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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Michael Blaisdell
Conducted by Jason Stuart
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Transcribed by Emilie Meadors**

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

Jason Stuart: This is Jason Stuart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University conducting an Oral History Interview with Colonel Michael Blaisdell. Today is August 5th, 2009. I am in Lubbock, Texas, in the Special Collections Library on the campus of Texas Tech. And Colonel Blaisdell is joining me by phone from Woodland Park, Colorado. Is that correct, sir?

Michael Blaisdell: I don't actually live in Woodland Park. My post office box or my post office address is Woodland Park. I live about eight miles north of Woodland Park.

JS: Okay, all right. Why don't we begin with if you could tell us a little biographical information about yourself? First of all, when and where were you born?

MB: I was born in Tyler, Texas, in November 1939. I lived in Tyler and Waco. My father was in the Second World War, and he came back, and we lived in Tyler again. And then we moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, where I lived for about six years. Moved to Kansas in about 1954, went to high school in Kansas, played football there.

JS: Okay.

MB: I got recruited by the Air Force Academy to go into the 4th class at the Air Force Academy.

JS: Okay.

MB: I graduated there. I didn't play football. I blew both knees and had to quit because they told me if I got hurt again, I probably wouldn't be able to fly. So, I quit

1 playing football, was captain of the swimming team though. I graduated in 1962, went to
2 pilot training in Big Spring, Texas.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: I got through pilot training and went to F-100 training in Phoenix, Arizona,
5 at Luke Air Force Base.

6 JS: All right.

7 MB: You want me to just keep going?

8 JS: That's fine. I do have some questions, but if you'd like to give an outline to
9 begin with. But I certainly have some questions about your early life and education and
10 particularly about the Air Force Academy.

11 MB: Okay, well let's just stop there then, and we'll pick back up again with F-100
12 training at Luke.

13 JS: Okay, sure. You mentioned your father serving in World War II. Do you mind
14 me asking what did he do during the war?

15 MB: Well, he was a very good swimmer, and he worked for the YMCA in Waco.
16 He had gone to Northwestern in Chicago to college but didn't compete there but came
17 back to Waco to work in the YMCA and got recruited to go over and teach combat
18 swimming in England.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And I think that was kind of a cover for other things that he was doing
21 because he mapped the French coast. He was working with Navy frogmen.

22 JS: Oh wow, okay.

23 MB: And he never talked a whole lot about it. I know he was in a plane crash, and
24 actually came back to the United States before the Normandy invasion.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: But I know he was in England, and he was doing preparations both teaching
27 combat swimming for the guys that were going in on the LSTs—

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB:—you know, how to swim with a sixty-pound pack on your back.

30 JS: Right.

31 MB: And also, he was doing mapping of the French coast.

1 JS: Okay, all right. Well, growing up as a kid, with your father's military
2 experience and all, did you have any interest in the military as a kid?

3 MB: No, not really. I was fairly disciplined. I know probably the first military
4 kind of thing I ever did was I was in the safety patrol when I was in elementary school.
5 That was back when kids could be crosswalk guards and stuff like that.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: And I did that and, you know, that was a little kind of disciplined activity. I
8 never did a whole lot in Scouts. I remember I went through—I'm trying to think—
9 American Sharpshooter Rifles, and stuff like that. I did quite a bit of shooting, did a lot of
10 hunting when I was in high school. Both game, birds, and squirrels and rabbits, and
11 things like that.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: So, I was very familiar with small arms and things, but not really. I was
14 playing football in high school, and a guy in front of me—a guy one year ahead of me—
15 had been recruited by the Air Force Academy, and I said, "That sounds like, you know, a
16 pretty good activity. I'll look into it." I looked into it, and they were interested in me and
17 helped me get an appointment.

18 JS: Okay, all right. How about flying? When did you develop an interest in
19 flying?

20 MB: After I got to the Academy.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: I had never even thought about flying a whole lot. The Academy looked like
23 a good place to get a good scientific education. When I was in high school, about the time
24 I was a junior or between sophomore and junior year is when they launched Sputnik. And
25 I was trying to make a decision. I have some doctors and some uncles and other relatives
26 who were doctors, and I was thinking, "Well, maybe I want to be a doctor or maybe a
27 veterinarian or something." And I was making decisions whether to go a
28 biology/chemistry kind of prep for a doctor or go more into physics and math and things
29 that I would need to be an engineer.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: Well, Sputnik came along, and they were really pushing the engineer side, so
2 I went that way. And of course, then the Academy just fit right into that kind of
3 education. Then I got to the Academy and had some very good mentors there both in
4 sports and in military and in the classroom. Most of our instructors were Korean War
5 vets.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: They were all fighter pilots, so I wanted to be a fighter pilot.

8 JS: Sure, all right. I know you mentioned that you were born in 1939. Do you
9 have any memories of the Second World War?

10 MB: Yeah, my dad—I think my dad was over in England for about two and a half
11 years, something like that. We were living in Waco close to my mom's family. I can
12 remember—I think was it McClellan Air Force Base or not McClellan? Yeah, I think it
13 was McClellan in Waco (Waco Army Airfield until 1945, later Connally Air Force Base,
14 after 1949 known as James T. Connally Air Force Base).

15 JS: That sounds right, but I'm not sure.

16 MB: I've got terrible allergies. We've got beautiful flowers up here this year
17 because we've had a lot of rain, but unfortunately, I've got terrible allergies. I can
18 remember airplanes probably, I don't know, P-47s or something flying low over the
19 house, you know, buzzing the house. Not our house but just the neighborhood.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: And so, I can remember that vaguely. I can remember helping my mom with
22 a victory garden. We would haul pails of water out to water the victory garden out in the
23 backyard. We were in a little red house in Waco. So, you know, that's the sort of thing I
24 remember. I remember going out to, I think, it's Camp Fannin which was close to Tyler.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: A big Army base, and we went out there for parades. I remember they had a
27 kind of like a variety show that the soldiers put on. And I'm pretty sure that was after the
28 war, but the camp was still open then. So, I do remember that just vaguely.

29 JS: Sure. Okay, well where did you go to high school?

30 MB: I went to high school in Topeka, Kansas.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: We moved to Kansas from North Carolina in the winter of 19—I think it was
2 '54. And I remember my mom, having been raised in Waco and then spent some time in
3 Charlotte, North Carolina, we moved to Kansas in January, and she actually cried
4 because the weather was so bad.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: But she got used to it and ended up living there for forty years.

7 JS: Okay. Well, we've talked about what your father did for a living, but I haven't
8 asked you about your mother. What did she do?

9 MB: Well, my mom—my grandfather was a carpenter originally, he worked in
10 the oil fields building those big old black derricks that they had all over Texas then.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: And then later—he didn't have a college education, but he was a smart man,
13 and he ended up as an accountant working for the city of Waco. And they had like five
14 kids, I think, and built a house in Waco. He and his friends and family built a house. They
15 said it took two kegs of nails and one keg of whiskey to build a house.

16 JS: (laughing) Right.

17 MB: It was sort of on the edge of town, and I remember when I was very young,
18 they actually had a cow in the side yard. Of course, I grew up there with my cousins and
19 always went there for holidays and slept out in kind of a barn garage that had a little
20 cabin on the end of it. Now that house looks tiny and is almost in the middle of town, but
21 it was on the edge of town then.

22 JS: Yeah.

23 MB: I remember going there and there were some storm drains, and we'd go
24 down and catch crawdads and little crappy in the storm drains. They were creeks. You
25 know, just a good memory of childhood there.

26 JS: Sure. All right, well, as far as high school goes, you mentioned that you
27 played football. Could you talk about the position you played, and was your team any
28 good?

29 MB: Well, we did all right. I was blessed with growing up in Texas where the
30 schools were very good. I remember they were oil-supported and very good schools,
31 elementary schools. And then I went to North Carolina and the schools weren't quite as

1 good there. A little more crowded, and it was a little more metropolitan place. I started
2 playing football in junior high there in North Carolina. I carried a paper route. I delivered
3 the *Charlotte News* for several years. And then, again, I was blessed when we went to
4 Kansas because Kansas had a very responsible government there. A lot of wheat, a lot of
5 old money there in Kansas, and they built a beautiful high school in downtown Topeka.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: It was the only high school there except for a Catholic high school when I
8 went to school. Now there's about a half dozen high schools in Topeka. Topeka High
9 School was—it looked like a Cathedral. It's a beautiful building. Pretty big classes—I
10 think we had something like three or four hundred in our graduating class—excellent
11 teachers, very well-funded, a very good school, and so therefore I got a pretty good
12 education. And football was big in my world, and I wanted to be a fullback, but I wasn't
13 quite fast enough. I was big for my age. In Texas—that's something that kind of helped
14 me, by the way. In Texas, you couldn't start to school until you were seven. Well, my
15 birthday is in November, so I was darn near eight before I started to school.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: So, I was kind of about half a year older than most of my classmates and a
18 half a year bigger.

19 JS: Right.

20 MB: So, I played guard and tackle and linebacker as about one hundred and eight-
21 five-pound footballer in Kansas. And I did make All-State, which did help me with the
22 Air Force Academy. And I made Team All-American which was sort of unusual from
23 somebody from Kansas, but we did pretty good playing all the little high schools around
24 there. We played Shawnee Mission and a lot of the Kansas City, Kansas teams,
25 Wyandotte, and places like that.

26 JS: Okay, when did you graduate from high school?

27 MB: I graduated in 1958.

28 JS: 1958.

29 MB: And we just went to our fiftieth anniversary last year and our reunion and
30 really enjoyed it. Good to see all the old classmates.

1 JS: Sure. Growing up during this time period and going to school and all, of
2 course, this was the time whenever the Cold War was really starting to heat up. Did you
3 pay attention to what was going on in the world with the Cold War?

4 MB: Yes, I did. I mentioned I was carrying newspapers in Charlotte, North
5 Carolina. I remember reading about the Korean War, and the aces there. I didn't really
6 understand what was going on in Korea, but yeah, I did. In high school like I say, we had
7 real good teachers, and they would talk to us about communism and what was going on
8 as far as the Soviets. Of course, I've learned a lot more since then.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: But I was very affected by Sputnik, by them getting ahead of us
11 technologically.

12 JS: Right, okay.

13 MB: Or the perception that they were ahead of us.

14 JS: Right, yes sir. Could you talk about how you received your appointment to the
15 Air Force Academy and how all of that came about?

16 MB: I was contacted, as a junior, by the Academy. And as I say this guy in front
17 of me wanted to go there. He wasn't quite smart enough to pass the test to get in, so he
18 went to a prep school for a year, and then he came in the same class that I was in. It's
19 kind of interesting. He didn't last long. He just wasn't smart enough, really. He was a
20 good kid, and his dad ran a rental place over in Laurence, Kansas, but he didn't stay there
21 very long. Myself and a couple other of my classmates got in. They came and
22 interviewed me and my coach, who was a very good mentor—gave them some film, and
23 they were very interested in me as a defense linebacker.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: I never did go to the Air Force Academy. I saw pictures of it and so forth.
26 And actually the first three years, first three classes at the Air Force Academy, went to
27 academics up at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver. And my class was the first one to go
28 all four years at what they call the "Permanent Site."

29 JS: Right.

30 MB: But what the Academy does is they contact local congressmen and senators,
31 and there was a Senator Scheppele, who was a Republican in Kansas at that time. My

1 family was Democrat coming from Texas. He was convinced by his staff and by the folks
2 that I interviewed with and by the athletic department at the Academy that I should get an
3 appointment. I went in and talked to him with all his staffers and advisors there, and he
4 cleared the room, and it was just he and I. And he looked me in the eye, and he said,
5 “Son, I’m going to appoint you, but if anybody asks you, you’re a Republican.” (both
6 laughing) I’ve been a Republican ever since.

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: He was a little bit bothered that I was a Democrat.

9 JS: Sure, right. Well could you talk just about life there at the Air Force Academy
10 and kind of what it was like? Just kind of your day-to-day routine and all of that.

11 MB: Well, of course what they call “doolie” training, the basic training during the
12 first summer before you ever get into academics is tough. But physically I was probably
13 at an advantage over some of the kids who weren’t athletes who went there. I enjoyed the
14 heat and the running and the pushups and the obstacle courses and stuff like that. In fact,
15 some of the upperclassman who were my leaders when I first got there—we’d have
16 tailgates at the football games now. We laugh about the fun that they had and the
17 challenge that I had, in going through that physical part. The mental part and the stress
18 was what was really hard on me. I had—you know, my dad had to discipline me, and I
19 knew how to take that sort of thing, but the constant stress and having to memorize things
20 and that sort of thing. Making mistakes and getting corrected for it. That was hard and it
21 really affected me. And of one the things that I learned—and this is one of the things I get
22 to teach, or mentor really, out at the Air Force Academy once in a while—those kinds of
23 systems are rife with abuse. People take advantage of that arrangement. And I tell people,
24 “Remember how much you disliked being yelled at. And try not to do that. Try to teach.”
25 You know, you can be tough without being mean.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: So, that was the hardest thing for me, and then of course, academics. It was
28 like turning up the heat on a burner. In high school I had taken Latin and a lot of math,
29 and so forth. I had never taken calculus though. A lot of my classmates had one or two
30 years of college, and they were way ahead of me in calculus. And that was one of the
31 hardest things. I just had to learn calculus, and the light didn’t come on to me as to what

1 calculus was all about until I applied it to some other sciences, like aero and astro and
2 chemistry. Then my last two years at the Academy academically weren't quite as hard. I
3 just didn't know how to study and didn't know how to take tests at first.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: And the reading, enormous amounts of reading. And I never did, while I was
6 at the Academy, learned how to speedread and since I have. And it makes life much
7 easier.

8 JS: Sure, right. What was your major there?

9 MB: You know when I went to the Academy they didn't have majors. They have
10 about twenty or thirty majors now, but I took accelerated courses in physics.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: Nuclear physics. Because I figured, it's a nuclear world, we've got nuclear
13 submarines. At that time, the Air Force was even looking into nuclear airplanes. I
14 thought, "Well, if I don't get to go to pilot training, maybe I'll be a nuclear scientist." So,
15 I took accelerated courses, and today I probably would have been a physics major.

16 JS: Okay. Could you kind of describe, say, a typical day in the first year? How
17 would the day be structured?

18 MB: You mean as a 4th classman?

19 JS: Yes, sir.

20 MB: Yeah, they call them "doolies" at the Air Force Academy, you know, the
21 same as a "plebe" at West Point.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: Well, during football season I got to sit on—at meals we sat at athletic
24 tables. The rest of the squadrons would sit in squadron tables. The athletic tables you just
25 got to eat more is all. In my day, we marched to every meal.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: Now sometimes, because of athletics, you were excused from marching. But
28 as a 4th classman, seldom did you get not to march. So, you'd get up in the morning—the
29 4th classmen call minutes, so five minutes until—I think the reveille was something like
30 six o'clock. So, the 4th classmen would go out in the hallway and call minutes, "Five
31 minute until reveille formation," and then you had to get up, brush your teeth, shave, put

1 on your uniform, go out, march to breakfast. Breakfast is about thirty minutes. Meals
2 were very good in my day. I hear the cadets say now they're not, but I think they
3 probably are. I mean, cramming five thousand calories into cadets is a real challenge for
4 the dietitian.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: I later got to work with him, by the way, when I went to the Academy. We'll
7 get to that later.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: So, you'd march to breakfast, go back, grab your books and go to your first
10 class. As 4th classman, you march to class. Classes were wonderful. About ten, fifteen,
11 max fifteen students to an instructor, in a small room with blackboards all the way
12 around. And in the math courses, and the science courses, the instructor would give a
13 lecture. Of course, it's all according to a syllabus. He'd give a lecture, and then
14 everybody stands up at the board with a piece of chalk and does the math or whatever
15 problem on the board. Everybody is doing it at once. You're sharing, you know. You
16 look over at the other guys and, "Oh yeah, that's the way you do it." You share and the
17 instructor's coming around and saying, "Okay, you're going the wrong direction there.
18 Here's what you want to do." It's a wonderful learning environment, and at the Air Force
19 Academy they always get kudos from any academic evaluation. Their one-on-one
20 instruction is great.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: Anytime you're in trouble in a class you can request extra instruction.
23 You're going in the afternoon and you're one-on-one with an instructor. One of the
24 things that—the Academy when I was going there, weren't accredited yet, and the
25 academic world was looking at them and, of course, they got accredited and have done
26 very well ever since.

27 JS: Sure.

28 MB: They, the academic world, and you're in that world, looks down on the
29 Academy because they don't have a whole lot of doctorates teaching there, they have
30 blue suitors.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: And each academic department is made up of a permanent professor who is
2 the department head.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And he's sort of a professor for life. He'll never go past colonel, but he's got
5 a job as long as he wants to, and there's no mandatory retirement age. So, we've got
6 some of the oldest colonels in the Air Force teaching at the Air Force Academy.

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: And then you usually have a civilian, probably from MIT, or someplace like
9 that, who is a civilian representative from the outside world.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: From that academic discipline. And then your instructors are usually young
12 majors, blue suitors, and they are really good. But most of them just have master's
13 degrees, and they represent the real Air Force to the cadets. So, while they're teaching
14 them math, they're also teaching them Air Force. So, they're great mentors, but the
15 academic world kind of looks like that like, "Oh, you don't have enough doctorates in
16 that department." And those guys don't stay there long. I have a problem with people
17 homesteading at the Air Force Academy. You know, you get a math instructor who goes
18 there twelve or fifteen years. He doesn't really know what's going on in the Air Force.

19 JS: Right.

20 MB: So, he can teach math great, but he can't teach Air Force. That's a constant
21 struggle, and of course, the academic world would like us to go to civilian instructors, but
22 I don't think that's ever going to happen.

23 JS: Sure.

24 MB: Because the Academy really is strong on both teaching "blue suit" and math.
25 And that's something I encountered later when I was at the Air Force Academy was
26 people homesteading and staying too long there. But anyway, back to the day, you go to
27 classes, go to lunch. After lunch all the athletes maybe have one class, and then they go to
28 whatever their, you know, sport is. The Academy is built on really three, used to be four
29 pillars, but three pillars, academics, military, and athletics. Every cadet, if he's not an
30 intercollegiate athlete, participates in intramurals. The cadets call it "intermurder." And in

1 those days, there were three different intramural seasons. In the fall they'd play tackle
2 football, intersquadron tackle football.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: You know, played lots of different sports. Winter is kind of hard because
5 you've got to be indoors, so fitting two or three thousand cadets into the gym is sort of
6 hard.

7 JS: Sure.

8 MB: And then of course you've got your spring baseball and things like that. But
9 all cadets are athletes and try to give them a lifetime appreciation for physical activity.
10 Anyway, then after football or swimming practice go back, have an evening meal and
11 study for three or four hours. I used to kind of cheat or break the regulations. Because
12 after swimming—in those days, we didn't have really good goggles, and my eyes were
13 just killing me. So, I'd go to sleep about eight o'clock and then wake up about four
14 o'clock in the morning when you weren't supposed to be studying and I'd study in the
15 morning.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: And I've kind of kept that habit all my life. I'm a morning person. I get up
18 and if I need to do some good thinking or studying, I do it in the morning. So that was the
19 day, and in my 4th class year we were away from our families. We didn't get to go home
20 at all. Nowadays they get to go home for Christmas, and Spring Break, and so forth. But
21 we stayed at the Academy. Of course, we were at ease because all the upperclassmen
22 were gone during Christmas break. My family and my girlfriend, now wife, came out to
23 see me, and we had a lot of fun. And then, of course, in the spring of your 4th class year
24 you get recognized as a cadet, and then you're at ease. You don't have to run around at
25 attention. You don't have to sit at attention at meals and so forth. So, it gets a little easier.
26 I tell the cadets that the 4th class year is hard, but third-class year is harder because during
27 the 4th class year everybody tells you what to do.

28 JS: Right.

29 MB: You're in the 3rd class, you'd be a sophomore. You have some discretion in
30 how to use your time, so you can waste your time if you want to. The spring of my 3rd
31 class year that's when I got my knee hurt and decided I wouldn't play football anymore.

1 We had some young airmen at the Academy who were training for the Olympics. Well,
2 they needed a fourth swimmer on some of their relay teams, so I went to the Olympic
3 tryouts with them. These guys were all in their twenties. I was probably, I think I was
4 nineteen or twenty at that time, but they were all older than I was. But I outranked them.
5 So, I was the military commander of this group of about six guys that went down to
6 Phillipsburg, Oklahoma. Anyway, went down there for the Olympic tryouts, and we did
7 okay, but I took this whole bag of books with me and didn't crack a book the whole time.
8 I got back and had midterms and I almost flunked out, but that got my attention that,
9 "Hey, you better apply yourself." I spent the whole rest of that semester in my room
10 studying.

11 JS: Sure.

12 MB: Then things get—you know, the Academy is a real good experience in that
13 you're not only a follower in your upper-class year, you're a leader, and you're a teacher.
14 It really taught me how to be a commander and a mentor to younger folks, and I enjoyed
15 that part of the Academy a lot. I got to be a squadron commander, I wasn't very high in
16 the ranks, but I enjoyed being squadron commander and having a hundred people
17 working. I probably didn't have that kind of command responsibility again until I was a
18 colonel.

19 JS: Okay, wow.

20 MB: You know, as a pilot you don't have a whole lot of people on your team,
21 especially if you're flying a single seat fighter. Of course, you've got to depend on the
22 people on the ground, but you're not really their commander.

23 JS: Right, sure. Well, speaking of that issue, could you talk a little bit about the
24 command structure within the cadet corps and kind of how that worked?

25 MB: Well, there were only five hundred people in my class going in, and only
26 three hundred of us graduating. And that's about average. I think now they're taking in
27 about twelve hundred per class, and their objective is to graduate a thousand. The
28 Academy was very small then. The three classes in front of us were even smaller than our
29 class. But nowadays there's about forty-four, forty-six hundred cadets. They're divided
30 into forty squadrons of about one hundred apiece.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And each squadron has a squadron commander, and then there's an ops
2 officer, and then the juniors are sergeants, and they all have their responsibility—training
3 officer, athletic officer, who makes up the intramural teams, and so forth. So, it's very
4 similar to what you have in the real Air Force. Then those squadrons are divided into four
5 groups, ten in each group. And so, there's a group staff, and then there's a wing staff. The
6 Academy—it flows back and forth. Sometimes if they're having a problem, the
7 commandant—who is usually a one star—takes some of that authority away from the
8 cadets. But for the most part they try to push that authority down, and that responsibility
9 down, so the cadets are making their own decisions.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: You know, it goes and comes depending on the superintendent. The
12 superintendent is a three star General, and the two one-stars under him are the dean, who
13 is, of course, in charge of academics, and the commandant, who is in charge of the
14 military training.

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: And then there's a colonel or a civilian who is the athletic director. Right
17 now, it's a civilian retired colonel who happens to be also a retired head of the chemistry
18 department who is the athletic director.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: Academic year is pretty cut and dry. It hasn't changed a whole lot. They
21 have about one big Saturday parade per month during the good weather months. And of
22 course, the cadets are all in charge of that. They have just normal inspections and tests
23 and so forth, training that the cadets are pretty much in charge of. The summertime is
24 when they really get the good military training.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: And of course, outside of the Academy-type group in the academic area,
27 there is a flying program that we didn't have. But now they have an airfield, and they
28 have training airplanes. They have a lot of sail planes. We didn't have that opportunity.
29 They had one of the best jump programs in the world. They consistently win freefall and
30 jumping awards all over the world. They have a wonderful "Wings of Blue"

1 Demonstration Team that actually jumps into the football field if the weather's
2 permitting, if the winds will permit.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: Which scared the heck out of me. I can't imagine steering a parachute that
5 well, but they land on the fifty-yard line all the time, so their airmanship programs are
6 really good.

7 JS: Right, okay. You mentioned a little bit earlier when you were talking about
8 discipline, that sometimes it could be abused a little bit with lots of yelling and things like
9 that. At your time there, how were things like discipline and honor taught and instilled?

10 MB: Well, the honor system at the Academy is good. It's changed a little bit since
11 our time, but it's good. It instills honor and integrity into the cadets. In my day, if you
12 committed an honor violation, about ninety percent sure you were going to leave. And it
13 was totally administered by the cadets. Cadet board—the only time you might not leave
14 was when it was self-initiated. In other words: if you said, "Hey, I did something wrong,"
15 and went to your honor rep and said, "Hey, I lied," and you fessed up right away. Then
16 there was a chance that you might not be thrown out. The cadets totally administered it.
17 And if the cadets said, "He's guilty of an honor violation, and he's out of here." The guy
18 was on the bus the next day. I mean, there wasn't any question about it. Nowadays, the
19 first thing a cadet does is lawyer up, and tries to make a case out of it, a legal case. So
20 more of the cadets get to stay now, but they have a good redemption program. If a cadet
21 has committed an honor violation, and is given amn—not amnesty, but if he's allowed to
22 stay, then they put him through about a six month or a year program of where he works
23 with an honor rep to redeem himself and learn how to be an honorable person. And I have
24 mixed emotions about that. A lot of my classmates are very adamant about it, "Oh man,
25 we had it tough and now they got it easy." You know, coming from a high school
26 background, I think it's even tougher nowadays because the kids nowadays are so much
27 into not narking on your buddy. You go with the flow. Maybe you don't lie, but if you
28 know somebody else is lying you just look the other way. We weren't so much that way,
29 but that's the hardest things for kids nowadays to accept is this, "We won't tolerate those
30 among us who lie." They get in more trouble over that than anything. And of course, we
31 get dinged in the press a lot for honor scandals at the Academy. Well, any place you have

1 an honor code, occasionally you're going to have a group who decide to collectively take
2 advantage of the honor system. So, from time to time, you're going to have honor
3 scandals. You're going to have groups of a hundred sometimes thrown out, and that's as
4 it should be. But just because people have an honor system doesn't mean everybody in
5 the system is honorable.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: And you've seen it at West Point and Annapolis also. They have their big
8 cheating scandals.

9 JS: Sure.

10 MB: It's going to happen.

11 JS: Right, all right. How about discipline?

12 MB: Discipline?

13 JS: Mm-hmm.

14 MB: Well, you know when I was a cadet, we had very few enlisted people,
15 sergeants, working with us. Now we have quite a few, and I think it's good especially
16 sergeants who have been through the NCO Academy who have been instructors at the
17 NCO Academy. They're very good at applying pressure without abusing the recipients,
18 and they teach the cadets how to do that. One of the things I enjoy doing is they have a
19 character and leadership program at the Academy.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: And they need facilitators because it's like one facilitator per ten people.
22 And they don't have enough instructors to do it, so they ask graduates in the area just on
23 a volunteer basis to come out and get qualified. And they have some wonderful training
24 exercises that they do with the cadets. So, I enjoyed doing that. I'd just do it a couple
25 times a semester, but those are great learning opportunities. I've got a master's in
26 management, and you can't buy that kind of training. A lot of the master's programs, a
27 lot of the management programs that I've been through, you know, they have weak
28 examples of that kind of training, but not nearly what you get at the Academy. From time
29 to time, they have abuses. When I was working in the athletic department as a colonel
30 back in the 80's.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: The Commandant and I were kind of—we'd play poker together and we'd
2 talk. He said, "You know we've got a thing out in the national forest here that we do
3 every spring, or summer rather. It's called SERE—" Search Escape Resistance and
4 Evasion or something like that. Anyway, it's where they take the pre-degrees out and
5 dump them in the forest, and then they chase them catch them and put them in prison and
6 interrogate them and things like that. I went out and watched it, and I came back to the
7 commandant, and I said, "You need to get rid of that program." I said, "It's just
8 screaming and yelling and debasing, and there's not a whole lot of learning going on." He
9 says, "Well, really?" And I said, "Yeah, let's go out." So, we went out about a week later
10 and watched another exercise, and he says, "You're right." And he did away with the
11 program. Now they're getting it back now, but it's monitored by NCOs.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: NCOs who are trained in SERE, not upperclassman who are just looking for
14 an opportunity to abuse underclassmen.

15 JS: Right, right.

16 MB: So, they're getting it back slowly but surely, but it needed to be eliminated,
17 and it was for several years.

18 JS: All right. Just talk a little bit about your thoughts on the education and training
19 you received there.

20 MB: Oh, academically it couldn't be beat. Militarily, I think it gave me a lot of
21 grit, the ability to stand up under pressure. I had a lot of combat time later, and the
22 discipline of doing what you're taught to do, remembering what you have been taught to
23 do under pressure. It probably saved my life. If I had had to do what I had to do in
24 combat without that training, I'm not sure I'd have made it.

25 JS: Okay, all right. One thing I meant to ask before wrapping up here with the Air
26 Force Academy—if you could talk a little bit more about your time with the swim team
27 and how that was.

28 MB: You know, swimming was just sort of a second thing I did and probably
29 physical—I know a little more about physiology now—it probably wasn't a good thing to
30 do. That's probably why I blew my knees.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: You need nice tight muscles to play football, and you need nice loose long
2 muscles to swim. And going from one to the other probably physically was not a good
3 idea. But I tried and ended up not playing football and did swim. The Academy, starting
4 up, had a lot of good help, especially from Notre Dame by the way. Notre Dame was a
5 very dedicated supporter of the Academy. We used a lot of their academics. A friend of
6 mine who was a lieutenant when I was a 4th class cadet—his name is Mal Wakin.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: And Notre Dame sent him to the Air Force Academy to teach philosophy.
9 And the Air Force Academy said, “Oh, we’re not going to have a philosophy
10 department.” And Notre Dame said, “Oh, yes you are. And this lieutenant is going to be
11 the head of your department.” Well, Mal Waken ended up staying forty years at the Air
12 Force Academy. He’s called the “conscience of the Air Force Academy.”

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: He still speaks to cadets quiet often. He’s written several books and is just a
15 dedicated great guy. I encounter him in the character and leadership department. So, we
16 got a lot of help, and one of the guys that we got—and I can’t remember. I think he was
17 from Stanford or someplace. His name was Doc McKenzie, and he was the swimming
18 coach. Well, we didn’t even have a swimming pool at the Academy when I went there.
19 They hadn’t finished the gym yet. We had a little community center pool on base. It was
20 just a little twenty-yard pool. We trained in it the first year, and then they finished the
21 gym, and we had a wonderful natatorium after that. But Doc McKenzie was a great
22 coach, and he was called Doc because he had a doctorate in physical—not physical,
23 physiology.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: And he was a good mentor, and then we picked up some blue suit swimming
26 coaches, and they were my mentors. I mean, they were pilots, and they helped me swim
27 and taught me to love the Air Force and flying.

28 JS: All right. Let’s see. Before we wrap up with the Air Force, could you talk
29 about—are there any memorable or humorous moments from your days there at the
30 Academy that you could talk about that kind of stick out in your mind?

1 MB: Well, my class was—each class has a class color, and we were the first class
2 to have red as our color.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And we outnumbered the upperclassman practically, and we were the first
5 class that was actually trained by the upperclassman. Before my class, they had mostly
6 West Point lieutenants. They were called ATOs—Air Training Officers.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: And they acted as the upperclassman and were the military trainers for the
9 class of '58, '59, '60, '61.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: Anyway, it wasn't the class of '58. That's where I'm off on my order. The
12 first class '59 and '60, '61, all had ATOs as their infrastructure of military trainers. My
13 class had no ATOs; they were all upperclassmen. And by the way, that's something that's
14 changed in the dorms. It used to be there was one officer in the dorm. He was the officer
15 of the day, and he was a captain or a major and one of the air officers commanding. Each
16 one of those squadrons, each one of those forty squadrons, has—usually a major now.
17 Back then it was a captain—who was the military commander of those hundred cadets.
18 But his office wasn't in the dorms; his office was over in a separate building. There was
19 only one officer in the dorms, and if something went wrong in the dorms—there was a
20 fight or somebody trashed a room or somebody set off a fire alarm, the upperclassmen are
21 the ones that were responsible, and they were expected to fix it. Nowadays there's two
22 officers per cadet squadron and an NCO. So, there's much more officer supervision than
23 there was back in my day. Anyway, that's one thing that's changed.

24 JS: Okay, all right.

25 MB: Oh, we were talking about funny things.

26 JS: Right. Yes, sir.

27 MB: That's how I got into this. So anyway, we had red nametags. Well, we went
28 on a spring field trip. We didn't get spring leave back then or spring break, but we did get
29 some good Air Force tours, so we went on about a weeklong spring trip. We were our
30 own commanders then in my class. We didn't have any upperclassman with us. Well, we

1 got in some trouble out in California over a donut incident. We attacked a guy with a
2 bunch of doughnuts on a tray.

3 JS: (laughing)

4 MB: And I wasn't at this particular thing, but we got in a lot of trouble. We got
5 back to the Academy and the 1st classman, of course, had heard of our misconduct, and
6 they met us at the front gate. And one of the leaders of the upperclassmen met us there.
7 We were doing push-ups, and they were chewing us out. He got up on a trailer, and he
8 said, "You red tag bastards are going to have the longest six weeks you've ever known in
9 your life." Well, we have proudly worn that name since then. We're "The Red Tag
10 Bastards," the RTBs.

11 JS: (laughing)

12 MB: And they've lived up to that name. We have quite a few in our class—well,
13 we've got several four-star generals, and three Rhodes scholars, so we didn't do too bad,
14 but we've worn that name for almost fifty years now.

15 JS: Right.

16 MB: So, we're the Red Tagged Bastards.

17 JS: Right, yes sir. All right, well when did you graduate? Was it '62?

18 MB: '62.

19 JS: Okay. Could you talk a little bit about the graduation service and kind of what
20 that was like?

21 MB: Well, we call it June week only it's in May now. They've kind of
22 rearranged—you know, the academic semesters were all screwed up back in those days.
23 You went to—you started school about the first of September, and then you took a
24 Christmas break before finals, and you came back and about three weeks after you got
25 back from Christmas break you took your finals. Well, that, you know, you lose a lot of
26 knowledge there. Now they're starting—in fact, they start tomorrow is the first day of
27 academics at the Academy, and they'll take their finals before Christmas break. And then
28 they finish up the second semester in May. And so, graduation is usually the last
29 Wednesday in May now, but they used to call it June week. And June week was
30 recognition. You recognize the 4th classmen. Somewhere in the spring you have a Ring
31 Dance and a Ring Dinner for juniors; that's when they get their rings. In the spring you

1 have a hundredth night, one hundred days from graduation. The 1st classmen all have a
2 hundredth night and that's a big celebration. They have a dinner and celebration. Then
3 June week itself you have several parades and graduation day is held in the stadium now.
4 In my day it was held on the parade ground.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: The Thunderbirds always fly at graduation, and traditionally they throw—
7 when all the cadets have gotten their diplomas, and the final words are being said, the
8 Thunderbirds fly over, and all the cadets throw their hats up in the air. And those are
9 cadet hats, so they're not going to keep them. All the local kids like to go out and grab
10 the hats after they've been thrown in the air. And then, of course, it's traditional after you
11 get your lieutenant's bars, the first person that salutes you gets a dollar. So, all the
12 underclassmen are waiting around to try to salute the new lieutenants and get a dollar
13 from them.

14 JS: Right.

15 MB: And then the 1st classmen are on their own. They traditionally love to go
16 pack their cars and see the Academy in their rear-view mirror, just driving out. A lot of
17 them get married, some that day and some later in the week in the chapel. When I
18 graduated there wasn't a chapel, so a lot of guys got married downtown. My wife actually
19 graduated from Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: She graduated on a Sunday, came out for my graduation on Wednesday, and
22 we got married in Topeka on Friday.

23 JS: Oh wow, all right.

24 MB: So, it was a busy week.

25 JS: It sounds like it, sure. Was there a major dignitary to speak at your
26 graduation?

27 MB: Lyndon Johnson, President at the time, was the one that spoke to us. And
28 they rotate that. You know, the President goes to one of the four academies almost every
29 year, and of course, that's a time for him to sort of reveal his foreign policy and so forth.
30 It's a major speech for the President wherever he goes. And then, of course, the Secretary
31 of Defense, Secretary of the Air Force, Vice President—they cover the other academies.

1 So, they rotate that around. It's really a big show when the President comes because all of
2 the Secret Service are all over the place, and security is very tight at the Academy.

3 JS: Now, at what point were you given the chance to choose your specific
4 assignment with pilot school and all?

5 MB: Well, all of my class that were physically qualified—a few had gotten, you
6 know, maybe an eye injury or some debilitating disease where they couldn't go to pilot
7 training. But I think out of 298 graduates in my class probably 275 of them went to pilot
8 training.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: Nowadays about fifty percent go to pilot training.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: About fifty percent of the class goes to pilot training. In fact, about one
13 hundred days before graduation, about three months before graduation, you get to pick
14 your AFSC, your Air Force Specialty Code, or whatever. You know, if you were going to
15 go—a lot of cadets now want to go to the CIA. And they kind of disappear. You don't
16 know where they went.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: When they go into CIA or they'll go off—quite a few go off to graduate
19 school. A few go off actually to become medical doctors.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: But that's changed since my day. In my day, most of us going to pilot
22 training and you get to pick your base based on your graduation order of merit. So, they
23 go down, first guy gets first pick and last guy gets last pick.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: In order to—the T-38 was a brand-new training aircraft, and I wanted to get
26 that aircraft. And so, I actually gave up a month of leave. Normally you get two months
27 of leave after graduation. Well, I wasn't high enough in the order of merit to get a T-38
28 base. There were only two of them—Williams Air Force Base in Arizona and Webb were
29 the only two bases that had T-38s. Well, I wasn't a high enough order of merit to get two
30 months of leave and get Webb. But if I was willing to give up one month of leave, I could
31 get Webb, so I gave a month of leave and got Webb. And that was a very good choice

1 because the bases that had T-38s got more fighter assignments. So, I ended up getting a
2 fighter assignment. Otherwise, I probably would have been a C-47 pilot or something.

3 JS: Right. Those guys that didn't qualify physically for pilot training, where
4 would they usually go?

5 MB: One of my classmates, a good friend is Chuck Cheesman and he had—I
6 don't know whether he's got MS or something like it. It's some sort of neurological
7 problem. He didn't have any problem getting a civilian pilot license. He wasn't even
8 commissioned. And he went down, and he worked for NASA, I think. He's a very smart
9 guy. He's a doctor now, a doctor in some kind of physics or something. He still flies his
10 own airplanes, and he has several of them and, you know, got enough money to have a
11 yacht and all that kind of stuff. So, he wasn't even commissioned because of his—I think
12 it was MS. I'm not positive, but he's still flying. You know, he's affected by it. He has
13 trouble walking and so forth. So, he did that. Some of the other guys—a lot of them went
14 off—one of the guys that I went to high school with was a Rhodes Scholar, Dave
15 Rowe—and he went off to Oxford and came back. He was a White House fellow. I mean,
16 this guy's really smart, and he messed around long enough that his eyesight got bad, and
17 he couldn't go to pilot training. And he admits—we talk quite often—he laments the fact
18 that he messed around too long and didn't get to be a pilot. So, they go do different
19 things. Most of them academically oriented.

20 JS: All right.

21 MB: I'm amazed by the number of graduates, people in my class, who after they
22 retired with twenty, twenty-five, thirty years in the Air Force, became college presidents
23 or college professors.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: Several are college presidents.

26 JS: Right, all right. Well, speaking on along those lines, you talked about a few of
27 the distinguished graduates from your class, but could you kind of talk a little bit more
28 about the "Red Tag Bastards" as you say to some of the distinguished graduates there?

29 MB: We had one guy, Don Sheppard, who was—in Vietnam they had a group of
30 what they call "Fast FACs." This was a new idea. And the first group of "Fast FACs"
31 were handpicked good pilots who were put in a special unit called "The Misty FACS."

1 JS: Right, okay.

2 MB: Have you heard of them?

3 JS: Yes, sir.

4 MB: Okay, well Don Sheppard was one of the Misty FACS, and he later wrote a
5 book *Bury Us Upside Down*.

6 JS: Oh, okay.

7 MB: Have you read it?

8 JS: Right, I have not read the book, but I've seen it quite a few times.

9 MB: It's a very good book, and Don is a good writer. He puts a lot of humor into
10 his writing. In fact, I just went through a program called the Leadership Program of the
11 Rockies, which is a conservative sort of think tank up here out of Denver, and I
12 encouraged the organizers of that group to invite Don to come speak, and he did. Don is
13 an expert on the Middle East, and he came and spoke and talked about the Misties a little
14 bit, talked about *Bury Us Upside Down*. You know where that title comes from don't
15 you?

16 JS: No sir, I don't.

17 MB: There's a poem and I can't quote it exactly, but it ends with "When I'm gone
18 and can no longer fly." I'm paraphrasing. "Then bury me upside down so the whole
19 world can kiss my ass."

20 JS: (laughing) Right, okay. That does sound familiar.

21 MB: So, he was one of the guys. Another one of my classmates was a POW. He
22 lives right here in the local area—PK Robinson. He's a bank president here, and he just
23 retired in Colorado. Let me think of some of the other guys you might know. One of the
24 guys was Butch Vasillio. He's a four-star general, and he interviewed to be the Chief of
25 Staff of the Air Force with the Clinton Administration.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: He apparently missed an opportunity to keep his mouth shut. He didn't get
28 picked as the Chief of Staff, but he later went to work for USAA (United Services
29 Automobile Association), and I think he still lives down in San Antonio.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: Let me think. Like I say we had three Rhodes Scholars. One of them ended
2 up a two-star general; one of them ended up a one-star general. One of them is our class
3 president.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: Academically, we did pretty good. They hand picked those guys. Obviously,
6 I wasn't picked, but they hand picked those guys when they were sophomores and
7 groomed them to be Rhodes Scholars.

8 JS: All right. Okay, well is there anything else we should cover or talk about with
9 the Air Force Academy before moving on to pilot training?

10 MB: Let me tell you. Are you real familiar with the Air Force Academy?

11 JS: Somewhat. Primarily from other graduates that I've interviewed but go right
12 ahead.

13 MB: Well let me tell you. I kind of have a unique perspective of the Air Force
14 Academy because I've always wanted to go back there. I respected my coaches and my
15 AOCs so much that I wanted to go back there, but it was kind of a death to a career,
16 especially for a pilot, to go back there because you're taking three years of time out of
17 your career to go do something that's kind of fun.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: It's one of the things that—it was obvious to me that I wasn't going to make
20 general, and I wasn't going to get be a wing commander. Then I said, "Okay, I'm going
21 to go to the Air Force Academy." I called up my friend who was the superintendent—his
22 name was Skip Scott—I said, "You know, Scott, what do you got? I want to come to the
23 Air Force Academy." And he said, "The only thing I've got for a colonel is Director of
24 Physical Education." I said, "I'll take it." I didn't know anything about physical
25 education except having been an athlete, and I had a great staff. I went there. When I
26 went to the Academy I said, "Nobody should ever spend more than three years at the
27 Academy." Well, I ended up staying five. Because I went there and I was three years in
28 the athletic department, and I put in my papers to retire, and the day I put in my papers
29 General Scott called me—he was just getting ready to retire and he said, "Rip, I need a
30 chief of staff," for the superintendent's staff.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And he said, “I want you to take it if you’ll promise you’ll stay in it for two
2 years.” “Okay, hell, I’ll do it.”

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: So, I became the chief of staff. Well, at that time the Air Force Academy
5 didn’t have a base commander. The chief of staff was the base commander. The chief of
6 staff was supposed to be sort of like a vice superintendent and also run the base. Well, I
7 had been on the PACAF inspection team before I came to the Academy. I was the
8 director of inspection. I knew what a base was supposed to work like. You know, I had a
9 hospital; I had engineers; I had air police. I had—all of the infrastructure came under the
10 Academy, came under the chief of staff. Well, I said, “Well, when’s the last time you
11 guys had an ORI—Operational Readiness Inspection?” “Well, we’re excused from that.”
12 And I said, “Well, you’re no longer excused from it. We’re going to have an ORI.” And
13 god, there was real gnashing of teeth over that. Well, it ended up I stayed in that job, and
14 I really enjoyed doing that job because that was at the end of the Carter years and the
15 beginning of the President Reagan years. Well, Senator Goldwater was on our board of
16 visitors, and he said, “I can get money for the Academy. What do you need?” Well, under
17 the Carter years the place had gone to hell, you know. The pavements were all chipping
18 up, and the plumbing was all backed up, and the electricity needed work, and all that. We
19 went from one million dollars a year for real property maintenance to seventeen million
20 dollars a year in one year.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: And we applied that, I think, fairly well. Anyway, it was a good time to be
23 the chief of staff. When I retired ultimately in ’89, I recommended that they make it an
24 airbase wing and get a colonel. Now they have a general as the base commander.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: So, I think I was effective in doing that. But one of the things I realized
27 about the Academy was the city of Colorado Springs has been very wise in how they
28 have promoted the military community. And they actually took, by eminent domain,
29 fifty-five different properties to make up the Air Force Academy.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And then offered it to the Air Force in order to get the Academy to come to
2 Colorado Springs. And they've been very good at promoting—in what used to be just
3 prairie out there around the Air Force Academy is now a big high-tech community built
4 all the way around the Academy.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: The Academy is huge. It's eighteen thousand acres.

7 JS: Oh wow, okay.

8 MB: It's got an airfield on it. It's got really two little communities, got a high
9 school, a couple of elementary schools, a middle school. It's a very big installation. The
10 Santa Fe Railroad runs right through the middle of the base, and they've had a lot of
11 problems though since 9/11 in that it was pretty much an open base before. You know,
12 they have gates, but they didn't stop anybody, but the public is encouraged to come
13 through the Academy. Well, the cadet wing—the cadets are a pretty big target, and they
14 were afraid somebody would blow up a bomb or something, so they've had to sort of
15 build a little enclave on the Academy that's secure around the cadets. It's still an open
16 base though, pretty much.

17 JS: Right, all right. One thing you mentioned a moment ago—this may be getting
18 out of order a little bit, but you mentioned your nickname Rip. Would you mind telling
19 me about how you got that nickname and when you got it?

20 MB: When I was in high school—my wife and I started dating when we were
21 sophomores in high school—and I was working as a lifeguard. My dad was the director
22 of parks and recreation in Topeka. I was working as a lifeguard all day long, but I'd get
23 up early in the morning and go clean swimming pools. I was working about ten, twelve
24 hours a day. And then I'd take her on a date, and I'd always go to sleep. So, she called me
25 Rip Van Winkle.

26 JS: Oh okay, all right.

27 MB: And then later, as a tactical fighter pilot, once you become a flight lead, you
28 can choose your own tactical call sign. And it has to be six or eight letters and it has to be
29 two syllables. There are certain radio things that had to be incorporated into your tactical
30 call sign. But my tactical call sign was “ripper,” R-I-P-P-E-R.

31 JS: Okay, right.

1 MB: And once you get a nickname like that in the Air Force you're never going to
2 get rid of it, so I've been the ripper ever since.

3 JS: Sure, all right. Yeah, I was wondering if it was something you had gotten at
4 the Academy or sometime during your military time.

5 MB: Actually, I got it in high school and guys that came to the Academy from my
6 high school called me Rip. It's kind of funny because the people on the football team
7 called me Mike, and the people on the swimming team, because there were people from
8 my swimming team in high school would call me Rip. Just kind of a fun nickname, you
9 know.

10 JS: Right, sure.

11 MB: I've kept it and it's a lot more distinctive than Mike so.

12 JS: Sure. All right, well anything else with the Air Force Academy before pilot
13 training?

14 MB: Well, one thing I just thought of.

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: You know, at the Academy people think, "Well, the Academy is where they
17 graduate cadets." But the Academy does a lot of other things. Their labs do a lot—I mean
18 they build satellites that they actually launch into space at the Academy.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: The Academy runs a thing in the spring that I always take part in. It's the
21 National Character and Leadership Symposium where they bring in cadets or bring in
22 students from West Point, Annapolis, Coast Guard Academy, Notre Dame, Texas A&M.
23 Kids come in—usually junior or senior level kids come in, and they do about a three-day
24 seminar where they have some really great speakers speak. And then they have these
25 table groups that sit down and discuss integrity and honesty and things like that. And I
26 really enjoy participating in those things. So, I always take a couple days off and go out
27 there. So, the Academy does a lot more for the Air Force and the academic communities
28 than just graduating cadets.

29 JS: Well, moving on to pilot training—you mentioned it was at Webb Air Force
30 Base. And that's at Big Spring?

31 MB: Big Spring, Texas.

1 JS: Okay, how long did the training last?

2 MB: It's about—let's see. I went there in July and we graduated in August. About
3 thirteen months in those days.

4 JS: Okay, so July of '62 until August of '63?

5 MB: Yes.

6 JS: Okay, all right. Well could you just talk a little bit about the training, about the
7 day-to-day training and what that was like for you?

8 MB: Well, of course, lots of academics, and you have to learn the airplane and
9 learn aerodynamics from a pilot's viewpoint. Get a lot of training in navigation and
10 weather and all that sort of thing. So, there's class days and there's flying days. You go
11 through two airplanes. The two airplanes that I went through are still flying, both of them.
12 The T-37, called the "Tweet." It's a little side by side jet trainer. And when I went to pilot
13 training there were two primary aircraft called basic and primary. There were two
14 primary aircraft: the old T-33 and the T-38. And I was lucky enough to get into a T-38
15 though. But it almost was my downfall because they were so careful about pilots,
16 lieutenants that they were letting them go into T-38, that I almost washed out in the T-37.
17 And I had an Air Force Academy graduate as my instructor in T-37s, and he was so
18 frustrated that I just couldn't get it right. His name is Boomer Riva, he later got killed in
19 Vietnam, but Boomer passed me on to another IP, and I was up for my last check ride.
20 And this old major takes me up and he said, "Son, you can fly this airplane. I'm going to
21 pass you." And he said, "You just got to concentrate, and you just got to pay attention."
22 After that I went in 38's, and the light came on. The 38, I thought, was an easier airplane.
23 It was a supersonic airplane, but I thought it was a lot easier, and I did well in formation
24 and just didn't have any trouble after that old major said, "You know, you just have to
25 stay ahead of the airplane." So, I probably learned to survive there, but anyway, I had a
26 lot of folks in my class who were not Academy grads, and they were all guys that had
27 prior aviation experience.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: But they all wanted to go into airlines, and they didn't want to go to
30 Vietnam. And I wanted to go to Vietnam, and I wanted a fighter. So, I was middle of the
31 class, and that's the way I was at the Academy, too. They used to call me Median Mike. I

1 think my graduation order was one fifty-five out of three hundred. So, I was always right
2 kind of in the middle of the class and the same thing in pilot training. But enough of these
3 guys wanted to go into tankers or something where they'd get a whole lot of flying time,
4 so they could get out of the Air Force before five years and go into airlines. So, I
5 managed to get an F-100 out of the class. I went to Luke Air Force Base in September of
6 '63. And that was about nine months training. Now, my wife has a degree in education,
7 so she taught to school both in Big Spring and in Phoenix.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: But I graduated—the training at Luke—I think we got about eighty hours in
10 the F-100. The F-100 was a pretty hard airplane to fly, and it was sort of a follow along to
11 the old F-86 from Korea.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: The F-86 was called the Saber, and the F-100 was the Super Saber. Single
14 engine, single seat aircraft. Its claim to fame was it could go supersonic straight and level.
15 But they'd bought a lot of F-100s, and so we were training a lot of pilots. It was about a
16 nine month training at Luke. You learn how to drop bombs and learn how to shoot guns
17 and so forth. From there I got an assignment to Lakenheath, England.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: And Lakenheath—we flew the F-100A at Luke, and we went into the D, F-
20 100D at Lakenheath. The F-100D had a few things that were better than the original A. It
21 had a bigger tail, and it had better brakes and stuff like that. But our primary role at
22 Lakenheath was to carry nuclear bombs.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: And here I am something like a twenty-four-year-old pilot lieutenant, and
25 I'm sitting on a several-megaton weapon carried under a single-seat, single-engine
26 aircraft.

27 JS: Right.

28 MB: A lot of responsibility for a lieutenant.

29 JS: Sure.

30 MB: At Lakenheath we had three squadrons. Each squadron had four flights. Each
31 flight sat one—alert line we called them. And then of course, if the whistle had blown,

1 we had a lot of follow up targets that we also hit. So, you had to really train on flying low
2 level, and our primary delivery mode for a nuclear bomb was called an “over the
3 shoulder,” where you’d pull up into a loop and the bomb comes off. You have a little
4 setting gyro in the aircraft that you set depending on what type of bomb and what type of
5 delivery you’re doing. To escape the blast, you threw the bomb way up in the air. The
6 bomb would come off during this loop at about one hundred and thirteen degrees, and it
7 would go straight up.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: And you’re doing an Immelmann on the back side of the loop, roll out, and
10 get as low as you could, as fast as you could, to get away from the bomb blast. The bomb
11 would go way up in the air and come back down and, you know, a good bomb was a
12 thousand-footer, but with a nuclear bomb that’s close enough.

13 JS: Sure.

14 MB: So, we practiced, we called them “idiot loops.” We practiced these idiot
15 loops over and over and over again on ranges around England. And also, our primary
16 training—primary gunnery training we called it—was done down in Libya at Wheelus
17 Air Force Base.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: And that’s in Tripoli, Libya.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: I became a weapons officer, so I spent more time in Wheelus than the
22 normal pilots did. Normally pilots would go down there for about two weeks every six
23 months. And I would go down there and stay maybe a month to six weeks, every six
24 months. So, I spent a lot of time in Libya during those two and a half years that I was in
25 Lakenheath. We also pulled alert to other places like Italy and Turkey.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: We did a little bit of air-to-air training—not very much, and we did other
28 bomb training: dive bomb training and napalm delivery training—“skip bombing” we
29 called it. But there wasn’t a whole lot of opportunities to do that in England. First of all,
30 the weather’s so bad. Secondly, there’s not a whole lot of ranges over there. We were
31 training with these little twenty-five-pound bombs with a little white phosphorous charge

1 in them that marked where the bomb hit. But a normal training over there was mainly
2 low-level training, and we did a lot of that in France.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: We'd take off out of England, go over the channel and drop down, do about
5 a thirty-minute low-level in France, and then climb back up and go back to England. I
6 really learned how to fly instruments over there because most every time you launch, you
7 came back down through the clouds, and the weather over there could be pretty bad. But
8 we enjoyed our tour in England. I, because I went through jump training when I was at
9 the Academy, became a forward air controller and went to Germany just about every year
10 in the winter for some sort of group training. They had big exercises over there called
11 "reforger" and—I've forgotten the other ones. But we'd go over to Frankfurt and join up
12 with some battalion or something over there, and we'd go out into the north German
13 plains and play around in the snow. I'd get flights in, and we'd come fly over and
14 simulate supporting the troops. Of course, the troops all liked that, so I enjoyed doing
15 that. It got me away from Lakenheath and alert once in a while.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: And from there—in fact this is a good segue. Because I was a forward air
18 controller, I got pegged—we all knew from England we were probably going to Vietnam.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: We were promised if we would volunteer for Vietnam that we would get a
21 fighter assignment. So, I volunteered about a year before I actually went to go over as a
22 fighter pilot, as an F-100 pilot.

23 JS: All right.

24 MB: So, I had volunteered, and I got what we call "FACed." I got orders to go
25 over and be a forward air controller flying an O-1 in Vietnam. Well, I called up the
26 headquarters—you know, the personnel—and I said, "Look, I volunteered, and you
27 promised I would get to go as an F-100 pilot." They said, "Okay, you can be an F-100
28 pilot." So, they sent me over there, and six months after I got over there, I got FACed
29 anyway. So, they needed forward air controllers. They didn't need F-100 pilots. They had
30 quite a few F-100 pilots they were cycling through. They needed guys who knew how to
31 FAC.

1 JS: Right.

2 MB: So, six months into my tour at Bien Hoa in Vietnam—I had flown, oh, I
3 think about one hundred and fifty missions by then—I got orders to go checkout in-
4 country, to be an O-1 pilot. And I was bummed out about it, but it was a good experience.
5 I got to work with the Army, and I had worked with them before in Germany. I got to see
6 a part of the war that I wouldn't have gotten to see otherwise. So, it was a good thing in
7 retrospect, but I was ticked about it at the time.

8 JS: Sure, sure. Well, before we get to Vietnam, I've got a few more questions
9 about this time at Lakenheath and some training and all. It sounds like—in a lot of ways
10 you talk about flying, learning how to deliver nuclear weapons. It sounds like a lot of this
11 was a different kind of flying than what you'd be doing in Vietnam. Was that the case?

