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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Ted Engelmann  
Conducted by Kelly Crager  
22 August 2008; 16 September 2008  
Transcribed by Cecily Darwin**

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

1           Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an interview with Mr. Ted  
2   Engelmann. Today is 22 August 2008. I am in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of Texas  
3   Tech University and Mr. Engelmann is joining me from his home in Denver, Colorado.  
4   Good morning, Mr. Engelmann.  
5           Ted Engelmann: Good morning, Kelly.  
6           KC: I want to thank you first of all for taking time out of your day to speak with  
7   me for the Oral History Project here at the Vietnam Archive. We really appreciate your  
8   efforts in this way.  
9           TE: Well, I am honored and I am pleased to help out in any way I can. Thank you.  
10          KC: We appreciate that. We really do. To start things off, Mr. Engelmann, let me  
11   ask you a little bit about your background. When were you born and where?  
12          TE: I was born January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1947 in Bloomington, Indiana.  
13          KC: What were your parents' names?  
14          TE: My father is George Theodore Engelmann, Jr., and my mother is Irene Avery  
15   Engelmann. Her maiden name was Avery.  
16          KC: Okay. What did you parents do for a living?  
17          TE: My father predominately—well, I guess both of them had been educators. My  
18   mom taught in the elementary grades for some time and then was associated more with  
19   hospital work. She was director of volunteer services at a couple of hospitals in Upstate  
20   New York namely Oneonta, New York, and Johnstown, New York. Dad was teaching—  
21   he had a master's in journalism so he was teaching speech, English, journalism at the

1 high school and at the college level. He worked with RCA, Oneonta State, part of the  
2 SUNY State University of New York and Fulton Montgomery Community College in  
3 Johnstown, New York, both as a public information officer, assistant to the president,  
4 which would be your PIO, and also an administrator and an instructor, a professor in  
5 English and journalism. Both of their education, both of their backgrounds were in  
6 education. We lived and associated with educators. My father, my dad was also inactive  
7 reserve army and he was in World War II, he was called up for the Korean deal because  
8 he was in reserves. We were stationed at Fort Devin's, Massachusetts, during the Korean  
9 War so his military experience as a reservist also permeated our lives because he was  
10 always going to meetings and events and so on so that was part of our experiences, too.  
11 So education and military, Army backgrounds were kind of what I cut my teeth on.

12 KC: Let me ask you one question before I go back to your father and his military  
13 experiences. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

14 TE: I have a sister, Martha. She is two years younger. So, yes, that is all.

15 KC: Okay. What was your father's role in the Second World War? What did he  
16 do?

17 TE: I am sorry. Say it again.

18 KC: What was your father's role in the Second World War? Where was he  
19 stationed and what was he doing?

20 TE: For one thing, I have—Dad passed away two weeks ago. I have all of his  
21 military records and all the photographs and all sorts of memorabilia and his awards so I  
22 could give better details to that later, perhaps. But I do know that he enlisted when the  
23 war broke out. He was a private. He had been going and attending and had graduated  
24 from Indiana University, his B.A. (bachelor of arts degree) I believe it was in English. He  
25 had also attended ROTC, R-O-T-C (Reserve Officer Training Corps). He eventually  
26 became—went to OCS (Officer Candidate School) and was—got into the signal corps  
27 and was doing work in crypto work, cryptology. His basic—as I remember it, his primary  
28 efforts or his work was—Mom and Dad got married in '43 and then he shipped out, out  
29 of Hoboken, New Jersey on the USS *Rocky Mount*. He was a plank holder which meant  
30 that he was one of the first—he was on board when the ship was commissioned. The  
31 *Rocky Mount*, it turns out I guess that was also lettered AGC-3 and that was a flag ship. It

1 took them to Hawaii and then it took them to Kwajalein Islands and the invasion of the  
2 Philippines in October of '44. I think he had about a year and a half or two years out in  
3 the South Pacific. As I understand it from one of his—one of the men onboard ship he  
4 was set up—he set up a small base and was in charge as a lieutenant in charge of a crypto  
5 station there in the Philippines. I have to get better details as to maybe the location and all  
6 of that but predominantly that was his job. (Coughs) Excuse me. That in brief at least in  
7 general was his background and his work. Again, I have all the records and I can give  
8 better details as I go into them but that's essentially it unless you have other questions.

9 KC: No, no, no. That's perfectly fine, just what I am looking for. What about his  
10 role in the Korean War? You said he was called back up as part of the reserves?

11 TE: You know, we were posted in Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and I was a little  
12 kid and have quite a few memories of the post. A year ago I went back there. We had  
13 several photographs of me in front of the—it was kind of like a barracks house that we  
14 were living in and re-photographed those shots. Dad was as I can remember it—I don't  
15 remember specifically what his job was, to be honest with you. I know he was in an  
16 office and he also wore his uniform. I am just coming up with all sorts of visions here  
17 trying to put them in order or context. I attended elementary school there at Fort Devens  
18 and also what I remember and awful lot was, as a little, tiny kid like I was five or six  
19 years old, playing around with all the Army stuff. When we had Veterans Day, Armistice  
20 Day or Memorial Day or Fourth of July there were all sorts of activities going on on the  
21 post and for a little kid like me playing around tanks and touching a machinegun or  
22 something like this, eating in a chow line, dipping your mess kit in a garbage can full of  
23 hot water and sterilizing it and stuff. We were kind of—I remember doing things like that  
24 and that was just the neatest thing in the world. I just thought this was just everything. I  
25 had a lot of memories of that. Just a bit about dad and some of our home life. Going next  
26 door there was a lady named Rachael who lived next door to us and our walls were paper  
27 thin so when I woke up if my mom and Marty, my sister, weren't there I would just go  
28 the sofa and put my ear to the wall and I could hear Rachael and Mom and Marty next  
29 door at their coffee table probably having coffee and toast. I would, you know, hippty-  
30 hop next door and I would know that's where they were. Kind of, again, some of the  
31 lifestyle things that we did up and down the—in the post and around where we were

1 living; going to the commissary and kind of a running joke in the family was that I  
2 thought the Army had names for everything and so when we were at the commissary  
3 picking up food, (Clears throat) excuse me, I thought mom was talking about these red  
4 onions as being battalion onions, which sound normal to me. Later when I was a teenager  
5 at some grocery stand I was asking her, you know, do you want some of these battalion  
6 onions? She laughed and she told me, “You’ve got to grow up. You’ve got to learn that  
7 those were Italian onions not battalion onions.” You know, I kind of had thoughts that,  
8 you know, again, the Army’s words were everywhere. If I heard something I perceived it  
9 and that’s kind of what I bought into. I learned but it took a long time.

10 KC: Sure.

11 TE: Dad’s experience, I think he got his captain’s bars during this time period. I  
12 don’t know. Ask some more questions if you want to juggle some more memories. I have  
13 visions but I am not too sure what else to add to the context.

14 KC: No, it certainly sounds like the military experience of your father and the  
15 family as a whole, obviously, was something that permeated your experience from a very  
16 early age. It was something that you grew up with and saw military life as being  
17 probably, I would assume, being something as somewhat normal where many other  
18 families that certainly wouldn’t have been the case.

19 TE: Even though I wasn’t, let’s say, a full Army brat, like we didn’t stay in active,  
20 Dad got inactive reserves later after the Korean War and that’s why we were able to go  
21 and live a civilian life and move around at different jobs that Dad was doing. I still had—  
22 that was a fairly strong impression upon me being at Fort Devens or at least that was the  
23 start of it. Then with the inactive reserve his meetings, going to camps, the two weeks in  
24 the summer. I have been looking at this lately in the sense that so many of those World  
25 War II vets were obviously throughout the United States they made up our communities  
26 and so many of the people in my life were Dad’s friends from that sort of relationship. In  
27 the reserve units that he was assigned to that we lived in those communities—in Oneonta  
28 Dr. Vermillion was a lieutenant colonel, he was an optometrist. One of them was our—he  
29 was a colonel, he was my dentist. I hated him but he was our dentist. I kept thinking,  
30 “God, what did he do to the Army guys when he was in service?” Colonel Joe Ramp, he  
31 was my chemistry teacher in high school. So many of these people I knew kind of in two

1 different worlds. One of them was wearing their Army uniforms and I have photos of  
2 Dad in these groups and I knew them from that sort of an experience as well as they were  
3 the civilian people in life. They had jobs and so many of them were in education. In fact,  
4 Dad's—the last educational position he was holding at Fulton Montgomery Community  
5 College as the director of admissions, Dr. Bill Gragg was asked to come from Oneonta  
6 State where he was working and come and be the president of Fulton Montgomery and  
7 that was in the summer of 1964 when we started this school up there. So many of the  
8 people that Bill got to come up there were former military personnel and Army, Navy and  
9 so on and they all knew each other from their professional life of educators but also these  
10 people they were veterans. I thought there was an interesting aspect to their perspective  
11 and point of view in life, in work because today or at least after the war in Vietnam that  
12 was not the case. We had dearth of educators and people who had been in the military.  
13 That's becoming a little bit more—the pendulum is swinging the other way these days.  
14 But I just kind—it has been interesting to see the military experience in my life growing  
15 up and how it's shifted in our society over the past at least forty years now. The military  
16 did have a big impact on me.

17 KC: What about school? Where did you go to school?

18 TE: We moved a lot and unfortunately or not I moved a lot of schools. I started  
19 off in Fort Devens. We moved back to Bloomington, Indiana. I went to McCullough  
20 Elementary School in Bloomington. I went to the University School, IU (Indiana  
21 University) school there in Bloomington. We moved a house and therefore I had to go to  
22 a new school, Rogers School, which had just been built. After Rogers School I graduated  
23 from the fifth grade there and then we moved to Oneonta, New York, and I had to repeat  
24 the fifth grade they said. So I went to Bugbee School which is part of the Oneonta State  
25 University or Oneonta SUNY school, it was a lab school so we had all sorts of observers  
26 and student teachers in all of our classes. We were kind of like a goldfish bowl for  
27 educators. I went there for about three years and then I went to Oneonta Junior High  
28 School. I split at Christmas of '63, I guess it might have been. Mom was teaching down  
29 there at the time and then I graduated into Oneonta High School. My senior year we  
30 moved in 1964 to Johnstown, New York, and I attended Johnstown High School where I  
31 graduated, luckily. That was a rough year because it was so set in Oneonta I should have

1 been allowed to stay somehow and finish up school there. We had worked real hard to  
2 have a bond referendum and we got a brand new high school and I would have been the  
3 first graduating class out of Oneonta. But as it turned out I was the first graduating class  
4 out of a new school in Johnstown. It really sucked to have moved that senior year and a  
5 whole new social system and just a variety of things. I think I attended about eight  
6 schools in twelve years, something like that. College has been something similar to that,  
7 as well.

8 KC: Well, let me ask you this and you hinted at that a little bit there your last year  
9 in high school. You moved around from place to place with your family and different  
10 schools quite often. What kind of effect did this have on you?

11 TE: Well, I think that is where I was kind of saying it is fortunate and unfortunate.  
12 I have never had home. I've never felt like when I look—when kids I think might feel  
13 when I look around and see kids who have grown up in one spot. Started school, went  
14 through twelve years of school with their friends, might have taken off to college but, you  
15 know, they might keep in touch and that sort of thing but I just never felt that I had that  
16 sort of an experience. I have always wanted it. Maybe it is like people who have curly  
17 hair want straight hair and straight haired people want curly hair. I just know I have never  
18 had it so, you know, I kind of deal with it. On the other side I then gravitate more to or I  
19 associate a little bit with people who, say, well, there is preachers' kids or they are  
20 military brats or something. I kind of call myself a military brat and a university brat  
21 because of that type of lifestyle that I had. It helped me be social. It helps me know how  
22 to be around other people. It introduced me to a variety of people from the world who  
23 came to our communities and were part of the social structure my parents were both  
24 through the military and academics. That made a much richer life for me. I knew things  
25 and knew of places even though I haven't visited them but I knew things that some of the  
26 other kids who just lived in one spot had no concept of. For that I feel blessed. On the  
27 other side it takes a toll emotionally and in some other ways because you just kind of  
28 don't have whatever you might think is a normal childhood, but I don't know what  
29 normal was but it did have this effect where you are looking at kids who are the local kids  
30 and they are always looking at me askance trying to suss me out. I am trying to fit in and  
31 I did weird things and stupid things in order to fit in because I did feel different and I was

1 different, I felt. It made me act out in a lot of ways. It did things to me. I had—I played  
2 toy soldier a lot as a way to take up my time because I didn't have kids around me a lot of  
3 times when we moved initially to a new town. It took a while to meet some kids but I also  
4 met kids pretty quick. I was easy to move around in various social circles but I never got  
5 real deep in them. Again, the kids were pretty well entrenched and I was kind of a dorky  
6 kid. I knew things but, again, the movement was helpful but it challenged life for me at  
7 times.

8 KC: Sure.

9 TE: That's how that worked out.

10 KC: Well, in the middle of all this moving around what sort of things did you like  
11 to do most of school, sports or academics? What were your favorite things?

12 TE: I think history probably turned out to be one of the things I was most  
13 interested in because luckily Mom and Dad took us places. Since we lived in different  
14 locations, like when we were at Fort Devens, I remember going and seeing Plymouth  
15 Rock. After we moved from Fort Devens and we got into Oneonta, New York, I think it  
16 was in '57 that we moved there, I was in fifth grade and the teacher, Mrs. Gallagher,  
17 brings out something and we are talking about American pilgrims landing at this place  
18 called Plymouth Rock. I said, "Oh, I have been there. I know all about that." Mom being  
19 a teacher had all sorts of brochures and kept things from those places that we visited so I  
20 brought in all this stuff which overwhelmed the teacher because she had never been there,  
21 she didn't have as much material as I did. I think it also hacked off the kids a bit because  
22 it looked like I was showing off and this might be one of the problems that you end up  
23 with if you travel a bit you know things and others think you're being a jerk for talking  
24 about it so much. My idea was I wanted to show, I wanted to get in with the group and I  
25 could tell people stuff. I could see things. I knew stuff that kind of transferred later in life.  
26 I thought that was a helpful thing but those all came around to bite me a little bit, too.

27 KC: Sure, made fitting in a little bit more difficult, I think, in a number of ways.

28 TE: I don't think I got into sports so much. Again, it seemed like one of those  
29 things where there was a group of kids—I never aspired to be—I didn't have the body for  
30 it, for one thing, very sports oriented. I liked wrestling. I liked playing games but I just  
31 wasn't really great at it and I didn't work at it that hard. Again, I think the moving also

1 kind of inhibited that a bit. In Bloomington I got on an expansion team of a Little League  
2 at Moose, the Moose team and that was really cool but we moved that summer. We  
3 moved from Bloomington to Oneonta. I worked real hard to get on Little League and then  
4 once we moved to Oneonta I was out of my element. I didn't—somehow I just never  
5 made the Little League tryouts. Kind of something I think was kind of interesting. I  
6 believe this is how it worked. Kids used to tease me a lot in Upstate New York and ask  
7 me questions to say the word—when you hit a ball and it goes behind first base or third  
8 base what do you call that? Well, that's a foul. When you put your clothes in a machine  
9 and you get water on it, you clean them up, what is that? Well, you wash them. Well, I  
10 kind of had an accent, I guess, from the Midwest. When I would say "shoot," when I  
11 missed a ball I think the kids thought I said "shit." People were telling me, "Oh, you can't  
12 say that." And I said, "Why?" They would say, "Oh, you said 'shit' out there." "I did  
13 not." I think I was saying "shoot" because I didn't use words. I didn't use four-letter  
14 words as a kid that just wasn't something I did. I didn't know them. Yet people were  
15 telling me I was using these bad words. I have a feeling that it was the accent that they  
16 were hearing and that's my best guess. It makes me feel better, too. I never made Little  
17 League and I didn't have an awful lot of support so I kind of just muddled along and did  
18 what I could. It was just one of those things, basketball, baseball, football, you know,  
19 sports weren't the thing, academics, ah, that wasn't anything real big. I liked history but it  
20 was—I just never excelled in anything, I don't think. I liked reading. I was pretty good,  
21 articulate in English because my old man was kicking my butt as English person at home  
22 but that's kind of how I ended up just kind of being a jack of all trades and master of  
23 none.

24 KC: Sure. Well, you were—well, let me ask you this: when did you graduate from  
25 high school, again? Was it '64, you said?

26 TE: No, it was June of '65.

27 KC: '65, okay. By June of 1965 U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia is beginning  
28 to ratchet up, obviously. Johnson is president. We have the Gulf of Tonkin incident and  
29 the accompanying resolution. How closely were you following events in Southeast Asia  
30 at this time?

1           TE: If I remember right it was part of the discussion at home and around other  
2 places because Dad was—he had a position, his MOBDES, mobilization designated  
3 position, was in the Pentagon. I went with him a couple of times down there so it was  
4 kind of part of the military, part of the life for us, our discussions. We also had friends,  
5 one of them went over to—was in Vietnam, he was in combat engineers as an officer and  
6 we knew him from Oneonta. He was a career, a lifer. The issue among the faculty who  
7 were veterans, they would discuss this and I was privy to it, hearing their conversations,  
8 their points of view. I think we were fairly at that time I would say fairly Republican at  
9 that time, which might not be Republican today necessarily.

10          KC: Well, explain what that means. By Republican in 1964, 1965, what did that  
11 mean to you?

12          TE: Well, I kind of think that we were looking at the world view in rather a—Dad  
13 really thought a lot about Ike Eisenhower. Dad had been on city council on Bloomington,  
14 Indiana, as a Republican. I think and my feeling of it the connotation was that we were  
15 concerned about the world. We don't want to have America impacted by a negative force,  
16 communism. When we are getting the word that we have got the Domino Theory from  
17 Ike and we are hearing that the communists are moving in a particular area which could  
18 be influencing us, then we kind of get up in arms and start thinking, "Okay, what have we  
19 got to do to take care of ourselves and how do we protect ourselves and other people  
20 from a communist prospect there?" You know, communist overtaking. I think we were  
21 kind of looking at it rather in that black-and-white sort of setting and that's what I  
22 remember. I think today my idea of a Republican, a Democrat has more social  
23 connotations and issues and they are real different. Today I believe the Republicans are  
24 more interested, for instance, in economic power for their own base and unfortunately  
25 usurping other peoples' powers in doing so. The Democrats are kind of ignorant about all  
26 of that and trying not to lose it. I kind of feel that things have shifted gears, at least in my  
27 perspective. Back in those days Vietnam was a concern of mine and the biggest problem I  
28 had was I was really hacked off at being in Johnstown. I hated it. I hated the social  
29 structure. I hated the kids. I mean the whole nine yards. I didn't like it. I gravitated and  
30 had fun with the college personnel because we were there and it was senior year in high  
31 school and I knew everybody at the community college, all the instructors and professors

1 and admin by first name because we were all having social activities and so on. What that  
2 led to was I tried to fail to show people they can't make me do anything. I tried to fail  
3 high school my last year and I almost succeeded; luckily I didn't. I graduated from  
4 Johnstown High School. I had a New York State regents' diploma and I had a high  
5 school diploma, the local one. That made all the difference in my life because at that  
6 stage in 1965 if you're eighteen years old and you did not have a high school diploma,  
7 that was one of the first deferment levels right there, you could not enlist in the Navy or  
8 the Air Force.

9 KC: Okay.

10 TE: They took only high school graduates so that meant anybody who was  
11 walking around who was eighteen who did not graduate from high school was raw meat  
12 for Army and Marines for the draft. Well, for the draft because they couldn't, as I did  
13 eventually, enlist in the Air Force. I was confused the time when I graduated. I didn't  
14 really know what to do or where to go because this whole last year through me off base. I  
15 enrolled in the community college where Dad was. I spent one semester there from the  
16 fall of '65 until January of '66. I was on academic probation right away because I was  
17 partying with all my friends who had come up from Oneonta to go this school there  
18 because they didn't know what else to do, either. I was BMOC, big man on campus. My  
19 father was director of admissions, etc., so you know it was—I had it pretty cushy. When I  
20 was on academic probation I could pretty quickly tell this wasn't going to go—college  
21 was not my forte at the time. I decided to go down to Gloversville to the recruiter's  
22 office. I talked to the Navy guy. He talked to me about going underneath the ocean for six  
23 in a nuke sub and that would be so cool and I thought, "No." The Air Force recruiter  
24 Sergeant Vrooman, told me pretty much what I thought was a good idea, get a uniform,  
25 you can stay in the States, party, date, have a good time, and probably avoid Vietnam. It  
26 was a four-year enlistment but I would get training, I would get an education, I would get  
27 some skills, I would be able to travel, and I thought I could be fairly safe. So I enlisted in  
28 the Air Force in February the 7<sup>th</sup> 1966 in Albany.

29 KC: Now, let me ask you this, Mr. Engelmann. You were obviously raised in an  
30 environment where the military was something very, very important. It made up, I think  
31 it is safe to say, core of your understanding of the world as you saw it and as you

1 experienced it. Although college didn't look like it was going to pan out for you at the  
2 time, did you consider other options or was the military something you felt that you had  
3 to do?

4 TE: Well, I kind of felt that I didn't—once I got into community college and I  
5 was on academic probation I didn't see anywhere else to go academically at that time. I  
6 was going downhill not uphill academically and I wasn't interested in studying. I was  
7 having too much of a good time partying and all that, socializing, maybe kind of making  
8 up for what I hadn't had earlier. I think about the only—the black and white in my life  
9 was either you are going to go to school and be deferred from the draft or you get in the  
10 system somehow, you get into the military. I had the option of being in the elite group of  
11 having a high school diploma that I had a choice, in a sense. I had better options. I could  
12 go in the Navy or the Air Force, which were not combat arms. The fact that Dad had been  
13 in the Army and I had been in the Pentagon with him and I had seen things in the Army  
14 structure I was thinking I really don't think I want to do the Army bit and certainly not  
15 the Marines. They are kind of tough and I wasn't a tough guy. Although I had friends  
16 who went in the Marines and I didn't think they were tough at that start but they turned  
17 out to be tough. It just didn't seemed to be that—I was kind of like a lover not a fighter  
18 sort of an attitude. I was kind of taking the least path of resistance, the path of least  
19 resistance. I didn't want to be a leg. I didn't want to be a grunt. I didn't want to be a  
20 ground pounder. I certainly didn't think I was officer material at the time and I certainly  
21 wasn't in any category or position to get into OCS or go that route. Again, I think my  
22 options, although somewhat better than others, were still limited. It seemed like I better  
23 pick the Navy or the Air Force and go for years, get something under my belt, education,  
24 training, skills, and so on and come out on the other end and hopefully I can make a  
25 better, you know, I can make a decent life at that stage and start a life. Maybe go to  
26 college while I am in the service. That's a possibility. That's kind of where I was at that  
27 point in time.

28 KC: Watching as—I don't want to say as closely as you were—but being aware  
29 of the events in Southeast Asia and the growing American involvement in Vietnam, did  
30 you choose the Air Force explicitly to help stay out of Vietnam or was this something  
31 you thought could be a possibility?

1           TE: No, it was unequivocal. I didn't want to go to Vietnam. It was my way of  
2 being in an environment where it was not combat arms. I didn't think Air Force other  
3 than being in a plane at 30,000 feet would over Vietnam, so that was my decision. It was  
4 to avoid going in the Army or the Marines and the next step was over the pond.

5           KC: Okay, now this was at a time before the anti-war feeling, the anti-war  
6 movement, if you will, really began to roll so what was it, other than obvious, other than  
7 the danger, what was it about Vietnam that led you to want to avoid it? Or was it just  
8 purely the danger?

9           TE: I think it was purely the danger. It was a faraway place. Nobody basically  
10 knew where it was. We just knew it was on the other side of the globe. The conversations  
11 I heard among the faculty, the vets, my Dad's group, they had the theories and this sort  
12 thing. But when I listened to some of that it wasn't spooky but it kind of gave me the  
13 sense that this stuff could be serious. You get stuck over there you may be coming home  
14 in a body bag. There was some reasoning for that. There is some sound reasoning it  
15 sounded like. Not only did we see it on the TV news but it was a foreign world, it was a  
16 foreign culture to us, to me, in the sense that we had Filipino friends, we had friends from  
17 the Middle East, we knew Chinese people but I had never met a Vietnamese and I didn't  
18 know who or where they were or things like that. It kind of seemed, alien, strange, and a  
19 place I wouldn't want to go, certainly not in the potential of death. It seemed like a good  
20 idea to stay away and just kind of weather out the storm in the Air Force and have a  
21 decent life wherever I could.

22           KC: Had you any friends who were shipped off to Vietnam? Prior to this, of  
23 course.

24           TE: No, prior not accept for Jim Moot who was the gentleman, he was a real good  
25 friends of Dad's and he was a student at Oneonta State; had a family, well, they  
26 developed a family and he was like a half generation older then I was but under Dad. Jim  
27 was a real smart gentleman. He was in the Army. Dad and he were real good friends and  
28 he was a student at Oneonta but he was, I think, inactive reserves at the time. He got back  
29 in the active service and he was in the engineers and was in Vietnam. I was hearing stuff  
30 from that and that sounded—that was some difficult times for him. I was kind of leaning  
31 a little bit of that experience. I didn't—I knew people were in the service but hadn't run

1 into anybody who had already gone over. That came later. Sometimes I didn't know  
2 people were over until it was too late. I mean they were killed or we ran into each other  
3 later on.

4 KC: In '66 you joined the Air Force. Where do you go for basic training?

5 TE: I went Lackland Air Force Base.

6 KC: In San Antonio.

7 TE: In San Antonio, Texas.

8 KC: Okay. Describe basic training for me.

9 TE: It was like Boy Scout camp for me. I already knew the Manual of Arms. My  
10 father had taught me that by the time I was ten years old. I knew how to salute. I knew  
11 military protocol. What we did, for instance, real quickly was develop four squads and  
12 that was designed by how tall you were. You would get in four lines, the taller person  
13 tapped the one in front of him. If you're taller than the guy in front you tap them and take  
14 their place. The four tallest guys are at the heads of the four lines and then we do a left  
15 face and you do a taller tap again. Now the tallest person is in one line at the end and the  
16 shortest guys are at the other end. They were the road guards that got sent out when we  
17 had to cross a road or something to prevent traffic from coming and hitting us. That was  
18 the way of finding a squad leader. Real quickly my squad leader kind of didn't do as  
19 good a job and my training instructor the TI, Sergeant Sanes, asked me to be the squad  
20 leader because I showed the aptitude for it, the skills. We had one of the last sixty-five-  
21 man flights at that time. I think they shortened them. They made smaller flights of basic  
22 training units after ours. We—it was fun, a game, all we did was just kind of learn how to  
23 march and how to salute, you know, kind of keep your lockers and your clothes squared  
24 away. You learned where and how to place things. We didn't have much to do with  
25 weapons. We had an obstacle course which was, it was fun. It was a lot of fun. My squad,  
26 we did it in a really good time, we had a good time with it. In a sense the whole thing was  
27 pretty easy as far as I was concerned because it wasn't Army, it wasn't Marines. We  
28 didn't have to do pushups and stuff like this. It was a very lax sort of process. Sure,  
29 getting at four or whatever in the morning and doing GI parties and all that stuff was kind  
30 of harassing and all that but when you consider what other people were doing and going  
31 through we had a cush job. I think the biggest problem we had at the time was we had a

1 case of meningitis on the base and David Eisenhower, grandson of Ike, was also in the  
2 Air Force and he was on base at the same time. He was getting obviously some special  
3 privileges or issues, you know, to kind of take care of him and make sure he doesn't get  
4 in trouble or people don't mess with him. All of a sudden we had to start being several  
5 feet away from different flights and you had to go into the chow hall one after another,  
6 you couldn't be there at the same time so there was a few inconveniences in that respect.  
7 I felt, you know, I did a good job and it was kind of fun and I was kind of looking for  
8 more. Basic training, you know, was kind of easy because it was in February and March  
9 and April, I think it was. We had snow. We had rain. We had hot sun. I think within  
10 twenty-four hours I had a sunburn and almost frost bite because of the change of weather  
11 for us. Other than that I think I had a good time. I learned a lot. I came out in good shape  
12 and was kind of looking for my next venture.

13 KS: So what did you hope to do once you finished basic training there at  
14 Lackland? What was it about the Air Force that you wanted to do next?

15 TE: Well, for one thing when I went in we took the AFQT, Armed Forces  
16 Qualification Test. I think there is five or six different categories like general,  
17 administration, mechanical, electronic, maybe something else or two. You get a score and  
18 so you kind of figure out, all right, well which—certain score levels will indicate you will  
19 either probably succeed or not so well succeed in a particular category. That was about as  
20 far as we had a choice at deciding what sort of job we were going to be kind of aiming at.  
21 I took electronics so I knew that my tech school would be something to do with  
22 electronics. Now beyond that decision it is up to the military to figure out where they  
23 wanted to stick us. I just knew I would be going to some electronics school somewhere or  
24 a school that deals with electrical systems and I didn't know what. There is a lot of things  
25 that deal with electricity.

26 KC: Sure.

27 TE: I guess we were kind of waiting in our casual control in basic after we kind of  
28 did out stint. You know what you are supposed to know and now you are kind of waiting  
29 for your orders as to where you are going to be in the pipeline to go to a tech school,  
30 which tech school, where, doing what. We are all kind of waiting around for our orders  
31 and mine finally came. I think I waited for a couple of weeks or so in casual control at

1 Lackland and I was sent Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Mississippi, and I was going to  
2 go in to radio—no, I was going to go into inertial navigational aids. I had no idea what  
3 the heck that was but that was where I was going to go. That was the training course that  
4 I was scheduled for. I was going to go to Keelser and so that is where I started my next  
5 venture.

