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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with William Quigley
Conducted by Stephen Maxner
April 19; May 16, 23, 2003
Transcribed by Eunice Lee**

1 Stephen Maxner: This is Steve Maxner conducting an interview with Mr. Bill
2 Quigley on the nineteenth of April 2003 at approximately one o'clock. We are in
3 Charlottesville, Virginia, at the Sleep Inn Conference Room. First of all, sir thanks for
4 consenting to this interview.

5 William Quigley: You're welcome.

6 SM: Why don't we begin with a discussion of your early life and if you would
7 just tell me when and where you were born and where you grew up.

8 WQ: I was born in Portland, Oregon, December 1947. Nothing extraordinary
9 there at all, natural birth. I lived in Portland until I was eleven and we moved to rural
10 eastern Oregon in Baker. That's essentially where I call home and where I grew up.

11 SM: Baker, Oregon?

12 WQ: Baker City. It's called Baker City now, but as far as I'm concerned it's just
13 Baker.

14 SM: What was it like growing up there? I mean was it a rural community, small
15 town?

16 WQ: It's a small town. Ninety-five hundred, something like that, one high
17 school, junior high, senior high school. We lived out of town, rode the bus to school.
18 Nothing—didn't participate in a lot of things in high school. My time was spent out in
19 the rural part of the country in the woods, hunting and fishing as much as possible.
20 That's what I liked to do so that's what I did. I did participate, you know, went to the
21 game once in a while but not a lot. I wasn't antisocial, but I wasn't a gregarious kid by
22 any stretch of the imagination.

23 SM: Did you play sports at all?

1 WQ: No.

2 SM: Okay. What did you hunt?

3 WQ: What did I hunt? Deer, elk, pheasant—I hunt predators, coyotes. That sort
4 of thing, and in the summer when there's nothing else you hunted ground squirrels.
5 Some of the ranchers and farmers would pay you bounty on them. You'd get two bits,
6 you know. So that paid for your cartridges.

7 SM: Do you have many siblings or any siblings?

8 WQ: I had a brother six years my junior and a sister ten years younger.

9 SM: Okay. Did you all do activities together, collective stuff?

10 WQ: No. They were the little kids. I left home when my sister was seven. I
11 mean so—

12 SM: Oh wow. You were very much the senior.

13 WQ: Right. So I moved out of home when I was seventeen when I graduated
14 from high school, went off to basic training. I enlisted in the Guard in '64 when I was
15 seventeen. So I went off on my basic training at seventeen right, you know, three days
16 after graduation.

17 SM: Were there any particular subjects in school that you enjoyed, that you
18 gravitated towards?

19 WQ: I liked history. Actually, I liked—the last year was literature, English
20 literature, and I rather enjoyed that. I seemed to have a knack for interpreting
21 Shakespeare. But in high school I didn't shine at much of anything. I was getting
22 through high school because I had to, you know. I had a father that, "You will graduate,"
23 or you weren't going to exist very much longer.

24 SM: Oh, okay. What did your parents do?

25 WQ: Father was a dentist. My mother was a homemaker. Dad had a practice,
26 had to practice in Portland and then he moved it to Baker.

27 SM: Okay. When you were nearing graduation from high school and you
28 enlisted in the Guard, what led you to that decision?

29 WQ: I think as much as anything it was—as I understood it at the time, all
30 healthy males had a military obligation to their country. I just got started on it as soon as
31 I could. The recruiter did a good recruiting job from the local armory. He came to class

1 and I was already predisposed. It was apparent that I could do it right away soon as I was
2 sixteen and soon as I turned seventeen I could enlist with a signature from my parents.
3 My father served in World War II. It wasn't a problem so that's two weeks after I turned
4 seventeen I was in.

5 SM: Okay. Now, what did you go in in terms of expectation for an MOS
6 (military occupational specialty)?

7 WQ: It was an infantry unit. There weren't any expectations. You were a grunt.

8 SM: Yeah. Okay. 11-Bravo.

9 WQ: I was 11-Charlie actually, heavy weapons.

10 SM: 11-Charlie. This Guard unit was there in Baker, Oregon?

11 WQ: Yes.

12 SM: So then where did you go to basic training?

13 WQ: When'd I what?

14 SM: Where did you go for basic training?

15 WQ: Fort Ord, California. Was in the 1st Training Brigade, C-11 was the
16 company. It was the first basic training cycle after the closure of the post for spinal
17 meningitis. We had a lot of recruit deaths there. So they closed it down for a while
18 trying to figure out exactly what the problems were and why and what they could do to
19 prevent it. This was the first cycle after that. So it'd been closed for a couple three,
20 several, four months, something like that.

21 SM: Do you know what they discovered was the cause of that?

22 WQ: Well, I don't remember particularly. Some of the precautions that they took
23 were at night all of the windows were open. In the Monterey Peninsula in early spring
24 the fog would roll in and the fog would roll out. It was rather cool, but it kept the
25 barracks aerated. We weren't supposed to get within hands reach of anybody. You
26 know, some of these precautions were a bit much like the hands. I mean, when you're in
27 a barracks situation, you know, but that was supposed to be the SOP (standard operating
28 procedure). They cut back on training. The training was far less strenuous than it had
29 been. They wanted to reduce the fatigue level. I think those are the primary precautions
30 that they had. They restricted you. We couldn't go anywhere. Not that you had a lot of
31 free time in basic in any event at any point, but when we went through the PX (post

1 exchange) we couldn't just go to the PX. We had to go there in formation and they had
2 to open up all the windows. So they kept everything very aerated and I think that was the
3 biggest precaution to it.

4 SM: Now, when you left for basic training in 1964—

5 WQ: Five.

6 SM: Oh, you left in '65.

7 WQ: I was in the Guard for about six months before, seven months before I went.
8 I had to graduate from high school.

9 SM: Okay. How aware were you at that time of major either Cold War events or
10 maybe even some of the Vietnam specific stuff?

11 WQ: I was aware that it was going on. Being in the Guard you really didn't feel
12 that any of that affected you. My father was very political. He had ran for the congress
13 of the 2nd district. This is U.S. Congress. You know, I heard a lot from him. He had a
14 reserve commission in the U.S. Navy, spent a lot of time doing correspondence courses
15 through the War College. You know, so I knew what was going on. I understood
16 isolation, containment, the Monroe Doctrine, and that fairly well from just listening to
17 him comment and talking with him. So I had some idea what was going on, but I didn't
18 really feel it affected me at that point.

19 SM: What about Vietnam War specific things—the Gulf of Tonkin incident in
20 August of '64, that kind of stuff?

21 WQ: I was aware of it. At least I had some idea that there was some kind of
22 inter-reaction going on, but we didn't have television. It wasn't in the American
23 problems in the senior year. They didn't go into it. They were focused in on primarily
24 the Constitution and what the Constitution was and how it was amended in the process in
25 the civics classes. I don't remember having a history class, per se, my senior year. I
26 think I had all that out. World events just didn't play real heavy in rural Eastern Oregon.
27 You know, you're aware of it and that's really all. I knew that there was a lot of advisors.
28 The buildup hadn't started. It was mostly advisory. I knew that we had a couple three
29 thousand advisors over there and that was really it.

30 SM: What did your dad think of Goldwater, you know?

31 WQ: What did he—

1 SM: Yeah. What did he think of Barry Goldwater?

2 WQ: At the time, I liked Barry Goldwater personally. At that time that's who I
3 would've probably voted for had I the opportunity. My father at that time was a
4 Democrat running on—he was going against very strong. He was in the House Ways and
5 Means Committee. Running against him—I had his name, just absolutely escapes me at
6 the point, but anyway he was the representative for that 2nd congressional district at the
7 time. He was running against him in his party and he didn't get past the primary on that
8 one. The next time he ran on the Republican ticket, but my father was very anti-war.

9 SM: He was?

10 WQ: Very anti-war.

11 SM: Based on what?

12 WQ: He thought the theory of isolation containment and what was going on there
13 was basically a farce. I remember him thinking that he thought that maybe the Gulf of
14 Tonkin was probably a setup. He just didn't buy it outright. When actually it started and
15 then when I went over he was very supportive, but he didn't buy the basic premise that
16 we should be over there in the first place. So he was not particularly vocal about it but,
17 you know, under his personal views he didn't buy it.

18 SM: How about your mom? What's her political position in that respect?

19 WQ: I don't think she had one. She was very much a homemaker and keeping
20 the house clean. She didn't look up very often to even have an opinion on a worldview.

21 SM: Well, when you went to basic training down there at Fort Ord, California,
22 what did you find to be the most interesting aspect of the training, especially that
23 transition from civilian life and the military life? How did that affect you?

24 WQ: Well, the transition had already started when I went in to the National
25 Guard. So the basic drilling, the reception station, was, you know, the harassment was
26 there. I thought it was all very humorous, but I knew enough not to smile at them. It was
27 just part of the game. You got through it. Basic training itself we had a DI (drill
28 instructor) that, actually I respected him very much. Moseley was his name. He was
29 Korean War E-7. I felt him to be at the time a soldier. I thought he was more
30 professional than anybody that I'd been around in the Guard unit. The Guard at that time
31 wasn't really all that professional. There were some people that made a stab at it, but it

1 really wasn't. It wasn't so much that he was a soldier's soldier in terms of spit and
2 polish, it was that he had a good world view. We're here to train. We're here to learn.
3 We're here to—and remember that even in '65 it was just beginning to build up and he
4 had a full platoon of NGs (National Guard) and ERs, enlisted Reserves. So he didn't
5 figure we were going anywhere ,but he had a job to do it, he was going to do it. I thought
6 he did it very professionally. He had a couple of things that still are with me today and
7 he said, you know, "You're in my platoon. I'm your platoon sergeant. You do what I tell
8 you to do because that's your job and this is my job. Another one of the platoon
9 sergeants tells you to do something you do it, even if you feel it's wrong. Then you come
10 and tell me and I'll take care of it because you have nothing to complain about if you
11 don't do it. He does because you didn't follow the order." He was kind of protective in
12 that way and he said, "But if you screw up it's you and me and it's going to be mostly
13 Moseley." You know? So that was his idea and that seemed to me to be a way a DI
14 should be. Basic training itself I thought was rather anemic. They had to be very careful.
15 They couldn't work us too hard because of the spinal meningitis thing. They were kind
16 of—the Army was pairing back the basic training. I really anticipated something more
17 like Marine boot than what we received. I didn't think the harassment was near enough.
18 I didn't think the workload was near enough. I didn't think the physical exertion was
19 near enough. I had some idea of what the potential was in basic training and where you
20 could go from there, not that I really thought it affected me. It just wasn't enough. I
21 thought it was rather anemic.

22 SM: Okay. What was the most challenging part of it?

23 WQ: For me the most challenging part was doing a low crawl because I'd got
24 hurt early on in a confidence course. We were climbing the tower when a kid slipped and
25 started to fall and I grabbed him and he drug me off and I landed and hurt my leg. I had
26 what they call myositis, which is a torn muscle and internal bleeding and I hobbled
27 around on that. Doing a low crawl was just excruciating, but I got through it.

28 SM: How did that affect your final PT (physical training), your final APRT
29 (Army physical readiness test) readiness test?

30 WQ: It wasn't easy. I basically finished up basic on light duty. I was on
31 crutches. I finally had to go to the hospital and they kept me in the hospital for a week

1 and drained leg and got out of there, begged to get out of there. I didn't want to be
2 recycled for any reason. I mean recycling was like flunking, you know. That's not what
3 I wanted. I was a National Guard so the emphasis on getting me through and completing
4 at one hundred percent wasn't there, just get this NG in here and out of here. Send him
5 back. I fired—some of the things I just couldn't do. I made a stab at it, like the low
6 crawl. I did finish it, but I was done that day. That's the first thing I tried and I couldn't
7 do it anymore. Still they just put in me a deuce and a half, sent me back. I did the
8 overhead bars, some of the things that you could do without your legs. When we fired
9 for qualification on the range I did it all standing up because I couldn't kneel. I couldn't
10 bend that leg at all. I couldn't get down in the foxhole so I did it all offhand and still
11 qualified sharpshooter, which I thought was fairly well considering I did it all off hands.

12 SM: Absolutely. This was an M-14.

13 WQ: Mm-hmm.

14 SM: Wow. That's a heavy weapon.

15 WQ: No. I've been shooting all my life. Shooting wasn't anything that they
16 could teach me. They could teach me the military way, which I didn't particularly agree
17 with and I shot my own way and did alright, but I already knew how to breathe, how to
18 control, trigger control. I knew all that.

19 SM: What was it about the military technique that you didn't like?

20 WQ: Well, it's not that I didn't like it's just I had my own way. I knew what
21 worked well and I could shoot well so I basically ignored them, you know. For someone
22 who had no idea it was a technique, a technique that works. If you were willing to apply
23 it and learn from it, it works very well, but I already had my own. What's the point? I
24 just didn't tell them that that was what I was doing. End results the same, the hole in the
25 paper where they wanted it.

26 SM: That's right. Anything else that you remember from basic?

27 WQ: No. Not really. It's just I thought it was a little anemic to sum it up and I
28 thought it should've been more difficult, more of a challenge, than it was. From there we
29 went home for a couple of weeks and I came back and went through infantry AIT
30 (advanced infantry training).

31 SM: At Ord again?

1 WQ: Yeah. It was an entirely different scenario. The harassment wasn't there,
2 you know, like Marine boot. We had a DI that was kind of from the old school, but he
3 was also an alcoholic and was very out of shape so he couldn't push us that hard. We did
4 work a lot harder than we did in basic coming off of light duty after a leg injury. It was
5 tough, the running and especially in the sand. One time, of course, being a big guy I was
6 always in the front of the column and we were running. I ran until I couldn't run
7 anymore and I don't remember anything else. I just blacked out. I took out the whole
8 platoon. I went down and I took them all out.

9 SM: Oh no.

10 WQ: But I toughened up soon enough and then when we got through I went
11 through it all and did the PT test and everything. I didn't have a problem with it, but it
12 was some serious toughening up real quick, I'll tell you.

13 SM: Now, it was at this point that you chose or you were chosen to do heavy
14 weapons, 11 Charlie?

15 WQ: I already had a 11-Charlie MOS. So the AIT was the heavy weapons AIT.

16 SM: What consistence did you focus on then?

17 WQ: The 81 mortar. We went through and did everything. You know, we
18 trained on M-14s. We did the M-79, .50 cal, the M-60s, so we did all the infantry stuff as
19 well as the 81 mortar. So we went to school for that. We did the actual firing of the
20 mortar, the set up of the drill, FO, forward observer, and the FDC (fire direction control).
21 At that time there was nothing computerized except for the M-2 plotting board which
22 nothing more than a plastic disk on a—but we went through all that.

23 SM: Besides humping that base plate what was the hardest thing about working
24 with the 81?

25 WQ: Humping the base plate. It was awkward. There was no way that you can
26 carry it. It was a two-piece. You had the inner ring, which was steel, and you had the
27 outer ring. You broke it down. You only carried one part when you actually carried it.
28 When you were moving it and there was two of you then you put them together with the
29 handle on each end, but the base plate—the tube wasn't difficult. It balanced fairly well
30 on your shoulder and you can pack that. The bipod wasn't bad and of course the gunner

1 got to pack the sight and that was pretty easy. It was the extra rounds, the simulator
2 rounds, that—

3 SM: Yeah. How many would you have to carry?

4 WQ: If you're humping the base plate you usually carried four in a special pouch,
5 two in the back, two in the front.

6 SM: Man. That's still a lot of extra weight.

7 WQ: The gunner didn't carry any. You usually carry four to six and that was
8 kind of the World War II infantry in Korea mindset on how things were—later on when I
9 got in the Cav it was very different but it's just still Korean, World War II. At that point
10 World War II hadn't been over that long. We had more in common with the World War
11 II vets than the Iraqi Freedom vets do with us now.

12 SM: Right. Right. Now, the instructors that you had for advanced infantry
13 training, were they Korean War vets as well or these younger guys?

14 WQ: The older ones, the senior NCOs (non-commanding officer), were most of
15 the younger ones, the corporals. You have the infantry guys have the CIB (combat
16 infantryman badge) and then they have the expert infantryman's badge, which doesn't
17 have the oak wreath around it. The combat infantryman has the blue. Most of those guys
18 just had the expert infantryman. They didn't have the CIB. The Korean vets all had the
19 CIBs.

20 SM: When you did have training from a Korean War vet did they incorporate
21 personal lessons from the battlefield into their training very much that you remember?

22 WQ: I don't remember.

23 SM: How much did they talk about Vietnam? At all?

24 WQ: Very, very little. There wasn't—when I went back in the Regular Army
25 there was the big push was on. My first duty station was Fort Polk and of course
26 everything was Charlie. You know, Charlie's going to do this. Charlie's going to do
27 that, but then it wasn't. It was still like in the—I think the big push was already in the
28 planning stage, but it hadn't filtered down into like the training units and it wasn't—I
29 don't remember much of a discussion about it at all. Really the experience wasn't there
30 for the military other than the advisors I suppose if I were, you know, going on from

1 infantry into Special Ops or something like that then those people would probably be an
2 experience as advisors but very little, middle '65.

