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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Charles Galbach
Conducted by Jason Stewart
14 August 2008; 15 August 2008
Transcribed by Cecily Darwin**

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

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Charles Galbach. Today is
3 August 14th 2008. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr. Galbach is joining me in Greensburg,
4 Pennsylvania. How are you doing today, sir?

5 Charles Galbach: Pretty well.

6 JS: Okay, let's begin by, if you don't mind, by talking about a little bit of
7 biographical information, when you were born, where, your parents' names, that kind of
8 thing.

9 CG: Okay. I was born in Duquesne, Pennsylvania, in 1938. I am the oldest of four
10 children. My parents are now deceased and the four of us are scattered. I've got a sister in
11 Florida and one in Ohio and a brother in Florida.

12 JS: Okay.

13 CG: Let's see. I attended Duquesne city public schools in junior high school,
14 public elementary and public junior high school. Then in about 1952 we moved across
15 the river to a place called North Versailles Township which had no high school. So I
16 ended up attending Westinghouse Memorial High School in Wilmerding, PA, from
17 which I graduated in 1956. After that I went to Duquesne University on a music
18 scholarship. I had wanted to be an electrical engineer but my family couldn't afford to
19 send me to college and I had gotten a scholarship in music so I accepted that and resigned
20 myself to becoming maybe a music teacher instead of an engineer.

21 JC: Um, okay.

1 CG: I did participate in the first, required two years of ROTC (Reserve Officer
2 Training Corps) which Duquesne required in lieu of physical training. They didn't have
3 any PT (physical training) kind of course so they made you do two years of ROTC.
4 That's all I did, it was my only really contact with the military. I only did two years and
5 got out of that. I graduated in 1960 with a BS (bachelor of science) in music education
6 but the draft was on then and I was 1-A in the draft. The couple of local schools I
7 checked with that had openings weren't interested in somebody that was 1-A in the draft.

8 JS: Right.

9 CG: But I did get a graduate assistantship at Duquesne so I went ahead and started
10 graduate school in 1960. I also got a part-time job teaching at Youngstown University,
11 which was only about forty miles away or so. I did that until the Army, or the draft board,
12 rather, started coming after me.

13 JS: Right.

14 CG: I didn't quite finish my master's degree because of the draft board. So I—do
15 you want me to continue on with the next area that you've got in mind?

16 JS: You can if you would like. I do have a few more questions about your—

17 CG: I did know—go ahead.

18 JC: Okay. I was just going to ask just a few more questions about your early life
19 before the military.

20 CG: Okay.

21 JC: Could you tell me a little bit about your childhood and how you would
22 describe it?

23 CG: Do what?

24 JC: Just a little bit about your childhood.

25 CG: I was a skinny little kid and there weren't very many kids in my
26 neighborhood that were anywhere near my age. They were either a good bit older or a
27 good bit younger so I only had a couple of friends so I ended up—I had an uncle that
28 lived next door and he was a teenager when I was a little kid. He had a bushel of comic
29 books so when I was about three or four years old I started looking at the pictures in the
30 comic books and actually ended up learning to read from comic books.

31 JS: Okay.

1 CG: My mother disliked that but I ended up learning to read from the comic
2 books. By the time I started school I was sort of reading a little bit anyway.

3 JS: Right.

4 CG: I was always interested in reading. In the summers I used to belong to the
5 Carnegie Library and we would get down there and also the high school had a swimming
6 pool. So I used to go hang out at the swimming pool during the periods when they had
7 swimming for kids my age during the summer. I was not good at swimming but I tried.

8 JS: Right.

9 CG: I was better at reading so I spent a lot of time reading and played outside a
10 lot, too. That was at an age when, you know, you kind of went outside during the
11 summer, especially in the morning, and hardly came in the house except to eat, run to the
12 bathroom. I grew up in a—Duquesne was a steel town so I grew up there near lots of
13 relatives, aunts, and uncles and all scattered around town. I used to go visit aunts and
14 uncles on Sundays and have dinner with them and things like that, occasionally rode the
15 streetcar into Pittsburgh to visit with my aunt there. I had maternal grandparents and
16 aunts and uncles over in Ohio so we used to take the streetcar to Pittsburgh and then get a
17 train and go over to Ohio on a train usually once a summer to visit my maternal
18 grandparents there. It was kind of a—we didn't have much money. We were poor but
19 didn't know it.

20 JS: Yes.

21 CG: One of those situations. We always had plenty to eat. In the springtime my
22 mother would cut the toes out of the shoes and we thought that was just normal. We
23 didn't realize that was because we were poor and we weren't going to get shoes until the
24 fall. Since I was the oldest I didn't get hand-me-downs from any siblings but I did get a
25 few things from aunts, or uncles, rather.

26 JS: Sure.

27 CG: I only had a couple of cousins older than me so I didn't really get much in the
28 way of hand-me-downs from that. We lived okay at that time. I had a tricycle when I was
29 a little, kind of grew up kind of a normal small city life.

30 JS: Yes, sir.

31 CG: I don't know what else.

1 JS: Okay. All right. Well, you mentioned your interest in music and being—

2 CG: Oh, yeah. When I was in seventh grade there was an announcement at the
3 junior high, anybody interested in football meet out behind the junior high school after
4 school. This one friend of mine from a couple of block from my house and I went down
5 to—he was short and I was skinny. We went out among these thirty or forty maybe fifty
6 kids standing around outside behind the junior high. The coach climbed up on a wall
7 there and pointed at half a dozen kids and told them the next day to go down to the high
8 school practice field and he talked to them there. I thought, “Well, gee. That wasn’t much
9 of a football tryout.” The coach climbed off the wall and went over and I said, you know,
10 “I thought we were going to have a tryout for football.” He looked at me and he said,
11 “Well, yeah.” He says, “Go home and eat a lot, grow, and come back next year and we
12 will give you another tryout.” I already knew that I was a skinny little kid, too. I was
13 behind all the other the kids in being, you know, not real big.

14 JS: Right.

15 CG: A couple of days later there was an announcement on the PA (public address)
16 system that anybody interested in the band go over to, there was a closed elementary
17 school across the street that was used for storage and had a band room in it. The
18 announcement said to go over there after school. So I went over there after school and the
19 band director, Mr. Silagi, he looked at all the kids, you know, and tried to figure out, you
20 know, from your teeth and stuff like that what kind of instrument might suit them. It
21 came to me and I wanted to play trumpet. He said, “No, no, no. We have got too many
22 kids playing trumpet.” So he talked me into playing the tuba. It was too big for me but he
23 said, “Don’t worry.” He said, “For football season somebody will carry it out to the bus
24 and put it on the bus and go the football field and carry it off the bus for you and all that.”
25 He lied, of course. Nobody ever carried a tuba for me. I lugged that thing around myself.
26 From seventh grade, well, actually not seventh grade, eighth grade on. This was at the
27 end of the school year, by the way, when this announcement came out. The band director
28 had given me this small tuba, kind of small, and he gave me a book and basically showed
29 me how to make a sound on the thing and that was the end of school. Within a few days
30 school was over for the summer. I took this thing home and basically learned how to play
31 it by myself.

1 JS: Oh, wow.

2 CG: In the summer, you know. I mean you know “Mary had a Little Lamb,” and
3 those kinds of simple things.

4 JS: Right.

5 CG: When I went back for the beginning of eighth grade the band director was
6 kind of surprised that I could play this thing a little bit except I was playing melodies.
7 Also, an uncle of mine had played trumpet for a short while when he was younger and he
8 gave me a trumpet book and I was playing the melodies out of the trumpet book. Still
9 simple melodies, you know, that I was playing, all these simple melodies. The band
10 director was kind of surprised that I could play the thing except he said, “No, no, no.
11 That’s not what a tuba does. The tuba doesn’t play the melody.”

12 JS: Right.

13 CG: He sent me down to join the high school band instead of the junior high
14 band. He put me in the high school band instead of the junior high band and put me next
15 to an older kid who was going to show me what the tuba really did, you know, the
16 oompah stuff.

17 JS: Right.

18 CG: I went from melodies to playing typical tuba oompah parts in the marching
19 band.

20 JS: Yes, sir.

21 CG: Then when we moved I joined the band over in Wilmerding and the band
22 director there realized I didn’t really know what I was doing. I could play, you know, I
23 could follow the notes and some but I didn’t know anything about key structure or
24 anything like that or music in general. He said I had to take music lessons. So I did that
25 and I took music lessons with a private instructor who used to come to the school. I didn’t
26 take them all the time. If the mill went on strike and my folks were low on money I didn’t
27 have money for lessons so I wouldn’t take lessons for a few weeks or whatever it was.

28 JS: Right, sure.

29 CG: While the mills strike was going on. Otherwise I took lessons there and
30 ended up actually competing in the Pennsylvania Music and Forensic contests and twice
31 won the top honors for tuba.

1 JS: Wow.

2 CG: In 1955 and 1956, which is why I got the scholarship.

3 JS: Okay.

4 CG: I was, you know, either the best or one of the two best tuba players in

5 Pennsylvania those two years.

6 JS: Okay, very good.

7 CG: But that's what got me the scholarship but I wasn't really interested in music

8 other than it was to play in a band, you know.

9 JS: Okay.

10 CG: And it was fun to play in these contests but I never thought about going to

11 college for it and that's what I ended up doing, went to college for music. Many years

12 later I found out that was sort of closer to engineering than I realized. You know, music

13 has a very strong math basis to it.

14 JS: Sure.

15 CG: I didn't realize it at the time but, anyway, that is all I can think of about that.

16 JS: Okay, well, would you say that—was band your favorite subject in high

17 school?

18 CG: No, chemistry and physics.

19 JS: Oh, right. Okay, that makes sense.

20 CG: Yeah, chemistry and physics, algebra. I started algebra when I was in—I

21 always had trouble with arithmetic when I was in grade school, just plain arithmetic, you

22 know, especially word not so much adding and subtracting but the word problems and all

23 of that, you know.

24 JS: Right.

25 CG: The train leaves Cleveland at three in the morning, you know, what time is it

26 going to get to Philadelphia? I could never figure those out.

27 JS: I always hated those myself.

28 CG: I didn't understand it, you know, it made no sense to me.

29 JS: Right.

1 CG: But in eighth grade I think we had like the beginning algebra, just an
2 introduction to algebra and all of a sudden I had a way to figure out these word problems.
3 I would just assign X and Y to—stuff like that, you know.

4 JS: Sure.

5 CG: So I liked algebra and it help me figure out word problems. So I liked
6 algebra, geometry, physics, chemistry, biology. I liked all those kinds of things. Band
7 was just, you know, there for something fun to do.

8 JS: Okay.

9 CG: I never thought of it as, you know, a potential career. As it turned out it
10 didn't end up being a career.

11 JS: Sure.

12 CG: I did everything except that, I guess, almost. I will get to that later after the
13 service I ended up getting back to music somewhat.

14 JS: Okay.

15 CG: Okay.

16 JS: All right, very good. Thank you. Moving on to your introduction to the
17 military, unless there is anything else you would like to talk about prior to that.

18 CG: Not that I can think of at the moment.

19 JS: All right. Well, let' see. You said that, you mentioned earlier that you were A-
20 1 with the draft board.

21 CG: Oh, yeah. Yep, in 1960. I did get through one year of graduate school but in
22 the summer of '61 I got a draft notice and I was not real thrilled with that.

23 JS: Sure.

24 CG: I didn't want to—I had been in the Air Force ROTC and I kind of thought—
25 the thought crossed my mind that if I ever did go in the military I would rather go in the
26 Air Force than the Army. I preferred blue to brown, I guess.

27 JS: Right.

28 CG: That was part of the reason, you know, a trivial reason. Anyway, I got a draft
29 notice and had to take a physical and all of that. The draft, you know, they don't send you
30 a notice one day and grab you the next day, it takes a little bit longer.

31 JS: Right.

1 CG: So I ended up—I took an officer qualification test and didn't hear much
2 about that but talked to the local draft, or recruiting officer, Air Force recruiting office,
3 and they told me that the best thing to do while I waited to hear about Officer Training
4 School was just go ahead and enlist. At least I would be in the Air Force. So I did do that,
5 I joined the Air Force and began—went off to basic training in September 1st or 2nd of
6 1961. The basic reason was to avoid the Army. I went through basic training at Lackland
7 Air Force Base, Texas. While there I found out that they weren't going to let me go
8 because of the—I had told them that I had an application pending for Officer Training
9 School so they were going to keep me there until there was a determination on that
10 application. I was there and I was there for like an extra week and personnel couldn't tell
11 me anything. I officially signed a piece of paper withdrawing my application for Officer
12 Training School because I didn't want to sit in Lackland, Texas, not knowing what was
13 going to go on, you know.

14 JS: Right, right.

15 CG: Whether I was going to get to go to Officer Training School or not. But I also
16 at the same time had a promissory letter from the director of the headquarters command
17 band in Boling Air Force Base that I could play in the headquarters command band at
18 Boling if I joined the Air Force. I withdrew my application for Officer Training School,
19 pulled out my promissory letter. I got the personnel people a little bit upset because they
20 didn't know I had that letter. They cut orders and sent me to Boling. I got to Boling and a
21 few weeks later I happened to run into a sergeant there who had given me the officer
22 qualification test and also sent me for a physical. He was surprised to see me in the mess
23 hall with one stripe on. He said, "You should be an officer." He said I had done well on
24 the test and I should be an officer. He asked what happened and I told him I didn't know,
25 you know, I never heard any more from the Air Force about the application for Officer
26 Training School so I just gave up on it. He said, well, if I didn't mind he would look into
27 that, which he did. He came back a few days later—he knew where I stayed after that—
28 came back and tracked me down and said he found out what happened. That when I had
29 taken the physical one of the tests they weren't sure what my answer was on a red lens
30 test, they thought I had given them a wrong answer and actually I had. I told them what I
31 thought they wanted to hear instead of what I saw. He said that he could get my

1 application reinstated but I would have to meet a board to explain why I withdrew it and
2 that I would also have to take a physical and I should do the physical first to make sure,
3 you know, that I was physically qualified.

4 JS: Right.

5 CG: So he arranged all of that. I retook the physical and had no problems passing
6 it that time and then he arranged for me to meet a board. Next they wanted to know why I
7 withdrew my application and I told them because I thought, you know, something had
8 happened, either I was disqualified and they failed to tell me or my paper got lost or
9 something and I didn't choose to sit around Lackland Air Force Base forever waiting to
10 hear from them.

11 JS: Right.

12 CG: Actually, my physical record had gotten lost, as it turned out, so I would not
13 have heard from them. They did find out that my records were lost in transit somewhere.

14 JS: Right.

15 CG: My excuse turned out to be a valid excuse. I would have stayed at Lackland
16 for a very long time.

17 JS: Yeah, it sounds like it.

18 CG: Pardon me?

19 JS: I am sorry. I said it sounds like you would have.

20 CG: At the time there were no—I had passed the pilot qualification, not just the
21 officer qualification, but I had also passed and done well on the pilot qualification but the
22 Air Force at that time in '61 said they didn't need pilots.

23 JS: Right.

24 CG: So I got a notice saying that if I accepted going to supply Officer Training
25 School that I would be, you know, accepted into Officer Training School. I talked to my
26 boss at, in the band down there and explained to him what was up and asked for his
27 advice. He said, well, he thought I would be better off being an officer, supply officer,
28 than being an enlisted person in the band so he thought I should take the offer of going to
29 Officer Training School and becoming a supply officer afterwards. So I did that. I
30 accepted that and went off to Officer Training School and became a "ninety-day
31 wonder." I was assigned to Reese Air Force Base as a supply officer. Shortly after I got

1 there I left again for training at Amarillo Air Force Base up the road from Lubbock,
2 Texas. I went up there for eight weeks—I think it was eight week or six weeks. I don't
3 remember any more.

4 JS: That's all right.

5 CG: For supply officer training. I was kind of worried about doing that because I
6 had a degree in music and, you know, half the class was bus ad majors, business
7 administration majors. But I ended up finishing the Officer Training School, or not the
8 Officer Training School, the supply Officer Training School, second in my class.
9 Probably because I was worried so I paid attention and studied and all that. I did well in
10 that. I was number two in my class. I went back to Reese, you know, started performing
11 duties as a supply officer in aircraft supply, not a base supply but, you know, the aircraft
12 inventory, supply and inventory system. I did okay in there I got some good OERs
13 (officer efficiency reports) out of that stuff. But, you know, I was at a pilot training base
14 watching airplanes flying around. I got to thinking, "Boy, that would be kind of neat to
15 fly." I had in the meantime heard that while I had been at Lackland in Officer Training
16 School nobody in my class was going to pilot training. One person in the class ahead of
17 us was going for pilot training but nobody in the class after me was going to pilot training
18 so pilot training was kind of out for OTS (Officer Training School) people at the time.
19 However, I found out a week or so after I left Lackland and finished Officer Training
20 School they went around and contacted all the people who had been qualified for pilot
21 training and asked them if they were still interested. The ones that said they were they
22 assigned them to pilot training. I had missed out, you know, missed the window for that. I
23 didn't realize I would be that interested anyway. I put in an application for pilot training
24 because now the Air Force was wanting pilots. This was in 1963 already. They were
25 wanting pilots and were taking candidates from OTS, as well, so I put in an application
26 for pilot training and was accepted pretty much right away. Just within six weeks I got a
27 notice saying I was accepted to pilot training and that I would receive a class starting
28 date, and I did a little bit later I received a class starting date but it was for April, or
29 March, rather, of 1964. I had pretty close to a year to wait, for almost a year. I ended up
30 being a supply officer for close to two years before I went to pilot training. I went to pilot
31 training and, again, I was kind of worried because, you know, there were people with

1 more technical degrees than mine. But I ended up finishing pilot training. I was eleventh
2 in flying and twelfth in academics out of forty-eight, forty-seven pilots.

3 JS: Okay, so pretty well then.

4 CG: I was in the top 25% anyway.

5 JS: Right, yes, sir. Well—

6 CG: I did okay in that in spite of, you know, not having a technical degree. So
7 that's how I became a pilot.

8 JS: Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about your training, your undergraduate
9 pilot training school?

10 CG: Yeah, it was like about three years of college crammed into one year. It was
11 not an easy course. It was fifty-five weeks long. I went through during a window, a short
12 period of time where it was pure jet, all jet. I flew the T-37, it was the first airplane I ever
13 had my hands on it was a T-37 which was a small twin jet. I liked the airplane. I flew it
14 and did okay in it, had no trouble flying the thing. Then after that they put us in the T-38s
15 which they had gotten while I was still a supply officer, had gotten T-38s to replace the
16 T-33s. I got to fly the T-38. I was kind of disappointed in it initially. I remember the T-37
17 felt nice and solid under me and all of that. My very first flight in a T-38 we were taxiing
18 out with the canopy raised up and everything is rattling and shaking making noise and I
19 thought, "Gee, I was in a good airplane and now they put me in a tin can that rattles and
20 shakes and makes funny noises," you know.

21 JS: Right.

22 CG: But I didn't realize at that moment that the T-38 was designed to fly not to
23 taxi. We took off in the thing and as soon as we lifted off I realized this thing is like
24 flying on glass, you know, it was as smooth as could be, much smoother than the T-37.
25 This thing was really built to be in the air and going fast, not for taxiing around on the
26 ground. The T-37 was still a lot more fun to fly. When you did acrobatics in the T-37 you
27 could actually see what you were doing. I mean, you know, like outside references and
28 all. When you did acrobatics in the T-38 you were going so fast and covering such huge
29 areas of altitude and all of that, you know, you had to do it half on instruments and half
30 looking outside to do it correctly. So, you know, things like a 10,000-foot loop were not
31 nearly as fun to do as a 1,500 to 2,000 foot loop would be in a T-37.

1 JS: Right, okay.

2 CG: It was—the T-37 was a lot more fun but the T-38 certainly went fast. I have
3 had one up to just about 1.3 Mach, which is just a tad below, they were limited 1.4 Mach
4 and I pushed one up to 1.3. There is always somebody, by the way, that doesn't get the
5 word. Somehow I missed out on the admonition that student pilots flying solo were not
6 allowed to go supersonic. I just missed out on it. Somebody must have told me that or
7 that was written up somewhere and somehow I missed that.

8 JS: Right.

9 CG: When I was flying solo one of the things I would do was go supersonic, you
10 know, for a minute or so. I kept to the rules about altitude and all that, you know, in the
11 area that you were supposed to do it in but I missed out on the part that solo students
12 weren't supposed to do that. So I came back one day from a flight and went over to the
13 boom log, there was a boom board on the wall where you logged in when you went
14 supersonic in case they got any complaints or calls about it they could tell who did it, you
15 know. So I went over you know, and put down my name or my call sign, actually, you
16 know, put myself down in the boom log. One of the other students said to me, "Weren't
17 you flying solo?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "You are not allowed to fly supersonic when
18 you are solo, us students aren't." I said, "Oh, I didn't know that." I found out, you know,
19 it actually was one of the rules so I quit logging it.

20 JS: Right.

21 CG: I'm sure that is the standard comment that somebody would make at that
22 point. I only went supersonic maybe three or four more times near the end. I just made
23 sure I was up good and high where I wouldn't break any windows around Lubbock.

24 JS: Sure.

25 CG: You know, just there weren't too many things you could do in a T-38 that
26 were actually fun. I mean, you could go fast, you know. Landings were fun. I used to like
27 to do touch-and-gos, but you couldn't do that for your full assigned flight period or you
28 would run out of fuel. You know, jet engines use too much fuel when you fly down low
29 so you had to do something up at altitude.

30 JS: Right.

1 CG: You know, to use up some time. They expected you to go out and practice
2 acrobatics and stuff like that which I would do a little bit of that. But, you know, I would
3 also kind of push the thing over a little bit and give it a little gas and go fast also again.
4 Then go back when my time and fuel indicated it was okay to do so, go back and do a
5 bunch of touch-and-gos and finish up a solo flight. But the T-38 was okay. I almost
6 [washed] out of training them because of it, though. I was a little antsy in formation with
7 it to the point where my instructor gave up—you know, I had a tendency to over control
8 it. So my flight commander took me up to see if he could figure out how to get me fly a
9 little smoother. He did, he had me lock my wrist into my knee, against my knee and just
10 fly the airplane in formation with just my fingertips. That kind of smoothed me out
11 enough that I wasn't going to flunk out of pilot training.

12 JS: Right.

13 CG: However, at one point we got a new instructor who had been an F-100 pilot
14 and he also apparently didn't know all the rules. I went out flying solo on his wing one
15 time, it was a two-ship, and he and a student were in the lead plane and I was number
16 two. So we were going to go out and just fly around and do some high-altitude stuff.
17 However, Lubbock was overcast that day. It was a high overcast about 10,000 feet but
18 eight or ten thousand but it was overcast. No problem for this guy. He took us up through
19 it and I am on the wing, you know, flying solo. All of a sudden we are climbing and all I
20 can see is the whole world disappears except for this little white airplane beside me. I
21 stuck to him like glue and we climbed up and ended up never did get on top. The overcast
22 was very thick that day. We ended up getting up to 40,000 feet and still not on top and we
23 weren't supposed to do anything above 40,000. He called for clearance back. Well,
24 everybody and their brother was trying to get back down. So everybody was put into a
25 holding pattern and we were in a holding pattern for probably twenty-five minutes or so,
26 you know, descending down in a holding patterns as the airplanes below us were cleared
27 for penetration.

