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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Robert Lee Barker
Conducted by Dr. Richard B. Verrone
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Transcribed by Mark Varela**

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

1 Dr. Richard Verrone: This is Dr. Richard Verrone, I am conducting a video oral
2 history with Robert Lee Barker, Lieutenant Colonel. We are in Washington D.C., at the
3 Hilton Crystal City Hotel. The 40th anniversary reunion commemorating of the Ia Drang
4 Valley, as well as the 1st Cav Division's annual reunion. Colonel Barker, those days back
5 in November 1965. In the interest of time, we will cut right to that. But I would like for
6 you to make some comments before we talk about those days, about air support, and
7 artillery support and fire support and the role that—which you brought the ideas of how
8 that would function with the Cav and how that would function with troops on the ground.
9 A lot of people who look at operations on the ground forget there are supporting batteries
10 off in the distance, taking care a lot of business. Could you make some comments on
11 what that role is and your personal ideas on it?

12 Robert Barker: Sure. One of the basics of tactical support through artillery support
13 is to make sure you put a fire support plan together that supports the infantry maneuver
14 plan. The infantry can't go without some kind of good fire support plan. That includes
15 artillery, TAC (Tactical Air Control) air support, navel gun fire if we were in that kind of
16 situation. Up to B-52 strikes, which in this particular battle did happen for the first time.
17 When you consider all the available fire support to an infantry unit commander, there is a
18 heck of a lot of it and this is from 105 mm Howitzers, which is my battalion, my battery,
19 up to the 8 inch 175 guns during that time frame. During the Pleiku, Ia Drang campaign

1 though, there was only 105 mm batteries available. There was no 8 in, no 175, but a lot of
2 TAC air and that included, I believe some of the Naval and Marine Corps provided some
3 fighter support.

4 RV: Yes, sir. You were at LZ (Landing Zone) Falcon?

5 RB: I was at Landing Zone Falcon.

6 RV: Tell me what your role there was. Before the battle, how did you understand
7 what you were going to do and how you prepared?

8 RB: I got the order to relocate from where we were with the 1st of 7th. We were at
9 a landing zone somewhat south of Catecka Tea Plantation. Got the order to make a
10 reconnaissance, aerial reconnaissance of Landing Zone Falcon early in the morning of the
11 14th. It was a quick reconnaissance as I recall. We went out—

12 RV: Who was with you? Do you remember?

13 RB: When I made the aerial reconnaissance?

14 RV: Yes, sir.

15 RB: I went in an H-13 I believe. So just with a pilot and we went out and made a
16 fast reconnaissance and came back. Got a good look at the LZ and what we were going to
17 have to work with. Selected a portion of it that looked like a good place to land the
18 Chinooks. It takes nine or ten Chinooks to move a battery in total, but there weren't that
19 many available to move my battery in total that morning. We had to be in position, as I
20 recall by about ten o'clock in the morning, ready to shoot the preparation, the preparatory
21 fire.

22 RV: Falcon at this point is empty. There's nothing there. You selected this. Did
23 you coordinate with Moore about here's where we're going to be?

24 RB: Oh yeah. He knew. Colonel Moore knew where we were going to place the
25 batteries and that was not my choice obviously, but probably that decision was made at
26 brigade headquarters and it came down through the brigade to the infantry battalion. But
27 through my battalion it came through to me that we were going to Landing Zone Falcon
28 and that's how we knew where we were going along with my sister battery, A Battery. I
29 started moving the battery late in the morning, probably about 8:30, anticipating I would
30 take about an hour, hour fifteen minutes. Simultaneously, A Battery was going in also.
31 When I landed with my advanced party, in Landing Zone Falcon, my advanced party

