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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Glenn Bremenkamp  
Conducted by Kelly Crager  
Date 17 August 2009  
Transcribed by Emilie Meadors**

The transcription of this interview was paid for by a generous grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

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

1 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an Oral History Interview with  
2 Mr. Glenn Bremenkamp. Today is August 17, 2009. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr.  
3 Bremenkamp is joining me from his home in Biloxi, Mississippi. I'm interviewing Mr.  
4 Bremenkamp today in order to gain his reminiscences of his experiences as a forward air  
5 controller with both the 22<sup>nd</sup> Tactical Air Support Squadron and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Air  
6 Support Squadron in South Vietnam. Mr. Bremenkamp, to start this interview off, I'd like  
7 to get a little biographical information if I could. Could you tell me when you were born  
8 and where?

9 Glenn Bremenkamp: I was born March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1933. Near Colby, Kansas.

10 KC: Out west then, out west in the plains. What were your parent's names?

11 GB: George Bremenkamp and Anna Bremenkamp.

12 KC: What did your folks do for a living out there?

13 GB: My dad was a quasi-farmer. I think he sold land more than he farmed, but we  
14 did farm.

15 KC: And what sort of things were you farming?

16 GB: Dryland wheat farmers.

17 KC: Did your mother work outside the farm or did she stay?

18 GB: No, she was just a home wife.

19 KC: Right, right. What about brothers and sisters? Did you have any siblings?

1 GB: I still have two living brothers and one living sister.

2 KC: What was it like growing up outside near Colby, Kansas, there in the 1930s  
3 and 1940s?

4 GB: Well, I do remember—growing up I remember one dust storm out of all of  
5 them, I probably wasn't old enough. My first year of school I went to a country school,  
6 one room schoolhouse. There were two of us in the first grade, a seventh grader and an  
7 eighth grader.

8 KC: Wow.

9 GB: And that was the whole school student body.

10 KC: Wow.

11 GB: And then I think my dad sold that farm and we moved into the city and he  
12 had a farm that was outside of town and from then on, I attended grammar school in  
13 Colby, Kansas.

14 KC: Now, you said that you were born in 1933, correct?

15 GB: That's right.

16 KC: So, World War II, I would think had quite an impression on a young man in  
17 Middle America such as yourself or a young child such as yourself. What do you  
18 remember about the war?

19 GB: Mainly I remember the B-24s flying over at low level. I guess they were  
20 flying their missions out of airfields that were close around out there in Western Kansas. I  
21 had an uncle who spent the whole war at Guadalcanal and came back with Malaria which  
22 he fought for many years. I don't remember much about it. I do remember the scrap  
23 drives, the rationing of tires, gasoline, different food stuffs. I remember the little ration  
24 tokens and stamps, things like that. Now my dad used to use gasoline for the farm in his  
25 vehicles or in the car we had.

26 KC: Well, maybe I should ask this, how closely were you following the war? By  
27 the time the war ended, you would have been—let's see, you were born in March, so you  
28 would have been twelve years old in 1945.

29 GB: I don't know if I really followed it that close or not. I do know that, you  
30 know, all we had was mainly word of mouth and radio. I don't know, you know, I guess I

1 paid attention to some of the bigger battles and things like that, but it really wasn't that—  
2 I did have a cousin also who went so I guess we were pretty well connected to the war.

3 KC: Right. You said some of the major battles you might pay attention to. Do you  
4 remember any of the ones in particular?

5 GB: Well, I remember Iwo Jima and the Battle of the Bulge. I remember when  
6 that came on and it was, you know, pretty much a high topic and that's about it.

7 KC: Okay, now when did you graduate from high school there in Colby?

8 GB: I graduated in '51.

9 KC: Okay, so you graduated high school in 1951 and this was at Colby as well,  
10 right?

11 GB: No, that was in Norton, Kansas.

12 KC: Okay, you moved.

13 GB: We moved all over Northwest Kansas because my dad bought and sold farms  
14 all the time it seemed like. We'd farm a couple years and he'd try to—somebody would  
15 make him a deal and he'd buy another farm, so we moved quite a bit.

16 KC: Okay, so you went to high school then at Norton, Kansas.

17 GB: Well, my freshman year I went to a little town called Almena, Kansas, which  
18 was eleven miles from Norton and then we moved to a farm outside of Norton and I went  
19 to Norton High School. But all of them were in Northwest Kansas.

20 KC: Yes, sir. Well, you moved around quite a bit. What was this like as a child  
21 growing up? What was it like to move around these little towns?

22 GB: It didn't make any difference. You know just interesting country kid and just,  
23 you know, find something new. The big deal is see where we were to put out on the farm  
24 and that was it, you know. I guess just moving around came with the territory.

25 KC: I guess so. Especially considering your father's occupation, I guess.

26 GB: Right.

27 KC: Now, what sort of things did you like to do in high school in terms of  
28 activities, sports or academics?

29 GB: See, I tried to play basketball and I played football up until the start of my  
30 junior year, and I decided I had enough injuries and had been banged up enough. Then I  
31 dropped that and I continued with basketball. I played basketball from my sophomore,

1 junior, and senior year. We went to state tournaments my sophomore year and my junior  
2 year and then my senior we won our class A state tournament, which was pretty good  
3 thrill. I think we were 26-1.

4 KC: That is a very big thrill for a little country town out in Western Kansas, I can  
5 imagine.

6 GB: We were, you know, in our category we were all, you know, same size  
7 schools just about, but they didn't win another one until 2001.

8 KC: Quite a drought.

9 GB: They had a drought.

10 KC: Well, what about the academics there in high school? What sort of subjects  
11 did you like, what did you gravitate toward you?

12 GB: Well, I guess I went for history more than anything else. I had a heck of a  
13 time with second year algebra, I remember that. I mean once I got through that, all the  
14 other maths were okay. That was mainly it; I was on the yearbook staff. I took physics  
15 class. I guess I took some more maths, but after that second-year algebra I thought I was  
16 finished, that second year algebra. I didn't have a good basic freshman year in algebra.

17 KC: (Laughs) I think a lot of people can certainly relate to that.

18 GB: It messed me up.

19 KC: Well, growing up in the late 1940s and early 1950s, how aware were you  
20 would you say of larger global trends? Things such as the Cold War and US Foreign  
21 Policy, things like that?

22 GB: I guess I didn't pay much attention to it at all, really. It was just more  
23 interested in our little own world, you know. I cannot recall, you know, quite that far  
24 back, but I can't recall being too concerned. We knew there was an atomic bomb out  
25 there, but we hadn't reached that point yet of put your head between knees, you know,  
26 and all that and crouching down in the classroom. That hadn't started yet, so.

27 KC: Okay, well what about as a seventeen and then eighteen-year-old young man,  
28 what about the Korean War?

29 GB: Well, at eighteen my plan was to go to college. My family was not too well  
30 off, so I was going to work for a year at a Coca-Cola plant and then I was going to work  
31 for a year and save up enough to do my freshman year at one of the Kansas universities.

1 And when I reached, I guess it's nineteen, the Korean War was going on and the lady on  
2 the draft board said, "I think you're going to be called your number the next month or  
3 two." She said, "If you don't want to be drafted, start thinking of other things." So my  
4 buddy and I went down to the recruit air force recruiter and listened to his tale, and both  
5 of us enlisted in the air force.

6 KC: Okay, so with the specter of the Korean War.

7 GB: I didn't want to be an infantry man.

8 KC: Sure, sure. So war itself has definitely influenced your decisions on what  
9 you're going to do. You have probably an early word that you will likely get drafted soon  
10 and that working in a Coca Cola bottling plant isn't going to save you from the draft.

11 GB: Nope.

12 KC: And that maybe college is going to have to be put off. So you chose the air  
13 force. Can you tell me why you chose the air force?

14 GB: Because that recruiter gave us a song and dance about how we could get a  
15 commission and six months or a year and how simple it was to do this and both of us  
16 bought into it. Well, at the end of basic training the first thing they did is put us both—  
17 eighty of us started out and the flight I was in of recruits or whatever, but my buddy was  
18 one of them and he immediately failed the eye exam. Well, I got through the physical part  
19 of it and then we had to take all of these tests and everything and now eighty-two of us  
20 there were only two of us that were standing at end.

21 KC: That's incredible. Everybody else washed out.

22 GB: Everybody else washed out before they even got to go to cadets.

23 KC: Oh, wow. So you and one other were the only ones.

24 GB: We were the only ones who went, and I chose going to NAV School to  
25 become a backseat flyer of F-94Cs.

26 KC: Now, why did you choose NAV School?

27 GB: Well, because it's only six months, but that didn't work out that way. The  
28 other guy went to pilot training, I don't know what happened to him. I should have gone  
29 to pilot training, but that was water under the bridge. I got through my basic training and  
30 set the round as a casual until about two or three months, I guess, and they sent me to  
31 Waco, Texas and said, "Well, you're going to have to do something." So I became a

1 flight line mechanic and pretty soon they said, “Well, we backlog so much in this  
2 program. You might as well just pick another program to go to.” So most of us chose to  
3 go to bomb and air school at Ellington Air Force Base down in Houston, Texas. That’s  
4 where I ended up around November because I enlisted in May, so that was about then  
5 when I started my cadet training and NAV training.

6 KC: Okay, let me back up a little bit. You’ve made it through the physical  
7 examination; you’ve made it through some of the earlier rounds, the early batteries of  
8 tests. And as you said, many others obviously didn’t make it and that you’ve chosen  
9 NAV School. Now, before we get there, where did you go through basic training?

10 GB: I went to a place called Parks Air Force Base out in California, out in the San  
11 Joaquin Valley is all I remember.

12 KC: Well, tell me about this basic training for you out there.

13 GB: All I remember it was hot during the day and cold at night.

14 KC: (Laughs) Do you remember anything about your routine?

15 GB: The routine, the only routine I remember is marching up and down the streets  
16 and pulling KP (Kitchen Patrol) duty and being harassed by the drill instructors, but  
17 that’s about all I remember about it. I don’t even remember the classroom parts of it at  
18 all, but I know they probably put us through the classroom. I know I’ve been a hunter all  
19 my life, went out on that target range hoping I’d be an expert rifleman and all I got was  
20 marksman. I couldn’t shoot that carbine straight to save myself.

21 KC: What type of weapons were they training you on?

22 GB: I think it was some kind of carbine, M-1 carbine or something like that. It  
23 wasn’t a rifle, it was a carbine, and it was not as big as a rifle.

24 KC: So not too many experiences stuck with you about basic training out there in  
25 California?

26 GB: Nope, not really. Just remember the temperature fluctuations from day and  
27 night, and the fact that I sat there and I finished basic probably end of June and I sat there  
28 July and August, and went to Waco and it was 120 degrees in Waco, I do remember that.

29 KC: That will definitely get your attention. Explain to me again, what we you  
30 going to do? You finished basic and you go to Waco. What are you going to do at Waco  
31 again?

1 GB: I'm going to go through radar—it was called a radar operator in the backseat  
2 of an F-94 interceptor and it was a six-month course and that was, you know, one of the  
3 first radar equipped fighter interceptors at the air force and I'm not too sure. All I know is  
4 a six-month course and you got your commission and your wings and headed for Korea.

5 KC: So you knew that was going to be your ultimate goal, or your ultimate  
6 destination, not necessarily a goal.

7 GB: Yeah.

8 KC: Okay, well tell me about this. Tell me about the training that you underwent  
9 there in Waco.

10 GB: I didn't do any training at Waco at all. All I did at Waco was work on the  
11 flight line, work on airplanes. I did sheet metal, riveting, and a little bit of welding  
12 training and general maintenance on airplanes and learned how to put safety wire on both  
13 and stuff like that.

14 KC: And from there where did you go, from Waco?

15 GB: I went from there—they told us there were too many guys in the back log  
16 it's going to be forever getting through the radar school. They told us to pick another  
17 course or pick another program and I knew the only other program was either going to  
18 Ellington Air Force Base in Houston or Harlingen Air Force Base down in I think  
19 Brownsville, Texas, is where it was. I'm not too sure where Harlingen is or was, probably  
20 not a base anymore.

21 KC: So you chose Houston?

22 GB: I chose to go to Houston, go to NAV School in Houston.

23 KC: Okay. Tell me about NAV School, what was it like back then?

24 GB: Well, mainly it was going and getting through cadets. Just doing all kinds of  
25 visual navigation, celestial navigation, weather. I remember two of us together built a  
26 radio, that kind of stuff.

27 KC: Was there any particular area of navigation that you were specializing in  
28 while you were there?

29 GB: Well, no, because it was just a basic course and then the from there you  
30 graduated and according to your ranking you could pick a course like wanting to be a  
31 bomb NAV on a B-36 or you could go to MAT (Military Air Transport), that time in the

1 military area of transport service on cargo aircraft as a navigator. What I ended up  
2 picking was to go to A-26 bomb LEV which was, I don't know how long the course was,  
3 but I remember it just sounded like a good deal, so that's what I wanted to do.

4 KC: So did you do pretty well here in Houston at NAV school, basic NAV  
5 school?

6 GB: I got through it, let's put it that way.

7 KC: You got through it. Okay, so A-26, now this was your first choice then?

8 GB: It was the B-26.

9 KC: Oh B-26, yes.

10 GB: At that time, it was B-26s. So I went to B-26 school, that school that was out  
11 in, Sacramento. Mather Air Force Base, Sacramento. So I bundled up and go to Mather  
12 and in the mean time, just before I left I met my future wife and had a couple of dates.  
13 Maybe dated each other for about two or three months, something like that.

14 KC: Did you meet her in Houston?

15 GB: I met her in Houston. Her blind date cancelled out, so I ended up her blind  
16 date.

17 KC: Well, it sounded like it worked out pretty well in the long run.

18 GB: For the long run it did.

19 KC: On the short run it didn't.

20 GB: I ended up going out there to Mather. We trained in B-25s and there were—I  
21 forgot, I think there were three of us trained at a time in a flight, you know, when we flew  
22 in a B-25 and you had to drop bombs with the old Norden bombsight, I remember that.

23 KC: Well, tell me about that. Obviously, this is kind of a hold over from the 2<sup>nd</sup>  
24 World War.

25 GB: The 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, that Norden bombsight and the B-25 was noisy as I'll  
26 get out and we flew—the only room up in front in the nose to navigate and all they did  
27 was visual navigation and there were no navigation aids outside of a compass, and all you  
28 did was navigate by directing and visual navigation of getting a fix off of the ground,  
29 whatever you recognized on the ground. And in order to get up in front and back you had  
30 to pass the pilots, crawl over the bomb bay, and get back into the back of the airplane.  
31 And back in the back you flew two and a half, three-hour missions and of course you



1 always took a lunch or something like that. I remember the nastiest thing we did was drop  
2 coke bottles out and that's what finished them out and that was mean. I don't know what  
3 possessed us to do stuff like that.

4 KC: Well, take me through some of these practice runs and your training. How is  
5 it that you become proficient using the Norden sight and become accurate?

6 GB: Well, you actually have bombs, you had what they called "Blue whistlers"  
7 and they weighed, I guess a hundred pounds and they were painted blue, they were  
8 inners, and we'd go toward a target which had those rings around it, you know, circular  
9 and you had to have, I think it was below 150 foot circular air in order to graduate. I do  
10 remember even though I had to stop one time all the bombs because one of them  
11 wouldn't release at a time. I still ended up with twenty-five foot circular air.

12 KC: Oh wow.

13 GB: So I was eligible to graduate.

14 KC: Yeah, that's a terrific number.

15 GB: But didn't graduate.

16 KC: Why wouldn't you have graduated?

17 GB: Well, the Korean conflict was on and one week before our class was to  
18 receive our wings and graduate, they signed an armistice.

19 KC: Okay.

20 GB: Truce, whatever you want to call it. And immediately they cancelled our  
21 program. I mean, as soon as that was signed. I mean, one week to go and you're talking  
22 about guys that were upset. Of course, me one of them, but they cancelled our program,  
23 just that quick because they didn't need anymore in the pipeline to go over and get shot  
24 at, I guess. So they said, "Pick another school."

25 KC: So you never did finish this here?

26 GB: I never did finish the B-26 bomb NAV School.

27 KC: I'll be darned. Now, how long were you at this, how long did this training  
28 last?

29 GB: I think it was only a little over eight weeks. Eight weeks or ten weeks,  
30 something like that. So all I did is I sat back and said, "What's the longest course I can  
31 choose?"

1 KC: Why did you want the longest one?

2 GB: I don't know, at that time I was fed up, I guess, I don't know. I wanted to  
3 stay in class, I guess. So I ended up picking Basic Observer Aircraft Performance  
4 Engineer. At that time the B-36 had two flight engineers on it and one of them was  
5 commissioned and the other one was enlisted. And also, they had assignments to transport  
6 aircraft, but mainly they were putting us through a course in order to become engineers  
7 and replace the enlisted engineers on the B-36. At that time the B-36 still, you know, was  
8 the big—the B-52 was just coming in at that time and they still had a big fleet of B-36s.  
9 So I said okay, and in the meantime I called back and forth this lady in Houston and we  
10 ended up getting married in January of 1954.

11 KC: Is that right?

12 GB: And I graduated from the Basic Aircraft Performance School in June, I  
13 believe it was of '54.

14 KC: Okay, about six months later then.

15 GB: About six months later.

16 KC: Now you mentioned that they were in the process of replacing the enlisted  
17 with officers.

18 GB: Right.

19 KC: What was the mindset there? Why were they doing that?

20 GB: Typical of leadership, you know, since you got one of the flight engineers is  
21 commissioned, we need to commission, and the other fighter has to have a commission. It  
22 was typical air force thinking about officer versus enlisted in certain positions. It's like,  
23 you know, the enlisted can't fly and supposedly can't fly airplanes. Well, they can fly  
24 airplanes just as well.

25 KC: Right.

26 GB: But only the navy did that.

27 KC: Now you mentioned, just kind of in passing that it was a typical air force  
28 attitude or a typical air force approach. What do you mean by that? Can you explain that?

29 GB: Well, I can't explain it except that there's just certain positions that the air  
30 force fields require an officer, rather than enlisted. I don't know what the thinking is  
31 there, but that's the way a lot of decisions were made.

1 KC: Sure, sure. Okay, now in June of 1954 you graduated this latest school.

2 GB: Right.

3 KC: And got married in the process.

4 GB: I got married before I graduated.

5 KC: Right, so you've been very, very busy here. Now, what was it that you hoped  
6 to do in your career? I mean, was the air force something you were looking at as a career,  
7 as a young married man or were you just wanting to serve the time and get out and go  
8 back to civilian life? What were you hoping to do?

9 GB: I don't really know, I just wanted—clueless I guess, just drifting along. I  
10 wasn't too set on being—I wasn't Gung Ho about being military or anything like that. At  
11 one time, after I was in flight school, the thought crossed my mind the day I graduated  
12 because the airlines were sitting outside the gate recruiting, saying, "As soon as your  
13 obligated tour is up, how would you like to come fly for the airlines as a flight engineer?"  
14 Because at that time they used flight engineers. Well, they replaced the flight engineer  
15 with 3<sup>rd</sup> officers or something like that instead of flight engineers, but that was further  
16 down the road. At that time, they were taking on flight engineers rather than pilots. So  
17 that was a thought in the back of my mind, but mainly it was just, you know, I had  
18 nothing else in mind, so I'll stay with the air force.

19 KC: Now by making this decision to stay in the air force, of course, being in the  
20 military in the mid 1950s, the Cold War is burning at a pretty feverish pace then with the  
21 competition between the United States and the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union gets to  
22 bomb and China goes red and you have the Korean War, and you have all these things  
23 kind of boiling there. Did that ever enter into your calculations about what you wanted to  
24 do with your career? How dangerous it could be in the military at that time? Or were you  
25 all that focused on these world events?

26 GB: I didn't worry about the danger. I remember we flew simulated missions that  
27 had taken the big bomb with us and flying for twenty-four hours and all that. Of course,  
28 we had a special fight target and we did practice runs and things like that when we loaded  
29 weapons and downloaded weapons and those kind of things. Mainly just occupied my  
30 time with flying and doing the mission that was a mission of flying and training.

31 KC: And a lot of training it sounds like.

1 GB: Well, I guess quite a few hours. I was in the B-36 from '54 through '57, only  
2 three years. I don't really recall how many hours of flying time I got in that time, quite  
3 extensive. I remember I think the longest mission with the B-36 you didn't refuel I don't  
4 think the longest place I ever flew in the B-36 is around 27 hours or something like that.

5 KC: Wow. Now, where were you flying to and around?

6 GB: Well, some of them were just around the United States. I know we did fly to  
7 England, go to England and come back. We'd go to North Africa and stay there for a  
8 while, come back. The crew I was on, we went to Dhahran I believe it was, Saudi Arabia  
9 at one time. I caught the worst cold I'd ever had in ages because I lived in the air-  
10 conditioned quarters and then go outside in the heat and man, I had one heck of a cold, I  
11 remember that.

12 KC: Now that brings up a pretty good point. You're making these trips. I mean  
13 obviously you're going around the United States, but going to North Africa, going to  
14 Saudi Arabia, going to Great Britain. When you would have these layovers, one, how  
15 long would they last? And two, what sort of things would you do when you were there?