28 JS: Right.

29 CG: We were looping around, you know, doing this racetrack pattern, holding
30 pattern, for twenty to twenty-five minutes. I am hanging onto this airplane not able to see
31 anything except this other airplane. I stuck with them like glue and then we gradually got

1 to be the lowest airplane in the holding pattern and were cleared for penetration. We flew
2 the penetration back to Reese, broke out at about I think it was about 8,000 feet above the
3 ground and then went visual and then went on down and flew a little bit, flew around a
4 little bit down low and then went ahead and landed. The instructor on whose wing I had
5 been flying kind of got in trouble, got chewed out for taking me up, you know. However,
6 it turned out to be a very good thing for me because on the final check ride for formation
7 flying I ended up with the second highest grade in my class.

8 JS: Wow.

9 CG: Because I had, you know, went from having a lot of trouble flying formation
10 to being pretty good at it.

11 JS: Right.

12 CG: I think that one flight was what really got me to, you know, able to
13 concentrate and do what I was supposed to do to hang in there nice and tight with the
14 other airplane.

15 JS: Sure.

16 CG: That was kind of fun but it was illegal and I didn't know it and he didn't
17 know it but it worked out well for me. Anyway, that was pilot training. At the end of pilot
18 training, I kind of thought that I wanted—I didn't want to fly fighters. I wanted to fly C-
19 141s but for all of pilot training 500 and some students [throughout] all the bases—I
20 think it was around 500 students—there were only three assignments for C-141s.

21 JS: Okay.

22 CG: But several people told me that the C-124s were going to be all converting to
23 C-141s and if I wanted a C-141 and I wasn't high enough in my class to be sure of
24 getting one, to ask for a C-124 so I did that and I got an assignment to the C-124. I was
25 assigned to Travis Air Force Base as a C-124 copilot. However, when I got to Travis I
26 expected I would be flying C-141s. Well, when I got there I found out that my, the unit I
27 was assigned to, the 85th at Travis, was the only unit at Travis that was going to stay with
28 the C-124s. However, it turned out that would not be a problem because they had number
29 of older pilots upstairs in the 75th who didn't want to go to C-141 school and there were
30 three or four of us brand new pilots in the 85th that wanted to fly C-141s. So the
31 commanders did a horse trade and traded three or four pilots, whatever, it was from each

1 unit to the other. I ended up in the 75th, being reassigned to the 75th and ended up flying
2 C-141s. I never did fly 124s. I eventually got about fifty hours of time in the 124s for pay
3 purposes but never went to a school. So that's how I ended up flying C-141s after all.

4 JS: Okay. Could you give me a little bit of a description of the C-141?

5 CG: C-141?

6 JS: Yes.

7 CG: Yep. It's a very large four-engine jet, high wing, T-tail. At the time I flew
8 them they were—let's see here if I can remember the weights on it—three-hundred and I
9 think we were allowed gross amount up to maximum of 320,000 pounds of which I think
10 a maximum of 70,000 could be cargo.

11 JS: All right.

12 CG: However, if you had a full fuel load you could not take a full cargo load of
13 70,000 pounds. The airplane was roughly the size of a Boeing 707, actually slightly
14 larger than a Boeing 707. It had a little bit less of a swept wing than the Boeing 707
15 which meant that the 707s could fly a little faster, about forty knots, fifty to sixty miles an
16 hour, faster than a C-141. The Boeing 707s were faster than the C-141. However, the C-
17 141 had pretty powerful engines with great big fan jets on them. We could out-climb the
18 707s so routinely when we would take off out of Travis around the same time that
19 someone would be taking off either out of Travis or San Francisco or Oakland in a 707
20 headed westbound, we would be reporting at some very high altitude 30-, 33- or 35,000
21 feet or something like that long before the 707s. We could really out-climb them.
22 However, since they could do about fifty to sixty knots faster than us. After a couple of
23 hours of flying across the ocean here would come these 707s at, you know, whatever
24 their altitude was. They would pass us up. They did fly faster than we did. We had a very
25 large cockpit and we had a number of 707 pilots, they would come and look at our
26 cockpit and we would go look at theirs. They were kind of cramped in their cockpit. It
27 was small and not a lot of room to move around. The 707 and also KC-135s which was
28 basically the same airplane, pilots from those would take a look at our C-141 cockpit and
29 just be amazed at how much room we had in a large cockpit, plenty of room. We actually
30 had a bunk, a double bunk high upper and lower in the C-141 right inside the cockpit, the
31 back wall of the cockpit. We had pilot and copilot seats, a jump seat behind and between

1 those in front of it or behind this center console. On the left side was the navigator station
2 and on the right side an engineer station and then behind that was this double bunk. The
3 double bunk had room for two people to sit there. Then there was another flip-down seat.
4 If you closed the door to the cabin there was a little flip-down seat so you could actually
5 fit three people back there. You could fit eight or nine people properly strapped in in a C-
6 141 cockpit. There actually was three on the bunk and one behind the door on a flip-
7 down seat, engineer, navigator, somebody in the jump seat, and then pilot and copilot. So
8 you could fit nine people in the cockpit of the C-141. Then they built a platform high up
9 when you left the cockpit that was a little platform that was high in the cabin that you
10 could crawl onto that they would put a couple of thin mattresses up there. If you had an
11 augmented crew, a couple of people could climb up on that thing and go to sleep.

12 JS: Right.

13 CG: You know, it was like another bunk. The cargo compartment was pretty big.
14 I don't recall the length exactly but it was around seventy feet long. It had big doors in
15 the back that opened up so that you could drop cargo or big side doors with wind breaks
16 that would go out so that you could drop paratroopers out the side doors. There were
17 wind baffles to keep them from getting buffeted as they stepped out of the airplane. Let's
18 see, there were rollers on the floor and they could be turned upside down to provide a
19 smooth floor or turned up to provide rollers to put pallets on. Just kind of a fun airplane
20 to fly in spite of its enormous size. It was like flying any other airplane. It was obviously
21 heavier and smoother than the typical Piper Cub or something like that. But it flew pretty
22 easily. I did manage to fly a C-124 a couple of times just for pay purposes. That thing
23 was a monster. You had to struggle to make a turn in that thing. The C-141 was nothing
24 like that. You could just about fly it with your fingertips and for as enormous as it was it
25 was very easy to fly.

26 JS: Okay. So would you say the transition from the trainers to the C-141 was
27 fairly easy?

28 CG: From what?

29 JS: From the trainer planes, from the T-37, T-38 to the C-141, would you say it
30 was a fairly easy transition?

1 CG: Yeah, I think so. It wasn't that difficult. At least I didn't think so. Can we
2 take a break for about ten seconds?

3 JS: Sure, absolutely,

4 CG: Okay I will be right back.

5 JS: Okay.

6 CG: Okay, okay. The transition to the C-141. You know, like any check out in
7 any airplane in the military there was a period of ground school. You learned about
8 various systems on the aircraft and how to manage those systems, flight control systems
9 and hydraulic systems and power plants and all of that and you learned electrical systems,
10 various things like that. We learned all about that and then we would go out with an
11 instructor, usually a couple of students and an instructor, and you do initially have some
12 training in a simulator so you get some idea of what the cockpit looks like before you
13 ever go flying.

14 JS: Right.

15 CG: So that you are able to at least know where things that are important for
16 visual flight like air speed and all that where those kinds of things are and get familiar
17 with it before you fly the actual airplane. Then you just start flying it. The instructor
18 might demonstrate a landing to you so you kind of see what it looks like and where you
19 need to round out before touchdown and all that, then you just do it yourself. You know,
20 it's not especially difficult. The basic flying of an airplane like the C-141 isn't much
21 different than the basic flying in any other airplane.

22 JS: Okay.

23 CG: It is a swept-wing jet so you do tend to do power-on approaches as opposed
24 to power-off approaches that you do in straight-wing airplanes but other than that, you
25 know, it's not terribly different.

26 JS: All right.

27 CG: You know, you just have to get used to a different visual picture because you
28 are certainly up higher in the C-141, considerably higher than a small airplane. It takes,
29 you know, a couple of flights and then you are used to that.

30 JS: All right. Once you completed your training on the C-141 and you went into
31 duty as a C-141 pilot did you remain at Travis?

1 CG: Well, I was a copilot at Travis.

2 JS: Right, sorry. Yes.

3 CG: Yeah, that's the first thing that happens is you become a—actually they call
4 you the second pilot.

5 JS: Okay.

6 CG: You spend—you have to be—have a certain amount of flying time before
7 you are upgraded to a first pilot and more flying time and experience before you get
8 upgraded to an aircraft commander, that sort of thing. When I went to Travis, of course, I
9 left shortly after I got to Travis, a month or so, six weeks after I got to Travis, I left to go
10 to Tinker Air Force Base to the C-141 school. That was, I think, nine weeks long.
11 Between pilot training and getting to Travis I also had to go to survival school at Stead
12 Air Force Base up near Reno, Nevada. You are talking about even though I had
13 graduated from pilot training in May it was probably pretty close to the end of 1965
14 before I was finally at Travis and flying C-141s as a copilot. It was a large amount of
15 time there just in transition and training and that sort of thing. I didn't fly a whole lot in
16 1965 in the C-141s. In '66 I began to fly a little bit more. A couple of things happened.
17 One was that I got assigned as a training officer when I got to Travis and my unit when I
18 finally got settled into the unit. They tended to not let me fly as much as I wanted to on
19 trips. I didn't get a whole lot of flying time. I got more than I probably should have
20 expected. I didn't get a whole lot of flying time. Then in '67, the beginning of '67, I got
21 notice of my assignment to Vietnam as a forward air controller. During that, whatever it
22 was, sixteen, seventeen months that I was actually a copilot I didn't get enough time to
23 transition to first pilot, even. I think you needed 750 hours and I only got about 600 hours
24 during that time. Anyway, I was still a second pilot. I think fairly close to becoming a
25 first pilot when I left Travis to go to Vietnam.

26 JS: Okay. Well, before we move onto that point could you tell me a little bit about
27 your duties as a C-141 copilot, some of the places you flew to and all of that because—

28 CG: Well, one of the stories is probably—a couple of the stories are probably not
29 sure I should even tell them. I might have so-called dollar ride your first trip in a C-141.
30 You were assigned with no duties. You were just there to observe and see what it is like
31 to go on a trip. A trip was, of course, a westbound trip over to Vietnam and back. I don't

1 recall exactly where we were but I was sitting back on the bunk in the cockpit dozing off.
2 At one point I woke up and it was the middle of the night and we were coming back
3 eastbound again and I think we were going from Vietnam up to Okinawa. I woke up and
4 stood up and stretched a little bit and it's dark and everything and I looked around the
5 cockpit and it turned out I was the only person on the airplane awake.

6 JS: Oh, wow.

7 CG: We were out over the middle of the ocean. Scared the wits out of me.

8 JS: I'm sure.

9 CG: After that I always had a lot of difficulty falling asleep in the C-141, which I
10 will mention later when we get to augmented crews and twenty-four-hour crew duty
11 days. But after that experience on my very first ride in a C-141 I just did not like the idea
12 of going to sleep in the thing.

13 JS: Sure, very understandable.

14 CG: Then a couple of flights later, a couple of trips later if you were a brand new
15 copilot like I was at the time you—if you flew with a straight aircraft commander you
16 were stuck flying in the right seat and being in the right seat basically meant that you ran
17 the checklist and, you know all the checklist, items you called them out and things like
18 that. You raised and lowered the gear, you raised and lowered the flaps for the pilots, you
19 extended the spoilers for the pilot. You did a whole bunch of things. The pilot basically
20 just flew the airplane and manipulated the throttles, on the ground he did the steering
21 because that was only possible in the left seat. But you were stuck in the right seat if you
22 were flying with just a straight aircraft commander. However, if you were flying on a trip
23 with an instructor pilot you were permitted to fly in the left seat and the instructor would
24 fly in the right seat. He would play copilot and let you play aircraft commander. So on
25 about the second or third trip westbound I was with an instructor and he was a high time
26 pilot, had plenty of flying time and he was a good instructor and he just let me fly in the
27 left seat the whole time. Unfortunately, when we got to Clark Air Base in the Philippines
28 he went over to the club and had too much to drink. So when we got alerted to go to the
29 next morning to Cam Ranh Bay, or it might not have been the next morning. I don't
30 remember when it was. It was a daytime flight, though, I remember that. We got alerted
31 to go to Cam Ranh Bay. I didn't realize it but this pilot was still badly hungover, this

1 instructor pilot. I found out on the crew bus on the way out across the flight line the back
2 door of the crew bus opened up and this other pilot was back there and he tossed his
3 cookies out on the ramp.

4 JS: Oh, god.

5 CG: So we got into the airplane and he was in really bad shape and I said
6 something to the navigator, "Shouldn't we tell somebody?" The navigator said, "No,
7 because this guy is going to lose his job if they find out that he drank too much and drank
8 too late," you know.

9 JS: Sure.

10 CG: He would be in really big trouble. So, of course, he said, "You fly," and he
11 got in the right seat and promptly fell asleep. Well, you could actually fly a C-141 from
12 the left seat and do everything if you had to. You could kind of reach over and reach the
13 gear and the flaps and all that kind of stuff. He basically fell asleep and I ended up having
14 to get the clearance over the radio. He kind of mumbled a few times to me, not on the
15 radio.

16 JS: Right.

17 CG: I basically flew the C-141 solo from Clark Air Base seven hundred and some
18 miles over to Cam Ranh Bay and landed. He didn't do anything. He kind of woke up
19 when we were descending a little bit but he didn't do anything. So I did the checklist, I
20 made all the calls, my navigator did the radio check calls for position reports but I did
21 everything else. I landed the airplane and we were there two or three hours, whatever it
22 was, and this instructor stayed in the seat over there and basically slept through that.
23 When we left Cam Ranh Bay to go up to Okinawa for our next stop he woke up. I got the
24 clearance, but he did wake up and he did the checklist, he raised the gear and raised the
25 flaps and went to sleep. I flew the, whatever it was, 1,500 to 1,800 miles or whatever it is
26 from there up to Okinawa. I flew that leg and he basically slept through, after we were
27 climbing up he went back to sleep and slept for most of the trip up. Finally on the descent
28 into Okinawa he woke up and was just fine. He was able to do everything he was
29 supposed to do in the right seat. We had a normal flight, normal landing into Okinawa.
30 He didn't do that anymore. I flew with him a couple of more times and never saw him do

1 anything like that again. It was kind of interesting that on about my third trip I had about
2 one and a half solo legs to fly.

3 JS: Sure.

4 CG: But most of the time a copilot just stayed in the right seat and did the
5 checklist and made position reports on the HF (high frequency) radio and stuff like that.
6 Or, you know, if you're over land VHF (very high frequency), UHF (ultra high
7 frequency) radios those sorts of things, make the radio calls.

8 JS: All right. Let me ask you about the—how many—were a lot of these trips
9 primarily going to Vietnam and back?

10 CG: Almost all of them.

11 JS: Okay.

12 CG: Went to Vietnam. Going to Vietnam we had a wide assortment of loads.
13 Sometimes I flew Operation Blue Light which went into, I can't think of where it went to,
14 Central Highlands.

15 JS: Was it Pleiku?

16 CG: Pleiku. I flew was a copilot into there. We were hauling, you know, ninety-
17 six troops, you know, into—you know, they were basically Army guys, hauling them into
18 Pleiku. We would land and they would all run off the airplane and turn around and take
19 off. I've hauled lots of other passengers. I can remember hauling civilian advisors, you
20 know, from like aircraft company representatives and people like depot representatives.
21 At one point some civilian, I was—he was in the back of the airplane and was going over
22 to Vietnam on some kind of observation or something. He was asking me about the seat
23 and I couldn't figure out why he was asking me about the seat in the 141, asking me how
24 I liked it and I told him I didn't, you know. I'm kind of a small person. So he asked me a
25 lot of questions about what I didn't like about the seat. I explained, you know, the
26 problem I had with it and the headrest and stuff like that. It didn't come down low
27 enough and things like that for a smaller person. I'm 5'8" and at the time I was about 135
28 pounds so I am not a very big person. Anyway, he was taking notes and then I found out
29 he was the guy who was the ergonomic engineer who had designed the seats, the pilot
30 and copilot seats for the C-141.

31 JS: Oh, I see.

1 CG: Remember when President Johnson went to Cam Ranh Bay?

2 JS: Uh-huh.

3 CG: I don't know if you remember that. President Johnson was the first president
4 ever to go to a war zone and he went over to Cam Ranh Bay and back. Well, a week later
5 we—I was on a flight to Cam Ranh Bay and we were hauling, I think it was 13,000
6 pounds of celery, 13,000 pounds of celery fills up a C-141. Celery is pretty light so it
7 takes up a lot of space, 13,000 pounds and that entire C-141 was absolutely full. We were
8 joking that President Johnson must have gone through the mess hall line in Cam Ranh
9 Bay and liked celery and there wasn't any celery so he sent celery over.

10 JS: Right. (Chuckles)

11 CG: But it was just a joke, you know. That's not what happened.

12 JS: Sure.

13 CG: (Unintelligible).

14 JS: Right.

15 CG: Lots of times we were—sometimes we hauled ammunition and when we
16 hauled any kind of ammunition, including bombs, it was rare but we would sometimes
17 haul bombs. Much more often rockets or small, you know, small arms ammunition we
18 carried a lot of that. Any time we carried any kind of explosives we were not permitted to
19 go near any terminal.

20 JS: Right.

21 CG: If you were carrying any kind of explosives the C-141 after landing would go
22 be parked out in some remote part of the airfield and they would bus the crew in. The 141
23 wouldn't be able to park in a normal spot where they could use normal refueling. It
24 would have to be—they would have to use trucks. They didn't like to use trucks to refuel
25 the C-141s because it took too much fuel so they liked to park in the normal parking area
26 where they use underground piping to refuel them. If you had explosives or if you were
27 in a field that didn't have the underground park, of course, they would have to use trucks.

28 JS: Right.

29 CG: If it was explosives you had to park in a remote area. We would haul other
30 things, you know, tires for vehicles, tires for airplanes, all kinds of things; anything that

1 they ran out of in Vietnam and which would take too long to ship over by boat we ended
2 up hauling.

3 JS: Whenever you would make these trips and land in Vietnam, in Pleiku or
4 wherever, how much time would you spend on the ground?

5 CG: In Vietnam itself?

6 JS: Yes, sir.

7 CG: Two to three hours.

8 JS: Two to three hours. Okay.

9 CG: We never stayed overnight in Vietnam or, you know, we never had crew rest.
10 We were doing, in the C-141 in those days we were doing something called staging,
11 which meant you flew the C-141, oh, say from Travis to Wake Island and then you went
12 into crew rest, the crew did. But another crew would be coming out of crew rest at Wake
13 Island. They would get alerted three hours before we got there and they would take the
14 airplane. It would be on the ground two or three hours. They would take the airplane and
15 continue onto the next destination for that, you know. Then you would go into crew rest
16 at Wake Island for fifteen hours, well, twelve hours plus three hours for alert. So you
17 would be on the ground typically fifteen hours before you would leave.

18 JS: Okay.

19 CG: But you would be flying a completely different airplane. So you would pick
20 up a different airplane that was coming into Wake from Travis or from one of the other
21 bases on the West Coast. You would take that airplane usually to Clark and then you
22 would crew rest at Clark. That airplane would continue onto wherever it was going and
23 then after your crew rest you would pick up a different airplane that was coming in and
24 you would take it to some place in Vietnam or occasionally some place like Bangkok,
25 Thailand, we would go there occasionally as well. Then you would—if we went to
26 Bangkok we stayed over and crew rested there. If we were going to Vietnam we did not
27 crew rest. We would typically go from Clark to someplace in-country and then up to
28 Okinawa or to Yokota in Japan, one of those two places generally, and crew rest there.
29 Then the next flight after your crew rest would be from Yokota or from Okinawa,
30 Kadena, back to California. We could—the way the crew rest worked out we quite often,

1 we would go all the way over to Vietnam and all the way back and be at Travis in under
2 four days.

3 JS: Okay.

4 CG: It is the way the crew rest would work out and the flight times would work
5 out. Once in a while you would get a flight to go through Hawaii. Every one of those that
6 I was ever on was a medevac that was coming back from Vietnam. They usually went up
7 to Kadena, Okinawa, from Vietnam carrying wounded, sick people.

8 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

9 CG: If you were coming out of crew rest at Kadena and the flight was an air-evac
10 or medevac you would take that airplane generally to Hickam at Honolulu, Hawaii, and
11 you would crew rest there. That airplane would go on to back to California. If you crew
12 rested in Hawaii, since there were only about two or three flights per week through
13 Hawaii that sort, you generally were stuck there for two to three days. So that business
14 about going west bound and coming back in under four days was not true if you had a
15 medevac that went through Hawaii. Then you would—well, with the additional time
16 being stuck, you know, I use the word stuck in Hawaii kind of loosely, laughingly.

17 JS: Right.

18 CG: It was not a bad place to get stuck.

19 JS: Sure.

20 CG: But being stuck there for three days or so was not bad duty, you know. I have
21 been stuck on Wake Island for three days one time when winds were really bad, all the
22 flights were over flying, and that was not good duty. Wake Island had a bowling alley
23 and a little outdoor movie theatre kind of like a drive-in theatre but no cars, just seats,
24 you know, and that was it. Then, of course a bar, an outdoor bar, grass shack kind of bar.
25 I once played—during the period that I got stuck at Wake Island for three days I played
26 hearts at one point at a table up at this little bar sipping ginger ales for twenty-four hours.

27 JS: Wow.

28 CG: Because there is nothing to do at Wake Island.

29 JS: Sure.

30 CG: We just sat there at a table at this little bar, sat there for twenty-four hours
31 just eating snacks and stuff playing hearts.

1 JS: That brings up the question I was going to ask you about what would you
2 generally do during these crew rests particularly the longer ones.

3 CG: You could never be real sure on the longer ones but you would beg the
4 command post to release you for some number of hours and generally they wouldn't do
5 it. But once in a while—like in Hawaii they were pretty sure so they would release you
6 usually for just twelve hours at a time. You would try to go—in the morning you would
7 call them up and ask them if they could release you and if they released you a flight came
8 in and you weren't around it was their fault, not your fault. That's why they were
9 reluctant to release you. They would release and if they released you then you could go
10 spend the day at the beach or whatever, you know, if you were in Hawaii.

11 JS: Sure.

12 CG: Hawaii was the only place that I ever really got stuck for multiple days
13 because of infrequency of flights.

14 JS: Right.

15 CG: I got stuck, as I said, in Wake Island for three days one time but that was due
16 to weather, due to winds, high winds across the runway. You know, 141s could not land.
17 I also got stuck at Alaska at Elmendorf Air Base one time with an ear infection. I had an
18 ear blockage and I couldn't fly. They dug up another pilot and I was stuck there for about
19 three days going to the clinic every day to get my ear checked to see if I could fly back
20 home. Generally we only had these twelve to fifteen hours or so breaks on the ground.
21 During that time you wanted to sleep, you know, seven or eight hours.

22 JS: Sure.

23 CG: If we were at some place like Yokota, the town outside of Yokota is called
24 Fussa and seven miles away was Tachikawa which could be gotten to on a train. So
25 usually if you had time and the inclination you would run around Fussa and do some
26 shopping or something. I bought things like lamps, oriental lamps and things like and
27 brought them back. Or you could—Tachikawa had a really nice large PX. If you had a
28 couple of hours you could hop on the train and go over to Tachikawa and shop in the PX
29 there. I bought my wife a set of dishes and silverware at that PX and hauled them back.
30 There wasn't a lot to do, usually just shopping around.

