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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with James MacFarlane  
Conducted by Steve Maxner  
February 4, 2002  
Transcribed by Jennifer McIntyre**

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

1 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner conducting an interview with Mr. James  
2 MacFarlane on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February, year 2002 at approximately 9:15 Lubbock time. I am  
3 in Lubbock, Texas. Mr. MacFarlane is in Gardiner, Maine. Why don't we begin with  
4 your early life sir, and if you would tell me when and where you were born and where  
5 you grew up.

6 James MacFarlane: I was born in Waterville, Maine and I lived in the Augusta-  
7 Gardiner, Littrel area until I was fifteen and then the family moved to Connecticut where  
8 I lived for twenty-five years and graduated from high school there.

9 SM: When were you born, sir?

10 JM: I was born on August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1935.

11 SM: How old were you when you moved to Augusta? Do you remember?

12 JM: No, I really don't. I was very young, maybe one or two years old.

13 SM: So most of your memories of childhood are in Augusta and Connecticut?

14 JM: Absolutely, yes.

15 SM: What do you remember about growing up in Augusta, what was the place  
16 like?

17 JM: Well, actually I grew up in Gardiner; I didn't end up in Augusta until I  
18 returned to Maine after I came back from Southeast Asia. Living in Gardiner, it was a  
19 nice high school there and we lived in the country, had a hundred acres of land and we  
20 did a little farming, chickens, raising potatoes and cucumbers and we had a Jeep, I  
21 learned how to drive in a Jeep. We also had a beach on the Lake Pleasant Pond and it  
22 was very pleasant growing up there, it's a beautiful area there, lots of woods, I used to

1 hunt as a young teenager and used to swim all the time in the summertime and the Navy,  
2 that was in the latter part of World War II, and the sailors from Brunswick Naval Air  
3 Station used to come up to our beach, we used to charge ten cents a piece back in those  
4 days and they'd bring them by the busloads and they'd come down to the beach and it  
5 was a great day for us. They would come down once a week on an R & R type thing, and  
6 they'd bring all their beer and they'd bring Navy life rafts and they'd go out to our floats  
7 and drink beer, they had all kinds of beautiful steaks that they used to cook on our grills,  
8 it was just a great experience.

9 SM: Now what did you hunt?

10 JM: Deer, partridge, pheasant.

11 SM: How old were you when you started to hunt?

12 JM: Probably fourteen.

13 SM: Was that something that your father taught you?

14 JM: Yes.

15 SM: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

16 JM: Yes, I had four brothers.

17 SM: Four brothers. How about sisters?

18 JM: No sisters, no.

19 SM: What did you enjoy about school as you were growing up there in Gardiner?

20 JM: I enjoyed the woodworking class. I had a great, interesting teacher and I just  
21 in general enjoyed school. I spent two years in Gardiner and then went to Wallingford,  
22 Connecticut and I finished my last two years there and I found Wallingford to be a nice  
23 town, just north of New Haven. The teachers were all good there and it was a beautiful  
24 and it was a nice experience.

25 SM: What subjects did you enjoy particularly, besides woodworking as far as  
26 like, history, math, reading?

27 JM: I liked history and I liked English and since many years now I've forgotten  
28 what else I studied there.

29 SM: Well, how about sports?

30 JM: I just remember Harry Truman coming through my high school when he ran  
31 for president, I'm dating myself now, and he stood on the front steps of our high school

1 when he was campaigning against Dewey on his whirlwind tour through Connecticut.  
2 That was a very interesting day because there was quite a gathering there. What was  
3 your next question?

4 SM: I was curious if you played any sports?

5 JM: I didn't play for any of the school sports but I used to love to play football in  
6 the sandlots and so forth and I played a lot of baseball and basketball, but I never really  
7 played on the school team though.

8 SM: Now, what did your parents do?

9 JM: My father was in the lumber business. He had a couple of sawmills here in  
10 Maine, then he retired to Florida and he managed a real estate complex.

11 SM: How about your mom?

12 JM: She didn't work.

13 SM: Stayed at home, took care of the boys.

14 JM: Well, no she went into the antique business and real estate business in years  
15 later on. She did quite well at it.

16 SM: When did you become interested in aviation?

17 JM: Well, let's see. I was working the supermarkets as a bag boy and I had to do  
18 some kind of military service back in those days and I didn't really want to go into the  
19 military. This is kind of a funny story. I waited until one day before I was eighteen and a  
20 half and I joined the local National Guard Army in Wallingford, Connecticut because I  
21 only had to go once a week and had two weeks of summer camp for six years. I didn't  
22 want to go to Fort Dix, do all that training that they do down there, just wasn't interested  
23 in the military, but when I was in there, I began to like it and I became a supply sergeant  
24 and I had a local fellow there by the name of Lieutenant Colonel Edward Palanski, he  
25 lived in my town, he lived in Wallingford and he was in the Connecticut National Guard,  
26 he was a Korean vet and he was a Beaver pilot also, he flew Beavers in Korea and used to  
27 fly over Wallingford all the time in the little Bell helicopters that they use in *M.A.S.H.*,  
28 the Bell H-13 bubble and I saw that and I said, 'I'm tired of stacking cans on the shelves  
29 in the supermarket, I want to do that.' So I started poking into it and I found him and he  
30 told me how to do it and took me up to the armory and showed me all the regulations on  
31 how to do it and I did it. I went to all the appropriate schools, I went to the Connecticut

1 National Guard military academy for a year, weekends, with two summer camps, no, one  
2 summer camp down at Camp Niantic, I think it was called. It was named after the  
3 governor, and I can't think of his name, Ribercoff, it was named Camp Ribercoff back  
4 then, down in Niantic, Connecticut. I spent two weeks there, rigorous training, cadet  
5 training and then I got my 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant's bar but then I had to qualify for an infantry  
6 school. My objective was to get to flight school, I had to do all of this to get to flight  
7 school, so then I went to Fort Benning, Georgia for twelve weeks for basic training,  
8 infantry, foot stuff and they sent me out to the boondocks, did all things, escape and  
9 evasion and so forth, then I was fully qualified as an infantry officer and then I  
10 immediately applied for flight school and I went to flight school in San Marcos, Texas  
11 and that was the primary, that was the Gary Army Air Field, the Air Force used to control  
12 it, but then the Army took it over and they made it into a civilian training camp for the  
13 U.S. Army for primary students. I finished that and I went over to advanced over at Fort  
14 Rucker for the tactical phase. We were flying L-19 Bird dogs and then I finished that  
15 course and then I returned home and then a couple of months later I was able to get  
16 slipped into helicopter school, Camp Walters they called it then, its Fort Walters now,  
17 which is out west of Fort Worth and I did two months there. I nearly was first to solo in  
18 my class there, but my instructor wouldn't send me up because I was having a bad day  
19 but I was number two to solo in my class, I thought that was pretty good for me because I  
20 was competing with some West Point graduates and Citadel graduates and so forth.

21 SM: And this was a Huey?

22 JM: No, the primary helicopter was the Hiller, the Hiller D model but I did  
23 qualify in the Huey later on, years later, ten years later.

24 SM: What year did you go to Fort Benning? Do you remember?

25 JM: Fort Benning, let's see I went to Fort Benning 1959.

26 SM: Okay, and then at Gary Army Air Field?

27 JM: No, I'll take that back, I have to correct myself. I went to Fort Benning in  
28 the fall of '58 and then I started in January, February of '59 until August of '59 and then I  
29 went to helicopter school in 1960, oh, yes and I also did instrument training, civilian  
30 contract up at Fort Knox in a Cessna 172. I got my Army instrument rating and then I  
31 took some sort of a general test for the FAA on regulations and I got my commercial

1 license and my instrument, [?] helicopter rating out of that. [Commercial License with  
2 instrument and helicopter endorsements and single engine land].

3 SM: When was that?

4 JM: 1960.

5 SM: And your time at Fort Rucker and Camp Walters, same year?

6 JM: It was two months at Camp Walters, but the combination of fixed-wing  
7 school, between San Marcos, Texas and Fort Rucker, Alabama, I think was eight or nine  
8 months.

9 SM: So all of this took place between 1958 and 1960?

10 JM: Yes, that's correct. That's when I got all my military training. This was all  
11 in Connecticut National Guard.

12 SM: What took your family from Augusta Maine, to Wallingford, Connecticut or  
13 I'm sorry, Gardiner.

14 JM: Economics, like a lot of people, especially back in those days.

15 SM: Do you remember much, or did you hear stories from say, your parents and  
16 from your grandparents about the Great Depression and things like that?

17 SM: They didn't affect your family very much.

18 JM: No, I wouldn't say so, no.

19 SM: And how about World War II? Did your father or do you have any uncles or  
20 other relatives that served?

21 JM: Oh, yes I have a very interesting story to tell on that. My uncle Jim, I was  
22 named after him and I was born on the same day he was, strangely enough, August 24,  
23 1935 and he's a Colby College graduate. He went in the army as a [private], I don't  
24 know if he joined or was drafted for World War II and he ended up in England and he  
25 returned home safely and he became a vice president for Continental Cans and retired and  
26 now he's deceased, but my other uncle was an Annapolis graduate. His name was Robert  
27 Wing and he graduated from Annapolis, number fifty in his class, fifty, fifty-five,  
28 somewhere in there and then he applied for active duty with the Navy and they turned  
29 him down because he couldn't see too well. He studied so hard when he was Annapolis  
30 that it effected his eyes, so he became an engineer down in Aruba at Eastern Standard  
31 Oil. They have the refineries down there. Then World War II broke out and then all of a

1 sudden the Navy decided he could see okay so they sent him on a tin can on the North  
2 Atlantic chasing submarines, destroyer escort. He got the Navy Cross, I think, for saving  
3 one of his sailors that was trapped between two boats that were refueling, one was his  
4 destroyer escort and he spent twenty years in the Navy and then he retired. He is since  
5 deceased, but he is a very interesting individual. He had a degree in engineering from  
6 Pittsburgh, some school in Pittsburgh and I think he also had a law degree from  
7 Georgetown and he had a degree in engineering and oil. He specialized in oil of the  
8 Navy, that was his major in Annapolis, but I could be corrected on that but I think that's  
9 correct because he got a job when he got out of the Navy as director of the New England  
10 Petroleum Association so his expertise in the Navy was oil.

11 SM: Well, so did that have an influence on you at all as well as in terms of your  
12 interest in aviation as it evolved?

13 JM: No, I don't think so, but my Grandfather Wing, it's recorded out at the Air  
14 Force Academy that he invented the tail wheel. He was a draftsman and he invented the  
15 tail wheel for the U.S. Army Air Corps. I guess it was prior to World War I, whenever  
16 they first came out with those biplanes. I haven't seen the documentation on that, but it's  
17 well known in the family, we consider it as a fact.

18 SM: That's fascinating. Did you know him personally?

19 JM: My grandfather?

20 SM: Did he survive into your childhood?

21 JM: Yes, I was around him for years, right here on this lake. I could see his place  
22 from here that he used to own.

23 SM: In terms of some of your other earlier experiences, did you work much as a  
24 young man, say in Gardiner before you left for Connecticut, then in Connecticut before  
25 you became a, you mentioned that you were a bag boy.

26 JM: That was in Connecticut. No, when I was in Gardiner I was first two years  
27 in high school and it was kind of tough to make money as a kid then, but I used to work  
28 in a bowling alley as a ten pin, I'd get them banged off my head every now and then. I  
29 was setting up the ten pins, picking up some money for spending you know, like gas for  
30 the car and all that.

1 SM: When you were in Wallingford, Connecticut, what was that transition like,  
2 going from Gardiner to Wallingford?

3 JM: Oh, it was great, it was exciting. It was a new experience, different state and  
4 I was fifteen, sixteen, seventeen years old and I went to work in a supermarket there  
5 while I was going to school, the local market and I became the grocery manager in that  
6 when I was probably twenty. We used to buy direct from all the big manufacturers back  
7 in those days. You can't do it now, its all done by distributors. It was quite an important  
8 job and I learned a lot from it.

9 SM: Now, when you graduated from high school that would have been I guess  
10 around 1958?

11 JM: No, '55, I think.

12 SM: Oh, you graduated in '55?

13 JM: Yes.

14 SM: What were your plans? What did you want to do with your life?

15 JM: I really didn't have any. I was like a lot of kids that age. They're kind of like  
16 in limbo, waiting to see what they want to do and then all of a sudden that helicopter flew  
17 over my house, I just, that's what I want to do.

18 SM: What did your dad do there in Wallingford? Was it lumber business again,  
19 or something different?

20 JM: No, he did something different then.

21 SM: In your house and your family, were politics and the events of the time  
22 discussed very much?

23 JM: Not too much, no.

24 SM: What did you understand about the Cold War when you graduated from high  
25 school and the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union?

26 JM: We were the good guys and they were the bad guys. That's basically it.

27 SM: Did you have any relatives that served in Korea?

28 JM: No, I had a close friend who went over there, high school buddy who went  
29 over there.

30 SM: Did he talk to you very much about his experiences, explain what happened  
31 to him?

1 JM: Not really, we wrote back and forth while he was over there, but I don't  
2 recall him saying too much about what happened over there, but he might have, it's been  
3 a long time ago. I've seen him since but not very much.

4 SM: Well, why don't you go ahead and describe what it was like going from your  
5 civilian lifestyle to Fort Benning in 1958 for your infantry training?

6 JM: Oh, let's see, my wife at that time and I picked up, we packed up, the  
7 Connecticut National Guard shipped our stuff to Fort Benning and we moved to Fort  
8 Benning and they gave us quarters, which was very, very nice and I did my thing for two  
9 months, studied at night in the spare bedroom. We had a nice social life at the Officer's  
10 Club and she really enjoyed it very much there and it was a typical Army life situation.  
11 We used to go to Commissary, the PX, we used all the facilities there and saluted  
12 everybody and stood at attention when we were told to and ran when we were told to and  
13 just typical Army life.

14 SM: What was the most challenging aspect of that training for you, that first  
15 training experience, or was there anything challenging?

16 JM: No, I really didn't want to be there to be honest with you. It was nothing but a  
17 stepping-stone for me to get into aviation, that's exactly what it was. If I didn't have to  
18 go there I wouldn't have gone there, but it was good for because then I understood more  
19 what the foot soldier needed in the way of support, spotters and all that. That's exactly  
20 why they did that.

21 SM: And then from Fort Benning when you went to San Marcos for your  
22 primary, what was that like?

23 JM: Well we had to return home, because National Guardsers just don't go from  
24 school to school normally. They have to come back and then apply because you've got  
25 to graduate and all that. So we returned home, and I forget what I did. I returned home  
26 and then we drove all the way to Texas and we had our things shipped down there. We  
27 rented a house outside of Camp Gary, Texas and it was a nice ranch and we got ourselves  
28 a dog and I went to flight school every day, ground school in the morning and we flew in  
29 the afternoons and it was – the post was absolutely beautiful, it was managed by the U.S  
30 Army and I think there may have been still some Air Force advisors around there,  
31 because the school had recently transitioned from Air Force instructors to Army

1 instructors, but they had this civilian contract there and they had a civilian contract to  
2 teach us and they had a motto, unlike when the Air Force was teaching people there, that  
3 it was their job to get us through, so the washout rate went way down and they got people  
4 through and they worked harder than maybe a military instructor pilot would so we had a  
5 beautiful club there and Hilo Hattie came there one time, entertained us and the post was  
6 sort of very relaxed like, because it was mostly run by civilians overseen by the U.S.  
7 Army and so it was quite relaxing, quite enjoyable, it was really very enjoyable.

8 SM: Now, what did you learn to fly there?

9 JM: The L-19 Bird Dogs.

10 SM: This was the L-19, okay.

11 JM: Yes.

12 SM: And what did you think of that aircraft?

13 JM: Great little airplane, lots of power and safe machine, very reliable. I flew my  
14 pants off it when I got back to Hartford with the National Guard. I couldn't wait to get in  
15 there and go fly all over the world with it. I was young and eager then.

16 SM: Was there anything particularly challenging for you in that initial flight  
17 training?

18 JM: Yes, the whole program was challenging to me because I finally learned that  
19 I could learn how to fly an airplane and it was kind of like a dream come true and of  
20 course it was the prelude to the helicopters which I was really interested in. I was really  
21 fascinated by helicopters, but that entire course was very, very challenging for me and the  
22 Fort Rucker part was very challenging because they taught us how to fly a short field.  
23 They used to put these ribbons up and we used to have to come in and land over those  
24 ribbons and land on a thousand foot strip out in the boondocks at Fort Rucker. They had  
25 several staging fields, and back to San Marcos, I actually soloed at New Braunfels, which  
26 is the next town down from San Marcos and that was an exciting day, as it is for  
27 everybody who soloed.

28 SM: Now, of course the L-19 is a tail dragger. Any problems with ground  
29 looping while you were there?

30 JM: I don't ever remember ground-looping that airplane anywhere, no; I don't  
31 remember ever ground looping it at all.

1 SM: Other students have any problems with that?

2 JM: I don't remember it as being a major problem, but some people did ground  
3 loop a little bit sure, they're bound to, anybody who's starting to fly has a potential to  
4 ground loop a tail-dragger.

5 SM: When you were there at Camp Gary, was that a washout offense, ground-  
6 looping the aircraft?

7 JM: No, I don't think so, I don't recall it being that. It probably was with the Air  
8 Force or the Army instructors, but not with the civilians, no, not that I recall.

