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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Daulton Blevins
Conducted by Natalie Swindle
Date: 8 August 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 Natalie Swindle: This is Natalie Swindle of the Vietnam Archive conducting an
2 interview with Mr. Daulton Blevins. Today is August 8th 2008 and both Mr. Blevins and I
3 are in the interview room in the Special Collections Building on the campus of Texas
4 Tech. Hi, Mr. Blevins. How are you today?

5 Daulton Blevins: I'm just doing fine, thank you.

6 NS: Great, great. Well, just to start off let me go ahead and get a little bit of
7 biographical information. If you will go ahead and start off and tell me where and when
8 you were born and what your parents were like and kind of how your childhood was.

9 DB: Okay. I was born in 1919, June 30, between Fort Worth, Texas and Keller,
10 Texas in Tarrant County.

11 NS: Okay.

12 DB: We lived there a short time. I couldn't tell you for sure how long, but a short
13 time after I was born. Then we moved from there up to Wilbarger County, which is
14 Vernon, Texas. My dad was a farmer and we lived there a short time and then moved on
15 up further west about twenty-two miles to Foard County Texas which Crowell, Texas, is
16 the county seat. We lived near a little town of Margaret, Texas. I started to school after
17 we moved there. I think I was about seven years old when I started school then at a little
18 two-room wooden school that sat out in a cotton patch.

19 NS: Oh, wow.

20 DB: The name of the school was Airsville. Where it got its name was a fellow
21 that lived about a half a mile from where we lived by the name of Henry Airs had an
22 estate of several eighty-acre tracks of land and they were all right together. Each eighty

1 acres had a house on it with a family and this family farmed this eighty acres of land. We
2 lived about a half a mile from there. This school, the land was donated by Mr. Henry Airs
3 and he built a little two-room school and that's where I started to school. I went to school
4 there until I was about twelve years old. That would have been about 19—let's see. We
5 moved from there in 1932 so that was about six years, I guess, that we lived there, six or
6 seven after I started school. But my daddy died in 1931 with a ruptured appendix. He had
7 taken a bale of cotton to the gin about four miles away. He had walked that four miles to
8 keep warm and we were farming with horses and mules and this bale of cotton was on a
9 wagon. He was—they were ginning the cotton off the wagon when he had the attack of
10 appendicitis. They rushed him over to Crowell, Texas, and he lived about seven days,
11 passed away. That was in 1931. In 1928 my dad had come up to west Texas near
12 Littlefield, Texas, in Lamb County and bought 281 acres of the old Elwood Estate. At
13 that time this land, it was all ranch land was being broken out into farm land and he
14 bought 281 acres of that land. Then he died in '31 so Mother and us five kids the only
15 place we had to go was from Foard County up to Lamb County near Littlefield to that
16 farm. So we moved up there by wagon train. They moved all of our farm equipment and
17 household goods and stuff by wagon. It took—I think they were about eight or nine days
18 coming from Crowell, Texas, up to Littlefield. They ran into snow storms and everything
19 else on the way up. We moved there and I was twelve years old. I went to school at a
20 little place called Fieldton, Texas, which is about twelve miles from Littlefield. I
21 graduated from high school in 1937 and at that time the draft was in place, the military
22 draft.

23 NS: Okay.

24 DB: I was placed in class 3-A because I was a farmer. I became the bread winner
25 of our family at the age of eighteen years of age. I was farming 160 acres of land with
26 horses and mules. In 19and—the later part of 1937 we traded our horses and mules for a
27 little Ford tractor. I made four crops from '37 to '41. My wife and I married November
28 the 30th 1941, and the very next Sunday—we loved old gospel singing so we had gone to
29 the Baptist Church north of Littlefield, which is the Rocky Foard Baptist Church to a
30 gospel singing. I sang and my wife played the piano. She was playing the piano for some
31 singer when someone opened the front door of that church and whispered and had kept

1 whispering on and finally got up to me. I was up at the front of the church. It got up to me
2 and I heard what they were whispering: Pearl Harbor had been attacked by the Japanese.
3 That was December 7th 1941.

4 NS: Okay.

5 DB: When I heard this I said, "Oh, my," because I figured what was going to
6 happen. The very next week I was reclassified to 1-A and I had gotten busy. I knew I
7 didn't want to be drafted into the Army I wanted the Army Air Corps. The Air Force
8 hadn't been organized. It was the Army Air Corps. So I came to Lubbock and they were
9 working on the base just west of Lubbock, Lubbock Army Flying School. I heard that
10 that was just about to be opened and they were wanting guys in the area to volunteer into
11 the Army Air Corps. They would be sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for a short time and
12 right back to that base to help open that base. So I was in the first group of GIs that
13 opened the base in 1942, latter part of '41-'42.

14 NS: Okay.

15 DB: I was sworn in here in Lubbock, Texas, sent to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for three
16 days for clothing and some supplies, and was sent right back out to Lubbock Army
17 Flying School west of Lubbock for my basic training.

18 NS: Okay.

19 DB: Basic training then, it didn't take long because they were needing men to
20 fight and to man the aircraft and so forth. I went to A.M. (airplane mechanics) school at
21 Lubbock Army Flying School and learned airplane mechanics. I worked out on the line a
22 while and worked in transit aircraft, which we serviced aircraft from all other bases that
23 flew into our base. I worked there for about a year and then I was put into airplane
24 inspections, putting inspections on aircraft. I was doing that in 19 and—latter part of
25 1944. I was pulling an inspection and got a telephone call from the orderly room that I
26 was to report to the orderly room in class A uniform. I reported down there and found out
27 that they had finally come up with my number after about three years. The first sergeant
28 comes in and says, "Well, men. It's over the pond." The first sergeant looked at me and
29 he said, "Sergeant Blevins," he said, "You're one of the oldest men in time at this base.
30 They have finally got your number." So we got our orders for overseas. They gave us a
31 ten either delay in route or furlough time.

1 NS: Right, which is like a leave?

2 DB: Like a leave, uh-huh. They gave me—that day then, that was ten o'clock and
3 our leave started at eight o'clock that morning so we lost two hours of our leave.

4 NS: Oh, that's not fair.

5 DB: No, it wasn't. So they gave me that day to clear the field. Well, I had no idea
6 what you did to clear the field but I found out. I had to report to every organization on the
7 base including the chapel, the library, the tech supply, and I had never been to the library
8 and so my wife—I came to town and got my wife and told her what had happened, that I
9 had gotten my orders. She went with me and we went to the base and spent all day. It was
10 almost dark by the time we cleared the field that day. I got to spend a few days with the
11 family and finally the day came that I needed to start to Greensboro, North Carolina, for
12 overseas training. So the day came for me to leave Lubbock because it was about at least
13 a three-day trip by train.

14 NS: What was that like? What was your wife feeling? Was it a sad departure?

15 DB: Oh yes, sure, sure, the family. We had no idea what was ahead of us. We had
16 no idea exactly where I was going to be going overseas. We had no idea if I would come
17 home or not, and so it was, it was very, very sad, a sad deal. But anyway, I caught the
18 train here in Lubbock and a fellow that had worked for us a few years before, it had been
19 a couple of three years since I had even seen this man. I had no idea where he was. How
20 he found out that I was in Lubbock and fixing to ship out, I don't know. But when I
21 started to step up on the train to leave Lubbock for Greensboro, North Carolina, someone
22 tapped me on the shoulder. I turned around and there was a fellow that we called Heavy
23 Hester, was his name and he had been in—he was in World War I.

24 NS: Wow.

25 DB: He had a silver dollar that was given to him when he went overseas in World
26 War I for good luck and he placed and gave that silver dollar to me for good luck to come
27 home from World War II. I thought how interesting that was. I took the silver dollar and I
28 kept it close to my heart all those years. So we left Lubbock and I think it was about three
29 or four days later and we pulled into the depot in Greensboro, North Carolina. We were
30 there for training. We were hiking and having seminars. We are training for overseas.

