AC-130 gunships took over the over the

1 night truck killing mission on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. They said, ‘We’re canceling the A-26  
2 mission. Pick another aircraft.’ I chose the AC—or the UC, excuse me, UC-127K strike  
3 herbicide mission. I didn’t want to be a trash hauler with the 123. I wanted to be on a strike  
4 mission which meant you carried escorts with you to keep you from getting shot down. The  
5 Provider was similar”—that’s the name of the aircraft. “The Provider was similar to other multi-  
6 engine prop aircraft I had previously flown in my Air Force flying career of over forty-five  
7 hundred hours at that time. Since I did not have to report for herbicide air commando training  
8 until November ’69 I finished survival training at Fairchild Air Force Base in Washington. Then  
9 I finished my doctorate degree that fall. There were several faculty members that while I was  
10 teaching there that fall who were at the Air Force Academy who had been Ranch Hand crew  
11 members. I became very familiar with the mission. One thing I did was I contacted the many bio-  
12 scientists at that time”—we’ll talk about them later—“who were only then questioning the  
13 ecological effects of herbicides used in Vietnam.” This was their way to stick their nose as anti-  
14 war people. They used Agent Orange as the issue. “With their information and that of the  
15 biology department of the Air Force Academy along with information from the Army Chemical  
16 Corps, Fort Detrick, Maryland I was convinced this mission was not harmful to man or animal  
17 just as the Air Forces had concluded in it mission statement. I trained at Lockbourne Air Force  
18 Base in November ’69 for six weeks in the C-123K tactical mission and later during December  
19 and all of January at Hurlburt Field in the UC-123K.” That just meant utility because it had a  
20 tank in there and we sprayed from booms on the wings and the tail. “I trained for the air  
21 commando/special operation mission with duty with the 12<sup>th</sup> ACS, Air Commando Squadron  
22 or/SOS” (Special Operations Squadron)—they were changing the name at that time—“Ranch  
23 Hand Operation in Vietnam. I deployed in February ’70 for jungle survival training at Clark in  
24 the Philippines and arrived in South Vietnam last week in February flying my first combat  
25 checkout mission from Bien Hoa Air Force Base, South Vietnam. After one intensive week of  
26 two or three lifts each day”—that’s what we called them because we were tied in with the  
27 transport squadron because like airplanes and they labeled everything as a lift so every time we  
28 took off with a thousand gallons of herbicide in our tank it was a lift—“I qualified then as a  
29 aircraft commander. I was immediately assigned to Da Nang Air Force Base in north South  
30 Viet—northern South Vietnam just below the DMZ (De-militarized Zone) to fly with the  
31 Mountain Ranch Hand”—that was an OLA we had out there, outlying landing airfield—“as their

1 future operations officer. Within several weeks the Mountain Ranch Hand mission was  
2 cancelled. AC-119K gunships took over our revetments and space. I was reassigned to Bien Hoa  
3 in the south. After flying the last load of herbicide out of Da Nang with my lieutenant co-pilot  
4 Joe Wolhusen I landed at Bien Hoa and was immediately told not to unpack again. I was being  
5 reassigned to Saigon Headquarters Air Force in Tan Son Nhut as the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force's project—  
6 herbicide project officer. This office was in the Tactical Air Command Center, TACC." Down  
7 there they had Bluechip which was out-country fragging and TACC was in-country fragging of  
8 the missions. "I coordinated, coordinating with Ranch Hand missions" because we had to  
9 coordinate our missions with General Brown. who was head of it, and then General Roberts,  
10 John Roberts, Brigadier General was my immediate, head of TACC and then Colonel Mal Ryan  
11 was head of Current Plans where I was located as special operations. "We had to coordinate that  
12 through COMUSMACV (Commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam),  
13 General Abrams, and MACV J3-09, Colonel Whitesides was the Army Chemical Corps leader."  
14 All these people had to be coordinated before you could get the mission off the ground. "Again  
15 within weeks Secretary Laird canceled the Herbicide Orange." Many in the Ranch Hand reunion,  
16 they don't want to talk about Agent Orange. They want to talk about Herbicide Orange because  
17 we never called Agent until a lot of these journalists jumped on it and said, "Hey this stuff we  
18 can label it Agent Orange. It's like Agent 007 and make it very nefarious." As a result it's been  
19 called Agent Orange so I'll refer to Agent Orange throughout my article because that's the only  
20 way you can get anything published. Nobody knows what Herbicide Orange is but they do know  
21 what Agent Orange is, or think they do. Anyway, "it was canceled on April 15, 1970. I received  
22 the message, took it into Mal Ryan. He carried it on to Roberts. General Roberts carried it on to  
23 Brown and virtually we were out of the Agent Orange business but we were still spraying  
24 Malathion which the material for the bugs and the mosquito. We also had some Blue which was  
25 used on crops but the crops weren't in and as a result we sprayed out of White which was a  
26 substitute for Agent Orange. The end result was they cancelled the mission and it went over to  
27 Phan Rang from Bien Hoa as a six-aircraft flight. Limited Agent Blue and Malathion missions  
28 continued through '70 and the last Ranch Hand herbicide mission was flown exactly nine years  
29 after it was started in 1962 on January 7 and on January 7 of 1971 was the last herbicide mission.  
30 We still continued with Blue but it was not considered herbicide even though it was after crops.  
31 With the cancellation of Agent Orange and the spraying out of the remaining Agent White, I then