6 KC: So you are going to be in Biloxi, Mississippi, in the summer. That must have  
7 been really nice.

8 TE: Yeah. As it turned out Mom told me that real good friends of ours, Donal  
9 Snider and that is D-O-N-A-L, Mr. Snider was doing his master's as a vet at Indiana  
10 University when Dad was, when we were living there and I was born. Their son Donal  
11 was delivered by the same doctor I was about a month after I was delivered and they  
12 were now in Biloxi. Mr. Snider was the director of recreational programs in Biloxi.  
13 Today the Donal Snider Recreation Center is named for him. He and his wife are still  
14 there, the kids are still around the area so I found them just outside the AWOL (absent  
15 without leave) gate which is on one side of the base so I spent a lot of time at their house.  
16 It was like a family away from home. They had, I don't know, about five or six kids and I  
17 just kind of grew up with them. I was over there quite a bit and Donal and I pal'ed around  
18 a bunch. He was going to a local college or community college I think at the time. It  
19 wasn't until recently in the past couple of years now I have made contact with him. They  
20 are in the same house but Donal ended up I guess he enlisted or went into the Marines  
21 and he went to Vietnam and evidently that has made a big difference in his life and the  
22 others in their family. But Biloxi was where I was headed and I basically had a really  
23 good time and several things happened. I learned a lot about race relationships, black and  
24 white.

25 KC: Explain that to me. This must have been something very different for you  
26 having been—

27 TE: Well, it was because I grew up with kids, Craig Lewis in Oneonta went to  
28 Phillips Exeter after he had been at Oneonta High for a while. Craig, a very talented, very  
29 intelligent, bright young man, African American, good looking, athletic, just succeeded in  
30 every way. As I remember Craig lived, as we used to say in those days, he lived on the  
31 other side of the tracks. It seemed like he came from a family that didn't have half of

1 what I did from, again, what I understand. Craig and I were friends. We talked and hung  
2 out together at times. Here he takes off to Phillips Exeter in academics and the physical  
3 athletics he had. I knew him. I had all sorts of friends and people who were black and  
4 white and brown and all this and then I go down to Biloxi and we would have, our classes  
5 would be six hours. We would get off and we would go into town and there was one little  
6 donut shop or something like that and we would get a Coke and a donut there and kind of  
7 hang out and listen to the juke box and that sort of thing. Inside was a water cooler with  
8 the words “whites only” on it. Outside on the side of the building was a spigot and it said,  
9 “Colored.” I am walking around town and seeing stuff like this. It was everywhere.  
10 People talked that way. Mom had been raised in Joplin, Missouri, Webb City, Oronogo,  
11 that area down in the southwest corner. She was kind of a southern girl so she had issues  
12 and experiences where the N word was part of her vocabulary. When I grew up I didn’t  
13 realize the difference. I didn’t know that there was good or bad associated with these  
14 words. When I was down there as a little kid in Webb City we used to play with black  
15 kids. I was a little white boy and they were little black kids and it wasn’t a big deal.  
16 When I got to Biloxi it was a big deal. John Howard Griffin, the author of the book *Black*  
17 *Like Me*, changed the color—I read the book and it was so unique because he took a bus  
18 trip from Biloxi to New Orleans. I did, too. I took the same bus trip. When I read his  
19 experience and here he had changed the color of his skin so he looked black, I found  
20 myself to be a second-class citizen because when you went down to the Biloxi bus station  
21 to get on the bus one of these kind of older buses that looked like a little sausage or  
22 something and about as narrow. Everybody is kind of middling around waiting for the  
23 bus, the driver to open up the door. When that happened all the white people get onboard,  
24 all the white locals. They all take up the front seats. Then what is left are the Air Force  
25 guys taking off and going places and blacks. The blacks are milling around and we have  
26 been kind of taught and we have learned it doesn’t matter what color of skin you are you  
27 are in line first you get on first. Well, the blacks would just kind of hang and say, “Y’all  
28 go. Y’all go.” We get on and we kind of sheepishly, you know, this isn’t right but okay.  
29 We get onboard the bus and we go wherever we feel like going. Then the blacks would  
30 get on and they would go to the back of the bus or wherever they could fill in a hole in  
31 the back of the bus. On one occasion I had a suitcase with me, a small thing. I had a seat

1 and my suitcase kind of I guess it was in the aisle and it was a real narrow aisle, it was  
2 like a foot or so wide, again, these old buses. There was a black gal, a young, you know,  
3 early twenty age she was left standing. If she wanted to take a ride she was going to have  
4 to stand. I decided, I had my suitcase, I swapped with her because I could put my suitcase  
5 up on end and I could sit on it as a seat in the aisle and I had my friends on either side of  
6 me in the seats and she could have my seat and we are all happy. She was reluctant to  
7 take my seat. I kind of convinced her and forced her to do it because I wanted to sit with  
8 my friends. As she took my seat and I started to move my suitcase up there and turn it on  
9 end so I could sit down, I looked ahead of me and up in front all of these white heads,  
10 these white faces, were looking back at me and I have never felt in my life hate like I did  
11 in their eyes, honest to goodness. It was miserable. I was really uncomfortable. I was  
12 scared. It was kind of like, "Oh, man. I really screwed up somehow and I am going to  
13 die," or something. It was really a bad feeling. The Air Force guys, nobody else, you  
14 know, thought or looked or gave me any indication of anything but I sure got a real good  
15 dose of it from the white folks up front. I went to New Orleans and I had experiences  
16 there that kind of amplified that. Again, in the service I had black friends all over the  
17 place. I was always having troubles with them having troubles with other whites with the  
18 race barrier. Somehow I just was thinking this is wrong. I was obviously very naïve at it.  
19 I started to realize how Air Force personnel, we were second class citizens to the white  
20 folks there in Biloxi and then there was the third class citizens. I started to learn a few  
21 things like that in those locations and under those conditions. Luckily nothing bad  
22 happened. It was eye-opening for me to be down South. Pretty soon with the connections  
23 with the Sniders and knowing a lot of folks and kind of getting in with the local people I  
24 was referred to as a Yankee but I wasn't a damn Yankee so I was in a better state then a  
25 lot of other people.

26 KC: Well, tell me about your training here in Biloxi.

27 TE: Training was kind of interesting because there—somehow I didn't like  
28 whatever this inertial navigational aids was going to be. That's equipment that is in the  
29 nose cone of an aircraft like gyros and stuff to help it know which direction to go and  
30 what to do. Somehow, I don't remember why, but I wasn't grooving on this stuff at all  
31 and I wasn't doing great anyway. I requested a transfer in some way and as it turned out

1 they found a guy with a real similar name, George Carson, I think. But there is a guy the  
2 same block, the same day of training, educational-wise we were in the same exact spot.  
3 He was willing—he was in ground-to-air radio communications repair. He was willing to  
4 swap with me. Somehow they asked or found out somebody, he was having problems  
5 maybe, too. But we swapped career fields. We swapped jobs in training. One day I was in  
6 inertial nav aids and the next day I was in ground-to-air radio communications repair.

7 KC: Now, you could just trade like that? You didn't have to—

8 TE: It took paper work. They said they had never done this before and they also  
9 had to find—it's like having a compatible donor in blood or some organ, you have to be  
10 identical to each other. That meant we had to be on the same day of training, the same bit  
11 of information in our skill development to be able to do this. If he was one week ahead of  
12 me that meant they couldn't do it because he couldn't back up a week and I wasn't  
13 advanced enough a week or something like that. We had to be on the same day of  
14 training. Whatever that day was, we were. Somehow the paperwork went through. We  
15 swapped and that made all the difference in our lives because I ended up going to  
16 Vietnam because of that a year later or so, a year and a half later.

17 KC: The one thing you hoped to avoid in the Air Force.

18 TE: Yeah. I thought I was going to be safe. Had I gone inertial nav aids I would  
19 have been flying on airplanes to test out the gear. We were sending aircraft to Germany.  
20 You pick up your skis. You go skiing for a weekend in (unintelligible). You come back.  
21 It would have been a nice life. I didn't realize that until too late. But it was okay because  
22 I enjoyed getting out and doing things and I enjoyed going TDY, temporary duty,  
23 eventually when I got my permanent station. The training it was easy enough. We  
24 cheated like hell and I am sure the instructors knew it because they had been students  
25 themselves and everybody knew what the answers were. I don't know how they knew  
26 them but we all did. I don't know how the information got out but we would go into a  
27 test, we would line ourselves up in a certain order. We knew the answers to the particular  
28 questions that we were going to deal with. We took our time so it didn't look like we  
29 were just answering questions, which we did. We kind of mused around for a few  
30 minutes playing games with the equipment and testing it out and seeing, oh, maybe that  
31 really does work that way. We would hand in our papers. We would ace the test. All the

1 instructors would wonder, “How did you do that because you are an idiot?” “I don’t  
2 know. We must have been luck of the draw. I know these things though. You know that.”  
3 We would move onto the next course and we just kept on going through school that way.  
4 I kind of wonder sometimes how our space program and how all sorts of other technical  
5 things were really dealt with because we had an awful lot of people who really didn’t  
6 know what in the hell we were doing. We kind of faked our way through but I guess to  
7 some degree we kind of, you know, when you get on OJT (on-the-job training) and you  
8 start working on the job you do start to learn things. We had enough skills and knowledge  
9 that we were able to do a decent job when we were really put to it, put to the test.

10 KC: What kind of classes were you taking here in this ground-to-air?

11 TE: I’m sorry.

12 KC: What kind of classes were you taking in this ground-to-air training?

13 TE: They were basic electrical things like how not to shock yourself, how to read  
14 a capacitor. Like, there was little color bars on a capacitor, what do they mean so you  
15 could tell what the impedance of a capacitor or a resistor was so you knew which one  
16 went where. Which way does electricity flow from positive to negative or negative to  
17 positive? I found out the Navy says it is one direction and the Air Force said it was a  
18 different direction (Kelly laughs). Seriously. All of a sudden we started realizing that or  
19 we were told if you get on Navy gear you are going to have to think opposite of  
20 everything you are being taught in the Air Force. Just things like—just that. We had  
21 different types of equipment. How do you use your testing equipment? What is it? How  
22 do you use it appropriately? What does it tell you? How to fix it. Then we got into  
23 specific types of equipment like radio receivers, radio transmitters. The ground-to-air  
24 refers to the types of equipment that would be, let’s say, in a control tower. You are  
25 talking from the ground to an airplane in the air or taxiing around so your ground control  
26 approach, your GCA they use our equipment. All sorts of equipment that like teletypes,  
27 they send a signal through a radio. Well, the radio guys end up having to be in charge of  
28 the vehicle or the van or the shop that the teletype people just come in and they do the  
29 teletyping and then they walk out. We’re the guys, then, who are in charge then of tuning  
30 up the radios and the filters and getting all the equipment up and running for that teletype  
31 person to come in. We had to know not only how to turn on and off switches but how to

1 run them, how to test them, how to talk on them. You have operators which are just basic  
2 people who know how to turn on and off the switch and just key a mike. Then you had  
3 the repair guys who had to do that plus we had to know how this thing worked inside and  
4 how to repair it. Then we were being told, "Well, now, if this thing gets shot up..." And  
5 we are looking around us, "Who is going to shoot these things?" "Well, you just never  
6 know where you might be that, you know, shrapnel gets in a piece like this. Well, how do  
7 you fix it?" Stuff like that. We are starting to look around and say, "You guys have got to  
8 be kidding me. Nobody is going to be shooting up this equipment. This stuff is safe,  
9 man." That's the sort of training in classes. It was real basic electronics: how to read a  
10 schematic and drawing lines and following electrical circuitry and that sort of thing. I did  
11 okay but it really wasn't that interesting to me when it came down to it. I think the  
12 equipment was more rather than the electric like when you are doing engineering type  
13 work, you know, you have schematics and stuff to read, that stuff is boring. I like to  
14 actually get my hands on things and do stuff with it and tear it apart and blow it up and  
15 play games with it and that sort of thing. That's where I learned. We got sunburned a lot  
16 at the beach. We did our classes for six hours a day. I swapped with George Carson.  
17 Consequently, I got through tech school.

18 KC: You mentioned that they are training you how to fix these machines just in  
19 case they get shot, just in case there is shrapnel. You said that this seemed a little bizarre  
20 to you. Did this provide an indication to you that maybe you were bound after this  
21 training for Vietnam?

22 TE: No (laughs).

23 KC: That would never happen to you.

24 TE: I think the original thinking, ignorance, stupidity, and a few other factors told  
25 us, "We are not going. This is for other people. This isn't where I am heading. I am in  
26 control of my life and I am not going over there." (Coughs) Excuse me. No, it wasn't.  
27 You know, there were stories. They were kind of like jokes. They were kind, this is to  
28 scare you or to get you (technical difficulty) or to attend to your class more intently or to  
29 do a better job in studying. We blew it off. We're kids. I didn't take them seriously.

30 KC: All right. Well, when do you finish advanced training here, technical  
31 training?

1           TE: I think that was a nine-month program if I remember correct so—I would  
2 have to check my records but I think it was about nine months, ten months, or something  
3 like this. Watch me be really wrong. But I think I then got my orders for the 5<sup>th</sup> Mobile  
4 Communications Group, the 5<sup>th</sup> MOB in Robins Air Force Base outside of Macon,  
5 Georgia. I stayed in the South again. That's where I went after tech school.

6           KC: Okay what was it like in Robins for you?

7           TE: Robins was a SAC base, Strategic Air Command. We had a lot of B-52s on it.  
8 The 5<sup>th</sup> MOB was a tenant group so we were just kind of renting space. We had to live by  
9 SAC rules in some ways. SAC occupied the place. They made things happen so if you  
10 had an ORI, organizational readiness inspection, for the SAC unit a lot of times other  
11 parts of the base were affected like your—I know either you could or couldn't get on or  
12 off base. You had to abide by certain rules and guidelines because SAC was doing their  
13 thing and everybody else had to kind of accommodate that. I lived in a barracks, an old  
14 style barracks. I had a room upstairs in the far back right next to the fire escape, an old  
15 wooden stair fire escape up back. I used to rent out my room to buddies who would enjoy  
16 brining their girlfriends up for the weekend and I would make some extra bucks that way.  
17 I would be gone. I would take off with friends and go to some lakes or go to Atlanta or  
18 something like this and hang out other places and my room was empty so I made some  
19 hay. I just told them make sure you clean it up and leave fresh sheets and all that sort of  
20 jazz and they did so they were happy and I was happy.

21          KC: What were you going to be doing here at Robins?

22          TE: Oh, that. You mean my job?

23          KC: Yes.

24          TE: Oh, yeah. Well, I was assigned to Robins. The 5<sup>th</sup> MOB's job was we were a  
25 small mobile communications group, one of five in the world. We had both a Stateside  
26 assignment and a worldwide assignment. If there was any sort of a national emergency in  
27 the eastern part of the United States, such as 9/11, we were on a one-hour alert system. So  
28 within an hour our whole communications package was already loaded on a C-130. We  
29 would be deployed immediately, if not sooner, to wherever the situation called for. We  
30 had a three-hour worldwide alert so when the Seven Day/Israeli War in June of '67 took  
31 place we were taxiing at that time and we were told to stand down because another group

1 took over for us but we were heading into, I guess we were heading to Israel. We had a  
2 group that was constantly on alert, contingency alert, con alert and you always had to call  
3 into the charge of quarters, the CQ, to let them know if you were going to be gone from  
4 your phone any more than about a ten minute span of time. You had your bags packed  
5 ready to go and if you went to the store, you went anywhere, you had to call in and let  
6 them know where you are going, when you are coming back, where to be notified, call  
7 you or whatever. Often—we had a rotating group who was on con alert. Often we were  
8 called out for various reasons. Some of them false alarms, some of them were rinky-dink  
9 but there was a couple that were fairly significant. I enjoyed the travel so I used to sign  
10 up for—I would tell people in my shop with the equipment that we had—we had several  
11 guys who were married and had families. If they didn't feel like going on con alert or  
12 taking a particular temporary duty position, like we'd be sent TDY someplace, if they  
13 didn't want to go and we knew where it was I would raise my hand and take their place.  
14 A lot of times they would say, "Oh, go find Engelmann. If he is willing to go I don't have  
15 to," and they could stay home with the family and, you know, just kind of keep on doing  
16 what they were enjoying doing. Then I would be able to take off and go places and do  
17 things. We had Hurricane Camille in '69 was kind of like, that was one of those deals  
18 down at Biloxi. We had a tornado or something hit in Florida so we had a group of us fly  
19 down there and help set up, I think we were at Fort Walton Beach Aux field, auxiliary  
20 field, Number 5. We had to get their radios back up online at the control tower so I was  
21 the caretaker for several radios out of my shop that we took them down there and  
22 replaced their busted ones with our ones and then we were fixing theirs and then I would  
23 bring mine back when they were replaced. We had little things like that off and on but it  
24 was—again, we worked in our shops, we kept on our equipment to make sure it was up  
25 and running, we moved it around a lot. You are always waiting for something to happen  
26 which was the nature of our business but while you are waiting you always have to make  
27 sure that your gear is up and running and we would be doing testing runs to make sure—  
28 like, we would run it down to one end of the base and we would run it to the other end of  
29 the base. We would set it up and practice and we tore the stuff apart, we would repaint  
30 the interior of the van or change wheels or something. A lot of this also incorporated in  
31 my career field, all of us, that we had to know a lot of things about a lot of different

1 pieces of equipment. We had to know how to drive and we had driver's licenses for up to  
2 five-ton semi-trucks because we had gear on the stuff that we had to drive places and we  
3 had to be responsible to know how to park and back it up, how to drive it onboard a C-  
4 119 or a C-130 or -123 cargo aircraft. So we had to know things and I learned about crew  
5 chiefs' jobs and stuff like that because I was interested, it was fun being around the  
6 aircraft; how to tie this stuff down, how to fix the engines to some degree, a whole mess  
7 of things like that. It's kind of interesting because you had to be kind of proficient in a lot  
8 of different areas.

9 KC: Sure.

10 TE: Not only your career field but as well as you kind of had to know about how  
11 other people functioned and worked so that you kind of could anticipate what issues  
12 were, step in if you needed to, and for me that was fun. I enjoyed that. I was there for  
13 probably about a year. My first year in the military was basic and tech school. My second  
14 year basically was at Robins. At that stage a lot of friends of mine around the base and in  
15 my shop had been selected for Vietnam. They were in critical career fields and they  
16 needed them. A couple of guys in my shop had just come back from Vietnam and they  
17 had stories.

18 KC: What kind of stories are you getting back from these guys, Mr. Engelmann?

19 TE: I'm sorry.

20 KC: What kind of stories are you hearing from these guys who are coming back  
21 from Vietnam?

22 TE: Well, I am hearing some rinky-dink stuff like what we call chickenshit stuff  
23 that these guys had to put up with. In spite of trying to do a good job, the military was  
24 kind of getting in the way, rules and regulations, spit and polish, that sort of thing. Yet  
25 they are in an environment where they are what we were calling combat controllers. They  
26 had a radio chief that had AC/DC power supply and we had to know how to fix those  
27 jeeps and we had them at my days at Robins in the 5<sup>th</sup> MOB. They were using those to  
28 call in airstrikes from the ground and these guys were running those jeeps and they were  
29 doing the call-ins. My eyes kind of, my eyebrows raised a bit, "Well, what was that like?"  
30 "Well, they are getting shot at because they are out in the boonies or somebody will find  
31 them and they have got to get their butts out of there before they get overrun." One of the

1 guys had his, oh, what is his, his coat, jacket, a field jacket. He had this great big black  
2 stain on the shoulder on his left side of the shoulder there. You are supposed to have a  
3 clean coat and so—he said the Air Force wasn't going to give him one. They said "That  
4 coat's okay. Just wear it." Well, that was a blood stain from some guy he said he had to  
5 lift off of a chopper who had been wounded, or lift him on the chopper. So all of a sudden  
6 this guy, he might have been wearing the coat because he liked to and to show it off,  
7 perhaps, but it kind of struck home to me that there was a pretty good amount of blood  
8 that was on that jacket. If his story is half true there is some serious stuff potentially  
9 going on over there. How the equipment was working or didn't work—these guys one  
10 time they had doors on the sides of these jeeps so it made the interior of the jeep stupidly  
11 hot. It might have been that it was nice to protect them from the rain but it didn't protect  
12 them from the rain because the minute you opened it up everything was wet anyway. He  
13 told them, Don said—he took the side curtains, the doors, off the jeep and through them  
14 in the South China Sea to get rid of the suckers just because if you had them you  
15 couldn't—you had to have a loss, they had to be shot, destroyed, blown-up, burned,  
16 something like that so he just got rid of them. When that happens, okay that is fine they  
17 write it off the manifest. Jeep hurt or whatever, the doors were gone. But if you asked to  
18 take them off and put them someplace else just to remove them at the base, oh, no. That  
19 can't be done. That was some of the stuff that they were pulling. They just did it because  
20 they had to. You started realizing, again, there is this chickenshit stuff going on. The  
21 military had its rules and regs and yet the war had to run a very different way. I was  
22 starting to get a few stories that kind of, you know, oh, okay. Things are a little different  
23 than what you would kind of think they are by the rule book.

24 KC: Sure, now—

25 TE: People were getting called out of my base and out of my shop to go to  
26 Vietnam. It made me nervous because they just got a call, nobody knew when it was  
27 going to come or who was going to get the nod. I kind of complained, I guess, or whined  
28 to this girl I knew and she being of strong upper back and all that she said, "Well, why  
29 don't you go out there and you just go volunteer and just get it over with? I said, "Well,  
30 watch this. I will show you." And I did. I went to my folks' for Thanksgiving of '67. Dad  
31 and I went deer hunting. Kind of like *The Deer Hunter*, I saw a nice buck and I didn't

1 shoot it. We came back from our hunt and neither one of us got, we got a couple of shots  
2 but we didn't get anything. I came back and there was a phone call for me from my base  
3 in Robins. Peak, Sergeant Peak who was our CQ, he told me, "Your orders have arrived.  
4 You are going to Vietnam and you have got to be there in March." I went back and I had  
5 a couple of months to clean up and then I had a month's leave which I think was  
6 February, no January. Then I had to go to Lackland for automatic weapons firing as well  
7 as a piece of crypto equipment which we—I had a two-week fast course in that  
8 equipment. I never saw it. The rest of my life I never saw it. We were taken down to the  
9 same firing range where we had qualified back in basic training. They gave us a couple of  
10 clips fully, well, with eighteen rounds in them. We were shown how to put an M-16 on  
11 automatic and hold it at waist height as well as shoulder firing position standing and fire a  
12 couple of clips off into the hillside there. There was just five or six of guys who had to do  
13 that that particular day where the rest of the basic training guys were down the line a little  
14 ways where we had been some months or year or so ahead of time. They heard our  
15 automatic fire. A lot of heads turned our way. We emptied our clips and felt what it felt  
16 like to shoot and, you know, the sort of recoil and all that jazz and that's all it was. As we  
17 were walking out we turned our weapons in and we are walking up the hill on the road  
18 and all of a sudden there is this big booming voice on the loudspeaker saying for  
19 everybody to hear, the basic training guys as well as for us, "Now we hope you have  
20 learned some important lesson here because this might hopefully keep you alive in  
21 Vietnam." We are all laughing at this, "I hope not because what we just learned here  
22 wasn't very much at all." I had the two-week tech school on the crypto gear. We had our  
23 automatic firing experience and next stop was Vietnam.

24 KC: Now, let me back up here a moment. You mentioned that this girl somewhat  
25 dared you, I guess is one way to put it, to just go ahead and get it over with, as you say.

26 TE: Yeah, she didn't like me whining so she said, "Well, stop your whining.  
27 Either do something about it."

28 KC: Was it just her pressure or was this something that you had thought about  
29 that drove you to do this?

30 TE: The initial part was I didn't like being out of control. I wanted to be in  
31 control. If I was going to get called to do something I kind of wanted to know what was

1 up, when, how, you know, and that sort of thing. That's what I was whining about that I  
2 didn't know, that people were getting pulled out and sometimes some of the guys were  
3 gone and we didn't even know they were gone until afterwards when somebody said,  
4 "Oh, he is not here anymore. He got pulled out the other day." That was disconcerting to  
5 me. I didn't like that. That's what I was moaning about. So she said something to the  
6 effect that, "Well, stop moaning," you know. "There is ways you can deal with this." The  
7 way I dealt with it was, "Watch this," you know. So I put in my, I forgot what you call  
8 it, volunteer sheet to go to Vietnam. She kind of spurred me to do it. I was already  
9 concerned but I wasn't of the mind just yet to go ahead and put my name on the list. It  
10 wasn't until she kind of hacked me off with her challenge that I said, "Well, watched  
11 this." It kind of hacked me off enough that I went down and got my papers and signed  
12 them and then I was in the roster.

13 KC: All right. Now, you say you received word of your pending transfer to  
14 Vietnam and this was when you got back from Thanksgiving, you say '67 I believe it  
15 was. Now, you are not going to go until March so you have a number of months there,  
16 about what? Three months, four months before you, I guess three months before you are  
17 going to go. By late '67 and early 1968, obviously, with the Tet Offensive of January of  
18 1968 you've got not just an awful lot of time to think about what is going on but things  
19 change very, very dramatically during this time. Take me through your thought process  
20 here. What's going through your mind knowing that you have these orders and you are  
21 going?

22 TE: Well, for one thing part of my time—when I got back to the base there was,  
23 basically they knew I was heading out. I had my orders cut. What the next procedure for  
24 me was they were going to reduce my workload because I had to get dental, I had to get  
25 physical, I had to get kind of prepared for the deployment. There was some running  
26 around the base and some things I had to do in order that I could be gone for a year  
27 without major medical problems and so there was that to attend to. There was one month  
28 I think it—let's see. Okay. I'd have to look in my records but either I had one month of  
29 leave before I went to Lackland for the automatic weapons fire and the crypto class.  
30 Either I had my one month of leave before or just after. Right now I don't remember  
31 exactly which order it came in. That one month of leave, you know, I was away from the

1 base. I was back in upstate New York. I think that came sometime around the December-  
2 January timeframe and then February I think I might have gone to Lackland in that order.

3 KC: Okay.

4 TE: Time was somewhat taken up with various activities like either getting  
5 prepared, checking out of the base, getting organized for the tour, and taking a month  
6 leave that was just given to me and also the two weeks or so, two and a half, three weeks  
7 I spent at Lackland prior to my departure.

8 KC: What was your family's reaction to this?

9 TE: You know, it is kind of hard. I don't remember so well. I think everybody  
10 was concerned but nobody really said very much. Kind of in contrast, the irony was when  
11 I came back to the house and told everybody I had just enlisted in the Air Force, up to  
12 that point everybody was—I figured out who had which position but I think Dad was  
13 staying, "Why don't you stay in school and keep it up?" and this sort of thing. My mom,  
14 my sister, and my grandmother, my dad's mom who was there living with us, I think they  
15 were saying, "Well, if you went in the military that would make you grow up or give you  
16 an education," or whatever. I came back and told them all that I had just enlisted in the  
17 Air Force and everybody switched. My dad was saying, "No, I think that's a good idea.  
18 You ought to go in the military." My mom and sister said, "No, I think you ought to stay  
19 in school." Now that I was going to Vietnam, to be honest with you I can't remember  
20 their reactions but I think it was, they were probably being cautious around me and  
21 concerned and being real nice. My dad let me borrow the car and go skiing over a  
22 weekend. He never did that. He never let me have the car overnight. I have a feeling they  
23 were kind of indulging me but nobody really said, I don't remember anybody saying  
24 anything outwardly. I was just kind of having a fun time because it wasn't all that—  
25 nothing had really hit me just yet as there wasn't anything really to worry about so much.  
26 I thought things were still going to be kind of a cushy job. Vietnam was still pretty quiet.  
27 We still had the belief that we could see the light at the end of the tunnel. In about thirty  
28 days from then we realized that light was the headlight of a train. You know, until the end  
29 of January things were pretty copasetic. The end of January, the beginning of February  
30 that's when things got a bit nervous and that's when I started wondering, "Well, maybe  
31 they won't send me. Maybe it's too much over there. They just can't handle us just yet,"

1 you know. “We will have to wait until the fighting dies down or something. Maybe I  
2 really won’t go.” Denial was a good part of that, I think. It was kind of just waiting  
3 around just trying to figure out what was going to happen, when it was going to happen.

4 KC: Now, it’s the Tet Offensive, of course, of ’68 that you are talking about here.

5 TE: Right.

6 KC: What did this do to you mentally in your preparation to go to Vietnam?

7 TE: I think it accelerated and got me kind of excited, jumping. It was like I  
8 wanted to get in the fray. I wanted to go. I wanted to get there. Something is going on  
9 and, you know, I have no idea what the hell this was. I am really, really naïve. I got  
10 excited. I wanted to go. I wanted to be part of this. Here I am. I am guy in this electronics  
11 area which is not combat arms but I had a feeling from these other stories from the guys  
12 being combat controllers, this sounds—this could be exciting, this could be fun. I think I  
13 was kind anxious to get going, to move on this, to see if I could get there and that’s what  
14 I did.

15 KC: Now, that is quite a change from when you enlisted. You originally, as you  
16 mentioned, enlisted in the Air Force to avoid Vietnam and now when things are at least  
17 from the public’s perspective and the media coverage of the offensive things have—it  
18 looks like the bottom has dropped out and now you are more willing to go than you were  
19 just a couple of years earlier. That seems a strange twist in it.

20 TE: Well, I have a feeling that while I was in the military, I am in the Air Force,  
21 I start taking on the perception or the role that I want to do a good job. I am doing a  
22 military job and I think this is what everybody, anybody needs to maybe understand  
23 about, let’s say, in the occupation in Iraq and the war and Afghanistan and things like  
24 this. When we talk about military when you get into that position it’s a special job and  
25 it’s a special requirement. It calls for special effort. I think as a young guy at that time  
26 given the social values and structures that we were playing with, I felt strongly that I was  
27 in the military and I wanted to do a good job. I didn’t—that could have been a reflection  
28 or some—what do you call it? I didn’t want to disappoint my father. I didn’t want to  
29 disappoint my family. I didn’t have much of an attitude or a feeling for protesting. I  
30 wanted to do a good job. I wanted to make people proud. I wanted to be proud of what I  
31 was doing. I didn’t yet have any sense—all my work had been to support and help

1 Americans and anybody through whatever work I was doing and that's where I was  
2 heading with my thinking. I wanted to be the best Air Force sergeant that I could possibly  
3 be doing the sort of work I was doing. If that meant going over there to that war zone I  
4 would do the best job over there that I possibly could, too. I think maybe for various  
5 reasons, like I said, perhaps not wanting to disappoint the family, wanting to live up to  
6 good military structure. I kind of felt that the job was recalling me not so much the  
7 politics or my personal feelings and that sort of thing but I wanted to do a damn good job.  
8 To be honest with you, that's what I did even in Vietnam. As things changed for me in  
9 Vietnam, I did a good job at what I did. No matter which direction my job was taking me  
10 I did a good job at it and so that I am proud of. Other things are different but I did, I put  
11 myself out there. I really worked hard at doing a good thing for what I could do, for  
12 whom I could do it for.