31 NS: What did those entail? What did the training entail?

1 DB: Most they were telling us what the enemy was like, what we could expect.
2 We learned how to identify certain types of aircraft, whether it was our own or whether it
3 was enemy aircraft. We did hikes to keep our bodies in shape and we learned how to
4 climb—we had to climb rope ladders because when you are aboard ship and something
5 happens you've got to go down or up a rope ladder. We had to learn how to do those
6 things. It was very interesting. But we were there a while and a friend of mine that had
7 been stationed to be out at the base but had left a year before and went to Bryan, Texas. I
8 had no idea where he was or anything but we were in a seminar in Greensboro in our
9 barracks and I heard this strange voice talking and I said, "That voice sounds familiar." I
10 stepped over and there my friend was Marion F. Willie from, his home was in St. Louis.
11 So he and I buddied together while we were stationed at Greensboro. Then one day we
12 decided that we wanted to call our wives. We had no idea how long we were going to be
13 there. He called his wife in St. Louis and I called my wife Pauline here in Lubbock and
14 told them to catch the next train out for Greensboro, North Carolina, so they both came
15 down. We got to spend the week with them before we finally shipped out of there. But
16 one morning about four o'clock there were three train loads of us that left Greensboro,
17 had no idea where we were going, and one train load came through Amarillo, one came
18 through Lubbock. I was on the one that went through the southern route to Del Rio, El
19 Paso, Albuquerque, New Mexico, on out to the West Coast.

20 NS: Just missed it.

21 DB: So we were headed for the west coast. Well, an interesting thing, before I left
22 to go overseas my wife and I made a code that if, to let her know if I was going to the
23 West Coast to Europe, I mean to the West Coast or the Pacific or the East Coast and New
24 York and to Europe. At that time there was a deacon in my church, First Baptist Church
25 here in Lubbock, Jackson West was a farmer out at Abernathy. Our Sunday school
26 teacher at First Baptist Church here in Lubbock was Elmer East so we had two friends,
27 West and East. So we made a code that if I wrote her a letter and said, "Honey, if you
28 need to sell the car, sell it to Mr. West or to Mr. East." Then she would know if I was
29 headed for the East Coast or the West Coast.

30 NS: How clever.

1 DB: After I found out that we were headed for Camp Anza, California, I kind of
2 got, everything was censored, all your mail was censored then. If you put something in
3 there that would let the enemy know where you were or where you were going they cut it
4 out. But my letter got through and I told her to sell the car to Mr. West. I was headed for
5 the west coast. I went to Camp Anza and was there three days then we boarded a ship one
6 afternoon about four o'clock and headed for somewhere we didn't know for sure where
7 we were going but we knew it was going to be on the Pacific Ocean.

8 NS: Was this your first time in a ship?

9 DB: Yes.

10 NS: What was that experience like?

11 DB: It was scary.

12 NS: Scary.

13 DB: So our ship pulled out about four o'clock in the afternoon and everybody on
14 that ship was out on that deck watching for the last speck of land that we could see.

15 NS: Oh, my.

16 DB: But the ship pulled out and the first meal we had aboard ship that evening
17 was the very, very thing that we did not need. It was, I called it greasy goulash. But we
18 tanked up, everybody was starved to death because we hadn't had anything to eat all day.

19 NS: Right.

20 DB: About the time we were eating the ship hit those breakers because that water
21 was coming in rough, rough, rough and that old ship started rocking and a rolling.
22 Everybody got deathly sick. Anyway, we finally got over our sickness and we were
23 pulling a little guard duty and a little KP aboard the ship. But we left and thirty-four days
24 later across the Pacific we docked in Calcutta, India. We got off the ship in Calcutta and
25 boarded trucks that took us out about eighteen miles out of Calcutta to a place called
26 Camp Kanchrapara.

27 NS: Camp—what was that again?

28 DB: K-A-N-C-H-R-A-P-A-R-A, Kanchrapara.

29 NS: So this—

30 DB: It was kind of an R&R camp for military in China.

31 NS: Oh.

1 DB: They would bring them back over for R&R after they had spent a year,
2 maybe, in service.

3 NS: So this was kind of an in processing for you?

4 DB: Yes, it was a camp where we more or less kind of went and just kind of
5 stayed until we got our orders to where we were suppose to go from there. We were there
6 I think about three or four days and we got our orders. They put us on little old narrow
7 gauge Indian trains and sent us across India to a little place called Chabau, C-H-A-B-A-
8 U, Chabau, India. There was an air base there that belonged to us and that was at the
9 mouth of the Ledo Road. The Ledo Road went over The Hump, the Himalayas, to China.

10 NS: To China. So he didn't have to fly over The Hump?

11 DB: Well, they gave us the option.

12 NS: Okay.

13 DB: We could either go by convoy over The Hump or we could fly.

14 NS: So you were more thankful for the convoy.

15 DB: I had had enough camping and so forth in the military that I didn't need
16 anymore of that so I chose flying.

17 NS: Okay.

18 DB: Instead of using the C-47, which was the old, it was the workhorse of the air
19 force in World War II, the C-46 cargo airplane. But they were flying us over in C-46s
20 which was akin to the 47 but was a little larger plane, had this cigar nose on it that nose
21 but it wasn't as safe a plane as the 47 was. They loaded us onto that, loaded our
22 equipment and stuff on that plane. They took us inside into a room to give us orientation
23 before we left. During the orientation, of course, they explained to us what was in the
24 back of our parachutes—

25 NS: Had you ever jumped before?

26 DB: No.

27 NS: Oh, so this is airborne training.

28 DB: In the back of our parachutes was an American flag, there was Chinese
29 writing and so forth that if we had to bail out somewhere they would know who we were
30 and what we were about. We were sitting there during the orientation and just before he
31 turned us loose to go board the plane there was a loud speaker came and said, "This flight

1 has been cancelled.” It was pouring down rain, thundering and lightning, and The Hump
2 flight is a very treacherous flight.

3 NS: I have read. I have—yeah.

4 DB: I have a book, sometime you might like to see through it. It shows all the
5 stuff that had to do with the flight over The Hump and so forth. They said this flight has
6 been cancelled and boy our fears were brightened up. We were all scared to death. I said
7 you will grab—when you get on the truck they will take you down to the tent area and
8 you can check out a blanket and go to the tent and go to sleep. So that is what we did. I
9 had been asleep maybe fifteen minutes, somebody came in and patted me on the shoulder
10 and said, “Sergeant, get up, get up. The truck is waiting outside and we’re taking off in
11 twenty minutes.” It was still thundering and lightning and pouring down rain.

12 NS: Oh, wow.

13 DB: We got on the truck and went up, we loaded on the aircraft. The C-46 was
14 loaded to the gills. I don’t know how many men there were on that thing but it was
15 loaded down with all of our barracks bags and everything. The plane taxied out, sat there
16 and warmed up a while and then it took off. As you know, the C-46 type aircraft is a
17 twin-engine cargo ship with a tail gear and when we kept waiting for that tail gear to
18 come off the ground because until it comes off the ground you don’t take off. We were
19 headed down that runway and there was water out at the end of that runway. We kept
20 waiting for that tail to come off and finally just before we get to the end of the runway
21 that tail finally comes up and we take off.

22 NS: What were you thinking? Were you just—?

23 DB: Well, we were scared.

24 NS: I can imagine.

25 DB: A little bit frightened. Each one of us had our carbine, M-1 carbine rifles that
26 we carried with us. I had my rifle between my legs and was holding the barrel with my
27 hand and when we got up in the air there the barrel of that gun got cold as ice and I
28 thought, “Oh, my goodness. I have got to lay this thing aside.”