12 MB: Oh, absolutely yeah. The nuke mission was low-level navigation, single, you
13 know, one aircraft. It was sort of awesome to think about doing it. I'm sure I could have
14 gotten to the target. The surface-to-air missiles that the Soviets had weren't that
15 sophisticated, and our plan was to overwhelm them. They might have gotten a few of us,
16 but they couldn't get us all. Some of the targets we set—I won't talk anymore about that.
17 I don't think it's classified anymore, but it's not really relevant.

18 JS: Sure.

19 MB: The Air Force kind of had a constraining philosophy at that time, and that's
20 something I was privileged to try to change later on when we did our "lessons learned"
21 from the Vietnam War. We never fought air-to-air against dissimilar aircraft. We would
22 go up and do air-to-air training against the other F-100s. Well, you don't learn a whole lot
23 doing that. And we didn't do much aggressive stuff. But, while I was at Lakenheath, we
24 lost something like sixteen airplanes. We went through three wing commanders. We had
25 an engine problem at Lakenheath, and the engines kept flaming out on us. The F-100, it
26 turns out—and I didn't realize this until I got to fly some other aircraft—it was a nasty
27 airplane to fly. Aerodynamically—in order to make it go supersonic they had done some
28 aerodynamic things that gave it some nasty habits. One of the things it did was called
29 adverse yaw.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: When you were really turning hard—when you were pulling hard on a high
2 angle of attack, if you put in a whole lot of aileron, the airplane would yaw and actually
3 flip, go in the other direction. I won't even try to explain to you why it does that, but it
4 has something to do with the swept wings.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: If you got to a very high angle of attack and move the throttles very
7 quickly—the throttle, there was only one engine. If you move the throttle very quickly
8 the airplane, the engine would compressor stall. A flame comes out the intake, and it
9 blows the engine out, so you had to restart the engine and meanwhile maintaining control
10 of the aircraft. So, the engine wasn't very dependable. Funny design on the aircraft was
11 that the afterburner nozzles—at the aft of the engine you've got nozzles, a nozzle that
12 opens and closes depending on the throttle setting. Well, when you're in afterburner those
13 nozzles have to be full open.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: And the nozzles were actuated by oil pressure, believe it or not. And so,
16 when you lit the burner in the aircraft you had to look at the oil pressure gauge. If the oil
17 pressure gauge went up and stayed up, that means that the eyelids didn't open and you
18 had to come back out of burner, or you'd have a compressor stall. Well, when you're in
19 air-to-air engagement, and you're looking over your shoulder at somebody about to shoot
20 you out of the air, it's an eternity to watch for three or four seconds while those
21 afterburner eyelids open. And compared to the F-16, which I flew later on, you hardly
22 ever look in the cockpit. You don't have to.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: You know the engine—if you like the burner, you know it's going to light.
25 And if it doesn't light, it's not going to blow out.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: Like I say, the F-100 was old, old technology, and the newer stuff was much
28 more forgiving. I flew the 105 after I flew the 100, and the 105 was just much easier. It
29 was aerodynamic; it was honest; it flew straight; the engine worked; it was a wonderful
30 airplane compared to the 100, but I didn't know that at the time. I didn't have anything to

1 compare it to. I'll give you another example. This idiot loop that we did—the attitude
2 indicator on the—are you familiar with what an attitude indicator is?

3 JS: No, sir.

4 MB: It's a ball that rotates. It gives you an artificial horizon.

5 JS: Okay, right.

6 MB: It's what you fly instruments on.

7 JS: Right, okay yeah.

8 MB: There was an attitude indicator—and it was only about the size of a baseball,
9 covered with glass. And there's a standby attitude indicator which was a backup in case
10 your main one fails. Well, you can cage these things. You can trap them so that they
11 don't rotate, all right?

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: So, what we used to do—this is real sophisticated—the attitude—the main
14 attitude indicator would precess. It would tumble at about a hundred degrees just past
15 vertical. So, if you're pulling into a cloud, you didn't have any artificial reference to
16 recover. So, if you didn't come out the top of the cloud, you were kind of screwed.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: So, what we used to do is we would cage the little standby attitude indicator
19 and put a clothespin on it. Okay?

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: And as we're pulling up with our right hand, at about eighty degrees we
22 would reach up and uncage it so that it wouldn't precess on us as we recovered. Now
23 that's really high tech.

24 JS: (laughing)

25 MB: And then when we got down, we had to crawl down on the bottom of the
26 aircraft, under the seat, to find the clothespin. But it worked. Really high tech.

27 JS: Right. Let's see, I wanted to back up for just a moment as far as your early
28 pilot training at Webb. Could you talk a little bit about—of those that trained at Webb
29 how many went into fighter planes like the F-100?

1 MB: You know, I was trying to remember. I think there were about thirty in my
2 pilot training class, and I think we got nine F-100s. We got a couple of F-102s and the
3 rest were—a lot of them were C-130s.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: A few—in fact, it's kind of interesting. C-130s, at that time, some of them
6 were controlled by Tactical Air Command. So, some of my classmates who got C-130
7 assignments went to Tactical Air Command, and Tactical Air Command at that time was
8 getting F-4s, and they wanted pilots in the back seat of the F-4.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: So instead of going—they might have gone and checked out C-130s, and
11 then got transferred over to backseat F-4s which were—we thought that was terrible. If
12 you're a pilot, you ought to be flying in the front seat. Well, what happened is these
13 backseat F-4 guys upgraded to the front seat. And one of my classmates—one of my pilot
14 training classmates, a guy by the name of Jim Jamerson, got a C-130 assignment,
15 backseat F-4 assignment, went over to Vietnam, had a tour over there, came back,
16 upgraded to the front seat, went back to Vietnam and shot down a MiG. In fact, I think he
17 got two.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: He went from being a C-130 pilot—to being a C-130 co-pilot, actually—to
20 being a MIG killer within about three years.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: You know fate. Location is everything.

23 JS: Sure.

24 MB: Being in the right place at the right time.

25 JS: Right. How would it work as far as assignments go? Was it much like with the
26 Air Force Academy when you finish up there you get your choice of the—

27 MB: Exactly.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: Graduation order of merit. If you're first in the class, you get first choice.

30 JS: Okay, all right. At that time—I guess it would depend on what the person
31 wanted to do, but what would be the popular choices for—?

1 MB: Well, for most of the Air Force Academy graduates we wanted to be fighter
2 pilots.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: For a lot of the guys that came out of Texas A&M or Kansas University or
5 whatever, a lot of those guys wanted to be airline pilots. They were all ROTC guys, but
6 they wanted to be airline pilots. So, they wanted to build up as much time as possible. As
7 a fighter pilot you might get twenty hours a month. That's a good month.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: Maybe, you know, that would be twelve or fifteen flights. As, say a KC-135
10 tanker pilot, you'd probably get eighty hours a month. So, in four to five years in the Air
11 Force you'd get several hundred hours, well, thousand hours. Whereas as a fighter pilot
12 you might get two hundred hours a year, three hundred hours a year.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: So, the guys that wanted to build up their time took C-130s, and I don't think
15 we had 141s then. They took KC-135 tankers and so forth.

16 JS: All right. Let's see. Just along the timeline here and what was going on in the
17 world at this time, were you at Lakenheath whenever Kennedy was assassinated?

18 MB: I was. No, actually I was at Luke.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And that was kind of interesting. I was at Luke and we were—oh, I think he
21 was assassinated in November, so we started in September, so we were probably getting
22 into our flying. Probably had maybe thirty, forty hours in the F-100 by that time. I was
23 airborne when he was killed. We had a flight of four, of course, we had an instructor pilot
24 leading us, and they recalled everybody to the base. You know, I remember coming back
25 in and landing, and I was frightened because we didn't know what was going on. I mean,
26 everybody was coming back to the base. They shut down the range. Everybody was
27 recalled from any kind of training they were doing. Everybody went back. They said,
28 "Go park your aircraft and come into the briefing room." So, we all went in, and we
29 actually stayed on base. We thought we might have to go somewhere. And so, they
30 refueled all the aircraft. We were all in our equipment and ready to go, and there were

1 contingencies. “Okay, where are we going,” and “Are we going to be armed when we go?
2 Are we going to put bombs on the airplanes?” We didn’t know what was going on.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: Later on that day they said, “Okay, some of you can leave, and we’re going
5 to keep certain contingents here. And of course, we were all formed up with our
6 instructors because our instructors were going to lead us if we went anywhere. And I
7 guess this was quite a bit like they did during the Cuban Missile Crisis where they took a
8 lot of fighter aircraft down to Florida, but that was several years before.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: But anyway, it was frightening, and I remember it very vividly.

11 JS: Okay, you mentioned, I guess you can say this is a high state of alert at that
12 time. Was it a belief, was it a concern that possibly the communists were the ones who
13 had actually done this then?

14 MB: Well, I think there was a thought that perhaps there was some sort of
15 conspiracy, a coup, or whatever.

16 JS: Right, okay.

17 MB: There was a lot of speculation. I had kind of an interesting—later—kind of
18 an interesting follow up on the assassination. My cousin, who was from Stephenville,
19 Texas, was working, I think, for one of the Fort Worth papers at the time.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: And he actually got to know—what was the guy’s name that killed
22 Kennedy?

23 JS: Oswald.

24 MB: Oswald’s wife, I think her name was Marina or something like that. And he
25 got to know Marina after, months after. Actually, he met her like a day or two after. And
26 he knew who Jack Ruby was and, he was kind of on the inside of that, and he had some
27 interesting conspiracy theories and actually ended up writing a few stories later on.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: I don’t know—those were interesting times.

1 JS: Sure, yes sir. This time during this training and, of course, when you're in
2 Lakenheath, things were really beginning to heat up in Vietnam. Did you—had you been
3 paying close attention to what was going on? Did you follow?

4 MB: Yes, we were watching—and the gradual buildup in Vietnam was interesting
5 from a lieutenant's standpoint. The Special Forces that went over there and the training
6 aspect—you see a little bit of it going on in Afghanistan right now. Where "we're just
7 going to be trainers. We're not going to be fighters," and watching that whole thing.
8 From a world view, you know, Vietnam—and Korea first of all, and then Vietnam later,
9 were follow-ups from the Second World War. They were clean ups. Our enemy was
10 really communism and China. China was using the Koreans and the North Vietnamese as
11 surrogate fighters against—they were testing us.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: Our mistake, frankly, in getting into Vietnam was it's sort of like making a
14 law; you should never make a law that you don't intend to enforce; you should never get
15 into a war you don't intend to win. You fight wars for principles, not for pragmatic
16 reasons. You have to fight a war to the end. You have to take away the enemy's will to
17 fight. And sometimes that can be pretty brutal, and that's where we failed in Vietnam.
18 We weren't willing to take the war to the—we weren't willing to fight the real enemy,
19 China. And we weren't willing to kill them, to take away their will to fight. And you're
20 not going to win a war unless you're willing to do that.

21 JS: Right. Let's see. Before we get more into Vietnam if we could talk a little bit
22 more about this time at Lakenheath.

23 MB: Okay.

24 JS: One thing I wanted to ask you: along these lines we're just speaking of, what
25 was the reaction in England towards the build up in Vietnam? Were you able to detect
26 that, kind of what the English thought about it?

27 MB: Oh, I interfaced with the British military a little bit. Winters in England are
28 terrible, and the flying is not very good. And we were having engine problems, so I
29 wasn't getting much flying time. About '66, September or so of '66, I was—in addition
30 to being one of the assistant weapons officers, I was the life support officer.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: Each year we would get an invitation from the British military to go through
2 their water survival school down in Liverpool. We'd never taken them up on it, so I said,
3 "Hey, I want to do that. I'll go down and go through water survival school." So, I went
4 down there, had a ball going through their water survival school. You know, spending
5 time out in the freezing Plymouth—it wasn't Liverpool. It was Plymouth Channel or
6 Plymouth Harbor or whatever it was. So, I was having so much fun, and I called back and
7 said, "Did y'all get any flying time?" And my squadron commander said, "No," and I
8 said, "Well, can I stay for another week? We're going to do resistance training, escape
9 and invasion." He said, "Sure, go ahead. Take notes and come back and teach us." So, I
10 stayed down there for escape and evasion, and they had a lot of British interrogators from
11 World War II. And they had never gotten the chance to interrogate a Yank. Of course, we
12 did the normal escape and invasion thing. They took us out on the moors there and
13 dropped us off, and we ran around for about two days. And here I am with Brits; there's
14 no other Americans. I'm surviving. Of course, I had been through several survival
15 schools at the Academy in the Air Force and kind of enjoyed the outdoors, so I enjoyed
16 that part. Of course, they captured us, and they put us in prison, and froze us, and
17 deprived us, and all that kind of thing. And then they interrogated us. They had a lot of
18 fun interrogating me, and they debriefed me extensively because I was an American, and
19 I had a little different cultural background than their Brits, but anyway, I had fun. Jumped
20 out of an airplane—got in trouble for that, jumped into the water, never done a water
21 jump before, you know, rather ask for forgiveness than permission; and so, I went ahead
22 and did a water jump, and then my squadron commander found out about it and gave me
23 a little trouble over that. Anyway, so that's one of the—I never lived in British mess
24 where you have a batman that comes and polishes your shoes, and you have tea every
25 afternoon where they drink beer instead of tea. So, I enjoyed that. The Brits are
26 experienced all over the world with different cultures, and they take all that into stride
27 pretty much. Not a whole lot of reaction, they're very left winged. I mean, the common
28 worker in Britain is very socialist, even back in the sixties. My wife and I bought a house
29 in England, first house we'd ever bought. They have a thing sort of like FHA. So, we
30 bought a little house and actually made out pretty well on it anyway. I had to sell it about
31 two years after we bought it, but you know, interesting living in the British culture.

1 JS: All right. Now how long were you there?

2 MB: Two and a half years. Let's see, June of '64 till December of '66.

3 JS: Okay, all right. Any memorable moments during that time period that kind of
4 stand out?

5 MB: Well, you were asking about our view of Southeast Asia. Of course, even
6 when we got assigned in '64 to go to Lakenheath, we knew it was building up in
7 Southeast Asia, and I was a little disappointed I was going to Europe, rather than going to
8 maybe an F-100 base on the West Coast or in the Pacific. Misawa Air Base had F-100s
9 then and I figured, well, they'll get involved first. I don't think there was any F-100s—
10 there might have been an F-100 base in Korea. I think there maybe was, Kunsan might
11 have been then. Anyway, we were very interested. A few guys started trickling in later on
12 into Lakenheath who had been to Vietnam.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: And of course, the flying in the sixties was very, very limited, mostly TDY
15 (temporary duty), not a whole lot of—I don't even think they had any PCS (permanent
16 change of station) bases there until about '66. But we had some guys that were coming
17 from Southeast Asia, and they're telling us, "Okay, here's the weapons we're using, and
18 here's the tactics we're using." And they were pretty basic tactics, they weren't very
19 sophisticated, and they turned out to be deadly in some cases. But anyway, we're all
20 pretty anxious to get over there, and so we started volunteering to leave and of course—
21 Lakenheath, we lost nineteen airplanes, we lost something like twelve pilots got killed.
22 They were kind of hurting for people that could do the idiot loops; so, they didn't want to
23 lose any pilots, so it was sort of an interesting time there. We started getting more TDY
24 toward the end. At first, we were pretty much sitting our own lines out of Lakenheath,
25 and then we started getting deployed. Okay, we'd go for two or three months to Aviano,
26 Italy, and sit alert there, or we went to Turkey and sat alert there. I think that was during
27 the time when we had some tactical missiles in Europe. They had to pull them down
28 because of the Cuban Missile Crisis thing, and so they needed back up and they used
29 airplanes to fill those voids.

1 JS: Okay. You talked about some survival training you had had, some of the other
2 survival training. Was any of that specific towards Vietnam? Did you have it close to
3 your tour?

4 MB: Well, back in when I was a cadet at the Academy, we didn't have survival
5 training as such. Later they got survival training which actually took the place of, or was
6 sufficient so that the cadets, graduates, didn't have to go to Air Force survival training.
7 Air Force survival training used to be at Stead Air Force Base in Reno, Nevada. So, when
8 I graduated from pilot training, before I went to Luke, I went out there for two weeks.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: And again, it was the same kind of scenario. They teach you how to eat
11 snakes and survive with a parachute, make a tent out of a parachute, and how to read a
12 topo (topographic) map, and how to resist interrogation, and how to escape. They put us
13 in a prison, and we dug out, and got recaptured. So, you go through some pretty
14 stringent—actually, something really close to waterboarding that they did to us. You
15 know, deprivation, sensory deprivation. I remember, they put me in a box at Stead maybe
16 three feet high, and I'm squatting down. And my legs got tired, so I just stood up and
17 broke the whole box. I got put into solitary confinement for that. I splintered their box. So
18 we got pretty hard training there, and then went to Lakenheath and as the—I'm trying to
19 think of what is the guy that's in charge of personal equipment, anyway survival. And we
20 all, especially for these nuclear missions, we carried very extensive survival kits. We
21 could make up our own survival kit, and you had different places on your parachute and
22 where you could put them. I got exposed to some more survival training there. I went to
23 the German winter survival school in Germany: the German Army survival school. It was
24 kind of interesting because it was in German and I don't speak real good German, but
25 enough of the students, and we had some other English speakers there, so they kind of
26 took care of us. And then I later went to this RAF water survival school.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: Then, on the way to Vietnam, everybody that was going to fly in Vietnam
29 went through a jungle survival school in the Philippines.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: A weeklong school, and it was very good. It was taught by the Negritos
2 there.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: Out of Clark Air Base and it was a very good school. I actually went through
5 it twice because I went once before I went to Vietnam, and once before I went to
6 Thailand. It had evolved, in those three or four years, so that they were teaching a lot
7 more POW survival in the second school that I went to. We were getting some feedback
8 from the POWs that were in Hanoi about how they were communicating, and about how
9 they were resisting.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: So, it was much more sophisticated the second time through. A little less
12 snake eating, and a little more POW resistance.

13 JS: All right. You mentioned the Negritos. How did they play into the training,
14 how did it work with them?

15 MB: Well, they taught you how to—navigating in the jungle, reading a topo map
16 in a jungle is a lot different from reading it out here in Colorado. You can't see very far.
17 There are certain plants that you want to avoid, and certain plants that are going to help
18 you. A lot of plants you can eat in the jungle. Certain snakes that you don't have to worry
19 about, and others that are deadly, and they teach you a lot about that. A lot about how to
20 evade in the jungle. You can hide in the jungle. I mean, people can walk two feet from
21 you, and they don't see you. So, a lot of communications techniques, and how to call, and
22 how to prepare a landing zone for a rescue helicopter to come in. We did parasailing
23 there also—no wait, we did parasailing—where did we do that? I think we did that in
24 Okinawa.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: You know how to land in a parachute in the water. But the Negritos taught
27 us snails you can eat, and how to get across a jungle river, and things like that. They were
28 really good because they played up this bit about being an aboriginal, but they also spoke
29 English and drove American cars.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: They were kind of fun. Actually, the sickest I ever got in all of Asia was
2 from eating snails off the bottom of a river in the Philippines.

3 JS: (laughing) Right. Well, did you go directly from the UK to the Philippines?

4 MB: Well, we went through the United States, brought my wife home, left her in
5 Topeka, Kansas. Kind of interesting, we have three daughters. Our first daughter was
6 born; my wife was in England and I was in Libya. And I didn't even know whether it was
7 a boy or a girl for three days. They called me and I happened to be in a movie, and they
8 called me. "Lieutenant Blaisdell!" As I went out—do you know what MARS radio is?

9 JS: Vaguely, but could you—?

10 MB: Military Affiliated Radio Station (Military Amateur Radio Service), or
11 something like that. It used to be an old one channel radio system, and you had about
12 three or four different links in it and these MARS radio—a lot of them were civilian
13 amateurs, amateur radio guys. You would say something, you'd say, "Hello? Over." And
14 then everybody in the link had to switch to 'receive.'

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: And your wife would say, "Hello Mike, I love you. Over."

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: And then everybody would have to switch back. So here I am talking to my
19 wife, she's in the hospital. We're talking on MARS radio and they wouldn't let us say,
20 into a Muslim country, whether the child was male or female. I don't know why. But they
21 told me before I called, they said, "You cannot ask whether it's a boy or a girl." But I
22 said, "Are you okay?" "Yes." And "I love you." And that was about the whole
23 conversation. And then I couldn't get a flight out until the next day, so it was two or three
24 days before I got home and found out that we had a daughter. Anyway, when my first
25 daughter was born, I was in Libya, my wife was in England. The squadron took great
26 care of her. The squadrons were just big families.

27 JS: Right.

28 MB: So, the squadron commander's wife took care of everything, and all the
29 other wives in the squadron took care of her. Our second daughter—my wife was
30 pregnant with our second daughter when we rotated back to the states, and I got a
31 month's leave in the states and then I went to Vietnam. So, our second daughter was born

1 when I was in Vietnam. Our third daughter was born, and I left two days later to go for a
2 year in Thailand. So, my wife pretty much raised our kids without me.

3 JS: Right, right.

4 MB: So anyway, we got a month's leave in the states going on my way, and it just
5 happened to be Christmas time, so it was nice. And then about the first week in January I
6 left and actually went to the Philippines for a week of training, and then went on into
7 Vietnam.

8 JS: Okay, all right. Well, we are coming up on two hours here.

9 MB: And we haven't even gotten to Vietnam yet.

10 JS: Right. This is probably actually a good place to stop that way we can pick up
11 with Vietnam and not have to break up your first assignment in Vietnam. So, if it's okay
12 with you if we go ahead and stop for today.

13 MB: That's fine.

14 JS: Okay.

Interview with Michael Blaisdell

Session [2] of [=]

Date 13 August 2009

1 Jason Stuart: This is Jason Stuart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University continuing an Oral History Interview with Colonel Michael Blaisdell. Today
3 is August 13, 2009. I am in Lubbock, Texas, in the Special Collections Library on the
4 campus of Texas Tech. And Colonel Blaisdell is joining me, by phone, once again from
5 Colorado. Okay, last time when we left off as you just said, we were just about to start
6 talking about your first tour in Vietnam. First of all, at what point did you leave the UK?

7 Michael Blaisdell: Well, in about, oh, mid '66, I volunteered to go to Vietnam in
8 F-100s, and, you know, that was sort of on hold and they were picking up a few people
9 out of the UK, but we were very limited on people, and of course we had a pretty
10 demanding mission, so they weren't picking up people very fast. I happened to be in
11 Aviano, Italy, sitting alert. We had arranged—it was about Thanksgiving time and we
12 had arranged for some of our wives to come join us in Aviano. We were going to go tour
13 Northern Italy.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: Oh, three or four of us that were there on alert—we had a fairly large
16 contingent there—three or four of us got word that we were going to Vietnam. I think all
17 of us, of the three or four, were going as forward air controllers, which we were kind of
18 unhappy with because we had volunteered to go over in F-100s.

19 JS: Right, yes sir.

20 MB: So, we were destined for Vietnam, and we got shipped back to England and
21 started cleaning up things. We left—I left, my wife and I, just before Christmas and
22 during our leave—we got a month's leave at home—during our leave I got word that I
23 was going as an F-100 pilot, not as a forward air controller.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: So, I reported into Bien Hoa in early January of 1967.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: And flew there in the 531st (Tactical Fighter Squadron), "The Ramrods" out
28 of Bien Hoa, in F-100s for six months and then I got FACed anyway, so it didn't change
29 a whole lot although I did get the experience of flying both airplanes in combat.

1 JS: Right, yes sir. Well, what were your thoughts about getting the assignment to
2 Vietnam?

3 MB: Well, even before I went to England Southeast Asia was heating up, and I
4 wanted to get in a war. I was a young fighter pilot, and I wanted to go shoot guns and
5 drop bombs.

6 JS: Right, yes sir. All right, as far as the transition to Vietnam, how did you get
7 over there?

8 MB: We flew out of San Francisco.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: Not out of San Francisco, out of—I'm trying to think of the name of that
11 place. Travis (Airforce Base, CA)?

12 JS: Travis, yes sir.

13 MB: Yeah, I flew out of Travis. My wife and I, we left the kid, and she was
14 pregnant with our second daughter, by the way. We left our oldest daughter with grandma
15 and grandpa, and she drove out to San Francisco with me and spent a day out there. And
16 we loved San Francisco, especially back then. She saw me off, and off I went to Vietnam.

17 JS: Okay, all right.

18 MB: Oh, by the way, I stopped off in the Philippines for a week and went through
19 jungle survival school.

20 JS: Okay right. Yes, sir. I remember you talked a little bit about that last time,
21 didn't you?

22 MB: Uh-huh.

23 JS: Okay, all right. Well, upon your arrival in country, did you arrive actually at
24 Bien Hoa?

25 MB: No, we flew into Tan Son Nhut.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: In those days, and that varied, depending on the pressures of Vietcong and
28 the North Vietnamese were putting on the roads, but you could actually drive from Tan
29 Son Nhut to Bien Hoa, and it was only, I'm thinking maybe sixty miles or forty miles
30 something like that. Asphalt roads as I remember, dusty. You know red dust in Vietnam
31 and jungle.

1 JS: Right.

2 MB: We drove up and it took about, oh, maybe a week to get checked out. Of
3 course, I was current in the 100, so it was good to get back in the cockpit after a month of
4 leave and got checked out on all the tactics and so forth. I probably flew for about two
5 months before I became a flight lead.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: They flew kind of funny tactics over there. I didn't like them. Then it turned
8 out that we got them changed later, but they flew three ships.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: And the reason they flew three ships is because they had—McNamara was
11 the Secretary of Defense.

12 JS: Right, yes sir.

13 MB: And he was a numbers guy. The wing commanders all wanted to make sure
14 that their numbers were high, so they arranged the flights so that if anybody except—if
15 anybody aborted you could get at least a two ship off. The F-100 wasn't terrible reliable,
16 it was very high man hours per flying hour.

17 JS: Okay.

18 MB: So, they flew two flight leads, and a number three man.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And usually what they flew was the flight lead, the junior guy in the middle,
21 and the number three guy was a flight lead, so if any one of those aborted, the other two
22 could go. And it made for somewhat difficult maneuvering. That third man out there
23 was—it was a good thing we had air superiority, because we were trolling with him if
24 anybody wanted to shoot him down. It did make for a pretty good tactics over the target
25 though. 120 degrees in a circle is you can watch each other fairly well, but when you're
26 going anywhere that third man is sort of hanging out there. We flew a thing called
27 "fighting wing," which was about fifteen-hundred-foot trail.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: Very loose, but it's very hard to keep your eye on the second and third man,
30 as far as them getting hit—

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB:—from ground fire or, of course, air to air, but there was no MIGs in South
2 Vietnam, so. We developed pretty good tactics around the target, where we were working
3 with a forward air controller.

4 JS: All right.

5 MB: We would be handed off from a C-130, usually an airborne ABCCC
6 (Airborne Battlefield Command and Control Center) who would be somewhere flying
7 orbiting over South Vietnam who was controlling that part of the air to ground effort.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: And usually we would have a pre-planned target. Something that some
10 forward air controller out there had submitted during the night, or even days before.
11 Some area, maybe they had a pre-planned movement, or there were the convoy going
12 somewhere. So, we would have a pre-planned target and we would brief that target.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: But quite often we would get diverted to another target, or we would check
15 in with the FAC and he'd say, "Yeah, we're changing that, we're going to go to a
16 different target." But we would have a pre-planned, and usually even know what forward
17 air controller we were going to.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: But as we passed through, we'd do departure control, and climb up maybe
20 twenty thousand feet and go to our target. Sometimes the targets were right off the base. I
21 mean, you couldn't even climb to twenty thousand feet. You took off, checked in and
22 pretty much rocked your prongs is about a twenty- or thirty-minute flight, but that was
23 very seldom. That was when we had troops in contact.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: But when we had a pre-plan we'd go out and check in with a FAC, and he'd
26 give us all the elevations of the target, and where the friendlies were, and where he
27 wanted us to hit, and what we were hitting, and he'd give us limits,. Usually if there was
28 a defined contact point, or line between the friendlies and the enemies, we would go
29 either over the friendly's head, into the enemy, or parallel.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: Depending on what kind of ordnance we were using. And you've heard the
2 old quote, "hit my smoke." The forward air controller would either drop a smoke bomb
3 or fire a rocket. If it was a hot target he would fire a rocket so he could stand off a little
4 further.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: Rockets were pretty accurate, and I learned this later as I was flying as a
7 FAC. You could get pretty good with the rockets. And of course, the closer you got the
8 more accurate you got. But he would fire a rocket, and then tell us hit my smoke, or start
9 one hundred feet south of the smoke, or whatever. We'd go in on individual runs.
10 Probably twenty second spacing, maybe thirty second spacing and we were really
11 watching each other when we're on the run.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: The leader roll in, and number two would back off and roll in. Either the
14 same direction, or if it was an open target and there weren't any friendly's around, we
15 would come from different directions. And of course, that was safer because somebody
16 shooting at us didn't know which direction we were coming from.

17 JS: Right, yes sir.

18 MB: We had pretty good Intel that they were listening to us, and indication from
19 the ground that they were listening to us, because we could tell the guns opening up as we
20 rolled in. So, we got trickier and started using geographical locations so that they
21 wouldn't know we were in from the north. Like we'd say, "Okay, the target is Kansas
22 City, if you're in from Chicago you're in from the north or if you're in from Denver your
23 in from the West. You know, we tried to mix it up a little bit to confuse the guys on the
24 ground, because we were pretty sure they were listening to us.

25 JS: Right, yes sir.

26 MB: You want me to talk about ordnance?

27 JS: Sure, absolutely.

28 MB: We used a lot of different ordnance. The F-100 would carry basically four—
29 I'm trying to remember exactly because I flew 105 later. We carried four five hundred
30 pounders, or we could carry, say, two five hundred pounders and two napalm.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: We got five hundred pounders with what we called “snake eye kits” on
2 them. They had big metal fins, four metal fins that would open just as they came off the
3 aircraft. And that would allow us to—you could hang one of those on a clothesline. They
4 were very accurate because you were only dropping them from about maybe three
5 hundred feet.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: And you hope the fins open. If the fins didn’t open it wasn’t supposed to go
8 off, but we did have some bombs go off behind airplanes and airplanes would take some
9 frag. I would guess, as a weapons officer, that probably thirty percent of the holes that
10 were in F-100s were self inflicted.

11 JS: Wow.

12 MB: But we had the high drags, and we did sit alert at Bien Hoa. Each squadron
13 had one-two ship on alert. And alert was either very boring or extremely exciting. If you
14 had—we’d call it “snake and nape.” If you had two snake eyes and two napalms, that
15 means you were low level, you were ‘troops in contact.’ So, when we got troops in
16 contact and you had snake and nape you were pumping off the pad, the alert pad. The
17 rule was you could only fly three missions in a day.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: So, if you went on at six o’clock in the morning and there were troops in
20 contact, and you had snake and nape sometimes you were through by noon.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: Especially if the target was close by. I mean, that was when we would take
23 off, turn out right, and contact the FAC, and you were back on the ground in twenty,
24 thirty minutes.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: Napalm was extremely efficient and effective.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: More as a terror weapon than as a killer. It would do a job. If you knew
29 where the target was, and it was a soft target, and you had napalm, you could obliterate it.
30 Pretty much the ground fire went away when you dropped a nape. The enemy didn’t like
31 it at all. Snake eyes were good, except for the fact that there was no penetration, so it had

1 to be a fairly soft target. And five-hundred-pound bombs are—their effectivity is very
2 spread. Sometimes they're very effective, sometimes they just blow out the side. I know
3 as a forward air controller I walked around areas where I dropped a five-hundred-pound
4 bombs, and you'd find a bomb that was still—the case was pretty much intact, and it had
5 blown out one side. The quality control on the bombs wasn't all that good.

6 JS: Right, yes sir.

7 MB: Had lots of different fusing options. You could set the bombs to penetrate for
8 dive bombing. You could set them to penetrate, or you could set them to go off on
9 contact. We also had a thing called a "daisy cutter" that we used, and we used those more
10 with 750 pound bombs.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: But it was a one meter, or a one yard long, pipe in front of the weapon that
13 made the bomb go off slightly above ground, and that was very effective of course
14 against troops, or soft buildings, and stuff like that. Let's see, we also had a CBU—and I
15 can't tell you—I think it was CBU-87, or something like that, but it was a string CBU. It
16 looked like a bomb except it had tubes coming out the back. In fact, when I first saw it, I
17 thought it was mounted backwards on the aircraft because I thought it was rockets. I
18 actually think we dropped these pods because they were cardboard.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: But I actually think the Vietcong used them for rocket launchers. They'd
21 pick them up in the jungle and they had very inaccurate rockets and they used them for
22 rocket pods, you know, to shoot back at our troops. But string CBU took a little getting
23 used to. You could drop them all in one string, or you could drop two tubes or three tubes
24 at a time. You could select that from a cockpit. And those were pretty effective if you just
25 wanted to keep the enemies heads down.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: Unfortunately, the fuses on the little bomblets which were about the size of a
28 baseball weren't all that effective and they get tangled up in the jungle and, they were
29 hazardous to our troops, or civilians going through that jungle, even years later. And
30 there's lots of different variations on the CBU. Later, we got a CBU which was a bomb,

1 we called it “the hammer: because you could drop it—they’d drop it from fairly high
2 altitude in thirty to forty-five-degree dive bomb.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And it would open up, oh two thousand feet or a thousand feet above the
5 ground, and it covered a donut of coverage. It was more effective. Like I say we called it
6 the hammer because it really, it really devastated an area when you dropped it. One of the
7 things we discovered about it, it was a donut, there was a hole in the middle that didn’t
8 get covered so we’d usually drop two of them at a time so that they would overlap.

9 JS: Right, okay.

10 MB: You know, we used different methods of maybe getting a little overlap there
11 because if you dropped them both at once the donut was still there because they both
12 went off pretty much in the same place. But if you dropped one and then said, “a
13 thousand one,” dropped another—kicked a rudder, and dropped another, then you’d get a
14 little separation.

15 JS: Okay, all right. Could you talk a little bit about some of the different types of
16 targets? I mean, obvious troop concentrations, but what other type of targets would you
17 have?

18 MB: Well, if we thought there was a gun somewhere, we’d really go after it.
19 Especially if it was a big gun. And then ’67 in South Vietnam, you know .50 caliber was
20 considered a big gun. If we had quad fifties, or something like that we were really
21 sensitive to it. Later in South Vietnam they got some twenty-threes and up toward the
22 border they got bigger, crew served, weapons. Around Tan Son Nhut, and even in the
23 southern Delta area, what we called IV Corps. Automatic weapons was probably the most
24 dangerous thing we were against. Of course, if you stayed high enough, they weren’t a
25 real problem. Where they were a problem is when you were on final for a napalm run or
26 something like that. Although at night it was spectacular. During the day you don’t see it
27 so you’re not afraid of it. At night when you could see the tracers, there was a lot of stuff
28 down there. And a lot of it was ground to ground, but at night it’s kind of hard to tell
29 whether it’s coming at you or going from one place on the ground to the other.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: But there was a lot of small arms fire down there. One of the missions we
2 did that was pretty interesting was Ranch Hand support.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: Are you familiar with the Ranch Hand?

5 JS: Yes, sir I am, but could you talk a little bit about the mission and what they
6 did?

7 MB: I was the Ranch Hand liaison officer so I flew. About once a month I'd go
8 fly a mission with the 123s.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: That was the only time I was ever in an aircraft that was hit by enemy fire.
11 And I didn't count that because I wasn't flying it.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: I would fly between the pilot and the copilot, on a little jump seat there. We
14 didn't use parachutes because we were flying so low. They had some parachutes hanging
15 in the back somewhere, but we didn't wear them. Of course, there's a great big tank back
16 there that they would fill. They had different code words. The Ranch Hands were a
17 colorful group, by the way. They all wore purple scarves and that was—they called the
18 really bad stuff, which I think was Agent Orange, they called it "purple." So, when we
19 were flying a Ranch Hand support and they said, "This is a purple mission," we made
20 sure to not fly through the stuff that was coming off the back of the airplane.

21 JS: Sure.

22 MB: They would fly, oh, three or four, five ships, short of in echelon, very close
23 together, and very close to the ground. And man, they flew the nap of the earth. When
24 they went over a ridge, they pushed it over and pulled negative Gs. We would fly out in
25 front of them. A lot of times with CBU. We had to be very careful not to drop too close to
26 them, or we would just strafe in front of them. Sometimes, if it was a really hot target,
27 we'd use napalm in front of them. And they took fire from a lot of Viet Cong who were
28 shooting old French rifles and stuff like that. The problem with the French rifle is the
29 muzzle velocity was actually so low on it, the projectile would go in one side of the 123,
30 but it wouldn't come out the other side, so it rattled around inside.

31 JS: Oh, wow.

1 MB: And you could see, they showed me on the inside where these ricocheted
2 around the inside the one twenty-three.

3 JS: Yes, sir.

4 MB: That'd make usually one, or maybe two runs, and of course there was a lot of
5 jockeying around to get lined up right to make the second run. Those were kind of fun
6 missions because it was challenging for us, and we had a group of guys that were sort of
7 Ranch Hand prime because they had worked out the tactics of, , flying support for an
8 airplane that's probably going 115 knots, and you're making runs at 400 knots. It's pretty
9 challenging, and making sure that you, 1) don't fly through the spray, and 2) don't drop
10 too close to the 123s.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: But you wanted to drop in fairly close because if you dropped too far out
13 than the VC would just duck, wait a minute, and then pop their heads up and shoot at the
14 123s. So, it was a fun mission and interesting. I don't think I got poisoned by it, but I
15 might have. Especially riding in those airplanes, and those guys that did it everyday, I'm
16 sure they got—every time I use Roundup I'd think of Agent Orange because it's basically
17 the same stuff.

18 JS: Right, yes sir. You've talked a little bit about—a moment ago you mentioned
19 night missions. Would there be any different in tactics as far as between night missions
20 and day missions?

21 MB: oh, absolutely.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: I mean, you do everything much more carefully, and much more planned out
24 at night. When you're flying in a smoky—you know, if you got a battle going on it's
25 smoky, and we would drop flares. A lot of times the Army would shoot flares for us, and
26 we'd have maybe C-130s dropping flares. A lot of times we worked with Spooky, who
27 was dropping flares. And so, you had to know where the flares were, and when you fly
28 under a flare at night, your cockpit gets lit up and once you're in front of that flare
29 between the flare and the target, it's really disorienting. And a lot of guys flew into the
30 ground because they got disoriented or even lost control of the aircraft and spun in
31 because they were so disoriented. There are no horizons. It's like you're flying on the

1 inside of a ping pong ball. So, you've got to be very careful about where you fly in
2 relation to spent flares. Another thing, the flares would go out, and then there's fires
3 going on the ground and they'd get ballooned up by the fire, so they'd actually rise and
4 sit there and go up and down, we'd call them "ghost flares." And I know guys who flew
5 into flares. You know, they either came back with a piece of the flare in their wing or
6 they crashed mysteriously around the target. A very good friend and classmate of mine
7 named Jim Brinkman was—he had troops in contact and they really needed to—he was
8 flying off alert—and he flew into the ground delivering a napalm at night. We weren't
9 supposed to do low angle ordnance, but they needed it. So, he was going to give it a try,
10 and he died because of it. We mostly bombed at night, and used CBU which are
11 spectacular at night, the hammer, but again, you're basically dropping bombs on
12 instruments. Now, we had another system called "Skyspot." And basically Skyspot was a
13 very—it was an improvised radar. They had taken radars from B-52s, turned them upside
14 down, made a lot of modifications to them. And we were dropping bombs straight and
15 level flight from about 20,000 feet on areas that we thought maybe they were bringing in
16 supplies and troops. Or areas where we thought they dug in. And usually those where
17 they were dug in, we'd set the bombs for deep penetration. But a lot of times, I know as a
18 FAC—I didn't realize this when I was flying alert. And usually what they would do if
19 they hadn't used a crew all day long and you had bombs, they would fly you at night on a
20 skyspot mission. And lots of times that was in an area that had had weather that day.
21 They had thunderstorms so they couldn't get their planned FAC missions in. So, you'd do
22 a skyspot and it seemed like we were always doing skyspots in the middle of a
23 thunderstorm which is kind of fun when you think about it. It's kind of challenging
24 because you're playing along with two tons of bombs underneath your wings and there's
25 lightning flashing around you.

26 JS: Sure.

27 MB: Never heard of a bomb going off from lighting, but it was something to think
28 about. And the thunderstorms over there are spectacular. Heavy, heavy, heavy rain.

29 JS: Right, yes sir.

30 MB: Which made landing kind of interesting sometimes. The runways were good,
31 but they were not all level, and sometimes you'd get pooled water, you'd get just water

1 running off the runway and were domed enough that you got some really spectacular
2 hydroplaning on landing.

3 JS: Were there times when weather altered the flight plan for the day?

4 MB: Oh, absolutely. You take off and you'd be going towards your rendezvous
5 point with a FAC, and you'd see this huge thunderstorm and of course you'd check with
6 ABCCC and they'd say, "Okay, you can't get there. FAC reports heavy thunderstorms."
7 You know, they'd divert you to another target, to another FAC.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: One of the problems the F-100 had is with bombs on you could fly maybe an
10 hour and a half. And so, we didn't have much dwell time. When I was a FAC, if I had a
11 really hot target, I wanted fast movers. But when I had troops in contact and I needed
12 flexibility, I loved the A-1s. And we'd later design the A-10 with that in mind. You
13 know, they got lots of fuel, they got a lot of dwell time, they got a whole grocery list of
14 stuff they could carry, so you as a FAC can say, "Okay, tell me, how much 20mm do you
15 have? What kind of bombs do you have? Okay, standoff and I'll call you back in forty-
16 five minutes." When you know what's going on on the ground. But a lot of times you're
17 trying to sort out where the friendlies, where does the commander want the bombs, and
18 it's chaos on the ground, of course. And when a guy is shooting at an enemy, he doesn't
19 have time to be talking to the Air Force. So, you got to be very patient as a FAC.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: A lot of times I would just say, "Hey guys, I can't use you because I don't
22 know what's going on on the ground, divert to someplace else." And then I call ABCCC
23 as a FAC, I would call ABCCC and say, "I need somebody in forty-five minutes, I can't
24 use these guys."

25 JS: Okay. Well given the short flight time of the F-100, what was the extent of the
26 tactical area of responsibility for say the F-100s based there at Bien Hoa?

27 MB: Well, out of Bien Hoa we could cover up into II Corps.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: But III Corps was about—II Corps was a stretch. If you got up high and
30 went out there and made one run, dropped all your bombs, you could make it back. So,
31 we could go up to Dak To, but usually they'd cover up Dak To out of Phu Cat or Tuy

1 Hoa, or we'd get F-4s out of Da Nang or Cam Ranh Bay. But the F-100s were more
2 against the VC in the South. Bien Hoa was more against the VC and the south. We did a
3 lot of missions down to the Delta, a lot of missions in the swamps, and the Mekong Delta
4 down there. And those were hot. I mean, they had some good stuff down there shooting
5 back at us. We'd get—once in awhile we'd work with the Riverine guys. You know,
6 they'd get something going on the rivers, and sometimes we'd catch fuel barrels in the
7 Mekong, or boats on the shores where they'd been taking stuff across, and we'd catch
8 them early in the morning. We'd get some pretty good secondaries out of that. Target
9 wise, the FACs would find something dug in, maybe in a cave or—and there are some
10 pretty good karst around Vietnam up toward the Laos border, some ridgelines. These
11 karsts have some pretty good caves down in the base of them and sometimes—one time
12 when I was a FAC I was actually flying with the 173rd intelligence officer, and he thought
13 he knew where some were, and I was plinking around with—I think I was working with
14 the F-100s, I'm pretty sure I was. And the whole top, we'd drop one bomb and the whole
15 top of this mountain came off because there's a lot of stuff stored in there. So, we worked
16 that all day. You know, we kept dropping bombs until we quit getting secondaries. I
17 probably put four or five flights into that.

18 JS: All right. Well, I know that later on you would be flying missions over Laos,
19 but during this time was it concentrated completely in South Vietnam, or?

20 MB: Well, when I was flying out of Bien Hoa, I only flew there six months,
21 January through about June. We didn't even think about Laos. You know, we were
22 strictly forbidden from going into Laos.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: Or Cambodia. We knew where it was, we knew exactly what the TACAN
25 radials and distances were to the border, and there was kind of a buffer zone there. And
26 the only time we flew in that buffer zone was in very close control with a FAC, and he
27 knew exactly where it was. But you know, when you look down you can't tell, it's just
28 jungle down there. There's no fence or anything like that. But we were very careful
29 because you got in big trouble if you flew into Laos.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: Later when I was a FAC working out of Dak To, I worked the tri-border area
2 and again, I knew exactly, just visually, where that tri-border area was.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: And I was forbidden from going in there. Unfortunately, the North
5 Vietnamese were coming out of there and was a sanctuary for them. They'd come out and
6 get in a firefight and retreat right back across into Laos. And so, they used it very
7 effectively, and they were bringing a lot of stuff down. This is late '67, just before TET,
8 and they were bringing a lot of stuff down there. And I used to live with a guy by the
9 name of John Moon, I called him Lunar. He was an Army Intel officer, and the 173rd was
10 attached to the 4th Infantry Division, and John was good. He really knew—he talked to
11 the troops. The 173rd didn't have any LRRPs (Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol), but
12 the 4th infantry division did, and I worked closely with the LRRPs, usually just a click
13 code. I would go out and fly a specific area, and at a certain time I would click on the
14 radio on there. I only had a PRC-45 which was a very—excuse me, I had a 25, they had
15 PRC-45s which are FM radios. But they finally installed a 45 in my airplane, by the way,
16 because I was working too much with the LRRPs, but I'd go out and just click at a certain
17 time, and most of the time I would get “click, click” back and that was it. I'd just go back
18 and tell Lunar, “Hey, at this area, this LRRP gave me a double click.” “Okay, that's fine.
19 That means they're doing good.” Sometimes I'd go out there and I'd go “click” and
20 they'd say, “Get us the hell out of here.” Of course, I'd call back and they would launch
21 the recovery, which was a piece of work to watch. I would just stand off, and usually I
22 would call for cover, in case we needed it. But they'd go in and they'd soften up an area
23 as if they were going to go in and pick up this LRRP in one place, but that was a fake.
24 They would go in and pick the LLRP up in another place. So, they wanted the Viet Cong
25 and the NVA to concentrate on one hill, and then maybe two miles away they'd go in and
26 pick up the troops. What they would do is they'd pile all their stuff in a pile and get on an
27 open ridge line, and the helicopter would go in with a big rope and just drag the rope
28 down and he'd come up with two or three of them and he'd take them over to another hill
29 and then he'd go in and get the rest of them. And then they would blow all this stuff, and
30 all the radios, and everything they were leaving behind.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: But I only watched that maybe two or three times the whole time I was over
2 there. Most of the time they would put out a LRRP of maybe six guys, and they'd stay
3 out there a week watching the trail, counting the VC and NVA, and then quietly pick
4 them up and everything was good. Those guys were tough, by the way.

5 JS: Yes, sir. All right, could you talk a little bit about the enemy? I know you've
6 talked about them a little bit, but as far as their capabilities, and your impressions as far
7 as their capabilities as a threat to the aircraft, and that type of thing?

8 MB: The Viet Cong were determined; they are very much like the insurgents
9 we've got in Afghanistan and Iraq. They were brainwashed and, the VC owned the night.
10 So we might have friendly troops in a village during the daytime, but we'd all pull back
11 and at night the VC were there. Well, the VC were ruthless. They'd take out the leaders
12 of the village. I don't know this firsthand, I just know it from talking to people that that's
13 the way they operated. The NVA were much better trained, much better equipped, had
14 bigger guns. John Moon and I sat one day at a map and said, "Let's go take a look at this
15 area." So, by "take a look at" he meant on my reconnaissance. And I'd go up and fly four
16 hours a day whether I had flights coming in or not. I'd go up and just check around and
17 see what's going on. He said, "Go take a look at this one area," and I went out there—and
18 we had rules that I wasn't supposed to fly below fifteen hundred feet when I'm on
19 reconnaissance because I'm by myself. If I had gotten shot down and the radio was out,
20 they'd had never found me. But I was maybe forty, fifty, sixty miles west of Dak To, and
21 I'm flying along, and I see this—something, had to be manmade. It was a large, kind of a
22 winged shaped thing.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: And so, I looked at it. And I didn't want to call attention to it, but I looked at
25 it and kind of dipped my wing a couple times, and the O-1 was a great airplane because
26 you could look almost straight down underneath the airplane, but I didn't want to hang
27 around, so I went off about five or ten miles, dropped down and came back over it,
28 illegally, at about one hundred feet. It was definitely something manmade. So again, I
29 didn't hang around very long, and I went back and told John about it, and we looked in
30 books, and the best we could tell it was some kind of low frequency antenna. And it was
31 the size of a semi-truck, and it was in the middle of the jungle. There weren't any roads,

1 or trails, or anything that I could see around there. Well, they had a battalion out, yeah, I
2 think it was a battalion that was out in that area, and so John told the battalion to go up
3 and check that out, because they were just sort of out probing. Well, that turned out to be
4 Hill 875.

5 JS: Oh, okay.

6 MB: Have you heard about 875?

7 JS: Yes, sir.

8 MB: Okay, well Hill 875 was interesting from an Air Force standpoint. We
9 stacked FACs, and airplanes, in there from dawn to dusk. And then we had Spooky in
10 there at night, for about three days around Thanksgiving Day 1967. And that was a good
11 indicator as to what was coming. And because that was an NVA, I've forgotten the
12 number (174th NVA Regiment), NVA Army headquarters and that was their antenna.
13 When I went back the next day that antenna was gone, by the way. And then three or four
14 days later they got this battalion going up the hill and they got the hell shot out of them.
15 As long as we had an airplane on final, they weren't taking as much fire. So, we had guys
16 going in there and strafing and dropping—they'd shoot rockets and they'd come by and
17 drop their rocket pods just so we had somebody, on final, dropping something, all the
18 time. Well, because I had been so involved in that, after the NVA left, I went out there
19 and walked around for a day or two on hill 875. And it was amazing what the NVA had
20 in there. They had dug vertical shafts, with ladders coming up, with slits looking out
21 mainly to the south. They had gun emplacements there, and they had mortar tubes in back
22 of that. Now, these guys could drop down the ladders like fireman. They had to slide
23 down the ladder, so they were twenty feet underneath the ground. Even if they took a
24 direct hit from a five hundred pounder, you didn't get them down in the bottom. And then
25 they'd climb back up the ladders, and they'd be looking out and shooting out the slits
26 again. And they must have had on that hill, I didn't see them all, but they must have had
27 twenty of these slit firing positions looking to the south.

28 JS: Wow.

29 MB: So, they've been there for awhile.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: We lost in that battalion commander, we lost the battalion chaplain, and I
2 think about sixty people on that hill. That whole valley west of Dak To was a big
3 confrontation place for the NVA that were coming down for TET. Whenever we'd
4 encounter them, they would withdraw into Laos, and then come in and probe somewhere
5 else. We used to do LZ preps, and usually when I was a FAC in an LZ prep I'd look at a
6 hill and they'd say, "We're going to put an LZ there." And I'd say, "How are we going to
7 do that?" We would go in with seven hundred- and fifty-pound bombs, two-thousand-
8 pound bombs if we could get them. The F-100 couldn't carry them, but the F-4s could.
9 And we'd high angle dive bomb those trees and just clear out as much of the brush as we
10 could. And then they'd come in with helicopters because they'd have gunships, and we'd
11 have fighters standing off in case they ran into stiff resistance. They'd get helicopters in
12 there, and they'd drop the engineers in there with chainsaws and cut those trees down.
13 And those are hardwood trees. And if we hadn't blown them away—and sometimes it'd
14 take two or three bombs' direct hits on a tree before they'd fall, but we'd try to get
15 enough blown away so they could at least get helicopters and drop these guys down on
16 ropes with chainsaws, and they'd be using those chainsaws—a little hard on the
17 chainsaws because they'd have shrapnel in the trees and that'd ruin the chainsaws. But
18 they had Bangalore torpedoes and so they could wrap a C-4 belt essentially around a tree
19 and blow it that way.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: But meanwhile they're under attack, so that was a tough job. But we put in
22 Doc Seang and Doc Pec, and three or four others. I can't think of the names without a
23 map.

24 JS: Okay, all right.

25 MB: A lot of old French villages up there. The French tried to make that into a
26 rubber growing plantation, and a lot of old French villages up there.

27 JS: All right. This was at the time when you were a FAC?

28 MB: Yeah.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: I was a FAC from June until December of '67.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: Let me go back into history here. When I got FACed, I went to the ARVN
2 airborne and that was a—"Red Marker" was my call sign.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And I worked with them for about two months, and mainly I went to Dak To
5 then and Dak To was just a sleepy little curve in the river then. The ARVN had a camp
6 there, a fortress there, but they hadn't done much out of there. There was a presence there
7 and I flew out of there maybe for two weeks out of—and by the way, as a FAC, you are a
8 traveling salesman, you don't have a home. You just sleep wherever you happen to land
9 that night. You have a place that you work out of, but gosh, I worked out of Dak To for a
10 little while with the ARVN Airborne then I went over to Hue.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: And at Hue we flew out of Hue Citadel. The Citadel was a college, and they
13 had taken a couple of soccer fields and built some PSP across a road, and we'd land on
14 this soccer field. At the end of the soccer field was a big rock wall so it was kind of
15 exciting. You landed into the wall and you took off the other direction, no matter what
16 the wind. The Perfume River runs through Hue and The Citadel sits right by the old
17 ancient Hue palace. Hue was at one time the capital of Vietnam, and it was a beautiful
18 place. It was unspoiled by the war, beautiful stone Buddha statues. I remember they had
19 this one palace kind of place that had a gold throne in there. And you could just walk
20 around. They had fishponds with Koi. Koi, is that the name? It was a pink goldfish. It
21 was kind of a nice place to be. We actually had our barracks over with the Marines.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: At Hue Phu Bai which was—I'm trying to remember maybe twenty miles
24 away. So, a little hard to get to our airplanes, and once I was in a firefight at Hue Phu Bai.
25 I couldn't get to my airplane so I grabbed an M-16 and got behind a sandbag and
26 probably should get a Combat Infantry (Badge) for that. I don't know that I killed
27 anybody, but I sure shot a lot of M-16 ammo out into the dark.

28 JS: Right, yes sir.

29 MB: Enjoyed working with the Marines, although I never really worked with
30 them, I just lived with them. Anyway, I flew out of there. I used to fly—you probably
31 read the book, *The Street Without Joy*.

1 JS: Yes, sir.

2 MB: Route one out of Hue. I worked that as a forward air controller and had an
3 interesting experience. I'll tell you a war story, here.

4 JS: All right.

5 MB: Working with the ARVN Airborne and they had tracked vehicles. I'm
6 thinking they were probably 117s or maybe 114s, and they were going through these old
7 French rubber trees, rubber orchard.

8 JS: Right.

9 MB: I didn't have any fighters on station or anything, I was just kind of watching
10 the battle and I had a Vietnamese in the back seat, and I'm looking down and I can see
11 the VC running in front of these tracks. These tracks are kind of moving line abreast
12 through these hedgerows, these plantation tree rows. I know they're setting trip wires. I
13 can see these tracked vehicles getting their tracks blown off, and they'll stop, and
14 everybody runs out of the tracked vehicle. So, I'm talking to the Vietnamese in the back
15 seat, and he said, "Our commander wants you to stop those guys." And I said, "Good, I'll
16 call for some airplanes." And they said, "No, no fighters, they want you to stop them." I
17 said, "I've got a .45, and M-16, and a couple of rockets. I can't stop them."

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: And so, you know, they advanced a couple more rows and the trip wires
20 keep going off, the mines keep going off. You know, this guy, he's not speaking very
21 good English. Of course, he's excited and he's mad, and he said, "Stop them." And so, I
22 watched kind of the rhythm of these, and there were five or six of them running down
23 maybe two hundred yards in front of our tracks. So, I watched this one guy hide, and I
24 got set up, and he runs out through the buffalo grass, and so I know where he's going. He
25 can't get off the trail, and I got down about one hundred feet from him and I shot a rocket
26 right between his legs. Of course, that Willy Pete, that charge in that rocket is probably
27 ten pounds of white phosphorus. And it throws out a fan when you shoot it at a low angle
28 like that, it throws out a fan of white phosphorus. Of course, it burned him very badly and
29 they captured him and took him into Hue and I understand they interrogated him, but he
30 died the next day. But that's the only VC I ever shot, and I know he died.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: You know, I've dropped a lot of bombs and I've seen them on the ground,
2 but that's the closest to a kill that I ever got.