31 JS: Sure.

1 CG: There was a term called “if you were legal,” that meant for customs
2 purposes. Since we flew so frequently the customs rules were such that if you had been
3 out of the country less than thirty days—let’s see. How did it work? If you had a
4 declaration in the prior thirty days you were limited to ten or twelve dollars’ worth of
5 stuff for coming back. So you had to keep track of when the last time was that you had a
6 full declaration otherwise you couldn’t bring much back. After a couple of trips I got
7 where I refused to participate in anybody bringing back a hibachi pot. These hibachi pots
8 were made of concrete, people would buy them in Japan. The number five, the biggest
9 one, I think weighed around 100 pounds. If you or somebody on your crew got one, you
10 know, they were hard to carry, very difficult to haul. You had to keep all your stuff with
11 you so if you made a stop somewhere you had to haul things to the BOQ (bachelor
12 officers’ quarters) and back from the BOQ to the flight planning room and then from, you
13 know, flight ops and then from flight ops out to the airplane and onto the airplane. You
14 had to keep all this luggage with you, if your luggage included a hibachi pot it was
15 terrible.

16 JS: Sure.

17 CG: After a while I refused to help with hibachi pots.

18 JS: Understandable.

19 CG: Anyway, life traveling around in a C-141 was, you know, just kind of
20 haphazard, the lifestyle was haphazard. You never knew where you were going to go next
21 and didn’t know for sure how long you were going to be there.

22 JS: Right. How many trips to Vietnam would you say you made during this time
23 period?

24 CG: Well, I can tell you that I was in Vietnam during the four years that I flew
25 after finishing pilot training before I got out I was in Vietnam forty-two out of forty-eight
26 months.

27 JS: Okay.

28 CG: Twelve of those was my assignment to Vietnam so the other months, the
29 other thirty months I was just flying in C-141s in out of Vietnam.

30 JS: Sure.

1 CG: We typically, I typically went on three to four trips per month to Vietnam. I
2 have probably been to Japan seventy-five times, things like that.

3 JS: At this point before you were officially assigned to forward air control school
4 and before you were officially in-country when you were flying back and forth on these
5 trips what was your perspective on what was going on in Vietnam? What was your
6 thoughts on it at that time period?

7 CG: How do you mean?

8 JS: I guess how—I am sure, obviously, because of your role in the Air Force and
9 flying back and forth all the time you were very aware of the situation in Vietnam. I
10 guess, how did you—I guess what I am trying to say is how did you view the war at that
11 time period? What was your opinion on the war at time?

12 CG: Well, the first time I ever flew to Vietnam I was probably pretty scared of
13 going there. You know, I expected that, you know, as soon as you got within fifty miles
14 of Vietnam somebody would be shooting at you. In fact, that didn't happen.

15 JS: Right.

16 CG: Even when I was in Vietnam itself I was only sure that I was being shot at
17 probably a dozen times in the year.

18 JS: Okay.

19 CG: You know, from the ground.

20 JS: Yes, sir.

21 CG: Let's see. I guess my attitude about Vietnam was it is probably going to be
22 an extremely dangerous place, and it is—it was. Excuse me. But nothing at all like—it
23 turned out to not be anything at all like I expected. You know, I expected the war zone
24 to—to see people being killed constantly all the time and it just wasn't that way at least in
25 the places I was. You know, for some of the GIs that were, you know, on the ground
26 caught in the swamps and jungles of Vietnam, they experienced something totally
27 different than what I experienced. I expected that, you know, the stories that applied to
28 the Army and Marines would apply to us and it wasn't like that. It turned out to be
29 dangerous but less dangerous than I expected. My first day in Vietnam I was at Bien Hoa
30 waiting for an in-country assignment as a forward air controller and there was nothing to
31 do and someone there mentioned that I should go sit down at this table and read some of

1 the booklets there, books or loose-leaf binders there. The first one I picked up was
2 labeled *First Day in Vietnam*, you know, somebody had put a label on the end of it. I got
3 to reading it and it said if this is your first day as a forward air controller in Vietnam you
4 have a 66% chance of going home. Well, that didn't sound very good to me at all.

5 JS: Sure.

6 CG: But on the other hand, you know, if you stop and think about it that's a whole
7 different than there is 100% chance you won't.

8 JS: Right.

9 CG: My perception was ahead of time was much worse than the reality. I think
10 when I went to—when I got my assignment to Vietnam I never said it to my wife but I
11 had pretty serious thoughts that I probably would not come back or I would not come
12 back in one piece.

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 CG: You know, I just felt that way.

15 JS: Right.

16 CG: I had some reason to think that, too, because, you know, that first day in
17 Vietnam I already knew then that one of my good friends from pilot training had been
18 killed in Vietnam. I read the report on what happened to him and it was in and among one
19 of those loose leaf binders that had an account of the loss of each forward air controller,
20 had a report on them.

21 JS: Yes, sir.

22 CG: So I was able to look his name up and find out what happened. That was my
23 perception, that it was a pretty deadly place. You know, if you were assigned there, there
24 was little expectation you were going to get out.

25 JS: Sure.

26 CG: The expectation should have been a lot bigger, a lot greater, because, you
27 know, than I internalized.

28 JS: Right.

29 CG: Anything else about that?

30 JS: I guess if you want we can move onto forward air control school and your
31 assignment to, your assignment to Vietnam. Could you tell me—

1 CG: Oh, yeah—

2 JS: Go ahead.

3 CG: Okay, well, first of all when I was notified that I had an assignment to
4 Vietnam I had to go down to personnel. While I was down there talking with them I
5 happened to look at a piece of paper they had there that had my name on it, my name was
6 down at the bottom. I asked the personnel person there, “What is this list?” because my
7 name is down, I think I was number thirty-one and there were thirty-two names on the list
8 they were numbered, the names were numbered and I was number thirty-one. He said,
9 “Oh, that’s the list of people for the assignment that you are getting.” I said, “How come I
10 am getting it and I’m number thirty-one on the list?” He said, “Why, everyone else had
11 some excuse.” I said, “What kind of excuse?” He said, “Well, some of them their wife is
12 pregnant.” I said, “Well, my wife is pregnant.” She was going to have a baby. He said,
13 “Well, when is she do?” I told him and he said, “Well, that is not within the window.”
14 You know, she had to be pregnant and due within a certain window and my wife wasn’t
15 due for, you know, six months after I left, you know.

16 JS: Right.

17 CG: Anyway, some of the other people suddenly revealed that they had medical
18 problems, you know, that they had been hiding. It got them grounded but it got them out
19 of going to Vietnam.

20 JS: Sure, yeah.

21 CG: So anyway there were thirty-one people or thirty people in front of me who
22 didn’t go to Vietnam but I did on that particular list for that particular assignment.
23 Anyway, at the time that I got the assignment I was scheduled to go on an around-the-
24 world embassy run. It was a C-141 trip that goes all the way around the world stopping at
25 embassies. It was kind of neat thing to do, you know, it was kind of prized flight that
26 people would try to get on, you know. It went to Australia and all the neat places, you
27 know.

28 JS: Right, sure.

29 CG: It went all the way around the word just in about four days, four or five days
30 and still, you know, went all the way around the world. I was scheduled to go one the
31 following week. Well, because I was number thirty-one on this list of thirty-two people

1 and they had taken many days to talk to each one of the people in front of me, I had to
2 leave pretty soon, you know, like three or four weeks later from the time they talked to
3 me about this assignment I had to leave Travis. So I didn't have a lot of time left before I
4 had to relocate my family and all of that. I couldn't afford to be away for almost a week,
5 you know, or I didn't think I could be away for almost a week while I went on this trip.
6 That is the first thing I did was call down to the squadron and tell them I am not going on
7 the embassy run, get somebody else to do it. Which they did. I told them I was getting an
8 assignment to Vietnam and so they had no problem but they put somebody else on it. It
9 was no problem getting volunteers to go on those trips. Then I started making
10 arrangements to move my wife near her folks in New Mexico. By that point we had two
11 kids and our third one was due. Anyway, I had I think three to four weeks, something like
12 that, before I had to be at Fort Walton Beach in Florida for Special Operations School,
13 FAC school. Anyway, we left—we got our stuff packed up and moved about a week later
14 or so. I took two weeks of leave and went to with my wife, my father-in-law had found a
15 house for us to rent in a town near where they lived. So we went there and I was there for
16 all of the arrival of all the furnishings and all of that and help my wife get things moved
17 into the house. Then that's all we were doing was just basically moving and getting
18 settled and getting her settled in. Then I left to go to Florida for the training. But we also
19 made arrangements for her, my in-laws to take care of the two girls. Two weeks later I
20 think my wife came to Florida for a week and spent a week with me in Florida. I was
21 down at FAC school. I think it was only four weeks long. From there I went to jungle
22 survival school over at Clark Air Base in the Philippines. Of course, during that time I
23 sent my wife back to New Mexico, of course. Then I left from there and went to Clark
24 Air Base for jungle survival school and from there to Bien Hoa and from Bien Hoa was
25 sent up to Da Nang as the Quang Nam province forward air controller.

26 JS: Okay. Before we get into your duties as a forward air controller could we talk
27 a—I would like to talk a little bit about forward air control school and a little bit about
28 jungle training. Can you tell me a little bit about forward air control school, what it was
29 about, what types of things they were teaching you?

30 CG: Well, forward air controller school had a couple of different parts to it. One,
31 of course, was just getting checked out in a little airplane you know, a small observation

1 forward air controller the L-19 or O-1. The Army called it an L-19, the Air Force called
2 them O-1s. Just getting checked out in that, that was—we spent a lot of time, not a lot of
3 time, but we flew the thing you know pretty much every day for two or three weeks.

4 JS: Sure.

5 CG: But there was other parts to the school, you know, explaining the duties and
6 stuff like that. There were really only, let's see, two or three different things that a
7 forward air controller did. The easiest one in some ways or the hardest, depending on
8 your point of view, was visual reconnaissance. You went out over and looked for trouble,
9 basically, looked for things you know and documented things and made reports back to
10 intel on things that you saw, movements. If you passed over a river that was kind of semi-
11 remote, you know, and saw several large boats on it, you know, you would report that
12 and they would check and make sure they weren't hauling ammunition for the enemy and
13 things like that. Different things like that. You would report on people that you saw, any
14 large groups of people you saw away from any large villages or anything. Which, by the
15 way, I did see at times. In fact, at one point on one VR(visual reconnaissance) mission
16 later on in Vietnam I did see some people in uniform proceeding eastward down some
17 trails in the jungle or semi-jungle—pretty far west of Da Nang about thirty miles west of
18 Da Nang. I was flying around and an hour later I saw a group of people further down the
19 trail and they did not have uniforms on. I think, you know, I was pretty sure at the time it
20 was the same people and it was too large a group of people to, you know, to be out there
21 and there were no big villages or anything nearby. You know, you would find things like
22 that and report that. You also had preplanned airstrikes where you were given an
23 assignment, there would be—intel said that, you know, there was something that needed
24 to be bombed usually a weapons cache that needed to be bomb, 06:30 tomorrow morning,
25 you know. You would get up in the wee hours and get out there and go fly out there. At
26 the appointed time the fighters would show up, in the meantime while you would get
27 there fifteen or twenty minutes before them and locate where the target was and you
28 would go fire a Willy Pete rocket at it, a white phosphorus rocket, at it to mark it so the
29 fighters could see where it was, and they would bomb it. So we were—the training had to
30 do with, you know, being able to identify targets and marking them and things like that.
31 There were ranges down in Florida where you could actually fire live white phosphorus

1 and, you know, at some point, you know, something on the ground and mark it, you
2 know. We didn't get too many fighters in Florida, you know. I think one time only did
3 we have any fighters show up and bomb where we marked a target.

4 JS: Right.

5 CG: Because the fighters had their own problems in training and things like that,
6 they weren't available to us there for that kind of thing, for mutual training or not very
7 much. Most of that kind of experience you got in Vietnam rather than at the training. But
8 at least you did a little bit of it. Then for those of us who had not been fighter pilots they
9 arranged for I think it was three flights in a fighter. The fighters that we were assigned to
10 were A-1s, propeller-driven fighters. You had to fly on two day and one night mission
11 with the fighters, with a fighter pilot. These were all trainee fighter pilots that you would
12 just ride with a trainee. That was kind of interesting especially the night flight in a fighter
13 with, you know, a trainee fighter pilot on a bombing range doing bombing and strafing
14 under flares. You don't know what Kennywood Park is since you are from Mississippi
15 and Texas. Just think of Six Flags over Texas or someplace that you might have been,
16 you know, some big amusement park.

17 JS: Yes, sir.

18 CG: We have a big amusement park here like that. Those amusement parks are
19 nothing but child's play after you have been out on the night range in a fighter dropping
20 bombs and strafing under flares. An amusement park is just nothing, you know,
21 compared to that.

22 JS: Sure.

23 CG: It's very exciting, a much greater risk, you know. Amusement parks, they try
24 their darndest to make sure nobody gets hurt, you know, or they will get sued out of
25 existence. The military doesn't quite—you know, they don't want anybody to get hurt but
26 sometimes it happens, you know.

27 JS: Right, yes sir.

28 CG: Nobody is going to sue them out of existence if you get hurt. It can be pretty
29 exciting doing that sort of thing so we did that, you know, went on the range either
30 practicing for our own visual reconnaissance or airstrikes or flying these fighters and
31 things like that. Lots of local flying just to get used to the airplane both day and night.

1 The first time I ever flew the O-1 at night we flew for about ten minutes and we didn't
2 have true instrument lights in the O-1 we just had a little ultraviolet light that—you know,
3 it is like a C-4 light. I don't know if you know what that is.

4 JS: Uh, no, sir.

5 CG: A little light on a cord that hooks into the, a bracket on the wall of the
6 airplane or ceiling of the airplane. It was ultraviolet and shines down on the instrument
7 panel and there is florescent paint on all of the instruments. It allows you see the
8 instruments, you know, the air speed and things like that. Well, after about ten minutes on
9 my very first night flight the instrument light, you know, that little C-4 light the
10 ultraviolet went out. I fiddled and fiddled with it and couldn't get it working again. I told
11 the instructor that I can't get this light working. He says, "Well, what are you going to do
12 when you get to Vietnam if that happens?" I said, "I don't know. I'll just have to fly." He
13 says, "Yep, you just have to fly." So I flew for another hour or so or ten minutes, made
14 seventeen more landings and take-offs with no lights, not being able to see any
15 instruments, and you just fly. You do your job.

16 JS: Sure.

17 CG: It wasn't all as hard. By that time I had already flown the airplane for about a
18 week and I was kind of used to the sound of the airplane so it turned out I could tell by
19 the sound of the engine and stuff like that, enough, you know, the wind rustling over the
20 airplane I could tell if I was going fast enough to, you know, stay in the air and not stall
21 and spin.

22 JS: Sure, sure.

23 CG: You wouldn't have been able to do that in something like the T-37 or T-38. I
24 mean, you know, you just didn't have enough seat-of-the-pants sensations in those kinds
25 of airplanes to be able to fly like that. The O-1 was just a light aircraft and you can, long
26 before you actually stall you can feel what's going on. So I had no trouble with things
27 like that. But the school was like that and I kind of liked flying the airplane so I used to
28 volunteer—you know, they would fly airplanes over to Eglin Main for maintenance, for
29 certain kinds of maintenance, and I would volunteer to fly over there, you know, one of
30 the airplanes over there and somebody would pick me up and take me back. I would do
31 things like that just to fly an extra—the other thing that it did was close air support with

1 the, as a FAC, you know. I would kind of try to keep track of and locate where, you
2 know, somebody would be getting shot bad by somebody, you know, by the bad guys.

3 JS: Sure.

4 CG: You also flew things like cover for convoys. We didn't do any of that in
5 training but later, yeah, we talked about it and then later on I got—a number of those
6 were flying cover, fly over the top of a convoy. If they get in trouble you get help, you
7 know, in the form of fighters or whatever and try to track down where they were taking
8 fire from and all so when the fighter or gunship or something showed up you could tell
9 them where the problem was.

10 JS: Sure.

11 CG: That was pretty much special ops school.

12 JS: Okay, alright.

13 CG: Jungle survival.

14 JS: Yeah, but one thing I wanted to ask you before we moved onto that, again,
15 going from a very large cargo plane with C-141 to the little, tiny O-1 was there any
16 difficulty? Was it odd for you? Was it strange?

17 CG: Yeah, it was strange but the biggest problem with the O-1 was that it did not
18 have retracting gear and in fact had spring steel gear. If you landed too hard you would
19 end up about twenty feet in the air again with no air speed.

20 JS: Right, it would be bouncing then.

21 CG: You would bounce right off the ground. So, you know, we were warned lots
22 about that, you know.

23 JS: Right.

24 CG: You know, I managed to get through the training without ever having
25 anything bad happen there but I saw a couple of other guys, you know, bounce off the
26 ground and, you know, they were scrambling to get enough airspeed to keep flying, you
27 know.

28 JS: Sure. Would you say that this training, this forward air controller training,
29 would you say that it sufficiently prepared you for Vietnam?

1 CG: Yes and no. Yes, in that you had at least some idea of what was coming. No,
2 in that you didn't have, you know, adequate experience to deal with whatever was
3 coming, you know.

4 JS: Sure.

5 CG: So, you know, the first probably month you were in Vietnam you were self-
6 training to kind of flesh out your training, you know.

7 JS: The people who were training you here are they combat veterans?

8 CG: The ones at the school?

9 JS: Yes, sir.

10 CG: At the field? Yeah. All of them had been to Vietnam, had had a tour in
11 Vietnam, yes. Every one of the instructors had already been to Vietnam.

12 JS: Alright.

13 CG: Yep, they all knew what they were talking about.

14 JS: Sure. So you would rate them and the training very good for the most part
15 then?

16 CG: Yeah. I don't know about the ones that might have gone in 1962 or
17 something like that.

18 JS: Right.

19 CG: They might not have, you know, when there was still nothing but advisors
20 over there but I don't know. They probably didn't have anything close to the same kind
21 of training. Well, we weren't using fighters over there and all that that early, either.

22 JS: Sure, right. How long did this training last before you moved onto jungle
23 training school, how long did it last?

24 CG: I was trying to remember that. I said earlier it was four weeks but I think it
25 was closer to six.

26 JS: Okay, right, right, that is right, sorry. All right, then you moved on to jungle
27 training school. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

28 CG: We just went to Clark Air Base and went through a jungle training school
29 there. It was several days, about three days, as I recall. The classroom training, you know,
30 all sorts of topics everything from surviving and what to expect out in the jungle and how
31 to identify edible things and lots of stuff like that, you know. Things that you can eat and

1 things that you had to avoid, you know, those kinds of things. Training in how to—all
2 kinds of things, you know, about keeping dry and avoiding foot rot and stuff like that.
3 Try to stay clean and dry, those sorts of things. Then we went out in the jungle and spent
4 two or three days out in the jungle. They had to helicopter us into where we went because
5 there were no roads. They dropped us off and they were using old H-34 helicopters,
6 gasoline-powered helicopters, which couldn't take off where they were taking us so they
7 were landing on the edge of a cliff and we would jump out of the helicopter. The
8 helicopter would get up as much power as it could and roll off the edge of the cliff.

9 JS: Wow.

10 CG: You would watch them fall several hundred feet and then fly away.

11 JS: Right.

12 CG: Guys kept doing that over and over.

13 JS: Sure, right.

14 CG: Let's see, they—at the—out in the jungle for that part of it, the field training,
15 they gave us chits, two kinds of chits. One was red and that was if you got in trouble like
16 injured, you know.

17 JS: Right.

18 CG: You made a fuss because there were pigmies living in the jungle where we
19 had training called Negritos. That was their backyard and if you made any kind of noise
20 or anything they would come running. If you gave them the red chit they would go get
21 help. When they brought somebody back to you, you know, an American from the
22 school, when they led somebody back to you they would get whatever it was, some large
23 amount, ten or twenty-five pounds of something like that of rice for that red chit, for, you
24 know, getting you help. You also had three or four other chits, little plastic tokens. I think
25 they were white ones. I don't recall exactly, they got a couple pounds of rice or
26 something for one of those and those were—you had to give them one if they found you
27 so the whole part of the issue was to stay hidden from these Negritos, which was
28 basically impossible. Because, you know, we were out in area that was their backyard. I
29 had two interesting experiences there. One was at night I crawled under some brush and,
30 you know, spread out a poncho to sleep on to stay off the ground, you know, and stay
31 dry.

1 JS: Right.

2 CG: I was lying there covered up best I could be and happened to look down
3 toward my feet and I saw what appeared to be two eyes looking at me. I kind of got
4 spooked about what sort of animal, they hadn't mentioned anything about any animals
5 except rats. I could hear rats running around in the jungle, you know, they would run
6 through the branches overhead and stuff like that. Other than rats they hadn't mentioned
7 other animals that could be a problem but this looked like an animal down here looking at
8 me. I got out my flashlight and put my fingers over the end so it wouldn't light up too
9 much and turned on flashlight and the eyes disappeared. I turned the flash light off and
10 the eyes reappeared so I kind of sat up a little bit and twisted around and got a little closer
11 to these eyes. They were just like a foot off the end of my feet and turned the light on
12 again and the eyes disappeared. I turned the light off and the eyes reappeared. I thought,
13 "Oh, there is no animal there," so I turned completely around and got myself about a foot
14 away from where my feet had been, you know, down where my feet had been about a
15 foot away from these supposed eyes. I was pretty close to them and I turned on my light
16 again and there were two little mushrooms there. They had been something they had not
17 mentioned is that they had mushrooms, little toad stools or mushrooms in the Philippines
18 that glow in the dark.

19 JS: Oh, wow, right.

20 CG: That was kind of interesting.

21 JS: Sure.

22 CG: Then I had to crawl out from under that stuff and go to the bathroom at some
23 point there in the middle of the night and find my way back in the dark and crawl back in.
24 I had no problem doing that but in the morning I guess I had made myself—somebody
25 was aware of where I was all because when I woke up in the morning there was some
26 kid, young Negrito kid, standing down by my feet. He wanted a cigarette. Well, I didn't
27 have any cigarettes. He wanted a chit and so I gave him a chit and he wanted something
28 else from me so I gave him the chewing gum that I had. I gave him chewing gum and a
29 chit so he was able to turn the chit in for some rice so technically I was caught, you
30 know.

31 JS: Yeah, right.

1 CG: Just because I lost a chit there. After that one particular night we were
2 supposed to make our way and move on the map, you know, a certain distance away, it
3 wasn't too far, about a mile away to a clearing. We were supposed to be picked up by
4 these helicopters. The helicopters were not going to land, they were going to hover. They
5 could only pick up two or three people at a time because at the altitude they were, you
6 know, they couldn't handle more than two or three people. We would stay on the edge of
7 this clearing and then when the helicopter would come and hover, you know, we would
8 go run up and climb up the ladder about twenty feet, fifteen to twenty feet up into the
9 helicopter.

10 JS: Sure.

11 CG: So that was kind of the training. There were a few other things that they
12 talked about that are probably not too important, such things as there were no poisonous
13 snakes in the Philippines at that point in time but there were in Vietnam.

14 JS: Right, sure.

15 CG: You know, you learned some interesting things. For example, there are no
16 virgin jungles left anywhere in the world. None. Every place you go in any jungle
17 anywhere in the world there have been some time in the past thousand years or so
18 somebody has lived there. Because they have lived there they have planted stuff, you
19 know. Usually root crops or sugar cane, something, they have planted something. All
20 through the jungles all over the world—if you ever have to survive anywhere you want to
21 do it in a jungle because there is food everywhere you just have to know how to find it.
22 There is food growing, you know. What used to be little clearings here and there. There
23 would be maybe trees there but in among the trees there would be places that it used to be
24 part of the clearing and still have some kind of root crops or some kind of plants growing.