9 SM: Well, let's go ahead and talk then about your time at Fort Rucker, how much  
10 time was there between your time at Camp Gary and at Fort Rucker?

11 JM: Well, we went directly to Fort Rucker. Of course it was part of the whole  
12 program. In order to get my wings I had to go to Fort Rucker. It was called the advanced  
13 phase and Fort Rucker is a fascinating post because there's so much aviation there and so  
14 many different kinds of airplanes there. Even back in those days and it was very  
15 challenging, learning how to fly those airplanes off a short field. Of course that was one  
16 of the reasons I was hired by Air Asia a couple years later. We rented an apartment. I  
17 think it was in Enterprise and it was a typical Southern home and we just had a nice  
18 apartment in the back of this big home that this elderly lady owned and she was looking  
19 for the rent income. I made some nice friends down there in that class. One of them was  
20 Joe Palastra. He was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant and he became the Commander of the 101<sup>st</sup>  
21 Airborne and then he went on to, I think he's retired now, but he became a four-star  
22 General, Commander of Forcecom and I think that's in Atlanta, and the other man that I  
23 became friends with was Captain Brandenburg. He was our class commander but he was  
24 a very sociable guy. It was just a pleasure to be on the flight line with him, have him as  
25 our leader and he became the commander of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne also and then he became a  
26 two-star general down at Tampa and he was in charge of that draft machinery down there  
27 for all the draft people. He didn't like that very much. I talked to him. He was thinking  
28 about getting out of the Army, but then he got the job as commander of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps at  
29 Fort Lewis, Washington, I think its 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps but I might need to be corrected on it,  
30 maybe it was 13<sup>th</sup> Corps, but he had a lot of troops in Korea and so he had to go back and  
31 forth to Korea and he invited me up to see him once at his house, Quarters One at Fort

1 Lewis and I had a layover up there when I was flying for American Airlines, but we  
2 misconnected so one time he was in Korea, and the next time we misconnected because I  
3 was in a different hotel, but I did talk to him the next morning on the phone. His aide  
4 tracked me down but I couldn't see him because we had to go kick the tires and take  
5 off. He was a very sociable, incredible person. I enjoyed meeting him. There was also a  
6 Lieutenant Colonel Higgins was down there from Connecticut National Guard and I  
7 became good friends with him and that was San Marcos and Fort Rucker both, so pretty  
8 much some of the highlights of that experience.

9 SM: Now all this training was again in the L-19 at Fort Rucker.

10 JM: Yes, that's correct, tactical. They taught us to spot artillery there and they  
11 taught us how to spot for artillery and they also taught us how to do a short field and do  
12 airfield recons and all that sort of tactical stuff in support of the ground soldiers.

13 SM: In the short fieldwork that you did, the L-19 is considered a STOL aircraft  
14 isn't it, short takeoff and landing?

15 JM: Yes, but its basically a spotter is what it is, observation. The Ravens used it  
16 over there in Laos, excellent for spotting, they used in Vietnam also.

17 SM: Just out of curiosity while we're on this specific capability of the L-19, did  
18 you ever get to fly any of the other STOL capable aircraft in Southeast Asia, say the  
19 Heliocourier, anything like that?

20 JM: I flew several airplanes in Southeast Asia.

21 SM: How do they compare to the L-19 as far as STOL capability?

22 JM: Well, the helio and the porter were both superior in takeoff distance by  
23 probably, oh they could probably land and takeoff on strips 25 percent less than the L-19  
24 could, but the L-19 didn't have any capacity to carry anything except two people. The  
25 helio had a capacity to carry a pilot and five hundred pounds, and the porter a pilot and I  
26 think eight hundred pounds, but you might get different figures from different people but  
27 that's a pretty good presentation though. I think it answers your question.

28 SM: Yes, absolutely. Okay, well let's see. When you went to Camp Walters,  
29 was that just like with Fort Rucker, immediately after?

30 JM: No, I had to return home and get assigned a slot. They used to sign money  
31 into slots for those things periodically. It didn't take very long though.

1 SM: What did the training focus on there at Camp Walters? This was your  
2 helicopter transition?

3 JM: Yes, it was in the Hiller-D model and it was also civilian instructors and,  
4 what can I say about it? They taught me how to fly a helicopter, auto-rotation and doing  
5 [maximum performance] takeoffs, how to do skid landings and generally speaking, how  
6 to fly a helicopter.

7 SM: What did you find most challenging in this transition from fixed wing to  
8 rotary wing?

9 JM: I guess being able to solo a helicopter, I guess. That was a great day for me.  
10 That was just a great day. I did it in about ten hours, which is pretty good.

11 SM: Now in terms of actually flying the aircraft, what was the most challenging  
12 aspect of flying a helicopter for you at first?

13 JM: Learning how to solo it.

14 SM: Other pilots I've asked have said hovering. Would you agree with that as  
15 far as one of the physical aspects of flying the helicopter?

16 JM: Sure, that would be part of the solo. I have to hover before I can take it off.

17 SM: Now in comparing the time you spent at Camp Gary then at Fort Rucker  
18 then back again at Camp Walters, where you had the civilian trainers at Camp Gary and  
19 Camp Walters, but military trainers I assume at For Rucker.

20 JM: No, it was civilian again.

21 SM: Civilian again?

22 JM: No, let me see, wait a minute. No, I think they were military. Yes, they  
23 were Army pilots, yes.

24 SM: Do you remember if the atmosphere and the training atmosphere was very  
25 much different compared to the civilian training you received?

26 JM: Yes, it's beginning to come back to me now. It seems a little more rigid over  
27 there, yes.

28 SM: At Fort Rucker?

29 JM: Yes.

30 SM: Okay, let's see here. Were there any memorable events that occurred at  
31 Camp Walters?

1 JM: In the helicopter program?

2 SM: Yes, sir. Not necessarily just for you, but for other pilot experiences, things  
3 like that, other student experiences.

4 JM: No, nobody crashed that I can think of and no, I draw a blank. It was a nice  
5 post, I can remember that. We used to go to the PX and commissary and the club there  
6 and it was just a nice experience. We used to drive to Fort Worth on the weekends and  
7 shop and Fort Worth was delightful for us, all those big department stores, and even  
8 Neiman Marcus. That was a highlight for us.

9 SM: Well, speaking of aircraft losses, were there any losses of aircraft or  
10 personnel in any other training environments that you were in before Camp Walters?

11 JM: No, one of our pilots got lost on a cross-country down to Galveston and had  
12 the CAP and the Air Force and everybody was out looking for him. They finally found  
13 him and he made it back okay. I'm happy to say that I made it okay. I could never figure  
14 out how they could get lost, because all you have to do is fly from Camp Gary to the Gulf  
15 of Mexico and how could you miss that? But he got lost. Other than that, I can't think of  
16 anything except that we used to have a farmer that was outside of San Marcos and he  
17 hated us. I think he used to throw rocks at us and whatever he could do. I think I've told  
18 the story that he used to shoot at us but I don't think that was true. It was a long time ago,  
19 but he was so ripped at us because he had cattle so what they did, the Army went out and  
20 they met him, they introduced themselves and they gave him a grand tour of the base and  
21 took him up on an airplane ride and they really pampered the guy and so he was okay  
22 after that. He loved us after that.

23 SM: Was it because the aircraft spooked his cattle that he didn't like you at first?

24 JM: Yes, we had the same problem up at Camp Drum in upstate New York,  
25 where the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, a lot of turkey farms there, so it was prohibited from  
26 us flying there. We didn't have any problem up there because we'd just stay away from  
27 turkey farms. But there was an interesting event, or series of events that took place after I  
28 left flight school, when they moved the school from Camp Gary to Fort Rucker. They  
29 closed it down then put the whole thing up at Fort Rucker. Would you like to hear about  
30 that?

31 SM: Absolutely.

1 JM: Okay, it was probably 1960. No let's see I was in the last class that finished  
2 the primary. We were called the Black Hats and there was behind us that didn't finish.  
3 That was the last class there and they finished up over at Fort Rucker, but we had two  
4 hundred airplanes, two hundred L-19s on that ramp there at Camp Gary and they moved  
5 all two hundred of those airplanes over to Fort Rucker and they just built these, well they  
6 were twenty thousand dollars in those days. They're probably half a million today. They  
7 built a couple of hangars there and they just went to waste. They moved everything –  
8 there was a lot of politics involved in I believe - moved everything to Fort Rucker, but  
9 they had four mid-air collisions, because they had too many airplanes in one little  
10 vacuum and within just a few months and so they quickly moved the school right out of  
11 there and now it's over around Savannah at Fort Stewart I think, Fort Stewart Georgia,  
12 the Signal Corps base. I believe that's where it is today and that's why they moved it.

13 SM: Okay, now when you finished your training at Camp Walters, did you have  
14 to wait again for another slot at Fort Knox?

15 JM: I think I went to Fort Knox in the summer of '60. I went to helicopters in the  
16 fall of '60, so yes, I did have another two-month break between that.

17 SM: And this was for your instrument training and your civilian pilot's license at  
18 Fort Knox?

19 JM: It was specifically for my military instrument rating, however then when I  
20 got done with all of those things then I could go to the FAA and take the FAR test and  
21 based upon my graduating from all those military schools then I was automatically given  
22 a FAA license, commercial, instrument, single multi-engine land helicopter.

23 SM: What was most challenging about instruments for you?

24 JM: That was a great program. There again we had civilian instructors and just  
25 being able to shoot those approaches under the hood and looking up and being two  
26 hundred feet above the ground, line up with the runway and then land it and grease it in.

27 SM: How long did that training last, your instrument rating training?

28 JM: It was a couple of months in the summer of '60 at Fort Knox.

29 SM: What did you do after you finished all your flight training there in 1960?

30 JM: I went to work for Wrigley's gum.

31 SM: Wrigley's?

1 JM: Yes, Wrigley's gum, I have to say in Connecticut, that was my territory. I  
2 used to go around to all the supermarkets and wholesalers and then I used to fly on the  
3 weekend, and I was up there every weekend that I could get up there, every time that they  
4 would let us fly I was up there, flying the helicopters or the L-19s and then they qualified  
5 me in the Beaver, locally there at Brainard Field in Hartford, Connecticut.

6 SM: What was that like? How did you enjoy that aircraft?

7 LM: I love the Beaver. You go from an L-19 and then all of a sudden you think  
8 that you're in a big transport. It's got that big radial engine and it feels heavy and the  
9 cockpit layout, there's a lot more room in there and you can carry other people in there,  
10 the radios are better and that was like a big upgrade in my life.

11 SM: At what point did you decide that you wanted to fly full time, that you  
12 wanted to stop working in other capacities?

13 LM: It's difficult to answer that question because it was so long ago but I would  
14 say at the very beginning, at the first time somebody offered me a job I was gone from  
15 the gum company and that's what happened.

16 SM: When was that?

17 LM: That was in January 1962. I left the gum company and I went to work for  
18 helicopter up in Boston, called the New England Helicopter Airlines and we were flying  
19 a J-2 and a Cessna skyhook. We had a Brantley also, but that only lasted four months.

20 SM: What did you fly for them?

21 LM: I flew the J-2; I flew all three of those. I didn't like the Brantley very much  
22 though and I really didn't like the Cessna. I really liked the Bell Ranger J-2, that's what I  
23 loved to fly. I was the chief pilot there and I had two other pilots working for me. One  
24 was an Army Guard guy from Rhode Island and the other fellow was a Commander  
25 Gluting. He was out of the U.S. Navy and he had just returned from Southeast Asia  
26 flying for Air America. He was there I think two months and he got shot down, maybe  
27 three months. He got shot down, spent four days in the jungle and he said to himself, 'It  
28 isn't worth the money. I'm leaving,' and he left, but then he ended up flying for New  
29 England Helicopter Airways for me and he told me all about Air America and I had never  
30 heard of it before and I said, 'Well I'm going to try to get on with them,' so I tried to get  
31 on with them as a helicopter pilot and they said 'No, you don't have any heavy helicopter

1 time. You've got to H-34 time,' or something like that and then Andy was telling me  
2 about this Beaver program, I said, 'Gee, you know, I'm qualified in the Beaver, but I  
3 won't try in the Washington office, I'll write out to Taipei and they won't know that I've  
4 already been turned down,' so I sent a letter out to Taipei and within about ten days the  
5 Washington office contacted me and they said 'Come on down, we want to talk to you,'  
6 and that was no less than the great General Doole who was, when he died at age 75 he  
7 was written up in *Time Magazine* or *Newsweek* and he was considered the aviation  
8 spymaster of all time and he also flew, I think the first flight for Pan Am on the 747 ever,  
9 because he was a Pan Am pilot and he was a two-star general in the Reserves and I think  
10 he was active duty at some point in time, but he was an incredible individual. My  
11 interview was with him and he asked me some questions about—the chief pilot from  
12 Taipei was there too and that was in the CAT office, the Civil Air Transport office in  
13 Washington, D.C. They sold tickets there, but in the back room they did their other stuff,  
14 like hiring people for Air Asia and so I got my interview then he asked me a few  
15 pertinent questions about the performance of the Beaver and how much it could carry, the  
16 landing and takeoff distance and all that and I answered them all perfectly, so they hired  
17 me and ten days later I was on a jet for the Far East, Northwest Airline out of Kennedy,  
18 they got me a passport like over night and I was on my way.

19 SM: This is still in 1962?

20 JM: That was in 1962. You have that written down on something I sent you there  
21 I think, the exact date.

22 SM: Yes, before I get into the introduction of your service there in Southeast  
23 Asia, I did want to ask you quickly, because you mentioned a couple of aircraft that you  
24 had flown during your very brief time with New England Helicopter Airlines. You said  
25 you liked the Bell Ranger best and you didn't like the Cessna very much. Can you tell me  
26 why? Do you remember?

27 JM: I really can't tell you, I don't know why. I know it wasn't very well liked  
28 helicopter and they stopped making it. They had several accidents with it after that. I  
29 just didn't feel comfortable in helicopter. I really liked the Bell, it was easy to fly.

30 SM: And what was the third aircraft you mentioned?

31 JM: The Brantley.

1 SM: The Brantley. What didn't you like about that one? Do you know?

2 JM: Well, it was a very light thing. It was shaped like an ice cream cone,  
3 fuselage and it didn't have very much power in it and I was taking photographs one day. I  
4 had a photographer with me. We were taking photographs of the slum area of downtown  
5 Boston. I think the charter was for the city of Boston, or the developer that was going to  
6 develop that area. They eventually built a Prudential building down there and it was a  
7 cold windy day and I got caught in the gust, lost six hundred feet and I know that  
8 wouldn't have happened in the J-2, because the Brantley was so light and I just didn't  
9 like it. It was a very frisky flying airplane and I just didn't like. I didn't feel safe in it  
10 and it was uncomfortable, it was crowded. It was a Mickey Mouse helicopter is what it  
11 was. They were very cheap to buy.

12 SM: Now, before you got hired, before you went out to Washington for your  
13 interview, you said that was with George Doole, and you said the chief pilot [Ralph  
14 Adams] from Taipei?

15 JM: Yes.

16 SM: He was there; do you remember who that was?

17 JM: Oh, give me a chance and I'll think of it.

18 SM: Okay, if it pops into your mind that's great.

19 JM: Yes, remind me of it.

20 SM: What did you know before that interview, what did you know about Air  
21 America, the air proprietaries, if you will, that were conducting operations in Southeast  
22 Asia? Did you know anything?

23 JM: Not very much. See Andy wasn't there very long, Commander Glutting  
24 wasn't there very long and I heard mostly about the helicopter programs, but he told  
25 about the Beaver program and he didn't know too much about it because it had just  
26 started up when he left, but it was in support of Special Forces in Laos and that's the  
27 program that I got hired for. Strangely enough I was hired as an Air Asia pilot and my  
28 contract states that and I think probably most everybody else was. However there was a  
29 little obscure clause in it that we could be loaned to Air America and that's how they did  
30 it, but I never saw my paycheck so I don't know, to this day don't know what was on my  
31 paycheck, because it used to go directly to my bank.

1 SM: What kind of briefings did you receive before you left the United States to  
2 go to Asia? Anything after you were hired?

3 JM: Not much except the contract explains something, but the big briefing I got  
4 was in Taipei. I took off from Kennedy airport on Northwest Airlines. I was twenty-five  
5 years old I think and got off in Tokyo and switched to the Mandarin jet, the Convair 990  
6 that Civil Air Transport had and they flew me down to Taipei and then they put me in the  
7 Grand Hotel with several other people who were just hired including Paul Quackenbush  
8 who formed Empire Airlines from up in Utica, New York and grew that into quite an  
9 airline, sold it for \$40 million to Piedmont, but quite a success story. He went to Yale so  
10 he and I got along good because I lived in Wallingford which was right near there, then  
11 we went to ground school there for, I think it was a month. It was just a review of weight  
12 and balance and fuel consumption and they explained to us about the conditions in Laos  
13 and he told us that we would have to learn the country with another pilot first, for several  
14 hours and then we would be upgraded to captains in the Beaver. Some of the pilots were  
15 hired for the Helio program as I recall, but I was hired for the Beaver program, but they  
16 put us all through the same ground school and they gave us all kinds of problems to work  
17 on, fuel consumption, even on DC-3s and C-46s, it was a really good program and the  
18 gentleman who ran it was a very personable fellow. He was the chief pilot and I still  
19 can't remember his name but it will come to me though. He's the one that I met in  
20 Washington and that was a nice experience because the hotel was nice and we had a crew  
21 bus that used to pick us up everyday and one day Hugh Grundy was on there, and I didn't  
22 know who he was and he just said to me, he says, 'How do you like the program so far?'  
23 and I said, 'Boy I really like it.' I said the right thing, but that's the way I felt about it.  
24 Good thing I didn't say anything bad.