1 became involved”—I didn’t have much of a job to do—and I was involved in the Cambodian  
2 Incursion at that time. Started in May, it started in May and June scheduling Commando Vault  
3 missions, fifty-five thousand pound bombs that they dropped during that incursion. “I just—then  
4 I was sent off to a joint technical coordinating group defoliations/anti-crop sub-committee to be  
5 help at Camp Smith, Hawaii.” They want to take the operations, the material officer or lieutenant  
6 colonel but General Brown said, “No, send this pilot over there and let him tell them what this  
7 mission is about and how we’re costing—how much it’s costing us.” So I just returned from that  
8 conference as the Ranch Hand mission was being totally cancelled. “With this cancelation again  
9 I was reassigned with the 7<sup>th</sup> Air Force to the Directorate of Operations Analysis as a pilot  
10 research analysis using quantitative analysis to evaluate our Laotian Commando Hunt, Ho Chi  
11 Minh Trail operations. There I participated in several top secret Commando Hunt analysis,”  
12 which you at Texas Tech have copies of, “that went out as a final Ranch Hand operation went  
13 out of business. But I was always watching it and much to the dismay of J3-09, the Chemical  
14 Corps they continued to believe chemical missions were saving lives in South Vietnam. One  
15 thing that’s haunted me over the past years—I didn’t think much of it initially because when I  
16 came back within a week after returning I was teaching classes at the Air Force Academy again  
17 as an associate professor of economics. “During my last week in South Vietnam a young Air  
18 Force pilot I had trained with in the USA was going to fly his final finny—that’s what they  
19 called them—finny flight with Ranch Hand over Phan Rang. He called me and asked if I could  
20 accompany him as an aircraft commander. He was just a pilot of this Malathion mission. He had  
21 been—he never did check out in the Ranch Hand mission but he’s already checked out as a co-  
22 pilot in the Malathion mission which wasn’t that hazardous of a mission and finally checked out  
23 as a pilot. I needed—I thought I need several days to re-train and be ready to fly this combat  
24 flight. I told my boss Colonel Karl Anderson who was head of DOA, Director of Ops Analysis.  
25 He said, ‘Duckworth, you’re not going over there. I know what you’re going to do is party and  
26 hell you’ve got stuff to do here.’ So I called Colonel Lieutenant Chuck Dees and I said I could  
27 not make the final flight with him, thanks for the information. On February 10, 1971 eight—  
28 seven days before I DEROS’ed (Date of Estimated Return from Overseas) back to the United  
29 States”—and he would have done that, I was saving him a seat on the airplane—“Lieutenant  
30 Dees, Lieutenant O’Keefe that was flying as his co-pilot, Lieutenant Colonel Dan Tate who was  
31 a navigator, five children, Master Sergeant Don Dunn and Tech Sergeant Clyde Hanson—all

1 crew members I either knew or had flown with were killed when UC-123K, number 56-4373  
2 crashed on the return to Phan Rang. As he was flying over the field he pulled the nose up, it  
3 stalled out, and bam! Five of them dead on the end of the runway.” They called it pilot error, but  
4 I don’t know. It could have been shot down, where from? The base was pretty secure. “After my  
5 one-year tour in Vietnam I returned immediately to the Air Force Academy as associate  
6 professor of economics. I was teaching students and then during the summer I went back to  
7 South Vietnam for two and half months to do an econometric study on General Clay’s operation  
8 during Commando Hunt V. I made lieutenant colonel the next year, was chosen to go to the  
9 National War College, ’73 and ’74.” Some of my classmates were John McCain and Sam  
10 Johnson and others who had been—we couldn’t find a job for them. They were all colonels by  
11 this time and we couldn’t find a job—or captains—and we couldn’t find a job for them so they  
12 sent them to the National War College and we added one to each one of our seminars or two.  
13 “Then I transferred to the National Defense University’s other college the Industrial College of  
14 the Armed Forces where economics was the important issue for the next three and a half years. I  
15 was promoted to colonel after twenty years in the Air Force and later moved to Penn State  
16 University as professor of aero-space studies for three years. Then I completed my Air Force  
17 career as Chief, National Security Affairs Division, the Air War College and retired in ’81, last—  
18 December ’81. All the while since Vietnam I had been a commander, an economics professor,  
19 seminar leader, and director of electives covering lessons learned during the Vietnam War.  
20 While still on flying status I was not required to continue flying. I’d already ended my flying  
21 career with over five thousand hours in the air. I was credited with over fifty combat sorties and  
22 missions in Vietnam ’70 and ’71. In retired life I became a banking vice president and then I  
23 taught—was a banker for ’82 to ’87 and I was also visiting economics professor at Texas  
24 Christian University, my old school. In early 1990 after total retirement I was contacted by  
25 Colonel Harry Summers, editor of the now growing *Vietnam Magazine*. He asked me to respond  
26 to an article on Agent Orange. I had participated in at that time four of six scheduled three-day  
27 Agent Orange exams at Scripps Clinic as to the effect of this chemical, if any, of those veterans  
28 most exposed.” You have a tape of all my physicals that they printed up for me in your archives.  
29 “The Ranch Hand members certainly were the most exposed. After my article entitled  
30 “Reexamining the Effects of Agent Orange,” that was published in the February ’99 *Vietnam*  
31 *Magazine* and then in a book that they chose to put out in ’02 called *Vietnam Reader*. I continued

1 my heightened interest in the controversy over the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and  
2 especially over the claim it was now harming or killing our Vietnam veterans. The veterans who  
3 were experiencing mostly aging illnesses, common aging illnesses were very vocal in their  
4 mostly anecdotal attacks. Many of them said they had Orange all over them.” Well, that was  
5 what we painted the barrels with, a stripe of orange, white, and blue so that the Vietnamese  
6 would know what to put in our airplanes. It had the chemicals just smelled exactly like when you  
7 go out and spray Roundup on your dandelions. It all smelled the same. “Attacks on our mission  
8 and herbicides used. These attacks continued even those there was only very limit and suggested  
9 evidence of association. Never was their cause proven that Agent Orange ever cause any  
10 diseases.” With that I’ll finish this first introduction and get into another group of articles that I  
11 evaluated that came out beautifully in the *Dallas Morning News* where they kept this information  
12 alive a little longer. By the way, I did have my two studies were called—that they did publish at  
13 the Air Force Academy later after we came back and they were declassified—“An Economic  
14 Analysis of Steel Tiger Interdiction Campaign, 1 November ’69 to 30 June ’70.” That was with  
15 Colonel Gilster and Major Gregory Hildebrand as I was at that time at Penn State. They were  
16 able to declassify this. The other one was called “An Econometric Study of Aerial Interdiction in  
17 South Laos, 10 October ’70 to ’71.” The three of us also produced that. I’ll tell you, when we  
18 stood before many pilots and navigators who had flown over the trail they glossed over when we  
19 hit them with all these statistics. That’s what the war was about. It was about trying to kill trucks  
20 and see how we could do it more efficiently than any other source and that was with the gunship.  
21 Mike Baker from the Associated Press wrote an article in August, on August 31 of August 10,  
22 2010 headlined “Billions for Veterans Because of a Maybe.” “The following article said the  
23 tenuous link to Agent Orange doesn’t stop medical payments even though decades of research  
24 into Agent Orange have failed to find more than a mere possibility that AO caused,” and here’s  
25 the diseases: “diabetes, lung cancer, prostate cancer, heart disease, Parkinson’s disease, and a  
26 host of other covered diseases. Many thousands of Agent Orange claims were common diseases  
27 of age including erectile dysfunction, the seventh-most compensated disability are sky rocketing  
28 the VA (Veterans Administration) disability payment from the present thirty-four billion a year  
29 at that time in ’08 on all the wars.” Now that’s probably the tripled, doubled or a doubled,  
30 tripled, or quadrupled with the heart disease and the diabetes claims. “The latest cost figures  
31 obtained by the Associated Press” and he was able to through the Freedom of Information Act