25 JS: Sure.

26 CG: That fed a village, you know, ten years before or one hundred years before or
27 five hundred years before, you know.

28 JS: Right, right.

29 CG: I can't think of anything else. Two weeks after I left that jungle training they
30 had heavy rain storms in that same area and there was a mudslide that killed some
31 number, two or three American military people going through jungle training.

1 JS: My goodness.
2 CG: Pardon me?
3 JS: I said goodness.
4 CG: I am sorry. I couldn't hear you.
5 JS: I was just responding. Sorry, go ahead.
6 CG: From there I went to Bien Hoa whose—all of the forward air controllers were
7 assigned to just a couple of bases in Vietnam and then farmed out from there to other
8 bases.
9 JS: Okay.
10 CG: Depending on, you know, needs and they never knew, you know, between
11 the time you left the States and the time you got there somebody could have got killed or
12 injured or something and need might have arisen some place that wasn't expected.
13 JS: Okay. We are coming up on two hours here now. Did you want to take
14 another break now or do you want to continue?
15 CG: Actually, I have to go somewhere in about an hour and a half and I have to
16 get cleaned up so I don't want to go—I am going to start getting ready to go in about a
17 half hour or so. The most I want to go is another half hour.
18 JS: Okay, if you would like we could go for a half hour or we can stop now since
19 we are at a point where before we get into actually talking about Vietnam. Would you
20 want to continue?
21 CG: Yeah, but for no more than about a half hour.
22 JS: Okay, all right. We can do that. No problem. All right, so did you go directly
23 from jungle training school to Vietnam then?
24 CG: Yeah, yeah, as soon as it was over the next day we flew over to—I went to
25 Bien Hoa and then from there to—I spent one day—oh, we didn't fly into Bien Hoa. We
26 flew into Tan Son Nhut. I was kind of spooked about, you know, my assignment. I had to
27 ride a bus through town, through Saigon, you know, and on up to Bien Hoa. I think Bien
28 Hoa is about twelve miles north of Saigon at the time, what was called Saigon at the time.
29 You know, I had to ride the bus up there. Up until that point I had never seen any
30 Vietnamese, you know, really. Of course, I saw plenty of Vietnamese once I got to
31 Saigon.

1 JS: Right.

2 CG: I was only in Saigon, at the airport in Tan Son Nhut for a few hours at most. I
3 rode a bus up to Bien Hoa, checked in. The next day I had to report back to—down to the
4 ops area and was told that I have an assignment sometime that day. That's when I read
5 some of the reports they had there in the loose-leaf binders and the next day I was flown
6 up on a C-123, just riding on a C-123 up to Da Nang. When I got to Da Nang I found out
7 there was only one forward air controller at Da Nang assigned. That forward air
8 controller was assigned, was supplemented to some extent by a couple, I think three
9 pilots from the command post. The 20th TASS (Tactical Air Support Squadron) command
10 post. Those pilots typically did not participate in fighter missions. They only went out
11 visual reconnaissance missions. They usually did not—you know, they just didn't really
12 participate in war, so to speak, you know.

13 JS: Right.

14 CG: But they flew some of the missions. The pilot that I met there was Ernie
15 Betts and he had been there most of the year and he was scheduled to leave in about three
16 weeks. So I had about three weeks and I went out on two flights where I just—he rode in
17 the back seat and I rode in the front seat, you know. You know, just two of us in the
18 airplane. I went on I think two flights like that just so he could show me the area, you
19 know, point out things, landmarks and references and things like and how to find my way
20 around. After that we went out in two separate airplanes. One of the early—one of the
21 things we did before Ernie left was the Air Force had collected some photomaps of A
22 Chau Valley. I'm sure you have probably heard of A Chau.

23 JS: Yes.

24 CG: It is kind of a boot-shaped valley, you know, it was a long, long section with
25 a little dog leg off of it, short dog leg. It looks kind of like a boot. They had taken these
26 photo, done the photo mapping with I think it was F-105-2 photo recce birds, you know,
27 jets.

28 JS: Right, okay.

29 CG: With automatic camera equipment and all. Because of clouds and stuff after a
30 couple of missions they still had a little corner of it that they missed. One of the
31 assignments we got while Ernie was still there was to go over to the heel area, the boot

1 heel area of the A Shau Valley and take some pictures with a handheld camera to fill in
2 the area that it had been missed because of cloud cover with the jet photo recce birds. I
3 was flying high, any time we went more than about twenty miles west of Da Nang we
4 flew with two airplanes, so I was flying high just staying in contact with our radio
5 controller if need be and Ernie was down lower taking the pictures. (Clears throat)
6 Excuse me. While he was taking pictures I kind of wandered several miles away from
7 him. I was still within sight of him but probably five, six maybe seven miles away from
8 him, up toward the toe of this A Shau Valley, you know, boot shaped thing. I started
9 hearing some real heavy gunfire and I called Ernie and told him I think somebody is
10 shooting at me. Ernie, I could see him, he turned toward me, he only came a short ways
11 toward me and all of a sudden I saw the bottom of his airplane. You know, he was
12 wheeling around and he started screaming at me to get the F out of there. That that was a
13 .50-caliber machine gun somebody was shooting at me. So I zig-zagged my way out of
14 there and got away from that area. Somebody was shooting at me. That was the first time
15 I was ever actually aware that somebody was shooting at me from the ground.

16 JS: Right.

17 CG: In an O-1 you could hear all of this, you could hear any kind of ground fire.
18 Just the pitch sound of the engine was kind of a lower pitch on the O-1 and it wasn't too
19 loud. We flew mostly with the windows open just for, you know, poor man's air
20 conditioning. So you could hear things going on outside, you know, from the ground.
21 Anyway, that was the first time I can remember somebody actually shooting at me. As far
22 as getting shot at, I was at Da Nang for eleven months if you take out the—I was
23 assigned there for twelve—but if you take out the R&R (rest and relaxation) that I took
24 up at Japan plus a couple of weeks that I spent getting checked out in the O-2 in the Delta
25 region plus a few days in transit here and there I was actually there about eleven months
26 and we had thirteen rocket attacks on Da Nang I was there; during the eleven months I
27 was actually physically present at Da Nang. We were certainly being shot at then but in a
28 different way.

29 JS: Right.

30 CG: Anyway, that gets me up to Da Nang and gets me started. Anything else?

1 JS: I just wanted to ask you a little bit about when you first arrived in-country, in
2 Saigon for those few hours and the bus trip to Bien Hoa, you said that prior to that time
3 you had no contact with the Vietnamese. What was when you—

4 CG: I didn't even have any contact with any Vietnamese there, either. I just never
5 saw any before, there I did.

6 JS: I guess what I wanted to ask you was—well, I will phrase it this way, what
7 was your first impression of Vietnam? What was going through your mind when you first
8 arrived in-country? What did you think of it?

9 CG: Who is going to be shooting at me and where are they going to be shooting at
10 me from?

11 JS: Right, sure.

12 CG: You know, because I had no clue who the enemy might be other than that
13 they were Vietnamese of some sort. I came later to find out that the vast majority of the
14 enemy were North Vietnamese and that the idea of the South Vietnamese participating as
15 the enemy did happen but there were a lot more North Vietnamese than South
16 Vietnamese that were the enemy, you know. People don't like to think about that or talk
17 about that but that was true; because I used to see them in the jungle parading in from the
18 Ho Chi Minh Trail and all. On a couple of occasions I saw them in uniform and getting
19 out of uniform. They were basically, North Vietnamese military were basically changing
20 from being North Vietnamese military to being, I call it Viet Cong.

21 JS: Right, okay.

22 CG: I have no doubt that there were true South Vietnamese Viet Cong but not
23 nearly the numbers, you know.

24 JS: So a lot of these guys were coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail then taking
25 off their North Vietnamese Army uniforms, then.

26 CG: Yep, yep and putting on just, you know, the typical South Vietnamese pant
27 leg things, loose clothing, you know.

28 JS: Sure, sure trying to blend in with the population.

29 CG: I am sorry.

30 JS: Trying to blend in with the population, then.

31 CG: Oh, I am sure they did, yeah.

1 JS: Yeah, sure, yeah.

2 CG: I don't know how much interaction there was between them and, you know,
3 typical villagers.

4 JS: Right.

5 CG: I think the typical villagers were afraid of them and then just kept quiet.

6 JS: Sure. How long between going to Bien Hoa—had you already received your
7 orders by that time when you first arrived in-country or did it take a little while for you to
8 receive your orders?

9 CG: Well, my orders were to, I don't remember the name of the unit but the one
10 that was over all of the FAC units in Vietnam. I think there were four or five FAC units
11 in Vietnam, squadrons. There was a group over that and that is where I was assigned. So I
12 was just assigned there, that is where the orders were. Then when I got there they gave
13 me further orders to send me up to Da Nang. I was only there a day, well, two nights, one
14 full day at Bien Hoa.

15 JS: Once you arrived at Da Nang air base, well, could you describe Da Nang air
16 base to me? Could you tell me what it looked like?

17 CG: Well, if you look on that website we actually have pictures of it.

18 JS: Sure. Yes, sir.

19 CG: There was a—most of Da Nang air base was, belonged to the South
20 Vietnamese military, it just belonged to them. It had, as I recall, three U.S. military areas
21 on it. One was our main compound where officers and pilots, you know, and all those
22 permanent party like officers and computer officers and all of that, maintenance officers
23 all stayed. That was the main compound. That's where the O club was, that is where the
24 mess hall was, those kind of things. So that was one area and it was all fenced in with
25 barbed wire. It was within Da Nang air base and west of the runways, you know, flight
26 line area. There was another smaller air unit on the southwest end of Da Nang that was
27 the enlisted area and that had tents, enlisted people were all housed in tents. On the—I am
28 sorry, that was the southeast side we were on the east side. On the west side of Da Nang
29 was the Marine area, the northwest side of Da Nang was the Marine area. Our compound
30 was on the east side. I apologize. I said that wrong.

31 JS: It's no problem.

1 CG: And the tent area was on the southeast side. We were above the center off the
2 east of the runway area about a quarter of a mile. The Marine area was on the northwest
3 corner of Da Nang. There were two runways, two long runways, each one, if I remember
4 right, was around 10,500 or 11,000 feet long. It ran basically north-south and just a little
5 bit off of 17/35, 170 degrees and 350 degrees instead of 180 and 360 so they were very
6 close to north-south. There was a parallel taxiway on each side, the east side and the west
7 side. Then beyond the parallel taxiways were parking areas and all that for aircraft and
8 then hangars, maintenance areas and all. The tower was about midfield on the east side
9 just adjacent to the flight line. Directly opposite of the tower on the west side was the
10 ammo dump. They were just big piles of dirt on the west side. They were actually dirt-
11 covered, earth-covered, you know, buildings in effect where ammo was stored for all the
12 fighters, bombers, whatever. The Air Force compound, as I said, had the O club within it
13 and the mess hall so the enlisted people three times a day would come up to that
14 compound. As I recall there were shuttle buses that ran back and forth between the tent
15 area and the compound they could take and eat. On the flight line we had, the 20th TASS
16 had a maintenance hangar and some small Quonset huts that were used for offices. One
17 was a little training, part of one was used for a little training room because the enlisted
18 people even had to, you know, take classes and self-study things and all of that and take
19 tests in order to get promoted so we had a little training room for the enlisted people
20 there. It was just part of a Quonset hut. Let's see what else was on there. Oh, up in the—
21 on the flight line in the fighter area was their command post and it was separately fenced
22 in from the flight line since their command post contained an intel section that was
23 segregated from the rest of their flight line but it was in amongst some of their other
24 buildings. There was a base ops section at Da Nang that had, as I recall, two C-47
25 Gooney Birds. I rode on one, one time up to Hong Kong and back over a weekend. There
26 were—we had—when I initially got there we had about I think around thirty, thirty-five
27 O-1s but most of those were scattered out at other parts of I Corps. We only had, you
28 know, whatever I flew, Ernie and I flew. The guys from command post was just three or
29 four airplanes that we had there and the rest were either not there or were there for
30 maintenance purposes. We would go back out to the field and go on to the other air run,
31 places like Dong Ha or Hue or whatever. Shortly after I got to Da Nang we were notified

1 that we would be getting something called an O-2, which was the military version of
2 Cessna 337. Then we would have to go to school down at, I can't think of the name of the
3 base right off the top of my head right now but I have it on that website, Binh Thuy was
4 the name of the base where the O-2 school was going to be held in-country. We just went
5 down there for I don't recall how long. I think it was only about ten days and get checked
6 out in the O-2. Let's see, I thought that we were going to just get one for one
7 replacement, O-2s for O-1s but as it turned out that was wrong. I found out that we were
8 going to get—it was ninety-five or ninety-six O-2s and we were going to keep seventeen
9 O-1s in I Corps, Da Nang itself which is mostly O-2s. Although I think we kept one O-1
10 around, as well. There were some places where the O-2 couldn't go. The O-2 was not
11 allowed to go anywhere where there were rocks that could be thrown up into the rear
12 propeller so that eliminated a lot of places for us. We could only take an O-1 so we ended
13 up with a lot more airplanes than what I expected. In fact, our maintenance quality
14 control officer who was the test pilot for maintenance or maintenance test flying, he left
15 Vietnam and wasn't replaced, you know, at the end of his tour. They just didn't have
16 enough people, I guess. They rated maintenance officers to replace him. They weren't
17 going to replace him so I talked to our ops officer and told him that I would like to fly the
18 test planes and he initially said, "No." Being a pilot, it was worth asking at least. But he
19 asked why I wanted to do it and I told him that I just wanted to fly. I didn't like sitting
20 there on the ground and he said, "No." About a week later he came back and asked me if
21 I still wanted to do it. I told him, "Yes." He said, "Okay," but I had to keep FAC-ing, you
22 know, forward air controlling, but the test flying would be just extra flying. I said,
23 "That's fine," you know, I just wanted to be off the ground as much as I can be.

24 JS: Sure.

25 CG: He said, "Okay," but at that point I still didn't know how many airplanes we
26 were going to get. So I thought we were just going to get forty or whatever it was, forty-
27 two O-2s and get rid of the O-1s. I went off to Binh Thuy to the school and when I came
28 back is when I found out we were going to get all these other airplanes and keep some,
29 seventeen of the O-2s. Nobody said anything about me continuing to FAC or not
30 continuing to FAC. I just did it, you know.

31 JS: Right.

1 CG: I have flight records that show—you know, when I came back I was flying
2 both test flights and combat missions for another couple of months. The combat missions
3 kept decreasing in frequency. Well, what was happening was they, you know—as time
4 went on and they got more and more O-2s the requirement for test flights increased and
5 they needed somebody to fly the test flights. At some point it got to the point where ops
6 was doing things like calling over the command post and getting somebody over there to
7 fly missions for me and canceling me out on missions because they had test flights for me
8 to do. I ended up doing the forward air controller probably about six months out of my
9 year assignment. I expected to be doing it for the whole time but, you know, I was doing
10 so many test hops, as many as seven a day that after a while, you know, after they
11 canceled me out on so many FAC missions so I could fly test hops they finally just got
12 another FAC in Na Trang which I think was where a lot of the pilots came through and
13 told them they needed another FAC. They got a FAC for Quang Nam Province and I was
14 out of the business of FAC-ing and just doing test flights. They also—the Air Force was
15 always kind of against the idea of having people dual qualified or qualified in multiple
16 aircraft at the same time but nobody ever said anything to me. They just let me fly so I
17 ended up flying both O-1s and O-2s for all the rest of the time I was in Vietnam.

18 JS: One of the questions that I had for you since you did fly the O-1 and the O-2
19 throughout your time period—

20 CG: I am having trouble hearing you now.

21 JS: Oh, I am sorry. One of the questions I had about—since you ended up flying
22 both the O-1 and the O-2 throughout your time in Vietnam, which did you prefer?

23 CG: It depended. If I had to go over to—if I had to haul a mechanic or some parts
24 or something over to Thailand, to Ubon or someplace, well, the only practical airplane to
25 do that in was an O-2 because you could cruise in that thing at 120 knots, 125 knots,
26 where the O-1 could only go 70 knots and you had a much longer range also with the O-
27 2. So, you know, you weren't risking running out of gas in an O-2. But for forward air
28 controller missions I personally preferred the O-1.

29 JS: Okay.

1 CG: I mentioned earlier that you could hear what was going on, you could also
2 maneuver the thing much better than the O-2. The O-2 I said was based on the Cessna
3 337.

4 JS: Right, right.

5 CG: Well, the Cessna 337 is basically your civilian doctors and lawyers, you
6 know, high income kind of persons, weekend airplane, you know, has a yoke in it like a
7 typical Cessna, you know, 172 or something like that that a doctor might have. It is made
8 for, you know, somewhat wealthy people to fly as a—go joy flying in, you know, take
9 their family down to Phoenix for the weekend or whatever. So it had a yoke in it and little
10 dinky rudders and all it wasn't highly maneuverable. It also had a dangerous tendency—
11 at one point right before I got to Vietnam one of the pilots in the area just south of Da
12 Nang was out with two ship, two airplanes, and one of the pilots got shot. For armament
13 in an O-1 there was basically nothing so some ingenious people had put a piece of steel,
14 quarter-inch-thick steel boiler plate under the seat and another piece in the back. Well,
15 there was about an inch-and-a-half gap between those two pieces and this one FAC got
16 shot. The bullet came up through that gap and entered his back and rode up along his
17 spine and he went into shock. The other pilot in the other airplane realized something was
18 wrong because this pilot is kind of slumped in his seat. You know, they were flying close
19 together and he could see him. He managed to fly that other airplane back toward Da
20 Nang which was the biggest field nearby. He was able to do it by crisscrossing back and
21 forth on each side of the airplane bumping the wing up or down, you know.

22 JS: Oh, yeah.

23 CG: Up on whichever side needed to come up and kept guiding the other airplane
24 back toward Da Nang just by bumping the wing up.

25 JS: Wow.

26 CG: He managed to do that for a little over ten minutes and get that airplane back
27 in the vicinity of Da Nang at which point the pilot who had been shot aroused a little bit
28 and was able to make a landing and survived. In an O-2 it had something called negative
29 dihedral. You don't know what that is but the wings actually slope down slightly instead
30 of up. What would happen if you let go of an O-1 it had a tendency to fly just straight
31 ahead. If you did the same thing in an O-2 and just let go of the controls and left it alone

1 it had the tendency to drop a wing and begin spiraling and as it spiraled it would spiral
2 downward and eventually you would hit the ground. You couldn't, you know, another
3 airplane could not have kept up with it sufficiently to keep it from spiraling. You know, if
4 you got shot and into shock in an O-1 the airplane was basically going to fly straight
5 ahead for a while and give you at least some chance to arouse and start flying again. But
6 in an O-2 you were probably going to hit the ground before that could happen. That was
7 another thing that I didn't care for in the O-2. Another was that the engines were very
8 noisy and kind of whiny, had kind of a whine to them. They were turbo-charged
9 reciprocating engines, this kind of whine. You could not hear when you were getting shot
10 at unless you happened to be low and, you know, flying low and slow or something like
11 that which we tried not to do. But you couldn't hear anything going on outside. It was so
12 noisy you tended to not open the windows. They had vents in that let air flow through it
13 better than in the O-1 so there was less need to open the windows other than to hear but if
14 you opened the windows you couldn't hear anyway for all the noise from the engines.
15 You really couldn't tell when you were being shot at and in fact my airplane got hit only
16 twice in Vietnam and both times it was just in the wing and both times it was in an O-2
17 and I never knew that my airplane had been hit until the maintenance people checked the
18 airplane after I landed told me, "Oh, you got hit on that one, that flight." I had no clue
19 that I had gotten hit.

20 JS: Right.

21 CG: Where in an O-1 you could actually hear when someone was shooting at you.
22 So that is another thing that I didn't like was that you couldn't hear. You couldn't
23 maneuver the airplane very well and it gets kind of technical keeping up with the fighters
24 and stuff like that when you are flying a race track pattern and trying to put in fighters.

25 JS: Right.

26 CG: But you needed more maneuverability than you could get, except out of the
27 O-2 and the visibility was not nearly as good in the O-2, either, as it was in the O-1. The
28 one good thing about the O-2, though, was that it had two engines so if you took a bullet
29 in one of the engines there was a good chance that the other engine would get you home.
30 There were several instances of that happening. If that same thing happened in an O-1
31 you were going down.

1 JS: Right.

2 CG: A good chance in an O-1 of being able to survive a semi-crash landing if you
3 could keep it under control, you know.

4 JS: Right.

5 CG: Better than an O-2 but you had a much higher chance that you were going to
6 go down somewhere if you got hit in an engine in an O-1. Most of the pilots like the O-2
7 better and they did if you talked to them they liked it better because it had two engines
8 and it was faster. You could get to a target areas quicker and all that sort of thing but for
9 actual putting in fighter strikes I always like the O-1 better.

10 JS: Alright. Well, you said about thirty more minutes and it's about—

11 CG: Yep, we went thirty-five, almost.

12 JS: Okay. So, well, I will go ahead and stop the recording now and then if you
13 have got a minute I will talk to you again.

Interview with Charles Galbach
Session [2] of [2]
15 August 2008

1 JS: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University
2 continuing an oral history interview with Mr. Charles Galbach. Today is August the 15th
3 2008. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr. Galbach is joining me once again from
4 Greensburg, Pennsylvania. Good afternoon, sir.

5 CG: Good afternoon.

6 JS: Okay, the last time we left off we were talking a little bit about comparing the
7 differences between the O-1 and the O-2. If we can go back a little bit and talk about the
8 role of the 20th Tactical Air Support Squadron, could you tell me a little bit about it?

9 CG: Okay, well, the 20th TASS had a typical squadron structure, the commander
10 and an ops officer and all that sort of thing, also had a maintenance section. All of that
11 command structure was physically at Da Nang. The command post was outside of Da
12 Nang air base proper. It was in a smaller compound that was actually in town, in the city
13 of Da Nang. The city of Da Nang itself was off-limits to military but we could drive
14 through to go to some military installations that were outside of Da Nang like a Marine
15 club downtown or Marble Mountain and things like that. So the 20th TASS right in the Da
16 Nang area had the command structure and maintenance at Da Nang airbase and the
17 command post just outside of the air base. In addition to that, the 20th TASS was
18 responsible for positioning airplanes all over I Corps and at Ubon, Thailand, forward air
19 controller airplanes. The Ubon, Thailand, was added after we received O-2s because it
20 was impractical to fly back and forth between Ubon, Thailand, and Da Nang in O-1s. But
21 I don't recall all of those small bases we had in I Corps where we had airplanes but they
22 were places like Khe Sanh, Dong Ha, Hue, Quang Tri, two places in Hue, Hue Citadel
23 and Hue-Phu Bai. There were probably two or three others that I can't recall right now.
24 We had these airplanes, O-1s for I Corps proper and then O-2s in I Corps and Ubon,
25 Thailand, later on. We generally had one mechanic or maybe two mechanics at each of
26 these small bases or outposts. The type of mechanic maintenance guy that was there was
27 typically an APG guy, airplane general, somebody that could do kind of anything; change
28 a brake on an airplane or change a tire, you know, change the spark plugs or something

1 like that, change the oil, and do, you know, minor maintenance on the aircraft. For
2 anything more serious like the routine periodic inspections and things like that the
3 airplanes were flown back to Da Nang proper where there were more maintenance people
4 and specialists and all that sort of thing. If it was too serious a problem like a fuel leak or
5 something where the airplane shouldn't have been flown then we would send a specialist
6 out to the smaller base to fix the problem. If it was just a routine periodic every so many
7 hours type of inspection on the airplane the airplanes were flown back to Da Nang. The
8 forward air controllers from those locations would spend the night generally at Da Nang
9 while the maintenance was being performed and then go back the next day to, you know,
10 Quang Tri or Dong Ha or Khe Sanh or wherever they were normally located. The 20th
11 TASS was the supervisory agent for all of these forward air controllers for the
12 maintenance people that were located at the outpost and for the command structure, you
13 know, at Da Nang itself. There was no ops officer around at all these other bases so the
14 ops officer there was just one, that person would be at Da Nang. There was only one
15 commander and that person was at Da Nang and things like that; one safety officer and
16 that person was at Da Nang. The people out at these smaller bases were typically
17 anywhere from maybe a couple to seven or eight pilots, usually two to four mechanics,
18 APG type, you know, air plane general type mechanics. That was about as big a
19 contingent as we typically had, maybe ten people, ten to twelve at most that belonged to
20 the 20th TASS, they had at a particular location. The numbers were dependent on the
21 typical forward air controller activity in that particular area and how close it was to
22 another area that might be covered. Some areas were small and/or had little activity or
23 were close to another area so they didn't have as many people and airplanes. Other places
24 covered either more territory or had more responsibility for coverage, you know, more
25 flights and that sort of thing so there would be more people out there. I don't know how
26 many people were in the 20th TASS. I only knew numbers of airplanes so I don't know
27 the total number of pilots; never did know. That is all I can think of about the 20th TASS.