1 consisted of myself, my first sergeant, chief of firing battery, commo sergeant, a gun
2 chief or a canon air from each gun section, I had six-gun sections. I would position them
3 where I wanted them to. We pull my Jeep and trailer off the Chinook. Immediately, it
4 bogged down into the mud. Little did we know that part of the LZ was kind of mushy,
5 marshland perhaps. We were able to get the Jeep out and moved up to some higher
6 ground. I selected a different place to even land the Chinook later on as they brought the
7 Howitzers in so we would not bog those five-thousand-pound piece of machinery down
8 into the mud. I then gave the order to my battery executive officer to march order the
9 section back to where we were, each gun section in our previous LZ. I might mention at
10 this point, Landing Zone Falcon was about fifty-five hundred meters away from where
11 Landing Zone X-Ray was going to be. That's about optimum range for 105 mm Howitzer
12 and we get less range dispersion, less deflection—we never have much deflection
13 dispersion, but range dispersion is critical to us. That's the optimal range for us to be
14 shooting and support any kind of infantry. We were in a real good position to give them
15 real accurate and close end fire support. As I recall, we got the battery in total by
16 shuttling the battery one gunner at a time, all internal loaded in the CH-47 Chinook
17 helicopters. For some strange reason, to this day no one has been able to explain it to me.
18 When we trained back at Fort Benning, Georgia, in the 11th Air Assault, we trained to
19 sling load our houses underneath the Chinooks and sling load the ammunition underneath
20 the Chinook. But when we went to Vietnam, for some strange reason, we didn't have the
21 slings to sling load our Howitzers or the ammunition to use.

22 RV: So this is a completed different. You guys had to internally load it and secure
23 it?

24 RB: Internally load it and secure it with the crew and all their gear and about
25 thirty rounds per Howitzer. That was about the maximum load that hook could pick up.
26 (Chuckles)

27 RV: Wow. Did that slow you down?

28 RB: Yes, it did. Quite a bit because you have to land the Chinook, they have to
29 open the ramp, untie everything, let it roll out and then bring—the way we move our
30 Howitzer into position was with my Jeep. We go over, hook onto it, pull it into position
31 where the gun section chief—where I played out his particular gun section. So that took a

1 lot of time to do that. That's part of the problem we had that morning in getting into
2 position to shoot the preparatory artillery fire in support of Colonel Moore's 1st Battalion
3 7th Cav. I might go back and say at this point too that the mission I got that morning was
4 direct support, 1st Battalion 7th Cavalry. My battery was Charlie Battery. Which simply
5 means that the priority of fire I was to give were to go to—my forward observers were
6 with his battalion and A Battery was a reinforcing battery and they would take fire
7 missions also from the 1st of the 7th and only at my battery FDC's (Fire Direction Center)
8 direction. So at any rate, we got into position. A Battery was coming in also and they had
9 to shovel their gun sections in also, so that's what really slowed the whole operation
10 down and put us about fifteen or twenty minutes behind time. I think the book said the
11 preparatory fires were to be at 10:17, it was about 10:30 when we were really ready to
12 shoot. Meantime, Colonel Moore and his lead elements were airborne, and they had to
13 orbit for a while. But when we did shoot the prep, we were on time and on target. When I
14 say on time, we lifted the fires at the right time, as did A Battery and the aero-rocket took
15 over and TAC air, whatever else was in on the preparatory fires. We lifted and shifted our
16 fire from X-Ray to other targets in the vicinity of X-Ray. There were two other landing
17 zones, Yankee and Tango, I believe. We lifted and shifted our fires up to them. Further
18 up the mountain side.

19 RV: Were you aware that—I know Colonel Moore had seen and did a
20 reconnaissance and there were some Montagnard villagers and tribes people out there
21 around the X-Ray landing zone. Did he say anything to you about that? "Make sure—
22 let's do this around here. Let's be careful." Because in the book he does mention, he says,
23 and I've talked to him about this, that, "We were careful not to pour everything in on
24 there because we knew there were civilians in there."