25 SM: Just to verify, you actually sent us the contract you signed, or the contract  
26 that they sent you in letter form, dated 9 May 1962.

27 JM: I sent it to you?

28 SM: Yes, sir, I do have a copy of that.

29 JM: I copied it for you only, good.

30 SM: At a monthly salary of \$650.

31 JM: That sounds right, yes. That was good money back then.

1 SM: I was just going to say, that sounds like pretty good money. Was it?

2 JM: It was. We used to make a lot of overtime. One month I made \$3,600 back  
3 in 1962, that's when you could buy a cup of coffee for a nickel.

4 SM: Did you understand at all that Laos was at the time, hostile territory, that  
5 you'd be flying, being shot at?

6 JM: Of course, because Commander Glutting, back at the Helicopter Airline in  
7 Boston, explained it to me. He got shot down, spent four days in the jungle, so naturally I  
8 understood the dangers.

9 SM: What did your wife think of this?

10 JM: Oh, she had a great time. Her family didn't like it but she loved it. It was a  
11 great experience for her. In Laos we had a French colonial house right near the airport  
12 and we had maid service and banana trees in the yard, it was all fenced in and it was just  
13 a beautiful house and we only paid \$100 a month I think back in those days, which was  
14 very inexpensive considering the kind of money I was making. However, in Udorn it  
15 wasn't so good. We had substandard housing there, but we got along okay. We were  
16 very young and all of a sudden we were making a lot of money so that sort of seemed to  
17 satisfy some things and we could look the other way on things that weren't so  
18 comfortable. Udorn was okay, but Vientiane was better because it was kind of like an  
19 international city with the embassy there and we had the USAID complex there.  
20 However Udorn expanded after I left. I was only there a few months at Udorn and they  
21 had a school there and a lot more facilities than when I was there. They had a big club,  
22 but Vientiane was a much better experience.

23 SM: When you finished your ground school training in Taipei, where did you go  
24 from there?

25 JM: Let's see, they threw me on a DC-3 and they flew us—I remember being in  
26 Tai Ninh, I think, I don't remember how I got to Tai Ninh now to be honest with you, but  
27 I do remember, yes, I think the airplane was flown to Tai Ninh from Taipei and I  
28 remember being in Tai Ninh where the U-2s were, and they wouldn't let us look out the  
29 windows. It was an Air American DC-3, and then we flew to Hong Kong. It was my  
30 first night ever in Hong Kong and I loved that. It was a very short stay there, but at least  
31 I got my feet wet there, and I went there many times afterwards, but then we flew on to

1 Da Nang for a fuel stop and it was quite a trip. I was sitting on bench seats in the back of  
2 the airplane with a bunch of other pilots, two or three as I recall. There weren't many on  
3 there, and at Da Nang it was quite interesting to see the banana helicopters there from  
4 Fort Devens, Massachusetts because that was close to home and I used to fly up to Fort  
5 Devens with the L-19s out of Hartford and I talked to some of the pilots there while we  
6 were getting refueled and they were telling me how much they got shot at there. And the  
7 banana helicopter, I forget what that was called now, but it was built down in  
8 Philadelphia I think, would it be the H-21 I think, but it was a tandem rotor thing and they  
9 were replaced by the Hueys because the Hueys had turbine engines and they could  
10 operate a lot better in the mountains there in Vietnam. But anyhow, then went on to  
11 Vientiane and we landed at Vientiane, no I think we landed at Udorn, yes, we landed at  
12 Udorn, yes that's where I was being based. Then we landed at Udorn and then I started  
13 my line checking with a Captain Ferguson. He was the chief pilot of the Beaver program  
14 and he took me all over the country on missions for the Special Forces and I learned the  
15 country and he cut me loose.

16 SM: Now, when you were there at Da Nang for your refueling, and you noticed  
17 the banana helicopters and the base there, how much of a buildup was there? This is '62,  
18 so how much of a buildup?

19 JM: Not much. This was like, well the Special Forces were advisory teams that  
20 had been in Vietnam since the mid-50s because Joe Palastra, I mentioned before became  
21 the Commander of Forcecom, Forcecom General, [?]. He was a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant West Point  
22 graduate. He had already been to Vietnam. This was in 1959 when we were in flight  
23 school and he was an advisor there for one year, so that's what the military was there.  
24 They were in support of South Vietnamese troops.

25 SM: Then when you moved on to Thailand, how large was the base there when  
26 you arrived?

27 JM: Well, it was a very long runway there, six, seven thousand feet, maybe more.  
28 It was concrete and the Air America facility, it was fairly substantial one, but they  
29 expanded it a great deal after I left, but it had big hangars and office building there for  
30 everybody and Pat Landry had his office there, separate building and they had all kinds of  
31 antennas sticking up from it for his communications to whoever and wherever and we

1 had a club, but it was really a shabby sort of a wooden structure. They built a really nice  
2 one after I left though. I remember Rusty Phillips used to be the manager of the club and  
3 I used to bring wine down for him from Vientiane, French wine, and I used to bring it  
4 down and sell it to him, at cost, although some people thought I was making some money  
5 but I really wasn't. I just did it so the guys there would have some nice wine from France  
6 and then they had a nice club there, then, beautiful club. That was probably '64 that they  
7 had that up, so it was kind of primitive when I was there in Udorn but a lot of things  
8 changed as time went on because that operation in Udorn was there for over a decade.

9 SM: You said that when you first arrived there you were taken on flight with the  
10 chief pilot?

11 JM: Yes, Bob Ferguson, yes, I think about one hundred hours it was.

12 SM: Where were those flights principally?

13 JM: All of Laos, up in the Ban Houei Sai region, up to Phong Saly is the name of  
14 the place I was trying to think of before. That's way up north there, that I told you about  
15 where I used to run those missions up there right into China and then up into Luang  
16 Prabang and then all down along the Mekong river there. We could make drops out of  
17 Savannakhet and the places between Savannakhet and Vientiane. I can't remember the  
18 name right now, but then on down. We used to go down to Pakse and drop the Special  
19 Forces on the Plateau de Boloven and then I did all that after he checked me out. We  
20 used to get assigned to certain teams for a day or two, hauling them supplies, metal  
21 roofing, whatever they wanted and on the weekends, on Sundays, they used to have a  
22 skydiving club and we used to let them sky dive in Vientiane on Sundays. We'd do that  
23 for them too.

24 SM: What altitude or altitudes?

25 JM: Well, believe it or not, I used to get the beaver up to 19,000 and the door was  
26 off, but I couldn't get up there with six jumpers on there. I used to kick them out in  
27 stages on the way up and I think I'd get to nineteen thousand with one jumper and he  
28 would go out and it was getting cold up there and short of oxygen and so what I would do  
29 is throw the flaps down and cut the engine, put on the carburetor heat and dive. They  
30 used to land in the rice paddies around Vientiane there, and that was a great sport for  
31 those guys. They were incredible guys, fearless.

1 SM: The guys that you would take up to nineteen thousand, were they jumping on  
2 oxygen?

3 JM: No, we weren't up there very long. We were all young. We could do it.

4 SM: Okay, that's pretty cold.

5 JM: It would get cold even though it was there in Laos, yes.

6 SM: Did you yourself ever sky dive?

7 JM: No, I'm not nuts.

8 SM: Okay.

9 JM: Are you a skydiver?

10 SM: Yes, I was a paratrooper.

11 JM: Oh, really okay, sorry about that.

12 SM: No, that's okay, I've heard it quite a bit before. Anyway, well, as you were  
13 learning the area, would the chief pilot let you take over command of the aircraft and fly  
14 it around and stuff too?

15 JM: I was in the right seat I was flying, no, let's see, yes; I was in the right seat.  
16 I'd do landings and takeoffs, yes. He'd stay in the left seat, yes. He'd stay in the  
17 captain's seat.

18 SM: You did that for a hundred hours. About how long did that take in terms of  
19 weeks or months?

20 JM: A month.

21 SM: One month?

22 JM: It was a lot of territory to cover, if you didn't want to cut pilots loose up  
23 there, not knowing where the hell they were going. That was dangerous.

24 SM: You mentioned that you were providing support for Special Forces. Well,  
25 we think of Special Forces in terms of U.S. Army Green Beret Special Forces, or were  
26 these the CIA case officers working with indigenous Lao forces, the customers?

27 JM: The customers, yes. Generally speaking we were supporting directly Special  
28 Forces, however there was a customer run once in a while. In Pakse there was a  
29 customer there, but I think that they operated independently of each other, but I don't  
30 remember when I did all those flights in the Beavers. I don't ever remember going into  
31 Long Chien and of course that's where the CIA major hub was there. I didn't start going

1 in there until I started working for Bird and Sons. That's when I met Tony Poe and here  
2 we go, another name that slipped my mind. It will come to me though, but that's when I  
3 started work directly for the CIA.

4 SM: Okay, now for that first month that you were flying with the chief pilot, did  
5 you guys ever come under fire?

6 JM: Oh, yes sure, once friendly we believe. We were dropping north of that  
7 strip. There's a long dirt strip between Vientiane and Savannakhet and I can't think of  
8 the name of it right now. I think it was Lima 35 and we were just up in the boondocks a  
9 little ways, dropping rice to some friendlies there and we took around in the fuel cell and  
10 we figured it was some drunk Lao soldier. We never knew though, but the bullet ended  
11 up in the rice and we hauled ass out of there. Once we took the round, we didn't drop the  
12 rice and we lost the fuel in that cell, but other than that, we made it back home okay.  
13 That was my first round I took. I took more later.

14 SM: What was the heaviest thing you were fired on during that first month?

15 JM: During the first month, small arms?

16 SM: What were you typically dropping? Was it mostly food, rice and you  
17 mentioned some building materials and things like that?

18 JM: Well during my check out as I recall it was mostly rice but its been so long  
19 ago that it could have been other stuff too, I just don't remember.

20 SM: Did you drop many weapons and stuff like that, ammunition?

21 JM: No, I don't think that we dropped that kind of stuff from the Beaver. We'd  
22 take it into the major hubs, like Pakse and Saravan and those places. Saravan is the name  
23 of between Vientiane and Savannakhet. It's Saravan I think. I think that real heavy stuff  
24 used to be taken in by DC-3s and C-123s and so forth and it was disseminated from there,  
25 but it may have been dropped by somebody else. Generally speaking, we didn't carry  
26 that kind of stuff as I recall, but you've got to remember this is a long time ago, so I  
27 would say no, but we used to carry a lot of soda pop and food supplies and a little bit of  
28 beer once in a while and medical supplies I said, that sort of thing and also moving the  
29 Special Forces back and forth to their hubs along the river and Luang Prabang and so  
30 forth, that sort of a thing.

1 SM: Now the guys that you'd carry, the Special Forces guys, were they in  
2 uniform?

3 JM: Oh, yes, great bunch of guys.

4 SM: Do you know what group they were with?

5 JM: Yes, I do, White Star. Before I got there they were commanded by Bull  
6 Simon and the commander when I got there, I got a nice letter from him, I think you have  
7 it there, was Colonel Meredith, no Major Meredith then.

8 SM: They were part of Operation White Star?

9 JM: Correct, it was White Star, yes.

10 SM: Do you know about how many outposts they had?

11 JM: Six or eight. Let's see they had one at Pakse, one at Savannakhet, one at  
12 Thakhek, I think then they had one at Saravan, Luang Prabang, and Ban Houei Sai and  
13 there may have been a couple more that I've forgotten about that were maybe out where  
14 there was no airstrip and things get dropped to them. Maybe I never aided them at all. I  
15 just can't recall.

16 SM: How many men were typically at one of these locations, do you remember?

17 JM: Probably a dozen. Oh I remember there was a base also at Saya Buri, for the  
18 Special Forces.

19 SM: Let's see here, so after your first month of flying with the chief pilot, what  
20 was it like your first time out by yourself?

21 JM: In a Beaver program, it was great to get rid of him, well kind of like any  
22 instructor and be on my own and it was a very challenging job and it was just fun to fly  
23 those Beavers in and out of those strips and move the Special Forces around, and like I  
24 said they're a great country, the guys were fun to fly with and it was just very challenging  
25 and dangerous at times, but enjoyed doing it, enjoyed socializing with them at their bases.  
26 Sometimes we couldn't because the base was like in, down at Pakse, the base was up in  
27 the Plateau de Bevelon so we couldn't land up there, but we used to drop them off in  
28 Pakse. They'd go up by Jeep or something. It was a great experience and the money  
29 factor of course was interesting too, that was a great motivation for me, but it would just  
30 [?], it was an incredible experience. It was the most exciting part of my aviation career,  
31 no doubt about it.

1 SM: Well, what was your average day like and how much time would you spend  
2 up country?

3 JM: In the Beaver program, very little. We used to come back to Udorn almost  
4 every night, but sometimes we could fly as much as ten, twelve hours of flight time, hard  
5 time so it could be a thirteen, fourteen hour day, but we just kept moving because they  
6 wanted things moved and it's the old slogan, 'you call, we haul.' Boy, we hauled a lot.

7 SM: Now, what markings were on your aircraft?

8 JM: That's a good question, I'm glad you brought that up. I'll run that by you.  
9 They were Army Beavers. It was obvious to me because of the markings in them what it  
10 is. They took the paint off, to get rid of the fifty pounds of paint, because that's fifty  
11 pounds of payload and the markings on the tail began with L like in Lima and then they  
12 had like 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208. I think those were the tail numbers. I  
13 may not be exactly right on the beginning and the last one, but that's pretty close. They  
14 took the Army Beavers. The Army Beavers had a lot of radio gear in them, for ILS and  
15 UHF and FM, they took all of that out and they stripped it down to get more weight out  
16 of the airplane and they strictly had a VHF/HF in it and I think we still had, I think they  
17 even took the VORs out, because we didn't have any VORs over there. It was basically  
18 an ADF dead reckoning operation but maybe the VORs were still in, I can't remember  
19 but I do know that they stripped them down of a lot of the avionics that the Army would  
20 use but we couldn't use in Laos because they had nobody to talk to and nothing to  
21 navigate with. That's pretty much it, covers what they did with the Beaver, but they were  
22 obviously on loan from the U.S. Army.

23 SM: What about your uniforms? What did you wear, what kind of markings  
24 were on your uniforms, headgear, things like that?

25 JM: It was a standard Air America uniform. It was the gray as I recall and we  
26 had a hat that we wore, I think it was kind of like a cowboy hat, not leather, light weight  
27 to keep the sun from beating on our heads I guess, just to make us look more airline,  
28 paramilitary, whatever they wanted us to look like, organized, I guess. It was supposed  
29 to be a clandestine airline but it sure didn't operate like one.

30 SM: Well, you knew that you were working for the CIA?

1 JM: Yes, sure we did. State Department came around, checked my neighborhood  
2 after I left Wallingford. They came around and they asked all kinds of questions about  
3 me and they said they were from the DOD, but what can I tell you, they were really from  
4 the Agency.

5 SM: Basically doing the background investigation on you?

6 JM: Exactly. I'm sure they went up and talked to the National Guard about me  
7 and all that.

8 SM: I guess, why don't you go ahead and describe some of the more memorable  
9 trips you made up country during that, I guess it was five-month period that you were  
10 flying by yourself.

11 JM: One of them was a trip that I made from Udorn in a Beaver for the Special  
12 Forces down to Pakse. It was a pretty long trip, three and half hours I think as I recall  
13 correctly, maybe three hours. And I was known to be hauling supplies and Special Forces  
14 people, but ended up with this fellow by the name of Ed Hall and he was a new case  
15 officer for Pakse for the Agency and he quit Northeast Airlines out of Boston to go to  
16 work for the Agency and he spent a couple of years down there and he went back with  
17 Northeast Airlines afterwards. But I got to know him and I bumped into him at school at  
18 Northeast Airlines after I left in '67, yes I went to work for Northeast Airlines in 1967. I  
19 bumped into him in the school up there in Winthrop, Massachusetts outside the airport  
20 there at Logan, so that was an interesting experience. Let's see what else. I can't  
21 remember anything else that was other than routine in the Beaver program because it  
22 didn't last that long. And the Beaver program was terminated in 1962 as the result of the  
23 Geneva Accords, where all U.S. forces and U.S. involvement and Air America were  
24 withdrawn from Laos, so in the final days of the operation, the job was for us guys to go  
25 with the Beavers and pull all those guys out. And I pulled the team out in Pakse and I  
26 remember one of the last things that we did is the Special Forces had me fly over the  
27 [Plateau de] Bolevon and take a lot of photographs of the Bolevon because they said if  
28 they had to go back in there, then they'd have to jump in there, then they wanted good  
29 photos of that, so I did that for them and I'm sure that all the Special Forces were pulled  
30 out of Laos. I'm absolutely sure of it because I know all the guys who did it, but I'm also

1 sure that the North Vietnamese regulars didn't pull out like they were supposed to, too, so  
2 that's what closed up the Beaver program. I was out of work.