1 and I can't get this kind of information but he was able to get it, "that showed about thirty  
2 percent of the one million Vietnam veterans who were at that time '09 receiving compensation  
3 for diabetes. We see it for diabetes, so thirty percent of all the Vietnam veterans got it for  
4 diabetes. This is more than any other illness including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, hearing  
5 loss or general wounds all because of a mere possible limited and suggestive link to Agent  
6 Orange. The VA estimates the new rules that they just came up with in '11, the middle of '11,  
7 Parkinson's disease, heart disease and certain B-type of leukemia will cost sixty-seven billion  
8 alone over the next ten years." So immediately you have to add 6.7 billion to the 34 billion it's  
9 already up to 40. Now with heart disease they are really increasing the number. "Government  
10 officials and Congress are reluctant or unwilling to criticize the AO program that helps aging  
11 Vietnam veterans. They ignored an Institute of Medicine study that concluded"—and I'll go over  
12 that in a minute—"that concluded evidence about AO benefits being based on such slim  
13 scientific research was quite extreme" in quotes "quite extreme." The AP (Associated Press)  
14 estimate based on VA records suggest Vietnam veterans with diabetes presently receive about a  
15 billion a year and that number's decreasing over time. Another questionable area is the  
16 presumption that all Vietnam veterans were exposed merely for showing they were Vietnam for  
17 as little as a few minutes with a stop between," let's say between Bangkok and the Philippines. If  
18 the airplane stopped on the ground the guy got out and got pack of cigarettes, why, he was  
19 exposed for five minutes or ten minutes on the ground. "At any time between January 9, '62  
20 when we first, Ranch Hand sprayed the first mission 'til May 7, 1975 when took them off the  
21 roof of the embassy with helicopters and abandoned Vietnam" or were kicked out whatever you  
22 want to say. "This is quite a stretch of the imagination I say since Air Force and MACV stopped  
23 using Agent Orange when I was there 15 April 1970, five years before the end of this time.  
24 Ranch Hand members have participated now in six—over twenty-one years—six exams over  
25 twenty-one years." The Air Force Health Study is what it's called, Agent Orange Health Study.  
26 "A three-day exam every three to five years at Scripps Clinic in La Jolla costing nearly a  
27 hundred-fifty million. After twenty-five years of published research the Ranch Hand air crews  
28 being the most heavily exposed to Agent Orange because they loaded and sprayed the chemical  
29 had a prevalence of diabetes of 18.2 percent. The Air Force shadow group who were another four  
30 thousand who were tested against us and had never have been to Vietnam had a prevalence of  
31 diabetes of 19.3. So that was 1.1 percent more. Americans sixty and older have a twenty-five

1 percent prevalence due to obesity, physical inactivity, and family history. I'm saying it appeared  
2 present then that aging veterans based on a maybe needs to be reevaluated but it probably won't  
3 happen because the Centers for Disease Control say that the twenty-six million Americans now  
4 have diabetes with another eighty million just testing below the full-blown level." If you at that  
5 up that's one third of our population with nearly all with diabetes. "The final rule, the new rule  
6 that came about was evaluated on ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's disease, and B-cell with  
7 their exposure. Senator Jim Webb, Democrat of Virginia, a Vietnam veteran Marine officer  
8 requested a hearing on this since these three diseases," as I said were going to cause sixty-seven  
9 billion over the next ten years. "He sought a detailed explanation of why the VA considers these  
10 illnesses that are associated," now it's never "cause," but "that are associated only through  
11 merely limited and suggestive scientific evidence are being linked to Vietnam service," rather  
12 than "why are they being linked to Vietnam service rather than aging. Then Alan Simpson," who  
13 is President Obama's deficit committee, I'll go through his quote later on. The VBA (Veterans  
14 Benefits Administration) really lambasted him on that one and said veterans can't account for  
15 every moment and every place they were since they had a job to do. Well, everybody had a job  
16 to do over there. "No doubt the controversy over the use of Agent Orange will continue in the  
17 immediate future." Then I say, "However, the President and Congress will have to have a deficit  
18 reduction policy moving"—here I become an economist again—"however, the President and  
19 Congress will have to get a deficit reduction policy moving in a positive direction or global  
20 capital markets will most likely impose their own solution which would be very distasteful and  
21 economically unpleasant. We should be able to solve this ourselves but that's going to require  
22 sacrifices and hardship. America's past strength will have to be brought forth to face these  
23 expenditures not only for aging veterans but for other costs that are well become beyond our  
24 ability to pay. A recent *New York Times* article that covered the erosion of health for the current  
25 of Afghanistan and Iraq exposed the fiscal predicament more clearly. With two wars in Southeast  
26 Asia now among the longest there are still a hundred thousand or nearly that military personnel  
27 deployed in the region. More than two million have served there with six hundred thousand on  
28 multiple assignments over just two million or so"—I think it's 1.9 or 8 million—"is less than one  
29 percent of the nation's three hundred and eleven million citizens, a mostly disproportionate  
30 burden on our defense. During recent election and the ongoing debate that is going," on this was  
31 the election in 2010, "debate over the proper size and roll there was little if any discussion of the