25 RB: Yes. I don't recall exactly getting that kind of information from Colonel
26 Moore. If I did, it would've come through his battalion fire support officer. But I'm sure
27 as I made up my map reconnaissance of where our targets were going to be, as well as
28 fire direction center—my battery fire direction center, we took in consideration whatever
29 friendlies there might be and where their locations were, meaning the Montagnard
30 villages. So we picked our targets on likely avenues of approach into X-Ray and along
31 the perimeter and up the trails and further up the mountain side, knowing little of what

1 the real enemy situation was. At my level, as the battery commander, we got intelligence
2 of what we were going to shoot at. We picked trails, road junctions that type of thing.
3 Likely avenues of approach. If we knew where enemy position was, well obviously we'd
4 target it. But a lot of times that kind of information from intercepted communications
5 doesn't really filter down to battery level. We may get a plot on a map that said, "Suspect
6 location" and that's about the size of it. We plot that as a target and unload the world on it
7 if we had to.

8 RV: Tell me about your men who were working the guns.

9 RB: Okay. Well, when we left Fort Benning, Georgia on August the 18th, my
10 battery consisted of eighty-two enlisted men and six officers. Which was about strength a
11 little bit over. When we arrived in Vietnam a little over a month later, no sooner when we
12 got in country, got to the Golf Course, walked to our battalion position, battery position, I
13 had a man started rotating home. He had thirty-one days to go into the service, but the
14 cut-off was thirty days. So he came in and went right on out. By the time we went to the
15 Ia Drang, I went into that battle with about fifty percent strength. Forty-two, forty-three
16 enlisted men and the three officers and the battery. Myself, the battery commander, my
17 executive officer, Lieutenant McPherson and my fire direction officer, Lieutenant Fisher,
18 Ralph Fisher. Of course—

19 RV: That's it.

20 RB: Well, I had my enlisted men.

21 RV: Right. Right.

22 RB: But that was my three officers and that's typical. See, the other three officers
23 were forward observers. They were Bill Riddle, Tim Blake and the third one I can't recall
24 right off, but they were with the Colonel Moore's 1st Battalion.

25 RV: Right. So it's pretty well depicted in the movie to an extent and in the book
26 about how busy you all got. Had you prepared for or had you all envisioned that kind of
27 busyness? Just firing as quick as you could, as much as you could for such a long time.
28 And were the guns ready? Physically ready?

29 RB: I think the best way to answer that question is yes and no. Yes, we were
30 prepared as we went into the landing zone, got all the guns ready and did all that. We had
31 the ammunition to shoot the preparatory fires and we had allocated that ammunition.

1 Later on, I went into the air in a H-13 as an aerial observer. Not only to call in fire
2 missions for my battery, but to relay fire missions for my forward observers with the
3 infantry. About two or three o'clock in the afternoon is when we realized we were into
4 big time battle. Fortunately, the TAC air and air rocket artillery, they were doing a superb
5 job providing immediate fire support. We were shooting missions for them also, the 105s,
6 my battery and A Battery. By about four or five o'clock in the afternoon I went back to
7 my battery position from where I was aerial observing kind of south—southeast of
8 Landing Zone X-Ray. I could see it pretty well what was going on. Went back to Landing
9 Zone Falcon about five o'clock in the afternoon. As I was getting off the chopper,
10 Colonel William Becker, division artillery commander showed up. We had a
11 conversation and he said, "Bob, are you going to need some ammunition?" And I knew
12 what my ammunition status was at that point. We were down low on HE (High
13 Explosive) and had a bunch of illumination. Illumination doesn't do very much for you—
14 for the infantry, except put lights on the target, they don't kill anybody. So he said—well,
15 I told him, "Colonel Becker, we are going to need a lot of ammunition." He said, "You
16 got it." Well, he gets back into his Huey helicopter and takes off. Within about an hour,
17 the first Chinook started coming in loaded with ammunition. Between my battery and
18 Alpha Battery, every Chinook that came in would either take half of it or if one battery
19 needed more, we took more, whatever the case was. They had to go back to internal
20 loading. All that ammunition had to be internal loaded. A 105 mm Howitzer ammunition
21 comes in a fiber container total, projo as well as the shell casing, brass shell. Powder
22 increments are on inside so whatever range we are shooting at, you take the powder out,
23 put it back together and loaded it and away it goes. So those canisters, those fiber
24 canisters were laid into the bed of the Chinook. The crew chief would strap them down.
25 So when they got to our landing zone, all he had to do was open the ramp, flip the tie
26 down clasp. The pilot would raise the front of the hook and the rounds would roll out in
27 their containers, those fiber containers and all we had to do was go over with our little
28 mules and pick those things up and deliver them to the battery position.