16 GB: You stayed around the base. You know, you can go tour. I remember we'd  
17 go to—in North Africa, go to Casablanca and see places like that.

18 KC: Right. Now you said you did this from 1954 through 1957.

19 GB: '57 I guess, I'm trying to think of when I went to flight school, to pilot  
20 training, but I can't recall those dates and I'd have to go through full of papers out here  
21 and find out when I started flight training.

22 KC: Is it fair to say that you were pretty satisfied as a flight engineer and  
23 navigator?

24 GB: No, because well, I guess I was satisfied with the B-36 started to phase out I  
25 took one look at it and said, "Hey, it's a pilot's air force. It's time for me to go to pilot  
26 school." So I had to requalify again to go for pilot training.

27 KC: Well, tell me about that process. I mean obviously this is something that's  
28 important to you.

29 GB: Well, at that time—what did I have then? Seven years, maybe something like  
30 that. I could see that if I'm going to stay, I better go to pilot training because the only

1 other job was to go to bomb NAV School again and go out to Mather Air Force Base and  
2 upgrade to be a bombardier and a navigator on the B-52 or the B-47.

3 KC: And that didn't appeal to you at this time?

4 GB: That didn't appeal as much as being a pilot because, you know, it's the  
5 pilot's air force.

6 KC: Right.

7 GB: It was at that time. It's kind of changing, but that's another story.

8 KC: (Chuckles) Well, maybe we can get there later. We've got you in 1957 now.

9 GB: Somewhere in that era, let's see, my daughter was born in '57. Had to turn  
10 down one assignment because my wife was due and I said, "I just can't move her." And  
11 they said, "Okay." And then they assigned me another one and I think it started in  
12 October of '57 and they told me if I didn't take that one, didn't go on that one, I wouldn't  
13 get another chance.

14 KC: Oh, wow.

15 GB: I was getting up there close to within a year of not being eligible anymore  
16 because I think after twenty-six years old or something like that, they didn't take you.  
17 You couldn't get into pilot flight school. So I went in October of '57 to flight school at  
18 Bartow Air Force Base. Bartow Air Base, I guess it was in Bartow, Florida. It was a  
19 civilian run, contract type of school, you know, and did the primary pilot training there.

20 KC: Well, tell me about primary there at Bartow, what was it like back then?

21 GB: Well, it was fun. We lived in Lakeland, Florida, which is pretty nice. We  
22 lived in a single family dwelling and all I remember is I fished a lot there because  
23 Lakeland is, just like the name, there was a chain of lakes there that you could go rent a  
24 little motor boat and go bass fishing all up and down these lakes. I think that's when I got  
25 my son actually started on being a fisherman because he's really an avid fisherman still  
26 today, but he was just a little tyke then. I commuted about ten or eleven miles everyday to  
27 go to flight training and you went a full day, half a day academics and half a day on the  
28 flight line.

29 KC: Okay. Well, what did academics consist of?

30 GB: Same old thing I went through NAV School.

31 KC: So it's kind of a refresher for you?

1 GB: Yeah, mainly. Everything was, you know, sort of a rerun, yeah.

2 KC: Right.

3 GB: Well, what about the time on the flight line? What were you doing on the  
4 flight line? Not just flying I assume.

5 KC: Yeah, mainly flying and waiting around while your buddy—there were three  
6 of you at a table eating while the other two got their flight training for the day and  
7 sometimes waiting on the weather to clear up. Well, you had to memorize a whole bunch  
8 of—you know all kinds of things about your airplane. At that time, our primary trainer  
9 was the T-34 mentor and then the second airplane after you checked out in that one after  
10 about thirty hours you went to the T-28 and that was the same instructors that we had  
11 there.

12 KC: Now, my understanding is that a pilot trainee's relationship with the  
13 instructor could actually make or break a potential pilot. Did you find this to be the case?

14 GB: No, because I got along with the flight instructors I had, you know, the  
15 civilian types.

16 KC: Right.

17 GB: Of course, by that time I was already a 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenant. Quite a few of us  
18 navigators or whatever you want to call us, some navigators, some flight air surveyors  
19 who decided that it's better to be a pilot than be a navigator or a flight engineer, so. A  
20 quite a few of us in the class were I guess, you know, we weren't 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants, so they  
21 treated us, I guess, a little bit different. I never had any run-ins with any instructors and  
22 always got along good.

23 KC: Very good. How well did you take to flying, these trainers?

24 GB: They didn't have any trouble with T-34, T-28. I had no problem flying. I  
25 ended up—I didn't end up top guy in the class, but I came out in the top ten percent. I  
26 remember I had my choice of going to single engine or multi-engine, which some guys  
27 didn't have. The multi-engines seemed to be desired by guys, but I wanted to go to single  
28 engine anyway, so it didn't make any difference.

29 KC: So you chose single engine then?

30 GB: So I chose single engine advanced training.

31 KC: Were you hoping to go into fighters?

1 GB: In a way, yes, but I had a little restriction on that because momma said we've  
2 already got two kids. You know, I think she read it out as I'm going to transport.

3 KC: I'm sure.

4 GB: I just didn't want to go to the multi-engine training. I ended up choosing the  
5 single engine jet training.

6 KC: Okay, well, where'd you end up going for this training?

7 GB: Webb Air Force Base in Big Spring, Texas.

8 KC: Okay, so you went to Webb then. Okay. Well, tell me about your time there  
9 training on the single engine at Webb.

10 GB: Well, it started off at first—flying the airplane was no problem. I couldn't  
11 land that doggone little beastie.

12 KC: What was the problem with it?

13 GB: I think the landing gear was too short and I couldn't get it down to the  
14 runway and my instructor wanted me to solo and he gave me I think two pink slips in a  
15 row or something like that. He told me, "If I give you a pink slip tomorrow, if you don't  
16 land this thing in solo." He says, "You're going to go up for a check ride." And I landed  
17 that booger.

18 KC: You say you landed that booger, but what type of plane were you flying?

19 GB: T-Bird, T-33.

20 KC: Okay, okay.

21 GB: When he told me that he's going to get that third pink slip if I didn't come  
22 around and landed, but I landed it, so. He said, "Taxi down the runway" Got out and he  
23 says, "Good luck." I soloed and from then on, I didn't have any trouble getting through  
24 flight training with the T-33.

25 KC: Now, was the T-33 the only plane you flew here?

26 GB: At advanced training was the T-33.

27 KC: Okay, okay. Now you say you didn't have any problems after this one.

28 GB: No, didn't have any problems with formation instruments or navigation. Got  
29 through flight school, I think I was number seven in the class or something like that.

30 KC: Out of how many?

1 GB: I don't remember, I just remember my number. I remember I had the choice  
2 of going up to the fighters that would go to SAC (Strategic Air Command) for B-47s and  
3 talked it over with momma and momma says, "Well, you were in strategic air command,  
4 the B-36. Why don't you go back to B-47, it's a multi-engine airplane and all that." And  
5 like a dummy I picked it.

6 KC: Now your wife was certainly—

7 GB: She's still the boss (Both laughing). She still has a lot of things, some  
8 decisions that are made.

9 KC: Well, she certainly sounds like—

10 GB: It's better than rather rock the boat.

11 KC: Well, a man has to know what fights to pick, you know.

12 GB: Go with the flow.

13 KC: So she didn't want you to go into fighters even though you hadn't missed a  
14 single training.

15 GB: Well, no because I had two kids and we got pregnant while we were in flight  
16 training too, so.

17 KC: Okay. So this would have been the third child for you?

18 GB: Third child, right.

19 KC: And when you get through your wife and you, I'll say, come to this  
20 conclusion that maybe—

21 GB: Better go to multi-engine bombers.

22 KC: Right, strategic air command and then multi-engine, but you said the B-47, I  
23 think you said it was.

24 GB: It was the B-47, right.

25 KC: Now, you were trained as a single engine pilot, but now you're going to  
26 multi-engine. What are you going to do with SAC? What's going to be your role here?

27 GB: I'll be a co-pilot there.

28 KC: Okay. Now when do you report to strategic air command?

29 GB: I went to McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, where I crewed up with a  
30 pilot and a bomb navigator because it was a three-man crew, and we flew our training  
31 missions there. Also went to ground school on the B-47 and also, I remember going



1 through a nuclear weapon school, which I hadn't gone through before even though I'd  
2 been around the doggone nuclear weapons and done some weird things back in that B-36  
3 days with nuclear weapons, I'd never been to a weapons school. I remember that, we  
4 went to a weapons school there at Wichita, went through the crew training. About  
5 halfway through, we had a break against Christmas time. Yeah, Christmas break and the  
6 bomb nav lived in Mississippi, in Holly Springs and had a car accident on the way home  
7 and we lost him, and had to pick up another bomb navigator. Our crew's final assignment  
8 was Little Rock Air Force Base in Arkansas.

9 KC: Now, you mentioned something very briefly. You said that when you were  
10 with the B-36s that you did some weird things with nuclear weapons.

11 GB: We carried them in the flight and back in those days you had to arm the  
12 nuclear weapon in flight and that job fell to the navigator and the second flight engineer  
13 which I was at that time, most of that time.

14 KC: So you would have been responsible for it?

15 GB: We set the weapon up so it would be a nuclear weapon. Actually, we did it  
16 with dummies; we didn't do it with the real stuff.

17 KC: Sure.

18 GB: But we did it with dummy type bombs.

19 KC: Even without any kind of training prior to this with the B-47s, you were  
20 doing this?

21 GB: Right.

22 KC: Okay, okay.

23 GB: But by the time I got to .47, that B-36s carrying was obsolete and, you know,  
24 out of commission, I didn't have to do that in-flight arming anymore.

25 KC: Sure. Well tell me a little bit about the B-47.

26 GB: That mother was a killer. That, I didn't realize. We lost two airplanes while I  
27 was—I think I was only there '59 through '62. In three years, I know we lost—well, we  
28 only lost one through an accident and the other one was lost through pilot error. But B-47  
29 it was supposedly underpowered, but you could fly the wings off of it because once it got  
30 to going, it would go. Because with six jet engines and light weight it was—it would fly,  
31 get out, and get up there and get. It's a wonderful little airplane to fly.

1 KC: Now, did you spend much time flying this plane?

2 GB: I've done almost a thousand hours, almost reached the point of checking out  
3 in it and handwriting on the wall was that the B-47's on its way out, so you might as well  
4 do something else.

5 KC: Well, let me ask you about this. What was it like trying to transition from the  
6 smaller single engine planes to the larger B-47? Did you have any special training?

7 GB: Not much, not really just the same old thing. Same instruments, techniques,  
8 and stuff like that. Flying the airplane was, you know, not —the reaction was a little bit  
9 different, but no. It's like going from a car to a truck or whatever. It's basically the same  
10 thing, you know.

11 KC: Okay, so once again you say that you kind of see that the B-47 is going to be  
12 phased out in favor of the B-52, I assume is what you're talking about.

13 GB: Dumb me, I volunteered to go B-52 and I had to volunteer to go as a co-pilot.

14 KC: Now, when did you make this decision?

15 GB: About 1962, somewhere around there.

16 KC: Okay, so you're going to transition to the B-52 now, as part of the strategic  
17 air command. Obviously, the B-52 plays the dominant role with SAC in terms of long-  
18 range bombing.

19 GB: That time it was "the" airplane.

20 KC: Well, what did you think about the B-52 and making this move over?

21 GB: It was quite an airplane.

22 KC: Describe it for me. Tell me about it, some of its characteristics and different  
23 things.

24 GB: Well, fortunately for me, when I went to Mather Air Force Base—not  
25 Mather, where was it? I don't remember where I went. We went somewhere and like I  
26 first said I don't know what the place was. We went there for the B-52 upgrade and the  
27 pilot I went with had no problem with refueling, so I got to learn to refuel and that was  
28 the main thing that I really got out of the B-52 right away was, "Man, I can fly formation  
29 with this tanker and take on all the fuel from a tanker and that's kind of neat." That was  
30 just—it was completely different. You know, crewing was—having a crew was quite a

1 deal and sort of like a little closed community, I didn't get along too well with some  
2 people, but I guess I was irritant to a lot of people.

3 KC: About how many crew members was on the B-52?

4 GB: Six, the B-52G. Two pilots, bomb navigator, the electronics warfare and a  
5 gunner. That's the same airplane that flew, you know, linebacker in Vietnam over North  
6 Vietnam. So that was the normal crew, you know. On some missions you always carry,  
7 you add maybe a couple extras and maybe an extra nav, maybe an extra pilot, whatever.

8 KC: What was it like being part of strategic air command? Like you say, this is  
9 1962, of course '62 with the Cuban Missile Crisis in October. Did that affect you at all?

10 GB: Let's see, the Cuban Missile Crisis. I think I was still in the B-47; I know I  
11 was.

12 KC: Okay.

13 GB: Cuban Missile Crisis we took our B-47 to Terra Haute, Indiana, with a big  
14 old bomb on board and stayed there through the duration of that thing.

15 KC: Now, what did you think about that as someone who could potentially have  
16 been very much involved in an attack on Cuba?

17 GB: We weren't aimed to Cuba; we were aimed the other way.

18 KC: Okay, going the other way, going over the North Pole and then to the Soviet  
19 Union.

20 GB: Yeah.

21 KC: Okay, well tell me about that then.

22 GB: Well, I think most guys that were crew members on the B-47, B-52 were  
23 resigned to the fact that they were going to fly a one-way mission; that was probably  
24 about it.

25 KC: Were you resigning to this spot, too?

26 GB: You knew that if it was a real thing your chance of getting there and getting  
27 back were, you know, mighty, mighty slim.

28 KC: You're a married man with at least two children, maybe one on the way.

29 GB: That was one thing you didn't think about.

30 KC: Okay.

1 GB: Well, at that time the Russian defenses that—when I was starting B-47  
2 weren't that strong. As the sixties came along, their air defense became a lot, lot stronger  
3 and you know that you weren't going to run out of fuel, you were going to get taken out  
4 on the way in or way out. Because by that time the Russians had, you know many, many,  
5 many fighters.

6 KC: Right.

7 GB: And lots of ground and aircraft. And by that time, they also knew a lot about  
8 what we were doing.

9 KC: Right, that's what I was going to say. Their intelligence is (unintelligible).

10 GB: Up to date with what was going on. In the 1960s, you know, they caught up  
11 with us in the atomic age and the delivery airplanes and fighters and all that.

12 KC: You've been in the air force for a little over ten years now.

13 GB: Yeah, I'm thinking about getting out, but I didn't think that serious.

14 KC: Why were you thinking about getting out?

15 GB: I didn't like strategic air command.

16 KC: What was it about SAC that you didn't like?

17 GB: I guess just the fact that you were tied down the same old routine and to me it  
18 wasn't that inspiring. I wasn't that concerned about being, you know, involved with  
19 delivering weapons to targets in Russia.

20 KC: Right.

21 GB: You know, it's difficult because you spent time on alert, you got time off and  
22 it was just a confined career, I guess, is what you'd say. There wasn't any thrill to it. I  
23 mean, you were stationed at a base and that was it. Probably a different life, one you had  
24 to really have a personality to adjust to and like.

25 KC: You mentioned that it was kind of confined in terms of your career. I would  
26 assume, like you said, there are certain times when you're standing down, other times  
27 when you're not, when you're constantly ready for these very, very long missions. And  
28 like you said, these missions would maybe be one-way missions, so it doesn't sound like  
29 there would be an awful lot of variety or an awful lot of excitement. And the one piece of  
30 excitement that would come was excitement that you wouldn't want.

31 GB: That's right, that's probably it.

1 KC: Now, were you considering just getting out of SAC? Which I don't know  
2 how the difficulty is but getting all the way out.

3 GB: No, I thought of maybe just getting out of the service period.

4 KC: Okay, okay. It never crossed your mind to maybe stay in the air force, but  
5 leave strategic air command?

6 GB: No, didn't think about that. Getting out of the SAC was kind of tough. The  
7 way I got out of SAC was I got that assignment as a forward air controller from air force.  
8 Once I got that, it didn't take but about two months to get the decision made that it was  
9 the way out.

10 KC: Well, give me the timeline here if you will, Mr. Bremenkamp. You're fed up  
11 with, with the strategic air command, considering getting out of the air force all together,  
12 but yet this forward air controller opportunity comes up. When does this happen, take me  
13 through this?

14 GB: This happened in—probably in the early, middle summer of '65. Orders  
15 came from air force nominating me to—the only first one I guess out of our squadron to  
16 go as a forward air controller. I was a senior captain by that time, I'd been a captain for,  
17 you know, it was in the zone for major at that time even, so I was—and I don't know  
18 what they looked at as criteria, but there was my name on the list and of course, there I  
19 was. I'd been flying that B-47 and B-52 and I'd just finished my check ride as an aircraft  
20 commander. I did my low level mission, I did my refueling mission, I did my instrument  
21 check, and I did my crew check out, I passed everything and was put up as an aircraft  
22 commander without a crew because there wasn't a crew available at the time and here  
23 come these orders to go to Southeast Asia forward as air control and the wing  
24 commander said, "No way, you can't go because we've invested all this money and time  
25 upgrading you as an aircraft commander. We'll just get those orders cancelled." And  
26 somewhere in August I got put on alert and I'll be doggone if I didn't get food for a week  
27 and I'll be doggone when it came time to get relieved, I got put on alert again for another  
28 week. At the end of those two weeks, I called the wing commander and as soon as I got  
29 off of alert, instead—I don't remember his name, "Can we quit fighting those orders as a  
30 forward air controller and let me get out of here, on my way?" He says, "I'll get with  
31 them and find out and get what you want. If that's what you want" And I said, "That's

1 what I want.” And I got off alert at about nine o’clock in the morning and at three o’clock  
2 in the afternoon and says, “Bremenkamp. You’re on your way to Southeast Asia.” So I  
3 got out of SAC.

4 KC: Wow. Now let me ask you a few questions. One is, did you put in for this  
5 forward air controller position?

6 GB: No, that was an involuntary assignment.

7 KC: Okay, so what was it about you that they identified? You’re flying B-52s.

8 GB: I think it was the fact that I was a senior captain. I’m checking my flight log  
9 here right now. I see my last B-52 flight was in October 13<sup>th</sup> and I didn’t fly anymore B-  
10 52 missions. I flew all missions as a first pilot. So they must have let me fly on sight as an  
11 aircraft commander. How about that? And then I didn’t fly again until November 16<sup>th</sup> and  
12 I flew a KC-135 and the 20<sup>th</sup> of November it was my last flight in a SAC airplane, and I  
13 didn’t fly again until December. I mean, they took me off the crew and everything. So I  
14 didn’t fly again until December.

15 KC: Now, you mentioned that they had you on alert for the first time and then  
16 they had you on alert again the second time. Was this strategic air command’s way of  
17 fighting this and end up keeping you there to get you to retrieve their investment?

18 GB: No, you could always be on recon alert, you know, rotation on alert, but I  
19 think there was nobody to take—some crew was short either a co-pilot or an aircraft  
20 commander and I ended up pulling back to back alert duties.

21 KC: Okay. Now, you finally get your way. You’re finally out of strategic air  
22 command.

23 GB: I’m outside, thank goodness.

24 KG: Now, let me ask you this, I’ve heard other pilots say that it was very, very  
25 difficult to get out of strategic air command and you related part of that to me. I’ve also  
26 heard them say that as a result of their leaving this fraternity, if you will, of strategic air  
27 command, that it had a somewhat negative impact on their career in terms of evaluation.

28 GB: That would pass over for major.

29 KC: As a result of you wanting to leave SAC?

30 GB: I think so. I didn’t get a good ER when I left there, and I think it impacted. I  
31 didn’t get promoted until the next year. You know, I missed out on my one year. I

1 celebrated my first Passover while I was training to be a forward air controller and I think  
2 getting out of the SAC might have been that. I remember the wing commander saying  
3 “Glenn, as soon as you finish your tour as a FAC (Forward Air Controller) you can come  
4 right back here and we’ll put you back in the B-52, you know.” And I said under my  
5 breath, “It will be a very cold day, before I come back to SAC.” That was under my  
6 breath, but he might have seen my lips move, I don’t know.

7 KC: A very cold day in Hurlburt Field, huh?

8 GB: Right.

9 KC: Okay, now you’ve managed to escape strategic air command. When did you  
10 officially leave SAC and start training for forward air control?

11 GB: Well, I must have left in—well, I don’t know when I left because I got  
12 November 16<sup>th</sup> was—I flew a KC-135 to get my flight time. Like I said, in October I flew  
13 my last B-52 mission and then I didn’t fly again. My form five here says I didn’t fly  
14 again until December the 20<sup>th</sup>, after Hurlburt—it wasn’t Hurlburt, it was Holly Field, of  
15 course. Holly Field, I flew there on December the 20<sup>th</sup> of 1965. So I’ didn’t hardly fly an  
16 airplane from November through—from October, November, you know one flight in  
17 November. Last flight October 13<sup>th</sup>, I flew November 15<sup>th</sup>, and then I didn’t fly again  
18 until December of ’65. So I sat around doing nothing there. It probably took a little bit of  
19 leave and I sat around doing nothing there for almost a full month, or more than that, I  
20 really didn’t do anything from October until December 20<sup>th</sup>.