28 JS: Okay. Go ahead.

29 CG: As far as actual mission responsibilities, 20th TASS was responsible for, as I
30 talked about earlier in the other session, visual reconnaissance missions, pre-planned air
31 strikes on intel derived targets, impromptu air strikes on, you know, sudden targets or

1 something like, and for covering movements of both South Vietnamese and U.S. forces
2 around I Corps. If there was a convoy or there was a mission like other than Special
3 Forces or regular, like a Marine mission that move into a certain area for some purpose
4 then there would typically be air cover overhead which would be just us. If something
5 happened, they took fire on them or whatever, we would call for other air support, you
6 know, armed air support.

7 JS: Sure.

8 CG: Technically the 20th TASS was not an armed organization. We did carry
9 white phosphorus rockets on our aircraft and I always carried two guns with me. I always
10 had a collapsible M-16 and a pistol on my belt, on my hip, a .38 pistol. That was in case I
11 was shot down somewhere or, you know, whatever, had to land somewhere out in the
12 weeds or in a road or something. I would at least have some small arms with me. The
13 rockets were typically used only for marking targets. In one instance we had an O-2 pilot
14 who had been a former fighter pilot, knew how to use the gun sight very well and
15 somebody was shooting at him with a small machinegun and he flew at the guy and
16 actually hit him with a white phosphorus rocket. The guy, of course, was—the guy was
17 dead, unable to keep shooting at him.

18 JS: Sure.

19 CG: That is the only incident I ever heard of where a 20th TASS pilot actually
20 used a white phosphorous rocket in an offensive manner, actually more than just
21 marking. We also carried canisters, smoke canisters. They were like, kind of like a juice
22 can or something like that with a safety pin on them and a handle like a hand grenade.
23 You could pull the safety pin and throw the smoke canister out of the airplane and it
24 would start smoking. It would land on the ground and produce smoke for some period of
25 time, several minutes. We carried those in the O-1s. The O-1s could only carry four white
26 phosphorus rockets, two on each side of the airplane, plus these smoke grenades or
27 smoke canisters. We used those sometimes for marking targets, just fly overhead of a
28 target and drop it out just before you got there. Typically we did not actually hit the
29 intended target with either a white phosphorus or smoke can but we would get as close as
30 we can. Occasionally you would actually hit—you know, get right at the target. Generally
31 you would try to get within, you know, fifty yards or something like that. Then two of the

1 fighters, if it was an airstrike, two of the fighters you would describe, you know, a clock
2 direction or a compass direction from the smoke to the intended target, you know; like
3 fifty yards or seventy-five yards north, northeast of the smoke. You would see a hooch
4 down there or something like that and that is the target. So that is the sort of thing, kinds
5 of missions that the 20th TASS was responsible for doing. It wasn't just the 20th TASS,
6 each—there were other units responsible for II Corps and III Corps and IV Corps.

7 JS: Okay.

8 CG: Their mission was the same for forward air controller units in each area and
9 they were typically arranged the same way with a central command structure, a command
10 post, radio operators, that sort of thing plus, you know, a bunch of pilots that were both at
11 that location as well as smaller locations away from that major airfield. It was the same
12 all over Vietnam. The 20th TASS happened to be for I Corps.

13 JS: All right. When you are flying one of these forward air control missions—

14 CG: I am sorry.

15 JS: When you are flying one of these forward air control missions and a unit calls
16 you and asks for help.

17 CG: Okay.

18 JS: Whenever you would call for other aircraft support, what type of aircraft
19 would generally respond? It just depended on what was the closest?

20 CG: We normally—it was actually somewhat rare for somebody to call you
21 unless you were flying air cover over a convoy or something like that.

22 JS: Okay.

23 CG: You know, you didn't just—people on the ground didn't just see you flying
24 overhead and manage to contact you, there had to be some sort of pre-arrangement before
25 for communications. Before a mission, for example, covering a unit on some kind of
26 maneuver or convoy or something like that there would be preplanning also for fighter
27 strikes, pre-planned fighter strikes or anything like that there would be pre-planning from
28 the command post. You would get directions on where to be, when to be there, who to
29 talk to by call sign, and what frequency to talk to them on. People did not just call you up
30 and say, "Hey, airplane flying by," you know, "get me fighters."

31 JS: Sure, sure.

1 CG: That just didn't happen, you know. It was pre-arranged, you know, the
2 communications at least were pre-arranged.

3 JS: Sure.

4 CG: Now, given that they were pre-arranged for a pre-planned airstrike, you
5 know, that was one situation but for the more impromptu ones that you are probably
6 alluding to that would be in the course of flying cover, for example, for a convoy. If they
7 began to take fire you were generally in regular communication with this convoy or
8 somebody in the convoy, a comm vehicle. They would tell you that they are taking fire or
9 you would see it, you know, and you would say it looks like somebody is shooting at you
10 from the west side over there. They would confirm it and you would talk to them about
11 whether they needed—whether they could take care of the problem themselves or, you
12 know, it looked like it was something that they could deal with or they actually needed
13 aircraft support.

14 JS: Right.

15 CG: If they did we were also in contact on a different frequency—there are
16 multiple radios in the airplane—we were in contact with our command post and if we
17 were too far away from Da Nang then there would be a radio operator down a Hoi An
18 and we would tell them, you know, what the situation was and the coordinates and, you
19 know, we needed any available fighters; we think we need two or think we need four
20 fighters. If there was a pre-planned mission someplace in I Corps and there were fighters
21 en route to this pre-planned mission it was always a priority to take care of people needs
22 rather than going after just intel reported ammunition storage or something like that.

23 JS: Sure.

24 CG: What would happen if you did get the fighters they would be typically
25 diverted from some pre-planned mission of a lesser priority and diverted to help you
26 suppress an attack on some U.S. or South Vietnamese unit or convoy or whatever. They
27 would show up and you would do—at that point you would conduct activities as if it was
28 a pre-planned strike. You would talk to them and give them the coordinates, they would
29 have maps, too. You would also mark the targets because, you know, these guys in the
30 fighters were typically up high. Their picture of the ground was different than yours
31 flying down low. They would typically mark the target for them and give them a cardinal

1 direction, compass direction from the smoke or where the fire was coming from.
2 Depending on what was going on down there, how large a unit or whatever, you are
3 probably more interested in their ability to strafe than to drop bombs or anything in that
4 kind of situation. That is how an unplanned air strike would come about; through
5 something that happened while you were in pre-planned communication with an
6 organization or convoy or whatever.

7 JS: Okay.

8 CG: Also sometimes, you know, some place would be—would come under
9 attack, you know, Special Forces getting after Hoi An, you know, someplace where there
10 weren't any FACs but maybe a few Americans or some Australians or whatever would
11 come under attack. They would call up and ask for help so you would fly down there and
12 sometimes they would have already tried to get fighters as well, B-57 or something like
13 that. Or you would call for it, you know, when you got there or on the way depending on
14 how much you knew about what was going on there. That was another situation where
15 maybe there weren't any people out in the field but it was fixed installation, a small fixed
16 place that came under attack, maybe a mortar attack or whatever. You flew down there
17 and tried to get fighters or AC-47 or whatever, B-57 or whatever you could get to help
18 suppress the attack on the small place. Some places like one of the Special Forces camps
19 at Thung Duc, they didn't usually ask for help of that kind. They just, you know, that was
20 their little area and that was their little war and they would just take care, shoot back until
21 they could stop whoever it was from shooting at them.

22 JS: All right. Did you ever fly any support missions for the South Vietnamese?

23 CG: Oh, yeah. We typically did not do much forward air controlling of South
24 Vietnamese fighters. I had just a couple of missions where the airplanes had showed up
25 were South Vietnamese. They tried to use their own pilots, forward air controller pilots,
26 who unfortunately were generally kind of inexperienced as forward air controllers. On
27 the other hand, their fighter pilots were extremely experienced. Most of us American
28 fighter pilots or forward air controllers would fly over to—we would go over to Vietnam
29 and we would be there a year and then we would be gone back home.

30 JS: Right.

1 CG: One way or another, you know, either well or not well, you know, we'd be
2 out of there after a year. A few people would go back for multiple tours but, you know,
3 we would be gone for some period of time or for good. The South Vietnamese fighter
4 pilots, on the other hand, that was their home and it was their area. They flew almost
5 every day over the same areas. Even if they had one of their own forward air controllers
6 out who would call them and, you know, for some—or be functioning as a forward air
7 controller for a pre-planned strike or something like that the South Vietnamese forward
8 air controller typically didn't have to do much other than talk to them a little bit. These
9 guys, the guys flying A-1s, for example, the South Vietnamese, were very good pilots
10 flying in their own backyard. They knew every square inch of that area and they
11 typically, since they were flying typically A-1s, most of them, they weren't flying all that
12 high so they could actually see targets and dive bomb them and all, strafe without too
13 much trouble. They could kind of do it on their own. Kind of had a mixed bag, you had
14 fighter pilots, South Vietnamese types who were very good and South Vietnamese
15 forward air controllers who were not very good. They were pilots with, you know, the
16 same experience maybe as a typical weekend pilot in the United States, you know. Just
17 like a civilian pilot, you know, with fifty hours of flying time and there they are out there
18 trying to be a forward air controller. They were kind of shaky pilots. If they did well at
19 flying, which a few of them did, they gradually graduated to training in a fighter and
20 became eventually very good at it. In part, too, they didn't get killed in the little airplane
21 so they were pretty good and they flew a lot. As far as support of South Vietnamese
22 ground units, yes, we did that much more than we did support, you know, combined
23 support with South Vietnamese flying units. The South Vietnamese ground units
24 typically have either a convoy of them or some maneuver, you know. We used to call
25 them Sunday patrols because these units weren't always as, some of them, weren't as
26 well trained as some of the American units or even some of their best South Vietnamese
27 units. They would, you know, going from point A to point B or, you know, going through
28 an area to what they could—what kind of fire they might attract or something like that.
29 We would go out and fly overhead cover for them. We could stay up for three to four
30 hours, generally as much as four hours. Then, you know, somebody else would show up
31 like and fly cover for them if they were still out there, whatever, you know. So we would

1 fly cover for that. I don't know how much of that went on in other parts of I Corps but a
2 good bit of that sort of thing went on in Da Nang, especially south of Da Nang. That was
3 the area that I worked, south and west of Da Nang.

4 JS: Right.

5 CG: I did not see that very far west of Da Nang because that was all mountains
6 but in the lowland areas along the coast south of Da Nang there would be periodic
7 maneuvers by both American and South Vietnamese units from time to time. We would
8 fly cover just in case they needed more eyes up high to help look at certain areas or help
9 them locate where they might be taking fire from. You know, if there was a mortar unit,
10 if they were being mortared they couldn't necessarily see where the mortars were coming
11 from, you know. Mortars could be coming from behind two or three tree lines and you
12 just couldn't see from where they were to where the mortars were launching. Being up
13 where we were 1,000 to 1,500 feet above them we could see better. That is all I can think
14 of about that.

15 JS: Okay. All right. Can you tell me about any other—are there any specific FAC
16 missions that you remember that you could possibly tell me about?

17 CG: Well, the very first pre-planned airstrike that I put in was just not too long
18 after Ernie Betts left. It was an early morning, I think 6:00 or 6:30 in the morning, and I
19 showed up and there was a speaker bird showed up before me. The very first O-2s that
20 went to Vietnam were not FACs, they were psy-war O-2s. They had big speakers in
21 them, their drop leaflets. I showed up in an O-1 and there about twenty minutes before I
22 got there there was a psy-war airplane with speakers going and telling people in this little
23 village that American fighters were coming and they were going to bomb and to leave.
24 The intel report said that there had—right along the river and near a bridge was a couple
25 of buildings that were supposed to be storage buildings for some North Vietnamese
26 ammo, rockets and things like that and ammunition. So this psy-war airplane was already
27 there. In fact, he was getting ready to leave when I showed up. I had about ten or fifteen
28 minutes of flying around over this village. It was a good sized village as villages went,
29 probably twenty-five or thirty buildings at least, houses not buildings. There was a bridge
30 there, you know, a metal structure bridge across the river that ran just south of the town. I
31 was flying around and the people there seemed to pay no attention. They were walking

1 around in the village. In the meantime I have got fighters showing up in about ten or
2 fifteen minutes and I am thinking, “Do I really want to do this?” You know.

3 JS: Right.

4 CG: So I had second thoughts about, you know, we are going to be dropping
5 bombs and people are going to get hurt or killed down there. I was really antsy about the
6 whole affair, you know. It just didn’t sound good to me.

7 JS: Right.

8 CG: They had actually been warned but nobody seemed to be doing anything.
9 Then all of a sudden just about a minute or two before the fighters showed up all of a
10 sudden it seemed like almost probably everybody from the village started walking either
11 north or south out of the village across this bridge to the south or north. There is just a
12 parade of maybe thirty or fifty people in each direction just leaving, just going away; all
13 of a sudden they took off. Just as soon as I noticed them streaming out of that area I got a
14 call from the fighters on our pre-planned frequency that they were a couple of minutes
15 away coming from. I don’t remember the base they were coming from. It was American
16 F-4s. There were three of them. I thought, “Well, these people, it looks like they are
17 leaving and I will just go ahead and do what I was told to do.” I described the target to
18 the fighter pilots and shot a rocket down at this biggest building down there, missed it but
19 not by too much. But I was able to tell them in relation it was, you know, a little bit east,
20 you know, however many—I don’t remember exactly how far but under 100 yards to the
21 east of my white smoke was a bigger building; that was the target. Then—I started
22 clearing them in. You typically would clear these fighters in one at a time and the
23 airplanes, we tended to fly a figure eight pattern so that what we were doing is diving at
24 the same time the fighters were diving. We would actually watch the ordnance come off
25 the fighter, follow it down and see where it hit. Then circle back on like a figure eight
26 pattern in climbing back up a little bit, giving the next pilot a correction, you know, to
27 wherever the bomb struck, you know, if need be; or hit the same spot or whatever. You
28 would stay in the either oval or figure eight pattern and keep looping around and diving
29 and climbing, diving and climbing along with the fighters. We were much lower but we,
30 you know—much slower, as well, so you could actually watch the ordnance coming off
31 the airplane and follow it all the way down to the ground and see where it hit. We just

1 kept doing that. They dropped two or three bombs and nothing happened except their
2 bombs went off. Then I don't recall exactly but I think it was about the third or fourth
3 bomb that they dropped, one of them dropped, happened to hit that hooch, that bigger
4 building. It hit it and the bomb went off and then maybe a second or fraction of a second
5 later there was a much, much bigger explosion. A whole lot bigger than would have
6 happened just from a 500-pound bomb.

7 JS: Sure.

8 CG: It happened after the initial explosion. There was this great big explosion and
9 this whole building just blew apart. Then another second or half second later there were
10 additional explosions between that hooch. That hooch was about fifty yards from the
11 river. From the hooch down to the river there were more explosions just one right after
12 the other, (noise) like a machinegun and the ground opened up. It turns out there had been
13 a tunnel from the river up to this building about fifty yards away and the tunnel
14 apparently had crates or whatever, something of some kind of high explosives, probably
15 rockets, in this tunnel and in this building. All this stuff blew up. From, you know, the
16 third or fourth bomb—I don't remember which one it was—up until that point I kept
17 questioning in my mind, "Do these intel people know what they are doing?" You know.
18 "Are we doing the right thing here?" and all of that. As soon as all of that stuff blew up I
19 realized that intel apparently had good intelligence and knew what they were talking
20 about. There was a bunch of high explosives. What they didn't tell, what intel did not say
21 was there was a tunnel and this tunnel apparently had a lot of explosives in it on its way
22 into or out of that building.

23 JS: Right.

24 CG: That was the very first airstrike that I was responsible for controlling. After
25 that I tended to not worry too much about whether or not I should do it. I worried more
26 about accuracy and trying to make sure that we got exactly where we were supposed to
27 get, you know, rather than whether we should do it or not.

28 JS: All right. Did you find that intel was generally right or was it hit or miss?

29 CG: I don't know.

30 JS: Okay.

1 CG: Because I, you know, sometimes would go out in the jungle and they would
2 say something was there, you know, it was a weapons cache somewhere out in the jungle,
3 we would drop bombs and strafe and stuff like that and nothing would happen. Either the
4 intel was stale, you know, meaning that the stuff had been moved or the intel was wrong.
5 You had no way of knowing whether it was stale info or just plain wrong.

6 JS: Okay.

7 CG: There were also a couple of other things. Vietnamese used kerosene cook
8 stoves and sometimes, you know, when somebody was strafing, you know, one of our
9 people was strafing they would hit one of these stoves inside one of these hooches and
10 they would kind of blow up but they would blow up like a small bomb. You had to use a
11 little judgment, you know, did you really hit some ordnance or did you just hit a—if it
12 was a pretty small explosions and more flame than explosion they most likely hit a
13 kerosene or, you know, cook stove rather than any real ordnance. Occasionally something
14 like that would happen. You couldn't tell for sure about the intel all of the time.
15 Sometimes you would obviously like that one, first one I ever saw, it was obvious that
16 they were right and in fact probably had understated what was there. There were other
17 times when nothing happened. I don't know what more I can tell you about that.

18 JS: Okay. Could you tell me a little bit about, say, the enemy's capabilities, types
19 of weapons they would try to use against you? Just your assessment of the enemy's
20 capabilities.

21 CG: Well, first of all, the Vietnamese tended to not shoot at forward air
22 controllers. The tendency was to not do that because we could go get fighters. It didn't
23 matter how big their gun was, we theoretically had a bigger gun and they knew that, you
24 know, in the form of a fighter. They tended to not shoot at us. There were a few cases
25 where they did. It was right around the time I got there to Vietnam a forward air
26 controller was shot down by a SAM (surface-to-air missile) up near Dong Ha just right
27 along the DMZ. Everyone was shocked that the North Vietnamese actually used one of
28 these telephone pole things, you know, that is what they looked like in the air, the
29 telephone pole. They were—you know, they didn't have nearly as many of those as they
30 had, for example, .50-caliber machinegun bullets. Everyone was just shocked that they
31 actually used a surface-to-air missile against a tiny little airplane. But apparently they did.

1 Either that or they tended to shoot it at something higher up and it hit the forward air
2 controller instead. We don't know for sure but it certainly looked like they shot down the
3 forward air controller with a SAM. That is the only time I know of where they did that.
4 As far as getting shot I had been shot at several times. One—let's see, probably at least
5 three times that I can recall with .50-caliber machineguns. I was told and my experience
6 was that it was true that the Vietnamese firing single .50-caliber machineguns tended to
7 not be very accurate. Over along the Ho Chi Minh Trail where they had quad fifties a lot
8 some of those people defending the Ho Chi Minh Trail were better at shooting at
9 American airplanes. The ones that were in Vietnam, South Vietnam, occasionally would
10 shoot at us were apparently not that good at hitting their targets, moving targets in the air.
11 It was kind of like bird shooting, you know, you have to lead by the right amount and all
12 of that. Any time I was ever shot at we were taught to shove in a rudder and slip the
13 airplane sideways so that what direction you were pointed was not the direction you were
14 actually flying. I was shot at with small arms probably AK-47s or something like that on
15 three or four occasions but in the fifties on about three occasions. It wasn't real frequent.
16 I mean you are talking about—I flew 100, probably 125 FAC missions and probably got
17 shot at maybe ten times at the most out of that so it's a fairly low frequency; at least that I
18 was aware of, you know, times I knew I was being shot at. There could have been, in an
19 O-2 especially, could have been some times when I was shot at and didn't know it. In
20 fact, I got hit twice on a test op on an FCF in an O-2. The airplane was hit and I didn't
21 even know it because you just couldn't tell in an O-2 when you were being shot at. The
22 Viet Cong or more likely North Vietnamese, their capabilities when it came to shooting
23 rockets were pretty good. We always heard that they had a pretty good engineer along
24 with them who, you know, figured out the angles and everything pretty good because
25 when they fired rockets at Da Nang, after the rocket attacks at Da Nang I used to get
26 down and look at the EOD, explosive ordinance disposal unit, I used to go down to their
27 office. They had a very large wall size map of Da Nang and they would put, for each
28 rocket attack they would put pins in the map where those rockets hit. They would get
29 clusters of them. There was some scattering but you could tell that they knew what they
30 were doing shooting the Russian rockets, you know. All the rockets they fired at us were
31 Russian made rockets.

1 JS: Right.

2 CG: They were 104 mm and 122 mm rockets. The 104 mm had about a four mile,
3 four to five mile range. The 122 mm rockets had about a seven mile range so that is about
4 how far away they would be from Da Nang or from the part of Da Nang. Da Nang was a
5 little more than two miles north to south and probably a mile and half east to west. If they
6 hit the north end then they were shooting from the south with 122 mm rockets. They were
7 probably only five or six miles outside of the southern fence of Da Nang. They were
8 pretty good with mortars at times. Sometimes when some unit would get fired at with the
9 mortar they were pretty accurate. More often than not they weren't. My suspicion was
10 that mortars aren't very accurate anyway or at least that vintage of mortars was probably
11 not very accurate. Still there?

12 JS: Yeah, yeah. I was waiting to see if you had more to say, sorry.

13 CG: No.

14 JS: Okay. You mentioned in your veteran's questionnaire that you had flown near
15 and around Khe Sanh just before the siege.

16 CG: Yes. In fact, I landed up at Khe Sanh. I helped another FAC who was
17 stationed in the FAC—all the FACs were stationed technically at Da Nang but then they
18 were further stationed at these remote sites. The FAC that, well, there were a couple of
19 FACs, about three of them I guess up at Khe Sanh and a couple of airplanes, there were
20 three or four FACs, three or four pilots up there. They lived in bunkers. I helped one of
21 the FACs when he was moving up there to haul some stuff up including a toilet. I guess
22 the Marines roughed it up there and just pooped in a pit or something.