29 RV: Tell me about the first few hours after you did the preparatory fire, and how
30 did that day evolve?

1 RB: Like I said, I was aerial observing most of that afternoon, a couple of hours
2 that afternoon. I watched the heat of battle and listened to it on the radios relaying the fire
3 missions. The gun sections were working pretty hard, even at the point. Answering all the
4 calls for fire and keeping it sorted out, which is part of the battalion fire support officer—
5 that was part of his job too. Keep all that sorted out, attack air, air-lock artillery, field
6 artillery, whatever. From my standpoint, it was hectic. It was absolutely hectic. As I said,
7 I knew the ammunition was going to get critical. Just wasn't shooting battery one round,
8 we were shooting battery three and four and five rounds on target, which eats up a lot of
9 ammunition pretty doggone quick. Again, A Battery was more than likely doing the same
10 thing. So it was a hectic afternoon. I knew, as I said when I met Colonel Becker, that it
11 was going to get even more hectic before the next 24 hours, whatever it was going to take
12 to provide that artillery fire support that we were famous for.

13 RV: What did X-Ray look like when you were up in the chopper checking it out?

14 RB: Smoke and dust. Just a lot of smoke and dust is best I could say. I had to stay
15 off the gun target line when watching what was going on and staying out of the way of
16 the TAC air. So my vantage point was to see a lot of smoke and dust over the target area
17 itself. I could see the air and rocket artillery going in TAC air. I watched the Skyraider go
18 in. It got shot, to a round somewhere and he never pulled out. Flew that thing right into—
19 that was kind of a traumatic event, to watch that thing go in. It was late in the afternoon
20 when I went back to the battery and realized we were—it's going to be a hard, long fight.

21 RV: The guns overheating, was this a concern?

22 RB: Oh yeah. On the first night, it must've been around two o'clock in the
23 morning. I was sitting there in my battery command post and my 1st sergeant commo
24 chief. I didn't hear all the fire mission, but all of the sudden the fire mission became real
25 critical. I heard the fire direction officer started giving commands, "Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!
26 Fire!" There was little time, they were just absolutely—the gun chiefs were loading that
27 ammunition into those Howitzers one night after the other. We had sustained fire
28 parameters. I don't remember the details or the numbers after all these years, but we
29 exceeded our sustained fire. What happens when you do that, you run into the risk of
30 overheating your tubes and blowing the seals on the recoil mechanisms. Well, we did that
31 on one of my Howitzers. This was on the first night, sometime around two or three

1 o'clock in the morning. This sustained fire just shot for thirty, forty-five minutes. As fast
2 as we could load them and put them down range into X-Ray. So I had two gun sections
3 go down sometime around three thirty, four o'clock in the morning. One was from the
4 recoil mechanism when they blew the seals on it and the other one the tube was just
5 overheated. Early in the morning, I'd already notified battalion headquarters of our
6 situation, down to four guns. They had an ordinance team out there shortly after daylight
7 and they brought a new tube and they brought repair parts for the recoil mechanism on
8 the other Howitzer. About around noon, one o'clock something like that, both Howitzers
9 were repaired and back in operation. Had all six guns back ready to shoot. In the
10 meantime, you know fire mission were coming in and we did what we had to do with
11 four guns.

12 RV: Sure. Do you remember the day of the 14th, when Herrick's platoon was lost
13 and then the fire missions coming in from Savage to protect them? Do you remember any
14 of that? I know you weren't apart of that specific—those calls, but you were directing
15 them. What do you remember about that event and protecting that one platoon?