3 JS: Yes, sir.

4 MB: But later, let me continue the FAC story.

5 JS: Sure, no problem.

6 MB: The itinerary of what I did. The 173rd—the ARVN Airborne was kind of a
7 political unit working out of Tan San Nhut. The airborne was sort of the palace guard and
8 the President didn't want them to get too far from home. So, they had a few units out in
9 different places, but they always went back to Saigon.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: And I was pretty mouthy about, "Hey, I want to see some action here. I'm
12 tired of hanging around Saigon." So, the 173rd had one of their FACs killed, and another
13 guy was sick, and another one refused to fly, or something, I don't know. It was about six
14 or eight of them, and I knew Herb Nethery was the lieutenant colonel—or I think he was
15 a major then—who was the head of that group. And he called me up one day in Tan Son
16 Nhut and said, "Hey, I need FACs can you come?" He said also, "We're going to Dak To
17 so I understand you know the area around there, so I want you to come with us." So, I did
18 switch over to 173rd and became a "Tonto" FAC.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And it was my call sign. I was also "Tonto 6," which was always interesting
21 in the Army because their "six" is their commander, and they wanted to know why I was
22 "six" and I was only a captain.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: Our call signs worked a little different, but anyway—I actually went to a
25 little base and I've been trying to remember the name of that base. It was just south of
26 Tuy Hoa. It was right on the coast of—we had a beach and everything and probably lived
27 there for about a month, working with the 173rd and then they convoyed to Dak To and
28 working with the 173rd along the coast there, there was a lot of VC around Tuy Hoa, and
29 we cleared out a valley, and I helped—one patrol one time came upon a really big cache
30 of weapons, and they said, "Hey, we've got a AK-47 here for you, you want it?" And I
31 said, "Sure." So, they brought it over, they had some people there at our little base, and

1 they brought it over and it was still wrapped in the burlap and cosmoline all over and I
2 cleaned it up and actually fired it and gave it to somebody before I left Vietnam. I didn't
3 want to bring it home. But an AK-47 is a very good weapon. And this was one of the old
4 ones, I played around with that a little bit. I actually got to work there with some South
5 Vietnamese troops.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: Of course, they wouldn't send any unit that wasn't a crack unit, but they
8 were very effective, very ruthless. When the Americans would go through a village, there
9 was a little firefight, the VC would withdraw, and the Americans would press on through
10 the village. When the South Vietnamese went through a village—and most of them out
11 there on the coast they could use armored personnel carriers. When the South Vietnamese
12 went through a village, they backed over every house, and threw a charge into any hole
13 that was around. There were no VC left in the village. Of course, the Vietnamese hated
14 them, but they were very effective at getting rid of the VC. Anyway, I went hiking
15 yesterday, and the flowers were blooming up here, and my allergies are killing me.

16 JS: Sure, no problem.

17 MB: But we took the 173rd from the coast into Dak To. I'm trying to remember. I
18 think it was about a two or three day trip from the very first elements till that last one got
19 into Dak To. And of course, they tremendously expanded the Dak To perimeter. They
20 took even 175 guns in there. They could reach the border from Dak To with their 175s.
21 And unfortunately my hooch was right next to the 175s, and they always shot about three
22 o'clock in the morning, so, I'd come six inches off my bed when they'd open up.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: They also had a lot of 155s, and those were very mobile. They could set
25 those up and get them registered, and I kind of had fun in several places as a FAC
26 registering guns, zeroing them in anyway. I even got to work—when I was out there
27 around Tuy Hoa, I got to work with the Navy and they're not near as accurate. They have
28 big guns though.

29 JS: Yes, sir.

30 MB: I'm trying to think, probably destroyers, but once in awhile I'd get a call and
31 say, "Hey, can you help us, we've got a destroyer, or we've got a boat, out that wants to

1 register guns. So, I'd work with them. A little different terminology working with the
2 Navy, but the Army—usually they'd have six, eight, ten guns. No, they never had ten,
3 maybe eight. And they'd get six of them in and they'd have two out. So, they'd fire them
4 one at a time to see which one was missing. So sometimes you'd work over three or four
5 hours before you got them all registered.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: Anyway, got to Dak To, started working, opened up those and those LZ's
8 out there, and I was flying way over my allotted time. We were supposed to get a waiver
9 or something. I think its sixty hours in one month, and then we were supposed to be
10 grounded at eighty hours, and some months I flew one hundred and twenty hours. Log
11 time for other people, and they finally caught up with me and said, "Okay, you're
12 grounded." And sent be back to Bien Hoa. And this is just before Christmas. I said,
13 "Okay, let me go home." And they said, "No, you're going to work in the TACC until
14 your rotation time," which I think was something like January 10th, so I sat on my heels at
15 Bien Hoa for the last twenty days or so that I was in Vietnam. I kept a separate log of
16 what I was really supposed to be logging, and, you know, I flew some that I didn't even
17 log the time. But they needed me in the air, and I wanted to be in the air, I got bored on
18 the ground, so I flew a lot.

19 JS: Right, yes sir.

20 MB: I got about four hundred hours in six months.

21 JS: Wow.

22 MB: Let me see, I got a little bullet here that's got my time on it if I can find it.
23 Anyway, so I rotated back and in January of '68. Tet started right after that.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: When did Tet start?

26 JS: At the end of January.

27 MB: Yeah, because I left like a week before it started.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: The recorded time: I've got one hundred and eighty-nine combat missions in
30 the O-1, I found this 20mm bullet I got it on. And those were probably three hours

1 average apiece, so I got quite a bit of flying time, in a very short amount of time. You
2 there?

3 JS: Yes sir, I was just waiting to see—

4 MB: This is just kind of a transition point because—do you want to talk anymore
5 about Vietnam? O-1, F-100?

6 JS: Yes sir, yes sir I do. Before we move on to beyond that I do have some more
7 questions. You mentioned working with the ARVN, at first there as I guess as a FAC.
8 Could you just talk a little bit more about your impressions of the ARVN and what you
9 thought of them in general, and how they operated?

10 MB: I have mixed emotions about the Vietnamese. They're not—and I think this
11 is true of a lot of the indigenous people in Southeast Asia. They have been overrun by the
12 Chinese, and the Koreans, and the Japanese, so many times that they sort of bend, you
13 know, the Thais say we're like bamboo, we bend, but we don't break. They're rife with
14 corruption, but you can see why. The French didn't do us any favors over there. The
15 French always—and you could see this in Morocco, and other places the French have
16 been. They always try to make a place "like France," and they were there for commercial
17 reasons, they didn't care about the Vietnamese, I don't think.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: The Vietnamese—I'm trying to think, yeah, the Vietnamese—a lot of roads
20 and a lot of buildings and things have French names.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: They were pretty much an aboriginal people before the French were there,
23 and before the Japanese were there. I look at Vietnam as being an extension of the 2nd
24 World War.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: You look at all the places that the communists, either the Chinese or the
27 Russians, try to take part of, and we were tired of fighting. We beat the Japanese. We
28 didn't want to have to fight the Chinese. And so, we said, "Okay, for now you can have
29 North Vietnam and we'll take South Vietnam." And I think the idea was, "We'll work
30 this out at the bargaining table." Well, you don't work out things with the communists at
31 a bargaining table. What's theirs is theirs, and what's yours is negotiable.

1 JS: Right.

2 MB: So, we had some very weak treaties with the South Koreans, and with the
3 South Vietnamese, and with others over there. You know, if you look at it from a
4 diplomatic standpoint, what we were doing in Vietnam is we were honoring a treaty. The
5 North Vietnamese—and I'd forgotten exactly the political climate at the time, but the
6 North Vietnamese said, "Okay, we're moving in." and the South Vietnamese said, "No
7 you're not." And so, we started counseling them, and training them, and of course that
8 escalated: and that ain't the way to fight a war. When you're going to fight a war you go
9 in—and I think I mentioned this before—you have to take away the enemies' will to
10 fight. And we almost did that in South Vietnam.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: I think the North Vietnamese Army Chief of Staff, or whatever he was,
13 General Giap, said, "We couldn't have stood another Tet. We didn't have enough trained
14 people." Although, we didn't really dent the North Vietnamese population with the
15 millions we killed. Still, they were producing babies faster than we could kill them. But
16 they didn't have the will to fight another Tet. What beat us was our own press, our own
17 lack of will to fight. So, they beat us in a "will war," they didn't beat us in a military war.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: And the limitations were—I'll tell you. Even—I was a captain. I didn't know
20 anything about geopolitics or anything but the frustration, especially when I was flying
21 out of Thailand, of not being able to fight a war the way we were trained to fight it. You
22 take away the logistics. You close Hanoi Harbor; you close the Chinese border. And of
23 course, the fear there was the Chinese are going to come in like they did in Korea.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: So, Johnson was unwilling, McNamara was unwilling, to escalate the war to
26 win it. Though we should have pulled out. We should have never gotten into it, but then
27 you're reneging on your treaty.

28 JS: Right.

29 MB: You know this was the beginning of us not standing up for our allies. We
30 reneged on the Vietnamese. They're corrupt, yes, and they weren't the best of people, but
31 still we said we would help them, and we pulled out. We later did that—and that was sort

1 of a death sentence for Cambodians, because they were resisting in hopes that we would
2 win in South Vietnam; and we pulled out, and a lot of them died. We did manage to keep
3 them out of Thailand. We did manage to keep the domino—a lot of people say, “Well,
4 the domino theory never happened.” Yeah, it didn’t happen because we were there. If we
5 hadn’t been there, I think the Chinese would have been into Thailand, and Cambodia. Of
6 course, essentially, they are in Cambodia, and South Vietnam. A lot of people go back to
7 South Vietnam and say, “Oh, it’s such a peaceful country and they’re nice people and all
8 that.” They’re not, they’re communists, and they’re brutal. You know, I’m ticked that we
9 didn’t do what we should have done, but of course maybe we couldn’t have stood the
10 consequences, maybe we didn’t have the—well, the American people didn’t have the will
11 to fight.

12 JS: Right, yes sir.

13 MB: You’ve probably read *Dereliction of Duty* by McMaster.

14 JS: No sir, that’s one I actually have not read.

15 MB: Okay, well that’s one that you need to read.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: McMaster, H.R. McMaster—I think he was a major—and he wrote this
18 treatise, really at this Marine college. It might have been Armed Forces Staff College as a
19 matter of fact. It was some staff college that he went to and wrote this treatise (actually
20 his Ph. D dissertation at University of NC), and it turned into a book. It’s about the
21 inability, the unwillingness, of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to tell Johnson that he was
22 fighting the war wrong. It’s probably been fifteen years since I’ve read it, but it’s an
23 infuriating book about how Johnson treated military people. And the military people were
24 unwilling, the joint chiefs of staff were unwilling, to fall in their sword and say, “You’re
25 wrong.” You know this stuff of body counts, and missions, and all this McNamara crap,
26 is not the way to fight a war. Doing targeting from the White House is not efficient, is not
27 effective. So anyway, you can see that the military has gone to school on what they
28 learned in the Vietnam War. The ’91 war in Iraq, it was extremely effective.

29 JS: Right, yes sir.

30 MB: It was fought from the battlefield, by the military. You know, the 2003 Iraq
31 War, the “shock and awe,” that’s the way you fight a war, militarily. Of course, you need

1 to have a closer. You need to figure out how you're going to get out of there once you've
2 won the military war, and that's what we didn't have at Iraq, but that's a different story.

3 JS: Right, yes sir. Speaking of these restrictions that were put on bombing and
4 that type of thing all the way from Washington, how did that affect say the way that you
5 operated? How would that affect that on that level?

6 MB: Well, that three ship I was talking about.

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: That was in order to generate numbers. You didn't want to lose a three ship
9 because—and actually we should have been flying in four ships, or two ships. The
10 problem with flying in two ships is if either guy aborts then you don't get the other flight
11 off.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: Flying in three ships was awkward, and it probably got a few guys killed,
14 because that third guy was kind of hanging out there. Two ships or four ships would have
15 been better. And that's the way the Air Force has flown since World War I—in fingertip
16 echelon. Flying in “fighting wing” was difficult. The second guy—and we developed
17 tactics. I was privileged later. After the war, in '74, I was in the Pentagon and I was in a
18 section of the Pentagon, of Air Force operations called—the letters for it was “XOOSL.”
19 At the time it was the tactics shop, and one of the guys in there was Chuck Horner, you're
20 probably familiar with his name.

21 JS: It sounds familiar, yes.

22 MB: Yeah, he was the Air Component Commander, as a four-star general, in '91
23 in Desert Storm.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: He was a major/lieutenant colonel at the time. He might have been a full
26 colonel by the time we left there. He developed a thing called “Red Flag.” Are you
27 familiar with that?

28 JS: Vaguely.

29 MB: Okay. Well, one of the things we learned in Vietnam was: if a guy survived
30 about his first twenty missions, he was probably going to make it through his whole tour.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: So, we had to figure out a way in '74—how are we going to get these guys
2 exposed to combat, without getting shot at—in a benign environment? We need to have a
3 place where they'd fight a war. And so, we instituted "Red Flag" out at Nellis Air Force
4 Base (NV), and I mean, they fight wars out there, actually with hot bombs in some cases.
5 They go out and they fly planned missions—"big force goes," they call them—where
6 you've got the Blue forces and the Red forces and most of them are flying out of Nellis.
7 But that started with the tactical forces and I was a Commandant of Fighter Weapons
8 School in '82.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: While I was at Fighter Weapons School which is part of Red Flag. But it
11 became very real, and guys would go out there. They would go out there with units, and
12 they'd fly maybe two weeks of Red Flag where you'd have an evolving war. A parallel
13 effort was the "aggressors." In about '75, I think it was, as the Vietnam War was drawing
14 down, Northrop had built seventy some odd airplanes for the Vietnam Air Force.

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: These were F-5s. Well, there was no place to put them. So the US
17 Congress—and they were being bought and given to the Vietnamese through Foreign
18 Military Sales—US Congress says, "Okay Air Force, you've got seventy light weight
19 fighters here, what are you going to do with them?" and Chuck Horner and that group
20 said, "We got them." And they made aggressors out of them.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: Painted them like Soviet Aircraft, like North Vietnamese Aircraft. And they
23 had about the performance of a MiG21. A very good turning airplane, very fast, very
24 small, hard to see, and they developed Soviet tactics, bad guy tactics. They actually put
25 on a road show where they go into MacDill Air Force Base (FL) or Seymour Johnson Air
26 Force Base (NC), or different fighter wings and they would go up. So, the people who
27 had not flown combat could see what the tactics of a Soviet fighter force would be like.
28 The aggressors flew extensively in Red Flag as aggressor forces or as, the Red Forces.
29 That has evolved, that aggressor force has evolved. PACF's got a set of aggressors and
30 Europe's got a set of aggressors. They now have F-16s, and it has evolved into a very
31 effective training force. Likewise, Red Flag has evolved. It was so effective for the

1 fighter forces; they actually got B-52s and helicopters. We got ground force radar
2 controllers, people controlling from the ground. ABCCC comes out, we've got sigint. I
3 mean, it's a huge training thing out there now. The Fighter Weapons School, which used
4 to be just, you know F-4s and F-15s and F-16s and so forth, now has helicopters and so
5 they're training everybody through Red Flag scenarios.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: Other things we did in this little fighter group that we had in the Pentagon,
8 they said, "Okay, we want a good air-to-ground airplane." and all of us that had flown as
9 FACs said, "Let's look at the A-1, because we love them in a low threat environment
10 because they had lots of loiter time, they had lots of "groceries" we called them, lots of
11 bombs, napalm, CBU, gun, could go slow, could get down there in amongst them. And
12 we evolved the A-10. We essentially designed the A-10. And the A-10 is a fantastic
13 airplane. I got about four hundred hours in it and it's a wonderful airplane for air-to-
14 ground. The Army loves it, the Marines love it.

15 JS: Okay, all right. I remember last time you mentioned—you talked about how
16 when your initial training in the F-100 was more designed toward delivering an atomic
17 bomb, as opposed to something like a situation in Vietnam. Was this Red Flag that came
18 a little bit later on—I'm trying to put this together. Was this kind of as a response to
19 improve the way the Air Force, I guess operated tactically the way it had in Vietnam, to
20 improve things like dog fighting, and all of that?

21 MB: Well, the Air Force, after World War II, and during World War II when they
22 were designing airplanes, the theory was: farther, higher, faster.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: Whatever you had to do to make an airplane do those things, that was the
25 design objective, and they forgot maneuverability.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: The F-100 was a good example—and the F-86 was a pretty maneuverable
28 airplane.

29 JS: All right.

30 MB: The Saber—and they had several different versions of it. The F-100 was just
31 a big F-86.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: They had practically the same wing, it was little longer, I think, but I think it
3 actually had the exactly the same sweep. It was designed to go through the Mach, and at
4 that time in design, the Mach was sort of a plaything. They wanted to go faster than the
5 Mach and they wanted to—they didn't know what they'd have when they got above a
6 Mach because not very many airplanes could go above the Mach. So, the F-100 was
7 designed to go faster at low levels. Because of that, it has some nasty aerodynamic habits.
8 It was not a very good—you could turn the airplane pretty good. It had slats on the front
9 of the wings.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: So, when you got to a certain angle of attack these slats were—they weren't
12 automated or anything, they were aerodynamic. They would come out, and essentially
13 give you a more curved wing, which makes you turn faster. Unfortunately, we didn't
14 have enough engine to get going. Once you dissipated that energy turning you were
15 pretty much a strafe target up there because you were going very slow and didn't have
16 enough engine to go fast again. So, in the next generation of airplanes that I was
17 privileged to be a part of: the F-15, which was pretty much designed by the time I got to
18 the Pentagon, but the 16, the A-10, those three airplanes which we've flown for twenty,
19 thirty years now, were all designed more with combat in mind and not so much higher,
20 faster, farther. The F-15, an extremely good airplane. Of course, it was designed—there
21 was kind of an intermediate group of airplanes in there where they played around a lot
22 with "swing wings," the F-14, the F-111. Swing wing, it's okay, but it adds a lot of
23 weight and complexity to the airplane.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: The F-111—I've got kind of a bias against Navy airplanes because the Navy
26 made us fly their airplanes. The Navy has a lot more pull in congress. So, when they built
27 the F-4 they said, "Oh, yeah we're going to buy some." And "Oh, yeah, the Air Force are
28 going to buy some, too." And the Air Force said, "Well, you know, we don't want a lot of
29 F-4s." And they ended up flying the F-4 a lot. One of the things about the F-4 is: it's
30 designed to go onto carriers, so it has very heavy bulkheads.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And the Air Force flew the C and the D model F-4 that still had the Navy
2 bulkheads in it. So, we're carrying two thousand pounds of extra metal that we didn't
3 need. And when the Navy designed the F-4 because they were married to the fleet
4 defense mission, they designed the F-4 without a gun.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: And so, they're going to shoot everything beyond visual range with AIM-4s
7 (Falcon Air Intercept Missile) at the time. And the Air Force said, "Hey, we want to be
8 able to fight in close, so we need a gun." Well, you know, they put a pod on the F-4,
9 which made it—it was really draggy and not very accurate. Finally, the Air Force
10 designed its own F-4, which is an F-4E. It had a gun in it, took all that extra weight out of
11 it, put some slats on the airplane so it would turn better, put a very good computer in it.
12 Of course, this was years after the original Navy F-4. So, the F-4 was sort of a success
13 story for the Air Force, but it took us a long time to get there. and we missed a lot of kills
14 in Vietnam because we didn't have an airplane that would turn very well. The AIM-4 was
15 not a very good missile, very undependable, very hard to employ. It took extremely good
16 crew coordination to employ the AIM-4.

17 JS: Okay.

18 MB: One of the reasons I'm biased against the F-4 is because I'm a single seat
19 pilot, and never really learned to work with that guy in the backseat.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: And the 111, F-111. It's a McNamara airplane. It had a swing wing,
22 designed to go long distances, at low level, originally designed—and one of the reasons
23 it had a swing wing, was because they wanted to be able to land it on a carrier. Well, the
24 Navy abandoned that airplane, and the congress said, "No, you're going to build it and
25 the Air Force is going to fly it." Well with turned out again, the Air Force finally made a
26 decent airplane out of it, but it took them two or three models to get there. It was an
27 extremely complex aircraft, extremely high maintenance per flight hour. It even had tubes
28 in it for the A and whatever the original models were. By the time we finally got down to
29 the E-model, we finally got it to where it was fairly supportable, deployable, and
30 extremely effective because it would go very long distances at very high speeds. And
31 planning wise, when we had to give up the 111, and the reason we had to finally give it

1 up was it was just too difficult to maintain from an electronic standpoint primarily. We
2 actually had to abandon some of the targets that it could hit because we couldn't reach
3 them with any other tactical aircraft. Sort of filling in the space there was the B-1 which
4 is another swing wing aircraft.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: B1B, when we finally bought it, could cover some of those targets, and it's a
7 pretty awesome airplane, but old, old technology for today's world. But anyway, for the
8 next segment of airplanes we designed them to be Air Force airplanes.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: We had what we call the high-low mixed concept, where the F-15 was the
11 high cost, high performance aircraft; and we said we don't need a whole lot of these, but
12 it's sort of like the F-22, F-35 mix now. We need some for day one, we need some to go
13 in there and take out their primary air-to-air, or air superiority weapons. Survivable
14 airplane on day one. Now, the F-15 was very survivable back in the seventies and the
15 eighties. It's not so survivable now and that's why we need the F-22.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: The low end of that mix was the F-16, and it kind of had an interesting, from
18 my prospective had an interesting evolution, or birth, actually. It was a concept
19 demonstration, a technology demonstrator.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: Early on in the Air Force history. Air Force was playing with two
22 contractors: Northrop and General Dynamics. Each of them was flying and developing a
23 technology demonstrator. The General Dynamics was doing the F-16, and Northrop was
24 doing the F-17.

25 JS: All right.

26 MB: And Schlesinger (James R., Secretary of Defense) went over to Europe in
27 about '74, '75 and he came back and said, "The Europeans want to buy three hundred and
28 fifty of our light weight fighter." And we're pretty sure at that time it was going to be an
29 F-16.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: “If they want three hundred and fifty, GD (General Dynamics) says they
2 have to build a thousand to be cost effective so the Air Force is going to buy six hundred
3 and fifty of them.” This was a complete surprise to the Air Force. I had—I was in the
4 weapons branch of this ‘fighter mafia’ we called it, down in the basement of the
5 Pentagon, and I had a little file that said “F-16” and I was supposed to track it, you know,
6 just to stay in touch with GD, and with the Edwards guys, and find out what they were
7 doing on the F-16. I came into work one Monday morning and my boss said, “We’re
8 buying six hundred and fifty F-16s. Get busy.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: But it wasn’t positive yet that we’re buying the F-16. The Navy had a card in
11 this game, had a hand in this game, and they needed an airplane to replace F-4s, they
12 were flying F-4Js.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: But interesting enough they wanted an airplane that could carry the Phoenix
15 missile, and it had to be compatible with their Aegis defense system.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: And technology at that time—they needed a big radar in the airplane. But if
18 you look at the F-16 it doesn’t have very big radar, it has fairly small radar, but the F-17
19 had a big nose. Two engines, it could have a big nose. The Navy also prefers two
20 engines—over water flying, think they can get back with the second engine. So, they
21 wanted that big radar. And I remember General Alton D. Slay was the head of R&D
22 (research & development) at the Pentagon, and he got several of us young guys together
23 and we were supposed to meet with the Navy and identify commonality of requirements.
24 And we met with them for about two weeks. But General Slay got us all in the office,
25 closed the door, and said, “You guys identify all the commonalities you want, but we’re
26 buying the F-16.” And so, we sat with them, and I learned a lot about Navy airplanes, by
27 the way, sitting with these guys. I went over to Crystal City, they had a lot of Navy
28 officers over there, and we drowned on and on about what their requirements are.
29 Interesting thing about Navy airplanes, especially at that time, all their maintenance is
30 done under the deck, so they don’t have a lot of space. So, one of the requirements for
31 Navy airplanes is they have to be able to drop the engine—to remove the engine—in the

1 shadow of the airplane. Okay think about that. That means you have to drop the engine
2 out of the bottom of the airplane.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: Well, the engine is nested in bulkheads. Air Force airplanes have round
5 bulkheads, which are much more efficient. You can get a lot more strength out of a round
6 donut than you can out of a horseshoe. So, Navy airplanes have a horseshoe bulkhead.
7 Much heavier because it can't close at the bottom, or it closes under the engine so it has
8 to be removable; or you're going to hinge somehow, so you can drop the engine. And if
9 you look at Navy airplanes, the engines stick way out back, and they're high. One of the
10 reasons they stick way out back is because you don't have to U shape as many bulkheads
11 that way. The reason they're high is because they land on the deck at a very high angle of
12 attack.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: So here the Navy is trying to convince us to go to horseshoe-shaped
15 bulkheads and to tilt the engines and move them back, so they can land the airplane on
16 the carrier. Plus, they wanted a much bigger radar, which would have really slowed the F-
17 16 down. So, they were leaning toward the F-17, and as it turned out we chose the F-16.
18 They chose the F-17. Of course, they're not going to buy an Air Force airplane; so, they
19 renumbered it the "F-18."

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: And grew it about twenty-five percent.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: So, they bought the F-18, and then of course they got the F/A-18 or whatever
24 it is now, the Super Hornet.

25 JS: Right, yes sir.

26 MB: They've gone through a second generation of the Hornet. The Hornet's a
27 good airplane, I mean the F-18 is a good airplane, but we really liked the F-16, and I've
28 seen it grow through the Air Force, and then I worked for Lockheed for nine years after I
29 retired.

30 JS: All right, and you were at this position in the Pentagon. What was the timeline
31 on that?

1 MB: I was there—after I got back from Thailand in '71.

2 JS: Okay.

3 MB: '69, '70, I was in Okinawa flying 105s from '71; and then in '72 I was on the

4 US Air Force Thunderbirds.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: After the Thunderbirds in '74, I went through Armed Forces Staff College,

7 and then I went to the Pentagon for three years, so I was there from '74 to '77.

8 JS: Okay, all right. I certainly want to talk about some of those other aspects of

9 your career as well and of course your time in Thailand, too. But while we're on this

10 subject here I was just curious about when that was because I know a little later on,

11 whenever the Carter Administration takes over, of course cutbacks in military spending,

12 did that begin when you were there?

13 MB: At the pentagon?

14 JS: Yes, sir.

15 MB: Yes.

16 JS: How did that affect this plan of updating the Air Force and building these new

17 fighters and all of that? Could you talk a little bit about that?

18 MB: Hang on just a second.

19 JS: Sure.

20 MB: My wife is leaving. Well, I remember we had a goal of twenty-six fighter

21 wings. And I don't think we ever got to it. We kept trying to buy more airplanes, and of

22 course Carter kept turning them down, but he had to be sensitive. A lot of his base was in

23 Texas, where the General Dynamics plant was, where the F-16s were being built. In

24 Georgia, where the C-130s were being built so, you know, he wanted to keep those bases

25 of support going.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: So that's all political, and way out of my pay grade at the time.

28 JS: Sure, yes sir.

29 MB: You know later, much later, I was at a good prospective on the Carter

30 Administration because I was Chief of Staff at the Air Force Academy. And the Air

1 Force Academy, during the Carter years, didn't get much money. And everybody says,
2 "It's a new college, all you do is spend money on it." Well, it was twenty-five years old.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: And as Chief of Staff I was sort of like the base commander. They didn't
5 have an airbase wing there then. I took a look at the place, and it was coming apart. You
6 know, the pavement was all spalling up, and the sewers weren't working, and the
7 electrical systems needed maintenance, and all. Luckily, I became the Chief of Staff the
8 same year that Ronald Reagan came in, and Barry Goldwater was on the Board of
9 Visitors at the Air Force Academy.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: And Goldwater came to me and my boss, the Superintendent, General Skip
12 Scott and he said, "You guys need to fix this place up, what do you need?" And luckily, I
13 had an engineer, Colonel Will Stolis. Will and I both were on our final assignments. We
14 weren't going to make general, and we weren't going anywhere, so we didn't have to
15 make friends with anybody.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: And Will had this "shopping list of shovel ready projects" and we went from
18 one million dollars a year for real property maintenance of the Air Force Academy to
19 seventeen million. Barry Goldwater just loved it. He'd come in for a Board of Visitors
20 meeting every once in awhile, he says, "Okay Rip, what do you got for me?" and I say,
21 "Okay, we want to expand the Aero Lab." And he'd say, "Go for it, how much?" "Three
22 million." "Okay, go for it." And he just poured money into the Air Force Academy, it
23 was very gratifying to see the place brighten up after the Carter years, of neglect, but
24 that's another aside.

25 JS: Yes, sir.

26 MB: Technology wise we were in a very interesting time because we were going
27 through one of the big things that we got with the F-15 was look down, shoot down.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: One of the problems you have with an air-to-air missile is background
30 clutter, so most of the missiles back in those days AIM-7, AIM-4, were designed to shoot
31 up into a clear sky background.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: And they got the capability to shoot down into clutter. In other words, the
3 computers that run the radars can differentiate between background clutter, and the target.
4 So that was a very good technology that we got with the F-15. And the AIM-7, and later
5 we got the AMRAM that could shoot down, but the radar was a secret to that tactic.

6 JS: Okay, all right. Along these lines of what we're discussing here, or this update
7 in technology in the post-Vietnam time, are you familiar with the book *Prodigal*
8 *Soldiers*?

9 MB: You know, I've heard of it, but I haven't read it. I'm going to write that
10 down.

11 JS: All right. It talks about this move by Vietnam Veterans to improve the
12 technology of the military and improve the military in general to where things like
13 Vietnam won't happen again. But it talks about some of these things you were talking
14 about. There's a chapter that deals with Red Flag, and that deals with actually more than
15 one chapter deals with that. And this discussion of, I guess this was right after Vietnam.
16 Discussion between this move towards quality in fighter aircraft versus quantity; and
17 building more, cheaper, aircraft kind of like what the Soviets would have been doing.
18 Were you involved in any way in that discussion or had that discussion already taken
19 place by that point that you were in the Pentagon?

20 MB: I was right in the middle of it, (unintelligible) equality.

21 JS: Yes, sir.

22 MB: Of course, that's the old high-low mix. Do you buy one airplane that can do
23 everything, or do you buy a whole lot of airplanes that can do a little. At different times
24 in a conflict, you need both. You know, after day one of a high intensity conflict you
25 don't need a whole lot of F-22s.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: Because the F-22s have shot everybody down, now what do you do with
28 them?

29 JS: Right.

30 MB: And that's why so many of our airplanes have evolved into an air-to-ground
31 role in their later life. As they become not as effective on day one, we say, as they

1 become not as effective against the high-end enemy fighters, what do you do with them?
2 You make air-to ground-fighters out of them, make bombers out of them. You saw that
3 with the F-14. One of the reasons I ended up in the Pentagon is: when I was at Armed
4 Forces Staff College, I took a look at the numbers of airplanes that we had planned to
5 buy. And I said, “We’re not going to have enough air to ground airplanes; so, you’re
6 going to have to make an air-to-ground version of the F-15.” Well, unfortunately my
7 boss, my future boss, got a hold of that paper. He called me up and he said, “That’s an
8 interesting paper you’ve written, come up and talk to me about it.” So, I drove up to
9 Washington from Norfolk, we talked about the paper, and he said, “You know that this is
10 anathema to what we’re saying here in the Air Staff.” And I said, “Yeah, but it’s true.”

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: All you have to look is at the force structure ten years out; and you’re going
13 to have to buy some F-15s. Well, so he hired me, and I went there and the first paper that
14 he ever gave me to run, we call it the “action officer’s run papers.” You write the paper,
15 and then you take it, and one general says, “Okay, I want this put in it before I’ll sign it.”
16 So, you take it back and you rewrite. Well, he gave me this paper that was to buy—they
17 were BRUs, bomb release units, that were actually redesigned from F-111s for the F-15.
18 The slogan in the Pentagon at the time was, “not a pound for air-to-ground.” They didn’t
19 want to put any air-to-ground capabilities on the F-15. Well, I started running that paper
20 in about July, I guess, of 1974; and I still had not gotten it Sold to buy BRU 30s, or
21 whatever they were, for the F-15 in 1977 when I left the Pentagon. I never had it bought,
22 never could sell it, but if you look at the force structure and what the Air Force did, they
23 bought F-15Es about ten years later.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: So, my prediction was correct, it was just not politically correct.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: At the time.

28 JS: Okay. Well, there’s certainly some interesting things here. The development
29 of the Air Force after Vietnam, but for the moment I want to get back to some of these
30 things, but for the moment can we get back to a little bit about Vietnam if that’s okay. I

1 wanted to talk a little bit about your transformation whenever you were transferred from
2 being an F-100 pilot to being an O-1 pilot and just how that took place.

3 MB: They informed me, I got there in January and about June they said we got to
4 have FACs, you're FACed, and of course we had a going away part at Bien Hoa. At that
5 time, unofficially, you could take some leave when you were in Vietnam, you could take
6 a week's leave.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: What I did was I hopped on an airplane and went home to see my new
9 daughter, and they were living in Topeka, Kansas at the time, and this was not an official
10 return, to R & R, or anything to home, but especially if you were changing jobs or
11 something like that, you could take a week off and bum your way back to the States.
12 There were a lot of empty airplanes going back. One of the ways young captains get
13 around a lot, if you have a good security clearance, is you can volunteer to be a courier.
14 They give you a briefcase and a gun and you take something somewhere, and if you get
15 stuck in the Philippines, or something like that, the first thing you have to do is take care
16 of that briefcase. So, you have to take it to a command post some place and lock it up,
17 and then you go in and sign for it the next day and get on an airplane. So I worked my
18 way back and got to spend a couple of days at home, see my new daughter, and then I got
19 on a C-130 out of Forbes (AFB, Kansas). Forbes at the time had C-130s, and I think I got
20 back—I'm trying to remember, I think I got back on an airliner somehow, but I had to go
21 back to Vietnam on a C-130, and I signed for a bunch of survival equipment in the
22 Philippines, and it got to Vietnam and I signed it over to a sergeant; and they call me
23 months later and said, "Where's the stuff you were supposed to deliver?" and I said, "I've
24 got a piece of paper that says the sergeant has it." And I don't know what happened.
25 There was a bunch of rafts and stuff like that, but it's just one of those things that kind of
26 ticked me off about taking responsibility, and actually signing it over to a sergeant. I
27 don't know whether he sold it to the Vietcong or what, but.

28 JS: Right.

29 MB: Anyway, I got back to Bien Hoa. Bien Hoa was the headquarters, I think it
30 was the 21st TASS, Tactical Air Support Squadron.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: TASS, 21st TASS.

2 JS: Yes, sir.

3 MB: And of course, I didn't know how to fly the O-1 so they sent me down to—
4 gosh, I can't remember the name of the little base. I was only there a week. Down in the
5 Delta, and they taught me how to fly the O-1. I had never flown a prop aircraft, I had
6 never flown a tail dragger. The O-1 is a fantastic airplane, way overpowered, with lots of
7 torque, a ground looping SOB. But once you learn to fly it, and when you get four
8 hundred hours in an aircraft or, what did I get, maybe eight hundred hours, I don't know,
9 in six months, you really learn how to fly it.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: There were several different versions of the O-1. Some of them had pitch
12 props, props that you could re-pitch; and some of them had fixed props. The old ones, of
13 course, had the fixed prop. Some of them had what we call a Phenolic block in the
14 landing gear. It was just a spring, all the landing gear was just a leaf spring out there with
15 a wheel at the end of it, and it did have brakes, but the ones with the phenolic block—and
16 you could actually see the phenolic block from the cockpit—because I would switch back
17 and forth from one airplane to the other and I'd be flying long and I'd say, "Ooh I've
18 forgotten whether this model had the phenolic block," and you look out and see it. But
19 the phenolic block allowed the wheels to camber more, and so it didn't ground loop as
20 bad.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: You didn't have to be quite as careful at landing it. The airplane had some
23 undesirable things to it. The stick was mounted on a pipe essentially, which ran along
24 between your legs, and it's easy to drop something, like a grenade, down there and jam
25 the pipe. I'm sure in a commercial version of the aircraft they would make them put that
26 in some sort of—cover that up because the guy in the back seat would step on that thing
27 and you'd get this input from him banging your ailerons. It had two fuel tanks, and at a
28 certain time, depending on how much fuel load you had, you needed to switch that fuel
29 tank. Well, you could forget that; and you'd be in the middle of directing a flight and all
30 of a sudden, plump, the engine would stop. Of course, all you have to do is flip the switch
31 and in about ten seconds the fuel to start flowing again, and your engine would cough

1 back on, but when you're over a guy shooting at you, and directing a bunch of fighters,
2 it's kind of embarrassing to say, "Hey, wait a minute I got to get my engine started
3 again."

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: And I finally learned. I would fly maybe, you know, thirty, forty-five
6 minutes out to recce the area I was going to put a flight into, and before the flight got
7 there I would switch—you're not supposed to do this, you were supposed to wait until a
8 certain point and then turn it off. But if I was busy, I'd forget about it, so I would switch
9 over to the other tank, and then as I was going home, I'd go back and use the rest out of
10 the first tank. But you could fly about four hours if you weren't yanking and banking too
11 much, you could fly about four hours in the O-1. I've got an interesting story I'll tell you
12 later about that.

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 MB: But anyway, the O-1 got checked out, probably had about ten hours in it
15 when I went to the ARVN Airborne. While I was down there, and I wish I could
16 remember the name of this little base. It was south of Saigon down in the Delta. I got two
17 interesting things: I rode on a Riverine Force river boat overnight in the Mekong, got to
18 shoot a .50 caliber, that was fun, and then I also rode in an A-1. They were flying out of
19 that base.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: I've interviewed a few guys from down there in the Delta. Could it have
22 been Bear Cat, or Dong Tam, or—?

23 MB: Bear Cat might have been—was there another name for Bear Cat?

24 JS: I can't remember.

25 MB: Vung Tau.

26 JS: Vung Tau, okay.

27 MB: It was Vung Tau, that's what it was.

28 JS: Right, yes sir. Okay.

29 MB: Before I forget to tell you this story while we're talking about the O-1 I'll
30 tell you this fuel story about—I was sitting—we actually sat alert at night in the O-1. One
31 of us would not have a beer so we be awakened during the night we could go out and

1 mostly what they wanted us to fly at night for, and the O-1 was not a good night aircraft
2 at all, and we tried to avoid flying at night, but they didn't prevent us from it.

3 JS: Sure.

4 MB: Was Spooky missions, where they were using either the C-47, or the new
5 "super spook," we called it, the C-130. And by the way, if you follow that in the Air
6 Force they have done wonderful things with the C-130 aircraft, as an attack aircraft. But
7 one night I was sitting alert and the guys in the command post that were over with the 4th
8 Infantry Division, over across the Dak To runway, called us up. We had one of these field
9 phones, I think it was a wire operated thing, but they called us up and said, "Spookies up,
10 need you help." And they had troops in contact, out with one of our battalions, out around
11 the hill 875 somewhere. And so, I got up and launched, it was probably one o'clock in the
12 morning, and the only lights we had were actually these old smoke pot things that they
13 would light up along the side of the runway, little bitty flame, you know, essentially
14 lanterns out there.

15 JS: Right.

16 MB: And our enlisted guys would go out there and light and they'd light about
17 every third one of them, they just drive along the jeep lighting them up. So, I launched
18 with that configuration and then I had a full load of fuel and I got out there and we
19 worked Spook. I worked—I was by myself. We weren't supposed to fly at night by
20 yourself, but nobody would go with me, and they needed me, so I went out.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: Spooky worked and worked and worked, and finally Spooky said, "I'm out
23 of fuel, I got to go home, I'm going back to Plei Ku." And I said, "Gosh, I got to make it
24 back to Dak To." It's about four o'clock in the morning by this time. I said, "Drop me a
25 flare over Dak To as you go over." And I couldn't go as fast as Spooky; so, I'm maybe
26 twenty miles behind him and he drops a flare, so I at least knew where Dak To was, and
27 all the time I'm calling these airmen to please light the flares, you know, I'm coming
28 back.

29 JS: Right.

1 MB: The runway direction that I had taken off in—when I get over Dak To—Dak
2 To was in a great big horseshoe in the middle of a river, I don't know what the river was,
3 but a big old muddy river.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: And one end of the runway, the takeoff end the runway, I can see. I can see,
6 the curve of the river and I knew exactly where it was, so I knew where that runway was.
7 The other end was just clobbered in ground fog. I could not see the river; I couldn't see
8 the end of the runway and that's the end of the runway I was supposed the land on. So,
9 I'm calling these guys and they're not answering, they're not on the radio. They went
10 back to bed is what they did.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: So, I don't have any flares, which wouldn't have made any difference
13 because three fourths of the runway was covered in ground fog.

14 JS: Right.

15 MB: So, I said, "Okay, I know exactly where that runway is. I see the other end of
16 it so I can get lined up. I'll just get lined up, I know about how far it is, and I'll drop
17 down through the fog and make a zero, zero landing in an O-1." So, the top of this fog is
18 probably not one hundred and fifty feet above the ground, and the sun's beginning to
19 come up so there's a little glow there. I know exactly where the runway is. So, I drop
20 down into this fog and it's one of those seat-of-the-pants things. My gut said, "Go." So, I
21 clobbered the engine and took off and just as I caught the engine I heard "kick", you know,
22 just a real loud (unintelligible) So I go on up, and I am out of fuel now, so I just did a big
23 two hundred and seventy degree turn, you know, ninety/two seventy, came back in and
24 landed the opposite direction, which could have been dangerous. There could have been
25 C-130 taking off, and I would have met him right in the middle of the runway.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: You know, so that was very, very scary. Well, I get on the ground and this
28 Army lieutenant comes up to me and he is one pissed off army lieutenant. He had been
29 sitting on an abutment, a little road that ran on the other end of the runway. He'd been
30 sitting there at the end of the runway and I took his antenna off.

31 JS: (laughing)

1 MB: Closest I ever got to being killed in Vietnam. Because if I had hit—if I had
2 been five feet lower, I would have hit his jeep, but I took his antenna off, and he wanted
3 to know if the Air Force was going to pay for that antenna. I wanted to know if the Army
4 was going to pay for the hole in my wing.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: If I had hit that antenna with my prop, I probably wouldn't have made it. I
7 didn't have enough fuel to mess around, you know. So just that seed of the pants, gut
8 thing, I clobbered the engine at just the right time, I don't know what told me to do it.

9 JS: Wow.

10 MB: You know that decision was hard because if I'd of pushed that prop forward,
11 that throttle forward and had run out of gas I wouldn't have made it, no way.

12 JS: Yes sir.

13 MB: Anyway, that's the O-1 was not a forgiving airplane, fuel wise.

14 JS: Right, yes sir. You talked about during this transition where you were checked
15 out on the O-1 and all that. Were you also checked out or trained on FAC tactics and all
16 that?

17 MB: And of course, I had been flying with FACs for six months, and I had been a
18 forward air controller. Because I was jump rated, I was a ground forward air controller
19 with airborne units in Europe and Germany. I've driven three quarter tons all over North
20 German plains, up above Frankfurt, so I was fairly conversant—and that's why they
21 wanted guys with FAC experience to be airborne FACs.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: Taking a fighter pilot who didn't have any FAC experience, anywhere,
24 would have been a mistake. They wanted guys who had gone through about a three-week
25 course—I'm trying to think of the name of that course, in Germany, when I was a
26 Lieutenant. I remember we drove over there; my wife had not been to Germany. We
27 drove our little MG midget over there. I'm trying to think, it was some kind of—AGOS
28 that was the name of it, Air Ground Officer School.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: Run by the Army and Air Force at Ramstein.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: So, you know, I didn't need a whole lot of book learning.

2 JS: Right.

3 MB: Just to learn how to be a FAC. I needed to learn how to be a FAC. And
4 flying as a FAC was kind of interesting because where you set up your orbit and how you
5 transmitted; you really learn how to communicate because you had to do it in a short
6 amount of time. When you got the FACs coming out your way they handed off to you
7 from ABCCC. They'd call in and say, "This is Ram Rod, I've got three airplanes, and
8 I've got this kind of ordnance." And you'd say, "Okay, come out to TACAN (Tactical
9 Air Navigation) radial at such and such, and such and such DME (Directional Measuring
10 Equipment). We've got troops in contact." And first of all you had to talk them to the
11 area—and fighter pilots, they're up at twenty thousand feet. They don't see little karst
12 and little hills on the ground that you're flying right next to.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: You have to say, "Okay, come out to that radial, look out your right side and
15 you'll see a big bend in the river. Okay, you see that?" "Got that." All right, now, do you
16 see that line of hills just north of that?" "Yeah, I got that." "Okay, look to the very end of
17 that; and I'm flying in a left-hand orbit there," and the top of our airplanes was painted
18 very bright white."

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: A reflective white color. So, you'd get their eyes onto you first; and
21 sometimes it was so hard to get their eyes onto you, you'd actually have to drop a flare.
22 Of course, we flew with the windows open, and I carried like two cases of smoke
23 grenades, not flares, but smoke grenades.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: So, you'd maybe drop a—"Okay, I'm dropping a green now." And they'd
26 say, "Okay, got your green, got your airplane." And then from there you'd say, "Okay,
27 you see that hill just north of me. Friendlies on the south side, I want you attacking on the
28 heading of such and such, and I want you to drop one at a time, or I want you to drop four
29 at a time, or whatever. I want your napalm first, I want your bombs next, or your rockets
30 and such and such." Usually if it was a big fight and there had been napalm dropped in
31 there before, you didn't even have to mark for them. You'd just say, "From the Napalm

1 burn, go one hundred—I want you to drop one hundred yards north of that.” They would,
2 you know, depending on how much fuel they had, I might bring one in and then I talk to
3 the ground. And of course, all the time you’re talking to the ground saying, “Where do
4 you want it from that? What do you want next?” And sometimes—we didn’t like to strafe
5 with bombs on board from F-100s.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: It just made for a mushy pullout and kind of dangerous. So, we’d usually
8 drop all the bombs, and if they had time, they’d come off a strafe a little bit.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: Sometimes I’d mix flights. Sometimes I’d have one flight that had enough
11 fuel to hold, and they’d have twenty mike-mike (20 mm) so I would intersperse them. I
12 would drop a bomb then strafe, then drop a bomb and strafe. I think that kept from
13 making a pattern that the Vietcong could recognize; because they would say, “Okay, the
14 bombing’s over, now they’re going to start strafing; so, we’ll bring our guns out.” So, it
15 was interesting communication-wise to talk to them. Of course, you always gave them a
16 bomb damage assessment, a BDA, after the flight as they were flying back, before they
17 got off your frequency, you had to give them some sort of BDA; and sometimes you’re
18 real busy, you’d just say, “BDA unknown,” and then you’d forward it to them later. We
19 inflated those BDAs. If I had seen a whole bunch of Viet Cong on the ground before, and
20 I dropped a bunch of ordnance; I’d give them KIAs whether I saw the bodies or not. You
21 can’t see the bodies down in the jungle.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: But you know if they’re down there then you just say, “Okay, I’ll give you
24 five KIA,” or whatever. Sometimes you’d get a secondary explosion. That was a really
25 nice BDA because you knew they had gotten something. You’d give them Viet Cong
26 structures destroyed, that means you destroyed a village. You know, the big thing about
27 the My Lai incident, and all that; we think that’s horrible and all that. Those houses could
28 be built in a day, they were strong. It wasn’t like you were burning somebody’s house,
29 they were like tents. They could create a village in a day.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: Yeah, it was bad that—whatever the guy’s name was that burned the village.
2 That was terrible, horrible public relations, but we did it all the time.

3 JS: Right, okay. We’re coming up on two hours here. Would you like to go ahead
4 and take a break for today and reschedule?

5 MB: Sure.

6 JS: Well, we could continue for a little bit longer.

7 MB: Or you can tell me what you’re going to ask me, and I can think about it, and
8 then give you better answers if I have time to think about it.

9 JS: Well, I was just going to ask you a little about if you could talk about if there
10 were other memorable FAC missions that stood out in your mind. I know you talked
11 about the one and firing the rocket at the Vietcong, but if there were other memorable
12 FAC missions that you could talk about. That was one of the things I wanted to ask you.

13 MB: Okay, I’ll think of some.

14 JS: Okay, last time when we talked, I had mentioned that if you could talk about
15 some of those more memorable flights during your first tour of duty. Could you talk
16 about some of those?

17 MB: Sure, let’s see. Well, just to review I went over in about January of ’67 and
18 flew for about six months as an F-100 pilot. I got about—let me look at something here.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: I got 154 combat missions in the F-100, in six months of time.

21 JS: Wow.

22 MB: So that was almost about a flight a day.

23 JS: Yes, sir.

24 MB: But sometimes we’d be on alert and we’d fly three flights in a day.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: If there were troops in contact and we were carrying something like snake
27 and nape, I think I mentioned that to you. Snake eye bombs and napalm.

28 JS: Yes, sir.

29 MB: That was good for close in work, low altitude, low threat, and they’re just
30 shooting back with AK-47s, you can get pretty low, and get the ordnance very close to
31 troops in contact. So, my favorite load was snake and nape, with troops in contact. And I

1 had, oh probably; we'd go on alert maybe once every ten days. There were probably—
2 I'm trying to remember what the squadron size was. We probably had forty pilots.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And you'd go on alert with two airplanes, and you'd be launched off alert by
5 the headquarters in Tan Son Nhut, but they'd just call you. We'd all be sitting around in
6 an alert shack, right out by our airplanes.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: They would call us and say—our call sign was "Ramrod." That was our
9 squadron call sign, so anybody that flew out of that squadron was a "Ramrod." And I'm
10 trying to remember, I think probably the alert birds were Ramrod 1-1 and 1-2.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: So, we'd launch, and we could get off the ground in about fifteen minutes
13 from the time they'd call us and say, "Launch the Ramrods." And we'd go off. Of course,
14 we had a standard check in. We would check in with them as soon as we got "gear up."
15 Usually in the launch order they would tell us where to go. So, we'd copy that down.
16 They'd say, "Go to Bien Hoa Tacan-030 at fifty miles." So, we knew which way to turn
17 out of traffic, and we'd head for that point, and as we're climbing up, we would check in
18 with headquarters somewhere; and they'd usually hand us off to an ABCCC or a C-130
19 flying somewhere. And they would hand us off to the FAC. Well, by the time we got all
20 the handoffs done and all the information, if the target was in III or IV Corps, we were
21 there. And quite often if there was a big battle going on usually, they'd be three or four
22 different airplanes, or alert airplanes going in. We'd be stacked. And there might be two
23 or three FACs. It was really a marvelous coordination system that worked. I got to see it
24 later from the FAC side, so I understood how it worked. Like at Hill 875, I later flew that
25 as a FAC. (unintelligible) I had three or four FACs feeding different parts of the battle,
26 and it was amazing that we didn't run people together doing that, but we just stacked the
27 fighters, maybe one set at twenty thousand, one at sixteen, one at twelve thousand; and
28 we'd step them down as they got closer to being fit in. If there were troops in contact,
29 quite often it'd be just one pass because you wanted to get much ordnance on the target
30 as you could. But if you were a limited in the number of airplanes, or the number of

1 airplanes the ABCCC could feed you, then you might want to keep them on target for a
2 long time; so, you'd make maybe one or two bombs per pass.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: Also, if the enemy was spread out in a large area, you'd want to cover a
5 large area; so, you'd drop one napalm here, and one napalm a couple hundred yards
6 away, just to spread it out, especially if you didn't know where the enemy was; and that
7 was quite often the case. Very, very hard to sort out what's going on in the ground.

8 JS: Right.

9 MB: In the FAC cockpit—the O-1 was a nice big—and I'm jumping from one
10 airplane to another here, but the O-1 cockpit management was a real challenge because it
11 was really kind of a primitive airplane. You know, you just had a stick between legs and
12 the stick had one button on it. Now, in comparison the F-16—we call it the "pickle," it
13 has probably twenty buttons on it; that you do different things with. But O-1, you'd have
14 a great big, folded map, and that sucker could get all over the cockpit because you've got
15 the windows open, and it'll blow around. I usually had that tucked under one leg, and
16 then I'd have a smaller map of the local area maybe tucked under another leg, and of
17 course we had a clipboard on our thigh so you'd clip stuff there. I used to carry a grease
18 pencil so I'd just write stuff on the windows. as I was copying down—as I'm flying, I
19 want to be flying heads up not looking down at my knee pad. So, I might be looking out
20 the window, and I'd just write the directions from ABCCC on the window. So I'd get
21 back and all my windows have got red and green and black grease pencil all over them,
22 and I'd get it all over me, too. I'd get it all over my hands and everything.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: Also, in the cockpit you had—If I didn't have a back seater; and unless I was
25 working with the Vietnamese, or South Koreans, or something like that—if I was just
26 working with American troops, I seldom had anybody in the back seat, unless it was just
27 an orientation ride, I was showing some Intel officer, or something, the area.

28 JS: Right.

29 MB: And I would keep a box of smoke grenades behind me.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And I also had a couple of frag grenades in there, too. Just in case I wanted
2 to probe a little bit. That was, I suspect, illegal.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: But some of the FACs used to take a water glass from the O-club, or the
5 dining hall, wherever, the chow hall.

6 JS: Yes, sir.

7 MB: A glass water glass. I never did this; this is very dangerous to do. They
8 would pull the pin on the grenade and slip it down into the water glass so that the little
9 handle that comes out would not come out until the water glass broke.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: So, they've got, nominally, eight seconds after that water glass breaks. Well,
12 if you just drop a frag grenade from an airplane, it falls, depending on the altitude; it falls
13 for quite a ways before it goes off. If you drop it in the water glass, the water glass
14 doesn't break until it hits the ground.

15 JS: Right.

16 MB: And then you get a delayed frag grenade. A very dangerous—and I suspect
17 some airplanes were blown up because of that trick. You could also, by the way, make
18 napalm. Napalm is essentially jet fuel with soap in it.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And guys used to try to make little napalm grenades; and I wouldn't do that
21 either.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: They'd take plastic and put jet fuel and DUZ (detergent) or TIDE or
24 something, shake it up and drop it; and then if you put a smoke rocket into it, you'd have
25 a little napalm.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: We were easily entertained

28 JS: Right, yes sir.

29 MB: Anyway, back to flying off of alert.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: We had several different loads on alert. And each base over there, you know,
2 Da Nang, Cam Ranh, Tuy Hoa, Phu Cat; all those bases had similar alert arrangements
3 where they maybe had six, eight, ten, twelve airplanes on alert. So, we could generate
4 quite an array of weapons. And then of course you had your pre-planned targets, and each
5 squadron probably flew, let's see, one squadron was twenty-four airplanes. We could
6 probably fly, per squadron, maybe forty flights a day, including what we did off of alert.
7 And these are very rough figures because so if we surged, we could do more. But when
8 you surged then you hurt the next day because you got to fix the airplanes that broke
9 during the surge.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: If we had a big battle going on we'd cancel all the pre-plans and everybody
12 would just launch. We'd know where the fight was going on; so, the Intel could tell us,
13 "Okay, here's what's happening, here's the FACs you're going to be working with. We
14 don't know what they're going to put you on. We're going to launch you at such and such
15 time." So basically, the whole base sort of went on alert when we had big troops in
16 contact, maybe a Special Forces camp under attack or something like that.

17 JS: Yes, sir.

18 MB: We had also had these big surges where if American troops were moving
19 into someplace, or attacking someplace, where we'd all be supporting the same operation.
20 But day to day it was pretty much just we'd be supporting one division over here, and
21 another division over there. So, you'd be kind of split up all over.

22 JS: All right.

23 MB: Out of Bien Hoa most of our flights were—well, some of the more exciting
24 ones were down in the Delta along the Mekong Delta down south in IV Corps.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: VC were very heavy down there, and they didn't have as big of weapons as
27 the NVA, but some of the bigger fights were down there, where we'd get some VC
28 cornered somewhere and be rounding them up, and they would fight very hard. In fact,
29 some of the Special Forces battles we had down there; Special Forces camps getting
30 overrun, were down in IV Corps. And then III Corps was hot and cold. A little hotter out

1 toward the Cambodian border; and in II Corps, the further north you went, the bigger the
2 guns got.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And the more intense the resistance. Anyway, I think I told you about this
5 three-ship thing that they had, and that was just purely a McNamara thing that we were
6 trying to keep the numbers up, so that if anybody in that flight aborted you could still get
7 two ships on the target.