29 NS: Oh, wow.

30 DB: Of course, we were having to wear oxygen masks because your aircraft
31 weren’t—

1 NS: They weren't stabilized.

2 DB: They weren't—yeah. The, well, I can't think of the name of the word to use,
3 but anyway.

4 NS: This was your first time in an aircraft like that.

5 DB: No, no. I had flown quite a bit before but you had to wear oxygen masks.
6 They weren't pressurized.

7 NS: Okay.

8 DB: So we got up to that altitude and I said, "Well, I have just to"—it is hard to
9 breathe with an oxygen mask. You try to take a deep breath and it just comes to you and
10 you don't get any air at all so you got to breathe slow. So I went to sleep and was able
11 then to. I don't know how long I slept. It was about a four hour flight from Chabau to
12 Kunming, China. I went to sleep and when I woke up we were still—see, we took off. I
13 think it was about 1:30 in the morning when we took off from Chabau so it would have
14 been about five o'clock but we were up there and the sun was shining, we were up above
15 clouds. You couldn't see anything under you but the sun was shining. I said, "This is
16 weird. I never heard of this before."

17 NS: So this is a flight that is known as treacherous, you are in a plane that is not
18 that safe, it is filled to the gills, it is not a pressurized cabin, and you fall asleep.

19 DB: And I fall asleep. I had to go to sleep in order to breathe. So we got over
20 Kunming, China. The clouds were heavy so we couldn't land so we flew around and
21 around and around over Kunming for about thirty minutes. I got to wondering, "How
22 much gasoline has this plane got left in it?" We flew around and around and finally the
23 pilot saw a hole about the size of a pin head, just a black place in that cloud and he said,
24 "We are going through it."

25 NS: Oh, wow.

26 DB: He headed the nose of that C-46 into that black spot and went through it and
27 there we were over Kunming and was under the clouds and were able to land. So we
28 landed and we were in Kunming, China, I think three or four days. They gave us all
29 questionnaires to fill out and my questionnaire asked the question: "What type of aircraft
30 did you work on in the States?" I told them twin-engine trainers, training cadets to be
31 pilots. They said, "Well, what type of aircraft would you choose here in China?" I

1 thought, “Well, they had some radial-type engines in B-24s and maybe some B-25s.” So I
2 chose B-24s. When I got my assignment it was P-38s which has an in-line, either a Rolls
3 Royce or Allison engines, and I had never worked on them before but that is what I was
4 assigned to. They put some of us on a little carry-all type vehicle and sent us about
5 eighteen miles out to a little place called Cheng Kung, C-H-E-N-G K-U-N-G. So we
6 went out to Cheng Kung and there was my—they assigned me to a P-38 and said,
7 “Sergeant, that is your aircraft sitting right there.”

8 NS: How far is this out of Kunming?

9 DB: Out of Kunming? About twenty miles.

10 NS: Twenty miles, okay.

11 DB: So they—I said, “Well, you are going to have to send somebody out here that
12 knows about these things to give me a little bit of orientation?” A guy came out there and
13 about thirty minutes I knew all I was supposed to know about a P-38.

14 NS: Goodness.

15 DB: My job, of course, every morning was to pre-flight. I had to pre-flight that
16 sucker.

17 NS: What is pre-flight?

18 DB: Pre-fighting, you check the aircraft over, you get in the cockpit, you learn all
19 of the instruments in that aircraft, you crank it up and you sit there and you warm the
20 engines to a certain degree of temperature. Then when that gets, the operating
21 temperature gets up so high then you’re allowed to check engine, to check the magnetos
22 to see if the engine is running properly.

23 NS: And this is everybody, every—

24 DB: That’s every morning.

25 NS: Okay.

26 DB: That’s generally, sometimes we would be pre-fighting at four o’clock in the
27 morning.

28 NS: And so, sorry, just to go back real fast. Had you gotten your assignment
29 before went to Kunming or you got assigned once you got there?

30 DB: We were assigned in Kunming and then went to Cheng Kung and that’s
31 where I first started operating the aircraft on the ground.

1 NS: Okay. So you weren't with the 14th before you got to Kunming.

2 DB: No, no. I was still in—the 14th Air Force wasn't hardly really organized until
3 about, let's see, about 1991 or 93.

4 NS: Okay. All right, I must—

5 DB: I mean '41.

6 NS Okay, I was fixing to say, I was a little confused. So you hadn't gotten
7 assigned yet to the 14th Air Force, the Flying Tigers, the 51st Fighter Group yet?

8 DB: No, not yet.

9 NS: Okay, that was later.

10 DB: But shortly after that when I was in the Flying Tigers, 14th Air Force, Flying
11 Tigers. See, there was a Flying Tiger outfit that before our time, even before Pearl
12 Harbor. In fact, a man right here in Lubbock, Texas, and a lot of folks will know the
13 name, Elmer Tarbox. I knew him well. In fact, I worked with him at the old Lubbock
14 Auto Company, the Ford dealer here. I went to work for Lubbock Auto in '47 shortly
15 after I got back from overseas. But anyway, Elmer Tarbox flew P-40s or P-47s in the old
16 Flying Tiger outfit in about 1940.

17 NS: Oh, okay.

18 DB: He was over in that area, China-Burma-India Theater. But anyway, we were
19 there at Cheng Kung I think about two months. Then they moved us further—we were
20 chasing the Japanese. They were flying troops across the northern part of China. See,
21 they held the northern part of China and Shanghai, the Japs. So we moved I think about
22 two hundred miles on down and we were then in French Indochina. We were at a little
23 village called Mengzi, M-E-N-G-T-Z-E, (M-E-N-G-Z-I) I believe is the way it was
24 spelled, Mengzi, China. Our air base was way down in the bottom of a valley, high
25 mountains all around us. In fact, when our P-38s took off for missions they almost had to
26 go straight up to get over the mountains.

27 NS: Oh, wow.

28 DB: So we were there and the Japanese were moving troops across China by train
29 and our P-38s were flying over there and blowing up those troop trains, getting rid of the
30 troop trains.

31 NS: Are these the like bombing and strafing missions, is that correct?

1 DB: Say what now?

2 NS: Are these the bombing and strafing missions?

3 DB: Yeah, uh-huh, bombing and strafing.

4 NS: Okay. And you are still doing pre-flight for all of these?

5 DB: Yes.

6 NS: Okay.

7 DB: Yeah, we pre-flighted every morning. But the funny thing about the pre-

8 flighting, now, we didn't have equipment over there like we had in the States. We didn't

9 even have chocks to put under the front wheels to hold us while we were pre-flighting.

10 One of the first mornings that I pre-flighted a P-38 I had no idea for sure about the brake

11 system and so forth but I learned later that the first thing you do is to pump up your

12 brakes and be sure you have got brakes. Then you crank up those things and you let them

13 warm up to a certain temperature and then you push the throttle forward and check one

14 engine and you check the other engine and then you check both engines. One morning I

15 was pre-flighting, this probably was around five o'clock in the morning, dark. Our

16 aircraft sat about I would say, oh, fifty yards or so in front of our little crew shack out

17 there and I was pre-flighting and was checking those engines out and I noticed that the

18 aircraft was kind of bumping a little bit with me and I thought, "What's going on?" I

19 reached down and flipped my landing light on and when I did I was heading for the crew

20 shack.

21 NS: Oh, my gosh!

22 DB: The brakes had bled down. After so long a time they will bleed down and

23 you don't have much brake. I found the brake pedal pretty fast. I had brakes and stopped

24 before I hit the crew shack.

25 NS: And everybody is in there still asleep.

26 DB: That's right.

27 NS: Oh, gosh.

28 DB: So we had some scary times and then we had some good times, of course.

29 But like the P-38 could carry two, two bombs one under each wing. We would use

30 regular explosive bombs or we would load those tanks with what we called jelly gas,

1 mustard gas. Whenever you dropped one of those tanks you spread that stuff and it would
2 set fire to everything it hit. It was very dangerous stuff.