16 RB: I had a reconnaissance sergeant which was part of—let me back up, fire
17 support team and a company level consist of a lieutenant, a fire support reconnaissance
18 sergeant and his RTO (Radio Telephone Operator). Well, the recon sergeant is a fellow
19 by the name of Sergeant Brown, E-5 and he was with that cut off platoon. I remember his
20 call for fires, I remember what we did. We knew exactly from our fire charge were that
21 platoon was. Every time you know in fire direction, we put a pin on the chart where that
22 target is. So we knew around that platoon is where he built the fire support, the artillery
23 fire support to protect them. That's about all I can remember, except that when I think
24 about the fire direction chart in my battery fire direction center where X-Ray was, where
25 this cut off platoon was. We didn't have to move that pin very much to change the range
26 and deflection to shoot that artillery. By the time that was all over, that pin was a pretty
27 good size. But that's—they were very close together. A lot of ammunition went down
28 range. In the period of about three days, over four thousand rounds. That's phenomenal
29 for a 105 battery to be able to shoot that much ammunition.

30 RV: Would you say your busiest time was the morning of the 15th?

1 RB: The first busy time was in that morning of the 15th. About two to four in the
2 morning and then again early in the morning. The rest of the day it was constant during
3 daytime hours. The second night, we fired a lot of illumination, but we also fired a lot of
4 HE, high explosive, along with some white phosphorus and with variable time fuse and
5 time fuse. It got hectic again that second night. We put a lot of rounds down range the
6 night of the 15th, and 16th. Then again, during the daytime, during the 16th it was steady.
7 We were not lollygagging around having a good time, smoking and joking—it got a little
8 serious. My gun crews, as I said earlier were—we were down about fifty percent
9 strength. Gun chief, gunner, system gunner and a couple of cannoneers on each gun.
10 They got very little rest. None of us got very much rest at all. When you had a chance to
11 rest, you got it and so did they. About the 17th, we were pretty—even though we weren't
12 in X-Ray or in Albany later on, those gun crews did a magnificent job.

13 RV: A lot of people have said that the fire you all supplied from Falcon saved the
14 day in a number of ways. You have a lot of elements coming in to take care of things and
15 on the second day of the “Broken Arrow” call, where you had a lot of air support.
16 Looking back at it now, forty years later, how vital was your role from Falcon? And now
17 that you've kind of had a chance to look and analyze and see all the different pieces on
18 the ground. I know you found that out later during 1965, but people I'm not sure they
19 understand the importance of what you all did during the that battle. You weren't there at
20 X-Ray, but you had people on the ground for you, and you were above. But what can you
21 say about the significance of this artillery fire and your boys who did it?

22 RB: Yeah. Literally, a steel curtain if you will and that's what we did. We knew
23 the significance of what was going on in X-Ray, didn't take long to figure it out.

24 RV: I was going to ask you, when did you all sense that this is not only big, this is
25 very significant what's happening?

26 RV: Probably afternoon. About two o'clock, one o'clock in the afternoon of the
27 14th, my forward observer with Captain Nadal's company, shot in the first hour or so.
28 Killed in action. When that word came back through from the battalion O&O, it shocked
29 me as did my first sergeant. Had a First Sergeant by the name of Charlie Sanford.
30 Probably the oldest man in the division when we rotated over there, when we deployed.
31 Fifty-five years old. He had a certain aura about him that he had a great relationship with

1 the young lieutenants and heck, I was only a twenty-eight year old captain. But with the
2 young lieutenants who are only six years younger than me for the most part, he had that
3 fatherly instinct. That father-son relationship. Loved those boys. Tim Blake was killed in
4 the first hour of combat. That got my attention, as did him and everybody else. By that
5 time, we were listening and obviously hearing the fire listening—monitoring their
6 command net of the 1st of the 7th that knew generally what was going on, but it was going
7 to be a heck of a fight. That was really the first time, when he was KIA (Killed in
8 Action). When Tim was KIA, I got a feeling it was going to be a long struggle. A hard
9 fight. That was a shocker. No one wants to lose the first man in combat, but that was the
10 first. Lieutenant Tim Blake was the first causality, KIA out of my battery and I don't
11 choose to make that as a distinction, but it just happened that way. It's a part of history
12 and a part of this battle and never will forget it.

