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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Tom Cossaboom
Conducted by Jason Stewart
Date November 15th, 18th, 2010
Transcribed by Aaron Kellerhals**

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University conducting an oral history interview with Mr. Tom Cossaboom. Today is
3 November 15th 2010, I'm in Lubbock, Texas in the Special Collections Library on the
4 campus of Texas Tech, and Mr. Cossaboom is joining me by phone from Arizona. Is that
5 correct?

6 Tom Cossaboom: That's correct.

7 JS: All right, why don't we begin if you could tell me a bit of biographical
8 information about yourself? First of all when and where were you born?

9 TC: I was born January 21st 1944 on the campus of Ohio State University.

10 JS: Oh, really? Okay—

11 TC: University Hospital in Columbus, Ohio.

12 JS: Could you tell me a little bit about your parents? What were their names and
13 what did they do for a living.

14 TC: My father, Robert Thomas Cossaboom, was a college professor at Baldwin-
15 Wallace in Berea, Ohio. He was chairman of the Earth Sciences Department for years.
16 My mother Anna Roberta Kusse Cossaboom was a registered nurse, although once I was
17 born she stopped working.

18 JS: Any brothers or sisters?

19 TC: One sister, three years younger.

20 JS: Did you grow up there in Ohio?

1 TC: I grew up in Berea, Ohio, now a suburb of Cleveland. At that point, it was
2 just beginning to be absorbed into the greater Cleveland area.

3 JS: As a kid growing up, did you have any interest in the military?

4 TC: None whatsoever. Absolutely zero.

5 JS: Any relatives who had served in World War II? Anything like that?

6 TC: Yes, two uncles. My father's brother was a member of the Coast Artillery
7 Band in Boston until well quite a ways on in the war. Then he was transferred to combat
8 engineers and arrived in the Philippines the day the war ended. My mother's oldest
9 brother was a naval lieutenant who served in command of gun crews on commercial ships
10 transiting the Mediterranean. He saw quite a bit of combat with fending off German and
11 Italian attacks on aircraft.

12 JS: Where did you go to high school?

13 TC: Berea, Ohio.

14 JS: Berea, Ohio Okay What year did you graduate?

15 TC: 1962.

16 JS: 1962 All right. As a kid growing up in Berea, Ohio, did you pay much
17 attention to what was going on in the world? With the Cold War developments—

18 TC: Yes, the first thing I really recall was that I can remember some of my
19 friends' older brothers coming back from Korea with the old silk jackets with the
20 embroidered map of Korea on the back, and that probably would've been around Korean
21 war time. The only other thing that had anything to do with the military that I can
22 remember, and I didn't realize it until later was one of my friends' last name was
23 Thomas. Which would mean nothing to you except that his father turned out to be the
24 senior officer afloat on the battleship *Nevada* on Pearl Harbor. But the father never
25 mentioned it. Never said a word.

26 JS: What year did you graduate from high school? Oh sorry—

27 TC: Graduated in 1962.

28 JS: Sorry. I already asked you that.

29 TC: Yeah that's okay, no problem.

1 JS: All right well as a kid growing up, I know you talked about you were—you
2 did pay attention kind of to what was going on. Could you talk a little bit about—I guess
3 your view if you had much of one, of the communists and of Russia.

4 TC: My mother was involved in politics. She was a committee woman for the
5 Republican Party in Berea for quite a while. I can remember as a kid passing out
6 brochures and all that. I can remember Nixon running in 1960 and going down to
7 wherever Republican Party headquarters were in Berea and in those days of course, I
8 don't think they had a special T.V. feed for the individual precincts so it must've been
9 coming from the county board of elections up on a big chalkboard. I can remember in
10 1964 that's when I became a Democrat with Barry Goldwater. [Laughter] I didn't cheer
11 for him at all. Even as a kid he didn't make a lot of sense. I can remember that very well,
12 the election of '64. Probably didn't think a whole lot about the communists other than
13 yeah, there was the Soviet Union. Until I got to college and after my junior year, my
14 parents gave me a choice: They said you can either have a car, it was gonna be a used
15 Volkswagen or go to Europe with some of the money I'd earned money working
16 summers. I think I surprised them, I chose to go to Europe. Spent three months over the
17 summer in Europe. Did the usual tours around Western Europe, and then spent a month
18 of school in Austria, University of Vienna. After that five of us crammed into a
19 Volkswagen Beetle and drove from, well the school was near Salzburg, drove up to
20 Prague, Czechoslovakia, and on to Warsaw, Poland. Then we split up in Warsaw because
21 my father's secretary was from a Greek family and they were expecting me in Athens. So
22 I jumped on a train in Warsaw and went to Budapest for a couple of days and then took
23 the train from Budapest to Athens. And that was probably my first experience with
24 actually seeing communism in action in Eastern Europe so to speak. I can remember
25 staying in a youth hostel in Prague and it was, as I found out later, was the University of
26 17th November which was a special university for foreign students and communist
27 Czechoslovakia. There was a radio in the room and you couldn't change the station. It
28 was set to Radio Prague in English, and you couldn't turn it off or turn it on, you could
29 turn it down so you couldn't hear it but you couldn't turn it off or on [laughter]—and that
30 was somewhere in 1965.