3 SM: Well, you mentioned that there was also a captured POW?

4 JM: That was after I went to work for Bird.

5 SM: Okay, that was later, I'm sorry. Now, with the end of the Beaver program, as  
6 far as you were understood things, was that supposed to indicate where the Geneva  
7 Accords concerning Laos supposed to indicate a complete ending of all activity in Laos  
8 as far as the CIA?

9 JM: They formed a neutralist government, which didn't work of course, so Air  
10 America couldn't fly into Laos any more because of the Accords, but they used to bring  
11 stuff up to the border in Thailand from Tahkli and Bangkok or wherever they brought it  
12 from. And then Bird and Sons would be waiting there with their DC-3s and because in  
13 the Geneva Accords, Bird and Sons could still fly in Laos, so Bird and Sons started to fly  
14 supplies up into Laos because they were fighting up there again, and the CIA case  
15 officers were up there managing the supplies and training soldiers again. The Geneva  
16 Accords were in October ['62] and that was early '63.

17 SM: But as far as you understood all of the Operation White Star Special Forces  
18 personnel had been pulled out?

19 JM: That's correct and I don't remember them going back in either, to be honest  
20 with you. They might have, but I didn't interface with them because then I was working  
21 up at Long Chien, strictly for Tony Poe and Vinny Lawrence.

22 SM: And so it really did at this point, become a complete, as far as the Laos  
23 operation, it appears it was mostly CIA run and a covert operation?

24 JM: After the Special forces left, yes.

25 SM: When you were out of work in October of '62 what did you do?

26 JM: Well, Bob Rousselot was vice president of operations and I met him in  
27 Taipei and I was interviewed by him. I was already hired, but he kind of like gave me a  
28 run down on what was going on down there and he said, 'We'll get a lull in this war,  
29 things will slow down,' then he says 'But don't worry, the Communists will stir up again  
30 and we'll have a lot of flying to do,' so I decided I'd stay in Bangkok for awhile. My  
31 wife and I got a nice apartment down there and we enjoyed Bangkok and then we decided

1 nothing was going to happen so I returned home, got my twin engine rating up in  
2 Barrington, Massachusetts in the Birches and then I kept sending resumes to Dutch  
3 Brongersma at the Bird and Sons, Bird Air. I told him I had experience in Laos and that I  
4 got my light twin license now and I had so many more hours and all that. I finally got a  
5 telegram from Bird and Sons Construction company in Seattle and they sent me a ticket  
6 and away I went again, so that time I went to Vientiane and I remember that very clearly  
7 because I was flown into Udorn and somehow, I don't remember how, but I ended up in  
8 Nun Khai and the CIA arranged for me to be wet backed into Laos in a canoe across the  
9 Mekong river in some kind of a small boat, so that was the way I illegally got into Laos,  
10 working for Bird and Sons.

11 SM: Now, how long did you stay in Bangkok before you came back to the U.S.?

12 JM: Oh, I guess it was five, six weeks.

13 SM: Very short time.

14 JM: Yes, not very long.

15 SM: When did you get your twin engine rating?

16 JM: It was in the winter of January '63, somewhere in there. May have been  
17 November. No it wouldn't be November because I was still in Bangkok. Probably  
18 January '63.

19 SM: And then when did you find yourself back in Southeast Asia?

20 JM: Probably February, March.

21 SM: Wow, very quick turnaround.

22 JM: Yes, it didn't take long because the Communists started acting up again.

23 SM: What did you understand at this point, as you are going back for, now your  
24 second tour if you will, with Bird and Sons? What did you understand the United States  
25 was trying to accomplish in Southeast Asia?

26 JM: What were we supposed to accomplish?

27 SM: What was the United States trying to accomplish in Southeast Asia?

28 JM: The United States was trying to accomplish keeping the peace in Laos and  
29 keeping a government that was not expansion oriented and a government that was  
30 peaceful and one that would prosper for the Laotian people and one that would keep  
31 Communism in North Vietnam.

1 SM: What were you going to fly for Bird and Sons, or what did you fly when you  
2 went back?

3 JM: Well, I started out as the copilot on the C-46s with them and I did that for  
4 two months, then he checked me out on the Duwonniere, the Lake twin Duwonniere. I  
5 flew for that 2200 hours for them.

6 SM: 2200 hours?

7 JM: I also proved the Pioneer. I got between three and four thousand hours in  
8 Laos during that tour with Air America, Bird Air and Continental. I got between three  
9 and four thousand hours in Laos, Vietnam and the combat areas.

10 SM: And when you say Continental you're talking about CAS right?

11 JM: Yes, Continental Air Services, subsidiary of Continental Airlines, run by  
12 Pierre Phalanger.

13 SM: Let's go ahead and talk about your first couple of months flying with Bird  
14 and Sons, and C-46 as the copilot. After you got into country, where were you principally  
15 stationed out of and what were the types of missions you were flying?

16 JM: Vientiane, it was the airdrops. One of the guys that I flew with used to fly the  
17 hump. Duffy Buller.

18 SM: He was the pilot of a C-46 you were flying?

19 JM: Oh, yes I was the new kid on the block then, he was the old pro.

20 SM: Did he tell you many stories about flying the hump?

21 JM: No, I don't think so. I just knew that he flew the hump.

22 SM: Did you meet many other pilots that had that kind of experience in World  
23 War II?

24 JM: Oh, absolutely, yes. Eric Schilling was my chief pilot at Bird and he was a  
25 Flying Tiger Ace. I read one of the books on him and he's been written in many books  
26 and he was considered the hottest ace flier for the Flying Tigers out of Burma. It was  
27 1939. I think he was nineteen or something like that.

28 SM: Did you ever meet Felix Smith?

29 JM: No, But I heard than name many, many times. I don't think I met him. I  
30 think he was flying for CAP. I may have just met him in passing but I think I have his  
31 book too, but he was like in a different part of the company that was flying out of Taipei.

1 SM: Now the missions that you were flying out of Vientiane, with C-46s, re-  
2 supply drops mostly or food and other supplies, or medical supplies, things like that, or  
3 did this work also involve more ammunition and weapons drops?

4 JM: What we called hard rice, but a lot of rice, a lot of real rice. It was on pallets  
5 and I forget how many pallets it was now, but it was on rollers and the kickers used to cut  
6 them loose and let them fly out the door and they would be parachuted, but we dropped  
7 buffalo meat. No we didn't do that. I used to see Air America dropping the live buffalos  
8 in the cages and they would hit the ground and it was meat for the troops of course. They  
9 would hit the ground and it would break the legs, but they were slaughtered right there on  
10 the spot. They'd dropped them out of the C-123s because they had aft sliding door. It  
11 was easy to roll them out. You couldn't do that out of a C-46, it was too big.

12 SM: The water buffalo were? Yes, I'm sorry I say water buffalo; I'm assuming  
13 water buffalo.

14 JM: Yes, water buffalo. I was trying to think of the Thai name for them, but it  
15 slipped my mind now.

16 SM: I forgot to ask you, how much could you carry with the Beavers,  
17 approximately?

18 JM: Let's see, probably about seven hundred pounds, eight hundred pounds,  
19 depends on how much fuel we had on board. The Beaver had a tremendous range  
20 because it had the wingtip tanks.

21 SM: How about with the C-46?

22 JM: Oh, I can't remember those figures. I think the C-46 was gross at fifty  
23 thousand, but you can't hold me to that. That was too long ago.

24 SM: It was considerably more compared to the Beaver?

25 JM: Yes, the C-46 was a big airplane, transport.

26 SM: What parts of Laos were you flying during that first couple of months as a  
27 copilot?

28 JM: On the C-46?

29 SM: Yes.

30 JM: Let's see, we used to go way up north, Phong Saly I think was the drop and  
31 it was trips up north of Vientiane. I don't ever remember going down into the Southern

1 part of Laos, however some of the planes used to go down there, but I don't ever  
2 remember going down there. One trip was very interesting. I was with Merc Bassler,  
3 Merc was a tremendous pilot, and a tremendous individual and he helped me a lot with  
4 the C-46 because he was highly experienced in it. We were up north of Luang Prabang  
5 and we'd just finished our drop probably an hour, an hour and a half north of Luang  
6 Prabang and we were on our way back to Vientiane. And all of a sudden one of the  
7 engines started to leak oil very, very badly and he said to me, he says, 'Jim,' he says, 'did  
8 you know you're part of this crew too?' and this really impressed me that a guy would do  
9 this because a lot of guys wouldn't do this, because he was the captain. He said, 'Jim,  
10 we have a serious problem with that engine, we may lose that engine.' He says, 'It's  
11 entirely up to you. Do you want to land at LP or do you want to take the chance and go  
12 on to Vientiane with this problem?' And I said, 'Captain Bassler, it's entirely up to you.'  
13 I said, 'It's your call,' and so then we lost the engine so he had to go to LP so it was the  
14 engine made the decision for him. So we landed in on one engine and they sent the crew  
15 up and they put a new engine on it. Somebody else flew it out, but that was an exciting  
16 day for me.

17 SM: Did you have to handle the aircraft at all or did he take care of that?

18 JM: No, he did all that. I wouldn't have tried that, single engine, that big  
19 airplane, at my level of experience, no way.

20 SM: How much were you fired upon during that first couple of months there with  
21 the C-46s?

22 JM: I don't ever remember being fired upon. We may have, but we never took a  
23 round that I can remember because the C-46 flew high and the only time that we would  
24 be likely to take a round is during a drop and I just don't ever remember taking a round in  
25 a C-46.

26 SM: Why don't you go ahead and describe the flight information center, and I  
27 meant to ask you about that with your first tour with Air American in '62 and I forgot to.

28 JM: I sent the whole brochure down here.

29 SM: Yes, but if you would, could you describe what you remember most about  
30 the briefing system and how effective you thought it was?

1 JM: I thought it was very, very effective and they had really decent people in  
2 there. Bill Solon was running it and he had another fellow there that worked with him,  
3 too. I can't remember his name now, but he's in the Air America directory. I think he's  
4 living up around Washington State now, and he was very good too. We used to go in in  
5 the morning if we were going into a strange area and they used to tell us what they knew  
6 about the enemy up there and of course if we knew that there was a strong possibility of  
7 getting shot or shot down then we wouldn't go there.

8 SM: Did that change at all from your first tour in '62 to your time in '63 with  
9 Bird Air?

10 JM: I don't think there was any such thing in '62.

11 SM: Oh, there wasn't?

12 JM: No, I don't think so, but I think that that document that I sent you may  
13 explain that to you.

14 SM: Yes, I'm looking at it now; it's basically a short history.

15 JM: However it's possible that I never used it in the Beaver program because we  
16 were based in Udorn and that plate information center was in Vientiane, but I don't think  
17 that it was formed until '63.

18 SM: When that C-46 was shot down? It talks in this history, the Flight  
19 Information Center, it talks about a C-46 being shot down, the pilot and copilot and five  
20 other crewmembers.

21 JM: That was outside of Savannakhet, wasn't it?

22 SM: It doesn't say specifically the location.

23 JM: The pilot went through school with me. Had a French name; I'll try to think  
24 of that too.

25 SM: Okay, so the briefings you got before your missions in 1962, were you told  
26 where not to fly at all? I mean what could be hostile areas?

27 JM: In 1962?

28 SM: During your time with Air America flying the Beavers?

29 JM: Oh, of course we were. I don't recall specifics on it, but any time we had a  
30 mission into where there were Special Forces or whether they knew there were Laotian

1 soldiers that were there and it was safe to drop stuff, but sometimes places get overrun or  
2 what not but I don't remember that happening to me with the Beaver.

3 SM: While we're talking about that document that you sent to us, T.C. Walker,  
4 do you remember what his initials stand for, the guy that wrote this?

5 JM: No, I don't.

6 SM: Okay, just curious. So, when you went to work with Bird and Son and you  
7 started flying first the C-46s and then the Dornier, what kind of briefings did you get?  
8 How effective were they?

9 JM: The briefings were very effective. We used to go over to the Flight  
10 Information Center if we were going into an area that we didn't know about. Of course,  
11 we'd get briefed by Tony Poe up on Long Chien all the time too. Sometimes he would  
12 have more recent information than the Flight Information Center and he would pass it on  
13 back to them. It was a combined effort of people, the pilots coming in and giving  
14 information and information coming in from outposts. They had an extensive  
15 communication network there with the Chinese fellows in all the towers at all these bases  
16 and communication was quite good, especially for way back in those days. Did I answer  
17 your question?

18 SM: Yes, sir. Now you mentioned that before we started recording this second  
19 section of the interview that you worked with Tony Poe. He's been talked about a lot and  
20 covered in some of the literature about the work in Laos. Just out of curiosity, what do  
21 you remember most about him personally, you from your in action experience with him?

22 JM: With Tony?

23 SM: Yes, sir.

24 JM: Oh he was great. It was fun to work with him. He's gung ho. He was  
25 concerned for our safety but he used to give us a lot of work and he was just a lot of fun  
26 to work with.

27 SM: Now in terms of his effectiveness, as far as your understanding of what was  
28 going on in that part of the country, how effective did you think he was?

29 JM: With what he had to work with, he was extremely effective.

30 SM: Do you recall any particular stories or incidents with Tony Poe that you  
31 would share with us or would want to share with us?

1 JM: Not really. I just know that he lost a finger. I wasn't with him but he lost a  
2 finger from a hand grenade or a booby trap or something but you probably have got that  
3 story already. But he was a very dynamic guy. He was in the Tibetan airlift and I think  
4 he was in a war in Indonesia, World War II as a Marine. If there was a war out there then  
5 he was involved in it. Korea, I think he was involved in Korea too, just an incredible  
6 guy.

7 SM: You mentioned that you also worked quite a bit with Vinny Lawrence  
8 during this time.

9 JM: Vinny Lawrence was there for the three years that I flew out of Long Chien,  
10 as was Tony Poe.

11 SM: When you transitioned from the C-46 to the Dornier, why don't you go  
12 ahead and describe what that was like and what your missions were.

13 JM: I don't remember who checked me out in the Dornier. It didn't take very  
14 long though because it was a light airplane and I already had the experience flying  
15 upcountry, so I didn't have to be taught the country. I would take supplies up to Tony at  
16 Long Chien and then he would assign me missions all day long, all through central Laos  
17 and I would drop supplies, maybe move troops or land with supplies on all of the strips  
18 upcountry, many of them and one of the missions that was flying people right up into  
19 China. I used to drop them off and go pick them up a week later and of course Tony  
20 denies all this but I always figured they were spies under the cloak of carrying in  
21 medicine. They were locals, but I figured they were up there spying on what was going  
22 on up there.

23 SM: Into China?

24 JM: Yes, it was in China. Not very far but it was definitely in China.

25 SM: Now were you dropping or landing?

26 JM: I was landing. Yes, it was spooky.

27 SM: Were these just open areas or fields or where they cleared specifically for  
28 this purpose?

29 JM: It was a typical strip that they cut out for us. It was dirt strip and it wasn't  
30 very long, but I used to fly the Dornier and the, I might have used to fly the Pioneer in

1 there too, but I'm not sure, but I know I flew the Dornier. I think it was only Dorniers  
2 and I used fly to Phong Saly with the Dorniers too.

3 SM: What was the payload of that aircraft?

4 JM: Probably eight hundred pounds.

5 SM: How many passengers could you carry?

6 JM: I think I could carry about six.

7 SM: Do you recall about how many trips you went up into Southern China?

8 JM: Probably five or six.

9 SM: You say that this was under the guise of providing medical supplies and  
10 stuff?

11 JM: Yes.

12 SM: Did you ever carry any Americans?

13 JM: No, we'd take Americans to Phong Saly, which is pretty close to there.  
14 That's way up in the northern part near China. That was a risky operation too. We'd fly  
15 up there and we used to have to check in an hour before landing and they'd say continue  
16 the mission or abort. That's how touchy it was, and I remember when Dutch Brongersma  
17 was up there one day and he was in a Dornier from Bird Air and Al Rich was up there,  
18 and I went through school with him up there in Taipei, Al Rich, and he was up there with  
19 a helio and they wouldn't let him go and Dutch wouldn't leave until they let him go. And  
20 somehow, Dutch was a very persuasive guy, been out there in Asia for a long time, great  
21 personality and he was able to talk them into letting him go so they both flew out of  
22 there. That's how touchy that place was. It was scary. I didn't like going in there, plus it  
23 was up high on a hill and it used to rain up there and if you slid off the end of the runway,  
24 then you dropped two, three thousand feet. It wasn't one of the best places that we had to  
25 go.

26 SM: How long was the runway?

27 JM: Probably fifteen hundred feet long, but when it was muddy out there, geez,  
28 you had to get in there.

29 SM: Fifteen hundred feet long?

30 JM: Yes and you had to get in there in the first hundred feet. If it's dry, no  
31 problem.

1 SM: Now, when you were flying up into that area, not over into China, but in the  
2 very northernmost part of Laos, were those typical personnel drops or also material?

3 JM: Well, when I used to fly the Dornier it was material and people, but we used  
4 to make air drops, I used to make air drops with a pioneer around Phong Saly, south of  
5 Phong Saly as I remember, we used to do a lot of that up there with the Pioneer, we'd  
6 drop rice and supplies.