8 JS: Right, yes sir.

9 MB: Not really the best way to fly and that's one of the things we've corrected
10 later on in the seventies when we thought about lessons learned. We said that's probably
11 not a good way to fly. Two-ship is good, but that way if you lose an airplane—you could
12 not go out as a single ship. Now, we got kind of innovative every once in awhile if
13 somebody—if it looked like you were going to lose the whole flight, we just joined with
14 another flight and make a four ship.

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: Which is doable.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: Interesting things that happened: I had a wingman get shot down once and
19 there were Army helicopters in the area. They picked him up. I was setting up trying to
20 get a rescue effort going, the standard way. I'm calling back and asking for support, and
21 getting diverts, and stuff.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: All of a sudden, an Army helicopter called said, "We got your guy, where
24 you want us to take him?" He was unhurt, he bailed out. He got hit—I think he was doing
25 Napalm, some low altitude run, and got hit, pulled up, punched out, went down in a
26 neutral area and an Army helicopter was watching us and just went over and picked him
27 up. They got him back to Bien Hoa real quick. He wasn't hurt; of course, he was shaken
28 up pretty good. I was kind of disappointed because I'm all ready to coordinate the whole
29 thing; and it happened without me even knowing what was going on. I'm all clogged up.
30 I hiked all day yesterday, so.

31 JS: Yes, sir.

1 MB: So, F-100s were kind of—I learned a lot. I had been flying in Europe in
2 really heavy weather, and doing a nuclear mission over there, completely different
3 mission. Now, we had a conventional ground attack mission in Europe, but we never
4 practiced it. About the only thing we ever did is we'd go over and support exercises in
5 Germany, and that was kind of fun, but I never dropped anything over there; we'd just
6 make low passes, and take film, and kind of show support of the Army. But very, very
7 low priority mission in Europe. It was virtually the only mission in Southeast Asia, in
8 Vietnam anyway.

9 JS: Yes, sir.

10 MB: At the six month point because I had FAC experience and had jump wings, I
11 got assigned to the ARVN airborne, and we talked about that and checking out in Vung
12 Tau. The O-1 mission was—I hated it when I did it because I wanted to be a fighter pilot
13 and, you know, I wanted to fly fighters; but in retrospect I learned more about warfare
14 and I learned more about the Army, for that six months of being a FAC, than I would
15 have if I just stayed at Bien Hoa.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: As a FAC, I changed units, I went to the ARVN Airborne first and then I
18 changed over to the 173rd and I was all over South Vietnam, I didn't have a home. I
19 traveled with a shaving kit and a change of underwear in my cockpit because I never
20 knew where I was going to end up.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: As a FAC, I'm trying to remember when it was. I'm pretty sure it was—I
23 know it was when I was with the 173rd because Dak To was one of the places I was later
24 on in my FAC tour. And I was on the west side of the runway; and I know I wasn't on the
25 west side of the runway with the ARVN Airborne. We went in there and got an Army
26 backhoe to dig us a big deep trench, and then we put our tent up over that trench, and
27 under that trench we put layers of PSP, perforated steel planking, they make runways out
28 of it.

29 JS: Right, yes sir.

30 MB: And, you know, there's some lying around, bent up and stuff so what we did
31 was we put a layer of that—actually, I think we probably put a layer of plywood first, and

1 then we put a layer of that, we put about six inches of sand, we put another layer on. We
2 had two or three layers. In this underground bunker that we had was pretty nice. We had
3 one FAC that was a painter, and he painted some nudes, and some airplane pictures, and
4 stuff like that, and we had lanterns under there I suppose. We had some kind of lighting
5 under there. We even had a little refrigerator under there when we could get electricity.
6 We'd tap into somebody's generator and get some electricity and keep some cold beer
7 down there. And on top of that, we had a big, round Army tent, and that's where our
8 offices, and actually that's where our beds were, our cots were, they were just regular old
9 Army cots. And I remember one time I was—usually we slept above ground because it
10 was very crowded. I mean, we could sleep underneath, but it was just kind of just dirt and
11 we laid our sleeping bags down there.

12 JS: Sure.

13 MB: Because it's hot so you slept on top of the sleeping bag, or a piece of canvas,
14 or whatever you could get. But we used to trade stuff, you know, C-ration stuff.

15 JS: Right.

16 MB: And we didn't have, what do they call them now, MREs?

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: We didn't have MREs, we were on C-rats. There was an Army chow hall
19 there.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: And I remember the Air Force wasn't very strict about taking your salt pills.
22 But they actually had a doctor standing at the end of the line in the Army chow halls to
23 make sure you took your salt tablets. And I kid the doctors now. Now the doctors say,
24 "Well, you know, you need to cut down on your salt." I say, you're the same guy that
25 used to order me to eat salt tablets when I was in Vietnam.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: Anyway, we would trade these C-rats wherever we went. If somebody—they
28 had real milk; you know its canned milk.

29 JS: Yes, sir.

30 MB: And there was a chocolate version of that.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: I had a couple of cans of that sitting on my desk, and had a little fan on the
2 desk, and we had different radios and phones, and stuff like that in there. This was one of
3 those tents that had about a six-by-six inch pole up the middle, and then it was kind of a
4 pyramid off the top of that.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: We could sleep I think four or six people in there, and then of course we had
7 our little offices, and we had our radios. Some of the radios we kept underground, but it
8 was kind of hard to work down there so we kept some of them above ground.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: Anyway, I had this real milk sitting on my desk, and I had a couple of cans
11 of shrimp. These were canned shrimp appetizers or something. Well, I'm taking a
12 shower—we used to—you know what C-4 is?

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 MB: C-4 is an explosive, but it burns very hot. You took about, oh, maybe four
15 tablespoons of C-4 and set it under a five gallon can and set it off (burn it). Of course, it
16 ruined the can, but it heated the water up.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: Well, we had an old, beat up can that we'd do this over and over with, and
19 then we had a deal made out of canvas that provided as a shower. And if you have one of
20 your buddies stand at the top and pour the water into the little thing full of—it had holes
21 in the bottom of it, you got a shower, you got a hot shower.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: So, I had just taken a shower, this was about six o'clock in the evening. I
24 was toweling off and the mortar siren went off. And I heard "boom, boom" across the
25 runway and I thought, "You know, usually if it was across the runway it was going to
26 stay across the runway."

27 JS: Right.

28 MB: I thought, "Naw, they're telling us to get out of the way." So, I kind of half
29 trotted, had the towel wrapped around my waist and I kind of half trotted into the tent,
30 and ran down the little stairs that we had down into our bunker. Well, right behind me is

1 “Kaboom!” and flame came by my head, and there’s rocks, and dust, and everything. It
2 was the closest I ever came to getting hit on the ground.

3 JS: Wow.

4 MB: Anyway, this mortar hit around the edge of the tent. We had sandbags built
5 up about, oh, maybe three feet high—just right at desk height. This mortar hit about two
6 feet from my real milk and shrimp. Well, we had fried shrimp all over the tent. Of course,
7 the tent was ruined anyway, it burned, but it smelled to high heaven. Of course, we’re in
8 there salvaging the radios, and trying to get what’s left of the cots, and our sleeping bags,
9 and maps and everything else. Everything is coated with chocolate milk and shrimp all
10 over the tent.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: And it’s kind of interesting, the communists are not dumb. They use—let me
13 figure this out. They use 81 mm mortars. No, wait a minute; they 82 mm mortars. And
14 the US military uses 81 mm mortars.

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: That way if they capture a cache of 81 mm mortars (projectiles) they can
17 actually drop them in their 82 tubes.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: But if we capture their 82’s, they won’t fit in our 81 tubes.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: Of course, they’re very inaccurate when you fire a millimeter difference; that
22 mortar just rattles up the tube, and you can’t tell where it’s going to go very accurately.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: Which is probably why—hit my tent instead of hitting whatever it was
25 across the runway they were going after.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: But I actually got a mortar projectile, kind of like a little Christmas tree thing
28 in the middle of it, and you can tell what it is by if you can retrieve that, and that was
29 imbedded in the sandbag right next to my desk. But that was the closest I ever got to
30 being killed on the ground, and I was a lot worse—I was a lot more afraid of being killed
31 on the ground than I was in the air. Whenever there was something going on, on the

1 ground I usually got airborne. Quite often, as I said, I was all over South Vietnam. I
2 would manage to divert somewhere else while I was in the air, if I could get airborne, and
3 get out of Dak To. Of course, I'm valuable to me, but that airplane was much more
4 valuable to the war effort. So, getting it to a safe area was very important. You're got any
5 questions about that war story?

6 JS: I just wanted to ask you as far as that goes, how often would things like that
7 happen, as far as the enemy mortaring a base camp or something like that?

8 MB: Well, it sort of went with where the NVA was and how much pressure they
9 wanted to put on us.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: Dak To was very important to that corner of that tri-border area because they
12 had the 175s there.

13 JS: Right.

14 MB: And the 175s could reach all over III Corps. I mean, they had tremendous
15 range. I think I told you, we were about one hundred yards from them, and they always
16 shot about three o'clock in the morning.

17 JS: Yes, sir.

18 MB: We'd come up off our cots when they did that. And then they had several
19 155 batteries there, and they would move them in and out as they needed to. 155 is I
20 remember had about a twelve click range which isn't very good, but they're pretty
21 accurate and they're very mobile. They were a new kind for that day in age. They were
22 new and they could be helo-lifted in. They could get one of those set up, if they didn't
23 have any resistance, they could get one of those sites set up in half a day. They'd get
24 registered, and I kind of had fun directing and getting them registered in.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: So that was, not very often. Although, in six months I had some exciting war
27 stories. One of the war stories I had was at Dak To we had revetments set up, which were
28 just steel panels that they had filled with dirt in between. There were about three feet
29 thick.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And each one would hold an airplane, depending on it and they were
2 different sizes for different airplanes, but they were supplying Dak To by C-130,
3 primarily.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: And the C-130s would come in there—and for fuel they had these great big
6 bladders that actually just rolled off the back of the airplanes. Well, I'm at Dak To
7 between missions one day, and this is mid day. Pretty hot stuff going on all around us,
8 and they had two or three C-130s on the ground, well one of them got hit by a mortar,
9 and he had two or three of these fuel bladders in, and he was just taxiing out when he got
10 hit. Well, of course the plane goes up in flames, and I see the crew bail out the front of
11 the airplane. Not "bail out," they crawl out and drop to the ground and ran away.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: I was very relieved later. I didn't find out until much later that they all got
14 out. But the C-130 is sitting, and the other C-130 is behind him, and I'm trying to get in
15 so I can get fuel.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: So, I saw that I wasn't going to get in, and I taxied out of there, without
18 permission, across the runway, and got out of there as fast as I could. A wonder I didn't
19 get run over. But I called my airman and said, "Bring me fuel," and they said, "Well, all
20 we've got is five-gallon jerry cans." I said, "Bring it, I got to get out of here, I got to get
21 airborne." And so, they brought it over and they said, "Well, we can't refuel you because
22 we don't have a filter." And I said, "Don't worry about the filter, dump that stuff in there,
23 and get in the backseat if you want to, but I'm out of here." We actually strained the fuel
24 through a t-shirt.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: You know, that wouldn't have done it. In fact, it probably added moisture to
27 the fuel, but you don't have to have a filter. And usually, they pumped it in. They had an
28 electric pump, and they had a fuel source. The O-1s, by the way, use avgas, of course,
29 which is about one hundred and ten octane. I mean, it's very, very flammable and most of
30 the helicopters were using jet fuel, and of course the C-130 didn't even refuel in there,
31 they would just take off and get out of there without refueling. They never even shut their

1 engines down. Most of the stuff was just either on palettes, and they'd jerk them out the
2 back, or these roll-off fuel bladders. It was an amazing operation, really. Anyway, so I
3 got airborne and got out of there. And usually our airplanes—we had to have fifty-hour
4 checks done on them, so that's about every third day, maybe every week. We'd have to
5 take them to Pleiku to have fifty-hour checks done on them, and that was kind of nice
6 because we'd go into Pleiku and you could actually get on a little bus and go downtown,
7 have a decent meal, and kind of compare notes with guys you'd been talking to on the
8 radios that you didn't know. You'd get to know them.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: It had a decent shower there. And they couldn't believe the number of flying
11 suits I was going through because, well, when that mortar hit the tent there were three
12 flying suits there, and they all burned up, so I had to go back and get more flying suits.

13 JS: Right.

14 MB: Boots, and things you wouldn't think in six months you'd go through that.
15 And of course, at Pleiku they had a little BX so I could buy some underwear and some
16 razors and stuff like that, but any questions on that C-130 burning?

17 JS: No, sir I don't think so.

18 MB: Okay, well when I got to be—I was due to rotate in January, and I told you I
19 had a flying time problem. I was flying way more than the eighty hours they told me I
20 could fly per month. I used various subterfuges to get around that. But in about December
21 I flew—and I'm getting at this time I'm getting very cautious. I wanted to get home
22 without getting killed. One medal I never wanted to get was the Purple Heart.

23 JS: Sure.

24 MB: And by the way, I had a buddy—one time I was over at Phu Cat in that little
25 runway—I can't think of the name of it, right there on the China Sea, south of Phu Cat. I
26 was rooming with a friend of mine from England, who was also a FAC, his name was
27 Buddy Roberts, and we got attacked one night and, mortars coming in somewhere. Of
28 course, we all got up and ran for the bunker. Well, he gets up and instead of putting on
29 his boot, he put on his Dopp kit on his foot. Cut his foot on his open razor very badly and
30 got a Purple Heart for it. Every time I see him, I kid him about getting a Purple Heart for
31 cutting his foot on a Dopp kit.

1 JS: Right.

2 MB: But anyway, I took a trip in mid to later December and by this time, like I
3 say, I'm getting very nervous about getting killed, especially on the ground, being very
4 careful about what I did. I got into Pleiku and, met some guys in the dorm and they said,
5 "Hey, we're going downtown." I said, "I'll be right behind you, I'll be on the next bus as
6 soon as I take a shower and put on my civvies." And I head for the bus. I get off the bus,
7 and I'm walking toward the restaurant, and I hear "Kaboom!" And these three guys had
8 gone in there, having a beer in the restaurant, and some VC had thrown a satchel charge
9 over the wall, kind of out in an outside patio. One of them got a foot torn up really bad,
10 and I think one of them got shoulder and face injuries. None of them were killed, but if I
11 had been with them—if I had been fifteen minutes earlier into the dorm I would have
12 gotten injured then.

13 JS: Right.

14 MB: After that I never went off base for the next month, until I rotated, except to
15 go—I got shipped down to Tan Son Nhut and had to stay there without flying because
16 they caught up with me on my flying time. But I never went into town in Saigon or
17 anything before my rotation day because I just said, "It ain't worth it. They're
18 everywhere, and they're going to get you." I didn't get paranoid about it, I just got more
19 careful.

20 JS: Sure, yes sir.

21 MB: One thing I learned though, is flying back and forth from Pleiku to Dak To is
22 you can get about twelve cases of beer up to fourteen thousand feet, and if you stay
23 there—of course you weren't supposed to fly above ten, but if you stay there with all the
24 windows open in an O-1, the beer gets pretty cold.

25 JS: (laughing)

26 MB: And the Army troops would really look forward to me landing after I'd been
27 to Pleiku, because at first, I was bringing one or two cases, I'd just strap them down in
28 the backseat. Then I got very innovative about where I could pack them, and you could
29 actually get it cold. Of course, it was all gone thirty minutes after landing because we
30 handed it out to everybody on the base.

31 JS: Sure.

1 MB: But I thought that was a pretty good way to cool it off.

2 JS: Sure, absolutely.

3 MB: So that's my O-1 war stories, anyway.

4 JS: All right, one thing I did want to ask you about the O-1, your experience there,

5 you were talking about just keeping track of everything, and it sounds like you really

6 have to be a multitasking.

7 MB: Cockpit management.

8 JS: Right, yes sir. How many radios would you be working with?

9 MB: Well, that was kind of interesting. The O-1's, when I first started flying them

10 in about June of '67, they had a PRC-25.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: And the guys on the ground, when I first started flying, they were already

13 starting to get PRC-45s (probably PRC-77s).

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: And the PRC-45 had split frequencies. Now, if you look at this—and I think

16 those are—I'm trying to think what band they're in (VHF FM). They could go to 26.5

17 frequency whereas our 126 would be a VHF. Anyway, we had a PRC for talking to the

18 ground troops, and we had VHF which we'd quite often use to talk to either ABCCC or

19 our headquarters, or our ground troops. A lot of Army airfields work on VHF versus

20 UHF.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: Of course, the Air Force does most everything on UHF (Ultra High

23 Frequency). So, you had about three or four different radios you were talking on. One of

24 the problems in the O-1—it's a great thing in that they have windows that you can almost

25 look directly under the airplane from the cockpit without banking very much. But one of

26 the bad things of that design is the radios are buried down here by your thighs, so you

27 have to really look down. And in bright sunlight sometimes that was very hard to see the

28 little windows that show the frequencies. And a lot of them used either dials or cranks in

29 order to change the radio frequency. So sometimes it'd take me two or three looks. You

30 know, I'd look down, get one number, look up, get back to the horizon, make sure where

31 I'm going, look down, and get the next number. So, it was clumsy, very clumsy.

1 Especially when you got maps all over the place. You're going to have to move a map
2 from the right side to the left side to re-do this radio and then put the map back on top of
3 it, It was clumsy.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: I got one other war story.

6 JS: Okay, sure.

7 MB: One evening I'm out, I've forgotten whether I was VRing. VR is visual
8 recceing, and I kind of had a regular route. Although, it wasn't regular because I'd never
9 do the same thing twice, but if I approached a suspected site, or something I was
10 watching, from one direction one day I would approach from a different direction the
11 next day. But I'm out, and it's just about sunset and I just saw a flash out of the side of
12 my eye and looked down and rockets were coming out of this ridgeline. All my flights
13 are gone. I don't have anymore flights airborne that I know that I can get to.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: So, the first thing I did was call back to the 173rd and I said, "I've got rockets
16 coming out of—it could have been friendly rockets for all I knew. So, I got rockets
17 coming out of, this coordinate and, "Do you know anything coming out in that area?" and
18 they said, "No, but we're taking fire from that direction. Do you want me to call a flight
19 or do you want me to try to do something with these rockets?" They said, "Stand by."
20 Well, the VC, I don't know whether they had our maps or what, but they had set these
21 rockets up right at the intersection of the 4th division and the 173rd and I think there was a
22 Vietnamese division up there. They were right on the line; they're working the scene
23 there.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: And we couldn't decide who was going to fire on them. Eventually we got
26 175s out of Dak To on them. And I tried to call a flight in. I thought I was going to get
27 some A-1s in on it, but by the time the A-1s got there the rockets had quit. But it was
28 kind of interesting, I flew right over this rocket site, and they were set up on bamboo
29 racks. I didn't see anybody in the area, but there were like hundreds of them coming out
30 of these racks. I suspect there were 120s, I don't remember for sure, but I'm sure that's
31 what they were.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: They were the 120s which were vicious rockets. They were pretty accurate, I
3 don't suspect they were very accurate coming off bamboo racks, but I mean, they had this
4 whole—it looked like rows of corn in there. They probably had two hundred of them and
5 they were coming off one or two at a time.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: And then they'd stop for awhile and another row would start. And another
8 collateral war story on the 120s.

9 JS: Oaky.

10 MB: When I was at Bien Hoa, this was about May. I had been there maybe three
11 or four months. Just before I'd gotten there the VC had blown up the napalm stores at
12 Bien Hoa and done a lot of damage. There was talk of that, but during the January,
13 February, March timeframe not much went on there. We'd have little skirmishes off the
14 base and talk of things on the perimeter, but no big attacks. Well, in about May, I'm lying
15 in my—the hooches we lived in were just frame hooches with screen, very little
16 circulation. We did have fans, but I'm lying in my bed which had a mosquito net over it.
17 Because I was the junior guy in this hooch—I roomed with the dentist, by the way.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: I'm the junior guy in the room. I slept next to the door, and I could actually
20 put my foot out under the mosquito netting and open the door to look outside. Well, the
21 end of the hooch was about three feet from the road. And of course, the road was dirt, so
22 whenever trucks came by the dirt would come right in under my bed. But I'm sleeping
23 and I hear, "Boom, Boom!" Well, you know, I thought it was just a thunderstorm because
24 there was a ditch right beside my bed just outside the hooch. I thought, "Well, I better
25 look and see what's going on." Well, I reached out with my foot, opened the door, and
26 about a block and a half down the road was the chapel, and it was on fire. And this was
27 the 120s. The first time we've seen 120s in South Vietnam.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: So, I get up, and I'm in my underwear, and we had a little scorpion invested
30 bunker right at the end of the line of hooches. I run out, and I'm in my underwear with no
31 gun, no helmet, and I run in there and there's about a seventeen year old air policeman

1 with a fifty caliber. He throws it up on the end of the gun slot, cocks it, and says, "Which
2 way do you think they'll come from, sir?"

3 JS: (laughing)

4 MB: And I said, "I'm here in my Jockey underwear, and I got a seventeen-year-
5 old with a 50 caliber, and I don't think I'm prepared to fight." So, after that I always left a
6 flying suit and a .45 caliber next to me bed. We never got attacked after that, but that was
7 my first taste of combat as an officer.

8 JS: All right.

9 MB: But the 120s were a big escalation in what the Viet Cong had. Before that,
10 they just had mortars, and RPGs, and stuff like that.

11 JS: Right, okay. I can't remember if I asked you about this or not, but as far as the
12 threats when you're in the air, could you talk about those? What type of weaponry the
13 VC would have?

14 MB: Well, in South Vietnam the F-100s were their own worst enemy. I think
15 most of the ground fire that we took was self inflicted. Guys would go too low on a dive
16 bomb run, and there'd be very strict rules about: you don't go below such an altitude
17 because there's a bomb going off under you.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: And it will frag and it'll come up and get you. The string CBUs and I'm
20 sorry I can't remember the number of that, but the CBUs that came out the back of the
21 tubes.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: Guys would fly through each other's strings and take little bitty holes and
24 they looked very much like maybe a 7.62 or even a fifty-caliber depending on what kind
25 of CBU you were dropping. They were just like little ball bearings.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: But I think a lot of the damage that was inflicted on the F-100 was from guys
28 just flying too low, and not observing the rules for dropping bombs, or even flying
29 through each other's frag. If you crowded the guy in front of you, there's still shrapnel up
30 in the air and you fly down into, you take hits. The F-100 was very sensitive. If you got a
31 piece of metal down the intake, it was going to flame out. And we lost quite a few

1 airplanes from engine failure. Hydraulic failure was very bad. The Vietcong had a bunch
2 of old French weapons and the muzzle velocity on those isn't very good, but they shoot a
3 big piece of lead, and so a lot of times on the Ranch Hand missions we'd take fire from
4 these old French carbines.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: Down around the Delta they had .50 calibers, that'd either have twin or even
7 some quad-fifties. Those were crew served weapons. When the FAC would tell us about
8 them—you kept higher, and went faster, and made fewer passes. We loved to get in a gun
9 battle, and unfortunately, if we had a gun identified on the ground, we'd usually
10 eventually get it. It might take two or three flights before we'd actually knock it out,
11 because we were careful. We didn't get down; we didn't do napalm runs on a gun. So,
12 you have to get in his range to do that, so we'd plank around with bombs until we finally
13 got a hit. And they'd move the crew served weapons around. If they had them in a truck
14 they would move it from one place to another just so we'd have to re-find it. In between
15 flights the FAC would say, "Hey, he's moved over here. He's behind that hooch there."
16 We didn't have any SAMS in South Vietnam. We were always very—we watched very
17 carefully up around Hue and around I Corps,

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: Because they would bring them down, and occasionally you might get a
20 SAM fired very close to the border, but I don't think there were any SAMs in Vietnam.
21 Maybe later on, maybe in the seventies there might have been, but in '67 there weren't
22 any SAMs there.

23 JS: Yes, sir.

24 MB: Now, they were catching them up in the "route packs" (Route Package:
25 numbered, geographically defined strategic bombing zones both in and outside South
26 Vietnam) when they went north of the border, they'd catch SAMs down there, especially
27 along the coast.

28 JS: Yes, sir.

29 MB: And that's what the Misties were doing. They were up there probing for
30 SAMs.

1 JS: Did you, during your time in this first tour, did you ever have any damage to
2 your airplane?

3 MB: In one thousand hours of single engine combat I have never had my airplane
4 hit by enemy fire.

5 JS: Oh, wow.

6 MB: And that was one of the things that I was very proud of. As I got closer and
7 closer to the end of my combat, I became more and more careful.

8 JS: Yes, sir.

9 MB: The only airplane that I've ever been in that got hit by enemy fire was a C-
10 123 Ranch Hand.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: I think I told you those old French rifles would go through one layer of C-
13 123, but it wouldn't go through the other layer, so they ricocheted around inside the
14 fuselage.

15 JS: Right, yes sir. You mentioned your friend was shot down. How was he shot
16 down? What hit him, do you know?

17 MB: The guy that I was leading that got picked up?

18 JS: Yes, sir.

19 MB: Probably an AK-47 or maybe a .50 caliber.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: Fifty caliber was about the biggest we ever saw. Now, I understand later on
22 they got .23s in the seventies. The NVA brought 23 mm down which was very deadly. I
23 found out later in flying 105s, the .23s and the .57s, but the .23s were the ones you didn't
24 want to play around with, low level especially.

25 JS: All right. Well, is there anything we should talk about from this first—?

26 MB: South Vietnam I think we pretty—I'm exhausted on my war stories.

27 JS: All right, now you mentioned those last few weeks or so, that you didn't fly
28 because they had caught up with you about your hours. But at what point did you—let me
29 ask it this way, was there any sort of out processing and at what point did that take place?

30 MB: Well, I kind of had a going argument with them about, "Hey, if I'm not
31 flying, why don't you let me go home?" and they said, "No. You didn't come here until

1 after Christmas. So, you got to stay here through Christmas.” So, I spend Christmas in
2 Tan Son Nhut, and then in January I rotated home. And I was kind of pleased that I got
3 reassigned to the F-100s. I was afraid they were going to stick me in B-52 or something,
4 and I got assigned as an instructor at Cannon Air Force Base (New Mexico) and my FAC
5 experience there came in because we were teaching people to go to Vietnam. So I had
6 seen both sides of the war, so I taught two courses on how to work with a FAC, and
7 actually got in ’68 and ’69, early ’69 I got to be a forward air controller in Army Otters—
8 which are not a very good airplane, and they used to scare the hell out of the Army pilots
9 that flew with me. They didn’t like my aggressive handling in the airplane. Down at Red
10 Rio Range, down in White Sands Missile Range, out of Holloman (AFB, NM) and our
11 pilots out of Cannon Air Force Base would come down there, and I’d go down there, I
12 think, probably maybe every other month for a couple of days and fly FAC missions.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: Out processing, very little.

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: Maybe an out-briefing by an Intel officer, and paperwork. My paperwork got
17 all screwed up in between moving from Bien Hoa to then my headquarters was Tan Son
18 Nhut, and it was kind of interesting. My bank was Kelly Field National Bank out of San
19 Antonio. Anyway, they were wonderful. My pay did not go in for six months, and they
20 just kept giving me “no interest loans.” I didn’t even know about it until I got back in
21 January and my wife said, “We’ve been getting these things from Kelly.” She had a stack
22 of envelopes and they were just all loans. And finally, we got my pay dumped out of Tan
23 Son Nhut and took care of it all. They didn’t charge me a cent for that, it was wonderful.

24 JS: Yes sir.

25 MB: Kelly Field that was the name of it.

26 JS: All right, what type of reception did you receive upon your arrival back in the
27 states?

28 MB: You know, in ’68—and I was going right back into the military. I didn’t
29 have—I went to Topeka, Kansas and spent maybe two weeks and packed the kids up and
30 moved down to Cannon. It wasn’t bad, Topeka’s a fairly conservative place. There were

1 no war activists, there were when we can through San Francisco, but it wasn't too bad in
2 '68. It was much worse when I came back in '71.

3 JS: Right, yes sir.

4 MB: A lot of people around Topeka, my family, and friends, they asked me a lot
5 of questions, "What's going on, what were you doing?" I told all the walls war stories,
6 and they were sympathetic. Topeka's not an activist kind of place, so it wasn't bad.

7 JS: Yes, sir. But when you left, what was your feeling of how the war was going
8 at that point?

9 MB: Well, that was just before Tet.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: And as I told you, I was rooming with—or one of the guys that lived in that
12 tent or spent alternate nights in that tent, was a guy by the name of John Moon, and he
13 was a young captain, kind of a contemporary. We got along real well, and we sat around
14 and talked about what was happening and we were both convinced that they were
15 building up. We saw a lot more signs of them bringing in big weapons. We know the
16 NVA was on hill 875, and we chased them back across the border.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: WE saw a lot more trail activity. We worked with alerts a lot. The 4th
19 Division had long range reconnaissance patrols and John had access to their Intel, and he
20 shared some of that with me, and we were convinced that we were trying to submit
21 opinions that, hey—the Army mantra at that time is, "We got them beat, they're on a
22 downhill slide, all we got to do is hang in here."

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: John and I were saying, "They're bringing stuff in, something big is
25 coming." And sure, enough about three weeks after I left, Tet happened. And I've had an
26 opportunity to talk to John, he just wrote a paper for the Army, by the way, about Intel in
27 Vietnam. Anyway, would you be interested in that paper?

28 JS: Yes sir, absolutely.

29 MB: I've got a draft of it. I'll send it to you. He's submitting it to the Army, so
30 I'm sure he wouldn't mind me sharing it with you. It's about a ten-page thing and it's war
31 from his view. He wanted me to collaborate on what was going on in the air, so I'll do

1 that. Anyway, we were right, and Tet happened. And Tet was, in my opinion—having
2 read about it since—Tet was a last effort on the part of Viet Cong, and they lost Tet. They
3 lost thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of NVA and Viet Cong in that effort. Now,
4 they did overrun some camps. But the Army essentially never lost a battle in Vietnam.
5 What we lost, we the US, lost, was the media war. This was the first war where people
6 could see, the next day, things like My Lai, and napalm, and the terror of war. And we
7 lost the media battle.

8 JS: Right.

9 MB: The Vietcong could not—not the Vietcong, the NVA—could not have
10 launched another Tet. They had the people to do it, but they didn't have the supplies to do
11 it, and they didn't have the will to do it. We lost the battle of wills.

12 JS: Right. Did you follow Tet pretty closely on television?

13 MB: Yeah, I did.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: And we were constantly getting people back into the 27th Wing at Cannon.
16 There were two wings there, and I forgot the name of the other one. I think it was 474th,
17 but there were two wings at cannon at the time, so we had constant people coming back
18 from Vietnam. Also, kind of interesting—normally a senior captain, or a captain with
19 combat experience, would have gotten a flight, or some kind of command position, but
20 we had so many majors, and lieutenant colonels, and captain's senior to me coming back,
21 that I couldn't get a command position. I couldn't get a flight, or anything like that. So, I
22 volunteered for Wing Staff duty, and I was in the—I'm trying to think, anyway, it was in
23 one of the squadrons there, the "Crusaders." But I was on wing staff as a scheduling
24 officer, so I got to pick the plums of all the special missions. I think during the year and a
25 half that I was at Cannon, I probably returned to Vietnam three or four times.

26 JS: Oh, really? Okay.

27 MB: Ferrying airplanes back.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: And every time we ferried an airplane back, and they liked us coming back
30 because we had experience, they would get us to fly a couple of combat missions which

1 would renew our combat pay. So, I got combat pay for probably, oh, six of the eighteen
2 months that I was between assignments in Southeast Asia.

3 JS: Oh wow, okay.

4 MB: Some interesting—they would fly airplanes until they were just dead in
5 Vietnam, and then they'd take all the working equipment off of them, put all of the
6 equipment that they couldn't get to work right in the airplane, and we'd ferry them back
7 to the States. So, we'd pick an airplane up in Sacramento, fly it to Hawaii, fly it to Guam,
8 maybe take it to the Philippines, or depending on the tanker situation, and fly into
9 Vietnam: Phu Cat, or Bien Hoa, or Tuy Hoa, or something like that. Then we'd pick up
10 one of these junkers and fly it back. One mission—usually I wrote the orders because I
11 was wing scheduling officer for our ferry pilots, and usually we could get that done in
12 about ten days. Well, on one particular mission I wrote ten-day orders, and then took off.
13 And I didn't even get out of the states until about day seven because we got to
14 Sacramento, I'm trying to think of the name of that base (McClelland AFB). Anyway, we
15 got to Sacramento. And because we were flight leads, me and the other guy I was with,
16 they kept us as "spares" so that if the flight lead aborted, we could launch and catch up
17 with the flight and lead the flight all the way over to Hawaii.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: Anyway, we didn't even get to Hawaii until the 7th day, and then my
20 wingman got sick, and then a typhoon came through. Anyway, I'm sitting at Guam on the
21 way back with a broken airplane, and I'm having to borrow money from the base
22 commander because I didn't have any more—I was getting order extensions, and TDY
23 pay extensions, and I borrowed one hundred dollars from the base commander and finally
24 made it home.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: But anyway, I was staying in touch all the time. For the whole eighteen
27 months I knew what was going on. The kind of weapons and tactics that were changing
28 and so forth.

29 JS: Did you have a good idea that you would probably be reassigned to Southeast
30 Asia again?

1 MB: Well, when I got to Cannon, they were slated—the 27th Wing was slated to
2 get F-111s. I did not want to fly 111s. I immediately volunteered for 105s.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And they said, “No, you’re not getting out of this 111 assignment.” Well, I
5 have forgotten the model we were going to go into, but they were having all kinds of
6 maintenance problems with it, and they had finally took them all back to the depot and
7 quit flying 111s, this particular model that I was slated to go to. And so, they picked us
8 up, they needed people with Southeast Asia experience. So they picked about six of us up
9 from Cannon and sent us to Wichita. Gosh, I can’t remember what the Air Force base is.
10 What’s the name of the base? Anyway, McConnell, my wife just filled me in. We went to
11 Wichita, and we were supposed to go through about a three-month course there.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: And the six guys I was with had all just come back from Vietnam, and the
14 105 was just like a big F-100. They had taken a lot of the problems out of the airplane. It
15 was a different manufacturer, Republic makes the 105.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: But it flew very much like the F-100. So, we got there, and they’re teaching
18 us, and they suddenly said, “Okay, you guys are good enough, go over.” I had less than
19 twenty hours in the 105. I got my twentieth hour in the 105 in combat.

20 JS: Oh wow.

21 MB: And didn’t even know how to turn on the radar. They said, you don’t need to
22 turn on the radar.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: I learned how to operate the radar—and it was a damn good radar, especially
25 compared to the 100. The 100 didn’t have anything but a little ranging radar, kind of like
26 a little Doppler. But I got my twentieth hour in combat in the 105.

27 JS: Right. How did you feel about going back to Southeast Asia?

28 MB: I wanted to get back into action.

29 JS: Yes, sir.

30 MB: I may have quoted this to you before, but there’s nothing more exciting than
31 getting shot at and missed.

1 JS: You had mentioned that before.

2 MB: It was a challenge, I was getting to do what I was trained to do, it's hard on
3 my family.

4 JS: Yes, sir.

5 MB: But, you know, luckily, I have a wife that is an adventurer, and says, "Go do
6 what you got to do."

7 JS: Right, yes sir. Well, before we get into that second tour in Southeast Asia, was
8 there any other duties you could talk about while you were at Cannon, besides these
9 occasional trips to Vietnam?

10 MB: Hang on just a second.

11 JS: Sure.

12 MB: You know, it was fun, and I learned to fly the airplane a lot better instructing
13 it. Like I say, the 100 had some very nasty aerodynamic habits, and we had to teach the
14 young kids how to deal with those. An inverted spin in the F-100 is deadly, and we didn't
15 demonstrate those. But occasionally in demonstrating a stall, you'd get into one of those,
16 and it's really nasty. Not only are you handling the aerodynamic problems, you're
17 handling the almost inevitable compressor stall, which sometimes resulted in a flame out.
18 The 100, as I say, was designed to go through the speed of Mach straight and level, at sea
19 level. They made a lot of compromises in order to get it to do that. The engine was very
20 stall prone. When the engine stalled, it would blow your feet off the rudders. I mean, it
21 was that violent. It was just a big "Chachoo!" And sometimes you'd see flames coming
22 out of both ends of the airplane. It was kind of interesting when you're flying on
23 somebody's—you know, you were fighting somebody, and they got into a compressor
24 stall. At first, it looked like the whole airplane was going to explode. And then usually
25 because they're at very low airspeed, they'd go into a stall. Once when I was flying over
26 in Cigli, Turkey, this is when I was stationed at Lakenheath, a very good friend of mine,
27 and I'll follow up with this because he later got killed. His name was Carl Dice, and he
28 was one of the guys that already had a tour in Vietnam and then he came to Lakenheath,
29 so he was kind of a legend. He was one of the few guys that had combat time back in
30 about '65, and he was on flight lead one time in Cigli, Turkey, and we're up on an air-to-
31 air flight, and we're doing some air to air engagements right over Cigli. We were sitting

1 alert at Cigli, but we would do some training flights every once in awhile. He's right over
2 Cigli, and we're looking right down at the base and we're up at about thirty thousand
3 maybe, and he gets into an—adverse yaw is always very bad in the airplane, and the slats
4 weren't maintained very well, so sometimes they would cause you to get into a spin.
5 Anyway, he's spinning, he had gotten into a stall, gotten into an upright spin, and he's
6 spinning. And as he's going down, I'm calling out the altitude to him. Well, I said, "Ten
7 thousand, Carl, get out, get out." He says, "I got it." And you see the airplane nose kind
8 of come up, and then fall down, and he did get it, and he pulled put probably three or four
9 thousand feet above the ground.

10 JS: Wow.

11 MB: But I thought, "He's going to crash right on the runway." And Cigli was
12 kind of a little bitty base. I think it had a runway and a taxi way. I know it had a taxi way
13 because we later, on another flight—we didn't have a place to divert. And somebody
14 blew a tire on the runway, and we had to land on the taxiway which was about the size of
15 county road. But anyway, I thought I was going to see Carl bite the dust right there.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: The 100 had a—I think I mentioned this to you before, it had a problem with
18 adverse yaw, which is a characteristic of a swept wing aircraft.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And they later took care of that in later models. 105, 106s and so forth. They
21 took care of it, and I'm pretty sure they did it with differential horizontal stabilizers, but
22 I'm not positive. It was caused by ailerons if you put the aileron up it causes the aircraft
23 to yaw. When the aircraft yaws, the up-wind wing gets more lift, and you actually get an
24 adverse rolling effect out of it. And it was dramatic in the 100.

25 JS: Right, yes sir. Well, I know you've talked about just the differences between
26 the F-100 and F-105, but how, performance wise, how was the F-105 different? How had
27 it—was it much improved over the F-100?

28 MB: Oh yeah, yeah. I'm trying to think the difference in the timing. The 105
29 came along about around '62 or '63 was the first flights of the 105 and it was built to be a
30 low altitude interdiction. A bomber, it's not really a fighter, a huge airplane compared to
31 the 100, sits way up tall, and very long, fairly thin wings. The wings are kind of high on

1 the fuselage compared to the 100. Big tail, very stable. I mean, it was easy to strafe with,
2 it was a very good bomber, extremely fast, had a huge engine. I told you the 100—if you
3 took anything down the intake of a 100 it was going to stall and probably flame out. The
4 105 would eat things. I mean, it would take all kinds of damage to the engine, and you
5 didn't even know it until you got on the ground. It had a little angle of attack vane. It's
6 probably about the size of your hand, sat on a peg outside of the cockpit.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: Once one of those came off—and we figured it probably came off on
9 takeoff—in my airplane. I flew that airplane for two and a half hours, got back. The
10 engine looked like somebody had jammed a broomstick or something into it. I mean, it
11 was all damaged. I never even knew it until I got back. I flew the whole combat mission
12 with that damage, and I didn't even know it. The 105 was an extremely rugged airplane.
13 It would take a lot of fire. One of the interesting things on the design of it though—
14 because it was designed to be a low altitude bomber. They put all of the guts of it on the
15 bottom. All of the hydraulics and the electrics were underneath the airplane because they
16 figured the main—and this is World War II thinking. They figured that the main enemy
17 of the 105 would be interceptors shooting at it from above. So, they wanted the sensitive
18 stuff underneath the airplane. But it turned out the mission we were using it for, the main
19 enemy was guns below, and so fire from below was very deadly to it. But the speed of the
20 thing was what saved you. It wouldn't turn. But I was later a 105 instructor, and that was
21 the biggest thing you had to teach young guys was: don't turn with anything. Your only
22 survival is speed. Put them on the tail and go, and you can usually outrun—you could
23 even outrun an F-4. Side to side an F-4, if at twenty thousand you both lit the burners,
24 you'd stay just about even and eventually the F-4 would pull out ahead of the 105. But if
25 you dump the nose and went for the less than 1G, and got down on the deck, you'd just
26 run away from an F-4. I took some 105s—after my 105 assignment I was at Okinawa
27 flying 105s, and we took them back to Fighter Weapon School. Red flag hadn't been
28 invented yet. But we took them back to Nellis and we were playing around with some F-
29 4s and my wingman tried to turn with them, and they got shot down. I just lit the burner
30 and went to the deck, and I escaped. Anyway, let me continue on that 105 design story

1 because this guy Carl Dice that I almost saw crash at Cigli—he was the wing weapons
2 officer at the 355th Wing at Takhli.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And again, as a young captain, I wasn't going to get a command position so I
5 volunteered to be assistant weapons officer, although I hadn't been through weapons
6 school. I had been sort of a trainee weapons officer when I was at Lakenheath. So, I was
7 his assistant at Takhli. Well, the 105—there was a two-seat version of the 105, and what
8 they had done is they had added something like thirty inches into the cockpit in front of
9 the intakes.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: To add the second seat. Well, the bulkhead was, in the two seat model, the F
12 model, was just behind the front seat. Well, Carl was up one day and got hit somewhere
13 in hydraulic lines, and they had installed this thing, this “combat survivability” thing into
14 the 105 where you could actually fly it with all hydraulics gone. I mean, you were kind of
15 aiming it, you weren't really flying it, but what it used was electric trim motors to control
16 the slab. Carl got hit and this was probably a .50 caliber round. I was on the accident
17 board. And it was something big went through all three hydraulic lines, and he lost all
18 hydraulic power. He was one of the first guys I ever heard of that got this thing engaged,
19 it was a mechanical, electric driven, thing that actually caged the horizontal stabilizers.
20 And he got it on final at Udorn Air Base, which was up on the Mekong River in Thailand.
21 He gets it on the ground, but he's going extremely fast. And the guys in the tower were
22 used to F-4s. They had RF-4s, recce F-4s, at Udorn they said, “Barrier!” Actually, I think
23 they called, “Hook, hook.” And he lowered the hook. Well, the 105 hook was just kind of
24 an afterthought. It was a big steal strap with a hook on it.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: And the 105 wasn't stressed to take an approach in barrier. Actually, this is a
27 mid-field barrier.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: The base was set up for F-4s. F-4s had essentially a carrier hook, and he
30 yanked the back end off the airplane. And he's going down the runway with the whole
31 ass end of the airplane off. And he goes off the end of the runway, and goes into a ditch,

1 and that, that bulkhead, the airplane folded at that bulkhead, and smashed him. He had a
2 young Intel officer in the backseat, first time this kid had ever been airborne, and he
3 survived, but it's just because of that bulkhead break in the two-seater.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: So, a little design anomaly killed one of my best friends. Carl was one of
6 those guys that I always looked up to. He's like five or six years older than I am, and he
7 had combat experience, and he was one of the guys that had gone back. I got to be the
8 wing weapons officer after that with very little experience, which was a good experience
9 for me, but gosh it was a hard way to get there.

10 JS: Sure, yes sir. You mentioned being the wing weapons officer. What duties did
11 that entail? Could you tell me a little bit about that?

12 MB: Well, one thing I did—one thing I, and the people that worked for me did,
13 was we debriefed every flight that came back.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: The first thing a flight would do after they came back, was—of course
16 they'd go in take off their gear and everything and get some water and get cooled off a
17 little bit, and they'd do their debrief, and then they would come to the wing headquarters.
18 And that varied depending on what we were doing. Sometime our wing weapons officers
19 would go to the squadron, but we'd do about a ten minute debrief with them and the
20 reason for that was so we could get the big picture of what was going on because, you
21 know, the squadrons didn't always get to compare notes with each other during the day.
22 So, we're getting the big picture of: "Okay, we've got flights going into this area, and
23 we've got flights going into this area. They're taking this kind of fire. They're taking this
24 kind of fire." So, we could kind of get the big picture, and we worked very closely with
25 wing Intel. Also, every night, oh, late in the afternoon, really, we would get a frag, a
26 fragmentary order for the next day.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: And they knew that we were going to fly maybe sixty flights. We had
29 seventy-two airplanes. We were maybe going to fly sixty or so flights. Now, we didn't
30 get nearly the turn around rate in 105s because we were flying two and a half hour

1 missions vs. in the F-100 we were flying sometimes thirty- or forty-five-minute missions.
2 But we'd get maybe a frag for sixty flights, and flights out of Takhli were flights of four.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: So, we'd get the frag, and we'd get recommended ordnance for these
5 different targets. But we, a lot of times set the fuses, and we're the ones that interpret the
6 frag and send out an order to the "gun plumbers," we call them, the guys that loaded the
7 bombs. We'd send out the order to them. We'd break down the frag and tell them how to
8 set the fuses. You know what ordnance, and so forth. And then we fed back to the guys—
9 and all of the frags came out of Tan Son Nhut, even for Thailand. We would feed back to
10 them and say, "No, we don't recommend this anymore because we're not getting the kind
11 of result out of this kind of bomb." We'd recommend another kind. Of course, the guys at
12 Tan Son Nhut were also—and we were feeding this, too. We were getting rid of a lot of
13 World War II bombs, the 750-pound bombs. I think they were 114s or 750s. The 105
14 could carry them, the 100 didn't do quite as well with the 750, it could fly with a 750, but
15 it was a pretty nasty load. 105s we could fly with either a center line thing call a MER, a
16 Multiple Ejector Rack, and it had six stations on it, and that was one of the things about
17 the 105. It set up so high it had really long landing gear. It set up very high, and so you
18 could get something on the center line. And the 100, if you tried to load something on the
19 center line, the guys had to lie on their backs. I mean, it was very low to the ground. But
20 the centerline MER was one of our better configurations. The other configuration is we'd
21 sometimes fly with a, what'd they call it—a jammer pod on the center line, and we would
22 load two, two thousand pound bombs, one under each wing, and a five hundred pound
23 bomb under each wing.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: We're carrying what, five thousand pounds of bombs. The two-thousand-
26 pounder was a very good bomb; it went where you wanted it to go. Seven fifties were
27 sometimes kind of erratic. The two-thousand-pounder was a good bomb, it's an ogive
28 shape, it's a very aerodynamically stable shape, very long bomb, and it would do some
29 damage on the ground. And we could set those to either penetrate: we'd put a delayed
30 fuse in, or we could set them to go off on the surface. When it went off on the surface,
31 they would clear—unless you were dropping in really big trees, and there were some

1 really big trees over there—it would clear a good size spot. It was also very good for
2 roads, for digging holes in roads which was kind of a futile thing because they had
3 caterpillars over there and they could just fill them in overnight. But we would drop
4 mines, which would go in, and those would sometimes give them a lot of trouble. If we
5 wanted to close a road, which we would try to do during the rainy season, we'd drop
6 regular bombs, and mines, so when they went in there to clean up the holes from where
7 we closed the road, they'd run into the mines which would slow them down some. Some
8 of the problems we had—we seldom used napalm off the 105, the areas we were going to
9 were way to hot to get down and drop napalm.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: But we did—one of the problems that we had with napalm—when I was in
12 Vietnam, they used to make the napalm bombs on base. They had napalm in containers,
13 actually, had JP 4 and this gel that they put in it. They would send the cases for the
14 napalm over. I'm still trying to sneeze.

15 JS: Sure.

16 MB: They would send the napalm cases over nested. In other words, they were
17 empty half clamshells.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: And they could send a whole planeload of those over, and then we would
20 clamshell them, and they had about one hundred little screws around them that had to be
21 done locally. Well, that's very, very manpower intensive. And sometimes those cases,
22 because they were either assembled wrong or, they didn't quite fit, they would leak,
23 they'd come apart on the airplane—which is spectacular when that happens. Napalm, by
24 the way, you set it off with a Willy Pete charge, a white phosphorous charge.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: A white phosphorous charge that actually fits on the fuse. And sometimes
27 when you drop it, that white phosphorous charge would hit a tree or something and get
28 diverted off and wouldn't ignite the napalm. You'd come along and strafe—it'll ignite,
29 but that was one of the problems. So, they said, "Okay, we're going to fix this. We're
30 going to assemble the napalm in the states and we're actually going to fill it." Well, that's
31 not very smart because logistically talking filled napalm is very heavy, and you can't take

1 many of them over in an airplane, it's much more efficient. So, we had a conundrum
2 there whether we used the manpower on base to assemble the old clap trap kind of
3 napalm, and there were nomenclatures for each one of these. Or we had these really
4 sophisticated ones that actually were much better off the 105, because the 105 went so
5 fast they'd fail on the 105. It'd come off and do funny things. Sometimes it'd spin, or
6 they'd tumble, and unless you were right down on top of the target, they'd miss by
7 hundreds of yards sometimes, if you do drop them. We seldom dropped them from very
8 high altitude because they were inaccurate from a high altitude, unpredictable from a high
9 altitude.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: And I actually found some of these cases that were sent, "filled at the
12 factory" kind of cases at Takhli that were only half full of gel. And that was very
13 dangerous because if the gel all migrated to the front of the bomb, or the back of the
14 bomb, they'd do funny things off the airplane. So, we didn't use those a whole lot. Same
15 thing went for—especially five-hundred-pound bombs. I kind of made friends with the
16 local Thais who worked in our bomb yard, and I told them all the NCOs out there and the
17 officers and especially the Thai guys who did all the handling, they used bomb handlers,
18 these big front loaders to move those bombs around. I said, "If you find a funny bomb for
19 god's sake don't load it. If it's crooked, if it's got an open weld on one side, if it just
20 seems funny, put it over in a special stack, show it to me and we'll get rid of it." Well,
21 one day I'm out there talking to one of my Thai friends and he said, "Captain B, I want to
22 show you something." He goes over and this little Thai probably weighed maybe one
23 hundred pounds. He goes and picks up this five-hundred-pound bomb. He says, "It's a
24 funny bomb." I said, "Yeah, that's a funny bomb." These bombs are all made by some
25 little mom and pop shop in Tennessee, I think, and they get a little sloppy when they're
26 making a whole bunch of them. They wouldn't even put the right amount of medal in
27 them much less the right amount—there are two kinds of explosives, one's call tritonal,
28 the other's minal. They wouldn't even put the right amount of explosive in them or even
29 amount of medal. They'd have bubbles in them, and they'd blow out the side or
30 whatever. They weren't very good quality control and I complained about that a lot back

1 to our headquarters. They tried to improve it. The volume was so much, they're bringing
2 so much over there that it's really hard to check every bomb.

3 JS: Sure.

4 MB: Anyway, I was talking about what the weapons officers did.

5 JS: Right, yes sir.

6 MB: We would break down the frag and we would assign—they'd give it to us in
7 four ship bits, and we would assign that to the different squadrons. And of course we had
8 squadron liaison because they'd complain, "Well, we're getting all the crappy missions,
9 and the other squadrons were getting better missions." So, I worked for the deputy for
10 operations, and he would arbitrate all that, but we tried to give some of the good missions
11 to each of the squadrons, spread the wealth a little bit.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: Let me tell you about a typical flight out of Takhli.

14 JS: Sure, yes sir.

15 MB: Take off out of Takhli—and Takhli is kind of in the middle of the country,
16 it's over in the middle north/south wise and it's over toward the western side of the
17 country. The other big base in Thailand was Khorat, which was also a 105 base, and then
18 there was NKP we call it—Nakhon Phanom was over on the eastern edge of the country
19 and it was more, it was more—they didn't really have any fighters there I don't think.
20 You could go in there, but they flew a lot of CIA mission out of there, a lot of black
21 missions out of there. They flew the Raven FACs out of there, which were essentially
22 CIA FACS.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: Some real Special Forces kind of stuff out of NKP. But anyway, out of
25 Takhli and Khorat we'd fly—we'd take off and in about an hour—we'd climb up to
26 altitude and about an hour after take off we would hit a "pre-strike tanker."

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: The tankers were all named—some of them were fruit names, and some
29 were just colored names. They had an "Orange Anchor" and a "Cherry Anchor" and I've
30 forgotten all of them, but, you know, "Cherry Anchor" was usually in the same place
31 everyday and we had all this planned out.

1 JS: Okay, last time when we left off you were talking about a typical flight, I
2 guess. Could you pick up from there?

3 MB: A typical F-105 flight?

4 JS: Yes, sir.

5 MB: Okay, I don't know whether you've talked to anybody else that flew the F-
6 105, but it was called—officially by Republic it was called the Thunder Chief, and when
7 they first started flying it, it had crashed so much all of the pilots called it the “Thunder
8 Thud,” and later just shortened it to “Thud.”

9 JS: Yes, sir.

10 MB: So, when you talk about flying 105s, you talk about flying Thuds. And for
11 the guys that went north a lot the—for the guys that went north there was a ridge north of
12 Hanoi, it was called “Thud Ridge” because so many Thuds got shot down on it. I didn't
13 get to go north very much; I had a couple of missions north. We were kind of in
14 between—they had flown very hard in '66, '67, '68 in North Vietnam, and then they
15 backed off and weren't attacking Hanoi anymore, or attacking North Vietnam anymore.
16 We were trying to shut down both the North Vietnamese incursions into Laos, and Plain
17 of Jars.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: And that area of operation was called “Barrel Roll”.

20 JS: Yes sir.

21 MB: And the activity there was pretty intense, especially during the dry season.
22 They brought a lot of materials that far inland into Laos. And then the other area of
23 operation was the Ho Chi Minh Trail, and the Air Force call word for that was “Steel
24 Tiger”. And Steel Tiger—both of those areas had pretty intense gun fire. As I said—I
25 went out this morning and came back, and on my way back—we live out in the country
26 out in kind of a subdivision out in the National Forest, and my wife has been doing a lot
27 of work with some of the local organizations and clearing firebreaks and mitigating
28 around houses and stuff. Anyway, I was out doing work on the chipper, so I've got pollen
29 dust all over me. Anyway, the defenses were pretty—I mean, compared to South
30 Vietnam, they were intense.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: One of the guns that I respected a great deal was the 23 mm.