1 JS: How about—were there other I guess other things that you could see there
2 about—I guess a lack of freedom. Were there, I don't know, troops on the street—

3 TC: No, no nothing like that. You saw a few because there was a Russian
4 garrison in Czechoslovakia not in Prague, and you didn't see very many Soviet soldiers
5 or Czech soldiers for that matter in Prague. Although it certainly wasn't the tourist mecca
6 it is today. It was probably like a city that was frozen about 1938, as far as buildings and
7 what was going on with regard to newer buildings and places to eat and all that sort of
8 thing. The other thing I recall is on the menus in restaurants in Czechoslovakia they
9 actually told you how much meat you were going to get when you ordered a meal, how
10 many grams. Poland was even worse off. You could tell they were poor you still had
11 horse drawn plows in the fields and restaurants were really hard to find. I can remember
12 pulling up to a restaurant in a town in southwestern Poland not far from the Czech border
13 and parking the Volkswagen and five of us going and eating. The first Polish word I
14 learned was *brambory*, which was “potato” because every meal had potatoes, that was
15 what filled people up. There wasn't much meat and everybody was amazed at the
16 Volkswagen Beetle, when we came out of that restaurant there must've been twenty
17 people standing around looking at it.

18 JS: Did you have to have any sort of special permission to go into those Eastern
19 Bloc countries?

20 TC: Yes, you needed to have a visa, and you got the visa either through a travel
21 agency in the West, either in the U.S. or in Western Europe or through the particular
22 countries embassy. That was a little more time-consuming. We got our visas through
23 American Express in Salzburg, Austria. I needed a double-entry exit for Czechoslovakia
24 which caused a problem, because I was going from Austria through Czechoslovakia to
25 Poland and then from Poland back across Czechoslovakia to Hungary. Well, the
26 American Express and the Czech embassy made a mistake and I only got a single-entry-
27 exit and I didn't have time at that point to get another one. It was gonna take a week and
28 we had less than a week of school left. American Express called the Czech embassy in
29 Vienna and they said you can do it at the border when you go in. When I got to the border
30 going in, in addition to having it pretty well fortified as far as passage into the country,
31 they said “Where you going?” I said “Prague.” “Oh, you can go to the police in Prague.”

1 It turned out to be the Secret Police on Bartholomejska Street. They didn't want to issue
2 me a visa and they said, "No, no where you going?" "Well, I'm going to Warsaw."
3 "When you get to Warsaw go to the Czech embassy, that's easier." So I go to the Czech
4 embassy in Warsaw and they go "Where you going?" "I'm going from here to Budapest,
5 but I got to cross Czechoslovakia." "Just get it at the border because you're not getting
6 off the train." I got to the border about midnight or one in the morning. Czech border
7 official got on looked at my passport said I had one expired visa. I said I knew that and
8 needed another one. "Okay, that'll be ten dollars." So I gave him my passport and a
9 twenty-dollar bill. He was a younger guy, nice enough guy relatively speaking. He gets
10 off the train and goes into the customs booth. I wait and wait and wait. While he's doing
11 that the customs lady comes around, she was an older woman not very pleased to be
12 seeing an American. Fortunately, the guy with my passport was just going by the train
13 window. He holds up my passport to show her that yeah I have a passport, she says
14 "Okay, when he comes back with your visa come and find me and I'll give you a customs
15 declaration," because you had to have one of those too, stating how much foreign
16 currency you had and basically that's what they were interested in. The guy doesn't come
17 back and doesn't come back, finally last minute he comes back and hands me my
18 passport. Okay, fine. He said, "You're all set." I take the passport and the twenty-dollar
19 bill falls out. Clearly, they didn't have change for a twenty-dollar bill, but I got a
20 handwritten visa. All over one page of my passport is this handwritten visa with the
21 stamps. Then I go and find the lady and she's ready to leave the train, she says "Where
22 you going?" I said "Budapest." "You're not getting off the train?" "No?" "Okay you
23 don't need a customs declaration." "All right if you say so lady. You know more than I
24 do." So I get to the other end of the country and I'm going across, north to south which
25 doesn't take a whole lot of time, about seven in the morning we get to the Hungarian
26 border. The Czechs come on to check the passengers out of the country and first the guy,
27 the border police guy looks at the handwritten visa, and he's never seen one of those
28 before, so he kind of looks at it and looks at me: "Well, okay, it's stamped." So, he
29 stamps me out and then the customs guys come through. He's about—he's in his fifties
30 older guy. Asked me for a customs declaration. I said, "I don't have one." He says,
31 "What do you mean you don't have one?" He said, "Everyone entering Czechoslovakia

1 has to get one.” I said, “No, no, no, your cohort at the other end of this train line said I
2 didn’t need one because I wasn’t getting off the,” “That’s not right,” then he says “Let me
3 see your passport.” Then he sees, when I hand it to him the, the U.S. passport. He sits
4 down with me and says “Where you from?” I said, “The United States,” “No, no, no,”
5 and he’s speaking to me in German and I knew a little German at that point, and I said
6 “Cleveland, Ohio.” He says “Yeah my brother lives in Cleveland.” His brother was a
7 steel worker. So that’s how I got out of Czechoslovakia without any trouble because he’d
8 been wanting to talk about what Cleveland was like and everything and he forgot all
9 about the customs declaration and I happened to notice, he was facing away from the
10 window when he was talking to me and I noticed other customs guys come along and
11 sticking their heads up to see—looking in the windows of the train. I couldn’t figure out
12 what was going on, then it dawns on me they’re looking for him because it’s time to go.
13 So I said something to him and he says, “Oh, okay,” he left and that’s how I got out of
14 Czechoslovakia the first time I was there. Hungary wasn’t nearly so bad. Hungary was a
15 little more relaxed. Yugoslavia was really relaxed at that point.