13 KC: What did the Tet Offensive mean to the United States as you perceived it at  
14 the time in-country? Excuse me, not in-country but in the States at the time. What did the  
15 media's coverage of it, what did the public perception, what did that mean to you?

16 TE: Well, since I was in—I was outside of Macon, Georgia. Robins is just a few  
17 miles from Macon. I was hanging out with a group of college kids from Mercer  
18 University and Wesleyan, which is a women's college, Wesleyan University. I was going  
19 to Centenary Methodist Church, which I had been raised Methodist. So I was around a  
20 bunch of college kids. I think I was the only Air Force guy, only military guy, in that  
21 group of kids. I was downtown. I was around a lot. I was doing stuff in the communities  
22 to see college students and some protesting and so on, but I still feel that—I don't feel  
23 that there was that much of an influence on me seeing anything different. People were  
24 concerned about me, where I was, what I was doing, where I was going, especially when  
25 they found out I was heading overseas because then they had a going away part for me at  
26 the church. I felt supported and I didn't get a lot of negative feelings about this issue. I  
27 was feeling fairly direct. I kind of knew where I was going and it seemed like people are  
28 me were okay with that. They supported that. Does that answer the question?

29 KC: Yes, absolutely.

30 TE: Okay.

31 KC: So when do you ship out for Vietnam?

1           TE: I cannot remember the dates. I'd have to find some numbers but I realize this  
2 is part of this fuzziness in that time period for me. I left Lackland and I had gone out and  
3 I had been partying with some kids. I lost my wallet. I lost the pay that I had, which was,  
4 I don't know, a hundred bucks or something like that. I had my pay tube back in the base  
5 so I went to finance and got a few extra bucks but it wasn't much. It was not much. It was  
6 fifty, sixty dollars maybe or something. I don't know what it was but it was paltry. My  
7 departure date was several days down the line, maybe a week or week and a half or  
8 something it feels like. What I ended up doing with very little money to go anywhere to  
9 do anything and the departure date from Travis Air Force Base when I was in Lackland  
10 and I was the one responsible to get myself to Travis however I wanted to. But all my  
11 money had gone in my wallet; my IDs all this sort of jazz. I had to be at Lackland for a  
12 few days to get new ID, paperwork, you know, that sort of stuff and to have a couple  
13 dollars for food or whatever I wanted to play games with. I had a friend who was an air  
14 policeman at the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs and he was there primarily  
15 because they had some cadets go up into one of the halls, they took an elevator up and  
16 stole some tests and there was this scandal. So he is stationed at the bottom of the hall or  
17 at the downstairs at the elevator so kids can't go up there, the cadets can't go up. I ended  
18 up flying up on a military transport up to Colorado Springs and I stayed a couple of days  
19 in his dorm. He did the academy and got to play around a little bit and see things there so  
20 I stayed with him. I had some friends—one of the guys at the base at Robins, his father  
21 was teaching at Fort Collins, Colorado State University. Also the young lady who had  
22 challenged me that I volunteer for Vietnam she was attending Colorado State University  
23 at Fort Collins. I had some relatives in Denver. I stayed a night or two with them. They  
24 drove me to Fort Collins because a friend of their kids was going to go up there so I got a  
25 ride to Fort Collins. I stayed a couple of nights up there and saw Lowell's parents and  
26 they treated me to dinner. They gave me money for the bus back to Denver. I stayed over  
27 and saw these other kids I think for a night and then I came back to Denver to these  
28 relatives' house. At that stage somehow, and to be honest with you I can't remember  
29 how, I got to Travis Air Force Base and I was still early for my departure date, my  
30 scheduled one. I checked into—because I knew Travis. I was Air Force and this was an  
31 Air Force base. I checked in with the standby desk and I was telling these guys, "Look, I

1 don't want to be staying here any longer then I have got to. This is stupid. So if there a  
2 space available see if you can get me on it because I am going," and I showed them my  
3 orders so they knew where I was headed towards, which was Bien Hoa air base outside of  
4 Saigon. The guy who is at the standby counter befriends me and since there wasn't  
5 anything out day one, nothing out day two, he let me come on over to the barracks where  
6 they were staying and I could hang out with them and I could stay over there because  
7 there was nowhere else to stay, really, because I am really not supposed to be there in a  
8 sense. There is no place for me to stay militarily. When I walked into the room what was  
9 weird was all the bunk beds had been disassembled and they had their mattresses on the  
10 floor, black lights everywhere, Jimmy Hendrix posters, it was a hippie den. The kid, these  
11 guys, they would have wigs that they would put on to go downtown—this is Travis, this  
12 is outside San Francisco—they would wear wigs downtown so their short haircuts  
13 wouldn't give them away that they are military. All of a sudden I got into this  
14 counterculture group of guys that were there. The minute you walked into the hallway in  
15 their barracks, these great big cement block barracks with sea foam green paint on the  
16 walls and hallways, they were totally Air Force. You walk through that door and you go  
17 transformed into some hippie of some sort. It was an eye opener for me for a couple of  
18 nights. Then the guy found me a flight. There were two birds heading out, one who had  
19 Marines and the other had Army. The last seat on the Army aircraft was vacant. Let me  
20 stop there in case there are any questions you have.

21 KC: Sure. I have got to ask you about this den of counterculture that you walked  
22 into.

23 TE: They were wild.

24 KC: This must have been drastically different. Now, granted, it is San Francisco  
25 and you spent you time in the Northeast and then in the Deep South, but given the social  
26 dynamics in general and especially as it relates to the war and especially San Francisco's  
27 role in this time, in 1968. What does all this mean to you? You are getting ready to head  
28 out to Vietnam and you see this and, to make this even more bizarre, it's an Air Force  
29 barracks. What does this mean to you?

30 TE: That was what was really crazy, it was Air Force guys. But somehow I don't  
31 think—it didn't bother me. It didn't affect me. It was kind of as if I have seen it all. I

1 have been in Biloxi I have seen what life is like down there and this wasn't a problem. I  
2 didn't have a real issue—these guys weren't necessarily anti-war. They were, if the word  
3 counterculture would be part of this, they are into music, they are into the social thing and  
4 that was partying and that was part of my life. I enjoyed that. The war issue wasn't so  
5 much touted as the social partying, sex, drugs, rock-n-roll sort of side of it. I didn't see  
6 the sex there. I didn't see the drugs there. But the rock-n-roll was evident. I don't feel  
7 with the memories that I have of that place that, you know, this was gently anti-military  
8 perhaps, anti-establishment but that was okay with me. I guess I kind of felt that's cool,  
9 you know, that's fine. Nobody was bugging me, nobody put it on me that I am going to  
10 Vietnam so why don't I ditch and put on a wig and run downtown and get lost or  
11 something. I just didn't—you know, it just didn't hit me that way. Also, I don't know—  
12 let's see, probably about eight or nine months earlier I did have a TDY with about five or  
13 six of our guys from Robins from the 5<sup>th</sup> MOB, we went to augment the 1<sup>st</sup> MOB which  
14 was at Clark Air Base in the Philippines. Their guys had been sent to Vietnam. We went  
15 there for I guess about three months and we went through San Francisco and I have got  
16 photos of Haight-Ashbury, the street signs on that corner. We hung around and we looked  
17 dorky. I have got pictures of us, Jim Street, and Lowell Wooldridge and all this. We are  
18 dressed dorky. I mean we have got tight pants and high-water pants and, you know, our  
19 civilian clothes looked like idiots. You can tell from a mile away we are military. We  
20 were around the parks and stuff like this and we were hanging out and nobody harassed  
21 us, nobody gave us any static. So I kind of got a little sense of what was going on. I felt  
22 okay, that's their lives. Obviously they don't have square meals and all sorts of stuff.  
23 They're just kind of hanging on the streets and doing what they can. I had things to do  
24 and places to go and people to meet so, you know, I was okay with letting them be as  
25 long as they let me be. That is kind of, I guess, how I kind of was operating and so when I  
26 hit Travis and saw these guys with black lights in their room and they had just remodeled  
27 their whole room that in itself was—obviously somebody was letting them get away with  
28 it because they probably weren't going through too many inspections, otherwise, you  
29 know, they probably couldn't do half of what they were doing. It would be a lot of work  
30 to repaint and redo their room and put up the bunk beds and all that jazz just for an  
31 inspection. It must have been pretty lax at that stage and so I just kind of went with the

1 flow. I had I guess at this stage I was—like I said, I worked to get to Travis and then I  
2 was asking for a quicker flight out. Here I wasn't trying to delay, I was trying to expedite.  
3 I was trying to get there sooner.

4 KC: One last question, Mr. Engelmann, before we take a break here. You are  
5 going to leave Travis it is, I guess, early March I think of 1968.

6 TE: Right.

7 KC: You have been through all of this training, all of this experience, you have  
8 been to the Philippines and you know what the war is about, you are aware of the  
9 progress of the war, obviously the counterculture. You are getting ready to leave the  
10 United States for a tour in Vietnam with the Air Force. What is going through your mind  
11 as you are getting ready to leave the country?

12 TE: I'm excited.

13 KC: Why?

14 TE: It's a new adventure. It's a new opportunity. Here is a "war" whatever that  
15 means in the minds of me at that moment which I think didn't really—other than seeing  
16 the blood stain on Bob Hubline's jacket and hearing the stories from Don May and these  
17 other guys who were combat controllers who came into my shop, it's an abstraction. It's  
18 the sort of stuff I used to play as little kids with my friends playing army, shooting  
19 everybody and jumping over berms in the backyards of kids' houses. You'd get up and  
20 you would run again, you get shot and you fall down, okay, it's time to get back up again  
21 and you run some more and shoot some more and just play that sort of game. I think  
22 that's kind of probably what was in my head even though I had a lot of training, you  
23 know, I knew what it was like to shoot an M-16. I had been around a bit but I think—you  
24 know, I was anxious to see what this was about and I think it was—I was kind of anxious  
25 for a new opportunity and maybe prove myself or at least see what this is all about and  
26 get into it and test it out.

27 KC: Did you think you would come home again?

28 TE: Yeah, I had no—oh wait, all right caught me there. When I was in the  
29 Philippines the back of my barracks were pretty tall, pretty good sized barracks, they  
30 were bringing in the wounded in from Vietnam on C-141 Starlifters, Red Cross aircraft.  
31 They would load them onto buses and drive them over to the hospital. Now, behind my

1 barracks was this road that the buses would take. We got a lot of rain and there were  
2 some water dips in those roads to let the water flow quicker, better, you know, get it out  
3 of the way of drainage ditches. I remember being up in my barracks looking out of the  
4 window of the balcony and when those buses would go by—we would see the aircraft  
5 coming in. We knew they were coming in at certain hours and this was a twenty-four,  
6 seven-day-a-week operation at Clark. When those buses would be coming up I used to—I  
7 didn't like it because I could hear moaning and screams from the buses when they hit  
8 those dips in the road. I was saying to myself, "Damn," you know this is—that was the  
9 real thing. It is interesting that it kind of got put back until you mentioned that. I was  
10 thinking, "I don't want to be doing that," that's—these are unlucky people. I do  
11 remember having that experience, seeing the buses, hearing them on that back road on the  
12 asphalt road and hearing those yells coming out of the buses. They were a good, I don't  
13 know, three or four hundred meters away, they weren't real close. To hear anything  
14 meant that somebody had to be putting out a lot of power for screaming. That was a  
15 rather sobering experience. But at the point where I was at Travis I don't think I was  
16 thinking about that too much. I was ready to go.

17 KC: Okay. Well, that's good time. Let's take a break.

18 TE: Okay.

19 KC: Mr. Engelmann, when we last left off we had you at Travis Air Base in San  
20 Francisco getting ready to leave for Vietnam. So, if you can, please pick up the story  
21 there.

22 TE: Okay. One of the guys, the gent who I was working, with an airman at the  
23 desk for standby flights finally got me one. The aircraft, I think it was 727 Trans-  
24 International Airways. We were flying commercial jets into Vietnam. He got me aboard a  
25 flight that was all Army guys. We were all headed to the same place. I had to go to Bien  
26 Hoa and they were headed for Bien Hoa and then they were going to be heading over to  
27 the repo depot at LBJ, Long Binh. There were two birds evidently flying together on a  
28 path, at least initially. I think what the plan was is we flew from the U.S. we would—we  
29 got as far as over the Pacific and we landed at—the plan would be that you land at a U.S.  
30 base and then from there the aircraft would go to their different destinations. Perhaps, I  
31 think the Marine aircraft was going to be heading to Da Nang. Mine, again, was going to

1 go to Bien Hoa. As it turned out, I guess the two aircraft are kind of flying fairly close on  
2 the same path together not dare close to watch each other necessarily. Bad weather  
3 ensued and we could not land at the U.S. base which was required because you can't go  
4 into a combat—we couldn't go into a combat zone from a neutral country and we were  
5 diverted to Japan, a neutral country. My memory, if it serves me right, was we landed at  
6 Itazuke but I am not positive. It was a small base and both birds landed. I had made  
7 friends—well, kind of the unique part was when I got onboard the aircraft at first the way  
8 the Army loaded up their aircraft was the lowest rank went to the far back of the airplane  
9 and the highest rank would be up front. In this seating arrangement there was, the loading  
10 door was up front right behind, like normal, right behind the cockpit. The galley was  
11 there and the flight attendants were working out of the galley. The last seat was right at  
12 that door it was on the aisle seat, the front, right next to the galley, right next to the flight  
13 attendants and this little lowly Air Force sergeant boards the aircraft and all these Army  
14 guys, especially all the older NCOs (non-commissioned officers) are all looking at me.  
15 There weren't any officers aboard. These are all enlisted. Everybody looked at me and  
16 would have probably killed me right then and there because here I am this little know-  
17 nothing E-4 sergeant in the Air Force getting this best seat in the house. It was the last  
18 seat available. So I sat up front. I made friends with Sharon Millican, who was one of the  
19 flight attendants, and she was from El Segundo, California. She happened to be living  
20 with some Air Force major so I realized, you know, good looking lady get kind of picked  
21 up by the officers and the pilots and that sort of thing. We were working and talking. I  
22 had a book, *The Prophet*, with me and we were talking about that and some of the poems  
23 and stuff in there. It was fairly, I guess, interesting or kind of intense flight at least I got  
24 to know her quite well on the way over. When we were diverted because of weather to this  
25 Japanese air base because I was Air Force, because I knew Sharon and we were friendly  
26 and all that the Marine aircraft I think just kind of stayed put and the Marines stayed  
27 onboard. They just kind of waited because the whole point was when the weather broke  
28 at the other U.S. base we were to fly there immediately and then change crews and then  
29 go into the combat zone going to Vietnam. Our aircraft the pilots, the crew decided to get  
30 lunch so the crew took me with them into the base. We walked, I guess we walked or got  
31 a ride into the base area. We sat down at a lunch room as I remember it. We ordered up

1 sandwiches and again we were just kind of waiting. I think we had one or two or three  
2 bites in our sandwiches by the time they came, we got the word time to pack up and fly.  
3 The weather broke at the other place we have got to go. So we hurried back to our  
4 aircraft. I believe this was on a Sunday. I think it had to be. The Marine bird, I don't  
5 remember much about. I think one of two things happened. There was this skeleton crew  
6 of Japanese guys out there on the tarmac. We were far, in a faraway place. It wasn't a  
7 normal area. It seemed like we were stuck in a corner somewhere. Somehow the other  
8 bird got revved up. There was a generator out there and I guess the Japanese guys or  
9 somebody, they hooked up the generator to the aircraft and revved up the engines and  
10 disconnected the generator and that bird started taxiing out and took off. Our bird needed  
11 the generator. I knew how to do this stuff from previous work with the 5<sup>th</sup> MOB. I got the  
12 generator up by our aircraft. I hooked it up, started the generator, and the engine is revved  
13 up, disconnected the generator, wrapped up the cable, moved it off to the side and maybe  
14 one of the Japanese guys helped me, I don't remember exactly. By that time all of our  
15 guys had boarded up. They had this ladder that was on wheels that you roll up to the side  
16 of the aircraft and you set up, you know, the steps that go up. Well, the Japanese guys had  
17 pulled that away and the door had shut in the aircraft so they are revving up and all the  
18 Japanese guys are off to the side and they are just waiting for this bird to leave. I am  
19 sitting out in front of the nose of this aircraft and all of a sudden realizing, "Shit! I am not  
20 onboard and they have locked the door." My pay tube is onboard. There is no way for me  
21 to get money. I'm in a country that I don't look like these locals. Real quickly, within  
22 moments my mind was searching. "How long would I last here? Could I stay here? Could  
23 I not go to Vietnam? Is this somebody's way of telling me I have a chance or what?" You  
24 know, what am I going to do? Honestly, I was pondering. I could either go or not go and  
25 here is a prime opportunity. I could let them go and nobody would be the wiser for a long  
26 time. Evidently, I thought of it and I decided to put my hands up in a breaking motion  
27 telling them, you know, like crossing my wrists telling the pilot—I was on his side on the  
28 left side of the aircraft—when I saw the door was shut and everything was—they were  
29 ready to go. I told them to hold it. I signaled to the guys with the ladder and they brought  
30 it on over and they got fairly close but the engine is whining and they were scared and it  
31 is dangerous to be in front of one of those turbines. They got the ladder fairly close to the

1 door. The door opens up and I ran up the ladder and I jumped about three feet to get into  
2 the aircraft. I just remember getting in and I don't know. I don't even remember what  
3 happened. Anything could have happened. They could have cheered or booed or  
4 whatever but I was onboard. At that point it was like, okay, there is a commitment now.  
5 Then we flew to the next base, the U.S. base, and I don't remember honestly where that  
6 was. I do remember that we got off. Sharon and their crew were down below on the  
7 gangplank as we got down the ladders. It was sad. I was sad to leave her. It was kind like  
8 this is the last vestige kind of America, so to speak. There was a new flight crew and they  
9 were new and we didn't know them so there was this shuffle in emotions. There wasn't  
10 much time to fly from this next location to Vietnam. All I can remember is we flew and  
11 the next thing that was going on is everybody was kind of messing around on the  
12 airplane. I can remember laughing and goofing around and people were up and around  
13 because this had been a long flight already. Things had gotten loose and we were just  
14 kind of goofing off. Everybody was as I can remember it. All of a sudden the aircraft  
15 banks and we were told get in your seat, get your seatbelts on. The air craft banks and  
16 through the cloud cover you can see this red and green color down below, the red soil and  
17 the green jungle. The next thing you know, there is absolute silence in this airplane. You  
18 could hear hearts beat and pins drop. The pilot flew down. We are watching and were  
19 looking. Everybody is craning out the windows to see what it looks like and where we are  
20 and what's going on. We land. They open up the door. We get blasted by this god-awful  
21 heat and humidity. Oh, man, it was horrible. I remember coming off and we are kind of—  
22 we are on the tarmac quite a ways from these buildings that just seems to have roofs on  
23 them but no sides to them. As we are walking down the ladder down to the gangplank,  
24 down to the tarmac and we are kind of the tarmac. We just have our little bags with us,  
25 whatever our AWOL bags are. I can hear from underneath one of those roofs this great  
26 big kind of general roar. There was some sort of an announcement on the PA system and  
27 then this big kind of (roaring noise) comes up. What was happening was those guys were  
28 the ones going to be coming onboard aircraft and taking our Freedom Bird back home to  
29 The World. All of a sudden, I had this funny feeling like, "Oh, shit. This is not really  
30 good." First of all they are coming out and we saw the line as we were walking in. It was  
31 a ways to walk. As they were passing us they looked like shit. They really did. A lot of

1    them did not look good at all. I had this funny feeling, “If this is as good as they look  
2    when they get done here this is probably not a real good place to be.”

3           KC: Explain for a second, if you can, what did they look like?

4           TE: They were wearing their jungle fatigues, mostly as I remember. These are  
5    Amy guys predominantly. You know, they were sweaty, they looked kind of disheveled,  
6    they were carrying stuff with them. I can’t remember exactly what but it wasn’t like—we  
7    had our little AWOL bags like a bunch of little girls getting off a bus, you know. We are  
8    going to be staying overnight. We have our nice little prissy stuff with us. These guys  
9    were trailing stuff. They were brining stuff. They were carting stuff. They looked—they  
10   had hats on and boonie gear and they weren’t dressed like we were. I was dressed in my  
11   1505s, my summer weight class A uniform. The rest of the guys were in their, I guess  
12   their utilities but they were good looking, you know, they were dressed up well. All of  
13   these guys looked very different. They were wearing the greenie weenies, their jungle  
14   fatigues, but they didn’t look neat, they didn’t seem to care. They gave us looks and I can  
15   remember it didn’t seem like some of these guys were shaven. Some of them looked  
16   pretty ratty. Yet, I kind of think that they had to look fairly decent but still in my mind  
17   these are almost like a bunch of animals getting onboard. They were acting pretty sloven  
18   and they really could give a shit less to what we thought or anybody thought. They  
19   were—they had kind of a single purpose: “You guys get the hell off that aircraft because  
20   it’s ours and we are leaving.” All of a sudden I had this funny feeling like, “Oh, man.  
21   This is not good.” I mean, “These guys want to go. That means I probably shouldn’t be  
22   here.” That was the sort of sense I had as we walked by the kind of rag-tagged line of  
23   guys that were heading out to our bird. Again, we were then directed to go places and  
24   move kind of quickly. It was about four or five weeks after the major Tet Offensive but  
25   everything was pretty calm at most of the major installations like in Saigon and Bien Hoa  
26   at the air base and stuff because there was pretty good security up there. They had to  
27   maintain that even though it got hit pretty hard. So things are pretty calm but they knew  
28   what life had been like recently. They were telling us where to go and what to do with  
29   this oppressive heat and humidity. The next thing you know, it was like nobody—it was  
30   chaos. A little bit organized but it was pretty chaotic. The only thing that saved me was I  
31   had a different color duffle bag. Mine was blue and all the Army guys was green. I saw

1 somebody throwing my blue duffle bag up on the deuce-and-a-half, the four-by or the  
2 six-by. I yelled at him to, “Bring that down! That is not going to the repo depot. I don’t  
3 go with you guys. I have got to go someplace else. I am different than you.” So I got my  
4 duffle bag and I found my way over to the Air Force people and then I had orders and a  
5 place to go and people to try to find at a different unit. I was connected with them and I  
6 forget how I got there but somehow I ended up in the transit barracks and I was stationed  
7 with the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS which means T-A-S-S, tactical air support squadron.

8 KC: Excuse me, Mr. Engelmann. You flew directly into Bien Hoa?

9 TE: Right.

10 KC: Okay. Okay.

11 TE: So we were at Bien Hoa. That’s where my group was. That’s where the 19<sup>th</sup>  
12 TASS was located.

13 KC: Okay. Very good.

14 TE: Then I went to the CQ’s office, the charge of quarters, checked-in. They got  
15 me in a transit barracks and at that point what they were doing with guys like me, ground-  
16 to-air radio guys, they had forward observation locations, FOLs. These were base camps,  
17 Army base camps that had a small runway that could take an O-1E, Bird Dog, the  
18 Cessna. They were—they had a room with a large map of our area of operation, our AO,  
19 with a photograph of the runway and a yarn from that photo to the location on the map  
20 where Lai Khe, Di An, Quan Loi, An Khe, Tay Ninh, things like this, all these different  
21 FOLs and they were observation locations. That meant we could run an airplane in there.  
22 We had a site of radio guys working and supporting forward air control pilots. Often, the  
23 pilots lived at the base camp, as well. I was just kind in a holding pattern for a while until  
24 there was enough of us radio guys, that meant about seven or eight or nine of us, I guess,  
25 was kind of a critical number. Then they would figure out where we were to be deployed,  
26 which FOL to go to. As it turned out, they were going to let us choose. They had certain  
27 ones they needed people to go to but they brought us in a room, we got in a little circle,  
28 and just standing there and the CQ went by each one of us and checked us, you know,  
29 “Which one do you want to go? Where do you want to go.” We had a guy with us by the  
30 name of Tay, T-A-Y. I do remember that, I think he was in our tech school or something.  
31 He was not somebody I wanted to be around. He was just kind of a—he wasn’t a lose

1 canon. He just didn't seem to be responsible, didn't know what he was doing, where he  
2 was going to go. He was always relying on everybody else to take care of him, give him  
3 directions and all of that. Not somebody I wanted to be around or around me. I remember  
4 that Tay got in the circle luckily, or at least I helped direct this. He got on one side of me  
5 and he wanted to know where I was going to go, where I wanted to select, which FOL. I  
6 think I made some mention of some place, somewhere. So when the CQ got amongst us  
7 to ask us which ones I think I directed the CQ, "All right. Start on over there with guy at  
8 that end of the line which put Tay ahead of me. He would have to declare his base first,  
9 so that's what happened. As we went around Tay said he wanted to go to the place that I  
10 told him. Then it came my turn, two or three people later and I came up with another  
11 FOL. I remember Tay looking at me with big wide eyes like, "Oh, shit. You just ditched  
12 me." I said, "Right on. I don't want to be around you." I just kind of smiled at him and  
13 said, "Sorry. It's just I have a special order for this sort of thing." That's how I got my—  
14 well, that's how we kind of got selected to these FOLs.

15 KC: Did any of these FOLs, did it make any difference to you? Did you know one  
16 from another or any particular reason you chose one over another?

17 TE: Right, and that's the next part of it. I did have a commitment. When I got to  
18 be in the transit barracks I wanted to learn what was going on. I got out and about. I was  
19 checking in with people, asking questions, trying to find out who was doing what where  
20 and when. Most of the radios guys were used to being in air-conditioned buildings  
21 working on radios and that's not how and where I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> MOB. As it turned out, I  
22 found out where some of these FACs (forward air controllers) were hanging out and  
23 where these O-1Es were and I went down to the flight line. I started hanging around with  
24 the crew chiefs down there. One of the worst, dirtiest jobs you can do there was wash the  
25 airplane outside and inside. To me that was fun. I had nothing else to go. I could go swim  
26 at the swimming pool. It was really relaxed. It was a cushy place there. I am serious.  
27 They had a nice swimming pool. They had nice everything. I did a little bit of that but I  
28 was interested in what was going on. What's this whole thing about? What's this war?  
29 What are you guys doing? Where are people going and coming from and all that? I  
30 started hanging around with the crew chiefs washing the airplanes. I learned how to arm  
31 them, de-arm them so they had rockets on their wings so that something doesn't pop off,

1 inadvertently you de-arm it. You put pins in these triggers so they can't go off accidentally  
2 and fire a rocket down the airway or something. So I learned a lot of stuff in a few days.  
3 What they were also doing was the aircraft would be brought in for maintenance and they  
4 had had so many hours the thing would fly like twenty-five or fifty or one-hundred hours  
5 and then they had to bring it in and check out the engine, redo it, and then they had it for  
6 a test flight. Well, one of the people test flying from our TASS was Colonel Pinkerton,  
7 who was the ALO, air liaison officer, A-L-O, FAC at the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, 3<sup>rd</sup>  
8 Brigade at Lai Khe, which is about sixty kilometers north of us on Highway 13, Thunder  
9 Highway. Colonel Pinkerton is out there and somebody suggested or somehow he tapped  
10 me to go up on a check-out flight with him. Now, the pilot knows everything to do  
11 anyway but you have to check these little items off and I was sitting in the back seat with  
12 a little clipboard. Okay, brakes okay, aileron all right, rudder works right, and we fly. We  
13 go somewhere. We fly around Bien Hoa for a little bit checking this thing out. Checking  
14 the radios, making sure the engine is working okay, bring it back down. I did that several  
15 times with Colonel Pinkerton and I become somebody he kind of likes to work with,  
16 evidently. I'm working hard at doing a good job and pleasing him. He's like my dad. I  
17 mean, that's how I saw the guy age-wise and experience and all that with the rank. By  
18 that time my father was a major in the Army. So I was kind of relating that way. Then  
19 Colonel Pinkerton is flying with me one day, or I'm flying with him, and he asks well,  
20 where am I intending to go when we our call to go to the FOLs? "I don't know. There's  
21 all sorts of neat stuff out there and I don't have a preference at the moment." He says,  
22 "Well, I think you'd do really good at the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, that 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade up there."  
23 I said, "Very good, sir. That's fine." He said, "Well, that's where I am at and I'd like to  
24 have you up there." I said, "Fine and dandy." So that's how I knew Lai Khe was the FOL  
25 I wanted to go to because Colonel Pinkerton had asked for me.

26 KC: Okay, okay.

27 TE: Now, the strange part was when we did get our assignments and we did fly to  
28 our FOLs the guys—we had both headquarter and headquarter company for the brigade  
29 and the division at Lai Khe. The commanding general, General Ware, was at the division  
30 headquarters there at Lai Khe and we also had brigade headquarters. Now, the ALO FAC  
31 is at the division headquarters. They were kind of interior a little bit into the base camp.