3 SM: What was the most challenging aspect of infantry, advanced infantry
4 training, in general?

5 WQ: Well, getting the drill down. It was just physical learning for the mortar and
6 you get qualified. It was a timed event, if you will. Qualified expert, you had to have it
7 set up, goal leveled, and on target in X amount of seconds. It was a lot of time drilling
8 that. Some of the night stuff was a little difficult. The survival, escape, and evasion was
9 probably had our attention more than anything because we understood that if they caught
10 you, that you know, they'd brutalize you a little bit and try to give you a hint of what was
11 happening. It was all probably pretty mild. They didn't catch me. I stayed out there and
12 in fact I stayed out so long that they finally run a jeep around the perimeter hollering for
13 me by name because I wasn't coming out. I'd spent most of my youth in the woods and I
14 could move in the woods and they weren't going to catch me.

15 SM: Now, when you went back, when you finished your infantry training and
16 went back up to Oregon and spent some time with your National Guard unit, at what
17 point did you transition to active duty?

18 WQ: I went back home that fall, went elk hunting and finished the elk season.
19 When I got out I moved to Dallas, Oregon. My uncle was living there and he owns a
20 four-minute sawmill in Kings Valley and went to work at that saw mill. Between that
21 and going there I had made a decision to probably go regular. I was talking it over with a
22 friend of mine. Between us we discussed that—I didn't have to do anything. I could just
23 stay in the Guard and be perfectly—the draft was of no consequence to me even though I
24 wasn't going on to college and wasn't married. He decided he wanted to enlist in the
25 Navy and become a corpsman. His father owned a dental laboratory and was a lab
26 technician. He was kind of interested in the medical aspect of it. We just discussed that
27 and I knew I was going to do something, not necessarily be a grunt, but to do something
28 to help. I still had the background from my father. It wasn't necessarily that I objected to
29 the war. I felt if I was going to leave the Guard what I wanted to do to help the guys that
30 were over there—you started seeing the television news at night and you start seeing the
31 Medevacs. Two things struck me. One is you help them after they're hit. I looked at the

1 aviation and looked at the helicopters coming in and I had never flown before. So I had
2 no experience with it and that intrigued me too. I was kind of between talking with him
3 and knowing that I was predisposed to at least one of those two fields that I would
4 probably go with him and become a medic, which meant at the time and I wasn't aware
5 of that you end up as a Marine corpsman at some point in all likelihood. So we had a big
6 party and we went up to Anthony Lakes, which is a big ski resort in that area, and had a
7 big party. I got extremely drunk. Extremely drunk to the point I just passed out and they
8 kind of poured me on the bus this morning and headed off and take my physical for the
9 Navy at about nine o'clock the next morning. I was still drunk. I was hung over. I
10 could hardly move. I didn't pass the physical. So he went off and I went back home. So
11 that ended that and I moved off to Dallas, Oregon, and went to work in the mill for a
12 while. That just wasn't working. It was just not what I wanted to do. I was bound and
13 determined to enlist so I finally did. I looked at Air Force and on the flying end of it.
14 They just really couldn't at the time guarantee me that I would fly. So I was bound and
15 determined. I gave up on the medical side and I was going to fly. I didn't know anything
16 about warrant officer candidate. I just was going to enlist. My mindset was all enlisted
17 so I was just going to enlist. Air Force didn't—in fact they had a waiting list and so did
18 the Navy. I walked in to the Army recruiter, "Yes, sir." You know? "You want to leave
19 tomorrow?" So at the time I went through and I was guaranteed MOS training in
20 aviation. That's really as far as it went, some type of Army aviation. So I left. I didn't
21 have anything that I wanted to do so I just left. Ended up in Fort Polk, Louisiana, in a
22 holding company waiting for orders and the cycles to go to Fort Rucker, Alabama. While
23 I was in headquarters, headquarters of whatever the heck it was at Fort Polk, Louisiana,
24 in the old World War II barracks, they were using the holding company as a source for all
25 the dirty jobs. You're pulling KP (kitchen police) everyday. Anything nasty that came
26 along, that's where they got the bodies. It was just a holding pen, if you will, for bodies.
27 They had a couple things that were kind of interesting. One of them they had prisoner
28 chase. We had deserters and AWOLs (absent without leave) and things going on. So if
29 you volunteered for prisoner chase you were exempt from all this other garbage and our
30 job was several fold. If they caught a guy off post and we had to go pick him up and
31 bring him back. If the prisoner in the stockade had to go see his attorney or a doctor we'd

1 pick him up and actually do the transporting physically ourselves, anything that they had
2 to do outside of the stockade. The MPs (Military Police) didn't do it. We did it. You
3 had to be qualified with a .45. I already was because as a mortar man you took the .45
4 and were qualified with it. So that's what I did. It wasn't too bad a duty, had some
5 interesting people that you had to deal with. I had one kid, kid's name was Percy J. Saul.
6 He was built like a fullback. His mentality was like a fullback with, maybe not quite
7 everything, the bubble fully level, very difficult person to handle. Percy did not want to
8 be in the military. Of course with a name like Percy he had an attitude already and he
9 had the scars on his face. He was built like a fireplug and nobody liked dealing with him.
10 I drew Percy one day and they brought him out and I had to sign out for him and brought
11 him out in handcuffs and leg irons. "You will leave these all on." "Yes, sir." So I signed
12 out for him and took him. He was going to the doctor. He was always going someplace.
13 Always had dentists, doctors, attorneys, you know, whomever. So he came out and I
14 took him all the way to the hospital and we went in to the appointment with the doctor
15 and the doctor had an absolute fit. "You will take these off of him. I can't examine this
16 man. You will." He was a lieutenant colonel, as I remember, and, you know, "Yes, sir.
17 I'm not supposed to." He said, "That's an order." So I took them all off and they
18 finished with the examination and they got done. Percy came back out and he said,
19 "You're going to put all that back on me?" I said, "I'll tell you what. I got to put the
20 handcuffs on you. I won't put the leg irons on until we get back and I don't want any
21 trouble." I said, "I got your word?" He said, "You got my word." So I took him back.
22 It wasn't a problem. Before we got back I had a jeep and I handcuffed him to the jeep.
23 But anyway we got back and I put the leg irons on. We drove through the front gate of
24 the stockade and everything was fine. The next time I got him—I was always the one
25 that got Percy J. Saul because Percy J. Saul wanted me. So whenever he went out I was
26 the one that took him out. It got to the point that he—get him out I would take the
27 handcuffs off of him and he'd go about his business and I told him, I said, "I'll do this.
28 You've been so far so good. You run and I'll kill you." I told him that and I had five
29 rounds. Anyway, so we got along just fine. So that's what I did while I was waiting to
30 go to Fort Rucker. One night we had fourteen people come in and they couldn't put them
31 in the stockade until they were processed. So I had fourteen people and I was the only

1 one there. It was an office building about the size of this and at one end they had
2 mattresses. I had fourteen of them in there, armed robbery, rape, and just AWOL and
3 desertion all in there lumped together and no lavatory. About two in the morning one of
4 them had to go and only place I could do is get them all up, march them all out single file,
5 take them in to a barracks full of sleeping GIs, let them go to the bathroom, and it was the
6 old barracks. You went up and then down into a hole in the latrine. I had them all in
7 there. I'd stand at the door, get them all in there when they 're all done. I'd bring them
8 all out. When I got out two of them jumped me and that wasn't real pleasant. But
9 anyway, after that was all over, got that situated, went through the investigation and all
10 that. Moved on to Fort Rucker and waited there for about a week and went on to my
11 aviation school.

12 SM: That was to become a crew chief.

13 WQ: Mm-hmm. Well, Rucker is set up, at that time, was set up for general
14 aviation. So everybody went off to general, kind of like basic training for aviation. Just
15 the basic principles, lift, drag, you know, all that. Then completed that course and you
16 took a test and then you went on to your specialty. At that time they were needing a lot
17 of Huey crew chiefs so that's where most of us went. Some went to, you know—and that
18 was fine by me. That's where I wanted to be. So then you go to the Huey part. Then
19 once you graduated then you got your orders.

20 SM: Okay. What was the most challenging part of that training for you?

21 WQ: Most challenging part?

22 SM: Of your first or your initial aviation training and then crew chief training?

23 WQ: Initial aviation training wasn't difficult. I thought, you know, they did the
24 basics well. They had a lot of time to figure it out. It's one, two, three, four, five. The
25 basics are generally pretty easy that way. If you understand the principles of lift, drag,
26 thrust, and gravity, you have a pretty good handle on most of it and know what an
27 asymmetrical air flow is as opposed to a laminar flow wing. You understood that and it
28 was all right. It was just all general. It was both fixed wing and rotor wing and you got a
29 little bit of this, a little bit of that. It was interesting when you could stay awake. The
30 barracks was starting to get—the classrooms are hot. We'd always march as a class.
31 Probably the most interesting part about that is the class that maintained at the highest

1 class average was exempt from duty. Early on we decided that we were going to be the
2 highest class average and we helped each other. Those that were doing well in the
3 subject would tutor those that weren't doing so well. We had study—instead of spit
4 shining things we studied. It worked very well and we went through the first course the
5 highest class and we went in to the second as a class. I can't remember everybody, but
6 for the most part we went in as a class and we maintained the highest average through
7 that class. So there was only one time that we had to pull any duty and it was the squad
8 leaders that actually said they wanted the KP and you guys have been exempt from duty,
9 all this, and we're going to, you know, we want some bodies out of you. It was the only
10 time that they ever didn't—and it followed an incident that they were punishing us for.
11 So anyway we squad leaders decided that we'd take the KP because it was kind of our
12 fault. We're going to class. Class was like maybe half a mile, some of them, depending
13 on where you were. You'd always march in formation and there was at the time they call
14 them WACs barracks. We would have some cadence call that were less than desirable
15 and they complained.

16 SM: So that's why you guys got the KP. Okay.

17 WQ: Yeah. Anyway, so that's—so the squad leaders and the class leaders did
18 the penance for it. It wasn't bad.

19 SM: What about the most challenging aspect of crew chief training?

20 WQ: Trying to—knowing that in all likelihood—I'd put in a 1049. I'd already
21 decided that I wanted to go and I submitted the paperwork.

22 SM: To go to Vietnam.

23 WQ: Yeah. Knowing that that's where you're going, this is what you're going to
24 do, just trying to cram all that stuff in. There's a lot to a Huey. In such a short time to be
25 able to do your job and do it competently. You had some ideas that, you know, it
26 wouldn't be the most pleasant of circumstances sometimes. Just trying to get a handle on
27 it and feel that in your own mind that you'd be competent when you got there, that was
28 probably the hardest part. The basics, I'd done enough mechanicing as a kid that I
29 understood what a power train did and how it did. We had shop classes. In some
30 respects I learned more in high school with respect to how to weld, how to solder, and do
31 all that. Not that we were going to do that, it's just I had a better handle on it than a lot of

1 guys that had never worked on a car. You know, didn't understand that you had to mix
2 the fuel with the gas and pump it into a cylinder even though it was a turbine. Still, you
3 had to mix the fuel with the air, the oxygen, then pump it in somewhere. So the
4 hydraulics wasn't the big mystery. I'd worked on tractor hydraulics when I was a kid
5 working on farms and ranches. I understood that you couldn't compress the liquid and
6 that's what made it all work. So it wasn't—you know, that part wasn't daunting. It was
7 just trying to get it all in your mind and hold it there as they preached to you. You're not
8 supposed to know how to do anything. You know how to read the manual. Well, that's
9 all very nice, but you still like to know what you're doing, next step. If you need to
10 reference the manual then you reference it. That was probably the hardest part, getting
11 the blockheads through.

12 SM: All right. We're at a fairly logical stopping point, getting close to the two
13 o'clock hour. So why don't we take a quick break and we can pick up on another day.

14 WQ: Okay.

15 SM: Thank you very much. This will end the first interview with Mr. Quigley.

Interview with William Quigley
Session [2] of [3]
Date: May 16, 2003

1 SM: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr. Quigley on the
2 sixteenth of May 2003 at approximately 2:35 Lubbock time. I am in Lubbock, Texas,
3 and Mr. Quigley is in Baker City, Oregon. Sir, thanks for consenting to continue the
4 interview today. Why don't we go ahead and pick up with a little more discussion about
5 the details of your training when you went through flight crew training and crew chief,
6 yeah, flight and crew chief training at Fort Rucker, Alabama. If you would, just what you
7 remember, discuss what you remember about that training.

8 WQ: That training was actually in two separate parts. In the old part of the post
9 we had general aviation training. So both the fixed wing and the rotor wing people went
10 through the same training and that was very basic, the basic principles of lift, drag, thrust,
11 and gravity. So it was very broad based. We got a little bit of rotor wing, a little bit of
12 fixed wing. That part if I remember correctly lasted about six weeks. From there you
13 took kind of an aptitude test and they selected you for a specific aircraft. Some guys
14 went off to the fixed wing school. Some went off to the CH-47. Most of us went off to
15 the UH-1, Iroquois, Huey, part of the program. Then you specialized specifically in the
16 UH-1 Iroquois aircraft. A lot of classroom stuff. We had workshops and we went
17 through the two primary inspections. The intermediate, which is the twenty-five hour
18 inspection, and the PE (periodic evaluation), which was a hundred hour inspections and
19 learned how to pull a short shaft, do the checks, do the fluid changes, you know, the
20 basics. Learn how to safety wire, do all the inspections, and get it ready for the
21 inspection to really fly it for a flight. We did our first flight in a Huey during that specific
22 ground school. That was the first time—I guess my second time in a helicopter. My
23 father took me up in a helicopter when I was a little tiny guy and we were still living in
24 Portland, a county fair. We got a five minute ride. Went up, flew around the big circle,
25 and we came back down, but I was impressed with that. So I was kind of pre-disposed
26 because of that to flying in a helicopter. So we had just a real quick basic school for the
27 UH-1. We had a quick introduction to aerial gunnery. In fact we didn't even fly. We
28 just kind of shot off a tower with an M-60. So we had the very minimal weapons training

1 and that was pretty much it. We got our orders while we were still in school. We knew
2 where we were going when we went home on leave. Most of the class that I was in went
3 to the 1st Cav. Some of the guys went to the same unit that I did, but they were
4 interdispersed throughout the Cav. Some were just strictly maintenance and some
5 actually do some—were in the flight crews. So the training was very, very basic. You
6 had the rudiments of helicopter maintenance, not a whole lot more than that.

7 SM: What was the most challenging aspect of that training for you?

8 WQ: I didn't find it particularly difficult. A lot of the things that—the technical
9 data that was in the manuals, they didn't want us to memorize. Essentially they would
10 say always open your manual, go through the manual. Don't try to memorize torques.
11 Don't try to memorize how to do these things. Go to your manual and go through it step
12 by step. So that wasn't that difficult. Some of the—I just didn't find it terribly difficult.
13 One of the things that we did in our class, they had a class competition. Those who
14 scored highest, the class that scored highest in the weekly testing was an exempt class.
15 We were ED (exempt from duty). We didn't have to pull CQ (charge of quarters). We
16 didn't have to pull KP. You just were exempt from duty. We kind of pooled our
17 resources and the people that were having some problems in areas were helped by the
18 others that weren't having. So we maintained the highest grade average for the class
19 pretty much throughout both courses. So we didn't have to pull KP. We didn't have
20 barracks inspections. So, you know, if you were having problems you were helped by
21 our classmates. Instead of doing the GI party thing we were studying and we stayed at
22 the highest class all the way through that course, but it was—I have a background in
23 mechanics anyway growing up in rural Eastern Oregon. So I had an aptitude for that but
24 it wasn't all totally foreign to me. I understood some of the principles involved and I just
25 didn't have that difficult a time.

26 SM: Now, when you received your orders it was directly to Vietnam?

27 WQ: Directly to Vietnam. We were assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division. So
28 there wasn't any guess work about that.

29 SM: What did you hear about the Cav before you got there? Anything at
30 Rucker?

1 WQ: I enlisted in the Army out of the National Guard. I had been in the National
2 Guard for two years. So I wasn't under any real pressure to do anything other than to
3 attend my Guard meetings. I was single. I wasn't going to college at that time, but the
4 draft wasn't an issue with me. I personally felt that there was something more to be
5 doing than what the Guard offered and I wanted to be a part of it. That was about the
6 time that they were picking up heavily on the television. The networks were running the
7 nightly news. A lot of the emphasis was on aviation, you know, the helicopter. I was
8 aware of the primary unit that was using helicopters. At that time it was 1st Cav. When I
9 got to Fort Rucker we had some classes in ground control of aircraft and how to bring
10 them in to hover and how to set them down from the ground control. I remember
11 distinctly the pilot that was flying one of the demonstration aircraft sitting on the right
12 seat side of the aircraft, this big yellow Cav patch showed through the window and that
13 impressed me. I said that's where I'm going, but then that's where I ended up so you got
14 to be careful what you wish for. Sometimes you get it. So I had no doubts that that's
15 where we were going to begin with. I was pleased that that was the unit that I was going
16 to.

17 SM: How much time did you have between your graduation from crew chief
18 training until you went and got on board the aircraft to fly over to Vietnam?