1 present military size.” Now there is some where they’re talking about a large reduction going on  
2 over the next ten years. “Washington’s fiscal mess and budget problems in the state will require  
3 cutbacks on government programs that serve the military. This comes at a time when more than  
4 forty thousand service members from Iraq and Afghanistan have been wounded in Southwest  
5 Asia. Not all their wounds are readily apparent. Some twenty percent suffer from Post Traumatic  
6 Stress Disorder and major depression, nearly twenty percent more suffer from different levels of  
7 traumatic brain injury. The *Military Times* reported on March tenth of last year one in six  
8 members are in some form of psychiatric drugs, suicide numbers are rising. What we’re saying  
9 here is applying benefits too broadly without scientific merit can only cause more harm than  
10 positive results in the future. The VA benefit package will have to be scrutinized more closely to  
11 end up taking care of these new veterans of the wars in Southwest Asia and other wars to come  
12 in the future.” Okay. Then I get into this last article by Linda Dev—D-E-V-E-R from the staff  
13 writer *Dallas Morning News*. She wrote this on November 24, 2011 entitled “Costs to Treat Ills  
14 Tied to Agent Orange Soared.” She’s talking about how many more thousands Vietnam veterans  
15 are seeking medical compensation as the list grows to fifteen. ‘Five of these maladies classified  
16 by the Institute of Medicine early on show sufficient evidence of an association, the remaining  
17 ten illnesses with almost every one being age related in our male population are listed under the  
18 Institutes of Medicine’s lower category limited and suggestive evidence of an association.’ Then  
19 I have in underlined “Be advised, the association is not caused and Agent Orange has never been  
20 blamed for causing any disease. The definitions of sufficient evidence of an association”—let  
21 me read this quickly—“The Institute of Medicine includes health outcomes in the first category,  
22 sufficient evidence, when a positive association has been observed between herbicides and the  
23 outcome in the study in which”—these are all statistical words—“chance, bias, and confounding  
24 could be ruled out reasonable confidence. The limit and suggestive evidence of association  
25 where they classify the other ten diseases, these age-related diseases the Institute of Medicine list  
26 conditions on the second category when evidence revealed is suggestive of an association, not a  
27 cause but an association, between herbicide and the outcome but is limit because chance, bias,  
28 and confounding could not be ruled out without confidence. Health outcomes are included in this  
29 category when, for example, at least one, just one high-quality study shows a positive association  
30 but the results of other studies are inconsistent.” I mean if I tried to get something through when  
31 I was taking statistics courses for my PhD they would have said, “Rewrite that, Duckworth.

1 That's not enough." Anyway that's one of them. Then this article was really, "Again, where  
2 we're getting it forward and these newly covered diseases come at a time, the new diseases come  
3 at a time when Congress is grappling with long term health care costs of our veterans of Iraq and  
4 Afghanistan. An estimated future health care cost, according to the Watson Institute of Brown  
5 University for these two wars," now, the total health care cost they say would approach one  
6 trillion over the next twenty years. We're only in debt—I think the big deficit today is about  
7 fifteen to sixteen trillion and they're squawking like, "Hey, we're going to go down the tubes."  
8 "Many politicians, prominent politicians and scientists believe that most veterans would have  
9 developed these diseases regardless. They ask how the VA can afford these age-related illnesses  
10 that include, again, diabetes, lung cancer, prostate cancer, heart disease, Parkinson's disease, and  
11 a host of other covered illness with the seventh-most compensated being erectile dysfunction."  
12 That article went on into definitions of presumption, which I'll cover in my final little statement  
13 and reemphasizes the epidemiology study of the Air Force that showed that after twenty-five  
14 years in evaluation six physicals we have less of a diabetes prevalence than even our shadow  
15 group and almost ten percent less than what the average Americans are having over sixty. Then  
16 I'll also consider the new supplements in our California gas and electric bills. "The information  
17 covers a proposition called 65 with a warning that lists such substances known to cause cancer or  
18 reproductive harm. However, the substances in the warning you can't believe were used on a  
19 massive daily basis in Vietnam." I'll cover than in this one. Now, on to my last article here  
20 which is "Old Ranch Hand Pilot's Concern About Agent Orange Controversy." This is the one  
21 that the general just read and commented on. It deserved to be widely ready especially by those  
22 directly concerned because it is such a controversial subject. "On October 6, '09, I received a  
23 letter and book titled, the book was titled *Improving the Presumptive Disability Decision Making*  
24 *Process for Veterans*. The scientist who was instrument in directing the publication stated, 'I  
25 think the frustrating element for all Agent Orange'—excuse me, oh, I had to sneeze then.

26 KC: Bless you.

27 RD: "I think the frustrating element for all Agent Orange business is how science gets  
28 moved aside by politics and economics during policy development. Nevertheless, this is a reality.  
29 The Institute of Medicine of the National Academies was asked by the VA Disability  
30 Commission to do the above study evaluating how the presumptive decision could be done more  
31 scientifically. In the letter to me the scientists indicated doubt that the report would see the light

1 of day for some period of time. Fast forward to February 2012, just last—this month, *Vietnam*  
2 *Magazine*. The beginning sentence in the review of a new book by David Zierler titled *The*  
3 *Invention of Ecocide*—capital E-C-O-C-I-D-E, then the subtitle “*Agent Orange, Vietnam, and*  
4 *the Scientists Who Changed the Way We Think About the Environment*,” and I’ll add my part,  
5 “the Vietnam War.” “The first sentence corresponds precisely with the IOM (Institute of  
6 Medicine) scientist above. Patrick Robins, the reviewer, stated science is never value neutral.  
7 Political and economic interest always inform the scientific question, which scientific questions  
8 get asked and how the answers to those question are put into practice. He then continues with an  
9 interesting review of the ecocide book.” My main problem with his book after I’ve read it twice  
10 is the obvious bias. Zierler, he was getting this for his PhD, I think in Maryland. He was really  
11 siding with these four or five scientist Gallstone, Pfeiffer, and another one from Yale that had  
12 just picked and picked about in the ’60s about being a spray in this country of Vietnam was  
13 going to look like the moon. Anyway, “he displays his bias by using such words and phrases  
14 like, ‘Orwellian and macabre Operation Ranch Hand, a catastrophe, a rape, deformed fetuses,  
15 Vietnam as a dead country and a preview of planetary death, massive and uncontrolled spraying,  
16 an ecological variant of genocide, allowing Ranch Hand to go unchecked in destruction.’ This  
17 removed somewhat any objectivity from his analysis and leaves him clearly in the camp of  
18 environmental anti-war bio-scientist. For a fact, as the Ranch Hand a forestation mission was  
19 being curtailed, a substitute by Westmoreland was being ingenerated. The Rome Plow, named  
20 after Rome, New York were it was made, giant bulldozers that were able to clear cut of the  
21 jungle and vast forest areas. They could, with their blade they could cut through a tree two feet in  
22 diameter. The Army unit responsible there, that was doing this took the highest casualty count of  
23 any unit in Vietnam. This certainly was one of the main reasons aerial spraying was being used  
24 to save the lives of our servicemen while effectively and inexpensively exposing the Army to  
25 harm, without harm to human or animals. The two quotes in the above two paragraphs explain  
26 exactly why the Agent Orange controversy is still such a hot-button issue for many member of  
27 Ranch Hand spray mission as everyone was conducted from 7 January ’62 to 7 January ’71 when  
28 the last lift was flown. The Air Force squadron, this Air Force squadron dispensed over ninety  
29 percent, probably about ninety-three percent of the herbicide sprayed in Vietnam. Their exposure  
30 to this material in its liquid and gaseous state was as much as one thousand times greater than  
31 the maximum level experienced by ground personnel in the target area.” Those were simulations