16 JS: Well, certainly sounds like quite an experience seeing how I guess poor some
17 of the countries, particularly Poland, was and in some cases you said it being relaxed but
18 in some cases some restrictions on freedom. Did that have any impact on you did it make
19 you think much about I don’t know the larger struggle that you know—

20 TC: Not at that time. I later went to school in Czechoslovakia when I was in
21 graduate school in ’73 and ’74 I spent two summers at Charles University, learning
22 Czech. Of course that was after the Prague Spring in 1968. Then I was a little more aware
23 of what was going on and it was interesting because you go to the oldest beer place in
24 Prague, it’s an old monastery, they started brewing beer about 1799. In the summer in the
25 courtyard of what used to be the monastery courtyard, they had an outdoor band and
26 frankly Czech music is very similar to what you think of “oompa” German music a lot of
27 it, and they had a band and various singers and the singers sang pretty good and it was
28 only later I started asking questions about what was going on and it turned out a number
29 of the singers and a number of the band members had been members of the Czech
30 Philharmonic and in ’68 they were sided with the reformers and lost their jobs, so they
31 were earning money playing at this outdoor beer garden. And you learned, we were pretty

1 sure the school, Charles University summer school had a limited number of students from
2 any one country. Like there were six Americans, six—I don't even know if there were six
3 Russians perhaps, four Brits, four French, they had some Poles a Bulgar or two. You also
4 soon realized that each nationality group had—there was a Czech graduate student who
5 was there to kind of answer your questions they spoke your native language or whatever
6 it happened to be. Most of them were either candidate party members or members of the
7 young Communist Party, one or the other. You soon figured that out, then you started
8 figuring out that some of your professors weren't communists at all. That they'd either
9 left the party early, in the case of the second year I was there, or the first year the woman
10 had never been a party member at all, and they were stuck at the lowest pay level at
11 Charles University. In other words, they needed their talents but because they weren't
12 party members, they were never going to get promoted. You also—I also found later that
13 all of the lectures, and I was studying Czech, were screened in advanced by the party
14 representative in the department. It was probably a member or two of each class who was
15 either a member of the Young Communists or candidate member from some other
16 communist country and in both years there were —six East German and six West
17 Germans. Both summers the East German student got there before their East German
18 “minder,” who was a professor from one of the universities in East Berlin. In both
19 summers after the minder got there a day or two later all the East German students would
20 disappear for an afternoon. The second summer one of the East German students was the
21 daughter of a Lutheran minister and she knew she was probably never gonna get out of
22 East Germany again. She said it was a mistake they let her out this time they weren't
23 paying attention apparently. She hung around with the West Germans and the Americans
24 the whole time. When the East German students disappeared for the afternoon, they came
25 back so I asked her I said, “Where did you go—everybody—all the East Germans go?”
26 She said, “We had to go to the embassy and get a lecture from the secret police about
27 who our friends were,” in other words not the West Germans or the Americans. She said,
28 “But I don't care because I know I'm never getting out again anyhow so I'm staying with
29 the West Germans and the Americans.” [Laughter]

30 JS: Did you go—was this right after you graduated with your undergraduate
31 degree?

1 TC: No, it was while—it was after my military service I was working on a PhD at
2 Ohio State. 1973 and 1974 both summers.

3 JS: What year did you graduate with your undergraduate degree?

4 TC: 1966

5 JS: '66 Okay

6 TC: I got a B.A. in History from Baldwin-Wallace College.

7 JS: Did you get pretty efficient at the Czech language?

8 TC: Yea the real problem I had when I was there (in Prague), was that point I
9 already knew German and French from graduate school and undergraduate school for that
10 matter. The Czech was kind of, I want to say it was an accident. While I was at Ohio
11 State, I thought I'd passed all my language requirements for PhD in History, Central
12 European History, Austrian History in particular. I came in one day and my advisor says
13 "You know I think," she said, "I think you need another Central European language."
14 And I'm going "You gotta be kidding me." Well, it turned out, she told me what was
15 going on she was laughing, she said "I have four students who need Czech because their
16 field is Czech History, and you need five to make a class so how about you learn, in
17 addition to German which is a Central European language, I'd like you to learn some
18 Czech." Okay. Well, a professor at Ohio State was an economist and a native speaker. He
19 may have been a great economist, but he couldn't teach languages to save himself. The
20 other problem was of the five students in the class there were some who had already
21 spent a year in Prague as exchange students who were clearly fluent and there were
22 people like me who knew nothing. It just didn't work and she realized that and so did the
23 professor doing the teaching. Then she felt bad and she said, "tell you what," she said "I
24 would like you to learn a little Czech so I'll get you a scholarship to go to Prague for two
25 summers." And that's how I got there.

26 JS: While you were working on your undergrad, of course things were beginning
27 to heat in Vietnam—

28 TC: Were they ever.

29 JS: Were you paying close attention to those developments?

30 TC: No because Baldwin-Wallace did not have an ROTC detachment or anything
31 like that. It's a relatively small liberal arts school. As an undergraduate I didn't pay a lot

1 of attention. The draft board in Cleveland said I had six years of draft deferment to
2 pursuit a college degree as long I was making progress and getting good grades they
3 didn't care. And I finished my degree in four years and then went on and got a masters at
4 the University of Michigan that only took a year. While I was at Michigan the draft board
5 did send me in to old Fort Wayne in downtown Detroit to get a physical to see if they
6 needed to keep me on the books. Well, I passed the physical, so they kept me on the
7 books. I wasn't being drafted at the time. But I knew when I finished my master's degree
8 there was no use starting on a doctorate because I was only gonna get one more year
9 before they would draft me so it was at the point that I started—looking you know to get
10 into the military something I wanted to do as opposed to something they wanted to do
11 with me. Politics, yeah at Michigan in particular there was a strong anti-Vietnam War
12 presence. There was a demonstration, I think it was every Friday out in front of the
13 library. I can remember I had a class I had to walk by that. A couple of the classes I took
14 were history of South Asia, not particularly Vietnam, but by that point I knew more than
15 enough about why we were in Vietnam and it was—it was pretty clear to me that the war
16 was a big mistake even at that point.