7 SM: How were the Bird and Son aircraft marked?

8 JM: I think the DC-3s, it was a combination, its coming back to me now, one  
9 Dornier that I brought back from the factory it had an N number with an American flag  
10 on it and it had American, it was German airplane with American engines and one of the  
11 flights that we had was from a guy from New Zealand, his name is Len Cowper and this  
12 was after the neutralist government was covered and one of the Cabinet members who  
13 was a Communist came out and we were going to give him a ride somewhere, and he  
14 went out and he looked at the airplane and he said, 'American flag, New Zealand pilot,  
15 German airplane, American engines, I'm not going to go on that airplane.' One of the  
16 more humorous times we had out there. We had a lot of humorous times out there. So  
17 let's see, we used to drop with the pioneer in the upper part, but the C-46s used to go up  
18 there and the DC-3s and they used the drop the net, their whole northern region up there.

19 SM: But typically the aircrafts did have civilian markings?

20 JM: That one had American registration on it, November. It was 85 X-ray, but  
21 some of them had Laotian registries on them. X-ray, Whiskey and one of the Dorniers  
22 was X-Ray Whiskey Tango Bravo Juliet, and I think the other three Dorniers were  
23 Laotian registry. Air America's airplanes had the Bravo tail on them; they were Chinese,  
24 Taiwan registry, however some had N registrations on them. That pretty much covers  
25 that. The Beavers were nothing, Lima, whatever that stood for.

26 SM: Did any of the other aircraft you flew in Southeast Asia, were they ever  
27 sanitized of their markings completely except for say, just like a Lima designator, like  
28 with the Beavers or were they all typically marked in normal civilian markings?

29 JM: They were civilian markings, yes, but there were a lot of airplanes that were  
30 sanitized that would show up at various places, bigger airplanes, that they changed the  
31 tail numbers on, but I can't give any details but we know they were doing it all the time.

1 SM: How about false flag operations?

2 JM: First of all, the helicopters, the helicopters were marked H with a two  
3 numeral designation, H-23 and H-22. Maybe that's wrong. You probably know that  
4 already, Hotel, HE would be one I think. I think it was only letters but they didn't have  
5 an actual country registration on them. That's the best way to describe it to you. Because  
6 I know we used to call the helicopter that went down north of Vientiane, it was HE, so it  
7 was shot down up there and that's where they caught the Air American pilot and Grant  
8 Wolfkill maybe. He was a reporter and they shot them down up north of Vientiane just  
9 before you go in the mountains and that spot we always call Hotel Echo because that the  
10 registration on the helicopter.

11 SM: Now, while you were flying in Laos, for the entire time, going back to '62  
12 and then later when you went back in '63 and after, how many S&R operations? Were  
13 either Air America or Bird and Son supporting that you were aware of?

14 JM: What kind, S&R?

15 SM: Yes, search and rescue?

16 JM: Lots of them, lots of them, many, many.

17 SM: What kinds of pilots were they picking up?

18 JM: Military pilots?

19 SM: U.S. military pilots?

20 JM: Yes, fighter pilots or reconnaissance pilots that were being shot down.

21 SM: What kind of recon, do you recall?

22 JM: Yes, the Navy used to run those recon planes through there and the guy who  
23 escaped, he was a Lieutenant in the Navy, he was flying a recon airplane over, not the  
24 Plain De Jars, but the one up north of there, I believe. It was the Plain de Jars I think, and  
25 he was shot down in a recon plane, flying low and he bailed out I guess. And then Tom  
26 Moore tried to go in and pick him up and he picked up eighty-three bullet holes in his H-  
27 34 and Bill Cook was behind him with another H-34 and Klosseman was his name and  
28 Klosseman knew what was happening because the Pathet Lao put out a phony marker.  
29 That's what sucked Tom in and he was trying to wave Tom off and Tom didn't see him,  
30 but he knew he was right there. But then Tom was able to fly out and Phil Cook avoided.  
31 Naturally, he had to but they really tore up Tom's machines. It's a wonder that he made it

1 back. That had such a devastating effect on Tom. He was ex-Navy helicopter pilot that  
2 what he did is he wouldn't fly up north any more, he transferred to Bangkok and he flew  
3 Air American helicopter around Thailand, I think it was for Jusmag. But Klosseman  
4 escaped two months later, I think you've probably got that story already.

5 SM: How about successful search and rescue?

6 JM: How successful?

7 SM: Yes, did you yourself go on any successful S&R missions?

8 JM: Well, yes and no. You find a pilot that's killed and how successful is that?  
9 They count it successful because we find the body, but I had one with Vinny Lawrence  
10 on board and I've written those all up in those letters, too.

11 SM: Mr. Castle?

12 JM: Yes, to Timothy Castle. But one was way up north there, and it was an F-  
13 105 I think and we found the aircraft and it was in a clump of jungle surrounding by some  
14 plains and a valley. And I found it because of the smoke and then I called in the  
15 helicopters, Air America, and they went down and they pulled the body out and whatever  
16 else that they wanted to get out of there. And another one was I was looking for a guy, a  
17 Marine fighter pilot, who ran out of gas coming down from runs on the Plain De Jars and  
18 I knew approximately where he popped out, but I didn't have the homing device in my, I  
19 think I was in a Dornier and we didn't have that capability. But I searched for him  
20 anyhow. I knew about where he was and I looked and then I looked, but I called in a C-  
21 123 that was airborne because they had that homing device to pick up the beeper for a  
22 downed pilot. And they went overhead right away and they found him right away, so I  
23 was involved in that. Then the Air Force came up with a Husky and they pulled a guy  
24 out—he was alive—with a husky with a wench, he was hanging from a tree and let's see  
25 that was the other one. I've written up another one. You've got it all there though.  
26 There was another one I was involved. The other one was two T-28s U.S. Air Force  
27 pilots took off from Vientiane and they were going to Da Nang. Oh this was a biggie for  
28 me, a biggie, and I spent—the did a massive search for these guys and they gave us all a  
29 sector and I was in a Dornier and Bill Donovan came along with me as my copilot and  
30 observer. And my major sector was about thirty miles of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and the  
31 *U.S.S. Ticonderoga* supported me. They were out in the Gulf of Tonkin and they would

1 send four AD. I flew three days, seven hours a day, and these ADs, I'd have two on each  
2 wing and they would follow me all down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. All the time I was  
3 looking, but my sector was not only the Ho Chi Minh Trail, but a lot of other area. And  
4 on top of that, I didn't see them but I was told that there was a tanker, and F-105 and  
5 there was also an Albatross that stuck with me for the three days that was the control  
6 ship. If I had a problem with the control ship because I couldn't talk to them—no, I  
7 could talk to the control ship who would have talk to the ADs when I wanted to send  
8 them a message. But the interesting thing is that as I flew up and down the Ho Chi Minh  
9 Trail, looking for the wrecks of these two T-28s. There was nothing more. I could see  
10 where the gun emplacements were, but everybody went to the jungle and then up the trail  
11 maybe twenty miles on of those S&Rs. Then I could see smoke, so I said, 'Okay guys,  
12 let's go up there and see what the smoke is.' Get up there, nothing, no sign of any kind  
13 of life, human, animal or anything. They were just—I say it's because I had those ADs  
14 on my wing. If it wasn't for them ADs, I probably wouldn't be around today. And they  
15 could probably hear the jets upstairs too, so that was a biggie for me and that's where the  
16 letter came from, I think from General Moore. And we heard five weeks later, six weeks  
17 later, there was a massive search. I was not the only one. There were other guys  
18 covering other sectors. We heard later on that they were found six weeks, five weeks  
19 later on the backside of a mountain outside of Da Nang. They were flying too low in  
20 weather and they crashed. That's what happened to them, two of them in formation. But  
21 it was quite an experience being supported off the *U.S.S. Ticonderoga*. When those guys  
22 had to leave me, they'd sent a message to me saying, 'It's Bingo time. Sorry, Jim, we'll  
23 see you later.' They'd go back to the carrier. Then I used to go searching without those  
24 guys and I went in some really boony areas out there, but there was nobody out there  
25 except shacks and just isolated people there, but I kept looking. I didn't necessarily need  
26 those guys except over the trail. That's where I was really concerned and it was really  
27 nice to have them over the trail.

28 SM: Speaking of the trail, what do you remember about the trail network back in  
29 '62 when you were flying the Beavers?

30 JM: Nothing flying the Beavers, because I don't. Jerry was his name, Prudome.  
31 Jerry Prudome, he was the guy was shot down in the Air American C-46 that we were

1 talking about. I think that was him and he was shot down over around the trail I think,  
2 east of Savannakhet somewhere. It's kind of hazy. It might be wrong but I think that's  
3 the C-46 that you're talking about and maybe that's why the information group there was  
4 formed in Vientiane. But we didn't fly near the Ho Chi Minh Trail in the Beavers. We  
5 were mainly supporting the Special Forces and they weren't on the Ho Chi Minh Trail.  
6 They may have gone over there on Special Ops, but they certainly weren't asking for  
7 support over there, unless they got support from somebody else.

8 SM: Did you remember hearing about it during your first tour in "62?

9 JM: Hearing about what?

10 SM: The Trail.

11 JM: Yes, the Ho Chi Minh Trail was famous.

12 SM: And how about when you first started flying with Bird and Son and as you  
13 started flying more missions near the Trail? What did it look like from the air, from what  
14 you could see?

15 JM: Well, we normally wouldn't go near the Trail, except that three-day thing  
16 that I had looking for those downed T-28 pilots. And the Trail was like a road to these  
17 little village out in the boondocks and like I say, there were villages and gun  
18 emplacements, but the guns were gone and the people were gone and that went on for—I  
19 probably flew up and down the Trail seven to ten hours, something like that, of the  
20 twenty-one hours that I spent on that three day mission. Can you hold on a second?

21 SM: Now besides the hazards of being shot at, what were some of the other  
22 flying challenges to flying in Laos?

23 JM: Well it was probably more hazardous landing on some of those strips than it  
24 was to getting shot at, however later on I think they started getting SAMs after I left and I  
25 think they started to get more powerful anti-aircraft equipment in there, maybe –caliber  
26 machine guns which they didn't have before. When I was there it became more  
27 dangerous at that point. I think that they started doing a lot of night flying, but I rarely  
28 flew at night there at all. When I was there it was mostly daytime missions but  
29 sometimes we would come back a little bit after dark. But I wouldn't launch on a  
30 mission at eleven o'clock at night and go anywhere, that sort of thing. But it was  
31 challenging being able to land on those strips because they were so short. One of them

1 was like, that was Delta, it was a sight. That was like a roller coaster. You'd land and  
2 then you'd go down hill a little bit and then you'd go way up high and you'd land up on  
3 the top of it and that was another spot where if you missed you were going to fall off a  
4 cliff. As a matter of fact, they had an accident there where a Caribou got all banged up  
5 there.

6 SM: What about some of the various weather conditions or other phenomenon,  
7 like the smoky season, stuff like that?

8 JM: Oh, that was very interesting. The smoky season lasted for two months and  
9 that was a very, very stressful period. I was flying the Pioneer one smoky season and it  
10 was like I was on instruments all day long. I could be at eight thousand feet, five  
11 thousand feet, I couldn't see the ground and I couldn't see ahead of me because it was  
12 black. It was daylight but basically it was black and I'd have to stay on the gauges and it  
13 got especially [bad] when it would get cloudy, so you really had to know where you were  
14 and you really had to plan very carefully to get to your drop zone. Then of course there  
15 was the wet season and the wet season was hazardous because of the strips. The strips  
16 were very bad. Matter of fact, I remember taking off with a brand new Dornier up at Sam  
17 Tong for Pop Buel. I'm running a short mission for him and it was a new airplane and it  
18 still had the skirts on the wheels and I'm trying to take off and Sam Tong was like up on  
19 a hill and there was a little slope down and then it flattened out and you could go. And I  
20 try to take off and I'm going down a hill, I'm saying, 'This thing won't take off and I  
21 don't understand.' It was just sliding down the hill so I pulled it over to the side and got  
22 out and checked it out and the wheels were packed full of mud in the skirt and the wheels  
23 wouldn't turn. So we had to take the skirts off and then the mud would fall away. So  
24 that's a good example of one of the problems of the mud that was there during the rainy  
25 season plus it was slippery and you needed to be very, very careful. Then there was the  
26 dry season. That was great. No clouds, it was dry, no rain, you could see for miles and  
27 that lasted for months.

28 SM: Now were there any other field improvisations of the aircraft that you had to  
29 make because most of the aircraft were really designed for civilian activity and you were  
30 applying them to military problems, like the wheel flaps. Was there anything else that

1 you had to do to the aircraft over time to make them better or easier to use in the  
2 environment?

3 JM: No, except try to get the weight out, unnecessary equipment, so they could  
4 carry more. That's all I can think of as of right now.

5 SM: You mentioned Pop Buel. How well did you get to know him? What do  
6 you remember about him?

7 JM: Pop Buel I got to know very well and I really admire what that man did and  
8 what his call was. He was just an incredible individual.

9 SM: Any particular memories of certain operations and other things that you  
10 might have done with him?

11 JM: Pop Buel was a humanitarian and he wasn't so much interested in the war,  
12 but his call was there to help the people and he worked for USAID. But he used to  
13 interface with Tony Poe across the mountain there in the other valley and he would get  
14 support from Tony when he needed airplanes and he would get support from Vientiane,  
15 from USAID when he needed them. They would call us up and we would send them up  
16 an airplane and we dropped supplies for him also, but also we did a lot of bringing  
17 supplies into him at Sam Tong. And the people got to love him up there and he just did  
18 an incredible job up there, teaching them and teaching them how to grow, he was a  
19 farmer in Indiana I think, teaching them how to grow food and he had a little medical  
20 clinic up there and I think they were teaching nurses how to become nurses and just  
21 totally humanitarian, excellent, excellent man.

22 SM: Do you know if he ever went to work for the CIA?

23 JM: I would say no. I would say that he was always on the payroll of USAID,  
24 however he used to interface with the CIA and get support from it all the time, but I don't  
25 think he was ever an agent, but you just don't know. I didn't see any requirements for  
26 him to work as a CIA case officer because he was getting paid from USAID and it was a  
27 legitimate job. But he may have been, I don't know.

28 SM: Did you bring your wife on this tour with Bird and Son?

29 JM: Of course, yes.

30 SM: Where was she living?

31 JM: Vientiane.

1 SM: Now you mentioned that you got in country in a secretive fashion.

2 JM: Wetback.

3 SM: Yes, wetback. Once you were in country did you not have to worry about  
4 getting caught without appropriate paperwork, visa, whatever?

5 JM: They got me the paperwork afterwards. It was kind of a funny thing the way  
6 they did things. I don't even know why they wetbacked me in because they could have  
7 just flown me up I think. It was kind of a funny drill, but they did it the way they did it. I  
8 came up to ask for the Bird and Son and maybe a week later I had everything I needed. It  
9 was funny they did it, but it was obviously a wetback, and it was obviously arranged by  
10 the CIA.

11 SM: What were the major differences between working with Bird and Son versus  
12 your brief time with Air America in '62?

13 JM: Air America was more of a military style organization and Bird and Son was  
14 a construction company and it was sort of, it wasn't as big. It was smaller and everybody  
15 knew each other and it was based strictly there at Vientiane originally and Udorn, but  
16 everybody knew each other. Air America and its subsidiaries or other organizations were  
17 scattered all over Asia, all over like in Singapore and Tokyo, Taipei, Hong Kong, all  
18 those places, so it was a small organization, kind of like the difference between working  
19 for a big airline or a small local airline like Northeast was out of Boston.

20 SM: The intelligence that you were getting over time while you were working for  
21 Bird and Son was just as good as any intelligence you received while you served in  
22 Southeast Asia?

23 JM: Sure, but we had to go to the Flight Information Center and get it and we'd  
24 swap stories. We all drank coffee and had breakfast and drank our Heinekens at the end  
25 of the day in the coffee shop there at Vientiane and we'd also swap war stories and we'd  
26 all tell each other where that they'd been shot at and all this kind of thing, just generally  
27 passing information between each other. It was all in the Flight Information Center  
28 anyhow though, so the intelligence was equal between the two companies, but it was  
29 actually supplied by Air America, but we had total access to it.

30 SM: Now when you were flying for Bird and Son, did you ever engage in, what  
31 they call in Air America, Special Projects?

1 JM: Special projects. Well, I guess one special project would be the prisoner of  
2 war that I brought out. On the Geneva Accords, before they formed a neutralist  
3 government or the Paris Peace Talks, the pro-Western side was always complaining  
4 about there were regular North Vietnamese, ARVN they used to call them I think, North  
5 Vietnamese troops in Laos and the Communists would always deny it so one day they  
6 caught one and I just happened to be on the spot. And Tony Poe said, 'Jim, you've got to  
7 take this special prisoner of war down to Vientiane for us,' and I said okay. So they put  
8 the prisoner of war, they tied his hands behind his back with rope and they put him in the  
9 back of the Dornier with a little Lao soldier guard, a young kid with a gun on his hip, and  
10 then they expected me to get in the front seat of the Dornier and fly this tricky down to  
11 Vientiane. And I said 'Oh, wait a minute, I don't like this situation at all.' And I said,  
12 'First of all, I want this guy strapped to these two buckles on the floor,' and I said, 'So  
13 that he can't get away,' and I said, 'I want the gun in my pocket. I'm not leaving that gun  
14 in the back.' So I did that as a security precaution because I knew this guy was scared to  
15 death. And we flew him down to Vientiane without incident and it was the first North  
16 Vietnamese regular that they ever caught up there that I know of. That was kind of a  
17 special op but as far as going off on any kind of a spooky thing, no, everything was pretty  
18 much routine to us. Daily we'd go up and make these drops around the country.