2 JS: Okay.

3 MB: And it could be either visual fired, or it could be linked to radar to be fired.
4 And I think most of them—I've seen pictures of them and, you know I've seen them on
5 the ground, but I was moving pretty fast when I saw them.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: I think most of them were quads, four barrels, crew of two or three, and they
8 could put up a pretty good stream of fire for quite awhile. They were very flexible. Some
9 of the guns were very hard for them to swing around. So, if you came in from different
10 directions, they had trouble traversing around where they could get you. The quad 23
11 didn't seem to have that problem. One of the ways you could tell it was a 23 mm was the
12 stream of fire was very steady, and the fuse was very close to one another. In other
13 words, they would go off in very even streams.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: So, it'd look like a string of popcorn, a very straight string of popcorn as
16 compared to the old Soviet 57 mm, which was much bigger, but it was very—one would
17 go off above you and one would go off below you. It was just kind of a sporadic fusing, I
18 would call it. We also ran into some 85's I think they were. Big black burst of flack, but
19 maybe three or four was all you'd get. With a 23 you'd get hundreds of them whereas
20 with an 85 you'd get some big black puffs, and they could go up high. I mean, the 23s, if
21 you stayed above ten thousand you were safe.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: But the 57s, and then the 85s, could really reach up there, but they're very
24 big guns. I mean, they look like howitzers compared to the 23, which looks like a
25 machine gun and an aircraft gun.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: Of course, all of them have explosive heads on them so they get you. They
28 could either hit you and blow up, or they could go to their assigned altitude or time and
29 blow up and just fill the air with lead, hoping you'd fly through it. Anyway, so most of
30 the runs we made in Laos, and Steel Tiger which is also Laos, and in Barrel Roll in Laos,

1 were either one or two passes, very high, compared to the F-100, very high angle, and
2 high speed.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: I went over there—I mean standard attack pattern in a 100 and a 105 was
5 thirty degrees. And guys told me when I got there they said, “You’ll get steeper.” We
6 were using just plain depressible sights. We called them just a mechanical sight, it
7 doesn’t track, it doesn’t have an inertial navigation system, it doesn’t have a computer or
8 anything in it, it’s just a light that is shined on a “combining glass” they call it. Later
9 those things became heads-up displays which was one of the things, lessons learned that
10 we brought forward into the F-15, F-16. And now Pontiacs and Cadillac’s have heads-up
11 displays, but the old combining glass, you depressed a light, so what you’re doing is you
12 know the angle that you think you’re going to come down at, and the shallower the angle,
13 the more deep that you depress this light, so that the bomb is going to go off more
14 underneath you instead of out in front of you. Theoretically, at a ninety degree dive you
15 would have zero depression. In other words, you would drop exactly on the line with the
16 line of flight of the aircraft. So, at thirty degrees you may be having a 110 degrees
17 depression. The steeper you get the more angle you take out. Well, I started out by
18 bombing at thirty degrees. By then end of my tour a year later I was probably bombing at
19 forty-five plus.

20 JS: Oh wow, okay.

21 MB: One of the problems with that is the 105 is so slick. In the 100 you’d roll in
22 and pull the power back a little bit and drop the bomb and pull out. As soon as you start
23 your pull out you start pushing up the power. Of course, you don’t want to push it up too
24 soon or that just makes you go closer to the earth. So as soon as you get to nose about
25 level you start to power up, and by the time you get the nose up the power is up to one
26 hundred percent.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: In the 105, the steeper you got, the more you had to pull the power back, and
29 we were (unintelligible) and we were bombing at idle sometimes.

30 JS: Oh, wow.

1 MB: And one of the problems there, I told you about the poor-quality control that
2 we had on the bombs.

3 JS: Yes, sir.

4 MB: The bombs are designed to drop—and they test them up to about .9 Mach.
5 We were dropping bombs going supersonic, and they were doing damage to the
6 airplanes, or damage to each other, and unpredictable things. One of the things that I
7 really emphasized as an assistant wings weapons officer was for guys to really watch
8 their Mach. Mach and air speed are related, but they're not the same. The higher you are
9 the lower the air speed is at a Mach number. In other words, you can go through the
10 Mach at two hundred knots if you're at fifty thousand feet. So, you know, for such an
11 extreme, but I reminded everybody that they were really putting themselves in danger if
12 they dropped above the Mach, especially with something like an extended fuse or
13 something that's a little aerodynamically unstable anyway. One of the things I did, I told
14 you about these multiple ejector racks that we had on the center line of the aircraft that
15 would carry six bombs.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: Well quite often we could carry seven hundred- and fifty-pound bombs with
18 fuse extenders, daisy cutters. These fuse extenders are three feet long, and they've got a
19 fuse on the end of them so that when they hit the ground, they have a daisy cutter affect,
20 it's all frag and no penetration.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: I noticed—and we had about one out of six airplanes that had a combat
23 camera on it. It was a camera in the tail that ran anytime you turned the armament
24 selector to "on." In other words, that's one of the things you had to do was as we crossed
25 the bomb line. We would turn this selector to "arm," which meant that we could go ahead
26 and you then you could select stations and drop the bombs. If you didn't have it in "arm,"
27 no electricity would get out to the stations. Anyway, this thing ran all the time. It was a
28 great big, I think it was something like a 60 mm camera, great big film. That was one of
29 the things that we did with every flight that had this camera, everyone that had a camera.
30 We would analyze from the time the bomb came off until it hit the target. Now, if it got
31 turned, you know, it wasn't a trainable camera—

1 JS: Right.

2 MB:—so you'd get nothing but horizon. But the things we watched for was, did
3 the bombs all go the same place? Did the bombs, one of them spin and the other not, or it
4 went pitch down, or something like that? And we started realizing that when loaded that
5 fuse extender on the forward center bomb, the lowest bomb, that quite often the fuse
6 extender would even come off of the bomb as it was dropped because of the aerodynamic
7 loading on it.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: So, I decertified that load. In other words, I sent it back to—the first thing I
10 did was I sent it back to the Fighter Weapons School and said, “This is not a good load.”
11 And they came back to me—I realize that they came back to me and said, “Well, you're
12 dropping them at .9 and they're not certified above .85.” And I said, “Well, can you go
13 ahead and certify the other five stations and we just won't load a bomb on that station?”
14 Well, 7th Air Force didn't like that because they want to get as many numbers, they
15 wanted numbers, so that cut down their numbers. But anyway, we decertified it because
16 we just couldn't get guys to stay below .85 Mach not rolling in as steep and as high as
17 they were.

18 JS: Right, yes.

19 MB: One of the things we did and I kind of helped introduce this, this was an idea
20 a lot of other guys got, and I sort of got it by Carl Dice, the guy I was working for and the
21 DO and said, “Can we teach this to everybody? We want to come up with a
22 recommended amount.” We had big speed brakes on the 105, and I said, “If we would
23 teach everybody to crack those speed brakes. And I don't know how much, do it one
24 hundred percent.” The only way we could tell how much we were cracking them is they
25 took about three seconds to go all the way open, so you just go “one potato, two,” that's
26 enough, you know. That sort of slowed people down, they didn't accelerate as fast after
27 they rolled in.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: So that became kind of a standard tactic. But you had to remember, as you
30 pushed the power up, you had to fan those boards up because if you're trying to climb out

1 and you got those boards out, they're big and they really slowed you down. So, you asked
2 me what I did as a weapons officer, that's the sort of thing we do.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: Another thing we noticed when we'd watch those films, some guys would
5 pull straight out, well you don't want to do that, you don't want to pull your nose straight
6 up, you want to jink. So, we would teach guys, as they brought the nose up: roll one way,
7 reverse, come back the other way—and you do that by kicking the rudder and rolling and
8 unloading, kicking the rudder, rolling, and then pulling again. That makes it much harder
9 for a gunner to track you.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: When you watch it, it doesn't look that impressive as a maneuver. But when
12 you try to track it—I used to take guys out on the range. We had a little bombing range,
13 and we'd take a gun out with a scope on it. I said, "Follow this guy that pulls out
14 straight." And I said, "You can stay right on him all the way, but you try to follow a guy
15 that goes one way and then the other through a scope, it's very hard to do." Think about a
16 deer running and reversing direction.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: So, you know, that convinced guys to jink a little bit when they came off the
19 target. You had to be careful, though because you were pulling pretty heavy Gs, so you
20 didn't want to be yanking and banking too much while you're pulling four or five Gs.

21 JS: Yes, sir.

22 MB: Typical mission, I think I talked you through this. We'd take off, would hit
23 an anchor. Anchor is a tanker on station. They would run about a twenty mile track down,
24 you know, I think they were clockwise, I'm not sure. Some of them may have been
25 counter-clockwise, they may have run counter clockwise tracks for weather and stuff like
26 that, but they'd run an anchor for about a fifteen mile straight stretch, and then a 180
27 degree turn back and forth. We knew where those anchors were, so we'd take off, fly
28 about an hour, hit the tanker, usually a fairly low tanker because we were heavy with fuel
29 and with ordnance. Go into the target, maybe an hour and a half on the target, come back
30 out, hit a post-strike tanker. It might be the same tanker who would usually—they'd have

1 a low tanker, a low cherry, and a high cherry anchor. As I said, they were fruits and
2 colors.

3 JS: Right, yes sir.

4 MB: There would be red anchor, orange anchor; there'd be peach anchor or
5 cherry anchor or whatever. They may have—if we had a big strike force going in, they
6 may have three or four on the same anchor at different altitudes. Four different airplanes,
7 the F-4s could generally go a little higher than we could. They'd have recces, recces are
8 very slick, and they could go to the highest anchors and so forth. But those things would
9 get all scrambled around because of weather. As you take off you might check in with
10 ABCCC and they would say, "Cherry anchor is now." And they'd give you a radial and a
11 distance on a TACAN. That the cherry anchor was working, and it might be a hundred
12 miles from where it was supposed to be just because of the weather. We'll talk about on
13 the target later, but after a strike, quite often if you had damaged airplanes there were
14 really two places to go. You could either go to Udorn which was right up on the border,
15 just on the Mekong River.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: Nice big base, nice big F-4 base. As I told you, Carl Dice probably died
18 because it was an F-4 base because he took the center field barrier that wasn't made for
19 F-105s. He should have waited to put his hook down. Anyway, you could either go in
20 there—and when it was a really hot day, when a lot of guys were getting hit, and
21 especially when there was weather down toward Takhli, Udorn got very crowded
22 sometimes.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: It was very hard to get in there, and once you got there it was kind of hard to
25 get service and get out of there. Of course, our wing commanders wanted us to turn and
26 get home as soon as possible.

27 JS: Sure.

28 MB: So, the trick was, as a flight lead, was to analyze the situation and go to an
29 anchor that could get you home. Some guys just went ahead and tried to get to their post-
30 strike anchor, and if you could look over and see a huge thunderstorm where the anchor
31 was supposed to be, you say, "Maybe I'll try and find another one." And you start talking

1 to people and anchors and see if they could take you. The tanker pilots and crews did a
2 marvelous job of being very situationally aware. When there was a big fight going on,
3 they'd start edging toward that. They'd get clearance to move their anchor time after
4 time, so they could get closer to where they were needed. At times, they violated
5 regulations and went where they weren't supposed to be, just to get their fuel out there.
6 They would talk to the strike leads, and to the flight leads, and really analyze the situation
7 and optimize where they were going to give their fuel.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: I'll tell you a little war story. I was flying with a guy who had come out of T-
10 38s. He was a guy I had known at the Air Force Academy, his name was George
11 Thompson, and he was an all-American fullback at the Air Force Academy in 1959, and
12 he had been in T-38s as an instructor and had moved over to 105s, so he had a lot more
13 flying time than I did, but not a whole lot of combat, no combat time when he got there.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: I was a young captain, he was a major, but I was checking him out as a flight
16 lead one time when we went over, and I forgot what our target was. It was bombs I'm
17 pretty sure. We were coming back, and there was just a line of thunderstorms that went
18 up to sixty thousand feet it looked like, and we could not get to our anchor. We had
19 enough fuel to get home, but it was going to be tight.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: We went over, and I said, "Let's try Udorn." So he called us over to Eudorn
22 and we just checked in on the tower frequency. And it sounded like a brawl going on
23 down there, and I said, "Let's go back to Squadron common." We went back to squadron
24 common. And I said, "Let's go for it." So, we thought we might head for Khorat, but
25 Khorat was just as bad. Khorat might have been a little bit shorter, so we punched
26 through this thunderstorm and it was the worst weather I had ever been in. Thank god he
27 was a very steady pilot because I just tucked into his wing, and all I could see was just the
28 wingtip light out there. We would surge forward in our straps when we'd hit these cells
29 of water. And I glanced down. You can't take your eyes off the wing for very long, but I
30 glanced down a couple of times and my engine temperature was actually dipping as we'd
31 hit these walls of water.

1 JS: Oh, wow.

2 MB: We both got on the ground and the leading edge of the 105 in board is a
3 black resin kind of, I guess fiberglass kind of thing. And the whole nose is fiberglass;
4 about the first five feet of the airplane is fiberglass. That was all stripped white.

5 JS: Wow.

6 MB: It ruined a boat and, you know, I caught it from the maintenance office a
7 little bit, but the DO said, "Hey, you got it back, that's better than some guys did." So
8 anyway, it was the worst weather I've ever been in and got on the ground though.
9 Anyway, let's talk about targets.

10 JS: Okay, sure.

11 MB: Time to move onto that?

12 JS: Yes sir, absolutely.

13 MB: Okay, Barrel Roll—I would love someday to go as a tourist to the Plain of
14 Jars. There were areas that we were strictly forbidden from striking, and usually we were
15 in touch with somebody on the ground, or in the air. Now, we had some Raven FACs
16 over there. And just like I got FACed in South Vietnam they took a lot of 105 pilots. It
17 was kind of interesting, when you became a Raven FAC they flew O-1s, they flew some
18 O-2s, I think they might've even had some OV-10s. They also had some Pilatus Porters
19 because some of them flew out of very short, primitive, strips.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: Over most of Laos they had CIA in there working with the Vang Pao. Have
22 you heard of him?

23 JS: Yes, sir.

24 MB: Okay, they worked with Vang Pao, and post war I talked to some of those
25 guys that were FACs that worked out on some of those karsts, and TACAN sites and they
26 said those guys were really fierce, they were very determined not to let the communists
27 take over Laos. I've heard since Vang Pao, I think came to the United States and actually
28 tried to raise some money recently.

29 JS: Yes, sir.

30 MB: To restart that war over there.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: We were usually in touch with either somebody on the ground or a recce
2 bird, and I'm trying to think of their call sign. The recce birds used cameras for call signs.
3 I think they were Kodak and some of those where their call signs. Anyway, the recce F-4
4 has a longer nose and it's a little lighter weight than a regular F-4C or E.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: We didn't have any E's over there then, and a regular F-4C and it'll go
7 faster. And the only armament that they had was flares, these photo flash flares. They
8 weren't even the regular flares, but they could actually mark a target by flying over it and
9 popping one of those flares, and then they'd circle and look back and see where the flare
10 went down and say, "Okay from that flare—" pretty innovative. Why the hell they didn't
11 put smoke rockets on them, I don't know, although it would have slowed them down. So,
12 we'd either work with one of the recce birds, or we'd CAP (Combat Air Patrol) a recce
13 bird taking pictures, and we usually had soft ordnance for that. We'd have snake eyes and
14 maybe even napalm. One of the few times we'd carry napalm on a 105. A lot of times we
15 were cutting roads to stop the flow of stuff out of Hanoi.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: And down to South Vietnam. Cutting roads is pretty dull, but it takes really
18 accurate bombs, dumb bombs. Nowadays when the laser guided to bomb, you know, one
19 bomb, one road. But the roads were a lot of times in the mountains, so if you could get a
20 good mudslide or rockslide to cut the road it was amazing. They would get it fixed over
21 night and usually by hand labor. They did have a few caterpillars, and they were pretty
22 innovative at protecting their caterpillars. They'd back them down into a hole, put the
23 blade up, and take the gas tank off of it, so you couldn't burn it. And so, you could hit
24 that blade, you'd destroy the blade maybe or bend the blade with a direct hit with a bomb,
25 but it wouldn't take the caterpillar out necessarily. So sometimes we'd just cover them
26 up.

27 JS: Right.

28 MB: We'd drop bombs above them and get them a rock side down around them.
29 At least it took them awhile to dig out.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: I think I told you, we also would drop a mix of bombs. Usually if you're
2 going for a road you're going with a pretty low delayed fuse so that the bomb goes off
3 when it's down in the ground.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: So, we would set the fuses. And there's a way to do that where you can
6 select it in the air. You can actually set the fuse in the air now with the more sophisticated
7 bombs.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: Back in the old dumb bomb days we would set a nose fuse for instantaneous
10 and have a delayed fuse on the tail. And the way those are armed when they come off the
11 pylon there are wires that strip little propellers that actually keep their propellers from
12 turning. And if the propeller doesn't turn then the fuse doesn't arm and the other fuse sets
13 the bomb off, the tail fuse.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: So, what you'd do is you'd select it for "tail only" and the wire that was on
16 the bomb would stay with the bomb, rather than coming off on the airplane. All that was,
17 was just a little magnetic thing, a little solenoid thing. Either solenoid would open and let
18 the wire go with the bomb, or the solenoid was closed, and it pulled the wire which
19 released the fuse to arm. Now, what was really scary is when somebody had a hung
20 bomb, and you'd fly up beside them to check them out to see why the bomb's hung and
21 that propeller is spinning.

22 JS: Oh, wow.

23 MB: Which means all it takes is a jolt and that bomb's gonna go off. So, we
24 would have that occur every once in a while, in which case you jettison the whole pylon,
25 just get rid of everything if you can.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: Now, sometimes even that didn't work. You had electrical short or
28 something that pylon wasn't listening to you, and you had to come back and land with
29 that bomb. I've even seen them where they landed with a bomb and the bomb came off
30 on landing and skidded along the runway. Once or twice, I didn't see it happen, but I saw

1 the results, where the bombs skidded along the runway and they went off. So, landing
2 could sometimes be kind of exciting.

3 JS: Sure.

4 MB: Other kinds of targets that we had—let's see we had roads, and road
5 intersections, and things like that. Caterpillars, we had guns; that was exciting. Whenever
6 we found a gun everybody wanted to go after it, everybody wanted to go kill a gun. Up in
7 the Plaine des Jarres a couple of times we actually had tanks or APCs and if we could
8 identify it, whether it was a tank or APC—tanks we bombed, fairly successfully and
9 there's two kinds of kill on a tank. There's a "mobility kill" where you knock the tracks
10 off of it, he can't go anywhere. He can still shoot though. And there's a "K-kill" where
11 you actually hit the tank, and it explodes and isn't a factor anymore. If we knew it was an
12 APC, and not a tank, and there's no way you could tell on a 105 going five hundred
13 knots. First of all, you're not going to go slow enough to get down there and see if it's a
14 tank or an APC, it's just a big, black thing darting around in the jungle. If a FAC knew
15 that it was an APC we'd strafe it because APCs got really thin walls.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: And we could get them burning every once in awhile. We didn't see them
18 very much, we'd see trucks though, and trucks shoot back. So do APCs. But if you had a
19 convoy or truck you could count on having a lot of small arms fire from it. We loved to
20 find convoys, and once in a while we'd find them. You'd see one or two trucks and you'd
21 go down and start staffing, or start dropping bombs, and you'd get secondary's; and then
22 you'd see more trucks, and you'd see more trucks and there might be a hundred trucks.
23 They were very well dispersed though, so you might have, you know, a three- or four-
24 mile section where there's twenty trucks, but you kind of had to just pick them out. And
25 that's where the FACs came in really, they really helped us in those areas. But there the
26 FACs flew a different mission than I flew in South Vietnam.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: They stood away; they didn't get close to the bad guys. They might be ten
29 miles away—just describing to us what was there. They sure didn't want to get shot down
30 in Laos. One of the tricks we used in I think it was route seven that ran—I think it was
31 maybe North of the Plaine des Jarres. The F-4s would get down at about one hundred feet

1 above the jungle and go as fast as they could right down the road. Well, the guns that
2 opened up behind them—and we'd be sitting up about twenty thousand feet watching
3 these guys that do this. They might do a twenty- or thirty-mile section of route seven.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: And we could see the guns opening up behind them, and of course we'd roll
6 in as soon as we could. As soon as we saw a flash, we'd roll in. The first guy would take
7 one end of the flashes and we'd just go right down the road. Sometimes we would play
8 around with them like that. The recce guys didn't want to make but one or two runs. It
9 got pretty exciting for them.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: They were going fast enough that the angle rate was much greater than the
12 guns were used to. So, if you caught them by surprise you could find them once in awhile
13 that way. Very seldom did we have troops in contact in Laos.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: Sometimes one of these TACAN stations, or one of these karsts where Vang
16 Pao's guys were would come under attack, and we would cover that as they did the
17 extraction. Usually, black helicopters go in there picking guys up and moving them.
18 We'd even have a ground FAC, or somebody on one of the helicopters, tell us where the
19 fire was coming from and sort of coordinating runs. And the guys that had had Southeast
20 Asia—no, South Vietnam experience knew how to work that a lot better than the guys
21 that were there on their first missions, that had never seen troops in contact. Another
22 thing we did once in awhile was search and rescue. They did more of that out of Cam
23 Ranh Bay and Da Nang, but I remember a C-130 went down probably in early '71 or
24 something. You've probably heard of this one. We lost the C-130, and then we lost a
25 rescue helicopter, and I think we ended up losing an F-4 or maybe some A-10s—or A-1s.
26 A-1s were the Sandies, have you heard of them?

27 JS: Yes, sir.

28 MB: Okay, Sandies, and that has become the traditional call sign for any search
29 and rescue On Scene Commander is Sandie.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And now it's the A-10s that do it. But I do remember—and I think that was
2 about a two-day effort trying to get that C-130 crew down. And I don't remember
3 whether that was recce, or Intel bird, or whether that was a Spooky, Super Spook. But
4 anyway, it was kind of exciting. That was down at the south end of Steel Tiger. So that
5 was the kind of targets we would hit.

6 JS: Yes, sir. What was the result of that rescue mission?

7 MB: I don't think they ever got the guys out.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: I don't remember that real well.

10 JS: Yes, sir.

11 MB: I remember briefing guys on how to work with Sandies because I had
12 worked with them, both as a 100 pilot and as a FAC. We didn't do many of those kind of
13 missions, and I don't even think I flew on those missions.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: I remember it because we got all the people that were going to go support
16 that. We probably had maybe twenty flights of four, over the two days. I briefed them on
17 how to work with Sandies. You know, we were getting Intel bulletins in and trying to
18 keep guys up to speed on what was going on, where the target was, where the guns were,
19 where the bad guys were, who they would be working with, and I didn't fly on it.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: One other kind of target we did. I had a squadron commander who had
22 flown—he was on his second F-105 tour, and he had flown a lot over Hanoi. We used to
23 kid each other, I said, “When we go back, I want to be on your wing, boss.” And he said,
24 “Okay, fine. I want to go on the first strike.” He said, “No, we're going on second strike.”
25 Of course, second strike would be much more intense because they'd know we were
26 coming.

27 JS: Right.

28 MB: And I said, “We're going to plan it and I'm going to go on your wing on the
29 first strike.” Well, sure enough I went—the first time I ever went North in a 105 was on
30 his wing on the second strike and it was pretty intense. It was what we call a “bird's
31 mouth.”

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: Are you familiar with that?

3 JS: No, sir.

4 MB: If you look at a map of Laos, where it abuts North Vietnam, there's a kind of
5 a triangular indentation into North Vietnam. It looks like a fish's mouth, not a bird's
6 mouth, a fish's mouth.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: And that was one of the checkpoints that the 105s used for reference. You
9 know, they'd say, "Where are you?" "I'm one hundred miles north of the fish's mouth."

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: Well, we went right into the fish's mouth. They were moving SAMs west as
12 we did not attack Hanoi, they were continuing to move their SAMs, and their guns west
13 and they moved them into North Vietnam just east of the fish's mouth. So, we'd hit a
14 couple of those SAM sights in there. This was probably March or so of '70.

15 JS: All right.

16 MB: '71. Wait a minute. I was there six nights after. March of '70 is when we
17 started moving them.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: Anyway, we did two or three missions in there, and then we backed off
20 again. We wanted to go north. We wanted to go start attacking the rail yards, and all the
21 defenses, and all of the stuff that was sitting in Hanoi harbor, but they wouldn't let us.

22 JS: Right, yes sir. Well, I guess this is going to be a little bit out of order, but as
23 you were talking I was writing down some questions, if you don't mind me asking some
24 of these here.

25 MB: Sure.

26 JS: Again, this is not really in order, but you were talking about—as you're
27 descending on an attack, the movement of jinking to avoid getting hit by enemy anti-
28 aircraft, but would there be other tactics to avoid flack when you were just flying?

29 MB: Well, as I told you when I was flying as a FAC I learned early on, don't ever
30 do the same thing twice. You don't do a whole lot of jinking as you're tracking on the
31 target.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: It's very difficult to do that, but what you want to do is come out of the sun
3 if at all possible. If you're going against guns that are visually sighted, they can't see you.
4 I mean, it's an old World War II tactic, but it works. Come out of a cloud. When you're
5 bombing, let's say you're rolling in at 18,000 feet mean sea level. You put the target
6 almost at nine o'clock, maybe ten o'clock.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: And, of course, it's depressed, maybe thirty degrees. If you're going to
9 thirty-degree dive bomb, the target needs to be about a thirty degree below your wing. So
10 you're looking out here at ten o'clock low and you roll in. Of course, it's a curvilinear
11 approach so you actually raise a nose a little bit and then roll over a little past ninety
12 degrees of bank. And then the trick is to roll out with your nose short of the target. And
13 then you stabilize your wings and you're looking at that pipper which is depressed maybe
14 115 degrees from your line of flight. But you're going down thirty degrees, and it's
15 depressed right over your nose.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: And it's tracking up to the target. Well, the trick is to have it on the target
18 right at your plan release altitude and at the right air speed. Now we've got computers to
19 take all that into account. The computer nowadays puts the pipper where the bombs are
20 going to go.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: So, you don't have to worry about airspeed or anything else except for max
23 air speed and min air speed. You don't want to have not enough airspeed to pull out. So,
24 you're trying to make all these things come together as you're going through the release
25 altitude.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: And if it doesn't quite work, you know, you might press—we call it
28 pressing. You might press one hundred or two hundred or three hundred feet, but that's,
29 you know, less than a second and you release. So, the trick is to get all this to come
30 together just as your pipper arrives at the target. As I said, the more I flew the more miles I
31 took out because I was getting steeper and steeper and steeper. The steeper you are,

1 really, the more accurate you are, except you have less time to get that pipper on the
2 target.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: Thirty degrees you might be tracking your pipper up to the target for ten
5 seconds. At 45 degrees it might be five seconds. At ninety degrees—I never did do a
6 ninety degrees—it would be maybe a second that you could do it. Your pull out takes
7 more altitude from a higher angle dive bomb. Now one of the things we would do on a
8 strafing run, maybe you would overshoot and track back, and that would just make
9 your—that’s sort of like jinking as you’re coming in. But coming off is where they’re
10 going to get you, or more likely to shoot at you as you’re coming off. So that’s where you
11 want to roll one way, pull a little bit, roll back the other way and pull hard, go up, maybe
12 push over a little bit just so that guy, if you’re thinking about trying to track a deer that’s
13 doing that it would be hard to keep them in the scope.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: Another thing we would do if we had the latitude would we’d come in from
16 different directions. If you think about a flight of four, if you’re flying along—actually
17 what I’d do is I’d be in right echelon, so I’d have myself as number one on the far left
18 side, number two, three, four on my right wing, and then we would be flying around the
19 target and I’d roll in, and I’d call, “Ones in,” and two would go maybe thirty degrees
20 further until he’d say, “Twos in.” And so, you end up four is actually coming in almost at
21 the opposite direction from one.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: And then as you’d call off, you’d say, “One’s off hot” Usually you’d say, so
24 they’d know you dropped your bombs.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: Or especially if you didn’t drop your bombs, you’d say, “One’s off dry,
27 right.” If I’d roll in left maybe I could come off right. That would bring everybody into a
28 right-hand wheel, so that was one way to confuse the gunners because they couldn’t tell
29 which direction you were gonna come into. Another thing we did was called a Dog Bone.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: Where you might pull off and do a couple of jinks which actually ended up
2 coming off straight. And then you'd do a ninety-two seventy and roll back in from the
3 opposite direction from where you came from. Now, this is pretty confusing when you
4 got four guys doing that, so you really have to be calling in and off and calling, "Got you
5 one." Or "One's in, got you two." Or whatever.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: Whoever is the other conflicting bomber, you call that you have them in
8 sight. So, it's kind of a rhythmic thing, and when you get a flight of four working really
9 together with a dog bone or something like that, that it's a thing of beauty, really.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: Communications wise. And you'd say, "Knock it off, let's get up to 18,000
12 and sort this out. I can't see anybody."

13 JS: Right.

14 MB: The haze sometime over there. They burn their rice crops, and the haze goes
15 up to thirty thousand feet, and so you could see each other at thirty thousand feet just
16 fine, but once you go down into that haze you can't see but a couple of miles maybe, or
17 less than a mile sometimes.

18 JS: Okay, all right.

19 MB: Usually at what—excuse me, what would the altitude be when you would
20 release your bombs?

21 JS: There would be charts and charts and charts for that. Each weapon has its own
22 release charts.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: So, you go in with the given weapon and you say, "Okay, I'm going to drop
25 at thirty degrees with a two thousand pound, or mark—." What were they? They weren't
26 117s. Gosh, I've forgotten all that. Anyway, you go in with a two-thousand-pound chart,
27 thirty degrees, and you see what the minimum altitude release is. So, you know what that
28 is, and of course you have to add the ground elevation in. I'd usually add five hundred
29 feet at least to that. That's where I wanted to drop was five hundred feet above minimum
30 altitude. And if there were guns down there, or you're working in a valley where the pull

1 offs are going to be kind of hairy, then you just keep adding, you know—these charts are
2 maybe fifty pages for each bomb.

3 JS: Ok, wow.

4 MB: You'd have the ten-degree, twenty degree, thirty degree, forty-five degree
5 charts, and you have different air speeds. You might have one line—I'm trying to
6 remember exactly how they were going to construct it. You might have one line for three
7 thousand foot above ground level release, and then you'd have a whole bunch of vertical
8 lines for different air speeds. You could release it at three hundred calibrated, or four
9 hundred calibrated, or five hundred calibrated, and so forth. Of course, they've got
10 computers that do all that now, so you only have to go in and do the scratch work I used
11 to call it.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: I provided that to most of the FRAGs if I had time. If I didn't, the flight
14 leads could do it.

15 JS: Okay, all right. Another thing I wanted to ask you talking about the SAM
16 sites. Were they ever a problem in Laos, or was the furthest they ever moved them to the
17 west was that border area?

18 MB: They were always a threat.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And we got Intel. Whenever we were going within about fifty, sixty miles of
21 the Vietnam border we got Intel of where we thought they might be. You know, they had
22 a lot of sites over there that didn't have missiles in them. But they could easily move
23 missiles into them.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: So, we knew where they all were. And a few times we got briefed that they
26 might be coming into Laos, but I never heard of one being fired from Laos. I never saw a
27 SAM. As much flew over there, I never got close to a SAM. Talking to the guys that did
28 fight the SAMs—later after Vietnam I got checked out as a Wild Weasel.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: We had a lot of Wild Weasels at Takhli, but they weren't used very much
31 because we didn't go north. But the Wild Weasel guys, and the strike guys that said that

1 SAMs fired at them, attacked—the classic tactic for getting an SA-2 off of you—they
2 were fairly slow; they were easy to see compared to the later SAMs. I mean, they said it
3 looked like a telephone pole coming at you—was you'd put it at nine o'clock, and you'd
4 push over to get it—to make the SAM get its nose down, and then you had to time it just
5 right when it was—I think they used to say two thousand feet or something—off your
6 wing. You pull max G's; and it couldn't make the corner. It would overshoot you. And if
7 you had its nose low enough it would hit the ground, or it if you just out G'ed it, it would
8 just go off. I think they finally timed out and exploded is what they did.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: But that was the classic maneuver was to push over. Put it at nine o'clock,
11 push over, get its nose down, and then out pull it. Of course, if you had two of them on
12 you, pretty soon you ran out of energy doing that.

13 JS: Right, sure.

14 MB: You know, other distractions, other factors. You could maybe get one to
15 miss you; the second one would get you.

16 JS: All right. You've mentioned those times going into the north. What about
17 enemy MiG's?

18 MB: The only MiG I ever saw, I was flying into Libya and there were some
19 Tunisian MIGs that came out to greet us.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: I saw that. Once in South Vietnam when I was flying the O-1 they vectored
22 me—they thought they might have had a—they think the Soviets had a fabric wing
23 wooden airplane called the AN-2. I think they would send them down into South
24 Vietnam once in a while, and they vectored me. I was trying to catch it and I couldn't, but
25 that wasn't a Mig. But it was an enemy airplane. I had visions of glory. I was going to get
26 an AN-2 with a smoke rocket, but I couldn't catch him.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: Again, it might have been a helicopter. It was something down low, and they
29 said to see if I could see it and I chased it for about fifty miles and gave up.

30 JS: All right. Another thing I wanted to ask you about, you talked about these
31 restricted areas and that, and if you could comment a little bit on how these restrictions

1 kind of affected the way you did your job and what was your opinion and the opinion of
2 the other pilots on having these restrictions and the political side of that?

3 MB: You know, Laos is a great big place. I know we would sometimes fly down,
4 maybe if we had a little extra gas, or a little time, we would fly over the Plaine des Jarres
5 and try to see some of the ruins there. I guess they're just big jars down there in the
6 plains. A lot of old, I suspect French, or maybe even Chinese, rubber plantations. Laos is
7 a pretty arable place. I mean, it's got a lot of farms and orchards and things like that, and
8 very few towns. You know, little villages, but there's not many towns. Especially up in
9 the north and central part. I haven't looked at a map of Laos probably in ten years, but the
10 Plaine des Jarres—I'm a history buff, and I really respect that there were some roads
11 through there, but it was no real impediment. The Plaine des Jarres, anyway, was no real
12 impediment to our operations. We weren't denied targets because of the Plaine des Jarres.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: Now, the restrictions that we had about—it was funny, when I was flying out
15 of Vietnam I couldn't fly onto Laos; and when I was flying out of Thailand I couldn't fly
16 into South Vietnam. I had to get special permission. I flew a 105 over to Vietnam a
17 couple times for conferences and—targeting conferences and had to have special
18 permission to take a 105 into South Vietnam. We didn't have a whole lot of restrictions
19 in Thailand as to what we could hit. I mean, Laos, flying in Laos, except we couldn't go
20 into North Vietnam.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: And that's what we were there for, really. I mean, the Barrel Roll and Steel
23 Tiger were secondary missions as far as we were concerned. We wanted to go to Hanoi;
24 we wanted to go "fight the fight."

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: And we're not allowed to.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: In South Vietnam there were very strict restrictions. Like I told you about
29 that guy I shot with a smoke rocket.

30 JS: Right, yes sir.

1 MB: I could have stopped that whole battle with a couple of A-10s very quickly,
2 but the South Vietnamese commanders, for some reason, did not want to use air in that
3 area. So, I stuck my neck out and managed to slow them down a little bit.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: And that varied from one region to the other depending on the Viet Cong
6 and who we were working with, who had jurisdiction over an area. The South
7 Vietnamese quite often, especially around Saigon, had very tight restrictions on what we
8 could do.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: I think—reading about what's going on in Afghanistan, I don't think it's a
11 whole lot different. It's a different culture, but it's the tactics, and the restrictions, and the
12 frustrations, are quite similar.

13 JS: Okay. Did you feel that the North Vietnamese kind of knew of these
14 restrictions and were able to take advantage of them?

15 MB: Oh, absolutely. Yeah, the North Vietnamese were more of an army, a real
16 army. The Viet Cong were insurgents and, they owned the night. And that's why you
17 couldn't convince a village not to harbor them; because if they didn't help and feed the
18 Viet Cong, they got killed at night, they got murdered at night. And that was one of our
19 frustrations is that we could take an area, but we couldn't occupy it for long because we
20 just didn't have enough people. And once we moved out of it, the Viet Cong would move
21 right back in and anybody that had cooperated with the Americans got killed.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: They were brutal.

24 JS: Yes, sir. Well, speaking of them operating at night, was that the same case in
25 Laos as well? Were they more active at night as far as moving down the trail and all that?

26 MB: Jason, say that again, sorry.

27 JS: As far as speaking of the enemy being active at night, was that the case in
28 Laos as well as far as them moving down the trail?

29 MB: You know, we seldom flew night missions. We would take off in the dark
30 quite often, but by the time we got to the target it was light or beginning to become light.
31 We might have flown a few missions under flares, and mostly that was guys who had

1 South Vietnam experience. We'd very carefully pick the guys who go. Maybe if one of
2 these Vang Pao locations got under attack we'd go in at night. But they'd have A-10s
3 available out of NKP and they had other people who were more able—105 is not a good
4 night airplane, night bombing airplane.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: It just goes too fast.

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: And has too wide a turning radius, so—? The 105—and quite often we
9 would bomb late into the evening until night, and then land after dark, but we didn't have
10 a whole lot of night operations, so.

11 JS: What types of planes would be operated? Would the Spookies be operating
12 more?

13 MB: Oh Spookies, yeah, Spooky owns the night—Spooky and Super Spook. And
14 now the Super Spooks that they have are just so awesome I can't believe it. Of course,
15 they're still a very vulnerable airplane for a SAM, or even AAA or a Mig. The C-130 is
16 just a sitting duck for any of those. But if you have air superiority, Super Spook is
17 awesome. I mean, they shoot one bullet and get one truck. They shoot a 105 Howitzer.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: They've got 30 mm and 40 mm and 20 mm guns. And they've got pretty
20 good protection in chaff and flares, but that's only effective for a while, but you can't
21 stay over target forever just using that kind of defense.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: I would think—I flew A-10s a little bit and helped develop some of the
24 tactics for the A-10, but that was twenty years ago. I would think that Super Spook
25 working with A-10s, would be a very effective night attack force if you had air
26 superiority—if there were no big guns or missiles.

27 JS: Okay, all right. As far as the enemy, their tactics, were they any different? I
28 know you talked about the weaponry was much better, but did they operate any
29 differently as far as moving down the trail and all that?

30 MB: I don't think so, not a whole lot. You know, the Vietcong were indigenous,
31 they weren't going anywhere. They were sort of like the tribes in Afghanistan, I think.

1 The NVA were really an invading army, and so they were much better organized, they
2 moved faster, they had better equipment, better communications, and better mobility than
3 the Vietcong. Of course, the Vietcong didn't need to have mobility because they were
4 fighting in place, but they were resupplied by the NVA, and by the north, and by the
5 Soviets.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: And by the Chinese.

8 JS: Yes, sir.

9 MB: Had a lot of help.

10 JS: Right. How about the Pathet Lao, any contact with them?

11 MB: You know, I worked more with the Hmongs.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: And in fact, my squadron at Bien Hoa was very close to the Hmongs. We
14 called them the "Mike Forces." And the Mike Forces had a special scarf they would give
15 you if you drank enough whiskey with them. Their whiskey is terrible. Mekong
16 whiskey—it's like moonshine.

17 JS: Oh, wow.

18 MB: And they loved Crown Royal, or Jack Daniels, or any of the smooth stuff.

19 JS: Right.

20 MB: Anyway, they would give you a Mike Force scarf, and I wore it when I was
21 flying 100s. I carried it in my pocket as a FAC because I wasn't sure I wanted the ARVN
22 to know that I was that close to the Hmongs, because they didn't get along real well. The
23 Vietnamese kind of looked down on the Montagnards, and so I carried it in my pocket
24 and if I needed it, I could show it if I came down amongst the Hmongs. And it was sort of
25 one of those things that if you have one of these scarves; you're a trusted person.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: I still have my Mike Forces scarf somewhere. The Army, US Army Special
28 Forces that worked with the Hmongs were really tough, they were really good fighters.

29 JS: All right.

1 MB: As far as the Laotians, I never really got to know them. The people that I
2 know that were Raven FACs said they were good people, like the Hmongs and the
3 Montagnards.

4 JS: Okay. Well, what about the relationship to the Thais? I know you talked about
5 the bomb loaders, but what was the general feeling that you could get of the relationship
6 to the Thais, and how did you feel about the war? Were you able to pick up on that?

7 MB: You know, the Thais kind of had an interesting relationship with one guy.
8 Our squadron, I working in wing staff, but I was attached to a squadron. We had a few
9 Thais, you know. They ran the snack bar and had a couple of guys that were drivers.
10 They'd drive these big bread vans and come out—they were crew vans. They would
11 come out and pick us up after a flight. This one guy, first of all, Takhli was a Japanese
12 Air Base in the 2nd World War.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: And after we took over that part of Thailand it became one of the supply
15 bases and was actually a fighter base for awhile. So, you know, there was a runway there
16 when we went in there, and some of the old buildings were still there, the old World War
17 II barrack type buildings.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: We had some hooches where guys lived, and maybe eight, ten, twelve of
20 them in a hooch. They were much nicer than what we had in Vietnam. I mean, they were
21 air conditioned, and had refrigerators and I think they had a little stove. I lived in a
22 trailer—two guys to a trailer. These little, tiny trailers had a little shower I could barely
23 turn around in it. There was kind of half a bedroom on each end of the trailer, and they
24 were air conditioned. So, that was very nice, and Thailand gets hot, especially up there in
25 the plains, hot and dusty. But there was this guy that worked—he drove a van, and he
26 worked in the life support section folding parachutes, and checking survival kits, and all
27 that kind of thing. Takhli is a rice—it's just a railhead is all it is, it's a rice and lumber
28 town. So, the Thais in that area were not nearly as sophisticated as the Thais that you see
29 in Bangkok. I mean, these were country people. If you had a job on the base, you were
30 like a king in town. And this kid was maybe twenty-five years old, and he had a Thai

1 name that nobody could pronounce, but everybody in the squadron had one of these 49cc
2 bicycles.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: Mopeds I guess you call them.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: If you had less than fifty ccs, you didn't have to have a license on it in
7 Thailand. So, we all had 49cc bikes, and this guy had an unpronounceable name, but he
8 could fix all the bicycles, so we called him "Bicycle." That was his American name. He
9 was a good kid, and one day we were—and he didn't speak real good English, but he
10 could understand it. And we were riding back in, in the van maybe six or eight of us in
11 the van, and somebody said something about the Thai Queen, and somebody else said
12 "F*** the Queen." He stopped that van, slammed it into park, got out, and walked into
13 the squadron. He wouldn't have any of that. Somebody else got up and drove us in, and
14 we all apologized to him, and when I apologized to him, and knowing him a little better I
15 said, "I understand, but you have to understand that we don't have a queen, and we don't
16 know what it means." So, we sort of got to know each other better, and we'd play Frisbee
17 out at lunch time. He invited me down to his house. Well, most of the houses in Takhli
18 were just straw shacks. Mud floors or maybe elevated wood floors, but pigs running in
19 and out, and chickens out in the back and all that kind of thing.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: He had an air conditioned place where his mother and his grandmother and
22 his brothers lived, and they all worked in the rice fields, or in the lumber yard. But
23 because he lived on the base, he had enough money he had a palace in their standards. I
24 got to know him better and better the whole year I was there. We didn't stay in touch or
25 anything like that. He could write Thai, and he could barely speak English. He said he
26 learned to speak English from watching British movies.

27 JS: Really?

28 MB: And he spoke with a little bit of a British accent.

29 JS: Right.

30 MB: Of course, he had a very, very heavy Thai accent. Thais are beautiful people.
31 I think I told you earlier, they say that they are like the bamboo, they bend, but they don't

1 break. And that's what they said they did during the Japanese occupation was: they bent.
2 They did what the Japanese told them to, but they knew they couldn't fight the Japanese.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: By the way, Thai women are beautiful. They are more Chinese than the
5 Vietnamese, I think and there are some very tall Thais. Of course, the ones that are—I
6 forgot the word for it, but the ones that are partially French are particularly beautiful.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: They have a lot of French influence, by the way.

9 JS: Right, yes sir.

10 MB: We had some bikes that were bigger than 49cc's and I didn't have one, but I
11 borrowed, a 75cc Honda, and I rode it, with a couple of other guys, up to—you know, we
12 all had motorcycles, up to Chiang Mai, and I blistered my knees, I had on shorts. I
13 blistered my knees and my hands because the heat coming up off the asphalt was so hot,
14 but Chiang Mai was a beautiful place, and I would love to go back there someday.

15 JS: Did you ever get into Bangkok?

16 MB: Oh yeah, we'd get into Bangkok. We flew seven days a week, so about every
17 twenty days or so we kind of encouraged guys to take three or four days off. Because if
18 you fly every day, day-in and day-out, either fly or do staff work, it gets pretty old. I
19 mean, it gets boring. We drank too much. The O' Club was home, that was family. We
20 ate all our meals in the O' Club, and once in awhile we'd have some kind of
21 entertainment, either Thai boxing or some python charmer, or something would come in
22 and so we had a little entertainment. But about once a month I'd either hop on the train
23 and run down to Bangkok, or there was a C-130 that came through and if they had
24 space—and they were usually dropping off stuff, so they usually had space going out.
25 You could catch a ride down to Bangkok. And what we did is: a whole bunch of guys in
26 my squadron got together and got an apartment down there. So you could schedule
27 yourself to be in the apartment, and maybe six guys at a time could be in the apartment.
28 We had a little mamma-san down there. They would buy vegetables and stuff from us.
29 It's kind of interesting, you know you're always battling dysentery over there, or
30 diarrhea. If nothing else, you're just eating stranger foods, and spicier foods sometimes.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: I got a real bad case of dysentery, I think, in Vietnam and it came back on
2 me a couple of times in Thailand. But I talked to the doctors about it, and they said,
3 “You’re more likely to get sick eating the O’ Club food, than you are eating off a street
4 vendor in Bangkok.

5 JS: Really?

6 MB: Because everything you get from a street vendor is either boiled or fried.
7 And so, anything in it has been killed. Whereas if you eat fresh vegetables at the O’ Club,
8 it may have just come out of a benjo ditch somewhere.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: They use human fertilizer, for fertilizer.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: Anyway, I got sick a few times in Thailand. I got much sicker in Vietnam,
13 and it still comes back on me once in awhile. But anyway, we’d go down to Bangkok and
14 they had an Air Force hotel down there called the Chao PI, which is the same name as the
15 river. You could go to the Chao PI and get tickets for shows, and recommendations for
16 restaurants. You could seldom stay in the Chou PI because the rooms were all booked up,
17 but they would recommend places for you to stay, and things to do. You know, maybe
18 during my twelve months in Thailand I went down there maybe eight, ten times.

19 JS: Did you have an R & R in Thailand while you there?

20 MB: I got to do an R & R and my wife and I met in Hawaii.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: The same place we had met when we were in Vietnam. In Vietnam I took
23 my R & R between my 100 and my O-1 assignment, and we met and stayed in—I’m
24 trying to think of the hotel there, The Halekulani. The second time we went when we
25 were in Thailand, we got a cottage over on the North Shore and I forget the name of that
26 little Air Force military recreation area (Bellows Air Force Station), but it was very nice.

27 JS: When you would go down to Thailand were there a lot of American
28 servicemen there, say for R & R and things like that?

29 MB: Oh yeah, I’m trying to think what all they had. They had a trainer for a
30 missile, that we were supposed to be able to shoot, and it was just an excuse because in
31 Thailand all you had to do was walk in and shoot one missile. It took about thirty minutes

1 and you get to spend the weekend in Bangkok. The Air Force set that up just as an excuse
2 for guys to be able to go to Don Mueang, which is the Royal Thai Air Force Base in
3 Bangkok. Thailand also—I broke my arm when I was in Thailand, broke it really badly.
4 They wouldn't send me home to get it fixed. In fact, it was three days before I could get
5 out of Takhli, and they sent me down to a hospital down in U Tapao. U Tapao was a B-
6 52 base, but they had a big Army hospital down there, and that's where they'd sent a lot
7 of the burned and the badly wounded before they could get them back to the States. So,
8 they sent me down to U Tapao, and they set my arm and I went back and, I'm just pulling
9 staff duty. It was great for everybody I was working with because I had to pull all of
10 the—you know, I didn't ever have to fly, so every day I could pull one of the debriefing
11 shifts.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: So, I went back in four weeks to get my arm looked at, and they took it out
14 of the cast, and they said, "Well, we're going to have to rebreak it." And I said, "No,
15 you're not." I said, "You either send me back to the States, or you send me back to a
16 cockpit." And they said, "Well, you go back to Takhli, and when your flight surgeon
17 gives you the okay you can go back to flying. Well, I went back and the flight surgeon—I
18 said, "When I can beat you arm wrestling I get to go back into the cockpit." It took me
19 about another week before (unintelligible). And I went back flying with a clamshell cast
20 on my arm. Well, that never got healed. Well, they said, "When you get back to the States
21 you have to go get it fixed because it's not set right. And I came back, and I was too busy
22 flying and having too much fun, so I never did get it fixed right. And then finally about a
23 year ago, old age and arthritis got to me, and I went in and the doctor said, "Hmm, you
24 have a mess there, and you let it go too long, but we can do something." They fixed it
25 about a year ago. It's much better, I got a lot better flexibility and strength in it, and it's
26 not hurting anymore, but I should have gotten it done when I came back. Anyway, so
27 there was a big Army/B-52 base down in Southern Thailand.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: I always wanted to get down there to the beaches. Pattaya Beach I think it is,
30 but I never did get to the beaches. Some guys did take the train down there, but we were

1 pretty strapped for crews. While we didn't get a whole lot of guys shot down while I was
2 there, still, we were optimally manned, and you couldn't be going for very long.

3 JS: How did you break your arm?

4 MB: Trying to play at touch football. George Thomson, that guy I told you was an
5 all-American fullback, he was playing quarterback, and I was rushing him and jumping
6 up and trying to block his pass. This other kid took my legs out from under me, and I
7 should have just fallen on him, but I rolled off of him and broke my arm. I had broken it
8 before though, so it was weak.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: So, they put me in the little clinic there and just started giving Vicodin, and
11 they gave me so many Vicodins that when I finally got to U Tapao, and they blocked the
12 nerves of that arm. I think I slept for three days. God knows why.

13 JS: Oh wow, right. One other thing I wanted to ask you about was particularly
14 memorable flights from this time period that stand out.

15 MB: In the 105?

16 JS: Yes, sir.

17 MB: Oh, let me think. One was when we were strafing APCs in the Plaine des
18 Jarres. Let me give you a little background on tactics and attitudes in pilots.

19 JS: Okay, sure.

20 MB: A friend of mine named Bill Douglas was stationed with me in Lakenheath,
21 and he, before I got sent to Vietnam, he got sent to Vietnam as a forward air controller.

22 JS: Okay

23 MB: Bill's a good old Massachusetts boy and he was unmarried. He was kind of a
24 hell raiser over in England. All the bachelors in England lived in this old English manor
25 and they had some terrific parties. They knew all of the—I was married and had kids over
26 there, but these guys knew all of the British young ladies, so they had fantastic parties at
27 a place called North Court. Anyway, I got to know Bill in England, and then he went off
28 to the war, and he got shot down in an O-1. Took a .50 caliber through his leg—and one
29 of our squadron mates, who had been killed over there in England, his wife was also from
30 Massachusetts, so when she was back there and Bill was in the hospital in the northeast,
31 she went to visit him, and they ended up getting married. And they live right here in

1 Colorado Springs, we're good friends. But anyway, Bill and I were both stationed—after
2 his first tour in Vietnam and my first tour in Vietnam—we were both stationed at Cannon
3 Air Force Base. We lived right across the street from each other which was sort of a
4 critical mass, but we were always in trouble and partying too much. He and I both
5 volunteered for 105s at the same time, and we went through training at McConnell at the
6 same time.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: And went over to Takhli together. Well, Takhli had—the old guys, the guys
9 that had been there for a while, had flown north, and then they shut it off and I forget the
10 timing of that, but it was before we got there, they said no more north missions, or only
11 special north missions. We got there and we thought they were pretty reckless. We
12 thought they were hanging it out, a little bit too bravado. And guys would come to back
13 with a great big hole in their wing, and they'd go out and stand in it and get their picture
14 taken with big smiles and everybody would go to the bar and celebrate their getting hit.

15 JS: Right.

16 MB: Bill and I kind of look at each other and say, "They lost, they did something
17 wrong that they got hit."

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: So, we started kind of trying to be an influence for, "Hey guys, again you
20 want to get the bombs on the target, and you want to win, you don't want to get hit."
21 Now, you don't go down making your fourth strafe run on a gun. You can make a couple
22 passes on a gun, but then let the next guys get it. Don't hang around, don't take chances,
23 there's no target worth it. That was sort of the attitude that took me to, "Okay, I'm not
24 going to get hit. I haven't been hit, I've been doing something right, and I'm not going to
25 get hit." And Bill and I still talk about that, and that's one of the things I took to the
26 Pentagon when we were designing tactics and airplanes. One of the things I took Fighter
27 Weapons School when I was Commandant there was: you develop tactics, and you don't
28 get hit. That's not a red batch of courage when you come back with a big hole in your
29 wing. So anyway, one day Bill and I are up on a flight, and there's an APC down there.
30 We're trying to get it and it keeps moving around on us, we couldn't get it. After about
31 the second run I said, "Bill, it's time to go home." He says, "You betcha, let's go." So we

1 got of there. But we were being lured in there because there's that damn little thing down
2 there and "we were going to get it." Whoever's driving that thing was good because he
3 would wait until we got on final and he'd come toward us, or he'd go behind a building
4 or go behind a tree. He knew where we were coming from, he was really sharp, but man
5 we didn't get him. That was one of the flights I remember. I remember the one that I
6 wasn't on where Carl Dice got killed. I remember the one with George Thompson where
7 we flew through the big thunderstorm and stripped the radomes. There were some good
8 days, and there were bad days. There were days where, as a staff officer, and I'm sitting
9 there trying to kill something and I keep putting more and more flights on it and we can't
10 get it. Like a caterpillar on a hill, or a particular road intersection. You'd put another
11 flight on it and they'd come back, and you'd hit fifty yards each, or either, side of them
12 so they didn't take the intersection out. That was frustrating. It was frustrating when you
13 put guys on a target, and they got shot up a lot. And I would personally go out and look at
14 all of any of the damage that came back. There were some weeks where we'd get mostly
15 probably shrapnel when guys flying through their own bomb shards. We'd get very few
16 hits and sometimes there'd be a week where everybody came back with 23 mm hits. It's
17 very hard to tell the difference between gunshot shrapnel, where the projectile explodes
18 and you've got all these little razor blades flying around, or a bomb shard which is maybe
19 bigger, the shards may be bigger, but still, it's hard to tell what hit the airplane. But I
20 would go out and take pictures and, you know, spend a little more time debriefing those
21 pilots, and then we'd start marking where'd guys were getting hit so we could tell where
22 the 23s were moving around. And we'd get them targeted, we'd go through Intel and then
23 maybe take a day or two before we'd get them targeted, or I could divert flights. I had to
24 have approval to do it, but I'd just say, "Hey, we got somebody going in that area, can I
25 save half the bombs and go against where me and my Intel guys think the targets are, that
26 the guns are.

27 JS: All right, how many losses did the squadron take?

28 MB: How many what?

29 JS: How many losses does the squadron take?

1 MB: You know, it wasn't too bad in Thailand. It was much worse in Vietnam. It
2 was much worse in England. The wing I was in lost nineteen airplanes in the two and a
3 half years I was there in England. And we weren't getting shot at over there.

4 JS: What would the cause be then?

5 MB: We were having engine problems.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: And discipline problems. In the 105, I'm thinking in the year I was there, in
8 my squadron, we probably lost four guys, four pilots and airplanes.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: Carl Dice was one of them. I'm trying to think of other guys. Mostly to guns,
11 and mostly airplane and pilot, if the airplane went the pilot didn't survive. A couple of
12 bailouts, I don't think in my squadron, but in some of these. There were three squadrons
13 there, and of course I'm much more familiar with my squadron, but being in the staff I'm
14 also familiar with the other losses. And we had a few bailouts that we got recovered. If
15 they got out in Thailand—excuse me, if they got out in Laos and they weren't right on an
16 NVA route, the Pathet Lao would get them out. They had a lot of helicopters over there.
17 If you were around NKP, they'd get you out pretty quick.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: Of course, if you went out in Thailand, heck, you could catch the train back,
20 but they'd go out and get you into a helicopter. But when they were going north, they
21 were losing a lot. Of course, they were under the "hundred mission" rule then and some
22 guys would get a hundred missions in six or eight months and they were taking a lot of
23 losses. Both from the MiG and from SAMs, and guns.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: But the tactics weren't very good, I don't think. And talking to those guys,
26 they were pretty much—now, you were asking about constraints. They were pretty much
27 constrained on their attack routes, and their escape routes, and what they could bomb. It's
28 just ludicrous to go in and bomb SAM sites, and restricted targets, and leave the Mig
29 bases alone. You take out the SAMs and the Migs first. The best way to kill a MiG is
30 when he's sitting on the ground and you hit him with a bomb.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: It's not very cost effective to wait until he gets airborne to shoot him down,
2 but that's what we were doing. We also—there's this huge, rich target sitting out there in
3 Haiphong Harbor and they wouldn't let us hit it. So those rules were very frustrating to
4 everybody in the Air Force. The politicians, they say, "Well, we can't bomb them because
5 if we do then the Russians and the Chinese are going to come in."

6 JS: Were there restrictions as to how far north you could go into Laos before
7 getting too close to say, the Chinese border?