1 we ran after the war and that's were that number a thousand comes from. "Every Ranch Hand  
2 veteran wants to know if the herbicide they sprayed had any harmful health effects on anyone  
3 stationed in or living in Vietnam, especially on themselves who had the highest exposure of  
4 anyone. For this reason over eighty percent of the Ranch Hand members volunteered for that  
5 twenty-one year healthcare study was conducted at Scripps, La Jolla, California that gave  
6 physical exams each, that each took three days with six physicals over two decades," at a cost of  
7 I said a hundred and fifty million. "The difference between the Ranch Hand position and other  
8 VA medical and bioscientists is that the squadron members wanted to see indisputable,  
9 indisputable medical and scientific proof, no emotion or hidden agendas like get rid of the war  
10 just the facts. In one area it appears these facts are clear and that's where the operation showed  
11 on diabetes analysis showed show 18.2 for Ranch Hand verses 19.3 for those not exposed and in  
12 addition almost 25 percent of the Americans over sixty have diabetes and another eighty million  
13 are classified just below that level due to lack of physical activity, eating too much, and being  
14 obese and some family history. However, the VA, using the Agent Orange Act of 1991 now have  
15 fifteen disease presumptively labeled as service connected due to either sufficient evidence of an  
16 association, five cancer disease or limited and sugge—suggestive evidence and age related  
17 disease." Here a good question—statement. "A final VA decisions were not based on  
18 determination of causation or proof of exposure nor on studies of veterans like in the Air Force  
19 healthy study." They just disbanded ours, "who would be stationed in Vietnam. The IO—  
20 Institute of Medicine rather based it initially decisions on evidence as judged in periodic reviews  
21 of human literature. Some of them with small sample sizes," and alls you had to do is, as we  
22 said," one study that's somewhat verifiable when you have a hundred that say no connection it  
23 doesn't matter. The one will supplant it. Alvin Young's book *The History, Use, Disposition and*  
24 *Environmental Fate of Agent Orange*"—I wrote a review this in the October *Vietnam Magazine*  
25 and I will certainly leave a copy of that with you people up there at Texas Tech—"clearly covers  
26 more information concerning any evidence. He states that in quotes 'In their Institute of  
27 Medicine view if the evidence is sufficient or limited suggestive then a positive association is  
28 declared. The Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs makes the final decision with any  
29 doubt favoring the veterans. This public policy favoring the veterans is the proper thing to do.  
30 Yet science ought not favor one group over the other. It creates an unfair condition for Vietnam  
31 veterans who have diseases who do not qualify as associated with Agent Orange or other tactical

1 herbicides' unquote. As Al Young states similar to the two quotes at the beginning of this paper  
2 in quotes 'However, as scientists we can ignore the social, emotional, and legal issues  
3 influencing public policy because in today's environment these policies shape the research  
4 agenda and, hence, the funding dollars. If we are not careful may even affect the results.' At the  
5 present time approximately thirty percent, as I stated, over million Vietnam veterans are  
6 receiving monetary compensations up to about," three thousand a month now, I think, with this  
7 latest price increase, are increasing our retirement fees and so on and VBA. "Up to thirty-six  
8 thousand for a hundred percent disabled with dependents are getting it for diabetes. Thirty  
9 percent of all of them getting it for diabetes. More vets are getting disability checks for diabetes  
10 than other, as I talked about, "but diabetes being a common ailment of age along with prostate,  
11 lung cancer are all getting paid because of a," in quotes, 'maybe link through limited and  
12 suggestive evidence of association.' Again I institute remember association is not cause. Another  
13 ailment of age erectile dysfunction gets seventh most compensated and why? Because if the  
14 creditable evidence of an association of linkage is equal to slightly outweighs the creditable  
15 evidence against then the so called positive link is established. Then those new diseases, of heart  
16 diseases, ischemic heart disease, Parkinson's, and B-cell are now included under limited and  
17 suggestive. These diseases as I stated will cost sixty-seven billion over the next few years on  
18 estimate. Therefore, the VA's '08 spending of thirty-four billion a year on diabetes—on  
19 disability benefits for all the wars previous wars, Two, Korea, Vietnam, anything else will now  
20 easily going into double or triple or maybe quadruple in the foreseeable future. These newly  
21 covered diseases come at time when Congress is grappling with the long-term health care cost  
22 for veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan." I said "The Institute of Brown University, the Watson  
23 Institute, went ahead and said that's going to cost us about one trillion over the next twenty to  
24 thirty years. It's difficult for the American citizen to understand why Vietnam, why these  
25 veterans' excessive monetary compensations are being allowed. Many prominent politicians and  
26 scientist believe that most veterans would have developed these limited and suggestive evidence  
27 of associated degrees—diseases regardless of their presumptive exposure to Agent Orange. They  
28 ask how the VA can afford these age-related illnesses that include," those that I stated earlier,  
29 "diabetes, lung cancer, prostate cancer, Parkinson's disease and a host of other covered maladies  
30 like erectile dysfunction, enlarged prostate," you name it. "Former Senator Alan Simpson  
31 Republic of Wyoming of Obama's deficit commission has stated in quotes 'The irony is that vets