23 JS: Right.

24 CG: This FAC had moved up to Khe Sanh just a few days before and scrounged
25 an old fuel tank from an airplane and managed to paint it black and fill it up with water
26 from a water buffalo so he had warm water and he had rigged up a shower of sorts from
27 this fuel tank. Then he was, best I could tell, he was going to use the dirty water from the
28 fuel tank or from taking a shower to flush the toilet but I don't know where he was going
29 to put the toilet. He was going to put the toilet somewhere, probably just over a hole in
30 the ground. I helped him haul some stuff up to—you know, some of his personal goods,
31 some stuff that make life a little bit easier up there. I helped him haul it up there. He

1 showed me around a little bit and the bunker where everybody stayed because almost
2 every night they got fired at, you know.

3 JS: Right.

4 CG: With mortars and what not.

5 JS: Sure.

6 CG: I was there for a couple of hours probably walking around at Khe Sanh. All
7 around it was lush green, you know, the foliage. I don't know if you can call it jungle.
8 There were patches of jungle that also—well, there wasn't jungle that was all still green,
9 you know, lower vegetation. Everything was lush and green walking all around Khe
10 Sanh, it was a pretty place real pretty. Khe Sanh itself, the little military compound at
11 Khe Sanh, was not pretty. It was muddy and what not. They had jeeps and other vehicles
12 there that would drive around hauling whatever from the little airstrip that was there to
13 the hooches or bunkers and things like that. There were no roads so they were traveling
14 over ground, you know, that would become muddy and stuff from rains and all because
15 there was no roads or anything. Whatever vegetation that was on Khe Sanh proper within
16 the fence was probably kind of ripped up and muddy and what not. The place was a dirty
17 place inside the fence. Outside the fence it was very lush and green. I flew around Khe
18 Sanh several other times in the weeks before they were attacked up there. During the time
19 they were attacked I was not up there right during the siege. They very soon got where
20 they couldn't fly any airplanes in or out of Khe Sanh because they were getting shot at so
21 much; there were so many enemy troops all around. The forward air controllers were
22 taken out of Khe Sanh or flew out of Khe Sanh when things started to get bad. Then they
23 took a couple of them back in. I don't know if they used a helicopter or what but they
24 became essentially ground FACs. They were on the ground with radios and binoculars
25 and that sort of thing directing airstrikes on surrounding areas where they could see that
26 they were taking fire from. The airborne forward air controllers that also participated in
27 that sort of activity were not from Khe Sanh they were from other areas so we had two—
28 during the siege or within a day or two after it started we had two, I think it was two, two
29 forward air controllers that just stayed on the ground. Then a couple forward air
30 controllers from other areas nearby that flew over and assisted with airborne forward air
31 controlling. I did fly up around Khe Sanh a couple of weeks after the siege was over and

1 the place was essentially abandoned. It kind of looked like the moon, there wasn't much
2 vegetation left.

3 JS: Right.

4 CG: There had been a lot of, you know, explosive activity going on in that area. I
5 don't know what else I can tell you about that.

6 JS: Okay, all right. Now, did you play any role during the Tet Offensive? Could
7 you tell me anything about that?

8 CG: Well, not directly. By the time of the Tet Offensive I was pretty much just
9 flying maintenance test flights. I was no longer doing any forward air controlling so I
10 didn't have any direct combat responsibilities during the Tet Offensive. However, after
11 the Citadel, the Hue Citadel was retaken I flew up to the Citadel with a mechanic and we
12 went up to see if there was anything salvageable among the American airplanes up there.
13 I was there I think only about twenty-four hours after the North Vietnamese had been
14 routed out of the Hue Citadel and there was still some shooting going on in town, you
15 know, around the city of Hue at that same time.

16 JS: Right.

17 CG: It was right around that very same time that our forward air controllers who
18 lived in town—I think there were seven of them stationed at the Hue Citadel, they lived
19 in town. About the time I flew up there was when they were evacuated by helicopter out
20 of Hue, the city of Hue. They always had radio contact, you know, and they were directed
21 to go to a safe and more open area where they could be picked up by a helicopter and
22 they were taken back to Da Nang. That was around, it was the same day around the same
23 time that they were being evacuated I flew into the Citadel. I was actually at the Citadel
24 before the assigned FACs were ever there. They didn't get up there until about three days
25 later with other aircraft because their aircraft were all destroyed. That's the only thing I
26 had to do with the attack in the Tet Offensive.

27 JS: Right.

28 CG: We had a rocket attack at Da Nang that was part of the Tet Offensive. As I
29 recall it was not the biggest rocket attack we ever had. They were apparently more intent
30 on taking Hue than Da Nang air base, you know. It would have been much harder for
31 them to attack Da Nang air base. We did have a few attacks on Da Nang airbase while I

1 was there, I mean other than rocket attacks. A couple of times the military police shot so-
2 called Viet Cong, people dressed like Viet Cong but that is what they were, on the fence
3 trying to get in with grenades and rifles and stuff, you know. That happened two or three
4 times at least. There was never any concentrated attempt to attack Da Nang with
5 personnel, even during Tet Offensive there was no such thing. Not like there was at Hue
6 where North Vietnamese units actually attacked and moved into the city of Hue and took
7 over a good portion of the city and assassinated—they knew who was running various
8 things in the city, did a lot of assassinations and things like that while they were there of,
9 you know, South Vietnamese officials or teachers or whatever.

10 JS: Right.

11 CG: I don't recall any Americans who were killed in Hue in that same way. There
12 were some killed, you know, in firefights with the North Vietnamese units but none that I
13 ever heard of that were just assassinated in the same way that Hue city and whatever
14 officials were assassinated.

15 JS: Okay. All right. In your veteran's questionnaire you also mentioned a specific
16 rocket attack on Da Nang. Would you mind telling me about that one?

17 CG: Oh, the one where I took off.

18 JS: Yes, sir.

19 CG: Yeah, I guess I can talk about that. I didn't—I wouldn't talk about that one
20 for some years after I left Vietnam.

21 JS: Okay, if—oh, go ahead.

22 CG: It was the first really big rocket attack I ever saw at Da Nang. It started out
23 not with an attack on Da Nang but actually an attack on Hoi An which was south of Da
24 Nang, about twenty miles south of Da Nang. I was at the club and I got a call from the
25 command post. I don't recall the time but it was already dark. It was probably around ten
26 o'clock at night. I got a call from the command post at the club and they told me that Hoi
27 An was under attack and I had to fly down there and see what I could do. I had just
28 ordered a bourbon and ginger ale and I had taken a couple of sips of it. I said, "Well, I am
29 drinking an alcoholic beverage. I shouldn't go flying right now." Whoever it was on the
30 other end cussed at me and said, "Get in the air." I put my drink down and didn't have
31 any more of it and went down to the flight line—he also told me that I was on the, what

1 do you call it, the call list and I didn't know there was such a thing. I must have been on
2 there all the time. Anyway, I went on down to the flight line and at night—during the day
3 if we had a FAC mission we generally kept a maintenance guy out at the takeoff end of
4 the runway and we would taxi out and pull over to the side where our vehicle was,
5 maintenance guy was, always a pickup truck. He would pull the pins on our rockets right
6 before we took the runway for takeoff, you know, when we got to the takeoff in taxi way
7 anyway. Then we would get clearance and go takeoff. The same thing when we landed. If
8 we still had rockets left before we got very far from the runway we would have
9 somebody put the pins back in. At night time that is not what happened. The night, if you
10 took off at night you would meet whoever the maintenance guy was for your airplane, the
11 crew chief. He would follow, or lead you out actually, he would lead you out in a pickup
12 truck, old blue pickup truck and take you out to the takeoff end of the runway. He would
13 pull off to the side and come back and pull the pins and then he would drive back in. I am
14 headed for Hoi An because they are under attack. I check out the airplane real quick and
15 get in it, fire it up. The maintenance guy, he pulls his truck out in front of me and we
16 didn't roll very far, maybe thirty feet and there started to be explosions across the field
17 from us. We were under attack. He stopped his vehicle, put the brakes on, jumped out of
18 the vehicle and rolled under the vehicle. Well, I shut down the O-1 and started to get out
19 of it and I looked around and we are on a taxi way under—the nearest revetments were
20 more than 100 yards away and they were facing away from us which meant that you had
21 to go all the way around to them to get into them. There was no place to go, no ditches,
22 no nothing, you know, just open area. I was not going to climb under that pickup truck
23 with that guy. That looked like a really bad thing to do. I just pulled myself back in. I
24 never got more than one foot out of the airplane and I pulled myself back in and started
25 the O-1 back up. The maintenance guy heard me starting it so he jumped back up, pulled
26 his truck off to the side away from in front of me, ran around behind my airplane and
27 pulled the pins on the rockets right there. As I recall, it was on a taxi way facing north for
28 take-off to the south, you know. In fact, I think I was still on the ramp not on the taxi way
29 yet. I went ahead and taxied on out and these explosions kept coming, you know. They
30 didn't stop, just every few seconds there would be another explosion. I kept trying to call
31 tower and wasn't getting any answer. I continued up to the north end of the field, our

1 parking area wasn't that far from the north end I think about between two and three
2 thousand feet south of the north end. I continued up to the north end and kept trying to
3 call tower and not getting an answer so I looked at the approach and nobody was on
4 approach so I just wheeled onto the runway and clobbered the power and started rolling.
5 Just then a rocket blew up off to my right and I could see sparks tumbling so I guess it
6 was shrapnel, you know, something red, tumbling across in front of my airplane not too
7 far in front of it. The idea of stopping just didn't enter my head. I was shaking scared, just
8 had to get out of there so I just kept the power on and went ahead and flew past where
9 this shrapnel had flown through, passed me, in front of me and just kept going. The O-1
10 takes off fairly quickly so I got in the air. As soon as I got a couple hundred feet up in the
11 air the first thing I thought of was I didn't know if I did everything I was supposed to do
12 to get ready to take off again so I got back in the airplane. I had my lap belt on but I
13 didn't have my shoulder harnesses on. I undid my lap belt, retrieved my shoulder harness
14 from the back, pulled it up and strapped myself in properly. Then I went around the
15 cockpit and checked all the switch positions and everything was where it was supposed to
16 be so at least on that. The radios were on but I don't know when I was calling tower
17 everything happened so quick and they were tube type radios in the O-1s, they might not
18 have warmed up quite yet. Besides I heard later that the tower people were on the floor of
19 the tower, huddling on the floor of the tower so they may not have wanted to talk to me,
20 either. Anyway, as soon as I got off the ground I turned east toward the coast to get away
21 from where the rockets were attacking. That was the shortest way to get away from the
22 airfield itself. I kept looking for where these rockets were coming from. I could see that
23 they were coming from the southwest corner of the field, just not too far, maybe a mile
24 outside the field. As I climbed up I start turning back around to the south and then around
25 the south end of the field heading over that direction. I did manage to get a hold of tower
26 at some point after I turned away from the, you know, the takeoff runway direction.
27 Tower started talking to me and there were a number of fires around Da Nang caused by
28 the explosions. The first thing I did was get a hold of our radio operator, command post
29 operator and told him to get me something. I gave him some coordinates where I thought
30 the rockets were coming from. Da Nang tower asked me to fly over the field and report
31 any fires that they might not have been aware of, you know, for the fire department to go

1 out in. The rockets had quit firing right around the time I got to—just off the south end of
2 the field. I was probably maybe two to three miles away from where the rockets had been
3 coming from when they quit. I flew back up over Da Nang while I was waiting for the
4 radio operator to get back to me. When they did they told me that the coordinates I gave
5 them were too close to a South Vietnamese training camp which was also off the
6 southwest corner of Da Nang. They couldn't get me fighters for that—they wouldn't
7 allow fighters to drop bombs that close to that, to the South Vietnamese training camp.
8 They said I can—they were in contact with an AC-47 they called "Puff the Magic
9 Dragon," gunship. They said they could get him but it would take him fifteen minutes or
10 so to get there. I continued to fly around the area and he showed up in a little bit and I
11 told him where the rockets had been coming from and in fact I fired Willie Pete down
12 there. He shot up the area for a little while, five minutes or so, and it got kind of quiet;
13 nothing more was happening. I went to—I flew all around the area and down to Hoi An
14 and back up to Da Nang. I flew around the area for a while and after a couple hours of
15 flying I asked—told Da Nang I was all done and I was ready to land. They said, "No,
16 field is closed. You will have to go over to Marble Mountain." I said well, you know, I
17 didn't want to go over there. I just didn't want to go. I hung around for another half hour
18 or something pestering them occasionally to let me land at Da Nang. Finally they did let
19 me land at Da Nang. They opened up the first 3,000 feet of the left runway and let me
20 land and I did. I went back up to the compound and when I got to the compound there
21 were a couple of people sitting on the steps outside. One was one of the officers that lived
22 in the barracks where I lived and the other was an enlisted guy that worked for him. The
23 enlisted guy had been in one of the tents at the south end of Da Nang and one of his tent
24 mates—a rocket had hit just outside of the tent, one of his tent mates had been killed. He
25 was in really bad shape, rattled and, you know, in shock. This officer who was sitting
26 there with him talking to him he was already rattled from this kid's story and tired from
27 sitting there, you know. He asked me if I would sit with this kid for a while. This is
28 already I think around four in the morning or maybe later, four or four thirty in the
29 morning by the time I got back up to this compound and encountered this other situation
30 with this kid that his buddy had gotten killed. I sat down on the steps there outside the
31 barracks and just sat there. The kid didn't have much to say and I didn't say much to him,

1 just kept him company. Pretty soon, shortly after first light, it started to get light in the
2 compound, it wasn't very long after that all of a sudden we heard a shot, a rifle. A bunch
3 of people came running by, a dozen people or something came running past the barracks
4 and said somebody—there must be an attack on the compound and somebody in the mess
5 hall line, which was about two blocks away from us, somebody in the mess hall line had
6 gotten shot. We went inside the barracks just in case something was going on. I always
7 kept my pistol with me even in the compound I had it with me although we weren't
8 allowed to carry it in the club and I always otherwise carried it with me. We went inside
9 the barracks and kind of kept looking out and see what's going on. About a half hour later
10 found out one of the air policeman at one of the back gates of the compound which was a
11 block or two away from the mess hall on the far side from us had taken the safety off his
12 M-16 and was nervous and managed to squeeze off a round. That round bounced off of a
13 couple buildings and hit the arm of somebody standing in the line at the mess hall.
14 Whoever it hit didn't get hurt very bad, it was basically a scratch on his arm but that is all
15 that happened there so there was no enemy attack or anything at that point. It was just
16 somebody nervous in a not unusual wartime accident, you know.

17 JS: Right, right.

18 CG: Where somebody squeezes off a round just flinching, you know.

19 JS: Sure.

20 CG: Nobody was seriously hurt or anything but it caused a lot of panic for a
21 bunch of people for several hours until the people finally realized what happened. Even
22 so people were pretty spooked over the whole business of that big rocket attack
23 happening. That apparently was the biggest one that had ever hit Da Nang up to that
24 point. For about two weeks after that I never let my .38 out of my sight or out of where I
25 could reach it, you know.

26 JS: Right.

27 CG: It was always either strapped on to me or under my pillow or something, you
28 know.

29 JS: Sure, I understand.

30 CG: I even wore it in the club for probably ten days to two weeks after that rocket
31 attack. They didn't check up at the club. Finally they started checking and if you had a

1 gun they told you to go back and get rid of the gun, you know, so you would have to go
2 back to the barracks and stow your gun in the locker and go back up to the club. I only
3 lived a block away from the club so it wasn't hard for me to do. Then I quit carrying it
4 where I shouldn't, mess hall, club, and places like that. For probably ten days to two
5 weeks after that rocket attack most everybody was armed when they shouldn't have been
6 you know, pretty spooked.

7 JS: I understand.

8 CG: The whole business of getting shot at with rockets kind of had messed with
9 your head. I remember a couple of times waking up underneath my bunk with the siren,
10 air raid warning siren, going off and explosions somewhere in the distance. By the time I
11 woke up I was already under my bunk and had my .38 in my hand. That is the kind of
12 quirky things it does to your head, you know. You kind of react even when you are
13 asleep.

14 JS: Right, sure.

15 CG: You do what your brain tells you to do even though it is not awake. I
16 remember that happening, waking up like that underneath the bunk. Anyway, that was
17 my introduction to rocket attacks on Da Nang. We had thirteen rocket attacks in the
18 eleven months that I was physically at Da Nang so we had slightly more than one a
19 month.

20 JS: Sure.

21 CG: I think there was only one other one that was bigger than that first one. When
22 I say big I am talking about around 125 to 135 rockets.

23 JS: Oh, wow.

24 CG: In one episode. A small one was maybe forty rockets.

25 JS: That still seems like quite a few.

26 CG: Pardon me?

27 JS: I said that still seems like a lot.

28 CG: Well, when you are there shaking it seems like it is never going to end. The
29 whole thing is over with in less than five minutes probably. But when they are shooting at
30 you, you think it is never going to end.

31 JS: How long had you been in-country when this specific attack happened?

1 CG: I thought it was later than it was but from an officer effectiveness report, I
2 found out it was I think in July. Let's see. I actually have it written down here. I'd taken
3 the time to look it up.

4 JS: It's alright. We don't have to have the specific date unless you want.

5 CG: Oh, yeah. It was the middle of July of '67 and I think I got to Vietnam—let's
6 see. When did I get there? Let's see, I think I got there late May or early June of '67.
7 Yeah, it was late May of '67 I got to Da Nang. This was about six or seven weeks after I
8 got to Da Nang. Up until that point—during that six or seven weeks there had been no
9 rocket attacks on Da Nang small or big, nothing. By that point I was probably getting
10 slightly complacent thinking unconsciously that, well, Da Nang is pretty safe. That one
11 rocket attack took away that feeling.

12 JS: Yeah, that is a hell of an introduction to rocket attacks.

13 CG: Yeah, but it apparently was around six to seven weeks after I got there.

14 JS: Okay. Well, thank you for sharing that story.

15 CG: For a long time I couldn't talk about that without my stomach kind of
16 jumping up and down like it did during the rocket attacks.

17 JS: Right, I understand all of that.

18 CG: I still get a little upset about it but not like I did a few years back.

19 JS: Okay. Well, moving on a little bit now. I would like to talk a little bit about
20 your duties doing the test flights after you were finished with being a FAC. Could you
21 tell me a little bit about—

22 CG: Well, there was a period of several months where I was doing both.

23 JS: Right, right. Sorry.

24 CG: Forward air controlling and test flights. Initially very few test flights in the
25 O-1s. I am sorry, just mostly in O-2s and the few O-1s we had. There was an FCF
26 checklist, functional check flight check list for the O-1 which consisted of one sheet of
27 paper, you know, one small check list sized piece of paper with about seven or eight
28 things to check including radios and that sort of thing, you know, flight controls, it was
29 very general. There was no FCF for the O-2. The O-2 was kind of a last minute purchase
30 because the OV-10 program was delayed. They had serious problems with the OV-10
31 program and the O-2 was purchased as an interim airplane to fill in the period until the

1 OV-10 problems could be straightened out. The O-2 came to the military as kind of a
2 sudden last-minute purchase and they did have a Dash 1, a manual for the aircraft itself.
3 They also had a Dash 9, I think it is called, the maintenance manual but they did not have
4 an FCF checklist at all for the airplane so I wrote one. I couldn't use the O-1 checklist
5 because the O-2 had, you know, variable pitch props and the hydraulic system and all
6 kinds of things that just didn't exist on the O-1. I went down to the base flight area and
7 got a checklist for the C-47 that they had there, borrowed a checklist from them. The C-
8 47 had two engines and it had, you know, it was slightly similar in very general
9 configuration to a twin-engine O-2 although O-2 push-pull rather than the engines on the
10 wings. I also went to the F-4 unit and borrowed a checklist for an F-4 fighter because the
11 O-2 had some avionics in it that were somewhat similar to the F-4, the things that were
12 not in the C-47 or the O-1. I took the three checklists for the O-1, the C-47, and the F-4
13 plus the Dash 1 and the maintenance manual for the O-2 and just went back and forth
14 between them and assembled, you know, used the F-4 and the checklist basically as an
15 outline for what to check, what general areas to check like flight controls, and avionics,
16 and hydraulics and that sort of thing. I used the C-47 one for things like checking variable
17 pitch props and that sort of thing. I hardly used the O-1 checklist but I put together a
18 checklist and essentially followed the checklist pretty closely on all my check flights. The
19 O-1 checklist was no problem to follow because it was so simple. You just took the
20 airplane up and flew it around, checked the controls and made sure nothing was sticking
21 or anything; made sure all the radios and everything were working. The minimal flight
22 instruments that were in the thing—there was hardly anything—I would see that that stuff
23 was working and landed. The check flight on an O-1 took including flight out over the
24 South China Sea and back. That is what we were supposed to do on check flights, took
25 about twenty minutes altogether, maybe twenty-five if you had a little delay in the traffic
26 pattern or something. They weren't very long for the O-1s and pretty simple. The O-2
27 technically was not too much more complicated. There were more things to check but it
28 wasn't all that terrible. I used to check out the flight controls and then I would do things
29 like check the stall characteristics of the airplane. I did find one, one time that wanted to
30 go into a spin every time you stalled it, which I could tell you about later if you want. We
31 dealt with that, sort of cured it. But check stall characteristics and check the engines,

1 check the—I would shut down each engine three different ways, fuel starvation, normal
2 shut down, and just feather the engine. Then restart it and make sure it restarted in the air.
3 The idea being if a forward air controller was out there and since we had switchable fuel
4 tanks if you got busy and distracted then, you know, one of the engines could quit
5 because you ran out of fuel in the tank that was feeding it. I wanted to make sure that the
6 engine would restart okay in the air.

7 JS: Right.

8 CG: So that there were no surprises to a FAC out on any combat mission. What if
9 all of a sudden he has an airplane with an engine that won't restart? The check rides for
10 the O-2, FCF rides for the O-2, that didn't take but about thirty-five minutes maybe ten
11 minutes or so longer than an O-1 just because there were more things to check. I had a
12 few incidences happen on check flights. I had a complete electrical failure in one O-2
13 while on a test flight. That happened when I shut down one of the engines in flight. I
14 went to restart it which was basically unfeathering it and it wouldn't unfeather. The
15 pressure gauge for the feathering mechanism had checked okay on the ground but must
16 have had a leak in it or something because it wouldn't unfeather. Either that or the gauge
17 was stuck and not reading properly. But the thing would not unfeather and if it wouldn't
18 unfeather, the engine wouldn't start by unfeathering it. The Dash 1 called for hitting the
19 starter, which I did. It was a rear engine that it failed to restart so I hit the starter and it
20 ground, I could feel it, mostly feel it. It was kind of grinding back there and you were not
21 supposed to exceed thirty seconds on the starter. I got up right between twenty-five or
22 thirty seconds and I was going to release the starter and all of a sudden everything quit,
23 all the electrical stuff in the airplane quit.

24 JS: Right, wow.

25 CG: Nothing worked, no radios, nothing. No lights, nothing. This was a daytime
26 flight but still I had nothing, no electrical power whatsoever.