19 WQ: We had thirty days leave. I went and came back here to Eastern Oregon.
20 Spent our thirty days and went, flew down to San Francisco. They had there in Oakland
21 they had the depot replacement, the depot in Oakland and stayed there for a couple three
22 days and then processed and then boarded the commercial airliner and headed to Hawaii.
23 I think probably the one thing that—you were mixed up and so a lot of the people that I
24 went to school didn't necessarily end up through the same flight. So you went over there
25 by yourself. Of course you're going to be apprehensive about going over there, but
26 you're going alone. So you didn't have anyone really to talk to other than strangers
27 around you. You flew from San Francisco or Oakland to Hawaii, refueled there.
28 Actually got out for about four hours. A couple of us ran around, grabbed a taxi, and ran
29 around Honolulu for a little bit and came back and headed off and landed in Cam Ranh
30 Bay that night.

1 SM: Well, what were your first—as far as the flight over what was the
2 atmosphere like on the airplane itself with all these other guys going on?

3 WQ: It was pretty quiet. I don't remember talking a lot with anyone else. You
4 were pretty introspective. You were, of course, apprehensive and you knew you were
5 going to war. You knew that there was fighting going on over there. You were going to
6 be a part of it shortly. It really didn't sink in to you for quite a bit further into your
7 experience there that this was actually happening. There's always a, I guess, part of
8 human nature is just that you don't believe that. It takes time to really sink in. The flight
9 over there is just really uneventful. When we landed at Cam Ranh Bay, the first initial
10 experience was that you knew you were going to a hot, humid country. We left here
11 stateside in August so it was fairly warm here. But boy when they opened the hatch and
12 you went out it really hit you in the face. Boy, this is hot and this is humid. That really
13 struck you. They immediately, you know, you disembark the aircraft and you got on to
14 buses. The first observation that you had is the buses that all the windows were caged.
15 The bus driver immediately would tell you that's not to keep you in. That's from keeping
16 grenades from coming, you know—keep grenades out. Oh boy, here it goes. But it
17 really was all uneventful. You were processed in and they give you a brief orientation. It
18 was fairly late when you got in. You could hear some firing on the perimeter. The
19 comment was you got some mud Marines out there just shooting up things. So you'd
20 hear just sporadic firing on the perimeter. That was pretty much it for Cam Ranh Bay,
21 for just being there for a couple of days being processed.

22 SM: When you arrived in-country and you got there, what were your first
23 impressions when they opened the door of the aircraft and you walk out?

24 WQ: Well, just the heat and the humidity of the Cam Ranh Base airbase. I mean
25 it just hits you in the face. The humidity just kind of clung to your nostrils and your first
26 breath of that real, moist humid air. You're not going to make it. It's different coming
27 from a relatively cold, dry cabin to that hot humid atmosphere. It catches you. It's really
28 not that bad, but your first sensation is, "Boy, I can't breathe this stuff." For the most
29 part I didn't anticipate that we'd be landing in a jungle airstrip. I had stretched the
30 imagination, but it was more built up than I anticipated. Cam Ranh Bay was a fully
31 functioning airport and airbase with all the lights on and a lot of activity. I was impressed

1 by the fact that it was so bright. I didn't think it would be quite that bright with the lights
2 on at night. Other than that it was all rather uneventful. After we finished the in-country
3 reassigning there at Cam Ranh Bay then we were flown out of Cam Ranh Bay to Camp
4 Radcliff, which was headquarters for the 1st Cav at An Khe. We went in to the
5 processing center there. The Central Highlands at that time of year was considerably
6 cooler, still quite hot, but it's considerably cooler down in the south and Cam Ranh Bay.
7 There we did our in-country orientation. We had some classes. The infantry actually
8 spent a night outside the perimeter. If you weren't infantry then you did some repelling
9 and did some in-country orientations. We got the VD (venereal disease) films and that
10 sort of thing and spent a couple days doing that. Then you were assigned to your
11 company. Bravo Company of 229th had their company area there at Camp Radcliff right
12 off the edge of the golf course. At the time it was the biggest heliport in the world. We
13 spent a day or two there. We got our equipment issued to us, our field gear, the clothing
14 that we had, our weapons were issued. We just waited to move out to the company.
15 Then they had a flight going to the company, which was in Bong Son, on the Bong Son
16 Plain right off the coast. Our first in-country helicopter flight was from An Khe to Bong
17 Son where we actually landed in the company area. It was interesting flight. You really
18 didn't know what was going on. I sat on the left side on the crew chief's side with an M-
19 60—I barely knew how to load the thing—and flew there. I didn't have a helmet so I
20 wasn't connected any way. You had a lot of time to look down and think what you were
21 getting in to and look at the green down there, the country flying out of the Central
22 Highlands down onto the coastal plains. Flew in at about, oh, twenty-five hundred feet,
23 something like that. It was, it was a nice flight. It was smooth. Nothing happened. But
24 you had a lot of time to think about, damn, I'm really here. That's it down there. It still
25 hadn't fully sunk in that you were in combat because you hadn't really experienced any
26 yet. The flight from An Khe to Bong Son is about twenty-five, thirty minutes as I
27 remember, not very long. Sat down in the company and got processed some more. Was
28 assigned to your unit. I was assigned to the 1st Section, 1st Flight Platoon. Our color was
29 red. We had five aircrafts and you came in as essentially a gunner. You flew on the right
30 side. You were issued your flight gear, your flight helmet, your gloves, your chest
31 protector, that sort of thing and just waited to be assigned a mission, got to pull KP. That

1 was actually the only time that I ever pulled KP over there was my brief stint as a gunner.
2 The next morning in-country we flew on a mission and we did a relocation. It wasn't
3 really a combat assault. We were just moving some troops. We moved them somewhere
4 on the Bong Son Plain and put them into—and actually at the time it was LZ (landing
5 zone) X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley. It was where *We Were Soldiers Once*, where that
6 actually took place. I can remember the pilots talking about how what a nasty spot this
7 was when the Cav first went over. They kind of did a real brief history of that. So I
8 knew I was in some place important, but I really didn't understand what was happening.
9 I flew on maybe four, five, six missions as a door gunner, all rather uneventful. Then I
10 was assigned an aircraft when a crew chief left, an old D model. The number was 866.
11 That was my first ship. We were in the process of getting the new H models, which had
12 more powerful engines. They were a brand new aircraft. So I had one of the last of the
13 old D models. It'd been around for a little over twenty-three hundred hours. It had
14 considerable battle damage. There was a lot of patches on it here and there and
15 everywhere. You knew this aircraft had done its job and was still going.

16 SM: What about in-country briefings when you first arrived? Anything about
17 your rules of engagement, your behaviors as an American soldier in a foreign land, that
18 kind of stuff?

19 WQ: Well, essentially we—we were in an area in the Bong Son Plain. There was
20 definitely some hot spots in the An Lo Valley and the 506 and the Crow's Foot area and
21 some places down on the plain too. But for the most part it was below five hundred feet.
22 You'd deploy your weapon here you're ready to go. If you received fire you returned it.
23 In places like the An Lo it was a free fire zone. There were no indigenous people,
24 civilians living there at all. They had all been moved out. So basically if anything
25 moved you shot it. So it was totally free fire. If you were supporting your troops,
26 obviously you had to be careful of where your people were, but other than that it was
27 totally free fire. They didn't keep troops overnight there a whole lot. They did some.
28 There had been major unit actions in there. There'd been—I can remember them talking
29 about I had one of the battalions moving on line through the An Lo River and they were
30 ambushed by the NVA (North Vietnamese Army). The An Lo River ran kind of a
31 pinkish for about two days cause of all the bodies that were in the river. So it was a place

1 not to be taken lightly. That's for sure. We did receive some fire out of there, but for the
2 most part most of those areas, even though there was some action there, had been I guess
3 thoroughly gone through by the Cav. The NVA and the VC (Viet Cong) weren't
4 operating any large units in that area that I can remember. It was usually real small units.
5 A couple times there were some company sized units engaged, but for the most part they
6 were pretty much eliminated out of that area or if they were in the area they were not
7 wanting to be engaged. They didn't want to give away their positions so they left us
8 alone. So I guess, from my perspective coming in to the country with no experience and
9 very minimal training, it was an OJT (on-the-job training) period with just enough hostile
10 activity to keep you focused, but I had some time to learn. The rest of us that had come
11 in to country had some time to learn without—and make some mistakes that otherwise
12 would have been fatal to us and anyone around us. So it was for about two months we
13 had a good learning period. It made a big difference later on having at least that much
14 behind us without more serious consequences than we had. So, everything was, while we
15 were in combat, was a lot lower key than they were starting in October or November. So
16 English, LZ English, was a pretty, relatively speaking, easy experience.

17 SM: When exactly did you arrive in Vietnam again sir?

18 WQ: August 5, of '67. So by the time I got into company it was mid-August in
19 1967.

20 SM: What were your first impressions of the unit upon your arrival there?

21 WQ: I didn't—I knew nothing of the history of the unit and what they had been
22 under. Some comments made by some of the pilots when we were flying in some various
23 locations, they seemed to understand what they were doing. Our job was primarily direct
24 combat support. As an assault company we flew slicks, supported the infantry. We had
25 two primary missions for them. It was the direct combat assault or the combat assault
26 and the support missions work we called log, logistics supporting the units in the field.
27 We had some other secondary missions. We would fly hunter-killer at night looking for,
28 well, looking for trouble. You usually fly a Huey down low and nosing around we'd
29 have a gunship up and high behind us and a flare ship, five thousand feet, and just trying
30 to draw fire. We'd fly those kind of night missions. They were, for the most part, there
31 just wasn't a lot of hostile activity going on around there. They would rather leave you

1 alone. They didn't want to draw the fire if they were around. The combat assaults, even
2 in places like the An Lo and the 506 and the Crow's Foot, sometimes we'd draw some
3 sporadic fire. It was usually quickly suppressed. The system that we had for a combat
4 assault worked exceptionally well. The artillery prep was well coordinated. So when
5 you went in to an LZ if it was anticipated that there would be some enemy activity there
6 we'd have even the Air Force would go in and prep it, just put some Alpha Sierras, air
7 strikes, on it. We'd have the artillery prep, which would be sometimes as many as two or
8 three, maybe even four, batteries. They would put the barrage in there, sometimes as
9 much as five minutes. On final, on long final, we'd get the Willie Pete in the LZ that told
10 us that every battery that fired, the last gun in that battery would put in a Willie Pete, the
11 white smoke. So you'd know if you had a four battery prep that four smokes meant
12 they're all clear. The ARAs (aerial rocket artillery) would go in and on our long final and
13 suppress the possible positions, the wood lines. If there was any bunker or complexes in
14 the area, what their 1.75 rockets, lay that in. Their door gunners would work over the
15 tree lines. On short final our gun company, the Smiling Tigers, the Tomcats, would lay
16 in the prep right along side us. Then we would be prepping it. So, when we put the
17 infantry in generally in those areas there was really no activity in the LZ or adjacent to it.
18 They'd pull out and leave. Then we would pull out and the infantry would do their job.
19 The—go ahead.

20 SM: No. Go ahead please.

21 WQ: So my first impression of the company to answer your question was all very
22 well coordinated from my perspective. They knew what they were doing and it was a job
23 and we did it. We did it very craftsman like. The artillery knew what they were doing.
24 The guns in the ARA knew what they were doing. Air Force knew what they were doing
25 and it all worked very well. It always impressed me how smooth that stuff went initially.
26 These guys got it all down. I guess I was lulled in this false sense of confidence that
27 there was nothing that was really going to touch us. Initially that was pretty much true.

28 SM: Well, what was the overall infantry strength of the unit?

29 WQ: The infantry?

30 SM: Yes, sir.

1 WQ: Each—the aviation unit obviously didn't have any infantry. We were
2 supporting a brigade of infantry. Most of the time I remember it was the 1st of the 12th
3 Infantry Brigade and the different battalions and companies in that brigade. So we would
4 be running about, oh, probably a thousand something if I remember, serves about a
5 thousand twelve hundred troops in a brigade. On a CA (combat assault), a Charlie Alpha,
6 when we put them in a Huey, an H model could carry seven fully loaded combat ready
7 infantrymen, grunts we call them. We usually went into a flight of six. Yellow One
8 would be the leader. It would Yellow One, Two, Three, Four. Then the last two birds
9 would be White One and Two. Those were generally comprised of aircraft from Bravo
10 and they would've called it the Ready Reaction Force. So those would be the six birds
11 laid on that date to support the direct support of the infantry. We would have usually
12 three or four log birds laid on to support the companies that were in the field, take out
13 their C and Ds or donuts in the morning, coffee and donuts. We'd usually have three to
14 four companies that we would be supporting on a log bird. We'd go out—first thing,
15 we'd usually start about 3:00 to 3:30 in the morning. They'd wake up the crew chiefs.
16 We'd get the ships ready, get the guns ready, do the first pre-flight inspection to get it
17 ready for the pilot's pre-flight and usually be cranking by 4:30 and lift off and go to the
18 helipad of the infantry unit we were supporting. There the pilots would get the missions.
19 They would get the map coordinates, and call signs of the units that we would be
20 supporting. We'd load up supplies for the first company they would go out to. Generally
21 we would go out to the first company, that would be a movement company that would be
22 moving that day, and we would take them out just coffee and donuts and drop that off.
23 We would pick up their extra ammo from the night, usually their mortar tubes. They
24 didn't pack those. We'd bring them back. All the extra ammunition, anybody going in
25 on sick call, guys that were going on R&R (rest and recuperation) or leaving, we'd pick
26 them up and take them back. Then we would drop off that and we would pick up the
27 units. Let's say that there was a unit that wasn't moving at all, we would pick up usually
28 breakfast and mermite cans. They'd have bacon and eggs and the whole breakfast
29 scenario in these mermite cans. We'd take out extra ammunition, supplies, mail,
30 whatever it is that they needed and drop that off to them and pick up their sick, lame, and
31 lazy, and whatever they wanted to go back take that back. We'd go out to the moving

1 company and pick up all their extra stuff and bring it back. We'd fly as much as twelve
2 to fourteen hours a day just doing that. So we were assigned to that battalion and if they
3 needed something special and if we had the time then we would make different types of
4 runs for them. Sometimes we would just act as a scout for them if the battalion
5 commander didn't have a Charlie Charlie, a command and control that bird that day, he
6 would grab the log bird, go out and make a quick flight, and do an aerial recon of
7 something. So we were just at the disposal of the battalion that day, very long days. If
8 the company was engaged a lot of times we would be the Medevac too. We would pick
9 up the wounded. We would pick up their KIAs (killed in action) if they were engaged.
10 So we did a lot of different things when we were on log, very long days and busy. We
11 would have—so usually half the aircrafts were deployed supporting the infantry. We'd
12 have, of course, the ships that were down for maintenance of one thing or another and
13 we'd have a couple that were just held back in reserve in case they were needed. We had
14 twenty aircraft. Usually half of them were flying, a couple were held in reserve, and
15 thirty percent were in some kind of maintenance.

16 SM: What was the logistics system like for your unit and was there ever shortage
17 of equipment to keep, especially the aircraft running, but in any way whatsoever?

18 WQ: Well, there were spot problems now and again. Some of it really was rather
19 frivolous. We had trouble getting flight gloves. Parts weren't a real difficulty at that
20 time. I don't remember having any problems. We'd generally get what we wanted.
21 We'd always have one aircraft that was available for the company to do parts runs and do
22 whatever was needed. So I don't remember any real serious problems of any kind. I
23 mean sometimes you just didn't have exactly what you wanted, but when we were in III
24 Corps, around An Khe and Bong Son, we didn't have any real problem. Let's see. In
25 like November we moved from Bong Son back to An Khe and were headquartered out of
26 An Khe. We went to support the 1st of the 12th out of the Dak To and Kontum. We
27 didn't have a whole lot there. That was on kind of a shoestring. We didn't even have a
28 perimeter. We just parked the ships out on the edge of the jungle and we guarded them
29 ourselves. That was kind of an interesting period. Didn't have a whole lot there, but we
30 got by. I don't remember not having enough ammunition or enough chow or anything
31 like that. We always had what we needed. So at that time there wasn't a real problem

1 that I can remember. Some of the creature comforts weren't always available, but that
2 wasn't that big of a deal.

3 SM: Okay. What was the state of the base itself, where you lived? If you would
4 describe your living quarters, your typical chow that you would eat, stuff like that.