1 The brigade is kind of a little outside of that. It really was—the brigade was right next to  
2 the flight line. Well, the Air Force guys had heard me coming up or heard that I was  
3 coming up were brigade guys. When Moldenhauer, the crew chief, Moldy, met me at—I  
4 flew into the base. I get out and Moldy meets me and Jim McKenna is the radio guy. A  
5 couple of others are there. They usher me over to the brigade hooch. The guys who were  
6 living and working with the brigade not the division guys. Colonel Pinkerton never saw  
7 me again. The brigade guys hoodwinked me over and I didn't know the difference. I just  
8 was just was at the Big Red One and that's all I knew. The guys in division who had this  
9 nice little office and air-conditioned room to work on the radios they never saw me. They  
10 are all waiting for this replacement guy to show up and he never shows up. Well, the  
11 brigade guys never told them that they swiped me because they had one of their guys  
12 leaving in a week or so and they wanted me to replace him. I figured it out a little bit later  
13 but initially but I had no idea what the difference was. So Moldy and McKenna and Ross  
14 and these guys pulled me over to brigade and I live at their—that's where I ended up. I  
15 ended up in their hooch and I was right next to the TOC, the tactical operations center.  
16 Initially they put me in Ross's—I forget his first name—but Ross, we were all sergeants  
17 basically, all E-4s, all radios guys except the crew chiefs. Ross was a guy, he was from  
18 Oklahoma. He also was a civilian pilot. He flew small aircraft, single recipis. He was a  
19 really nice guy, very easy, very smart. However Ross, he is scared crapless of being  
20 above ground so he had relinquished his bunk. He never slept in it. He was always  
21 sleeping in the bunker. (Clears throat) Excuse me. We had an underground bunker which  
22 was heavily fortified. There was one hole down at the end of the walkway through our  
23 hooch. There is wooden boards and you just go down the hallway and you have to step  
24 over this kind of a two- or three-foot square hole which then drops down a couple feet  
25 and then it steps down into the bunker which had like railroad ties all over it, under it,  
26 PSP (perforated steel planking), dirt on it, just a whole mess of junk. Supposedly, if we  
27 took a direct hit you wouldn't feel it but I don't think that is what would have happened.  
28 But Ross was living down there. Any time he came up he always had his piss pot on and  
29 he had his flak jacket, everywhere. Now, he looked clean, he looked sharp, but he always  
30 wore all that gear because he was just afraid of getting hurt above. So I stayed in his bunk  
31 for, I don't know, a few days until this other guy took off and then I had my own bunk.

1 Ross still stayed down there. In the rural areas after the Tet Offensive of '68 we still were  
2 getting shit on a lot. The major cities were secure but out in the boonies where we were,  
3 we were getting hit all the time and you never knew when or where. Most of it was  
4 mortars and 122-millimeter Russian rockets. They would be set off—we were part of the  
5 Michelin rubber plantation. These things, the rockets would be set off I think somewhere  
6 like eight to eleven miles away. They could set those off automatically different ways so  
7 that nobody, no human person is around there, at least not VC (Viet Cong). The rocket  
8 would take off and it would just go wherever it goes and hits. A lot of times that would be  
9 to get somebody to come on out and shoot up the place and maybe the VC wanted the  
10 area shot up because maybe it was a friendly thing or something and if we didn't know  
11 that we kind of destroyed our own support systems. We got hit a lot. When we hit the  
12 bunker two things happened. One, on the walls the guys had been scratching in the  
13 Roman numerals like I, II, III, IIII, and then a / (slash) for five and they had a whole mess  
14 of them around the place. I asked, Are these the number of rockets coming in or  
15 something." Said, "No. Those are the number of rocket attacks and the attacks go  
16 anywhere from fifty to one hundred and fifty rockets and mortars at a time." There was a  
17 lot of numbers down there.

18 KC: So what are you thinking about this?

19 TE: I started to realize after I was in a few of these things what they meant. It was  
20 just—you were down there you are listening to these rockets coming, our hooch got hit or  
21 close to it. I did make an audio tape, which I still have, of one of the rocket attacks. I had  
22 the cassette in the machine and all the buttons were punched and we did have electricity.  
23 All I had to do was just kind of roll over to the left, plug the—plug into the outlet which  
24 is right next to my bed, roll over to the right and hit the deck and crawl out to the hall  
25 and hang a left and go down about ten feet and fall in a hole. That is what I did one  
26 morning and I have the siren from the base camp coming on, a steady wail which means  
27 rocket attack whereas an up and down wail, undulating wail would indicate a ground  
28 attack. Then the rockets are hitting and then you can hear the shrapnel going through our  
29 roof and into our building, in our hooch. That was something I experienced and the other  
30 part was what really scared me was there was there was—the hole that we jumped in  
31 down into the bunker and the rest of the area was totally open like anybody could be

1 walking around or doing anything above ground and we were down there and we  
2 couldn't see anything. We are just huddled in this cave. The thing that started to scare me  
3 was if there was somebody up there who wanted to do us harm, like a VC, all they had to  
4 do was go to that hole and drop a grenade down there. We're toast. We're gone. We're  
5 just wallpaper at that point. Then I started getting scared because all of a sudden now  
6 there is no exit out of here. Even though we are being protected from rockets, perhaps, by  
7 a good roof and a sound outside system the entrance and the exit were the same and that  
8 scared me. In my mind that wasn't good policy. Whenever I was down there I was—I got  
9 scared. I got nervous. I didn't like that. The smell of the muck and kind of the creosote in  
10 those ties, the wood, and just that whole experience and dankness. It was black, dark, we  
11 didn't have a light down there. We had candles or torches, flashlights we had with us  
12 down there that were just kind of kept for that purpose. That experience got scary for me  
13 and that's been with me somewhat since. It was an interesting process, you know, what  
14 we did get hit with and then growing kind of inured to it a little bit. Learning when  
15 rockets and mortars come in. The first one you kind of turn around and look around and  
16 see where it hit, what's going on. You are just alert. The second one you kind of crouch.  
17 You are kind of waiting to see what is going on next time. The third one then you start  
18 heading for cover. That's what we learned in the base camp. When I go to an Air Force  
19 base like at Bien Hoa, I only went there a few times, those guys if they even got the word  
20 there was going to be a rocket or a mortar coming in everybody stayed up all night long  
21 with their flak jackets close by, their piss pots ready to go, they're outside ready to take a  
22 run to what they called a bunker which is just half of a culvert with a few sand bags up on  
23 the sides and there is no protection whatsoever except from rain. It was a different  
24 lifestyle. What we experienced in the base camp was a very different life than what the  
25 guys on an Air Force base were like. To know those two different worlds was an  
26 interesting experience for me. I would have much rather had been in a base camp. There  
27 you kind of—the reality was the focus and we knew what to do, where to go, nobody is  
28 playing chickenshit games with you like they did on an Air Force base. When we had to  
29 go to a Quonset or one of those shelters, so to speak, those whatever they called them,  
30 somebody had a radio, like a transistor radio with them and evidently the base  
31 commander or somebody would come on the radio on a certain frequency and give you

1 the all clear like it is okay to go back to your hooches or go back to work or wherever you  
2 are going. So you were waiting for this authority figure to tell you life is alright to breathe  
3 again. Nobody ever did that to us up there. You know when it is okay to go out or you  
4 take your own risk sometimes, too. But it was real interesting to see how the guys were  
5 all regulated and how things were chickenshit-wise down in the base. The base camp was  
6 totally different and I much preferred the base camp. It was just kind of, again, part of the  
7 living and learning. I wasn't in combat arms in there necessarily, although I shot and was  
8 shot at and so on. It's kind of like I learned how to, I thought take care of myself a bit.  
9 Kind of like Ross, he was scared of anything and everything. He just didn't want to take a  
10 chance. I saw so many rockets hit that didn't explode under and around people that  
11 should have gone off and killed them. I saw a rocket hit a tree top or hit some limbs and  
12 explode, do an airburst. The only person that got hurt was this sergeant, kind of a high  
13 ranking sergeant like an E-8 or something like that, who was in charge of a mess hall  
14 area. He was having a nap. He got hit in his legs and nobody else in the hooch or around  
15 there got hurt. Well, he was the only guy that would not give us any surplus food that the  
16 Army guys at their chow hall couldn't get rid of. They couldn't feed it to the Army. They  
17 had potatoes diced and sliced and creamed and all sorts of different ways and a lot of  
18 times the guys wouldn't eat certain types of foods. A lot of the chow halls would give us  
19 their number ten tin cans and a bunch of other food that we would drive around the base  
20 camp and get from these different chow halls and we'd take down to an orphanage. We  
21 had one at Lai Khe run by some Catholic nuns and there was another one down in Ben  
22 Cat about eight or nine kilometers away. This is the only guy who was a real pain. He  
23 didn't care to help out anywhere and he was hoarding everything. He just wasn't a real  
24 nice guy. We didn't like him. Nobody liked him too much. It was just ironic that he was  
25 the only guy hurt in that one particular air burst. But I saw so many weird things happen  
26 that I learned and there is one experience. I had a little, like my flak jacket material, it  
27 was like a home-plate-shaped item that was to sit on. When I flew I used to put the under  
28 my butt because the only two parts of your body that are exposed to bullets, they are not  
29 coming horizontal at your body now they are coming from the ground up and the two  
30 pieces are the soles of your feet and your ass, your butt. I used to fly for a while with a  
31 pucker factor that was pretty tight. I learned to relax a bit but I had this little, this home

1 plate with me and when I would get out of the plane I would take it back to the hooch and  
2 it had a little loop on the tip of it and I had a nail above the headboard in my bed and I  
3 used to hang that on there for that particular piece of shrapnel that was going to hit my  
4 head and this would save my life or something, you know, should we have a mortar  
5 attack or something. Now, we had rocket boxes full of laterite soil, real hard stuff, about a  
6 meter high outside our hooch just in case like shrapnel is coming there is hopefully going  
7 to be some protection for you for at least the first three feet; after that you better be down  
8 below it.

9 KC: Right.

10 TE: This little piece of home plate material sitting up there and one of the rocket  
11 attacks we had or mortars we got hit pretty hard and our building got hit. After we came  
12 upstairs I was looking around and my side of the hooch got pretty well creamed and the  
13 screening and some of the boards were busted and blown out and I looked at the top of  
14 the bed and part of my bed head was gone. So I'm looking for my home plate. Well, I  
15 found it across the hall over near Ross's bed embedded in somebody else's or the wall  
16 over there. It had a piece of shrapnel in it and the shrapnel was still hot and it was still  
17 melting the nylon material around the, you know, the casing of this stuff. Whatever is  
18 inside of it I didn't know for sure, but that piece of shrapnel had just cut into that thing  
19 like a piece of hot butter and had nailed that against the wall. I left it there. From that  
20 moment on I just figured, "All right. This is God's way or somebody's way of telling me  
21 it doesn't matter what you do. They can get you, no matter what." From then on I didn't  
22 fly with any, you know, the home plate thing. I took my flak jacket. I wasn't stupid but I  
23 didn't do a Ross, either. I didn't wear stuff everywhere or go everywhere. I didn't get  
24 worried. Again, I got scared when something happens but I get scared because God  
25 knows what's going to happen. That was one of the techniques that I learned quick on  
26 that you can cover your butt as best you can but, you know, there is so many weird things  
27 going on in this experience and so many things happening that you can't explain. You  
28 just do the best you can and, you know, by the grace of God I am still here and I figure I  
29 am living on borrowed time because many times I probably should have been gone and I  
30 didn't so—I guess anybody maybe in war in those sort of conditions you just kind of  
31 count your lucky stars. Why does the guy next to you get hit and you don't? Who's to

1 say? Then you get—maybe some people will start getting what they call now survivor's  
2 guilt and, you know, things like that. You know, you kind of wonder how come it was  
3 him and not me or something.

4 KC: About how many rocket or mortar attacks did you experience there at Lai  
5 Khe before you came to this way of thinking?

6 TE: A lot. It must have been a good, I swear, at least a good couple of months into  
7 this thing so that would have put us in April or May of '68. I couldn't tell you the  
8 number. I mean, they just kind of flew by, they were just events in life. I couldn't even  
9 tell you. Fifty, sixty, seventy, different attacks maybe.

10 KC: Okay.

11 TE: Sometimes we—a couple of times we had sappers. The strange thing with Lai  
12 Khe is Thunder Highway, Highway 13 which is still there, goes straight up north from  
13 Bien Hoa and goes right through the village of Lai Khe. Well, it went right through our  
14 village, too, and our perimeter for our base camp surrounded the village. We had a village  
15 in our parameter. We had people on mortar bikes, you know rickshaws, well, not  
16 rickshaws, but you would have people walking and taking cows and driving trucks and  
17 buses and stuff right up and down that highway right next to our runway. So to consider  
18 any security I think was kind of ludicrous because anybody could have been bringing in  
19 anything. There was no checkpoint or anything. You just drive right on down the road. At  
20 times we had, at like three or four in the morning all hell broke loose. Sappers had put a  
21 bunch of satchel charges underneath the Blackhawk choppers and they blew. It was only  
22 about 100 feet from my hooch. I'll tell you, that was something else. The fire, the  
23 blowing, the explosions, at other times it took certain buildings out but that meant that  
24 they were—people were walking around my hooch and the next thing you start thinking  
25 is, "Jesus!" you know. "How come they didn't put anything my hooch? I thank God,"  
26 but—then you start looking, you start watching. We had a four-holer outhouse behind my  
27 hooch off to the side a little ways and it was convenient, that's nice to have one close by  
28 when you need it. There was one point—my paranoia was—laugh if you will—but when  
29 I would go to that outhouse I had a flashlight with me, especially at dark, mainly at dark.  
30 I would take that flashlight—now, you don't want to be showing light off too much but I  
31 would be looking down. I would look in the hole because I had a funny feeling somebody

1 is going to be down there and jamming a bamboo stick up my butt. Seriously, that was  
2 my paranoia. I thought that would be the worst way to go. Hemorrhoids are bad but  
3 bamboo is worse (Kelly laughs). So I would be flashing a light down there trying to see if  
4 anybody is crouching because where you're sitting is a good couple of three or four feet  
5 off the ground because you have a fifty-five-gallon drum probably cut in half but that's  
6 sitting below you. I am figuring, "Well, what if somebody moves the drum?" or whatever  
7 and gets in there and they are hidden underneath and you're vulnerable. You're not  
8 watching. You're not paying attention. Well, that didn't turn out to be the problem. The  
9 issue was people were, VC or somebody, was coming in and they would put a grenade—  
10 they would get inside the outhouse. They would put a grenade on the inside of the door  
11 and usually we would pull the door outward so you can get out easy. So as you pulled the  
12 door out you pull the trip and you pull the pin on the grenade and boom because you are  
13 walking into it. Well, that is what had happened in several outhouses around the area. The  
14 next thing you know everybody is gently pulling on the doors to see if there is any  
15 tension on it and that was the scary part. So we had these little moments that would last  
16 for a while that you get kind of concerned about this or that or the other thing. It passes,  
17 you know, after a while that didn't happen anymore. They wise up or whatever. But then  
18 you have your moments like I had just gotten out of the outhouse. I am walking out and  
19 some captain had just walked in right past me and I said, "How do you do, sir?" You  
20 don't have to salute. He jumped in there, the door slammed and the next thing you know  
21 ka-boom! There goes a mortar just right next to us. Dirt is still falling down and I'm  
22 yelling, "Sir! Sir! Are you okay?" He starts yelling at me. He is madder than hell. "God  
23 damn it! Go get me another pair of pants!" He hadn't gotten his off yet (Kelly laughs). So  
24 at any rate there is that. We had this one officer, what was he? He was a chemical warfare  
25 officer, big jerk of an Army guy, captain. He wanted to go up as they dropped CS gas on  
26 the ground and we are flying cover for the, I don't know, C-130s that dropped these  
27 pallets of barrels, fifty-five-gallon barrels of CS gas and they had a grenade in there or  
28 something that would explode and all this stuff would aerate and get all over the place  
29 and it was supposed to sink into the spider holes and get the VC out. Well, the chemical  
30 officer wanted to see this in action so he was flying with one of our guys and we were  
31 listening on the radios as the event takes place. Okay, the gas is dropped and it's good

1 and the explosion goes off and the gas is all over the place. The chemical officer, he  
2 wants to get close. He wants to see what we call the BDA, bomb damage assessment. So  
3 he wants to get down close so he tells the Air Force guy, "Let's kind of drop down here  
4 and see a little bit closer what's going on." We usually have a five minute radio check  
5 because in case you don't have any noise coming from the pilot, somebody flying, in five  
6 minutes you want to make sure where they were from the last check in case something  
7 should happen to them so it is not too far of a distance from the last point of reference.  
8 We didn't hear anything for a little while. We called the pilot. We wanted a radio check.  
9 The pilot says, "Yeah, I have got my hands full here. But the backseater. Can you guys  
10 meet us at the airstrip? We need a bucket and a rag?" Well, he had gotten low enough  
11 that the backseater got a good whiff of CS gas and it probably had a vomiting agent in it  
12 because Mr. Backseater was puking all over the back. We have a rule: you mess it up you  
13 clean it up. So the point being, with a bucket and rag out there we knew that the Army  
14 captain was going to be put at work for cleaning up his own mess. We weren't going to  
15 clean it up for him and that's what happened. I don't know, some of these are—you  
16 know, the joking part it is like the sort of stories my dad told me about the invasion of the  
17 Philippines (coughs), excuse me, and the things that he did but he never told me about  
18 anything difficult, you know, people getting hurt or anything like that. I guess in some  
19 ways some of these stories are kind of like that in the same way of what my dad was  
20 doing.

21 KC: Well, tell me, Mr. Engelmann, give me what it was like for you on a typical  
22 day there at Lai Khe. If there was such a thing as a typical day, what would—

23 TE: I have to say there is really not much like a typical day. There is one of two  
24 ways of being at Lai Khe, either you are on duty or you are off because we had several  
25 guys on the radios and we could take shifts. The way we had it staggered was somebody  
26 is on the radios from eight until, I don't know, six or five. The guy who was on yesterday  
27 will—let's see what is it? The guy who was on yesterday's radios will cover you for  
28 today. He will be there so you can get a bite to eat for breakfast and lunch and dinner. So  
29 he is going to be your back-up person. He will be at the hooch on the ready for a phone  
30 call or whatever it takes but he is the back-up person. He's already done his shift but he is  
31 going to be there to support you and you are offered or given like three meals and stuff

1 like that so you have got a few minutes to go get food and get back to the radios. When  
2 you are done with your shift then you're on call for that night and you are on call for the  
3 next guy's shift the next day for his breakfast, lunch, and dinner. You've got about a day  
4 and a half that you are kind of busy working. One day you are on the radios, the next day  
5 you're kind of—you know you are watching him part time. The other guys are doing  
6 other things, then. They're off duty, so to speak. The crew chiefs are always on. I mean, it  
7 depends on what flights we have got going when. But anybody who is around the hooch  
8 and you're not busy with work, like duty, we have all sorts of things we are doing. We  
9 made a volleyball court next to our hooch. We took a jeep with some PSP planking and  
10 were dragging it behind us to kind of level out the dirt. We built a—we went down to  
11 Bien Hoa and we stole—we didn't steal, we appropriated two—

12 KC: There you go.

13 TE: Yeah, two wing tanks, fuel tanks, probably fuel. T something or other, not  
14 trainers. They are like a T-38 but they are—gosh, what were they? A-37s.

15 KC: Okay.

16 TE: We got their wing tanks and we put them on top of a building that had a  
17 shower and a lavatory, hot and cold running water was then created. We had an  
18 immersion heater in one of the tanks, cold water in the other and every morning  
19 somebody had to go up a ladder and fire up the immersion heater so by the end of the day  
20 we had hot water in that tank. Then we used all the fuel lines out of the crew chief's  
21 world, out of the air craft that got blown up and stuff and we jerry-rigged a shower and  
22 then we had a lavatory for hot and cold running water so you could both shower and  
23 shave. Then the outhouse was just right behind us. We were one of the very few besides  
24 probably some of the higher ranking officers and the Army guys who had hot and cold  
25 running water showers but we made all of that ourselves. We always had something  
26 going, some construction project, building a part room on the end of our hooch.

27 KC: Tell me about that.

28 TE: Well, our hooch was—we were stationed at the base camp permanently and  
29 evidently that hooch in that unit had been there for some time already. This was the  
30 enlisted guys who lived in this hooch and, I don't know, fifty or sixty feet away was the  
31 officers' hooch. In between was a big open space which is where the Bob Hope Show

1 used to be. They had a big wooden stage up there that was just vacant when not in use  
2 and it normally wasn't in use. It was just sitting there. Our hooch ended up because I  
3 don't know our creativity or whatever we liked to do we could probably get away with  
4 because the Army—Army wasn't telling us what to do and the Air Force didn't know  
5 what we were doing so we are kind of like orphans. We got to do whatever we wanted to  
6 as long as we didn't hurt anybody.

7 KC: Right.

8 TE: So we had a lot of social activities and we thought—since it rained a lot it  
9 would be nice to put an addition onto our hooch about half as long again. Don't think  
10 small. We put a—we needed the tin roof, we needed flooring, we needed materials for a  
11 bar, we needed materials for the wall of the hooch. Just kind of make stuff. We needed  
12 some bricks to make a barbeque pit. I mean we wanted it to be nice. This was no slouch  
13 place. So we went around and we—what was it? We needed—oh, for the tin roofing I  
14 think we gave somebody a bottle of Drambuie. This is easy for us to come by but it  
15 wasn't for the Army guys. Being in the boonies as they were an awful lot, you know,  
16 certain things were really nice for them. It was always usually bartering and, you know,  
17 you owed somebody or you would get somebody to help you out. So for booze and beer  
18 and stuff like that we got all the materials we needed. We got ammo boxes, disassembled  
19 them, took the wood put it up on the wall, got a great big blow torch and took it to it  
20 because all this stuff is pine wood and we made knotty pine looking walls. When you  
21 blow torch it the hardwood stays fine and the soft wood kind of singes.

22 KC: Right, right.

23 TE: We had this really nice looking wall. We took tent poles and cut them in half  
24 and made the railing for the, and other ammo box materials, for our bar. We got the  
25 lacquer or shellac or whatever it was to put on it to keep it from, you know if it got wet it  
26 wouldn't destroy it. We made shelves. Oh, the flooring was, somewhere somebody found  
27 this Air Force material that they were using for air strips. They were about, I guess maybe  
28 about four or five feet square. They were aluminum. They were about an inch and a half  
29 thick, evidently to withstand the rigors of heavy aircraft landing on them. They had these  
30 catches on the four different sides so you could link them together, you know, they were  
31 secure. We got, I don't know, one, two, three, four, maybe sixteen of those. Somebody

1 said they were worth about twelve hundred dollars apiece, maybe. I don't know. But we  
2 got enough of them that it made our flooring in that party hooch and it was textured  
3 material on the top, kind of like gravely but it was real fine gravely material. It is for—  
4 you know, when an aircraft wheel hits down you don't want to be sliding around on slick  
5 concrete surface. You want it to have some texture to it, some traction. This stuff was  
6 really nice material and we got all that from somewhere. We laid the cement and we had  
7 a wheelbarrow and then we got hit by a rocket and shrapnel blew out the tire so we had to  
8 carry the stupid wheelbarrow. Two of us are in the front with a two-by-four through the  
9 front end and the other guy has got the handles in the back and we are carrying cement  
10 into the place. I have a few pictures of some of that. But that's the sort of thing we made  
11 on the end of our hooch and it was great. We had more parties there. We had Donut  
12 Dollies in the base camp. These are Red Cross girls. I used to go with one of them and  
13 Donut Six, which is the head honcho of the group, Nancy, she and the girls came over all  
14 the time. Ours was just a real safe to hang out. Any time you had free time you could  
15 always be sure to come over to the Air Force hooch and you could have a beer, soda,  
16 different things happened and we had different types of food from different events. One  
17 time General Ware is in his villa. I guess his ceiling was peeling or the geckos were on it  
18 and dropping stuff in their food and we got a cargo chute and we took it on over and they  
19 put it up on the roof, on the ceiling, to kind of hold the dusk back so it kind of kept the  
20 food clean. For that the CG mess sergeant gave us I think it was two or three cases of  
21 frozen steaks. So rev up the barbeque. So for a while it was either feast or famine.  
22 Sometimes we just were having a great time, other times, you know, you just kind of do  
23 what you can. Somebody dropped off a pallet of ice cream real near Moldy out at the  
24 airstrip and they should have dropped it way the heck down at the other end at some sort  
25 of, I don't know, area where they have the trucks to pick this stuff up for supply and  
26 transportation. But somehow somebody in the aircraft screwed up. Well, Moldy takes the  
27 jeep out there to check out what this stupid pallet of material was sitting in the middle of  
28 the runway because it had to be moved, it's a hazard to us, anyway. He finds it's ice  
29 cream sitting in the middle of the hot sun. He called us up at the hooch and said get our  
30 butts over there with a jeep and a trailer and take what we can quick and somebody run  
31 down to S&T and tell the supply sergeant—and we knew who these guys were—tell

1    them what was going on. We did it and the guys who got to the S&T supply guy he said,  
2    “Take what you want because heads are going to roll if any of that stuff gets destroyed.”  
3    He didn’t really care who got it as long as it was used but if it got wasted he was going to  
4    be mad and he is really going to burn some butts. It was smart that we got what we could.  
5    Well, we have two old refrigerators, tiny little freezers at the top, you know, that get  
6    frosty.

7           KC: Right, sure.

8           TE: Whenever you open it in a humid environment.

9           KC: Right.

10          TE: So these are kind of old models but we had two of them. Basically what we  
11    had was beer in one and soda in the other one. All of a sudden, out comes the beer and  
12    soda and in goes the ice cream. For the next couple of days anybody walked by our hooch  
13    we slammed a bowl of Neapolitan in their hands and said, “Eat it.” You know, it’s getting  
14    mushy real quick anyway but that was the way—again, it was just one of those moments,  
15    it was a freak accident but you do what you can. Again, we just didn’t want to waste it so  
16    we are offering ice cream to anybody who didn’t have a milk allergy, you know. Again,  
17    that was kind of those funny things that happen. That’s kind of the daily life, you really  
18    never knew exactly what was going to take place until the day kind of unfolds a bit and  
19    then you get to see. But there might be something that comes up unexpectedly that you  
20    have to attend to, as well. It was just you do the job and you are on the radios, you are  
21    listening to the airstrikes, you are calling up people, you are making sure everybody is  
22    covered or you are working on the party hooch. Stuff like that was going on.

23          KC: Let me—I want to get back to your official duties here in just a moment but  
24    let me ask you about, while we are on the topic of off duty, what other sort of things were  
25    taking place there at Lai Khe during off duty?

26          TE: Well, we had movies over in the division headquarters area. They had a big  
27    screen over there. We could go over and watch movies. Sometimes there would be I  
28    guess maybe like USO type folks, troops, they were the sponsors for—I remember  
29    Filipino bands would be going through the different bases and stuff and they’d be playing  
30    for a night so there would be a band that would be there. Let’s see. We played volleyball  
31    off and on. The Army guys would be over at our place. Lots of evening parties, like when

1 the day is done and the Army guys are off duty so, you know, a skeleton crew is always  
2 on but then we do things in the evenings. There again it was probably—during the days if  
3 you are off duty you are probably doing something fairly constructive. You didn't just sit  
4 around. Sometimes you could sit and write letters or read, I guess—

5 KC: Did you write a lot of letters home?

6 TE: I didn't. I wrote about eighteen or so and I have them with me. My father  
7 kept them and gave them to me afterwards and he kept copies—there's the major for you.  
8 He kept copies of every one of his letters that he sent me, which is a lot of them, so I have  
9 all of those. I have got all the letters and I have read mine and it's kind of interesting how  
10 stupid I was. I am not probably much brighter these days either, I'm afraid. You know,  
11 the sort of attitude I had in those letters about—who was it? Mark what's his face who  
12 went into the president's office in Columbia University, I think, and you know I was  
13 saying get his butt over here for a minute so he could see what is going on, you know.  
14 For a little bit—you know, I wrote some letters but not many to my parents. My attitude  
15 changed after about two or three months in-country. I started not to like the place, well,  
16 not just the place but I started to realize this whole thing was a real crazy piece of work.  
17 If anything, if one word would sum it up in my mind it was waste, waste of life, waste of  
18 material, equipment, time, energy, suffering, the whole nine yards. It didn't take too long  
19 but a couple of months into the game I started to switch gears real strongly about me  
20 being there, what this was all about, and that had a real profound effect on me.