17 JS: Looking at it from that perspective what did you think of the war protests at
18 the time?

19 TC: I thought that President Johnson and the Democrats in particular were trapped
20 in this, some of—a lot of leading politicians were World War II vets and they somehow
21 thought that by fighting in Vietnam we were somehow preventing the communist
22 takeover of South Vietnam and yet when I got to South Vietnam it was even more clear
23 to me that this was a waste of time, effort, money and not to mention a whole lot of lives.
24 Because they Vietnamese people for the most majority could've cared less.

25 JS: What was it at that time prior to going that stood out for you and kinda said
26 this doesn't make sense?

27 TC: The history of French colonialism in Vietnam and the 1954 agreements
28 which we helped the South Vietnamese violate by not holding an election in South
29 Vietnam in '56 as was supposed to happen. Clearly, we just stepped in to replace the
30 French. I looked at that and I go that's not right, and of course by 1966, '67 you'd had the
31 series of coups the last one of which when the Diệms were killed, we had probably

1 helped engineer. You kind of go, yeah this isn't exactly what it's cracked up to be, I don't
2 think that if the—even if the communist takeover South Vietnam they can't swim to the
3 West Coast of the United States. They certainly didn't have much in the way of an air
4 force or a navy they were gonna threaten us so what's the problem?

5 JS: Had you known at this point, did you know anyone who had already served?
6 Did you have any friends or anything?

7 TC: No, well, gee, let me think about that. Not that comes to mind. Jason, I have
8 to admit I don't recall knowing anybody. I mean I knew of people from Berea who had
9 been to Vietnam or who were there, but I didn't know any of them personally.

10 JS: When you started looking at options for going in on your own terms, were you
11 looking primarily at the Army or were you also considering Navy and Air Force?

12 TC: First choice was the Air Force, what I wanted to do was be either a
13 cartographer, a map maker, or an intelligence officer. I've always had an interest in maps.
14 The Air Force was willing to take me except the communications between the draft board
15 in Cleveland, when I took my pre-induction physical, and the Air Force surgeon at
16 Lackland Air Force Base who said "Okay" or "No" as far as joining the Air Force. I wore
17 contact lenses at the time. The Air Force's position was they wanted to know what my
18 eyesight was uncorrected, and they wanted to know what it was corrected with glasses
19 not contacts. The draft board would—this went back and forth at least three times, they'd
20 send the results down to Lackland and the doctor would come back and say, "No I need
21 to know what his uncorrected vision is and what his vision is with glasses," and the draft
22 board would give me another eye exam with contacts and say it was 20/20. This went
23 back and forth three or four times I said, "I think I need to explore other options." So then
24 I went to the Navy, same thing and the Navy recruiter in Cleveland who was a young
25 Lieutenant J.G. was the head of the recruiting office. He didn't read all the fine print, so
26 they decided they'd send me for a weekend, to see if I really liked the Navy, up to Grosse
27 Ile Naval Air Station near Detroit. So, they sent me up there and in the process of
28 spending the weekend there I got a pre-induction physical. Turns out in the Navy,
29 intelligence officers have to pass the flight physical, I guess the thinking was you might
30 fly in the backseat of an airplane someday, with my vision uncorrected it's about twenty-
31 one hundred or so I couldn't pass the physical. So I said, "Wow, gee, that's awful."

1 “Would you like to be a supply officer?” I said now I don’t really want to be a supply
2 officer, that didn’t appeal to me particularly. At the time I said I’ll think about, and so I
3 went back and in the meantime the clocks ticking along I was probably about halfway
4 through the sixth year of the draft deferment and was working at Baldwin-Wallace
5 College at the time. So, I went to the Army. The Army taught me a valuable lesson. I
6 went in to talk to the recruiter there that’s Sergeant; I think he was a tech—no he
7 would’ve been an E-6, E-7 platoon sergeant. He looks at me and says, “You got a draft
8 notice?” I said, “No, I don’t have a draft.” He looks at me, “What’s your education?” “I
9 got a master’s degree.” “You got a master’s degree? You don’t have a draft notice? Come
10 see me.” [Laughter] “What do you want to do?” I said, “I’d like to be an intelligence
11 officer or cartographer.” I said cartography, “Okay. No problem, the Army will send you
12 to Infantry Officers Candidate School, Fort Benning and you’ll get a branch transfer
13 when you get your commission.” And I said okay to intelligence. I said okay. He couldn’t
14 wait to sign me up, and my mistake was not to get all of this in writing. The Army taught
15 me fool me once, shame on them fool me twice shame on me. That’s the last time I ever
16 trusted the Army to give me a straight answer. I went down to Columbus, Ohio, for a pre-
17 OCS interview which was a joke because the guy doing the interviewing was a young
18 ROTC second lieutenant, Adjutant General Corps. It was about two seconds, he looked at
19 my record. “You don’t have any police record.” “No police record.” “Fine.” I think the
20 interview lasted ten minutes or less. Sent me back to Cleveland, I could’ve done the
21 interview over the phone and saved a trip, that’s how I wound up in the Army. I went to
22 basic training and AIT at Fort Dix, New Jersey, in the middle of winter. Then went down
23 to Fort Benning for six months of OCS and about three-quarters of the way through OCS
24 the Army suddenly announced “No branch transfers from infantry OCS.” That’s how I
25 wound up as an infantry officer.

26 JS: Well before we get into all that, if we could talk a little bit about, if you
27 wouldn’t mind talking a little bit about basic and advanced, well first what was induction
28 actually like?