5 WQ: The flight line, which was the center as far from the flight platoons, was
6 generally all pentaprime, which was a petroleum product that sealed them. It was thin
7 asphalt if you will. That was the center of our focus. We had to revamp much for the
8 aircraft and they were interdispersed about fifty to a hundred feet apart. The company
9 area was kind of on a side hill above the flight line. Each flight platoon had an officer's
10 tent and an enlisted tent. So the crew chiefs and gunners that flew with the first section
11 1st Flight Platoon had their own tent and the second section 1st Flight Platoon had their
12 tent. We had—it was a GP (general purpose) medium. We had I think as I remember
13 about ten people in a tent, five on a side. We had plenty of room. You had an issue cot,
14 an issue sleeping bag, an issue poncho liner, an issue mosquito net, and that was about it.
15 Anything else that you wanted we made ourselves. We put—ammo boxes were plentiful.
16 The artillery people generated a lot of empty ammo boxes. So you'd take those apart and
17 they were just like one by threes and we'd use those. We'd make flooring in our tent
18 were made out of ammo boxes and we'd make our chairs out of ammo boxes. You'd
19 make shelves for your personal stuff. You made those out of ammo boxes. I made a
20 desk once out of an ammo box with a folding lid so I could just close it up and seal it or
21 fold it out and use it like a writing desk. So it was pretty—if you had any kind of
22 carpentry skills at all. We had tools that we could get out of supply and nails and lots of
23 ammo boxes. So we'd make whatever you wanted. So your imagination is what limited
24 you. As far as we would go in together and buy a refrigerator out of the PX so we kept
25 our beer and pop cold. Always had a generator running twenty-four hours a day so that
26 we always had power. So relative to the infantry we had pretty plush surroundings. It
27 was never anything fancy. The only time we lived in an actual building was in An Khe
28 when we were in An Khe for about a little over a month. I was there for maybe two or
29 three weeks when I wasn't someplace else like Dak To or Kontum. That was metal roof,
30 wooden walls, concrete floor. The rest of the time was all in camps. Drainage was a
31 problem during the wet season. You had lots of ditches draining water here, there, and

1 everywhere. But it was—I look at the pictures of the guys who were in the Gulf this go
2 around and it's very similar. We had sandbags around the tents for shrapnel protection. I
3 mean that's the way armies have been living in the field for the last couple three hundred
4 years. Not a whole lot has changed when you're in the field, but we did have a couple
5 light bulbs and refrigerators. So we did have some of the creature comforts. We really
6 didn't lack for anything. I never felt like I was—I didn't feel uncomfortable. Growing
7 up in eastern Oregon I spent a lot of time camping and living in the woods anyway so it
8 was just one big camping trip to me is what it was. I just didn't mind it at all. In fact, in
9 a lot of ways for me it was better than living stateside because you didn't have spit shine
10 stuff. You didn't have to do a lot of the busy work that you do in the military when
11 you're not in a combat area. So I thought it was just fine. I didn't have a problem with it.
12 We would go to Bong Son. We had an airbase out on the plain. It was called Phu Cat.
13 Among other things it was an emergency runway for B-52s and they had a spider
14 squadron there. It always amazed me that you had the Air Force was living out there in
15 the middle of nowhere in Phu Cat with air conditioned barracks and all the creature
16 comforts. These guys don't know how to take it. They wouldn't be able to even handle
17 where we were living and we were living pretty good compared to our infantry folks. I
18 didn't have a problem with it. One big camping trip. Are you there? Seem to have lost
19 you.

20 SM: Let's change gears real quick.

21 WQ: Oh, you are there. Okay.

22 SM: Oh, yes, sir. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I was just gathering some notes real
23 quick. When you got in-country and you got to your unit did your unit provide you with
24 any kind of specialized training for the kind of operations you would be undertaking?

25 WQ: No. Not really. What little bit of training I got in company was when I was
26 assigned to a ship as a gunner. I would work with the crew chief. That only lasted ten
27 days, maybe two weeks at the most, and then I had my own ship. I was pretty much on
28 my own. I had the basics down. I had a manual. We had other crew chiefs. If you had
29 questions you'd ask them, but it was all on the job training. You learned as you went.
30 You paid attention and tried not to make mistakes. We had the luxury after we were
31 issued the H models that we had new ships. So they didn't have any, you know, just a

1 few hours on them. So they weren't fatigued. They didn't have a lot of battle damage.
2 You didn't have problems from the outset. Maintenance was there and if it was a little
3 more difficult the crew chiefs did the first second echelon maintenance. Our maintenance
4 platoon did the third and fourth and then of course the fifth echelon maintenance was
5 done by 15th TC (Transportation Corps), which was at An Khe. So the support was there,
6 but I don't remember just having a good strong H model once I got one of those and
7 brand new. We didn't have a lot of problems to begin with so you got to ease into it as
8 things developed. You had some experience behind you and you knew how to deal with
9 them. Of course if you ever had a doubt then you would call in the techs and let them
10 know what the problem was and let them deal with it. By and large we had a very gentle
11 break in period for the first couple three months, but as far as real training it just wasn't
12 there in terms of as you would look, you know, like a classroom setting. There was none.
13 It was all on the job. So you had to pay attention.

14 SM: When you were out flying missions what kind of pre-flight briefings, pre-
15 mission briefings, did you receive as a crew chief? Anything?

16 WQ: Well, usually we knew if we were going to be on the Ready Reaction Force,
17 the RF. You knew that was your mission. You knew what your mission was. The
18 specific missions you really didn't know not at the crewmember level. So you would set
19 up accordingly. If you were going to be on the RF you'd pack more ammunition, but
20 once you lifted off from the company it didn't really make any difference what your
21 mission was. You were ready. When the pilots, usually the peter pilot, the guy flying in
22 the right seat, the new guy in-country would come down to the pre-flight. Of course
23 you'd be visiting with him and finding out what was being laid on. Then when the
24 aircraft commander or the AC got there then you'd get some more specifics. He was the
25 more experienced of the two pilots. He would brief you then on what you were going to
26 be doing, what to expect. So that was really the extent of your briefing. The AC had got
27 his briefings in the air ops and so he knew what he was going to do, where we're going.
28 If you're in the RF the flight leader had the most specific instructions and you just
29 followed him. If you were going on a log for that day then you got a lot of your
30 instructions. You knew who you were assigned to, where their pad was, and you'd go
31 over there and you would get what they wanted and where they wanted it. Essentially

1 you did what they wanted you to do. So the briefings and stuff weren't real formal, not
2 for the crew. I don't think they were really—you conjure up the 8th Air Force during
3 World War II going in to the briefing hall and real formalized stuff. We didn't have any
4 of that. There wasn't need of it. Most of the pilots knew the area. The aircraft
5 commanders had been to a lot of these LZs time and time again. You just tell them the
6 name of the LZ and they knew everything that really you needed to know about it, the
7 best approaches and the best altitude to come in. There wasn't really the need for that.
8 When you're on the Ready Reaction Force you didn't have any trouble finding the LZ
9 because that was the place that was being blown to hell. So that was pretty easy too and
10 you just set up on the short final. The aircraft commander already knew what the winds
11 were. You could just see them from the artillery. You had an idea of what they were
12 anticipating as far as enemy activity. You'd get the word whether it'd be suppress the
13 fires from the slicks from us or not. Sometimes it was, sometimes it wasn't. It just
14 depended on what they anticipated. The proximity of other friendlies. You'd try to make
15 it. You just don't want a lot of ordinance flying around, depending on where the
16 friendlies were. So the briefings weren't real formal for us, but we knew where we were
17 going and who we were supporting. We had, setting in the back there, we had full
18 communications. We could bring up the UHF (ultra high frequency), the VHF (very high
19 frequency), the FMs (frequency modulation), the intercoms. So as far as the chatter
20 going back and forth between the flight, between the different aircraft, between our
21 company area, between the ground, we knew what was going on. We weren't just sitting
22 back there in total silence. We knew what was going on and who was doing what and
23 what was expected.

24 SM: Throughout your first five months in-country, say, from August to
25 December '67, typically what kind of enemy units were you encountering? Were they
26 mostly Viet Cong, NVA, a combination?

27 WQ: Up where we were it was mostly NVA. I think the whole infrastructure of
28 the VC had pretty much been dealt with. There was obviously VC activity. It was pretty
29 sporadic. You probably had some main line VC units that were attached to the NVA that
30 we were involved with. I can remember engaging some people that the fifty VC
31 stereotype in the black pajamas. Most of the NVA were in uniform. So when you're

1 engaging NVA you knew it when you had sight recognition. So primarily NVA. I didn't
2 really have a lot of engagements with VC that I can remember. Once in a while it'd be
3 pretty small. If they were main line VC units I wasn't aware of it. It didn't really make
4 much of a difference. A guy shooting at you is a guy shooting at you. It didn't make
5 much difference what his uniform was.

6 SM: Absolutely. Well, what was the typical strength of the units you went up
7 against during that first five months?

8 WQ: Probably company and down. Probably the biggest engagements we
9 encountered was up at Dak To. There was some battalion movements over there, but
10 from my perspective if you were going to be dealing with heavier, larger units you're
11 going to be getting more anti-aircraft type ordinance put on us, quad fifties, 37
12 millimeter, 40 millimeter anti-aircraft. We didn't get a whole lot of that in those first
13 couple three months. We got a little bit of it up at Dak To. Some anti-aircraft stuff were
14 deployed on us. We just really didn't see a whole lot of that until we moved up north in
15 to I Corps. Some fifties, there's always fifty-ones scattered around. Once in a while you
16 knew you were being targeted by a fifty-one, but most of the part it was small units,
17 company sized, in that area. The area had been dealt with pretty well by the 1st Cav and
18 there just wasn't a whole lot of activity. We had the 173rd Airborne Brigade was moving
19 in to take over that area. We worked some with them on the III Corps and on the Central
20 Plains. We worked a lot with—not a lot but some—with the ARVNs (Army of the
21 Republic of Vietnam). They were active throughout that area. The National Police, we
22 worked some with those, those people. The Americal Division was active in that area at
23 some point. I remember doing some combat assaults for the Americal Division. So
24 when our infantry units weren't needing the support then we were loaned out to whoever
25 needed it. We worked with a lot of different units over there. I can remember a few of
26 the call signs, like the National Police were the Artful Stars. I wonder who came up with
27 that, but I didn't particularly like working with them. I always thought that they were just
28 a little too Nazi, Nazi like, for me to be working with. Not that I had the choice in the
29 matter, but I didn't care for those people. The ARVNs was always a problem. We knew
30 that the ARVNs had a lot of infiltrators in them. Sometimes you'd put them in a combat
31 assault and they're small people. So we'd carry as many as eleven ARVN soldiers in an

1 H model. Sometimes you'd go in to the LZ and one of them would leave a grenade in the
2 ship. You always had to be careful of that. The minute they start pouring out you start
3 looking for the frags lying around. You just pitched the frag right out in the middle of
4 them. I never felt good working with them because a lot of them, you know, most of
5 them were conscripts. They weren't, you know, the enemy, but far too many of them
6 were infiltrators. They like nothing better to put maximum damage on you and it's like
7 jumping out and leaving a frag in the ship. The old Hueys didn't handle that kind of
8 explosion very well. So I preferred working with our own people. They understood what
9 was happening. The Cav grunt knew what was happening. I was always interested. The
10 173rd Airborne Brigade, when we were working with them, they had some idea that the
11 ship had to be setting on the ground before they could get out. I'm sure that's what their
12 orders were and we would come in to the LZ so we wouldn't have to set down on
13 possible punji stakes or trip booby traps. We would hover three feet off the ground and
14 our Cav guys were out of the aircraft. They didn't hang around. They were gone. 173rd,
15 they just wouldn't get out. We'd come to a hover two, three feet off the ground and I can
16 remember one time I particularly impressed the pilots. I was throwing these guys out,
17 just grabbing them and throwing them out, yelling, "Jump. You're airborne." I'm sure
18 they didn't see the humor in it, but I thought it was funny. It was a multitude of different
19 things and none of it was really heavy action. There was a couple times it would get kind
20 of hot for a little bit. You'd get some company, an NVA company, cornered in a ville'
21 down on the coastal plains. It'd get pretty hairy for a little while calling the air strikes
22 and the artillery. You'd have them concentrated and put your fire in on them and just go
23 in and clean it up. Not that there wasn't, you know, a lot of rest particularly for the grunt,
24 but they just didn't have the, the NVA didn't have their way in III Corps where we were.
25 They just did not. A few incidents. We didn't get hit a lot in our LZs. The built up ones
26 I don't—real sporadic, maybe two or three rounds in Bong Son. When we were at An
27 Khe we got hit a few times. We had a mission called hunter-killer that was out in an area
28 called Can Ac. It was a mountainous region I think to the north of An Khe where we'd
29 get, you know, mortars and rockets from. All we did we just looked for trouble. We
30 would track, hover into the trees, we'd be doing a lot of the jobs that the scouts were
31 doing in heavier built up areas. We'd do sniffer missions. Just had a probe out on the

1 front that would gather the air and smell them. We did some psy war ops stuff in these
2 free fire zones and if it moved you shot it. That's where most of the problem was. I can
3 remember initially we were getting some mortar fire out of An Khe. General Tolson said
4 get any more mortar fire out of An Khe into Radcliff and we're going to level the town.
5 That ended that and they knew we would do it. We didn't have a lot of infiltrator
6 problems in our LZs because we didn't allow any civilians in after night. Very few
7 worked inside our perimeters during the day. We just didn't have them around. We had
8 it controlled really. There was a very different mentality in '67 and '68. We actually felt
9 like we were actually doing something. We were fighting. We were gaining ground, if
10 you will. We were doing our job and doing it well and getting it done. I know that—if
11 we'd have stayed at the level that we were and continued doing what we were doing the
12 war would have been over in probably about '69. There wouldn't have been enough
13 NVA left to deal with it, but from our perspective I know the guys that went back for
14 second tours in '70, '71, it was a whole different attitude then. It hurt the people that
15 were over there. It wasn't the same war is what I've heard. At the reunion the guys say it
16 wasn't the same war. We were over there in '68. It was a whole different war than even
17 the latter part of '69. But we were doing our job and we were doing it well.

18 SM: Well, would your base camps be mortared or rocketed at all?

19 WQ: Yeah. We did. A couple times in Bong Son and one or two times at An
20 Khe. We did get hit a little bit, but we dealt with it. It just wasn't a big event. I'm trying
21 to remember for sure if we ever got hit at Bong Son. If we did it was nothing close to us.
22 We had right next door to an artillery unit so they're always banging away. There's no
23 doubt in your mind once you've been on the receiving end with the difference between
24 outgoing and incoming, but we just didn't. We didn't get it. Not then. That would
25 change when we got up north, but in the area that we had been for a couple years we just
26 didn't have that kind of problem.

27 SM: Okay. You mentioned earlier that every once in a while if when ARVN
28 were carried on your aircraft they would leave behind frags. Would the pins be pulled?

29 WQ: Oh, yeah.

30 SM: I mean, these are pulled active grenades?

1 WQ: Yeah. Yeah. They would just all pile out and one of them would pull a pin
2 and leave a frag laying there. So I mean you had to be quick. The only thing you could
3 do is you just yell frag and throw it out. What happens is what happens. You had to
4 watch it. I had two of them on one mission that they were taped together and they
5 dropped it underneath the troop seat in front of me and I just laid over. We pulled up out
6 of the LZ and I'd start scanning. The gunner and I would start looking for frags. I mean
7 these two were taped together laying under the seat right next to—well, I had to lay out
8 on the seat, unbuckle my seat belt and lay out on the seat and reach under to get it and
9 throw it out. It happened. It's not like we did a lot of missions with them. Like, you
10 know, if I were to come up with a number maybe twenty or thirty missions and it
11 happened maybe, oh, three, maybe four times.

12 SM: When you tossed these grenades out they'd go off?

13 WQ: Well, yeah.

14 SM: Wow. Did your unit ever lose any helicopters because of this?

15 WQ: I don't think so. I mean, it was part of our procedure when we worked with
16 the ARVNs that you understood that was a very real possibility. I know that other crew
17 chiefs and gunners had that happen. But I don't think that we did. I'm reasonably sure
18 that we never did, not that I'm aware of anyway. Later on we lost a ship and I don't think
19 it was from our company to a situation like that. I had nine days left in company and I
20 was still flying. I was down on a maintenance hold. I wasn't even supposed to fly that
21 day and I replaced a ship that had been effectively blown out of the air. They weren't
22 real sure whether—they thought maybe it was an RPG (rocket propelled grenade). When
23 we went in there we were moving out refugees. We'd gone in and got one group out.
24 Then we went back to get another group out and—and I don't know—you only have nine
25 days left in-country so you're just antsy as all hell and you're busy saying, "I'm too short
26 for this shit," was the common expression. When you picked up refugees, these little
27 people, you'd have twenty of them pile on there if not more. I just got a look, a
28 movement, and mama san was sitting there pulling a pin on a frag. That's probably what
29 got the ship that we replaced was essentially a Vietnamese suicide bomber. I wouldn't be
30 a bit surprised if they had the frag given to them by the NV or VC. They really didn't
31 even know what they were doing. If you want your children safe then you'll get on there

1 and pull this pin out and drop it on the floor. They probably didn't even have any idea
2 what they were doing.

3 SM: Unbelievable. Well, for that first five months before '68, how many aircraft
4 losses do you remember your unit suffering? Were there very many?

5 WQ: I don't think we lost a single aircraft. We had, obviously, some battle
6 damage, pretty small stuff, but I don't remember losing one at all.