21 KC: That’s a long time for a pilot.

22 GB: And then I started training in the O-1.

23 KC: That’s a very long time for a pilot to not be flying.

24 GB: Yeah, but I’m looking right here at my form five. The first day I flew the O-  
25 1, I did fifty-five landings.

26 KC: Fifty-five?

27 GB: Fifty-five, Fifty-five landings the first day.

28 KC: My goodness, what was the reason for this high number of landings?

29 GB: I guess because they let me fly an airplane. I flew six hours that day and did  
30 fifty-five landings.

31 KC: My goodness.

1 GB: I really learned how to fly an airplane.

2 KC: Now let me ask you some very general questions or just to start this whole  
3 process of going to forward air control training. Was there anything about the fact that  
4 appealed to you? Did you know much about the mission or the overall approach?

5 GB: Well, I read up on it after I got the assignment and everything. I knew it was  
6 a dangerous mission, but I also knew it was going to be, you know, it was quite a  
7 different mission from anything else that the air force was doing. You know, it's  
8 something to look forward to.

9 KC: One of the things that you mentioned a while ago was that the routine  
10 became a little stale with strategic air command, but as a forward air controller that would  
11 certainly not be the case.

12 GB: That's for sure. Because once you ended up flying your combat missions,  
13 well, it was quite different.

14 KC: Well, take me through your training. Where were you trained as a forward air  
15 controller?

16 GB: Well, where every other FAC went through, Hurlburt Field, you know.

17 KC: Right. Okay, well take me through that training.

18 GB: Well, I think I slept most of the time during the ground courses. I do recall  
19 we did get what they call AGOS, Air Ground Observer or something like that, AGOS.  
20 We went through that course. A lot of stuff I guess I should have paid attention to, but  
21 didn't because mainly it just, you know, turned loose having a good time. I partied every  
22 night and food everyday.

23 KC: Did your family move down to—

24 GB: No, they got to stay—my family, of course I was at Seymour Johnson where  
25 the B-52s were, where it was owned by an F-105 wing and before I left the wing  
26 commander set it up, so my wife and family got to stay in base quarters on Seymour  
27 Johnson for the full year I was overseas and Vietnam, so that was a very good deal. They  
28 did come down at Christmas time. We spent Christmas off because I think we only had  
29 about four or five days off for Christmas time, but ended up coming down there and  
30 stayed in a motel with the family during that Christmas break. And it's mainly just flying  
31 a lot.



1 KC: Now I assume this is late '65 into the early 1966. I assume that you are  
2 training, you're trying to check out in the O-1, the Bird Dog, is that right?

3 GB: Yeah.

4 KC: Okay, well tell me about that plane. You've gone from the biggest plane that  
5 the air force has to arguably the smallest.

6 GB: That's right.

7 KC: What was that like for you?

8 GB: That was—that was like turning a kid loose in a candy store, it really is.

9 KC: Really?

10 GB: Because here's an airplane you got it to yourself again. You're it. I mean  
11 there's nobody else to depend on, nobody else to be responsible for. I mean, it's your  
12 airplane and you get to fly it and do what you want to do. It was just being turned loose  
13 with an airplane that was fun to fly.

14 KC: I assume that you have very little problem in terms of flight training with the  
15 O-1, checking out.

16 GB: I only ground looped it once and that was when they told me to expedite the  
17 runway and did a ground loop and a big cloud of dust and I didn't hit the wingtip on the  
18 ground and taxied away from it. That was the closest I came to having an accident in it.

19 KC: Now, obviously you're doing well in the flight. You say you weren't paying  
20 that much attention in ground school.

21 GB: I guess I didn't, I don't remember. It's been so far back there.

22 KC: Right, you've been through so much of this stuff before. You've been flying  
23 very complicated, complex planes.

24 GB: Yeah, and we've got an airplane that you stick of throttle and a mixture  
25 control, and I do remember that they did have the O-1F, which got a variable pitch prop  
26 on it, too. There were two different types. The O-1E and the O-1F.

27 KC: Okay, well I've heard other pilots talk to me about this before, that they've  
28 told me about this, but this variable pitch, explain to me what you mean by that.

29 GB: Well, you can change the angle of the propeller and if you change the angle  
30 propeller you can get more airspeed and the same fuel and have better power for take offs

1 and stuff like that. Don't tell me we've got a storm going on out here. Oh boy, it's  
2 pouring.

3 KC: Is that right? Biloxi is getting some more rain.

4 GB: This part of Biloxi is getting rain anyway. That's probably part of the  
5 offshoot of that little tropical storm over there in Florida.

6 KC: Right, right.

7 GB: We got a sixty percent chance today, so I see sixty percent of it's on us, I  
8 guess.

9 KC: You've mentioned again, you're not having problems with flying the O-1,  
10 you're really enjoying it by the sounds of it.

11 GB: Oh, it was a good airplane to fly.

12 KC: Ground school doesn't mean much to you, considering everything else  
13 you've been through, but what about the mission of the FACs? Or in training, are your  
14 instructors telling you what's going to happen, what's going on, how you're going to  
15 approach things? Obviously, you can't know until you're there, but—

16 GB: I really don't think they knew that much that they weren't experienced at that  
17 time. You know, at that time the FAC program was just—I was probably heading—I was  
18 in class 6505, so they probably hadn't been too many classes before that because there  
19 weren't but a handful of FACs in Southeast Asia in '64 and '65. So those of us that  
20 started there in '66—one started getting over there in '65, late '65 and '66 were the first  
21 guys getting a lot of experience. Actually, as far as combat went, combat flying went into  
22 everything, the ground school didn't quite cover it. What they covered more than  
23 anything else was communications, you know, and all that. Yeah, the communication set  
24 up was alright, but the other thing was that you actually were out there flying and, you  
25 know, the main thing that the ground school taught was lines of communications, lines of  
26 command, how you got your airplanes for your airstrikes, and coordination with the army  
27 and stuff like that. So the ground school was not geared toward combat. At that time, I  
28 don't know how it evolved later on. It may have, you know, changed some. I don't really  
29 know.

30 KC: I think it would stand a reason that some of these FACs finish their tours and  
31 they got to come back.

1 GB: They came back as instructors, yeah.

2 KC: Yes. They have a better idea about communications and about coordination.  
3 All the things that made the FACs mission more wise.

4 GB: Another thing that I kept thinking about, I got over there and went to Tan  
5 Son Nhut, to headquarters and I got assigned as an air liaison officer/FAC. Well, I can't  
6 remember anything at ground school telling us what the duties of deal and what an air  
7 liaison officer was really responsible for. I had to play that by ear once I got out in the  
8 boondocks assigned to a province.

9 KC: Before we get you to Vietnam, a few more questions here back home. One,  
10 and most importantly I think for right now, your wife encouraged you to leave the  
11 fighters behind you. Now, you've got orders for Vietnam. And not only are you not in a  
12 fighter, you're several thousand feet closer to the ground and you're moving at about one  
13 hundred miles and hour.

14 GB: She wasn't too happy.

15 KC: I was going to ask you, what was her reaction to this?

16 GB: She just wasn't too happy about it, but I think she knew that I'd had my fill  
17 of being in the flight job I was in. She didn't protest it. She said, "If that's what you want  
18 to do, go ahead and do it." So that was it.

19 KC: Okay. Now also, this is very early in the beginning of the American build up  
20 in Vietnam.

21 GB: Yeah.

22 KC: What did you know, if anything—or maybe I should ask you this, how  
23 closely were you following US involvement, the events in Vietnam?

24 GB: Fairly close. I knew that, you know, that counter insurgency type war and we  
25 were fighting it a lot differently than the conflict in Korea was fought. So it wasn't that  
26 much concerned in my mind about what was taking place at that time.

27 KC: Okay, now when do you finish you're training there at Hurlburt and go to the  
28 West Coast to leave for Vietnam?

29 GB: I got my form five in front of me. My last flight there was January the 17<sup>th</sup>. I  
30 remember being home on the 19<sup>th</sup> of January because I had from the 19<sup>th</sup> to about, I think,  
31 about the first day or two of February or something like that to spend before I went over

1 to Saigon. So I ended up, like I said, the middle of January of '66, finished training there  
2 at Hurlburt.

3 KC: And it's not until early February that you have to report for duty.

4 GB: I think I had to report over there February 2<sup>nd</sup>, that just sort of sticks in my  
5 minds and I'm not too sure.

6 KC: Now, report in Saigon?

7 GB: In Saigon, at Tan Son Nhut, yeah.

8 KC: Okay. So you leave the US late January of 1996, very early February, the 1<sup>st</sup>  
9 of February.

10 GB: Yeah, probably the first.

11 KC: Okay. Now, what was it like—again, this is very early in American  
12 involvement, the buildup. What was it like on the trip over to Vietnam? Describe that trip  
13 over for me.

14 GB: Well, the only people who saw me off was my wife and three kids at a little  
15 airport outside down there in North Carolina. I flew to Chicago, I flew commercial—flew  
16 Chicago and had a hold over in Chicago. I remember I was ill prepared. I had nothing  
17 with me, but a summer uniform and it was cold as the dickens in Chicago because it was  
18 January, February. I spent several hours there waiting on my flight, I think non-stop to—  
19 was it a base or was it an airfield? It was somewhere, coming off the top of my head, I  
20 can't remember. It was an air base out in California, I know that, where I was to catch a  
21 commercial flight to 'Nam. The only thing I remember about that trip is nobody paid any  
22 attention to you, you know.

23 KC: When you say nobody, do you mean people at the airport, or?

24 GB: People at the airport. I got to the airbase and everybody loaded up on the  
25 airplane and away she went. I know the airplane we went over on was Continental  
26 Airlines and I don't know what type of airplane it was outside of a jet.

27 KC: Did you have any concerns, any anxiety, and trepidation about making this  
28 one-year tour in Vietnam?

29 GB: No, I'm going over there to kick butt.

30 KC: Is that right?

1 GB: I was going to do my thing. Hey, you know, through the little training down  
2 there at Hurlburt they made you sort of gung ho for the program. Especially when you  
3 got a taste of, you know, actually putting in the airplanes with live bombs and stuff like  
4 that. You know, in practice that's where they got you wound up and ready to do it.

5 KC: How old were you at this time?

6 GB: Hey, I was an old man at that time. I was thirty-two years old, I turned thirty-  
7 three in March of that year, '66.

8 KC: That is an old man, I guess for the circumstances it was.

9 GB: Compared to all these kids that came on as FACs later on you know, just out  
10 of college and out of flight training and out of the Air Force Academy and places like  
11 that, they were young. They were a lot more gung ho than me. Of course, the first cadres  
12 of us were older. We don't understand why, but most of us were older, more experienced  
13 pilots and we talked about discussing why did they pick us, we don't really know.  
14 Outside the fact that they did not want to get down, they wanted people who had been  
15 flying airplanes for awhile, I guess. I don't know, I'm glad we were chosen.

16 KG: Do you think that maybe the maturity level would have been something?

17 GB: It might have been it. It might have been the maturity level and that. They  
18 knew you were going to be out there, you know, on your own and you had to think. They  
19 want people who thought things through, I guess.

20 KC: Right. Now, you are headed to Saigon. You're going to fly into Tan Son  
21 Nhut, as you mentioned.

22 GB: Yeah.

23 KC: When you get to Vietnam, what are your first impressions? You walk off this  
24 commercial flight, what are your first impressions of the country?

25 GB: What the heck am I doing here?

26 KC: (Laughs) Why do you say that?

27 GB: (Chuckles) Well, it was strange, like, "Hey, you've arrived. We're just going  
28 to put you up, get on the bus here and we're going to take you to some quarters, and you  
29 can catch some sleep. A couple days we'll send somebody out here for you, pick you up.  
30 Just sit back and relax and wait until we come pick you up and you get your in-country

1 briefing and we'll issue you all your equipment and give you your assignment." That  
2 took about, I guess, three or four days or something like that.

3 KC: You talk about the in-country briefing, what did the in-country briefing  
4 consist of in February of 1966? Do you remember?

5 GB: No, I don't remember at all. All I remember is getting a gamma globulin shot  
6 because they told us we had to have them every so often. Anyway, the lieutenant colonel  
7 I knew and myself and somebody else, we went and got our gamma globulin shots, and  
8 we swore up and down that was the last thing we were going to get because it hurt so bad.

9 KC: I've heard that.

10 GB: Man, they stuck that big old horse needle in your butt and shoo, that was the  
11 last gamma globulin shot we ever got, I ever got. I don't know about the rest; I know they  
12 didn't either.

13 KC: Forty some odd years later that still sticks pretty clearly.

14 GB: It still sticks in my mind of that gamma globulin shot. Man, that was  
15 something else.

16 KC: Did you receive your orders where you were going to report at this time?

17 GB: Yeah, they sent me down as an air liaison officer/forward air controller for  
18 Kien Giang Province, Rach Gia was the name of the province capitol. And I was assigned  
19 to a MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam) team, 55. I had another pilot there  
20 waiting and my whole command was another pilot, a radio operator, and a crew chief. I  
21 was liaison officer to the VNAF (Vietnam Air Force)—no, not to the VNAF, really to the  
22 ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) army guy, to the province chief.

23 KC: Oh, okay.

24 GB: I had to give the morning briefing and what we'd got done, and what  
25 transpired and what we were going to do for that day and they'd tell us what to—tell me  
26 what support we needed and I'd have to get back with the desk and find out, you know,  
27 whether we could get airplanes or whether we needed airplanes or if they had anything  
28 planned for the area. So I covered a province, I don't know how big it was, maybe fifteen  
29 miles, twenty wide by about thirty miles or so long. Right on the Gulf of Siam.  
30 Wonderful place for seafood and the only other Americans that were stationed there was  
31 on the Cambodian border, was a Special Forces advisor team and of course the MACV

1 team had sections on the gulf, on the coast and we had navy, air force, and army  
2 representing both because the navy worked with the motives that the South Vietnamese had  
3 there in that area. It was about sixty of us total there, in the province. Well, I was only  
4 there from, you know, February through March and we only had one operation the whole  
5 time I was there. They brought ARVN Rangers in and dropped them off in helicopters  
6 and they swept through a bunch of rice patties and never made contact with whoever they  
7 were supposedly chasing. I don't know whether it was—it became more of a training  
8 exercise than it did anything else. And that was about—the big thing there was fly  
9 everyday, you know, check the problems just to see if there was any change. The biggest  
10 excitement was right after I got there, the swift boat, I don't know if you know what the  
11 swift boat was.

12 KC: Yes, sir.

13 GB: Okay, we had a swift boat engine who decided that this Viet Cong flag on a  
14 bamboo pole out there in the water didn't really belong there and he didn't know it had a  
15 five-hundred-pound bomb underneath it.

16 KC: I was going to ask if that were the case.

17 GB: They must have been sitting right over it when they detonated it because it  
18 blew the ammo belts right out of the torrent. It took three days to find the gunner's body,  
19 it killed—how many did they have on crew? Four or five. Anyway, he and the radio  
20 operator, the engine and the radio operator were the only two survivors. That was my first  
21 SAR (Search and Rescue) mission, and I didn't even know it was a SAR and I ended up  
22 coordinating and getting an army helicopter in to pick the engine up. He was wounded,  
23 the radio operator had broken legs, but he'd survived because he was behind something  
24 he said. Poor old little (unintelligible) got court marshaled when they got him out of the  
25 hospital. I think he learned—they learned a lesson, don't mess with Viet Cong flags.

26 KC: Yeah.

27 GB: But he drove that boat right up to it and of course they had it booby trapped.  
28 We spent, I guess, about three or four days getting that boat out of there. The first thing  
29 was to try to find a gunner and once he was found well, then they had to get the boat out  
30 of there and we put in air strikes because they kept shooting from the shoreline at the  
31 recovery crews out there. And that was the first air strikes I got to put in. The other air

1 strikes were just missions that were already targeted, you know, by the province chief,  
2 said, "We bomb here." You know, that was it. The special forces, I liked to support them.  
3 It was kind of hairy because had to land right by the Cambodian border and then had to  
4 go two or three miles to get to where the special forces camp was, and you leave three or  
5 four ARVN guys out there guarding your airplane and hope it was still there when you  
6 got back. After you went to talked to the special forces guy and they were always sending  
7 us out there with special communications, you know. Can't put it on the radio so you got  
8 to carry it out there to them, you know.

9 KC: So you would actually leave your plane, go out and find these guys or they  
10 would find you?

11 GB: Well, they had a fort set up, a base camp.

12 KC: Right, a little A-camp, I guess.

13 GB: A little A-camp and they had their Claymore mines sitting around it and all  
14 that and the machine guns, you know. I had some pictures of it, and I can't find them at  
15 all for some reason. I can't find some of the stuff, can't find a lot of things. I can't find  
16 my diary; that was the worst thing. I lost my diary. It's had to be in this house  
17 somewhere, but it disappeared within a year after I moved in this house and it's been  
18 gone ever since.

19 KC: Wow, what a shame.

20 GB: Well, it wasn't a real complete diary, but it had a lot of little memorandums  
21 in it, but it's gone. It probably got thrown out with the trash one day.

22 KC: It'd be great to be able to recover that one of these days.

23 GB: All I can do is try to remember things and then I remember them wrong, so.

24 KC: Well, Mr. Bremenkamp, why don't we take a break there for today.

25 GB: Okay.

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**Interview with Glenn Bremenkamp**

**Session [2] of [3]**

**Date August 21, 2009**

1           Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager continuing an Oral History Interview with Mr.  
2           Glenn Bremenkamp. Today is 21 August 2009. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr.  
3           Bremenkamp is joining me by telephone from his home in Biloxi, Mississippi. Alright,  
4           Mr. Bremenkamp, when we last left off, we had just got you to Southeast Asia. We got  
5           you at Rach Gia with the 22<sup>nd</sup> TAS (Tactical Air Support). Now your time here was a  
6           short time, about a month and a half, as you mentioned and you're serving as air liaison  
7           officer/FAC. Can you go ahead and, if you would, tell me a little bit about your duties  
8           and responsibilities as air liaison officer? You just mentioned that you're working not  
9           with American troops, but with ARVN troops. Can you tell me some more about your  
10          time there as ALO (Air Liaison Officer)?

11          GB: Okay, the ALO—we were attached to the MACV Team 55, which was  
12          headed up by an army colonel. We had the army MACV team, we had a navy group in  
13          there because we were on the go for Siam and of course, our little air force continued of  
14          myself, a FAC, and radio operator and aircraft maintenance guy. We had 1O-1E and the  
15          army had an O-1E, which an army pilot by the name Tom Savar flew very erratically. He  
16          was gung-ho, he got grounded a couple times by the commander. But my main job was,  
17          you know, keeping contact with the ARVN S3, which is the intelligence officer, and he  
18          was a lieutenant not too keen on being out getting exposed because I took him on one  
19          flight, and they had briefed that there was a 12.7 or .51 caliber machine gun at this  
20          location on the canal and sure enough there was. They fired a few rounds at us, and I  
21          jinked around and watched him for awhile and he never hit us. The ARVN lieutenant  
22          called me a cowboy and said he'd never fly me again and he didn't. He flew one flight  
23          and that was it. He wouldn't go up again. So I got me assigned a little sergeant with a  
24          carbine and he had about half dozen shiny little bullets that he carried around. He didn't  
25          have anymore ammo for the gun than that, but that was his weapon, and he flew in the  
26          backseat and was my communication because he understood enough English that he  
27          could interpret for me.

1 KC: Okay, now were you in contact during your time in the air? Were you in  
2 contact with ARVN troops on the ground?

3 GB: No. The only ARVN troops ever in contact with was a little operation that  
4 they had with the rangers they brought in by helicopter.

5 KC: Okay, you mentioned that briefly last time.

6 GB: That was the only operation we had—I did work with special forces guys on  
7 about two or three occasions where I was airborne and they would call and say, “We’ve  
8 got contact.” And tried to get airstrikes which was really not—it really didn’t work, but  
9 we did do one coordinator strike where they had located a base camp of Viet Cong out in  
10 the sort of river or I guess I would call a creek down here. They had a bunch of hidden  
11 buildings and everything and they brought in, the army brought in about four helicopters  
12 and myself and I went in and marked the target for them, and I fired all four of my  
13 rockets into the brush line and into these—you could see hooch’s from buildings down  
14 inside the jungle and they attacked them for a period of time. No known—I think the Viet  
15 Cong had already evacuated the area before the air strike because they didn’t have any  
16 body count of any type. One other time the special forces guys were out and way out in  
17 an open area or somehow, some way an ARVN—not ARVN, it was the VNAF Air Force  
18 with four A-1s and spotted them. And the first thing they did was they made a pass at  
19 them and I got this frantic call from the captain of the special forces saying, “You’ve got  
20 to save us. These guys are going to try to kill us.” And I said, “What’s going on?” And I  
21 headed toward them and they said, “Well, they made a pass at us but we’re afraid they’re  
22 going to fire on us.” So I got there and I got myself between them and the VNAF, and  
23 tried to contact them and I couldn’t make contact. Finally, finally I found what frequency  
24 they were on through the control through my radio operator and tried to talk to them and  
25 nobody answered. But finally, they pulled off a target and as I was pulling off the target, I  
26 heard this voice, “Okay FAC, we’re leaving the area, you’re okay.” I said, “What the  
27 heck is going on?” It turns out there was an American pilot in the number four airplane,  
28 and he was not able to stop these guys from—he wasn’t able to communicate enough to  
29 stop these guys from scaring my special forces.

