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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Dean Jones
Conducted by Kelly Crager
Date 29 March 2010, Unknown, 19 April 2010
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 Colonel Dean Jones. Today is March 29, 2010. I am in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of
3 Texas Tech University and Colonel Jones is joining me by telephone from his home in
4 Woodland Park, Colorado. Colonel Jones, I'd like to begin this interview by asking you
5 some biographical information type questions. Can you tell me when you were born and
6 where?

7 Dean Jones: Yeah, I was born in Highland, Kansas, along with my identical twin
8 brother who beat me by eight minutes. That was on January 18, 1937.

9 KC: 1937, very good. What were your parents' names?

10 DJ: Salem and Martha Jones.

11 KC: And what did they do for a living there in Kansas?

12 DJ: He worked in a Texaco gas station. Highland is a farm community in
13 Northeast Kansas on 36 Highway.

14 KC: Was your mother a homemaker?

15 DJ: Yes.

16 KC: Describe life growing up there in Northeastern Kansas. What was school
17 like? What sort of things did you do? The relationship among your family? What was life
18 like for you growing up?

19 DJ: You know, from a looking-back perspective, a good life. Farm communities
20 are pretty independent and take care of themselves. Of course, our early years were war

1 years, and we had an older brother that was fourteen years older than us. So, by the time
2 we were seven and eight years old, he was in the War. He was in the Army Air Forces
3 working on B-17s as a communications guy. So, we got exposed to the military early on,
4 as we were growing up in small farm towns in northeast agricultural Kansas there. From
5 our point of view, we had good schools. We had a quiet, friendly atmosphere as far as our
6 friends and our family and of course, everybody was kind of a team effort support team
7 during those early years during the war. We were old enough to remember coupons for
8 sugar and of course, gasoline didn't mean much to Wayne and I, but we remember using
9 coupons to go run errands for our mom to go get butter and sugar and things like that. So,
10 we remembered that, but we were also involved in sports and oh, basketball was a big
11 thing in Kansas, still is. We played basketball and softball and baseball and track and
12 field and all those sort of things. It's important and music was important in our family.
13 Our mother taught and played piano and organ. We had an older sister also. She played
14 piano and sang. So we grew up hearing a lot of classical music and church music and
15 participated in choirs and, you know, music was an important part of our background as
16 well.

17 KC: Very interesting. What about school? How did you do in school?

18 DJ: Well, we did pretty well in school. We were blessed with good teachers and a
19 good teaching atmosphere. In fact, it's kind of ironic. One of the teachers that was a
20 heavy influence on my brother and I when we were in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade
21 which were pretty formative years because a guy named Sylvester Skoch and he was a
22 real tough ex-marine disciplinarian kind of guy, but a wonderful teacher. And he really
23 put the background of math and English into our lives that served us well all through our
24 later academics. That was in Everest, Kansas, where we moved when we were six. And
25 so, we went through all our school years, K through 12 there in Everest from grade
26 school all the way through high school. So, we were in that same small town about five
27 hundred people. But he is still alive, and we're going to go see him this spring on the way
28 to our fifty-fifth high school reunion. We saw him a couple of years ago, and he's still an
29 amazing guy. We always looked back at him. You know, you have a teacher that stands
30 out, and he's one that did for us.

31 KC: Wow, that's terrific, and he's still alive, huh?

1 DJ: Yeah, he's ninety-two now and still has a good mind.

2 KC: That's terrific you guys still can get in touch with him and want to get in
3 touch with him. That's really cool.

4 DJ: Yeah, we're going to go by and see him. He's in a home in Kansas there, not
5 too far from where we're going back for our reunion. So, we wanted to see him again.
6 You know, I guess teachers all through the years are probably happy to hear that.
7 Through all the frustrations of their jobs that they had some successes at least.

8 KC: Yeah, teacher's rewards are certainly not paid back like most people would
9 anticipate.

10 DJ: Now they're not. They're certainly not in the money sense. I guess they take
11 pride in watching their students go on and do things.

12 KC: Now growing up there in I guess Everest and going to school, and you say
13 this is a small farming community. What prompted this move to Everest?

14 DJ: Well, you know, jobs were kind of scarce and the farming business was pretty
15 tough. A lot of people had lost their farms including my dad in the late thirties and he was
16 a farmer at heart his whole life. He couldn't afford to go it alone like so many and so by
17 then he had my brother and I and a younger brother four years younger and the older
18 brother and sister had left by then, but nevertheless they had to put food on the table and
19 there was a cooperative creamery that was being formed in Everest, Kansas, that worked
20 for the farmers in Northeast Kansas. They'd go around and pick up their milk and they
21 had a plant there that made all the products; the cheese and the cottage cheese and the
22 milk and all. He worked for Everest's Creamery for I guess ten, twelve years. About all
23 the time that we were there and that's what he moved there for was that job. And we were
24 there until we left high school.

25 KC: When did you graduate high school?

26 DJ: In 1955.

27 KC: In 1955. All right, now growing up in the 1940's and then the 1950's you
28 talked about your memories of the Second World War. But what about your memories of
29 the Cold War as it was emerging? As an adolescent and as a teenager, what sort of things
30 do you remember about this growing competition between the US and the Soviet Union?

1 DJ: That's an interesting question. In that time frame when we were younger,
2 especially I think in an outlying community like that, your focus tends to be more local.
3 You know, the whole country really was pretty isolationist for so long and I don't think
4 we paid much attention and cared much about somebody like Russia until the Korean
5 War came along and that was kind of the first thing I remember, and it hit home to me
6 because a guy that was three or four years ahead of me in high school joined the Marines
7 and a year later, he was dead. He got killed in Korea and here I am a freshman in high
8 school and that was direct. You know, we didn't have television and we sure as heck
9 didn't have anything like cell phones and so the newspaper and we didn't read the
10 newspaper that much. So outside of maybe some of the social studies and the history and
11 things that we got in from the teachers, we were somewhat isolated. When we listened to
12 the radio, it wasn't that much to listen to the national news or international news. But
13 Korea was the first thing I remember that hit home that there's a big world out there and
14 some of it kind of ugly, especially when someone in your home, some little home town
15 guy gets killed. We knew then that there was some support from China and Russia for
16 this Korean thing and that means they can't be all that good and also by then, the first
17 nuclear—by the time I was starting high school, the big thing about nuclear bombs and
18 the thermal nuclear bombs and how destructive they were and all of that was coming to
19 the fore in the early fifties. That was what I remembered as kind of the start of the Cold
20 War was that the Russians are—they're powerful, they're talented, they're able to do a lot
21 of things and of course, a little later than that in '57, the Sputnik thing really hit home.
22 And by then, we were starting our first year at the Air Force Academy. That's getting a
23 little ahead, but you know, from the perspective of the world and what's going on out
24 there, I guess that's when it really started was in high school.

25 KC: Now you mentioned Sputnik. Of course, this was one of the watershed
26 moments of the war and all the things that it meant. What do you remember about that?
27 How did it affect things as far as you recall?

28 DJ: Well, go just a little behind that about how did we get interested in the
29 military and the Air Force, it started really with our older brother and we were eight years
30 old at the end of World War II and we went down to visit him in Ardmore, Oklahoma,
31 and he was with a brand new B-17, you know, the flying fortress, there and we were just

1 really impressed with that. I guess it kind of stuck in our mind or something, “Boy, that
2 would sure be neat to be able to be part of something like that.” We didn’t get involved
3 and we didn’t have anything like ROTC in high school, but I mentioned that Wayne and I
4 played basketball and we were part of a team there at Everest. We went to the state
5 tournament and it was the first and only time that Everest ever won the county, district,
6 and regional and went to the state tournament. So, we got a pretty good basketball
7 scholarship out of that, my brother and I did at Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas.
8 And they gave us the best offer and it wasn’t too far from home and so we went there. As
9 part of that involvement there, we really hadn’t planned to make Air Force our careers,
10 but they had Air Force ROTC there at Washburn. We were in a fraternity there and we
11 had done that even though we didn’t have any money because, believe it or not,
12 economically it was the best thing. They wanted us to join and we were on campus. We
13 didn’t have to have a car and we had room and board offered there and it was pretty
14 reasonable. So, we did that and a lot of them were involved in ROTC. And so, they
15 encouraged us to take a look and do it and we did. And we joined the Air Force ROTC; it
16 just happened they had Air Force there, but that’s what we were interested in, anyway.
17 So, in the second year of that, at that time we were just taking-- it’s a law school
18 primarily-- but we were just taking the liberal arts curriculum. And the second year, kind
19 of one of those fateful moments that sometimes you have in your life, they had a couple
20 guys come in from Forbes Air Force Base, which was a big SAC base right on the edge
21 of Topeka. They had B-47s there; big, beautiful. These were the recce version of the
22 bomber, the Boeing bomber.

23 KC: Right.

24 DJ: And these two guys were lieutenants, just made 1st Lieutenant, they were
25 West Point graduates who had gone to the Air Force and they had been selected to act as
26 an upper class for the brand new Air Force Academy out in Colorado Springs. We had
27 never heard of that. We didn’t even know there was one. They came in and talked to the
28 Air Force ROTC Unit and said, “Hey, there’s a new school, if any of you guys are
29 interested, let us know and we’ll tell you how to try and compete for it.” And my brother
30 and I said, “Well, we’re running out of money and we need to take a look at it because it
31 sounds like it might be a pretty good deal since we’re interested in going into the Air

1 Force anyway. So, they came in and talked to us and they were good recruiters, I can say
2 that. And so, we decided to try, my brother and I, and we made it. We were lucky enough
3 and so '57 we got our appointments through a competitive process and ended up going to
4 the Academy.

5 KC: That must have been very exciting for both you and your brother to be going.

6 DJ: It was, we were the first twins and we had said—the quota from Kansas was
7 four because the class was only three hundred seventeen, as I recall. Wayne said, “Well,
8 what if one of us makes it and the other one doesn’t?” He says, “Well, we’ve always been
9 competitive in everything else we did as far as sports and grades and everything.” So, he
10 says, “If that’s what happens, that’s what happens.” But we were fortunate enough to get
11 half a quota and so we showed up out there in '57. That’s how our military career started
12 was through that involvement, to some degree. I mean, we might have gone on, and
13 probably would have, into the Air Force anyway, but the way we got involved was
14 because of that chance meeting.

15 KC: That sounds very fortuitous.

16 DJ: It was interesting that the guy that was so influential, Joe Yeager was his
17 name and no relation to Chuck Yeager, but he was a real firebrand, barn-burner young
18 lieutenant and he was one of these kind of guys that you’d bring back for football rallies
19 because he could kind of stir a crowd into a frenzy. He was an amazing guy. Well, he was
20 in line to give us our pep talk and he taught the bayonet course out at the Academy. So
21 that was interesting, looking back.

22 KC: Well, tell me about your time there at Colorado Springs. Tell me about the
23 curriculum; tell me about the atmosphere, the environment, the mission. Tell me all about
24 your time there.

25 DJ: Yeah, well at first, of course, we went to Denver because the Academy wasn’t
26 completed yet in 1957. They had one more year to go, so we spent one year at Lowry Air
27 Force Base and that was a really tough year. It’s like the plebe year at West Point and air
28 training officers like Joe Yeager, they were determined to make us the best and that
29 school was brand new and at that point had two classes. If anything, I’d say they were
30 kind of extra hard on us to make sure everything got off on the right foot. They had so
31 much talent recruited to do that as far as our teachers, our training officers, the whole

1 program. You know, people were hand-picked from all over the Air Force to do that.
2 They even pulled professors out of colleges that were in the reserves, for instance. I
3 mean, one of my English professors had come from Harvard and so we just had an
4 amazing collection of talent. Of course, the kids are all hand-picked, too. I mean, we had
5 three hundred picked out of about ten thousand, so it was a very selective, very difficult
6 process because it was so competitive. Most of us had at least some college to even
7 compete. Nevertheless, when you got there, boy, it was like drinking out of a fire hose
8 every day. They just jammed it to you from six o'clock in the morning until ten 'o clock
9 at night. Never a dull moment, but it was enjoyable to Wayne and I. We liked the
10 competition of it. We had a little bit of a head start because of our college and we were in
11 good shape from playing basketball so that part was okay. And, of course, they were
12 already starting to expose us to the Air Force and we got to fly in jet airplanes and they
13 were taking us on different trips around the country. We even took one field trip to
14 Europe our junior year and visited several installations. I remember particularly we went
15 to Berlin, and this was just before the wall was built in 1960. I took pictures of these
16 Russian soldiers at one of their shrines and they weren't very happy about that, but it was
17 my first direct exposure to the Russians, was a guard in Berlin. That was just a
18 fascinating time, those four years there at the Academy. We all aimed to be pilots. We
19 had to be qualified to be pilots and that's what Wayne and I wanted to do, certainly, was
20 to be pilots and even more I wanted to be a fighter pilot, not just a pilot. That had been
21 one of my goals early on and I stuck to that as we went on into the Air Force. We were
22 fortunate to survive the four years and a lot of wonderful academics and we were even
23 able to continue our music. We both sang in the chorale and we played a little bit of
24 basketball, but decided we weren't good enough for college ball. We weren't tall enough
25 or fast enough, so we went into the intramurals, and they had a great sports program
26 there. We really enjoyed that. Things we had never been able to do before. Soccer and
27 field hockey and a lot of sports that we didn't have, you know, in small towns. So, I
28 guess—one of the interesting things was that the guy who nominated Wayne and I for the
29 Academy, his name was Senator Frank Carlson and he had been the governor of the State
30 of Kansas when Wayne and I were in grade school and we were Page Boys at the state
31 capitol for a week or two there when he was the governor. Years later he appointed us,

1 and he came out for our graduation partly because they were making a little bit of a to-do
2 because we were the first twins graduating. Anyway, it was fun having him come back
3 and be there. All our family was there, and then I got married. I met my wife, Jo
4 McNeilly, about a year before graduation. So, we got married the day after graduation
5 when all our relatives were all in town and then took off on our career.

6 KC: That's terrific. Tell me about some of the curriculum and the daily routine
7 there early on at the Air Force Academy.

8 DJ: The curriculum, of course, was focused on science and more specifically
9 things like astronautics and aerodynamics, thermodynamics, electrical engineering, a lot
10 of heavy engineering sciences. Although it isn't that they ignored the social sciences, it's
11 just that the emphasis was on the sciences that we were going to be using a lot. And then
12 we also had a professional military education portion that most colleges don't have that
13 dwelled on the leadership aspects. Of course, we were involved in that our whole time.
14 We would be, you know, a flight commander and a squadron commander. In fact, I was
15 the wing training officer on the wing staff my last semester of my last year. And that's
16 kind of the high end of your leadership there at the Academy. They had that kind of
17 training and then, of course, athletics. The curriculum was focused, I would say, heavy on
18 the hard sciences. You know, we had good laboratories, wonderful instructors. These
19 guys were Air Force, a lot of them pilots, most of them were Air Force career guys and
20 very dedicated and very high on the masters. Well, they all had masters, but they had a
21 very high degree of PhDs and they were just really talented people. I recall they were
22 very dedicated to making us the best they could.

23 KC: What about the physical training requirements? What was that like?

24 DJ: Gosh, we're at seven thousand feet there at the Academy and in the early
25 years we were double-timing and we were running, literally, on the terrazzo. It's a quarter
26 mile long there down to class and sometimes you're doing that in a blizzard. We had
27 athletics every afternoon, a couple hours in the afternoon from three to five as I recall,
28 that were intramural sports or intercollegiate sports as the case may be. Very competitive,
29 squadrons, the cadet squadrons were competing against each other and then we had
30 training in individual combat, Judo, and we used to call that Dirty Fighting 101 class on
31 how to protect yourself. You know, the more war fighting kind of things. So, you had to

1 be in shape. You would not survive the Academy if you weren't in good physical
2 condition.

3 KC: Sure, now when did you graduate from the Academy?

4 DJ: In '61, June of '61.

5 KC: All right, now this is the beginning of a pretty tumultuous time here, I think,
6 for the United States in terms of its foreign affairs and different things going on. And in
7 '61 well, of course, you had the Berlin Wall go up. You said you were in Germany right
8 before that happened in Berlin, right before that happen. The Bay of Pigs and you have a
9 new president. What was your opinion of the state of world affairs as you get out of
10 Colorado Springs, as you get out of the Air Force Academy?

11 DJ: Well, what I would remark, especially compared to my high school years, my
12 world had opened up in a way that I could never have dreamed in many ways. Partly, just
13 the travel of going to all parts of the world when all I had done in high school was go to
14 Oklahoma, you know, is about as far away as I had been in anywhere. We did drive to
15 California one time to see our brother, but we had been so isolated. There we were and,
16 going back, and you talk about sputnik, well, sputnik, you know, not only did it energize
17 our country, but it certainly energized the Academy. I distinctly remember the night that
18 thing, we listened to the beep, beeps and the news just hit us like a bombshell. I mean, if
19 anything, I think it just, you know, was a great spur to the whole military and certainly to
20 us as a, "Hey, we got some heavy duty competition going on out there and we got to get
21 with it." I just remember the incentive that gave us and of course, it spurred a lot of
22 programs, you know, the moon programs and all that I'm sure were all—their seeds came
23 from that. But by the time we graduated, we were getting all kinds of international
24 diplomatic type of courses in what really is going on in the world and so we were going
25 in—I'd say with our eyes wide open and in '61 when we graduated, we knew that we
26 were not necessarily going to war, but we knew that we were going into a very
27 competitive world and that the military was going to be important. I don't know if you
28 remember much about the history of fighters, but well, not just fighters, but in many
29 ways, the late fifties was, you know, probably the greatest period of engineering that our
30 country ever saw. We built the best cars, some of the best cars that we ever built. We
31 built some of the best fighters. Some of them are still flying—and bombers. That all came

1 out of that late fifties, early sixties time period; the F-105, F-104, the F-100 that I flew,
2 and the seeds to some of the later fighters. Most of that came in a very short time frame
3 of about less than ten years. Some of the best we ever did in this country. So that was
4 remarkable. In fact, when I graduated, I bought a '57 Thunderbird, do you remember
5 those?

6 KC: Yes, sir.

7 DJ: Powder blue, Starmist blue is the real name of it. Jo and I just loved that car
8 and we drove it for two years and that was a typical example of premiere engineering that
9 our country was able to turn out in that time frame. That's the one thing that I do
10 remember was just marveling, especially looking back, at all the things we did in this
11 country from '55 to say '65.

12 KC: So, you want to go into fighters. When you leave Colorado Springs, do you
13 know that your destination is going to be fighters?

14 DJ: No, not at all.

15 KC: Where do you go from Colorado Springs?

16 DJ: Well, we went to Williams Field in Phoenix, Arizona, for pilot training. There
17 were about eight or nine pilot training bases and we were able to pick a base depending
18 on our standing in the class. I was fairly high in the class and Williams was kind of the
19 favorite of a lot of people. It was near a big city and good flying weather and I was lucky
20 enough to get it. And so, I went to Williams field and went through a year of pilot
21 training there from '61 to '62.