3 NS: Is this kind of like the early napalm kind of stuff?

4 DB: Yeah, napalm bombs, uh-huh. That is what they were, napalm. We called it
5 jelly gas. There had been times when an aircraft we would pre-flight and it seemed like
6 everything was in good order but then when those pilots came down and got in those
7 aircraft and took off he might notice that one of his engines is cutting out a little bit. Well,
8 you don't dare take off on a mission with an engine like that. So he would fly, maybe he
9 had jelly gas under that thing. Well, you don't dare to land with that thing on there, so
10 you have to drop that stuff before you come around and land for another aircraft to take
11 its place. When they would go across those mountains over there they would drop that
12 stuff, it was awesome.

13 NS: Wow.

14 DB: To see that stuff burning. We got through it. There was one pilot that flew
15 my plane at Cheng Kung before we moved down to Mengzi took off one morning and he
16 was a brand new pilot. This was the first mission that he had run since he got overseas.
17 When he came down to get in my aircraft I could tell he was very nervous.

18 NS: I bet.

19 DB: He crawled up in the cockpit of that aircraft and he couldn't even find the
20 primer to prime the engine. He couldn't even find the starter and I thought, "My soul. I
21 have got something on my hands." Well, we finally—I helped him to find everything and
22 finally got it started. He sat there and he warmed up, he taxied out. Generally there would
23 be at least four P-38s that would be going on a mission together, never single. They went
24 out there and warmed up and he took off and I don't know what happened but he crashed
25 that booger and, of course, it killed him. Well, that was the only accident that I had any
26 personal—I felt personally involved in that. It wasn't my fault. He was just a nervous
27 sucker. He didn't hardly know what to do.

28 NS: What would happen when—I know that this is your first time of seeing a
29 pilot killed or anything like that. Was there any special service or kind of a memorial or
30 anything?

31 DB: Yes, yeah, our chapel would hold a special service there, yeah.

1 NS: Okay.

2 DB: Ordinarily, I never did know for sure what they did with the bodies.
3 Sometimes I guess they would bury them there or they might have a chance maybe to box
4 them up and maybe send them back home. I never did know for sure what they did about
5 that.

6 NS: Okay. Well, and that's a very sad time. We've had some scary times and
7 some sad times here overseas but you mentioned that there were some good things that
8 happened. Can you remember any specific instances?

9 DB: Very, very good. In fact, I have a picture here of my pilot, Forest Green was
10 my pilot in Mengzi.

11 NS: Okay.

12 DB: He flew my aircraft all the time there. He was a good man and we didn't—
13 while we were there we lost three planes, none of them were my own plane but we lost
14 three planes, three P-38s and three pilots over Hanoi, Vietnam. That was help with the
15 Japanese. But Forest Green was a real fine—he was from Texas, a fine guy. They would
16 take off and go on these flying missions and they would encounter Japanese Zeros or
17 Japanese bombers and they would have dogfights with those Zeros. When that plane—
18 when they would come back home to our base those planes would be solid oil from one
19 end to the other where they had flown upside down and so forth. They would be a mess.

20 NS: Oh, my.

21 DB: My pilot, he and I had something really—we were good friends. I was just a
22 tech sergeant. He was at that time a captain. I thought it was neat. Sometimes he would
23 come in and land and when he would come down and I would position him to where he is
24 to park and whenever he cut his engines off he would open his canopy and he would look
25 at me and he would salute me.

26 NS: Oh, wow.

27 DB: He was a captain and I was a tech sergeant. I felt pretty little about that but
28 anyway but that's what he thought. He appreciated my taking care of his aircraft. I got
29 him home safely. He crawled out of that thing and he would come over and he would
30 shake my hand and he would say, "Thank you, sergeant." He would go up to his officers'
31 tent and he would change into a jump suit. He would come back down there and we

1 would take a five-gallon can of 100-octane gasoline. Each one of us would have a big old
2 rag and we would wipe that plane and polish it and have it shining again for the next
3 mission.

4 NS: Oh, awesome.

5 DB: He was a great guy.

6 NS: So he was—did any other pilots help their tech sergeants?

7 DB: I think so.

8 NS: They did?

9 DB: Yeah, I am pretty sure they did. I think so.

10 NS: Well, you mentioned that you lost three planes over Hanoi and one thing that
11 I have kind of learned about is that there was the possibility that during this time and in
12 the lead up to the next war that happened, was the OSS (Office of Strategic Services) at
13 this time was getting Vietnamese and members of the Viet Minh and that kind of thing to
14 help downed pilots. Did you hear about anything like this with these three planes and
15 pilots?

16 DB: No, I sure didn't.

17 NS: You didn't? Okay. All right, well, that's pretty interesting. Okay, so you are
18 in Mengzi, China. What is happening now?

19 DB: We were in Mengzi, China, of course, when the war ended. I was pulling
20 guard duty one night. This was during—we were having some monsoon rains over there.
21 It was kind of interesting. One fun thing, another fun thing that happened that we finally
22 learned and caught onto was we had a large what we called gasoline dump where we had
23 hundreds of barrels 100-octane gasoline for fuel for our aircraft. We also had many five-
24 gallon cans of hydraulic fluid for brake systems and so forth and other parts of the
25 aircraft. We had Chinese—we were paying Chinese guards a little amount of money to
26 guard our aircraft at night while we slept. We came to find out that those Chinese guards
27 were stealing us blind of hydraulic fluid and no telling what else, maybe some tools that
28 we had. See, we didn't have hangars to pull an aircraft inside and work on. We had to
29 work on them outside all the time. Anyway, those Chinese were stealing us blind. The
30 funny thing, we go into the little village of Mengzi, just a little old filthy village, but we
31 found a shop in there and went in there one day and was looking around me and a buddy

1 of mine, looking at all the different stuff they had in there to sale. We found some little
2 small bottles of colored liquid and we asked the owner, a Chinese owner, “What’s this?”
3 “That is hair oil, hair oil.”

4 NS: Hair oil?

5 DB: So we had to buy us a bottle of hair oil. Of course, China was a very famous
6 place for perfumes, you know, fragrances, spices. We bought us some hair oil and it
7 smelled just like Rose hair oil that you would buy here in the States. At that time a lot of
8 the men used Rose hair oil.

9 NS: Oh, my.

10 DB: So I bought me a bottle of hair oil and I used it a little while. We came to
11 find out later on that that was hydraulic fluid with a little perfume in it.

12 NS: Oh, my goodness! So you just rebought your hydraulic fluid.

13 DB: S they were using hydraulic fluid and making hair oil out of it and selling it
14 back to our soldiers. I had bought me a bottle of hydraulic fluid with a little perfume in it.

15 NS: Oh, my.

16 DB: So that was fun, but anyway they were just about stealing us blind. One night
17 we had a tent down close to the dump and I was pulling guard duty that night and it had
18 rained so much until my tent had about at least six inches of water on the floor, on the
19 ground; didn’t have floors in them, it was ground. I had to have a cot in there and I had to
20 get up on that cot to keep out of the water. I was sitting there on my cot there in that tent
21 and I saw a light coming and I wondered who that is. I got my gun handy just in case and
22 it happened to be one of my buddies drove up in a jeep and he said, “I just wanted to tell
23 you, sergeant, that we have just heard over short-wave radio that something is about to
24 happen and we may be going home pretty soon.”

25 NS: What month and time was this?

26 DB: That sounded good to me.

27 NS: Right.

28 DB: I said, “Do you know anything?” He said, “All we know is that something is
29 brewing.”

30 NS: Wow.

1 DB: The next morning they came and got me and went back up there. Soon we
2 learned. This was in, I think it was August 1945, and that was on about the 14th or I think
3 it was the 15th when they actually dropped the hydrogen bomb, the atom bomb over
4 Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Anyway, we heard later, soon after that that they had dropped
5 the bomb and that the war was going to be over pretty soon and we would be going
6 home. That was good news.

7 NS: Uh-huh. I bet.

8 DB: We stayed after the war ended. In fact, we had—they were flying some of the
9 Japanese soldiers around different airbases over in China signing peace treaties and they
10 came to our base in Mengzi. The old Betty bomber—I have a picture of it somewhere at
11 the house if I can find it—the old Betty bomber came and landed and the Japanese crew
12 chief came off of that aircraft, a little short guy about my height. He had on his Japanese
13 cap, flying cap and his goggles and his boots. I went out and talked to him a little bit. He
14 could talk pretty good English. I asked him, I said, “What aircraft of our aircraft did you
15 all dread the most to see?” He said, “P-38.”