7 SM: How about personnel losses?

8 WQ: We had some guys that were wounded. I don't remember even—no KIAs
9 that I can remember. Some minor wounds, we had a couple leg wounds I think, nothing
10 real serious. So I mean it was a charm school, it really was in a lot of respects, because
11 given where we were the Cav had the area pacified if you will to the point that—although
12 it was dangerous obviously, it wasn't near as it was going to be when we moved up north.
13 We were very fortunate that we had that period. Dac Tho was considerably more active
14 than An Khe. So that was probably for us, for those that came over in August, that group
15 came over in August, September that was the most hostile action most of us had seen.
16 We first went over there. I can't remember who—I think there was some Marine activity
17 there, maybe not. I don't remember. I know that we put in the 1st of the 12th, pretty
18 much a battalion size move, in on a ridge top. Either another unit—and I think it comes
19 to me as Marine recon—didn't have the word that they're going to have friendlies in
20 there and essentially they saw movement on this hilltop and called in air strikes on it. We
21 spent three days taking out the dead from the 1st of the 12th off of that ridge top there,
22 very affected. The body count was something like two hundred of our guys were killed
23 by our guys' friendly fire, if you will. So that was probably, in terms of handling our
24 own KIAs, we would be supporting and have ground action and pull out wounded. We'd
25 have a couple wounded or a couple three wounded and maybe a couple KIAs. It was
26 very limited type actions, but this was the first time that we had load after load after load
27 of dead and wounded. It seemed like we pulled out—the first day we were just pulling
28 out wounded and the next two days we're pulling out KIAs until we run out of body bags
29 and went downtown in Kontum and bought baskets. A lot of it was—towards the end it
30 was just body parts. Bodies turn black real quick and body parts do in that country.
31 You're trying to get the different pieces of at least the same skin color in a bag. After

1 awhile it was even difficult to even tell that. That was our real first heavy, heavy
2 contact—not contact, but in dealing with a lot of casualties. There was a lot of—we got
3 hit a lot at night, not so much in Kontum, but down at Dak To and we were on some kind
4 of mission there. We were down on the flight land at Dak To and they started hitting us
5 pretty heavy with mortars. As a helicopter we were able to lift out of there and get out of
6 there. Both the C-130s, the ones we were setting between, both were hit and burnt. We
7 pulled up out of there and just started circling the area trying to find some muzzle flashes
8 from the mortar tubes. To then Dak Tho and Kontum were the heaviest action that we
9 saw. When we got through that right after Christmas we moved up north and everything
10 was livened up considerably once we went up north.

11 SM: When you—let's see. By the end of '67, bring you back just before you
12 moved to Kontum and Dak Tho.

13 WQ: That happened back November.

14 SM: Back in November then. How did you think the war was going? Did you
15 think you understood what the United States was trying to accomplish there in Vietnam?

16 WQ: Oh, no. Yeah. We spent a lot of time going in to the same hilltop that we
17 went in to last week and going last week and blow the hell out of it. We weren't holding
18 anything. So even then you would be questioning why are we going in to the same place
19 that we were in last week. We'd take a couple casualties and then pull out and then go
20 back in and just stay there. Move them out. So a lot of us were, "What is this that we're
21 doing? We're not holding anything. We're not cleaning them out and keeping them
22 out." That was a very simplistic look at what we were doing, but you started asking
23 yourself why aren't we just holding this stuff and going forward on a front if you will and
24 just taking everything that's in the path. Of course that country doesn't lend itself like it
25 does in the Middle East where you can see twenty miles off in the horizon and you can
26 move everything out. You'd have to walk hand in hand through that country to do that.
27 That's kind of what they did with Operation Ranch Hand trying to deprive them of the
28 triple canopy by defoliating everything and let's you, could get, see down to the ground.
29 That country doesn't lend itself to just making a sweep and moving everything out
30 because they could be above you or under you, but we were starting to ask why aren't we
31 just holding this and cleaning it out. It was just the question. The answer is it's not a

1 country that lends itself to that and we knew that too, but we still didn't feel like we were
2 going in a lot of the areas that we were working in and cleaning them out and holding it.

3 SM: Yes. Okay. Well, let's take a quick break.

4 SM: Back from break. I wanted to go ahead and quickly cover the buildup of
5 Tet. If you would describe where you were I guess through the months of December and
6 January and what your expectations were as far as how the war is progressing where you
7 were.

8 WQ: Well, we were at An Khe for Christmas. Then shortly in January moved
9 back down to the Bong Son Plain to an LZ called Dog, which was just a little on the other
10 side of Bong Son from LZ English. We were there for it seems like a week, ten days.
11 We finally got the order to move up north. From what I knew personally it was we were
12 just going up north to help the Marines. That's really all I knew at that time. I know that
13 there's a lot more involved than that in retrospect and from reading history accounts and
14 stuff, but that's what I knew. We loaded up. Primarily the ship, my ship, was full of my
15 possessions, personal possessions, and the two pilots' personal possessions, my gunner's
16 personal possessions, and as much other stuff we could cram on. We took off grossly
17 overloaded and headed north. Stopped I think probably once at Da Nang, refueled there
18 and put on a full load of fuel and had to do a sliding take off. We couldn't even get off,
19 hover off the ground until we hit transitional and were able to take off. Went in to Phu
20 Bai, which was a Marine base just on the other side of Hue. Spent a day or two there.
21 Then we went up north and established what we called LZ Tombstone. It had a couple of
22 other names. Then finally the 101st took it over and called it Camp Eagle, which was
23 their headquarters for the 101st Air up in I Corps. Initially I had no sense of Tet from my
24 level. We had problems with water. At one point we were pretty much without water
25 other than what—you were allowed to drink all that you wanted out of a lister bag in a
26 company area. You got a canteen cup for personal hygiene and you got to fill your
27 canteen. Once you got that initial ration in the morning you could drink what you wanted
28 out of the lister bag, but you couldn't take any away with you. We had water for
29 purification had been hit by I guess the VC and put out of action. So we were begging
30 water from the Marines and they weren't real generous with it. Then from there we
31 moved to Camp Evans. Evans was a Marine base, pretty well built up. We established

1 our camp pretty much like we'd been establishing camps the whole time I was there.
2 That's when the monsoons started, a lot of rain, cold. I'd never been so cold in my life as
3 I was over there. You wouldn't think that you get cold over there, but temperature gets
4 down to around fifty degrees and a steady drizzle all the time and flying around a
5 hundred miles an hour with the door open I got pretty cold back there. The day before
6 Tet itself—we do a lot of we call it laggering. We would send ships. We dispersed the
7 ships so they weren't all in the company area. We would go to sometimes entirely
8 different parts of the LZ that we were on or go to entirely different LZs so that if we were
9 hit that we wouldn't lose all the ships, all of our eggs in a basket if you will. The
10 morning of Tet we cranked real early. Things started happening. We were at LZ Lane,
11 which I was on. It was south of Hue on the coast. When we did that I usually just slept
12 in my ship. The officers would go to the officer's clubs and they would usually have
13 officer's barracks. Usually the crew just stayed, the enlisted crew, just stayed with their
14 ship. Not always. Some of the officers would stay in the ship too. We cranked early,
15 knew that something was different happening. We left LZ Lane and flew over Hue. In
16 fact it was when they were trying to get in to the—I remember specifically going over the
17 Perfume River to the little airport on the—what was it? What the heck was it? Anyway,
18 it was across the river from Hue and they were being hit real hard. They were calling for
19 help and we just flat couldn't get in there. The ground fire was so intense that you could
20 see the fire going both ways and the mortar rounds hitting. There wasn't anything we
21 could do. Couldn't get into them. So we flew back on to our company area. Then it was
22 just—and that first day of Tet was just a blur. Everywhere you went you were being shot
23 at. We were moving troops frantically here, there, and everywhere. Fuel, rearm, move
24 troops, shoot it out with them, come back and stick your finger in bullet holes and check
25 them to make sure you can still fly with them then refuel, rearm, and move troops. I can
26 remember at the end of that day we'd just put in some troops and it was starting to get
27 dark. We were pulling out and receiving fire and returning it. I could see an ARA (aerial
28 rocket artillery) bird. It crashed into a rice paddy and it was burning and I thought, geez,
29 I'll never forget this day. I had no idea that there was a major offensive. I mean,
30 obviously I caught on pretty quick, but I mean it's something coming up. I had no idea.
31 Then one day melted into another and they all turned out to be like that day for about ten

1 days, two weeks. It was pretty interesting. We went from a team of twenty ships down
2 to four real quickly. Almost all of our ships were battle damaged the first day. We took
3 some minor casualties. We got through it fairly well all things considered. We'd get hit
4 at night. We're getting hit almost every night, rockets and mortars. Some of the ships
5 were being damaged out in the flight line. Resupply became a real problem. I know that
6 for a while there at Camp Evans we were totally cut off from any ground travel. I mean
7 we could fly out of there all right, but they were resupplying us with C-130s. The C-130s
8 would—it was heavily overcast, a steady drizzle. You would wait around in the mud, a
9 real soupy thin mud, up to your, about halfway, mid-calve. Everything turns into mud.
10 The flight line was fairly solid. There was a lot of rock on the flight line so it was
11 holding together, but everything else was just soup. The C-130s would resupply us.
12 They'd drop down out of the cloud cover and the tracers would go up at them and they
13 would parachute all this stuff out and dive back into the clouds. It would be a running
14 gun battle to see who got it. It was an interesting couple weeks. We ran short of pretty
15 much everything. Ammunition got to be—we could fly out and get what we wanted and
16 refuel in some more secure areas. I remember once we got it seemed like a whole lot of
17 nothing but dehydrated eggs and bologna. The cooks got real creative with bologna. We
18 were having bologna and some powdered eggs for breakfast and bologna sandwiches for
19 lunch and baked bologna for dinner. We always had plenty to eat. That wasn't ever a
20 problem, but there wasn't a lot of variety there where I can remember a few times. A lot
21 of the food you were getting they would put the cans up. We would receive cans with the
22 shrapnel and bullet holes in them and be careful what you're eating. You don't know
23 what's in it. The ships were taking a lot of damage. We started doing things that were
24 absolutely forbidden. Wiring, we were splicing together. You're never supposed to
25 splice wire. If you had one wire and a whole harness damaged you take out the whole
26 harness and replace it. We were splicing wires. A bullet would go through all that stuff
27 and cut half a dozen wires. You just figure out where they went and splice them back
28 together. We were cannibalizing aircraft because if the aircraft got hit bad enough we
29 couldn't get parts for it. It was down so we'd start taking parts off for the other ships that
30 were battle damaged. A couple of the aircrafts just flat disappeared. I mean, they just
31 disappeared. So we had a hard time keeping ships flyable. I think for a while the best we

1 could get up was twelve. So that was one time when parts was serious. It was just
2 difficult. Basic supply stuff was difficult. The Ready Reaction Force and the log ships
3 could go out and get fuel. About that time our ammo dump was hit. It set it off and it
4 was throwing live rounds everywhere. Some of them could go off and some of them
5 wouldn't. That was kind of interesting. We were doing a lot of support of our Cav unit.
6 We started supporting the Marines some. We did some flights into Hue for the Marines,
7 mostly pulling out casualties and resupply. The Cav infantry had blocking forces. Hue
8 was supposed to be a Marine operation so it was left to that. The Cav did all the
9 blocking, make sure that the NVA couldn't get out and no fresh resupplies or troops
10 could get in. Some of those blocking forces sometimes were very heavily engaged.
11 There was one—I can't remember the action. I remember they called it the Battle of Titi
12 Wood, the little wood. One of our battalions became fully engaged and were hit hard
13 when they were going through online between two little villages about two hundred yards
14 of rice paddy between them. I did a lot of support there. That first night we couldn't get
15 the wounded and the dead out of the rice paddy that were cut down when they went
16 through there. We were flying around at night with our search lights on trying to pick up
17 the wounded and dead out there in the rice paddies. Felt like a bullet magnet. Every time
18 you'd go in there you'd get fired on. It was like that. That would have been east of Hue.
19 The blocking forces around the Imperial Capitol were heavily engaged on both sides,
20 troops trying to get out of Hue. They'll infiltrate back into Laos and Reserves trying to
21 get in. We used to fly along the Perfume River and shoot at the NVA that were up on the
22 Citadel walls. They'd shoot at us. We'd shoot back at them. It was a real hectic month
23 pretty much. About that time we started supporting the Special Forces in their studies
24 and observation group operations in Laos and the A Shau. So if you—kind of like going
25 out of the skillet into the fire. As bad as it was down in I Corps you get up into the A
26 Shau Valley and it was a lot worse. Mostly because there were a lot of them there and
27 they only had a couple helicopters to shoot at. So Hue was cold. It was wet. It was—at
28 the same time it was very hot in terms of contact. Everywhere you went you had to fight
29 your way in and fight your way back out. Had trouble keeping supplies into some of the
30 units, strung out and in some of their LZs, the firebases. We had some firebases get
31 overrun. Sometimes you could see the activity. You just couldn't get to it. So a lot of it

1 is a lot of flying and a lot of fog, terrible weather to fly in. I remember once we couldn't
2 even find Camp Evans. We flew out on some kind of a mission. It was a single ship, and
3 flying above the fog and trying to get down through it. We finally decided if we could
4 get through the fog and find Highway One we'd hover along the highway to try to find
5 our way back. Army Hueys didn't have much in the way of avionics on it at all. What
6 we did have was pretty elementary stuff. We found a hole in the fog and just kind of
7 dove down through it. They went just right, just kind of a cylinder right straight to the
8 ground. When we got to the ground and it was full of the NVA. They were just as happy
9 to see us as we were them. He just pulled pitch and got the hell out of there. Just one
10 event like that right after the other. It was popping all the time. I received some—I was
11 shot down. In fact, Levering, Walt Levering. We were shot down in kind of the coastal
12 plain between Phu Bai and Camp Evans. Just took a lot of hits, but one of them cut our
13 fuel line and shut her fuel off. That was really the only time we ever was hit or was down
14 by ground fire. Managed to get that ship back and had it back up flying the next day. I
15 don't know. But I kept telling you that we had an easy break in period in Bong Son and
16 An Khe. When we got back up north we had at least that base to deal with some
17 experience. We'd have been in sore trouble if we would have come into country right in
18 the middle of that. In fact I can remember we started getting a lot of replacements then
19 and were taking casualties. Two crew chiefs or future crew chiefs came into the
20 company, into our section, in the middle of a mortar attack. These guys would come into
21 Cam Ranh Bay and Cam Ranh Bay was under attack. Everywhere they went they were
22 being hit with rockets and mortars. They came into Quang Tri and they were being hit.
23 They finally got into the company and they come sliding into the first section or first
24 platoon's tent. We were under attack. By then we knew how close they were and they
25 weren't close enough to get us all excited and we're just kind of sitting around in the
26 hooch. You sat in close to your sandbags and wait it out. These poor guys come flying
27 in the tent and just did a face plant right in the middle of the floor just gasping for breath
28 and, "God, is it always like this?" "Nah, sometimes it gets bad." These old guys, you
29 know, laying it on the FNGs (fucking new guy). During all that we moved. We moved
30 up from Evans to Quang Tri or Evans to, yeah, Quang Tri at LZ Sharon in preparation of
31 going up north to Khe Sanh to help the Marines out at Khe Sanh. So the time we got

1 done with Tet we moved up to Khe Sanh, started supporting their operations. Did one of
2 the largest division assault ever done into Khe Sanh. We actually put in the 1st Cav
3 Division and the 1st I think it was the 1st ARVN Marine Division into Khe Sanh. When I
4 landed in Khe Sanh it was the first time that any aircraft had landed inside the Khe Sanh
5 perimeter in two weeks. In fact, they did *60 Minutes*, or not *60 Minutes*, but *Twentieth*
6 *Century* did a special on Khe Sanh at Con Thien. The first two or three seconds they
7 have a Huey setting down at Khe Sanh, happened to be an Army Huey and happened to
8 be my Huey. So I thought it was quite appropriate that they do this special on the
9 Marines. Tenacity at Khe Sanh and the first thing they show is an Army helicopter
10 relieving them there. Khe Sanh was interesting. It was one of those places that we'd fly
11 in there and they'd had every square inch of that LZ zeroed in with their artillery. So
12 you'd make all a display of landing in one area and about the time they started dropping
13 artillery in on you, you fly off to the other side of the LZ real quick and dump your load
14 to get the hell out of there before they could get their guns moved on you. So I spent a
15 little time at Khe Sanh. In between Tet and Khe Sanh and we'd go back and support the
16 Special Forces out of Phu Bai. They had their FOB-1 (forward operating base)—let's
17 see—it was FOB-1 North, Phu Bai. It was like the 7th or 8th Special Forces Group. They
18 were doing a lot of the preliminary stuff for the future assault into the A Shau. So we
19 were putting in their lerp (LRRP, long-range reconnaissance patrols) teams and pulling
20 them out and letting the ARVN or the NVA use us for target practice. So the minute we
21 put the division in at Khe Sanh and when we got done at Khe Sanh we pulled the whole
22 division out, put the whole division into the A Shau. The A Shau was the place where we
23 took most of our casualties, lost most of our ships. Of course the reunion we had on
24 April nineteenth was because of that. By that time we were all pretty experienced. A lot
25 of us were getting short by then and your focus turned because you knew the day that you
26 were going to leave the country you're—I know a lot of the guys, the enlisted, the crew
27 chief, quit flying after the A Shau. We had—some of them quit flying as early as ninety
28 days before they got out. They just went to maintenance and turned the ships over to the
29 young and dumb. I just never did want to go to maintenance. So I stayed in the flight
30 platoon and I flew my last mission nine days, my next to last. The last mission I flew
31 was taking my ship, 785, to Da Nang to 15th TC for its thousandth hour. It was one of the

1 newest H models in the company and it was the first one to break a thousand hours.
2 There at Da Nang I turned it over to a young kid that just got in-country. He didn't even
3 get ten days of support from me. He just got in-country. They sent him down there and
4 said, "Here's your ship. Goodbye." He got a little less indoctrination or training than I
5 did. Came back to the company, signed out, went down to Cam Ranh Bay again waiting
6 to get out. That was an experience. But anyway do you have any questions on—?