21 KC: What led to this change?

22 TE: A couple of things, one—I took a jeep ride down to the orphanage down at  
23 Ben Cat and I was with a group of guys. They had the trailer. We were just a jeep taking  
24 a run with them. We came back early. They were dropping off the stuff. We were way  
25 ahead of them. We were halfway back up at Lai Khe and the VC opened up on a mortar  
26 attack down there in the village down at Ben Cat. Personally, I don't know what military  
27 value that village had, probably something I imagine. Lai Khe was sitting on kind of a  
28 plateau. It was higher so you could see around us. We had pretty much taken out all the  
29 trees around the place so you could look and watch for the enemy and that sort of thing.  
30 So maybe Ben Cat had some sort of military position of value to them. But they opened  
31 up. They walked the mortars through the place and they hit the orphanage and there was

1 mess. All of a sudden little kids getting hurt, people like that I don't care who does it that  
2 was wrong. So that started it. Linda, who was the Donut Dolly I was going with, she and  
3 I went to a Protestant chapel. I was raised in the Methodist Church and on my dog tags  
4 you have your name, your serial number, your blood type, and your religious preference.  
5 In my case in big capital letters it said "METHODIST" at the bottom line. I went to this  
6 chapel with Linda and the minister there, the chaplain, extolled the virtues of our god  
7 beating their god, the enemy's god. You know, all the belief and all this religious stuff  
8 started showing up in how we were much better than the enemy. I knew a little bit by that  
9 time that most of the enemy, the local people, Viet Cong were the local people down in  
10 the south and the southerners and these people were predominantly Catholic and/or  
11 Buddhist. I grew up with Catholic friends and kids and all of a sudden I was trying to  
12 think, "Okay, now, how does my god separate their religion from my religion?" All of a  
13 sudden I thought, "This is stupid. This is the way that the chaplain in the military are  
14 trying to get me and everybody else to go along from a religious perspective and as one  
15 of the guys had written on his helmet liner, "Kill a Commie for Christ." That really  
16 bothered me, really bothered me. I went down into the village, the Lai Khe village, which  
17 was in our perimeter, our base camp. They had, one of the Vietnamese guys, had a dog  
18 tag machine down there. I remember that is during the war, after the war they still have  
19 the dog tag machine and they had our names because I went down there and I had a new  
20 set of dog tags made up. In place of "Methodist" my dog tag said "None." I didn't want  
21 to have a religious preference in a war, it didn't fit. It is almost as if the war had to have  
22 some sort of religious overtone in order to make, to validate it. That in my mind was  
23 totally inappropriate, wrong. So already then I was starting to get on kind of a—I was  
24 heading to another direction. I was there. I couldn't leave. I was going to do the best  
25 damn job I possibly could but then I started to see things, experience things, the rules of  
26 engagement, how people were screwing each other over. The ARVNs (Army of the  
27 Republic of Vietnam) were—I went into the Delta and the ARVNs down there if they  
28 didn't like people in the village they would call and airstrike and say there is Viet Cong  
29 there. Luckily, we had been doing visual reconnaissance, we kind of knew what was  
30 going on. We could tell whether there is more people or fewer people. We saw where  
31 ammunition had been dug into the ground because the digging they brought out the

1 surface dirt and when they got down below six inches it was a different color. When they  
2 started spreading it around the area you could see it from the air so we knew what was  
3 kind of going on. We didn't do a lot of bombing where they told us because we knew that  
4 was what the game was, it was retribution. People wouldn't pay taxes to the local village  
5 or province chief who was an ARVN officer, all sorts of weird stuff going on. I started to  
6 feel that this whole thing was wrong. All of a sudden, it almost didn't matter to me what  
7 communism was anymore, that was just a name. It was no better, no worse, I thought,  
8 than sometimes democracy in some cases. When the people are living a certain way and  
9 they are allowed to live and function and prosper in that way I kind of don't care what  
10 you call it. All of a sudden like somebody else had an idea that this had to be changed and  
11 we had to have a fight about. All of a sudden, now I am starting to say, "Well," you know  
12 "I am part of the game plan but I don't believe in it. So how do I function? How do I do  
13 this?" As it turns out, I end up at the end of the war doing some passive aggressive stuff,  
14 almost got my butt canned. I also worked with one of the pilots in the Delta when I got  
15 sent down there. I requested a transfer. We worked well together and we bombed other  
16 targets that were not assigned to us but we gave the BDA of the assigned target but we  
17 kind of kept our track of what we were doing. It was because we didn't believe in half the  
18 stuff that was being told to us. I know we were right. So instead of just killing people for  
19 the hell of it, do something that was constructive to our benefit. We are trying to deny the  
20 enemy ammunition, weapons. We didn't care how many people are living down there but  
21 we didn't want to be having people with guns, one little kid with a gun pointing up in the  
22 air and shooting us out of the sky so we are trying to get the weapons out of their hands.

23 KC: Sure.

24 TE: So—

25 KC: I believe you were with the 22<sup>nd</sup> TASS at that time.

26 TE: Right. That was that but the reason I even got down there was I was on radios  
27 on the morning of Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> in September of '68. Major General Ware, the division  
28 commander for the Big Red One, was out. He didn't sit behind a desk very much. He was  
29 gone a lot. He was with his troops a lot. He was in a C&C (command and control  
30 helicopter) and they got shot out of the sky. I guess an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) or  
31 something got them and he was killed that morning. That was a major blow in my

1 emotions. I knew who the man was. I also felt somewhat responsible not intellectually  
2 but just the fact that people aren't supposed to die like that on my watch and I'm  
3 supposed to watch out for people and take care of them and I was calling up TAC air to  
4 support anything he might have in the way of troops in contact because he was trying to  
5 protect his troops who were being told to go somewhere and they were walking into a  
6 trap. Now, he gets shot out and his XO (executive officer) and all of those guys, he lost—  
7 his dog was killed with him and right away I kind of went into a tailspin. I felt  
8 responsible somehow. I asked for a transfer. I wanted out of there. They sent me—I got  
9 my transfer requested and they approved it and they sent me down to Binh Thuy, which  
10 is near Can Tho in the Delta and I went to the 22<sup>nd</sup> TASS. Then I was assigned to the  
11 Advisory Team 55 in the fishing village of Rach Gia, R-A-C-H G-I-A, and that's one the  
12 western coast of the Mekong Delta right below Ha Thien which is right next to the  
13 Cambodian border. We were between Cambodia and Ca Mau, which was all VC. I  
14 worked there and there was only about 100 Americans in the province and it was all run  
15 by the ARVN. This was the Vietnamization at that time.

16 KC: Sure.

17 TE: So that is why I was down in the Delta and that is where I ran into to some  
18 other experiences just because now I wasn't with the American army I was with the  
19 advisory team, some Army, some Navy, brown water guys. Our pilot stayed in Bien Thuy  
20 and I had to live out there in Rach Gia. So it was an interesting experience and working  
21 with the ARVNs, that was a trip.

22 KC: What was your impression of the ARVN in general?

23 TE: The individual soldiers when they got pushed to it they could fight but as a  
24 group the officers and where their direction was leading was pretty corrupt or whatever  
25 benefitted them at the time. Hence when they were in the Delta down there if these guys,  
26 somebody didn't get what they wanted from a village they would come up with the idea  
27 of, well, there is a VC unit over there so we need to hit it ASAP. They would call in a  
28 frag, which is a bombing assignment, we would get the frag that night and we already  
29 knew that there was nobody over there. We were seeing stuff like that going on. The  
30 ARVN would sit on one side or another of a forest area, let's say, or a region that they  
31 didn't want to go into because the VC are down there. But they would pay people to tell

1    them how many VC did they feel or see in that area. Well, the people aren't dumb. The  
2    more VC they saw the more money they got. You know, these guys would then send,  
3    would give information to the 4 DASC, direct air support center. We would say, "All  
4    right, there is like sixty VC over here in this area," that we want to get this little tiny area.  
5    We would always kind of joke and put the decimal point place one place to the left  
6    because instead of sixty there is probably six. That's how we gauged their numbers and  
7    we were probably closer than they were, darn close. We saw the province chief, Van Thai  
8    was his name. He had, I think, a girlfriend or two or his wife or somebody he messed  
9    with. The ARVN guys would be in a convoy ready to move out and they are all along—  
10   they are on the side of the road, they are waiting until nine o'clock in the stupid morning  
11   for this guy to get out of his jammies and to get into uniform and get his butt down there  
12   to lead them out. Everybody else in the world is—everybody has got a job to do. We are  
13   all doing it, we are waiting on this idiot to get out. He was such a rummy. I had to drive  
14   from Rach Gia to Rach Soi about eight kilometers because the Air Force had two airstrips  
15   they could use to land an aircraft but they weren't secure to leave them there overnight.  
16   Now, the Army did. They had the same damn aircraft we did just brown paint or green  
17   paint on theirs and ours was grey. But our pilot had to live at Binh Thuy air base. He  
18   would fly in to Rach Soi. I would drive a jeep out there, often my radio jeep sometimes a  
19   slick, and I had the battle plans with me especially when I had the radio jeep. I had  
20   frequencies, I had call signs. I had this what we call the overlay. It's a map with—a map  
21   of the area of the operations for that day with plastic stapled around it and that was to  
22   protect it from water and stuff and then all of the troop movements were written, drawn  
23   on there so I had that. I had to drive that eight kilometers by myself out there and  
24   sometimes back either right away or else come back in the evening. I had to go through  
25   three bridges that were secured by Ruff Puffs, those are Regional Force/Popular Force,  
26   RFs, PFs, those are ARVNs kind of like your National Guard, I guess, sort of thing.

27        KC: Sure.

28        TE: These guys had Claymores and .30-cals and their guns at these bridges and  
29   they were protecting them from the VC. I swear, you know, I had to drive through these  
30   guys and I swear I didn't know how I got through them without them shooting at me or  
31   blowing me up because they weren't trustworthy at all. Then you had the VC and I got

1 potshotted a couple of times. Then I get on out to the, what we called the long strip. The  
2 short strip was the one the Army guys used but the Air Force said, “Nah, there are rocks  
3 on that strip.” They are gravel strip. They are too big. “Our planes won’t—we just have a  
4 safety factor there. We can’t use that strip.” Well, that was the secure strip in the village  
5 and now they made me drive out eight kilometers to go meet the stupid pilot.

6 KC: Oh, man.

7 TE: After the war then I started thinking about what the Air Force made me do,  
8 you know. I thought, “Okay, that’s just my job. I will go do this and I will just hunker  
9 down and just do it.” Then I kind of realized how stupid this was. It was my ass they’re  
10 putting out there and nobody cared, nobody gave a crap. When I was driving I had  
11 sandbags on the floor in case I happened to hit something maybe they might stop  
12 something underneath me but I have got a tank of gas I am sitting on. I had an M-16  
13 across my lap, I had a 12-gauge shotgun with three slugs in it. I kind of stole this gun  
14 from a cache that somebody had gotten. I had a .38 on my hip and a .45 shoulder holster.  
15 I think I paid twenty bucks for the .45 and I stole the .38. I had frag grenades, incendiary  
16 grenades on my radios in case you are going to get captured pop the incendiaries and it  
17 did burn the radios, it burns through metal so it’ll deny the access to the enemy. I had  
18 smoke grenades, concussions, frags, and I still felt terribly vulnerable. It was like I had all  
19 the ammo in the world but I won’t—I will just have—I won’t be able to get the last guy  
20 or something. No matter how much I had with me I always felt I was going to miss—I  
21 couldn’t see the person, I would miss him, I didn’t have enough bullets, whatever it was.  
22 The more I tried to protect myself the more vulnerable I felt. I had a knot in my stomach  
23 so much of the time.

24 KC: That’s on these drives back and forth?

25 TE: Yeah.

26 KC: Okay, now let me—

27 TE: I know what it felt like to gear up and to go out by myself. Even though I had  
28 radios nobody could get to me in time. Criminy. I would be toast. I would be gone. I was  
29 lucky. But that’s what the Air Force did to us, as well. They made that happen that way  
30 but there’s no protection for me. I have been back there and I have driven that road now a  
31 few years ago and some of those bridges are there. A lot of stuff came back to me. It was

1 interesting. At that time, again, I hunkered down and I did the best darn job I could. At  
2 the same time I was also not trying to kill people. I was trying to save as many lives on  
3 everybody's side as possible. That's where that passive aggressive behavior kind of came  
4 in. One of the pilots I flew with, Major Anderson, had just been medically retired. He was  
5 with his family in Hawaii, I believe it was, and they called him back up. This guy had his  
6 medical retirement, I think, at least most of it was something to do with his back. I mean  
7 he had a disc out of something like that because when he got in—he got in the front seat,  
8 when he sat there for more than ten or fifteen minutes his back was frozen. It would take  
9 him a good ten or fifteen minutes to get out of the dadburn airplane. When I flew with  
10 him I was in the back seat and when we had to stop and we would get out we have a  
11 three-hour VR (visual reconnaissance). We enough fuel in our tanks that we could  
12 visually reconnaissance for three hours of a flight. Whatever our distance was we would  
13 land. He would scoot his seat up as much as he could. I had to remove the smoke  
14 grenades from the back of the seat which we had hanging on the back. I had to take off  
15 my survival vest and my flak jacket and I would squeeze between the back of his seat and  
16 the door frame and kind of squeeze out, fall out of the airplane. Then I would literally  
17 help him, kind of carry him out of that front seat. He was in a sitting position and he was  
18 in pain. He would put his foot on the strut, get down on the ground somehow and he had  
19 his hands on the strut and the side of the plane and he's bent over and it took him a while  
20 to straighten up and he was in pain. He could not move other than just that at that  
21 moment. Now, here is something that I am not sure about. I believe he told me something  
22 but it so kind of weird that I am not sure if I was dreaming this or not but I think he told  
23 me, when we are flying if we ever had to go down in an emergency or we get trapped  
24 somehow that I was supposed to shoot him in the back of the head and escape because  
25 there was no way he could go.

26 KC: Sure.

27 TE: He couldn't come with me and he wasn't going to be captured. This would be  
28 excruciating for him to be in this sort of situation physically which all the more made him  
29 madder and madder at the Air Force for having brought him out of medical retirement.  
30 Now that's my memory. That could be faulty at that point but it kind of seems logical,  
31 although cold, but that is what I think I remember him telling me. Obviously we didn't

1 have to do that but he left after a little bit and I'm not sure whether—because people kind  
2 of came and went in my life, pilots, and I remember them a little bit but I kind of don't  
3 remember when they came in or how they left or things like that so much. I remember  
4 Major Anderson because he was pissed and he was hurting. I was his caretaker. He was  
5 the pilot but he couldn't live without me. It was kind of a strange experience.

6 KC: Very, very interesting. How many of these flights would go out on typically,  
7 say, in a week or a month?

8 TE: Probably in a week basis, it kind of depends. I was not supposed to fly. That  
9 wasn't in my job description. I was supposed to be on the ground in the radio jeep or  
10 something. Often, we would be flying to or from a base or some odd location or  
11 sometimes we would be flying with a pilot as an observer and we had another mission to  
12 go to afterwards or something so we would be stuck in the backseat. I'd say we could be  
13 flying once or twice a week. The only pilot that I have seen, he was flight officer Mac  
14 Cottrell. We called him "Mac the FAC." (forward air controller) He was an Australian  
15 and he was at Lai Khe and Mac lives in Canberra, Australia. He retired as a group  
16 captain, which I think is full bird colonel in our system. He was a base commander at  
17 Richmond RAAF (Royal Australian Air Force) Base outside of Canberra and then he  
18 moved back when he retired. Mac still has his Form Fives, which I believe if I am right  
19 that would be our—the forms that you fill out as pilot, you know, when you take a flight,  
20 who, when, what, where, why and all that bit. After every flight you fill one of those out  
21 and he still has his. One time I was staying at his house and he looked up on those forms  
22 and he found the dates when I flew with him so that was kind of funny because we kind  
23 of remember a few things that we did. He was teaching me how to fly. I flew with him  
24 and again at Lai Khe we had about—we had officers, we had our pilots living there so we  
25 had maybe five or six pilots so it kind of depends on what was going on but you might be  
26 able to fly once or twice a week at least. Then if we had things going on or you had  
27 something like I might have to go to Bien Hoa for some admin purpose or go somewhere  
28 else then you have got a flight just for that alone. Now, that is flying with those pilots.  
29 Another aspect was if we were off duty or at Lai Khe—when I was down at Rach Gia I  
30 had a guy who could relieve me and sometimes I used to fly on over to Vung Tau, or—  
31 you know, Vung Tau and Nui Dat and a friend of mine had been at that security

1 equipment school at Lackland, Roland was over there and I would go visit him. He was  
2 working with the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Task Force up in Nui Dat. Sometimes I would hang out  
3 down in Vung Tau with him which is like a big city, real fun, or sometimes I would go to  
4 Nui Dat with the 1<sup>st</sup> ATF (Australian Task Force). I flew an Aussie chopper up there and  
5 a couple of times we had to go and ditch, well, ditch the flight, and pick up some kind of  
6 like our Special Forces guys some Aussies who were coming out of the bush with VC  
7 after them and we were all firing out the doors so that was an experience. It was a side  
8 trip. I was free to go I didn't have to be at Lai Khe and I split. You hop a flight and so I  
9 could do—I did a lot of those sort of things during the year or at least the seven months I  
10 was up in Lai Khe, probably not so much when I was at Rach Gia because it was just me  
11 and this one other guy that would come in and relieve me at times so I was kind of  
12 staying close. Once a week, twice a week, several times a month and that was just with  
13 the FACs and then there could be other types of aircraft like Caribou, C-7As, C-130s, or  
14 choppers mostly.

15 KC: Now, you mentioned the Aussies. What was your impression of them?

16 TE: Good troops. We had several operations where the Aussies came up from  
17 Phuc Thuy and they came on over into our AO (area of operations). I met a couple of  
18 guys, several EM (enlisted men). One was from Tasmania, another guy was somewhere  
19 in Australia. I kind of thought that's the sort of troops we needed because they had  
20 training, a lot more jungle experience before they came to Vietnam than ours guys. We  
21 just kind of walked in and you might—you know, you get something out of a few days of  
22 learning a few things but we had raw recruits coming in and they had to learn fast and  
23 hard or else they could get hurt. The Aussies came in, they had a good command  
24 structure. They didn't have an awful lot of chickenshit like we did. Their whole attitude  
25 was kind of like, "Let's get the job done, mate," and get on it and go to it and that's what  
26 they were about. I liked them a lot more than a lot of our guys just because their attitude,  
27 their skill, their equipment seemed to be a little bit better, their organizational structure,  
28 the way they treated each other and others like me when I came in their environment up  
29 at Nui Dat. They were good. I felt good with them around. I ran into some ROKs,  
30 Republic of Korea troops, down in Vung Tau because it was an in country R&R (rest and  
31 recreation) center. It was kind of funny in a way because the beach that we had access to

1 for all of us Allied troops there as an Aussie section then a ROK section and then our  
2 section. The Aussies had all these toys like sailboards and floats and a bunch of boards  
3 and stuff for water activity. We didn't have anything down at our way. But we had to go  
4 through the ROK section in order to get to the Aussie beach. We could use their stuff but  
5 we just had to get there. The ROKs are, they are as tough as nails. I have heard so many  
6 stories, when the ROKs were in town everybody is comfortable because they know no  
7 VC is going to attack. These guys I know and I have been in Korea a lot so I understand  
8 this. The ROKs were, even when they are sober they are dangerous. Now, when these  
9 guys were on the beach they are drunk. What we would do is we would have a group of  
10 guys going on up the beach right near the waterline so we are right on the hard part of the  
11 sand and we could run fast. You got some good footing on that hard sand but not where  
12 the funky sand is inside the beach area. We would get some guy to go with us who was  
13 real naïve to this issue and he's going to be the sacrificial lamb because the minute you  
14 go up the ROK beach they want to come out and screw with us. You know, they want to  
15 wrestle. They want to fight. They want to—I mean, not kill each other but that is kind of  
16 what they do anyway, that's just for fun. So they are coming on out in groups and these  
17 guys look like the Olympic guys that you watch on TV doing the rings and parallel bars  
18 and stuff like that. They had muscles coming out of their ears. What we would we was  
19 we would throw this sacrificial lamb to them and they are going to take that guy and beat  
20 the crap out of him, mess with him while the rest of us run like hell for the Aussie section  
21 of the beach because the ROKs won't come up there. I mean, they know their limits and  
22 stuff. That's how we got up to the Aussie section by, you know, sacrificing somebody.  
23 We never saw them again. We don't know if they lived or died or, you know, we just  
24 never saw them again. We don't know what happened to these people. We don't know.  
25 That was just the only way where we could have fun so we kind of figured it was worth  
26 it.

27 KC: I think now is a good time to ask this question having just gone through the  
28 Aussies and the Republic of Korean troops and your opinion of them. You have already  
29 mentioned that you didn't have—and I don't want to be putting words in your mouth—  
30 but it seems to me that your opinion of ARVN troops wasn't particularly high for a  
31 variety of reasons. What was your opinion—I shouldn't say opinion. What are your

1 thoughts on having put yourself in harm's way and all of these American troops and  
2 American allies but particularly yourself and other Americans with you, putting  
3 yourselves in this position, in this war ostensibly for the South Vietnamese and to see, to  
4 experience, their abilities or willingness to fight, something that you didn't believe was  
5 there. What are your impressions of that?

6 TE: There comes the word waste again. It was kind of like a lost cause and that  
7 was just at the surface level of seeing what was going on and how things were run. Later  
8 in hindsight or when you are sitting in an armchair you can start reading about the culture  
9 and you might be able to understand a little bit about why and how these things work in  
10 their culture, in the Vietnamese way of doing things. For instance, when the Koreans  
11 were doing their operations they would spend an inordinate amount of time planning. The  
12 Americans were yelling at them like, "Hurry it up! Come on! Let's get going. We want to  
13 get moving here." Well, the Koreans had at one time a 300-to-1 kill ratio and that was the  
14 result of their planning. They didn't lose people. Others kind of made a plan, went after  
15 it, and got their butts kicked. I mean, that's us a lot of time. Then the ARVNs kind of  
16 seemed like they went where they had to go and sometimes they would ditch and they  
17 would call in false reports or—they did a number of things which we didn't do. (Coughs)  
18 Excuse me. After a while, especially when I was working with the ARVNs, one thing  
19 was told to me that the province chiefs were supposed to be civilians only. Well, our  
20 province chief, Van Thai, was the province chief and he was a, I think a lieutenant  
21 colonel or a colonel, colonel I think it was so he was a military guy. I was thinking.  
22 "Well, I hear one thing but I'm seeing something else." I'm seeing how the Vietnamese  
23 people live. I'm driving down the road and I see people running and I get scared  
24 immediately, you know. What's happening? Ambush or what? There's this woman on the  
25 side of the road and she is down and she's pregnant and as it turns out she is going to  
26 deliver. My shirt wasn't probably all that clean but I took my jungle fatigue jacket off,  
27 my shirt, and I gave it to them to put underneath her, you know, on the dirt of the road.  
28 After a little bit everybody, you know, "Get away. Get away. *Di di*." So I took off and I  
29 lost my shirt. I hoped the kid lived and all that. I got to see people, so some of  
30 photographs show base camp life, the war machinery, and the Vietnamese culture. It was

1 a waste. This didn't have to happen. At least later I—well, even then I kind of figured this  
2 was crazy work what's going on. Anyway, am I getting to an answer there?

3 KC: No, no. That's perfect. I think you answered that pretty well. Well, how long  
4 were you with the 22<sup>nd</sup> there at Binh Thuy?

5 TE: I stayed five months in Rach Gia.

6 KC: I am sorry, Rach Gia.

7 TE: So I did seven months up at Lai Khe. I asked for a transfer after General  
8 Ware was killed and I think within a week or two I got reassigned to Rach Gia so I went  
9 down to Can Tho and kind of went through their indoctrination or, you know, showing  
10 me around 4 DASC, 4<sup>th</sup> Direct Air Support Center, because I was working with 3 DASC  
11 out of Saigon/Bien Hoa. Now I am in IV Corps and I had to learn all about that. I went  
12 down to Binh Thuy and stayed there and then I got assigned out to Rach Gia, so five  
13 months down in the Delta.

14 KC: What were your major impressions of the differences between what you saw  
15 in III Corps for six months or so to what you saw in IV Corps?

16 TE: It's in like a whole different world.

17 KC: Explain that to me.

18 TE: The vegetation was different. We had the rice paddies in the Delta. We were  
19 on top of a rubber plantation at Lai Khe. We had plenty of rivers and stuff up around  
20 Bien Hoa in that region but nothing like the Delta had. Tons of stuff down there,  
21 mangroves, we had the ocean, so there was a lot of water, a lot of geographical  
22 differences. The people also seemed different. Well, they had different lifestyles because  
23 of different food and resources and where they were living and what they lived on and  
24 around. Also, we were further away from people in places down in the Delta. We had  
25 Rach Gia but it was like I was stuck. We couldn't go anywhere. We are up at Lai Khe, I  
26 could get out. I could go to Bien Hoa. There wasn't much around our base camp, for sure,  
27 but it kind of seemed like when I was in the Delta it was a different lifestyle. I am sorry,  
28 that is redundant. I think mostly the culture, the people, the water, the topography, the  
29 geography of the area, animals—we didn't see any water buffalo up in Lai Khe, up in III  
30 Corps. You might have maybe on the coast but not in the higher areas and they were all  
31 over the place in the south. I mean the Delta. So things like that.

1 KC: What about the way the war was being fought from your perspective? How  
2 was that different from III Corps to IV Corps?

3 TE: Well, the Vietnamization in the Delta, as far as I was concerned, sucked.

4 KC: Why is that?

5 TE: It wasn't very productive. We've got all the U.S. and allied forces with all the  
6 materiel and all the support services but we have all of this miscommunication between  
7 English and Vietnamese speaking people in your higher ups. Binh Thuy at one time I was  
8 driving by and it was night time and I had my radio jeep and the radios were on all of a  
9 sudden they started crackling Binh Thuy was getting overrun by Viet Cong. They were  
10 on their airstrip. They were running up the airstrip and blowing up and shooting up the  
11 airplanes that were tied down. They were heading for the control tower. I heard the guys  
12 in the control tower screaming for help. I heard Seawolf, which was a Navy attack, I  
13 think it was like an attack chopper I mean it had guns and stuff from what I know.

14 KC: Sure, working with the brown water navy.

15 TE: He is airborne and this one Seawolf pilot is, I thought he was crying. He was  
16 saying, "I've got them in my sights. Give me the permission to fire." He needed  
17 permission and the damn Vietnamese wouldn't give it. The Americans in the control  
18 tower screaming bloody murder like, "Somebody protect us! They are shooting at the  
19 bottom of the building and," you know, "they are shooting our windows out and stuff!" I  
20 was listening to this stuff on the radio and I was going crazy because I couldn't do  
21 anything from where I was and now I started looking around and I am getting scared like  
22 somebody around me as well because I wasn't far from them. The relationship between  
23 the two branches of the, or the Vietnamese and the allied system often would not  
24 coordinate, wouldn't work together. That was one of the striking things for me at Binh  
25 Thuy when they overran us and I went over there I guess a day or two later and saw the  
26 mess. I remember that Seawolf pilot crying, yelling on the mike, you know, "I need  
27 permission! I need permission! I have got them in sights! I am ready to fire!" and nobody  
28 would give him damn permission.

29 KC: About when was this?

1           TE: I can't give you a date, honestly. I don't know. I really can't tell you. I think  
2 it was in '69 so it would have been the first like January, February, March or maybe  
3 Christmas to March of '69 when I left.

4           KC: Okay.

5           TE: Maybe in there is probably where it took place. I don't have a date. This is  
6 one of those (coughs) excuse me, this is one of those memories where I have this real  
7 strong visual memory of it, but I don't know where it came from or where it goes.

8           KC: Sure, I understand. I understand.

9           TE: The beginning of it is a foggy thing. I can remember Bob Hadad, the guy  
10 living next door to me in the hotel that we were living in in Rach Gia. I have got a  
11 photograph of him when we got out, his parents sent him a Christmas tree, a little tiny a  
12 couple of feet tall. I have got a picture of him, we had a little party in his room but  
13 anything before that or after that I don't remember a thing about. It's kind of funny where  
14 some of these memories kind of come up and, you know, how they come up out of the  
15 fog and how they go away in the fog for me. I remember certain things and I can  
16 remember real good details on some things and I can't remember squat on other things  
17 and it is kind of frustrating, but I guess that is how part of this played in my head, too, or  
18 my heart.

19          KC: What about your off-duty hours at Binh Thuy? Were they similar to what you  
20 were doing at Lai Khe—or I am sorry, not Binh Thuy but Rach Gia. Were they similar to  
21 what it was like at Lai Khe? Were they different? What were you doing?

22          TE: It was 180 degrees different because I lived in a hotel, the Cam Do Hotel. We  
23 were all billeted there or at least a bunch of us were billeted there. There was other places  
24 that Navy and some officers lived a few blocks away from us in the town but there was  
25 nothing to do. I played tennis with some Army guy because Van Thai, the province chief,  
26 had a tennis court next to his house. One time we played tennis up there. Let's see. I  
27 remember a bunch of guys went down to the ocean. I don't know how I knew, but  
28 somebody was saying there was VC out there in the water with boats. They are trying to  
29 circle us or go around us and go down the coast and I kind of think that was bullshit. I  
30 think what they were doing was they wanted to shoot somebody, they wanted to shoot  
31 something like a boat. They wanted some target practice. They were trigger happy and

1 had itchy trigger fingers. So I was down there with my M-16 because it sounded like,  
2 well, there is something really going on here. We got down there and there wasn't  
3 anything going on. There was a couple, I think, fishing vessels perhaps up there quite a  
4 ways out like, I don't know, a mile or so out in the water. You can kind of see them but  
5 they are far away. Well, the guys were shooting at them. Then there was this little boat  
6 pulled up on the beach down below us. We were kind of up on a bluff, I don't know,  
7 about ten or fifteen feet above the waterline. So these guys got their guns and they  
8 couldn't get—they didn't know if they were hitting somebody out there and I'm sure the  
9 people out there if they heard or saw anything coming their way they were getting further  
10 away. But the guys opened fire on this little wooden, I don't know, dug out or this kind of  
11 like a little fishing boat down, two or three people could get in it and they blew the crap  
12 out of that. Well, then all of a sudden somebody gets the word, uh-oh somebody is  
13 coming. Evidently the village chief or somebody of higher, like the mayor, comes trotting  
14 down the rice paddy or this little path and he comes trotting out there. He was not at all  
15 amused at this little game these Army guys were doing or whoever was doing this stuff. I  
16 knew better. I split real quick. I kind of hid in the grass and got back to the house or  
17 whatever. Either that night or the next day everybody got a pretty strong reprimand at  
18 chow hall or some sort of display of information that you are not supposed to be shooting  
19 local boats and all that sort of jazz. Somebody had talked to our guys and obviously the  
20 word filtered down and we got an ear full. That was an aberration. That didn't happen  
21 much. There was really nowhere to go and there was really not much to do. In the  
22 evenings the officers and the EM had a building of our own and so we had parties there.  
23 Ron Ely showed up one time. He played Tarzan, if you might remember. He was  
24 muscular. He did all of his stunts I found out. I didn't know we had some American  
25 nurses there in town until he showed up because they were on his arm.