16 NS: Oh, wow.

17 DB: It was called the P-38 Lightning was the—and the P-51 Mustang was another
18 pretty dangerous little aircraft that we had that they didn't like. But he said, “We don't
19 like the P-38.” Anyway, they took the—the Japanese generals got off of that aircraft with
20 their long swords hanging down to their sides and the officers that were on that Betty
21 bomber—and I forget now. There must have been six or eight of the main high-class
22 deals. But anyway, we had some little L-5 aircraft, little single-engine planes, and they
23 put one of those along with our pilot in each one of those aircraft. Some of those guys
24 didn't want to get in that aircraft. They thought that they was going to take them up and
25 push them out.

26 NS: Oh, wow.

27 DB: They didn't want to get in the aircraft but we finally got them all in there and
28 we flew them over to another place where they actually did the signing of the treaty and
29 they brought them back. But that was interesting. We were there at Mengzi, I guess
30 probably about two weeks after the war ended and they finally flew us up to a place
31 called Lo Ping, China, where our headquarters squadron was stationed. We got up there

1 and found out that headquarters squadron was packed up and ready to ship out to come
2 home. They were loading up and flying back over The Hump back to India to catch the
3 ship to come home. There was a few of us that did not have enough points to come back
4 home with them so we had to stay and come home later. I was one of those that didn't
5 have enough. I liked about three or four points to having enough points so we had to stay.
6 Well, when the headquarters squadron moved out they moved all the equipment and most
7 of the food and everything had left, they moved it with them. All we had left was
8 crackers and cheese to eat but they told us, said, "Now, they're going to be coming in
9 here at least in two days and will pick you up and move you out and you're going to
10 Shanghai." That sounded okay, so they left. Well, soon after they left we had clouds
11 move in that were so thick that no aircraft could land. So we ate crackers and cheese for
12 three days and nothing else. That's all we had to eat.

13 NS: How many of you were here?

14 DB: You know, I don't remember. I would say probably seventy men left.

15 NS: Living off of crackers and cheese.

16 DB: Crackers and cheese.

17 NS: Oh, my goodness.

18 DB: Three days we went without any aircraft landing. Finally, on the fourth day
19 the clouds raised and they were able to come in. They came in and we went down and
20 was going to load on and fly out of there, we thought. Well, I was taking roll call,
21 checking off the names as they loaded on the aircraft and I was the last one to get on.
22 When I stepped up in the aircraft somebody tapped me on the shoulder and I turned
23 around and it was a lieutenant. He said, "Sergeant, I'm sorry but I have got to catch this
24 flight. I have just got to catch this flight. You will have to wait for the next plane." That
25 really hurt. Well, I stepped back off of the aircraft and he stepped on and I went back up
26 to the tent and had been there probably an hour and finally a guy comes down from the
27 communications tent, we had a short wave radio communications tent, and he came down
28 and he said, "Sergeant, just be happy you didn't get on that aircraft. We just got a
29 message that they crashed into a mountain and they were all killed."

30 NS: Wow.

1 DB: I said, "Oh, mercy." Some guys that I knew a little bit, I didn't know all of
2 them real well, I knew some of them. I said, "Well, I have lost some good buddies." I got
3 on my knees and thanked the good Lord that I wasn't on that aircraft.

4 NS: That first lieutenant—

5 DB: It was the next day then that I got out of there and we ended back up at
6 Shanghai. We got to Shanghai and they transferred me over to another squadron, into a P-
7 51 Mustang outfit. So I was crew chief on a P-51 for a couple of weeks until we got our
8 orders in to board a ship. We left Shanghai on December the 15th 1945 and on the 29th we
9 finally docked in Seattle, Washington.

10 NS: How was that—what was going through your head those few days, those
11 couple of weeks on the ship ride home and then docking? Were you just so excited to be
12 back in the States?

13 DB: Oh, yeah. When we learned that we were going to board ship that was
14 something.

15 NS: Right.

16 DB: It was an interesting stay while we were at Shanghai. We were based at a
17 little base right on the edge of the Huangpu River.

18 NS: Okay.

19 DB: It was kind of, it was a naval base. It was interesting while we were stationed
20 there. Of course, we got to go into town a time or two and so forth. When we left
21 Shanghai and fourteen days later docked in Seattle, Washington, we pulled in there at
22 night and when the ship was coming into the harbor there was a buoy floating out there
23 with a light on it and a little sign. The light I would say was no more than a ten-watt bulb,
24 you just barely could see the light and was shining down on this little sign that says
25 "Welcome home." I thought, "Man, that's great." We felt real honored to be welcomed
26 home by a little ten-watt bulb. But anyway, we pulled into the dock and found out that
27 Fort Lewis and Fort Lawton both were full of troops coming home from overseas. They
28 were there and both of those bases were full so we had to stay aboard ship for seven days.

29 NS: Oh, my gosh.

30 DB: In the States but couldn't go home. But they gave us passes to go into town
31 so me and a buddy went into town one night and we decided that we wanted to buy us,

1 we had been wearing those little brogan shoes for about twelve months, we wanted a pair
2 of dress shoes. So we bought a pair of dress shoes. Well, those dress shoes, our feet had
3 flattened out wearing those old brogans and the dress shoes were beginning to kind of
4 hurt our feet a little bit so we passed by a shoe shop, repair shop. We just walked inside
5 and asked the guy, “Sir.” He said, “I bet you boys have just got home from overseas.” We
6 said, “Yes, sir. We just got home from China.” He said, “Boy, we’re glad to see you back
7 home.” He said, “Thank you very much for your service.” We asked him, said, “Do you
8 have some stretchers, shoe stretchers that we can use? We have bought us a pair of dress
9 shoes and our feet have spread out larger than they are supposed to be and these shoes are
10 uncomfortable. Could we use your”—. He said, “You sure can, boy.” He gave each one
11 of us stretchers and we put those stretchers in those shoes and we sat there and visited
12 with him for about thirty minutes. We took those out and put our shoes on and they felt a
13 whole lot better. We said, “Sir, boy, that is great.” He said, “You know what?” He said,
14 “We just appreciate you guys.” He said, “I’m just going to charge you five dollars
15 apiece.” Charged us for stretching our shoes. We felt another real welcome home.

16 NS: Well, good (both laugh). Well, that’s neat, though, that there is some—you
17 know you never know when somebody is just going to surprise you like that and kind of
18 help you out in the day, so that is a good thing.

19 DB: That’s very true. We finally got out there. They put us on a train and we were
20 heading for El Paso for discharge. We came by train and when we got to—oh, I think it
21 was—I forget what little town it was. It seemed like it was Dalhart or somewhere up
22 there. The train pulled in there and we had problems. We had to sit on the track there for
23 several hours before we could pull out of there. Finally we pulled out and when it got on
24 down to El Paso and I was discharged there and then caught a bus to Lubbock, Texas.

25 NS: Awesome. What was that reunion like?

26 DB: Oh, great. It was great. I think it was a Saturday when we got to Lubbock and
27 this was January of 1946.

28 NS: Okay.

29 DB: I think I was able to get my wife, she met me at the bus station and—oh,
30 yeah. That was great. My wife was working for Miller and Miller Motor Freight here in
31 Lubbock and before I left I asked the dock foreman, I said, “Now, would it be possible I

1 might have a job with you guys when I get back from overseas?" He said, "You just
2 come see us." I had slept on cots all that time over there and got in a good old bed and,
3 man, that felt so good. On Monday morning I was sawing logs and my wife had already
4 got up and gone to work. About nine o'clock the phone rang. I reached over and grabbed
5 the phone and this guy says, "This is Rob down at the dock." He said, "Did you say that
6 you wanted to go to work?" I said, "I sure do." He said, "Well, I've got a truck loaded
7 waiting for you."