1 who basically saved this country are now in a way not helping us save the country in this fiscal  
2 mess. You are going to find out these unbelievable benefits and compensations will fail. There is  
3 no way they can be sustained.' Unquote. That's when the VVA (Vietnam Veterans of America)  
4 attacked him—ugh, you can't believe it. "However, an attempted amendment to the  
5 Appropriations Act of 2012 to exclude future presumptive diseases or make veterans show  
6 causal instead of association effects and prove they were in fact exposed, that was defeated by  
7 the US Senate sixty-nine to thirty in July of 2011. The seven Senators went after the presumptive  
8 definition in the AO Act, Agent Orange Act of '91 as much too generous." Now, here's the  
9 definition, "presumption means a decision to automatically award monetary benefits to veterans  
10 who needed only to prove they were in Vietnam at any time during a thirteen-year period, 9  
11 January '62 to 7 May '75, and later got one of the illnesses associated with the presumed Agent  
12 Orange exposure. Veterans were automatically presumed to be exposed no matter what their job  
13 or where they were stationed. Even though MACV and the Air Force stopping using Agent  
14 Orange on 15 April '70, a full five years before the end of the period. One consideration that  
15 permeates my mind after living in California during retirement years is Prop 65. This proposition  
16 appears periodically in our gas, electric, water bills, and our newspapers quarterly." They're  
17 forced to do this, the businesses are. "The information concerning Prop 65 has a warning that  
18 lists substances known to cause cancer." Somehow they've got cause in there. I guess they know  
19 more than I do. "The Proposition 65 states materials such as gasoline, kerosene, natural gas,  
20 tobacco, and equipment and vehicle exhaust found around facilities, worksites, railroad yards,  
21 airports, and highways contain substances known to cause cancer." There is no mention of any  
22 herbicidal chemicals that were used in Vietnam. I can probably say that's because we're one of  
23 the biggest agricultural states in the United States, "However, the substances listed in the  
24 warning were used in Vietnam on a massive daily basis. I'm saying should not some blame for  
25 aging illnesses be put on these substances? Prop 65 warning should put to rest the recent slogan  
26 that I've seen by many concerned veterans and their healthcare advocates that they were sprayed  
27 and betrayed in Vietnam and our military was to blame. On several visits I made to the Vietnam,  
28 Roving Vietnam Wall in Texas I came across volunteer veterans wearing Ranch Hand patches on  
29 their vest. They had boonie hats on and big bellies and cigarette backs under their, in their sharp,  
30 in their pockets. My anger arose. I complement them for volunteering to do the rubbings and  
31 guiding people to the names but my anger arose when I saw in the circle surrounding the patch

1 the words—my patch, our patch—the words in bold print “Agent Orange.” We never called it  
2 that, “but they put ‘Agent Orange: Sprayed and Betrayed.’ I call that—what hypocrisy, what  
3 denial. Members of the Ranch Hand are not alone in questioning the generous decision made by  
4 about Agent Orange by the VA. In the ecocide book by David Zierler on page 127 he describes  
5 the only medically qualified participant in a four-scientist, two-week tour of Vietnam in August  
6 of ’70.” I was still there but I was working in a different department and MACV and the Air  
7 Force would not even talk to these people so they went to the, the scientists or the sponsorship of  
8 the CIA, the State Department and the Vietnamese People, Vietnamese government. “John  
9 Constable,” that was his name, “a French-speaking surgeon from Massachusetts General  
10 Hospital would join the mission and spearhead the commission’s health effect studies in  
11 Vietnam.” The others were looking at biology. They were all biologist. “Constable began the  
12 tour like all of them did with the expectation to find causation between Agent Orange and  
13 dozens of life-threatening health ailments that Vietnam veterans and Vietnamese have blamed on  
14 herbicide. He has since become one of the field’s leading skeptics regarding any correlation of  
15 Agent Orange to the many ailments mentioned in the writing. He as concluded that the data  
16 simple does not correlate. In a June 12, 2007, interview with the author Zierler when pressed to  
17 recognize any AO related-illness as is the VA policy as we know today. He stated in quote ‘You  
18 have to remember when Vietnam veterans came back to this country they were not the heroes of  
19 World War I and II. They got a pretty raw deal. The least we can do is bend over backwards to  
20 help them medically, to give them benefits of the doubt.’” Underline this remaining part of the  
21 sentence—‘even if a proper scientific study doesn’t have a doubt to give.’ In his view there was  
22 no meaningful evidence, there is no meaningful evidence that proves a human’s death or life-  
23 threatening illness came be blamed on Agent Orange.” I don’t know a better quote you could get  
24 from anyone. “Also, the main scientist in the book who campaigned to end herbicidal warfare,  
25 Arthur Gallstone,” the one of them I contacted before I even went over there, “a plant biologist  
26 coined the word ecocide”—it’s the title of the book—“as the willful and permanent destruction  
27 of environment in which a people can live in a manner of their own choosing.” Unquote. “He  
28 offered this definition in mid ’70s as an indictment of the America’s use of herbicide 245-T,  
29 better known was Agent Orange. However, Gallstone and his colleagues were clearly against the  
30 war but were careful to separate this sentiment from their campaign to end herbicidal warfare  
31 because they didn’t want to alienate the military. They wanted to make a study and get involved

1 in chemical, see in enemy-held territory how this stuff was working.” Anyway he—“however,  
2 Gallstone was clearly against the war yet Gallstone told Zierler”—now listen to this quote—“in a  
3 March 9, 2007, interview that quote ‘If herbicide could have exposed German gunners on the  
4 beaches of Normandy then he would have adamantly supported their inclusion in the Allied  
5 arsenal.’ However, for Gallstone and his friends World War II was good war whereas Vietnam  
6 was not. If ending ecocide could help end the war in Vietnam that was good news for this anti-  
7 war environmentalist regardless of the scientific and medical evidence. No doubt the controversy  
8 over the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and its unintended consequences will continue in the  
9 immediate future and most likely be on as the healthcare cost increases and federal and state  
10 spending dwindles. The American citizens and all veterans expect past promised benefits and  
11 understandably resent any hint that they will be cut or eliminated. However, as”—here I’m an  
12 economist again—“however as deficits or taxes go up the greatest risk to the US is that economic  
13 instability will increase and economic growth will decrease or maybe both could happen together  
14 with economic stagnation for the coming decade as Japan has experienced for the last two  
15 decades. Then there was a recent Pew study showing how the people feel about our war and our  
16 war-fighting men. The most striking feature was that”—this was reported in November of ’11—  
17 “that three fourths, seventy-four percent of the American public felt it was perfectly acceptable  
18 and fair for armed forces war fighters to make all the sacrifices to defend the nation.  
19 Respondents stated, ‘That is just part of being in the military.’ For the past decade less than one  
20 half of one percent of the US population served in the all-volunteer military. The civilians  
21 admitted that the war made little difference in their lives while they recognized that the military  
22 bears the burden. They frankly don’t want their family members close to them also bare those  
23 burdens, so let the other guys fight. An example of—in the *VFW Magazine*, Veterans of Foreign  
24 Wars, February 12 of the late—some non-Vietnam veterans are again taking to gain Agent  
25 Orange monetary benefits occurred late last year. Air Force Reserve members some sixteen-  
26 hundred to two-thousand troops who flew in the few”—we only brought back maybe ten/twelve  
27 123s that had been used over there as spray planes. We brought them back and then they put  
28 them in service as transport. “Returned to the United States in the mid-’70s. They said they were  
29 exposed to Agent Orange while flying in contaminated planes after the Vietnam War. Recently  
30 some said they contracted diseases.” Well, hell yes, they probably have heart disease and  
31 prostate cancer and adult onset diabetes—or Type II diabetes “as being caused by AO exposure.