27 JS: Right.

28 CG: Of course, no way to restart that rear engine. I flew back to Da Nang and,
29 you know, there is a radio out procedure where you fly down past the tower and wag your
30 wings and then watching for a green light from tower. When you get a green light you are
31 cleared to land. I went through that procedure, you know, wagged my wings at the tower

1 and flew around a little bit and they gave me a green light when it was clear to land and I
2 landed. Technically it was an uneventful flight in landing after that except I had no
3 electrical power. We traced that back to Cessna had used aluminum battery bus cables to
4 go from the battery to the fuse compartment. Those battery bus cables being aluminum
5 one of them just burned out, it acted like a fuse and just blew when I was starting the rear
6 engine. As it turns out the Dash 1 probably should have said to turn off other electrical
7 equipment like especially radios to turn all this other stuff off before attempting to restart
8 an engine with the starter in the air. But it didn't say that so I did exactly what the Dash 1
9 said and blew out a battery bus cable. We inspected all the other airplanes and found
10 several that had melted insulation around that same bus cable, a blackened and wrinkled
11 melted plastic insulation on the outside of that cable which indicated that on several other
12 airplanes the cable had overheated. It hadn't gone as far as (unintelligible) but, you know,
13 it definitely had overheated. We would report things like that that we discovered, our
14 maintenance would do that to the other units that had O-2s. We were advised to replace
15 that cable with copper cable it was just an eighteen-inch-long cable or something like
16 that. They used aluminum to save weight but you aren't saving that much weight on a
17 cable that is eighteen inches long. We were told to replace it so they replaced, as far as I
18 know they replaced all of those battery bus cables and all the O-2s in existence with
19 copper cable instead of aluminum cable and that was because I blew one out on a test
20 flight.

21 JS: Right.

22 CG: Anyway, test flights were mostly routine, they weren't that exciting. You just
23 went up and flew around, checked all these things on the checklist covering the various
24 systems, and came back and landed and wrote up anything that you found wrong and you
25 were done.

26 JS: Okay. All right. You also mentioned on your website that you had several
27 missions ferrying mechanics and parts and things. Could you tell me a little bit about
28 that?

29 CG: As I mentioned earlier, at each of the remote sites from Da Nang we had
30 pilots and a couple of air plane general mechanics, you know, APG type maintenance
31 people and airplanes, some variable number of airplanes, variable number of pilots and

1 two to four mechanics. These mechanics could do routine kinds of things like change a
2 tire, change oil, and change spark plugs and even change brakes or something like that.
3 But they were not qualified necessarily or allowed to do anything more serious. If there
4 was a fuel tank leak or something like that they weren't allowed to do their own patching
5 of it. If there was an engine problem that was not simply traceable to just a bad plug or
6 something like that they were not allowed to tamper with the engine and those kinds of
7 things. Generally they couldn't do much with any kind of flight instruments or avionics,
8 radios, and that sort of thing. Plus, they didn't have spare parts out there for a lot of that
9 stuff. They might have oil filters but they didn't have spare radios, you know.

10 JS: Right, okay.

11 CG: They might have spare tires or brakes but they didn't have spare radios. On
12 occasion we would get a call down at Da Nang that they needed some part that they
13 didn't have up at Hue or wherever the place was, Quang Tri or some place like that.
14 Because I was by then doing—most of my work was for maintenance doing test flights
15 and I was the available pilot for maintenance, they would ask me to take a part
16 somewhere which I would do, you know. I would haul the part up. If it was something
17 that required a specialist, you know, somebody more specialized than an airplane general
18 type maintenance person like an engine person or an avionics person or whatever, if it
19 required that person then I hauled that kind of maintenance person up, as well, along with
20 any parts or anything. I would take them up and either if it was something quick to fix I
21 would wait, if not I would leave them there and go back to Da Nang. Either somebody
22 else would fly back at some later point or I would go back and get them. Usually I didn't
23 have to bring them back if they stayed. One of the other FACs would be coming back
24 down to Da Nang within a day or so for some reason usually bringing another airplane
25 down for some kind of maintenance, routine maintenance and he would bring the
26 mechanic with him and return him back to Da Nang. That is kind of—that is all there was
27 to that.

28 JS: All right. Well, before moving to your last days in Vietnam before leaving are
29 there any other FAC missions or test flight missions or anything like that were
30 particularly memorable that you want to talk about?

1 CG: I don't know about memorable. You know, we were all stuck in a war zone
2 and those of us who flew at least had some idea where we were and what it looked like
3 around where we were and that sort of thing. The enlisted people they were, you know,
4 cloistered quite a bit. The pilots were officers, once a month or something we would go
5 into a town down to the Marine club. There was a Marine officers club in town and we
6 would go down there, get in our little jeep and two or three of us would go down there
7 and park. It was a full, tiny compound they had down there, you know, fenced-in parking
8 lot and go have a meal or something down there. Well, the enlisted people had no such
9 opportunity at all. They couldn't go anywhere. They were stuck either on the flight line
10 or in their tent or at the mess hall in the compound. My boss in maintenance was
11 technically not my boss but the guy that was head of maintenance was not a rated officer,
12 he was not a pilot. He didn't know anything about airplane. He was just a guy with an
13 engineering degree that went in the Air Force and became a maintenance guy. At some
14 point I told him that I wanted to take the mechanics with me on test flights and they could
15 help out on test flights. Well, maybe they could, it was minimal but I just wanted to take
16 them up. For probably six months for very routine test flights where there were no flight
17 control problems or anything else critical to be checked, if it was just a routine test flight
18 with no expectation of any problem I would take one of the mechanics with me under the
19 theory that he was helping me do a test flight. I would give these kids a ride, you know.
20 They could see where they lived on the base, compare the compound and where we were
21 compared to town, where the rivers were and where some of the rocket attacks had come
22 from south of Da Nang that sort of thing. They could kind of see around the area a little
23 bit and they kind of mostly enjoyed it. After I checked out the airplane and made sure it
24 was safe and all that I would let them fly the airplane for a few minutes on the way back
25 to Da Nang. I would have them make a few simple turns, you know, then I would take
26 the airplane back and continue back to Da Nang and land. If we—when we got close to
27 Da Nang I would take the airplane back and go ahead and land it. They kind of enjoyed it
28 and I always thought that what I was doing was no more dangerous at all than them
29 sitting on the ground waiting for a rocket to hit them.

30 JS: Sure.

1 CG: I was careful about not taking them up on any flight that there was any
2 suspicion of a problem. I had some funny incidences with that. One fellow I took up for a
3 ride and then just because the numbers of maintenance people that worked in QC (quality
4 control) and a couple of other areas that were close to our area and the number of test
5 flights I was doing it would take maybe a week to ten days before I ran out of people and
6 could start repeating rides for other people. You know, for the same people again, take
7 them up a second or third or fourth time or whatever. They could get a ride in an airplane
8 about once every seven to ten days usually. This one fellow, I hadn't seen him for a
9 couple of weeks who had been up with me once. I asked him how come he hasn't come
10 over for another ride in the airplane. He said, "Oh, my wife said I couldn't." I said,
11 "What?" His wife told him he wasn't allowed to. I said, "Well, where is your wife?" "She
12 is in Kansas." "Oh, okay." I didn't argue with him at all or comment any more on it but,
13 you know, I found that privately amusing that his wife in Kansas told him—he had
14 written to her and told her he went for a ride with me and she wrote back and said don't
15 ever do that again. He didn't. He didn't do that again.

16 JS: Right.

17 CG: I had another incident with a fellow that was pretty big. I had mentioned
18 before I am kind of a small person. At the time I was about 5'8" and about 135 pounds. I
19 took this one mechanic up with me who was probably around six foot maybe 200 pounds,
20 so he was bigger than me. I kind of had second thoughts in the back of my head about
21 letting this kid fly. I asked him if he had ever been in an airplane before and the only
22 airplane he had ever been in was the back of the airplane that flew him to Vietnam. So he
23 had no clue whatsoever but, you know, I kind of showed him how to make a turn and that
24 sort of thing. I finally let him and I told him if anything happens let go of the airplane.
25 You know, it will straighten out. I will take it, you know. I was a little leery because if he
26 did something wrong and wouldn't let go of the airplane I would not be able to
27 overpower him.

28 JS: Right.

29 CG: I was, you know, a little leery about letting him fly a little bit but I did.
30 Darned if he didn't fly just as pretty as could be. The guy was just a natural pilot. He had
31 never been in an airplane before and I took him up probably four or five times and he

1 flew very nicely. He caught onto how to make coordinated turns just instantly, you know,
2 and flew very nicely. I recommended that he go when he gets back to home to take flying
3 lessons because you are good at it. Then I had another kid that he was kind of a pudgy kid
4 and I let him fly. Before—I gave them the same speech all the time, if anything happens
5 let go of the airplane. He was flying, you know, and he happened to push on the yoke and
6 that is one thing I cautioned, don't push on the yoke ever because that noses the airplane
7 over and you begin to approach zero or negative Gs and you float up in your seat and it is
8 not comfortable to somebody who is not used to that. Sure enough, we are flying along a
9 little bit and he pushed on the yoke and when he did he was kind of surprised so he
10 pushed a little harder. I looked over and all I could see was eyeballs and teeth you know.
11 I kept telling him let go, let go, and I was about ready to hit him. I was going to punch
12 him in the face, you know.

13 JS: Yeah, right.

14 CG: To get him to let go of the airplane but he finally let go. I deliberately did not
15 touch the airplane. I told him keep your hands in your lap, don't touch the airplane and I
16 didn't either. I said watch the airplane, what happens. It went through a few oscillations
17 and settled down and continued to fly straight ahead. I did have my feet on the rudder. I
18 mentioned yesterday that the O-2s tended to drop off on a wing but if you kept your feet
19 on the rudder you could compensate for that. I didn't tell him I was keeping it from
20 rolling off on a wing but I left the yoke alone so that pitch control was just the airplane
21 doing it itself. I showed him that, see, it settles down. After that it scared him enough he
22 didn't want to fly anymore. He went up with me a couple of times after that but he
23 wouldn't touch the airplane. It just spooked him a bit and he just wouldn't do it anymore.

24 JS: Right, okay.

25 CG: Those were kind of interesting things and not 100% legal but hopefully I
26 gave some kids, you know, something they could forget about getting shot at or rocket
27 attacked or something for twenty or thirty or forty minutes during their tour.

28 JS: I remember on the website you mentioned about taking the base photographer
29 up one time. Could you tell me about that?

30 CG: Yeah, the cookie tosser.

31 JS: Yeah, right.

1 CG: I used to get an assortment of people who would show up and they didn't
2 usually show up. I would get a call from ops telling me that they wanted me to take
3 somebody up. They would tell me who it was and all that. Well, this one day this kid
4 shows up he is a young airman with three stripes, I think, or something like that. He
5 shows up and he has got a couple of cameras hanging around his neck. He said he was
6 supposed to go flying with me. I was kind of wondering why they didn't call, you know,
7 nobody called. He said he was told—he told me the name of the ops officer that told him
8 to go down and see me for a flight, you know. I was going out on a VR mission, visual
9 reconnaissance mission, west of Da Nang but not far enough west to require two
10 airplanes. I asked him if he had ever flown before and he said, yeah, he had been up. I
11 don't recall exactly how many times he had been up but he had been up two or three
12 times before. I said, "Okay," and I said, "Do you know how to work the mike switch and
13 how to strap in and all of that?" He said, yeah, he knows all of that, you know. I figured,
14 "Well, there is no problem," you know. I got him into the airplane and I climbed in and
15 strapped in and cranked up, took off. We weren't up more than five minutes or so maybe
16 ten minutes. The O-1 is pretty slow so we were still pretty close to Da Nang. It was just
17 right there a few miles behind us. Just the way you had to maneuver to get away from Da
18 Nang to the west you had to go east first and then west, you know, climb up and go west.
19 Da Nang was still just a few miles behind us. You could easily see it just looking back.
20 This kid calls up on the mike and says, "I don't feel good." I said, "Oh? What do you
21 mean you don't feel good? What is wrong?" He says it's his stomach. I said, "Well, how
22 bad does it feel?" He says, "Pretty bad." I said, "Bad enough you think you might throw
23 up?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "Oh. I thought you flew before." He said he did. I said,
24 "Did you ever throw up before in one of the airplanes?" He said, "Yeah." I said, "How
25 many times did you do that?" He said, "Every time." I said, "Uh oh. I am in trouble."

26 JS: Right.

27 CG: We didn't really carry barf bags with us, you know. I mean, we mostly were
28 pilots, we were by our self most of the time and we just didn't have barf bags. But I did
29 carry an extra canteen. We had these kind of vinyl or whatever they were plastic
30 canteens, soft ones. They look like a hot water bottle but smaller and they are semi-clear
31 but they were all old and yellowed. I always carried a couple of them with me. I handed

1 one of those back with water in it and gave it to him and said, "I want you to take a very
2 tiny sip of water out of this canteen. Then I want you to count to thirty," or ten, initially it
3 was ten, I think. "I want you to count to ten then take another little tiny sip as small as
4 you can and then count to ten. Just keep doing that." He started doing that and I am
5 thinking, "Well, in a few minutes I am going to have to turn around and go back to Da
6 Nang," you know. But he started doing this and after five minutes or so he seemed to be
7 okay. He was still sipping on there so, you know, after the first couple of minutes of that I
8 told him, "Okay, stretch it out to twenty counts," you know, count to twenty and do it and
9 then a little bit later I told him stretch it out and count to thirty between sips. He did that
10 for the next three hours. We flew all over the place and a couple of times I kind of twisted
11 around so I could see what he was doing. He would take a little sip, put the cap back on
12 the canteen, put it down, pick up his camera, look out the window and take a picture. You
13 know, the camera is on straps. He would put the camera back down, you know, hang it
14 back down, pick up the canteen, take a little sip. We did this for three hours. I did
15 everything I was supposed to do on that mission, you know, checked out the areas I was
16 supposed to check out and all that and look for whatever I was supposed to look for then
17 back to Da Nang. Usually when you land at Da Nang as a FAC, you know, you landed
18 and as you are taxiing in you would see one of the mechanics come ambling out to where
19 you are supposed to park and kind of put his arm up, kind of a wave to let you know that
20 he was going to park you, the spot that he walking toward. You would spot him and start
21 taxiing toward him. This particular time there were about six or seven mechanics out
22 there and I'm wondering, "What is going on here?" You know, it was usually just one
23 and here is about a half a dozen or so mechanics out there. Well, I think they knew what
24 was probably going to happen. The kid was going to get out there with me and he was
25 going to throw up. They were there to jeer with me most likely, you know. We taxied in
26 and climbed out of the airplane and I talked to this photographer for a couple of minutes
27 and asked him how he felt and he said he felt pretty good and all and I said, "That's
28 good," you know. He left and these mechanics I asked them, "What are y'all guys
29 looking at?" They were all kind of sheepish and didn't want to say anything. I said, "Did
30 you expect this guy to throw up?" One of them said, "Yeah." I said, "You guys set me up
31 or tried to set me up. Didn't you?" They wouldn't say anything. Anyway, the joke wasn't

1 on anybody, nobody was the butt of that joke. The kid flew with me I think one other
2 time, maybe it was twice, I don't know, once or twice other than that. He would take sips
3 of water but not nearly as often. He kind of settled into flying, you know, riding without
4 getting sick. By the way, it is easy to get sick in a light airplane in a warm climate with
5 summer around Pennsylvania or Texas or certainly Vietnam. If it is warm and you are in
6 a light airplane you are basically bouncing around in thermal currents and things like that.
7 Light airplanes are conducive to nausea if you are inclined to become nauseous over that
8 sort of thing.

9 JS: Okay.

10 CG: It is not surprising when a person get nauseated, you know, in a small
11 airplane. Okay, anything else?

12 JS: Okay, I guess we will move onto your last days in Vietnam and leaving.

13 CG: My what?

14 JS: Your last days in Vietnam and the process of leaving and all of that, if you
15 could tell me about that.

16 CG: Well, before I left—well, before I left they pretty much let you have
17 whatever assignment you wanted returning from Vietnam, within reason, you know.
18 Especially if you were requesting to go back to the same kind of airplane you flew before
19 at one of the bases that had those. They were pretty accommodating about that.

20 JS: Okay.

21 CG: I told them I wanted to go back to C-141s except that I wanted to go to the
22 East Coast because that was closer to my parents. My parents lived near Pennsylvania.
23 That would have been just around three hundred miles from my folks whereas if I went
24 back to the West Coast, anywhere on the West Coast, I would have been 2,500 miles
25 from my folks and over 1,000 miles from my wife's folks. I wanted to get closer to
26 family so I asked to go to Dover, Delaware. I was fairly sure that that would be approved
27 and eventually I did get orders back to Dover. About five days or so before returning,
28 before my flight, I was told to turn in my gear and I was done with my duties. I was
29 sitting around for a couple of days there at Da Nang with nothing to do after I turned in
30 all my gear. Part of turning in your gear was packing up your personal goods, you know,
31 extra clothing or whatever you had, any gifts that you bought for your wife on your R&R

1 and things like that. You would pack that all up and they would put it in a crate and all of
2 that so there was a rigmarole to do with getting ready to leave that included packing up
3 your so-called household goods which from there it was just personal goods in a crate.
4 Turning in all your gear, they would check that everything was turned in. They didn't
5 wait until the last minute for those sorts of things. So I had nothing to do. I technically
6 couldn't fly or anything because I had turned in my helmet and my survival vest and all
7 that sort of thing, flak vest and everything. So I sat around with nothing to do. After a
8 couple of days of that an airplane that had crashed up at Quang Tri had been brought
9 back to Da Nang several months before was finally rebuilt. The only thing original on it
10 from the original airplane was the left wing, I think the tail, and some of the fuselage, not
11 all of it. It had a different engine and different right wing. There was lots of repairs on the
12 fuselage, different landing gear, probably different radios because when there was a crash
13 on an airplane they recovered whatever they could out of it and put it in a storage, you
14 know, stock for reuse in another airplane. There was no guarantee that you would get all
15 of the flight instruments or radios back to the same airplane when they rebuilt one.
16 Anyway, this airplane was ready to be flown and they had nobody around Da Nang at the
17 command post or in operations or anything who had flown an O-1, in recent times at
18 least. I was the only one.

19 JS: Right.

20 CG: They got a pilot from I think Hue, it might have been Quang Tri, to come
21 down and fly test hops on the O-1. We only had maybe one test hop every couple of
22 week or two so he was assigned to do that. When they had a test hop they would call up
23 there and he would fly the test hop and go back. This was going to be his very first test
24 hop in an O-1. I went down just—I had been watching them repair this airplane, rebuild it
25 for a couple of months and I kind of knew the story of the airplane, had seen the progress
26 of working on it. I also had a lot of trust in our mechanics, you know. I just trusted them
27 to do everything right. I am standing around there, the mechanics are briefing this other
28 pilot and, you know, he asked what the test flight was for and they said it was for a
29 rebuild on the airplane. He said, "What do you mean?" They explained to him what they
30 did. You could tell by his body language he started backing away a little bit, a couple of
31 feet while they were talking. His face went kind of blank and he is listening to this story

1 about what they did to this airplane to rebuild it. I could tell just looking at the guy that
2 this is a guy who does not want to fly this airplane. Finally, they are about finished telling
3 him about the airplane and he is kind of real hesitant and doesn't know what to say. I
4 finally asked him, I said, "You want me to go fly that thing?" He didn't hesitate. He said,
5 "Yeah" instantly. I mean right out of his mouth comes "Yep," with no thought or
6 anything. "Yep." I said, "Well, I don't have any gear. I turned everything in so I need
7 your flak vest. I need your survival vest," that is, what had your emergency radio and
8 stuff in it, you know." I need your helmet." He pulled that stuff off and handed it to me
9 and he was a big guy so this stuff didn't fit me too well but I put it on and climbed into
10 the airplane. I had been there while. We all—he and the maintenance guys pre-flighted
11 the airplane while I was standing there so I knew it was all checked out. I climbed in and
12 cranked it up, did the ground checks on it and went out and flew it. As I recall, I think I
13 had something like twenty-two write ups on it of which maybe two were something
14 called red Xs which were grounding items and the rest were all minor stuff, you know,
15 noisy radio or whatever, you know, things like that. One of the radios I think was noisy,
16 you know, there were a bunch of other small write ups. The airplane flew slightly
17 crooked which could be straightened out, you know. They had ways to adjust the wings
18 so that it wouldn't tend to fly wing low and things like that, you know. I think that was
19 one thing, it tended to want to fly one wing low which meant one of the—there were cam
20 shape bolts at the back of the wing that could be adjusted, tweaked the direction the wing
21 was pointed so that it would fly straight. Also, there was a bolt installed wrong,
22 backwards, in the tail so that the rudder would bump the bolt on the elevator. It wouldn't
23 bind, it wouldn't catch it, but it still touched and those were not allowed to touch. No part
24 of one flight control was allowed to touch any part of another flight control so they had to
25 reverse that one bolt. I wouldn't have even taken it off if it actually caught but it didn't. It
26 just touched it. I could feel it, you know, a little bump when you touched it. I think—
27 those were the only two red Xs and everything else was just radios and little things. After
28 I flew it I handed the other pilot his stuff back and he went over and got in his airplane
29 and flew back to I think it was Quang Tri he was from, somewhere north of Da Nang.
30 That was the end of that. So I sat around for another couple of days and then the day
31 before I left we had an O-2 that was coming from somewhere north of Da Nang who

1 didn't quite make it. He ended up landing in the little bay there just north of the airbase at
2 Da Nang, landed in the water or just actually landed on the beach but below high tide
3 level. It was basically mud there where he put the airplane down. He initially hit water
4 and then kind of coasted up onto mud. Climbed out of the airplane and there were
5 Marines in little sandbag bunkers along the beach. They had radios and all. They
6 generally had jeeps and stuff. Either they or somebody, they either called for or took him
7 back themselves but he got back to Da Nang. Anyway, I guess they realized pretty
8 quickly that the tide was coming in so they got up a group of maintenance people to go
9 out and try to pull this airplane up above high tide level onto the beach for overnight
10 because they couldn't get it pulled out of there. It was already late in the day. They asked
11 me if I would go out and act as supervisor for this little foray so I told them, "Okay." I
12 was bored with nothing to do. I climbed in one of the trucks that we went out there in, we
13 took two vehicles, and proceeded out the gate, around the base, and got up to the beach
14 there. We took, several of the guys took M-16s with them. Any time we went out of the
15 base you tend to do that. One of the fellows that was along, well, a couple of them I
16 didn't know, they weren't our regular mechanics. I had nothing much to do I just stood
17 around watching what they were going to do and talking to them about what they were
18 going to do. The one fellow that I didn't know, a big guy, he said he'll—the tide was
19 already coming in and it was already up over the wheels of the airplane, in fact, close to
20 the bottom of the fuselage. He said he will go out and put a chain around the landing gear
21 and then we'll hook chains together and use one of the trucks to pull the airplane out of
22 the mud up out of the beach so that sounded okay to me. I asked him if he was sure he
23 wanted to go out there because there is already water there and he is going to get his
24 boots and clothes and everything wet. He said, "Yeah, no problem." He waded out, you
25 know, walked down and through the mud and then into the water, walked out and it was
26 probably a good hundred yards out to where this airplane was from the dry part of the
27 beach through the mud and then water. The tide was coming in somewhat. It originally
28 had been, the airplane had just been in mud but now it was in water probably two feet
29 deep. He got out there and he was working on putting chains around the landing gear and
30 all of a sudden there were some shots. We could hear gunfire and it wasn't too far away.
31 The guys with the rifles, there were four guys with rifles. Two facing basically east and

1 two facing west. The gunfire was coming from the west side. The guys with the guns,
2 they dove on to the ground. These are Air Force guys. They don't have a whole lot of
3 training in combat, you know, ground combat at that time. But they are looking around,
4 they are on the ground looking around and I am kind of squatted down a little bit looking
5 to the west from where we heard the sound from. They were about maybe fifty yards
6 from us, there is a guy with a gun shooting up in the air. He seemed to have some kind of
7 uniform on. It took a second or so before I realized he was a cop. He was a South
8 Vietnamese policeman. I didn't know what was going on but I knew this guy looks like a
9 cop and he is not pointing at anybody he is pointing up in the air shooting his gun.