29 TC: It was pretty straightforward. I actually went in on what was called a delayed-
30 enlistment program. I signed the papers sometime just before Thanksgiving, 1967, and I
31 actually didn’t report to Fort Dix until middle February of the following year. There were

1 about three or four of us in my basic training company who were, it was called the
2 College Delayed Entry Program, now that you ever had to have a college degree to get in.
3 There were about three or four of us in my OCS class, three maybe, who were all on the
4 same program. Basic training, well let's see what do I remember. First night at Fort Dix
5 they put a bunch of us on K.P. We got off—we finished K.P. maybe eight o'clock at
6 night? And a blizzard was in. We couldn't get from the mess hall to our barracks because
7 the power lines were down and they were afraid somebody would step on a live line. As a
8 result, they—believe it or not the Army let us sleep in the next morning. Because we
9 hadn't really started basic training yet, this was—we got there a couple days early.
10 Everybody else went and got their basic shots, basic inoculations, except about four or
11 five of us. Well, you end up—basic training comes along and you go over to the clinic
12 and pick up your records and take them over to the new clinic that handled advanced
13 individual training (AIT) people and they look at our records and well we don't have the
14 initial inoculations on our records. This would give you a feel for the Army in the mid
15 '60s, the spec-4 behind the desk said, "You guys get your basics?" "Oh, yeah. Sure we
16 got them all." we just marked them all off, signed them get all the boosters but we never
17 got the basics. That was basic training, that and the fact that the first time we had to run a
18 mile it was in a blizzard and you couldn't even see around the oval. It was—a lot of
19 people came down with upper respiratory infections that was the official Army term for
20 chest cold. There was coughing and everything in the barracks so they made you take
21 your poncho liner and fold it into like a triangle thing, and using one of your tent pegs in
22 the corner of your bunk you put this thing up and you were supposed to sleep facing it so
23 that when you coughed you didn't cough on anyone else at night [laughter]. Outside of
24 that I don't remember a great deal about basic—well, I mean it was basic training you
25 went to the rifle range, lots of pine tree and sand. Because I found this also at Fort
26 Benning, I think the Army's got the market cornered on those two qualities (sand and
27 pine trees). The first sergeant we had was a platoon sergeant an older guy, black guy,
28 really good. He wanted to be a basic training sergeant. The Army of course wanted to
29 move him up, here he is an E-7 with experience here there and everywhere and as we
30 learned he'd been in the Air Force. He hated the Air Force because he didn't think they
31 were military enough, but was really good. About a third of the way through basic

1 training, he finally couldn't fend off the Army anymore so they moved him into some
2 other bureaucratic job sitting behind a desk. The second sergeant we had was equally
3 good, equally decent guy. Basic training wasn't bad at all, neither was AIT really, it was
4 more of basic training.

5 JS: The drill instructors you had there, were they Vietnam vets do you know?

6 TC: Geeze, yes! Both of them were, all three of them. The two in basic and we
7 had one that lasted all the way through AIT. Yes. The interesting thing was we had—
8 there were a number of assistant sergeants because the Army, as I learned later when I
9 came back from Vietnam, had a problem with guys that came back from Vietnam and if
10 they had less than I want to say sixty days left on active duty, they'd discharge them and
11 send them home early. But if they had more the Army had to keep them. And they had
12 trouble keeping them entertained, let's put it that way. I mean these guys knew they
13 weren't going back to Vietnam, so what was the Army going to do to them? And we had
14 one E-6 in advanced individual training he—when we went into AIT, he was an E-6, I
15 think he was assistant supply sergeant for the company. By the time we'd finished AIT
16 eight weeks later he was down to private E-1. He didn't care. He'd been a draftee; he'd
17 done his job in Vietnam got promoted all the way up to E-6 and he wanted out. The
18 Army couldn't or wouldn't because of the policy at the time that said you had to have at
19 least have done all your last few months when you came back from Vietnam. So, yeah
20 and I ran into that when I was at Fort Bragg after I got my commission too. Eighty-
21 second Airborne was loaded with those guys.

22 JS: You mentioned the weapons training, were you guys still training on the M-
23 14s?

24 TC: Yes. I didn't see an M-16 [laughter] I didn't see an M-16 until I got my
25 commission. I'll tell you that story later.

26 JS: Overall then, you feel like you were adjusting to the military lifestyle, I guess?

27 TC: Sure, I mean we got—you know between basic and AIT—I think most of the
28 unusual weapons training, .50-caliber machinegun, M-72 light anti-tank weapon, what
29 else did we get to fire? Those are the one that come to mind off the top of my head that
30 was all in AIT that we saw those.

1 JS: One question I wanted to ask you, you and the other students that were going
2 through the college program, was there any difference in treatment were you guys treated
3 any harsher as a result, anything like that?

4 TC: The only time I was ever aware of it—the first night we were in basic training
5 actually in the basic training company with the platoon sergeant that had been in the Air
6 Force for a while and everything, and he had a college degree believe it or not. Black
7 guy, African American. And he had us all sitting out in the hall in relatively new
8 barracks; they were cinderblock, they weren't the old wooden ones. And were sitting out
9 there and he says "Okay, how many guys do I have here with a high school degree?"
10 Hands all up. "How many with some time in college?" There're still eight or ten hands
11 up. "How many guys got a college degree?" There were still five, six, "How many with
12 an advanced degree, beyond bachelors?" And I think there was one other guy and myself.
13 He says, "Okay, how many guys I got going to OCS?" He started laughing, he was just
14 chuckling, because he—the Army had tried to get him to go to OCS, and I think he tried
15 two weeks and he said he didn't like. It wasn't for him. He didn't want to be an officer.
16 But beyond that, nobody bothered us.

17 JS: Any other memorable moments, or funny moments anything like that from
18 basic that stick out that you could possibly...