19 SM: To include your operations into China?

20 JM: Yes, well that was a Special Op; I would consider it as a Special Op.

21 SM: When was this POW captured, do you recall?

22 JM: It was probably; it had to be '63 or '64, somewhere in there.

23 SM: To your understanding, what happened to him, what was he used for, was it  
24 just as proof that they are there?

25 JM: Well, they probably took him to Switzerland and put him in a fancy hotel  
26 somewhere and then interrogated him. He ate steak every night. I don't know what  
27 happened to him. I often wonder that myself. Maybe he testified at the Geneva Accords.  
28 I'm sure they didn't kill him because he was too valuable.

29 SM: Yes, sir. Were there many other people captured that you are aware of?

30 JM: I'm sure there were, but I don't remember seeing a lot of prison camps  
31 around for the enemy, the Communists.

1 SM: Did you ever carry any Pathet Lao prisoners?

2 JM: No, not that I can remember, no. I used to carry a lot of pro-Western Laotian  
3 troops, but I never carried any Pathet Lao prisoners.

4 SM: As far as the pro-Western troops, did you ever carry other country forces into  
5 Laos, in particular of course, Thai forces?

6 JM: Yes, not many though. There was not a big group of Thai soldiers up there.  
7 There were some that were working with the CIA on special projects.

8 SM: Now were these the Thai paramilitary forces, the PARU, do you know?

9 JM: I think so. There was a guy by the name of McCorn at Long Chien and he  
10 worked for Tony and Vinny and his job was to go around every night to all the villages,  
11 to the village chiefs and smoke the pipe with them, heroine, poppy, and the story is—I  
12 used to see him and he was a tremendous guy, spoke fluent English and I used to see him  
13 and his eyes were bulging red and they told me that he died later on from going around  
14 and smoking the pipe with all of the village chiefs and he was kind of like making peace  
15 with them for the West, keep them friendly to us, but I think he was PARU.

16 SM: Yes, P-A-R-U.

17 JM: Yes, it was like the Special Forces of Thailand. They were trained to wear  
18 Phitsanlouk.

19 SM: I'm sorry, they were trained what?

20 JM: At Phitsanlouk, Thailand by Jack Shirley who was another CIA case officer.

21 SM: Did you know, or ever get to meet Bill Lear?

22 JM: Many times, yes.

23 SM: What do you remember about working with him?

24 JM: Well, I didn't work with him very much because he was kind of off there in  
25 his shack, doing his thing, running I guess his case officers. I think I flew him maybe a  
26 couple of times, but I was definitely not exposed to an awful lot and I can't say too much  
27 about him to be honest, except I knew he was there and that's about it. He probably used  
28 to socialize with the guys at the club in Udorn, but I was in Vientiane most of the time.

29 SM: Now, why don't you go ahead and describe briefly the living condition for  
30 you and your wife in Vientiane?

1 JM: Oh, they were delightful. We had the old French colonial house, the rent  
2 was inexpensive, we had maids' quarters in the back, it was all fenced in, a banana tree in  
3 the yard, we had a Jeep and we had it all furnished with the Ratan furniture. I had a Sony  
4 tape recorder, one of the large one with the speakers that were in favor in those days, and  
5 we had a refrigerator and you name it, we had everything, very comfortable, so delightful  
6 airy house and upstairs I had my own office up there, quite an experience. We were very  
7 comfortable.

8 SM: Did you have any other family there?

9 JM: No, but we did go through four coup d'états in Vientiane.

10 SM: Okay, what were those like?

11 JM: Well, one of them was, only one affected my wife. I was away flying  
12 somewhere and we had two German shepherds and one of them got out of the yard and  
13 he got run over by an Army truck with all the activity and the coup d'état was out around  
14 the airport and there was a lot of mortar fire, so she went down another part of town, but  
15 she was okay. It was kind of a frightening experience for her, but she just split out of  
16 there and that was the end of that and I think the next day we were back in the house.  
17 Let's see, something else happened to our house, something happened to our roof. I think  
18 our roof got shot up in the house, too, when she was gone. The coup d'état was very close  
19 to—I was near the airport, of course we lived right next to the airport, so it was pretty  
20 exciting and that was the one that was very exciting to us. The other ones, they were  
21 internal and I just don't remember much about them. I just remember that there were  
22 four coup d'états while we were there.

23 SM: How about other oddities of living in Vientiane, the capitol, like for instance  
24 I understand that in Vientiane there was a Pathet Lao headquarters?

25 JM: Yes, when I used to go to work there were Pathet Lao guards there as I recall,  
26 when I first got there, around one of the Pathet Lao buildings, maybe their headquarters  
27 and that was kind of an eerie feeling because they all had Tommy guns.

28 SM: Were you guys allowed to carry weapons, personal weapons?

29 JM: At first, but then they took them away from us.

30 SM: When did they take them away and why, do you know?

1 JM: I think Geneva Accords, it was taken away in '62 I think, '63 maybe. I just  
2 can't remember all the details on that. I just do remember that we weren't allowed to  
3 carry guns, except a little pistol in our survival kits, 22. It was small, but I never worried  
4 because I figured if I went down somewhere I'd be better off without a gun because I'd  
5 be so overrun with people that if I started shooting at them, I'd be an enemy.

6 SM: Now in your survival kits, did that include a blood check?

7 JM: Never opened one, thank god, so I don't know. I just heard there was a  
8 pistol in there.

9 SM: What about, what would you carry with you as personal stuff in case you got  
10 shot down? Anything in particular, gold bracelets, things like that?

11 JM: No, I never carried anything for that. Some of the guys used to joke about it;  
12 I think more than they actually did it.

13 SM: As far as your missions and the operational aspects of your work, you  
14 mention in the letter that you sent to Tim Castle, about the SAR operations and SAR  
15 missions, things like that. A lot of the times you wouldn't receive a specific call or you  
16 would not be out on a specific call or mission for SAR, but instead you'd be out on a  
17 mission for something else and of course the SAR call would come in?

18 JM: Sure, they always call the airborne airplanes first to get them in as quickly as  
19 they could.

20 SM: You mentioned that typically that's what you'd do. You'd drop what you  
21 were doing and you'd go and see if you couldn't help.

22 JM: We would abort the mission and go to the SAR.

23 SM: Was there a time where you couldn't drop what you were doing, you had to  
24 stay on mission?

25 JM: No.

26 SM: Do you recall any other specific missions or operations that stand out in  
27 your memory?

28 JM: I remember flying from Udorn in the Beaver program down to Pakse and the  
29 case officer down there, I met him, I flew him down there, although I was supporting the  
30 Special Forces. He hopped on my airplane, his name was Ed Hall and he was the case  
31 officer and I flew him down to Pakse for his initial assignment. He quit Northeast

1 Airlines to go to work for the Agency and I used to see him in Pakse occasionally when I  
2 was down there and then I went to work for Northeast Airlines in '67 when I returned to  
3 the States and who do I bump into but Ed Hall. He had quit the CIA and he'd gone back  
4 to work for Northeast Airlines and I bumped into him in Winthrop, Massachusetts near  
5 Logan Airport in the ground school there, so it was kind of an interesting reunion.

6 SM: Did you keep contact with many of the people that you met in Southeast Asia  
7 over the years?

8 JM: Absolutely, Air America gang, sure. We have a big email net up, sure.

9 SM: As far as the rest of your time though in Southeast Asia, you eventually left  
10 Laos?

11 JM: Yes, I was transferred to Vietnam?

12 SM: And was this still with Bird and Son?

13 JM: No, Continental then, but Bird was bought by Continental. I gave you that; it  
14 was bought for four million dollars.

15 SM: Yes, Continental Air Services, Inc. Well, I guess before we talk about that  
16 transition, what had you heard about CASI, before going to work for them?

17 JM: That it was Continental Airlines, that was basically it and they were buying  
18 Bird and Son.

19 SM: That's all you had heard. Do you know if they were trying to keep it secret  
20 or anything?

21 JM: No, it made the press, you got the news release on it.

22 SM: Right and they even took out advertisements.

23 JM: Sure, those C-130s, they advertise those. Yes, I can state this, all that  
24 aviation activity over there was supposed to be clandestine, pretty much so was only  
25 clandestine to the American people, Peking and Moscow, and Hanoi knew all about it,

26 SM: While we are on the subjects of other foreign nationals, did you ever bump  
27 into any of them, I mean we talked about the Pathet Lao that were in Vientiane, but how  
28 about other enemy foreign nationals, Chinese, Soviets, you ever meet any or see any?

29 JM: I met some French people there and well, there were Chinese people  
30 working for Air America and Bird Continental and a lot of Filipinos.

1 SM: Those were Chinese Nationalists right, from Taiwan? How about PRC  
2 Chinese?

3 JM: No, they weren't there. I think they had an embassy there, but we never  
4 interfaced with them at all.

5 SM: Well, not intentionally but maybe in a bar or—?

6 JM: Maybe, I just don't know but I never talked to them and I never knew who  
7 they were.

8 SM: Do you know if there were any Soviets in Vientiane while you were there?

9 JM: Yes, there were Soviets there. Well, I have to back off on that statement.  
10 They had the ICC there, and they had a white helicopter and it was—the Poles were for  
11 the Communist side and the neutral, let's see, who was neutral? I forget who represented  
12 the neutral faction, what country, but the Canadians represented the West in that  
13 commission and their job was to try to keep peace, but it was a difficult job. I got to be  
14 good friends with the Canadians. There were two Canadian officers and my wife used to  
15 socialize with them a lot. They used to be over at the house for dinner, great guys, can't  
16 remember their names now, too long ago. Of course we get along great with Canadians  
17 anyhow, and never met any of the Polish ICC people and I think India was the neutralist,  
18 yes, India, but I never met any of those people either. Russians were there probably in  
19 the embassy, but I don't remember interfacing with them.

20 SM: Now the ICC, you're talking about the International Control Commission?

21 JM: Yes.

22 SM: Did you ever fly the Canadians or any of the ICC people?

23 JM: No, they had their own helicopter, they had their own air support.

24 SM: I didn't know if maybe they chartered or contracted out any other flights?

25 JM: Well, they may have with Air America and they may have with Bird or  
26 Continental, I just didn't know about it, but I don't ever remember hearing of them  
27 chartering anything, but I do know that they had the white helicopter. It was a Sikorsky  
28 H-34 with a black ICC on the side of it. That was supposed to identify them, so nobody  
29 would shoot at them, but it didn't work a lot of the time. They used to get shot at all the  
30 time.

31 SM: I guess they didn't have a Flight Information System, like you had.

1 JM: They used to go the wrong places.

2 SM: Yes, sir. Well did that happen very often, did Bird Air pilots ever make  
3 mistakes and fly into areas that they probably shouldn't have and get shot down?

4 JM: Yes, it happened occasionally. I can tell you one great story. We had a very  
5 colorful guy by the name of Jim Fore when I was with Bird and Son, and he was flying  
6 the P2V, used to drop rice and supplies and what not, and he got a briefing. He was  
7 supposed to make a run up north of Ban Houei Sai and drop supplies in the P2V, and that  
8 was a two man crew as I recall and he got information that there were fifty-caliber  
9 machine guns up there and he went over to Dutch and he says—Dutch Brongersma was  
10 the chief pilot, flight manger, he was the flight manager, Eric was the chief pilot. He  
11 said, 'Dutch I don't want to take this mission.' They were doing it in the coffee shop,  
12 where everywhere is around there and he says, 'Dutch, I don't want to take this mission  
13 because they got this fifty-caliber machine guns up there and I'm afraid I might get shot  
14 down.' So Jim was a big ego guy and so Dutch said to him, he says, 'Jim, if you don't  
15 take that mission, I'm going to take it.' So Jim Fore, that blew his ego and he said, 'Okay  
16 I'll take the mission,' so he flew up there and got his ass shot down. This is a true story.

17 SM: Was it by fifty cal's?

18 JM: Yes, it was by the fifty calibers that he knew was there, so I used to tell that  
19 story when I was in the Army reserve to a bunch of helicopter pilots. I used to teach that  
20 as a safety item. I said, 'If the chief tells you to go up there, and you know there are guns  
21 up there, then he says he wants to do the mission then let him go.' Everyone used to love  
22 that story so the safety briefing [?] reporting session.

23 SM: Did he get recovered?

24 JM: Yes, he got burned quite a bit and I think he broke his leg, but they pulled  
25 him out with the helicopter as I recall. I know that he came back. He was safe, copilot  
26 was too. But he said that he had to fight off a wild boar in the night that he was there in  
27 the jungle, but we don't know whether that was just baloney or what.

28 SM: Interesting, a wild boar?

29 JM: Yes, that's the story he told, but Jim could tell some stories, I'll tell you, but  
30 he's a great guy. I used to fly with him as copilot, great pilot. He used to fly the  
31 Alaskan, the dew line in C-46s, incredible pilot.

1 SM: How do you spell his last name?

2 JM: F-O-R-E, I think he's in the Air America log. He lives up in Colorado  
3 somewhere, somewhere out that way.

4 SM: Any other memorable incidents where Bird and Son pilots got into trouble?

5 JM: Yes, Dennis Fenn was up north of LP in that area that I was talking about  
6 and he dropped down below the clouds in a Pioneer to drop stuff, he got all shot up, four  
7 or five rounds I think and he pulled out of there real quick like. There was—well, that's  
8 pretty much it. There were a lot of other things, but I've forgotten a lot of them and so  
9 I'll leave it at that.

10 SM: What was the transition like from Bird and Son to CASI was there any  
11 changes?

12 JM: Yes, there was definitely a change because there was a lot of new  
13 management that came in. They transferred me to Vietnam and I wasn't too happy about  
14 that because I was so comfortable there living in Laos and I only stayed in Vietnam a  
15 year. The flying was safer down there, believe it or not.

16 SM: Safer in Vietnam?

17 JM: Yes, because we were flying, we weren't dropping any supplies. We were  
18 carrying people around into the enclaves, so it was quite safe. However, one day I was  
19 going north off the East Coast up south of Da Nang and I was going northbound and I  
20 was going over this, I think it was a destroyer or a destroyer escort and it was a U.S., and  
21 I wasn't concerned about it because I was coming from the South, going up north and  
22 they opened fire on me and man did I do a ninety degree turn and get the hell out of there.  
23 I was flying a Beachcraft Baron. The sky just was full of tracers and I guess they were  
24 shooting at anybody that flew over them. One of the interesting missions that I used to  
25 have down there, if this is the appropriate time to tell you about them.

26 SM: Yes, sir absolutely.

27 JM: We did a lot of work for the Navy Bureau of Yards and Docks and one  
28 mission that I used to do on some weeks, it was weekly mission, pick up this Navy  
29 captain, no not a captain. He was the equivalent of an Army captain. What is he, a  
30 lieutenant I think, and his job was to photograph all of the projects that were being built  
31 on the contract to the Bureau of Yards and Docks, U.S. Navy, airfields, hospitals and all

1 that and I'd fly him for twelve hours all over. It was a long day but it was a great day and  
2 we would fly all over the enclaves and he would take aerial photos of everything that was  
3 being built to see what the progress was and then we'd go back into Saigon that night and  
4 the next morning he was on a jet to Hawaii where the photos were then sent on to  
5 Washington DC for the Congress to look at, to see where the money was being spent,  
6 which I think was a great idea.

7 SM: When did you go to Vietnam?

8 JM: January '66. I left in I think October '66.

9 SM: While you were in Laos what had you been hearing about the major events  
10 that the U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, in particular the Gulf of Tonkin incident  
11 in '64, passage of the resolutions shortly thereafter and the American military buildup?  
12 Had you been getting a lot of news and things like that in Laos?

13 JM: Oh sure, we used to listen to the VOA and it was covered in the Thai  
14 newspapers and we used to get the Wall Street Journal. It used to come in like a week  
15 late, by APO air and there was no shortage of information for us over there, not at all.  
16 Everybody used to buy these Zenith trans-oceanic radios back in those days at the PX and  
17 we could listen to VOA and the BBC and Moscow and everybody was always telling me,  
18 'What a great radio.'

19 SM: Well, when you left Laos—

20 JM: Let me interrupt. The *Stars and Stripes*, we used to read the *Stars and*  
21 *Stripes* all the time and that was a pretty accurate newspaper.

22 SM: When you left Laos in '65, what was your opinion, what did you think about  
23 the U.S. activities there? How effective did you think U.S. policies were in Laos?

24 JM: I'll be very honest with you. I didn't really give it too much thought, to be  
25 honest with you. I figured that we were going to win, but we didn't.

26 SM: What about in Vietnam, when you started hearing about the U.S. buildup,  
27 the military forces? Obviously when you compare what we did in Vietnam with what we  
28 were doing in Laos, where everything was covert and clandestine in Laos, everything is  
29 overt and openly conventional military in Vietnam, what did you think about that? Did  
30 you give it any thought?