1 To their credit, the VA said, ‘Any exposure was minimal and would not have caused,’ again,  
2 ‘adverse health effects.’” They should use the word association but they don’t. “The VA ruled in  
3 November 11 that it would not provide disability benefits to these people. After fifty years of  
4 research into the chemicals of Agent Orange the only relationship or linkage to most if not all  
5 aging diseases is through the words limited and suggested evidence of an association. The claim  
6 in many articles, books, or on TV that AO, Agent Orange, caused any disease is blatantly false.  
7 Many claims whether true or false can most likely be made for every chemical manmade or  
8 natural that now appears in our industrial society. Proposition 65 in California certainly can attest  
9 to this.” By the way, they also stick a plastic about three-by-five sticker on the side of your car  
10 driver’s window in California, every brand new car that you drive off with. It says, “Warning.  
11 Motor vehicles contain chemicals known to in the State of California to cause cancer, birth  
12 defects, and other. These chemicals are contained in many vehicle components and replacement  
13 parts. Vehicles fluids, paints, and materials including but not limited to fuel oil brakes”—and on  
14 and on it goes for a little while. You leave that on your window for I don’t know how long after  
15 you buy a brand new car. Anyway, “Prop 65 is certainly—therefore the Vietnam veteran was  
16 clearly was not betrayed by MACV, the Air Force, or members of Ranch Hand’s 12<sup>th</sup> Air  
17 Commando Squadron/Special Operation Squadron who bravely died or were wounded while  
18 performing this hazardous herbicide mission in Vietnam. The mission undoubtedly saved many  
19 Army or Marine lives in South Vietnam. If one can say there were real victims of Agent Orange  
20 it has to be the twenty-seven crew members who were killed while performing this hazardous  
21 Ranch Hand mission flying at a hundred and twenty-five to a hundred and thirty knots only one  
22 hundred to one hundred and fifty feet above the jungle or rice paddies for five to six minutes in  
23 order to achieve the professional spray defoliation swaths across enemy-controlled areas and  
24 inevitably saved our soldiers’ lives. The Ranchers certainly want to avoid sensationalism and  
25 dramatization which seems firmly embedding in current media hype. While everyone was  
26 entitled to their own anecdotal opinions and views, research scientific facts and medical evidence  
27 should be the basis in determining the truth of the matter. The very latest example of media hype  
28 appeared in the February 12 *Vietnam Magazine* while interviewing John Rowan, National  
29 President of Vietnam Veterans of America, an organization and has had many questionable non-  
30 Vietnam veterans in the past. See Jug Burkett’s, *Stolen Valor*, Chapter 23.” This tainted Vietnam  
31 service organization. Anyway, “Rowan was asked what he saw as the VVA greatest successes. It

1 was, quote 'Prevailing in the AO battle from the original '91 law to last year's addition of  
2 ischemic heart disease to the presumpt list.'" Then he makes this statement, "'Agent Orange  
3 killed and continues to kill. It was critical to get disability payments for these diseases. I am  
4 especially proud when young veterans'"—well, they've all got to be near sixty if they fought in  
5 Vietnam—"tell me that if it was not for us they would still be getting screwed.' It is with this  
6 type of dialogue that AO is cited by so many citizens and beckons as the cause the their age-  
7 related diseases. Once statements like this are voiced or appear in the pint it becomes very  
8 difficult to overcome with factual information. It is also important to mention that in a completed  
9 study, Vietnam women who fought in—or were in Vietnam reported more babies born with birth  
10 defects as compared to non-Vietnam women veterans. There were no new studies linking  
11 exposure to Agent Orange herbicides and birth defects in either male or female veterans. While a  
12 relatively small number of women served"—I think seven-thousand to eight-thousand,  
13 something like that—"the VA was given Congressional authority"—you have to have that to pay  
14 for spine bifida or any of these diseases because the VA can only give it to veterans—"to prove  
15 certain benefits—to provide certain benefits to children with birth defects. However, it's  
16 important to point out that the authority to help was strictly based on association with in quotes,  
17 capitalized, 'SERVICE IN VIETNAM' not with exposure to Agent Orange. If Vietnam veterans,  
18 their health care advocates and Vietnam Veterans of America-type service organizations would  
19 have pursued political avenues other than Agent Orange while getting—after thirty years they've  
20 only gotten fifteen disease appearing after twenty years or thirty years. They may have gotten all  
21 ill boots on the ground Vietnam veterans their desired compensation with the overall condition of  
22 either service in Vietnam or the Vietnam experience. This approach would have eliminated the  
23 unfair condition that Al Young discusses for veterans who develop diseases and illnesses not  
24 associated or suspected to be associated with Agent Orange. Let us make it fair for all Vietnam  
25 veterans. There is still much work to be done. However, this country's financial condition the  
26 large deficit will have to be considered paramount as we endeavor to solve the AO controversy  
27 once and for all. It is too bad that Ranch Hand members can't make their voice heard loud and  
28 clear. Many of us are tired of Agent Orange being the ugly football that has been kicked around  
29 since the anti-war scientists started their environmental attack in the '60s and the '70s. As I  
30 wrote in my '96 article that appeared both in *Vietnam Magazine* February '79 and in the book  
31 *Vietnam Reader* published in '02 entitled "Reexamining the Effects," my primary endeavor is in

1 clarifying the facts about Ranch Hand missions and revealing the most recent sources and factual  
2 data concerning Agent Orange. Certainly and clearly much misinformation is still being  
3 circulated about the use of herbicides in Vietnam and their effects on humans. Perhaps careful  
4 consideration of the information in this present paper will provide the reader with a better  
5 understanding of Vietnam veterans' health problem as they relate the AO, Agent Orange by  
6 helping sort out the facts from the fiction." Thank you. I'm done. How 'bout that?

7 KC: Very good. Thank you for that discussion of that.

8 RD: I know that probably bores the hell out of a lot of people but that's pretty well the  
9 scientific avenue we should have been taking instead of the others.