8 NS: Oh, wow.

9 DB: I got up and dressed. I went down and got in the truck and went to work. I
10 worked for them for about twelve months. I quit them and went to work for the Lubbock
11 Auto, the Ford dealer here in town.

12 NS: Okay.

13 DB: I spent thirty-five years in the parts department at Ford.

14 NS: Wow, so that being a crew chief and a flight mechanic really helped out,
15 then, afterwards, huh?

16 DB: It sure did, you bet.

17 NS: Good. Well, a couple of things were going on at this point after World War II
18 ended. One of that was—well, actually, first of all, I wanted to kind of go back and just
19 ask you a couple of more questions about serving in China and just some of the things
20 with the Chinese army. You know, we've talked about The Hump and how treacherous it
21 was and that kind of thing. That would obviously lead to maybe an issue of supply with
22 that kind of thing. Was it hard for you serving in China to get supplies and to be
23 resupplied with food and that kind of thing?

24 DB: Oh, yes.

25 NS: What was that like? Did you have to improvise or anything?

26 DB: You see, everything we received over there had to go over The Hump. That
27 was the only supply line we had. In fact, when you were in China back then you were in
28 the boondocks, so to speak. All of our supplies, we would get our monthly, what we
29 called monthly rations. Once a month we would get rations which would include—of
30 course, they had a few cans of beer they brought and, of course, I didn't use beer. They
31 had tobaccos. I didn't use tobacco but I got my tobacco my cigarettes. I turned down my

1 beer but I chose the candies, the bar soap for showering. Everything we got had to come
2 over The Hump. I would do a little trading with the other guys. Of course, they wanted
3 the cigarettes and I didn't want them so that was good so I would get their candy for my
4 cigarettes. It was—a lot of our food, of course, we had C-rations and K-rations, the
5 military food. The C-rations I was so tired of that I couldn't hardly stand that anymore.
6 The K-rations was pretty good. It had a big deal of chocolate in there. You couldn't get
7 chocolate anywhere else so that came in pretty handy. Being a Christian, I lead the
8 singing in the chapel for the Christian services on Sunday, but I fell in love with—we had
9 a Lutheran chaplain and he was a fine guy so I got close to him and anytime I needed
10 some K-rations I would go down to his tent and get K-rations. He was my buddy.

11 NS: What was his name?

12 DB: You know, I can't remember his name to save my neck.

13 NS: That's alright.

14 DB: I can't remember his name but he was a great guy.

15 NS: Well, good. So was this issue of supply, was that also receiving parts for the
16 plane and gas?

17 DB: Yes. Any parts that we got had to also come over The Hump. Kunming,
18 China, was they called it the LaGuardia Air Field of World War II.

19 NS: Oh, wow. Okay.

20 DB: It was busy place, that air base in Kunming because of air craft coming and
21 going. Of course, our guys had to fly those C-46s, C-47s with gasoline and that was a
22 dangerous thing. The Hump, it was our buddy.

23 NS: You kind of had to appreciate it.

24 DB: You bet your boots, you bet.

25 NS: Well, do you think that this issue kind of led to maybe the Chinese robbing
26 you blind, as you said before, of that kind stuff? Did they have a hard time getting
27 supplies, as well, the Chinese army?

28 DB: Oh, yes.

29 NS: They did, okay.

30 DB: At that time the Chinese army was very, very poor.

31 NS: Right.

1 DB: Their clothing was terrible and the old guns they used, I don't know how old
2 they were. Anyway, but the Chinese army any time any of their soldiers flubbed up they
3 were shot.

4 NS: Oh, wow.

5 DB: So a lot of mornings before we would get up, maybe we will still be in our
6 cots, in our tent at like five o'clock in the morning and the Chinese army had their deal
7 over just pretty close to where we were. You would hear gunshots over there and you
8 knew what was happening.

9 NS: Oh, gosh. What was that like? What was going through your head?

10 DB: Oh, scary. The Chinese people as a whole were a beautiful people. We fell in
11 love. Chiang Kai Shek was the leader at that time.

12 NS: Right.

13 DB: In fact Chiang Kai Shek gave all of us a medal from the Chinese government
14 thanking us for our service.

15 NS: Oh, good.

16 DB: China was our ally at that time but there was still a group of people in China
17 that we called the Red Chinese, which were communist people, and we had a little
18 problem with them. They were trying to come in and take over our gasoline dumps and
19 so forth.

20 NS: Well, I was going to ask you about that next, actually. It seemed to be that
21 there were these two separate groups kind of at odds with each other. In this one country
22 we have the Chinese army that the United States is trying to build up into a modern army
23 that is going to be a force that we can ally with.

24 DB: They were our friends.

25 NS: Right. Then we have this idea of this Red Army that is helping out the
26 communist movement. What were your thoughts on that? These two opposing forces,
27 what did you think about that?

28 DB: Well, at that time we had no idea, of course, what was coming later.

29 NS: Right.

30 DB: But we were good friends to Chiang Kai Shek and his people. They were just
31 beautiful folks. They were our good friends. Most of the fellows that owned the shops

1 and so forth you would go in a shop and they were glad to see you and they would help
2 you out in any way. So another funny thing that I have got to tell you, China had, of
3 course, a lot of silk, silks and so forth. These silk shops were just big old metal buildings
4 with no windows or doors in them. They run these shops day and night, people working
5 day and night at that time. But if our base—at one time our base was located about three-
6 quarters of a mile from one of these silk shops and they had short-wave radio in those
7 shops and they knew what was going on. We had to be careful because the Japs would
8 come in at night and strafe and bomb our bases. One thing we learned right quick that if
9 you happened to look up and see the lights out in that silk shop you better hit the rice
10 paddy or get behind a hill or something. The Japanese were coming. The minute they
11 turned those lights back on you was free to go back to your area, to your tent. They
12 helped us a whole lot that way. That's one of the fun things that we watched were the
13 lights in the silk mills.

14 NS: Well, that's good, though, that they were trying to help you guys out and say
15 take cover quick.

16 DB: You bet you.

17 NS: Well, that's interesting. Okay, well, so we kind of have—you know, you
18 mentioned that there was no idea what was going to be coming next.

19 DB: That's right.

20 NS: It was about another twenty years before—

21 DB: We didn't know that the good part of China, would be going to Taiwan, form
22 their government there. It was still kind of a part of the Chinese or China but it was
23 separate deal, our ally, good people. But the mainland would be communistic.

24 NS: Right. What was your reaction to that when China finally did fall to
25 communism?

26 DB: Oh, terrible. We didn't know, still didn't know for sure what was going to
27 happen later on.

28 NS: Right.

29 DB: Things just kept happening. Of course, China turned into—right now it's a
30 powerhouse.

1 NS: Right, right. Well, that's interesting the use of the word powerhouse. I know
2 that at this point in time the idea of China falling to communism instilled a great amount
3 of fear in everybody, you know, around the world. What was the United States like at that
4 time? You know, you have this opposing force halfway around the world and, you know,
5 there is the fear that it is going to spread, spread everywhere.

6 DB: I can't hardly explain fully probably what you would like to know but
7 anyway when I was over there China was our good ally but then they turned to be a real
8 enemy of ours. Even today I don't understand for sure what all may happen or what's
9 going on. Did you happen to see the Olympics?

10 NS: Yes, sir. So there were a lot of—there were some interesting things going on
11 with the Olympics this year.

12 DB: It showed that they're pretty smart.

13 NS: They are a smart people. So there were—at this point in time, you know,
14 1945 to about 1955, that kind of thing you know this is a period in history where there
15 was theories and things like that going on. What was it like living in Texas and, you
16 know, just trying to live an everyday life with this overhanging cloud? What was that
17 like?