26 KC: I'm sure it didn't take long.

27 TE: Oh, no. He was a real chick magnet. He's a real nice guy, though, very nice.  
28 Troy Donahue showed up. Jimmy Stewart was there and that's when you kind of found  
29 out how these little junkets go when these celebrities show up. The military isolates them  
30 from any and all information, any scares, any worries. Troy Donahue showed up at my  
31 TOC (tactical operations center) in my little area and I had this big map behind me and

1 there was only a couple feet between me and the desk and the map. We have troops in  
2 contact and we have TAC air going in so my radios are blasting. The officers, the majors  
3 and all the big wigs kind of let him walk into our little area, this little room, and he's  
4 hearing all this stuff going on and I am having to switch buttons and turn to different  
5 frequencies to pick up this that and the other thing and to communicate with the pilots  
6 and the ground troops and the TAC fighters. So I am kind of busy like, "Stay out of my  
7 way, Donahue. It's nice to see you, but you are in my way." We had a lull and he said,  
8 "Well, what are you doing? How are things going?" He was excited. I said, "Well, sir,  
9 what we have here is we have got troops in contact." I turned around and showed him on  
10 the map where this was. Then he turns to a major or some high rank and he says, "Look,  
11 didn't we just come from up above there and we just kind of went around there?" The  
12 major is kind of (clears throat), "I guess. Yeah, yeah. Right. We were in that area." "You  
13 guys didn't tell me that we had bombs going off and we are shooting people and having a  
14 war down there?" "Well, no," you know were just, "It's safe," you know, "We are not  
15 putting you in harm's way." You know, "Better you didn't know. It's not a big deal."  
16 What he is listening to is people screaming and yelling from the ground troops, the  
17 ARVNs, and calling for us and we are hearing the fighter bombers going in and what  
18 they are saying about stuff. We are hearing the FAC talk and everybody is jamming and  
19 cramming. Troy Donahue is really excited and what he is realizing is the officers are not  
20 telling him jack crap. He doesn't know anything. Here this war is all over and around him  
21 and under him and he hasn't got a foggiest idea. All of a sudden we all kind of realized  
22 how isolated he was being kept. The same thing for Ron Ely. There was some strange  
23 things that happened with some of these things. We had some Filipinos show up at that  
24 EM place that is now reverted back to their temple, thank god. It's a museum, really, but  
25 it was a temple at one time and it had been commandeered for officers as a BOQ  
26 (bachelor officers' quarters) or an officers quarters. Then the building next to it was this  
27 place we had our booze and our parties and stuff like that. Again, it's a silly thing but  
28 kind of indicative of the world of the war. Christmas 1968, Lieutenant JG (junior grade)  
29 McGrath was one of the advisory team guys, Navy guys. I was the only Air Force dude at  
30 the club and somebody, we had all been drinking, somebody got the idea we needed—  
31 Bob Hope was in-country, we needed Bob Hope to come down because Rach Gia got

1 nobody. So let's call and find Bob Hope and invite him down to Rach Gia. McGrath got  
2 the bid to be the guy who was going to make the phone call but they wanted to make sure  
3 that McGrath didn't screw around and didn't play games and stuff so they had another  
4 phone upstairs in this little room and they said that I should be the guy who listens in on  
5 the other phone to verify that McGrath is not pulling their leg, that he really is getting  
6 through because it is going to take a while. I'm on the other phone and we are listening  
7 and Sergeant Green is the guy on the switchboard at the time and as we have to do in  
8 Vietnam all the switchboard operators will have to come in on your line and they say,  
9 "Are you working? Are you working?" to verify that somebody is online or else they will  
10 pull the plug on you. We start going on this venture and Admiral McGrath introduces  
11 himself to the next switch and he says, "I'm Admiral McGrath. I am an old friend of Bob  
12 Hope's and I am trying to find him. Can you help me?" Well, the switch operator like  
13 Sergeant Green is just a sergeant. He's just an enlisted guy. There is usually an OIC,  
14 officer in charge, of the switch. Immediately with an admiral talking to you the EM turns  
15 it over to the officer immediately. We had these captains and lieutenants and a major I  
16 think at one time come on the line and say, "Sir! May I help you sir?" "This is Admiral  
17 McGrath, my boy. We are looking for Bob Hope. Do you know where he is or how we  
18 can find him?" "No, sir, but let me try, sir." All the time each switch that we go through  
19 is going to be coming online in a few moments to say, "Are you working?" and we have  
20 got to say, "Working. Working." So that's always going on. We went from Rach Gia to  
21 Can Tho to I don't know, shit, Saigon, Saigon to Cam Ranh Bay, Saigon to Long Binh,  
22 we went all over the South Vietnam place. We couldn't find the sucker. We didn't know  
23 where—everybody knew he was in-country but nobody knew exactly where at the  
24 moment and I think this was like Christmas Eve or the night before Christmas Eve.  
25 Finally, I mean, we were going through some heavy duty officers and switches and  
26 everybody was bending over backwards to take care of this Admiral McGrath who was  
27 calling for his friend Bob Hope. They were trying to make this happen and they were  
28 working hard. They would keep him online while they go off and ask other people, you  
29 know, "Where is Bob Hope? We've got this admiral online," you know. All of this sort  
30 of stuff is floating around. Green, Sergeant Green, was keeping us going here he was  
31 doing a yeoman's job. Finally, Dong—let's see. Where was he? He was at Dong Ba Tin

1 or he was at Cam Rahn Bay, one of the two, something like that. All of a sudden on the  
2 line we heard some guy, he was not military, you could tell in a second. It was civilian  
3 sort of lingo. He said "Hello." McGrath said, "This is Admiral McGrath. I am looking for  
4 Bob Hope." All of a sudden you could hear the voices, the audience roar in laughter. We  
5 had arrived. This was a manager in the back stage for Hope. We could hear all the stuff  
6 out there between McGrath and myself and all of a sudden McGrath fell apart. He started  
7 whimpering and crying. He said, "Oh, this is Lieutenant McGrath. I'm down in the Delta  
8 and please can Bob Hope come down and see us? Oh, we want to see him so bad. We are  
9 so lonely down here." Oh, he just fell apart. He just spilled the beans. This guy for a  
10 second just was quite on the other end and I thought, "Oh, shit," you know, "He is going  
11 to get the cops or something on us immediately." He was so sincere. He said, "I am so  
12 sorry. I really am. I know how much this much mean to you but Bob Hope is booked up  
13 solid. I mean, we can't get an hour extra out of the schedule," and this guy was really  
14 apologetic. I mean when he realized somebody is talking to somebody back there and  
15 putting their life on the line, so to speak, he was just so humbled. He was real nice to us  
16 and he just basically said, "It just can't work. It isn't going to work. Bob is moving off  
17 even tonight and we have got all these places to go and people to see and stuff and I am  
18 sorry. I am just sorry." McGrath said, "Well, thank you so much. We really appreciate  
19 your effort and have a good life," and all that bit. So we hung up. I came downstairs and  
20 we are just laughing, McGrath and I, because we got there, we found Bob Hope but we  
21 just didn't get to talk to him. We are all just jamming and ramming about this and we are  
22 drinking and just I am verifying that we got through and all that sort of bit. We are  
23 drinking and, okay, Bob Hope can't come but, you know, what the hell? Have another  
24 beer. I guess we kind of just played it through the evening and into the night drinking and  
25 all that jazz. The next morning bright and early, nobody is up, and the phone is ringing all  
26 over the place. Sergeant Green is on the line. "Gentlemen, get your butts out of bed and  
27 out of town. Brass is on the way." We had three choppers set in in the short strip where  
28 the Army guys land. There were—I think the lowest rank was a major. There were big  
29 guys onboard all these choppers. Sergeant Green had the switch and they immediately  
30 went to the switch and I think some of the bigger guys got in his face immediately and  
31 said, "Sergeant, tell us where is this Admiral McGrath? It came from here. We are sure it

1 came from down here,” or something like this. “We are looking for him and we have  
2 been all over the place and nobody seems to know but you guys you have got to know  
3 this.” Sergeant Green just, “Sir, I have no idea what you are talking about. We don’t have  
4 anybody here like that.” Seriously, everybody had split to the four winds in the town. We  
5 were nowhere to be found. These officers stuck around for half a day or so ramming  
6 around talking to our officers. The name was familiar but, you know, no admiral. Nobody  
7 on the switch knew about this and everybody else was out doing business. “We are all  
8 working, sir. We’ve got a war to fight down here. Nobody could be doing that during the  
9 night. This just doesn’t sound like anything that could happen here.” The officers packed  
10 up and got in their choppers and went away and then we kind of come out of our hidey  
11 holes. Obviously, we are kind of watching what we are doing at this point, everybody is.  
12 We got through it. Nobody got busted and Admiral McGrath, rest his soul wherever he is,  
13 you know, he and I are the only two that really heard that conversation but the rest of  
14 them could hear kind of what he was saying at least. Anyway that was, that was fun.

15 KC: Very good, very good. Well, listen, Mr. Engelmann I told you we would go  
16 for a couple hours in this session so why don’t we stop there for today and we can pick it  
17 up at another time.

18 TE: Very good.

**Interview with Ted Engelmann**  
**Session [2] of [2]**  
**16 September 2008**

1           KC: This is Kelly Crager continuing an oral history interview with Mr. Ted  
2 Engelmann. Today is 16 September. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr. Engelmann is  
3 joining us from his home in Colorado. Good morning, Mr. Engelmann.

4           TE: Good morning, Kelly. How are you doing?

5           KC: Doing very well, thank you. You mentioned a moment ago off the recording  
6 that you wanted to go back to Lai Khe for an incident that you thought was significant for  
7 your experiences there. So can you go ahead and pick that story up for me, please?

8           TE: Sure. What I remember was at Lai Khe, which was—I was in the section  
9 for—I was in the area for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, of  
10 the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division. We had at the division headquarters a Red Cross representative.  
11 I think the guy's name was Larry something, obviously a civilian, and he was over at our  
12 hooch an awful lot because we had beer and booze and stuff. Larry came over one day  
13 and told me that he had gotten a message through the Red Cross looking for me from my  
14 parents trying to find out whether or not I was okay because I had not written to my  
15 parents, which was not a good thing at that point in time. We were encouraged to write to  
16 our families to let them know we were all right.

17          KC: Why weren't you writing—

18          TE: I had an attitude which was very angry at the war and what was going on at  
19 that time and shutting off my family was one of the ways I exhibited that attitude. I have  
20 all the letters I wrote to my father and my parents and also all the copies of all the letters  
21 my father wrote to me, which are numerous; several file folders' worth. I only wrote  
22 about, I am not positive, I think it was something like eighteen or twenty letters during  
23 the whole year to them at least that I got back. At this time I hadn't written anything for  
24 several weeks, evidently. So when Larry told me that the Red Cross was, my parents  
25 were checking up on me through the Red Cross I think I got angry in two ways. One, that  
26 my parents were checking on as if I wasn't a big boy or couldn't take care of myself and  
27 the idea, two, that it was like an official situation. It was kind of scary in a way because if  
28 they had been in the Air Force base, not on an Army base camp where we were orphans,

1 we Air Force guys. Army regs didn't seem to apply to us too much. But if this had been  
2 in the Air Force and had been a little bit closer to my system I probably would have been  
3 given an Article-15 for not having written and causing this situation to escalate to this  
4 level that shouldn't have happened. I told Larry kind of the angry sort of tone as I  
5 remember it. I told him to tell my family I had no more holes in my body then what I  
6 came over there with. I kind of dismissed him and kind of was PO'ed and that sort of an  
7 attitude. I remember that was one of the issues or one of the events that took place that  
8 had to do with my frustration, my anger, my whatever it was towards the war and  
9 everybody and anybody who is associated with it. I think that was one of the—I could  
10 look it up maybe in the records and get a little bit better date on that but I have a feeling it  
11 was towards the end of the summer of '68 which then kind of got us close to September  
12 which when Major General Ware was killed in September 13<sup>th</sup> of '68 that was the straw  
13 that broke the camel's back and I wanted out of there; I wanted to get a reassignment. I  
14 know I was kind of behaving a little passive aggressive and was not happy and a few  
15 other things. My attitude was pretty well in the shitter towards the end of the—at least by  
16 the end of the summer of '68 which was about five or six months, four, five, six months  
17 into the tour of duty. That at least was one of the major moments, events that took place  
18 that kind of recognized and symbolized some of my attitude at that time. That's kind of  
19 just a moment of recognition for what was going on. Again, I can go back and look at the  
20 letters and I could read them, I suppose, and kind of give you some insight from that  
21 perspective. At any rate that is just something I wanted to bring up that I had forgotten  
22 from our last session.

23 KC: Well, why do you—you go to this a little bit, but why do you think you were  
24 taking this out in this way towards your parents? Other than their—you felt like they  
25 didn't trust you or that you weren't a grown-up or something like that. Other than that  
26 was there a reason why you were reluctant to communicate with your parents? Was there  
27 something larger about your experiences there in Vietnam?

28 TE: Are you a psychologist now?

29 KC: No, I am certainly not. And please feel free to disregard that.

30 TE: I would say probably. Now, trying to dig into my little what do call it,  
31 emotional brain here trying to figure it out. You know, it seemed as though, it seemed as

1    though there was this—I'm in a base camp. I'm in Air Force in an Army base camp and I  
2    have got a pretty cush life comparatively to the Army guys. These guys lived in GP-6 and  
3    -8 tents. Some of them had wood floors and a lot of them had dirt floors. We had a nice  
4    hooch and we were staying there. We were permanent party, so to speak. I had a nice life,  
5    so to speak, and it was easy, it was fun. Once you got the hang of it, you know, it was  
6    almost like camping out or something. Other than the war going on around us it was a  
7    decent life. Here was this stretch between—at moments there is war going on and you're  
8    scared shitless and in other times it's as if we are just having this one great big old party.  
9    It is kind of fun and games and you've got little glitches of life to accommodate, you  
10   know, it's more fun than it is stressful, I thought. Nobody knew what was going on. The  
11   outside world had no concept. I was trying to relate to my folks and trying to be the nice  
12   kid and all of that that I had been raised to be. I was even trying to take I think it was a  
13   correspondence course with Indiana University in psychology in like 101 or something of  
14   that sort. I didn't complete it. I don't remember even going very far in it but I was trying  
15   to have this normal life but it wasn't easy. I think there possibly was this connection.  
16   Here you've got this you know your family, my family, and I'm trying to relate to them  
17   as a family group like, you know, my mom and dad, my sister, and grandmother and all  
18   this and that's kind of in one world of thinking and feeling and at the same time I have  
19   got other stuff going around me which, I guess it's causing me a lot of stress due to the  
20   aspects of what it was in the war whether it was just being part of it or seeing the results  
21   of whatever else was kind of getting under my skin and in my system that I didn't agree  
22   with. There wasn't anything I could do about that except and then I went into a passive-  
23   aggressive mode, I guess, or whatever it is to deny—and hurt the ones who were closest  
24   to me, the ones who care about me the most. I'm not sure if that is something a lot of us  
25   do. You don't strike out at those who could care less and don't even know you. You hurt  
26   the ones who are closest to you your family member whether it is spouses or your  
27   children or your parents or your siblings or something. Besides the fact my father being  
28   the officer and his letters, when you look at those and read them they are real interesting,  
29   his perspective in life and how he writes and so on. Then you see my letters and there is  
30   one time I write to him and tell him something to the effect that I need to sit down with  
31   you and talk to you. I'm different. I'm changed. There is something going on here. I need

1 help. I kind of recognized that and I was reaching out and he kind of acknowledged that  
2 and said, “Well, do something.” But it was kind from his secure position, like he wasn’t  
3 going to get—he knew what I was talking about but he wasn’t going to get close to it.

4 KC: Right.

5 TE: So that kind of also—you know, the sense comes through, the feeling comes  
6 through then that kind of maybe puts a wedge between us. So then I move back away  
7 from him and away from Mom. He is the one who is writing all the time. And, again, I  
8 have—he kept copies of every one of his letters. He made carbon copies and I have got  
9 them. I don’t know. That’s kind of—that’s one of the ways I can look at it at least right at  
10 the moment.

11 KC: Sure, sure. What was your parents’ reaction to this attitude of yours? I would  
12 think that part of it would be coming through in the fact that you weren’t writing as  
13 regularly as maybe you had before, but what were your parents making of what was  
14 becoming of you? Did you have any idea?

15 TE: No, I don’t. I didn’t and I still don’t. Unfortunately, both of them are gone  
16 and the letters I got, you know, they are sharing their concern generally, you know, they  
17 want me to be okay, don’t get bullet holes or something like that in me. But there’s also  
18 this quietness, nobody is talking about the elephant in the living room sort of thing. Being  
19 real—well, Mom has gone through it already with Dad after World War II. Evidently,  
20 when we were living in Woodland Courts at Indiana University when I was a baby just  
21 born and he is on his GI Bill we are living in these small little trailers I’d asked Mom at  
22 one point about what life was like for us and she said all these little trailers that had no  
23 bathrooms, that was in the semi-trailer down the corner, all these guys were—so many of  
24 them, I should say, had all these dreams and you would hear yelling and there is all sorts  
25 of—a lot of emotional stress going on with these World War II vets and nobody talked  
26 about it. Everybody heard it through the walls but nobody said anything because they all  
27 just recognized it and kind, I guess, sucked it up and went to their studies and kept the  
28 homes together. The whole concept was push forward and have the families and let’s get  
29 working and let’s get life going. Perhaps that is part of their model and they had already  
30 been through that and now they are seeing their kid somewhat do this so they just kind of  
31 be quiet again and just kind of let it play itself how in however I do that. I suppose they

1 were just concerned that I am okay. When I came back from Vietnam only Dad came to  
2 the Albany airport. Mom didn't come. She waited at home for me, so Dad was the one  
3 that picked me up. I don't know if that is indicative of some of this—you know, how  
4 their social system and how their system worked. Dad was the one who was always  
5 putting the letters out and anyway that's kind of how it played out but I don't really know  
6 other than—I don't know how they really reacted or how they felt or what their issues  
7 were. I never really got a good sense of that, not even from my sister. She didn't say very  
8 much about it or either didn't know too much, either.

9 KC: Okay, that takes care of this episode in Lai Khe. Let's bring you back to  
10 Rach Gia there in late '68, early 1969. Was there anything else you wanted to relate for  
11 the record while you are still here in Vietnam in Rach Gia?

12 TE: Let's see, I forget exactly how I—if I may have covered this previously. I  
13 think I did. The fact that the pilot, the FAC that we flew with or we supported, the FACs  
14 lived at Binh Thuy. The planes were kept at Binh Thuy air base ou side of Can Tho. We  
15 had to drive with the radio jeep or a slick out to the long strip at Rach Soi quite a few  
16 kilometers out there sometimes in the dark of the morning or in the evening going out or  
17 coming back and we had the overlays for the battle plans and all the freaks and all the call  
18 signs, etc., with us. We drove alone. There were two Air Force guys, myself and Robert  
19 Kastner, Kastner K-A-S-T-N-E-R; both of us were E-4 sergeants, Air Force. That drive  
20 out there, for me at any rate, put knots in my stomach because we had to go through  
21 bridges that were covered by Ruff Puffs and I was concerned getting—I did get sniped at  
22 a couple of times. Just the stupidity of having us go out to the long strip and not use the  
23 short strip which was a little airstrip that the Army guys used for their Birddogs, same  
24 aircraft as ours but the Air Force thought the ground was, the rock size was too big or  
25 something for our wheels or whatever. Being set up like that by the Air Force, the system  
26 allowed us to be put in jeopardy like that. Now, one of the pilots might have been staying  
27 at Binh Thuy or at Rach Gia with us and then he would be taken out and they would swap  
28 each other so one guy would stay at Rach Gia for a few days, perhaps, and the other guy  
29 would—there would be another pilot at Binh Thuy and Binh Thuy would fly, Rach Gia  
30 guy would meet them and they'd swap, Rach Gia guy flies back to Binh Thuy for a few  
31 days, that sort of thing. They just would swap each other. I know we had that going on

1 but, again, just the drive out to the long strip put a real anger in me which came up  
2 several times later, many years after Vietnam. Just the idea that the Air Force would  
3 allow that to happen, would put its people in jeopardy that way to me that was wrong. So  
4 that was a case where it really ticked me off when I saw that happening. Just kind of  
5 another notch, if you will, in the belt of the issues that I had with the war and with  
6 system, military otherwise.

7 KC: Like you say, this would be the second time at least that this has happened to  
8 you. You felt the same or a similar frustration, I think it is safe to say, with the 19<sup>th</sup> TASS  
9 and here again at Rach Gia with these trips out the long strip with the 22<sup>nd</sup>. It seems like,  
10 I get the feeling, anyway, that regardless of where you would have gone next it would  
11 have very, very difficult for you to escape this feeling of frustration with the entire war  
12 effort and the military's role here. Is that safe to say?

13 TE: I think so and, again, I think part of it is taking the context, you know, if  
14 somebody is listening to this. I'm twenty, I just had turned twenty-two when I was in  
15 Rach Gia. I had a birthday then. I was twenty-two and I was twenty-one when I got to  
16 Vietnam. I'm in the Air Force, we have got a four-year enlistment. It's kind of a long  
17 term sort of a process thinking attitude. Rank does not come quick. It was two years  
18 before I got to E-4 and I was one of the group that got E-4 quicker than almost anybody  
19 else had ever seen in two years and that is because we went to our tech school, we got  
20 extra—we took classes at our first duty station and we had all this stuff going for us  
21 which kind of pushed our rank through our extension course work. So I had this E-4  
22 position and I am at this age and I am not—I am not in combat arms. That is not my job  
23 so—everybody has got their own way of dealing with this stuff. Mine was, again, I  
24 already was kind of ticked off with the war and I didn't believe in it and I didn't like it  
25 and I saw various ways that this was not a good experience. When I'm put in these sort of  
26 positions it's probably—I am saying something to myself maybe I am not being as  
27 flexible as I could and should be or ought to be but I'm saying, "This stuff sucks. This is  
28 not good. I don't like this." The Army guys who were in combat arms, infantry, 11-  
29 Bravos and so on, they may have the same feelings, however, their job is different than  
30 mine and so maybe I'm kind of, you know, being a little arrogant in all this by saying,  
31 "This wasn't in my job description," yet I am experiencing and exposed to this stuff,

1 these activities, these issues, you know, this whole craziness. That kind of, along with  
2 who I am and where I come from, kind of sets me up for some of these long term  
3 attitudes and issues. I have a feeling—I already had PTSD by the time I was ten years old  
4 from my dad, whether that be from his World War II experiences or his family of origin  
5 but I already had a bunch of stuff and was trying to be—I already had an issue and so this  
6 just compounded it. Here, given the age, given my responsibilities, my rank, where I was,  
7 what I was doing under those circumstances it just kind of added to it. I think, again, for  
8 each individual where we go in life, what we have as an experience and what we do with  
9 it has a lot to do with—and how do you cope with it, or how do you process it, what do  
10 you do with it? That's what kind of came later in my life so I kind of want to say that to  
11 help anybody recognize that obviously we are all different and that's I kind of just how I  
12 processed my situation. Again, it would be interesting perhaps to analyze my letters, you  
13 know, what I said and how I said it because I was pretty upset with Mark Rudd and  
14 others who took over the Columbia president, Columbia University president's office and  
15 stuff as war protesters. Yet after a while I kind of empathized with them or sympathized  
16 with them, so I had a switch over. At any rate that is kind of at that stage of life. I just  
17 kind of think it is interesting and unique to see how everybody, how I was operating  
18 different from other people.

19 KC: Well, very good. Thank you.

20 TE: We can carry on.

21 KC: Okay, let's work you out of Vietnam here now with the 22<sup>nd</sup> there at Rach  
22 Gia.

23 TE: Okay, basically I was waiting for orders and we put in a dream sheet, where  
24 we wanted to be stationed next. All the paperwork I generated went down the tube  
25 somewhere else. Evidently, the Air Force screwed it up, lost it, or whatever. I started  
26 getting real nervous because I didn't have orders and I was getting real short.

27 KC: Where did you want to go on your dream sheet? What did you put in for?

28 TE: I forget now where but I don't know. I might have put down Colorado  
29 Springs at Peterson Air Force Base or something like that but it wasn't back to Georgia,  
30 which is where I went. I ended up going back to the 5<sup>th</sup> MOB because they had nothing  
31 else better to do with me. Wherever it was that I wanted to go, and honestly I don't

1 remember, but—maybe, like I said, Colorado Springs but everything came down and as I  
2 understood it they didn't have—you know, I was supposed to get out. I was short. They  
3 scrambled for an assignment and they just put me right back where I came from and that  
4 ticked me off. I remember going to Tan Son Nhut. I was dragging my duffle bag. I had—  
5 I sent back in a box—I had the smallest box I could, they possibly had to send back  
6 personal effects. I had nothing I wanted to send back. I just more or less left with kind of  
7 what I came with, a few uniforms, summer weight uniforms and so on that I had to  
8 maintain with me by Air Force regs so that when you left you would dress in your—our  
9 1505s, our summer weight Air Force uniforms. I went to Tan Son Nhut. I ran into Moldy  
10 the crew chief out of Lai Khe, Moldenhouer, Alan Moldenhouer from California. Moldy  
11 was working on, I forget, O-1s, O-2s, something like that at Tan Son Nhut. I don't know,  
12 somehow I ran into him. I was in Tan Son Nhut for two or three days, I think. I was in a  
13 transit barracks there. I have a black-and-white photograph of me standing out in front of  
14 the transit barracks, no shirt on, just my trousers. I don't look very happy. I have got a  
15 frown on my face. I kind of think that is representative of where my attitude was at the  
16 moment. Moldy and I had a beer. I can remember we were upstairs, I think, in like Tan  
17 Son Nhut in the lounge or something we were overlooking the tarmac and aircraft and we  
18 had a beer kind of shooting the shit for a little while. I guess I was ready to, I suppose,  
19 head out shortly and board the plane. I don't remember hardly anything on the way back.  
20 I remember we landed at Travis. I grabbed my gear. I headed for San Francisco airport  
21 We came in late at night, again, from my understanding that was to prevent protesters  
22 from seeing us, getting into altercations and stuff like that. I grabbed the red-eye flight. I  
23 ended up in Albany, New York. The next morning, this was in March, there is snow on  
24 the ground in Albany, man, and I am in my 1505s, excuse me. I am in my 1505s. I am  
25 freezing cold because I have no winter gear whatsoever. I don't have any baggage. Well,  
26 I have baggage in checked baggage. I didn't have it with me to fly with so I am freezing.  
27 Dad showed up and picked me up at the airport and then we drove back to Oneonta;  
28 correction, we drove to Johnstown. I just kind of remember, again, I had this vision we  
29 are landing in Travis. I remember going to San Francisco. I remember getting into  
30 Albany because it was stupid. It was cold and snowy then Dad getting me and taking me  
31 to the car and then driving back. The next thing I had a few days' leave. I was supposed

1 to be back in Robins, Georgia, shortly, like, I don't know, in a week or two. I had some  
2 cash on me from, I don't know, from the savings I guess I had during the war. I went  
3 down to a VW dealer and I ended up buying a VW Super Beetle as opposed to a little  
4 sportier car. My thought was the Super Beetle was kind of a compromise between a  
5 bigger car and a sports car. I had this thought that I somehow was going to settle down  
6 like have a family one of these days really quickly. That was obviously stupid but that's  
7 kind of why I went to the Super Beetle. I had this cash on hand and Mom and I went to  
8 this dealer just down the road a ways from us and the salesman, and I believe he knew I  
9 was back from Vietnam and this guys wouldn't have anything to do with me.

10 KC: Really?

11 TE: I swear, I couldn't give him the—I almost couldn't buy the car from him, he  
12 wouldn't deal with me. I was about ready literally within a few seconds of giving the  
13 cash on the desk to this other person there and say, "I will buy from you and you get the  
14 commission or whatever it is, but I am getting really ticked off with this idiot over here  
15 giving me the run around and not dealing with me and not telling me the straight scoop  
16 and helping me buy the stupid car. Here is the one I want. Cobalt blue. This one, exactly,  
17 and I want it now." That was one of my first experiences that I perceived that somebody  
18 was kind of giving me static because I had been in Vietnam or I was in the military or  
19 something like that. They just weren't, they weren't jumping too fast. They weren't  
20 helping out at all. I got the car and I ended up driving to Georgia and kind of renewing  
21 old acquaintances down there. I had nine months to deal with the Air Force. I went on  
22 TDY a couple of times, went to Roosevelt Roads Naval Air Station down in Puerto Rico  
23 once. I was wearing my jungle fatigues and the Navy told our first shirt that we couldn't  
24 wear uniforms or shirts outside of our pants because Navy regs didn't allow them to wear  
25 their shirts outside of their pants so we had to be like Navy regs. So we were in formation  
26 out in front of god and everybody and the first shirt tells a few of the guys like myself  
27 who were wearing our jungle fatigues outside of our—normally, we had these big  
28 pockets on the front of the jungle fatigues. It's not a shirt you put inside your trousers.  
29 The first shirt told us, you know, to tuck them in and I said, "Okay," and he said, "Now."  
30 "You mean drop trousers and tuck them in now? Are you kidding me?" He said, "No," so  
31 we did. It was hotter there than it was in Vietnam. It was horrible. You know, all of a

1 sudden we started running in to this, these, I don't know, chickenshit rules and regs  
2 again. We went to the movie theatre one night and we didn't pay much attention to it but  
3 on the backs of the seats in the movie theatre, we're familiar with at least the back row in  
4 the first section because there is an aisle that is like a cross so you have four quadrants of  
5 seats. In the back row of that first section which it is a good seat but that back row is four  
6 contingency alert troops in case you have got to make a move, you have got to get out so  
7 you don't want to be sitting in the middle of some square of people and having to roll out  
8 when there's a—when you get a signal or a call out. We were familiar with some seating  
9 arrangements for special purposes but all these Navy guys, every rank had a seat and we  
10 didn't care about that so we didn't even know what these letters and numbers meant  
11 anyway. We were sitting anywhere we damn well pleased and all of a sudden these Navy  
12 guys started showing up and started tapping us on the shoulder and hitting us and telling  
13 us to move. The movie is just starting and they are still filling in. All of a sudden there  
14 was a mess going on because we weren't interested in getting up. The movie is starting  
15 and we don't care who they are, sit down and shut up. They wanted their rightful seats  
16 and we didn't care and we didn't know, so we were running into troubles all over the  
17 place it seemed like with the Navy guys. This is also the place where I think I might have  
18 told we had—we got the frogs out and the Army guys showed up and we put the frogs in  
19 the water because the Army guys went in the swimming pool late at night when it was  
20 dark.