30 KC: Wow.

1 GB: Of course, these guys had about twenty, twenty to thirty ARVN irregular  
2 forces with them and of course they saw all these troops off the ground, they thought they  
3 were the enemy, I guess. So they were pretty pleased that we saved their—but the big  
4 problem at that time in the province was, the province chief ruled that province. He was  
5 like a little petty king, I guess. Of course, he got his kick backs from protection of  
6 different things in the province. The big thing he got money from was a cement plant that  
7 was about five or six miles from rock Rach Gia and that was under his big protection, so  
8 he protected them, and he got a payback. He did get transferred to another job. I don't  
9 remember much about the new guy that came in because probably about that time is  
10 when I left. It was interesting being there. A few little operations like that and mainly just  
11 everyday things, you know, get up and go fly on visual reconnaissance, drop leaflets,  
12 things like that. Trying to win the hearts and minds which was a fallacy, you weren't  
13 going to win the hearts and minds bombing these people and shooting at them. I did fly a  
14 night flight in a helicopter, which I must not have been in my right mind. I got on board  
15 with these army guys and we flew a night mission. I don't know what we were looking  
16 for. We went out and back and you couldn't see anything at night. I don't know what the  
17 whole big deal was on that, but I don't know why I did it either, but I did.

18 KC: Well, let me back up here a little bit. You talked about these two missions, if  
19 you will, dealing with US Special Forces. Of course, there are indigenous personnel  
20 working with the American Special Forces there. The first time you said that they thought  
21 they had engaged the enemy. Now, were you apprised of them being out there? Were you  
22 made aware that the special forces team was going to be in the region and that they were  
23 going to be working there?

24 GB: No, no. I did not know that they were out on an operation of any type. They  
25 were lucky that I was airborne and in their vicinity when these VNAF guys thought they  
26 were the bad guys. They got on the radio immediately to my ARVN guy, you know, on  
27 his radio because I didn't have communication. Through the interpreting with them I  
28 finally found out a frequency I could talk on and we got it untangled and got the VNAF  
29 out of there.

30 KC: So you were just up flying?

31 GB: Just up flying a visual recall at night.

1 KC: Okay, okay.

2 GB: It wasn't a special operation of any kind. The only special one was the  
3 special operation before we went after the base camp.

4 KC: Which you said overall was a failure?

5 GB: Well, we destroyed their base camp, but they could rebuild that within the  
6 next week probably.

7 KC: Okay. Now, as the air liaison officer you're going to have to deal with units  
8 that are on the ground, helping to coordinate some sort of air support, air cover for  
9 whatever you may be involved in.

10 GB: Communication with the direct air support center, they would flag missions  
11 if we asked for them and if the pilot chief asked for them, well we'd call the DASC  
12 (Direct Air Support Center) and another FAC would get up and if he was around, he'd  
13 call the DASC and we'd try to get DASC to schedule us air support for the province  
14 chief. Sometimes I was a little leery of what kind of targets he selected, but—

15 KC: Okay, now that's very interesting you should say that. Now, you're going to  
16 be—because these are largely ARVN unit with which you're dealing, what was your  
17 relationship like with the—you said it was the S-3 with whom you were dealing, right?

18 GB: No problem, they just didn't want to fly with me.

19 KC: But other than that, there were no problems?

20 GB: No problems at all.

21 KC: Communication problems or their attitude to your being there or your attitude  
22 toward them?

23 GB: No, they only liked the idea of us being there because, you know, in my  
24 estimation sometimes it was just punishment for not really conforming the way the  
25 province wanted things to go. I was leery of a couple airstrikes that they had us put in, but  
26 I tried to limit collateral damage on a strike like that.

27 KC: Sure, sure. So you have to—you coordinate with the ARVN unit, then you  
28 call in DASC and you try to find some sort of a middle ground here on bombing targets,  
29 but you say they all have to be approved by the province chief and the province chief  
30 could also initiate, he could call them as well.

31 GB: He initiated the target and all that.

1 KC: Okay, now you said that you were leery of some of the targets that he would  
2 promote. Why was this the case?

3 GB: Well, I think it was just like most of the corrupt government in South  
4 Vietnam, that he was expecting kick back from the people he was, you know, protecting.  
5 And if he didn't get it quick enough well, I guess he prompted him a little bit.

6 KC: So do you suspect that he was bringing in air power against targets as a form  
7 of—

8 GB: For intimidation.

9 KC: For intimidation?

10 GB: Yeah. Not being able to really understand his thoughts and what his motives  
11 were, but very suspicious.

12 KC: Now, you said that he was certainly trying to protect this concrete plant.

13 GB: Yeah, the cement plant. Yeah, because it was a very lucrative business.

14 KC: And it was Vietnamese owned, I assume?

15 GB: It was Vietnamese owned, right.

16 KC: Okay, and you certainly suspect that the protection of that was a result of his  
17 paying for the—

18 GB: Well, certainly he did because he stationed a lot of his regular forces around  
19 the cement plant in order to keep the Viet Cong from damaging it or hurting it in any  
20 way.

21 KC: Okay, let's go to the way then.

22 GB: It was a priority protection zone.

23 KC: Sure, well let's go the other way with that now. You said that some of the  
24 one's that he would call in were somewhat suspicious. What types of missions would he  
25 call in? What kinds of air power would he call in?

26 GB: Well usually we got F-100s.

27 KC: F-100s?

28 GB: Yeah, right.

29 KC: Okay, and what types of targets would he be going after?

30 GB: Either structures or in some cases he said, "I don't like the way they've got a  
31 concentration of water buffalo in this area or something like that." Things like that.

1 KC: And you'd bring them in and then of course, as you said, you would try to  
2 limit the collateral damage despite the suspicions you had.

3 GB: That's right.

4 KC: Or because of the suspicions you had you tried to limit the damage that these  
5 sorts of things could do. That's very, very interesting. Did you ever pressure concerns up  
6 to any higher level while you were there?

7 GB: No, no. It wouldn't have done much good because they wanted to get that air  
8 power out and show that we were, you know, providing our ordnates on target as  
9 requested.

10 KC: Sure. And of course, he's province chief and like you say, they hold an awful  
11 lot of power.

12 GB: Oh man, yes.

13 KC: For sure.

14 GB: He would have gotten backed, you know.

15 KC: Now you'd also mentioned this one insertion of ARVN rangers. Take me  
16 through that mission. You said that it didn't really result in anything, but can you take me  
17 through that mission and how you would try to coordinate?

18 GB: Well, we'd watch them bring the helicopters in and all these little guys got  
19 out and every one of them had a red bandana around his neck and they'd take off running  
20 through the rice patties and finally get through the zone that they wanted to get through  
21 and they regrouped and picked them up and went back on home.

22 KC: Was there any enemy fire this entire time?

23 GB: Not that I know of.

24 KC: Okay. Were you flying in the area?

25 GB: Yeah.

26 KC: I guess it was just visual reconnaissance that you were doing there?

27 GB: Yeah, just visually seeing what was going on.

28 KC: And so, it was a clear LZ (Landing Zone), clear landing zone. They came in,  
29 they hit the ground, essentially no one found anything, and then they picked them up and  
30 that was it then?

31 GB: Yeah.

1 KC: Okay.

2 GB: That was probably the only one I saw like that, but that was probably typical  
3 of a lot of things that the ARVN initially operated on, but it was probably more of a  
4 training exercise in overall results, you know, than anything else.

5 KC: Sure. How much contact did you have with the ARVN as the ALO here?  
6 Daily contact.

7 GB: Well, just the ones that were stationed there in Rach Gia themselves. Just the  
8 province chief, his staff.

9 KC: Okay. What was your relationship like with the Vietnamese personnel in  
10 general? What was your impression of them?

11 GB: They were good people. They wanted to get rid of the Viet Cong, but it was a  
12 problem that they just didn't have the fire power, the intelligence, control of the area, in  
13 order to do this. So once you got outside the ring of wherever there were troops stationed  
14 while the Viet Cong had full reign because they would—like sending the Vietcong flag  
15 out there in the Gulf of Siam, out in the shallow water. After the swift boat incident,  
16 within day or two they had another flag out there on a flagpole after we got the swift boat  
17 out of there, you know and everything. They put another one out there. Of course, we  
18 tried to shoot it up with rockets, but what do you do when you fly an O-1 and you don't  
19 have a very accurate rocket?

20 KC: Right.

21 GB: So it still stood there.

22 KC: Well tell me a little bit—and you mentioned this last time, especially during  
23 your training at Hurlburt, but here you are in Vietnam in an O-1, tell me about what it  
24 took to fly this plane, how you would approach at the types of things you would do, the  
25 weapons you would carry, take me through your typical O-1—I believe you say they  
26 were O-1Fs you flew most of the time?

27 GB: These were all O-1Es.

28 KC: These were O-1Es, okay. Well, take me through a tour of a typical flight for  
29 you as ALO with the O-1.

30 GB: About time to get to fly the airplane the crew chief already had it ready to go  
31 and had the rockets loaded and all you had to do was do a walk around and crank up and

1 the air strip was North/South roadway and with another crossroad going through it, a  
2 little old ARVN army guys would block traffic while you went taxiing down the end of  
3 the road toward the water and turned around and take your take off and they'd block  
4 traffic while you made your takeoff. And of course, the same thing when you came back  
5 to land, you'd buzz them, and they'd stop traffic so you could land. We had about seven  
6 hundred feet, I guess, of roadway to take off and land on.

7 KC: Huh, I've never heard of that using an actual road to do this.

8 GB: Yeah, we didn't—It wasn't a runway, it was a roadway. It went right past the  
9 graveyard on one side of it, which was very interesting. And then, about a hundred yards  
10 off the end of the runway we had the rice patties, and we had a guy that used to sit out  
11 there and take a pot shot at us and they said leave them alone because he hadn't hit an  
12 airplane yet, so nobody bothered him.

13 KC: Was he Viet Cong or was he just a?

14 GB: It had to be a Vietcong, or he was just a disgruntled farmer, one of the two.

15 KC: Right, right.

16 GB: He never hit the airplane, so we left him alone.

17 KC: What was he shooting at you with?

18 GB: We figured it was an old carbine or an old rifle of World War II vintage.

19 KC: Sure, okay. That's funny. You say that there was an army O-1 and another  
20 FAC, so there were—

21 GB: Yeah, an army O-1 and the army had an O-1 there too.

22 KC: So there were three of you there, three O-1s there?

23 GB: Two O-1s.

24 KC: Two O-1s.

25 GB: The army had one and we had one.

26 KC: Okay, so the other FAC would share one with you, is that the case?

27 GB: Right, we'd share that airplane.

28 KC: Okay, I've got you. Now were you going out on any sort of night flights,  
29 night missions?



1 GB: I think I was airborne once or twice at night. We did not patrol at night  
2 outside. I do remember watching—you know, seeing the Puff the Magic Dragon, I saw  
3 one of them working one night.

4 KC: What was that like?

5 GB: Oh, it was a real fireworks display.

6 KC: That's what I understand. What was the occasion for this?

7 GB: I don't know, he was several miles away. I never did find out, you know, he  
8 wasn't in my province. So I don't know what he was shooting at or whatever.

9 KC: Okay. What sort of weapons did you carry on the O-1?

10 GB: I carried a .38 and an M-16.

11 KC: For your personal weapons you did?

12 GB: My personal weapon, yes.

13 KC: Did you have, I would guess the white phosphorus rockets?

14 GB: Yeah, the Willie Pete rockets, yeah.

15 KC: Willie Pete. Okay, and what, four of those I would assume?

16 GB: Four, yeah.

17 KC: Okay.

18 GB: We weren't equipped with eight like—later on some of the O-1s were  
19 equipped with eight rockets pods, but we only had four at that time.

20 KC: Okay, now tell me about flying. Again, you're a few hundred feet off the  
21 deck; you're going roughly a hundred miles an hour. What sort of tactics did you take in  
22 your flying? Low and slow as it were. How would you compensate for the lack of speed  
23 and the lack of altitude?

24 GB: There was no real ground threat in this province, so I mainly just flew  
25 straight and leveled. If I got shot at it was probably small arms. I never got hit in that  
26 month and a half that I was flying there, so. And I'm sure I was shot at several times, but  
27 nothing made contact with the air machine.

28 KC: Sustained no damage then?

29 GB: No damage at all. So I may have been shot at, but I don't know.

30 KC: Yeah, flying a straight line I'm sure wouldn't serve your purposes later on,  
31 but now it was okay to do so.

1 GB: Yeah, there was no, any aircraft threat. The only problem that might have  
2 been would have been closer to the camp. It was like the pilots right on the Cambodian  
3 border and there might have been something there, but I never strayed over into  
4 Cambodia, so.

5 KC: Oh, you never went over the line.

6 GB: No, I didn't want to provoke an international incident, so.

7 KC: Right.

8 GB: I stayed out of Cambodia.

9 KC: That's good thinking. I don't think there's any doubt about that. Alright, now  
10 you mentioned that you're only here until about the end of March of 1966.

11 GB: I think about March 31<sup>st</sup> is when I left. The only reason they got me then was  
12 they'd been talking to me, trying to get me to volunteer to go flying the mission up the  
13 Ho Chi Minh trail and I turned them down.

14 KC: Who had been trying to get you to do this?

15 GB: 23<sup>rd</sup> TAS Headquarters.

16 KC: Okay.

17 GB: Calling me on landline and talk to me. I politely turned them down and the  
18 other FAC right there when I got called had dysentery. I wouldn't call it that, really. He  
19 was so bad off that he just could not stop having diarrhea so I told him, I said, "You get  
20 in the back seat and I'm taking you to Tan Son Nhut, so you can get to an air force  
21 doctor." And for a couple days he didn't want to do it and then finally he said, "Okay."  
22 So we climbed in the airplane and I flew up and we landed at Tan Son Nhut. I dropped  
23 him off on the ramp in front of the operations and got permission to turn right around,  
24 taxied out and took off. Left him up there on his own to go find a hospital and get rid of  
25 that dysentery because he had lost a lot of weight and everything. I mean, he couldn't  
26 even fly it was so runny. So I flew the airplane back and on the way back I said, "I might  
27 as well stop and pick up the mail." And I can't remember the name of the little army  
28 airfield where our mail came from and I landed on this PSP (Pierced Steel Planking) strip  
29 and I couldn't stop the airplane, it just kept right on rolling. And I ran out of runway, so I  
30 ran it off out in the grass and got out. Shut it down, got out, and my brake line was  
31 severed, so I didn't have any hydraulic pressure.

1 KC: How did it get severed? Do you have any idea?

2 GB: No clue. Either it got hit by a magic bb or it got worn out or something, but it  
3 was severed. Unless I'd hit something because it was probably about the third of the way  
4 up the strut, so I don't know how that happened, but it happened. And I got out, got over  
5 to the ops and called the 22<sup>nd</sup> TAS headquarters there and said, "Hey, you need to send a  
6 mechanic and fix my break line, so I can kick this airplane on to Rach Gia." And he said,  
7 "Bremenkamp, we got another airplane for you already." I said, "Yeah, and I bet you got  
8 a set of orders with that airplane." And they weren't kidding. They came over and picked  
9 me up. It was about four or five miles away. They came over and picked me up in a Jeep,  
10 took me back to Can Tho to the air force compound there, wined and dined me, put me  
11 up for the night. The next morning they had a set of orders and an O-1F for me to go back  
12 down to Rach Gia, pick up my gear, and head for Bien Hoa for a briefing. So that's what  
13 I did. I got back down there, and I told the problems chief what the problem was and he  
14 didn't like the idea of being down—having no FAC at all there anymore. They didn't  
15 have a, you know, an airplane.

16 KC: Right.

17 GB: So I don't know how that got taken care of, but I went in there and picked up  
18 my gear and they gave me a Viet Cong flag that they had captured and had set aside  
19 somewhere. I flew on up to Bien Hoa that same day for my briefing and it ended up there  
20 were four of us at that time, get it together. One of them was Dick Strong, Bill Tilton, and  
21 Tim Coremanic and the four of us gathered there for our briefing the next day and April  
22 1<sup>st</sup>, I believe it was, we started our trek up the coast of South Vietnam headed for NKP  
23 (Nakhon Phanom Royal Thai Navy Base).

24 KC: Now, were these other three guys, were they also at the 22<sup>nd</sup> at the time?

25 GB: No, I don't know what units they came from, but I was the only one from the  
26 22<sup>nd</sup>.

27 KC: Okay, now—

28 GB: We'd all been in country a little while, not very long because I think I left  
29 for—Coremanic may have left first. It all depended on how quickly—I don't know which  
30 one of us had been there in country long. They'd pick people who'd been in the country  
31 just a while anyway.

1 KC: Now why, other than this, why do you think they chose you in particular?  
2 Just because—

3 GB: No clue, they just looking for volunteers.

4 KC: And they chose the volunteers for you?

5 GB: They volunteered me.

6 KC: And apparently things weren't all that busy at Rach Gia.

7 GB: I wouldn't have been volunteered if my airplane had been intact and I'd  
8 gotten back to Rach Gia. I think that's the way I see it.

9 KC: Is that right?

10 GB: I think it's because the airplane was out of commission, they knew they had  
11 me. They had their volunteer.

12 KC: You had no choice in the matter.

13 GB: I had no choice but being a volunteer.

14 KC: Now you said they put you up in Bien Hoa, I guess.

15 GB: Yeah.

16 KC: And they wined you and dined you. Why would they go through this trouble?  
17 I mean, if they volunteered you.

18 GB: Well, the wining and dining was at the 22<sup>nd</sup> down there the night I spent there  
19 with them to get my airplane out the next morning.

20 KC: Okay, in Can Tho, okay.

21 GB: Yeah. Being nice to me, I guess.

22 KC: Because they knew what they were going to do to you.

23 GB: Well, I knew what was going on when he said, "Yeah, you've got a set of  
24 orders. We got you an O-1F." I said, "Uh-oh."

25 KC: Did you know what it was going to be at that time?

26 GB: Well, yeah, I knew what the assignment was.

27 KC: Yeah.

28 GB: As soon as they said, "We've got a set of orders and they've got a new  
29 airplane for you." And I said, "You've got a set of words to go with it, don't you?" I  
30 knew what it was.

31 KC: You knew that they were going to get you to NKP.

1 GB: Yeah, I knew I was going. I didn't know I was going to NKP, I thought I  
2 might be going up with the cubbies, but staying in country, but when I got to Bien Hoa I  
3 found out right away what I was going to do. The four of us were headed to NKP. I think  
4 they had something like twelve pilots there already and about twelve pilots, fourteen  
5 airplanes, something like that.

6 KC: What were you going to be doing at NKP?

7 GB: Well, I knew what we were going to be doing. We were going to be flying up  
8 the Ho Chi Minh trail. We were going to be putting in strikes, you know directing air  
9 strikes on traffic down the trail.

10 KC: What did you think about this?

11 GB: I don't know, I wasn't too concerned at the time. It was just another  
12 assignment.

13 KC: Was it something that—I heard some people say they preferred interdiction,  
14 these missions over the trail. I've heard other people say they preferred working with  
15 ground troops, in support of ground troops.

16 GB: Well, according to the air force at that time I wasn't a fighter pilot, so they  
17 put me with the ground troops even though at that time it didn't make any difference, but  
18 later on you had to be fighter qualified to support, you know, American troops. Well,  
19 because mainly our American troops weren't that involved. You know, Ia Drang Valley  
20 had just happened shortly before we got there and that was the biggest marine operation  
21 or biggest operation so there weren't that many—it was just during the build up and they  
22 had plenty of FACs to fly the support of American troops. So we went where we were  
23 needed and I guess the need was to—because it had started off, you know, with the fuel  
24 on the Ho Chi Minh trail and found out that it is doing some—you know, doing good  
25 because we are getting some strikes in, so I guess one of the reasons they wanted to beef  
26 up the—at that time it was just a detachment, it wasn't even, you know, a tactical air  
27 support squadron, it was just a detachment of troops, TDY (Temporary Duty  
28 Assignment). Actually, we were TDY to Nakhon Phanom.

29 KC: Yeah, this was—

30 GB: It's like taking all two dollars and thirty cents a day extra or something like  
31 that.

1 KC: That's righteous bucks. This was cricket I believe was the—

2 GB: It was called Operation Cricket.

3 KC: Right.

4 GB: And we ended up flying—the area we flew in was called Steel Tiger and our  
5 part was called Operation Cricket.

6 KC: Now tell me—

7 GB: They called us Cricket FACs with a call sign of “Gumbey”, which was not an  
8 air force approved call sign, but that was the call sign that was picked.