1 JM: I believe it was incredible what they were doing. The loss of life there was  
2 devastating and the way that they built airfields and the way they built hospitals and the  
3 way that the aviation assets did things, it was just incredible what that our country did  
4 there. However looking back at it, it was all done wrong and that's why we lost and we  
5 could have won over there, there's absolutely no doubt about it. I had lunch with General  
6 Westmoreland in Washington DC in 1984 I think it was, and he personally told me that  
7 the major asset that he had as the commander of all those forces down there was the B-  
8 52. Not to knock the ground forces, because they were tremendous too, but he said that  
9 every time he was winning the war by bombing North Vietnam, then Washington DC  
10 would take the B-52 away from him. He said he had that war won so many times it  
11 wasn't even funny, but we all know that story so I won't go into more of that. The  
12 military over there had one hand tied behind its back. That's why we didn't win but on  
13 the favorable side of that, we won the Saudi thing, the Kuwait thing, Desert Storm and  
14 the other one, and now the Afghanistan thing because we learned from our mistakes in  
15 Vietnam and so that's why we have become so damn effective. When they start those  
16 bombings, they don't stop, they just keep going.

17 SM: In Vietnam, what kinds of missions were you typically flying, and what  
18 aircraft were you flying for CASI?

19 JM: I was flying mostly the Baron and the Dornier and they were mostly support  
20 missions, they weren't dangerous at all.

21 SM: When you say support, you mean for—?

22 JM: Carrying construction engineers, mostly construction people for the RMK  
23 Brown Routing Jones, RMKBRJ Combine. It was flying to all the airfields. It was  
24 mostly associated with the construction that was going on down there. It was an easy job.

25 SM: Any military support?

26 JM: Well we used to get the guys that—no, the military had their own support.  
27 We used to give guys hops. If I was like at Cam Ranh Bay and a guy wanted to go  
28 Saigon, I'd say, 'Yes, get in, come on, hop on.' We'd do that gladly.

29 SM: How about agency support?

30 JM: I think Air America was doing most of that down there with their  
31 helicopters, but we basically speaking weren't that I know of, or that I can recall. It was

1 mostly supporting the Bureau of Yards and Docks and I think we did some work for  
2 USAID and information, USIF, that sort of thing.

3 SM: You mentioned the one mission where you encountered basically a wall of  
4 tracers and banked out of there. Any other memorable operations while you were flying  
5 for CASI in Vietnam?

6 JM: For Bird and Son, yes. One of the most frightening experiences was, I was  
7 flying up north. I was checking out another pilot and I was letting him fly and I made a  
8 mistake in letting him fly. I ordered him not to go into a certain area and the weather was  
9 bad, because it was outside the flight plan route and he said, 'No it's shorter this way,'  
10 and I let him do it. It was a mistake on my part and we broke out over a mountaintop and  
11 they opened up on us with a Czech Burp gun and I had bullets spraying all over the  
12 cockpit and one of them hit me in the back. It didn't penetrate me because it was fairly  
13 well expended but it burned me and I thought I'd been hit hard and I was going to feel it  
14 later on, but I just got a mark on there, if I was a military pilot I'd have a purple heart  
15 from it, but it was a scary event. I think we had hand grenades on there, or mortar shells  
16 that we were going to drop to friendlies. Anyhow, that was the fixed amount, was eight  
17 thousand feet high and I called in for U.S. Air Force support and I don't know what  
18 happened to those guys, but I think they got what they had coming to them. A very  
19 prominent location, high on the mountain, it was up north of the PDJ.

20 SM: Were you ever wounded in any other mission?

21 JM: No, that was the closest I got to getting wounded.

22 SM: You never lost an aircraft while you were flying?

23 JM: No.

24 SM: When you were in places like Long Chien or other base areas in Laos, well  
25 principally in Laos? Did they ever come under significant attack with artillery, mortar,  
26 rocket, anything like that?

27 JM: Yes, it was rare but I was up at the Plain De Jar one day and it was a funny  
28 situation because the neutralist they were headed up by that General Kong Le and they  
29 were there on the Plain De Jar on one side and the pro-Western were on the other side  
30 and the Communists were at the far end behind Kong Le and the neutralists, but they  
31 used to shift from day to day. So I'm up there one day in a Dornier and I forget what the

1 mission was, but I'd landed on the PDJ and all of a sudden they started lobbing mortar  
2 rounds in at us, so I had to get in the trench, it was a bunker that they had built just for  
3 that and I had to spend an hour in there, and then fortunately they didn't hit my airplane  
4 so I got out and then flew out, but that was an exciting day. Plain De Jar is one of the  
5 most beautiful spots in the world but the B-52s bombed the hell out of it and they put it  
6 full of holes, the big holes that the B-52 makes when they bomb, but the Laotians used  
7 their ingenuity and they made them into fish ponds now, so they've got a lot of fish up  
8 there. That was an unusual article that the National Geographic Society wrote about  
9 several years ago. They normally don't get involved in the war stuff, but they did on this  
10 particular one. It was an interesting article on Laos.

11 SM: While you were there, how frequently would the neutralists or the Western  
12 friendly forces, how frequently would they control the PDJ?

13 JM: Most of the time the Western side or the—yes, I think the Western side held  
14 the PDJ was controlled by the pro-Western forces, had a big old run in the end. The  
15 neutralists had maybe the middle part, but they would change from day to day. As a  
16 matter of fact there was one Air America pilot that was going in there in a C-123 and this  
17 was in 1962, I think. Maybe it was in '61 before I got there, I can't remember but I know  
18 the story very well. He had a mission to go in with a planeload of supplies for the  
19 neutralists, and the neutralists shot him down on final approach, killed him. It was a dirty  
20 deal.

21 SM: You mentioned Kong Le, what about Vang Pao? Did you ever get to meet  
22 him?

23 JM: Many times, sure. Yes, I knew him very well.

24 SM: What do you remember most about working with him?

25 JM: I enjoyed working with him. I used to fly him around and he used to assign  
26 me missions sometimes, with Tony close by, flying his people around, flying his  
27 intelligence people around and if I stayed up there over night, we'd socialize with him. I  
28 liked him. He was a very tough guy, but he had a tough job and that's how he got to be a  
29 general, by being a tough guy, but I'd hate to be on a bad side of him in Laos. And I  
30 personally saw him—they had two prisoners, I think they were Pathet Lao prisoners and  
31 they had him in a hole there at Long Chien and they grabbed the male guard's rifle and

1 they shot him and they tried to get away but they got captured and shot by the Maos,  
2 Vang Pao's troops, and the bodies were laying on the ground and I saw Lang Poa go over  
3 with a—they were dead—with a handcuff and he whipped them in the face with those  
4 handcuffs. He didn't know they were dead, he was so angry that these guys had killed  
5 his people. So I saw the mean side of Lang Poa that particular day, but normally he was  
6 very friendly.

7 SM: Now, when you were up country and working with people like Vang Pao or  
8 other Laotians, would you eat a lot of the food that they prepared or did you guys carry  
9 your own?

10 JM: Pretty much had our own, yes, but I didn't stay there an awful lot, but I think  
11 they were doing that after I left a lot because they built facilities that were suitable. But  
12 we used to take our own stuff up there, tuna fish and peanut butter and bread and stuff  
13 like that.

14 SM: Did you eat much of the local cuisine?

15 JM: No, I shouldn't say that. I used to like to go down on one of the Chinese  
16 noodle shops there in Vientiane and eat there, but most of the time we ate at home from  
17 the commissary. We had a commissary there and we could get most everything except  
18 we couldn't get good fresh dairy products like milk, because they didn't have any cows in  
19 Laos at that time, and when they're going on up to Hong Kong that's the first thing I  
20 want to do is get a glass of milk because they had a Danish cow dairy farm there in Hong  
21 Kong so they had plenty of milk. But we used to get steaks from Australia, New  
22 Zealand. We'd get butter from down there, because it was a lot closer and easier to  
23 transport there and it was in the commissary and Air America and Bird and Continental,  
24 we all had the APO privileges and we had commissary and PX privileges and whatever  
25 other privileges that the military could give to us.

26 SM: While you were in Laos was there much of a black market?

27 JM: As I recall there was a black market on airline tickets. People used to swap  
28 the money around and they could get airline tickets for fifty percent off and I don't  
29 remember exactly how they used to work, but they used to play the kip against the dollar  
30 somehow, or the dollar against the kip. There was probably a black market there but I  
31 didn't pay too much attention to it, or it wasn't of interest to me but I'm sure there was

1 goods coming across the Thailand. But in Vietnam there was a big black market thing  
2 down there, and I'll tell you the story if you'd like to hear it.

3 SM: Yes, absolutely.

4 JM: Well, the GIs in Vietnam, they couldn't have any dollars. They had what  
5 was called military scrip but I used to be able to get dollars, being a civilian, so I would  
6 go to the commissary, so this is what all the guys were doing that—we used to be able to  
7 take our dollars down to an Indian bookstore and we would put the dollars in a book for  
8 the Indian and what he would do is, he would know where the book was, and we would  
9 go to him and we'd say that we want another book and then he would go to the book and  
10 get the dollars out and then he would give us double the amount in scrip. It was all a  
11 coded operation, and then we'd go down to the commissary and we'd have two hundred  
12 dollars in scrip to spend at the commissary. That's black market I guess, right?

13 SM: Yes, sir it is. Wow, okay.

14 JM: There was a lot of that that went on, but there was an awful lot of black  
15 market stuff in the streets, stuff that was smuggled in that we used to see, but one of the  
16 funniest stories was the McNamara hairspray situation. There were no wives there for  
17 the GIs, but in the commissary there was these huge displays of hairspray on the end of  
18 the grocery aisle and that made *Newsweek*, because it was going to all their girlfriends, all  
19 the GIs girlfriends, another funny story round there.

20 SM: Any other black market or other bizarre activities involving American  
21 products in Vietnam?

22 JM: No, I can't put my finger on anything right now. USAID used to send a lot  
23 of stuff into Laos, cases of canned goods and supplies and stuff and it was all marked 'a  
24 present from the United States of America' with the handshake on there, the American  
25 flag and we'd supply a lot of that stuff in there.

26 SM: Into Laos?

27 JM: Yes, it was in Vientiane and Laos, and I think I used to see in Vietnam too. It  
28 was USAID giveaway.

29 SM: Well, this will end CD number one of the interview with Mr. James  
30 MacFarlane.

1 Steve Maxner: This is CD number two of the interview with Mr. James  
2 MacFarlane. When you were near the end of your tour in Vietnam, which would have  
3 been, I think you said in October of 1966, is that correct?

4 James MacFarlane: Yes, somewhere around there.

5 SM: Well, what was the purpose for your leaving and what were your impressions  
6 upon leaving? How did you think things would turn out in Vietnam?

7 JM: Well I figured that we would win because we had such an incredible machine  
8 over there, but it didn't work that way because Washington just wasn't supporting it, no  
9 doubt about that, not like it did in Desert Storm and in Afghanistan. They just let the  
10 military run the operation and the politicians kept their nose out of it. That's why we  
11 won both of those campaigns and a lot of those senior people in either one of those  
12 campaign, was they were Vietnam majors, lieutenant colonels and they understand what  
13 happened over there. I left Vietnam because I had a good friend of mine who was on  
14 furlough. He was assistant chief pilot for Air America. His name was George Posky. He  
15 was a World War II fighter ace, shot down five zeros. He was next to Pappy Boyington's  
16 squadron, he flew corsairs and he was on furlough for Panagra Braniff and flying for Air  
17 America as the assistant chief pilot in Vientiane. And he kept telling me, he says, 'Jim  
18 this is only a temporary thing over here,' and he says, 'Once you make your money get  
19 out of here and go to work for the airlines,' so I figured it was time to do it and also my  
20 mother was very ill with cancer back here in Augusta, Maine. So I came back on an  
21 extended leave and I got a job with the airlines so I never went back. That's basically it.

22 SM: Okay, when you got back to the United States, what did you think inside this  
23 country as far as supporting the war and how that evolved over time, because when you  
24 came back in '66 most Americans were still pretty much supporting the war effort. The  
25 anti-war student movement was beginning to pick up of course, but what did you think  
26 about all the events in the United States as they unfolded as the Vietnam War continued?

27 JM: Well, it was certainly very interesting and I watched it like everybody else  
28 did in the newspapers and I was still flying. I came back to the United States to go with  
29 the airlines and I went to work with the airlines and they turn around and send me back to  
30 Vietnam. And I was flying the troops back and forth in a military CRAF airplanes,  
31 Civilian Relief Air Force, military contract, so I was still involved in the war and I was

1 base a clock, and flying into Vietnam, getting shot at again. I went away so I didn't get  
2 shot at any more right, I'm right back in there again. I really wasn't forming any  
3 opinions at that time about the war. I was in it and I was going along with it and doing  
4 my thing and supporting it, but it's afterwards that I formed a lot of opinions and I've  
5 already pretty much given those to you. I got heavily involved in the POW/MIA thing in  
6 the '80s and I even lived in Thailand for a year, trying to develop intelligence on  
7 POW/MIA. That was right after I retired and so my opinions about the war were all  
8 formed after the war was over.

9 SM: Now you said that part of your employment after you left CASI involved  
10 flying American troops back to Vietnam, back and forth from Vietnam. How did you  
11 feel about that?

12 JM: Well, I'll give you my experiences. One night we're at Da Nang in a DC-8  
13 and we had two hundred and fifty troops on board, getting ready to haul these guys out  
14 and all of a sudden the tower told us to pull off to the side and they wouldn't let us go  
15 because there was a big fire off the end of the runway. And we sat there for forty  
16 minutes watching the flares and the mortars get thrown around and finally they said,  
17 'Okay, the brushfire is over, you guys should take off,' and it was a pretty tense situation.  
18 And these guys in the back of the airplane know that they put their year in and they're  
19 saying, 'Holy Christ, I'm not going to make it out of here.' And I didn't talk to anybody  
20 but I know that's what they were thinking and I was thinking the same thing myself. But  
21 anyway we got the green light to go and we took off and right after we rotated, probably  
22 we're a couple hundred feet in the air and we're pulling up the gear, right after the gear  
23 came up, two hundred and fifty guys in the back started clapping. They were so happy to  
24 get out of Vietnam safely and we took them to, I think we took them to the Philippines  
25 and then somebody else took the airplane that took them on to Travis. So that was one  
26 experience. The other experience that I know is that when Tricky Dicky said—well, he  
27 was trying to wind down the war. He said we're going to pull out, I think it was forty  
28 thousand troops out of Vietnam and I was flying that run with the troops and he maybe  
29 pulled forty thousand troops out, but he put forty thousand troops back in, because I  
30 never ferried any airplanes. They were always full of troops both ways so that was  
31 another experience that I noted on the thing. But one of the things that I didn't like was

1 sometimes I had to bring back the dead bodies and the caskets and that was a really  
2 gruesome thought, that all these poor guys had lost their lives over there and that was the  
3 downside to the job. I always felt very badly about that. I've never forgotten that but the  
4 MAC airlift thing was just absolutely incredible, what it could move, the civilian part of  
5 it only, what that it could move back and forth to Vietnam from the United States. It was  
6 unbelievable. Most airlines were involved in the Pan Am and Airlift Universal and  
7 TransCaribbean airways and World and Eastern was involved in I believe and some  
8 others and it's just unbelievable what this country can do with the airlift.

9 SM: The carrying of caskets and dead soldiers and Marines and airmen, sailors,  
10 back, you did that from Vietnam to Clark? You never carried them all they way back to  
11 the U.S.?

12 JM: I forget which leg it was because sometimes I was based at Hawaii,  
13 sometimes I was based at Guam, but I can remember it was from Vietnam to the United  
14 States.

15 SM: Was this every flight? Did you bring back remains?

16 JM: No, sometimes you'd come back empty, sometimes we'd have broken  
17 airplanes in there. Players, if it was passengers, we always only brought passengers, but  
18 a lot of times we'd haul freight out there. As a matter of fact I remember the Tet  
19 Offensive that they almost ran out of bombs and ammunition out there, and we had a  
20 couple airplanes one that—I was with TransCaribbean airways there, DC-8s, and we had  
21 a couple of airplanes on there but we got to throw three more airplanes and we only had  
22 like nine airplanes. So they took most of our fleet because if you were in the CRAF  
23 program you had to give part of your fleet to it and this was an emergency. So we were  
24 shipped down to Dover and we were flying flights out of Dover with bombs and  
25 ammunition into Vietnam steadily until we could build up the reserves over there,  
26 because they were just about out of ammunition over there. But it wasn't only us, it was  
27 Pan Am and we could see all the outfits down there hauling bombs bad stuff back to  
28 Vietnam.

29 SM: You remember what time period, this was Tet '68?

30 JM: Yes.

31 SM: Tet, '68 they almost ran out.

1 JM: That's right. My brother was a Marine fighting door to door in Hue and I'm  
2 in his house right now and he recalls that vividly.

3 SM: That they almost ran out of ammunition.

4 JM: Yes, everybody knows that they almost ran out of ammunition. They were  
5 getting very low. That was a big offensive, there was a lot of rounds fired, a lot of bombs  
6 dropped.

7 SM: Now, not to harp on the subject, but I did have one more question about you  
8 having to ferry back casualties. Did you have occasion where you were bringing back  
9 both returning soldiers and casualties at the same time or did you only carry casualties in  
10 caskets and freight aircraft?