7 SM: Yes, sir. I was wondering, in terms of what happened at the A Shau, what
8 took your unit into that valley and what did you expect to happen?

9 WQ: What took us into there?

10 SM: Yes, sir. I mean, were you going in for a specific, on a specific operation for
11 a specific mission?

12 WQ: Well, the A Shau Valley, we were supporting the studies and observation
13 groups, the Special Forces, in there and they were doing all the recon. They were trying
14 to locate the weapons and placements, the anti-aircraft. They had tanks. They had
15 everything in there. In fact, there were three old French airbases, airfields, in the A Shau
16 Valley, the A Luoi, the Ta Bat I think, and the A Shau. They were even landing light
17 aircraft on some of those runways. They considered the A Shau as a primary infiltration
18 route in I Corps out of Laos. They had a road down through there. They had CATs,
19 heavy road repair equipment in there. They were repairing mud holes with PSP (pierced
20 steel planking), the steel plates. Just bunkers everywhere. When we were flying in
21 support of the Special Forces they had the estimated two divisions of people in there with
22 everything, the quad 50s, the 37, 40 millimeters, the 80 millimeters, the 100 millimeter
23 anti-aircraft, their own artillery, their own armor. They were in their pretty heavy. Part
24 of what they wanted to do is cut that infiltration route. They figured that that was the
25 primary infiltration route prior to Tet. As they withdrew they would be withdrawing
26 through the A Shau. So a lot of us were flying support missions in the A-Shau before we
27 actually assaulted it. So we knew exactly what we were getting into. We knew it would
28 be bad because they had so much stuff in there. The idea was to go in and cut that supply
29 line, create as much damage as we could, and then get back out because the monsoon was
30 setting in. You just didn't have that much time but it would—to disrupt their flow and
31 how long did they figure they were going to disrupt it I have no idea what division

1 thought they were going to do let alone MACV (Military Assistance Command
2 Vietnam), Westmoreland, but that was the idea. Once we got in there we destroyed a lot
3 of equipment and disrupted their flow. We got some tanks. Then we pulled out. It was
4 kind of the same old story. You'd go in there, lose a lot of people, and pull out. The
5 101st when back in there, lost a lot of people then pulled out. The Marines tried it again.
6 Marines had been trying again to the A Shau Valley in Operation Dewey Canyon and a
7 couple and they didn't have the resources to do it. So just a typical, go in, create a lot of
8 havoc. Try to cut their supplies, pull out, let them rebuild it and they did. It's like trying
9 to sweep water up hill. The minute you quit sweeping it flows right back down. So, you
10 know, the overall strategy to inflict maximum damages and then pull out and let them
11 rebuild again so you can go back in another day I guess from my perspective that's what
12 we were doing. We did inflict a lot of casualties and they inflicted casualties on us. So I
13 don't know what the zero sum gain of it all was.

14 SM: In your operations there in the A Shau, you mentioned that this was when
15 you lost a lot of aircraft, a lot of personnel. What were your aircraft losses? Were there
16 any that were totally destroyed or was it just principally damaged?

17 WQ: No. I think we lost four. Four aircraft destroyed. One was just flat blown
18 out of the air. Lost a couple in the LZs. I think almost all of us received some kind of
19 battle damage.

20 SM: What was the heaviest weapon they were using up against the helicopters?

21 WQ: It's hard to say. I mean, what they had, I know that they had a 100
22 millimeter. Probably the 37s were the most and the quad 50s were the most devastating
23 to us. There isn't any place that you can hit a Huey with a 37 mm. If you hit him you're
24 not going to knock him out of the air. They're a small aircraft and it just won't take that
25 kind of punishment. There was a few service air missiles from SAMs (surface-to-air
26 missiles). We had one SAM fired at us when we were supporting the Special Forces. It
27 didn't miss us by much. I could feel the heat off the motor and the only thing I can say is
28 that either it didn't have or the proximity fuse was defective because it didn't blow up
29 when it got close to us. It goes by close enough that you can see the gray body and the
30 black writing on it, you know—

31 SM: That's close.

1 WQ: Yeah. Come up from the right side underneath the skids. Somehow you
2 have to feel that there might have been some divine intervention because quite literally
3 we hit kind of an updraft and it just picked us straight up probably fifty feet and that
4 sucker just went right underneath us. So we just hit that updraft, that pocket. But
5 anyway, and the fifty tracers were flying around. It's hard to say. There was so much
6 coming at you and your mind starts shutting this stuff out. You focus on what you're to
7 be doing and you get tunnel vision. You don't see this stuff going on around you.

8 SM: But they had the big guns and the SAMs. I mean, this isn't just AK-47
9 firing now. This is big stuff.

10 WQ: Yeah. This is conventional warfare.

11 SM: Yes, sir.

12 WQ: Most people don't even understand that that even existed up there. They
13 think we was all chasing little guys in conical hats with beat up mausers.

14 SM: Black pajamas.

15 WQ: Yeah. Beating them up, you know, yeah.

16 SM: Well, what were your personnel losses in the A-Shau? An estimate.

17 WQ: What did we lose? That first day probably six if I remember correctly. We
18 lost the one whole crew, Brannow, crew chief, I think six or seven, something like that.
19 Four aircraft and some slight wounding and pretty much everyone else was battle
20 damage. Then we put it all back together and went in the next day.

21 SM: Yes, sir. How long did that last, the campaign for the A Shau?

22 WQ: It wasn't much more than two weeks. The weather was setting in. I know
23 that we put them in the first couple days the weather was good enough that we could get
24 in. Then the weather closed in and we couldn't even get in. So the guys, the grunts that
25 were in there, were isolated. I know that—was it LZ Stud or Stallion, one or the other—
26 one of them was up at Khe Sanh and the other was in the A-Shau, Stud and Stallion.
27 They had tanks try to penetrate the perimeter one night. They crippled one of the LAW
28 (light antitank weapon) and the other one hooked on to it, took it away, and it was kind of
29 the end of that, but it was scary for those guys. I mean, they're totally cut off. The A
30 Shau is a real narrow long valley. You just didn't have any room to maneuver like
31 bringing a C-130 in. They repaired the runway and started bringing them in when they

1 could, but when it socked in you just didn't have any wiggle room. It was VFR (Visual
2 Flight Rules) only approaching there. So we were kind of in and out. After we got out of
3 the A Shau it was just kind of a lot of hit and miss stuff. After that I didn't figure that
4 they had a whole lot they could throw at me again that I hadn't already seen and survived.
5 I don't remember a whole lot about the actions. Certainly nothing was at the level of Tet,
6 Khe Sanh, or the A Shau. So it's just kind of do your time and get through this and go
7 back home.

8 SM: I forgot to ask you. When you were talking about Khe Sanh and going in
9 and helping to relieve the Marines there, how did you interact with Marines? Was there
10 very much interaction between you and other Army soldiers and the Marines?

11 WQ: It was interesting. It kind of started when we first went up there. There was
12 a lot of reluctance, the Marines, to share any resource with us. I know the first night that
13 we were up there we were at Phu Bai and they didn't even want us inside the perimeter.
14 In fact we had to shut the ships down outside the perimeter and they did finally supply
15 the guards for them. We had a problem with water and they didn't, as I remember, react
16 real well and weren't eager to share water with us. We set up on that hilltop for a couple
17 weeks and we finally got them to come in and take showers. Hadn't had any kind of
18 other than out of a rag in a canteen cup, no kind of personal hygiene. Coming into the
19 showers they had a big shower. It seemed like it was fifty feet long and about twenty-
20 five feet wide with showers on both sides and a strip of showers in the middle. You
21 could get about fifty guys in there and all the hot water you wanted. We never had that
22 the whole time we were over there. The hottest water we had is how hot the sun would
23 make a black barrel full of water. That was the only time that I took a hot shower over
24 there. I mean, a real live hot shower. The rest of the time was just water out of a barrel.
25 It's kind of interesting. We flew a lot of support for them. We did things for them that
26 they didn't. Their aviation didn't do for them. We were flying command and control.
27 We'd loaned a ship out to one of the Marine battalions. Little Abner was their call sign.
28 They never had a command and control ship at their disposal, if you will. The battalion
29 commander and his first sergeant went out and kind of reviewed their area, did an area
30 recon and it was like our pilots would go, "Well, don't you want to do this?" "Well,
31 yeah. Can we do that?" "Well, sure. Let's go do that." So they were, you know, "Well,

1 would you like to do this?" "Our battalion commanders do this. Would you like to do
2 that?" It was an interesting experience. They just didn't have the aviation. They had the
3 aircrafts they just didn't utilize them very well from our estimation. We put in a combat
4 assault one day for the Marines and they put in their C Stallions and they started
5 receiving a lot of fire. They had two gun ships that disappeared. I don't know where
6 they went. I never had a good experience with the Marine aviation to be honest with you.
7 I was their rotor wing. Their gunships kept disappearing. In fact, on this one particular
8 situation their people were pinned down in the LZ and they had no gun support. They
9 were outside their artillery range. So we did what we used to do. We'd call a play on
10 gunship. We just turn the crew guns forward. I had made a little pin that would position
11 the gun just right at the right elevation all the way forward. The pilots would actually fly
12 the gun. They'd just tell us to fire and both the gunner and I would squeeze our triggers
13 and start feeding the ammo. He would just fly the tracers into where he wanted them to
14 go. That was the only support these guys had. We ran into that a couple three times. We
15 were supposed to have Marine guns support in the A Shau and they would refuse to
16 crank. There was a couple of times that we went in there without any gun support at all
17 because the Marines wouldn't go. I don't know what their problem was, but I was never
18 impressed with Marine aviation, at least the rotor wing. I know that when we went into
19 Khe Sanh they were refusing to go in there to even pull out their own wounded. They
20 would pull the wounded outside the perimeter on the units that were doing the patrolling
21 outside of Khe Sanh, but they weren't landing. It was novel to have a helicopter land
22 there. I can understand that it was hairy landing there, but you still got to get in to do the
23 support and get out. I don't know. So there was a certain amount of animosity between
24 us and the Marines. Sometimes you felt it, sometimes you didn't, depending on what you
25 were doing. I know that the day that we were supporting this insertion and they didn't
26 have any support that they were happy to have us there. I mean, a slick flying just two
27 60s isn't much of a gun ship, but that's all they had. There was a couple times like that.
28 Our experience with the joint ops that we had with the SOG (Special Operations Group)
29 people wasn't particularly warm with the Marines. They had kind of an attitude we
30 didn't care for and I guess they didn't care for us. So it wasn't real pleasant and I think
31 that from what I see now that they've learned a lot from that and tried to cut back some of

1 this inter-service rivalries and with more joint operations and making it a little more
2 dependent on each other, which I think is good. It's no one unit has ever won anything. I
3 was reading an after action report from a Marine Cobra pilot. Some of that's still there.
4 It's like the Army wasn't in Iraq at all. Marines won it all. Of course I passed that after
5 action report on to the rest of the guys and there was a lot of boo-hoo about that. It's just
6 it's still there. It's like I said, I just did my little caption on these—I said I see the press is
7 misleading us again. They've been telling us that the Army's been involved over there,
8 but that apparently isn't the case or we just have a Marine being a Marine. So you just
9 have to deal with that's the way they are.

10 SM: Well, when you—let's see. What kind of communication did you have
11 going back and forth between yourself and your family back home?

12 WQ: Oh, I was writing letters back home. From the time we moved up north
13 from An Khe to pretty much until I got out a lot of it—I didn't have a lot of time to even
14 sit down and try to think about it. When we were flying it was twelve, fourteen hours a
15 day. We were getting hit sporadically throughout the night, and back up the next
16 morning and try to go. I didn't spend a lot of time writing home. I tried to get off a note
17 now and again just to let them know I'm still there. There was but there wasn't a lot of it.
18 We had problems getting our mail and I'd have different comments from different
19 people. "Well, did you get this?" or, "I wrote you last week. I didn't hear from you,"
20 and I just wouldn't receive the letters. I don't know how much—especially during Tet
21 there were so many resources that we were losing you couldn't keep track of that stuff.
22 I'm sure that mail is a fairly high priority in the military, but then when you're having a
23 full fledged offensive going on it's not the highest. So who knows where that stuff ended
24 up. About that time when there's Christmas presents that never got there. So there
25 wasn't a lot of communication.

26 SM: What about news, as far as magazines, radio, armed forces television? What
27 sources did you have available to you?

28 WQ: Sure as hell didn't have TV. I remember going down to Da Nang to Red
29 Beach to our 15th TC to get some battle damage taken care of. There was a news report
30 on armed forces television and it was rioting. I didn't have a clue. I just flat, you know,
31 "What the hell is all this about?" This is early '68. There was a lot of the hoo-haw that

1 was going on in the States about the Tet Offensive. I didn't have a clue. I didn't have a
2 clue where they were coming from. I was getting papers, local papers. They were pretty
3 sporadic at best and a lot of them I wasn't getting. The local paper here didn't go into
4 that stuff a whole lot. So I really wasn't prepared for what I met when I came home. I
5 really wasn't. I had just that one quick piece of news that I watched and I didn't even
6 watch maybe five minutes of it. There was some conversations between the crews like
7 when Martin Luther King was assassinated. We were all aware of that and, "What are we
8 over here for when this kind of crap goes on at home?" But we weren't prepared. We
9 were very focused on what we were doing. We had just gone through the Tet Offensive.
10 We essentially destroyed the VC main force. It didn't exist anymore. Every NVA unit
11 that we engaged we destroyed. So it's the we won the battle, but we lost the war. In fact
12 the only significant battles the Viet Minh or the Viet Cong or the NVA ever won was
13 against the French so what does that tell you? But the point is that we were very focused.
14 We had a job. We were doing our job. We were gaining. We were engaging the enemy
15 and we were destroying them. So what's all this other crap? Where are these people
16 coming from? It just wasn't in our psyche and we were very ill-prepared when we went
17 back home for what we met. It's just I had not the faintest clue. The hostility that we
18 met initially when we came back stateside at the airports to the outright even when we
19 got home in our own, back to our home. Our parents obviously and our family are glad
20 to see us back, but the rest of the people or the people that you grew up with that you
21 knew all your life, they weren't the same people because we weren't the same people.
22 The absolute apathy that was met, not so much open hostility here at home but like, "So
23 what?" We were doing our job. We were doing it well. A lot of us came back with
24 decorations that went above and beyond. We were met like we hadn't done anything.
25 Then when we went to college we were—we had to deal with, "You're baby killers," and
26 we weren't prepared for that. The military did not prepare us, help us, in any way, shape,
27 or form for that. Those of us that still had time to serve it was—you just hunkered down
28 in the bases stateside and didn't go off base much. It was—the military towns weren't
29 openly hostile, but there was an underlying hostility there, some of which is always in
30 military towns, but it was more than that. Together with the racial problems that,

1 particularly the Army was having at that time, it wasn't—the last year and a half in the
2 Army wasn't pleasant at all.

3 SM: Well, what about in Vietnam itself? What was the ethnic makeup of your
4 unit?

5 WQ: Well, we were an aviation unit. We were pretty much all volunteer. We
6 were all Regular Army, for the most part. I don't remember. We might have had some
7 draftees and like the mess section and the cooks and like the motor pool, but most of us
8 were all volunteers. I don't think we had any pilots that weren't white. I don't
9 remember. We might have had one black pilot. I don't remember him. He might have
10 come later. We had a black crew chief and a black gunner. We had two Hispanic crew
11 chiefs, Frank Gamavisqua and Ruben Ortiz, my best friends while I was over there. You
12 know, to us it didn't matter. It made no difference at all when we were supporting the
13 grunts. It didn't make a difference. We had a GI, an American grunt, in trouble we'd go
14 after them. That type of animosity didn't, at least in our circle, in our unit, didn't really
15 exist. We were all there doing the job and most of us were volunteers so it wasn't a big
16 issue. It just wasn't. People ask about drugs. Drugs wasn't a big thing. There's a few
17 maintenance people that did that stuff, but most of us in the flight platoon, we're too
18 busy. We had to stay focused. We had to stay sharp. Just too busy to play any stupid
19 games. Had too much to do. We didn't have time to—I went into one of the towns
20 maybe three times, four times, once in Da Nang, once in Nha Trang or Qui Nhon, once in
21 Bong Son. That was about it. I just didn't have time to do any of that stuff. So that's
22 probably a positive. I was too busy to get sidetracked.

23 SM: How about alcohol use?

24 WQ: Oh, we had plenty of beer. We had lots of beer. We had some whiskey
25 available to us, you know, hard drink. In the Army, you had to be an E6 and twenty-one
26 to buy alcohol. So most of us in the flight, you know, enlisted in the flight platoon, it
27 wasn't available to us. It was however at Da Nang. The Seabees (Construction
28 Battalion, CBs) would sell us anything we wanted because we did a lot of favors for the
29 Seabees and ferried them around, but you'd have a couple three beers and then we had
30 some guys that drank too much and a couple pilots that drank too much, but for the most
31 part that wasn't even a problem. You had too much to do. You had to stay focused.