8 MB: Yes.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: But there wasn't much going on up there, I don't think. There may have
11 been some Chinese Migs come down out of there, but I don't think they ever engaged
12 anybody, they were just probing. You know, but that's a real jungle area there.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: There wasn't much going on war-wise that I know of up there.

15 JS: All right. Is there anything else we should say about this time at __ (??)?

16 MB: Well, it was very frustrating, you know, flying there and knowing what rich
17 targets there were, and not being able to go after them. Especially talking to guys that had
18 been able to go after some of them, anyway earlier in the war. It was frustrating, and
19 more frustrating when I came back and really studied what was going on as a captain. I
20 didn't know much about what was going on politically. I didn't have the big strategic
21 picture. I just had my little world of 105s.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: But it was frustrating later.

24 JS: I asked you this question about South Vietnam within the time you were there,
25 but this time were you in Laos when you were flying over missions of Laos. Again, did
26 you have a feeling—I know you talked about it, you didn't really have the idea of the big
27 picture, but did you have the feeling that the war was going well, or what was your
28 opinion on that at that time?

29 MB: I thought the war was going well. I thought that we were, if not stopping all
30 of the materials—and you know, they talk about the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Ho Chi
31 Minh Trail was a network of highways through the jungle. You could cut one and there

1 were ten more that were all going south. I thought we were if not stopping, at least
2 severely limiting the amount of supplies that were getting into South Vietnam. But the
3 frustrating thing was, we could have stopped it all at Hanoi Harbor.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: And it would have been much easier to hit it there than to wait until it got
6 down and dispersed into Laos. I felt that we let down our allies over there. South
7 Vietnam, South Vietnamese, the Diem Government, and later the Cao Key.

8 JS: Win Cao Key?

9 MB: Win Cao Key, I think he was a fighter pilot. As a matter of fact, he was a
10 pilot.

11 JS: Yes sir, right.

12 MB: While they were corrupt, they were no more corrupt than most of the
13 governments in Southeast Asia, and they were our allies. We had a treaty with them. I
14 think we let them down badly, and at the same time let the Cambodians, and guys like
15 Bang Pao who depended on us, and was a Vanguard of freedom in Laos—we let all those
16 guys down. And we showed to the world that you can't depend on the US, and the world
17 has reacted to that.

18 JS: These are certainly some issues that I want to touch on later as we get towards
19 the end of the interview. Get your opinion about strategy and the way the war was
20 handled a little bit. Is there anything else about Thailand? Were there anything like funny
21 moments or anything that stick out in your mind?

22 MB: Oh, funny moments? We had a lot of fun. My wife and I were talking about
23 how I love Colorado because I'm a beer drinker, and we've got a lot of microbrews up
24 here. And I tried a new microbrew at dinner the other night when we went out to eat, and
25 I said, "Not bad," and she said, "Have you ever had a beer that you didn't like?" and I
26 said, "Well, in Thailand we drank Amstel." Which is a European, or Dutch beer. "It was
27 Amstel. It must have been sitting on a dock in Bangkok for twenty years, because it was
28 terrible." Now Amstel, when you drink in Europe it's not a bad beer. Amstel in Thailand
29 was horrible, but you know, I think it cost a nickel, a can over in Thailand. I can't to this
30 day drink an Amstel without kind of getting queasy because there are so many of them in
31 Thailand. You know, we would all sit—when we were talking about flying nights,

1 sometimes the guys that were coming in to brief for the early mission, I mean, they were
2 going to take off at probably an hour before dawn. So, they're briefing at three o'clock in
3 the morning and, go walking out to the airplanes about five or four thirty and taking off.
4 So, they'd be in eating breakfast in the O' club at three o'clock. The O' club was
5 virtually open all the time.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: If you went in and there was nobody in the kitchen, you'd just bang on the
8 bar, and there was probably a Thai asleep under the bar who'd get up and scramble you
9 some eggs. So, the guys that were getting up for their three o'clock briefings would meet
10 the guys who had come in and landed at nine o'clock, and we're still in the bar drinking
11 beer. So, the O' club was a twenty-four hour a day operation, and we would sit kind of by
12 squadron, and you kind of had a favorite place you'd sit for most of the meals. You'd
13 wander around and do other things. Sometimes I'd go over and get an egg sandwich or
14 something like that and just got back to my hooch and read. We had a little swimming
15 pool we could sit around. I took a course there, Industrial College of the Armed Forces,
16 which was a correspondence course. I took three big boxes of books over there. I read
17 them all, took all the tests while I was over there. So, you know, I kind of kept myself
18 occupied that way. Of course, the language, there were hardly any women around. We
19 had maybe a couple of nurses, and every once in awhile a red cross girl would come
20 through or something. I think some of the contractors had female employees or
21 something. There were a few "round eyes" as we called them. They kind of hung to
22 themselves you know. They stayed out of the bar as much as possible, or only went there
23 with friends. So, the language got a little rough, and our standards got a little rough at the
24 dining table. About a month before rotation, we had a "couth table."

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: Everybody sat at the couth table, and of course, if you said a curse word you
27 had to put a dollar in the jar. And that would clean your language up a little bit before you
28 went back to your family. We had Thai waitresses and Thai bartenders, and they were
29 very friendly. They were very used to the rough language and everything. Almost every
30 bar in Southeast Asia had a nude behind the main bar. I think ours was called Big Red or
31 something. We very seldom got anybody above the rank of colonel in there and the

1 colonels didn't care, the wing commanders didn't care. But if somebody like a general or
2 a politician was coming in, we'd have to take Big Red down and we'd put another picture
3 up there. As soon as they were off base, Big Red would go back up.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: Some of the girls, and some of the Thai waitresses we had favorite
6 nicknames for. They're very pretty people, and they're very gentle and gracious people,
7 but this one, they have flat noses and we called her "Mach Two" because that's what we
8 figured she was going when she hit the wall. We had another on that was very pretty and
9 everybody was always hitting on her, and her favorite response was, "Maybe later." So,
10 her name was Maybe Later.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: So, we had some fun. When you did your "end of tour flight," the last flight,
13 you usually got to lead it, unless you were very new, or a very poor pilot, you got to lead
14 it. So, you'd come back, and you could do one fly-by as long as it was in reason. You'd
15 put your flight in a diamond and bring them down, or you'd come by and do a little pitch
16 up from the deck, or something like that. And then they would all meet you at the
17 airplane, and they have these beautiful leis over there that they make out of very sweet
18 smelling flowers. They'd put a lei around your neck and you'll pop a champagne and
19 then they'd put you on a truck and drive you around and usually it ended up at the
20 swimming pool and everybody would throw you in the swimming pool and you'd have a
21 party. So almost every week we were having some kind of end of tour party for
22 somebody. It's because they had people scheduled so that there was always a turnover in
23 the squadron. Always somebody getting short, and always a newbie coming in.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: We did a lot of sports. We played basketball, we played softball, we played
26 touch football, we had horseshoe pitching and badminton, and we had a pool. We didn't
27 swim races in it or anything, but you could sit around the pool. So, we kept ourselves
28 entertained, and kind of our minds off of the danger we were in, it was fun.

29 JS: Yes, sir. At what point would you be pulled off of the flight line, I guess and
30 stop flying missions?

1 MB: you flew your last flight and usually the next day, or the day after that, you
2 were on a freedom bird and they'd get you on a C-130 down to Don Muang, and then
3 you'd take a—the Air Force had contract airlines that would stuff us into an airplane to
4 take us back. Usually, they'd take you from Bangkok to maybe Hawaii, or Guam, and
5 you'd switch planes there and back into San Francisco.

6 JS: All right.

7 MB: They didn't want you hanging around much after you flew your last flight.

8 JS: Okay, all right. So, when did you leave?

9 MB: July of '70.

10 JS: July of '70, okay.

11 MB: Went from there back to the states, picked up my family, and we moved to
12 Okinawa, where I flew 105s for a year and half. It was kind of interesting. When I got to
13 Okinawa they said, "We're all Weasels (Wild Weasels: aircraft and crews equipped and
14 trained to directly and indirectly engage and destroy enemy radar/SAM capabilities) and
15 you're not a Weasel, so you're going to fly a T-33." I said, "Oh no I'm not." They said,
16 "Well, you have to become a Weasel." So I call a friend of mine up who was running the
17 Weasel school at Nellis—Frank Bates is his name." and he says, "Ripper, I cannot get
18 people to come to this course." He said, "If you can show up next week, I have an
19 opening, and the paperwork will follow." So once again I was the wing scheduler and
20 they had some airplanes that needed to be taken back to McClellan, so I got to McClellan
21 and I'm on a space "A" of some kind, got to Nellis, and I was in the course for 105
22 Weasel school at Nellis for about three weeks before my orders caught up with me. But I
23 had a friend, and he actually could not get people to come to his course. So, he said, "If
24 you show up, you've got to fly." So, I learned to fly a Weasel, but I never flew in combat.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: And that's a very interesting mission.

27 JS: Could you talk a little bit about that training? I'm somewhat familiar with
28 what a Weasel would do, but could you talk about that training?

29 MB: Well, when I went through—and I'm sorry, I should have reviewed my
30 nomenclature and my missiles and stuff, but they were using "Standard ARMs." (AGM-
31 78) The Standard is a kind of a run of the mill missile that the Navy developed. They use

1 it for all kinds of things. They use it for anti-ship and depending on what kind of
2 guidance you put on it, and what kind of war head you put on it, and what kind of fusing
3 you put on it. You can make one missile body do a lot of different jobs. Well, Standard
4 ARM was a very long missile that you could carry, I think four of them, on the 105.

5 When they first started developing the Wild Weasel mission, it was done by F-100 two
6 seaters, the Misties did a lot of the Wild Weasel prototype work. You don't stay exposed
7 to a SAM for very long, so you need to get exposed to him, get him to illuminate you,
8 and either shoot at him or get out of his way. So, what they would do is they would go in
9 low, and the SA2 radars were not very good at picking up low targets. So, if you knew
10 where SAM was, you'd go in low and you'd pop up. Have you ever seen a weasel run
11 through the grass?

12 JS: Yes, sir.

13 MB: The profile looks very similar. You pop up, you get him to illuminate you,
14 and the detectors that we had I watched them evolve. For the first ones that I ever saw
15 were in Vietnam in '67. They started mounting these boxes in the cockpit, and they didn't
16 turn them on, they didn't even wire them up when they first started appearing. Everybody
17 said, "What's that, what's that?" And a few guys knew a little bit about it and what it
18 would do it was like a big watch, maybe a three inch—cathode ray tube is what it was, a
19 little three inch television. When a radar illuminated, when they finally did connect them
20 up, we hadn't been briefed on them yet, but we realized that if you turned them on—you
21 weren't supposed to turn them on, but we did anyway. Even ground approach radar,
22 you'd get a strobe out—just a strobe of light from the center out toward where the radar
23 was coming from. And depending—I've forgotten exactly what the symbology on it was,
24 but you'd have a red strobe, or a yellow strobe, and at the end you might have a 2 or you
25 might have an A, or something like that.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: and the length of the strobe indicated the strength of the signal. Well, when
28 the Weasels—when the Misties first started flying against the SAM sites, they would just
29 put that strobe at twelve o'clock, fly into it until they knew about where the target was,
30 and then they'd pop up, and of course they'd get other illumination. They'd start
31 getting—one of the symbols was for a search radar, I think they called it, and then there

1 was a fire control radar, and of course that would flash and really get your attention
2 because you didn't want to get shot at. Well, they'd pull up until it started flashing, then
3 they'd make a ninety degree turn and do that maneuver I was telling you about where
4 they'd fly down and they'd try to get the SAM site to shoot at them, or at least to leave
5 the radar on long enough so the guy behind them, or they, could shoot one of these
6 Standard ARMs at it. I, even in Thailand, flew a few times with Standard ARMs,
7 although I wasn't a Weasel pilot. I was on the wing of a Weasel pilot and they would use
8 a tactic where I'd follow them in, and they would pop up and try to get the SAM to shoot.
9 Never shot one, never shot a Standard. But those missiles have—and that's what you
10 learn to do at Nellis. First of all, I had never flown with another crew member in my
11 cockpit. I had flown two-seaters as an instructor, but that's not crew coordination, and by
12 this time I had about twenty-five hundred hours, and it was very frustrating to me to try to
13 learn how to talk to somebody in the cockpit, to have a teammate in the airplane with me.
14 And it was even more frustrating when I got into the F-4 D, which you had to have a
15 back-seater for. It was more of an air-to-air airplane and I was squadron commander in a
16 training squadron of F-4Ds, and I never did learn to do the mission very well, I'm afraid.
17 But anyway, back to the Weasel thing. Through the years, the Standard ARM gave way
18 to another missile, which gave way to another air to ground missile. And now we have
19 the ARM, Standard ARM, still a standard body except it's got a lot better range.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: No wait, it's not Standard ARM, its HARM, it's not the Standard body. It's
22 the High Speed Anti-Radiation Missile (AGM-88). They've got several different flavors
23 of HARMs now, but back in '81, when they first had the HARMs, this is the first time
24 we'd ever used it operationally. The HARM has a profile that looks alarmingly like an
25 SA-6, or some of the more advanced Soviet ground-to-air missiles. And I'm sure it's a
26 solid fuel motor, but when it's going to shoot a long way the computer, and the Intel, and
27 all forward sources, and so forth tell the missile where it's going or where you think it
28 wants to go. And if it's going to go a long way, the first thing it does when it comes off
29 the wing is it goes up to about eighty thousand feet. And as it goes up with a solid
30 propellant plume coming out the back of the missile, it looks a lot like a SAM. Well,
31 that's very scary too, if you've got fifty airplanes going into a target like they did in

1 Desert Storm 1, everybody starts breaking and getting scared. So, they used this call on
2 “guard” that say the word “magnum” and it would be repeated. And then everybody
3 knew that was a HARM being shot so they didn’t get nervous about ground to air
4 missiles. The HARMs were so accurate against the Iraqi—actually Soviet—SA-6s and
5 other ground to air missile SAMS. About day three of that war, they didn’t even have to
6 shoot the missile, they’d just come up on guard and say, “Magnum.” And all the radars in
7 Iraq would shut down. So, they were listening to us, it was a pretty good tactic.

8 JS: Right.

9 MB: But the HARM is an awesome missile, and it has—if the enemy radar shuts
10 down, the HARM remembers where it was anyway.

11 JS: Oh, wow.

12 MB: It may not be as accurate of a shot, but it will get the target. And what it goes
13 after is the magnetron. It doesn’t go after the missiles. So, they’ve actually got these
14 HARMs that have Willy Pete, white phosphorous, in them. So, it will mark the target and
15 you can go ahead and bomb it. I think they’ve even got some now that have a shot gun
16 effect, so they go off before they hit the target, and it will pepper the area with shards
17 rather than trying to get a penetrating shot. But they’ve got pictures of HARMs actually
18 going through the missile van that has the magnetron in it.

19 JS: Okay. How long was this training here at Nellis?

20 MB: How long was what?

21 JS: How long was this training here at Nellis for the Weasel training?

22 MB: I think it was about four weeks, it was about a month. Yeah, my family was
23 in Okinawa and I was back here in the States going to school.

24 JS: All right.

25 MB: I went back to the wing in Okinawa, and I was in the squadron, and had a job
26 in wing staff. And we only had two squadrons there. We didn’t have a full wing because
27 a lot of the Wild Weasel airplanes, and crews, were temporary duty over augmenting one
28 wing or another. So, it was kind of a nice laid back tour. I was the squadron weapons
29 officer, and we went to, and won, the PACF weapons competition that year. And we were
30 kind of proud of that because we were up against A-7s which had inertial navigation
31 systems, and we were using plain dumb bombing methods and still beat them. It was nice

1 to get back with the family, learned to scuba dive there, and started applying for the
2 Thunderbirds there and made the Thunderbirds after a year and a half.

3 JS: Okay, so then you were for a year and a half then?

4 MB: Yup.

5 JS: Okay. Was there any possibility—I know this is counterfactual because it
6 didn't happen, but was there any possibility that you could go on alert and go back to be
7 sent back to Vietnam?

8 MB: The thing we were on alert for was Korea.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: Before I got there the Pueblo incident happened in Inchon Harbor, Inchon,
11 the west coast of Korea (Actually, off Wonson Harbor on the east coast of N. Korea).

12 JS: Yes, sir.

13 MB: Where they captured the Pueblo. We did not have a fighter aircraft within
14 range of Korea at that time. They actually—I think it happened on a Saturday or Sunday,
15 when the wing at Okinawa wasn't flying and they pulled guys in, called guys in, and
16 launched them in civilian clothes, to go up and just show presence in Korea. We had
17 bases up there. We just didn't have any armed aircraft. The South Vietnamese (Koreans?)
18 had some, but we didn't. And so 105s went up there, with nothing but 20 mm and landed.
19 We later, when I got there, we were pulling conventional alert at Taegu.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: And Taejon, two different bases up there. But it was pretty primitive, but
22 still, it was less than a year after the Pueblo that I got there, I think, I can check my dates
23 on that, but it was primitive enough up there that we stayed in little bitty unheated
24 trailers, and ate in the South Korean Air Force mess, and we only had like four airplanes,
25 so maybe we had six or eight crew members up there. Very small operation and we did
26 have conventional weapons then. Of course, that later grew quite a bit, and we re-manned
27 Kunsan and put in F-4s there and then later F-16s. That was kind of a fun mission though.
28 I had been to Korea a couple of times but I never spent any time there. And we'd go up
29 there and actually hunt pheasants, and hike around, and got up to Seoul a couple of times.
30 Then later, when I was working for Lockheed, I lived in Seoul. It changed quite a bit
31 between 1970 and 1996.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: So, we did have a mission there, and of course we had a standby special
3 weapons mission out of Takhli. It was a fun place to be stationed.

4 JS: All right.

5 MB: We also took airplanes from Takhli to—excuse me, from Okinawa—Kadena
6 is the name of the base there—to Southeast Asia. We were flying in and out of Khorot
7 and Takhli.

8 JS: Okay, all right. And this would have been, I guess, from timeline wise, from
9 '71 to '73?

10 MB: I was in Takhli '69 and '70.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: So, I moved to Kadena in about August of '70.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: And I applied for the Thunderbirds that fall, and the next fall and I made it
15 the second time I tried.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: So, November of '71 is when I got assigned to the Thunderbirds, and I flew
18 on the Thunderbirds in '72 and '73.

19 JS: Okay, all right. Before we get into the Thunderbirds and at Kadena, of course
20 this is the time when the US is really withdrawing from Vietnam, if you could talk a little
21 bit about that? Had you paid attention to that, and what did you think about the
22 withdrawal?

23 MB: Well, yeah, I was paying attention, and we were very frustrated as I said.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: And they actually started flying north again, I think, in about '72 or '73.

26 JS: Yes sir, particularly with the Easter Offensive, and Linebacker 172, yeah and
27 maybe somewhat before that as well.

28 MB: I didn't really start paying attention until I got on the Thunderbirds, and was
29 back in the States and '72, '73 was kind of—the Thunderbirds is a public relations team
30 and kind of hard—that was a hard job in those days because we'd fly into places that
31 we'd be greeted by tie dyed hippies, and we didn't get to spit on them, but there were

1 some communities that just didn't want anything military around. There were still some
2 very patriotic people, but it was kind of a tough time to be trying to sell the military, and
3 so that was frustrating as a Thunderbird.

4 JS: Right, sure.

5 MB: And then what ended my Thunderbird tour—I went on as the narrator, and
6 the narrator in those days automatically you stayed one year as a narrator, and then you
7 moved up into one of the demo slots the next year.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: And so, I was the narrator for about three months and one of the right
10 wingmen, we were at Dulles Air Force Base (International Airport), and the F-4 at that
11 time was having some horizontal stabilizer problems, and the actuator broke, and he got
12 killed in the crash. So, I moved up to right wingman, and actually, I had all of twelve
13 training flights until I flew my first demo flight.

14 JS: Oh, wow.

15 MB: It looked like a three ship and a bogie out there, you know. There's three
16 guys flying together and there was one out there yugging around and moving in and out.
17 But anyway, so I flew my first demo in '72, and had an option to stay for a third year in
18 '73, but that was when we were having the big fuel crisis. You know, fuel shortages?

19 JS: Yes, sir.

20 MB: And the last part of our season in '73 got cancelled. We cancelled about our
21 last twelve flights or so, demo flights. And they went to the T-38 as a demo airplane
22 because it was much more fuel efficient airplane. And I chose not to upgrade or
23 downgrade into the T-38 and moved on and went to school out of there. And that's when
24 I really started becoming aware of what was going on politically. But I was aware of it on
25 the Thunderbirds.

26 JS: All right, well once again unfortunately we're coming up on two hours here
27 and before moving into—I'd like to talk a good bit more about the Thunderbirds, and
28 your experiences there, but I guess we should probably go ahead and stop here for today.

29 MB: Sounds good to me.

30 JS: Okay.

Interview with Michael Blaisdell
Session [3] of [4]
Date

1 Jason Stuart: Last time when we left off, we had just begun to talk about your
2 time with the Thunderbirds.

3 Michael Blaisdell: Yes.

4 JS: Could you kind of pick up on the story there?

5 MB: Well, let's see I was at Kadena Air Base, flying F-105s there, and as I said I
6 got a few occasions to take airplanes from there over to Southeast Asia and back, and a
7 relatively short trip versus the trips that I had made in the 100 from the States. But I was
8 there—when I got there, they had a rule that everybody in that wing had to be Wild
9 Weasels and I wasn't a Weasel and they were going to assign me to the T-33, so I got my
10 friend, Frank Bates, to get me in the course at Nellis. And then I remember it was about a
11 month long course, and then I got through that. I was the squadron weapon's officer
12 there. I think we only had two squadrons there. We were pretty short on airplanes
13 because most of our—well, we had some two seat airplanes, they were Weasel airplanes.
14 But anyway, I think we had about two squadrons there. We were constantly exchanging
15 airplanes with Takhli and Khorat.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: But I had kind of always had in the back of my mind that I kind of wanted to
18 be a Thunderbird, but the criteria for being a Thunderbird, at that time, was you had to
19 have less than ten years rated service. But you had to have over one thousand hours of
20 fighter time.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: Well, that makes it a fairly small window.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: I mean, because if you're real lucky you can get about two hundred hours a
25 year, so that makes it, you know, five or six years to ten years so a fairly small window.
26 Mostly young captains are applying. They usually have about one thousand applications
27 for each opening on the team.

28 JS: Okay.

1 MB: The team at that time was five demonstration pilots. The four in the
2 diamond, and one solo. And they normally rotate two or three a year. The assignment for
3 a demo pilot is two years on the team. Now they have six, they have two solos with the F-
4 16s, but anyway, I applied and got selected to travel with the team. In other words, I kind
5 of got on the short list.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: And to apply you of course have to send them a picture and you have to send
8 them a written statement of why you want to be a Thunderbird and, of course, you give
9 them all your experience and everything. I got to travel with the team. I met them down
10 at Pensacola, Florida, by the way, which was at that time the home for the Blue Angels.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: But we were doing a show down—they were doing a show down there. And
13 when you get to travel with the team, they just want to see how compatible you are with
14 the public, see how compatible you are with the rest of the team. How you travel in other
15 words.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: So, you make at least one move with them. From Pensacola—I've forgotten
18 where we went, I think it was somewhere in the Midwest. So, I got to ride in the backseat
19 of one of the demo pilots while I was traveling. Back up just a little bit. When I was at
20 Cannon Air Force Base as the scheduling officer, I had gone to a tanker scheduling
21 conference. I think it was at Tinker Air Force Base and I met a guy by the name of Mac
22 Angel who was a left wingman at the time. He and I kind of got along at this little
23 conference. It was actually a pretty big conference. All the training wings were there, and
24 of course the Thunderbirds have a big aerial refueling commitment, and they get priority.
25 But we were there two or three days and we kind of hit it off and he says, "Why don't
26 you apply to be a Thunderbird?" Well, three or four years later, after I had gone to F-105
27 assignment, and got to Okinawa, I got to thinking about that. So that's why I applied.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: He was sort of my mentor to apply.

30 JS: All right.

1 MB: Anyway, I got to chat with them, did not get selected that year, so it was
2 pretty easy the next year to just update my portfolio and send it back in, and they had
3 encouraged me to apply again.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: So, I applied again, and that time got selected and it was kind of funny, I
6 don't know whether you remember it or not, I told you about finding out about our first
7 daughter being born on MARs radio?

8 JS: Yes, sir.

9 MB: Well, they informed me, in Okinawa, that I had been selected about four
10 o'clock in the morning, and Tom Swam, the leader of the Thunderbirds, called me and he
11 informed me on MARs radio that I had been selected.

12 JS: All right.

13 MB: We'd been in Okinawa about a year and a half, and that was really a nice
14 reunion for our family. All the girls were pretty young then, and Okinawa's a pretty nice
15 assignment, you know kind of a tropical place. Not all that comfortable living because of
16 the hurricanes and the heat and all, but we spent a lot of beach time. I scuba dived and
17 although we still had some TDY in Korea, and some TDY going into Southeast Asia, we
18 still kind of—it was still kind of a reunion for us. Anyway, we got assigned to go to
19 Nellis, and when I got there—actually during the interview process they had asked me if I
20 would consider being a narrator.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: The narrator on the Thunderbirds is kind of the advance man. He gets to
23 work with the public a lot. He gets to work with the base where they're going. Every base
24 has a project officer for the Thunderbird visit, so the Thunderbirds have a pretty nice staff
25 that sets everything up.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: But the narrator's the one that goes in there, and he's got the short term
28 requirement to get things right before the team gets there. He's usually got an hour or two
29 is about all. He's the advance man, he flies out ahead of the team, sets everything up, and
30 then the team comes in and does the demo—or the arrival show.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: I kind of liked that idea anyway, and that would have given me a three year
2 assignment on the team instead of two. The policy at that time was: you were narrator for
3 one year, and then you moved into a demo slot the second and third year.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: So, I became the narrator, and I had never flown in the F-4. Well, I had
6 flown in the F-4 just as a joyride kind of thing.

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: But I've never been checked out in the F-4.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: So that was a bit of a challenge. They sent me down to Holloman (AFB, NM)
11 and I got a quick check out in the F-4, and then became the narrator. And I'd never done
12 a whole lot of public speaking, so I had a lot of coaching. As the team was doing their
13 training—training is in November through about March, and then in March the show
14 season starts, so I had that time to rewrite the narration, and practice my timing and my
15 elocution, and all that kind of stuff. So that was, you know, a good time. And I also, at
16 the same time was continuing to get current in the F-4.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: Because the narrator flies by himself. He doesn't—there's nobody with him
19 when he goes out there ahead of the team. And he doesn't have a tanker, so he has to do a
20 lot of stopping to refuel across the country when he goes on a long flight.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: So anyway, got all checked out, and we started our show season. And then in
23 about June of that year we were at a show called "Transpo" which was a big
24 transportation aerial show in Dulles Airport in Washington, DC. And the right wingman,
25 during one of the maneuvers—Joe Howard was his name—his slab got stuck. Actually, a
26 slab actuator failed, and he pulled about 9Gs and pitched up, bailed out. He got out of the
27 airplane okay, but came down into the fireball, so he was killed. And by the way, the
28 narrator is sort of the press front man for any kind of accident. Because he doesn't know
29 exactly what happened, and they want to keep that deniability to the press. So, I had to go
30 off with all the press, and there were a lot of them down at Dulles around Washington, I

1 mean big press conference and, “Here’s what I’m allowed to tell you.” Kind of thing, you
2 know.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: Two or three hours I wasn’t rejoined with the team on purpose. And so that
5 was a big blow to the team.

6 JS: Sure.

7 MB: And at that time, I had less than one hundred hours in the airplane, I had
8 about eighty hours in the airplane. Colonel Swam, the—Lieutenant Colonel Swam, the
9 leader said, “Okay, Rip’s moving to right wing.” So, they did a couple more shows
10 without a right wingman.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: And then we got back to Nellis, I got something like twelve training flights
13 on the right wing, and we went to Alaska for a tour, and I did my first Thunderbird show
14 with less than one hundred hours in the airplane.

15 JS: Oh, wow.

16 MB: Up in Alaska, and they kidded me, they said all of our film looked like three
17 Thunderbirds and a bogie. I was flying pretty loose. During most of the maneuvers
18 you’ve got smoke on—which smoke is just they add to the airplane a little tank of oil,
19 and you’ve got a switch in the cockpit, and it dumps just a little tiny stream of oil into the
20 exhaust. And this oil is designed to make smoke, a white smoke. Any mistakes that you
21 make are very obvious with the smoke controls. The first couple shows I didn’t even turn
22 the smoke on because I was so wobbly out there. But by the end of that tour—we did
23 about ten shows up there, in places like Clear, Alaska, where we had all of eighty
24 spectators or something. So that was a pretty good training season for me up in Alaska.

25 JS: Yes, sir.

26 MB: The show got better and better, I got steadier and steadier. Flying in the
27 diamond is more like a dance than it is flying an airplane. You don’t really—you’re
28 thinking more about position than you are about flying the airplane. The boss flies the
29 airplane, the leader does, and all you’re doing is maintaining position.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: The way you maintain position is—we call it “light on the star.” There’s a
2 star on the side of the airplane, and there’s a light on the end of the wing, and what you
3 do is you put the light on the star and try to keep it in that star. Well, for different
4 maneuvers you move that light around on the airplane, not necessarily on the star. You
5 know, for some maneuvers I had to stack low or stack high, or cup in, or whatever. But
6 it’s a fun thing. Like I say, it’s more like a dance than a—very, very strenuous. The show
7 is around thirty minutes long, the actual show. Now, we did arrival shows and we did
8 passes, and things like that quite often that weren’t standard show, but the standard show
9 is about thirty minutes.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: And on a good hot day, even though the F-4 had better air conditioning than
12 any of the other airplanes I’ve been in—no, the 105 had pretty good air conditioning—
13 but you’d sweat so much you’d lose five pounds, and you were just totally dehydrated
14 when you get on the ground.

15 JS: All right. If you could talk just a moment about the F-4, and I guess the
16 characteristics of the F-4. Kind of like the way you talked about the F-105, and the F-100,
17 and just flying that plane. Could you talk a little bit about that?

18 MB: Well, the F-4—I think I went through my whole bias against the F-4 being a
19 Navy airplane. The E-Model was a real Air Force airplane. They had taken all of the
20 extra weight and strength out of the airplane that the Navy had in it. They C and D
21 models F-4s were Navy airplanes. I mean it was a Navy airplane that the Air Force had
22 slightly adapted. The E Model, which we flew, had leading edge slats which made it turn
23 much better, had little bigger engines in it, I think, I can’t remember. But the F-4 had a
24 big engine compared to—of course the 105 had a huge engine, but the F-4 engines were
25 very responsive. Having two engines—I had never had an engine failure until I got in the
26 F-4, and then I had several of them where the engine either wasn’t reacting correctly, or
27 actually flamed out. So, having two engines, it was a good thing I had two engines in the
28 F-4 because I did have engine problems.

29 JS: Right.

30 MB: It had variable ramps in it, which adjusts the intake flow so that the
31 supersonic wave doesn’t hit the compressor blades. And any airplane needs that sort of

1 arrangement to keep that supersonic flow from hitting the engine blades because that'll
2 severely effect the engine. Nowadays they have aerodynamic things that adjust that, but
3 the E had a little longer nose because it had a gun in it.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: It had the capability of having a gun in it. The Thunderbird airplanes didn't
6 have guns in them. Just for weight we took the guns out.

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: They were the actual prototype airplanes, the airplanes when they made the
9 F-4E, whenever they go into a new series of airplanes, they make some prototype
10 airplanes that are kind of hand built. These airplanes had never had radar in them. They
11 had a nice big radome on them, and during the test they put a weight up there to simulate
12 the radar.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: But for these particular airplanes, they just took them right from Edwards
15 (AFB, CA) where they were doing the testing, and gave them to the Thunderbirds.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: So that was our baggage pod, the nose of the airplane.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: The nose would swing to the side and it was about the size of an average big
20 car trunk, a Cadillac car trunk or something.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: So, you could put a couple hanging bags and maybe a helmet bag and stuff
23 up there, pretty handy.

24 JS: Yes, sir.

25 MB: Two seat airplane, of course. I later had a squadron at McDill (AFB, FL) of
26 F-4Ds and the D was kind of an interceptor airplane, and it had an IR dome, and had a
27 good radar, but you needed two people to fly the airplane. The guy in the backseat had
28 his head buried in the radar scope all the time. They used primarily—for air-to-air they
29 used an AIM-4 missile that had to be very carefully tuned and locked-on—hands on lock-
30 on from the backseat. So, the guy in the backseat was doing the lock-on while the guy in
31 the front seat was flying the airplane.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: Very definitely a two man airplane. And I was not used to that, so it was
3 very difficult for me to teach that as a squadron commander, but I kind of muddled
4 through it. I'd much prefer a single seat airplane.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: And now, later on in the following airplanes: the F-15 and the F-16. The F-
7 15, for the interceptor—or for the air-to-air version, it's all single seat.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: Because now, with the missiles and the radars, you don't need that hands-on,
10 looking at a scope, raw data kind of interpretation, in the backseat. The computer does
11 that for you.

12 JS: All right.

13 MB: In fact, I was just talking to a guy this weekend who's flying F-16s, or he
14 actually just retired from the Colorado Air National Guard, and we were talking about
15 some of the new stuff that they've got now where they get off-board intelligence through
16 a thing called Link 16, and gosh that's magic. You know, tactically lock you on, the
17 ground controllers can lock you on.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: You can control your other airplanes and your flight, and you can control—
20 you can do battle management from your cockpit. It's fantastic what they've gotten out.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: The only thing they've got two seats for now is the F-15E, which is the air-
23 to-ground version of the F-15.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: The F-15E has what we call "slipper tanks" on the outside of the intakes that
26 put a conformal tank on it to give it a lot more range. Of course, that severely affects the
27 performance, as far as top speed. We've kind of learned you don't need top speed,
28 especially for an air to ground airplane.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: They've got so many sophisticated weapons that they need a Weapons
31 Systems Operator in the back seat, so those are two seat airplanes.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: But the F-4: good airplane, good turning airplane, in its day it would out turn
3 most anything in the US Air Force anyway. Of course, we kind of learned that from
4 Korea and Vietnam that speed and altitude wasn't everything. You need to be able to turn
5 and that's a trade off. So, the F-4 is a good airplane, but the F-15, 16 are designed more
6 for the Air Force mission.

7 JS: Okay. A few more questions about this time period in the Thunderbirds that
8 you were just talking about. When you took over as right wing did someone replace you
9 as narrator?

10 MB: Yes.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: Yes, as a matter of fact the follow on leader, number one, was traveling with
13 us then. A guy by the name of Parish, Roger Parish, and he was traveling with us, so he
14 just stepped in as the narrator, and that gave him a good idea of what was going on as far
15 as show coordination, and that sort of thing. So, he stepped in as the narrator.

16 JS: Okay. Now as narrator you talked about you would fly by yourself. Would
17 you be flying a Thunderbird plane or—?

18 MB: Yes, oh yes.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: I flew with my crew chief. My crew chief was specially trained also, and he
21 had a special role. He would get on the ground and he would make sure that they had
22 everything they needed for the arrival of the team. You know, chocks are in place,
23 towbars are in place, things that we need to get set up for our show. So, he'd get on the
24 ground and he'd grab all the maintainers on that base. And you know, if we were going
25 into an F-4 base, or especially if we're going in any kind of fighter base, they pretty much
26 knew, and if they'd had previous shows they knew, and they had a big packet that told
27 them exactly how to set everything up, and what size taxiways we needed, and
28 everything. And then I would set up with the press, and one of my main jobs was anytime
29 you put on an air show you need a representative on the ground.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: I would get with the local FAA representative and—if they were
2 knowledgeable, and had observed Thunderbird shows before, they were pretty easy to
3 work with. When you went into a new place, or went into a commercial field, they were
4 nervous. I mean, they were really nervous because something happens when they're
5 watching, oh, they're responsible.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: And especially if it was like we were going into a commercial airfield and
8 they had to stop the traffic. I mean, I got in some big problems with commercial airliners
9 who were saying, "Well, I'm going to take off." And my boss is saying, "Well, I'm going
10 to start the show." And me and the FAA guy are knocking heads in the tower because we
11 would go up to the tower. The first thing I did was shake hands with the FAA guy and
12 say, "Here's what we're going to do." I'd turn and say, "Okay, show coordinator, have
13 we got this, have we got that? Have we got transportation," so forth. And then I'd have to
14 head up to the tower because I had to be in the tower like fifteen or twenty minutes before
15 the team arrived. We'd get up there and I'd make sure that the tower operators were
16 briefed, and we knew which direction the team was coming in from. Of course, I
17 coordinated all that with the leader before. I'd make sure we had enough time. Especially
18 if it was like a commercial field. They might block fifteen minutes for us to do an arrival
19 show, and it had to start at such and such time and had to end at such and such time.
20 Sometimes, because of what the boss wanted to do, he'd tell me what maneuvers he was
21 going to do. I would ask the tower operator if the winds would allow us. I'd say, "Can we
22 land downwind?" You know, if you've got a thirteen thousand foot strip or something
23 like that it doesn't make much difference, you can land down wind. And they'd say yes
24 or no and tell me why. And also, sometimes we'd have eight, ten, twelve, airliners sitting,
25 waiting to take off, and they would block the taxi way for us. So, I'd have to say, "Can
26 we land this direction and turn around and taxi back on the runway?" It was just nuances
27 like that had to be taken care of in a very short time. And I had even a couple of
28 incidences where I had to say, "Boss, they're not ready for us, we can't do an arrival
29 show." Or "We're going have to limit the arrival show somehow." And he wasn't very
30 happy with that, either. When we'd get on the ground we'd say, "Okay, what went
31 wrong? Why weren't we given the time that we needed? Why weren't we allowed to land

1 downwind, or taxi back, or whatever we needed to do to make the show?” Because we
2 want—we got press out there, we got people watching. We want to make a good
3 impression. We don’t want to make an impression that we don’t have our stuff together.

4 JS: Right, sure.

5 MB: And those restrictions have become even more—through the years—more
6 restrictive, more limiting. The Thunderbirds have a very hard time finding a good place
7 to do a show. We used to not worry too much doing the show over an Air Force base.
8 Now, if there are any people underneath the show line, they practically have to find a
9 beach or a piece of desert where they can do the show. A good example is one of the
10 places that is sort of a traditional Thunderbird show is up in Cheyenne, Wyoming, the
11 daddy of them all, the big Frontier Days Rodeo up there. We used to do two or three days
12 of shows up there. We did it at F.E. Warren Air Force Base which is right outside of
13 Cheyenne.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: Well, they can’t do it at the base anymore, they have to do it off in a piece of
16 prairie that’s kind of adjacent to the fair ground, and it doesn’t make nearly as nice a
17 show line as a runway. My wife and I went up there about 2004, 2005, something like
18 that when I went up to Cheyenne? I think it was 2004. We went up there and it’s the
19 fiftieth year in a row that the Thunderbirds have done a show at Cheyenne.

20 JS: Oh, wow.

21 MB: We got invited up there, it was kind of funny. I got an invitation for the—
22 Thunderbirds in the area are invited to come up to the show. And we thought, “Well,
23 we’ll just go up there and take our free tickets and enjoy the atmosphere up there.” We
24 kind of like to go up there every once in awhile anyway. Well, we went up there and we
25 checked into the hotel, and there was a little card on the table that said, “You are invited
26 to the Governor’s house for a reception this evening.” And they treated us like royalty.
27 We were in the parade, and we got priority seating at the rodeo and everything. It was
28 really nice and a great group up there.

29 JS: Yes sir. Could you talk a little bit about the show itself, and some of the
30 different type of maneuvers and things that would be performed?

1 MB: Well, as part of the narration we say, “These are representative of some of
2 the maneuvers that would do in aerial combat.” Start out the show, one of the really tough
3 maneuvers we did was a “four ship take off.”

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: In the F-4, as you would lift off, you’re taking off in “fingertip.” In other
6 words, you’ve got the leaders in the center; the left wing is on the left side, of course; the
7 right wingman is on the right side and the right wingman is number three; I was number
8 three. Number four is on my wing, so if you hold out your right hand you’ve got sort of a
9 configuration of what we looked like as we rolled down the runway. As soon as we lifted
10 off, number four would cross underneath me and tuck into the trail position under number
11 one. So, we were in “the diamond” then.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: Lieutenant colonel Swam, Tom Swam, had us doing that very tightly.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: As soon as we’d lift off number four would dip his wing and tuck in
16 underneath, and his left wing actually would come very, very close to the ground as he
17 moved over. It’s kind of interesting, the number one airplane—

18 JS: Yes, sir.

19 MB:—the maintenance troops trimmed his engines back a little bit so he couldn’t
20 outrun the rest of us. And of course, he took off not in full throttle anyway. Number four
21 had the hottest engines because he had to make a lot of the moves where he needed more
22 power.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: Of course, you’re taking off in afterburner anyway. At Holliman Air Force
25 Base in 1973, I had a hardover rudder on takeoff, and hit number one, and had to bail out
26 at about three hundred feet. Number four managed to stay out, he saw me having
27 problems as we lifted off, and didn’t take any damage. But number one had to land of
28 course—I hit his tail and damaged it, and he had to land. Of course, the airshow was
29 cancelled and everything.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: Anyway, that's the takeoff: is the move of number four into diamond, and
2 then we'd almost go vertical, and the turn around maneuvers we would do were called
3 "whifferdills."

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: It's where you go up almost vertical and you get very slow. And Boss Swan
6 used to say once in a while, when he'd get us a little too vertical and a little too slow,
7 he'd say, "Don't touch a thing." We all had kind of an "out" maneuver; we all had a place
8 we could go. Mine, of course, was out to the right, if number four wasn't out there, if we
9 were in a diamond I would just let my airplane kind of drift out away from his if we got
10 into a real slow "shaker." The F-4 has a stick shaker. When you get into a stall, the
11 computer actually just shakes the stick a little bit just kind of to let you know that you're
12 in a bad aerodynamic area. Anyway, we'd go up in a big whifferdill and as we were
13 doing our whifferdill, number five, the solo would take off, do a "roll on takeoff," and
14 then he'd go vertical. And then we'd come back down the show line the opposite
15 direction we took off and we'd do a roll, a "four ship diamond roll." And it's a nice,
16 smooth big "barrel roll," you never get negative Gs. You'd kind of float at the top. It's an
17 easy maneuver to do, it's an easy maneuver to stay on the wing, and it's a very graceful
18 maneuver, it's a good opener. So, we'd do a diamond roll and of course in between our
19 maneuvers, number five would come by and do a maneuver—and the solo pilot's name
20 was Steve Drolly, and we're still good friends, we see each other quite often. In fact, his
21 wife just died, unfortunately, about a year ago. But we called Steve "the filler." He was
22 the filler between the real guys, you know, the real show. "Philly filler," we called him.
23 Anyway, we'd do a diamond roll and we'd come back and do a "diamond loop" and I've
24 forgotten the exact sequence of the maneuvers. We would do a "roll back." It was one of
25 my favorite maneuvers. Where the team would come in in diamond, and number two and
26 I, two and three, the two wingmen, would pull up, and then we'd roll away from the
27 diamond and join back in what we called the "arrowhead" where, instead of flying off
28 three we were flying off four.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: So, we'd call a roll back to arrowhead and then we'd do a couple of
31 maneuvers and arrowhead. I think we did a loop in arrowhead and maybe we did a roll in

1 arrowhead. Arrowhead was kind of a fun formation to fly, we're flying off four. Actually,
2 we were flying off lead, but we were avoiding four and trying to make it look good on
3 four. The way we did the rollback, we had always had trouble and they don't do the roll
4 back anymore. It was deemed too dangerous, maybe that's why I liked it. We only had
5 trouble coordinating the roll, because number two and I wanted to be at ninety degrees at
6 the same time, we wanted to be upside down at the same time. It was always, "Well,
7 you're going too slow." "Well, you're going too fast." So, what we did is—
8 (unintelligible) was the left wingman—he and I said, "I bet you I could beat you." And
9 we'd both go as fast as we could, and we were together that way. So, it was a nice—what
10 we'd do is we would pull up and then unload to almost zero Gs, so we didn't have any
11 roll coupling. So, it was an unloaded roll, very nice point roll and then you'd sink back
12 down and then just come right up on number four's wing. Anyway, we'd do that and
13 we'd do a thing called a "five card loop."

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: Where number five would join with us, and a five card is like a five on a
16 deck of playing cards where the lead is in the front left. I, as right wingman am on the
17 front right. Four's in the middle, three and five are behind and it was a very difficult
18 maneuver especially for me because I couldn't see anybody, but lead.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And I had to maintain a very wide position, and whenever I pinched,
21 whenever I got too close, the guys in back would just bitch like hell because I was not
22 giving them space to fly in. It was a very difficult maneuver, and I don't think they do
23 that one anymore. I haven't seen the show in a couple years, but five card was hard to do
24 right, so I think they've dropped it. Then, let's see, we did a "wedge," which was—five
25 flew with us for part of the show, so we'd do a "wedge roll"—which is a very—it's a lot
26 of airplanes to do a roll with. And then we'd do for—the show ender kind of was we'd do
27 a "bomb burst," and that's where you come in perpendicular to the show line and you
28 pull up. Sometimes we did it perpendicular, most of the time we did it down the runway,
29 down the show line, pull up into the vertical—the diamond would pull up into vertical
30 and five is about half a mile in trail. As we got to vertical, lead would call, "break" and
31 we would all roll to the four points and do an "Immelmann." We'd go up on our backs

1 until we were horizontal, flying level, and then we'd roll out, and we'd go outbound until
2 lead called—I'd forgotten what he'd call, "Roll ready now," or something. We would
3 count off and in those days, we didn't have good INSs or GPS or anything, so we just had
4 to do it time and distance based on winds. We would roll into a vertical and come back
5 down the runway. Well, number two and I would go down the runway, level with each
6 other. I, of course, was always on the right side of the runway. He was always on the left
7 side of the runway. We would do the "cross." Well, all four airplanes cross at once, and
8 it's very, very difficult to get that perfect square. All four airplanes are at the same spot
9 going four different directions at once. Number five would come up, as we were pulling
10 up vertical, back to the vertical—of course, we had smoke on all this time. Number five
11 would come up, and as he reached behind us, the point that we had broken, he would do
12 vertical rolls as far as he could go, straight up. Anyway, then you're going four different
13 directions, and the rejoin is lots of fun. The lead would start a turn, and we would all do
14 what we needed to do to get back into formation, and it would take us about ninety or one
15 hundred and twenty degrees to get back into formation again.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: We would come in, pitch up and land.

18 JS: Right. Now, as you're doing these maneuvers was it more—I mean, I know
19 you're focused on doing everything right, but doing a show like this, is it more strenuous
20 or exhilarating? How would you describe, I guess the feeling you would have doing a
21 show?

22 MB: Well, the most we pulled in Gs was about five Gs, and we didn't wear G
23 suits. Nowadays in the F-16 they pull a lot more Gs, and they wear G suits.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: It was focus and concentration.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: I mean, you hardly had time to look in the cockpit. I told you in the F-100
28 when you lit the burner you better be looking at the eyelids, at the oil pressure gauge,
29 because that's what opened the eye lids. And if the oil pressure gauge didn't fluctuate.
30 The eye lids weren't going to open, you were going to probably blow the engine out,
31 blow the fire out. You always had to look down in the cockpit when you're lighting the

1 burner. In the F-4, you lit the burner, and you didn't worry about it. It was going to light.
2 So, you're really focused on what you're doing, and thinking ahead about, "Okay, last
3 time I looked like I was high, so I've got to drop low on this roll." I used a lot of rudder. I
4 probably used more rudder than was needed in the F-4, but to move in and out, and to
5 avoid cups. "Cup" is when you're over rolled, the leader—your wings are more vertical
6 and the leaders a level. And you can actually fly like that. You can—by compensating
7 with rudder and aileron—you're flying uncoordinated, but you can fly like that. It's only
8 a couple of degrees, but it shows up in the film, and it shows up in the optics when you're
9 doing the show. So, you're really working on that kind of stuff. It was draining. When
10 you do three or four days where you're doing shows one right after the other. You're
11 exhausted.

12 JS: Sure.

13 MB: I kind of equated to these country and western stars, and these shows that
14 these travelling tours that go around. When you see them do a matinee and then do an
15 evening show you think, "God, that's like a—we used to call that a double." We would
16 do an arrival show and a show in the same day. It's exhausting. You can't do it for very
17 long without getting tired.

18 JS: Yes, sir. All right, well, could you talk a little bit I guess about your schedule,
19 about just the life of a Thunderbird and that daily routine. How many shows would you
20 do a year and that type of thing and when you weren't doing a show, what other types of
21 things would you be doing?

22 MB: Well, we used to joke that you got on the team when you were twenty, and
23 got off two years later, when you were forty. In the seventies we—the Air Force has
24 always had crew rest requirements where you're supposed to have twelve hours of
25 uninterrupted rest before your next flight. We didn't always observe that.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: Now they are very strict about observing it. A normal trip would be we'd
28 usually leave on say a Wednesday or Thursday and get to the show site and maybe do
29 let's say a Friday arrival show, a Saturday and Sunday show at a base, and then move to
30 the next base on Monday.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: We might do a mid-week show, or two, and then we'd have another
2 weekend. So, we'd be gone for about ten or twelve days, and we might do six shows in
3 that time.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: In between we were doing a lot of public relations stuff. A lot of times the
6 show sponsor, whoever the show sponsor is—whether it's a chamber of commerce or a
7 Dandelion flight, or a big expo like we did in—or Transpo that we did in Dulles. Lots of
8 aerospace companies: Hewlett Packard, General Dynamics, Northrop, Boeing, they've all
9 got shows—or they've all got venues at these big shows.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: So, we'd be wined and dined, and we'd be the attraction for a lot of those
12 things. We do a lot of local public relations, too. Hospitals, Children's hospitals, schools,
13 just about anybody that the show sponsor wanted to use us for. And so, like if we were
14 doing a Saturday afternoon show, we might have a Saturday morning where each
15 Thunderbird would go out, and we'd take the film with us, and we'd show the film to
16 children's hospitals. We would meet with local—heck, anything, car dealers. Any place
17 we could get in front of the public. We'd have press conferences. One of the things that
18 the narrator got to do a lot was we'd take a local reporter on a joyride. Of course, you had
19 to get them all briefed, and suited up, and put a G suit on them, and the helmet, and all
20 that kind of stuff. And then you'd take them up and depending on how tolerant they were.
21 You might talk to a local FAA guy and he'd give you a training area where you could go
22 out and do some loops, and rolls, and stuff like that, and demonstrate to the local reporter,
23 television personality, or whatever. Of course, they'd always get big pictures, and you'd
24 get coverage in the local newspaper. You want to show presence, you want to show what
25 the Air Force is, and one of the big feedbacks from being a Thunderbird is: I'll see some
26 old chief master sergeant now who, you know, or retired chief master sergeant who said,
27 "You know the reason I got into the Air Force is I saw you at Davis- Monthan Air Force
28 Base in 1972 and I decided I wanted to join the Air Force. And here this guy is forty
29 years later, and he still remember it. So that's really good positive feedback.

1 JS: Yes, sir. Well, I know from talking to you before, you mentioned that because
2 of the political climate at the time that dealing with protestors and things like that was
3 also an issue. Could you talk a little bit about that?

4 MB: Well, one of the things that you do when you're in your training, as you
5 become a Thunderbird, is you get briefed by some Air Force people, public relations
6 people, and they would prepare you, and the rest of the team does, too. You pretty much
7 have stock answers for protestors, and questions that you know are going to be asked of
8 you. And if we were going into some place, some city where we knew there was an anti-
9 military reporter, we'd be pre-briefed on it. We'd know that, "Hey, this guy from the
10 Detroit News, or whatever, has been negative and he's going to be there. He wants to
11 interview one of you." We'd prepare for that. For the most part we didn't have direct
12 confrontations. We'd sometimes have some placard carriers or something like that, but
13 we weren't directly attacked by protestors very much.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: After the show we would line up in front of our airplanes, and people could
16 come out and talk to us. We'd just stand there for as long as people wanted us to. We'd
17 sign—we had these little "three folds" that we call them. They were little brochures, they
18 had all of our pictures, and pictures of airplanes, and we would sign those and hand them
19 out. Mostly the kids, kids would try to get all five of us, and we'd just sit there and chat
20 with people as we're signing these things.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: Each one of us would have—we'd be standing there, and a few feet away
23 would be our crew chiefs, and we're answering questions about the airplanes, and about
24 the show, and about the Air Force. Just showing the flag, showing "The Blue."
25 Occasionally somebody would come up and be nasty, and we could try to mitigate it as
26 much as possible, downplay it and answer them politely. The climate in the country at
27 that time was pretty bad. I think it was important to have the Thunderbirds out there. It
28 wasn't a good time to be a Thunderbird because you weren't as popular as they are now,
29 or as they were in the eighties, when they were more popular. The military was more
30 popular, I think. Actually, our second show season, in 1973, got cut short not so much by
31 anti-war stuff, but by the gas shortage. There was a lot of pressure to cut down on any gas

1 use, so I think something like our last ten shows, or something were cancelled. And that
2 was sort of affected by the Blue Angels. The Blue Angels were flying F-4Js at the time
3 which was sort of their follow on airplane to the F-4B. I think is what they first flew. The
4 reason they had to quit flying the Js was they ran out of airplanes. They had an accident
5 and I think it destroyed two of them, or damaged two of them beyond repair. They didn't
6 have any more airplanes, so they said, "Okay, we're going to the A-4." I think is what
7 they went to, and the Thunderbirds kind of had to say, "Okay, we'll go to the T-38, which
8 uses less gas." Less expensive airplane, and the T-38 turned out to be not such as good
9 airplane. A couple years later—let's see, I got off the team in '73, it must have been
10 about 1980, and the Thunderbirds were flying the T-38 and they were doing their in
11 between season, upgrade to new pilots. And they were doing a five ship loop out at
12 Indian Springs (Air Force Auxiliary Field, now Creech AFB, NV) and the T-38 had a
13 stick force reversal problem, that they knew about, but had sort of said, "Okay, well the
14 airplane will never be flown in this region anyway." They put a little note in the dash one
15 about the stick force reversal. Well, the leader encountered stick force reversal in this
16 "line abreast loop" and four of them hit the ground—with him, just went into the ground
17 in formation. And I was the commandant of the Fighter Weapon School at the time—and
18 I had to be the—first of all, whenever you have an accident you have a team that goes out
19 and informs the wives. Well, we had four team dads go out and inform the Thunderbird
20 wives. And then later they had an accident board. And Roger Parish, the guy that had
21 been my 1973 leader, was also a graduate of the Test Pilot School, and he was the board
22 president. For a long time, they did a very intense investigation of this stick force
23 reversal, and I think there are still suits about that. I'm not sure they ever resolved it.
24 Anyway, T-38s, four of them got destroyed, and that was a good time for the Air Force to
25 go over to the F-16, which had been my dream for many, many years, to have an F-16
26 Thunderbird team. So, that's when they went to the F-16.

27 JS: So, you were with the Thunderbirds for, was it two years or three?

28 MB: '72, '73.

29 JS: '72, '73.

30 MB: Because I had become the right wingman, the boss gave me a choice, he
31 said, "Okay, you signed on for three years, we'll give you your third year if you want to

1 go over to the T-38.” And I said, “You know, boss, I don’t want to go for one year, and
2 it’s kind of time for me to move on anyway.” So, I chose not to take my option for the
3 third year.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: From there I went to Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, and then got a
6 Pentagon Assignment.

7 JS: Okay, all right. One other question I wanted to ask you, you talked about that
8 incident where you had to bail out, was there any other times in your career that you had
9 to do that or was the only time?

10 MB: Nope, that was the only time I ever bailed out.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: I was very lucky! I got out—my airplane was actually upside down, and I
13 reached for the handle and I said, “Not yet,” and the airplane kind of rolled over, and as it
14 rolled over, I punched out. One swing and I was on the ground. I hit, and I had visions in
15 my mind of Joe Howard landing in a fire ball. I hit about maybe two hundred feet from
16 the fire ball. The accident investigation team was kind of amazed that I’m taking things
17 off and running as fast as I can away from the fire ball. My chute actually fell toward the
18 fire ball, that’s how close I was when I hit the ground. I had been through jump training,
19 and I had jumped out of airplanes before so, you know, I kind of knew what to do with
20 the chute. I got out of it very quick, but they said there was a parachute, and then about
21 twenty more yards there was a glove, and about twenty more yards there was another
22 glove, about twenty more yards there was a helmet, and I was just shucking things as I
23 was running as fast as I could.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: They came out and picked me up in a truck and of course I had to go into the
26 doctor, and he made sure I was okay. Actually, flew out, took off on the wing the very
27 next day.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: And then they grounded me for about ten days. And, they found that it was a
30 hard over rudder, so I was exonerated and back flying.