19 TC: No not really—well, yeah, one other thing, the sergeant—they even had
20 sergeants to do physical training for us and the guy we had because they had so much—
21 such a problem with upper respiratory infections at Dix that winter, I don't know if other
22 winters were different, he was finally told we didn't learn it 'til later, that if it was cold
23 and raining outside which was pretty standard at Fort Dix you were not to have the young
24 troops outside doing physical training if it was cold and raining below a certain
25 temperature, maybe forty degrees I'm only guessing. He was kind of a mean cuss, I
26 forgotten what his basic problem was, so he decided one day that our company was
27 gonna be out there anyhow regardless of what his orders were. That was the last we saw
28 of him. When the company commander saw us out there, he had a fit and as I said that
29 was the last time we saw that sergeant. But beyond that basic training, no it was your
30 standard basic training, physical training and the rifle range and how to figure out your
31 left foot from your right foot. The usual.

1 JS: And you went through the AIT at Fort Dix, as well?

2 TC: Infantry AIT at Fort Dix. That was, as I said, more of the same as basic
3 training, really.

4 JS: Just a little bit more focus on weapons and tactics.

5 TC: Not even so much tactics, all you were do were supposed to follow orders,
6 remember this was for junior enlisted guys they weren't too much worried about you
7 knowing a lot in the way of tactics.

8 JS: Anything from AIT that sticks out?

9 TC: Not really, nothing that I remember anyhow.

10 JS: How long did AIT last?

11 TC: Eight weeks, basic was eight weeks AIT was eight weeks.

12 JS: So you finished those, do you remember about what time period this was?

13 TC: Yeah, would've been in June of 1968.

14 JS: June of '68, well as you're going through this training— go ahead.

15 TC: June of '68? Yes, June of '68 that's right.

16 JS: As you're going through the training, I know you were kept quite busy every
17 day, but were you guys hearing much about what was going on in Vietnam?

18 TC: Very little.

19 JS: Had you known anything about the Tet Offensive anything like that?

20 TC: I recall it, but beyond that it didn't make a great impression on us, at least it
21 didn't on me at the time. In fact, the only other thing I do recall, and that was in AIT, we
22 had one individual from Vermont believe it or not who, all the rest of us are going we just
23 wanna get this done and move on with our lives, and he'd volunteered for the infantry.
24 And we asked him, he was kind of a quiet kid, why did you volunteer—he wanted to go
25 to Vietnam and win some medals. And were going, this guy can't be serious. Well, it
26 turned out that apparently the recruiter wasn't paying close attention this kid could not
27 read. So, he could never pass the first-aid portion of AIT, because it requires you to read
28 and take a written examination. And the Army finally pulled him out of AIT and sent him
29 off to teach him to read and write. And we're all going this is the one guy among us that
30 wants to go to Vietnam and win medals and he's the only one that'll probably never see
31 Vietnam. He also had some personal hygiene problems, I don't think he knew what soap

1 and water were. We had to show him how to clean his mess kit. He had no idea what to
2 do. Maybe he was from the backwoods of Vermont.

3 JS: Between AIT and going to OCS, how much time did you have in between
4 there?

5 TC: I don't know, I got married. [Laughter] Geez I wanna say ten days, two
6 weeks. Because we reported in to OCS right after the 4th of July.

7 JS: And you said that was at Fort Benning?

8 TC: Oh, yeah, "Benning's School for Wayward Boys," as we so fondly called it.

9 JS: Could you talk about OCS and how it was structured and what it was like for
10 you?

11 TC: Six months basically, we graduated and were commissioned right before
12 Christmas, twentieth of December. Structure. You know they started out, in, looking back
13 on it you realize what they were trying to do. Teach you things like map reading and
14 other skills that you were going to need as a small unit infantry commander, how to make
15 good decisions. I'm trying to think, also how to instill unit cohesion even in the OCS
16 company and remember the OCS company I was in, with very few exceptions all of them
17 were college grads on their college grad program to commissioning. For various reasons
18 either their schools didn't have ROTC, or they didn't participate I don't know which, so
19 it was probably brighter than the average group of OCS candidates because at that time
20 the Army was taking even some guys who were prior enlisted that may not have finished
21 a college degree. We had a few prior enlisted guys in our OCS company they had college
22 degrees, they'd gotten them in the evenings that sort of thing. In some respects, it was a
23 lot like being in a fraternity in college. I mean it was plenty of horsing around after hours,
24 you weren't supposed to, but it was kind of expected. I don't mean you got off base or
25 out of the barracks necessarily but you're always trying to fool around with your tac
26 officer that sort of thing. And the tac officers most of them were recent OCS graduates
27 from the same program, so they were all college guys and had been through the same
28 thing, so they knew what was going on, we weren't fooling anybody. The company
29 commander we had was kind of a sad case. He'd been wounded in Vietnam pretty badly
30 and he was prior enlisted and gone through OCS. Was from Ohio, northern Ohio,
31 Cleveland area if I remember. He was trying to make major, and he thought—we had

1 some really talented guys in the OCS class, and I don't mean just great military officers
2 but they had a lot of outside talents. We had three or four guys that could really sing
3 well, put on skits so we were always getting volunteered to do all this kind of stuff,
4 entertaining at parties around Fort Benning and this kind of thing. You could see the
5 company commander was hoping that by showing he had such a wonderful talented
6 company he was gonna get a promotion or get a leg up on making major. I don't know
7 whether he ever got promoted or not I've no idea. He was kind of a hard guy to read
8 because I think deep down, he felt a little inferior to most of the college—he didn't have
9 a college degree. He felt a little inferior to most of the people in the company in one
10 respect, and that was on the education side. There were some—I won't say there were
11 tense moments, but it was really kind of sad in a way to watch him. He was a decent
12 human being it wasn't that he was picking on us or made life miserable for us, but you
13 could just see that what he really wanted to do was finish his career as a major in the
14 Army and there was some question because he was badly wounded and he was never
15 going back overseas again. Whether he would make major. Can we take a break for a
16 second?