21 KC: No, you haven't told me that.

22 TE: I didn't?

23 KC: No.

24 TE: Okay. We were in Rosey Roads because there was Exotic Dancer #2  
25 operations. It was a joint Marine, Army, Air Force, Navy operations and it was—it was, I  
26 don't know, dropping people from perfectly good airplanes, jumping out of them and  
27 doing all sorts of stuff. So we were there to help set up communications. As we were  
28 located in this barracks just by ourselves for a while, our 5<sup>th</sup> MOB group real soon  
29 came—we were there early to set up airbase and all the communications systems and  
30 antennas and stuff and tune them up and then showed up the Army guys. A bunch of  
31 yahoos and they showed up—they were put into the barracks next to ours. Well, we had

1 this nice little swimming pool and the pool had a nice little diving board in it, It's a small  
2 pool but it was nice. It had a little chain-link fence around it probably about four feet tall  
3 or something like that. The Army guys were starting to go just raise hell and, you know,  
4 being uncontrollable little idiots, of course that's the way we look at it. The first night  
5 they were there they didn't go during the daytime because they were busy doing stuff so  
6 they went out and found a swimming pool at night. They jumped the fence and went in  
7 the pool and were raising hell and drinking and just carousing around and making all  
8 sorts of trouble. We had this one big Quonset hut that we had a lot of our radio gear set  
9 up in. For several nights a lot of things—we had been learning the system on the island.  
10 The guys had the doors open on the ends, big screen doors. They had a screen there but  
11 they opened up the interior door which is the solid one just to get air flowing through  
12 because this place was hotter than the dickens and we didn't have AC in the place. This  
13 was in '69 probably May or June, something like that. What they—they had lights on and  
14 it was a 24/7 operation so we were running all the time. Pretty soon the guys inside were  
15 hearing these big thumps like people were knocking on the doors or something. Well,  
16 they go to the door and they look out and nobody is there. All over the building they  
17 would hear these thumps. They were getting kind of skittish. They weren't too sure what  
18 is going on like somebody is playing games on them or something. Finally they started  
19 looking around and they took a torch outside, a flashlight and they found these [gigantic]  
20 frogs, toads, whatever the hell they were. I mean they were as big as—they were half as  
21 big to as big as a football. They were just humongous little buggers. What they were  
22 doing is they would see the light evidently and they were jumping towards the light. They  
23 had windows on the side of the building and the frogs were coming up and they would go  
24 towards the light. They would jump and they would hit the wall or they would hit the  
25 screen door and they would jump away and they would come back again. That is why the  
26 guys weren't seeing them at first. Well, then we started realizing these little amphibians  
27 were all over the place as well as crabs and other things that were on the road skiddling  
28 across. The locals would grab them and sell them and eat them or sell them themselves  
29 and make some bucks. We thought these Army guys are out there raising hell at night  
30 causing us no end of misery because we couldn't get some sleep. One of these guys  
31 figured out let's bring some frogs in. We got a whole bag full of these things and three or

1 four of us guys brought a whole mess of these frogs in from that Quonset hut area that we  
2 found these frogs bumping around again late at night. We figured the Army guys would  
3 be showing up after chow. They are going to go get their swimsuits on. It's going to be  
4 dark pretty soon. We went on over and threw all these frogs into this swimming pool area  
5 because they had the fence around it so they weren't going to go anywhere. Pretty soon  
6 we were just kind of hanging around waiting for whatever was going to happen and, sure  
7 enough, the Army guys came trooping out their barracks late at night, went on over to the  
8 swimming pool, beers, you know, and yelling and screaming and having a good time, you  
9 would hear the splashing and stuff like this. All of a sudden you heard some screaming  
10 and honestly it was funny to hear kids, grown men, scream like this. They were in the  
11 water and these frogs were around the place and they were in the water evidently, too,  
12 and these guys would bump into them or they would be stepping on them or they didn't  
13 see them. There was no light out there. They just knew where the water was. You could  
14 kind of see it, I guess, in the light of the night but there were no street lights and there  
15 were no lights in the pool. The frogs were getting to them—they were just meeting each  
16 other late at night in the dark. They had no idea what it was you know snakes, what but  
17 screams that for a little while until these guys figured out what was going on at least they  
18 knew what the animal was, we just had a lot of laughs. I think they probably heard us  
19 laughing in our barracks and they kind of realized that we had played a trick on them.  
20 Pretty soon—I can't remember what happened after that, whether we had any rivalries or  
21 something. We kind of went to bed having a little bit of a chuckle because at least we  
22 scared the little Army guys who supposedly were pretty hot stuff. These were all the  
23 paratroopers and the guns and stuff like that in the world and here they go swimming and  
24 they start screaming like little kids because of a bunch of frogs. Anyway, that was fun  
25 and games at Rosey Roads.

26 KC: Let me, if I may, Mr. Engelmann, take you back a little bit and follow up on  
27 some questions that I had. Let's take you back to Tan Son Nhut.

28 TE: I'm moving off.

29 KC: When you first arrived in Vietnam, I believe you said you arrived at Bien  
30 Hoa, if I am not mistaking, mistaken. One of the things that you recalled was how crisp  
31 your uniforms were, how young, fresh, I think naïve is a fair word to use especially when

1 you looked at those who were going to get on the plane after you, the grizzled veterans  
2 who had been there for a year, who had spent their tour in Vietnam. You remarked how  
3 unkempt they looked, how roughed they looked, how distant, I don't want to use the  
4 word angry, but I think you are probably getting the image that I am trying to portray  
5 here. When you got on the plane in Tan Son Nhut or when you are waiting to get on the  
6 plane at Tan Son Nhut, how did you feel about your appearance and who you were at that  
7 time compared to those who were likely getting off the plane or getting off other planes  
8 who you encountered there in 1969? Did you see that from the other perspective then?

9 NE: Well, I don't remember other people who were with me, to be honest with  
10 you, when I was leaving. I don't have much of a memory of that other than being with  
11 Moldy, having a beer. But I was in my 1505s so I wasn't in jungle fatigues.

12 KC: Right.

13 NE: I was not allowed to fly in jungle fatigues, I was told. So any Air Force  
14 personnel we had to come out looking decent. A bunch of the Army guys were in—as I  
15 remember it, had some different other uniforms. Some of them were in khakis but there  
16 was a bunch of them, it looked to me as I remember, in jungle fatigues. Maybe they were  
17 utilities. I am not positive right now. But it seemed to me as though, this is where the  
18 mind can play tricks, I hardly have any recollection of the return trip at all other than just  
19 being a Tan Son Nhut with Moldy dragging my duffle bag down the road. I don't—that's  
20 kind of weird. I mean, some of this stuff is really interesting that I don't have any  
21 recollection whatsoever. It's like it didn't even happen almost.

22 KC: I'll be darned. Okay, well, what about this, my next question here and it is  
23 much more general, much more broad and interpretive. You are leaving Vietnam after a  
24 year's tour there. You have been frustrated at a number of different turns while you were  
25 there. I think it is fair to say you were questioning the U.S. role and your role in all of  
26 this. When you were leaving Vietnam, you are leaving, you are going back to The World.  
27 What are your thoughts on your experiences as you are leaving? What is going through  
28 your mind as you are leaving Vietnam?

29 TE: I think I was just glad to get the hell out of there.

30 KC: Okay.

1           TE: I had—I also felt, and this is a tear inside of me and it still is in a way, there  
2 are people who I know who are still there. Now, they are all in different locations. The  
3 Donut Dollie I used to go with up at Lai Khe, she went to Dong Ba Thin up near Cam  
4 Rahn Bay. We went to Bangkok on R&R in November of '68. I didn't touch her. We had  
5 two different hotels we stayed at. We went around and so on but she was riding and one  
6 of the FACs I flew with, Ed Stevenson, a captain, who had been a smoke jumper out of  
7 Yakama, Washington, he wrote me, Linda wrote after I got back but, again, I had these  
8 people that I knew and I hated leaving them. I was torn. I wanted to get the hell out of  
9 there but at the same time there were different people that I really cared for that I didn't  
10 want to leave or I didn't want to leave the country because they were still there. It was  
11 really hard leaving them. I remember the way I ended up doing that was I cut everybody  
12 off when I left country. It's almost as if that place didn't exist in my life anymore, those  
13 people didn't exist. I don't think I wrote hardly, if I ever did. I didn't connect back to  
14 Vietnam once I left.

15           KC: Oh.

16           TE: I just shut it off.

17           KC: That's very interesting. Well, once you—

18           TE: And I hated that. I mean, I hurt myself by doing that.

19           KC: Did you make any efforts once you got back home over the years and had  
20 time to think about this, did you ever make any efforts to try to get back into contact with  
21 any of these people?

22           TE: The Donut Dollie I did and I did find her. I know where she's at but we don't  
23 have hardly any connection whatsoever. I can call her but she has never made any  
24 overture to me. I visited her, I think on my—I am not sure. One of the times I was driving  
25 I had a car and I stopped by. She lived in Townsend, Maryland. I stopped by and saw her,  
26 she was back. But I didn't really search out anybody. I didn't care. I didn't want to. I was  
27 angry.

28           KC: Right.

29           TE: I had nine years of an angry fog I was in once I got back so I didn't search. I  
30 didn't look. It wasn't until, I guess 1987 when I went to Australia to Sydney for the first  
31 welcome home parade of the Aussies that I even asked about one of the FACs I flew with

1 McCauley Cottrell, who was a flight officer at the time. “Mac the FAC,” as he was  
2 called, was well known by the guy I asked if he knew this gent. Yeah, Mac had stayed in  
3 the service and he was a group captain, that meant in our terms he was a full bird colonel  
4 and he was a base commander at Richmond RAFF Base. I ended up meeting Mac and,  
5 you know, we have stayed connected and I have seen him, I stop at his place, I stay at his  
6 house in Canberra when I am there but he is the only person I have run into that I was  
7 with in Vietnam. I only had thirteen—there were only thirteen of us at the base camp at  
8 Lai Khe. There was one other Air Force guy, there was a bunch of Army dudes that I  
9 don’t remember too much at all at Rach Gia. There is nobody that I have connected with  
10 except Mac, I know where the Donut Dollie is, and that’s about it. Unlike my father, who  
11 used to go to annual reunions of the USS *Rocky Mount* that he was a plank holder of  
12 which was a flag ship in World War II and ended up going into the Philippine invasion,  
13 they would have annual reunions and all these men and their wives would get together  
14 and they all knew each other. In fact, one time—it was ’74, in the spring of ’74, April,  
15 May, or June I was up in upstate New York helping Dad out with his newspaper, his  
16 tabloid that they were having difficulty keeping ends going. He said come on over to this  
17 luncheon place across the street. There is about five or six of these guys who I don’t  
18 know how they knew to show up at the time but they all showed up and these were all his  
19 World War II buddies and they just had lunch together. I do remember thinking, “Holy  
20 shit. This would never happen to me. Only World War II guys would do this. You know,  
21 Vietnam vets don’t do this very well.” Again, it was one of those things when it got out  
22 we got isolated a lot. I know there is a bunch of groups that do get together like through  
23 Texas Tech and the center there and other relationship that they’ll have, chopper groups  
24 or Marine units and so on. But as far as the group I was with and who I was, I have never  
25 had that sort of connection. I would be interested in it but there were only thirteen of us to  
26 start with at Lai Khe anyway and I have no idea where all those guys went. I just didn’t  
27 have that sort of affiliation. I don’t know that that was even in our system that much as it  
28 might have been with some of the other types of units, the Marines or Army units or a  
29 chopper unit or something like. I just never had that sort of connection or relationship  
30 since the war.

1 KC: My next question has to do with war protesting and the social climate in  
2 regards to the war when you got back home. How aware were you prior to coming back  
3 to the United States in March of '69, how aware were you of the anti-war sentiment and  
4 what had happened in American society since you had left a year prior to this? What did  
5 you anticipate seeing?

6 TE: I think I was somewhat aware even though it could have been fairly myopic. I  
7 had my father writing to me and he's an academic—he's at the State University of New  
8 York in SUNY at the community college there but I am getting some feedback from him.  
9 Newspapers, TV, at Lai Khe the Air Force gave us a television for our forward  
10 observation location so we watched the news, we watched *Combat!* Religiously, Vic  
11 Morrow and the guys. So I had some insight to that. I had my feelings about it which  
12 were I didn't like it. When I got back and I went back to Robins Air Force Base real close  
13 by to us in Macon we had Mercer University, which is I think probably a Baptist  
14 endowed school. We also had Wesleyan University, which is the oldest women's college  
15 in the United States, I think. So we had some college kids around us or I was around  
16 them. I can remember walking through some halls at Mercer and a bunch of the guys they  
17 had newspapers up in front of their faces and they would see me walking by and they  
18 were asking, "When is your birthday?" because they were trying to help each other out  
19 because the lottery was on. I would kind of laugh at them a little, "Well, too bad. I am  
20 already in. You can't help me very much. I am part of this system already. They already  
21 got me. You might worry, but I'm not." They were worried about the draft through the  
22 lottery. I didn't see much protesting around where I was. It probably in the South wasn't  
23 going on that much especially at Mercer. I guess when I was around other places it  
24 wasn't until after I was out of the Air Force that I went back to Fulton-Montgomery  
25 Community College. I got an early out because I got accepted up at F-M so I got out in  
26 December of 1969. Classes didn't start until, I guess, January of '70, but then that first  
27 semester, that winter semester, protestors at Albany State stopped traffic on the  
28 thoroughway. They messed up the library pretty badly, they really screwed up the campus  
29 pretty much. I was ticked off because I was trying to do studies and I needed to go to the  
30 Albany State library and I couldn't get it. I couldn't get in there. I was ticked off because  
31 I'm trying to do my studies and this protesting stuff was interrupting the access to the

1 resources so I could get my research done. So I was pretty mad at them for that. As you  
2 are seeing, I didn't have any interest or issue with the protest. It was just that they were  
3 bothering my study, my academic world. I kind of kept separate from it. I don't think I  
4 had—real quickly I didn't have a big problem with them necessarily other than if they  
5 bothered my life, but I wasn't against them at that point. I kind of empathized with them  
6 now that I was back. I was a civilian I could appreciate what the issues were. I also  
7 wanted to get on with school and I wanted to finish that up. That kind of didn't happen  
8 exactly the way I was hoping it would because I ended up bouncing around a bunch of  
9 schools and so on and different universities over a period of time before I ever got a  
10 degree in '77. Starting—it took me about seven, eight years, well, seven years to finally  
11 get a bachelor's degree. The protesting was there. I saw it. I didn't participate with it but I  
12 wasn't—I didn't have a real problem with them, either, not like I did when I was in  
13 Vietnam.

14 KC: Right. Okay, you mentioned that you are in the Albany airport and your  
15 father greets you there. What was it like for both you and him? What were your reactions  
16 when you saw each other for the first time since you had come back?

17 TE: It was awkward for me. I remember him coming through the glass doors into  
18 the area where you got your baggage checked. I didn't know whether to salute, shake  
19 hands, or give him a hug. He gave me a hug. I think we shook hands and he gave me a  
20 hug but then we were out of there. I just felt awkward. It was like I didn't know how to  
21 relate to him. Is he a dad? Is he the major? What way do I address him? How do I deal  
22 with this? I remember feeling pretty, I don't know, awkward or strange because I was in  
23 uniform and I was in Albany in the airport and so pretty much people knew who we were  
24 and kind of had a sense as to what was going on and I felt a little strange in that respect,  
25 as well. But that's what I can remember best, that is the only thing I really can remember.

26 KC: How many days leave did you have before you had to report down to Robins,  
27 Georgia?

28 TE: I think I had something like a couple of weeks, I believe, because I had travel  
29 time but I didn't have long. It was no more than a couple of weeks, I'm pretty sure. I have  
30 probably got the orders here somewhere but it wasn't long because I had to mosey down  
31 pretty quick.

1           KC: Right. Well, other than your experience trying to purchase this Volkswagen,  
2 what other sort of things did you do and encounter during this time off? You are fresh  
3 back to The World after all this time in Vietnam. What sort of things did you do and what  
4 did you see?

5           TE: I don't remember. I swear I don't. I am searching my brain right now. I don't  
6 remember. I remember the car, the VW experience. Oh, okay. Something else has come  
7 back now. I told everybody, mainly Dad, when they—if they are going to come up and  
8 wake me up just knock on the door, yell at the door way, something like that. Just make  
9 some noise and I will get up fine, no problem, I will be up in a second. Dad came in and  
10 he shook my shoulder waking me up and saying something like, "Get up, my man," or  
11 something like that. I jumped out of bed and I had him up against the wall and I was  
12 going to hit him. It scared the shit out of me. Scared the shit out of him, too. I was scared.  
13 Somebody grabbing me and touching me like that I just ripped out of bed. I mean I tore—  
14 the covers were on the floor somewhere else. I mean I must have just really ripped out of  
15 that place but I can only remember that I kind of came to or woke up realizing that I was  
16 scared. I felt scared inside, my stomach was scared. It was like somebody was going to  
17 try to kill me and I was going to kill them. That's the only way I can experience that. I  
18 remember the look on his face as I can remember just from his nose on up. I don't  
19 remember his mouth I just remembered the eyes. They were wide, they were big. I  
20 backed off right away and I apologized and I just felt like hell. I really did. It was never  
21 mentioned after that. He kind of walked out. I don't remember even what he did or said. I  
22 just remembered I was scared and even right now I can feel it in my stomach it is just a  
23 cold ice cube sitting in my gut because I felt so bad for what I did. That was one of the  
24 first reactions I had to somebody touching me or waking me, a startled reaction being  
25 hyper alert. That never happened after that with him nor anybody in my family, nobody  
26 did anything to me from that point on. I think the word probably got out. I never heard  
27 about it. Nobody ever talked about it. It was never mentioned, ever. But there are  
28 moments like that that my parents were around, either Mom or Dad or the whole family  
29 when certain startled—I had certain startled reactions. You know, to his credit at least at  
30 one time when we were in Phoenix he stood up for me and it is the only time I ever  
31 remembered. I was—later on I came to talk to him and I apologized for my jumping

1 under the table, dodging under the table. I had tears coming up and partly it was because I  
2 recognized that he knew what I was dealing with and he could appreciate it and he stuck  
3 up for me for the very first time that I remembered and at the same time I was  
4 embarrassed as hell. I was kind of torn between the two emotions, appreciating him and  
5 feeling bad for what I did.

6 KC: If you don't mind, Mr. Engelmann, can you tell me about what happened  
7 here?

8 TE: We have some very close family friends, kind of almost relative but very  
9 close family friends in Phoenix and Mom and Dad and I and their family so there was  
10 one, two, three, four, five, at least eight or nine of us around a table having lunch, I guess  
11 it was, or maybe dinner. The doors were open to let breeze through. It was just a nice  
12 comfortable time with the family sitting down. We had this very long, you know, a  
13 couple, three tables, a couple of tables probably put together end to end in the living  
14 room, dining room area. Dad was sitting at the end of one of the tables and I was to his  
15 immediate left on the corner. To be honest with you, I really don't remember who all was  
16 there at that time. I could have been married at that time I don't remember. I remember  
17 the back door being open which was to my back and I was okay. What happened was  
18 there was a real strong breeze that slammed the outside gate. It was a not a hurricane  
19 fence but a chain-link fence. Evidently the gate out to the drive area where you park, you  
20 know, the park area for your car it was an open space but they had a roof over it. That  
21 gate evidently was slammed shut. It wasn't shut in the first place and the breeze caught it  
22 and slammed it. It was just right behind me just a few feet outside the house and when  
23 that hit I went, it was a pretty strong noise. I think everybody kind of obviously lifted up  
24 their heads. It was a noise to kind of get your attention for a moment. Well, I dodged  
25 underneath the table. I just I was underneath. My chair went out from underneath me and  
26 I was under the table on the floor, on my four knees or knees and hands. In a second I  
27 knew exactly what had happened but I was already down there and so I kind of  
28 sheepishly come up and, "I'm sorry," you know, "Excuse me." Well, everybody  
29 immediately had this nervous titter, laugh, going around the table. I knew—you know  
30 what that means. Everybody is laughing nervously because it was kind of funny but they  
31 were kind of were embarrassed that they were laughing at me.

1           KC: Sure.

2           TE: Immediately Dad just got into—he just got into this officer stance. Sitting  
3 there you could see his shoulders come up and he just kind of leaned forward and in a  
4 real stern voice said to everybody something to the fact, stop the laughing, you know,  
5 some people have these sort of reactions. He was protecting me by trying to get  
6 everybody to recognize, stop the laughing, it was a reaction, it was a normal sort of  
7 reaction to the situation and let the guy be. It was calm, everybody was cool. Dad put the  
8 lid on it real fast. We all went back to eating and stuff. After the meal, which was not  
9 much longer, everybody is—and I suppose everybody is feeling a little nervous,  
10 everybody was taking the plates and stuff away. I guess I was married because now I  
11 remember my former wife was with me. She and I go in the living room and I'm kind of  
12 wrestling with this emotion which is still kind of bubbling inside of me for—I was  
13 embarrassed and all this. Dad came into the living room and I turned to him and I started  
14 to say I was sorry for doing this and I appreciated him saying what he did. Tears were  
15 coming up—I had tears. I was probably dropping a few but I realized probably for the  
16 first time it felt as though he knew what it was like or what this experience was for me he  
17 knew what it was for himself, as well. That was my first emotion. The other one was he  
18 was protecting me like he never had before because there is too many incidents when I  
19 was a kid and other times when he berated me or other people did in his presence and he  
20 wouldn't say anything about it. This is the first time he really stood up for me and so that  
21 was new. It was a totally new experience. For both purposes or three reasons he stood up,  
22 I was embarrassed, and I think I knew that he knew what I was feeling like militarily  
23 from his war experience. All of that just, you know, was inside of me just bubbling up. I  
24 remember that moment. That was pretty profound, that was unique. It never did happen  
25 again like that, not with him at any rate. That was one of the times when something like  
26 that happened and Dad was around. He saw it. Again he saw several incidents like that,  
27 different times different places—also my anger, attitude, just again being in this angry  
28 fog from about 1970 to '79; angry with the system, the government in general, and angry  
29 with various people at times because people wouldn't act quickly or they wouldn't think  
30 fast enough for, let's say, emergency purposes or issues that they ought to be moving a  
31 little faster, a little quicker to help out that would get me uptight, as well.

1           KC: So with this anger and other issues related to your service, were you ever  
2 able to meet your father on any sort of common ground here?

3           TE: No, I don't think so. Not that I remember, not that I know of. We always kind  
4 of seemed to be on different sides of the fence for some reason. As though, you know, he  
5 had his world and I never could be part of it. I wasn't included. He needed me at times to  
6 do different jobs and tasks around the house and, you know, help out. We did certain  
7 things that were fun like fishing and hunting and camping and we had some decent times  
8 in that respect, too, but it always seemed as though it was his life that was being led and I  
9 was an adjunct part of it. Since I was there and his kid, you know, he helped me out and  
10 that was part of our lifestyle and kind of an unspoken agreement between a father and his  
11 son. A lot that experience for me, at any rate, felt distant as though, you know, it was him  
12 controlling and commanding the situation and I was just there and so I could participate  
13 but it wasn't on my behalf. It was kind of him running the show. It kind of seemed like  
14 there was constantly always this, I don't know, almost this, well, always tension; almost  
15 like a fight could happen anytime, you never knew when or how. I had a lot of  
16 experiences with him in that respect. I'm not sure—I kind of relate it to the book Tom  
17 Matthews wrote a few years ago, *Our Father's War: Growing Up in the Shadow of the*  
18 *Greatest Generation*. He interviews nine other guys our age, his and my age, who had  
19 fathers from World War II to find out what life was like in their families. His experience  
20 came out because his father, luckily he was still alive, his father and he—he was two  
21 years old when his dad came back from World War II and his dad had been in the 10<sup>th</sup>  
22 Mountain Division, a forward air controller, spotter in a plane. The two of them started  
23 butting heads immediately. All through their life they had that tension and that fight  
24 going on. Finally, as a writer and an older guy he is trying to figure out what happened,  
25 how come. He had his father to work with but he also interviewed other people, their  
26 family members, spouses, to find out what these vets, what these men were like younger  
27 and in the service and then afterwards to kind of understand what was the role of the  
28 family of origin, what is the role of the military, the combat experience that they had,  
29 military experience. I took that book as my *entre* to asking dad in March of 2006. He  
30 didn't want to hear or see me for about twelve or thirteen years after he got married in  
31 1995. That would've been eleven years, sorry. Finally after reading Tom Matthews's

1 book I called up Dad and I went down to Florida to see him and his wife because Mom  
2 had passed away in '93 and he got married in '95, remarried. I went down to find out and  
3 ask him questions. He was real pleased that I did that and that really kind of helped set us  
4 up in a much better situation. He still was of that—his old style but I got a lot closer to  
5 him and understanding a lot, you know, I kind of cleaned my slate with the trip in March  
6 of '06 with him. He eventually gave me all of his military records and all of his  
7 memorabilia and all of his awards, his shadow box. All that stuff that I grew up with on  
8 the walls and around me I now have. It's kind of an interesting process to come around in  
9 full circle but it took so many years to do it. So that's an interesting process. He died on  
10 August the 5<sup>th</sup> last month and, you know, now there is no more. The finality of that is  
11 kind of getting to me once and a while that, you know, I can't talk to him anymore about  
12 anything. Not that we talked very much anyway, but it's now gone and all I have are  
13 these papers that he left that I now have to go through and look at the genealogy and the  
14 military stuff. It's going to be a lot of reading, a lot of research work now is going to be  
15 left to me to do to learn more about our family and about him and about myself, perhaps.  
16 That is an interesting process but, criminy, it takes this many years? That's a long time.

17 KC: Well, it sounds like that was very, very important for you and for him to be  
18 able to reach some level of understanding and knowing each other, I think, probably as  
19 much as anything else by the sounds of it.

20 TE: Yeah, I think so. His wife said that he was extremely pleased that I came  
21 down to visit. He called me up and asked me to come down in October of '06 because  
22 they were going to move and I think his wife being a minimalist was pressing for him to  
23 get rid of the rest of the stuff. She knew I wanted it, as well, so that was cool. As it turned  
24 out, then I flew from Albany, New York, in September, yeah September, October of '06,  
25 went down there for a couple of days and picked up the rest of the materials and boxed  
26 them up and mailed them back to my place and carried some stuff back with me. It  
27 worked out real well, positively for us. That was a good thing for me. When he passed  
28 away in the beginning of August I was up on the side of Mount Evans outside of Denver  
29 about an hour. It is a 14,000-foot mountain, the highest auto road in the U.S., as the  
30 chamber of commerce will tell you. I was at 11,500 foot photographing bristle cone  
31 pines. I purchased a cell phone because he was in ICU (intensive care unit) and I wanted

1 to be in contact with his wife in case something happened. I was up there, I don't know, it  
2 was 8:30 in the morning for me and I got a beeper signal and a message came from Jane  
3 that he had died that morning. I am on the east flank of this mountain and the sun is up a  
4 couple of hours now so I had my medium format camera and my tripod and my bags and  
5 stuff. I listened to the message and I put the phone away and I kind of just looked to the  
6 east and I just gave a salute and that was just the only way I could say good-bye to him.  
7 That was kind of—that was probably the only—that's the way I was raised to relate with  
8 him.

9 KC: It sounds like, again, that it was very important that you were able to do this,  
10 for sure.

11 TE: Yep, yeah it was.

12 KC: If I may, let me take you back to, say, the spring semester of 1970. You are  
13 fresh out of the Air Force. What did you hope to do with your college career, with your  
14 career in general? What did you see for Ted Engelmann at that time? What did you want  
15 to do? What did you want to be?

16 TE: Um, I'm not sure that I knew what I wanted to be. I knew I wanted to get a  
17 college education, I wanted to get a bachelor's degree, at least, but I honestly didn't have  
18 a real strong sense what subject area, what department or something to be in, what major  
19 to have at the moment. I was back, I was just more or less trying to get my feet on the  
20 ground. There were only two other people at the college that I related to student-wise.  
21 One of them was a guy that I happened to be walking through the parking lot and I  
22 looked at his bumper and he had a Robins parking sticker just like I did from Robins Air  
23 Force Base on his bumper. He also, Bob, I don't remember his last name, but he had just  
24 gotten discharged from Robins and so he was going to school up there, too, so I found  
25 him pretty quickly. Another person the two of us, Bob and I found, Jan, was a woman  
26 who was married to an Army chopper pilot who was stationed in Korea, South Korea. Jan  
27 and Bob and I kind of hung out together that semester. It was kind of like the three of us  
28 just kind of did our thing. I really hardly related to the students very much at all. That was  
29 the beginning of the sense that I was different from everybody else. For one thing, I was a  
30 few years older than most of the students, especially when you got to a four year college.  
31 The experiences I had and all that, I was very different, you know, in many ways

1 emotionally and attitudinally. I didn't—I really didn't have any direction other than just  
2 to get done with the semester. I don't even remember what my grades were or anything  
3 like that but I do remember the difference I felt with some of the students, with almost all  
4 the students. I kind of felt it was rinky dink and I just wanted to get through and get out  
5 of there, get going, you know, and just kind of get on with life, so to speak. I knew I  
6 needed a degree, a bachelor's degree so perhaps I will just get the double A degree and  
7 then move on but I was just trying to get back in a groove of some sort and that's the best  
8 I can remember at the moment and with those two friends I had at the time for that  
9 semester. Towards the end of the semester we had the summer coming up and I  
10 remember going down to the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) office and  
11 talking to the director down there for some—my interest and my—I enjoyed it. I was a  
12 scuba diver and did a lot of water work. I applied as a waterfront director at a lot of  
13 different YMCA places, camps I think mainly in the South. I also applied at the YMCA  
14 conference center in Black Mountain, North Carolina, just outside of Ashville. Blue  
15 Ridge Assembly is the name of the place. They came back with a job offer and I took  
16 them up on it. I was kind of fumbling and fawing about it because, ah, I didn't really  
17 want to do that that much. I wanted to be the waterfront director but I never heard from  
18 anybody else. All of a sudden I got all these acceptances and Mom and Dad said, "Well,  
19 now, you have already told the Blue Ridge Assembly that you will work there. You can't  
20 renege on your promise." I said, "Oh, man. I don't want to do that." I had these other jobs  
21 that I could have done and I had to tell them, "I'm sorry. I'm already committed." I ended  
22 up—which made all the difference in the world, kind of, because I ended up going to  
23 North Carolina to Ashville. There I meet some people. There is a bunch of students and  
24 again I am the oldest one there as a student and just like up at other YMCA conference  
25 centers in the United States like we have one up at Estes Park and there is one up in  
26 upstate New York. All the college kids come up for the summer. They work for a pittance  
27 and, you know, do everything, housekeeping and everything else. I met a bunch of the  
28 folks and one of the girls I met was going to a university down there in North Carolina  
29 which I ended up leaving the community college as I went back for the fall semester and  
30 I headed back south. I kind of felt Southern in a way because I spent so much time down  
31 there. I ended up going to her school at Mars Hill, North Carolina, just to visit and then I

1 ended up looking around for jobs and stuff. I was driving all over the stupid state looking  
2 for work. As a vet trying to find vet reps who could help us find jobs, they were doing  
3 nothing. I ended up going to Sugar Mountain up in Banner Elk in the northwest counties.  
4 There was a school there—let's see. McCray Lee, I think, community college and  
5 Appalachian State was in Boone just a few miles away but the ski industry had started up  
6 and Sugar Mountain was one of the ski mountains or ski destinations, ski resorts. I ended  
7 up getting a student starvation plan there. They gave me room and board and I worked at  
8 Sugar Mountain doing all sorts of stuff and then I got on the ski patrol and stuff like this.  
9 We blow snow in that neck of the woods. They don't have natural snowfall so I ended up  
10 in North Carolina and I ended up going to Appalachian State for three years. Being  
11 around that neck of the woods and having some experiences there with the Vietnam stuff  
12 coming up once and a while. Again, certain decisions I made like applying for jobs,  
13 getting one, accepting it, wanting the other ones but then sticking with that decision. A lot  
14 of times that's what makes and breaks our lives, I guess. That's how I ended up kind of  
15 leaving upstate New York, going to North Carolina, getting in school at Appalachian  
16 State, seeing Jane Fonda come in with VVAW (Vietnam Veterans against the War) guys  
17 one time.