13 RV: Yes, sir. Tell me about Colonel Moore during those days, what do you
14 remember about him?

15 RB: Dynamic person. When we trained at Fort Benning, Georgia, I was his
16 battalion fire support officer. Another name for it, battalion L&O (Law and Order) back
17 then. I lived and slept for those guys in the field while we were training air assault tactics
18 and techniques up in the Carolinas and around Fort Benning and so forth. So I became
19 very well acquainted with him and his staff. Knew his company commanders and one of
20 the company commanders, John Herren, he and I had served together in Germany
21 previously. So I built that relationship with him as a battalion fire support officer, along
22 with my liaison sergeant. I'd been invited to Colonel Moore's house, to battalion
23 functions, officer's functions on occasion. So that's the kind of relationship I had with
24 Colonel Moore. He never developed his maneuver plan without having me present to
25 develop that fire support plan which included the TAC air, the artillery, the navel gun fire
26 if that was the case. At that time, we were training, we had some armed Mohawks,
27 gunships, air cavalry, the whole bit. Obviously, that was my job and I established that
28 relationship with him and his staff. So when I became a battery commander, I didn't see
29 much more of Colonel Moore at that point. It just wasn't the way it went. But he knew
30 who I was, and he knew who was commanding which battery and who was going to be
31 his direct support. So I carried that relationship with him all these years, especially very

1 important back then. When you have that kind of relationship, and you develop those
2 kind of leadership techniques that he employed, I can remember seeing him as he was
3 planning for an operation. Whether it was the real, whether it was a training mission at
4 Fort Benning, Georgia, or even on a couple occasions in his operation tent, he would sit
5 there and look at that map and you could just mentally see him going through the courses
6 of action that he could take and develop his maneuver plan. I can't explain forever how
7 much I think of that man. So when they went into battle, that relationship carried on and
8 it wasn't hard to put all that ammunition down range in support of his unit.

9 RV: Mm-hmm. What's it been here forty years later, almost to the day of those
10 battles? How is it today for you looking back and being with all these men?

11 RB: (Chuckles) I go a little bit crazy. No I—

12 RV: Can you clarify that?

13 RB: Well, it all starts in late October, first of November. As we were getting
14 ready to go out there from An Khe. You start thinking about those days and come back
15 leading up to, when we deployed from An Khe up to the valley out to Pleiku and the tea
16 plantation so forth. I suppose yesterday making that walk down in front of the wall meant
17 a lot to me. Very moving experience, but it's that way with me every time I come for this,
18 come here for our reunion and especially when we go to the wall. Knowing that we didn't
19 bring everybody back. But when you have a man like General Moore leading you down
20 that long path in front of that wall, the feeling of admiration, of desire to still do the best
21 you can to support the man. Forty years later, and you think about those men that aren't
22 with us anymore. A lot goes on in your mind and in my mind. I look at my family. I
23 might add, on the 19th of November, and this is after Albany, got a letter from my wife
24 about a month beforehand and she said, "Well, you're going to have a baby on the 19th of
25 November." I didn't know it was going to be a daughter, nobody knew back then. Well, I
26 got orders that morning of the 19th to move the battery from Falcon to LZ Crooks, with
27 the 2nd of the 5th Cavalry. And in the move, I knew the 19th was coming, I knew she was
28 going to be in the hospital. Going to have that baby. The remainder of the battalion, my
29 battery was detached from my parent battalion, the 21st Field Artillery and attached to the
30 1st Battalion 77th Artillery, who was a direct support of the 2nd Brigade. The 3rd Brigade
31 was going back to An Khe, the 2nd Brigade was coming out to take over the operation. So

1 I was moved over to Crooks to the 2nd of the 5th Cavalry, to fire direct support artillery
2 fire for them. You know, when you're good, you're good, you get all those wonderful
3 choice assignments. The rest of the battalion goes back, you get to stay here and have a
4 good time some more. We had to move obviously all the battery in four, five thousand—
5 105 mm canisters had to be moved too. We got all of those moved over there. Out of
6 Falcon, close to the Landing Zone Crooks. I still had no idea whether I was a father again
7 the third time or just exactly what was going on. The Red Cross had the mission of
8 getting information like that, births out to the troops. Well, we were out in the middle of
9 nowhere.