22 KC: Tell me about pilot training at Williams in Arizona.

23 DJ: Well, in many ways it was an extension of what we had just come from. It
24 was highly intensive, physical, mental, challenges every day. You had to stay in shape
25 and of course, we were flying the first at that time, the T-37 was a new jet trainer. It was
26 pretty high performance. It would do acrobatics and so that was our introduction to the
27 Air Force and boy, it's a real quick sink-or-swim thing. We had several guys wash out in
28 the first two weeks from just couldn't take the G Forces and they got sick or they just
29 couldn't land the airplane at all and just didn't have an aptitude for flying. I remember
30 that was, you know, all that wishing, all that work, but if you didn't hack those first two
31 or three weeks, it was over, and your career changed completely forever. Luckily—of

1 course, we were better prepared than most as far as the academic challenges of it because
2 we had so much of that already. In fact, I had neglected to mention in my history there,
3 the second semester of my second year of college, I was getting ready to take the test for
4 the Academy. So, through a connection of my older brother's wife, my brother and I had
5 worked out at Douglas Aircraft, at the home plant in Santa Monica during the summer of
6 '56 and then I went back in the Spring of '57 for one more semester of college. I worked
7 there again, and it was in the Testing Division of Douglas Aircraft, so it was a really fun
8 place to work. I mean, we were working, and we had clearances, security clearances, and
9 we were working on flight test data that was coming from Edwards Air Force Base on
10 what were then brand new fighters. Now they're in the museum; the A-4, the F-4, the
11 F4D Skyray. And these things held world time-to-climb records and here I am, a college
12 kid, a physics major and able to run a calculator. We didn't have computers yet, but what
13 we did was reduce flight test data for the engineers. My boss was a guy with two degrees
14 from Cal Tech in aero engineering. I had an early exposure to one of the geniuses. He
15 built a six-inch slide rule for aeronautics that I still have. Slide rule, kids are saying,
16 "What's that?" Anyway, from that exposure, we learned all kinds of things that later
17 became really good things to know about flying. Beta, Theta, you know, Beta being slide
18 slip and Theta, pitch, and yaw and all those things. You know, some of the important
19 principles of flying and aerodynamics, Bernoulli's theorem, and all that. So that was
20 helpful when I started pilot training. I couldn't help but think because I'd been around
21 pilots and that sort of thing early on, luckily, and it helped.

22 KC: How did you take the flying?

23 DJ: Well, the first few rides I went, "Woo, this is harder than I thought and there's
24 a lot of pressures on you sometimes, have an instructor yelling at you about how poor
25 you're doing and, "Get this airplane right-side-up again." I don't know, I always felt I
26 could do it, but there were certainly some doubts the first few rides about, "I don't know
27 if I'm cut out for this or not." But I was so determined to see it through. I know that's
28 how everybody else was. We went through four years of Academy, we surely can do this.
29 And we did and we made it, but I didn't get my fighter assignment because there were
30 only three or four fighters per class. You chose on your standing in your class and I
31 wasn't high enough in my final standing. I was kind of in the middle and so I wasn't high

1 enough to get a fighter slot right out of pilot training. So, I said, “Well, I want to keep my
2 options open to do that.” So, I went and took a training command instructor slot and so I
3 did that because then I knew that I could have a chance to go back to fighter school. If I
4 took a bomber assignment out of there, that was, once you’re in that sort of thing, you’re
5 in it. And it’s almost impossible to get out of. Whether it was flying cargo airplanes or
6 bombers, they were specialties that you tended to be in for your career.

7 KC: That certainly didn’t appeal to you.

8 DJ: So that’s what I did. I took a flying training assignment to Reese Air Force
9 Base and you know where that is.

10 KC: Beautiful Lubbock, Texas.

11 DJ: So, I know all about Texas Tech.

12 KC: Tell me about your time at Reese, what were you going to be doing there?
13 And tell me about your daily routine, etcetera.

14 DJ: Okay, well, my first assignment there was as a primary flying training
15 instructor and you had the first rides in the T-37, which was the same airplane that I had
16 trained in and that was a little side-by-side two-seater. I did that for a year and a half and
17 right after we got there, our first daughter was born and we ended up having three kids
18 and they were all born in Reese Hospital, and I used to joke that it was in the water
19 because we didn’t have any more kids after we left Texas. Anyway, it was a good time, it
20 was good family flying because I was home. I wasn’t TDY a lot. I’d go cross-country and
21 things, but mostly I was home. I was getting a lot of flying in. I piled up almost two
22 thousand hours in three and a half years there, so it was a good start to my career in
23 flying. I enjoyed the instructing job, but I didn’t want to do it all my life, but certainly it
24 was a lot of responsibility as a brand new pilot right out in the Air Force. I was kind of
25 amazed that they would do that. Stick a guy that barely knew how to fly himself and
26 make an instructor out of him. You know, the Air Force programs, training programs
27 are—I found through the years—have always been well-thought-out and well-run that
28 way. I thought most of us did a pretty good job at instructing. So, after a year and a half,
29 then I got into the—I say graduated into the T-38, which was the advanced trainer and
30 that’s a supersonic trainer and that’s where the second part of your flying training course
31 goes. I had not flown it before because I was in one of the last classes to fly the old T-33,

1 T-Bird they called it, at Williams before they were phased out. So, it was real exciting
2 getting into that airplane. At that time, it held the world's time-to-climb record. It'd do
3 forty-thousand feet in about three and a half minutes. So, it was exciting to fly and a very
4 safe airplane. Probably one of the best-designed airplanes ever and it's still flying. It's an
5 amazing airplane. So, I did that for another two years and at the latter part of that
6 assignment, I also was teaching some academics and became what they call a class
7 commander. I'd have a bunch of students under me and I'd kind of be their air training
8 officer, as it were, as they went through the pilot training. So, it was a rewarding first
9 assignment. But by then, this was '66 when I had finished that assignment, and by then
10 we were hearing a lot about Vietnam and we were already getting people back from
11 Vietnam. So, we were starting to hear the first of the war stories of what was going on in
12 Vietnam and so most of us, I think, that were young and early in our careers, we said,
13 "You know, it's our time, we need to go, that's what we're trained to do." If you're a
14 boxer, you go box. Then I really wanted to go to fighters, and I did get an F-100
15 assignment out of that flying training job.

16 KC: Hmm, and where was this?

17 DJ: And so, we moved across town to Luke Air Force Base. I say across town,
18 I'm sorry, I wasn't in Phoenix then, I was in Lubbock, but we went out to Luke Air Force
19 Base on the other side of the valley in Phoenix and spent four months going through F-
20 100 training. That was the Fall of '66.

21 KC: You mention there toward the end of your time at Reese that you were
22 hearing about what was going on in Vietnam. What sort of things were people coming
23 back to you with? What sort of things were you finding out about Vietnam and the US
24 involvement there?

25 DJ: Well, it was bits and pieces. It wasn't organized; it was mostly word of
26 mouth. It wasn't like we were getting into any big treatises or papers or things on, you
27 know, the grander scheme of the war. What we thought we knew at that point was that
28 we were getting involved in an insurgency kind of war where we had the bad guys in the
29 north fighting the good guys in the south and that we were coming to the rescue of the
30 good guys in the south and it was part of the containment philosophy. You know, Russia
31 had been steadily expanding in the late fifties and sixties and gobbling up every country

1 they could get a hold of on their perimeters. There was a fear that communism really was
2 going to gobble up everything. It was just spreading everywhere and that we had to stop
3 it and that we had to draw a line in the sand somewhere and that we had chosen Vietnam
4 to be that line in the sand. “Okay, this is the end. We’re not going to let you continue to
5 expand.” That was the philosophy that I recall and that we were using Vietnam as our
6 point to do it.

7 KC: Right. Was this something that gave you any reason to think about the
8 application of US force there? Again, this is an insurgency type of war like you say. Did
9 you have any trepidation about just the overall American involvement?

10 DJ: Not trepidation. I guess when you’re young and cocky and you’re pretty
11 fearless, we never thought about it when we were volunteering to go over there. Of
12 course, we’re all invincible and nobody thought about being killed and there weren’t very
13 many being killed at that point in time. Certainly not in the Air Force. We just felt that—I
14 felt the fighter was the point of the spear, still do, for that matter. You know, everybody
15 talks about fighting, but there’s only a handful that really do it. They’re truly at the point
16 of the spear. Whether it’s an infantryman down there at the front of the, you know, the
17 point man on the squad or whether you’re in the fighter engaging a target right out there
18 on the front line. And that’s all I wanted to do was be out there on the front line.

19 KC: Now, you say that, even though you had a family at home.

20 DJ: Yeah, three little kids.

21 KC: Did that cause your family to worry?

22 DJ: Yeah, yeah, we had some long talks about that. I must say, my wife, she was a
23 sort of a military brat. Her father was with the Army and then he had lost an eye and he
24 was in Civil Service. She had been around the military her whole life, spent four years in
25 Germany right after the war, in fact, so she had seen war close up, the effects of it,
26 anyway. So, she knew she was marrying a military guy. I mean, she kind of made a point
27 of it. She and her dad watched us march into the Air Force Academy and she told her
28 dad, she says, “You know, there’s somebody out there for me.” And that was pretty
29 prophetic. And it turned out to be true. So, it wasn’t like she was naïve about it and we
30 had talked a lot about it, but she knew that, hey, I wanted to fly, I wanted to be a fighter

1 pilot and fighter pilots go to war. So, it wasn't a shock, it was a reasoned decision.
2 Somebody had to do it and I wanted to do it, so that was the decision.

3 KC: Okay, now let's go back to Arizona again, back to Phoenix. Tell me about
4 your training in the F-100s. What was that like?

5 DJ: Once again, in to the barrel. It seems like once you get into this kind of thing
6 it's always competitive and it's always do it fast or quick or hard and the F-100 was a
7 whole new ball game, but by then it was a seasoned airplane and I happened to be there. I
8 felt it was kind of a step down in my flying because the T-38 would out-perform the F-
9 100 for just sheer flying, but of course, the F-100 was, at that time, well, in the early
10 Sixties it was the advanced fighter we had. It was the first fighter that would go
11 supersonic, straight and level. It was our primary jet fighter and front line. It was sitting
12 nuke alert in Europe, ready to take one-way nuclear missions into Russia and it was also
13 involved in a lot of brushfire kind of warfare, but it really came into its own in Vietnam
14 and it was our primary in-country fighter for the whole war, really, the F-100. Part of
15 their mission was what we called close air support, working with the Army and
16 supporting the Army and what they were doing, so the F-100 mostly, that's what they
17 did. They did have one squadron called the Misty squadron that was doing FAC work up
18 north and I'm sure you interviewed some of those guys. Mostly it was in-country, and it
19 was an interesting airplane to fly. It was kind of hard to fly. It had some quirks about it,
20 and it would kill you real quick. It would snap-roll on final if you tried to yank it around
21 too tight and it had an adverse yaw problem. The guys taught you, this airplane is a good
22 airplane, but it's not real forgiving. Here's some things that are no-no's. We all learned
23 those quick. In some ways, the airplane was a good airplane because of the pilots. Almost
24 in spite of itself, it was a good airplane because the pilots made it a good airplane.

25 KC: Okay, now you've trained here in Arizona, you want to be a fighter pilot,
26 you're in the top-of-the line US fighter, you're in the F-100. You don't go to Vietnam as
27 an F-100 pilot.

28 DJ: That's correct.

29 KC: What happened in the intervening time?

30 DJ: Okay, well, what happened was the Air Force has also kind of had a running
31 battle with the Army about who should be providing close air support. The Army used to

1 have some of that mission itself and through the roles and missions battles in
2 Washington, they finally decided that the Air Force will provide the close air support for
3 the Army, but there's several Catch-22s to that and one of them is that you will provide
4 trained people—and in this case, fighter-trained people to liaison with the Army to make
5 sure that you have a good working relationship with them. You know how they fight; you
6 know where they are, you know the lingo, and the forward air controller position was
7 created. In the case of the US Army, fighter-trained forward air controllers to provide that
8 service was part of our role in the Air Force. So as the war started really cranking up in
9 '66, they all of a sudden had a shortage of these fighter-qualified FACs and they needed a
10 whole bunch of them in a hurry because the war was really ramping up and we were
11 adding divisions of Army and they needed the support. So, in true Air Force fashion, the
12 needs of the Air Force come first, and they just drafted a whole bunch of us coming out
13 of fighter training. We had fighter stamped on our forehead, but we had no experience in
14 fighters, we had just been trained. But they took us and sent us and reassigned us to the O-
15 1 Bird Dog as a FAC and we went and trained for a couple months down in Florida at
16 Hurlburt Field in the spring of '67 for that role.

17 KC: Let me ask you about this. Again, you've been trained for fighters, for the F-
18 100, you were looking forward to this, this is what you wanted to do since the time you
19 were a kid, this is a big thing for you. Then the Air Force says, "You know what, here's
20 our approach and you, although you're fighter-trained, are not going to be in a supersonic
21 fighter, you're going to the Bird Dog." What kind of effect did that have on you?

22 DJ: First reaction was bitter, as you could expect. I remember when we first—you
23 know, the assignments came down and all of us that were in the training, "We're
24 going to what?" We're going from the front-line fighter to a little tiny airplane? Fly a
25 prop job airplane? A tail-dragger at that? I was shocked, shock and some bitterness that
26 they would do that. And plus, we just felt, how wasteful can you be to spend all that
27 money, all that training-- by that time, they estimated we were worth half a million
28 dollars each in training alone-- and throw us in a little airplane like that. Army or no
29 Army, that's really stupid. The other side was the professional side that we had come
30 through. You know, all our military training was the needs of the Air Force do come first,
31 and their need right now was to have a bunch of those FACs out there and certainly, they

1 didn't have to make the case about how important the FAC was. It was pretty obvious
2 that the kind of war we were fighting was something we had never done to that extent.
3 We had done it before and called it different names in World War II and Korea, too. We
4 had FACs in both those wars who didn't necessarily call them that, but we had them. So,
5 they were always important. This guy that found the target, spotted the target, directed
6 people to the target and got a hit. And so hopefully kept their own people from getting
7 killed. So, we understood the mission and knew it was important. We just felt, "Geez,
8 why can't someone else do it?" But knowing that we had done that deal with the Army,
9 we went grudgingly, but we went. Of course, once we got involved in the training and
10 talked to more of the guys coming back, by then the instructors at Hurlburt were all war
11 veterans already. They were highly decorated because it was such a dangerous job that
12 there were Silver Star guys there, you know, 1st Lieutenants, instructing us. They had
13 eight hundred hours of combat and at least a Distinguished Flying Cross if not a Silver
14 Star. That was eye-opening in itself. Boy, nothing seasons you quite as fast like a little bit
15 of combat time.

16 KC: Tell me about your time there at Hurlburt Field and the transition to the 0-1.
17 What was it like for you and take me through the routine again?

18 DJ: Well, yeah, you know, it's all about training and certainly the Air Force, once
19 again, they set up a good program there. They brought people in that first-hand knew
20 what needed to be done. There weren't very many manuals on the subject and so these
21 guys were just teaching us by the seat of their pants. "Here's what I did and here's what
22 worked and here's what didn't. They drummed into us the 1500 foot rule. About you're
23 flying a small airplane; you're flying in a country with mostly small arms fire. So, if you
24 stay above the small arms fire, you got a good chance of making it. And it turns out that
25 fifteen hundred feet above the ground was a pretty good number to pay attention to, to
26 stay out of small arms fire. I always remembered that, and I came home. A lot of the guys
27 didn't, and they got down and buzzed targets and stuff and they got shot down. The
28 airplane was pretty easy to fly. It was kind of tricky to land with that tail-dragger. You
29 could ground-loop it pretty easy if you didn't pay attention. You know, it's just a little
30 light airplane that had quite a bit of power. The typical Air Force, we'd get a good
31 airplane with a lot of engine and then we'd load it up with everything. We had all kinds

1 of—it was a two-seater front-back, and sometimes you’d have an observer in the back,
2 but usually you were flying alone, but you had three radios back there. You had FM to
3 talk to the Army, you had VHF to talk to the air traffic control and then you had UHF to
4 talk to the fighters. You had to run all three of them and I think the hardest part of being a
5 FAC was to multitask. To be able to do three or four things at once all the time when
6 you’re in combat. You had to listen to what was going on in the ground. You had to
7 digest that, and the fighters are checking in saying, “Hey, I’m here. What do I do?” And
8 you got to know their call sign and where are they. Then you’re talking cruise control and
9 the radar guys about the bigger picture of what’s going on out there. So, that was the
10 hardest part, it was not flying the airplane. You tended to fly it with your knees to steer
11 the stick and you’re writing on the windshield and a lot of multitasking.

12 KC: And this is all pretty new training for you. You’ve flown before, but this is a
13 whole different kind of bird and a whole different kind of mission. You mentioned
14 writing on the window with a grease pencil and things. You and I know what we’re
15 talking about there, but for someone who may not be familiar with it, you talk about
16 writing on the window with a grease pencil. What’s the purpose of this?

17 DJ: Well, first of all, we fired rockets to mark the target and we didn’t have a
18 sight and we didn’t have anything. We literally would mark an X on the front windshield
19 as kind of an aiming point to fire the rockets and you kind of get a sight picture after a
20 while. They were white phosphorus rockets that we used to mark the target. And then the
21 O-1 had a door, they had plastic windows, and you could literally open those up when it
22 was real hot because you weren’t going that fast. You’re going about eighty-five knots to
23 one hundred knots. But mostly we would have those windows down partly for noise. And
24 you always carry two or three grease pencils with you because you never wanted to run
25 out of a grease pencil. You would write out all of the information about the fighter call
26 sign, what kind of ordnance do they have. You got a couple F-4s and they have what we
27 call snake-and-nape. They’d have Mark 82 snake eyes, five hundred pound bombs, and
28 they had fins that opened up on them so they could deliver them low altitude. They had
29 napalm. You had to know what those ammunitions would do, what kind of approaches
30 that the pilot would have to do. You couldn’t ask them to do things that they couldn’t do.
31 You wanted to know where you’d have Army call signs down there. You had a lot of

1 information on that windshield. In fact, if we ever went down, we wanted to make sure
2 that windshield melted or got blown up or something if we didn't have time to erase it.
3 There was a lot of classified information there.

4 KC: All right, now tell me about the training you received. How would you
5 characterize the training you received?

6 DJ: At Hurlburt?

7 KC: At Hurlburt, yes sir.

8 DJ: I would say it wasn't frenzied even though we knew now we're going to
9 combat, and people are getting killed. To me, it was a very intensive, but well-designed,
10 training. I thought, for two months, it was intensive, once again. A lot of information in a
11 short period of time. I thought, looking back after I had been a FAC that they really
12 prepared us very well. Whoever put that program together in a very short period of time
13 and almost nothing to lean on as far as precedent, they did a really good job of designing
14 a program to teach you the fundamentals. The airplane was simple enough, but to teach
15 the job of a FAC, I thought they did a good job of it. And it was all centered around
16 processing, assimilating, disseminating information. That was your main job.

17 KC: Yeah, to a very large degree it's about information. What you're getting and
18 what you're putting out to help others understand what the situation is.

19 DJ: Absolutely. Yeah, when you're there on the scene—in fact, General
20 Momeyer, I don't recall exactly how he said it, but he had remarked one time that the
21 forward air controller, he was the air battle commander on scene. And what we said,
22 went. We could stop a fight, start a fight. We'd call the fighters in, we could call them
23 off, we could send them home if we thought they were dangerous. We could tell the
24 Army, "We can't do this. It's unsafe." So, we kind of ran things as far as the air war in
25 South Vietnam.

26 KC: You mentioned a moment ago that you had these trainers, these instructors I
27 should say, who were coming back from Vietnam and telling you these things. You
28 mentioned this, you know, this basement of where you could go or the floor of where you
29 can go. You can't go any lower than fifteen hundred feet because of small arms fire, etc.
30 What other sorts of things are they telling you about the war there?