10 JS: Right.

11 CG: The nearest Air Force guy to me with an M-16, he saw the guy about the
12 same time I did and he starts—he raises up his gun and starts aiming at the guy. I dove on
13 top of his gun and basically in front of the other guy's gun because he was behind him a
14 little bit and I got on top of the gun, you know. I am yelling at him, "Don't shoot! Don't
15 shoot! It is a cop!"

16 JS: Right.

17 CG: They didn't—nobody fired any guns on our side. I didn't want them firing
18 any guns because it went through my head that I would be there for the next two years
19 why we killed the South Vietnamese policeman. Anyway, we got that all stopped and
20 calmed down. I found out from somebody there on the beach that that was the local
21 police patrol guy, the South Vietnamese. The beach was covered with South Vietnamese
22 people, with kids, women, and men. They were all out watching us and what we were
23 doing. I think they just—that is where they went to the beach. There were probably two
24 or three hundred out there on the stretch of beach we were on. It was curfew time. It was
25 six o'clock in the evening and the policeman had been walking along blowing his whistle
26 and nobody was paying attention to his whistle so he decides to shoot his gun. That got
27 their attention and got our attention.

28 JS: Right.

29 CG: This guy is pretty lucky he didn't get killed shooting a gun. We got that
30 stopped and then a little bit later, a minute or two later, there were a group of Vietnamese
31 that came around me. They formed a circle around me and I thought, "Uh, oh. I am in

1 really big trouble.” I never learned to speak Vietnamese at all. Some of the Vietnamese
2 were a lot smarter than me. They picked up English but I never learned any Vietnamese
3 beyond hello and goodbye and a couple of things like that.

4 JS: Right, sure.

5 CG: One of this group of people, there were about ten of them around me, one of
6 them told me in English, fairly good English, he said, “Viet Cong come pretty soon. You
7 go.” That is basically what he told me and he said that about three times, “Viet Cong
8 come pretty soon, come soon,” you know. “Viet Cong come soon. You go.” I told the
9 guys, “Well, let’s get out of here,” and we left. I think they just wanted us out of there so
10 that is what they said but I have no way of knowing if any Viet Cong were going to show
11 up or not. Probably not since about every fifty yards there were these Marines in these
12 little sandbag bunkers, you know. But I took that to mean they didn’t want us there so we
13 left. I gathered everybody up and we left. This big sergeant had been out there putting the
14 chains on the airplane. I found out many years later that he dove under the water when he
15 heard the shots and he wouldn’t ride inside the truck on the way back. He climbed in the
16 back of the truck and darned if he didn’t show up at the FAC reunion in the year 2000. I
17 talked to him for a while there. I didn’t know who he was and he didn’t know who I was
18 but as we got to talking he looked kind of familiar to me and I guess I must have looked
19 familiar to him. I found out he had been the big guy. He was from one of the bases north
20 of Da Nang who was just down at Da Nang for a couple of days and had volunteered to
21 go out and retrieve that airplane. He told me at the time that the airplane had spent the
22 night in salt water so it was ruined, everything was ruined. They never got a single usable
23 part off of that airplane. But I didn’t know that from 1968 until the year 2000. I never
24 knew what happened to that airplane because I left the next morning, left Vietnam the
25 next morning. Anyway, that is the end of that, the last day at Da Nang. It ended kind of
26 semi-exciting.

27 JS: Yeah, right. Well, as you left Vietnam how did you feel about leaving
28 Vietnam? What was going through your mind?

29 CG: Well, right up until the last—until we were about 100 miles off the coast
30 inside the Boeing 707 I still had the feeling I was never going to get out of there. We
31 were airborne for twenty or thirty minutes and 100 miles away from Vietnam before I

1 finally kind of decided, "I guess I am going to go home." Get there maybe in one piece,
2 you know. I was glad to leave. Like everybody, I kept track of the days left until I got out
3 of there but didn't believe it until I was pretty much on the way. It was a good feeling to
4 get out of there. Bad things happened, you know. We had one guy at Da Nang, a forward
5 air controller from the command post who, this happened about a year before I got to Da
6 Nang, who was killed on his last or last flight of his last day. His last flight before he
7 went home. He was determined that he was not going to get shot down or captured or
8 anything. He took with him, this was the kind of guy that carried with him a whole bunch
9 of ammunition. You know, I used to carry half a dozen clips for the M-16 and, you know,
10 some extra dozen or so rounds for the .38. This guy was carrying canisters of clips and he
11 was determined that nothing was going to happen to him. In fact, he didn't do his mission
12 that he was supposed to do. His last mission was supposed to be a VR missions, visual
13 reconnaissance mission out west of Da Nang. He didn't do it. What he did, he climbed up
14 over the top of Da Nang to about four or five thousand feet overhead of Da Nang or close
15 to Da Nang. He was flying around there not doing what he was supposed to be doing and
16 a flight of F-4s came by and one of them hit him. The F-4 managed, didn't have too much
17 damage and was able to land and the FAC got killed, got run over by an F-4 in flight.
18 Some bad things could happen by being improperly cautious, you know.

19 JS: Sure.

20 CG: I just always had a concern that I wouldn't get out of there but always did
21 what I thought I was supposed to do. Anyway, that is all my thoughts being there.

22 JS: When you flew out of Vietnam where did you fly to?

23 CG: I don't remember if we made any refueling stops or not but I ended up at—I
24 remember landing at LAX Los Angeles and I think about a three-hour layover there,
25 three- or four-hour layover. Some guy at Da Nang had begged me to take a gift he had
26 bought someone, I think it was a bracelet or something, back to his girlfriend in Los
27 Angeles. He gave me a phone number and all of that and when I got to Los Angeles I had
28 I think it was about a four-hour layover. I called the number and asked for this girlfriend
29 of his and somebody had answered the phone, some woman answered that phone. She
30 said, well, that person is out and wanted to know what I wanted. I explained that I was
31 coming back from Vietnam and brought this gift, you know, for this fellow's girlfriend.

1 This woman said, well, would I like a bite to eat? I said, “Sure,” you know. These people
2 drove from wherever and showed up in about ten or fifteen minutes and picked me up at
3 the airport and took me back to their apartment. You know, the only thing they would tell
4 me was that this girl was out that was their daughter. She was out and they came to pick
5 up the gift, you know, as much as me. The lady made a sandwich for me and I had a
6 sandwich and all then they drove me back to the airport. They were kind of evasive about
7 the daughter and where she was and finally on the way back to the airport the lady told
8 me that her daughter was out on a date. I don’t remember who the guy was, you know,
9 the name. I have always had trouble with names so I certainly don’t remember and
10 wouldn’t say who it was anyway.

11 JS: Sure.

12 CG: He was some guy in Vietnam and had a girlfriend back in the States and she
13 was out on dates while he was there. Anyway, I landed first in Los Angeles and after the
14 layover got a flight to New Mexico, Roswell, New Mexico, where my wife picked me up.
15 We went down to where the house was that we had rented for her while I was gone. That
16 was pretty uneventful.

17 JS: All right. How did your family react to your return? Obviously they were
18 happy.

19 CG: They were really happy. My girls at the time, the two girls, were just three
20 and a half and two and half I think and I had a son that I had never seen before that was
21 six months old so he was—he was more than six months old. I guess he was about nine
22 months old then. He wasn’t walking yet. That was the extent of the family at that time.
23 My wife was really happy to see me. I was very happy to see her, of course. We spent a
24 few days there and got movers and got everything packed up to move to Delaware. Drove
25 from New Mexico up to Pennsylvania to visit my folks and continued on to Delaware to
26 my next assignment in Dover.

27 JS: All right. After completing your assignment in Vietnam you stayed in the Air
28 Force, what, for about another nineteen years or so?

29 CG: No, one year.

30 JS: Okay, I am sorry.

31 CG: Of active duty.

1 JS: Oh, okay. One year of active duty.

2 CG: I spent one year, approximately one year from May of '69—I am sorry. May
3 of '68 when I returned until the end of June of '69 I was at Dover. Like I say, that
4 euphemistically. I was a C-141 pilot and C-141s were flying their tails off back then so
5 during that last year I was home an average of about four days per month just gone and
6 TDY (temporary duty) the rest of the time. Even when I was home I wasn't home much
7 which is part of the reason I left the Air Force, the active duty. I was just gone too much
8 and I had a family. I was tired of not being around them very much. I missed all the kids'
9 birthdays and all that kind of thing so I got out, got off active duty. That was kind of an
10 interesting episode to because I was at that point in 1968 where being involuntarily
11 extended regardless of your commitment they were being extended. You just weren't
12 allowed out. For an officer your ID cards always say for expiration date indefinite. It's
13 unlike enlisted people. For officers it is always indefinite. Theoretically, you could leave
14 after your commitments were up. In certain times when there is a war or something you
15 can't always get out. But what happened in I think the late summer of '68 President
16 Johnson, the one that tried to get me killed over in Vietnam, had a fight with Congress
17 over taxation. He wanted to increase taxes and Congress wouldn't let him do it unless he
18 cut down on federal spending so he agreed. One of the items in reduction of federal
19 spending was to permit attrition in the federal service including the military so I attritted.
20 What I did when I heard about that, I went down to personnel and found out that indeed
21 they would accept a request to leave the military. I had a regular commission and
22 resigned my regular commission at that point effective the following June, the end of my
23 commitment. I wasn't able to leave early. I was still obligated to fulfill my commitment
24 for the C-141 and pilot training schools. I resigned my commission effective the
25 following June 30th which was just two weeks I think after my commitments were
26 expired. It was approved. Some people in our unit found out about it but not right away
27 and they missed the window. I think it was just a four- or six-week window when they
28 were accepting requests to leave the military by pilots. I guess I lucked out. I probably
29 would have been able to leave again without that window of opportunity probably a year
30 or two later but right at that point that was the only way to get out was to take advantage
31 of that little window of opportunity. I left the military active duty June 30th of 1969.

1 When I was at personnel they asked if I wanted a reserve commission, if I wanted to
2 exchange my regular commission for a reserve commission or if I just wanted to resign. I
3 said, "Well, what would be the advantage of the reserve commission?" The young airman
4 in personnel said, well, he didn't know. I said, "Well, it sounds to me like if I take a
5 reserve commission they could get me back in the Air Force and send me to Thule,
6 Greenland, or Vietnam or someplace where I am out away from my family again. I don't
7 think I want that to happen." If I am quitting my job I am quitting my job, you know. I
8 told him, "No, I didn't want a reserve commission." I basically became a civilian and
9 never expected the work in it on June 30th of '69, the date arrived, you know. I left the
10 active duty. I left the military behind entirely. I didn't rejoin for almost two years. I got to
11 missing flying and finally decided that this reserve unit in Pittsburgh hadn't been called
12 up since World War II. They weren't even called up during Korea nor Vietnam up to that
13 point. They were likely not to be called up unless there was a major war. I decided,
14 "Well, if there is a major war then I wouldn't mind being part of the military again."
15 People who had worked in Westinghouse would ask me about that. "Why are you in the
16 reserves?" I told them, "Well, if the Russians start coming onto the beaches of New
17 Jersey, I'd just as soon be in the military than Westinghouse," you know. So that was
18 kind of my attitude. I ended up joining the reserves after almost two years. Let's see, I
19 left the military in June of '69 and '70. Let's see, I rejoined at the end of '70—well, early
20 '71 something like that. It wasn't any big problem to get back in and get a commission
21 again. I applied for acceptance as a pilot in the reserves at the Pittsburgh unit. They
22 conducted a certification board on me to make sure that I had never had an aircraft
23 accident or anything that would preclude me flying. The first thing that happened was
24 that I got orders assigning me back to flying duties at the unit in Pittsburgh International
25 Airport. Along with the orders came instructions to give me an oath of office as a captain
26 in the United States Air Force in order to enable those orders. They can't order a civilian
27 to go fly a military airplane, so I could not accomplish the orders to go back on flying
28 status unless they gave me a commission back, so they did.

29 JS: Okay.

30 CG: That is kind of the way that works. I got commissioned three times. First out
31 of Officer Training School and a couple of years later a regular commission and then

1 resigned that later and got a direct appointment in the Air Force almost two years after I
2 had got out.

3 JS: During this time after Vietnam—

4 CG: I am having a hard time hearing you.

5 JS: Sorry about that. What types of planes were you flying afterwards? Were you
6 flying C-141s again primarily or—

7 CG: In the reserves?

8 JS: Yes.

9 CG: No. I joined the Pittsburgh unit and it had C-124s at the time so I expected
10 that, you know—I had told you earlier that I expected to fly C-124s coming out of pilot
11 training and I didn't. I ended up in C-141s instead.

12 JS: Right.

13 CG: Although I had a couple of flights in a C-124 just for pay purposes but
14 actually never went to school and went off and flew C-141s instead. Well, I joined the
15 Pittsburgh flying unit, reserve flying unit, expecting I am going to fly C-124s.

16 JS: Okay.

17 CG: In my second monthly meeting they call them UTAs, Unit Training
18 Assembly. The second one I attended they announced the unit was switching to C-123s.
19 Most of the people in the room were old reserve pilots. Several of them turned around to
20 each other and said, "What is the C-123?" They didn't even know what the airplane was.
21 As a C-124 unit they were pretty heavy with people, you know, majors and lieutenant
22 colonels and even a bunch of colonels. Going to C-123s they got rid of all the old folks so
23 I ended up flying C-123s instead of C-124s again although again I had a couple of flights
24 in a C-124 during the period between the time we got the—I joined the unit and we
25 actually got C-123s to fly so I had a few flights just for pay. I managed to get in the seat
26 and made a very scary landing in a C-124 down at San Antonio, Texas, when I went out
27 on a weekend trip having never been to any schooling or anything. One of the instructors
28 let me make an approach and landing and I zig-zagged my way down final and managed
29 to get it on the ground after almost two years of not flying. It was a scary landing but I
30 guess safe. Then I flew—I think we had C-123s for five or six years before we got C-
31 130s at Pittsburgh. Initially we got C-130As and we had those for quite a while and then I

1 was in the reserves for sixteen years. About the first five to six years of that was C-123s.
2 Then about eight years of that we had C-130As. There was lobbying going on with
3 Congress to get us better airplanes which turned out to be fruitful so we got brand new C-
4 130Hs out of the factory at Pittsburgh. I had been contemplating leaving the reserves at
5 the twenty-two year of service point. When I found that Congress had approved the C-
6 130Hs, brand new ones for our unit I decided to stay. I stayed for two more years and got
7 checked out in the C-130H. That was kind of interesting also because back in 1965 and
8 '66 I had made several trips from Travis Air Force Base to the Lockheed factory down in
9 Georgia and flew brand new C-141s from the Lockheed factory to Travis. Thirty years
10 later in 1985, I guess it was, or '86, '85, I again made a trip down to the Lockheed factory
11 in Georgia and picked up a brand new C-130 and flew it back to Pittsburgh. I managed to
12 get a little personal record there and fly two totally different brand new airplanes out of
13 the factory to their base thirty years apart. That was—it wasn't thirty years, it was twenty,
14 '65—

15 JS: '65 to '85.

16 CG: Yeah, thirty, twenty years.

17 JS: Twenty years, right.

18 CG: Twenty years later.

19 JS: Right, okay.

20 CG: Twenty years later, not thirty. Nobody cares about that, though that was a
21 personal little milestone in my life. After a couple of more years in the reserves I retired
22 with twenty-four years of total military time. And better than 5,000 hours of flight time,
23 5,400 or 5,500 hours of flying time.

24 JS: All right. Before we wrap this up I would like to ask you just a few broad
25 questions about your opinions on the war in Vietnam and that kind of thing. You can say
26 as much or as little as you would like.

27 CG: Okay.

28 JS: Okay. Tell me a little bit about, looking back on it, a little bit about your
29 opinion on American policy towards Vietnam and Southeast Asia during that time
30 period?

1 CG: I don't know what to think about it. I thought that we had a reasonable reason
2 for being there. On the other hand, I thought there was too much diddling by the
3 politicians back home in things we did.

4 JS: Sure.

5 CG: Things like rules of engagement and stuff like that were just excruciating to
6 us in Vietnam. You probably aren't aware of exactly some of the things that went on but,
7 for example, the Ho Chi Minh Trail over in Laos. Normally when you fly over any area
8 you cannot see borders. If you fly over—when I fly over Pennsylvania I could not tell
9 where the border of Pennsylvania was.

10 JS: Sure.

11 CG: That is true of international borders too. If you go flying up in North Dakota
12 and Montana and fly up into to Canada and back, you know, and never know that went
13 over into Canada.

14 JS: Uh-huh, sure.

15 CG: That should have true in Vietnam, it was not. In the western part of Quang
16 Nam province as you go west there, you know, the population decreased because it was
17 jungle.

18 JS: Sure.

19 CG: But right along the border on both sides of the border was places that were
20 cleared and crops being grown and all of that stuff. You could actually see where the
21 border was especially for somebody like me who flew day after day out there. I was over
22 there two or three times a week, you know. You could actually see where the border was
23 and we could see activity, you know, we could see encampments and stuff like that along
24 the border which were North Vietnamese encampments. But because it was close to the
25 border and the rules of engagement prohibited bombing along that border within a certain
26 distance of that border and the North Vietnamese knew that, you know, it was just a free
27 zone for the North Vietnamese to do whatever they wanted to. That was their R&R area,
28 that was their staging area and there was nothing we could really do about it. A little bit
29 further west apparently they had some kind of agreement or whatever to bomb the Ho
30 Chi Minh Trail. But right along the border there was never any bombing going on and
31 that was all due to the rules of engagement. There were other rules of engagement that

1 were stupid but that was one of them that really struck me. You know, there is all these
2 kind of free areas to the so-called enemy. We were unable, you know, not allowed to do
3 anything about it.

4 JS: That must have been very frustrating.

5 CG: Well, not so much that you went around and wrung your hands about it all
6 day every day but, you know, if you thought about it was kind of annoyance. We had a
7 bunch of stupid politicians, you know, running things instead of military people running
8 things.

9 JS: Okay.

10 CG: That was kind of the general thoughts. We probably had some reasonable
11 justification for being there in the first place, you know, because it was obvious to me at
12 least that the North Vietnamese were intent on taking over South Vietnam which they
13 eventually did. That, you know, our general policy at the time was to try to stop the North
14 Vietnamese and as a consequence the Chinese and Russians from expanding their
15 influence, you know.

16 JS: Right.

17 CG: We all thought that was okay to do. But how we did it was not real good.

18 JS: Okay. How close—excuse me. How closely did you follow the war after you
19 left Vietnam?

20 CG: Not much.

21 JS: Not much, okay.

22 CG: No. I got wrapped up in a civilian career and even flying in the reserves we
23 didn't do any kind of war support or combat support kinds of things in the C-123s. It was
24 not a long range airplane so, you know. The C-141 reserve units were, for example, over
25 in New Jersey were flying to Vietnam to guys on summer camp or, you know, taking
26 long weekends or whatever flying, were actually continuing to participate in the war in
27 Vietnam in a way. Like the C-123s out of Pittsburgh we were lucky we were able to get
28 down to Florida, you know, some place like that let alone across any ocean. We just
29 didn't do that.

30 JS: All right. How would you say that your experiences in Vietnam have affected
31 your life since then, or has it?

1 CG: At first it did. I didn't even realize it. I had mentioned that in the website
2 thing, write-up that I put together, that about a year after leaving the military which is
3 about two years or so after I left Westinghouse or left Vietnam, that's about another year
4 on active duty before I got out of the military. It was about two, two and a half years
5 later. It was winter time and it got dark early and I was working late at Westinghouse and
6 I was walking out through the parking lot and realized all of a sudden that I was looking
7 around for a place to go hide when the rockets started coming in, walking out through the
8 parking lot. That was a habit I had gotten into in Vietnam. I apparently had never gotten
9 away from it but didn't realize I was doing it. I kind of laughed at myself, you know, for
10 doing that. Gradually that sort of feeling just faded. It was still present roughly two and a
11 half years after I left Vietnam. There was a tendency to unconsciously think about what
12 to do if the rockets started coming in. It kind of screws up your head some in mysterious
13 ways, strange ways. Over the years you get away from thinking about that sort of stuff
14 even unconsciously. I don't have any dreams about Vietnam or anything like that.

15 JS: Sure.

16 CG: On the other hand, I have no interest in the place. I know there are quite a
17 few veterans who have made trips back to Vietnam thinking I guess they are going to
18 make some kind of peace in their mind having been or whatever their motives are. Me, on
19 the other hand, I am just not interested in the place. Last time I was there they were trying
20 to kill me so why would I want to go back there?

21 JS: That is understandable.

22 CG: In general, I don't give too much thought to Vietnam at all. It took some
23 years but basically I think forgot about it. To the point where the first time I attended one
24 of these—the very first forward air controller reunion in the year 2000 I had a lot of
25 trouble remembering anything about Vietnam especially names of places. So I got on the
26 internet and looked up maps of Vietnam and stuff like that. I finally figured out the
27 names of some of the places like Thung Duc, for example, was a Special Forces camp I
28 used to go pretty frequently. Initially I had trouble remembering the name of the place,
29 you know, things like that. I had trouble remembering after so many years. I also had a
30 lot of records, flights records, OERs (officer efficiency reports), performance reports, you
31 know, and other personnel records and things like that that I kind of picked my way

1 through. I had a lot of pictures, not a whole lot, probably four or five rolls of pictures. A
2 lot of repetition but I still had pictures of different places. A lot of the pictures I just
3 didn't recognize. I took pictures or had pictures taken when I was out at some of the little
4 remote places and years later couldn't remember where those pictures had been taken. It
5 was hard to remember things but I was able to gradually over several months by looking
6 at records and thinking about it was able to recall some of the life in the war zone kind of
7 thing.

8 JS: Sure. Okay, well, before we wrap this up completely is there any last thing
9 you would like to comment on?

10 CG: I can't hear you.

11 JS: I am sorry. Before we wrap this up completely is there any last thing you
12 would like to say or comment on about your experiences?

13 CG: I don't think so.

14 JS: Okay.

15 CG: To me this is all like the oral histories from Appalachia, you know, that some
16 college people did a hundred miles from here where they went through Appalachia and
17 took oral histories and stuff like that. They sit in some college library and nobody pays
18 much attention to them except maybe an occasional graduate student. That is my
19 expectation is that nobody is going to care much about what I said here and whatever I
20 said is going to sit in some college library and maybe twice in the next fifty years some
21 grad student will take a look at it or listen to it and that will be it.

22 JS: Well—

23 CG: But, you know, it is okay to do.

24 JS: Well, that could very well be the case. We don't know for sure.

25 CG: That's true.

26 JS: But, of course, I appreciate and I am sorry that it took us as long as it did to
27 get back to you but I am glad we did.

28 CG: Yeah it was kind of a long time. I told you before that it would have been
29 much easier in 1975 to remember some of this stuff. It did help that one of your people
30 was at the FAC reunion in 2000 that I was kind of motivated at that point to try to
31 remember some stuff and write it down. You did look at the website?

1 JS: Yes, sir.
2 CG: Okay. Did it look okay to you?
3 JS: Yeah, it looked very good.
4 CG: I mean, I am not a website designer or anything.
5 JS: It looked perfectly fine.
6 CG: I just wrote up a rambling series of stories about my experiences.
7 JS: I can tell you it was definitely helpful in preparing for the interview.
8 CG: Did you see the second page of it?
9 JS: Yes, with the pictures and everything. Sure, yes.
10 CG: All right.
11 JS: All right. Well, I will go ahead and bring the interview to an end here and I
12 will talk to you for a few more minutes, if you don't mind, after I stop the tape.
13 CG: All right.