18 DB: Oh, well, like I say a while ago, it's scary to think about the difference of
19 what China was then. They were a very poor nation but a real ally. They loved the United
20 States. They loved our people. Our soldiers that were stationed over there at that time
21 really, well, we just had a good time with those folks. They were so good. At that time
22 our monetary, it was 1,500 to 1, 1,500 yen to one silver dollar or one dollar. A friend of
23 mine before he went overseas, this friend that I buddied with and so forth he had built
24 himself a radio to take with him. He made his wooden housing and put the radio inside
25 there and it was a neat deal. At one time he got to thinking, "You know, this thing is kind
26 of hard for me to haul around going from base to base." He said, "Let's go into town,"
27 this was after we got to Shanghai. He said, "Let's go into town and I'll sell this thing and
28 get rid of it." We went to town and he had what we call a musette bag, you know, and
29 you put that radio in there. Of course, black market, it was against the law. If we were
30 caught selling anything in black market we would be taken care of. Anyway, he took this
31 radio in and we found this little shop and he went in and he talked to this Chinese owner

1 and he said, “You buy radio?” “Yeah, yeah.” So he wanted to see it. He saw it and he
2 said, “Yeah.” Marion Willie asked him, he said, “How much?” He said, “Come.” He took
3 us up a little old narrow flight of stairs that was straight up into a little room upstairs. He
4 had a big old, built a safe thing up there. He opened that safe and reached in and got a
5 bundle of Chinese money and it was I bet you that thing was twelve inches square of
6 Chinese money. There wasn’t any way, because if he took that our then some over MPs,
7 somebody saw him with that much Chinese money they knew something took place and
8 he would be—so he couldn’t sell it. He had to keep it, took it back to camp.

9 NS: Oh, wow. Well, you were going to be—you were on your way to being some
10 pretty rich guys there before you thought better of it.

11 DB: There was no telling how many yen, there was 1,500 to 1. If he was going to
12 give him like, I don’t know, fifty dollars, you can imagine.

13 NS: I know. That’s a lot of cash.

14 DB: That’s a lot of paper money.

15 NS: That’s right. Well, that’s pretty interesting. Well, some more things that were
16 going on, you know, we kind of discussed this idea of this communist scare, the idea that
17 that was going on. It was after World War II ended it would be another twenty years
18 before the Vietnam War started. One thing that was in the history of Vietnam is this idea
19 that—there is some thought, you know, I mentioned before OSS getting parts of the Viet
20 Minh to try to help downed pilots and that kind of thing. I know that in researching you
21 can see that Ho Chi Minh during this time after the French, after French-Indochina
22 wasn’t French-Indochina anymore and the Japanese were trying to take control that
23 maybe there was this idea that Ho Chi Minh began to see a way to gain independence for
24 Vietnam. Are you hearing anything about this at this point or are the United States just
25 kind oblivious to—

26 DB: You know, I have heard little. About the only thing that I have heard really
27 about us and the Vietnam situation was that our men were not given the privilege to win
28 that war.

29 NS: Okay. What are your reactions to that?

30 DB: Terrible. A lot of our men thought that it was needless that they go. I have
31 heard from some sources that said that before, during the Vietnam War that before the

1 men, the pilots, before they moved their aircraft to go out on missions they were told that
2 if you have to use your guns or bombs in any shape, form, or fashion do it in open
3 territory.

4 NS: That's not going to, that's not going to win a war. Well, so do you think—
5 obviously you feel that that is on the politicians' side, you know, which is a great—there
6 are many that feel that way, the politicians didn't—you know the White House in
7 Washington, D.C., did not allow the generals and the soldiers to actually fight and to win
8 the war.

9 DB: I feel like that Washington really needs to, they need to know what's going
10 on and they need to be kind of in charge but the way I feel about it we should never enter
11 in a war that it is impossible to win. We are almost in that situation right now.

12 NS: And you are referring to Iraq.

13 DB: You know, if there is a house that has a bunch of insurgents in it that are
14 shooting at us and shooting missiles at our troops and we go back and say, "Okay, we are
15 going to blow you up," well, when they blow it up then there is some people that they call
16 insignificant people in there and they get killed. Then they come back and bad mouth us
17 for killing some innocent folks.

18 NS: Right.

19 DB: I don't understand that.

20 NS: Right, and I can understand not seeing that and I agree with you, especially
21 because, you know, in World War II you had the buoy.

22 DB: In other words, in World War II, World War I, we were fighting an enemy
23 that we would fight until they lay down their arms and we have won.

24 NS: Right.

25 DB: But that's not the case now what we are fighting. Al Qaeda is not going to
26 lay down their arms.

27 NS: There is a great deal of thought to that in insurgency and counter-insurgency
28 tactics.

29 DB: So how will we know when we have won?

30 NS: Right. What defines success? Okay, well, so in this, again going back to this
31 build up, were you aware at this time in the span of 1945 to 1965, were you aware of

1 anything going on in the, you know, let's say the Chinese helping out the North
2 Vietnamese and that kind of thing? Were you aware before we actually had military
3 action over there?

4 DB: Really not.

5 NS: Not really.

6 DB: Really not. A lot of that is kind of dark to me.

7 NS: Okay.

8 DB: I didn't really realize what was happening then and what was going to
9 happen later on. It's hard to tell. Of course, after World War II we had a similar war in
10 Korea, North and South like in Vietnam, North and South. The bad element of a country
11 was trying to take over the whole country and we had to go in there to help keep that
12 from happening and that's what we are in really right now and in Vietnam. It was crazy.

13 NS: Okay. So then obviously you knew, it was all over the news you know
14 starting in 1965 that we were starting military action in Vietnam.

15 DB: Right.

16 NS: What was your reaction to that, especially since you had served in that same
17 kind of theatre? What was your reaction to that?

18 DB: I felt like just like I feel about Iraq. I felt that it was needed. I thought we
19 needed to go over there and help but we weren't given the opportunity to do what we
20 needed to do.

21 NS: Okay. Kind of—we are just kind of sent over there.

22 DB: Our hands were tied to a certain extent. Like I say, it's hard to tell. You don't
23 know who the enemy is or who your friend is. You can be with your friends, like, in Iraq
24 or in Vietnam but somebody could come in there that looks just like then that is strapped
25 with explosives.

26 NS: Right, and so you just kind of, kind of can't trust anybody.

27 DB: That's right, that's right.

28 NS: Being—you're a civilian at this point. You have been out of the military for
29 several years. You know, what—a big thing during this period of time was the issue of
30 the media and the media kind of skewing the story, so to say, so to speak, the war in a
31 more negative light. What was your reaction to that?

1 DB: Well, I have some real queer feelings about the media.

2 NS: Right.

3 DB: They will take something, just like what's going on right now with elections
4 and so forth, they take things on their side and they will blow it up. Good things, a lot of
5 good things are happening in Iraq and they don't ever show that. All they show is that we
6 killed some innocent folks and that we in this prison thing over there, our people have
7 been real mean to those prisoners. One side of the media will blow that up and make it
8 look like the United States is the bad people and build the other side up and I don't like
9 that.

10 NS: That again goes back to the idea of not being able, of having your hands tied,
11 not being able to win a war that you are set to do. Do you agree or do you feel that this
12 idea of the media reducing support home that that affects again the military tactics and
13 the warfare to even win?

14 DB: It sure does, you bet.

15 NS: All right. Well, so, you know, the Vietnam War started and we kind of were
16 fighting for ten years here. You mentioned that you were a host family to two woman, is
17 that correct?

18 DB: Two women and also two men.

19 NS: Okay, so you have four Vietnamese citizens living in your house at different
20 points.

21 DB: Well, they didn't—there was only one that actually lived with us.

22 NS: Oh, okay.

23 DB: This young man here, Tri Vu lived with us for about six months. We charged
24 him no rent. We just gave him a room. He brought his own cooking utensils. He cooked
25 his own rice and his spices and stuff. I tell you what, this young man was the sweetest
26 friend. I would trust anything to him and these young ladies. Then Tri Vu's brother, Phu
27 Vu that married Huong Tran, they were the sweetest people. Every time they—at that
28 time there was quite a few Vietnamese living in Lubbock and a lot of them worked at TI
29 north of town. Every time they would have a celebration, they celebrated their new years
30 in February.