1 DJ: Well, it was more tactical. I don't recall very much in the philosophical or
2 strategic discussions in that time frame. I think you might have heard once in a while,
3 already some signs of a little bit of frustration about how we were fighting the war and
4 that here we were, oh, things like using a multi-million dollar airplane with multi-million
5 dollar weapons and all these troops to go out there and try to kill or disable a bunch of
6 stone-age grunts down there. Why are we doing this? Isn't there a better way? And we
7 had been taught the lessons of Air Power, that you don't fight little ground wars like that,
8 they're a waste of time, they're a waste of materiel and lives, that you go straight to the
9 heart of the matter. You know, you cut off the head of the snake. You don't just keep
10 killing all the fingers and the arms. You go to the head. And we weren't doing that. We
11 knew that, even then, that North Vietnam was off-limits and we couldn't do this, couldn't
12 do that and even in our war down south they were telling us—I remember some of these
13 FACs, they already had frustrations about the rules of engagement, the ROE. It was our
14 lasting frustration in the whole war, of the whole Air Force world, was the rules of
15 engagement. They were constantly changing, "You can't do this, you can't do that." And
16 they weren't as restrictive in the south as they were in the north, but there were a lot of
17 things that, you know, it was so frustrating to have the power that you knew you had and
18 that you couldn't employ it all, that you had to do it piece-meal. A little bit here, we'd go
19 do a search and destroy mission knowing full well we wouldn't stay there. And so, two
20 weeks later they'd be right back where we had been fighting two weeks before. And that
21 kind of war—even early on we were seeing frustrations and hearing comments about this
22 is not the way to fight a war, interesting.

23 KC: What did you find to be the most challenging aspect of your training there at
24 Hurlburt?

25 DJ: I think the multitasking. You know, I had absorbed a lot of the information
26 before, but having three people screaming at you on the radio at once, all in a panic. They
27 didn't, of course, go to extremes in the training, but they did try to impress upon you, you
28 got to listen. You got to pay attention; you've got to be able to sift out what's important.
29 You got to get the wheat out of the chaff in those radio calls because someone's probably
30 getting killed. I mean, you got to get there quick and you got to do something. So, you
31 know, the guy checking in, that's one thing, but a guy on the ground saying, "I need

1 something now.” You better hear that and do something. And I think that was the
2 challenging part of it.

3 KC: All right, now your mission and your goal and where you’re going and what
4 you’re going to be doing has changed dramatically from the time that you’re in the F-100
5 to the position of forward air controller in the Bird Dog. Now, you’re having to come to
6 grips with this and you know—I assume you know that you’re going to Vietnam at this
7 point.

8 DJ: We do.

9 KC: Okay. When do you graduate or finish there at Hurlburt and when do you get
10 your orders to go to Vietnam?

11 DJ: Okay, we got our orders while we’re still in training, but the orders were
12 somewhat unclear in that you didn’t have a unit yet that you were assigned to. You were
13 just assigned to, as I recall, they were kind of general, that you’re going to go to Vietnam
14 and you’re going to go to a local area check out there. I don’t know, maybe it was a
15 couple of weeks or something. And at that point, you will be assigned to where you’re
16 really going to go and who you’re going to be assigned to. And so, we finished up
17 training the end of February and in March, we had a short week at home or something
18 and then we processed out and flew. We went to—I think we went out of Travis. We
19 went over in C-141s. They flew us over in a military cargo plane. The aircraft
20 commander of the 141 that took me over was one of my classmates, Wayne Haring. How
21 about that for a small world?

22 KC: Classmate at what level?

23 DJ: From the Academy. Yeah, we still laugh about that. I spent half that trip
24 talking up there, telling jokes and stories and stuff with Wayne. That’s pretty interesting.

25 KC: Small world as you say.

26 DJ: Yeah. So anyway, we went over there and when we first arrived in Bien Hoa
27 my first impression was, “Boy, is it hot and humid here.” You were ringing wet in about
28 ten minutes. It was the first thing I remember because I never did like humidity and I’d
29 just come from Florida and didn’t like it there either. I had spent a lot of the time in the
30 desert and West Texas, so I do remember that as a first impression and also the smells.
31 All kinds of different smells; smoke, cooking smells of things I had never smelled before.

1 A lot of that, but we were just in Bien Hoa a short time and they took us down to Binh
2 Thuy down in IV Corps in the southern part down by the Mekong River south of Saigon.
3 And we did a short in-country training. Again, I thought, “Well done.” Well, you know,
4 talking about how to map read when all you got is a bunch of flat jungle out there. Next
5 to the multitasking, that was the next most important thing you had to do was learn how
6 to read a 1:50,000 map in detail and be able to fix your position within a few meters.
7 Even when the terrain was varying terrain, that’s not too hard to do with mountain
8 formations, but flat, you may have a few rivers. You couldn’t count on roads and maps
9 weren’t that accurate, so it was hard, hard to map-read. So, they taught us that, as best
10 they could.

11 KC: Before you get to Vietnam, did you go through jungle training? Say, in the
12 Philippines like most people did?

13 DJ: Oh yeah, yeah, I forgot about that. Yeah, they did. As part of our preparatory
14 training knowing that we were headed for jungle and in some cases, likely ending up in it,
15 I think the school had been there before, but they centered it around Vietnam escape and
16 evasion and survival training in the jungle and they did it near Clark Air Force Base in
17 the Philippines. We went through a two- week training program there and it was a good
18 program. I guess I always go back to how good the training was in the Air Force. But
19 they had a good training program there. They literally took you out in the jungle and they
20 gave you two or three days of, “Here’s what you can eat and here’s what you shouldn’t
21 eat.” Good thing about the jungle is there is always something to eat if you know what it
22 is. And then they introduced an enemy by these little guys, they call them Negritos, they
23 were native Filipinos, and they were little people that almost were still in the Stone Age.
24 They still threw spears, and it was pretty amazing. Of course, they also knew enough
25 about the western world, they’ve been told, “If you can go find a pilot out there in the
26 jungle, we’ll give you a bag of rice.” And so, we were priority targets. They had turned
27 us loose out there. I remember that first night I woke up at three in the morning and I
28 heard this rustling noise and I turned my flashlight on and I’m looking at the biggest rat
29 I’ve ever seen. I mean, as big as a dog. I didn’t sleep anymore that night. That was good
30 training about the rudiments, at least, of how to survive.

31 KC: Now was there any sort of escape, evasion kind of thing?

1 DJ: Well, they taught us as far as the Air Force's helicopters and how they could
2 come in and get in the jungle penetrator. They would drop down to get you and how to
3 climb on the cable and get pulled out and shooting flares and doing ground markings that
4 airplanes could spot from the air and how to make due as far as travel at night and don't
5 expose to horizon lines. You know, the basics of escape and evasion. And we had a rifle.
6 We carried the AR-15 with us, which was a version of the M-16. A good little rifle and
7 we learned to shoot that, and we also shot the 38 and forty-five pistols. So, we had some
8 fire training for survival.

9 KC: Would you characterize this as pretty accurate training? Something that was
10 useful?

11 DJ: I did, yeah. And a lot of guys remarked that, too, that had to use it.
12 Fortunately, I didn't, but it was good. Of course, before that, even, we had training in
13 another what they called survival training at Stead Air Force Base. We had done that
14 right out of pilot training and the Air Force started doing that for all pilots and learning
15 their experience from Korea that the kind of treatment you may get isn't what they used
16 to hear about. It was always bad, but it was psychologically bad in Korea. And so, they
17 came up with a program that both physically and mentally abused you for a couple of
18 days up at Stead Air Force Base in Nevada and they would teach you how to resist
19 interrogation. You know, basically survive. A lot of guys that ended up as POWs, they
20 said that training was invaluable. That it was close enough to the mark that you went in a
21 lot more prepared than the guys did getting shot down in Korea.

22 KC: Right, yeah, that was certainly the big concern for the US Air Force. The US
23 Military in general during Vietnam, of course. Tell me about this training you had at
24 Stead. We're getting a little off the timeline. It's fine, I think it's very interesting and I
25 think it's important. Describe the survival resistance training you received there at Stead?

26 DJ: Well, they tried to make it as realistic as they could, knowing that they only
27 had a few days to get the point across and you knew all along, "Hey, I can stand on my
28 head for two days. But even at that, they were able to create an environment—hostile.
29 You were out, in our case, in the Sierras hiking and you were learning how to hike and
30 map-read at night to get from one point to another. Fortunately, we had a full moon and
31 no snow. So that helped. But then, at the end of those few days of evasion, you'd get

1 caught. They'd take you and put you into this prison camp. The first thing I remember is,
2 these guys have played the roles of the prison captains and the guards. They were tough,
3 and they'd been taught to be, and some of them had actually been POWs and these guys
4 were tough. I mean, there was no slack there and they would jam you into a box that
5 you'd swear you wouldn't fit in. Especially, I'm 6'2" and I said, "There's no way I can fit
6 in that box." And they just literally shoved me into that box, and I was in there for two or
7 three hours. It seemed like two or three days, but I could hardly move when I got out.
8 You know, just short term, but somewhat painful and then they take you in and they'd
9 have the light in your face and this guy knew all about your personal background and
10 would talk about your family and kids and try and dig a little hole there somehow. They
11 just filled you in kind of a quick and dirty fashion what you might very well face. And it
12 was intimidating, even for a couple of days.

13 KC: Now, you knew the entire time that this was the Air Force doing this to you.

14 DJ: Absolutely.

15 KC: And that you weren't going to be there permanently, and it wasn't—did you
16 take it as seriously as you think that you might?

17 DJ: I took it pretty serious. I think most guys did. They played the role so well,
18 they'd even have accents and they just, you know, played the role. They were very good.
19 Maybe they went on to Hollywood or something, but for the time you were with them,
20 you swore they were the enemy. The way they talked, the way they acted, and talked about
21 capitalist pigs and how you were out there killing babies and they played the whole role.

22 KC: Very interesting. All right, let's take you back across the Pacific again.
23 You're in Vietnam and again, this is what, March of 1967, is that correct?

24 DJ: Yeah.

25 KC: Okay, March 1967, you arrive in South Vietnam and you said you spent
26 some time at Bien Hoa and then you're moving south down to IV Corps. When do you
27 get your assignment to the 21st Tactical Air Support Squadron?

28 DJ: I don't remember. I think we started making our selections, you know, they
29 gave us several—"Here's some things you might, you know, are better choices that are
30 available. Not that you'll get it, but they're available now. I think we were still at Bien
31 Hoa when we saw that list and when I looked at it, we knew we were going to the Army

1 because we were fighter guys. See, all of them weren't, but the ones that were knew they
2 were going to go to the US Army. I had gone to Fort Benning jump school when I was a
3 3rd class cadet. We were the first Academy class to go to paratroop training down at Fort
4 Benning.

5 KC: Oh, really?

6 DJ: So, I had my jump wings and I noticed that there was one brigade of the 101st
7 Airborne, the Screaming Eagles, that was in-country. In fact, they were General
8 Westmoreland's reaction force. That's what they called them, and they were one brigade,
9 and they went where the action was. I said, "Hey, I'm here." This looks like a good
10 match for me so I asked for that assignment and got it. Partly because I had my jump
11 wings. That was the start of a very interesting year. It did turn out that they were in on a
12 lot of the action, because we moved a lot. The bad news was our living conditions were
13 kind of grim because we were always in a tent, at best, because we moved—oh, every
14 three, four, five weeks, we'd be moving to another location. So, we didn't have a chance
15 to get established anywhere with better living conditions and we sure didn't have any air-
16 conditioned hooches or anything like that.

17 KC: Right.

18 DJ: We were out in the field and we were flying off a short 1,000-1,500 foot what
19 we called PSP strips, pierced steel planking. Sometimes we didn't even have that. They
20 had developed stuff that was penepreme. It was kind of an oil base and it would mix with
21 sand. And so, it was kind of a poor man's blacktop runway. Better than dust.

22 KC: Oh, absolutely.

23 DJ: Of course, there wasn't much you could fly out of there, but we could with
24 the O-1. It turned out to be kind of the perfect airplane for the job we had to do.

25 KC: I've often heard that. Despite the fact that it was a World War II-vintage
26 plane, it actually was what worked very, very well for the FACs.

27 DJ: It did the missions very well. It had the radios, and it could work out of
28 rugged conditions. It was easily maintained and dependable. It had a Continental engine
29 and just kept on going.

1 KC: While we're on the subject of planes here, and you mentioned this earlier.
2 The Misty FACs flew F-100s. Did that ever bother you that you were in the 0-1 rather
3 than the fast movers?

4 DJ: No, it didn't. By the time that came along a little later in '67, as I recall, when
5 the program cranked up, by then I was so fully immersed in my job, that it wasn't any
6 sour grapes or anything. You know, they got a job to do too and also it was a very high
7 risk mission going north in that airplane patrolling around trying to get people to shoot at
8 you. So, you know, each guy had their job to do. No, I didn't have any second thoughts
9 about that.

10 KC: Sure, and like you say, you get used to the Bird Dog from what I understand,
11 you get very used to it and you find out how effective it is and how versatile it is for
12 doing that kind of mission. All right, so you're going to be assigned to the 21st TASS and
13 you're going to be attached to the 101st. Where were you based out of? The 21st TASS
14 was based out of—

15 DJ: Nha Trang.

16 KC: Okay, so you were not in Pleiku, you were out of Nha Trang.

17 DJ: We were out of Nha Trang. I went there when I first finished my training and
18 I met, you know, basically the administrative part of being into the TASS and here's
19 where your paycheck is and here's your interface with the outside world basically. You'll
20 probably not be here much and that was an understatement. I probably wasn't in Nha
21 Trang more than three weeks out of the whole year.

22 KC: Oh, is that right? Wow.

23 DJ: I'd fly in there, go have a nice meal at the officers club and it was surreal. I'd
24 be out there watching a 16 millimeter class D, class C movie outside and ten miles away
25 you could see the war going on. You could see bombs going off and there you are sitting
26 there watching a movie, drinking a beer. Only in Vietnam, I guess. It was weird.

27 KC: Well, describe Nha Trang when you arrived there in '67. You weren't there
28 very long or very often, but what was Nha Trang like?

29 DJ: It was nice. Nha Trang had been selected by the French to be the French
30 Riviera of the Far East and they were starting to do that. They had built some beautiful
31 homes there and had a couple of really nice restaurants. It was always the strange thing

1 about that war is how you could be one day out there fighting for your life and the next
2 day you're sitting there in a French restaurant eating a lobster and all the trimmings,
3 drinking a bottle of Chateau Neuf de Pape. It was just pretty unreal, the extremes. Nha
4 Trang was nice. Beautiful beaches there and I understand now the cruise ships are going
5 in there. It really was a pretty place, although you had signs of war by then. The base was
6 busy, a lot of airplanes coming and going all the time, but mostly prop jobs because they
7 had short runways and mostly it was FAC- type business, but it was a place that was
8 business-like, busy, but you know, it was enough removed, as for the nice town, except
9 for that night-time combat in the mountains off to the distance. You weren't in the war
10 there, you were just near it.

11 KC: One of the things that strikes me about forward air controllers, pilots in
12 general, forward air controllers in particular in Vietnam are the personalities of the
13 forward air controllers. I think the personalities really stand out in the position that you
14 were in and you had a wide range of personalities in the forward air controllers, but there
15 are some common characteristics I think among many of them. Describe the people you
16 were with, the type of relationship that you had with other forward air controllers. What
17 was that environment like?

18 DJ: That's an interesting point. You know, there were different kinds of FACs
19 because you had the Army FACs that were fighter pilots, and then you had all the other
20 FACs that came from all the other parts of the Air Force. They were cargo pilots, bomber
21 pilots. Of course, I'm a little prejudice being in the fighter world, but there seemed to be
22 kind of a more devil-may-care, aggressive, sometimes kind of cynical sense of humor
23 sort of thing from the FACs I was around that were all working with the Army. We had a
24 comradery that was very close, and it was more tied to the unit we were with, whereby a
25 lot of the sector FACs, you know, they may have been working with an ARVN unit or
26 something, but it wasn't that everyday you're totally immersed with these guys fighting
27 for their life down on the ground as much. A lot of them were just looking in a sector,
28 they called it, and they would learn all the things about it. And that was an important role,
29 too, but it was different from being right with the Army in the field. And so, I guess the
30 things I kind of noticed and enjoyed was the common background we had and the
31 comradery we had, and you always hear that about war. The most important thing is the

1 people you're fighting with and it kind of overrides everything. And I think there's some
2 truth to that. And we all worked together, we planned our missions very carefully, we
3 went to bat for each other and if someone couldn't make it and another one could we'd
4 fill in for each other and it was a very close association. There were, I think, mostly eight
5 of us at one time assigned to the First Brigade and we rotated flying dawn-to-dark
6 virtually every day, whenever the weather allowed.

7 KC: That brings up a good point here or a good question for you to ask. Once
8 you've come to Nha Trang and you've got yourself set up there, what is your daily
9 routine there? Tell me, for the second you wake up in the morning, whatever time that is,
10 to the time you put your head back down at night. What is your daily routine?

11 DJ: Okay, well, in Nha Trang there isn't much to tell. I was there only three or
12 four days; I think at the most. Just doing admin processing and then almost immediately
13 one of the FACs from the 101st Airborne came in and picked me up and took me out. So,
14 I was dumped into the jungle within about four days. And so, my routine there started
15 very quickly and very suddenly. I think they do that sometimes to break in new FACs. I
16 had my own tent. I had what they called a GP small and Air Force officers were given
17 that privilege, but I was right by the 155 howitzer batteries and they were doing what
18 they call H and I fires, Harassment and Interdiction, and those suckers started going off
19 about midnight and I was just starting to fall asleep and I came flying out of my bed. Oh
20 my god, we're getting mortared my very first night in-country, so the Army had a big
21 laugh over that, of course,

22 KC: Now where were you in this jungle?

23 DJ: That was in a place called Khanh Duong.

24 KC: Okay.

25 DJ: It was, as I recall, not that far at forty, fifty miles maybe from Nha Trang. Of
26 course, in the jungle it was a long ways, but it was so different to go from Nha Trang to
27 literally an opening in the jungle, and there was a Montagnard village, and that was my
28 first exposure to the Montagnards, who I still admire to this day. They were amazing
29 people. They were very resourceful, very independent. No one ever controlled them, and
30 they learned how to live off the land and you know, there we were sweltering in a tent
31 and they were relatively cool in thatched-roof buildings that were raised off the ground,

1 so you didn't get that ground heat. I said, "Geez, maybe we need to learn something from
2 these savages here." A lot more comfortable than we are. It was kind of funny. They
3 didn't have many teeth, after chewing roots and nuts, but they were interesting people.

4 KC: I've seen some of the photographs or from the slides that you've taken that
5 you've donated to the archive with the Montagnards, as well as the 155 battery. At this
6 first place you were, what was the overall layout? Can you describe this particular camp
7 for me?

8 DJ: It was a very typical brigade layout and one thing I must say that I always
9 admired and liked about being with the 101st Airborne is that those guys were tough, they
10 were organized, they were disciplined. I never felt safer in Vietnam than when I was in
11 the brigade camp. I mean, if anybody tried to probe their perimeter, it was like stirring up
12 a bunch of hornets. They would just go crazy. They defended their perimeter, I mean,
13 with everything they had. And we were in an area that wasn't that active then. Thank
14 goodness, that gave me a little time to get broken in. It was kind of a quiet area in II
15 Corps and this was March/April of '67. They were mostly doing search and destroy
16 missions. They'd take a squadron—I mean a platoon, and head out and go into areas
17 trying to find the Viet Cong, primarily Viet Cong. And so, we were in support of that, but
18 we didn't have much contact, very little contact with the enemy in the first month in-
19 country.