11 JM: Yes, strictly cargo planes, yes.

12 SM: Strictly cargo?

13 JM: Yes, never with passengers on board, no. However there may have been  
14 some in the belly that I didn't know about, but I don't think so because usually we'd see  
15 that stuff on the ramp before they loaded it.

16 SM: Did you notice during the Tet period, was there any kind of change in your  
17 approaches? How would you guys get intelligence about how to come into Saigon or  
18 Tan Son Nhut or whatever?

19 JM: Well, Saigon was already programmed for that because the ILS was tilted up  
20 like three degrees to nine degrees or something. I forget the exact amount, but we always  
21 did a steep approach into Saigon so you couldn't make it any more steep than that and if  
22 you're going into Cam Ranh Bay then that was safe over there anyhow and Da Nang,  
23 most of the approach is over the ocean, so no, I don't remember any change as a result of  
24 Tet '68 for the airliners coming in there and I didn't hear of any either. It's pretty hard to  
25 make any drastic changes in what was already there, for safety purpose, because those  
26 airplanes are all heavy and they just don't maneuver very well.

27 SM: When you were doing this commercial flight, did you get hit coming in?

28 JM: No, did not. No, but I know of planes that did, commercial, but I was lucky I  
29 never did.

30 SM: How frequently—you said you were flying out of both Clark and Guam, but  
31 you were also at time flying out of the United States, out of the continental United States?

1 JM: We did it in different ways because we did it for four years. Sometimes I'd  
2 get two weeks in Hawaii and then fly a trip to Manila over to Clark, then another crew  
3 would fly it into Vietnam and come back. Then we'd have twelve hours rest and we'd fly  
4 it back to Hawaii and then we're there and then another crew would take it back to the  
5 States. And we were there for two weeks then they'd send us home because we were out  
6 of time and we'd have two weeks back in New York and they'd put another crew at  
7 Hawaii. Other times we would what we call leap frog. We'd fly from Dover to—I think  
8 when we replaced all the bombs and ammunition that was a leapfrog operation out of  
9 Dover. We'd start at Dover and fly to Hawaii. Another crew would be in position, we'd  
10 get rest there and there were a lot of flights there. So this is how the leapfrog would  
11 work, and then another crew would take that airplane away and then there would be  
12 another airplane coming in after we got our rest and then we would fly it to Guam. And  
13 then we would get off in Guam and get our crew rest and another airplane would be  
14 coming and then we would fly it on into Vietnam and then bring it back to Guam and  
15 then get a night's rest. Then the other plane coming out of Vietnam—so it was a leapfrog  
16 operation. We wouldn't stay in one place more than a day or two. However, January of  
17 1970 I spent the entire month in the Philippines and the crews that were there, I think we  
18 had three or four crews there and it was strictly our job to fly the airplane in and out of  
19 Vietnam for a whole month. The other crews would feed it to us from Guam or Wake or  
20 where it was, Hawaii, and they would rest at the hotel outside the gate there at Clark Air  
21 Force Base. They would rest while we took the airplane into Vietnam and we'd bring it  
22 back twelve hours later and then they'd fly it back to Hawaii. Then there would be a  
23 crew based in Hawaii that would take it on to Travis or something. So we either were in  
24 position for a month or we did a leapfrog operation. The leapfrog operation as I recall  
25 was for the Tet Offensive because we didn't have time to get guys into position on the  
26 crews out there, to base them and get hotels and all that. It was, 'You've got to move  
27 right now guys,' that's how desperate they were for ammunition out there.

28 SM: Did you have occasion as you were ferrying soldiers, especially back from  
29 Vietnam, did you ever have occasion to talk to many of them?

30 JM: No, not really. No, we were just too busy with our duties. An hour before  
31 the flight, preparation, flight plans, weather, all that, then we get in the cockpit and go.

1 SM: Yes, sir. What did you think about Nixon's plan to withdraw the U.S., that is  
2 the Vietnamization program? Did you hear much about it? Were you able to form an  
3 opinion about it?

4 JM: No, only what I told you about the forty thousand out and forty thousand in.  
5 That's about it.

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

7 JM: I guess they were favorable, right?

8 SM: Well, we got our prisoners back.

9 JM: Yes, some of them. Yes, it ended the war. Those are the Accords you're  
10 talking about; there were several peace talks.

11 SM: Right.

12 JM: Those are the ones that ended the war, but the war in Laos continued on.

13 SM: Well, what do you remember in terms of where you were, what you were  
14 doing in '75 when Saigon fell and it was official, Vietnam was reunited under  
15 Communism?

16 JM: I was flying for American Airlines then and I was glad the war was over  
17 because I knew it was our guys getting killed over there. I was flying domestically so I  
18 wasn't involved in the war any more, so its like I said, I was glad it was all over and so  
19 were a lot of other people.

20 SM: You said that after you retired you went back. When did you retire?

21 JM: I retired in late '86. I retired ten years early.

22 SM: You said you went back into Southeast Asia?

23 JM: Yes, I spent a year there tracking POWs.

24 SM: What did you learn?

25 JM: I didn't come up with any positive information, intelligence that there was  
26 definitely anybody there who didn't want to be there. That doesn't mean that they didn't  
27 hold a lot of our guys back. There are just so many stories about them being held back  
28 from various people but I could never lock in any firm intelligence. However, there are  
29 some people that are over there that want to stay there and I'm pretty sure that the stories  
30 that I heard, because of the source, that it was true that they were there. I reported  
31 whatever I had to Attorney Mark Waple. He's the man who sued the President of the

1 United States. I work for Project Freedom and General Westmoreland was our honorary  
2 chairman and that's how I was able to communicate with him and he made a speech for  
3 me down at Washington DC at the National ROA, Reserve Officer's Association  
4 meeting, the year 1984 and it took me a year to get him there because he's in such  
5 demand. Back in those days he would usually get five thousand dollars for a speech but  
6 he spoke there for free. I offered to buy him his airline tickets and he bought his own  
7 airline tickets from South Carolina. He lives in Charleston and he made a speech there  
8 [Washington, D.C.] on a variety of topics and he hit the POW thing, and he said they  
9 were being held over there and he got like seventeen standing ovations in, I don't know,  
10 half an hour, something like that. That was quite a day for me to be able to put that  
11 together. It was in front of three hundred ROA officers. It's in the same hotel [Hilton]  
12 where Ronald Reagan had got shot on the outside.

13 SM: Well, what drove you to go back and try to track POWs? Did you  
14 personally believe it before you went that there were still POWs being held against their  
15 will in Southeast Asia?

16 JM: Yes, I believed that. I still do, but it's impossible to access them now.

17 SM: What leads you to conclude this?

18 JM: Because of all the intelligence that I have. One of the main things that came  
19 up was the DIA in Washington DC is responsible for all that in the end. I knew a lawyer  
20 from Florida who was in the Reserves and got assigned up there for a couple of weeks, I  
21 think in the summer, and he came out of there and he's saying that they're holding up  
22 POWs over there. And also there was another guy, he was the Congressman from North  
23 Carolina, and I can't remember his name right now, he worked in there. He lost his bid  
24 for election in North Carolina and he worked in DIA section there on the POW thing and  
25 he came out of there and he says there are POWs in there. After he did that he ran for  
26 election again, but they put a nuclear waste in his district in North Carolina. But he lost;  
27 they did it to him on purpose. Then there was a full colonel who ran the DIA and he was  
28 newly assigned to it. He was only there like two months and he was taking a look at the  
29 stuff there and he came to the conclusion that they were holding POWs over there. Now  
30 this is the Defense Intelligence Agency in Washington DC. They're not in the Pentagon,  
31 I think they have a separate building, but you know the DIA. And he got so angry about

1 the whole thing that he resigned in protest and he said—I have his letter somewhere. I  
2 should have sent it to you. It was like a ten page letter, a five page letter, something like  
3 that, very lengthy and he said, ‘Okay, guys, this is such and such, Department of the  
4 Army. I’m retiring because if I don’t retire what I have to say in this letter, then I know  
5 I’ll end up and it will be like Kodiak, Alaska and I know it will be the end of my career,  
6 so I’m going to leave. I’m retiring now anyhow and I’m leaving this message.’ He said,  
7 ‘This agency is nothing but a debunk organization and it is designed to discredit all of the  
8 reports that come in on POWs and MIAs,’ and he says, ‘I think that there are still POWs,  
9 that are MIAs being held over there.’ So what he did with this letter of resignation, he  
10 pinned it to his door and he walked out. I forget his name now. Now I got the document  
11 within a week. It was his resignation because somebody in there sent it to somebody in  
12 our group and they sent it to me right away, so I made the document public. It was  
13 classified. It was classified like in ten days after the Army realized what was going on,  
14 but I got it before it was classified so I could do whatever I wanted with it. So those are  
15 the reasons, plus working over and developing the intelligence that I did. What a  
16 smokeless fire. One of the problems I had on the border is all these con artists over there  
17 that would muddy up the waters but I still feel that they held a bunch of our men,  
18 probably three, four hundred.

19 SM: Now, where did you go when you back in ’86?

20 JM: Well, I spent my time between Bangkok and mostly Nakhon Phanom  
21 because there was a fairly decent hotel there and down in Mukdahan part of the time and  
22 sometime over with Tony in Udorn because they had a good hotel over there and I  
23 wanted to go see Tony and swap stories with him, because he was still living there then.  
24 He’s living in San Francisco now, as you can tell from the directory, and I did spend a  
25 little time in Ubon but I think it was mostly transit getting up to Mukdahan because that  
26 was the easiest way to get to Mukdahan. I used to fly up on Thai Airways, but I rented a  
27 truck and drove up there with a pickup truck one time and I rode the train once and that  
28 was a never again. It was a long trip. That’s about it.

29 SM: Well, when you were visiting with Tony Poe, what was his opinion of this,  
30 whether or not there were POWs left? Did he have one or do you remember?

1 JM: He would question everything. He would never say that there was nobody  
2 up there but he would question everything as to the validity of the information I had.

3 SM: Were you ever able to develop sources in Vietnam concerning the POWs?

4 JM: No, I was too far away from there.

5 SM: So where do you think they were held?

6 JM: I have a map somewhere as to where that they were. There were some up  
7 around Dien Bien Phu and there were other camps in central Laos, but it's just been to  
8 long now and they were in remote places, not in big cities, so I can't—like if it was in  
9 Savannakhet, I would say Savannakhet but it was always out in the jungle so I can't  
10 really specify that well without finding my map. I don't even know where it is because I  
11 just moved. I'm all packed up now.

12 SM: What did you do after you returned from Southeast Asia, I guess in '87?

13 JM: Yes, I was over there in part of '87 also. Not much, I just stayed in  
14 retirement. I traveled and I started traveling to Costa Rica and Ecuador because Thailand  
15 was too far away for me.

16 SM: In some of the materials that you sent us, there's a reference to the movie  
17 *Air America* and in particular it's a response from Leon Lashomb, former president of the  
18 Air America Association and it's a response to a letter that you must have sent to him and  
19 the association concerning the movie. I was wondering what your thoughts were on that  
20 movie and in particular the obvious allegations that Air America pilots and other civilian  
21 pilots were flying drugs and engaged in nefarious activities in Southeast Asia?

22 JM: Yes, I can tell you a lot about that. I was in Thailand when, I can't  
23 remember his name, no, maybe it's there in the letter, the director of that filmmaker,  
24 Carolco. They're on the big board I think. They're on one of the stock exchanges from  
25 Hollywood. He came out there and he heard that I was in town from somebody and he  
26 sent somebody over to see me, some British guy that was in the film industry and he  
27 contacted me and he said that he wanted to know if I would go up to Udorn with the  
28 producer that was going to make the movie *Air America* and show him around. I said,  
29 'Sure, I'll be glad to.' So they bought me a ticket, not much, forty bucks to get up there  
30 and so first of all I tried to get Tony to let us in to the Air America facility because he  
31 lived there. I figured he had the connection and he couldn't get the connections to let us

1 into the Air America compound because it's Thai Air Force now. So got a hold of  
2 George Getsky, who used to run Jusmag down in Bangkok back in 1970. He stayed over;  
3 he's still there. He's almost seventy now. He's still jumping with the PARU over there  
4 from the twin pack Sikorsky helicopters and he got me permission to go in there with the  
5 producer of *Air America* and he had his young French wife with him and we all flew up  
6 there and George came along too, George Getsky, Colonel, Retired U.S. Army, really  
7 great guy. He was in one of the movies that they did on some of that stuff over there. I  
8 can't remember the name of it now, but he did a real short part in it and we all went up to  
9 Udorn to see the facility and they let us in there. But I was given the transcripts of the  
10 movie and it was filthy—loaded with drug stuff and I wasn't very happy about that at all,  
11 but I did my thing with them up there and I showed them all around and it was really  
12 interesting. I took all kinds of pictures, which I think the Air America Association has, of  
13 the hangars, how they were all run down and whatnot, the pool and where the school was  
14 and the old office buildings and it was fun to show them all that and where Bird and Son,  
15 their hangar used to be. It was a great day for me, it really was, because it was twenty  
16 years after I had been there. George enjoyed it, too, and so I complained to the producer.  
17 I said, 'This is not true, what you're writing here. This is disastrous to us because it's bad  
18 for our reputation when we go try to get jobs and that sort of thing, because what you're  
19 writing is not true.' So that had an impact upon him but the Air America Association  
20 dumped on him and threatened him with lawsuits and everything so he cut ninety percent  
21 of that drug stuff out of there but he had to leave some of it in there because that's  
22 Hollywood. So Fred Walker was also asked to—I wouldn't help him any more so Fred  
23 Walker was asked to be an advisor on the movie. He was up in Fryeburg, Maine and he  
24 was given a ticket by this guy and he went out to Hollywood and he met this guy and he  
25 too wouldn't work with this guy because of all the drug stuff in the transcripts. So the  
26 combination of he and I and the Air America Association, we got most of it out of there  
27 but there was still a little bit left in there. But my answer to the drug thing is it's a bunch  
28 of bullshit. It's Communist propaganda. I never saw any signs of anything like that  
29 going on in the five years that I was over there. But I do remember when I was in  
30 Vietnam I used to fly to an island called Con Son and Con Son hit the headlines because  
31 the political prisoners from the South Vietnam regime were supposedly on the island of

1 Con Son and they were in this jail down there and they were living off their own urine.  
2 And on one of my flights down there I walked down to the jail and it was empty and I  
3 said, 'This is all Communist propaganda and that's what the drug thing is on *Air*  
4 *America*. It's all Communist propaganda. That's how they turn the people against their  
5 own government. The other thing is that in the Senator Frank Church hearings in the  
6 Senate in 1967, that entire thing was investigated and the Senate committee ruled that  
7 there was no evidence if any such thing going on. It's just not factual so that runs it by  
8 you pretty good. I have to fight that off all the time with people. I get needled on it all  
9 the time and I have to butt right into them and let them know my stand on it.

10 SM: In terms of when you're talking about your flying experience with other  
11 pilots and stuff?

12 JM: Well, any time anybody knows that I'm with Air America, not any time, but  
13 once in a while it comes up.

14 SM: Is that misconception based on the movie?

15 JM: No, I don't think so. I think it's from Communist propaganda. That's where  
16 I think it came from.

17 SM: No, I'm sorry when you meet someone today if they start ribbing you about,  
18 'Oh, you guys were flying drugs in Laos or whatever.' Is that misconception that that  
19 person today in the United States that they have? Do you think that is based on the  
20 movie?

21 JM: No.

22 SM: Because I would imagine that that's a more likely avenue of information for  
23 people.

24 JM: Well, it could be part of it but it was the reputation that we were slammed  
25 with by the Communists and don't tell me where it came from because you never know.  
26 That's they way propaganda flows, misinformation.

27 SM: Well, have you seen some of the other documentaries that involve Air  
28 *America, Flying Men and Their Flying Machines?*

29 JM: I've seen some of those, yes.

30 SM: What do you think of those? How they were done?

31 JM: Let me see.

1 SM: Do you recall what they covered?

2 JM: Yes, they were all okay. There were different versions of them. I would say  
3 that they are all okay. I would say they were quite accurate, unlike the movie, unlike the  
4 Air America movie done by Carolco.

5 SM: What do you think we should take away from our experiences in Southeast  
6 Asia, the United States?

7 JM: Well, I think we've taken away, we've learned the mistakes of how not to  
8 win a war, that's for sure. We've also learned maybe there are certain places we should  
9 keep our nose out of, but we don't know where that would have gone, whether the  
10 Communists and the Chinese would have pushed south through Thailand down in  
11 Singapore or not. We'll never know, but that was supposedly the theory in those days  
12 and that's why John F. Kennedy put the original battalion in helicopter Airborne Marines  
13 in 1962 into Thailand, because of that threat. And so history as it is and we'll just never  
14 know the answer to that, but we learned a lot from that, an awful lot from that.

15 SM: Is there anything else you'd like to discuss today?

16 JM: No, let me take a look at my notes. I didn't make many notes here because I  
17 knew you had a lot of questions. I still can't remember the name of the captain, the  
18 captain for Air America based in Taipei, but I'll find it out for you. [Later remembers the  
19 name is Captain Ralph Adams]. No, I guess that's about all.

20 SM: Well, let my put an official ending to this. Thank you very much. This will  
21 end the interview with Mr. James MacFarlane.