1 From the people that I was interacting with on a very close basis it just was not a
2 problem. Not that I didn't get drunk once in a while, but very seldom.

3 SM: What else would you do for any kind of recreation? Did you have access to
4 books or movies? (Quigley laughs) What about USO (United Service Organization)
5 shows or any kind of recreation that you engaged in whatsoever?

6 WQ: There was a radio playing. Tapes, guys would play tapes. Just didn't have
7 the time. There was—in Bong Son I went to one USO function. It's when they had Miss
8 America's Courts there. It was pouring down rain and these poor gals in their evening
9 dresses standing out there getting soaked. That was the only thing I went to at all because
10 it was about a hundred yards from my hooch on the flight line and I went. Young
11 nineteen year old males had other diversions that they sought out, but there wasn't a
12 whole lot of time even for that. We didn't have—there was no USO. I made it to the PX
13 maybe two or three times. So I didn't have a lot of—most of what I had like cigarettes
14 and writing stuff and shaving stuff were supplied to us in our sundries. I just didn't have
15 time. The mail, the photos that I did were all prepaid. Mailers, you'd buy it that way and
16 they would mail it to you. So you'd send off a role of film and it would be processed and
17 sent back with a fresh roll of film. When you'd get that—I got most of that back. There
18 was some stuff I didn't get back that I never saw again, but I got a lot of that back. There
19 wasn't time. There just wasn't. The only thing a crew chief did was fly and take care of
20 his ship. We didn't have to do all the perimeter guard and anything else, but we had all
21 we could handle. We had a ship, our guns, and our personal equipment and we didn't
22 have time for anything else. A movie—I think the one movie that I saw I went to when I
23 was at Da Nang for maintenance on the ship. I went to a movie out on Red Beach. It
24 was Clint Eastwood's first movie, *Fist Full of Dollars* or something. Yeah. *Fist Full of*
25 *Dollars*. We watched it from a hot foxhole and they'd turn the projector on. The
26 projector room was all sand bag with a hole there. The minute you turn it on they'd lob a
27 few mortars at you. So you watched it from a foxhole. So the entertainment that we had
28 we provided for ourselves. We had a couple three company parties. Once in a while—
29 we didn't even do this up north. Down in Bong Son were kinder gentler days. Have a
30 pizza party and they'd make pizzas and you'd have pizza and beer. But then we got up
31 north and we didn't have time for that stuff. We didn't. The enlisted flight crews didn't.

1 The pilots were pretty pampered. They had time to piddle around and do other stuff. We
2 didn't. You'd go out in a mission, you'd get all shot up, you'd spend all night trying to
3 put yourself back together again, go out fly the next day. There was a couple of times
4 that I flew thirty-six hours without stopping, without getting any rest or be maintenance
5 trying to get ready to go. When you finally did get shut down you'd fall asleep for
6 twenty hours. So there wasn't any time for that stuff.

7 SM: Anything else you'd like to talk about with regard to your time in-country
8 before we talk about your trip home and all that?

9 WQ: Not really.

10 SM: How did you feel about leaving?

11 WQ: I was ready to leave when I left probably because I didn't sign up to extend.
12 Part of me—I'd done my share. I felt like I, you know, for someone who didn't have to
13 go in in the first place I felt like I'd done my share, but part of me wanted to go back. I
14 told myself I'll go back home and see. Get my bearings again and if I want to go back
15 the form that you'd submit for that was a 1049. I was, you know, if I wanted to go back
16 I'd 1049 right back to my same unit. They very seldom ever say no to volunteers. That
17 situation was taken care of. I got home. Bought a brand new motorcycle and took it out
18 and stacked it up and ended up in a hospital for two weeks. So I did myself more damage
19 than the enemy ever did to me. I spent the rest of my time in the military on light duty. I
20 tore up my leg pretty bad so it was a non-issue. I couldn't go back. By the time that I
21 was healed enough to go back if I wanted to I'd spend a year and a half stateside. The
22 Army was such a deplorable mess that the attitude over in 'Nam had changed by then and
23 I just said I want out of this mess. So I just ETSed (expiration of term of service) and
24 left.

25 SM: Well, when you left Vietnam did you feel like you had accomplished very
26 much as a member of the unit?

27 WQ: Oh, yeah. There was no doubt in my mind. We had a job to do. We did it.
28 We did it very well. I pulled my weight. Having met me, I had a lot of weight to pull. I
29 was considerably smaller in those days, but I'm very proud of what I'd done.

30 SM: Yes, sir.

1 WQ: I'd done my job. So that was a non-issue to me. There's a very different
2 Army. There are armies within armies. The combat army is an entirely different army
3 than even the support army even in 'Nam. Then the stateside army is something entirely
4 different. That's a whole different critter. You have Vietnam veterans, but to me you're
5 not a Vietnam veteran until you're a combat veteran. These guys who hung out in Tan
6 Son Nhut and the most serious thing that they had to worry about was the clap. They
7 might be Vietnam veterans, but they're not combat veterans. That's my distinction.
8 They had a job to do and they did it. They made what we were doing possible and we did
9 our job to make what the infantry, what they did, possible. But there is a difference. I
10 think there should be more distinction made on that, but that's just my personal opinion.
11 Kind of like the infantry combat, you have an expert infantryman badge and then you
12 have an oak wreath around and you're a combat infantryman. There's a very separate
13 distinct even in the recognition that you wear. The armor guys today wear a combat
14 armor badge, kind of like that. On my uniform I wore aviator wings or crew member
15 wings. There's no distinction between that and then a set of wings earned stateside. That
16 would be nice, but what the heck. It takes everybody. It's all a team doing it. So you
17 have to have the guys in the rear doing the support stuff. They are necessary and I don't
18 diminish their job in that respect, but I always felt there should be a distinction.

19 SM: Yes, sir. This'll be a good place to take a quick break. This'll end the
20 interview with Mr. Quigley on the sixteenth of May.

Interview with William Quigley

Session [3] of [3]

Date: May 23, 2003

1 Steve Maxner: This is Steve Maxner continuing the interview with Mr. William
2 Quigley on the twenty-third of May 2003 at 3:40 Lubbock time. I'm in Lubbock, Texas,
3 and Mr. Quigley is in Baker City, Oregon. Sir, thank you again for consenting to this
4 interview. Let me go ahead and let's go ahead and start our interview today by looking at
5 your trip home. If you would describe what it was like when you learned that, when you
6 realized that you were at the end of your tour in Vietnam and it's time to leave and come
7 back to the world, as you gentlemen used to put it.

8 WQ: Well, we were always aware if we made it through everything the date that
9 we would DEROS (date of estimated return from overseas) back to the world. So your
10 last thirty days you were very much aware when you were going to be leaving country.
11 A lot of guys started having some serious problems. The common term for a lot of guys
12 that were still in combat support was, "I'm too short for this shit." You started—you
13 weren't really a very good soldier at that point. You started being concerned about
14 surviving. To back up a little bit your first couple months in-country you're learning.
15 You're not aware of what's happening and you aren't a very good soldier. About the
16 second to third month you start to grasp what's happening. You've learned some of the
17 very basic skills to survive. From that point on you've almost, to a certain extent, written
18 yourself off. I'm going to do the best job I can. If I don't make it home I don't make it
19 home. You focus in on your job, doing your job. You put a lot of the world out of your
20 mind for the most part and you just do your job. You're there. We were there to support
21 the infantry troops, the grunts. We were, in many cases, their lifeline, their only lifeline,
22 for supplies, for the basic combat supplies, for some of the creature benefits, and of
23 course if they are wounded or needed to go, you know, go out on R&R, whatever. We
24 were there source for that transportation. You focused on that and that's what you did.
25 Our days were extremely long. You didn't have time to really pay attention to too much
26 of anything else. You'd have a few moments sometimes in the evening between when
27 you get off and you were done with what you needed to do and have a couple beers and
28 enjoy the other people in your flight section and then go to sleep. If it wasn't interrupted

1 you got five, six hours sleep and then you started all over again. So during that period,
2 that eight months, you're a fully functional military personnel and you did your job and
3 you knew what it was and how to survive. The last couple months you started getting too
4 short and your focus changes, going back to the world. A lot of guys quite flying, got out
5 of the flight platoons, went to the maintenance, and hung out, if you will, took the easy
6 road out to the end of their tour. I flew my last combat mission nine days in-country. I
7 wasn't really slated to do that, but there was a ship that was shot down and I replaced it.
8 It was. I knew that would be my last mission. I was slated to take my ship to Da Nang
9 for its thousand hour inspection. At that time the new crew chief on it would be sent
10 down and I'd turn it over to him and I would start the sign out process. So extremely
11 antsy but we got through it and signed out of company and headed south. Leaving the
12 company, kind of mixed emotions. I felt like I was basically bugging out on the guys, but
13 then I'd done my share. It was my time to leave and I was going to leave, but you still
14 felt a little guilty on that. By the same token you were happy to get out of that mess and
15 head home and see your family. So you left country with mixed emotions. I flew out of
16 Quang Tri, flew in to An Khe. That was our headquarters and finished the signing out,
17 and then flew on to Cam Ranh Bay. Cam Ranh Bay was an interesting experience. It
18 was probably in many respects left the most distasteful aftertaste, if you will, in my
19 mouth from the U.S. military. You had all these guys coming in out of brush, particularly
20 the infantry guys. They came in to Cam Ranh Bay dressed in their khakis, ready to go
21 home, put in to a holding company and all they did was screw with people. Had them
22 filling sand bags, building bunkers, every trash and dirty detail they could come up with
23 because they knew these guys were focused in on going home and certainly didn't want
24 to do anything to forestall that. Getting in trouble would just delay that, if not make
25 things more difficult for them. So these poor guys took an immeasurable amount of crap
26 from the cadre at Cam Ranh Bay. Quite frankly they left the worst taste in my mouth.
27 Those people than the enemy I was supposedly fighting. I have more respect for the
28 combat veterans, the NVA, than I do those people. Well, we got through that and
29 essentially you went home alone. I was on the aircraft with one person that I went over
30 with, Tony Holcum was his name. He went off to another company and we kind of
31 bumped into each other at Cam Ranh Bay and went home. I think the most memorable

1 part of going home was you were in—most of us were fairly dirty from being messed
2 with. A lot of guys didn't even have a change of clothes with them when they went down
3 there. You got on to this pressurized air conditioned aircraft, got up to whatever, forty
4 thousand feet, whatever we were flying at, at about seventy-five degrees and most guys
5 were painfully cold. You left Cam Ranh Bay at a hundred ten plus degrees at eighty-five
6 to ninety-five percent humidity and go in to one of those cabins at seventy-five. It was
7 probably the most miserable twenty-three hours I've ever spent in my life. Landing at
8 Guam to refuel was getting back out in the semi-tropical area like Guam, even in the
9 middle of the night, was a relief from that cabin. Most guys spent their time all wadded
10 up in a blanket hugging each other because they were painfully cold. Landing in the
11 States again was mixed emotions. In '68, after the Tet Offensive, the demonstrations
12 were starting in earnest. Most of us didn't really have any concept of how divided the
13 country was at that point. I had seen maybe five, maybe ten minutes, of TV my whole
14 tour. I wasn't really aware of it. I quit reading stateside papers after a couple months in-
15 country and was focused on my job and I just didn't have—I didn't really want to know.
16 I had my job and that's what I was going to do. Coming back to the world, landing at
17 Sea-Tac and being met with that was quite an experience. Most of us felt that we were
18 serving our country, we're doing our job well, and to come back and to be met with total
19 disdain and hostility by our fellow Americans was quite a shock. We spent a lot of time
20 just kind of looking at each other, "What the hell is all this crap?" They pushed us
21 through the reception area. We went in and got showers. We got a meal. New class A
22 uniforms were issued to us and tailored rather quickly. Everything that we needed was,
23 any medals and insignias were all sewn on. So we were squared away when we left
24 there. We were kind of put out the door and find your way home. Then again we went in
25 to starting mixing with the civilians in uniform and how we were greeted was—I was
26 very taken back because I didn't think that I'd done anything wrong. I thought I spent
27 my time over there and acquitted myself well. To be met with disdain—even the airport
28 personnel treated us not real rude, but they were pretty curt with us. Most of us were
29 flying on standby were shoved off in to corners and didn't want to be out in the open.
30 They tried to herd us in to the USO, keep us out of the main part of the airport. Even
31 when we boarded the aircraft it was kind of like—there was no one that said thank you,

1 that's for sure. No one wanted to sit by you. It was an interesting experience. I flew a
2 short trip to Seattle, hit Portland, and then caught a puddle jumper out of Portland and
3 went to Pendleton. I had to take a bus out of Pendleton to get home. It was kind of like
4 that. By the time I got on the bus to Pendleton to get home I really didn't give a rat's ass
5 what anybody thought. I was getting out of here. When I finally got home it really
6 started over again. Of course my parents were very glad to see me and a lot of family
7 members were there to meet me once I got home. Some of the people that I'd known
8 were less than cordial. It was like if you told them where you had been, "Haven't seen
9 you around. Where you been?" "I was in the 'Nam," and then it was like, "Oh, yeah.
10 Well, get away from me," was their attitude. So you started shutting down all that. You
11 started going in to denial. You spent—really, I spent the next nineteen years pretty much
12 in denial and had to work my way back out of that to deal with all this. So by and large I
13 don't feel that anybody owes me anything for my tour in Vietnam, my service in the
14 military, except an apology. A lot of it is coming back around. There are some people
15 starting to say thank you and that's fine. I've dealt with that and gotten past that. My
16 goal now is that if I ever see a GI mistreated, anything, faintly, like we were he's going to
17 have support. He's going to have it right now. So, in some ways we kind of paved the
18 way to the attitude that our troops are receiving now. I'll pay the price as long as they're
19 well treated. That's really kind of where we are. From the gathering when you were
20 there, we're all brothers. To a certain extent, not even to a certain extent, I'll rephrase
21 that. To a great degree, the people that we fought, our enemies, are closer to me in some
22 respects than the citizenry of this country from that period. They are our brothers in that
23 they have tasted combat. They know what it's like. I have a great deal of respect for
24 them. I mean what we meted out to the NVA was horrendous. How they even got
25 through some of the stuff we threw at them is truly amazing. I don't know if I could have
26 held up under that. That's true and you get—as time goes on you understand the
27 brotherhood. You can't even begin to convey that to people that's never experienced that
28 sort of thing and that's fine. I hope that it's never to the point here in this country where
29 the civilians have to experience that. We got a little tiny taste of it in 9/11 and I hope
30 that's as far as it ever goes, but the—I don't know. You just deal with it and go on from

1 there and make sure that the people that are returning now aren't treated that way. That's
2 really my goal.

3 SM: Well, when you came back did you find it difficult to talk with people that
4 were close to you whether it be your parents or siblings or other friends, close friends?
5 Did you find it difficult to talk about the Vietnam War and broach the subject? Did you
6 find a general unease about the war?

7 WQ: Well, yeah. My father had gone through World War II. In many respects
8 he did a great, very similar job to what I did. He was with the Navy. He was a crew
9 chief gunner on a helldiver. So, he had experienced some of that. He never did see any
10 combat really, but he had at least some of the appreciation of what it's like to maintain an
11 aircraft and fly with it and go out on combat patrol. I think what really brought it to my
12 dad is the first night that we were home, and you know, with what I'd been through and I
13 didn't really write a whole lot about it. I did once in a while and of course he followed
14 the news. We lived in a very rural part of the county up close to the mountains in the
15 Timberlands. In our backyard, our backyard fence about fifty feet from the door the tree
16 line started. We were sitting out in the picnic table in the backyard right at dark. I
17 smoked at that time and we were both having a cigarette out there. Our closest neighbor
18 was probably about a hundred yards away down the road. For whatever reason
19 somebody down there just ripped off about four rounds with a 22 rifle and it was pow,
20 pow, pow, pow, pow. My immediate reaction was I just grabbed my dad around the
21 chest and just below the neck and drug him off underneath the picnic table. Of course
22 poor guy was hollering and was carrying on me, "What the hell was that?" You know,
23 and I got him down under there and he was real quiet and he just said, "Okay. I
24 understand." That was all that was ever said about that. But the first night home I was
25 laying in the bed after about an hour after that, it was dark. I could hear the owls hooting.
26 There was no artillery. There were no sporadic weapons fired. There was nothing. It
27 was absolutely quiet. The animal sounds that I'd grown up with and I remember just
28 before I went to sleep said, "I don't have to worry about anything tonight." There's no
29 one going to come through the wire. We're not going to get hit with mortars. I don't
30 have anything to worry about. That was just focused on that for a few minutes and then,

1 “Damn. I’m really back to the world.” That was probably at that point really accepted
2 that you were home.