20 KC: Now, would you receive any sort of briefing with the platoon or a company
21 that might be going out?

22 DJ: Every day. I knew everything about the people I was assigned to. I was the
23 FAC for what they called the second five-o-deuce, battalion. It was one of the battalions
24 of the 1st brigade.

25 KC: The 2nd battalion 502nd.

26 DJ: 2nd battalion 502. And I went out, to get a feel for what they could see; I went
27 out into the field with them on the ground on a couple of missions with a backpack, the
28 way they used to do it with a FAC.

29 KC: All right flyboy, what's it like—

30 DJ: Here I was a grunt.

31 KC: What's it like to go out and go with these guys?

1 DJ: I didn't like it. I felt so vulnerable and if you're a guy with a radio on your
2 back, you're the first target anyway and that was scary. I felt it was necessary because I
3 had to appreciate what they could and couldn't see, especially.

4 KC: Did anybody ask you to do this?

5 DJ: I went down there in a double, triple layer canopy.

6 KC: Did anybody ask you to do this or was it something you wanted to do on
7 your own?

8 DJ: No, it wasn't something anybody told me to do. I just volunteered to do it
9 because I felt I had to do that because there was no way to appreciate their environment
10 unless you were in it. There was just no way you could tell somebody what you could see
11 in triple layer canopy. Or more important, what you couldn't see. A lot of our job among
12 other things was to locate them. Even though they were pretty good at map reading, they
13 got buried in that jungle down there and I'd have them pop a smoke, a little can of smoke
14 so that I could identify by map reading where they were, and I got pretty good at that. I
15 could usually spot them within, oh, twenty-five, fifty meters, at worst, if I had any kind of
16 terrain at all. I got to know the terrain so well, but yeah, that's what it was.

17 KC: Take me back out on the ground with these guys. Tell me your experiences
18 walking through this triple-canopy jungle. What you saw, what kind of toll it took on
19 you, etcetera. What was it like to go on the ground with them?

20 DJ: Well, it's a very, very focus- limited environment. There's no big picture to it.
21 You're in there for survival with about ten, twelve other guys. You know what their
22 capabilities are pretty much. You know what their tactics are if they come under fire and
23 you know what your job is in those cases, about how to support them and what kind of
24 things you could bring to bear. But mostly I was just impressed when you get in that kind
25 of an environment, how narrow your focus is. You just can't see much. Of course, it
26 wasn't all jungle, but so much of it was that when you broke out in a clearing, even then
27 you were worried because now people could see you. It was always very threatening; you
28 just didn't know where it was going to come from.

29 KC: Now, how often did you go out with these guys?

1 DJ: Well, I went out with them on the ground a couple of times. And I felt that
2 was enough to give me the feel for what they were doing and then I started flying after
3 that.

4 KC: Did your company or platoon encounter the enemy in combat while you were
5 with them?

6 DJ: Oh yeah, uh-huh, oh yeah. On occasion, even in the first month there, but they
7 were kind of limited, they weren't full-scale battles. It was more snipe shoot and sniper
8 fire kind of stuff. It wasn't anything where we had to bring in a large amount of airpower,
9 not in those early days. I need to—I was wondering if we could take a break here.

10 KC: Well, why don't we stop there for today? We're about up with our time
11 anyway.

12 DJ: Okay.

Interview with Dean Jones

Session [2] of [3]

Date Unknown

1 Dean Jones: It's kind of fortunate in a way that even though I was going into an
2 outfit that was Westmoreland's reaction force, there was kind of a pause in the fighting
3 world and where I went with them up at Khanh Duong in II Corps was a fairly quiet area.
4 And so, I didn't get thrown into the breach of having to go out the very first day and be
5 tested. I had a little time to get used to flying in-country and getting used to my outfit and
6 to learn the general lingo and the lay of the land and the radios and who to talk to. Just
7 the general business of being a FAC. So, I had two or three weeks there initially that was
8 pretty quiet, and it was kind of a breaking in period and in hindsight that was fortunate.
9 Some of my buddies weren't quite that lucky and almost immediately were under fire and
10 a real baptism to the real world of combat. It took a little longer for us. After that period
11 there at Khan Duong, then they moved us up to I Corps and we moved to a place called
12 Duc Pho, which is just a little village. It didn't really amount to anything, town-wise, but
13 our area of responsibility, or AOR, they call it, was down in southern I Corps. This is the
14 area south of Da Nang and bordered from I Corps up to about half way up to Da Nang
15 and well back into the hill country. So, we went from the coast back into the hill country
16 there in that area. We started seeing quite a bit more activity there. An activity to us was
17 usually in a form of what they called troops-in-contact. Our squads, our platoons and
18 squads were going out to search and destroy, really, to try and find weapons caches and
19 the Viet Cong tunnels and areas that they fought out of, and it was a very pain-staking
20 tedious kind of job. As I had mentioned a couple days ago, the frustration of that to me,
21 and I think it was to the Army guys, too, was that sure they could go and clear an area out
22 and go through it and be pretty thorough and be sure that for some period of time that it
23 was safe. We wouldn't occupy the area; we would just go through it. So inevitably, you
24 know, not too long after we'd left, they would infiltrate back in until that strategy of
25 search and destroy didn't seem very effective to me and to a lot of people. It's interesting
26 to watch what's happening now in Afghanistan and, of course, in Iraq, too. We found out
27 the very same thing, you got to occupy it. You can't just go through and clear it out. In
28 insurgency wars, you got to win the hearts and minds of the people sort of thing and
29 ultimately you got to not only clear it, you've got to occupy and replace what was there

1 with hopefully something better that the people will support because otherwise it's a
2 losing effort. So anyway, that's what we were doing. A lot more regular at that point
3 we'd get caught up in providing close air support for troops-in-contact. Usually, it would
4 be a gradual escalation of firepower. The 101st Airborne was fairly lightly armored. They
5 didn't have tanks and they didn't have much in the way of APCs or anything. They were
6 mostly infantry guys with 105s. They had the 105 Howitzer. That kind of artillery was
7 about all they took with them. They could haul those around with helicopters and set up
8 emplacements for them, but even at that, they were pretty mobile. The 101st was able to
9 move around. Helicopters allowed them to do that and so a lot of times the artillery was
10 out of range or it just wasn't the right weapon for the job for whatever reason. At that
11 point, if the fight was escalating and it looked like they were outnumbered or cornered or
12 that it was something where we could bring firepower to bear, that's when they would
13 call us. Of course, we sat in on daily briefings with the brigade commander and all the
14 platoon commanders and so we knew who they were, where they were, call signs. Some
15 of that we had on our maps which we had to destroy, we knew, if we ever went down. A
16 lot of it we just committed to memory and day after day we got to know them anyway.
17 So, we really did know as much, almost as much as the commanders themselves about
18 what was going on. We had FM contact with them and so not only were we sometimes
19 helping to locate them, but of course, we could almost predict when we were going to get
20 calls for firepower because we could hear the war escalating down there. After a while,
21 just the tone of their voice was enough to tell us, "That's real trouble down there. These
22 guys are pinned down; they're way outnumbered or whatever. It's time to do something."
23 Then they would call for us.

24 KC: Now, let me ask you this. On a particular day, or any given day, what I want
25 you to do is take me through the routine from the time you get up, the time you accept a
26 mission, the time you go out, what it's like to have troops in contact and everything
27 you're going to be doing. I mean, juggling the information, calling the fighters, dropping
28 white phosphorous, all that stuff. Give me a run-down of all of that.

29 DJ: Well, we provided FAC air cover for our units basically 24/7. I'm sorry, that
30 isn't really true. It's really about 12/7. We weren't nighttime most of the time. We did do
31 a little bit of night combat night flying, but not too much. We weren't very effective at it.

1 Our fighters had a hard time seeing and so did we and we did that very, very carefully
2 and not very often. The dawn to dark flying, we were first FAC airborne at daybreak. At
3 Duc Pho, that was an interesting thing in itself because they would mine the roads. The
4 airstrip we had was about two miles from the brigade area and they'd mine the road at
5 night and so the first flight of the morning, the helicopters would fly us over to the
6 airstrip from the brigade. Helicopters that were right there with the brigade would fly us
7 over to the airstrip. Of course, the Army guys, they loved that. They always tried to buzz
8 and show us how close they could fly to a tree.

9 KC: Showing off to the pilots.

10 DJ: It was fun, and we rotated that as far as who got the first flying. But we would
11 fly typically two to three-hour missions and we would fly pretty much every day, the
12 rotation was such that there were only six to eight FACs to the brigade and so we were
13 flying almost every day. Over the years' time there, I piled up about eight hundred hours
14 of combat flying and three hundred and sixty missions, so I averaged almost one a day.

15 KC: Had you received any sort of briefing on what was going to be going on,
16 where this particular unit was going to be?

17 DJ: Yes, the night before—and usually about four o'clock in the afternoon we
18 would have a brigade briefing and all the main staff, his staff, and we were a member of
19 his staff, actually, the brigade ALO, or Air Liaison Officer, Major Blanton, was a major
20 and the rest of us were captains, and he would attend a briefing or sometimes, if it
21 involved one of our particular battalions that we were working with, then we'd sit in, as
22 well, but usually the ALO was there. He was a member of the commander's staff—it was
23 a brigadier general, by the way. Most brigades are colonels, but because it was a separate
24 brigade, then it was a one-star. And his staff would have a meeting and they would
25 discuss what happened that day and what's going to happen the next day and sometimes
26 it'd get into further down the road as well. But usually, it was a day to day thing about
27 what we're going to do, and it would include all the logistics, communications, you
28 know, fire power, and of course they got to know what we could do very quickly, and
29 they really depended on us. We had a very good working relationship with them. They
30 treated us like—they gave us the best of what they had, little tents of our own and always

1 made sure we were well-fed and they really took good care of us because they knew that
2 if they got in real trouble, they were going to really need that airpower.

3 KC: Right, right.

4 DJ: It was a very good working relationship.

5 KC: Now you'd mention that they'd go over things like firepower and
6 communications and all of that. Can you provide me with any sort of details about that?
7 What kind of things?

8 DJ: The ALO usually had a pretty good handle of what kind of airpower was
9 going to be available. It varied and the things we usually used were F-100s. We had
10 Marine A-4s that were flying local there, mostly out of Da Nang and Chu Lai. We had A-
11 1 Sky raiders sometimes. They did a lot of the Sandy work for rescue, but we had the use
12 of them sometimes. We had the Air Force F-4s out of Cam Ranh Bay and those F-4s
13 were splitting duty between North Vietnam and South Vietnam. And then we had—well,
14 we had F-101 and RF-4 Recce birds if we had to have some special reconnaissance done,
15 but most of that work was going on up north. We FACed in a lot of the recce work local,
16 including cameras, but mostly it was just visual and plotting things on a map. Anyway,
17 we had a pretty good feel about what kind of airpower day to day was going to be
18 available and mostly on where any action was. If you had a big firefight going
19 somewhere it could draw off some of what you thought you might have in your district,
20 but it might have to be sent somewhere else. So, there was a pecking order to that which
21 was pretty much prioritized on where the action was and who needed it, but the beauty of
22 the system was that the DASC, the Direct Air Support Center, could see the big picture
23 and so they were pretty good at allocating their power so that there was enough to go
24 around and nobody got shorted out on that. Day-to-day, I thought they did a pretty
25 doggone good job.

26 KC: Okay, now you've received your briefing the night before and you go back to
27 the hooch and you do the things you need to do. You say the next morning you get up and
28 the Army helicopter pilots fly you out to the strip, right?

29 DJ: Right, if I got first flight I could expect probably, oh, five o'clock in the
30 morning or something like that. I'd be meeting a chopper down at the helo pad, they
31 called it, and they'd take us over to the flight line. The crew chief lived over by the flight

1 line that took care of our airplanes. By the way, they were just the best. Those guys were
2 so good at keeping those airplanes going. The hardest part, of course, was keeping all the
3 electronics working and the airplane itself was not real hard to maintain, but nevertheless,
4 in the whole year I flew over there, I only had one maintenance mishap the whole time.
5 And so, I certainly all through the years have always admired how dedicated those guys
6 were because they had crappy living conditions and it was a thankless job. I mean, we
7 always thanked them, but still, it was kind of dirty working and they weren't in combat
8 usually, but they were awful close to it. They were good. We could count on an airplane
9 starting up; the rockets would fire when we wanted them to, the radios mostly worked.
10 And when they didn't, it was more a matter of a bunch of old radios and some pretty bad
11 conditions with sand and dust and a lot of humidity, so naturally we were going to have
12 some problems.

13 KC: Sure.

14 DJ: But they worked pretty good. So, we cranked up and we would fly these two
15 to three-hour flights over our area and we wouldn't necessarily stay right over our troops.
16 First of all, that's not a good idea. You know, you didn't want Charlie to think that
17 wherever you were flying was where the good guys were. So, you kind of varied your
18 patterns, but sometimes we'd be going out further away from the main brigade area to
19 work with what they call LRRPs. They were long range reconnaissance patrols and
20 sometimes Marine recon guys, too, but they'd be out in the boonies all by themselves and
21 they'd go out there and drop them in and they'd be watching trails or something and
22 sometimes their only real contact with the outside world was us. You know, as far as
23 radio, those FM radios don't have much range. So sometimes we would relay for them
24 and sometimes we'd help locate them. By the way, on one of those missions, with that
25 maintenance mishap I told you about, an oil cap came off that hadn't been pinned
26 properly and it vibrated off. Unbeknownst to me, I was losing oil out of the engine. We
27 flew with our windows open because it was so hot, and I had my arm dangling down the
28 side of the airplane and when I brought it up it was covered in oil. I knew I was losing oil
29 and I didn't know how much I had lost by then and didn't know if I had enough to make
30 it back. So fortunately, I was out on one of those boon dock areas with those LRRPs guys
31 and they had a little airstrip because they had little planes like ours. You know, the L-19,

1 the Army version of our airplane. They worked with observers and things. So, I went in
2 and I knew that this particular one was manned and so I went in there and it was a good
3 thing I went in there because I was almost completely out of oil by the time I landed
4 there. It was typical warfare. These guys, they had oil in fifty-gallon drums and they
5 brought out some oil for my airplane in a Rainbow Bread sack. I couldn't believe it, they
6 climbed up on the airplane, stuck it in there, poured oil in my airplane, and screwed the
7 cap back on and pinned it right this time and I took off. You know, that was routine, but it
8 could have been real exciting for me if that engine had frozen up and here I am out in the
9 boonies. We didn't have parachutes. We opted for flack vests instead because the odds
10 were greater of us getting drilled by a rifle than getting hit in such a way that we would
11 have time to bail out. We were usually fairly low to the ground.

12 KC: Right, right.

13 DJ: We had a steel plate under the seat so if we got drilled from underneath, then
14 we'd survive this. The first vests we wore were just hotter than heck. They were soggy,
15 heavy things. But then the Kevlar vest came in about two or three months later and they
16 were much lighter, and they claimed would stop at least an AK round and I guess they
17 mostly did. It wouldn't necessarily stop a 50 cal.

18 KC: Right, a few things will.

19 DJ: But they were pretty good. Anyway, we would be out in an area like that and
20 mostly just seeing if we could see anything unusual in a way of movement or traffic or
21 things that hadn't been there the day before and particularly watching along road lines,
22 river lines, areas that lent themselves to easier movement on the ground, knowing that's
23 probably where they'd be and try to figure out that sort of thing. I must say that the
24 insurgents there were very good at jungle fighting. I mean, they had done it against the
25 French and probably the Japanese and these people have lived and died doing that for
26 decades. And so, they are really good at it and of course it was their territory, they knew
27 it backwards and forwards and had posed a really difficult problem as far as trying to pin
28 them down.

29 KC: Okay, so you're in your plane, you've got it fired up and you're flying over
30 the general area, the area of responsibility, but you know where your guys are going to

1 be. The people you're responsible for. You're doing a little reconnoitering. Now, this
2 group makes contact with the enemy, let's say.

3 DJ: Right.

4 KC: Take it from there.

5 DJ: Okay, well usually these sort of things would start out kind of small and
6 there'd be some sniper fire maybe or something like that, but then once in a while either
7 the Vietcong decided that they were in large enough numbers or well enough located to
8 take on, let's say, a whole platoon or vice versa. That they would butt heads in such a
9 manner that the thing escalated and when it escalated, what we tried to avoid was the
10 Army guys getting pinned down in such a matter that they were trapped or would be
11 receiving a lot of fire and couldn't get away from it. Either the gunships couldn't get in or
12 it wasn't sufficient firepower and going through triple-layer jungle, sometimes they just
13 didn't—even a 105 Howitzer, just wasn't enough punch to get the job done. So that's
14 when they called us in and they would give us—they may have coordinates, but more
15 often than not it was direct physical eyeball sort of thing where they would pop smoke to
16 show their location and of course, we would identify the colors because the VC would
17 sometimes get on our radio freq. and they knew about our tactics and they'd pop smoke,
18 too, to try to confuse us. We'd do different colors of smoke to identify where they were.
19 Sometimes they'd use mirrors and things like that, but it was obviously very important
20 that we knew exactly where the friendly troops were, because the worst thing that could
21 happen to us was to bomb our own troops. Of course, that was the main reason we were
22 there was to preclude that from happening and getting the firepower exactly where it
23 should be placed. So, first and foremost protect the troops and then secondly get those
24 bombs on target. In a typical firefight, once we identified the friendlies, from their
25 description, they'd say, "Okay, we're receiving fire 200 meters north of our position."
26 They would try to identify it either by a landmark or relative to them. And typically, once
27 the fighters checked in, they would come up and we would first call through the air
28 control system in-country to call for firepower. And we'd see what was available and
29 when it was going to arrive, we'd get an estimated time of arrival. The fighters, some of
30 them sat alert. Sometimes they would have them airborne already. Sometimes they would
31 divert fighters that were on their way to some other target. If our firefight was more

1 serious, it was a priority thing and the DASC had reassigned people. A lot of times it
2 would be 100s sitting alert down at Phan Rang or over at Bien Hoa, and they would come
3 up. Of course, it's a big country to us and little airplanes, but for an F-100, in a few
4 minutes, they could join us. You know, fifteen, twenty minutes was usually the most time
5 between when we called for power and when we got it. We were pretty responsive. So,
6 these guys would check in on UHF and meanwhile we're talking to the Army on FM.
7 They would tell us who they were, what ordnance they had, how much time on station
8 they thought they would have. So, then I would brief them on the situation and give them
9 a real quick tactical briefing about, "Okay, we got friendlies at such and such a position
10 and, of course, coordinates and stuff wouldn't help the fighters. This is long before GPS
11 so again, more of just plain old visual, seat-of-the-pants, here we are. I said, "I will mark
12 the target for you when you guys are ready to go. When we get that mark in, I'll describe
13 where the friendlies are from that and where the enemy is from that." They would usually
14 be in an orbit around fifteen thousand or so and you may have a two-ship, you may have
15 a three- or a four-ship sometimes. More typically in South Vietnam, you'd have a two-
16 ship. And they'd be loaded with five hundred pound bombs, what we called snake eyes,
17 that worked really well because they could get closer to the target and release a bomb
18 more precisely and not worrying about blowing themselves out of the sky. These tail fins
19 would come open after the bomb was released and they slowed down the bomb. And they
20 were very effective, and they had those at 500 and 750 configurations, usually. And then
21 sometimes we'd have napalm, but we didn't use napalm all that much. I know it's
22 something you see in the movies. They loved to show napalm with the big fireballs and
23 everything. It wasn't terribly effective in jungle, triple-layer jungle like that and it didn't
24 stick around very long, didn't have much blast power or anything and so we preferred
25 these snake eye-type bombs. The other thing that we used depending on the target were
26 CBU-24, it was bomblets, and these bomblets were in a bomb shell and the shell would
27 open above the ground and these little bomblets would then spread out as they came
28 down and then they would go off and it was a real good anti-personnel weapon and if you
29 were trying to take out a gun site or something or if you had a clustering of soldiers it was
30 a very good anti-personnel weapon. The drawback of it was a lot of them didn't go off
31 and so through the years those kinds of weapons have either been outlawed or frowned

1 upon because the residual damage on them was pretty high, unfortunately. You know, at
2 the time, for many targets they were pretty effective.