9 KC: And it later changed to “Nail”, as I recall.

10 GB: They changed to “Nail” on June the 1<sup>st</sup> of '66, when it became a 23<sup>rd</sup> TAS.

11 KC: Right, right, when it officially became the 23<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Air Support.

12 GB: Right, the 23<sup>rd</sup> TAS.

13 KC: Okay, well tell me about this area, Steel Tiger. For those who are listening  
14 and don't know where this area is, can you tell me more specifically?

15 GB: Okay, probably from route nine, which is around close to where the DMZ  
16 (Demilitarized Zone) cuts across South Vietnam you'd say east-west across Laos, up past  
17 into Nape Pass which was north of Mu Gia Pass. But mainly it was from Mu Gia Pass on  
18 south down there because once we got good air support and everything, Nape Pass  
19 became, I guess obsolete according to them because the trail out of Nape Pass to come  
20 south was too exposed. It was on a plain and it wasn't jungle, it was just wide open area  
21 and I guess they decided they better not—need to stay in the jungle canopy, you know.

22 KC: Sure.

23 GB: Nape Pass was—actually, I never saw tough traffic ever on Nape Pass from  
24 the whole time I was there. But it was really Steel Tiger around from there on down along  
25 the ocean border with North Vietnam, and it came as far—while I was there, it came as  
26 far as to what we called Cricket West. Well, Cricket West was where one side was the  
27 Royal Laotian Army, on the other side was the Pathet Lao and that was probably about  
28 six or seven miles inland often depending on the roadways. That was what divided Laos  
29 into two different factions. And of course, when we first got there they told us we didn't  
30 have our air force insignias on our airplane, we had these little slots where you put flags  
31 of Laos or Thailand, and our flight suits weren't allowed to have any rank. We had to

1     surrender all of our ID, leave it at home when we flew a mission. And I could remember  
2     flying a few missions in Bermuda shorts and combat boots, so I don't know whether—  
3     they knew we were Americans anyway, so.

4             KC: Yeah, it seems as if it's a very poor effort to try to hide the identity of the  
5     American pilots of American planes.

6             GB: You can hardly hide a big old white American.

7             KC: Yeah, I would think that you can't.

8             GB: And the North Vietnamese knew Air America was there, they knew we were  
9     there. Once we started flying those missions, they knew those airplanes weren't flown by  
10    anybody else but Americans.

11            KC: Right, I mean it was, it was really—

12            GB: And the radio traffic, they knew the American voices, I mean.

13            KC: You simply could not hide the American presence.

14            GB: That's right.

15            KC: Even if you were flying in Bermuda shorts.

16            GB: Yeah.

17            KC: It's still pretty obvious who it was. Alright, now I've got a few questions for  
18    you and the first one I want to ask has to do with the base there at NKP. When you arrive  
19    there, what did it look like? What was it like? Describe it for me.

20            GB: When I got there, well it was the end of the line. It was a pure steel plank  
21    runway. There was temporary—our first quarters when I got there was a tent. And we  
22    lived in the tent probably for, I don't know a short while, while another building was built  
23    where we at least didn't have to double bunk and we had a lot more open air circulating  
24    through the building. By the time I left, red horse had built more quarters. Only two guys  
25    had to live in a room, but there was no air conditioning for us. The only air conditioning  
26    came in June when the A-26s came in and they were night flyers, so they had to sleep  
27    during the day, so they brought trailers in that were—god, there goes my voice—air  
28    conditioned. I feel like I've swallowed a cricket.

29            KG: (Laughs) Speaking of crickets.

30            GB: Crickets (Chuckles). And the other strange part was when I got there, first  
31    guy that I flew with, we'd gone through training at Hurlburt together. The guys in the

1 unit, at least four or five of us had gone in training together there at Hurlburt, which was  
2 a strange coincidence because you wouldn't think that many would get together in one  
3 location, but we did.

4 KC: Yeah, it does sound very odd, especially the circumstances around it.

5 GB: I guess they were volunteers; I sure wasn't.

6 KC: (Chuckles) Yes, indeed. Well, what about the other physical facilities there?  
7 You know, for mess, for showers, latrine.

8 GB: I don't recall much about the mess hall. The food wasn't that great because  
9 most of it came out of cans. Because we were at the end of the line, we didn't get that.  
10 You didn't get much fresh type stuff until later on during the year. It just wasn't that  
11 palatable type food. Later on, we got a swimming pool built eventually and there was a  
12 theater; a small little BX (Base Exchange). I don't know what it sold outside of cigarettes  
13 and that was about it. The big deal was to try to get fresh fruit from Bangkok. If anybody  
14 was coming in—there was a courier coming in once a day and if you'd get somebody,  
15 one of the pilots on that to bring you fresh fruit or fresh vegetables, that was a big deal.

16 KC: I'm sure it was. So you were there at a very early time there at NKP and you  
17 watched it grow quite a bit.

18 GB: Right.

19 KC: Now, you say there were twelve of you who were there?

20 GB: There were twelve there when we got there, so we made sixteen and built up  
21 to—by the time I left there were about twenty-three, twenty-four guys there.

22 KC: Okay. So certainly at the very early stages of what was going on there.

23 GB: Right.

24 KC: Like you said, it actually became the 23<sup>rd</sup> TAS while you were there.

25 GB: Once it became the 23<sup>rd</sup> TAS they brought more airplanes and more pilots in.

26 KC: Okay now, take me through a typical day. From the time you wake up in the  
27 morning, I assume you're flying mostly day missions, is that correct?

28 GB: We flew day missions up until around December of '66. The day before, you  
29 know, we flew in pairs, of course because of the hostile environment we were in. Because  
30 if one of you went down, at least you had a high man who could supposedly pinpoint  
31 where you were shot down, I guess is what it might've—but that was supposed to be our



1 protection, having two pair of eyes and two separate airplanes, one flying cover for the  
2 other one. So we tried to keep a presence out there, you know, from dawn till dusk and  
3 your missions overlap, but in order to cover the whole area—everybody just about got  
4 scheduled everyday. Because I look at my flight log and I flew almost everyday that the  
5 weather would allow flying, of course. Typically flew three-hour missions, a lot of times  
6 up to four hours, sometimes four hours plus depending on what kind of mission it turned  
7 out to be. A lot of boarding time, a lot of just looking and watching, trying to catch traffic  
8 on the trail.

9 KC: Where would you get your orders? The tactical operations center?

10 GB: Yeah, we had our own little TAC (Tactical Air Command) center.

11 KC: And you'd show up in the morning, and they would give you or where you're  
12 going to go, the coordinates?

13 GB: Well, you'd know what the schedule was the night before, whether you got a  
14 ten o'clock take off or twelve o'clock, whatever. At first the steel tiger was not broken up  
15 into different areas, we didn't have a specific block assignment.

16 KC: Okay.

17 GB: So you went out there and you just sort of freelanced the area.

18 KC: Interesting. Now, did this change over time?

19 GB: Oh yeah. It evolved over time and it evolved to where it was blocked off into  
20 areas and you had a mission frag order to go to a certain area and do that area.

21 KC: Now, did this change occur while you were there?

22 GB: Oh yes.

23 KC: Okay. What were the differences, in terms of effectiveness, do you think  
24 between the earlier time when you say you were freelancing a little bit and when it  
25 became more structured when you had the coordinates in areas?

26 GB: I think it made a bit of difference. The area was small enough that you knew  
27 the whole area no matter what.

28 KC: Okay. Okay, so it wasn't that big of change.

29 GB: Not that big of change as far as I was concerned. Of course, I was one of the  
30 five or six rebels in the offset who didn't pay much attention to anything.

31 KC: Now why do you say that? Explain that to me.

1 GB: Well, I guess you'd have to say we did our thing. We took a lot more risks  
2 than some of the others. We didn't fly high; we got down there and mixed it up. And that  
3 was the only way you could find the traffic. I mean, that was the only way you could find  
4 a bulldozer, that's the only way you could find trucks under the trees and things like that.

5 KC: Okay. Well, that's a good point for you now to describe for me a typical  
6 mission over the trail. You know where the trail is, like you say, you have to get low,  
7 especially during these day missions because there's no life whatsoever and you're just  
8 trying to catch things moving as you see them through the canopy, through the jungle.

9 GB: Right.

10 KC: Describe for me a typical mission, a typical three-hour mission over the trail.

11 GB: Well, probably forty minutes to get out to the trail itself and once you got  
12 there you started flying back and forth. I always flew with the airplane a little bit out of  
13 trims, in a skid most of the time, which is not real comfortable flying, but at least the  
14 airplane is not going the direction it looks like its going.

15 KC: I'm going to interrupt you again here, Mr. Bremenkamp. Explain to the  
16 listener what you mean by the plane flying in a skid and why you would do that.

17 GB: Well, you trim the airplane up, so it flies one direction, but the nose points  
18 another direction. All you do is trim the controls and the rudder, so the airplane is out of  
19 trim. You'd set them all off center in the needle and ball. Not a comfortable way to fly,  
20 but if you flew in a straight level it gave the illusion of the airplane going one way, but it  
21 actually was moving another. Not that far, but enough to throw anybody on the ground  
22 off.

23 KC: Okay, this is for ground fire.

24 GB: But mainly, never flew straight and leveled for over fifteen seconds at the  
25 most, always trying to turn, always turning.

26 KC: Right. Or jinking is what I've heard a lot of people talk about.

27 GB: Jinking they call it. Well, I didn't jink the airplane, I just gently made turns,  
28 you know. As long as you're moving in a turn it's difficult to get hit.

29 KC: Right.

30 GB: The only times I got hit was when I was dumb and flew straight and leveled,  
31 and too low and too slow.

1 KC: Okay, I want to get to this in just a moment. You're flying in a skid as you  
2 say, you're looking for anything on the ground that's moving.

3 GB: Anything moving or anything different. Most of us got to the point you could  
4 pick out the new guns positions because of the disturbed foliage. I mean, no matter how  
5 well they camouflaged they could pick them out. And especially you'd see six little green  
6 dots that didn't look the same green as a surrounding area. You knew that there were six-  
7 gun pits down there loaded with guns and the rule was stay away from them, don't mess  
8 with them. But sometimes the temptation got too much and all you had to do was ask,  
9 especially the navy pilots, you'd ask them, "Do you want to tango with some guns?" And  
10 of course, most of them said, "Why not?"

11 KC: What kind of guns did you generally encounter? Were these .51s?

12 GB: First got there, encountered several .37 millimeter and my closest encounter  
13 was I was flying right over the treetops one day and came into a clearing and there was a  
14 .37 millimeter hooked to the back end of a truck with a Vietnamese laying on a gun barrel  
15 taking a sunbath. We threw the airplane around and the gun was gone. I mean, whoever  
16 the truck driver was drove off into the deeper jungle as quick as he could. But he was  
17 sitting out there in that clearing, I guess waiting for FACs to show up and the FAC  
18 showed up, but the FAC was too low and too close to him or waiting on an airstrike. A  
19 lot of times the .37s never shot at the FAC because a FAC is not high enough for the  
20 capabilities of the .37s.

21 KC: Sure.

22 GB: But the 23 millimeters, the 14-5s, and the 12-7s were pretty prevalent. Of  
23 course, we saw quite amount of 50 caliber or 14-5s. And of course, headquarters said  
24 there were no such things down there, but there were. They claim they weren't there, but  
25 they were there.

26 KC: I'm sure you would know whether or not they were there.

27 GB: They were there. We saw them.

28 KC: Okay, now you're flying, you're looking for anything different like you say.  
29 You're looking for guns that you can call in strikes on. Hopefully, these navy boys come  
30 in and pass them over and wipe them out. But you're also checking for traffic on the trail.

1 If you saw something moving, if you saw a truck, if you saw a bulldozer, if you saw  
2 people walking or bicycles down the trail, what would you do?

3 GB: Never saw bicycles, I saw people walking. If I saw a moving truck or  
4 whatever, fire a rocket and try to get them to stop and usually they wouldn't. Tried to find  
5 out where he was going. If a truck was moving, you weren't going to get him anyway  
6 because you weren't going to get an airstrike in time to kill the truck. But you tried to  
7 find places where they were hiding the trucks or where they were storing material and  
8 that was mainly the best part.

9 KC: Okay, how would you tell where these were, these truck parts or these little  
10 storage areas?

11 GB: Just by the way of disturbance in the area. You had to memorize the area.  
12 You had to know for one day to the next what the changes were down there on the  
13 ground.

14 KC: Okay.

15 GB: Or you could do like—after I first got there, I went out with one of my more  
16 adventurous buddies and we split up, which we weren't supposed to do. I was flying  
17 through this valley all of a sudden, I see a flash of light. Well, I knew what it was; it was  
18 a light off of a windshield. I went over to investigate it and found a convoy. As luck  
19 would have it, got a flight of B-57 yellow tail Canberra's and marked them and totaled  
20 where they were, and got a—searching around for both of them and they set several of  
21 them on fire and I had a nice little thing going. I had smoke columns rising in the sky and  
22 they say, "Wait a minute FAC, we got bombs." I say, "Okay, bomb them." You know  
23 what they did? They put all the fires out.

24 KC: Really?

25 GB: The bombs, and they had no smoke signals anymore.

26 KC: So the bombing robbed the fires of the oxygen, I guess?

27 GB: I guess, blew them out.

28 KC: I'll be darn.

29 GB: I counted seven or eight trucks. I gave them credit for killing seven trucks.  
30 That was only because they were laying, they were setting out—the one that I saw was  
31 slightly open, but it was covered with trees in camouflage, but for some reason they

1 didn't quite get the windshield completely covered. Now, if it hadn't been for that one  
2 little wink of light reflecting off that windshield and I happened to be in the right place  
3 and get that reflection, why, they'd have sat there, and I'd have never seen them.

4 KC: Hmm, and you said there were seven or eight trucks?

5 GB: Seven or eight. Well, I counted seven for sure. And those Canberra's got  
6 them. That was right after I got there. That was my first convoy.

7 KC: Is that right? Interesting.

8 GB: It was.

9 KC: Okay, now say you called in a successful strike on this convoy, either in this  
10 particular case or in general, what would you do next? You had extended your markers I  
11 assume, the white phosphorus.

12 GB: Right.

13 KC: Would you go back to NKP or would you still go around depending on the  
14 fuel you had, what would you do next?

15 GB: Well, that depends on fuel you had to stay out there because you had smoke  
16 grenades, you know, so you got smoke canisters. They weren't grenades; they were  
17 canisters, I guess you'd call them. So you flew your field supply, you know, your three  
18 and a half hours. Plus, you got your high man; he's still got his rockets.

19 KC: Right.

20 GB: But I never carried a rocket back, I don't think anybody ever really carried a  
21 rocket back. I know at one time we ran out of Willie Pete rockets and we had to use high  
22 explosives and that caused a lot more of us to get shot at more because we realized we  
23 didn't have marking rockets anymore. But then, once you get shot at, you'd drop a smoke  
24 canister on them and it kind of quiets them down, I guess.

25 KC: So you'd just open the window and drop it?

26 GB: Well, I flew with the windows open all the time.

27 KC: Okay, so hot, I would assume.

28 GB: It was hot, plus you could hear more.

29 KC: Okay, tell me about that. We always talk about the visual aspects of this,  
30 which are of course vital, but tell me about the things that—you flew with the windows

1 open so you could hear. What were you listening for? How would you listen? What sort  
2 of things would catch your attention this way?

3 GB: Well, something that goes, “Ta-ta-ta-ta-ta.”

4 KC: (Laughs) Well, that would be the obvious one, wouldn’t it?

5 GB: That’s obvious. It’s when you hear that you know it’s time to change altitude  
6 and everything else.

7 KC: Right. Would you be able to hear any sort of truck traffic on the trail?

8 GB: No.

9 KC: No.

10 GB: I never heard that, but the only thing I ever heard was, you know, ground  
11 fire.

12 KC: Okay. And of course, you get the ground fire. One, like you say, you would  
13 take evasive maneuvers, you’d move.

14 GB: Right. You need to stay away from that and look for that area and try to find  
15 a source of it because usually they’re so well camouflaged that you didn’t want to go  
16 looking too much for them. Like I said, you could locate them if you were high enough  
17 and the position was fairly new. Of course, if it got very old, they would move their guns.  
18 But the paper deal that they had was to set six 23 millimeters or six 14.5s in the—what  
19 we call “The Star of David” and they would set those up in different spots. They’d stay  
20 there until the foliage wouldn’t camouflage them anymore and then they’d pick back up,  
21 move somewhere else. The guys you didn’t want to run into, on the guns on the ground,  
22 were what most of us called a level nine gunners. You go five, seven, nine level and nine  
23 levels were the guys that were pretty experienced so they could hit you.

24 KC: Right. Now, you said that you were hit one time?

25 GB: I was hit with twenty-three one time.

26 KC: Now, tell me about that. Tell me about the whole mission, tell me where you  
27 were, tell me what you were trying to do, and tell me the whole story.

28 GB: The whole story. Well, I was flagged, the A-26 on their night mission had  
29 spotted a bulldozer between the Alpha check patrol point, which we haven’t talked about  
30 and the battle choke point. They said they saw it there and didn’t know where it went.

31 Well, my flag mission was, “Go find the bulldozer.” Well, that was no real big problem.

1 Got out there between the choke points and right on the trail I could see the bulldozer  
2 tracks. So I'd get right down there with it, follow the bulldozer tracks right into a big  
3 clump of jungle trees. And the only problem was the ceiling was about eleven hundred  
4 feet and I'm down below the ceiling, so instead of leaving the area, like a dummy, I  
5 turned back up the valley and just barely moving along and not paying much attention I  
6 see this Vietnamese standing on the side of the hill there and he had his arm up in the air  
7 and got closer to them. When he dropped his arm, the world exploded. I was so close to  
8 the guns that I think I was sitting right on their barrels. Of course, when they hit the  
9 airplane it sounded like a hailstorm and all I did was—I was already below eleven  
10 hundred feet, I dived down to the road itself and got away from them. I turned around and  
11 like a dummy didn't go home, continued the mission. Went on to a different area and  
12 located several trucks that had been stopped. I got back and turned in my report and the  
13 Ops officer said, "Well?" I said, "I think I need a decoration." He says, "Yeah, we'll  
14 decorate you with an article fifteen." He said, "After you've been hosed and got holes in  
15 your airplane, you don't fly, you come home." So after that, I said, "If I get clobbered  
16 like that again, I guess I'll turn around and come home."

17 KC: Now what was it they hit you with?

18 GB: It was .23 millimeter.

19 KC: A .23 millimeter, okay. So they peppered you pretty good then, huh?

20 GB: They did a pretty good job.

21 KC: But not bad enough obviously to affect the plane?

22 GB: No, it wasn't bad enough. It scared the heck out of me, but I could see the  
23 holes out there in the wing and there was nothing in the wings or in the strut, I had one on  
24 the strut too, but nothing that looked serious enough to me to have to go home, so.

25 KC: So what goes through your mind when you've been hit like this?

26 GB: What went? The first thing that went was how to evade it and I mean it was  
27 so automatic all I did was I threw everything, throttled the mixture and the prop. All three  
28 controls full forward and dive the airplane, avoid the road. Tried to get it as low as I  
29 could get.

30 KC: Why down instead of up?

31 GB: That airplane won't climb.

1 KC: Okay, okay.

2 GB: So I had enough altitude I could get down low and they couldn't track me.

3 KC: Then eventually worked your way back up and—

4 GB: And I worked my way out of that valley and back up right.

5 KC: And you said you were able to find some more trucks?

6 GB: We went on—down the trail was several trucks. It was one of them, they had

7 gotten—one of them had an accident and blocked the trail when it went through a little

8 cut and there were about six or seven trucks sitting there waiting to be—but I had to leave

9 them for some other FAC to get after.

10 KC: Because of the damage of the plane or fuel?

11 GB: Well, because of my time I took time out there on target.

12 KC: Okay, okay. So you come back in and—

13 GB: I'm at the ops office there.

14 KC: The ops officer says he'll decorate you with an article 15. When you came in

15 from one of these missions over the trail, what would you typically do when you got

16 back?

17 GB: Fly the pattern, land the airplane, go debrief and either go take a shower or

18 usually go take a shower. You're sweating like a Turk. I only went from 217 pounds

19 down to 165.

20 KC: So you weighed 217 when you went?

21 GB: I sure did. I was a big, fat guy. I didn't realize it, but I had backaches and

22 problems and I didn't realize it, but I had kidney stones and that caused a lot of my

23 weight loss.

24 KC: While you were there you had kidney stones?

25 GB: Yeah.

26 KC: Wow.

27 GB: Well, I didn't pass them until I started home, but wearing a flak vest and

28 sweating was a lot of it, I guess.

29 KC: So you would wear a flak vest while you were flying?



1 GB: I wore a flak vest all the time. I sat on one and sat on a piece of ceramic  
2 armor that I'd pulled off of the helicopter that crashed down in South Vietnam. With me,  
3 that was my personal under seat protection. Not that it would have done much good.

4 KC: It would make you feel better, I would guess.

5 GB: It would make me feel better, right.

6 KC: Now, when you get back to go through the debriefing, take me through a  
7 typical debriefing.

8 GB: All you did was say what you've seen, put down on the maps the position of  
9 any new guns, you know, because they were constantly moving the gun positions, and  
10 anything that had transpired out there during the night and that was about it.