17 JS: Absolutely, sure.

18 TC: Thinking back to OCS, it wasn't bad. I enjoyed the field of problems, I
19 should say my undergraduate and my master's degree minor field was geography and as I
20 said I always liked maps, so I was, if I may say so rather good at map reading and I don't
21 mean just figuring out where you are on the ground but being able to quickly interpret the
22 maps figure out which way was uphill, which way was downhill and that sort of thing.
23 Which a couple of times in OCS saved a bunch of us from stepping off a cliff literally.
24 One of the things they tried to do was teach you what your endurance was by taking you
25 out on a field program that kept you moving until you were literally walking into trees. I
26 mean that's how tired you were. Part of that problem was there was this nice almost
27 straight sided ravine that was probably twenty feet deep. Unfortunately, I spotted it on the
28 map so the guy that was walking point at that time didn't step off the edge, because that
29 was supposedly one of the great chuckles that the tac officers got.

30 JS: Overall, did you feel that the training you received there at OCS did you feel
31 that it prepared you to be an officer in the Army?

1 TC: Yes, I think it did. You weren't the World War II ninety-day wonder. I
2 question how in ninety days they could prepare you but the Vietnam-era OCS that I went
3 through, Officers Candidate School I went through, was trying to prepare you for more
4 than being a small unit leader in combat. They were worried about such things if you
5 didn't have social skills, they tried to hammer those into you because we had a number of
6 occasions where we had to get dressed up in dress greens never dress blues during OCS.
7 To go to a dinner or something like that, or to help run a dinner. Everything had to be just
8 so as you can well imagine, so there was some of that went on too to prepare you for the
9 social world of a military base is the way to put it. When we graduated, we had to
10 purchase a set of dress blues and a second set of officer's greens, initially we were gonna
11 have to purchase two sets of officer's greens. One of my platoon mates, his father was the
12 senior medical officer at West Point. All the other companies, Officer Candidate School
13 companies at Benning were allowed to take their enlisted set of greens, you got one when
14 you joined the Army and convert those into officers' basically sew the black stripe down
15 the side of the legs and on the cuffs. Our company commander again, part of his "I'd like
16 to make major," his company was going to have to buy two sets of dress greens. This guy
17 that was in my platoon called his father and asked him and we were told "Okay, you can
18 convert your set of enlisted greens, too." That's how you learned how the Army
19 bureaucracy works through the back door.

20 JS: Overall, how about preparing—you're training up to this point, how about
21 preparing you for Vietnam?

22 TC: Well, certainly some of the field problems that OCS—there was a make-
23 believe Vietnamese village that you learned how to, one surround and two search. But I
24 can't say that it was all—it was aimed at Vietnam, yes, we had some classroom time
25 spend on studying what tactics had been used in Vietnam and were being used in
26 Vietnam. But there was also a good deal of it focused on Europe, don't forget we still had
27 a fairly large garrison in West Germany. While I was at OCS in fact a month and a half in
28 is when the Russian or the Soviet Union's invasion of Czechoslovakia took place. I can
29 remember a couple of us had radios that we had smuggled into OCS. You weren't
30 supposed to have them, but we smuggled them in anyhow. I can remember staying up at
31 night and listening to the reports on the radio from Prague. That kind of made a bigger

1 impression than Vietnam, to me because I'd been to Czechoslovakia. But beyond that,
2 certainly the equipment again we still had M-14s in OCS. M-16s were in short supply I
3 suspect partly because the initial version of M-16s had at least two problems when it
4 came to Vietnam. One was they tended to jam when they even got a small amount of dirt
5 in the chamber and the other one was the original flash suppressor on the M-16 was kind
6 of like a three-pronged, they were a lot fatter than tines on a fork it was a kind of three-
7 pronged thing, and when you walked through the jungle that hooked everything in sight.
8 The later version they added a complete circle at the top of those three-prongs so that
9 they didn't stick out and hook and then they—the manufacturer went back and I forgotten
10 what they coated the chambers of the weapons with to cut down on the jamming problem,
11 but there was a kind of shortage of M-16s and so we went through OCS with M-14s. We
12 had M-60-machineguns and all the rest of it, PRC-25 radios, but no M-16s.

13 JS: You said that you got one, or you saw one right after commission, I guess.

14 TC: I did, I was sent—my first assignment was to a Psy-Op battalion at the
15 Special Warfare Center at Fort Bragg, the John F. Kennedy Center. The Psy-Op group,
16 there were three Psy-Op battalions in the group, plus at least one Special Forces group
17 assigned to the Kennedy Center. Any of the special details around the Center were made
18 up of both Psy-Op guys and Special Forces. The Special Forces guys had an
19 overabundance of World War II and post-World War II DPs from Central and Eastern
20 Europe. These guys were all E-8s and E-9s and they'd been in the Army since then, since
21 they came to the States. They knew their way around more than one Army, most of them.
22 As a young second lieutenant from the Psy-Op side I drew Officer of the Day on a couple
23 of occasions. The first time I drew Officer of the Day the Special Forces guys had M-16s,
24 and the guard mount was mixed Psy-Op /Special Forces, Psy-Ops still had M-14s. I'm
25 going down the line inspecting the weapons to pick supernumeraries, the guys that would
26 have the best cleanest weapons and best uniforms and everything. Of course, you're
27 asking the senior NCO with you, to kind of help you along, help you make the selection.
28 That was just part of the way—the tradition at least at the Kennedy Center. I'm going
29 along and about the fifth guy I hit in the first rank of the guard mount, doesn't he drop an
30 M-16 in my hand. I have no idea how to look down the barrel. On the M-14 you pull the
31 bolt back and stick your finger down in and the sunlight reflects off your fingernail right

1 up the barrel. The M-16, I didn't even know how to pull the bolt back. Then this old
2 crusty E-9—I'm sure he was laughing about this greenhorn lieutenant. He showed me.
3 That was my introduction to the M-16.