3 KC: Tell me about this part of it. You are hearing and seeing from the grounds
4 point of view. The Army is telling you, "All right, here's what we've got, here's what we
5 think we need this for, need the fire to come in." And you've got to take what they see,
6 you process it, and you have to translate it to convert it into fighter jock lingo.

7 DJ: That is true.

8 KC: Now you've been in fighters before. How do you translate what is going on
9 on the ground to a guy who is moving five hundred miles an hour and will be over target
10 for about two seconds?

11 DJ: Yeah, very good question. That really gets to the heart of the FAC. Why do
12 we have a FAC and why is he a fighter-qualified FAC? The ability to do that translation,
13 to know what the Army has seen and how they're feeling down there and what they're
14 encountering and taking that and translating it to something, having done it yourself,
15 knowing kind of, maybe not exactly what they're seeing, but pretty good. You know
16 what they're seeing and how that when you're down there at fifteen hundred feet it's one
17 thing. When you're rolling in from 10,000 feet, as you say, doing 450, that's a different
18 ball game. The important thing was to get the pilot's eyes on the target. You had to make
19 sure that lead was an experienced old-head guy. The best thing in the F-100s, they were.
20 The F-4s, not necessarily, but the F-100s, these were old-head fighter pilots. These guys
21 were good day in and day out. I must also say, A-4s that we worked with, that's all they
22 did was close air support. That was their primary mission, and they were very good at
23 what they did. The trick was to get their eyes on the target. If they could see it and knew
24 what it was, sometimes all it was was just the smoke from our white phosphorous rocket.
25 That was maybe all they had to go on. And so, then you had to translate that and say, "All
26 right, from that smoke hit the target dead on, or the main target is 100 meters north of that
27 smoke, and you've got to come in on a run-in from 260, otherwise, you're going to be
28 going across the friendlies." What you didn't want is to have those fighters dragging
29 across the friendlies on release. The worst problem we had was either early or late pickle
30 times and the bombs would hit long or short of the target so you had to make sure that
31 these guys were running parallel to the friendly line so that wouldn't happen. Of course,

1 we also had strays. You know, they also had twenty millimeter cannons and so that
2 would be kind of our last resort most of the time. Sometimes it was our first pick because
3 it was so accurate. If we were working very, very close to friendlies, we would opt for
4 strafing first and try to get in close and do the job. Yeah, that was the hard part. One of
5 our most important jobs is on that very first roll-in when lead said, "I'm in hot." Which
6 means he's gotten all the switches armed and he's ready to drop something. Well first of
7 all, you clear him in. It's a famous saying about FACs is "you're cleared in hot."
8 Sometimes we'd make them do a dry pass first to make darn sure they saw where the
9 target was and were doing a roll-in that would work, if there was any doubt at all. We
10 didn't want to do that, though, because obviously that was a heads-up to the enemy, but
11 that first roll in, man, we'd watch them so careful to make sure that lead had the target,
12 that his alignment was right and that things just looked right for a good weapons release.
13 And usually once you got that first bomb in there, then things got a little easier. Number
14 two could see that first bomb go off and he had just enough spacing so that you could
15 say, "Okay two, from lead's hit, go fifty meters north or short or right or whatever to get
16 him lined up right." So that was key, was getting that first guy in there and I must say,
17 day in and day out, they did a really good job of it. I always admired the professionalism
18 of those guys, knowing how hard it was and especially when they were burning the rice
19 fields off and you had smoke and haze. It was hard to see. And then of course, in the
20 afternoon in monsoon season we had thunderstorms almost every day and we had low
21 ceilings also during the winter, the rainy months. So, you're working under low ceilings
22 and trying to dive bomb. Sometimes it would get so low that the only thing we could use
23 were A-1s, the old prop job Sky raiders, because they were flying slow enough that they
24 could work below those ceilings when they got down, say, below five thousand feet AGL
25 or something. And so, they were a very important part of the mix to us. Especially the
26 low ceiling conditions. And also, they had a lot more time on station compared to the jet
27 fighters. They could stick around for half an hour instead of ten or fifteen minutes. And
28 they had all kinds of weapons on board. They could stay with you and do a lot of good
29 jobs. I know right now we're talking about looking at a new counterinsurgency airplane
30 for use in Afghanistan and my reply is, "Just go get the Sky raiders out of the bone yard
31 and put them back to work." That airplane was perfectly suited for that role.

1 KC: I've heard a lot of people say that.

2 DJ: Huh?

3 KC: I've heard a lot of people say that. The loiter time on the target and the 20
4 millimeter cannon and all of those things.

5 DJ: Yeah, it was an excellent counterinsurgency airplane and it did all kinds of
6 things. Some of them had a big cabin and they carried three or four guys. They could go
7 in and pick somebody up even. And they were rugged; they'd take a lot of hits. They
8 were really rugged airplanes with big, powerful engines in them. I flew with the
9 Vietnamese a couple times in their Sky raiders just to see what it looked like because I
10 had never done that, having flown the jets. But just to get a feel for that and those were
11 exciting rides. The Vietnamese guys are really good pilots in those things. The first time
12 he rolled in to dive bomb I said, "Oh, we're going to die." I mean, we're doing sixty
13 degrees, it seemed like straight down, and he'd pickle that sucker off and I couldn't see
14 any way he was going to keep it from hitting the ground. It was pretty exciting. It opened
15 my eyes a little on the perspective of that kind of aircraft support, and very good at what
16 they did.

17 KC: Now, were you ever involved in any sort of bomb damage assessment after a
18 run like this? After an engagement?

19 DJ: Yes, routinely we would do that not only from our own firefights, but also
20 once in a while, we would order what they called the B-52 strikes, Arclight, Arclight
21 strikes. We would work with the brigade commander, usually, and not too often, but if
22 there was an area that they wanted to carpet bomb and it was very, very rugged, real hard
23 to get to, and they were convinced that there was a bunch of Charlie's running around up
24 in there. They thought that would be the best way to get to them and arc lights were
25 almost always at night, hoping that that's when they would be out moving around, and
26 we would set these things up. Typically, it would be a box that would be, say, a mile wide
27 and about seven or eight miles long. That would be the box that we would ask the B-52s
28 to put their bombs in. They were really good at that. They would dribble one over the end
29 sometimes, short, or long, so we always allowed a little slop factor for that, but I'll tell
30 you, those guys were good. They'd drop them on things from thirty, forty thousand feet. I
31 remember the first one I ordered; it was really pretty close to our camp. It was up by Duc

1 Pho there and those bombs started going off at about five in the morning and I came
2 flying out of my cot. I had forgotten that I had ordered the strike. I mean the sound of—I
3 guess the Vietcong said it was the scariest thing they ever experienced. I can't even
4 imagine, you know, forty or fifty seven hundred and fifty pound bombs going off within
5 a few seconds. Just shook the ground. I mean, it was like a little earthquake and we were
6 ten miles away. That was pretty awesome.

7 KC: Now, you said that you ordered strikes, and these were strategic strikes to
8 begin with, but you were the one who picked out the area that you thought.

9 DJ: That's correct, yeah, I was in discussions with Intel guys and the brigade
10 commander would actually order it, but then we would go through our system and put it
11 into the DASC, who, in turn, would go to SAC and make it happen.

12 KC: Okay, after a typical mission, if there is such thing as a typical mission.
13 You've got the troops-in-contact, you've brought in the airpower and that's over. I mean,
14 you successfully completed that. What would you do next?

15 DJ: Well, it depended on the intensity and the length of the fight. Now sometimes,
16 we could fly for about four hours on a tank of gas. And so, what we had to be careful of
17 was the way we set up our schedules, we overlapped so that a FAC would be coming into
18 an area, say, with five or ten minutes overlap with the old FAC so that we'd always have
19 somebody there. If things were getting a little terse out there—well for instance, maybe I
20 used up all my rockets and/or maybe was anticipating having trouble getting back to the
21 field for whatever the reasons, or happened to take some circuitous route. Sometimes
22 we'd call to get the next FAC scrambled early to replace us or be ready to replace us. A
23 lot of times it was just because we needed more rockets to mark things with. We also had
24 canned smoke that we would drop out the window. It was pretty crude, but we could use
25 that sometimes if we had to, but we didn't like it because it made us more of a target to
26 do that. I tried to avoid that. Whenever we were down low to the ground, especially if we
27 got below the 1500 foot thing, we tried to make sure we were changing and moving all
28 the time. No straight lines flying down there. You had to keep moving around all the time
29 and make yourself as difficult a target as you could. Anyway, either we were getting low
30 on gas or we were being replaced in any event, then we would head back to the field and
31 the guy coming in, we would give him a briefing to get him up to speed on where

1 everybody is and of course, they already pretty well knew the ground situation. They had
2 been listening, and we had the ability to listen to some of that back at the brigade,
3 depending on how close we were and whether the radios would pick it up. Sometimes we
4 could hear the traffic from our own tactical air control party set up there. We had radios
5 usually at the airfield and at brigade, too. Guys didn't come in blind, you know, they
6 were already kind of up to speed on what's going on. Mainly you just had to get them
7 current on, "Okay, I've got two sets of fighters overhead. These F-100s have only got
8 about ten minutes; you better get them in first." And trying to tactically employ the
9 fighters as best we could to make sure that we could get them all in and not have to send
10 them home, you know, dry. Also, sometimes it was a matter of who had the best weapons
11 selection for us. Some might have had some 750 Slicks that weren't very good with no
12 fins on them and they were dive-bombing from eight, ten thousand feet. Well, they
13 weren't as accurate and so we had to take that into consideration as far as what we were
14 trying to do. It was one thing if you're just trying to take out a bridge or something, that's
15 a different story, but troops-in-contact, you had to be so careful. But anyway, then we'd
16 head back to the field and after we landed, almost immediately then go to the brigade
17 area, and debrief, usually through the Air Liaison Officer, but sometimes just directly we
18 would report in with our battalion and or brigade and debrief what we did. And then we
19 would fill out kind of a report sheet that was, again, kind of a tactical report of what
20 happened on our tour of duty out there. Then usually it depended on, if you flew in the
21 morning, then usually in the afternoon you might fly again. Sometimes we'd fly twice a
22 day and we'd go, and we'd pick up another couple hours in the afternoon. I even flew
23 three times some days. If we were short-handed, for instance, or if we just had a lot of
24 activity going on, but more typically we would each fly about once a day.

25 KC: After you debriefed, do you go have lunch, take a shower, do something? Or
26 do you just stay there at the brigade to the communication center. Are you listening to
27 what's going on? What do you do with the rest of your time if you're not going out?

28 DJ: Well, we lived right with the brigade and even that was kind of interesting. I
29 think I mentioned to you, they give us our own little what we call a GP small tent, but I
30 lived right by my battalion and it was all sandy there. It was near the beach, a lot of sand
31 and so I got some of these 155 Howitzer boxes that the shells came in and made a little

1 wooden floor in my tent and then I built some sand bags and things for protection around
2 in case we got mortared around the edge of it. And then I built a little shaving stand with
3 those boxes and I had an Aussie shower. It's a three-gallon canvas bag with a showerhead
4 on it and you hang it from a tree and so I would put water in a five-gallon jerry can and
5 let it sit out in the sun and it would actually, at the end of the day, it would be almost too
6 hot. About eight or nine at night it would cool down and I'd pour it into that bag. They
7 called it an Aussie shower. I guess the Australians came up with that, but it was so
8 functional, it worked so well, you just unscrewed the head a little bit and the water came
9 out and you had this shower. Well, the Army guys called my place the Jones Hilton on
10 the Hill.

11 KC: I've seen pictures of this.

12 DJ: Yeah, I think I did have some pictures in there of that. They couldn't
13 understand why the Air Force guys kept trying to clean up their area and they seemed
14 irreverent just being out there in the sand and mud. I said, "Hey, you know, I wasn't
15 really intending in the Air Force to be wallowing around in the mud. I'm going to make
16 the best of my situation."

17 KC: There's a reason why you joined the Air Force.

18 DJ: Yeah, right. But we had a wonderful rapport with those guys and we
19 respected each other's jobs and what we did, a lot. I always admired them and their
20 dedication to some really dirty work crawling around in that jungle and never knowing
21 where you're going to step on a punji stake and it goes through your foot with a poison
22 bamboo spear; just a nasty, nasty wound. Then the rest of the day depended—sometimes
23 we would be preparing for a mission for the next day. We might be working with the
24 Intel guys. We worked closely with the Army Intel guys a lot. And sometimes we'd be
25 coordinating—let's say we were going to do an insertion of troops. They would do that
26 with helicopters, and they would go into these sites and what they'd usually want to do is
27 have us help them do what they call an LZ prep, a landing zone preparation. You know,
28 the VC knew that those were likely areas for helicopters to come into, also, so they'd
29 mine them. And so, what we wanted to do was blow off any mines or punji stakes or
30 traps or pits or whatever to secure that area. And we'd do that in a variety of ways. One
31 of the more interesting ones was we would coordinate the Navy cruiser gunfire from

1 destroyers and cruisers sitting off the coast. Eight-inch guns, and they weren't real
2 accurate. Especially the first few rounds, you wanted to stay well out of the line. But once
3 they got zeroed in, they were pretty good, and they could lay down a barrage of several
4 shells and pretty well do an LZ prep that way. You know, cleaned it off. And we also did
5 that sometimes with fighters, with bombs. So, we would design those and send out and
6 get them ordered for the next day at some certain time over target and then we'd check in
7 with the Navy guys and we'd talk to them, on VHF as I recall, quite a bit when we used
8 their guns, and then we would work with—our Army artillery did this quite a bit, too.
9 That was one thing that they could do pretty well with the 105s and the 155 howitzers.
10 And sometimes we had the eight-inch howitzer and, from my experience, that was the
11 best thing the Army had. That was a very accurate powerful artillery weapon out there in
12 the field and fairly easy to haul around. So, we used them quite a bit, too. Anyway,
13 whatever we could get hold of, we would use and the Army, we worked very closely and
14 sometimes we'd take an Army, what they'd call an FO, a fire observer, with us in the
15 back seat to help do that, to coordinate those kinds of fires. So those were things we
16 would do. We'd have some time off. It wasn't like there was any swimming pools, but
17 like there at Duc Pho, sometimes we could get out to the beach. We could actually go to
18 the beach and it would be, again, surreal that you're a few miles from gun battles going
19 on and there you are out there sun-tanning on a beautiful beach. In fact, an old Academy
20 classmate of mine, George Buchner, was a FAC just up the road from me with a Korean
21 Marine outfit, and so we'd get together every once in a while in our off-duty time. We
22 couldn't drive up the roads, but he'd fly down to my strip or vice versa and we'd be out
23 there on the beach and we'd usually take a radio with us so that if we needed to be
24 scrambled or something we could get back if they had a big firefight going. But there
25 we'd be sitting there with our combat radio on the beach and it was pretty unreal, a
26 strange part of the war.

27 KC: Do you remember your first mission?

28 DJ: Yeah, my first mission at Khanh Duong , the first thing unique was just flying
29 off of this PSP. I'm sorry, up there we had penaprime. It was just kind of a poor man's
30 asphalt, pretty crude. So that was one of the welcomes to the boondocks and to the field
31 and combat. Here I am flying this 0-1 out of about a little over a thousand feet of runway,

1 so you didn't have too much room for error, and it was hot and humid, so you had a little
2 more takeoff roll than normal. My first flight there was back seat with another FAC, and
3 he was giving me a local area check out. So, I wasn't flying the very first time we went
4 out of Khanh Duong. We always did that with new FACs. We broke them in. The first
5 thing we had to do is make sure they understood the area because that was all important,
6 was map-reading and knowing where everything was. So, we'd go up and spend a whole
7 first mission flying around the local area and here's this and here's that and here's a
8 Montagnard village and here's one of the main roads, and here's where the VC travel a
9 lot, and all that sort of stuff. That's what that mission was.

10 KC: What about your first solo mission out there by yourself with troops in
11 contact?

12 DJ: Well, I think pretty much the next day. There wasn't much screwing around
13 once you hit the ground out there. You know, we didn't have extra people. We were all
14 busy all the time. You were flying almost every day. I think the next day I was up flying
15 a recce mission with my battalion and just, again, trying to get more familiar with what I
16 was seeing on the ground and trying to get used to reading one to fifty thousand maps.
17 That was all important. Those one to fifty thousand maps, it's again, a whole new
18 appreciation for the photogrammetry and the world of map-making. It was something I
19 had been exposed to some because my twin brother flew RC-130s and photo-mapped
20 countries for his first six years in the Air Force. He didn't do Vietnam. They had done
21 them, but not recently. You know, those were the kind of maps—we would go to these
22 countries and we'd keep a copy of the map. Well, that's how we got a lot of those good
23 maps. Now, of course, it's all satellite and GPS. Those maps were really quite good.
24 Once in a while we'd have to plug in things that had been added, man-made usually, or
25 maybe you had a big monsoon flood and it changed the stream directions, the streams
26 weren't quite where they said they were and things like that. And sometimes you'd have
27 an area that had been slash-and-burned by the farmers and so what showed to be kind of
28 heavy vegetation may or may not be, things like that. That was an important part of
29 getting broken in, in-country, was reading those maps.

30 KC: What was your most memorable mission?

31 DJ: Most what?

1 KC: Memorable, one that really stands out to you.

2 DJ: As far as missions or as far as the tour?

3 KC: Well, anytime that you went out and can compare all of them together. Are
4 there any that really stand out to you?

5 DJ: Well, I guess the ones that stand out, there were a couple that I was awarded a
6 Distinguished Flying Cross on because they were kind of extra high on the hairy end of
7 things. The most difficult missions for us—and fortunately we didn't get faced with them
8 too much, is where we had heavy troops-in-contact combined with a difficult tactical
9 situation. It may have to be with a topography where you had some very steep ridge lines
10 or something to worry about, both you and your fighters. More often than not, it had to do
11 with weather and thunderstorms and trying to get in and get your job done when you had
12 the weather closing in on you. And these were really violent heavy thunderstorms down
13 there in season. So that was the most difficult mission. It forced you, usually, to get more
14 exposed to gun fire. You had to get in closer to see what you were doing. A lot of times,
15 you're out dodging lightning bolts yourself and then you're trying to get fighters in and if
16 you've got really heavy troops-in-contact at the same time, maybe they're even being
17 overrun and saying, "I don't care if you put the bomb on me, I need some help now."
18 That sort of thing is so desperate that you've got to keep your cool about it, and not let
19 things get out of hand, but trying to control that situation and help those guys get
20 airpower in and keep anybody from getting killed, those were the hardest and most
21 memorable missions. When you came out of that and you'd meet those guys back at the
22 brigade and they're saying, "Boy, you saved my ass today." Those were the most
23 fulfilling missions.