11 KC: And then you say you're likely to go take a shower?

12 GB: I'd usually go take a shower. You're sweaty and stinky and of course the  
13 Thai hooch ladies washed your clothes. I think they washed them in the river water  
14 because once you sweat them up they stunk so bad you had to get out of them.

15 KC: What would you do after this? Would you go eat, go to bed, see a movie?

16 GB: Sit around, maybe head down to the pool, especially they had a swimming  
17 pool. I'd go down, lay around the pool, drink a couple beers; four or five.

18 KC: At NKP, did they have the nail hole open?

19 GB: No, that came years later.

20 KC: Year later? Okay.

21 GB: That probably was about '68, '69.

22 KC: Alright.

23 GB: That was when they became a younger group of pilots. See we were—  
24 looking at the ages of the pilots that we were, most of us were over thirty years old. Now,  
25 you look at the guys that did the nail, these were guys that were twenty-two, twenty-  
26 three years old, just out of flight training a lot of them. A lot of them just out of the Air  
27 Force Academy. It was a different attitude of what the mission was and everything.

28 KC: Sure, sure yeah.

29 GB: Got the nail hole and did all that kind of stuff.

30 KC: I was not aware of this generation difference.

31 GB: They did the (unintelligible) and all that, we never even heard of a party suit.

1 KC: Right. All be darn, I wasn't aware of this kind of generational difference  
2 here.

3 GB: Oh yeah, it was a generational difference from those early guys to probably  
4 '68 when the younger guys showing in—coming in. Most of us are captains and plus, you  
5 know.

6 KC: Right.

7 GB: Their whole group was, you know, lieutenants, 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenants, and there were  
8 more of them. Like I think at one time by the time they built at full strength they had over  
9 one hundred pilots there at NKP. OV-10 guys, I guess.

10 KC: So as the American build up continued, of course more and more of these  
11 forward air controllers are coming to NKP, flying these international missions, etcetera  
12 there. And of course, they're bringing them in younger because they need more of them.

13 GB: Oh, yeah before they run out of us old heads.

14 KC: Right.

15 GB: They run through us.

16 KC: Alright, so I've heard a number of other forward air controllers say that when  
17 their mission was over, that they spent a lot of time at the Op Center listening to radio  
18 traffic, to try to keep up on things. Now this was mostly with those who were in support  
19 of ground troops, but was this ever something that you did?

20 GB: No, not to my knowledge, not to my recollection. If there was a shoot down  
21 or something and you heard about it, you'd go try to listen to it but that was about it. I  
22 saw a rescue or something like that.

23 KC: Sure. And from your prospective it certainly changed everyday, but it wasn't  
24 something that was so massively fluid and dramatically changing with lives on the line,  
25 with soldiers on the ground, that sort of thing.

26 GB: No, it wasn't like that.

27 KC: Right, it was certainly—it would change no question about it, but it wouldn't  
28 change as dramatically.

29 GB: Not dramatically. The only thing, we got there and of course mostly the  
30 activity—by the time I got there they closed off ninety percent of the activity coming out  
31 of the Nape pass, which is north of Mu Gia. And of course, Mu Gia Pass of course has

1 the reputation of being one of the worst places. I've seen pictures of Mu Gia Pass later on  
2 where it looked like nothing but bomb craters. Well, when I first got there, I flew up Mu  
3 Gia Pass at low altitude and I was unimpressed and came back and said, "I just flew up  
4 this place and there were topple towers." And they said, "You dummy, you flew up Mu  
5 Gia Pass." I said, "What's the deal about that?" "That's the worst place you could go." It  
6 did become a little bit more hazardous in that first year, in '66, but we still could fly it  
7 without really getting shot at that much. But we bombed that area enough and they started  
8 building another road out further south called Route 912, and it was Ban Karai Pass and  
9 we watched as they built this road and it kept coming and moving, and every day they'd  
10 move two, or three hundred more yard meters on down the trail until they connected with  
11 the Route 911. This started in April and by the end of June, July, somewhere in there,  
12 they had connected the two roads and they had opened the new pass. So we had two  
13 passes to contend with then.

14 KC: You said that you were watching this slow but steady construction. Were you  
15 ever able to bring in any sort of—

16 GB: Oh, we could bomb the head of it and if we destroyed a bulldozer or other  
17 equipment, well the next day they had replacements there.

18 KC: What does this tell you about the approach that the North Vietnamese took to  
19 what they were doing there on the trail?

20 GB: Well, their attitude was "We were never going to stop them." I mean, they  
21 were willing to, you know, suffer the losses, but then we weren't going to stop their  
22 bringing supplies down the trail. Of course, in that environment—jungle environment, I  
23 don't know how much exposure, how much the trail got exposed later on and in less  
24 places, you could see the road. I got, you know, a lot of my slide show where you could  
25 see the trail, but at night they drove down the road and in the daytime, they came down  
26 and hid. If they moved in the daytime, it was when it wasn't very much movement at all.  
27 I mean, they put those trucks where they were in a central location. Every now and then  
28 we'd find, you know, some of them parked, but they were tenacious people and if you  
29 interdicted the road and blew a big crater in the road, within an hour they could have it  
30 repaired. They had enough people along there to repair it. Of course, in the rainy season,  
31 we practically closed it down, in '66 anyway and there was no traffic hardly at all. Most

1 of it was, you know, they would truck it as far as they could and then it was hand carried  
2 on back and you never saw these things. All you could see is footpads.

3 KC: Right.

4 GB: Well, we aren't going to interdict unless you found something that was  
5 strange and if that was a storage area or something like that. They knew what they were  
6 doing and after I did my tour I got—I read a book by Matthew Ridgeway and his  
7 statement was, "You're never going to interdict supplies in a jungle environment."  
8 You're never going to stop—the interdictions never going to stop the flow of supplies.  
9 You may get some of them, but you're not going to stop it." I mean, they improved  
10 things. Eventually they even had a pipeline for fuel and while we were there, they had to  
11 transport their fuel in fifty-five gallon drums. Of course, they made nice little targets so  
12 they'd make beautiful fires if you could find them, get you a nice big black cloud of  
13 smoke.

14 KC: Right.

15 GB: But they actually built pipelines later on and plus our claim was we bombed  
16 the cars so much that they were able to pave the road with limestone rubble that we'd  
17 ground up for them with our bombing.

18 KC: What did that do to you as—you know you've got overwhelming fire power,  
19 you know you've got all the technological advances, you know what you're doing, and  
20 you can see the damage you're inflicting. But like you said, during the rainy season  
21 where trucks can't go any further and you've bombed these things and destroyed these  
22 roads in places, but yet you know they're still going through. What does this do to you  
23 mentally?

24 GB: No problems as far as I was concerned. It was just the idea of, you know,  
25 getting the successes that we got. If just even got one a week or one every now and then,  
26 it was well worth it. We figured, "Well, we stopped that bunch of supplies getting there."

27 KC: Was there any frustration that set in that really—

28 GB: The only frustration was not getting any airpower because priority at that  
29 time was still rolling thunder, you know.

30 KC: Sure.

1 GB: Bombing North Vietnam. A lot of times you'd get diverted flights, and you  
2 wouldn't even have a target for them. We did set up—we formed a tactics committee,  
3 and we did set up choke points. We set up a choke point called Alpha and then a Bravo,  
4 Charlie, and a Delta by the time I left. And these were points where you best could put  
5 those kind of strikes. Where you know you could block the trail temporarily and cause  
6 transportation problems. They became places where you—if you didn't have any other  
7 target you put them in on what we call the choke points. Other places where you had to  
8 cross rivers or pretty good-sized streams; if you could get rid of their fords—they didn't  
9 build bridges after we bombed their bridges out, they built fords. They were just like an  
10 underwater bridge. The only way you knew they were there is you could see the rapids  
11 where the water was churned up. We didn't have laser grounded bombs at that time in  
12 '66.

13 KC: Now, were these B-52 strikes you're talking about?

14 GB: The only B-52 strike we had was in an area just outside of the Ban Karai  
15 Pass, in what was called Harley's Valley where we lost a FAC named Harley and his  
16 back seater died. Harley's Valley became an Arc Light target and the B-52s dropped  
17 bombs on that target and it was nothing but sort of an open area and all the North  
18 Vietnamese transporters did was drive around the bomb craters. I mean, cloud to ground  
19 up and they just drove around the craters and kept right on coming.

20 KC: Right.

21 GB: I have a pretty good slide of that Arc Light area that they used. That was the  
22 only Arc Light that we got. Before I got there—right after I got there the B-52s  
23 supposedly were going to lay a bunch of time to lay bombs up into Mu Gia Pass, they  
24 didn't hit the pass. They missed it, but they were delayed bombs, so they went off for  
25 about a week, but they weren't in Mu Gia Pass.

26 KC: Now you say they were delayed.

27 GB: Delayed fuses.

28 KC: Okay, so it wasn't like they had to have a certain amount of traffic or a  
29 certain amount of weight on? They were going on their own.

30 GB: I had one of the choke points one time when I was flying kind of low and  
31 unfortunately a five hundred pounder went off underneath me.

1 KC: What was that like?

2 GB: Right in the middle of the day, “Kaboom.” No airplanes around or nothing,  
3 just time delayed bomb went off. It wasn’t a truck in the way, it was me.

4 KC: Now what did that do to you?

5 GB: Far enough away it didn’t bother me.

6 KC: Okay, okay.

7 GB: On some of my slides you ought to see how close I was to some of the bombs  
8 that were dropped.

9 KC: How close, or how accurate I should say, were these Arc Light strikes? For  
10 this one?

11 GB: Well, the place where they put this Arc Light, they hit the trail. Like I said,  
12 they had an open area, and it was good aiming points, I guess. They were able to bomb  
13 the trail, but I mean it didn’t do any good because like I said, they just drove right on  
14 through that area. It slowed the traffic down, I guess you’d put it that way. But it wasn’t a  
15 point where it would stop at all.

16 KC: Now Mr. Bremenkamp, some of the materials you sent to us here several  
17 years ago or you submitted I think a couple of different stories for the FAC book, the  
18 FAC history book.

19 GB: Yeah.

20 KC: Now, you’ve got a number of different missions, a number of different  
21 actions that took place that seemed to me that they kind of stood out in your mind. Now,  
22 there are a number of them here but what I’d like to do is ask you, which of these  
23 missions, which of these activities that took place, what sort of things like this stand out  
24 in your mind? Are there any specific things, any specific missions or any specific  
25 instances in which you would like to relate to me today?

26 GB: Well, one was—the first trucks I found after I hadn’t been there, but probably  
27 a week and found those trucks in a convoy with the light reflecting off the windshield.  
28 From then on, I guess one of the better ones was—at first, we did orientation by not  
29 flying the new guy in a separate airplane but flying him with you in the front seat of your  
30 airplane. And after being shot at pretty bad one time, I decided no more orientation of  
31 new guy flying in the front seat of that O1, I’m flying in the front seat and he can fly in

1 the back. So after we talked it over, at the TAS we decided that a new guy would fly  
2 behind me and by himself and we'd be the bowman because he couldn't really get that  
3 much from flying in the backseat of the airplane anyway. So let him fly the high man and  
4 watch what went on from the high position.

5 KC: Okay.

6 GB: But I had a guy as a morning flight and they had a guy in the back seat and  
7 came on between the choke points and found a convoy of about at least fourteen trucks in  
8 a row, sitting in the roadway all covered with camouflage trees, just been cut down and  
9 looked like bundles of greenery sitting down there on the trail. Not too good a way of  
10 camouflaging them.

11 KC: Right.

12 GB: So that was one of the great discoveries that got hosed a couple times, but  
13 talking about strange thinking, you know strange thinking. When I first heard guns going  
14 chattering, I thought the guy in the backseat—I had his shoulder harness unfastened and  
15 it was beaten on the side of the airplane and it wasn't. I learned my lesson about listening  
16 to sounds and thinking the wrong thing.

17 KC: So what was it?

18 GB: I don't know. It was at least a 14.5 because it was pretty good chatter. One  
19 other time that mission turned out we destroyed all of those trucks.

20 KC: You got all fourteen of them.

21 GB: And one other time I found a truck that had rolled over and it was tearing  
22 fifty-five gallon drums of fuel and I got two Navy A-1s to come in and strafe it and then  
23 set the truck with all the barrels on fire. I had this beautiful fire going and I'm flying,  
24 circling the area and I happened to look down and right underneath me I had six, 23-  
25 millimeter gun positions tracking me. I mean, they were crew served weapons and here's  
26 these guys setting there, cranking these guns around while they were camouflaged pretty  
27 good. They're cranking these guns around and what the heck should I do? I just sort of  
28 ignored them and kept on turning and talking to Nav guys and said, "Would you like to  
29 attack some gun positions?" Of course, there was six-gun positions on this little hilltop  
30 and the guy says, "Yeah, we still got our fifty-caliber ammo left."

31 KC: So you come through and strike them.

1 GB: "Where are they?" I said, "They're on this hilltop over here." I said, "I don't  
2 want to mark them because then you won't have any surprise because then they'll know  
3 that I know they're there because they're waiting on you guys to leave so they can hose  
4 me, I think." I said, "They're on this hilltop." But I forgot to tell them when there were  
5 two hilltops one of them who had the camouflaged guns on, the other little hilltop had  
6 empty gun positions on. It says, "Oh, I got it." And he rolled in and he fired away at the  
7 empty gun position.

8 KC: Oh no.

9 GB: And I said, "No, it's the other hill." And they didn't shoot at him for some  
10 reason. And then number two they didn't shoot at him. I said, "It's the other hilltop and  
11 he says, "Okay." And he rolled in and they were connected. It would look like there was  
12 a red stream from the ground to the airplanes. I said—my only thought was I sentenced  
13 these two guys to be shot down out of the sky. I'm sending two guys here to get killed  
14 here today. I thought sure they were going to shoot them down, but they didn't, and they  
15 pulled off and number two says, "Where are they? I didn't see anything." And then lead  
16 says, "Well, you followed me in, didn't you?" he says, "Yeah, but I still didn't see them."  
17 I said, "Well number two you were on just like lead was." And they strafed probably  
18 about four runs of that and the silenced every gun.

19 KC: Really, under that kind of heavy fire?

20 GB: Under that kind of heavy fire and I don't know whether they got hit or not. I  
21 never did find out from them whether they were hit. They thought it was great and I  
22 thought, "Gee whiz, you guys are crazy." When I saw what was happening and I said, "I  
23 shouldn't have even told them where those guns were." I thought sure they'd get shot  
24 down. That's still a memorable story. Outside that most of the stories were, you know,  
25 finding an area—I remember finding caves or trucks sitting by the cave one time and had  
26 bombs dropped in there and the twenty, thirty minutes later the whole place would blow  
27 up. I also remember having trucks sitting on the side of the road and channeling 4105s  
28 strafe them and miss them all.

29 KC: Huh.

30 GB: That's frustrating, too.

31 KC: Yeah.



1 GB: And come out the next day and that truck's gone so it didn't even get one  
2 bullet to hit it. But every now and then I find a truck or two or three and if you were  
3 lucky enough you got a deferred airstrike to destroy it. I had one mission in Cricket West  
4 where I had—the A-26 had seen something, but anyway it was kind of a mountain inside  
5 this area where there were caves and then they decided that we need the FAC to come in  
6 here and show us where these cave openings are. So I got in there and I mark it for them  
7 and they dropped bombs all over that bunch of cars and things were pretty good.  
8 Anyway, they must have been pretty good because the whole mountain smoked for about  
9 three days.

10 KC: Wow.

11 GB: So whatever they hit, they set it on fire.

12 KC: Yeah, no intelligence on it, no idea what might have been in there.

13 GB: No intelligence or whatever, outside the fact that they had seen troop  
14 movement or ground movement or something. The A-26 had seen something in the area,  
15 and they wanted to strike. At that time, we had the go ahead to go after that area. It was  
16 not quite on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, they called it Cricket West. And the ambassador and  
17 the Laotians— well, the Laotians had approved that target area. P West is where—on the  
18 west side of the west where the Royal Laotians were and on the other side was the Pathet  
19 Lao. Of course, we supported Royal Laotians. It was an interesting tour, you know, a lot  
20 of flying time, a lot of sitting around, a lot of sunbathing by the pool.

21 KC: You mentioned the Pathet Lao, did you ever have to engage any of the Pathet  
22 Lao?

23 GB: I don't know if I did or not. I saw them, I put airstrikes on them.

24 KC: Tell me about one of these times you put air strikes on them.

25 GB: Well, these guys had boats on the river and their black pajamas and they saw  
26 me and they immediately piled into shore and get in a clump of trees and I got a flight of  
27 2104s that bombed and strafed them. I don't know whether we got them or not, but they  
28 were definitely the bad guys because as soon as they saw me, they ran for cover.

29 KC: About how many of them were there?

30 GB: Over ten.

31 KC: Over ten of them? And they're on the river then?

1 GB: Yeah, that was the only Pathet Lao outside of seeing—that was the only  
2 Pathet Lao I really saw. The rest of troops I ever saw were North Vietnamese. On one  
3 occasion, it was almost dark and just out of the way it might have dropped a couple  
4 smoke canisters out of the airplane along the trail and all of a sudden everything—I  
5 mean, there were little guys running everywhere. So I hollered at the airborne  
6 commander post and I said, “Get me some air.” They said, “Sorry FAC, you know what  
7 time of day it is.” I said, “Yeah, but you can get me an airstrike.” They said, “It’s the  
8 wrong time of day, we don’t have anything airborne.” And there must have been two or  
9 three hundred North Vietnamese moving down the trail toward South Vietnam.

10 KC: Oh, wow.

11 GB: And they all got to move on. But that’s the way it went sometimes, you  
12 know. Because you can’t get that air, because there’s nothing airborne and here you’ve  
13 got, you know, North Vietnamese troops that you’ve actually got out in the open. There’s  
14 no protection for them, their there.

15 KC: Now, you said that there was nothing air borne at the time. What time of day  
16 was this?

17 GB: It was almost dark.

18 KC: Almost dark, they had nothing in the air at that time?

19 GB: Nothing airborne to send to it.

20 KC: That must have been incredibly frustrating that it wasn’t coordinated in a  
21 way.

22 GB: It’s frustrating because you know they’re going to keep on going, they are  
23 going down the tree to our guys. And I guess that was our main motivation. We knew  
24 that every truck we destroyed might save a nineteen-year old’s butt down south.

25 KC: Right.

26 GB: It was a whole big thing to interdict and get as much of that stuff off the trail  
27 as you could.

28 KC: I’ve never heard anyone say that before, that they had nothing—obviously  
29 I’ve heard them say that they had nothing to divert to that, to a particular area.

30 GB: And nothing that could be diverted. That was frustrating. Now, one other  
31 evening I found about the same amount of troops moving down and got one flight

1 diverted of 104s, four of them, with four or five hundred pounders a piece and we did put  
2 airstrikes in on them. But how effective it was by the time it was over, you couldn't tell  
3 how much damage we'd done to the troops because it was dark by the time it got through  
4 bombing the troops right along the side of the trail. But as soon as they saw us, you  
5 know, they'd get into the jungle as quick as they can off the trail, but I don't know how  
6 many of those we really hurt. But that was the only air strike we could get, but at least it  
7 was better than the first time that I encountered, you know, troops on the ground; that  
8 many of them anyway, moving down that road unscathed.

9 KC: Were you involved in any night missions over the trail?

10 GB: That was as close as I came to night missions other than flying late. No, the  
11 night missions started in December and right around December 1<sup>st</sup> and I was due to rotate  
12 out on December the 20<sup>th</sup> or something like that and the Ops officer says, "Glenn, you're  
13 not flying a night mission because we want you to go home." And I said, "Wait a  
14 minute." I said, "I've been here all this time, I want to fly." And he says, "You're not  
15 going to fly a night mission." He says, "I won't put you on one." So I didn't get to fly a  
16 night mission, but we initiated the night flying then with the starlight scopes. And you  
17 know, a couple of my good buddies got to fly it, fly the mission. And they did good, they  
18 could spot the trucks you know, but hitting them and getting a rendezvous with the air  
19 power and all that. I cannot recall how much effectiveness there was because checking  
20 the next day you never found, you know, the truck kills that they thought they might have  
21 gotten or at least they slowed the traffic down. If nothing else, they may have stopped  
22 some of them that we found out on the road, you know you find a truck isolated or one of  
23 the truck drivers got panicked and rolled it over, ran into a tree or something. But that  
24 was not start of the night missions, that was in December of '66. That was the start of  
25 night flying.

26 KC: Okay.

27 GB: You flew a single O1 out there, you know, right in the front seat and the guy  
28 in the back seat had the starlight scope. I can't remember if they were carrying a flare or  
29 not. I'm not too sure, but they tried to locate them and then get the A-26s to, you know  
30 interdict them. At that time, all we had the A-26s, we didn't have the T-28s. The T-28s  
31 came shortly after I left there, they flew some night missions.

1 KC: Now, when you would return back—we've talked about some of the more  
2 routine things you would do. You'd debrief and go have some beers, take a shower. What  
3 about other things you would do in your off time? I'm thinking specifically here of letters  
4 home, of R&R (Rest and Recuperation) leave, anything like that. What other sort of  
5 things were you doing?