31 NS: Uh-huh, Tet.

1 DB: Every time they would have their new year's celebration we were invited to
2 their party.

3 NS: Oh, wow.

4 DB: They just invited us. These two girls, we helped each one of them have a
5 wedding. The two girls—I'll tell you an interesting story about Huong and Cindy. I can't
6 think of what Cindy's last name was, but anyway her folks left Vietnam and went to
7 France and then she left France and came to the United States for education. But a funny
8 thing, I believe it was Huong—they were both going to Tech—

9 NS: These are the two girls?

10 DB: Yeah, the two girls.

11 NS: Okay.

12 DB: So one day Huong called Pauline and said, "I have to write a paper and you
13 may need to help me." Pauline said, "Okay. Let's talk about that when we pick you up
14 Sunday." A lot of times we would pick them up Sunday and then we would take them to
15 church with us and they would go home with us for Sunday lunch. So Huong said, "I
16 have got to write a paper," and Pauline said, "Oh, what are you going to write a paper
17 about?" "I have got to write a paper about God." She had no idea about God because they
18 were Buddhist. Pauline said, "Oh, great." She said, "Pauline, you know God?" My wife
19 said, "Yes, I do. I know something about God." She said, "Great. You help write me a
20 paper." So she helped her write her paper and she told her all about it and so forth and
21 then did a little missionary work there. Then two or three days later she told Pauline, she
22 said, "I want to know your God."

23 NS: Wow.

24 DB: So she became a Christian and was baptized in our church.

25 NS: I bet that was an exciting experience.

26 DB: Cindy, the other girl, did the same thing.

27 NS: Oh, wow.

28 DB: When Tri came to Indonesia and was on his way here to be with his brother
29 and his wife, Tri came to Indonesia and then when he came here he came to Phu Vu's
30 and Huong's home, they were living in an apartment out north of 4th Street in those
31 apartment houses out there, they were living out there. About that time they were

1 graduating from Tech and had jobs in Oxnard, California, with the government,
2 government jobs. About the time Tri got here they were fixing to leave. Well, Huong
3 called Pauline and said, “Pauline, we moving to California. Tri have no place to stay. Can
4 he live with you?” Well, we were fixing to go to a meeting down at the church that night
5 and Pauline told me on the way down there what happened. I said, “I think we’ve done
6 our part,” you know. We went to the church at the meeting and the guy was preaching
7 from James when it says something about you say you love your brother but you turn
8 your back on him when he has a need. Pauline looked at me when he said that and I
9 looked at her. When we had a little break in the meeting she said, “What do you think?” I
10 said, “When we get home we will call her and tell him to come on and live with us.”

11 NS: So there you go.

12 DB: He came lived with us six months and that was the sweetest time we ever
13 had. Those kids were—we still hear from them once in a while. They will send us
14 Christmas cards or something like that. But this Tri graduated with a degree in electrical
15 engineering. They live in Coppell, Texas. We haven’t seen them now, we hadn’t seen
16 him in probably four or five years, but they are the sweetest people and made the dearest
17 friends.

18 NS: Well, good. Well, Tri, am I pronouncing that correctly?

19 DB: T-R-I.

20 NS: T-R-I, okay.

21 DB: V-U is his last name.

22 NS: Tri Vu, okay. He escaped, you had mentioned before, before we started
23 recording you mentioned that he escaped on a fishing boat.

24 DB: Fishing boat.

25 NS: Can you tell me about that again?

26 DB: He and a friend or two had been making plans to escape.

27 NS: And this was after 1975.

28 DB: This was before the war was over. It was still brewing.

29 NS: Okay.

30 DB: He—let’s see. I think this was probably—I don’t remember exactly what
31 year this would have been. Anyway, I think it was before the war was over. I’m not going

1 to say for sure. Anyway, he and his friends were planning on escaping but they could go
2 fishing but the authorities would only give them enough gas for just a few hours out in
3 the water and then they had to come back. They had made plans to meet someone else
4 somewhere out there and got more gasoline. So they came to Indonesia with nothing on
5 their back except a pair of pants maybe and a pair of shoes and that's about all he had.
6 But the funny thing about it, when he got to Lubbock, well, when he came to live with us
7 one night he had I think he had gone to the library or something to study or whatever but
8 anyway we came in and he came in and said, "Well, where have you been." I said, "We
9 have been to church." I said, "Tri, would you like to"—I said, "You Buddhist?" "No, no,
10 no, no. Me Christian." I said, "When?" He said, "Just a minute." He went back out to his
11 room and brought in a certificate of baptism. He was baptized in Indonesia.

12 NS: Oh, my gosh.

13 DB: I don't know who by or what kind of a situation it was. But anyway, I said,
14 "You want to know more about God?" "Me know God. Me Christian."

15 NS: He has a certificate to prove it.

16 DB: We decided we better—D.L. Lowry was our pastor at that time. I said, "We
17 need to take you down and let you talk to D.L. Lowry. He may want you to be baptized
18 again because we don't know who baptized you or where or what." He said, "Would that
19 hurt?" We said, "Oh, no. No hurt." So he was re-baptized in First Baptist Church by D.L.
20 Lowry.

21 NS: Wow. That's an interesting story. Okay, well, did you ever get a chance to
22 speak with him? Did he ever mention anything about what it was like in Vietnam at that
23 point? Was he ever—?

24 DB: Not a whole lot, because he was so busy in school and we didn't—I don't
25 think they wanted to talk about it very much.

26 NS: Understandably.

27 DB: But it was pretty bad.

28 NS: Well, okay. Well, Mr. Blevins, is there anything else that you want to discuss
29 today about Vietnam or World War II or having—?

1 DB: I don't really think that there's anything else, really. We just need to be
2 thankful for what's happened so far and, of course, it didn't happen like we wanted it to
3 happen. But the thing in Iraq, we really need to be much in prayer about that thing.

4 NS: Right. Hopefully it will be ending soon.

5 DB: Ending soon, you bet, with victory.

6 NS: Success on our side. That's one thing in any—

7 DB: With victory.

8 NS: Yes. One thing that we want.

9 DB: That's right.

10 NS: Okay, well, Mr. Blevins, I want to go ahead and I will put an official ending
11 on this. I want to thank you so much for coming out today and speaking with me.

12 DB: It has been interesting. It has been interesting.

13 NS: Well, I'm very appreciative of it.

14 DB: I have got to relive some of this stuff that I went through. Of course, a lot of
15 guys went through a lot rougher stuff than I did and I am thankful that I came back and
16 my two brothers came back alive. One of those brothers has passed away. One was
17 placed in limited service because he only had one eye. He didn't have to go overseas. The
18 other brother served in the Pacific in the Navy and he lives in California and is doing
19 well.

20 NS: Well, good. All three of you were in different branches of the service?

21 DB: Yeah, Navy, Army, and Army Air Corps

22 NS: Oh, wow. Was it is just personal preference that made each of you go that
23 way?

24 DB: Yes. Well, the one in the Army I don't guess—he was drafted. The one in the
25 Navy, I think he volunteered probably and got in the Navy and I volunteered and got in
26 the Army Air Corps instead of the Army, walking army.

27 NS: Wow, that's an interesting story.

28 DB: It was an experience that we did a whole lot of learning. We learned how to
29 sacrifice and one thing about World War II is that our people cooperated with each other,
30 we loved each other, we helped each other, everybody worked hard, everybody
31 sacrificed, and we won the war.

1 NS: Good, glad to hear that that camaraderie was established.

2 DB: You bet.

3 NS: Okay, well, Mr. Blevins, again thank you so much for coming out today. I
4 really appreciate you.

5 DB: I appreciate your calling me and the interest in this thing. I've enjoyed it very
6 much.

7 NS: Well, thank you very much. I will go ahead and stop the tape now.

8 DB: Okay.