24 KC: Tell me about this mission in which you won this honor.

25 DJ: You're coming in a little weak here.

26 KC: I'm sorry, can you hear me?

27 DJ: Yeah.

28 KC: Okay. Tell me about this mission in which you won this award, the
29 Distinguished Flying Cross.

30 DJ: That I did what?

31 KC: The mission in which you won this award.

1 DJ: Well, it was that kind of a mission, it was one where a platoon had stumbled
2 onto a real hornet's nest and I think the VC were defending it because it was a weapons
3 cache, and they didn't want to leave. And so, they were really fighting hard. Sometimes
4 they would disperse them, and the firefight would quit quickly, but this one was getting
5 heavier and heavier and they were bringing in reinforcements and so did we and so you
6 started bringing in gunships and they tried to bring in helicopters with extra troops to
7 support our part. Now this was pretty heavy jungle so we couldn't see physically the
8 troop interaction much at all. So, the identification thing was extremely difficult, and
9 these guys were under so much pressure down there that they were just yelling and
10 screaming in the mike. Part of our job was to try to calm them down a little bit. We had to
11 know where they were and so we would try to stay as calm as we could. Easy to say, not
12 easy to do, but to try and say, "We're here, we're going to help you. Let's make sure we
13 know where you are." And that was what this mission was, it was one of those. It was in
14 an area where they had some tight ridgelines as well, so it confined where we could make
15 our approach runs. And wouldn't you know it, the thunderstorms are coming in from an
16 area that was going to impede that as well. So, you're fighting both terrain and weather
17 and troops that are almost being overrun. They were in a very heavy firefight. And so that
18 was a matter of you had to get a bunch of ordnance in there in a hurry for a couple of
19 reasons. Most important was the fight itself, but secondly because if you didn't get it
20 done pretty quick, the thunderstorms were going to preclude our being able to help and
21 that would have put them in really deep trouble down there. So fortunately, I was able to
22 pull that off to get enough firepower in there to get them disengaged and we got enough
23 ordnance on the enemy at that point to nullify their counterattack and our guys got out.
24 They were able to disengage and come back for another day. You know, they told me
25 after that fight, "Well, we saved a bunch of lives that day." They were going to be
26 overrun.

27 KC: Now, you provided a very good overview of this and it may be out of just a
28 natural sense of humbleness on your part. What I would like for you to do, if you can
29 remember, provide me a blow by blow of this. It sounds like an incredibly, incredibly
30 interesting event. Can you take me through this? I mean, play by play?

1 DJ: Well, it's one of those things where you hear about the chaos of combat and
2 that's what you get faced with is that what starts out as a few bullets flying here and there
3 and, you know, we'll hear some of that on the FM. So, we start flying towards them. If
4 we're not right, there we start heading towards the area where we know this is occurring.
5 You may or may not talk to the radio guy right away, but you're certainly listening to
6 what's happened. As you hear this thing intensifying—and sometimes you can hear the
7 guns firing on the radios. You think, “Oh, doesn't sound good.” And sometimes you
8 could even start seeing smoke from the firefight, but it's when their voices go up an
9 octave and they start saying, “Oh shit, we're in big trouble now.” They're identifying that
10 they've stumbled into something that's bigger than they are and they're a platoon of
11 maybe fifteen, twenty guys and they're facing two or three times that many VC out there.
12 Sometimes heavily armed and using mortars. Then it's when they realize, “We need
13 some help here.” Of course, if their artillery can reach, they'll go for their own artillery
14 and trying to get them to help, but sometimes in these close fights the artillery wasn't
15 accurate enough, reliable enough without some zeroing in to be safe to use. They were
16 good; they were accurate, once you could get them zeroed in. When you get troops that
17 close together, you don't want a couple of practice rounds lying right in the middle of
18 you. So, they fairly quickly turned to us because they knew we would be as careful as we
19 could, and we could typically work within a hundred meters of friendly troops if we knew
20 where they were with some confidence with five hundred pound bombs. In one hundred
21 meters, that's a football field. And I don't know if you've ever been near a five hundred
22 pound bomb going off, but let me tell you, it's an attention-getter and they're dropping
23 them in pairs or three or four at a time. You know, yeah you had to be careful, but that's
24 what we did and did well. You know, in a fight like this, it's a matter of, “Okay, I
25 understand you need help, you need it now. I've got a couple F-100s ; they'll be here in
26 about ten minutes. They got 500 pound snake eyes and I need to know more about where
27 you are.” And so, the next two or three minutes would be while they're fighting and
28 yelling and all kinds of noise on the radio. He's trying to identify by popping smoke or
29 mirrors or something and getting my attention about their alignment of where they are.
30 “Okay, they're along this string bed, they're strung out, oh, say fifty meters, and they're
31 in about, on that mission, I don't remember the exact directions, but it seems like they

1 were on an east/west line along the stream and then they had a fairly steep ridge line
2 behind them.” So, it was hard to run the fighters straight in on a real low pass. Usually, if
3 the ridgelines weren’t too high, you could run vertical to them and get away with it. You
4 know, they weren’t so low on their release that they had to worry about running into a
5 ridgeline. They’d usually be going burner when they’re pulling out of their dive anyway.
6 Anyway, that’s the key part of those kind of situations is the identification. And once I
7 was pretty confident about where they were, I said, “Okay, I’ve got my fighters on board
8 now and they’re ready to go.” I said, “I’m going to roll in and mark where I think you’re
9 telling me that these guys are, where the heart of the fire is coming from. You let me
10 know immediately if that isn’t right.” And so, I roll in and fire a rocket and fortunately
11 this one was right on target and the guy came back and he said, “That’s it, that’s it.” I
12 said, “Okay, we’re going to work.” And so, then I called the 100 lead and I said, “All
13 right, you got my smoke?” He said, “Yeah.” I said, “And you know the friendlies that are
14 in this case about 150 meters away from that smoke.” I said, “Okay, now you’re going to
15 have to confine your run-in to this heading, 260, where it was. It’s going to have to be
16 pretty close to that.” Usually, we didn’t want to do that. You know, once you get running
17 in from the same direction all the time, by then the enemy is sitting there ready to take
18 pot shots at you and even small arms, if they’re lucky, they might get a round to hit
19 something vital in a fighter. It was rare, but they could get them. So, we tried to avoid
20 that, but in this case, they had to, but good old lead, he comes in there and man, he puts
21 those first two five-hundred pounders right on that smoke. It was beautiful. I said, “Okay,
22 two.” I said, “That’s good.” I said, “Move yours about fifty meters south of that and let’s
23 do it some more.” They each made two more passes to get rid of the rest of their bombs.
24 And then I had them strafe a little on top of that and that was enough. Just a two-ship of
25 100s. In this case, they either scared them off or killed enough of them. We never got in
26 for a quick body count. The next day they went back, but the VC were pretty good at
27 hauling their bodies off and so you never knew what you got. There was a lot of over-
28 estimation of body count and for some reason the Pentagon got kind of enthralled with
29 this body count thing. It seemed like that was the most important thing was, “Well, what
30 was the body count today?” Well, nobody really knew. It was never accurate in my
31 estimation unless it was something where you were able to just overrun and be right on

1 the scene before they could haul them off, but you never knew. In this case, we knew that
2 it was a pretty heavy fatality because there were so many of them, we managed to get out.
3 And within about, I'd say fifteen minutes after those guys left targets and I was starting to
4 move away from my area, this huge thunderstorm came in there and when it dumps water
5 over there, it's just like you're pouring a bathtub on your head. It's unbelievable how
6 heavy those rains are. You can't see anything. I mean, you go completely blind for the
7 timeframe that it's raining for ten, fifteen minutes. So, I was leaving the area on the edge
8 of that thunderstorm and it was chasing me out of there, but fortunately by then the Army
9 guys were able to disengage. I debriefed with that platoon commander a couple days
10 later. That's when he was saying, "Boy, you saved our butt today." I said, "Well, that's
11 what we're here for."

12 KC: Now who put you for this medal?

13 DJ: Huh?

14 KC: Who put you in for the medal?

15 DJ: The Army guys recommended it, but it's sent through the Air Force channels
16 and it's our ALO, who was the head of the local TACP, they called it. A Tactical Air
17 Control Party, they'd send it up through channels and it would go up through the 7th Air
18 Force, typically, down in Saigon and then go on up. It's a lengthy process. Usually, you
19 know, you forget about it. You've been through three or more of those kind of battles
20 before you even know. You know, the medal thing, it was superfluous stuff. I mean, we
21 were not there to get medals, we were out there to do our job. I mean, we appreciated it
22 when they gave them to us, but there were at least three or four more firefights I was in
23 that were as hairy or more difficult and more dangerous than that one. For whatever the
24 reasons, you know, we didn't submit it. We were just too busy to worry with the paper-
25 work or I don't know, a variety of reasons. It was that way with everybody. There was a
26 lot of heroism going on all the time and most of it was not recognized in that way. It
27 certainly wasn't among us. We knew among ourselves, and the Army guys we worked
28 with, what we had done, and they did, too, but it's a nice thing after the fact, but I don't
29 know of anybody that was over there just to see how many medals he could collect.

30 KC: You mentioned that there were others that were hairier than this particular
31 mission. Can you tell me about that?

1 DJ: At least as much so and they were very similar. These missions started, you
2 know, it sort of sounded like, if you were writing them up, they'd all sound the same.
3 They were almost invariably a matter of heavy troops-in-contact, usually some weather
4 involved with it, heavy small arms fire, maybe the helicopters had been shot down and
5 now you're trying to get them out as well. You're trying to bring Sandies in for air rescue
6 and the Medevac helicopters who, by the way, did one hell of a job over there. Those
7 guys, talk about fearless. That was the hardest job I know and the most dangerous was the
8 Medevac helicopters. I mean, they'd go in on some of the heaviest fire and a lot of times
9 they'd get shot down. We tried to give them as much protection as we could. Maybe with
10 Sandies riding shotgun on them, but those kinds of missions it was chaos, your radios
11 were screaming, you had fighters running out of fuel. They wanted to get their bombs in,
12 and you were trying to hurry up and get them in rather than waste them. There were many
13 missions that were like that. I could think of at least three or four that were pretty much
14 carbon copies of the one that I just described to you. They all fell into that same pattern
15 of a crunch of time to try and keep guys from being overrun and trying to get things done
16 while you had ammunitions and trying to get it done before the weather closed in. Almost
17 always time was critical, it was the amazing thing is you hear a lot about combat as it's
18 hours and hours of boredom interspersed with a few minutes, in some cases, of sheer
19 stark-raving madness out there, chaos. That was always kind of an amazing thing to me
20 that I could be flying along out there for two or three hours just kind of doing holes in the
21 sky and nothing much going on and then all hell breaks loose and that's when the rubber
22 hits the road, you either cut it or you don't, but I must say, the guys, and I go back to
23 training, I think the Air Force did a wonderful job of training us for what we had to do.
24 The guys that came in are pretty well-prepared. You still had to cut your teeth a little bit
25 in-country, but by the time most of us were faced with those kind of situations, we were
26 ready to do it. I can't think of a FAC situation in my personal case that completely
27 dropped the ball and got a bunch of guys killed because he couldn't do his job. I can't
28 think of any. We produced.

29 KC: Tell me about the times you were not on duty. What would you be doing?
30 Would you write your wife at home?

31 DJ: Yeah.

1 KC: Traveling. What sort of things would you do in your leisure time?

2 DJ: Well, the traveling was pretty limited. We really couldn't go anywhere. The
3 roads were unsafe and once in a while, an in-country R and R for us was if we can take
4 our 0-1 down to Nha Trang for kind of a heavier field maintenance on the airplanes and
5 so you could hang out at Nha Trang for two or three days while they were doing that.
6 And typically, we would do that at the same time we'd go in and check our personnel
7 records, maybe pick up a paycheck, like we needed that. There wasn't any place to spend
8 it anyway. I mean, we'd have a little bit of this in-country money. I forgot what they
9 called it.

10 KC: MPC.

11 DJ: MPC or something? Military Pay Certificates? Anyway, it was kind of funny
12 money that you could use, that we used at the club and stuff there at the brigade.
13 Anyway, you'd go to the club there and I described Nha Trang to you, it was a pretty
14 place before Tet, before the Tet Invasion. It had French restaurants and it was pretty safe
15 in town. You didn't want to stay there at night, but you could see movies and it's like
16 coming back to the world again in a way. So, you did that maybe, oh, once every six to
17 eight weeks or so. It would be your turn in the barrel to take a plane down and get that
18 done. Daily, almost daily I'd write a letter and I was taking a lot of pictures and they were
19 slides, I was doing 35 millimeter slides, that you now have in your possession, and I
20 would make a sound-and-slide presentation and I had a little three and a half inch reel-to-
21 reel and like a little portable radio, but it was a tape recorder, and I would make a tape. I
22 would say, "Okay, here's slide one." And I would describe what you were looking at and
23 what I was doing. So, the slides, the tapes went along with the slides, and I'd send those
24 to my wife, and she was staying here in Colorado Springs and her two younger brothers
25 were in high school and her dad and mom were here and so they would have these little
26 get-togethers. "Oh, I got another tape from Dean." And they'd all come sit around and
27 listen to this sound-and-slide presentation. That's why I was certainly hoping—I usually
28 did those at 1 and 7/8ths RPM so I could get more on a tape. Some of those, when I tried
29 to play them years later, they were kind of garbled and I was sure hoping that the
30 equipment at Texas Tech could decipher that. I'll try to get a hold of a guy you
31 mentioned there. But anyway, because they are an important part of tying to those slides

1 to give you an oral history of what I did. The mail delivery was really pretty good
2 considering where we were, especially with my outfit being out there in the boonies all
3 the time. Our mail was delivered by C-123s typically, Providers. That was the biggest
4 cargo airplane usually that could get into our areas. 130s normally couldn't get in unless
5 we were on some bigger airbase. I was stationed at Chu Lai for a while and they had a big
6 runway there and the A-6s—Marine A-4s and A-6s, were flying out of there and we did,
7 too. There we had more supply, but usually it was 123s and the most important things
8 they brought in was mail, first of all, and then beer and Playboys and that was next higher
9 priority.

10 KC: All the bases covered that way.

11 DJ: What's that?

12 KC: I said you have all bases covered that way.

13 DJ: Yeah, and in fact sometimes I would literally take those Playboys and take
14 them out to the Special Forces guys way out in the boonies because they didn't get
15 anything. We didn't take beer out there, of course, but we would take them some
16 Playboys and that was a highlight of their day when a FAC would come in. I'd have that
17 backseat loaded and the tail would be dragging when I got airborne. They're pretty heavy
18 magazines, you know? In fact, that brings up an interesting point about how we helped
19 each other out. Everything was a matter of barter over there. Money didn't mean
20 anything, it was, "Did you have something that I wanted, and did I have something you
21 wanted?" And so, we were always trading for something and like for instance, we got to
22 know the guys, the Army supply sergeants, that controlled the supplies coming into the
23 airfield. And so, like at Duc Pho, we knew that about every two or three weeks they'd get
24 some, what we called "the general's steaks," that would come in. And we also knew that
25 the sergeant that was the head of all that had a sweetheart down at Qui Nhon, where a big
26 nurse facility was, but he couldn't get down there. So, we said, "You know, we could
27 probably arrange a combat mission down to Qui Nhon and get you down there if you
28 could maybe make one of those cases of the general's steaks get diverted to a high
29 priority Air Force mission." So, we ate pretty good. At Duc Pho, we'd have steaks two
30 times a week.. We made a barbeque pit out of these fifty gallon drums. So that was the
31 barter world. What could you provide, like LRRPs rations, the first freeze-dried foods.

1 The hunters started using them later, but the very first dried foods in the field were these
2 that long-range reconnaissance patrols would take with them because they were out two
3 or three weeks at a time completely isolated in the jungle, like over in Laos and
4 Cambodia, and their rations were pretty good. If you had a little sterno can and could heat
5 that up with some water and put that in there, they were very tasty. So, believe it or not,
6 they were an item of demand and so we'd do favors for the LRRPs and of course, they
7 liked us anyway, because we were about the only firepower they had. I mean, they were
8 so far away from everything, if they got in trouble, they had to have a FAC. We helped
9 them a lot, so they'd give us some of their LRRPs rations. That was always an interesting
10 thing. One thing that comes to mind, a story, I don't know how many fighter stories you
11 want to here.

12 KC: As many as you care to give me.

13 DJ: I was telling you about sometimes the hairy conditions we'd get in with
14 fighters and this particular one was a firefight, it was a fairly high, steep ridgeline and
15 wouldn't you know the alignment of the good guys and the bad guys was such that they
16 had to come perpendicular to that ridge in order to run parallel to the friendlies. So, they
17 had napalm that day which means a low, flat delivery. I knew that and I knew what the
18 problem was going to be, and I made a very specific briefing to these Marine F-4s.
19 They're pretty cocky guys and they get low, they press the target. Oh my god, those guys
20 just get right on the target. And I knew all of that and I was briefing these Marines. I said,
21 "Okay guys, it's a tough one here. The target is on that ridgeline and you've got to come
22 ninety degrees to it." And they said, "Oh, wonderful." I said, "Yeah, I know, but that's
23 the way it's got to be." I said, "It's going to come up fast." I said, "This is a steeper
24 ridgeline than you may think. When you get down in the weeds, you're going to see what
25 I'm talking about, so be prepared to do a quick pull-up once you release that napalm." So,
26 Lead comes in and does a really cool job and puts them right on target there. Obviously
27 an old-head experienced guy, again. And then two comes in, and this was a four-ship of
28 F-4s. Number two comes in and he's trying to show off a little, I guess, but he's really in
29 the weeds down there. He's below this ridgeline and I'm thinking, "Oh, this is not good."
30 I was trying to watch him so close and I got on the mike and I said, "Two, PULL UP!"
31 He was going to hit the ridge. And just as I said that the top of his wing turned white. I

1 don't know if you know what happens, but if you're in real high humidity and you have a
2 high wing-loaded aircraft like that and you put a lot of G- Force on it, when you pull that
3 wing up it compresses the air and it makes a little cloud on the top of the wing and it
4 literally turns white with moisture. And you'll see these in airshows every once in a while.
5 The wing tip vortices and the pressure of that as the air flows over that wing makes a
6 cloud over the top and that wing turned white and he's getting that nose up and he starts
7 up that ridgeline like a lawn mower. There are pieces of trees flying everywhere. "Oh
8 shit, he's going to be a fireball any minute." He just kind of staggered and he never
9 released his napalm. It just scared the crap out of him. He went burner, which is what
10 saved him. That F-4, a strong, powerful airplane and he just bulldozed his way back into the
11 air and kind of staggered off. I said, "Okay, Three, you're cleared in now and what are
12 you going to do to top that act?" Three didn't say anything, but he released his napalm
13 about a thousand feet above that ridge. But anyway, I knew they were back at Chu Lai,
14 where I was at the time, and when I got back to the field a couple hours later, I said, "I
15 want to see that F-4 that just came in from a mission." They were parked down there, and
16 I went down, and I looked. One of the maintenance guys was already crawling all over
17 this airplane. And it looked like he had taken a ballpeen hammer and beat the crap out of
18 the whole leading edge of both wings. I mean, even a sledge hammer. There were great
19 big dents all along the front edge of that airplane. I said, "Oh my god." "Yeah," He said,
20 "That's a tribute to McDonnell, and this F-4 is built like a tank. I said, "You should have
21 seen him cutting trees out there." So that night, I'm at the bar where we all gathered to
22 tell our war stories of the day and who did what. We intermingled with the Marine guys
23 there, of course, and here's this lieutenant and he's in his third martini by then, still white
24 as a sheet. I said, "Well, that was a pretty good show you put on there today, lieutenant."
25 And he could hardly talk. I mean, he was still scared. I said, "Didn't you hear what I was
26 telling you about the risks?" He said, "Yes sir, I heard you, but I just wasn't paying
27 enough attention." I said, "Well, you did the right thing at the right time, but you were
28 about five seconds from a fireball." And he knew it. Anyway, things like that stick in
29 your mind.