3 SM: In what ways did the Vietnam War affect you most personally and your
4 experiences in Vietnam?

5 WQ: I don’t—you know, you’re always going to deal with it. To say that you go
6 through something like that and then come home and it’s done, that’s not true. It’s like
7 any experience that you’ve had. The people that were involved with 9/11 will never
8 forget that. It’ll be part of their psyche and they’re forever changed by it. You have—
9 my perspective on life is that the world, if you will, dealt me as worse, as bad, as an
10 experience that it was going to. I got through that and everything after that is anti-
11 climactical. What can you threaten me with that hasn’t already been tried? I survived
12 that and I can survive anything else the world has to throw at me. So I guess in that
13 respect there’s a certain confidence level from that. I think the only thing that I’ve ever
14 encountered in my life since then that would put the adrenal jolt that you get when you’re
15 in combat when the rounds start cracking around you and the artillery and the mortars
16 come in is it was my seven year old daughter was—oh, about six or seven months ago
17 and she had gone outside. I was outside and all of a sudden I couldn’t find her. When
18 you have children you’re always worried about them being picked up or something. That
19 sense of, the initial sense of panic that you feel when, oh my gosh, my child is gone and I
20 don’t know where they are, the only thing that’s ever—that rivals that feeling. I was
21 struck by the fact that I never thought that I could be, you know, as scared, if you will, as
22 I was when the initial shock hits you, but your kids can do that to you. So if you’ve ever
23 experienced that it’s much the same. It’s just a combination of dread, shock, and almost
24 helplessness all at once. You have to just kind of suck it up and get past that and do your
25 job. I found my daughter and everything was fine, but it’s the same shock that you get,
26 that adrenal shock that you get, in both instances. That’s the only thing that’s ever come
27 close to that sense is that. The fear that you experience for your family and in that
28 situation it’s a fear for yourself really, but just a fear for your family like that is close if
29 not even stronger. That’s the part that’s stayed with me. I think when you get to a
30 gathering and meet the people that you served with there’s an immense amount of pride
31 that I don’t think that you’re going to experience anywhere else, and a closeness that even

1 after thirty-five years you picked up where you left off on the people that you were close
2 to. That doesn't ever wane. It's always there and I don't think that—the only place that
3 you could probably experience that to a greater degree is the brotherhood that
4 infantrymen, grunts, that have lived in the dirt and the mud. Theirs is even a greater
5 sense than the aviation personnel because they're even closer. The things that I've
6 experienced since then have been tempered somewhat by that, sometimes positive,
7 sometimes negatively. You just deal with it and go on from there, but it's something that
8 is with you for the rest of your life and you'll die with it. As the people since man started
9 picking up rocks and throwing them at each other all combatants have experienced that,
10 will experience it, and they'll deal with it the same way in many respects that we do.
11 Time hasn't changed any of that nor will it ever. I don't care if you're involved in a Star
12 Wars or you're the first guy to pick up a rock and throw it at the guy, you know, across
13 the creek. It's much the same and it always will be. Nowhere else are you going to
14 experience that except maybe something like 9/11, going through that scenario. Even
15 that, that's a one shot jolt. You multiply that by three hundred and sixty-five days and
16 sometimes it is, some of these guys do have a hard time getting past it and dealing it with
17 the rest of their life. If ultimately if they use it as a cop out as the reason they're
18 performing a serious disservice to themselves. That's kind of where I am with it and it
19 isn't everything that you've ever done with and you deal with everyday. Most days
20 aren't that difficult, but once in a while it'll hit you and it'll come out of nowhere. It can
21 be a sound, an image, a smell, and it'll put you right back in the middle of that.
22 Sometimes you have a tough day or two. So you're never done with it.

23 SM: Have you had an opportunity yet to visit the Wall, the Vietnam War
24 Memorial in Washington, D.C.?

25 WQ: No. There was the half scale wall that travels around.

26 SM: The moving wall.

27 WQ: Yeah. I went to that. I went to it with a couple of guys and I didn't serve
28 with them, but I served in the same unit. They were in the Cav. They were infantry guys
29 and spent most of my time holding them up because they do feel it for the most respects a
30 lot more sharply than the aviation people. They were even closer. Of course they'd see
31 the names and some of the names, the hundreds of people that I encountered as we

1 moved out as casualties and KIAs, they're still with me. I see a lot of them, but I didn't
2 know them. These guys in many instances would see their buddy go down and try to
3 help them and be holding them when they died. It comes back and hits these guys real
4 hard. The grunts' always going to have a tougher time with it because they had the
5 tougher job.

6 SM: How do you think—well, what do you think about the way the VA
7 (Veteran's Administration) has taken care of veterans from the Vietnam War?

8 WQ: Atrocious.

9 SM: Okay.

10 WQ: One word, atrocious.

11 SM: Have you had cause to use the VA system very much at all?

12 WQ: I'm registered with the VA as an Agent Orange veteran. I had some service
13 connected injuries so I'm involved in the system. I don't use it but very rarely. I think I
14 got involved with the Agent Orange and just by accident. My dad was in the VA system
15 and the last ten years of his life I was his guardian. He wasn't able to take care of himself
16 so I took him to the VA hospital in Boise, about a hundred and twenty-five miles away,
17 once a month and saw to his care. I had been in the system quite a bit and I just noticed
18 that they—back in '84 I think I noticed a poster on the wall that if you're in Vietnam that
19 you had until '85, January of '85 or something, to be registered as an Agent Orange
20 veteran. So I went through that and got the physical and got set up on that. I was already
21 in the system for some service connected injuries. That's really been the extent of it. I
22 haven't asked anything from them. I know that—I suppose, the system itself, the VA, is
23 doing the best with what the funds are allocated to them. I'm sure most of these people
24 would certainly do more if they had the funds and the personnel to do it. So if I'm going
25 to say atrocious it's not the VA itself. It's the government, the legislators that have
26 strangled it down and would much, as well—they don't seem to have as much problem
27 funding the war, but they don't want to deal with the casualties when they come home.
28 They don't want to think about that. So the way the U.S. government has dealt with it is
29 atrocious.

30 SM: What do you think about government policy towards Vietnam, especially
31 the normalization of relations with Vietnam?

1 WQ: That's fine. I don't have a problem with that. Here in Iraq one of our allies
2 was Spain and we fought a war with Spain a hundred year ago. I mean, you get past
3 things. Like I said, I have a great deal of more respect for the men and women that I
4 fought in Vietnam than I do a lot of American citizens in this country, then and now. So
5 you get past that. You go on, deal with it. There are still some things that need to be
6 cleaned up. We have some MIAs (missing in action) that we need to deal with and find
7 and to get some closure for the families on those. Fine. In many respects Vietnam had a
8 goal, Ho Chi Minh, and then later on the hierarchy of his party, they had a job to do.
9 They wanted the country cleaned out and I don't blame them for that. I think some of the
10 tactics they used particularly with the Viet Cong were certainly less than admirable, but
11 you can't attach that to all of the NVA soldiers that served over there. They were just
12 kids like we were. Their country said, "It's time for you to serve," and they went. They
13 have certain bragging rights. I mean, they did get us out of there. If the United States
14 Army and Marine Corps and Navy and Air Force had been told to win the war the war
15 would've been won. The Vietnamese never won a major or significant battle. In fact, the
16 only significant battle they did win through the history of that conflict was against the
17 French. So that should be no surprise, but they never did win any major conflicts or
18 engagements with the United States Army and the U.S. Marines. But they got us out by
19 fair means or foul, by military or political, we left. They were left there to do as they
20 pleased. So they have a certain amount of bragging rights there. So, I don't have a
21 problem with normalization at all.

22 SM: Do you think that the United States in general, the government in particular,
23 policy makers, and the American people, do you think we've learned all the lessons we
24 can from the Vietnam War?

25 WQ: Well, I'm not sure that you ever learn all the lessons that you can. We
26 learned a great many of them. I think—well, in Desert Storm the way they went about
27 Desert Storm I know that Schwarzkopf and Powell were field commanders during
28 Vietnam. They did their tour or tours on the ground. They were both grunt officers.
29 They served in the field. They've been there. Their primary goal was not to end up in a
30 quagmire, essentially turn the military loose. If you want the military to fight a war you
31 let the military fight the damn war. I think if my wish were granted with respect to the

1 government at the time that Vietnam was going on that quite possibly some of the
2 government leaders, including LBJ (Lyndon B. Johnson), should be at least scrutinized
3 for treason. I think some of the things that they did were down right treasonous. Of
4 course some of the celebrities I still think should be tried for treason. Should they be
5 hung? No. But I think they should stand trial for treason. I think there should be some
6 closure on that. I listened to the celebrities that voiced strong dissent with respect to Iraq
7 and a lot of them are paying and I'm glad to see that. Thirty-five years ago they wouldn't
8 have had to pay anything or very little, but I'm glad to see that the American people have
9 at least awoken to that. I wouldn't be opposed to a couple treason trials going on right
10 now. People have a right to speak their mind and I wouldn't certainly interfere with that
11 and I would defend their right even if I didn't like what they're saying, but you don't go
12 to the country that we are engaged with and shoot your mouth off. That's treason. That's
13 aid and comfort, sedition. I've seen some demonstrations where we support American
14 soldiers who shoot their officers. That again is sedition and inciting mutiny. They
15 should be tried accordingly at least. I think the money would be well spent. I don't
16 particularly want to see any of them hung or shot, but I think that stigma should go with
17 them for the rest of their lives. I would certainly be happy to serve on any jury that heard
18 that trial.

19 SM: Well, when you came back from Vietnam were you surprised at the attitude
20 of the American people? I mean, you were there from '67, '68.

21 WQ: Correct.

22 SM: So you were there before Tet. You left before Tet. Although there was
23 some anti-war activity it really wasn't all that geared up, but when you came home it
24 wasn't too long after that the anti-war movement really picked up steam and a lot more
25 activity was going on. Were you surprised by the reaction of our nation to the war?

26 WQ: I didn't have any defense for it. I was surprised is putting it mildly. I came
27 back home in August of '68. That was roughly—what—six months after the Tet
28 Offensive. Things were boiling over. I still had fourteen months left in the military and I
29 served it at Fort Hood. Once I got there I didn't engage with civilians. I essentially
30 isolated myself from Fort Hood, very seldom went off post. I didn't even come home. I
31 had over almost forty-five days of leave when I got—about thirty-five days of leave when

1 I got out and I didn't go anywhere. I shut it all down. I didn't deal with it. What little bit
2 of television I watched I watched a few sports and I watched the landing on the moon.
3 Other than that I didn't read papers. I totally shut it all out. When I got out of the Army I
4 drove home. I don't remember dealing with it at all. I think the first attempt that I did or
5 had to deal with it is I thought that I probably would want to get in to law enforcement.
6 So I interviewed with a local police department. I did a résumé. The chief of police told
7 his second in command, I could hear him in his office, he said, "Well, get rid of that one.
8 I don't want one of those Vietnam killers in my police force." I really slammed it shut
9 after that. I didn't talk about it. Nobody really that didn't know me before wouldn't even
10 have been able to tell you that I ever served in the military at all. I went to college on the
11 GI Bill. The first thing they did was—this was in '70, '71, yeah, the fall of '71—is label
12 you a GI Bill student. You were immediately ostracized by some of the faculty, certainly
13 some of the younger students. I majored in psychology so part of what they were doing
14 was the group therapy. As part of your class curriculum you had group therapy
15 encounters. There was always some little mindless bimbo that wanted to call you a baby
16 killer and try to make you atone for your sins right there and join the anti-war movement.
17 You always had that to deal with. You shut it out. Unless somebody forced you to deal
18 with it you shut it all out. You didn't deal with it. I spent nineteen years like that and
19 have a lot of nightmares. It's going to manifest itself someday and I had a lot of
20 nightmares. The reoccurring theme was—when we were over there supporting studies
21 and observation groups. When you fly out you were so far from anything friendly that if
22 you went down you were in serious trouble. We weren't well equipped to take care of
23 ourselves in that scenario. With what we had you put together your own survival kits.
24 You had to take care of yourself. The military didn't handle that very well for Army
25 aviators. That was always my thought. The central theme was going down and getting
26 captured. I wasn't going to be an easy capture. That's something that you was always
27 aware of and in the back of your mind. I wasn't going to go down easy. If they killed me
28 then they killed me. I wasn't about to be taken alive. So that was, in many respects, the
29 central theme of the dreams. For nineteen years I didn't deal with it other than when it
30 would manifest itself, something of that nature. When I was in college I was a
31 psychology major. So they thought that anybody was a psych major that was a GI Bill

1 veteran would be good counselors for the program they called Outreach and it was
2 Vietnam veterans helping Vietnam veterans. You'd have group therapy. The psych
3 students were expected to run it and counsel these guys. So I went in to that and started
4 it. I was about three or four months into it. In rapid succession two guys that I was
5 counseling committed suicide. One did it and then the other guy just said I can't deal
6 with it and he shot himself too. I had to leave that. I didn't think either one of them had
7 seen, as much as I had, or really had the potential to have as much problems. One guy
8 was in Tan Son Nhut. They really never saw any real action anyway. Some of it was
9 that he felt guilty 'cause he hadn't. So I got out of that program. I couldn't deal with that
10 and shut it down some more.

11 SM: Well, what was it that after nineteen years or so prompted you to be a little
12 more open about your experiences and, I guess, accept them?

13 WQ: Well, one of the problems that I had, my first wife was convinced and she
14 quite often would tell me that I was going to freak out and kill her. She wasn't—with
15 respect to dealing with that experience, was absolutely no help if not—well, she was no
16 help. After we divorced, I had to take responsibility for some of that. Some of the
17 responsibility lie in the fact that I wasn't taking, I wasn't dealing with it. I'd have these
18 nightmares and I'd wake up and she'd be sitting in the corner of the bedroom just all in
19 the fetal position shaking, afraid that I was going to wake up and beat her to death or
20 something. I'm not quite sure what she thought I was going to do. So I had to look hard
21 at why we didn't survive as a couple. There were a lot of reasons. Are you there?

22 SM: Yes, sir.

23 WQ: Oh, okay. I heard some pop in here. A lot of reasons that we didn't—
24 certainly one of them was my experience in not dealing with it. So I had to look at it all
25 and I had to decide if I was going to go on that I had to come out and deal with some of
26 this stuff. I owed it not only to myself, but to my children. They had to have a father that
27 was worthwhile. Even though their mother and their father were divorced they weren't
28 going to be the scapegoats and they were going to have somebody they could rely on. So
29 I had to understand part of why the relationship didn't make it and take responsibility for
30 my part of it and make sure that wasn't going to happen again. After that I had ten years
31 before I married again. I just pulled it up and faced it and came to some decisions that I

1 had nothing to be ashamed of, that my performance was honorable. It sounds real easy to
2 say that. It took a couple years to come to that decision and that realization, but that's
3 what it took. So you, instead of shutting it out, you dealt with a little bit of it everyday.
4 Sometimes it was pretty tough, but you have to if you're going to go on. You have to get
5 some closure for yourself, and if you don't then you're not going on and you'll be like a
6 lot of these guys that you see that are on full disability because they can't deal with it and
7 they usually end up wasted away very shortly on drugs or alcohol. I just decided that I
8 was going to do a little better than that. So I dealt with it. Some of the things that I've
9 never dealt with well like crowds of people I dealt with that. Moved to San Francisco,
10 Berkeley, and kind of threw myself right in the middle of it. If I can survive this mess I
11 can survive anything. After seven months I felt I could deal with it and still don't like
12 large population area. I'm very rural where I live and don't like to be around a lot of
13 people. That's fine. I can deal with it and I know I can if I have to. It's just a matter of
14 trying to put a handle on it and deciding that you're going to focus in on some of the
15 things that you had been suppressing and deal with them. Bring them out. Deal with
16 them. Then you can put them away at will and bring them out at will.

17 SM: Okay. Is there anything else that you want to discuss today?

18 WQ: Oh, not really. I'm doing well. My life is good. I have a good family. We
19 adopted a little girl. A lot of the reasons that we adopted partly goes back to Vietnam and
20 the Agent Orange exposure. I don't have any real problems that I'm aware of. I know
21 that part of what you pass on to your children—there are some spine deformities, spina
22 bifida. Both of my kids have some spinal deformity, nothing major. Just it's more
23 annoying at this point than anything. The reason that we decided to adopt is we didn't
24 want to risk having another problem. There's a lot of little lives in the world, in the
25 United States, that need help. Rather than produce another child why not take one that's
26 already here and try to do the best you can by them so that's what we did.

27 SM: How old is your adopted child?

28 WQ: Seven.

29 SM: Wow.

30 WQ: Part of the reason—the first thing they told me. We went through the State
31 system and the first thing the interviewer said was, “Well, you're too old to adopt.” We

1 got to discussing why and I explained to them about Agent Orange exposure and the
2 possibility of having a child with some serious problems. Come to find out he was a
3 Vietnam veteran too and he said, “Well, we’re going to get this done.” So, that’s one
4 place it paid off. I outlined to him what I wanted, what I anticipated, what I would like, if
5 you will. He came up with an infant little girl that fit that specification exactly. So be
6 careful what you ask for. You might get it. So, yeah, I wouldn’t change a minute of that.
7 That’s worked out very well.

8 SM: Anything else sir?

9 WQ: Oh—that’s really all. We’re doing it. We’re getting by it. That’s the
10 important thing.

11 SM: Yes, sir. Absolutely. Well, let’s go ahead and put an official ending on this
12 and we can always add to it later.

13 WQ: Okay.

14 SM: All right. Well, thank you very much sir. This will end the first series of
15 interview with Mr. William Quigley. Thank you.