10 KC: I have just one question for you.

11 RD: Sure.

12 KC: When you look at all of this controversy and you look at the government's  
13 willingness to pay for the, this long list of diseases that with, as you say, perhaps questionable  
14 association with the spraying of—

15 RD: Age-related is basically what they are.

16 KC: Why do you think it came about? Why did the issue become an issue?

17 RD: Well, it came about because of organizations like the VVA screaming "Agent  
18 Orange killed!" These guys came back and initially and started—one who flew in a helicopter  
19 said—he was a crew chief so he wouldn't have flown a the missions all the time. Maybe once a  
20 month. Anyway, he said he flew under Ranch Hand missions and got the spray right in his  
21 airplane. Well, that's not possible because the spray had oil in it. That's the way—we put a  
22 couple gallons of oil in the barrel of herbicide to get the proper droplet size when it went down  
23 so it wouldn't just blow everywhere. This would be all over his windows. Anyway he came back  
24 with some kind of a cancer, soft-tissue sarcoma or something and they all start bitching, "Oh my  
25 kid's got this. I got this. I can't stand. I never had this in my life." They kept giving. Then the TV  
26 started with its programs. A Chicago program came out in the titles and the media hype just went  
27 crazy with this trying to say, "Hey these guys are all victims of the war." They're victims just  
28 like a lot of people came back and said that they'd done atrocities over there. Not the ninety  
29 percent who said, "Hell, I was happy I served." The rest came back just totally angry about  
30 everything and the end result is this was a football after Nixon's claim we canceled it. He wanted  
31 to go to the protocol on the gas that we never did sign. The—not using gas after World War I. He

1 said, "I want to get it in on that," and to do that they had to disband in a way the information on  
2 chemical and biological warfare we were perpetrating on the poor Vietnamese countryside. It  
3 was the riot gas we were using to save our pilots who were downed in Laos and also in the tunnel  
4 wars that they were fighting and then the herbicide. So it just got to be those words that they  
5 used. Everybody started reading that. The Army couldn't verify the number of troops we saved.  
6 How can you say we saved them when the enemy didn't attack them anymore? The result was  
7 they said, "Well, we'll give them a few things back in '91." After the first Gulf War everybody  
8 said, "We did a pretty good job over there. Let's give these guys something because as that one  
9 quote said, we weren't treated right when we came back. The end result is let's give them a little  
10 bit. Even Principia, who was the first VA secretary that passed the diabetes law, he said he never  
11 expected it to be more than about twenty or thirty thousand veterans. My god, now it's over two-  
12 hundred, three-hundred-thousand of these guys are claiming diabetes because they just don't  
13 care, take care of their body at age. They're in denial. It's easy to blame Agent—I've heard these  
14 guys at the VA up in Loma Linda here in California when I go to get one little pill, aspirins or  
15 something else for cholesterol that aren't covered by Agent Orange. They've got a bag of  
16 psychiatric drugs they're going on. Many of them look at my little patch I wear on my, our little  
17 insignia I wear on my hat as I go in there. I don't wear one of those boonie hats or even a  
18 baseball hat it's just a little visor. They say, "Oh, you sprayed Agent Orange." They want to  
19 shake my hand because they weigh about three-hundred pounds and they're all getting a hundred  
20 percent disability for diabetes. I think that the American public just said, "We've got to do  
21 something for these guys." It just got out of hand and now it's really gotten out of hand because  
22 it's probably going to end up as the most expensive mission we even flew in Vietnam because of  
23 the added cost, and cost, and cost that go on. I don't have a firm answer on it but I just know that  
24 these guys are really upset when I even stand up and talk. I've had people just throw things at me  
25 on the stage. One time when I was down at a briefing of helicopter pilots in Arlington, Texas,  
26 they all got huffed up. Oh man, when I started talking. This stuff hadn't been proven to do this.  
27 Finally they took a break and the warrant officer came back to me who was running it and said,  
28 "Do you still stay around for questions." I said, "Sure, I'll stay for questions but let me start my  
29 second portion like this, 'I'm going to hold up my hand and ask you some questions. How many  
30 took the malaria pill regularly?'" I held up my hand. None of the fifty guys sitting out there held  
31 up their hands, so that malaria. Second thing is I said, "How many of you didn't not eat off of the

economy?” which meant I ate the Officers Club the NCO Club, the mess hall, but I wouldn’t eat outside of the base because on Tundo Street or wherever you walked they were just cooking just any kind of stuff and they were fertilizing almost everything in Vietnam with their own bowel movements. That means you’ve now got hepatitis which was rampant over there at times. You’ve got the diabetes—I mean you’ve got the problem with the mosquito and then you’ve got—which we were spraying to try and keep it down. Then we had the other one. Then finally I said, “How many of you did not smoke, drink or use any kind of drugs or excess medication?” I’m the only guy holding up his hand to all three questions. Then they said—one guy in the back yelled at me, “Who are you, Jesus Christ?” I said, “No, but let me ask this last one. How many of you didn’t fornicate with the local population?” Because now you’ve got sexual transmitted diseases that were rampant after the war because everywhere you moved over there, there was a whore house. When you get sexually transmitted diseases, you get diabetes—I mean you malaria, you get lower immune system. How all these things affect you later on in life when you get sixty or seventy you’re just prime prospect for prostate problems, hearts problems, or diabetes. I think that might be some of the reasons why but I can’t tell you. We just felt, the nation felt okay we can give them a little bit. But it’s now become just almost unbearable when you look at the money that’s being spent on this. So anything else?

KC: Well, no. I think you’ve laid it out pretty clearly, Colonel. Is there anything you’d like to add?

RD: No I think that’s it. I just really appreciate you giving a chance to blow off my mouth about it because I’ve been writing these articles and I can’t anybody else to listen to me and at least you’ve done that so maybe somebody will punch in your oral histories and say, “My, god. Here’s this guy blabbing again.” Because I’ve done this and several in our Ranch Hand, Jack Spey, who’s president of it, and Paul Cecil, who’s our historian and they’ve been writing stuff on this forever and ever. It just doesn’t make any headway. The first ones were where they were talking about smoking and lung cancer. I mean every one of these guys—and Jack still smokes like a pig but he doesn’t get anything from Agent Orange. He doesn’t even get any kind of VA benefits. We’re all right there at eighty years old and still alive so somebody said, one general—after the first one or two physicals and it showed how we were out living our shadow group—he said, “Maybe we all should’ve had a drink of that stuff.” (Laughs) It’s easy to joke about it but the end cost with what we’re in now with the deficit. I play the part of a veteran who

1 loved to fly and do this mission. I loved low-level stuff and then at the end result. I'm also an  
2 economist who looks at this and says, "Hey we can't keep doing this. This is unbearable just like  
3 Alan Simpson says on that deficit finance"—