30 KC: I would imagine it would.

31 DJ: What it might have been, and what was.

1 KC: Now Mr. Jones, you were involved, you were in Vietnam for the Tet
2 Offensive 1968.

3 DJ: Yeah.

4 KC: Tell me about Tet '68.

5 DJ: That was exciting in many ways. In December of '67 the rest of the 101st
6 Airborne joined our brigade. So, the whole Division was there, and we teamed up and
7 moved them down to III Corps and in January we moved to a place called Phuc Long ,
8 which is about an hour north, about sixty, seventy miles north, northwest of Saigon. And
9 it was kind of quiet in January when we first moved down there. And we weren't quite
10 sure—I don't think they were quite sure exactly how they were going to employ the
11 whole division, but I think the main idea was to do a better job of going out and searching
12 and maybe even doing a little occupying of these areas in III Corps out there around Phuc
13 Long . So, it was kind of the calm before the storm. A little aside right there, my twin
14 brother that I mentioned to you, he was in-country. We overlapped tours seven months
15 over there, and he was flying the AC-47 gunship out of Ton Son Nhut airbase down in
16 Saigon. I had just been down to visit him. One of those ironic things again, we both play
17 golf. One of the things we really wanted to do was play golf at the Saigon Country Club.
18 So, we did that, I met him on a little R and R, and of course, he's living in a hotel in
19 Saigon, air conditioned, so I said, "Why don't you come out and see me? I've got a nice
20 tent." And he came out and saw me one time, he didn't think it was too great of living.
21 Anyway, we played golf at the Saigon Country Club in December. I think it was near
22 Christmas, around December 26th, it was ninety degrees and ninety percent humidity, and
23 they had these girl caddies. And this gal that was Wayne's caddy was about nine months
24 pregnant. We were saying, "Hey, you don't need to carry those clubs. We'll carry them,
25 we'll pay you, don't worry about it." Oh no, she insisted on carrying those clubs the
26 whole eighteen holes. I couldn't believe it. I said, "These people are certainly strong and
27 strong-willed, I'll say that." Anyway, it was ironic because two months later, you had a
28 whole bunch of sand traps at the Saigon Country Club. It was never a golf course again.
29 They mortared the hell out of it and there wasn't hardly anything left after Tet. We got in
30 just in time. It was on our bucket list, I guess. Anyway, Tet Offensive started. The
31 morning of the Tet Offensive, it was a bright sun-shiny day and bullets start whizzing

1 overhead, over the brigades. Highly unusual for us, as I had mentioned. People didn't
2 screw around with the 101st. They were extremely good at perimeter defense and I always
3 felt safe with them, but here we are and just bullets. Not hitting anything particularly, but
4 just whizzing over the brigade. I thought, "What in the world is going on?" It didn't take
5 long—I went down there, kind of ran down to our TACP, and we went into the brigade
6 there and so we were fairly quickly getting an intelligence feed and it looks like they're
7 kicking off some major offensive because we're getting reports from all over the country
8 that there are firefights and places being attacked and a lot of mortaring going on. So, this
9 is the big deal. We knew it almost immediately, that this was not just an ordinary
10 firefight, it wasn't even a big firefight, it was a major battle and we knew it quickly. And
11 so, what we wanted to do was get our airplanes airborne right away. I was in 2nd wave the
12 first day, as I recall now. We didn't have heavy activity with my Division those first two
13 or three days. They were doing some perimeter firefights, but as far as employing that
14 Division in major battles, I don't recall. Maybe some battalion was sent out somewhere
15 quickly, but I don't recall us real quickly being involved. Now, the Division, after a few
16 days, did get involved very heavily, but that was my first impression was there's big
17 things going on and we're just short of involved at the moment. And I hadn't heard—I
18 was wondering what was going on in Saigon because I heard that all hell was breaking
19 loose down there, and I was worried about my brother. It turns out he had a really close
20 call. He was driving to the flight line, scrambling to the flight line to get back to the
21 airplanes about six in the morning driving across the race track area. His buddy, the
22 driver, took an AK round in the thigh and was bleeding to death. Wayne got him shoved
23 out of the driver's seat, got through a bunch of RPG fire and got that guy to the airport
24 and saved his life. He got a Bronze Star with V, for valor. It was unbelievable. Anyway,
25 he had a close call, but those guys were flying almost nonstop gunships for almost two
26 weeks. So, he had some exciting times, but what happened to me was they took my
27 battalion, the 2nd /502 to Hue, which was one of the big fights. They sent my battalion up
28 to Hue/ Phu Bai, which was an airfield near Hue. This is up in I Corps. Our job was to
29 defend a Marine firebase, which in turn was trying to defend Hue. Unfortunately, this
30 was in February and it was the winter monsoon up there, so we had low clouds, cold and
31 drizzly, very difficult conditions for airpower. That was very frustrating to me. I was the

1 only FAC with that battalion and I was living with the Mohawk, the Army Mohawk, guys
2 that were stationed at the airfield and my battalion was not too far away near that Marine
3 firebase. We kept hearing how Hue was being overrun and that it was in big trouble and
4 we couldn't get in. I could fly and the ceiling was about a thousand feet, which was
5 already hairy because now we're violating the fifteen hundred foot rule. And the only
6 thing we could get in were the good old A-1 Sky raiders. I did, I was able a few days
7 where we'd get enough break in the weather that I could bring those Sky raiders in to
8 drop some bombs. It wasn't in Hue, it was south of Hue and the area we were working
9 was trying to protect the airfield itself, so we were doing—sometimes it wasn't even with
10 my own battalion. You know, it was one of those things, I thought, "Boy, is this strange
11 or what? I'm living with Army Mohawk guys, I'm with an Army battalion protecting a
12 Marine firebase and trying to protect, basically, a Vietnamese city." It was just kind of a
13 strange moment working in that environment. I never knew day-to-day because I wasn't
14 around my TACP. You know, who I was going to be working with, what kind of air time
15 I'd have available. It was kind of a confusing situation because there was a lot of chaos
16 the first days of Tet. We did what we could and unfortunately that wasn't too much. We
17 didn't have what we have now where we can do things all-weather. Weather did close us
18 down, but again, the good old Sky raiders, we were able to get them in a little bit. That
19 and artillery was about it. This was, of course, I'm about two to three weeks from my
20 DEROS, so it was particularly traumatic for me because I was about to go home, and to
21 top it all off, I was reading—I don't know why I happened to do it, I was reading this
22 book by Martin Trumble called *Johnny Got His Gun*, and it was an anti-war story that
23 was written in 1939, I think, about a World War I artillery guy that got hit by artillery and
24 it blew his arms and legs off and turned him into a vegetable . He couldn't hear or see,
25 and he wanted them to make him an example of here's what war does to you. Here I'm
26 reading this book and we're getting mortared every night, heavy mortar, and we're down
27 in a bunker and I said, "Why am I reading this?" It was one of those "You can't put it
28 down" books, but it's ironic. That was it, that was Tet. Although my view was pretty
29 narrow in my perspective there, the broader perspective of it that I started getting pieces
30 of from the Intel reports was that we were kicking their butts. I mean, thousands and
31 thousands killed. It had back-fired big time on them. It was a major victory for the US

1 Military. The Tet Offensive, in spite of what you may read and what you did read in
2 those days, was a major US victory. What was being reported wasn't even close to what
3 was happening. We set back the North Vietnamese war effort by years by that offensive.
4 They couldn't really develop another offensive until, what was it, '71. Because they got
5 hurt so bad, and then they tried to do the Khe Sanh thing and the B-52s took care of them
6 there, so there wouldn't be another Dien Bien Phu, either. Those things were interesting
7 to me. I had been frustrated by that before and a media guy lived with us in the field for a
8 while. He wouldn't go out on FAC missions with us and he wouldn't even go in the field.
9 He was just kind of there at the brigade. It was kind of like the press in Iraq and what
10 they were reporting is what they heard from the Green Zone, very frustrating. I mean,
11 they weren't really seeing the war. Some of the embedded guys there maybe were, but
12 they weren't that embedded with us. Indirectly we'd get feedbacks of their reports
13 sometimes from back home and I said, "Well hell, that isn't what happened, I was there."
14 So, already in that time period by '67, '68 we were getting the impact and it turned out to
15 have some pretty adverse consequences for the military and guys coming back home. By
16 then, the anti-war movement was, by the time I got home in '68, was in full swing and it
17 was just very frustrating to see what people were writing versus what was happening. The
18 Tet Offensive was particularly that way. That it was misreported in such a way that
19 Congress, I guess, from all that decided we were losing the war and it was just the way it
20 was reported. That's all I kind of attributed to the media, because we had no way, shape,
21 or form lost the Tet Offensive.

22 KC: Why do you think it has been portrayed in that way or by the American
23 media? Why do you think there was this type of approach?

24 DJ: Well, I think it was a growing frustration which we shared, too, about how the
25 war was being conducted and how it was and probably why it was, too. You know, there
26 were a lot of different people had a lot of different philosophies about why we fought
27 over there, what we were trying to achieve, and the way we were fighting that war, a war
28 of attrition that was never going to end because there's millions and millions of those
29 Vietnamese and they just kept coming. You know, you weren't going to stop it that way.
30 You had to go to the head of the snake, and we wouldn't do it. We just wouldn't do it.
31 We were in—obviously it's hindsight now, but I think we inordinately, maybe it wasn't

1 fear, but we were afraid of triggering either the Chinese or the Russians and what we
2 know now is that neither one of them were really capable of retaliating against us in any
3 major way. We should have closed off the Haiphong Harbor the first week of the war.
4 Just barricaded it and said, “No more ships in and out. If you don’t like it, tough luck.”
5 And of course, what we finally did do to stop the war was the B-52 bombings. Literally,
6 we were turning North Vietnam back into the stone age and they could see this time we
7 were going to do it. I told my wife that my greatest lesson learned out of Vietnam was
8 “the biggest truck has the right of way.” And it came from—the big old Army six-pack
9 trucks, huge things. We would drive right through Saigon and never stop because
10 everything got out of our way. Bicycles, there were hardly any lights anyway. That was a
11 micro lesson about how that world operated was, you know, if you had a bigger truck you
12 had the right of way and the bigger truck in that war was the B-52 and airpower being
13 delivered precisely to wipe out rail yards and wiping out their whole infrastructure. That
14 was a whole different ballgame than brushfire fighting in South Vietnam that would last
15 for one hundred years. It was very frustrating to me as an airpower enthusiast after all we
16 learned from World War II about, you know, you go cut the head of the snake off and we
17 just didn’t do it and all those POWs sat in those prisons all those years because nobody
18 had the balls to do it until Nixon finally said, “Enough, enough, we’re going to end this
19 sucker.” The sad part is the way we ended it, even though we made them, you know,
20 come to the table, we sold the Vietnamese down the river. You know, the ensuing years
21 was genocide down there and the killing fields in Cambodia. All these people in South
22 Vietnam and even some of the North got retaliated against and disappeared into camps
23 and stuff. We sold them short, to say, “It’s your war now, hope you can make it.” We’re
24 probably in danger of doing that again in Iraq and Afghanistan. “Well, we’ve got you this
25 far. Now I hope you make it.” So, we’re not very good at finishing things, I’m afraid.

26 KC: That’s very interesting.

27 DJ: You can hear my frustration coming out.

28 KC: Sure, sure.

29 DJ: It really is—when you’re out there in the fighting world you really do learn
30 that all the talk, talk, talk, what it boils down to is the biggest truck has the right of way.
31 And if you don’t have the biggest truck, sooner or later someone else is going to run over

1 you with their truck. And so, when they cancelled the F-22 program, for instance, our key
2 to air superiority for the next twenty years, we hadn't been bombed since World War II,
3 so we'd forgotten all about that if you don't have airpower superiority, you don't have
4 anything. You literally don't have security and yet we chose to build 186 of them and
5 say, "Well that's enough, we're so busy with these little counterinsurgency wars, who
6 cares if the Russians are now putting out the T-50 and the Chinese are on their way to
7 building a 5th generation fighter." I'm afraid we're losing sight of the big picture because
8 of all this insurgency stuff.

9 KC: You spoke about the frustration when the war was being prosecuted on
10 behalf of the United States. Let me put it this way, what about the rules of engagement as
11 a pilot? And forward air controllers have a unique perspective on the war. It's almost like
12 their physical perspective over the country. They're somewhat more detached and they
13 see somewhat different things and they deal with strategic bombing, they deal with
14 tactical bombing, they deal with troops on the ground. What about the overall various
15 different rules of engagement under which the United States limited itself? What are your
16 feelings about that?

17 DJ: Well, as far as the rules of engagement, I must say, they were much more
18 frustrating and difficult for the people going north than they were for us in the south. We
19 had some rules of engagement about what we could and couldn't hit, but you know,
20 mostly we were there to support the Army troops and so doing that, I guess it would be
21 more of a matter of what the Army was allowed to do. We were kind of indirectly
22 affected. In other words, whenever we were in a fight, we were able to do what we
23 wanted to do. We could employ as much power as we had and could use what would be
24 reasonable for support of the Army and a firefight in South Vietnam. So, I can't say that
25 the rules of engagement per say directly inhibited the FAC world in South Vietnam.
26 Maybe over in Laos and in Cambodia it did, but our particular narrow focus, it didn't
27 slow us down much. I would say that the rules of engagement were widely employed, as
28 far as what the Army could do and not do, and maybe it wasn't all just rules of
29 engagement. It was just tactics and strategy of going out on the search-and-destroy stuff
30 they were doing. You know, it was partly rules of engagement, but I guess it got a
31 broader sense to it about what are you trying to achieve here. If we were really going to

1 pacify the South, then we should have done what General Petraeus did in Iraq. You got to
2 go and stay, and you got to win over the hearts and minds of the local people, and we
3 weren't doing that, we didn't do that, never did do that. In little bits and pieces, we would
4 and in some sectors, somebody would be successful and convince the locals for support.
5 Mostly, I don't think we did and that's why it didn't work. Those insurgencies, if you
6 don't have local support there, they're finally going to fail. So, rules of engagement-- It's
7 a little tricky to answer that in South Vietnam. It's easy to answer in North Vietnam. It
8 was a matter of targeting. And when you've got the President sitting there, you know,
9 Johnson doing his own personal targeting and "I want to hit this and that," that's wrong.
10 If you're not letting your experts, you know, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, doing that. Not that
11 the President had the final say, but if you're not taking their advice and the lessons we
12 learned from Tokyo or from Berlin, it doesn't matter what it is. You call it an insurgency
13 war if you want, but strategically, you've got to go to the head of the communist party in
14 North Vietnam and say, "We're going to destroy you, period." And if you don't do that,
15 you're not going to win.

16 KC: Why don't we take a break there today, Mr. Jones?

Interview with Dean Jones

Session [3] of [3]

Date 19 April 2010

1 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an Oral History Interview with
2 Colonel Dean Jones. Today is April 19, 2010. I am in Lubbock, Texas, on the campus of
3 Texas Tech University and Colonel Jones is joining me again from his home in
4 Woodland Park, Colorado. I'm sorry, Colonel. I interrupted you there for a moment. Why
5 don't we go ahead and pick up with the aftermath of the Tet Offensive and what you saw
6 there with the 21st TASS?

7 Dean Jones: Well yes, it had seemed like it was still going on when I left, leaving
8 in March. It did drag on for a while although the main battles had been fought by then
9 and decisively won, I would point out, by the American forces. We were, you know,
10 rather chagrined that this wasn't reported as accurately as we would have liked. Of
11 course, I think even the sheer shock of it occurring upset the American public and it was
12 a turning point, no doubt about it, in the war as we look back on it. Partly because of the
13 shock value of it, I guess. And partly because it was being reported as some kind of a
14 defeat for the American military, which it absolutely was not. As a matter of fact, it
15 probably set the North Vietnamese back eight to ten years before they could finally
16 achieve what they wanted. In any event, in my narrow little world down there, battles
17 were still going on in Hue that seemed to be one of their focus points because it was the
18 old ancient capitol. So, at Hue-Phu Bai, which was where I was, at the airfield, there were
19 a concentration of battles and they'd continue to fight there for some time. I'm not sure
20 exactly when those battles ceased, but it was quite some time and there was an awful lot
21 of damage to Hue, of course. That was kind of my last two or three weeks in-country
22 there and it was the monsoon season was on and it had low ceilings almost every day;
23 sometimes light rain and drizzle. It made it extremely difficult to employ airpower, as I
24 had mentioned before in our interview. We were pretty much confined to using A-1 Sky
25 raiders, that were prop jobs. They could fly low and slow and get underneath the ceilings.
26 Both they and I were very confined in our ability to get bombs on target. There was a lot
27 of confusion, too, about what the target was, for that matter. I was working with both
28 Marines and Army out there, although, I, of course, answered to the Army. I was
29 assigned to them, but it was one of those situations where we had a lot of different forces

1 working, so I was kind of trying to help coordinate all of them, including artillery fires as
2 well. The wind-down for me, it was just kind of abrupt. You know, one day I was
3 fighting and the next day I was on my way down to Cam Ranh Bay to catch a civilian
4 airliner out of there. And it was just almost like, poof, one day you're there and the next
5 day you're not. It was that way when I went on R and R, too. Just surreal. I think I
6 mentioned to you, I'm living in a tent in a jungle and the next moment I was staying with
7 my wife at the Illikai, which was a new high-rise hotel, twenty-something stories, right
8 on Waikiki Beach, and those things are just kind of unreal. This time, when I went back
9 home, my assignment changed, and I was just a little anxious because my assignment was
10 supposed to be F-100s with the 354th Tac Fighter Squadron at Myrtle Beach. Somewhere
11 along the line, in our typical Air Force fashion, that squadron was assigned to Vietnam as
12 I was leaving, that squadron was in-bound to Vietnam. I think it was going to Tuy Hoa.
13 In any event, I didn't really think it was going to be too great for my family or me to
14 spend two years in a row in Vietnam. As much as I wanted to fly the F-100, I declined
15 that and of course, they weren't even trying to force me to, anyway. And they said,
16 "Well, we'll reassign you." and what they assigned me to was the F-5 training squadron
17 for the MAP countries that we had going down at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona.
18 We had a squadron of F-5s down there and we had something like seventeen countries
19 around the globe that wanted to have fighters and, you know, be able to say they were jet
20 fighter qualified. They didn't have the money nor the programs to support our modern
21 fighters. The F-5 was a fairly simple airplane to operate and maintain so it was a very
22 good airplane for those kind of groups, and so that was the squadron I was assigned to.
23 Actually, I was going back to Williams, which I was really familiar with, because I went
24 to pilot training there. That turned out to be one of my best assignments in the Air Force.
25 I didn't experience, when I came back, the anti-war protests and the anti-war experience
26 that a lot of the vets did. It was primarily I think because, first of all, the base is about
27 twenty miles from Mesa out in the desert. It's kind of, not anymore, used to be, isolated
28 out there kind of all by itself. And we decided to live on base at that time. I didn't have
29 any money, really, accumulated to buy a home and we weren't sure just how long that
30 assignment was going to be. So, we just moved on base. It was much simpler for us at
31 that time, so I was kind of, I guess you'd say, in a cocoon. I was surrounded by military

1 and I don't remember Phoenix being a hot bed of protest anyway, for that matter, but
2 maybe around the university there at Arizona State. For the most part, I didn't see it,
3 didn't experience it. Of course, I read about it and I was pretty frustrated with a continued
4 prosecution of the war and the way we were doing it in our graduated piecemeal fashion
5 that was just a meat grinder, as far as I could tell. They had called off the Linebacker
6 operations and so we weren't even going after the North anymore. There was a long
7 moratorium there, so it was just a frustrating time. I was just amazed to see it; at that
8 time, I was still a captain. So, I was pretty low on the totem pole, but I was frustrated by
9 how we were persecuted. Some of my buddies had been killed over there. You know, I
10 came away with kind of a bittersweet attitude. I was certainly glad to get out in one piece.
11 I was frustrated that a lot of my buddies didn't.