18 KC: Describe that for me.

19 TE: I was going with a girl at the time and she and I took off and went over to the,  
20 I guess it was like the big field house, you know, basketball is in it and stuff. Lots of  
21 students—the whole place was pretty well filled. All I can remember was they talked  
22 down at wherever they were located on the floor down there at the end underneath one of  
23 the goal posts or something, one of the baskets. At one point either Fonda or VVAW  
24 person asked for a show of hands in the audience how many people were—had been in  
25 Vietnam. I looked around and there was a good number of hands that came up and so  
26 they wanted to meet us after the presentation downstairs off into a little room over there. I  
27 went on down to the room and I was kind of looking around and, sure, it's Jane Fonda  
28 and there is all that but what struck me was, and has stayed with me ever since, kind of  
29 my first and lasting impression about Vietnam vets. As I got in the room all these vets  
30 were arguing with each other. What they were arguing about was everybody was coming  
31 up with the three questions that we asked each other in those days: When were you there?

1 Who were you with? What did you do? Those three questions basically would either  
2 make or break a connection between the veterans, two of us, any two or three of us.  
3 Because if you weren't, as it found out, if you weren't doing almost exactly the same  
4 thing at the same time and the same location, we all had different experiences in the war  
5 by that time which was 19-, what? 1971. The war had been on long enough that a lot of  
6 things had changed, just like it has in Iraq. The first guys there, if you are a Marine, if  
7 you are Army, if you are Air Force, and so real quickly I figured out the permutations  
8 that all of us represented. When were you there out of eleven years? Any branch of the  
9 service. We had five of them there with the Coast Guard included, different jobs that we  
10 had, different locations that we could have been at geographically, all gave us this  
11 experience of like blind men touching the big elephant and trying to figure out from  
12 which part we touched how to describe the elephant. Nobody could agree and all the vets  
13 in that room were kind of arguing back and forth about, "Oh, well, I didn't see this."  
14 Well, you didn't do this and I saw that." It was all of this—we just couldn't get together  
15 on it. It just reminded me Vietnam vets are never going to agree on anything. I don't care  
16 what it is. The color of the sky, they won't agree on it for some reason. That was kind of  
17 my first recognition of, I don't know, the kind of the internal chaos that we had. We just  
18 all came from different experiences and I figured this is going to be a real bear to get  
19 Vietnam vets on anybody's side. We are all too damn independent. We all have that basic  
20 different experiences. Until something can—we can all agree on something we're going  
21 to be a tough group to work with because we're just not able to talk with each other very  
22 well. I think that is probably what VVAW found out, too. They got a few people,  
23 perhaps, to help them out but I think the majority kind of just, kind of just walked away  
24 after their little bit of argument or their discussion kind of shaking their heads saying,  
25 "This is screwed up just like it always was," and they just kind of went away and did  
26 their own lives again. I kind of thought that was an interesting process.

27 KC: That is very interesting.

28 TE: What was happening was.

29 KC: It really helps, I think, explain a lot of the aftermath for individuals when  
30 they came home from the Vietnam war trying to make sense of it all and trying to find  
31 comrades who shared their experiences and oftentimes the experiences, like you said,

1 were so diverse that maybe it wasn't there which would make it a little more difficult, I  
2 would think, to try find the kind of closure or understanding that one hopes to achieve.

3 TE: Yeah, and we had a veterans group at ASU, Appalachian State. I can  
4 remember a couple of things. I have a few photographs I made of a float that our group  
5 put into the homecoming parade, I think it was. We called the school a suitcase school  
6 and that was what our float's theme was because all the kids who were at ASU, this was  
7 the teachers college, so all the kids came from around the state and they came there to get  
8 a teacher's certificate and their degree and the general plan was they were going to go  
9 back home eventually and take over some teachers role that they had had when they were  
10 in school. It was—the suitcase also meant that the kids were just there for a lot of times  
11 the week. They would go home on the weekends. It wasn't too far to go usually in the  
12 state. I can remember it was only a six hour drive from Boone to Norfolk, Virginia. You  
13 know, kids could get home pretty easily if they wanted to pretty often. We were kind of  
14 stuck. We didn't have homes to go to. We were there. That's where we were living as  
15 vets. We weren't local boys like these kids were, at least in the state sense. We might  
16 have had state residency at that point but that was just for purposes of getting cheaper  
17 tuition. So we had the suitcase float of these kids but we also had a house that a bunch of  
18 the guys got, they rented for vets for our group. I can remember that we could get  
19 together for parties and often it was just basically we were drinking beer and carousing  
20 around and having fun and stuff like that but other than that there was no connection as  
21 veterans because we all came—we couldn't talk with each other. We all had different  
22 backgrounds. Even though we all may have been in the era or had been in Vietnam itself,  
23 that wasn't the underlying—that didn't mean very much to us. The fact that we were vets  
24 just more or less got us into the game and we could talk with each other as vets. Real  
25 quickly other than the party that somebody was throwing real fast everybody's  
26 personality kind of seemed to take off and spike and go wherever they wanted to go and  
27 do what they wanted to do. You know, if it really wasn't somebody who you could get  
28 close to or have an affinity for, like you both liked to go do something together, it was a  
29 very—it started the downfall of the house in a way because everybody was doing their  
30 thing, whether they're smoking a bowl or they are drinking or whatever they were doing,  
31 bringing chicks in, everybody seemed to have their own little world and they didn't care

1 about anybody else. It was a very independent group of people who only had the veteran  
2 status as their gathering point. After you identify yourself as a vet there was nothing else  
3 there because we were all so different, both in what we did as vets while we were active  
4 duty, as well as what we were doing right then and there. We were all—like a personality  
5 started to blossom, if you will, or they came out. It really—we didn't have a real strong  
6 focus on where we were going and what we were doing as vets. We were just having a  
7 good time or whatever it was you wanted to do. Some guys wanted to study and some  
8 guys didn't. Maybe that's general, but it kind of seemed like within that group, at any  
9 rate, that was one of the reasons why the vets had a hard time holding their organization  
10 together because there was not an awful lot to hold together other than the fact that you're  
11 a vet. Once that word has been used any further identification gets rather muddled very  
12 quickly.

13 KC: Yeah. Well, you get your degree is 1977, you said. Was this from  
14 Appalachian State or did you go elsewhere?

15 TE: It was elsewhere.

16 KC: Elsewhere.

17 TE: It was about school number four or five for me. I got my degree in earth  
18 science and biology and a teaching certificate out of the University of Northern Colorado  
19 at Greeley.

20 KC: Okay. You also got married somewhere along the line. When did you get  
21 married?

22 TE: Yeah. Something I might point out, I ended up in Greeley kind of as kind of a  
23 similar experience. You remember I went to tech school and I was in inertial navigational  
24 aids and this guy, I think George Carson but I'm not sure, he was in ground-to-air radio  
25 communications and he and I swapped tech school programs.

26 KC: Yes. I remember you saying that.

27 TE: On the same day, you know, the same block that we were in. When I was at  
28 Appalachian State I was also getting kind of bothered by all these kids going back home  
29 to do their student teaching and/or just being in North Carolina in general. I went down  
30 to—I was going to have to get a student teaching position and I went to the office and  
31 asked the guy who places us, I was going to ask him if he could maybe get me over to

1 Tennessee or Virginia just across the border, it's not far, and maybe get me out of state so  
2 to speak, anywhere else but North Carolina. When I walked into his office, you know, he  
3 shook my hand, we sat down. He crossed his legs and he is wearing cowboy boots. I  
4 asked him, "You're not from around here, are you?" He said, "No." He had been the  
5 student teaching placement director at UNC (University of Northern Colorado) in  
6 Greeley and he had just come to Appalachian State. I perked up my ears because I had  
7 been out to Colorado to ski the Thanksgiving before and I just loved it and I said, "Well,  
8 tell me more." What we ended up doing was he got me a student teaching position at  
9 Arvada West High School here in the northwest part of Denver. He took a student from—  
10 and I used Ladd Cochran, Dr. Cochran who was at UNC as my, what do you call it?  
11 Student teaching advisor. He took a student from UNC and I don't know who it was.  
12 They came out and took my student teaching position in North Carolina wherever that  
13 would have been. I have no idea. I ended up coming out to Colorado, I think it was in the  
14 fall of '73. I remember calling up my girlfriend late at night, all the quarters in the phone  
15 booth on the corner of Colfax and Colorado Boulevard. So I had an experience out here  
16 which then drew me to be out here. I lost the girlfriend to some guy so I decided to come  
17 on out to Colorado and that's how I got here and then I started at UNC and I still had to  
18 do two more years on top of everything I had done at ASU but I finally graduated. I had a  
19 few moments where I also displayed some Vietnam, I will just call them Vietnam  
20 tendencies, some of the anger.

21 KC: Explain that to me, if you can.

22 TE: We had a—I was in earth science, a degree for that, and I was in a geology  
23 class. Evidently they had hired a petrologist or a geophysicist, one of the two, but he had  
24 been a guy who had been out in the boonies out here in Wyoming out in the oil fields and  
25 he was in to teach. Well, even though he had maybe I guess he had a PhD or whatever his  
26 credentials were he wasn't a good instructor. Real quickly he and I did not hit it off. I  
27 wasn't doing real great in the testing and all that bit. I just wasn't putting my mind to it  
28 and I was upset and I was angry and I was lonely, as well. I was really depressed a lot of  
29 times. At one time I got a really bad mark on a test and I went down to his office and it  
30 was in the basement of the Earth Science Building. I'm sitting in a chair next to his desk  
31 and I have got my left elbow on his desk looking at him and he is going over my test. It

1 wasn't him so much but I was just darn frustrated with the fact that I had done so bad and  
2 I probably should have done better but I didn't. There was something he said or did,  
3 something he said to me about who I was or what I was and it just bubbled right up  
4 immediately. Out of my mouth came the words, "You know what? If we were in  
5 Vietnam. I would have broken your leg by now." I remember saying that so clear. Well, it  
6 took him back. I said, "I'm sorry," you know. "I'm just frustrated. It's just the whole  
7 thing. I'm not getting good grades in your class and it's just making a mess and I am just  
8 having a hell of a time." So all right, I took off. I didn't think anything of it because it  
9 wasn't a real threat to him. It was my personal frustration but I did address it to him.  
10 Well, I found out some years later that that professor turned on his lights in his house  
11 every night for months because he was afraid that I was going to come on over and hurt  
12 him. This was told to me by the department chairman.

13 KC: Really?

14 TE: Really. I do remember his lights being on. Strangely, I was thinking, "How  
15 come this guy doesn't go to bed?" But his lights were on like downstairs in his house. I  
16 remember going by it one time or something, not that I was looking for him at all but I  
17 knew that is where he lived. Real quickly, I guess, by the end of that semester or quarter,  
18 whatever we had, this guy resigned. The department chairman told me that was the best  
19 thing that happened to the department and they were really pleased that I was the one  
20 who did it. It was kind of a mixed blessing but I didn't hear that for years and I felt really  
21 bad because I spouted off a little bit like that to a couple of people. We had a weather—I  
22 had a meteorology class and the instructor had been, I guess he had been in the Air Force.  
23 He had been in Panama. I think in Panama. Yeah, been in Panama either Air Force or  
24 worked with the Air Force. We had a bunch of ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps)  
25 kids in the class and I kind of remember them being, you know, they were supposed to be  
26 paying attention and they weren't and I wasn't listening that well, either, but this guy was  
27 also bugging me as far as his instructional process. He was not a—he wanted us to  
28 regurgitate information and I didn't like that and probably I wasn't doing so great  
29 anyway, but still. This idea of just memorizing stuff and all he wanted us to do was just  
30 put it back on the test paper just the way he gave it to us like no learning was really  
31 required. I remember being in his office and for some reason I just popped off and, you

1 know, just chewed his ass out for being such a lousy instructor, just telling us to vomit  
2 information back out. We didn't really have to learn anything and if he really wanted to  
3 have a better class maybe he ought to treat us differently or treat us better or something of  
4 that sort. Evidently he felt—he hung onto that for years because when there was a  
5 retirement party for the department chair, who I did like a lot and he is the guy who told  
6 me about the other prof resigning, the meteorology guy and the department chair guy  
7 retired and maybe somebody else. I went up to the school and I went to the retirement  
8 party. I introduced myself to the retiring meteorologist, just said my name and, you know,  
9 who I was and good luck and all of that. Then a little while later he came around to me  
10 and he had this look on his face and he said, "I remember who you are," and he was not  
11 happy. Evidently it must have come back to him who I was and what I had said to him at  
12 some point in time because it must have stayed with him, it seemed like it did. It wasn't  
13 positive but, again, that was part of that anger, that frustration I had inside of me, the  
14 loneliness, especially at Greeley I really was depressed a lot of times. I mean, I just felt  
15 like—that was the time I looked up in the sky and I would see these clouds and I was just  
16 was wishing myself just to evaporate off the ground out of that place and just be a cloud,  
17 just be gone, just be like the breeze that was warm and cold and just would go anywhere.  
18 But I just didn't fit. I just couldn't be there. I hated it. I was part of a vet group and I was  
19 trying to help out as much as I could with the vet things and help guys with their GI Bills  
20 and that sort of thing a little bit off and on. It was—Greeley was a real lonely place and  
21 time for me for two years. It was also several veterans that I knew in our vet group, a  
22 couple of them switched wives and a couple of them were henpecked. One guy had been  
23 a, what was it? An E-5 and his wife who—his wife was going to school and she had been  
24 an Army captain and I remember she was in our meetings along with him and he was  
25 kind of, I don't know, honchoing it or something and she would just barge right on in on  
26 him. At one time I just told her, "Why don't you just be quiet and let him speak?" We  
27 had this husband and wife thing going on as well as the captain was telling the sergeant to  
28 shut up and it pissed me off. I kind of knew a little bit about who they were in their  
29 relationship and yet here amongst this veteran group she was still lording it over all of us  
30 and especially him when he took the floor. I just, again I just told her to clam it. Just let  
31 him speak his peace, you know, get finished before she took over the wheels. I thought,

1 “Well, that was real brazen of me, kind of stupid.” I probably got myself an enemy for  
2 life but at any rate it goes on and on.

3 KC: Sure, sure. Let me ask you a few questions to wrap up this interview, Mr.  
4 Engelmann, and larger questions and feel free to interpret and answer these questions in  
5 any way you see fit. My first question is this: What is your opinion, either then, through  
6 the years, or now on American involvement in Vietnam?

7 TE: I think it was a mistake. I think it was based on fear. Somebody was kind of  
8 coming up with the boogey man as communism and containment theory. It was based on  
9 a lie when the Gulf of Tonkin incident didn’t happen the way President Johnson said it  
10 did, which I can translate into present day conditions like weapons of mass destruction  
11 didn’t happen, either. So a war was set up. Since I have been in and out of Vietnam since  
12 1989, I’ve noticed the economic development and the entrepreneurial spirit of a socialist  
13 system, as you might call it. The government might be socialist but the people are  
14 capitalistic. I was thinking, you know, “If you give the people and support, not just that  
15 you throw money at them but you develop an economic program and systematically  
16 support the government and the social system economically, there wouldn’t have needed  
17 to be a war.” I kind of look at that and think you know we probably could have avoided it  
18 had somebody had a little bit more thoughtfulness back in those days, which maybe is  
19 hindsight and not so easy at the time. After that I really don’t think unless you come up  
20 with somebody like Hitler or someone similar to that as an individual that wars are the  
21 way and are good ways of settling things. There may be some necessary ones, that’s for  
22 sure. On the other side, if you can and should ameliorate a lot of the issues worldwide if  
23 you can or jointly with other countries and I would think that a lot of the unrest and issues  
24 could be put to rest and avoided so that conflict, physical, the violent conflict, wars would  
25 be avoided and I think that would be a real strong possibility. It’d be the way I would  
26 rather try it rather than look to the military-industrial-political complex today as we are  
27 and see what sort of technology we have got that we can pull out and, you know,  
28 eradicate insurgents or do whatever we can militarily to destroy things and then go in and  
29 see what we can do to rebuild it. Anyway, that’s kind of what I saw from that time period  
30 and also how I see it kind of playing out again.

31 KC: What is your opinion of the U.S. military effort in Vietnam?

1           TE: Well, the effort was constrained. We were limited. Like today, too, we had  
2 the best technology and we had the best firepower and all that sort of jazz but under the  
3 circumstances it was not very effective because we had lots of rules and regs and that was  
4 frustrating for the people on the ground because we knew we couldn't do certain things  
5 and we had the capability of doing it and physical potential of doing it but we just  
6 couldn't implement it. It's not to—there is no way to say that our country was, our  
7 country, our system, our military was, let's say, inferior. Given the circumstances, an  
8 insurgent, jungle, guerilla warfare we didn't have system ready to play that game and we  
9 weren't playing with a full deck, anyway, so it turned out to be pretty messy. That means  
10 destruction in a lot of ways, such as Operation Ranch Hand wanting to kill all the plants  
11 to deny food and cover to the enemy. Well, it kills all the food and cover for all the  
12 locals, as well, and that usually doesn't bode well for good attitudes. So you don't win  
13 the hearts and mind of those people. If you have a residual problem such as if Agent  
14 Orange is the culprit with dioxin and causing those sort of issues, where is that going to  
15 go? So it gets messy, it gets complicated. People don't want to be responsible and money  
16 is involved, etc., so not only the lives and the waste that's taken place. There is no doubt  
17 that we had the military might and strength we just didn't have the smarts. Again, it was  
18 putting military into a position and a place where it probably was not the best way to use  
19 it.

20           KC: What about your particular service in the Vietnam War, Mr. Engelmann?  
21 When you look back on that what emotions or thoughts come to mind?

22           TE: I was given, I was awarded whatever you want to call it, the Air Force  
23 Commendation Medal. I will wear that on my lapel, the pin on my lapel, when I wear a  
24 sport coats, which are getting infrequent these days. Basically not so much as I was proud  
25 of the war in Vietnam or my participation, but it's my way of saying at least to myself  
26 and anybody else who wants to ask, I did the best damn job I could and I did a good job.  
27 That job entailed saving lives by misdirecting airstrikes as well as, excuse me, saving  
28 lives by taking care of my own troops as best I can. Given what I had under the  
29 circumstances with the directions I felt were appropriate, I did a good job. For that  
30 purpose and for that reason I would wear that lapel medal for that medal. Other than that,  
31 I just wish there was something more I could have done to have done a better job, to have

1 stopped the war if I could have or something like that. At any rate, that's kind of my  
2 place in it or what the legacy for me is and what my connection is with it.

3 KC: What do you think you learned about the United States as a result of your  
4 experiences in Vietnam?

5 TE: That Americans as a people, as a nation, we have, perhaps, you know, the  
6 best system, the most productive, the richest process in civilization, perhaps, and yet we  
7 are very ignorant because of our largess. We are very ignorant of others, we are arrogant,  
8 we take things for granted, we are easily manipulated emotionally and I feel that out of  
9 the eleven-year war we had in Vietnam, which certainly was a very different experience  
10 than the victorious experience we had out of World War II and then rather forgotten war  
11 of the Korean era. When we got out of Vietnam finally in '75, I feel that our country as a  
12 nation, let alone individually, suffered a form of post-traumatic stress denial. We denied  
13 what we did and who we did it to. My father's generation won their war. We lost ours  
14 they said, and I have been and I know other people Vietnam vets have been told to leave  
15 American Legion and Disabled American Veterans and Veterans of Foreign War groups  
16 early on in the '80s because of that. You know, we were candy asses and stupid boys and  
17 we lost and they won so we had no place in their localities, in their organizations; not  
18 until their memberships started dying off and they require membership in order for  
19 lobbying purposes for our entitlements and benefits then they started asking us to be part  
20 of their groups. But for a while we were denied by our fathers, that older generation. Our  
21 country denied what it did and our country denied how it happened that our government  
22 lied to us. As a nation with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), so to speak, denial, we  
23 have been vulnerable to other traumas of our nation, such as 9/11 and then I am afraid  
24 that we hadn't healed from the first one and then the second really set us up as a knee jerk  
25 reaction we were more than willing to do what the shock doctrine folks wanted us to do.  
26 It just has taught me that, you know, the country can be wonderful, it can be great. We  
27 have got wonderful people. There isn't a nation in the world that doesn't like us in many  
28 ways by individually we give things, we help people out. Soldiers were basically  
29 individually we had great friends, we loved the kids, we gave the kids things. That  
30 happens in every war you watch. We are handing out food, candy, taking care of the kids  
31 an individual soldiers but we end up seemingly as a nation and as politically and

1 militarily we end up screwing up other cultures, as well. The soldier ends up being, you  
2 know, the bad guy or we feel bad because of that. It's complicated but it seems to follow  
3 certain patterns. Personally, I am really discouraged and I am saddened at the pattern that  
4 we are following presently. If politics go towards the Republican way in November I am  
5 really afraid. It's not the people are bad people but I have a feeling that we have—part of  
6 our nation is willing to develop into a, I don't know, an ideology that has been able to  
7 develop and propagate. We have lost a lot of the basic elements of a democracy and I  
8 kind of feel some of that started back in the era of the Vietnam time period and  
9 afterwards as a result of that experience. I'm really concerned and I'm saddened in a lot  
10 of ways. I'm hoping and individually I know people and I have good times with folks and  
11 I know a lot of good people, but I also know an awful lot of people that are pretty scary.  
12 But I don't know. I was thinking that after Vietnam life could just be, could kind of go on  
13 and I don't know what was going to happen, we'd die in an old rocking chair with little  
14 kids around me like that. I'm single. I don't perceive that I am probably going to ever  
15 have a partner. I feel sad that whatever those conditions are that kind of put me that  
16 position. I wish I could have folks around me and have relationships but that doesn't  
17 seem to work out. So life is kind of a different thing than I perceived back when I was in  
18 my twenties especially after Vietnam I was just hoping that things would get better and  
19 kind of grow up, get our jobs, have families, and kind of be good with each other and that  
20 doesn't seemed to have happened. Not as nation and certainly not in my life. A lot of that  
21 I think came out of the experience, at least for me, out of Vietnam and I think also for our  
22 nation in a lot of ways. That's how I see the past and now I see the past being influencing  
23 our present. I think there is still a lot to learn as I am trying to offer and even on my  
24 website I am typing up, before you called, trying to set up my website with some  
25 information on it that is just there for people to read but material that is not discussed or  
26 people in America don't know in our educational system about other countries who  
27 fought in Vietnam along with the United States. The seven-flag Chieu Hoi pass shows six  
28 flags of the allies, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, Thailand, Philippines, and  
29 South Korea. We were the ones fighting and that was President Johnson's "Many Flags"  
30 program similar to the "Coalition of the Willing" today. We paid South Korea to be there  
31 and South Korea's economic development was based on the war in Vietnam. That sort of

1 information is not out there very much at all in our educational system. There is a lack of  
2 information still about the war in Vietnam and I think that's important to know so people  
3 can perhaps do a better job with decision making in the present or the future. I'm striving  
4 to put some of that out there so people can see it, if they will, and hopefully use it. At  
5 least it's recorded if for no other reason. That is why I appreciate the Vietnam Center and  
6 Archive so we can put stuff there for people to go find. They've got to look but hopefully  
7 it will be there and it will be adding more to the story and fleshes it out and adds  
8 more pieces to the big puzzle. I appreciate what you folks are doing down there, as well,  
9 recording and archiving this experience because it is pretty unique and different.

10 KC: Absolutely. I appreciate the kind words. That is certainly what we hope to do  
11 is be able to add significantly to the understanding of the Vietnam conflict and the things  
12 that were surrounding. Well, Mr. Engelmann, do you have anything else you would like  
13 to add before we put the wrap on this interview?

14 TE: One thing maybe I had forgotten and it is coming back to me, this was a point  
15 in time in Rach Gia. I don't think I discussed the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with the  
16 bronze for valor.

17 KC: Oh, please do.

18 TE: Towards the end of my tour of duty which was in March of '69, I have the  
19 orders, the original orders still, and I had mine translated, there was for the Advisory  
20 Team 55 there was a whole slew of us that were given various awards, medals, Bronze  
21 Stars, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry, all sorts of things. I can't honestly say for the rest  
22 of the people but I have a very strong suspicion that none of these were honestly won or  
23 awarded for real service. What we called these were morale medals and especially for the  
24 South Vietnamese army to give them to us meant that they had to come up with an action  
25 so somebody like I was credited with killing three VC on a certain day, capturing  
26 weapons, etc., at a certain location and therefore I received the Vietnamese Cross of  
27 Gallantry with a bronze star for valor. The rest of the people were also given—they had  
28 descriptions of their actions. Again, I don't believe almost any of this ever happened to  
29 any of these people. When the award ceremony took place I had the other Air Force guy  
30 go in my place. I pretended that I was sick. I told him to tell the people I am sick. I didn't  
31 want to go there to receive the medal. I was real angry about getting it because it was a

1 morale medal. It was bullshit. It was a high ranking medal in the system but it was being  
2 given out for nothing and I realized its purpose as a morale medal. I knew that I didn't do  
3 what they said I did and I basically believed at that time I knew nobody else did it, either.  
4 Bob went to the award ceremony, came back with my medal. He evidently got one, too.  
5 He said he through his into the Rach Gia canal and almost got court martialed right there  
6 on the spot because the officers didn't like that attitude, either. So he brought mine back  
7 and told me that everybody was upset with me for not showing up. Well, I got away with  
8 it and I got out of there but the basic idea I kept my medal for was I thought that someday  
9 I would be a teacher. Maybe that's what I wanted to be when I grew up. Both my parents  
10 were teachers. I wanted to be a teacher and I would use this medal and I would show it to  
11 the students to explain how crazy that war was because of the nature of how it was  
12 awarded to me. Honestly, I have talked about the war many times to many students but I  
13 have really never shown that medal. I have never explained that medal people. I have  
14 done it in different ways but I have never shown that medal. There's been a lot of  
15 incidents in schools when I was teaching—lots of things now are popping up in my head.  
16 That was—I still got the medal. At any rate, it's an interesting process, you know, what  
17 you get or what you don't get. I got hurt in Vietnam but I didn't get a Purple Heart and I  
18 really don't care. I knew one of the guys over in the officers' hooch he hit the deck when  
19 the rockets came in one night and scraped up his hands and his knees with some splinters  
20 from the wooden floor, wrote himself up for a Purple Heart. A lot of these, you know,  
21 you could care less. In fact, I didn't want a Purple Heart. It is just an interesting process,  
22 again, part of the history that comes out of that and that's part of the anger I guess I got,  
23 too, the falsehoods, the lies, all the crap that went on and supposedly this is supposed to  
24 be a glorious sort of thing that you are supposed to come out and all the medals and  
25 ribbons that you get are what you get your rank from. The more medals and paperwork  
26 that is generated in appreciation of your efforts and all this bit from different people all of  
27 that adds up to a thick file and that means you are going to go ahead and rank a lot  
28 quicker. That's part of the game and unfortunately that's not what I wanted to play with  
29 so that was another reason for getting out of the service. I really didn't want to be part of  
30 that anymore. I still have the Vietnamese Cross for Gallantry with the bronze star for  
31 valor. It's going to be part of the book that I am working on. It's just another one of the

1 awards that I didn't really win. It wasn't—I don't know what you call it. I didn't win that  
2 one. It wasn't something that I earned. I just keep it as a token of the experience. At any  
3 rate, go look at the website some day or my book if I can get the dadburn thing published  
4 and it will be in there with the story. So there you go.

5 KC: Well, best of luck with the book, for sure.

6 TE: Thanks.

7 KC: Mr. Engelmann, I can't thank you enough for taking all this time out of your  
8 life to sit down with me and discuss your experiences here. You said some things that I  
9 think are very poignant, very important and informative and it will go a long way to help  
10 document the American experience in the war as well as help future generations come to  
11 grips with what it was and its legacy. I thank you very much.

12 TE: Certainly. I appreciate the opportunity.