1 JS: One other thing, you mentioned this transition to the T-38 because of the gas
2 shortage. How long were they flying in the T-38s before switching to the F-16?

3 MB: Well, '74 to about '80.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: They switched in between seasons, '73 to '74, and then I believe that line a
6 breast accident was in 1980 or '81.

7 JS: Okay, all right. So, '73 you left to go to the Armed Forces Staff College then?

8 MB: Yeah, November '73 and started in January of '74. Armed Forces Staff
9 College was about six months.

10 JS: Okay, how did you get this appointment?

11 MB: Well, as you go through your career, there are three stages of military
12 schooling. There's squadron officer school which is—I forgot exactly what they called
13 that. Mostly captains go to squadron officer school, I had gone when I was in England. I
14 had taken the correspondence course where I kind of filled that square.

15 JS: Okay.

16 MB: I didn't go to squadron officer school. Most Air Force military service
17 schools are at Montgomery, Alabama.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: Air War College. Intermediate level is for majors, and that is—let me see,
20 what's it called? I guess I can't remember. Anyway, the Air Force version of that is done
21 at Montgomery.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: The Navy version of that is Armed Forces Staff College.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: And it's done at Norfolk, and everybody tries to get at least one non-Air
26 Force school and so this is my chance to go to the Navy school and get kind of "purple
27 training" they call it, cross service training. And Armed Forces Staff College is
28 dominated by the Marines, so I got a lot of negative training from the Marines. It's a six
29 month school, and from there I was sort of predestined to go to the Pentagon. Another
30 square filler. You need to go to the Pentagon if you're going to make the service your

1 career. So, I went to the Pentagon after that. The Pentagon is supposed to be a four year
2 assignment. I managed to get out in three.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And I went from the Pentagon, I went to Air War College down in
5 Montgomery, Alabama, and that's a year long course.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: It's like getting a masters, or a doctorate almost, in military science.

8 JS: Are these courses like Armed Forces Staff College, and then the Air War
9 College? Is that like on a check list to ensure that you can continue to be promoted to
10 upper echelon?

11 MB: Yeah, square fillers.

12 JS: Yes, sir.

13 MB: And you want to do well at them, I worked very hard. When I was in the
14 Pentagon, I got a master's degree by going to the University of Southern California. USC
15 sends people on sabbaticals to Washington DC, to work on various studies, and so forth.
16 And while they're there, they teach night courses in a master's degree. Mine is in systems
17 management.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: And gosh that was hard going to school. I was what, thirteen years or
20 something out of the Academy at that time, and I went back and took some math courses
21 and they damned near killed me. Some of the guys that were in the courses were young
22 government executives. They were fresh out of school. One guy, I remember, had a
23 broken leg and he was a whiz at mathematics, and I hadn't done any math in, you know,
24 ten or twelve years.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: So, I struggled that whole time. I took two of those courses in one summer,
27 and I don't even remember that summer. I spent all my time doing homework. One of
28 them was in statistics, and the other one was in matrix management—matrix algebra.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: And that was in the days before computers, so it killed me, but I passed and I
31 enjoyed it, and I actually felt like I learned and used the stuff, because I was a systems

1 manager in the Pentagon. I was using what I was studying, and so I thought it was a very
2 good master's for me.

3 JS: Yes, sir.

4 MB: But then like Air War College—one of the nice things about the War
5 College and the senior schools is you get lectures by people in government, and there's a
6 non-attribution policy. In other words, if the Secretary of defense McNamara comes and
7 talks to you, you can't quote him out of class. In other words, you can't go to a reporter
8 and say, "McNamara says we're going to lose the war."

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: And a lot of these speakers that come in, they enjoy coming because they get
11 good feedback from the senior officers in the school, and they'll have like a special
12 luncheon for these guys that come in. So, if you're really interested in what the guy is
13 talking about, you can go to lunch with him, and sit down and face to face with him, and
14 tell him here's what's going on in Vietnam and he can tell you here's what's going on in
15 Washington.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: So, it's a very good atmosphere for learning.

18 JS: Okay. For example, at the Air War College, would all of the students there be
19 Americans?

20 MB: No.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: In fact, we get a lot of political hay out of letting people from foreign
23 governments come, and in the Air War College you have seminars kind of like a
24 homeroom, where you have maybe twelve or fifteen and a "seminar facilitator." And out
25 of that twelve or fifteen at the Air War College, probably eight or ten of them would be
26 Air Force lieutenant colonels or colonels, and then some would be Army, some would be
27 Navy, and maybe one or two foreigners. In my particular seminar we had a guy from
28 Saudi Arabia and a guy from Iran.

29 JS: Okay.

1 MB: At that time, the terrorism, this was 1978, terrorism and the Islamic
2 Fundamentalism wasn't—it was just beginning to show its ugly head in the Middle East.
3 Actually, more in the former Soviet Republics.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: I think at that time Afghanistan—the Soviets were in Afghanistan. Anyway,
6 we talked to these guys, and they told us about, you know, “what is Islam,” and what's
7 the difference between Shiite and Sunni, because we had—the Saudi Arabian was Sunni
8 and the Iranian was Shiite. It's kind of interesting that '78 was when the Shah when the
9 revolution was. And the guy, I forgot his name, the Iranian disappeared one night, and
10 was never heard from.

11 JS: Wow.

12 MB: They took all the Iranians out, and I think there were like six of them at the
13 Air War College, and they all disappeared overnight and we got unofficial feedback that
14 they were assassinated when they got back into Iran.

15 JS: Oh, wow.

16 MB: But the seminars—as you move through the curriculum, the seminars would
17 talk about various subjects, and then would have a speaker, and would come back maybe
18 that afternoon or the next day and talk about what that speaker said.

19 JS: Okay.

20 MB: And we moved through international relations, we moved through weapons
21 and tactics, and strategic thinking, and it was a very good—we call it rebluing. It was a
22 very good time to sit back and reflect on what was going on in the world and what was
23 going on in the Air Force, and what sort of weapons, and how the Air Force needed to
24 evolve, where we were going.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: Everybody has to write a thesis there, and you get into teams. Myself and a
27 guy by the name of George Elsea teamed up with an Army colonel and wrote a book on
28 how to employ—and I think I mentioned this earlier—how to employ and deploy A-10s
29 in northern Europe. I have recently talked to a guy that was an A-10 wing commander at
30 Bentwaters (RAF Bentwaters, Suffolk, UK) and they pretty much did what we projected
31 that they would do as far as forward operating locations and so forth. A-10 is an awesome

1 weapon and used correctly it's very effective. I think they have used it correctly. But
2 anyway, so we wrote this tome, I mean it was a huge document, and of course it was
3 classified, and the Air Force used it. I later used it as a matter of fact working at
4 Lockheed.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: Some of the recommendations and so forth. George Elsea, by the way, I just
7 thought of George and I said, "Oh, I meant to tell you about this book." George was—did
8 I tell you about (*A Tuy Hoa Ace*)? He wrote a book.

9 JS: Okay, I don't believe you did.

10 MB: Okay. George, when we first got to Vietnam in '67—I had known George
11 over in England. George married a nice Scottish girl, by the way. But George was a good
12 artist, and he would draw cartoons and put them on the squadron bulletin boards. And he
13 was supposed to be unknown. You know, everyone kind of knew who was doing it, but
14 they were hilarious. Just situational kinds of cartoons. Usually a little text at the bottom
15 of them, and about twice a week he would come out with these things. Well, everyone
16 started collecting them, making copies of them, and collecting them. And so, George
17 said, "Well, let's just do a book." And so, he published a book, and all the fighter pilots,
18 of course, bought it. Mine's up in the attic somewhere. But everybody bought them, and
19 he made a little money off of them. He laundered the money through the squadron snack
20 bar and he gave all the money to a local orphanage. The book, *A Tuy Hoa Ace* is a
21 collector's item now.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: It's hilarious. For example, one of the jokes in there was—there's a fighter
24 pilot. His fighter pilot had a little mustache, and he wore goggles like a World War I
25 fighter pilot. He's got his little Tuy Hoa Ace leaning over a case. Seiko watches were
26 very popular in Southeast Asia. All fighter pilots had to have a big watch.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: This fighter pilot is leaning over a case of Seikos, and the clerk is saying,
29 "Sir, I'm sorry I'll have to ask you to quit drooling on the Seikos."

30 JS: One thing I wanted to ask you about this time at the Air War College, and at
31 the Armed Forces Staff College, would you be flying during that time as well?

1 JS: No.

2 MB: It's purely academics.

3 JS: Okay, all right. The time when you were at the Pentagon—could you talk a
4 little bit more about what your duties were there?

5 MB: Well, I was an action officer and most of the junior officers at the Pentagon
6 are action officers.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: Of course, it's changed a lot with computers, but what we used to do is the
9 boss would give us a—and I was privileged to be in a very special section.

10 JS: Okay.

11 MB: My boss was a guy by the name of Danny Walsh, "Fire Can Danny" Walsh.
12 He was a strategic thinker. I was in the weapons branch because I had been a weapons
13 officer, and I knew a lot about the weapons of the time, but weapons included airplanes.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: In the same office there was the tactics division. I was in the weapons
16 division, and I'd forgotten what the third division was, I think it was a plans division.
17 Although, there was a whole plan—I was in XOX, which meant that I was in the
18 operations directorate, a three star general over the operations directorate, and we actually
19 had a command post, and we were in charge of strategic operations. There was another
20 XOO. I was an XOO—XOX was the plans director. Anyway, that's all kind of changed
21 now, but we were charged with implementing lessons learned from Southeast Asia, and
22 we had a guy by the name of "Moody" Suter (Richard "Moody" Suter). Did I mention
23 Moody to you?

24 JS: I'm not sure.

25 MB: Moody was one of these guys that, you know, he came on as a good old boy
26 from Texas, but he was sharp, and he thought up things like the Aggressors and Red Flag
27 and all that sort of thing.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: One of the things I was involved in with him was: we took a look back at
30 World War II, and big airplanes. Big fighters back then had a second crewman that sat
31 looking backwards. Moody said, "You know, we maybe ought to try that in Air Force

1 airplanes because the guy that gets you is the guy that sneaks up on you from six
2 o'clock." So, it's very hard to "check six," as we say. Very hard when you're flying an
3 airplane to turn your head 180 degrees and look behind you. So, we said we ought to get
4 some enlisted guys, or navigators, or second crewmen that are sitting looking backwards.
5 And so, we actually went to McDonald Douglas in St. Louis and said, "What would it
6 take to build an ejection seat that, you know, a seat in an airplane that sits backwards?"
7 We got even down into what sort of tactics would you use, how would the guy in the
8 back who's sitting backwards tell the guy in the front that he's got somebody closing on
9 him from one o'clock position and, maybe we can get that guy some binoculars back
10 there. We got very serious about this, even to where McDonald Douglas was doing some
11 concepts of a seat sitting backwards. Well, I'm kind of a historian, and if you know the
12 god Janis, the two-headed god.

13 JS: Yes, sir.

14 MB: Two headed god? He looks both directions? Actually, that's where we get
15 the word for the month January. He's looking forward into the future, he's looking back
16 into the past year. Well, we called this project Janis.

17 JS: Okay.

18 MB: Well, it got to Tactical Air Command and General Jenkins said, "No way in
19 hell are we doing that, forget it." But that was just one of the things that Moody and I
20 came up with as a possibility. People still joke about Project Janis. But Moody was a very
21 forward thinking guy. Never made it past colonel, he was just too flamboyant, but he was
22 one of those guys that the whole Air Force thanks him for what he did for tactical air
23 power. Another guy in that same division, he was Moody's boss, was a guy by the name
24 of Chuck Horner. Well, Chuck Horner became a four star general as the air component
25 commander for Desert Storm.

26 JS: Okay.

27 MB: Worked with Schwarzkopf. And I later got the opportunity when I was
28 working for Lockheed—he was doing some consulting for Lockheed, he went over to do
29 some work with a ROKAF, the Republic of Korea Air Force and I was the Lockheed
30 director of Seoul Operations. Well, my job while Chuck Horner was there—he was of
31 course a retired four-star, and I had known him before, and so we got along real well. I

1 spent about a week with him, with my driver driving us all around South Korea. I mean,
2 he went to see the ROKAF Chief of Staff, he went to see every one of the ROKAF wing
3 commanders over there. He talked to Samsung and Daewoo and Kia, and everybody who
4 was working on the F-16s, possibly making future airplanes over there. And I spent hours
5 and hours and hours with him in the car just chatting, talking about Desert Storm. And he
6 was very disappointed, and he said Schwarzkopf was very disappointed, that they weren't
7 allowed to go ahead and go into Baghdad when they went up the Highway of Death, they
8 called it, up to the Kuwaiti border, and a little beyond. He said they could have just
9 walked right into Baghdad. But of course George Bush the 1st had made a pact with the
10 four other countries that we could not go into Baghdad, that we would only take back
11 Kuwait.

12 JS: Right. Well, any other—go ahead.

13 MB: Back to what did I do in the Pentagon.

14 JS: Yes sir.

15 MB: An action officer. So the boss would give me a project, and I would write up
16 a paper and the boss would make his comments, and I would rewrite the paper. And this
17 is the day before computers. I mean, we had a few, what do we call them—machines that
18 you could type on, and you could make corrections fairly easy on them, but they weren't
19 computers. They didn't even have screens. They had a little bitty screen that would type
20 out maybe one line or two lines. The secretaries were extremely important to action
21 officers. But we would type up a paper, we'd make many, many copies of it, and we
22 would farm it out to all the other directorates. In other words, we would say, "We want to
23 put a bomb release unit on the F-15." And we'd take it to plans, we'd take it to logistics,
24 and we'd take it to all the different three stars in the Pentagon, and they would either have
25 to sign off on it, or they'd make comments. And we'd go back and insert their comments
26 into the paper, and then we'd take it back out and try to get it passed again. And this
27 was—oh, some projects which were very, very high priority as an action officer, you
28 might have two or three action officers working on it. You maybe get it through in a
29 week or two. Now, I'm sure, they do it all by computer, and they don't have to run
30 around. But I spent probably a third of my day just walking the halls of the Pentagon.
31 One of the guys—when I first got into the Pentagon, he said, "You can either do this the

1 easy way or the hard way.” He said, “The easy way is just walk fast. Every place you go,
2 you run up the stairs, and you walk fast through the halls.” He said, “The hard way is you
3 stroll along, and you chat with people, and it takes you a lot longer to get things done.”
4 So, I learned to walk really fast, probably walked five miles a day just through the halls
5 of the Pentagon.

6 JS: Oh, wow.

7 MB: You get to know all the secretaries, and you get to know all the executive
8 officers. Each three star has a pretty nice office with lots of secretaries, and lots of actions
9 officers, and an exec. You learn to be real nice to the execs and the secretaries because
10 that way you get your papers on top of the pile, for the three-star to see, and hopefully to
11 sign off on. So, you spend most of your day running papers.

12 JS: Okay.

13 MB: Writing.

14 JS: Yes, sir. And you were in this position, was that from '74 to '77 is that right?

15 MB: Yeah.

16 JS: Okay, so you were there when Saigon fell then?

17 MB: When what? And that was pretty—one of the things that was a bummer
18 about being in the Pentagon in the mid seventies was we were encouraged not to wear our
19 uniforms. They didn't want people in Washington DC to see how many military people
20 were in Washington DC, so they encouraged us not to wear our uniforms. We wore
21 civilian clothes and that was kind of, you know, a blow to our pride. You could wear a
22 uniform if you wanted to, but they encouraged us to wear civilian clothes. And if you
23 remember, the civilian clothes from the seventies is pretty bad.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: Bellbottom trousers and double breasted coats. Loud, wide ties, and colorful
26 shirts, it was kind of fun.

27 JS: Was the atmosphere then in Washington still very, I guess, anti-war, anti-
28 military, even though the US had withdrawn by Vietnam at that point?

29 MB: Well, it was “peace dividend.” Remember, we were withdrawing so we
30 didn't need to spend anymore money on the military, and so we were fighting for our
31 budgets every year. You have the five year defense plans, and you have the annual

1 budgets. It was a time of big changes in our tactics, and our weapons, but we didn't have
2 a lot of money to spend on it. One of the big windfalls that we got was, we had—I think I
3 mentioned it to you. We had about sixty F-5s that were supposed to go to the South
4 Vietnamese, and when we withdrew, we had sixty F-5s that were kind of a gift to the Air
5 Force, and we made “aggressors” out of them.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: That was one of the big packages that I, and other guys, got to run and what
8 to do with those airplanes, and where to base them, and how we were going to support
9 them, and all.

10 JS: Yes, sir. Was there any reaction in the Pentagon about the end of the war and
11 the fall of Saigon?

12 MB: Yeah, it was kind of shame. It was kind of—we got to know the South
13 Vietnamese, especially the Air Force, and although they were corrupt, there's not a
14 government in the world that's not corrupt. We felt like we had reneged on our promises
15 to the South Vietnamese and got a lot of them killed. Did I, in a previous talk, we talked
16 so much, and I certainly enjoyed it, but did I mention a guy by the name of John Boyd?

17 JS: I'm not sure, unfortunately.

18 MB: John Boyd and Moody Suter were compatriots. John Boyd was a guy who
19 had been in the Korean War. He didn't shoot down any airplanes, I think he was pretty
20 young during the Korean War, but he was a legend in the F-100. They called him “Forty
21 Second Boyd.” He'd get on the tail of anybody in forty seconds. Of course, he over-
22 stressed the airplane to do it, but nobody ever mentioned that.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: But John Boyd was a very, very controversial guy. He got to the level of
25 colonel, but then he retired from the Air Force and he worked as a one dollar a year
26 volunteer in the Pentagon. He later became a legend with the Marines more than the Air
27 Force. He had a process, a mental process really for commanders, where he tried to get
28 inside their decision making abilities, and he developed a technique of thinking ahead of
29 the enemy, and he talked about OODA Loops, and I've read his book. His book—a book
30 about him called *Boyd*. It is a very, very good, “military thinking manual” and John Boyd
31 helped us develop the tactics and the weapons that we now have in the Air Force. John,

1 unfortunately, like so many guys like him, had a very tragic personal life. But he was an
2 interesting character. I met him, got to sit in a few briefings with him, but I couldn't say I
3 knew him.

4 JS: Yes, sir. Well, you mentioned earlier that this time of the Pentagon was
5 supposed to be for four years, but—I'm sorry, I know you said earlier that this time at the
6 Pentagon was supposed to be for four years, but you ended up getting out of it in three.
7 How were you able to do that?

8 MB: Begging, pleading, whining, crying.

9 JS: Is it at that point that they sent you to Maxwell at that point?

10 MB: Yeah, Air War College.

11 JS: Okay. After the Air War College where'd you go from there?

12 MB: I got a squadron at McDill Air Force Base in F-4s.

13 JS: Okay. What was the duty of the squadron there?

14 MB: We were checking out F-4 pilots. We'd take kids out of—we had a couple of
15 different courses that we taught, but mainly we were taking new lieutenants out of pilot
16 training and teaching them how to fly the F-4. It was about, oh, I think about four or five
17 months per class, for the long class. And we would take both front seaters and back
18 seaters and teach them. Mainly you're just teaching them how to take off and land, and
19 basically fly, and fly formation. And then you got into the weapon deployments, so you'd
20 take them to range, and you let them drop bombs, and different delivery tactics, and stuff
21 like that. The back seaters you are teaching how to operate the radar, or you're teaching
22 them some basic formation and intercepts and air-to-air.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: Like I say, it was about four months, and I think it was about forty, fifty
25 hours in the airplane. You know, you'd get successive classes. Now, we also had a—what
26 do we call those courses? Where we take—"transition" pilots from one airplane to
27 another, maybe a pilot that had been in the F-100 and we were going to upgrade him to
28 the F-4, and that would be a shorter course, maybe two or three months.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: And transition them.

31 JS: All right. And you did this from '78 to '81, is that right?

1 MB: Well, actually I was a squadron commander and then I made colonel, and
2 they made me the assistant DO.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: And then the assistant DO got promoted and I became the DO, and at the
5 same time we were transitioning into F-16s.

6 JS: Okay.

7 MB: So, I was kind of charged with developing a course to teach the F-16s. Well,
8 the primary base for doing that was—I got to remember the name of the airbase out in
9 Salt Lake. Actually, not Salt Lake, but anyway, they were also charged, and they were
10 getting F-16s at the same time. Well, I had a classmate named Tuck McAtee that who had
11 been the test pilot in the F-16, and he's sitting out at Edwards Air Force Base and kind of
12 looking for a job. So, I called him, and I said, "Tuck, I need a training squadron
13 commander, and I'm trying to make you the ADO when you get here, but please come
14 help me." And so, he came, and we started writing syllabuses and developing part task
15 trainers. We actually had a—a "part task trainer" is like a simulator, only it's dumb. It
16 doesn't have any electronics to it all. It's just a mockup of the cockpit where guys can
17 come in and touch switches, and we actually had one made out of an old cardboard crate
18 that we'd cut down. It was just, you know, a prototype so we could show the Air Force
19 what we wanted. We used that for several months before we got anything out of the Air
20 Force. It was kind of fun because we were treading new ground, you know.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: And Tuck developed the syllabus, and trained guys to do the classroom
23 training, and I remember—I hadn't had even a flight in the F-16, although they'd been
24 working on it for years. And so, we started getting our first F-16s and Tuck took me up in
25 the backseat, and then he put me in the front seat, and we went out to the end of the
26 runway, and we're just working on "how are we going to teach kids to do this stuff?" I
27 got about three or four flights—my wing commander knew what I was doing. In the
28 meantime, I had put in a request to Tactical Air Command to allow me to upgrade. Well,
29 they came through with the authorization for me to upgrade into F-16s, and the very next
30 day we sent back my paperwork and said that I had already upgraded. So, for a while
31 there I was current in both the F-16 and the F-4.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: At about that time I got selected to be the commandant at the Fighter
3 Weapons School and I went out to Nellis. And I wasn't a graduate of the Fighter
4 Weapons School, so I had to go through the course, and they said, "Well, what airplane
5 do you want to go through?" Because at that time they had F-4s, they had F-15s, they had
6 F-16s, and they had A-10s. Well, because I was most current in the F-16, everybody
7 expected me to take the F-16. I said, "No, I know more about air-to-ground, and the only
8 way I can fly the A-10 is if I go through the school in the A-10. So, I checked out the A-
9 10 and went through the school in A-10. So there in about a year I was current in four
10 different airplanes.

11 JS: Okay.

12 MB: And I actually flew the F-4 some in the Fighter Weapon School. It was a
13 very tumultuous time in the Fighter Weapons School. General Creech (Wilbur R.) had a
14 vision of making the Fighter Weapons School, which was a very good tool for educating
15 fighters. He had a vision to expand it for the whole Air Force. One of the things I had to
16 do is: they had squadrons out there and some of the squadrons were very small like, ten
17 airplanes or something for the A-10s for instance. They didn't have very many airplanes.
18 Anyway, just a second.

19 JS: Sure.

20 MB: So, I had to eliminate the squadrons, and some of the old Fighter Weapons
21 School graduates weren't very happy with that, but it wasn't my decision it was General
22 Creech.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: We expanded the Fighter Weapons School tremendously, and I was
25 privileged to be apart of that. They had a museum of Soviet weapons that we enhanced
26 quite a bit. At that time, they were actually flying Migs. A friend of mine, Gail Peck, was
27 running a very highly classified program out at Tonopah, where they were flying Migs
28 and the Fighter Weapons School would get to fly against those Migs which was a very
29 good training experience. We were getting the Migs from defectors, and from other
30 countries who had them, would trade them for whatever. They instituted a ground
31 controller Fighter Weapons School, they even had helicopters, and B-52s, and search and

1 rescue and, you know, all sorts of expansions of that program out there, and working very
2 closely with the Red Flag program and became a very good training base for future
3 fighters. And it's paid off in Desert Storm, in Iraq, and Afghanistan, and a lot of the
4 concepts that we're using now for unmanned aerial vehicles and some of the weapons
5 we're using now were developed right there.

6 JS: Okay. Well, about the A-10, had you played any role in developing how it
7 would be deployed or anything like that?

8 MB: Oh absolutely. We wrote that paper at Air War College.

9 JS: Okay.

10 MB: And the Air Force kind of took some of the ideas out of that. You know, like
11 any paper, you're an academic—you always propose a few things that are off the charts,
12 you know. You want to be innovative; you want to think outside the box.

13 JS: Right.

14 MB: One of the big problems we had with these forward operating locations,
15 FOLs they called them. Bentwaters is where the A-10s are stationed now, and that's in
16 Eastern England, but those airplanes don't fight out of there, they fight out of forward
17 operating locations in Germany, and Belgium and so forth.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: This is sort of an innovative thing for the Air Force. Normally a captain or a
20 major didn't have a whole lot of command responsibility. He flies the airplane, he may
21 have to be a flight commander, or something like that, but he doesn't have a whole lot of
22 people under him. Well, in the A-10 he does because a young major might go out with
23 four airplanes for the forward operating locations. He'll have a hundred airman, you
24 know, gun plumbers and electricians and people that maintain the airplane, fuels people
25 and all that. And he's the commander of that forward operating location. He determines
26 when they fly and what airplanes they fix and so forth. So, it's a lot more like the Army,
27 and the Air Force guys like it. What we did in this study that we did is we looked at all
28 the glider fields, and stuff like that in Germany: what kind of rail support they had, what
29 kind of electricity they had, if they had any way to store fuel, and things like that. And
30 one of the big problems when we ran the numbers was getting supplies out to the A-10.
31 Fuel and bullets, primarily.

1 JS: Okay.

2 MB: So, we actually looked into the possibility of making a tanker out of the A-
3 10. Putting huge tanks on it and letting A-10s actually fly out and refuel one another. Not
4 in the air, but on the ground.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: So, an A-10 could actually fly into a glider base somewhere, with these huge
7 tanks under its wing. The A-10's got a lot of lift capability, especially if it doesn't have
8 any bombs or bullets in it. Flying in there with these huge twelve hundred gallon tanks,
9 and actually have a little pump in the tank, or maybe some way of pressurizing those
10 tanks so you could transfer fuel. And so, one A-10 could taxi up to another one, load it up
11 partially with fuel, and maybe even do three or four airplanes that way. So, we didn't
12 have to depend on railroad, or trucks, to get our fuel to us. The other thing was a bullet
13 transport system where we'd have the same kind of huge tank under the wing. We could
14 actually taxi up to another airplane, run an ammunition chute over to it, and load from
15 one airplane to another. The bullets, you go through them really fast when you're fighting
16 a ground war. A-10 was designed as a tank buster.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: So, you know, I think it holds something like an eleven hundred rounds of
19 30 mm. This is stuff is very heavy. In fact, they used depleted uranium, which is even
20 heavier than lead. And so those are the kind of innovative things we thought of. They
21 haven't done them because—well, they haven't fought a war yet with the A-10 in
22 Europe, but those are the kind of out of the box kind of thinking we did.

23 JS: Okay, all right. This time whenever you were at Nellis—

24 MB: I'm sorry, you're fading out again.

25 JS: Sorry, this time when you were at Nellis and you were flying the A-10, could
26 you just talk a little bit about your impressions of the plane itself from the pilot's
27 perspective?

28 MB: It's a fun airplane to fly.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: I mean, it's made to last forever. It's really a tough airplane, and that's the
31 way we designed it, you know, that's the lesson—I think I told you before. That's the

1 lessons learned. We said, “What do we like for a ground support airplane?” We like the
2 A-1. So, we said, “Okay, what does the A-1 have? It has lots of weapon stations, it’s got
3 lots of fuel so it can stay on station a long time, it can take a lot of damage and still land,
4 and still operate. It’s got great visibility.” The A-10, you can look down and almost see
5 directly under the airplane, the canopy is huge, and the cockpit is big. I told you about
6 when I was flying as a FAC—cockpit management is very important to keep your maps
7 and your charts and all your radio frequencies and everything. If you’re in a small cockpit
8 it’s very hard to do. In a big cockpit it’s much easier. It’s kind of like an office.

9 JS: Yes, sir.

10 MB: The A-10 was designed—it’s got a titanium “bathtub,” they call it,
11 underneath the pilot, and underneath the flight controls. It will fly—I mean, you can
12 shoot out all the hydraulics on it, you can still fly, it’s got mechanical backups, you’ve
13 got to be pretty strong to fly it, but you can practically shoot one wing off and it’ll still
14 fly.

15 JS: Wow.

16 MB: The engines are mounted up real high, so ground fire is not as effective
17 against it. Another reason for mounting the engines up high is the wings and tail mask the
18 IR signature of the airplane. And it’s hard to shoot down with a Stinger or an IR
19 controlled weapon. The engines are extremely high bypass so it’s cool, it doesn’t have a
20 very bad IR signature. It’s very quiet, so you can sneak up on ground troops. You hardly
21 hear it when it’s coming toward you. So, the airplane was designed for what it’s doing.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: It’s not a very survivable airplane. I mean, day one over Baghdad it wouldn’t
24 have survived. SAMs would have gotten it, it’s too slow. But for troops—and the Army
25 loves it, the Marines love it. Anytime they got A-10s over them, they’d feel safe.

26 JS: Right. I vaguely remember reading an article at one point where they’re
27 talking about phasing it out. Do you know anything about that if they’re still talking
28 about that and if they’re going to replace it?

29 MB: Well, the Air Force forever has a planning document that shows how
30 airplanes are procured, as they build up and become a major part of the operational Air
31 Force. And then they have a lifespan that, you know, goes out maybe twenty, thirty years.

1 And then as they draw down, and another airplane is built, and keeps the total numbers of
2 airplanes up.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: You know, that's always it's a very fluid planning document. Right now,
5 I've seen charts of the same thing. I remember back thirty years ago when I was at the
6 Pentagon projecting someday the F-15s and 16s would draw down and a Joint Strike
7 Fighter, JSF, would build up and replace them. And then you've got a little bitty layer of
8 F-22s, and the thickness of that line varies with Congress. I think originally, we were
9 going to buy something like seven hundred of them. Now we're down to less than two
10 hundred of them.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: So, you know, that planning chart is always out there, and we're always
13 planning what is the next airplane. Right now, I'm sure there's a nice wedge of
14 unmanned aerial vehicles in there.

15 JS: Right.

16 MB: Unmanned aerial vehicles I've—I think they're a natural evolution, but they
17 are not an end all, and we'll keep manned fighters for a long, long time. The Joint Strike
18 Fighter is a very good airplane. And of course, we've only got maybe a dozen of them or
19 something right now flying. Eventually, it will be, like the F-16, it'll be the work horse.

20 JS: Okay. With the F-22 being kind of—you have less of them, but I guess it does
21 some things that the Joint Strike Fighter can't do, would that be the case?

22 MB: Yes, yes.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: You know, the 117 (F-117) was "The Wobblin Goblin" we called it. It filled
25 a stealth layer in that fighter program, and I think we had less than one hundred of them
26 and they are still flying, I think. Until we get the F-22s on board. Of course, the B-2
27 bomber fills part of that stealthy, day one survivable, air frame mix. The F-22 gives us a
28 couple of things that we really need for "day one, downtown" we call it. Day one over a
29 very, very heavily defended place, like Baghdad, or like Hanoi, or other bases or
30 countries that we might need to attack. Three or four things that the F-22 has: one, it has
31 stealth. I mean, it's not one hundred percent stealthy, there are radars that can track it, but

1 for the most part there's no operational radars, in numbers, that can track it or shoot it
2 down.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: So, stealth is very important, and we have that in the B-2 and the F-22. It has
5 "super-cruise" which makes it—you can go fast without using a whole lot of fuel. I think
6 it operates about the Mach 2 range. When I was at Lockheed—actually General
7 Dynamics, before it became Lockheed—they'd take all the people with fighter
8 experience—and had a program being run in kind of a simulator building, where they'd
9 take you over, and they were trying to design the F-22. What kind of information do you
10 need in a fight? One of my favorite things to do—I was a program manager, but I'd love
11 to go sit in simulators and talk about tactics. They'd say, "Okay, you've got this situation.
12 You've got bogies here, here, and here. What kind of information do you want about
13 those bogies, and how do you want it displayed to you?" And so we'd talk about it. And
14 then they'd advance the game about twenty seconds. They'd say, "Okay, this airplane's
15 done this, this airplane's done this." I'd spend hours over there talking to engineers
16 because they said, "We have this information. We have these sensors that can give us this
17 information, but we don't know what's important to you. If an airplane is going the other
18 way and he's behind you, is that important to you? Or, if an airplanes in front of you and
19 his nose is pulling into you—he's converting on you in other words. He's getting a
20 solution on you, is that important? And is that more important than the guy behind you?"
21 So, this game that we'd play was fun, and we'd shoot missiles, and I didn't realize how
22 important stealth, and super-cruise were until I played this game. I found that if the other
23 guy couldn't see me, but I could see him. And if I was going fast—the faster I went the
24 farther my missiles would go. Because if you're going to shoot a missile that has a six
25 mile range if it's shot from an airplane going five hundred knots. It might have a ten mile
26 range if it's shot going one thousand knots. So that going fast gives you farther range so
27 you can reach out and touch somebody a lot farther way. So, you know, the tactic you use
28 is go fast, shoot early, and disappear.

29 JS: Right.

30 MB: There's other tactics that the F-22—of course, it has a much more powerful
31 radar. It has a lot of off-board sensors. Of course, when you turn your radar on, it's like

1 turning on a search light. Everybody knows you're there when you turn your radar on.
2 So, one of the tactics is you want to use, is don't turn your radar on until you're ready to
3 shoot.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: And so, you use off-board information. Well, you've got AWACS feeding
6 you, you've got ground control feeding you information. You target—you set your
7 missile up, you tell it right where the target is, you turn your radar on, open your weapons
8 page, shoot, and then shut everything down. So, you're only a blip for about three
9 seconds. See, when you open the weapons doors that makes—your radar cross section is
10 bigger. So, the radar—that's not seeing you when you're stealthy, might see you while
11 your doors are open—and you shut the doors again, and you disappear to it. He also—his
12 sensors can tell when your radar comes on. But your radar comes on, you shoot the
13 missile, and then you shut your radar off because the missile is smart enough to
14 remember where that target was. So, it's, what do they call it? There are different kinds
15 of missiles, there's active missiles, that's the one's that have transmitters on them. And
16 there's passive missiles that don't have transmitters on them, where you have to leave the
17 aircraft radar on, or you have to hand it off to a ground control of some kind. Or it just
18 tries to remember where the target is, or it has some sort of a sensor on it that turns on an
19 IR guidance system at the terminal phase. So, there are different combinations that you
20 can put into missiles. The AMRAAM (Advanced Medium Range Air to Air Missile),
21 there's several different models of it, but the AMRAAM is a very effective missile, and
22 we call it "shoot and leave," or—I'm trying to think of the other term where you can
23 shoot it and forget about it—"fire and forget."

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: Rather than the old F-4—like the AIM-4 missile, where you had to stay
26 locked onto the target because you were transmitting to the missile where the target was.
27 So that made you very predictable and identifiable. While you had a missile in the air you
28 had to be very careful that somebody wasn't shooting back at you.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: At what point did this shoot and forget, I guess, technology come in to be a
31 mainstay?

1 JS: In the seventies the F-15 had a “look down, shoot down” capability with the
2 AIM-7 missile. And that was very important, that was a technological leap. “Shoot down
3 in clutter” was one of the terms we used. Ground returns caused a clutter in the radar. It
4 causes it very hard to shoot something into that clutter. The F-15 had—I’m trying to think
5 of the terminology for the radar. It had the capability to sort the background clutter so
6 you could shoot ‘down.’ Until that time most interceptors tried to shoot ‘up,’ out of
7 clutter, into a blue sky background. “Allstopper.” “Allstopper” was the technology that
8 allowed us to do that.

9 JS: Okay, all right. Well, is there anything else we should discuss about this
10 before picking up again on the rest of your career?

11 MB: Sure, what do you want to talk about next time? If you want to have a next
12 time.

13 JS: What I meant was we can continue if you’d like.

14 MB: Let’s see, it’s coming up on two hours, but no, we were talking about just
15 technologies. Another thing the F-22 has—and remember we talked about the radome
16 sizes?

17 JS: Yes, sir.

18 MB: The F-22 has radar actually in the leading edges of the wings, and also in the
19 nose. But it doesn’t have a big parabolic radar dish. So, it can have a skinnier nose which
20 helps its stealth capabilities. It has—let me think of the terminology, the technology they
21 have now is called—the computer does the—instead of having one big radar dish, it has
22 thousands of little bitty radar receivers, transmitters and receivers. And they call that—
23 I’ll think of the terminology here in a minute, but that allows them to do away with that
24 big dish because that big dish is a big reflector, see.

25 JS: Okay.

26 MB: And this new technology allows them to spread the radar all over the
27 airplane so the whole airplane is really a big sensor. They also have very good IR,
28 infrared capabilities so they can actually look at something. The nice thing about IR is
29 you don’t transmit anything, all you’re doing is receiving IR signature, so they can do IR.
30 They also have a very good optic system, where they’ve got these optical receivers that
31 can look out there. So, if you receive something on your radar, you can train the optics,

1 and actually look and see what it is, you know fifteen miles away you can see an optical
2 picture of the airplane that your radar is looking at. Well, once you get an optical picture
3 or an IR picture, you can shut your radar down.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: What is the terminology for that radar capability? What it is, is the computer
6 forms a picture of what you're looking at, instead of having to have an actual raw radar
7 data of it.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: I want to say random string frequencies, but that's one of the technologies
10 they use. I'll think of it here in a minute.

11 JS: Sure, no problem.

12 MB: So, the F-22 is a very important airplane for us to have. I've had a lot of
13 conversations recently with people who are much more in the know than I, and they say,
14 "Well, it's a good airplane, we've got the technology, but a hundred million dollars an
15 airplane is a lot" I had a guy this weekend just tell me, "You know, maybe it's better to
16 have three F-35s rather than one F-22. You need some F-22s, but that's that old
17 quality/quantity thing."

18 JS: Right, yes sir. Well, I guess it probably is a good time to stop for today if
19 that's all right because we're coming up on two hours. But I would like to continue.

Interview with Michael Blaisdell
Session [4] of [4]
Date 10 September 2009

1 Jason Stuart: This is Jason Stuart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University continuing an Oral History Interview with Colonel Michael Blaisdell. Today
3 is September 10, 2009. Okay, last time when we left off, we were talking about your time
4 at Nellis Air Force Base with Fighter Weapons School. At the end of this duty, where did
5 you go from there?

6 Michael Blaisdell: I went over to Korea to Kunsan Air Base. They had just
7 converted from F-4s to F-16s. I went over as the Vice Commander in Korea, at Kunsan.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: They have two squadrons there, kind of an interesting base. I think I told
10 you—in the seventies when I was at Okinawa, they didn’t—back when the Pueblo crisis
11 occurred there, there weren’t any US fighters stationed in Korea. After that, they
12 reopened Kunsan to have some presence there. They had some fighters in Okinawa, and a
13 few Navy fighters, I think, in Japan, but no Air Force presence in Korea.

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB: So, they opened up Osan and Kunsan. Osan was there, but I don’t think they
16 had any fighter aircraft stationed there. I’m not sure of that, but anyway. So, they opened
17 up Kunsan actually, oh probably in the mid-seventies, no it was before that. After the
18 Pueblo crisis anyway. Kunsan’s a very interesting base. It’s an old World War II and
19 Korean fighter base and it’s right on the Western Coast. Very, very shallow sea there, a
20 mudflat that runs out to the West into—I guess that’s the Sea of Japan there. They had
21 Korean aircraft there also.

22 JS: Okay.

23 MB: Very tight security on the base. It was interesting, the Korean Army
24 provided the security on the base, and I used to go out walking around, and running
25 around the runway. They had stations along the way, you know, sentry posts along the
26 way and the sentries would take little seashells and pile them up on the lower wire of the
27 fence. So, they could tell if anybody came by. If anybody tried to crawl under that fence
28 it would knock the seashells off. I thought that was pretty innovative of them. We were
29 very definitely being watched by the North Koreans, and probably the Chinese also. We

1 would stage mass takeoffs where all the airplanes that we could get airborne would get
2 airborne, and head north in formation, just to prove that we could do it. I'm sure that got
3 their attention north of the border.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: Very interesting place to fly. The weather is challenging there. The F-16 is
6 wonderful for that environment. But it had a good range there and was very interesting.
7 Of course, that was a remote assignment, so I didn't take my family with me. And I had
8 been on many remote assignments before so I kind of existed by working out at the gym
9 a lot and going on long runs and reading a lot.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: I enjoyed hiking around Korea, but it was a great assignment, great for a
12 remote assignment anyway. I left that job early—and actually didn't stay there quite a
13 full year. I went to be the Director of Inspection at PACAF working out of Hickam. Of
14 course, my family joined me there. But it's kind of a tough assignment after being gone
15 for a year, and then I was on a team that was traveling. Probably three fourths of the time
16 I was out of, not in, Hawaii. I was out around the Pacific somewhere doing inspections.

17 JS: Okay. So, you were just based in Hawaii, but then you would travel to another
18 place in the pacific?

19 MB: I worked for the Inspector General at PACAF, a one star general. And what
20 you do is you have a team of experts and depending on where you're going you kind of
21 pick and choose who you take out of the headquarters, or you'll be augmented by experts
22 out of other bases. But generally going to a Wing I'd take about one hundred experts,
23 mostly officers, some enlisted. Probably two-thirds officers and about a third enlisted.
24 And we'd go into a base, depending on what kind of inspection we were doing, we'd
25 do—the main inspection is an Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI), where you go in
26 and ring the bell and see how they react to a combat situation. You impose simulated
27 chemical conditions on them, you impose all sorts of emergency situations, and see how
28 they react. It's a real interesting job. Boy, if you want to learn how the Air Force works,
29 be on an inspection team.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: We'd also do MEI's, which are Management Effectiveness Inspections, for
2 units that don't really have a combat role. A lot of times you'd go in and do an MEI.
3 Although a Wing has MEI's, too. When you're going for an ORI you're looking at their
4 combat capability. When you go in for a MEI you are looking at how they're keeping
5 records, and if they're following all the rules of training, and all that sort of thing. And
6 then there were the very classified Nuclear Security Inspections, NSIs.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: And we did some of that. We did some Special Weapons kind of inspections.
9 Those are very, very interesting.

10 JS: Right.

11 MB: In fact, when I went into that job, I told the boss there, I said, "I'll do it for
12 one year, but I've got teenage kids and I don't want to be travelling for over a year." And
13 he said, "Okay, do it for one year." I said, "You're not going to want me in there after a
14 year anyway." I wasn't terribly popular with the wing commanders because I held them
15 to—I and my team, held them to pretty tough standards.

16 JS: Sure.

17 MB: One of the interesting places we went was to Misawa (AFB, Japan) which
18 was an old F-100 base that they closed down, and they were considering reopening it, and
19 it was just a little communication station up in the northern part of Japan.

20 JS: Okay.

21 MB: We went there with the idea that they were going to reopen it. So, it was sort
22 of a pre-inspection for re-opening the base, although we couldn't announce that.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: This little communication station probably had maybe, oh, a couple hundred
25 people there, and we took a hundred people in to inspect them. But we were looking at
26 the availability of rail, and postal, and if there was space for a hospital, and all that kind
27 of stuff. And so, it was—when I got there of course it was all classified, but I took the
28 station commander aside. I think it was a lieutenant colonel that I said, "This is what
29 we're doing so don't worry about it." You know, we're not super-inspecting you here,
30 we're doing a prep." And about six months later they opened the base.

1 JS: What was the impetus for reopening it at this time? Did it have to do with the
2 military spending under the Reagan administration or?

3 MB: Well, let's see, that was 1982.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: Yeah, so—no, that was the very end of Carter wasn't it? Again, it's
6 presence. They needed fighters in that area. That area is very, very important because the
7 sea between the Sea of Japan and the Pacific Ocean is very shallow at that point.

8 JS: Okay.

9 MB: So, if you wanted to pin the Soviet nuclear submarine fleet up, you could do
10 it at that point. It can also—the Japanese had very sophisticated electronic aircraft flying
11 in that area. The Japanese Navy, I believe. They were watching the submarines come in
12 and out there, in that strait, and I forgot what that strait's called, (Tsugaru Straits?) but
13 it's a very strategic point in Japan, and they let us open Misawa, but I'm not sure whether
14 Misawa is still open or not, I haven't stayed up with that.

15 JS: Okay, what other types of places would you go to for inspections?

16 MB: Oh gosh, we did a lot of stuff in Korea. I went back and inspected my old
17 unit there at Kunsan. There were a lot of radar stations in Korea, and we'd go in with
18 very small teams, and we would usually do those stations as collateral to another
19 inspection somewhere, but Osan we inspected, and Kunsan we inspected, and Suwon,
20 which is a little auxiliary base out of Osan. Which Kunsan, by the way now has
21 expanded. It's going to be the Army headquarters. They have moved out of the base in
22 Seoul and they're moving all their operations back away from the border, and out of
23 Seoul. It's a big political thing of moving out of Seoul.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: I'm trying to think of the name of the army base in Seoul. I used to live right
26 next to it when I was working for Lockheed. Anyway, they moved all that back to
27 Suwon. Suwon was just a little bitty auxiliary base, but it had space to expand, and the
28 Air Force put in A-10s there years ago. Now the Army's moving all their stuff in there.

29 JS: Okay.

30 MB: One of the bases we inspected, or one of the radar sites we inspected, in
31 Korea is down kind of on the Southeast Coast. They put these radar stations on

1 mountains, so they're very remote and the best way to get into this base, it's called
2 Paobonson. Son is the Korean word for mountain, and this is Paobon Mountain.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: At Paobonson they had a guy that would—this mountain is very hard
5 granite, and he polished this granite and would engrave it. Their theory was if they gave
6 enough of these rocks away, eventually the mountain would disappear. So, I've got a
7 rock somewhere, a paperweight that says Paobonson on it.

8 JS: Right.

9 MB: You just go in, and you take in mechanics, and you take in radar detection
10 people, or people who can analyze radar and make sure that their radar's all calibrated,
11 and that they're meeting all the requirements for what they're watching, and when they're
12 watching, and what they're watching for.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: You know, usually those bases are only maybe a couple hundred people.

15 JS: Right. So, depending on the size of the base, obviously, I guess that can
16 depend on the size of your team, so it varied?

17 MB: Absolutely, yup.

18 JS: Okay.

19 MB: We even went one time to Alaska. Alaskan Air Command, at the time—and
20 I don't know whether they still do or not—didn't have an inspection team. They had an
21 IG, they had a general who was the inspector, but he didn't have a team. Alaskan Air
22 Command was fairly small, staff wise. So, we combined with a team out of the United
23 States and when in and inspected Alaskan Air Command. It was a very interesting
24 inspection because I got to go all over Alaska, and they had OV-10s up there as forward
25 air controllers, so they just gave me one and a pilot. I mean, this inspection was all the
26 way from Anchorage over to Eielson. Eielson Air Force Base was in Fairbanks, and up
27 into the tundra and out on the range and they've got radar sights everywhere and we're
28 inspecting both air-to-air and air-to-ground. Alaska is a huge place, and about the only
29 way you can get around is in an airplane, so they gave me, I think, about three or four
30 OV-10s and said, "Use them however you need them." So, I had my inspectors moving
31 around in these OV-10s and it was really kind of a fun exercise.

1 JS: It sounds like it. I imagine it was nice to get to see a lot of that countryside up
2 there.

3 MB: Oh yeah.

4 JS: Well, one of the things I wanted to ask you about, about this inspection.
5 Overall, did you find that most of the bases and installations that you inspected—did you
6 find that they were in pretty good shape as far as operational readiness and all that was
7 concerned, or were there problems?

8 MB: Well, there are always problems, but some of the problems—see, and this is
9 one of the things that the IG has to do. A lot of the problems are created by the
10 headquarters. You're not only inspecting the base you're inspecting the headquarters. If
11 you go to a base and say, "Hey, you can't do that." This thing they're charging you to do,
12 "What's your problem?" and they say, "Well, headquarters hasn't given me enough
13 money to do that or headquarters hasn't given me personnel to do that." You know, if
14 you're supposed to be watching—a radar site is supposed to be up twenty-four hours a
15 day, and you've only got three people working in a position then they're working eight
16 on and eight off kind of thing. So, a lot of times I would go back, and I would write the
17 base up for not being about to do the job, but in the corrective action I would task
18 headquarters. And I get in a lot of trouble for that because my—the guys at the base, or
19 the guys at headquarters said, "Oh, we know we don't have enough money to do that."
20 And I said, "Well release them from that tasking then because if you're going to task
21 them to do it and then not give them the resources to do it, then my argument is with you,
22 not the base."

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: And then you run into other things. One of the things that my NCOs did very
25 well is when they would go into a base—sometimes they'd go in early, and just sort of
26 clandestinely look around at the living conditions, and where the guys are drinking off
27 base, and stuff like that, and they could pick very quickly if there's a drug problem. And
28 we had a drug problem, a lot of marijuana, and cocaine. And one of the things
29 especially—and this is true in the Philippines and in Korea. I'm not sure it's quite so bad
30 in Japan. Japan is very tough on drugs. But in Korea for instance, at Kunsan, all the little
31 off-base bars have what they call "jungle juice" or they call it different kinds of stuff. It's

1 just a punch that has a lot of liquor in it and they mix up different fruit juices and stuff
2 like that. It's cheap. So, the GIs drank the jungle juice. Well, the bar owners, wanting to
3 make a better jungle juice, and put cocaine in it.

4 JS: Wow.

5 MB: And then the kids would come back from off-base, you know, and they'd
6 test positive for cocaine, and they say, "Hey man, I haven't had anything. I haven't done
7 a darn thing." You'd get two or three of them that came out positive and say, "Where you
8 been drinking?"

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: "Where you been going for jungle juice?" They'd say, "Oh, the Tiki Bar."
11 We'd go down and test the Tiki Bar's jungle juice, and sure enough it had cocaine in it.
12 So, we'd have to shut that bar down, make it "off limits."

13 JS: Right.

14 MB: And then exonerate the guys because they didn't do it on purpose. But you'd
15 have to take them off—especially if they were on some kind of special weapons
16 sensitive job. You'd have to take them off that job, and that'd really screw up the
17 manning. If you have to take them off for, I don't know, six months or something, and
18 they were only over there for a year. That really made it tough, so we tried to nip that in
19 the bud, and the NCOs were excellent. We had a lot of cops that worked with us, security
20 police, that they'd go in early, or they'd go talk to the NCOs on the base and find out
21 where the problem is, and we'd try to cut that off very quickly.

22 JS: Right. Was this part of the, I guess, for lack of a better term hanging over from
23 the problems from Vietnam? Because I mean, I've heard, talking to Army guys, some of
24 them have said, particularly in the late seventies, I guess, that the Army was just in a
25 wreck at that point. Was this the same thing going on in the Air Force, you think?

26 MB: The Air Force can be a little more selective.

27 JS: Right.

28 MB: No, I don't think really—the services reflect the civilian community. So, if
29 you've got a big drug problem in the civilian community, you're going to have it in the
30 services.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: The Army in Vietnam had a big problem because it was a draft army.

2 JS: Right.

3 MB: And people didn't identify with a unit. And that was one of the lessons
4 learned from Vietnam is: you don't send a guy over as a replacement, as a single guy. I
5 mean, the Army had people going to Vietnam that didn't know which unit they were
6 going to go into. They get to Saigon and they might be assigned to an infantry unit, or an
7 Airborne unit or—if they were airborne qualified, or they'd be assigned artillery and they
8 weren't trained for it. They didn't have any unit identity. If they had a drug problem
9 when they were civilian, and got drafted, and got through training, then they arrived in
10 Vietnam with a drug problem, and an attitude problem.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: And while it was perceived as a big problem, I didn't see it as a big problem.
13 I lived on a lot of Army bases in Vietnam and I saw guys that were high. I'm sure they
14 were smoking dope. I really don't think there was much of a cocaine problem or heroin
15 problem over there because guys were living too close together. If you're on a front line
16 and depending on another guy, you're not going to tolerate him being really strung out.
17 I'm sure marijuana was very common. I smelled it a lot over there.

18 JS: Right.

19 MB: But I didn't see it as a big problem as far as getting the job done. And since
20 then, the Air Force, especially, has really cleaned up their act, although there are still
21 drug problems.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: But there are drug problems in society.

24 JS: These issues like you mentioned, like problems with the jungle juice, and the
25 drugs and all that. Once the inspection determined what the problem was with this be
26 turned over to MPs at that point?

27 MB: The inspection process is very intense.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: We'd go in and run the ORI for three or four or five days, making sure that
30 every aspect of the—and, you know, we'd make up some scenario that we're being
31 attacked by North Korea, or China, or Russia, or something like that. We'd even feed in

1 bogus exercise Intel before the fact so we could inspect the Intel to see that they were
2 given the commander the right information. We'd have guys up at headquarters that were
3 feeding stuff in, and we were also looking at how headquarters was reacting. And so,
4 headquarters in Oson got inspected every time we went into a different base, well, parts
5 of it did. But we'd run a conventional scenario, we'd run a chemical weapon scenario:
6 where everybody has to dress up in their suits, and that's very hard to work. Especially
7 the suits are getting better, but to work in a suit and a mask, and communicate in a suit
8 and a mask, is very difficult. So, we'd limit those to maybe six or eight hours of actually
9 being in the suits. We'd take lots and lots of pictures while we were doing it. And then at
10 the end of the exercise we'd close down the exercise, and then we had about a day and a
11 half to write our report. And before we would give the report to the whole wing, we
12 would go into the commander and his staff, and we'd give them an executive summary.
13 We'd tell them what they made. Let me see if I can remember what the ratings were.
14 Outstanding, excellent, satisfactory, and unsatisfactory, I think. We gave that to each unit,
15 and then we'd sum those up, and give the total rating to the top—or to the whole wing.
16 So satisfactory was—that was really a "C." Excellent—and I gave a few excellents. I
17 gave—I never changed my team's recommendation. I told them when I started working
18 with them, I said, "I reserve the right to go up or down one rating, based on my
19 observations, but I will do that very advisedly, and I never did it. If they said a wing was
20 excellent, I stuck with it. So, it wasn't just a numerical adding up, it was an overall
21 perception grade, a subjective grade if you will. I don't—we gave some small units, and
22 some sub-units outstanding, but I don't think we ever gave a whole wing outstanding. We
23 gave mostly satisfactory and excellent. Like I tell the wing commander, I said, "I can
24 always give you either an unsatisfactory, or an outstanding. I know where to look to find
25 things. And I know you'll flunk them, and so if it's not important to the headquarters,
26 then I'm not going to look in those places." But practically every wing could be flunked
27 on one thing or another. It's just like when I walk into an airman's barracks, I can tell you
28 exactly where I'm going to find dust. And the more experienced you become with the
29 inspecting, the more you know where to look. But you don't want to be an ass about it.
30 JS: Sure.

1 MB: So, you might, if you're walking into a barracks with a sergeant—
2 refrigerators, you can open a refrigerator and the bottom seal is always going to have
3 mold in it and the tropics, in Asia.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: So, I can walk and run my fingernail under the bottom seal and show it to the
6 1st sergeant and he says, "Oh damn, I flunked it." And I say, "No, we're not going to
7 write that up. I just want you to know that practically every refrigerator in Asia has mold
8 on the bottom seal."

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: And that's not important, except if your kids are getting sick from it it's
11 important.

12 JS: Sure.

13 MB: But, you know, you're kind of just showing off. Like I say, I can go into any
14 aircraft hanger and go find WD-40. You're not supposed to use WD-40 on airplanes, but
15 they do. WD-40, by the way has chlorine in it.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: And it causes rust, believe it or not.

18 JS: I imagine as far as the inspections go and would this at times breed resentment
19 among the guys you're inspecting? I'm sure it probably would, huh?