12 KC: You mentioned a few things here that I'd like to get more information from
13 you on. One, you talked about the Peace Movement and the anti-war protest and all of
14 that. Granted, you were somewhat insulated from all of this, remaining in the Air Force
15 and being up there in what was a kind of an isolated area in Arizona, but you were aware.
16 You read the newspaper, you watched television, you were aware of what was going on
17 in American society. What was your feeling toward the anti-war movement? And we all
18 know the anti-war movement was a very complex thing.

19 DJ: It was.

20 KC: In general, what was your feeling about that?

21 DJ: Well, of course being a military guy, I was frustrated that the public seemed
22 to be turning on its own and not supporting them and not getting what we thought was the
23 big picture of containing communism and drawing some lines in the sand. We really did
24 feel sorry for the South Vietnamese, just kind of the pawns caught up in the whole thing.
25 They weren't getting support internally that they needed. I think probably the word
26 frustration more than anything else. I was unhappy with the press and the way they were
27 reporting things, and that seemed like it was the start of what I would call the opinionated
28 editorial press, writing articles that weren't confined to opinions on the editorial page, but
29 they were showing up on the front pages. I was seeing opinions coming into these
30 people's articles about the war. I felt that that was coloring public opinion in a manner
31 that wasn't fair. It wasn't accurate and it wasn't fair-- obviously from my military

1 standpoint. I did have one interesting direct confrontation or introduction to the other side
2 of that. I have my older brother that I mentioned earlier that was in World War II, he had
3 twin daughters and one of those daughters, Karen Jones, was a student and she was going
4 to San Francisco State, right smack in the middle of Haight Ashbury, so in the very heart
5 of the anti-war movement. I flew in on a training mission into the Southern San Francisco
6 area and I had a couple extra days there and so I went up to San Francisco and visited my
7 niece. She introduced me to her friends, and she was an art major at San Francisco State,
8 on top of everything. You can see that picture developing. They were about as far—there
9 I was there right next to Genghis Khan and they were about as far left flower children as
10 you could get. So, they were at opposite poles and yet we had some long discussions
11 about the war and what was going on. I certainly got an insight and feedback from them
12 that I had not heard before and I tried to keep an open mind to that, but I couldn't help
13 but feel that, you know, here's these kids and they're going to college and their being fed
14 the typical political science line and that was starting to get kind of ugly in the '68, '69,
15 '70 time period about baby killers and anti-war and all that. They had a lot of impression
16 that they had been given, no offense to your profession, but it was from college
17 professors that were tainting them about what the world was like. I said, "Kid, you don't
18 have any idea what the world is like." And that's when I first expounded on my
19 philosophy that "the biggest truck has the right of way." I said, "You can sit here and
20 romanticize and politicize all you want and talk down American military, but I'm here to
21 tell you there's some really tough people out there in the world and they don't give a whit
22 about you and your ideas and if they can run over you tomorrow, they'll do it. And they,
23 of course, just poo-pooed and said, "Well, that's just propaganda." So, we certainly had
24 long—they weren't quite arguments, but they were heated discussions, and it was an
25 interesting thing for me and certainly gave me some insight.

26 KC: Sure. Also, in March, you come home in March of '68. Also, in '68, Lyndon
27 Johnson says he's not going to run for reelection.

28 DJ: Right.

29 KC: Of that year which kind of throws things politically, since we're on the topic
30 of politics, throws a knuckle ball in all of this. Nobody's sure how things are going to

1 shake out. What was your opinion of LBJ's handling of the war at that point and then his
2 decision to not run for president, to finish this thing, if you will?

3 DJ: What I had read and had some, oh, you know, indirect inputs that he was very
4 closely involved, and was literally sitting there and picking out targets and telling the
5 military what to do. Of course, being brought up in the idea that our military finally does
6 answer to the civilian world, yet, you know, we had never seen a president that involved.
7 Maybe Roosevelt did, getting that involved in the tactics of the war as opposed to
8 strategy. Of course, we didn't think those tactics were very good, for that matter, as far as
9 what they were targeting. I didn't have much respect for him in the manner he ran the
10 war. Of course, it was more the people he had around him like McNamara that we less
11 and less respected as the war went on, with their strategy and all their bean-counting, but
12 not really understanding the bigger picture. I still, you know, in spite of McNamara
13 explaining himself away, I still resent him a lot. I didn't resent Johnson, I just felt that he
14 was a political animal, probably the ultimate political animal. He was doing what he
15 thought was right, but I was surprised that he hung it up. He was such a tough competitor
16 all along, but I think he was kind of overcome by the whole anti-war thing himself, that
17 he was going to be a victim of it, too. And he probably would have been.

18 KC: Now, '68, of course, is a very tumultuous year with the war.

19 DJ: Kelly, I can barely hear you.

20 KC: Sorry, is this better?

21 DJ: Yeah.

22 KC: Okay, '68 was a very tumultuous year for the United States and all the social
23 unrest and all the racial issues and the war and all of this. You know, the convention of
24 1968, Democratic National Convention in Chicago. What was your opinion of this world
25 that you came back to? After being in Vietnam for a year, what was it like to come back
26 to the United States and see all of this going on?

27 DJ: Well, as far as the civil rights movement, I was very much in support of that
28 and I thought it was way overdue. It was almost incredible, we had fought a war one
29 hundred years before and we're just now getting around to honoring it and what came out
30 of that. And so, I'd say, in fact, interestingly I came from Kansas, Brown versus Board of
31 Education. I was very aware of that, too, through the years about where that came from

1 and what had happened in Topeka, Kansas, where I spent some of my college days, for
2 that matter. So that part of it, yeah, it was tumultuous, no doubt about it, but I thought it
3 was a cause well worth fighting and glad we finally bit the bullet and did it and I was in
4 support of that. I think I kind of divorced that from the war. They were kind of two
5 different things. Although, certainly at the Washington level, maybe some of the feelings
6 of those things overflowed into each other, but I guess I kind of separated them in my
7 own mind. I was supporting one and yet on the business of the war I just felt we've got to
8 do something differently. This meat grinder will go on forever, there's millions of them
9 over there and just out there chasing them around in the jungles. We could end up
10 fighting twenty years over there and never really realize anything. So, I was hoping that
11 we would do something different.

12 KC: As largely a result of the Tet Offensive and the perceived American failings
13 of the Tet Offensive, General Westmoreland is recalled back to the United States,
14 promoted if you will. Clayton Abrams replaced him and took a different approach to
15 fighting the war. Compare and contrast the two. Westmoreland's search and destroy and
16 then Clayton Abrams change in the way that he approached it.

17 DJ: I don't know how qualified I am to speak. I was under Westmoreland the
18 whole time and when I left is when Abrams came in about that time as I recall, wasn't it?
19 Early '68 when Abrams came in?

20 KC: I'm thinking June. I can't remember off the top of my head.

21 DJ: I think I had left. I had heard that he was a tough guy and Westmoreland
22 seemed like more of a scholarly guy. I respected him. He was doing, you know,
23 executing the war the best he thought and I felt that his hands were kind of tied by
24 Washington and especially by McNamara. But as far as the day-to-day execution there,
25 he was a real professional guy, and everybody respected him in all the Services. So, he
26 had a lot of support and he came out in the field all the time and was always trying to
27 figure out what's really going on and so I really did respect him. Of course, I was in the
28 group that was his reaction force so we kind of had some direct ties with his strategies
29 and how we were employed. As far as Abrams, when I left there, I moved to another
30 world. Although I was reading about Vietnam, it's like I said, one day I'm there and one
31 day I'm not. It's just kind of a world behind me. I paid attention to it, but it certainly

1 wasn't a daily thing. I mean, I had my new job to learn, working with foreign students
2 and flying F-5s and all that sort of thing. As far as what Abrams was doing and the
3 strategy going forward at that point, I was semi-remote, I would say. I was kind of hands-
4 off. Maybe I was just trying to shut it out, I don't know. I wasn't paying close attention to
5 it. Especially at the ground strategies, I was frustrated by the air strategies when
6 Linebacker was called off when they stopped the bombing and all that. I said, "What in
7 the heck are we doing that for? We should be increasing it, not decreasing it."

8 KC: What was your opinion of Richard Nixon? Nixon's elected in November of
9 1968. What was your opinion of Nixon and the way he was going to approach this war or
10 the way he did approach the war?

11 DJ: Well, I know, he had the nickname of Tricky Dick and I had followed politics
12 with him somewhat. I grew up in Kansas, I'm a Republican, and obviously I supported
13 him as far as voting for him. I didn't know too much about him. I had known about some
14 of his, oh, when he gave his famous speech in Congress and all of that. I didn't really
15 know the guy, too much. I assumed, and he came on, as someone that can be very tough,
16 very pragmatic in a world of politics. And when he opened up China, well there's an
17 example of somebody, you know, we can sit here and rave about the Chinese
18 communists, but they are a comer, and we need to engage them and he did that. There's a
19 good move in the world politics scene. I was hoping that he would change the McNamara
20 air strategies and reengage in a strategic fashion to bring the war to some kind of a
21 conclusion and he did that when he reordered the Linebacker attacks. We can second-
22 guess it all day long, but in my opinion we should have done that right from the get-go in
23 the early Sixties. "We're going to take you back to the Stone Age and we'll literally
24 obliterate Hanoi, everything that's military, at least, and we'll close the Haiphong harbors
25 and nobody's coming in or going out. We'll cut off all your supply routes and we'll
26 choke you." And if we had done that, I'm still convinced the Russians and Chinese
27 wouldn't have stepped in. They weren't as big as they thought they were and we even, I
28 think, ourselves knew in our intelligence world, they weren't as good as they said they
29 were in their Mayday Parades, and we should have done that. In any event he did do it
30 and he brought them to the table to negotiate the end of the war, at least as far as we were
31 concerned. The sad part of that was, as I had mentioned earlier to you, was that I'm afraid

1 all too often we're getting into this habit of, "Yeah, we'll fight this war, but if it isn't
2 going for us, we'll leave and hope you make it." We're looking at Iraq right now and
3 probably someday Afghanistan as well. And we may do the very same thing, possibly
4 with the same sad results. We leave a power vacuum and it's filled all too quickly by
5 people we don't like. So, the result won't be good. In any event, he did get our POWs
6 home and brought Vietnam to a conclusion, from America's input. It was a mixed—you
7 can't call it a victory, but it was a conclusion that at least got us out of the quagmire.

8 KC: Well, if you can, you say it was mixed. You're talking, of course, about the
9 Settlement of the Paris Accords of '73. What do you think was mixed? You see
10 something good coming out of this, you see negatives out of this? What was your opinion
11 of the Peace Accords?

12 DJ: Well, what I have from my own observations in-country and I had mentioned
13 to you that we were moving in and out of villages and staying mostly in the flat lands and
14 not getting into the mountains all that much and certainly not moving over to-- we tried to
15 shut down supply lines, but we weren't doing a very good job with the Ho Chi Minh
16 Trail. I just had this feeling all along that it's always about winning the hearts and minds
17 of people. We weren't doing that; we weren't winning the hearts and minds of the
18 Vietnamese people. I'd go into these villages, you know, go into Bao Loc, into what we
19 call a grocery store. Just the way people looked at you. Of course, you didn't know even
20 who's—I mean, they could have been Viet Cong for all I knew. You never knew who
21 they were, whether they were good or bad. I always had the feeling that they're tolerating
22 us and they're hoping that we take some of these VC people off their backs, but they
23 were going to kind of bend with whoever's winning. I just didn't have a good feeling
24 about how that was going to come out. And it was the same way when we pulled out and
25 we were leaving equipment and supplies and stuff for the South Vietnamese. The South
26 Vietnamese Army was really just tagging along with us and they just weren't up to it and
27 I felt that as soon as we pulled out of there that it was only a matter of time before the
28 more oriented and goal-minded north would move down there and take them over. The
29 sad part of that was the blood bath like in Cambodia that occurred after that. It was just
30 extremely sad.

1 KC: One of the things that we see as a result of the Vietnam War for a variety of
2 different reasons is a much more negative view of the American military, both among
3 military personnel who believe that discipline was shot, there were all kinds of internal
4 problems, and this very negative view that the public had that the military came out of the
5 Vietnam War in some pretty rough shape. How do you think the Vietnam War affected
6 the Air Force?

7 DJ: That's an interesting question. You know, it is true that for a long period of
8 time, thank goodness that has changed. It did color the opinion of the public on the
9 military for a long time, but the Air Force, I think we didn't come out unscathed, but
10 because we weren't in this direct hand-to-hand combat and had to work with all the
11 messy details of being down there in those villages and Mei Lai massacres and things.
12 You know, it was a removed war in our case, so I don't think we got hurt to the same
13 degree. In an interesting way, it seemed like what did come out of that was that we
14 greatly improved our Air Force. There were some huge lessons learned for us that came
15 out of that. One of the biggest in my world being the creation of the Red Flag Program
16 out at Nellis Air Force Base because we realized we were sending our fighter pilots to
17 combat and they weren't well-trained for what they were supposed to do and that we had
18 a lot lower kill ratio, for instance, against Migs than we had in Korea. We've got to get
19 our pilots better trained for combat, real combat. And so, we've got to create an
20 atmosphere to do that. And the Red Flag Program came out of that and also, that was the
21 beginning of precision guided weapons that are our mainstay today. A lot of our tactics as
22 far as going from, oh, from fluid four, from 4-ships that were kind of tied together, we
23 went into fluid two-type to fight Migs with our fighters. A lot of tactics that evolved, both
24 air-to-air and air-to-ground, that made us a much better Air Force, going forward. That
25 was a positive side of our experience in Vietnam, but I don't think the Air Force got hurt
26 that bad. Partly because we went forward to become a lot better and we built some new
27 airplanes, also based on experiences there. So, I think that helped us a lot and kind of
28 prepared us for our next wave of air warfare in the nineties.

29 KC: How do you think the American experience in Vietnam most affected the
30 United States? What did we learn, what did we not learn? What does Vietnam mean to
31 the United States?

1 DJ: Well, I think maybe Vietnam was a wakeup call to the United States that you
2 can be a superpower and have all the power in the world for annihilation and obliteration,
3 but still, you can't use it. That you've got to find other ways, that to win the hearts and
4 minds is a lot more complex than just going in and playing the wars of attrition that we
5 had done in the past, like going and bombing Germany and just destroying all the cities
6 and stuff, that wasn't enough. I think Vietnam was—we were kind of naïve in the respect
7 that we had this idea that you go out and you bomb everybody or on the ground you beat
8 them up and then you just close shop and go home and everything's going to be okay.
9 Granted, that we did things like the Marshal Plans and stuff to rebuild what we bombed.
10 To some degree, Americans were pretty naïve about warfare and so this was an
11 introduction, Vietnam was, to what is still occurring as far as the new world of guerilla
12 warfare and an extended mode and expanded mode that all those big weapons aren't
13 going to help you much and what you really got to do is get down to the nitty gritty of,
14 "How do I fight that kind of war?" You got to go and understand what motivates them
15 and what supports them and how do you cut the legs out from under that and things like
16 General Petraeus did in Iraq, as far as getting involved with these villages and these
17 power structures and getting them to support you rather than fight you. We've been kind
18 of slow about it, but I think it was the beginning of the guerilla warfare era which is still
19 going on. What's frustrating to me and to most Americans is that we didn't win that war
20 because we hadn't learned how to win. I don't know if we've learned it yet, but it looks
21 like we're starting to learn it and we've espoused that we're trying to do the same thing in
22 Afghanistan as far as the hearts and minds business. When you're working with cultures
23 so different, so removed from what we know and religion being a big part of that, it's
24 hard to think the way they think and walk in their shoes. It's a real challenge, it certainly
25 is. That, to me, is what came out of Vietnam was, "This is a lot tougher than we thought
26 it was."

27 KC: As you look back on it, Colonel, how would you say the Vietnam War most
28 affected your life? Your experiences in Vietnam. How did it most affect your life?

29 DJ: Well, you know in some ways a lot of guys—I read a lot nowadays about
30 people coming back and of course, their experience was different from mine. But as far
31 as being all screwed up psychologically and they can't talk about the war and everything,

1 it didn't affect me that way. I was a trained professional. I mean, I had entered even as a
2 cadet with the idea that I wanted to be at the point of the spear out there for the military
3 defending our country and our way of life and my family. So, I was prepared to do it and
4 went in mentally prepared to do that and maybe it was because I didn't experience any
5 big psychological tests as far as being a POW or being captured by the enemy or
6 something. That might have changed my outlook a lot. As it was, I went home about the
7 way I came in. That I was still a trained professional doing what I was trained to do, and
8 if I was called on to go back or go do it again, I would do it. It was what I was signed up
9 for. So, I wasn't complaining about it. I don't feel that I was damaged by it. It probably
10 reinforced my feeling that there's a lot of bad guys out there and someone's got to step in
11 and control them, and that I was a part of that group that would always be ready to step in
12 and control them. So, it probably reinforced, I guess, my patriotism in spite of all the
13 frustrations and all the reexamining that was going on back home in my world of
14 military. Like I say, the Air Force took that whole thing on and said, "We're going to get
15 a lot better." And we did and continued to get better. So, I had a pride in that and being
16 involved in it and employing some of those lessons learned. Later on, I helped start a
17 program called Green Flag, which is an electronic warfare program primarily for fighter
18 pilots, for fighters that we're using today. I think that was the main thing. I don't feel like
19 I had any hang ups about it. I don't know if I have any deep lasting effects except for
20 deepening my feelings that we've got to have a good, strong military always and we can't
21 just walk off and say the words, "I can go home now and get my plow shares out again."
22 Because the world doesn't work that way.

23 KC: Well colonel, is there anything else you would like to add to this interview
24 before we bring it to a close?

25 DJ: I'm sorry, I could barely hear that.

26 KC: I'm sorry. I said, is there anything else you would like to add to this
27 interview before we bring it to a close?

28 DJ: No, I think that pretty well sums it up, Kelly. It was an experience obviously
29 deeply embedded that I'll always remember and there were a lot of joys and a lot of
30 defeats along the way. Should we do it again? I guess we're always asking that question.
31 You know, I guess Vietnam keeps coming back to the present and what makes memories

1 come back to me is when I read in the papers about comparisons of Afghanistan with
2 Vietnam and are we heading down the same road, are we making the same mistakes?
3 Hopefully we can do things better. There do appear a lot of similarities. There's quite a
4 few things that aren't the same, but I certainly hope that to a degree, we did learn things.
5 The Air Force did coming out of that war, that we can employ them in such a manner that
6 we can succeed in these guerilla wars. I think it's more of a matter of persistence. That
7 we can't just walk off, we've got to hang in there and we may have to stay in Iraq, for
8 instance, a lot longer than people think. Maybe not in large numbers, but to not leave
9 those kind of power vacuums behind. Every time we do that it's trouble. That's a lesson I
10 certainly hope we've learned. We're engaged throughout the world and we've got to stay
11 engaged. So that's, I think, kind of the overall impact of Vietnam in my world.
12 KC: All right, well thank you very much, Colonel.