6 GB: Well, we got to go to Bangkok once a month after we'd been there about—  
7 had there been an operation I guess April, May, June, somewhere in there, decided that if  
8 you flew two missions the day before you could get the day off to fly to Bangkok on the  
9 courier. You got to spend two nights, come back and fly one or two missions. Anyway,  
10 you had to get enough sorted in, in order to cover your time off.

11 KC: Sure.

12 GB: I don't recall too much about them. Go to Bangkok that way you've got good  
13 food, you have an air-conditioned room; you got to sleep all day and all night. Whatever  
14 you wanted to do and do a little shopping.

15 KC: Did you do any site seeing while you were in Bangkok?

16 GB: I rode on the river tour, through the river tour and go around to the different,  
17 what do you call them—pagodas and the different palaces and stuff that they had. You  
18 know, Oriental things they had. Temples and places like that. We'd take little tours.

19 KC: Did you take pictures?

20 GB: Pictures, I don't have too many pictures of off-duty. The only one's that I  
21 got, I only found two slides of was the Bob Hope Show that we had there in December  
22 before I left. Bob Hope's opening remarks were, he says, "Guys, this place is so secret,  
23 we had to land backwards today."

24 KC: Now, was he at NKP, he come in NKP?

25 GB: Yeah, he came in there with an entourage.

26 KC: Well, tell me about that show. You got to see Bob Hope, tell me about that.

27 GB: It was a good show. Joy Heatherton, I remember was one of the girls he had;  
28 young ladies or whatever. I don't know who else he had on the show. One of his sidekick  
29 guys, he got up there on the stage and did about an hour-long show. I don't recall too  
30 much of it though.

31 KC: Did all of you FACs get to go to the show?

1 GB: At least the two guys that were out flying they didn't get the show. Probably  
2 about four guys missed it because they had to be out there during the daytime flying.

3 KC: Okay.

4 GB: That was the entertainment we had. Like I said, we had a theater. I think I sat  
5 through one whole complete movie. And lo and behold one of the stars in it was Jane  
6 Fonda. I mean, it was a western comedy, and I can't remember the title of it. But I said,  
7 "Good gosh, I'll never watch that movie again." After Jane had made her trip to Hanoi,  
8 we found out about that.

9 KC: Now, what was your opinion of all that?

10 GB: Of Jane Fonda?

11 KC: Of her political stance and her actions, her activities. I know it's kind of a  
12 stereotype of everybody's reaction, but—

13 GB: I like the posters. You know, Jane call home, call Hanoi—1-800-HANOI.  
14 The others that say F-Jane Fonda, you know there's no call for her and Tom Hayden  
15 doing what they did at all. As far as you know any of the pilots that ever flew there, I  
16 know our attitude toward her. I mean, she really shouldn't be an American citizen  
17 anymore. Especially the top 100 women, you know, being honored and whatever. Just,  
18 she just, her apology never was sincere enough to really be an apology, I don't think. And  
19 I know all the FACs have that opinion of her and how she was. Initially '66,'67 there  
20 wasn't that much opposition in the United States about the war in Vietnam. It's all of a  
21 sudden when the hippie crowd decided that "Hey, we're going to be peace nicks and we  
22 don't have any business there." The business there wasn't the war between the north or  
23 the south Vietnamese. Business there was, as far as I could see was between Russia and  
24 the United States. It was a proving ground for what they thought they could accomplish  
25 in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world. I think that both of us found out that fighting  
26 a surrogate war just wasn't the way to do it and neither country had the deal that they  
27 were going to attack each other, you know. So it turned into a big ball of wax that just  
28 really didn't do anything except cause people a lot of hardship. We killed a lot of North  
29 Vietnamese and a lot of South Vietnamese. A lot of innocent suffered on the count of it.

30 KC: Absolutely.

1 GB: I don't know if it proved anything at all. Of course, some of our police  
2 actions I think were justified and everything, but still have, you know, understand why  
3 does the United States want to be the policeman of the world? Especially when we don't  
4 get too much support from the rest of the world that we think we need to go help police  
5 and I don't understand that.

6 KC: I'm sorry, you had mentioned the anti-war movement. Of course, there's  
7 anti-war sentiment in the United States in 1965, 1966 when you're over there, but of  
8 course it doesn't reach its head until a few years later.

9 GB: Right, later.

10 KC: How aware were you while you were in Vietnam then of course and then at  
11 NKP, of the growing anti-war sentiment in the United States? How much were you  
12 learning about what was going on back home?

13 GB: I don't think we knew a thing about what was going on at all. Because it just  
14 never got that far, you know and nobody mentioned and talked about what was going on  
15 in the States at all, really.

16 KC: Yeah. What about in your letters home? I assume that you wrote letters  
17 home.

18 GB: Oh, letters home I had to be careful because we were told we weren't to  
19 divulge what our mission was.

20 KC: Sure.

21 GB: Outside of broad hints to momma that I wasn't where I originally was, and I  
22 think she read between the lines and was able to figure out from my descriptive pros that  
23 I wasn't in South Vietnam anymore. I know she knew because some of the things that  
24 happened made the national news, even though we were flying on the Ho Chi Minh trail  
25 in secret. I remember one of the guys heard that one of his flight episodes had made the  
26 news back in the States and we had what we called a gun side on our O1. It was a medal  
27 rod sticking straight up and actually a 23-millimeter hit that rod and bent it double. He  
28 said it shook the whole airplane it vibrated so much. Anyway, somehow or another, the  
29 press somehow got a hold of that story. How it leaked out we never did know. But he said  
30 his wife actually wrote him back and says, "When did that happen, and do you know  
31 what it was or whatever." It was completely you know, undercover that what we were

1 doing, but nobody really knew what our mission was. It wasn't declassified what, until  
2 '91 or something like that. So the story never got added except for the tales that got told  
3 around the bar.

4 KC: Now, you said you wrote letters home, but how often would you write home?

5 GB: I wasn't one of these everyday letter writers. I probably wrote once or twice a  
6 week, probably twice a week.

7 KC: How often did your family write back?

8 GB: Not that often, maybe the same amount, I don't know. I never kept the  
9 letters, and momma never kept the letters I sent home, so I don't have a count. I do know  
10 I made one phone call home through the MARS (Military Auxiliary Radio Systems)  
11 systems.

12 KC: Right.

13 GB: And that's about it. The only contacts I had at home.

14 KC: So did you get any leave, a two week leave?

15 GB: No, I never got a leave. The only time off, I got I got on a C-130 and flew to  
16 Okinawa and spent two nights in Okinawa, got on the same airplane and flew back to  
17 NKP.

18 KC: What'd you do when you were in Okinawa?

19 GB: I went to the officer's club, ate good food and drank good beer, wine. That  
20 was it. I did go shopping at the BX and did the typical, you know, Southeast Asia Tour  
21 guides of what we were doing. I bought a tape recorder and a slide projector and that was  
22 it.

23 KC: I'll be darned. Kind of the typical tourist.

24 GB: I had to have the tape recorder and the speakers, that's what it was. Back in  
25 those days the tapes were the big thing, you know. So I played tapes and had it—two of  
26 us were in the room, we had set the tape recorder up and the speakers up and played  
27 music and a reel to reel tapes, you know.

28 KC: This was after the base there at NKP had been built up, you had buildings.

29 GB: They had come in and built us some better hooches than what we originally  
30 had. We were out of the communal living business.

31 KC: Right, right.

1 GB: I mean, at one time the first twenty of us were all in a big old tent. And we  
2 had to double bunk, you know, one above the other. That's how crowded that little space  
3 was. And then they moved us into an open bay area type building where we all had an  
4 individual bunk on the ground, side by side. That was almost—the first was like being in  
5 basic training and the second was, I don't know what you would call it. But of course, our  
6 officers club consisted of a tiny little barn with about enough room for ten or twelve  
7 people at a time in the place, a little old hooch. I remember drinks were ten cents a piece,  
8 something like that.

9 KC: Wow.

10 GB: I think they were a dime a piece.

11 KC: And speaking with other forward air controllers, one of the things that stands  
12 out to me is the personalities, the people. FACs tended to be very independent. Like you  
13 said, you had this kind of rebellious streak in you and a few others. What was the  
14 relationship like between all of the forward air controllers? Can you try to explain that to  
15 me, the day-to-day relationship?

16 GB: Our relationship was—of course I got to know, you know I lost two guys out  
17 of my training class down in Hurlburt. After the second one was shot down and not  
18 recovered, I learned not to get too close to anybody because you didn't know who was  
19 going to be next. I mean, it was protect each other and when we were flying two man  
20 teams, work together and that was our whole big deal, concern. We were fortunate in  
21 flying over the trail, there was no real restriction on us outside of, you know staying  
22 within the rules of engagement fifteen hundred feet or five hundred feet off the trail or  
23 whatever. And if you found something, you're more than likely going to get air support  
24 hopefully. When I was in South Vietnam, you know, you were your own boss. I mean, it  
25 was your province, and you flew on your own schedule and flew your own flight plan  
26 and sometimes you went where you were told to go because you had to deliver messages  
27 or stuff like that, work with an operation. But the FAC was an independent person. He  
28 was the only guy I could tell fighter pilots where to go and what to do.

29 KC: And they had to listen.

30 GB: And they had to listen to you. The FAC was a good learning tool especially  
31 for younger officers. I'm sure younger air force officers, I mean it taught them



1 independence and taught you how to think. Because you were the on-scene commander, I  
2 mean it was your responsibility and your job.

3 KC: Well, why don't we take a break there for today, Mr. Bremenkamp?

4 GB: Okay.

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**Interview with Glenn Bremenkamp**

**Session [3] of [3]**

**Date August 25, 2009**

1           Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager continuing an Oral History Interview with Mr.  
2           Glenn Bremenkamp. Today is 25 August 2009. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr.  
3           Bremenkamp is joining us by telephone from his home in Biloxi, Mississippi. Mr.  
4           Bremenkamp, we had talked about how we covered most of your time in Vietnam pretty  
5           thoroughly and eventually we need to start moving you out of Vietnam towards the  
6           United States. But you mentioned that you might want to relate some of the more foolish  
7           things that either you did or that you saw during your time there in Vietnam. Do you have  
8           anything in particular that stands out?

9           Glen Bremenkamp: Well, used to play games with the truck drivers. If you caught  
10          a truck and didn't have any way of stopping, you started using M-16 on him rather than  
11          use up your rockets. A lot of times truck drivers would jump out of their vehicles and  
12          abandon them. They'd leave them on the road and run for cover. One unusual event that I  
13          recall was right after the wet season while they had road gang crews repairing the trail,  
14          getting ready so the trucks could make it. I came on a group of seven people one day that  
15          were filling in ruts I guess, and I guess mud holes, whatever you want—maybe bomb  
16          craters. Anyway, the seven all went running for a truck that was just going. I thought,  
17          well, they're running for shelter, but what they were running for was AK-47s.

18          KC: Uh-oh.

19          GB: So we had a running gun battle, their seven AK-47s against my one M-16.

20          KC: I don't like those odds.

21          GB: Well, they never hit me, but the reason I could keep them—I had reached a  
22          point where I was down to one tracer every five rounds. So at least I could tell where I  
23          was semi-shooting and a couple of them running up the trail and they would run for cover  
24          and then I'd flush them out with a few rounds. Finally, I got an airstrike and tried to tell  
25          where they were, but wasn't too sure whether they had hidden, but had two 105's without  
26          bombs in a general area that did get cut on the road again, so it gave them some more  
27          work to do.

28          KC: Even if they didn't hit—

1 GB: Even if it didn't even find them at all. I'm not too sure we did any good  
2 there.

3 KC: How often would you do something like this?

4 GB: Too often. I used to get down at low level and they had built watch towers  
5 along the trail. They had manned watch towers and some of the open areas to make sure  
6 there weren't any gun positions around, get down, and fire a few rounds of the guys of  
7 the watch tower. Of course, they were shooting right back at you. Nobody hit anybody  
8 that I know of. There were just foolish things like that. You could hear them shooting at  
9 you and you could see the guys. It was just one of those games, I guess, that we played.

10 KC: I guess they'd be shooting at you with small arms, AK-47? Things like that.

11 GB: Their chances of getting you are about the same as your chances of hitting  
12 them, you know.

13 KC: So you would fire your M-16 out of the open window of the O-1 while you  
14 were flying along?

15 GB: Oh yeah, I shot many, many, many rounds. In fact, I wouldn't be able to tell  
16 you how many thousand rounds I did shoot because I carried an ample supply with me.

17 KC: Now why did you decide to do this?

18 GB: I brought a whole box of clips with me; full ammunition can full of clips. I  
19 didn't have any problem having ammunition from my M-16.

20 KC: Did other pilots do this as well?

21 GB: I don't know, I might have been one of four or five that did something like  
22 that. I'm not too sure that we all didn't do the same thing. Some didn't want to play  
23 combat anyway. I mean, some of them were very cautious about what they were doing.

24 KC: Why do you think you did it?

25 GB: I didn't know any better. I was invincible. I mean, it had to be invincible.

26 KC: When you went back to the base at night, when you debriefed, would you  
27 mention this to any of your superiors about what you had done? Or did they discourage it  
28 or just let it go?

29 GB: I didn't tell anybody about it. You don't get carried away.

30 KC: Well, what other sort of things did you see in this thing?

1 GB: Well, I killed the truck one day when I couldn't get an airstrike. The truck at  
2 one of our choke points had rolled over and was laying on it's side and it had no damage  
3 to it, but since it was one of the choke point areas—it's a pretty clean area so I got right  
4 down on level and probably only fifteen, twenty feet above the ground and holding in on  
5 him. I wanted to make sure I got close enough with the airplane to hit the truck. Well, I  
6 got so close that when the white phosphorus went off, I flew right through the white  
7 phosphorus smoke. So that meant I was pretty close.

8 KC: Wow.

9 GB: But I did hit the truck, so.

10 KC: And you said it destroyed the truck right there.

11 GB: Right there, but the scary part was in fact I couldn't pull up fast enough to  
12 avoid the smoke from the white phosphorous rockets.

13 KC: It must have been a pretty wide area that was cleared.

14 GB: It was a good enough area and open to get at it. I learned my lesson about  
15 getting down too close to the ground because a lot of our strike areas where you'd bomb  
16 so much there were a lot of snags, big old jungle trees still sticking up there one hundred  
17 and fifty, two hundred feet in the air, but you couldn't see until you got right down there  
18 with them. Once you got down there with them it kind of scared me a little bit. Well, this  
19 is not the right place to be. Things like that, learn to stay away from Harley's Valley; that  
20 was not one of the places to go.

21 KC: You mention Harley's Valley the last time we spoke. Tell me a little bit more  
22 about this. You mention that it was named after a FAC that was killed.

23 GB: Well, Lee Harley was one of my classmates in Hurlbert when we went  
24 through training. When I got the NKP, well there he were along with a couple of the  
25 other guys that went through Hurlburt with me. Lee had a combat controller named  
26 Andrew Guillet—I can't pronounce French pronunciation, with him and he was shot  
27 down just above a place that's called Ban Laboy Crossing, between Ban Laboy Crossing  
28 and Ban Karai Pass, which came out of North Vietnam on route 912. He was shot down  
29 over this valley area. We named the valley Harley's valley. Well, it turned out to be  
30 subsequently one of the most highly defended areas along the trail. It was also an Arc  
31 Light point too because on one end of it the B-52s dropped all their weapons on this one

1 segment of the road, but all they did was crater it up and powder it up and then you get  
2 out there the next morning and here'd be truck tracks weaving around the bomb craters.  
3 We didn't do much about stopping them. Every now and then they might kill a truck, but  
4 it didn't interdict them that much. But that's how the valley got its name. There were a  
5 few other losses while I was there. I might as well go down them.

6 KC: Please, please.

7 GB: Okay, the first FAC killed out of NKP before we were the 24<sup>th</sup> TAS was Karl  
8 Worst. He was killed 3/2/66 in midair with a 105. And he was a classmate of mine at  
9 Hurlburt. Next was Joe Brown, he was in a class at Hurlburt right behind me. He was  
10 shot down at Mu Gia Pass, 4/19/66. After that was Lee Harley and his back seater Andre  
11 Guillet, they were shot down 5/18/66. The next was a classmate of some friends of mine;  
12 William P. Smith was shot down 7/23/66 at one of the choke points. I think it was choke  
13 point Charlie. After that the next one was—right after I left, one of the guys that I'd  
14 checked out because I'd become an IP (Instructor Pilot) during my ten year there, George  
15 Menges was shot down January 2<sup>nd</sup> of '67. I left there December 24<sup>th</sup> of '66. Also,  
16 another classmate went through pilot training, his name was Charlie Claxton and he was  
17 flying the EB-66, was shot down 12/29/67 up over North Vietnam. A guy that flew with  
18 me, a 105 pilot named Karl Richter was killed on his 198<sup>th</sup> mission. He volunteered for a  
19 second hundred mission tour. He was killed—the objection he hit, he landed on the  
20 (unintelligible) and subsequently died from injuries received on his landing. He was shot  
21 down 7/28/67. A guy that worked for me after I got back in the United States and was in  
22 my tech section, William Commodore Wood was an F-4 pilot, shot down October 4<sup>th</sup>,  
23 1972. I think that just about runs down my list. Oh, I skipped Tom Wolfe. Tom Wolfe  
24 was a guy that came to us at the 23<sup>rd</sup> from A-1. We were checking him out as a forward  
25 air controller so he could go back and fly support of either the marines or the army back  
26 in Vietnam and he was killed in an A-26. A-26s came here in June of '66 and there were  
27 three of us that were picked to fly daytime orientation missions with them. As myself,  
28 Tom Wolfe, and Dick Strong. I think the third day out or something like that the aircraft  
29 Tom Wolfe was with, they decided they would take on a gun position up in Harley's  
30 Valley and ended up the A-26 was shot down with all three crew members killed, that  
31 was 6/28/66. And the real strange thing, in 7/27/69 Captain Ed Miskowski was a B-52

1 navigator. Also, was the god father of my youngest son, was killed flying B-52s out of  
2 Guam. That just about runs down all of the guys that I was close to, that I associated  
3 with. Either flew with or was very close to. I guess I flew with every one of them except  
4 Charlie Claxton and the rest of them all probably flew in the same aircraft at one time or  
5 another.

6 KC: What does that do to you Mr. Bremenkamp?

7 GB: Well, you just sort of remember the anniversaries or the dates they were shot  
8 down. Actually, we did have one guy that couldn't handle the fact that his wingman was  
9 shot down and subsequently ended up back in the States grounded, but he just couldn't  
10 get over the fact that it was dangerous out there. It's dangerous out there.

11 KC: What do you go through at the time when you lose these friends?

12 GB: At the time the big thing is you wonder, you know, did they survive? Is there  
13 any way of rescue? And that kind of thing. But outside that it's just, hey it's one of those  
14 things that happened. I guess some people handle it differently, but I was what they call  
15 casualty officer for one of the guys that was bunking right beside me. You know, you get  
16 all these special effects together and box them up and send them home. But I guess some  
17 people can live with the combat losses, other people, you know, it affects quite severely, I  
18 guess.

19 KC: Do you—

20 GB: What I figured was don't get too close to anybody, you know.

21 KC: Right.

22 GB: Don't get too friendly.

23 KC: Well, even if you can keep this kind of distance between you and them, do  
24 you have time or did you pause to reflect on what happened to them and what could  
25 happen to you on your next mission or before your next mission?

26 GB: I never worried about the next mission. That was the one thing that never  
27 bothered me. The next mission was something to look forward to because you knew you  
28 were going to be able to do something, no matter what. Or I did anyway, I knew I was  
29 invincible, and the next mission was a chance to do something.

30 KC: Were you ever called in for SAR, for search and rescue on any of these?

1 GB: Well, I aided when Brown was shot down, but by the time I got to the scene  
2 of the thing, an A-1 was shot down and an on-scene commander called the rescue off and  
3 there was no rescue anyway because the airplane was crashed. That was Joe Brown, and  
4 he was recovered I believe—somewhere in the nineties I believe they finally were able to  
5 figure out where his remains were, where his aircraft was and got him out of that area.  
6 That was a joint—

7 KG: The JPAC (Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command), I believe.

8 GB: TAS force something, like full accounting or whatever it was.

9 KC: Yes, sir.

10 GB: Out of Hawaii. He was recovered. I think he's the only one of the FACs that  
11 I know while I was there that has been repatriated back to home. The rest of them, the  
12 North Vietnamese buried them, can't remember where they buried them, or they didn't  
13 ever know what they did with them.

14 KC: Right.

15 GB: A couple of them their bodies were never found because the midair and stuff  
16 like that and some of the scenes—I guess full accounting is just—I did a thing back in  
17 about '90 or '91, worked real close with joint task force and gave them all the flights that I  
18 knew, the coordinates and all that. They did a pretty good job of locating. They found one  
19 A-1 pilot and one of those gun ship AC-47 crews, they found them. I think that's about  
20 the only one that they got out of the areas that I identified. But that's as close as I got to a  
21 SAR. I didn't ever work with full blown SAR. I got a tail end of one and that was about  
22 it. It was all over and all I had to do—I was going to monitor destruction of one of the  
23 helicopters that was unable to continue the mission. They had abandoned it and we had to  
24 destroy it to keep anything—guns and stuff I guess from falling into their hands. I don't  
25 think the helicopter was ever destroyed.