10 RV: And this is conscious? You're thinking and thinking and thinking about this?

11 RB: Oh yeah, sure I was thinking, "What's going on?" I was trying to get through
12 the communications channel back to An Khe to find out just how she was and what had
13 happened. It didn't happen that way. On Tuesday before Thanksgiving, I don't remember
14 the exact date or what year. But it was the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, I got the order
15 to leave Landing Zone Crooks and return to Pleiku and go back to An Khe. A Battery of
16 the 77th Field Artillery was coming in to replace my battery. The battery commander was
17 a guy by the name of Neil Crocker, who is a close friend of mine, we'd been to the career
18 course together. Captain Neil Crocker gets off that Chinook with his advanced party and I
19 hug his neck and said, "Hey man! Am I glad to see you! And by the way, would you take
20 care of the four, five thousand brass canisters and back haul those for me?" To this day,
21 he has never forgiven me for leaving him those four. But he did it, I moved my battery
22 back to Pleiku and we spent the night there and the next morning. We hooked them up
23 behind the Howitzers, behind two and a half ton trucks and road marched back to An
24 Khe. Got in there late in the afternoon, mail was stacked this deep for the troops. We
25 hadn't had any, we'd been out there over two weeks again. There was a letter from my
26 mother, and she said, "You have a baby daughter. Mother and daughter are fine." Hour or
27 so later here comes a Red Cross guy carrying his telegraph. "Hey, I got some good
28 news!" I said, "Little bit late." That's just a little bit of the personal things.

29 RV: The letter got there before the Red Cross order.

1 RB: Letter got there before the Red Cross guy did. That's from the 19th of
2 November to the Wednesday before thanksgiving that was only four, five days. Six days
3 the most.

4 RV: That's interesting, when all this was going on there in Vietnam, you're
5 becoming a dad again for the third time, and you have that memory connected with this
6 battle. Well, looking into the future, people listening to this a hundred years from now.
7 What would you like them to know about you, LZ Falcon, this battle, the men you
8 commanded?

9 RB: I think I would like for people to know that the troops is what make you. My
10 cannoneers, my guy section chiefs, our fire direction center, the forward observers. You
11 know, I just happened to be the battery commander. Yes, I had the leadership techniques
12 and all that good stuff, and they followed my orders. But those men is what made me.
13 Those men made that battery, not me. Those guys dedicated as they were, professional
14 from the moment we hit the ground in Vietnam, till the time we all left. I would like to
15 say that those men deserve a lot more credit than I do as battery commander. Heck, I just
16 commanded a battery! I don't have to load those 105, those forty-five pound projos. Hour
17 after hour, minute after minute, day after day. All I have to do is to look back and make
18 sure that they had the ammunition and the people to do that job. That was my job. I never
19 did obviously, but those men are the ones that did what I asked them to do. Back then,
20 nobody talked about loving their fellow man. That was not the manly thing to do. You
21 just never said it. But I got to tell you, General Moore had it right when he said, "Love
22 your men." And he just said that recently. So as I look back, that's probably—I probably
23 love those men, but I couldn't stand there and say "Hey, I love you." Go out and do this
24 job, you know? But that's what he really meant.

25 RV: But you can now?

26 RB: Oh yeah. Oh yeah.

27 RV: Okay. Well, I have stop the interview now, thank you very much Colonel
28 Barker.

29 RB: My pleasure, sir.

30 (End of interview)