20 MB: Well, a lot of that is how you present it. That's why we took lots of pictures.
21 I used to really enjoy—I had a pretty good Pentax camera at the time, and I got all the
22 film I wanted, so I'd just drive around in a staff car taking pictures of my inspectors
23 inspecting. We'd get all those together and at the out-brief for the wing, we'd get them all
24 together in the base theater or something. We would give them a slide show. Each unit—
25 if we were talking about the security police, we would show them reacting to a bank
26 robbery, or we'd show them with their guard dogs. The guard dogs in a brace out at the
27 end of the leash. We'd show dramatic pictures, and we would accentuate the positive.
28 We'd say the canine unit got an outstanding, and we'd show the head of the canine unit
29 with a couple of dogs, and a couple of his handlers. We'd show them taking down—our
30 inspectors were the robbers, and so we'd rob a bank, and they'd catch the robber. And
31 then we would downplay the bad things. So, it was kind of a pep talk to them. And so, we

1 would downplay the unsatisfactory, or we'd say, "Here's an unsatisfactory, and here's the
2 corrective action, and we're going to take action to make sure that sufficient funds are
3 provided or—trying to make it positive. And it was a joy to be able to out-brief an
4 outstanding sub-unit. It was fun to go into the wing commander and say, "You got an
5 excellent." It hurt, it was an unsavory job, to go in and say, "You flunked it man, and
6 here's why and here's what we need to do."

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: At times they would change out commanders. They would fire wing
9 commanders over our findings. That's why I only lasted a year.

10 JS: (Laughs)

11 MB: I told the boss, I said, "You're not going to like it because I'm going to be
12 brutally truthful about things.

13 JS: Right.

14 MB: And they were ready to let me go after a year.

15 JS: Right, all right. And I guess from that point you went back to the Academy,
16 right?

17 MB: Well, what happened is my boss, Fred Haeffner was his name. He was a two
18 star general, we called him "Fat Freddy," although he was a weight lifter, and he and I
19 kind of respected one another for that. Although, I'm not a power lifter like he is. I've
20 always done a lot of gym work. I'm a gym rat. I told him when I went into the job, "One
21 year." And one year after I got into the job I walked in and I said, "It's time boss, I want
22 to go." And he said, "Well, where do you want to go?" I said, "Whatcha got?" and looked
23 around, my old Thunderbird leader was a two star general, General Tom Swam. I called
24 him up and he said, "Rip, you need to come back into TAC and redeem yourself." I said,
25 "Boss, I hadn't done anything to be redeemed from. I worked hard for TAC, everybody
26 knows me in TAC, I ought to be able to get a job" I was kind of looking for a vice wing
27 commander job. He said, "Well, they got a little group down in Eglin. They're counter-
28 insurgency. Well, if counter-insurgency at the time had been as popular as it is now, and
29 if I'd known where that unit was going, I might have considered it. But I had three
30 teenage daughters. One of them had already gone to three different high schools. And
31 they had a very bad experience with high schools in Hawaii. Although, we enjoyed being

1 in Hawaii, the ocean part of it. The girls are all good boogie boarders, and we did some
2 scuba diving, and I had a little wind surfer, and we'd take it out to Kailua Beach. The
3 school experience—they were a minority, they were haoles, they actually were going to a
4 school with a lot of the Navy kids near Pearl Harbor there. Although, we were living up
5 in the middle of the island in —(unintelligible) , anyway, I needed to settle down. And so,
6 my boss said, “Get this job done in Eglin.” I said, “Well, what do they fly? What kind of
7 airplanes?” he said, “They don't fly anything, they test radios.” I said, “Boss, I don't want
8 a job testing radios.”

9 JS: Right, sure.

10 MB: And he said, “You stay in that job about a year, and redeem yourself in
11 TAC, and then maybe we can get you a vice commander or commander job.” I said,
12 “Boss, I'm not going to go any place for a year.” And I had always wanted to go back to
13 the Air Force Academy. And the problem with going back to the Air Force Academy is it
14 takes you out of your primary AFSC, and takes you out of circulation, and that's a bad
15 thing, and I've talked to a lot of superintendents at the Academy about that. You know, it
16 needs to be a positive thing to come to the Academy, not a negative thing. So anyway, I
17 was ready to quit, you know, I was fed up with moving around. This would have been my
18 third move in three years. I had three daughters in high school. I said, “Heck with it, I
19 want to go to the Academy.” And a good friend of mine, Skip Scott, who had been a
20 squadron commander when I was in Lakenheath, twenty years before, but he and I kind
21 of run across each other, and I liked him. He was a really good commander, good mentor.
22 He was the superintendent at the Academy. And I called up his exec and just said, “What,
23 what's going on at the Academy?” I guess General Scott was in the office, and he said,
24 “Let me talk to Rip.” And so here I am talking to a three star general, and he said, “Rip.”
25 He said, “The only thing I got here is director of physical education.” I said, “Boss, I
26 don't know anything about physical education.” Except I was an athlete at the Academy.
27 I said, “But if you can get me that job, I'll take it.” So, he got me the job and I moved
28 back to the Academy, and of course, I had a house here in Colorado. I had bought this
29 land in 1968 when I was working at Cannon Air Force Base. I built a house on it in the
30 early eighties and was renting the house. So, in '84 we moved into this house which is
31 about thirty miles from the Academy. I started working as the director of physical

1 education. The nice thing is I was in charge of all the non-revenue sport coaches. They
2 teach physical education, and also coach fencing, or pistol, or volleyball, or something
3 like that: non-revenue sports. They were all good folks. Most of them had master's
4 degrees, and some were working on doctorates, and I had a few doctors working for me.
5 You know, in sports psychology, and I'm trying to think of the other doctorate that they
6 had. One lady I had working for me was a lady named Mickey King, who was a gold
7 medalist in diving. She was an Air Force lieutenant at the time she was in the Olympics.
8 And I had met her when I was a swimmer at the Academy and met her years later. She
9 was just a joy to work with. She was a lieutenant colonel at the time, coaching women's
10 diving, but she was sort of the task force leader for integrating women into the Academy.
11 Women had come to the Academy, I think, about '75 or '76 was the first year they were
12 in the Academy. But we were still figuring out, you know, what kind of sports, what kind
13 of physical challenges do we have to integrating women into the Academy. And she was
14 a great help at that. Of course, one of the big problems is sexual misconduct. Sort of like
15 Senator Goldwater said when he was on the board of visitors when they integrated
16 women. And he said, "If you have women at the Academy, you're going to have
17 misconduct, and that's just the nature of people." And they do, and they still do, and they
18 have problems with it. I think the Air Force Academy did the best of the three academies
19 at integrating with it. They're still meeting challenges with it. One of the big challenges
20 of women that age is encouraging them to meet the weight standard.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: Women under stress tend to gain weight, and you put them under a lot of
23 stress at the Academy and they eat for relief, and then their little bodies won't give up the
24 weight. So, one of the programs that I was in charge of at the Academy was the
25 overweight program, and Mickey King and other—exercise physiologists, that's what
26 they're called. They had a woman named Mary Anne Poseros that was just wonderful at
27 working with young ladies and working on their self-esteem to get them to be able to
28 meet the weight standard. Whenever a kid got in trouble with weight, I had a team of
29 people under Mary Anne. We had psychologists, we had doctors, we had personal
30 trainers practically. At any given time, out of four thousand students I'd maybe have
31 twenty or thirty that were really in trouble with not being able to meet the weight

1 standard. I think we probably dismissed, out of the three years I was in that job, maybe
2 three or four cadets. Most of them—the young men would come in and I'd have a “come
3 to Jesus meeting” with them, and look them in the eye and say, “You’ve got to lose
4 weight, friend, and here’s how you do it.” You work with all these people on his team
5 and the guys, especially if they were athletes of any kind, had the discipline to do it. You
6 know, they’d come back in six weeks and they’re off the program. The women were
7 just—I swear they could look at a cookie and gain weight. Their friends would give
8 them—we had them on special tables, they ate low calorie, a good diet and all that kind
9 of stuff, and they just couldn’t lose weight. But their friends would give them cookies and
10 things like that. And their dads would say, “Oh, I’m going to put her on—I’m going to
11 pay for an extra course. She’s going to go downtown.” That’s not they way to do it.
12 You’ve got to change your way of life. So that was one of the biggest challenges I had in
13 the three years I was in that job. I had a lot of fun in that job, and it was one of those
14 things where I could kind of relax. I knew I wasn’t going to make general. I knew I
15 wasn’t going to get a wing. I was living in my house and kind of living the dream. After
16 three years—when I went to the Academy, I said, nobody should ever stay at the
17 Academy over three years. People like to go there and homestead, especially academics.
18 So, they’d go there, and stay there for twelve, fifteen years, and then expect to get
19 promoted, and they’re not going to get promoted. If you’re the tennis coach at the Air
20 Force Academy and you’ve been there for twelve years, and your real AFSC is logistics,
21 you’re not competitive as a logistician anymore.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: So anyway, I said when I went there nobody should ever stay over three
24 years. So, at the three year point I just put in—I had gotten my realtor’s license to work
25 here in Colorado, and was ready to retire, and I put in my papers to retire. Well, the
26 afternoon I put in my papers, General Skip Scott called me, and he said, “Rip, I need a
27 chief of staff. Would you be my chief of staff?” and I thought about it for about thirty-
28 seven seconds and said, “Yes.”

29 JS: Right.

30 MB: “But you have to do it for two years.” He said, “You have to promise me.”
31 He was getting ready to retire, and a new superintendent was coming in, and he said, “I

1 need a chief of staff that knows the Academy.” I knew General Hamm (LGEN Charles R.
2 Hamm), the guy that was coming in. He was a Thunderbird. Not at the same time I was,
3 but many years before. But he and I knew each other, and so he had already talked to
4 Skip Scott, and General Hamm and said, “Yes, I’d like to have Rip as my chief of staff.”
5 So anyway, I moved into chief of staff. I ended up staying for those two years and then I
6 retired. And as chief of staff—it was kind of a good time to be chief of staff because that
7 was the Reagan years, that was when Reagan had come in, and Senator Goldwater was
8 the head of the board of visitors, and he could get money, and we needed money. At that
9 point, the Academy was twenty-five years old, and any engineer will tell you about every
10 twenty-five years you need to go in and replace wiring, and replace plumbing, and redo
11 curb and gutter, and redo roofs and all that kind of stuff. So, we went from one million
12 dollars a year at the Academy—real property maintenance, to seventeen million in one
13 year.

14 JS: Oh, wow.

15 MB: Now they probably are working at fifty million.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: Another thing we did—because of my background in inspections was—I
18 said, “We’ve got the hospital that’s on mobility, we’ve got the security police and the
19 engineers on mobility. We’ve got all kinds of terrorist threats and security things like
20 that. What are the results of your last ORI, Or MEI?” They said, “We’ve never been
21 inspected, we’re exempt from inspection.” And I said, “Well, you’re not anymore.” And
22 General Hamm agreed with me. So, we ran an ORI, and did our mobility thing, and all
23 that and didn’t do very well on it because it had never been inspected.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: And all the chiefs, the NCOs just didn’t like me very much at all. But it
26 improved the Academy, and one of the things I recommended—because the Academy
27 had so many auxiliary things that they were doing beside cadets, like engineers were on
28 mobility to go wherever the Air Force wanted to send them and build runways. So, we
29 went during our ORI—we don’t have a real runway at the Academy. It’s a glider and
30 light aircraft, but we went over to Peterson Air Force Base and exercised them on
31 rebuilding runways there, using Peterson’s equipment. You know, I had that all

1 prearranged. So anyway, we did an ORI. And one of the things I recommended when I
2 left the Academy was: the chief of staff doesn't need to be the base commander. You
3 need to create an Airbase Wing and have a real Base Commander. Well now, they not
4 only have a base commander, they have a one star base commander instead of a colonel
5 base commander because of all of their auxiliary missions, and they also have a guy
6 that's now called the Vice Superintendent who does the chief of staff job. So, it's kind of
7 evolved through the years, and it's been interesting to watch.

8 JS: Sure. So, you retired in '89 then?

9 MB: Retired in '89, and kind of had fun about the last six months I was in the job
10 as chief of staff. I just kind of opened up the doors and said, "I'll do anything, I'm going
11 to look at a lot of interesting things to do. And I still had my realtor's idea, but 1989
12 economically was a very bad time to try to get into real estate. The guys I had been
13 working with in '87 had gone out of business. They had gone to work for somebody else
14 and there just wasn't much building or real estate going on. I looked at being a
15 commandant of Valley Forge Military Academy over in Pennsylvania and actually got on
16 their short list and was going to interview, and my wife said, "I don't want to live in
17 Pennsylvania." So, I declined that job, and looked into other things. I really wanted to
18 stay here in Colorado. I looked into getting into mountain management for skiing. I like
19 to ski. But I didn't want to move away from my home, so that would have made me have
20 to have another job, or another house up in Summit County or something. I got an offer
21 to manage a facility up there, but I turned it down. And one of the things that everybody's
22 looking for, they really want to get the experience and the training you've gotten in the
23 military, but they don't want to pay you for it. They'll say, you're going to get Air Force
24 retirement, so we don't have to pay you very much.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: So, I turned that down. Finally, my good friend Tuck McAtee- was working
27 in engineering down in Fort Worth for General Dynamics, on the F-16, and I didn't really
28 want to go to Texas although I was born there and had a lot of relatives down there. But
29 they made me an offer I couldn't refuse to work in engineering writing engineering
30 studies on the F-16. What they did with the F-16: they started out with a Block 1 and then
31 they went to a Block 5. And then they started moving forward and the block changes—

1 there's some physical changes in the aircraft, but they're mainly software changes to
2 integrate new equipment into the airplane. So, each block was supposed to be about a two
3 year between Block 5 and Block 10 and Block 15.

4 JS: Okay.

5 MB: And they went through the first blocks fairly quickly. They got up to about
6 Block 25 when I entered the picture, and they were working on Block 30 and Block 40
7 and Block 50. I don't think there was ever a 45, but it was taking about four years to
8 integrate all the new equipment and so forth. And what they did is they wrote a—what
9 did we call them? They were called a “Falcon Century” series of studies, and this study
10 would be, you know, you'd get engineers, and these were all—no, they were government
11 funding. I was going to say they were all GD funded, but they were government funded.
12 They'd worked with the Air Force and they'd say, “Okay, we want to integrate this
13 LANTIRN pod.” And LANTIRN stands for Low Altitude Navigation and Targeting
14 Infrared for Night. They'd say, “We want to integrate this LANTIRN pod that Honeywell
15 had come up with.

16 JS: Okay.

17 MB: And I've forgotten who built the LANTIRN. There were a couple of
18 different kind of LANTIRN pods, but—so we'd get together with Honeywell, we'd get
19 together with engineers, we'd get together with the software guys and see what the pod
20 did, and what the airplane had, and how you needed to integrate those two, and then we
21 would propose it for the next block of airplanes. We did the testing out at Edwards and
22 they'd do what did they call them—operational testing anyway, was done at Kirtland Air
23 Force Base in Arizona (New Mexico) I'm trying to think of the name of that outfit, (Air
24 Force Operational Test and Evaluation Center) but anyway, Tom Swam was running that,
25 by the way. It was my previous Thunderbird guy. But anyway, I finished up one of the—I
26 think it was block 30—I finished up that study and then I did the Block 40. Block 40 F-
27 16 was a big leap forward electronically. It was a very expensive airplane and a very
28 sophisticated airplane. At the time it was the most expensive F-16, and we did not give
29 any of those to the foreigners. Then we had a Block 50, which had a bigger engine, and
30 we integrated a new engine, a GE engine, into the Block 40 airplane. So that's the sort of
31 thing I was doing. One of the things I really enjoyed doing, and found challenging, was

1 talking to the engineer and they would say, “Well, we can do this.” And they would write
2 it up, and it didn’t make sense to a pilot, from a pilot’s standpoint. So, I’m working with
3 the Air Force, mostly pilots, and I would rewrite it, and make sure the Air Force
4 understood it and it meant what the engineer meant to say.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: So, I had a lot of communications to do to get this “Falcon Century” study
7 out the door. I enjoyed that very much. Unfortunately, after Block 50, which was about
8 1992, the Air Force said, “We’re not going to do a Block 60.” My little unit, and my little
9 group of people I was working with the Falcon Century kind of said, “Woo, what are we
10 going to do now?” One of the things we did is we did a General Dynamics funded thing
11 called—it put a big wing on the F-16, which gave it a lot further range, and a lot more
12 loiter time and a better turning capability. And it also—it stretched the airplane about
13 fifty inches. It made it a big airplane and put a whole new computer into the airplane. I
14 wish I could remember the acronym for that—but the Air Force didn’t buy it. Some of
15 the Europeans were kind of interested in it, and this kind of led to a follow on job for me.
16 I got into—after the Falcon Century studies kind of dried up, I went looking around the
17 company for something to do, and I had some management experience so I moved over
18 into management and started working with the different integration projects, and upgrade
19 projects, where different countries would come in and say, “Well, we want to upgrade
20 our computer, or we want to put a different weapon on the airplane, or we want to put a
21 jammer internal on the airplane, and so forth.” So, I got into some of those and those are
22 limited. You know, they may be six months jobs and then you’ve got to move on to
23 something else.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: So, I was working in management. And because of my work on this other
26 thing where we were going to put the big wing on, the Europeans came in and said, “We
27 don’t want the big wing, and we don’t want to stretch the airplane, but we need to
28 reinforce the—we told them they need to reinforce the bulkheads on the airplane. Either
29 reinforce them, or change them out, which is a very difficult thing to do structurally. So,
30 the major—had to take everything out of the airplane. You’d take the airplane part
31 essentially to replace these bulkheads or “cold working” we called it where you extrude a

1 tool through the holes in the bulkhead to close up the little cracks, so they don't get
2 bigger.

3 JS: Okay.

4 MB: We were doing this with all the original European Block 1 and Block 5
5 airplanes, so I was working with Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway. I was
6 the assistant manager, program manager for that program. And they were putting—the
7 main thing they were doing in the airplane was putting all this new capability, a whole
8 new computer in the airplane, pretty expensive job. It was interesting working with these
9 different countries. The Belgians, of course—and every country they were working with
10 we had to have offset contracts. In other words, if you go into Belgium and they're going
11 to do a ten million dollars' worth of work—we had agreements with each of the
12 countries—you had to have something like a twenty or thirty percent offset. So, you had
13 to place—and the numbers were bigger than ten million. Say it was one hundred
14 million—you had to place thirty million dollars worth of work, of some kind, in that
15 country. Well, Belgium is kind of interesting because if you put work with a Francophile
16 company, then you had to go back and put an equal amount of work with a Flemish
17 company. And we were working with SABCA and SONACA in Belgium and a lot of
18 those have a lot of French overtones to them. The Belgium's weren't very good about
19 keeping correct track of what modifications it'd done to the airplanes, so we were always
20 arguing with them. We were supposed to be in charge of configuration management.

21 JS: Okay.

22 MB: In other words, we were supposed to know everything they'd done to the
23 airplane, and we would say we could do something to an airplane, and we'd go in find
24 out it didn't look like what it was supposed to look like. It had wires where there weren't
25 supposed to be wires, and it had tubes that they rerouted, and stuff. So, it always cost us
26 more, and take more time, and we were always arguing with the Belgians about that. The
27 Belgians didn't fly their airplanes very much. The Dutch on the other hand just beat the
28 hell out of their airplanes. They were pretty easy to work with.

29 JS: Right.

30 MB: They were very understanding, and they knew they had beat the heck out of
31 their airplanes. The Danes were broke. They're good folks, but their airplanes are sort of

1 like little sports cars. The same crew chief may be on the same airplane for twenty years.
2 They'd baby them, and they'd polish them, and they don't fly them very much. They
3 didn't have a whole lot of money in Denmark in those days, and now they've got a little
4 oil money and they're doing better. The Norwegians have a lot of money, and they're
5 very sophisticated, and they want the latest and best thing, but they're extremely good
6 businessmen. They drive a hard bargain, but they always want—they study what they
7 want to put in the airplanes, and I enjoyed working with the Norwegians. About every six
8 weeks I was on this program for two years. About every six weeks I would go over and
9 my boss—one of the reasons they put me on the program is my boss had been on the
10 program for about two or three years, and he was just burned out. He just didn't want to
11 travel anymore, he was kind of pissed off at the Europeans (unintelligible) they were hard
12 to work with, and they were so diverse. It was one contract with all four of them, but it
13 was like four different little contracts. So, I'd fly over to Belgium, to Brussels, where our
14 headquarters was. Actually, our headquarters was in London, but our foreign
15 headquarters was in London, but the headquarters for this program was in Belgium. I'd
16 fly into Belgium—and in every country I would meet with the Lockheed people, it was
17 Lockheed by then. The Lockheed people, I would meet with the foreign Air Force
18 people, and I'd meet with all of the different contractors that were working on the
19 program. And in every place, I got wined and dined. And so, I'd be over there for about
20 ten days and I'd gain about fifteen pounds.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: From Belgium I'd take the train up to the Netherlands, meet with those folks,
23 and then I'd fly over to Denmark and meet with those folks. And then I'd get—when I
24 learned the system a little better, I would get on an overnight ferry from Denmark to
25 Norway, to Oslo. The company liked that because they didn't have to pay for a hotel
26 room overnight, and I liked it because it was kind of fun to be on a ferry overnight.
27 Anyway, I'd go up to Oslo, and then I'd fly down to London and out-brief them and go
28 home. After ten days of that it was just exhausting, but I enjoyed the program and got it
29 finished up. Then I moved on to the Korean program. A friend of mine was running that
30 program and he was having trouble getting the—what do we call it—the “proposal” out,
31 the “final proposal.” I mean, when you do a program, and of course you bid the program.

1 This Korean program was originally supposed to be done in Texas. And the unions in
2 Texas said, “You’re not bringing four or five hundred Koreans in here to learn how to do
3 our jobs.” And they really got nasty about it. So, we said, “Okay, we’ll do it Korea.” And
4 what it was, was the Koreans wanted not—well, they wanted some more airplanes, they
5 wanted a modern third generation, or whatever the F-16 is. They wanted a modern
6 computer aircraft and they wanted to learn how to build them.

7 JS: Okay.

8 MB: So, we started by making—I think about the first four or five airplanes were
9 made in big chunks. We’d make the fuselage, and the cockpit section, and then the tail,
10 ship it over to Korea and let them glue it together. And then we cut down into smaller and
11 smaller and smaller pieces until finally they were actually making the pieces over there.
12 Samsung was the lead contractor on it, but there I think there were four or five. Let’s see,
13 there was Samsung, Kia, Korean Air, and Hyundai—

14 JS: Okay.

15 MB:—were all making pieces of the F-16. And we had, at one time, up to four
16 hundred people in Korea working at Pusan, and we actually had them housed at a little
17 navy base down there called Kimhae, which worked out nice for the navy because they
18 were going to have to shut down Kimhae until we came in there and gave them a bunch
19 of money to keep it open. But anyway, we had bid the program and won the bid to do it,
20 had been awarded it, and we had actually started making airplanes, but we had never
21 finished the actual proposal. The proposal is sort of a contract. It’s the detailed part of
22 how you’re going to accomplish what you said you were going to accomplish. Well,
23 we’re already doing it, but the proposal had never been finished and approved. So, this
24 friend of my said, “Rip, I need your help. You can write, you can communicate, we need
25 to get this thing done and delivered.” When you put the whole proposal together, stacked
26 up, it’s probably four feet high.

27 JS: Oh, wow.

28 MB: I mean, there’s logistics, there’s fuel, there’s armament, there’s computer
29 management manual, there’s a whole bunch of different manuals that have to be
30 completed. And they were all drafted, but they weren’t completed yet. So, I took that on,
31 it took me about six months to get that done, and out the door, and of course, the sad

1 thing about it, nobody ever looked at it after you got it out the door. I got them all
2 delivered. There's probably four or five hundred of them had to be assembled and mailed
3 off to everybody in the world. Each one of the contractors had multiple copies, and the
4 Air Force had a lot of copies, and the Korean Air Force had a lot of copies. Korea is
5 pretty smart. A lot of these countries insist that we deliver it to them in their language.
6 That costs a lot of money.

7 JS: Sure.

8 MB: So, we just—to the Koreans we just delivered them in English, and I don't
9 think they ever translated them. But anyway, got that done. And then my boss from the
10 Korean program—I had hoped to be able to stay in that job, and maybe move up to be the
11 assistant to him, because there was about a four or five year job, too to get all these
12 airplanes completed. They ended up buying one hundred and twenty of them.

13 JS: Okay.

14 MB: But he needed somebody to go over to Seoul who knew the program. And
15 having been in Korea, and I liked the Koreans, and knew my way around Korea a little
16 bit. He asked me if I could go over and be the Director of Seoul Operations, in Seoul.
17 Director of Korean Fighter Program Operations. And so, I went over there and kind of
18 said, "Okay, I'll go do it for two years." The deal was that there was kind of like a
19 townhouse there, that I lived in, just off the base in downtown Seoul. I can't for the life of
20 me remember the name of that base, but my main job was to interface with—all these
21 foreign sales are done through the foreign military—let's see, FMS, Foreign Military
22 Sales.

23 JS: Okay.

24 MB: Which is done through the embassy—the Air Attaché in the country
25 manages the foreign military sales. He actually has a general who manages all of the
26 programs in country. I'm trying to think of that guy's name. Anyway, the Army had a lot
27 of contracts in Korea, and this one star had an Air Force section that actually
28 administered the contract. So, I was working with the embassy, I was working with the
29 US Army, and the Air Force subsidiary to that. I was working with the companies, all the
30 companies had headquarters in Seoul so, if we had an issue with Hyundai, or Samsung, or
31 anybody like that. I was working with the ROKAF, the Republic of Korea Air Force. I

1 had a big office in Seoul. Of course, there are lots of other Lockheed type operations in
2 Seoul, so I was in a great big office there and I had a nice staff. I had a big car and a
3 driver—and my real job was whenever anybody came over and wanted to meet
4 everybody in the Korean Fighter Program, I would take him all around the country. So, I
5 got to travel all around the country and driving in Korea is kind of fun. That's why I had
6 to driver. One of the problems is there's no parking, especially in Seoul.

7 JS: I bet.

8 MB: And so, when I was going to a meeting, he would drop me off, my driver
9 would drop me off, and then when the meeting was over, I'd call him, and he'd come
10 from god knows where and show up and take me back to the office. I did drive that car
11 though quite often. I'd drive it home at night, and then drive back in. But if I was going to
12 a meeting or something, a driver would drive me. And he was also my security, and my
13 translator, although he didn't speak very good English at all.

14 JS: Right.

15 MB: But I would take people like, I think I told you, General Chuck Horner came
16 over and he was going all over to talk to the Korean Air Force as an advisor, paid for by
17 Lockheed. And so, he and I got in the car and just drove all around for about a week,
18 shooting down to ROKAF Headquarters, bring him down to Pusan, took him into
19 Samsung, really enjoyed traveling around with him. But I did that with a lot of different
20 people over there. So that was a good job. After about two years the program was boiling
21 down and I finally called my boss and said, "Hey, I'm working a lot of stuff here, and
22 getting paid for by the Korea fighter program, but that has nothing to do with Korean
23 fighter program. So, I'm really kind of feeling like maybe you could do without this
24 position." We had a Korean colonel that could do the job that I was doing just as well so I
25 said, "Why don't you just eliminate this position, save the program some money, and I'll
26 come home." So, I went back to Lockheed and—when I went to work for Lockheed there
27 were over thirty-thousand people working, at the Fort Worth plant. I went to work for
28 General Dynamics. When I left there were less than ten thousand working there. When I
29 went there, they were making twenty-four airplanes a month, when I left, they were
30 making one airplane a month. So, it was kind of one of those things where you had to
31 stay light on your feet to keep a job.

1 JS: Right.

2 MB: They were starting to gin up on the Joint Strike Fighter and the F-22, but I
3 was really kind of ready to retire and come back to Colorado. In fact, I went back, and we
4 had Sold our house in Weatherford, near Fort Worth, and my wife was supposed to come
5 over to Korea and live with me, but we had a daughter who had a problem pregnancy, so
6 she stayed here for that, and then her father passed away and she had to take care of that
7 estate. So, she ended up not being in Korea with me very much. Maybe a third of the time
8 and, Korea for a class B bachelor is just not a good place. I worked out a lot, and read a
9 lot, and traveled when I could, but it was time for me to get out of it. And so, I went back
10 to Fort Worth hoping that I'd find a niche, but I also needed a knee operation. My left
11 knee had been bad for actually forty years. And so, I went back, got my knee operated on,
12 and my wife—we were living in a little apartment down there until we decided what we
13 were going to do. She just moved up to Colorado and said, "I'm through." Our daughter
14 was living in this house then, and she moved up here and said, "Come join me when you
15 can, but I'm not going to move anymore." And so, I decided to quit, and thought I'd
16 come up here to Colorado and get a job and I came up here and started looking around
17 and networking a little bit. I got offered a couple of jobs, but not very much pay, and
18 every time I looked at a desk I just said, "I don't have to do this." So, I retired and got
19 into hiking and canoeing, and rafting and self-actualizing kind of things. I don't know
20 who did all this volunteer work before I retired, but I'm staying real busy.

21 JS: Right.

22 MB: So that's brought you up to the present.

23 JS: Do you ever fly anymore?

24 MB: I stay in touch with a lot of guys that fly, and several of them—not several,
25 but a few of them have gotten killed. Flying is very expensive. Time wise and dollar
26 wise. I have thought about buying into an airplane. Two or three guys get together and
27 buy an airplane. But unless you have time to fly about twenty hours a month, time, and
28 money, you can't stay current. And the reason some of my friends have busted their ass is
29 because they're not current, and they go out and do something stupid and get killed. So, I
30 kind of made a conscious decision, I can get my thrills on the ski slopes, and rafting, and
31 so forth, and I don't need to fly for that adrenaline fix.

1 JS: Right.

2 MB: And frankly I don't have enough money to do it. I got a neighbor here who
3 owns a little T-34—he's rich. He got out of the Air Force early and got into financial
4 management, and he's got lots of money. I don't know what he spent for that T-34, but I
5 go out and fly with him, oh, it's been a couple years since I've been out with him, but I
6 have gone out with him a couple times. It's fun; it's a fully acrobatic airplane.

7 JS: Right.

8 MB: Flying it at this altitude is a little dicey. I have another friend—well it's Tuck
9 McAtee, the guy that got me the job at Lockheed—is now living up in Virginia and he
10 has a little—I don't know what it is, it's a little low-wing experimental aircraft, although
11 it's a manufactured aircraft, he didn't build it. He called me about a year and a half ago
12 and said, "We're going to Alaska." I don't even keep a current license now. First of all, I
13 don't have enough money to go to Alaska with you. But secondly, it'll take me six
14 months to get my license renewed so I could go out and do that. So, what they did is
15 about five of them, in the same kind of airplanes, one of the guys, Bob Philips I think is
16 his name. Anyway, he lived up in Alaska and he had invited all of his friends with similar
17 airplanes to come up and fly around Alaska, and they did it for about six weeks. I don't
18 know what it cost him. But anyway, I was very tempted to do that with Tuck, but didn't
19 really have time or money to do it. I get offers every once in awhile to fly, but I can't
20 afford the time to do it.

21 JS: Right, all right. Well, what about involvement with the Air Force Academy?
22 Do you ever do anything with them anymore?

23 MB: Yes, I do. I enjoy being at the Academy. One of the reasons I wanted to go
24 back was I think the Academy does some very good training. Whether graduates stay in
25 the Air Force or not, they're well trained to do whatever they choose to do. I've gotten
26 involved with the Character in Leadership development program.

27 JS: Okay.

28 MB: Each class has a kind of an off-site or, a getaway kind of day that they do
29 once a semester. They've got four programs. Let me think back and think of the
30 acronyms. The program for the—I can't begin to tell you what the acronym stands for,
31 but the program for the first class for the seniors is called ACES. And it features a guy by

1 the name of Mal Waken. Mal was a lieutenant when I was a senior at the Academy, and
2 he was sent to the Academy by Notre Dame. Notre Dame was a very good mentor. Father
3 Hapsburg at Notre Dame was a very good mentor to the Air Force Academy. In fact, a lot
4 of the departments at the Academy used Notre Dame Curriculum when they developed
5 their curriculum. Anyway, Notre Dame sent this young lieutenant, that graduated Notre
6 Dame, to the Academy, and he was in philosophy. And the people at the Academy said,
7 “Well, we’re not going to teach a philosophy course.” And Notre Dame said, “Oh, yes
8 you are. You need one.” And so, this young lieutenant was there to develop the
9 philosophy department and all of the other instructors at the Academy were majors and
10 lieutenant colonels. You know, a few captains with graduate degrees. And so, Waken
11 stayed at the Academy something like thirty years. He’d go out and have another
12 assignment somewhere, like a sabbatical, and then he’d come back to the Academy. And
13 he’s known now as “the conscience of the Air Force Academy.” He’s written a couple of
14 books. But he is a wonderful speaker. I enjoyed going to his courses, and he keeps asking
15 me every time, he says, “Rip, is this getting old?” he says, “I’m saying the same thing
16 over and over again.” And I have to keep reminding him. I say, “Mal, you’re talking to
17 different people each time, and they all need to hear what you have to say.” “Okay, well
18 I’ll just keep doing it.” He does like fourteen or twenty of these things every year, free of
19 charge. He lives in the local area, he makes a lot of money off of doing business seminars
20 and things like that, but he just enjoys working with cadets, as I do. But anyway, I do
21 what they call “facilitate” at these seminars. They’ll have maybe forty or fifty students,
22 and they’ll divide them into five or six tables, and each table has a facilitator and most of
23 the facilitators are blue suitors.

24 JS: Okay.

25 MB: A few old guys, retirees, do it as I do. So, Mal Waken, as I say is kind of my
26 mentor. He speaks without notes. He can talk on any subject you want practically. Most
27 of them he relates back to honesty, integrity, that sort of thing. Anyways, these are all day
28 seminars. Each class has one of my favorites. I’m going to do one I think in about two
29 weeks, it’s called the “ropes course.” It’s done with sophomores.

30 JS: Okay.

1 MB: And we have kind of like an obstacle course where they go out, and I think
2 there's about fifteen of them in each group, and we'll have three or four groups out there.
3 They have a physical obstacle they need to get a team through. One of the things we do is
4 a standard test. Before they go out to do the ropes course, they do this test. And I can't
5 remember the name of the test. It's a physiological profile test. It determines whether
6 you're a type A, type B. Whether you're a 'person person' or if you're a 'dictatorial
7 person.' So, we grade these folks, and we put their name tag—we put type A, or I think
8 there's a symbol for each one. 'O' is for the organizer, and 'I' is for the introspective
9 person, and 'S' is for the person who is more into detail kind of stuff. Anyway, and then
10 we go out and put them in a group situation and see if they really meet their profile or
11 not.

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: It's really interesting to do, and this profile test they take is about a thirty
14 minute test. There are some very lengthy tests. I've done some management courses
15 where there are two day tests to determine what your profile is. Anyway, they try to get
16 through this "ropes course." A lot of ropes involved, and they're swinging, and they're
17 catching each other, and they're trying to figure out how to get across obstacles. We call
18 it "death lava." If they touch it they 'die'—and they have to do back to the end of the line
19 to figure out how to get around it next time.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: So, I really enjoy that course, and you see kids kind of coming out of their
22 shells and becoming leaders, in that course. There's other pep talk kind of courses that
23 they go through. I'm going through one next week called "Lift," and it's more of an
24 organizational, more of a sit-down pep talk kind of thing. I enjoy that, so I do that, and
25 recently—oh, they also—in fact, I'm pretty sure Texas Tech sends a contingent to this
26 Character and Leadership development seminar, which is held in February each year
27 about the last week in February, at the Academy. We get two or three days. It's usually, I
28 think, Thursday through Saturday. We get speakers from all over the world. I mean, and
29 this is funded. Some of the funding comes from the Association of Graduates, to bring in
30 speakers like—one of my favorite speakers is a guy by the name of Chad Hennings.

31 JS: Okay.

1 MB: He was a 1987 graduate of the Air Force Academy. Went to pilot training.
2 Was in Desert Storm. After Desert Storm they had a deal where young captains could get
3 out of the service early. Got out of the service—and he was a football All-American, and
4 he was drafted by the Dallas Cowboys.

5 JS: Okay.

6 MB: Played for the Dallas Cowboys in both of their 1990s Super bowl
7 championships. And he's retired now and does a lot of inspirational speaking around the
8 country. He's a great guy. Rulan, Rulan the Olympic wrestler.

9 JS: Oh, um.

10 MB: Anyway, I can't remember his last name, he speaks. Mickey King comes in
11 and speaks. We've had Rudy Giuliani come in and speak. We have guys who are like
12 Silver Star, and guys from the Iraq War come in and speak. Each one of these Character
13 in Leadership seminars has a theme. Selflessness, or courage, or things like that. We have
14 people coming from West Point, Annapolis, Coast Guard Academy, Texas A&M, The
15 Citadel, students coming in, representing their school. You know, maybe five or six from
16 each school, and I'm pretty sure Texas Tech sends somebody.

17 JS: Okay.

18 MB: I always attend that as a facilitator. And now I've gotten involved very much
19 with the Association of Graduates. And we're kind of in a cataclysmic time right now.
20 Fundraising is not doing very well.

21 JS: Sure.

22 MB: So, we're feeling some growing pains, and so I had been on the board of
23 directors back in the late eighties and nineties and thought I didn't need to do it anymore.
24 But with this turmoil going on I volunteered to run again for the board, and got elected,
25 and I'm just starting a four year term.

26 JS: Okay, all right. Well, I guess the last thing we should do before wrapping up
27 the interview, the last thing I wanted to do, is to ask some of these broad questions
28 concerning the war, concerning Vietnam.

29 MB: Okay.

30 JS: And you can say as much or as little as you'd like when it comes to these. I
31 guess first of all, looking back on your time in Vietnam, how do you feel about American

1 involvement in Vietnam, and your own involvement in Vietnam? How do you feel about
2 that today, now?

3 MB: Well, I think I said it in an earlier interview, but the US should never get
4 involved in a war they don't intend to win. And to win you have to take away the
5 enemy's will to fight, and taking away his will to fight can be brutal. When you show
6 pictures to the American public of supposed civilians being killed, it's hard to keep the
7 resolve to win up. The American public will tolerate a short war, but they don't have the
8 guts to tolerate a long one.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: And that was our problem in Vietnam. A Commander in Chief wasn't
11 committed to winning it. I've learned a lot more about Johnson and McNamara since the
12 war. If I'd known, it during the war I might not have been quite as eager to fight. I'm
13 proud of what I did there, and I could go back and do it again. I just wish that we had
14 been allowed to win it. But everybody says, "Well, we were fighting to avoid the domino
15 theory. We were afraid that all of the countries over there would go communist." The
16 detractors from the war now say, "Well, they didn't. We lost the war." We didn't lose the
17 war, we gave up on it. But they say, "We lost the war, and the dominoes didn't fall." But
18 some of the dominoes did. Cambodia is the most obvious one. Millions of people were
19 killed there because the communists came in.

20 JS: Right.

21 MB: Brutally. Vietnam is a communist country. Everybody says, "Oh, they're so
22 friendly there, and they're capitalists." They're not, they're communists. But the
23 dominoes didn't fall perhaps because we did show some resolve, and concern for that
24 area. Taiwan is still free. I'm not sure how much longer they're going to stay free and
25 that could be very nasty. The Philippines are not communist anyway. They're not what
26 we'd like them to be, but they're not communists. Especially the older Philipinos
27 respect the US. Guam especially respects the US, and they're very, very strong, almost
28 like a colony. They're very strong. What do they call it? Anyway, Guam is a very strong
29 ally in the region, and we need Guam very much regionally. So, we did show some
30 resolve, and we did keep the big domino from happening there, so I think that war was
31 worth fighting.

1 JS: Okay, all right.

2 MB: I'm just sorry the way it ended.

3 JS: Right, yes sir. How about, and I know you kind of touched on this a little bit

4 as well, but US strategy in the war, and how the war was handled? Could you talk about

5 that for a moment?

6 MB: Our strategy in Vietnam?

7 JS: Yes, sir.

8 MB: I wish that—I think I mentioned to you McMaster's book *Derelection of*

9 *Duty*. I wish that some of our military leaders had had the guts to stand up and tell

10 Johnson that we were fighting the war wrong. Johnson was willing to do just enough to

11 keep us in the war, but not enough—he didn't want it to sacrifice his welfare programs.

12 What did he call it, the Great Society?

13 JS: The Great Society, right.

14 MB: He didn't want to sacrifice those programs enough to win the war. The war

15 wasn't that important to him.

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: I think he got very bad advice from McNamara, and I think that the Chiefs of

18 Staff were gutless.

19 JS: Okay all right. What about media coverage of the war?

20 MB: The media was kind of 'feeling its oats' at that time. They realized that, hey,

21 we can show a picture and change the whole attitude. In World War II, in comparison,

22 the media was very pro-war, and very pro-America. Didn't denigrate the US

23 involvement, although there were some detractors, especially before the war. But one of

24 the guys I kind of hold up as an idol, an example of the way the media treated the US

25 military in World War II was Ernie Pyle.

26 JS: Right.

27 MB: Ernie Pyle, by the way, is (was initially) buried on a little bitty island called

28 Ie Shima (now Iejima) which is just off the coast of Okinawa. (He was later re-interred at

29 the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu, HI) There's a bombing

30 range there, and I actually walked around the shrine where he was killed. But he was very

1 pro-GI, he was very pro-US Military. He projected a “We’re going to win this thing”
2 kind of patriotic theme. Whereas few media figures do that today, talk show guys do.

3 JS: Right.

4 MB: But the real reporters don’t, and they’re always looking for “the bad” in the
5 military and not “the good.”

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: I think Jane Fonda, and Kerry, and people like that, really, really hurt our
8 effort in Vietnam.

9 JS: All right. What your opinion of US policy towards Vietnam today, in this
10 growing relationship that we have with the communist government there?

11 MB: Oh, I’ve forgotten who said, “If you have free trade with a country. It’s hard
12 to remain enemies.” I’m a free trader, I’m an open marketer. I think we ought to trade
13 with our enemies, that’s the way we make friends. You don’t trade secret software with
14 them, like we did with the Chinese under the Clinton Administration.

15 JS: Right.

16 MB: But trading meat, and potatoes, and rice and, you know, I think that’s very
17 good. I think China is very much communist, and I was talking to a friend yesterday
18 about China. China was very, very corrupt in little village kind of corruption, and area
19 kind of corruption, and a war lord kind of corruption all the way back into the 1930s and
20 40s before the war. The only way they could correct that was communism. I’m not a big
21 fan of communism, but if you have to do a dirty job, a communist dictator can get it done
22 pretty quick.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: An example of that is they had a tremendous over population problem, they
25 still do in some of the regions in China. They brutally took care of that by saying, “One
26 wife, one child.” And you couldn’t do that under any other form of government except
27 communism: a totally dictatorial government. If they hadn’t taken care of that problem,
28 the whole world would have a much bigger problem now because of their
29 overpopulation. Our trading with them right now, I think it’s good. I kind of don’t like to
30 see toys and stuff being sold in Walmart that are being made by slave labor.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: But at the same time, the more money we give to them to improve their
2 living conditions, the higher their expectations of life will be and that will take them
3 toward capitalism, I hope. God, I hope we never get in a land war with China.

4 JS: Sure.

5 MB: Things are going to be nasty if we do.

6 JS: Right. All right, well, what do you think about US military interventions and
7 other countries since Vietnam, such as in obviously Iraq and Afghanistan?

8 MB: Well, let's see, what have we had since then? We've had Haiti, we've had
9 Panama. I think we did a pretty good job in Panama. It's still an extremely corrupt
10 government. I think it was a shame that we gave up the canal there. The canal has
11 become somewhat less strategically important. And there are commercial enterprises
12 now—I have a friend who is working down in Costa Rica—to bypass the canal. Either
13 build another Canal or make rail connections across Costa Rica. But anyway, Central
14 America, South American countries, Haiti, Panama, and then of course the Middle East.
15 This friend of mine, Tuck McAtee, and I were both working at Lockheed in '91 when we
16 had Desert Storm. He said, "Ripper, we're going to go all the way to Baghdad, we're
17 going to get that bastard over there." And I said, "Tuck, two things: one, remember the
18 term inscrutable oriental? We don't have the will to fight those guys for a hundred years,
19 and that's what it is going to take to change that culture. So even if we go to Baghdad
20 we're not going to win over the hearts and minds of those people. Number two, George
21 H.W. Bush had to form a coalition to get the world to let him go in and free Kuwait.

22 JS: Right.

23 MB: And we had to promise all those countries, that came in on that coalition,
24 that we weren't going to Baghdad. So, we're not going to Baghdad. And we went a little
25 further than I thought we would, but it took a second war, without the coalition, to be
26 about to go in and get Saddam. One of the things though, strategically, that we did with
27 Desert Storm, and Iraqi Freedom, was Iran watched that very closely. They have a very
28 good CIA equivalent. They watched that, and we did in ten days what they weren't able
29 to do in about fifteen years.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: We knocked the snot out of the Iraqi, what do they call them, the home
2 guard or whatever.

3 JS: The Republican Guard.

4 MB: The Republican Guard. And we didn't even have to use—Iran had tried
5 chemical weapons, and they'd done everything they could to beat the Iraqi army, and
6 they couldn't do it over about a fifteen year period, and we did it in ten days using—
7 remember I talked to you about John Boyd?

8 JS: Right, yeah.

9 MB: Using the type of warfare that he advocated. So strategically, Iran and a lot
10 of other countries took note of that. You can't beat the US military right now. There's no
11 other land army that has what we have, and it's tenuous. We won't keep it forever. So
12 that was the strategic thing about Iraq. People ask me, "Why do we go into Iraq?" and I
13 say, "Just look at a map. Where is our biggest threat over there?" "Iran." Okay, so we've
14 taken Afghanistan which is one side of Iran, and we've taken Iraq on the other side. Now,
15 we don't have firm holds in those places, but at least we have a foot in those two places.
16 We've got Turkey to the north of Iran, which is a pretty good ally, but not terribly
17 dependable. Depending on what we want to do, they may or may not help us. We've
18 got—on the southern border, we've got the Emirates. They're pretty much westernized.
19 They are also pretty much cowards. They don't want to fight for themselves, but they'll
20 support us if they have an interest there. So, we sort of have Iran surrounded. I like to get
21 a map out and show people. I do this with the cadets once in awhile. Why do we go to
22 Iraq? Because we want to close off this eastern border of Iran. And there's a very, very
23 good book called *Desert Queen*. It was written about Gertrude—something who was a—
24 Gertrude Bell, who was a spinster, rich lady of a British—I think it was a coal, or steel,
25 magnate. Back in the turn of the century she went to Mesopotamia as an archeologist.
26 She spoke fluent Arab and worked with Laurence of Arabia. And she was actually a spy
27 in the First World War.

28 JS: Okay.

29 MB: Working with all the tribes over there—and she had the trust of the tribes
30 overt there because she was the first white English lady that they'd ever see who could
31 speak Arab and understood their culture. She said after the 1st World War she said,

1 “Mesopotamia is an enigma. You’ve got the Kurds in the north, you’ve got the Sunnis in
2 Baghdad, and you’ve got the Shiites in the south, and you’ll never get them together.”
3 That’s pretty interesting, I think.

4 JS: Right.

5 MB: Back in those days the Germans were building a railroad down through
6 Baghdad in order to have access to the Arabian Sea. If you go back strategically, one of
7 the big things that changed the whole Middle East was when Winston Churchill—who
8 was Lord of the Admiralty at the time—made a strategic decision to change British war
9 ships from coal to oil. He was shipping coal out, all the way to the Middle East, in order
10 to refuel his warships out there. And he said, “Why should we do that, we have oil in the
11 region?”

12 JS: Right.

13 MB: And Saudi Arabia is an interesting place. I’ve had several friends who have
14 worked over there, and I started to go to work there, and my wife said I’m not going.
15 Another time when she said, “I’m not going.”

16 JS: Right.

17 MB: Saudi Arabia built itself an insular layer of Emirates, to their north, to keep
18 the infidels out of Saudi Arabia. One of the things—and they’re kind of duplicitous folks,
19 but one of the things they take very seriously is their stewardship of Mecca and Medina.
20 And if you want to get their attention. You threaten the area around Mecca and Medina,
21 they react very quickly. They have actually taken some pretty draconian measures to get
22 rid of the Al Qaeda—what do they call they call them? Not the unintelligible). There’s a
23 term for it.

24 JS: Wahobs?

25 MB: What?

26 JS: The Wahhabis?

27 MB: The Wahhabis!

28 JS: Yeah.

29 MB: Yeah, their taking some draconian measures after the—remember the
30 Wahabis tried to bomb Mecca.

31 JS: Right.

1 MB: I forget when that was, but I mean they have murderously taken care of some
2 of the leaders of the Wahhabis. And I think it would be terrible to have a war between
3 Saudi Arabia and Iran. But I think if Iran gets too rambunctious over there, that our best
4 ally is Saudi Arabia. And what we need to say is, “Look, the terrorist element comes
5 from the Muslim community—whether it’s Sunni or Shiite, and if the Iranians threaten
6 with nuclear weapons, threaten our neighbors with nuclear weapons, you’re going to get
7 involved.” And Mecca and Medina are going to be threatened. So maybe you better take
8 care of the problem yourself before it gets too big.

9 JS: Right.

10 MB: We look at Iran and their nuclear capability, and it’s frustrating. The rest of
11 the world would hate us forever if we used a nuke on Iran, or if we facilitated Israel using
12 a nuke. And one of their tactical problems there is Israel has to come across Iraq to attack
13 Iran.

14 JS: Right.

15 MB: Iraq doesn’t have the air to ground weapons right now, but they own the air
16 space.

17 JS: Right.

18 MB: If we said they’re coming across—of course, the Iraqis would say, “No
19 they’re not.” And we could escort them across and make it across and they could attack
20 Baghdad.” Unfortunately, the F-16s and the F-15s that they have are going to have to be
21 refueled. The Israelis have the capability to do that, but they’d probably have to do it in
22 Iraqi air space, so it’s going to get nasty if the Israelis have to attack Iran.

23 JS: Right.

24 MB: On the other side though, Iran might try to attack Israel.

25 JS: Yeah.

26 MB: And if they do it with Nukes, I think we should retaliate. One of the things
27 that may help us there is there are—what do they call them? Not shrines, but there are
28 locations in Israel that are very protected, religiously, by the Muslims. They may not
29 bomb Jerusalem because of that.

30 JS: Right.

1 MB: They might bomb Haifa though, or the military installations in Israel. Israel
2 is a pretty small place, though. So, you know, there may be some insurance there, but
3 when you look at the balance of power, or the balance of nukes, Iran may have one or
4 two, and a very limited capability to deliver them. We have six thousand nukes.

5 JS: Right.

6 MB: And if we said we want to go to Iran, the services would fight with each
7 other to see who gets to deliver it. We can do it by cruise missile, we can do it from
8 submarines, we could do it from air bases, we could do it with continental ballistic
9 missiles, and we can do it with B-2s or F-15E's or F-117s. I mean, we have all kinds of
10 methods of delivering it with pinpoint accuracy.

11 JS: Right.

12 MB: And if we don't have a planning document that is layered so that, "Okay, we
13 can do one nuke, on their nuke facilities, or we can do ten nukes on all ten of their nuke
14 facilities, or we can do a series of nukes that dig down into their bunkers, or we can go
15 get Tehran.—" Tehran, by the way is a very vulnerable place for a nuke, cause it sits in a
16 bowl valley. So a couple of nukes would pretty well take care of the whole place.
17 Unfortunately, there are a whole lot of innocent civilians there, and we don't want to do
18 that.

19 JS: Right.

20 MB: You know, all the way to attacking Mecca and Medina. You know, we really
21 want to play a trump card we say, "Saudi Arabia, if Iran attacks us the first place, we're
22 going is Mecca." And Saudi Arabia all of a sudden gets very interested in keeping Iran
23 quiet.

24 JS: Right.

25 MB: That's draconian, and it's not very likely, and it's not a very likely scenario,
26 but it is a possibility. If they tested—and they've always said, "Oh no, it's only for
27 civilian use." Well, we know that's BS.

28 JS: Right.

29 MB: So, if they test a nuke, maybe we ought to take out their test facility, or
30 maybe we ought to take out a few of their centrifuges, or whatever those things are that
31 make uranium material. But they've got them spread out, and they've got them protected.

1 They've got everything under the ground so you can't do it with one strike. We could do
2 it with a non-nuclear strike. We could at least set them back a few years with a non-
3 nuclear strike. But, Iran's a big problem, and it's not something we can ignore, and the
4 British realize that. I think the Germans realize that. I'm not sure the rest of the world
5 does.

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: Australia does, Canada does.

8 JS: Right. Well, just a couple more questions to wrap things up. Getting back to
9 Vietnam for a minute—Well I guess I should ask this one, have you ever visited the wall?
10 And if so, what was your opinion of it?

11 MB: Yeah, I have a couple of times and it's a very emotional experience. I didn't
12 really like the design of it too much when I saw it, when I saw the drawing of it. But in
13 person it's well done. It's, like I say, just an emotional experience. It kind of reminds
14 me—I don't like to go to church anymore, because for many years every time I went to
15 church, I was saying goodbye to somebody.

16 JS: Right, yes sir.

17 MB: So, for the same reason I don't go to the wall a whole lot.

18 JS: Right, sure. Yes sir. Well, another question I have for you is these days, I
19 know in the past ten or fifteen years a lot of veterans have been going back to Southeast
20 Asia, to Vietnam, to Thailand, and the areas where they served. Did you ever have any
21 thoughts about doing so?

22 MB: I like Southeast Asia, it's a beautiful place. I like to go to Bangkok. I like to
23 go to—I would love to go back someday and take my wife to Chang Mai in Thailand.
24 The Thais are beautiful people.

25 JS: Right.

26 MB: I like Taiwan, been there, been to Indonesia a couple places. When I was in
27 Korea I used to try to get out of the country whenever they had big holiday. I'd just use
28 my Korean Air miles and go someplace. Vietnam, I'd love—again, it's a beautiful
29 country. I like the people there, they're typical Asians, and I've been in Asia so much that
30 I can kind of look at somebody here in the United States and say, "Oh, they're Chinese,
31 or they're Korean." I can definitely tell the Korean. They are more of Mongol people. I

1 can look at someone and say they're Chinese, and there's lots of different kinds of
2 Chinese, or they're Thais—a beautiful people. Some of the most beautiful women I've
3 ever seen are from Thailand. As far as going back to Vietnam, no: they're a communist
4 nation, and I joke with my friends, "The only way I'd like to go back to Vietnam is with a
5 load of snake and nape."

6 JS: Right.

7 MB: I don't have any desire to go there.

8 JS: Yes, sir. Well, is there anything else you'd like to say, anything else we
9 should cover before wrapping things up?

10 MB: I think we've about covered everything and probably covered a lot of stuff
11 twice. My main point in discussing this is there is some things we've got to be involved
12 in, and Iran is one right now. Things are going to get nasty in the Soviet Republics.
13 Georgia is probably the next one. Things in the old "-stans," the old Soviet Republic "-
14 stans" are not settled. It's a very volatile country, and cultures, over there and until
15 they're exposed to modern civilizations they're not going to change. As long as they're
16 allowed to live in ignorance—and I think the Islam religion is complicit in keeping them
17 in ignorance. They're going to be very difficult cultures to deal with. When they get
18 nukes, we've got to get involved. As long as they keep fighting between their warlords
19 than we ought to keep our armaments out of there and let them fight. If they want to fight
20 with sabers, and old Enfield rifles, that's fine. But we shouldn't feed their animosities
21 toward one another, and toward the outside world. As a superpower, we can't stay not
22 involved. We got to be very selective about what we get involved in, and we have to have
23 strategic reasons, but I think we have a very strategic reason in Iran, and in the Middle
24 East, we can't pull out. If we pull out there's chaos, and it'll eventually reach us. So,
25 we've got to have the will to fight. We shouldn't get in fights that we're not willing to
26 win, and we've got to have the guts to endure the civilian collateral damage. There aren't
27 any people over in Afghanistan right now that aren't either with us, or against us. And so,
28 when we kill a civilian who just happens to be draining fuel out of one of the US military
29 hijacked tankers. They're an enemy. So, I'm pretty brutal in my thoughts, but I think
30 that's where we are in the world right now.

31 JS: All right. Okay, well I will go ahead and bring the interview to a close then.