26 KC: Right.

27 GB: That's about as close as I came to a SAR. Never got to one, real one.

28 KC: Right. You mentioned briefly that you were also an IP at one time there  
29 while you were at NKP.

30 GB: Well, I became an instructor pilot. Would give the guys a couple rides in the  
31 airplane in the local area to get a feel of landing on the PSP (Pierced Steel Planking) and

1 then I would put them in the backseat and take them for one mission out of what they  
2 called orientation. The next flight they were in another airplane by themselves, flying  
3 high cover before somebody.

4 KC: Right.

5 GB: And that was it. But we found out you did need to take guys out there. Like  
6 when we first got there, I mean, my orientation was, "Here's your airplane, follow me." It  
7 took me a week to figure out where I was.

8 KC: Right, let alone all the things necessary to pursue your mission.

9 GB: It took awhile to learn what to look for out there because it wasn't that easy  
10 to discern gun positions or where the trucks were or where the trail went, so it took a  
11 while.

12 KC: What sort of things would you try to show the incoming FACs?

13 GB: I'll try and show them an abandoned guns position, try to show them active  
14 gun positions. You'd always tell that the gun position is new because the camouflage  
15 used—the bushes they used were disturbed, so they were a little bit different than what it  
16 normally was. See, the gun and the gun position we contended with were in the Star of  
17 David configuration.

18 KC: Right.

19 GB: It'd be six-gun pits in a circle and they'd either have a 14-5 or 23 millimeters  
20 in them. The neat ones were the 23 millimeters, where they had a gun crew and they  
21 could crank those boogers down, but I watched them crank them around and they were  
22 good, stay away from them. Let the fast movers go after them. Once you found where a  
23 gun was, stay away from it.

24 KC: Right, right. Well, as you are working your way through your time here at  
25 NKP, you've flown all these missions over the trail. You're becoming very, very good I  
26 would guess at what you're doing. You're also serving as an instructor pilot for the new  
27 FACs, but you're also running down on your time in country. Did you pay much  
28 attention to that, how much time you had left? Was it a short time?

29 GB: No, I wanted to fly and especially when it came time as my last month there  
30 that we started the night missions, and we had a big fuss about me not getting to fly the  
31 night mission. I didn't get to because they said. "We don't want to keep you here until



1 you can go home.” And they didn’t even tell me what my last mission was and when I  
2 got back, they told me that was it.

3 KC: So do you remember your last mission?

4 GB: Sort of, didn’t do much of anything. Just fly around in circles, I guess. Out on  
5 the trail, but that’s about all I remember about it.

6 KC: Now this would have been, what, December of ’66?

7 GB: That was in December, about middle of December.

8 KC: Middle of December of ’66.

9 GB: Yeah, December of ’66. And then I was supposed to go to Bangkok and  
10 catch an airplane on the 24<sup>th</sup> of December, out of Bangkok and back home. I would get  
11 home the same day I left, you know, because of the time zone. So I’d get home on  
12 Christmas Eve. Well, it turned out I didn’t because I went to a terminal and ended up in  
13 severe pain and finally this master sergeant said, “Major, I’m calling an ambulance.”  
14 They hauled me over to the air force side of the airport where a doctor came along and  
15 says, “Well, I guess we’re going to keep you here because we think you’re passing a  
16 kidney stone.” And they put me in the army field hospital and sure enough I passed a  
17 kidney stone. So I got home the day after Christmas because I had to spend an overnight  
18 at the army field hospital passing a kidney stone.

19 KC: So it was just overnight then?

20 GB: It was just an overnighter.

21 KC: Well, I say just overnight.

22 GB: You’d be kind of weak because I had about four more episodes, I guess after  
23 I got back home from ’66 on through about 1990. Kidney stones are not much fun.

24 KC: Yeah, I said just an overnight, but just overnight with a kidney stone must  
25 have seemed like a month.

26 GB: Until they give you that shot it’s like forever.

27 KC: How would you rate your care there, by the way?

28 GB: The army hospital, they’re great, I mean great. By the time I got there they  
29 were giving me a morphine shot out at the airport and by the time I got there these two  
30 corpsmen practically had to carry me out of the ambulance to a bed and get me in a bed.  
31 They were great.

1 KC: But you were good enough to go after that.

2 GB: Absolutely. The doctor said, “Go on, go back and book your flight and get  
3 out of here.” So that’s what I did.

4 KC: And where did you fly out of again?

5 GB: Out of Bangkok.

6 KC: Out of Bangkok. Now, did you fly up to say, Okinawa, did you fly to Japan  
7 on the way out?

8 GB: I think we ended up going to the Philippines.

9 KC: Okay.

10 GB: And then refueling in the Philippines and then Hawaii, and then this time I  
11 think I landed in Los Angeles, if I remember right.

12 KC: Is that right?

13 GB: And I caught a commercial all the rest of the way home.

14 KC: Okay. Well, one of the questions I always ask veterans upon their return  
15 home is what was it like when you reached California? What was the atmosphere like?  
16 What was the mood like?

17 GB: Nobody even knew I was there.

18 KC: Is that right?

19 GB: I got my flight and I got home and the only people that met me when I got  
20 home was momma and three kids. My daughter didn’t even want to have nothing to do—  
21 little old daughter was ten years old, and she didn’t want to have nothing to do with me  
22 for about a week.

23 KC: Why is that?

24 GB: I guess she didn’t know who her daddy was anymore. Of course, like I said,  
25 I’d gone from about 217 pounds down to about 170, so I was quite different.

26 KC: Now this was back in North Carolina?

27 GB: That was in North Carolina, yeah. My wife had stayed while I was on my  
28 tour.

29 KC: What was that reunion like when they met you there in North Carolina?

1 GB: That was great. For the boys it was all right, but for my daughter she was a  
2 little shy about it. But that was it, getting back. That was '67, they still you know, the big  
3 old protesters still hadn't—weren't out there doing their thing.

4 KC: Right, it hadn't reached that degree at this point yet. What did you hope to do  
5 once you got back? Obviously, you're going to stay in the air force. What did you hope to  
6 do?

7 GB: Well, my big disappointment was ten days before I was to rotate, I had my  
8 assignment changed from Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio to go to Keesler Air  
9 Force Base in Mississippi. Instead of being an instructor pilot in T-38s, I was to be an  
10 instructor pilot of a T-28. Well, I thought the air force got rid of all their T-28s and they  
11 were all over, flying with Laos and the Thais and supporting the propeller war up in Laos.  
12 But found out there was a military assistance program, and we were training pilots for the  
13 free world, especially, South Vietnamese pilots. Ended up at Keesler Air Force Base in  
14 Biloxi, Mississippi and that's been home ever since.

15 KC: Now you were training—

16 GB: Twenty plus some years.

17 KC: So although you were reluctant to take that assignment, apparently it worked  
18 out for you.

19 GB: It worked out very good. I never left because well one of the reasons I stayed  
20 here, my boys were—I'm only 6'2, my boys are 6'4 and 6'6 and both of them were  
21 scholarship type basketball players. Well, they both got scholarships, but neither one of  
22 them wanted to play after their first year so papa had to come up with some financing so  
23 they could get through their remaining years. I told them, I said, "If you don't think it's  
24 fun and you don't want to play anymore don't, you know."

25 KC: Sure. Now you mentioned that you were a T-28 instructor pilot there.

26 GB: Right.

27 KC: You were training then South Vietnamese?

28 GB: Yeah, a majority of our pilots were South Vietnamese. We probably, in the  
29 time I was here I know we put over three hundred pilots through pilot training.

30 KC: Tell me about that if would. Tell me about your role in this and tell me about  
31 your observations.

1 GB: Well, I started off—my first class that I had, I was in charge of transition  
2 pilot training. Well, that was taking experienced South Vietnamese pilots through mainly  
3 instrument flying. But we also taught them some, you know, some formation, but mainly  
4 it was instrument approach to flying and after that class I ended up with UPT  
5 (Undergraduate Pilot Training) undergraduate classes. I mean I herded a couple classes  
6 through, I'm sure. I had one class of all South Vietnamese except I had—well no, I had a  
7 Venezuelan, I know that. And then I had Guatemalan as one of my students and I had a  
8 Vietnamese one. So I put three classes through, three different classes and mainly South  
9 Vietnamese, except one class I had was nothing but Jordanians. And these were a bunch  
10 of wild Islamic guys that were turned loose with nobody to monitor them. They had a  
11 ball. All of them were good pilots except one and the one that was not the best pilot, they  
12 sent him—after he graduated from pilot training, they put him in helicopters and we all  
13 figured, “Man, of all the pilots to put in a helicopter, wasn't the best pilot.”

14 KC: How prepared would you say the South Vietnamese pilots were when they  
15 came to you? To Keesler?

16 GB: Well, when I first got there, they were pretty proficient in English. I got, you  
17 know, sixty-seven and most of them had been through maybe one or two years of college.  
18 By the time I retired in '72, the quality wasn't that good anymore and their  
19 comprehension of English wasn't that good. Their ability to fly was still as good because  
20 we didn't lose too many of them. I mean, they pretty well were screened with their ability  
21 to learn to fly. They were good pilots when they left us, they were good pilots.

22 KC: What was their attitude throughout training? Did you see one—

23 GB: They were eager to learn.

24 KC: Is that right?

25 GB: Oh, they really were. A great bunch of young kids.

26 KC: It sounds like they really took to it then.

27 GB: They did, they worked hard at it.

28 KC: Were you able to keep in any contact with them once they finished training?

29 GB: The only ones were a couple of them. Some of them came back and one of  
30 them that I—ended up I was in charge of the check section for a couple three years or so.  
31 One of the guys that I gave a check ride to came back here and he looked me up and I

1 think he still lives here, in fact. They all were afraid of me when it came time to get their  
2 final check ride.

3 KC: Why is that?

4 GB: They thought I was tough.

5 KC: Is that right? How would they ever have gotten that idea?

6 GB: Well, I guess my blood shot eyes and my demeanor probably. I don't recall  
7 ever busting any of them or failing any of them on their final checks. I probably did.

8 KC: You said you did this until what, '72?

9 GB: '72 when I retired, right.

10 KC: And you retired from the air force in 1972.

11 GB: Right.

12 KC: How many years did you have in?

13 GB: Twenty.

14 KC: You had your twenty years in, and it was time to get out.

15 GB: Well, it was time to get out because Uncle Sam said so. He said—this is back  
16 when they had a public law called 20-10. If you had been enlisted at one time and you  
17 had ten years of commission when you reached twenty years as a reserve officer, you  
18 were mandatorily retired. You didn't volunteer to retire, you were out.

19 KC: Would you have stayed in if you could have?

20 GB: Looking back I probably would have but getting out was the best thing that  
21 ever happened to me because I went to start teaching school and didn't like that and then  
22 went to work at Civil Service and that gave me a better retirement than I would've had—  
23 probably had I stayed in for another five or six years.

24 KC: Although you retired in 1972, you've been in the United States since your  
25 tour, essentially since the beginning of 1967. How closely did you follow the war after  
26 you were in the United States?

27 GB: Well, probably you know, whatever the headlines were and things like that.  
28 Little disappointed in the fact that we pulled out and didn't really fight the war the way it  
29 should have been fought, so. But there was nothing you could do when the war's being  
30 run from Washington DC rather than from on the scene. It makes a whole lot of  
31 difference.

1 KC: Explain what you mean by that? Feel free—

2 GB: We had a president and a secretary of defense that thought they could do the  
3 strategy from Washington and didn't have to listen to what was happening ten thousand  
4 miles away.

5 KC: Would you say that this is a result of decisions in Washington, or would you  
6 say that the commanders, the American Military Commanders both in Washington and in  
7 Southeast Asia had a hand this?

8 GB: I think it's all from Washington, Southeast Asia knew what needed to be  
9 done; they just weren't allowed to do it. I mean, when we were flying out of Nakhon  
10 Phanom and flying into Laos, we knew what needed to be done there because the trail  
11 needed to be cut. We were going to be, you know, good guys. We weren't going to have  
12 a presence in Laos at all, even though we were going to bomb it into oblivion and drop  
13 more bombs on it than we dropped in all of World War II on Germany. It still didn't stop  
14 the North Vietnamese from bringing supplies you know, from the North to the South. But  
15 you can't stop, you can't interdict in the jungle or against an enemy who is bound  
16 determined that no matter what his cost, he's going to keep right on doing and supplying  
17 his troops to reach his goal. We may have eventually ran them out of manpower, but it  
18 would have been a long drawn out process.

19 KC: Right.

20 GB: So we pulled out. Well, I think a lot of it had to do with the South  
21 Vietnamese government not—being more on the corrupt side and thinking of their own  
22 selves instead of the mission that they should have been thinking about. Which, you  
23 know, filters down to the morale of their troops and everything else.

24 KC: Sure, sure.

25 GB: Once we pulled the props out from under them, it was over for them.  
26 Especially once we withdrew our airpower support, the South Vietnamese were doomed.

27 KC: What do you remember about the South falling in 1975?

28 GB: I was kind of disappointed with it all. I knew it was inevitable. It was one of  
29 those things that is going to happen because we weren't you know, we didn't provide that  
30 much support after we started pulling out. And then, I guess the peace nicks won it.

1 KC: Well, that brings up the next question I was going to ask you. In a way, what  
2 was your reaction at the time, to the way American society dealt with the war and the  
3 way the American political system dealt with the war?

4 GB: Well, I think our leaders listened too much to the protestors and wanted to  
5 get out. I think they really just wanted to get out. I don't really know why they thought  
6 that way, but evidently decided it was time to end the conflict. It wasn't something we  
7 couldn't win, but it was I guess pressure.

8 KC: How do you think the US could have won that?

9 GB: How they could have won it?

10 KC: Yes, sir.

11 GB: We could have done the same thing we did to Germany and Japan.

12 KC: Which was?

13 GB: Bomb them until they quit. I mean, when you got all kinds of restrictions and  
14 you can't do this, you can't do that well, you know, we found out with the Christmas  
15 bombing that the North Vietnamese were willing to listen. Had we started that type of  
16 bombing three years earlier and continued to do it, they would have never been able to  
17 take over South Vietnam. But our attitude toward war changed from 1946 to 1970,  
18 definitely.

19 KC: Absolutely.

20 GB: And now we've reached that again. We've reached the point that we don't  
21 really want to engage the country that we're fighting against because we say, "Well, these  
22 people fighting don't represent the population." Well, they wouldn't be able to be there  
23 without the support of the population. And I've read some diaries of our B-17 bombing  
24 raids, B-24 raids on Germany and firsthand accounts of what the targets really were. I  
25 mean, we weren't just bombing ball bearing factories and aircraft factories and places  
26 where they made tanks and stuff like that. And Dresden wasn't the only town that we  
27 unloaded on.

28 KC: Absolutely not.

29 GB: But nobody in World War II ever thought that that was not the right thing to  
30 do. This was how we were going to end the war. We were going to break the spirit of the  
31 country that we were fighting.

1 KC: What do you think accounts for that change, Mr. Bremenkamp?

2 GB: I don't really know. I think—one thing today, I think people tend to forget  
3 because unless you're probably—if you're under fifty-one, fifty-two years old, you have  
4 no concept of what happened in World War II, Korea, or Vietnam. And that's where the  
5 majority of our population is and that's where a lot of our attitudes are formed. People  
6 who have no concept of what this country's gone through and could care less. I mean,  
7 I've been substitute teacher ever since I retired from the civil service and I read those  
8 history books that those kids in high school are reading. And when you get two sentences  
9 about the Vietnam War, they talk about (unintelligible), that doesn't tell them anything.  
10 And you get one paragraph on World War II and they talk about us bombing Dresden or  
11 something like that. I don't think our school board people ever read these books before  
12 they authorize them. We know that, you know, our elite professors are more on the liberal  
13 side and they don't go with this stuff about what we really did and what really happened,  
14 so they go glorify. You can't glorify war because war and combat just can't be glorified,  
15 but still, you need to tell the whole story instead of covering, "Well, maybe we shouldn't  
16 have done this." Apologetic, you know. I guess what a lot of people would call it is  
17 revisionist history.

18 KC: Right. Sure, sure. Just a completely different approach that has filtered  
19 through the system.

20 GB: Yes.

21 KC: And like you say now, our textbooks are reflective of this.

22 GB: Yeah, they just gloss over and don't even cover what happened.

23 KC: Yeah, the story of textbooks in this country is a whole other issue entirely.

24 GB: If they would spend just, you know, three pages doing D-day, just what  
25 happened, what transpired, what kind of sacrifices our army and our young guys made  
26 just so we could save another country. Not even, you know, fighting on US soil, but in a  
27 far away world and what happened and what kind of sacrifice they made. Same thing  
28 with the invasion of Japan when we went to Okinawa. Anybody under fifty probably  
29 doesn't even know what happened. Iwo Jima, Okinawa, they don't know. Now we fight a  
30 war, started in Vietnam. Shoot, I remember supporting, you know, two guys with a rifle  
31 stop a company. Because when we first get the air pilot in here, we don't want to suffer



1 any losses. And that's sort of become our attitude of we don't fight the kind of war that  
2 we fought in World War II or Korea anymore. There are no front lines, we fight  
3 containment war. A policeman's type war and I don't know why we didn't learn from the  
4 Frenchmen at Dien Bien Phu, where you just don't put yourself in a fort and let the  
5 enemy pound on your forever.

6 KC: We're certainly very heavily dependent upon technology as well.

7 GB: We are, and a guy is just reading the other day where it looks like in twenty  
8 to thirty years, we won't even have regular pilots, we'll even fly our transports by remote  
9 control. There won't be a call for pilots. Technology breaks, you've got a problem. That's  
10 like our computers are down, we can't handle you today. Wait a minute.

11 KC: All too often happens of course.

12 GB: All too often, you're right. It all too often happens.

13 KC: Well, tell me Mr. Bremenkamp, as you look back on your experiences and  
14 the American experience in Southeast Asia, what can you say this country learned about  
15 itself? What are the lessons we should take away from this war?

16 GB: Well, I think one thing we learned, I think the Russians learned and we both  
17 learned that we sure as heck weren't going to have any World War III between Russia  
18 and the United States because both sides tested their weaponry during that time period. I  
19 think what the American people learned during Vietnam was high losses weren't  
20 acceptable anymore. I mean, giving American blood for a different country, a different  
21 world, just wasn't worth it anymore. So I think that's why we fought these kind of wars  
22 that we have. We still report, you know, how many Americans were killed this week, last  
23 week, we still keep a track, but we don't pay as much attention to the numbers as we did.  
24 Of course, that was McNamara's kind of war, to pay attention to the numbers and, you  
25 know it was acceptable. A 13-1, 10-1, 5-1; at least we're not doing body counts anymore,  
26 thank goodness. But we don't like to see, you know, Americans killed anymore.

27 KC: Right, sure.

28 GB: So we don't fight the kind of battle we used to fight. We probably never will.  
29 See, like you said, more and more dependent on technology and sort of a send off type  
30 approach to warfare.

1 KC: What do you think you learned about yourself the most? How has the war  
2 most affected your life as you look back?

3 GB: I guess I grew up. I was pretty, you know, happy go lucky. I came back and I  
4 guess took a more serious approach to life.

5 KC: Why do you suppose that was?

6 GB: Well, the fact that I guess just growing up and knowing that you've done  
7 things that nobody else has ever done and things have happened that just don't happen  
8 everyday. You've seen a lot of different things than what you would see just normal day  
9 to day operation of the world.

10 KC: What about you as a family man? How did it affect you as a father and as a  
11 husband?

12 GB: No change there. I ended up with little league, doing coaching, officiating,  
13 managing, the president of different organizations, all that kind of stuff. The fact I'd been  
14 to Vietnam was just something I put behind.

15 KC: Do you stay current with other forward air controllers? I know this is a pretty  
16 dynamic group. Are you involved with forward air controllers' reunions, association?

17 GB: I've gone to most of the reunions, yes.

18 KC: What does that mean to you to go to those things?

19 GB: You go there because these are the guys that share with you a common bond  
20 because you've been there and done that and it's like some of them say, "Until you've  
21 seen the elephant, you don't know what the elephant looks like." And most forward air  
22 controllers have seen the elephant at one time or another.

23 KC: Right, that's for sure.

24 GB: So, you know, it's a common bond. Even know you don't know the guy, you  
25 know him.

26 KC: Right, I think that's very well said. Well, Mr. Bremenkamp is there anything  
27 else you would like to add to this interview?

28 GB: Well, I got a quote that I found quite a while back.

29 KC: Okay.

1           GB: It's by an anonymous US Army helicopter pilot. And he said, "Combat. Once  
2 you are exposed to it, it never wears off. It may fade over the years, but never wears off  
3 and you will have to live with it." So that's about it.

4           KC: Well, thank you very much.

5           (End of interview.)