4 JS: As you were going through your training up to this point, did you feel that
5 there was a pretty good chance that you were going to be going to Vietnam?

6 TC: I was certain I was going to Vietnam. As certain as I could be. I learned much
7 later that a few of my OCS compatriots from my OCS Company, couple of them that
8 were sent to Fort Carson, Colorado. They went to Korea and never saw Vietnam. We had
9 a couple of guys who were smart enough to make the Army sign paperwork that they
10 were commissioned in either Signal Corps or I think Intelligence Corps and they went to
11 Germany. We had one armor guy I think, at that point the Army was kind of shutting
12 back all of the non-Infantry/Artillery OCS because they didn't need the officers. So,
13 Armor OCS which had been at Knox was closed. Signal Corps OCS at Fort Gordon was
14 closed. There were a few guys that had paperwork that said they were guaranteed a
15 commission in one of those branches.

16 JS: Did you receive your assignment to Psy-Ops there at the end of OCS?

17 TC: There were I think four of us in my OCS Company who had master's degrees
18 and you could tell the Army didn't know what to do with us. Most of the rest of the
19 newly minted lieutenants were sent to one of the infantry divisions in the States to be
20 either a platoon leader there or a few of them went to Special Forces school, the ones who
21 wanted to go Airborne and then Special Forces, or they went to be basic training officers
22 somewhere. But, there were four of us that had master's I went to the Special Warfare
23 Center as Psy-Ops officer and I'm trying to think of where the others went. We didn't get
24 the normal kind of assignment, just the four of us. So that's how I end up at Fort Bragg, I
25 think because I already had a master's degree. The Army said well, there but be
26 something we can do with him that's different. Which it was.

27 JS: When you first got the assignment before you had actually gone, how did you
28 feel about it what did you think about it?

29 TC: I didn't know anything about Fort Bragg either so it didn't make much of a
30 difference. The only thing I knew I wasn't gonna do was go Airborne. In fact very few
31 from my company did and I think the reason was at about the fourth or fifth week of OCS

1 the jump towers, 120-foot jump towers for airborne training were right next to the OCS
2 area at Fort Benning. We came out one day and it was windy, the wind had come up and
3 there was one guy who was trapped a third of the way down the jump tower and wound
4 up dying on the jump tower because they couldn't get down. The wind was that bad
5 everybody goes, yeah that doesn't look like the brightest idea in the world. Jumping out
6 of a perfectly good airplane is not a smart idea. When the Airborne came around to
7 look for people to sign up for Airborne, I think he got about two. But as far as going to
8 Fort Bragg, I'd never been to North Carolina—well I guess I had once as a kid but I
9 didn't remember anything passing through. I didn't know anything more about Fort
10 Bragg, I'd already seen Dix and Benning, so I had a sneaking suspicion Bragg was more
11 of the same, sand and pine trees, and it was. Except this time, I didn't have to go play
12 around in it.

13 JS: What was the Special Warfare School all about?

14 TC: The John F. Kennedy Center for Special Warfare was set up either while
15 President Kennedy was alive or after he was assassinated. It was to train people for
16 Psychological Operations and Special Forces. Both of which were relatively new
17 concepts in the Army. For most of the Special Forces guys the initial idea was they had a
18 foreign language capability, or they had to learn one. That's the reason you had a lot of
19 these World War II-era DPs from Central and Eastern Europe they spoke Russian,
20 Ukrainian, Czech, Polish, you name it. It's how they got their citizenship by joining up
21 once they got to this country. They came here as refugees in the late '40s and early '50s
22 and their English wasn't great but their foreign language skills were wonderful. So, the
23 Army offered them a place to find a job or find something to do, plus most of them hated
24 the Soviets anyhow. In the Psy-Op, the Army had run Psy-Op-type operations —
25 propaganda as it was called World War I, World War II. I'm not sure how they got, I
26 assume that was the carry over into Vietnam. Where they got the term Psy-Op I have to
27 admit I don't know although it's possible they got it from the British who used similar
28 tactics against the Mau Mau in Kenya in the early '50s, '54 – '55. One of the instructors
29 we had—I did get to go Psy-Op school eventually before going to Vietnam. One of the
30 instructors we had was a U.S. Army major who was originally a Brit and thought he
31 knew everything there was to know about Psy-Ops because he'd been to Kenya in the

1 early '50s. None of us were really impressed with what he thought should be done and
2 how things should be presented, but he's the instructor and we're just students. Going to
3 Psy-Op school, I wasn't guaranteed to go, when I was sent to the Psy-Op battalion. In
4 fact, my first assignment was as the battalion adjutant. I didn't even know what a
5 battalion adjutant was, never mind anything else. I walked in and they needed an adjutant
6 and the sergeant major, and the battalion commander had been together for quite a few
7 years. They'd served in Vietnam together. The battalion commander had a little drinking
8 problem so the sergeant major more or less ran the battalion to a certain extent, not
9 everything obviously. He's the one who taught me what an adjutant had to do. From
10 paperwork to everything else. It was a real education in fact it was a faster education than
11 anything else I'd been through in the Army.

12 JS: For potential listeners that may not know what an adjutant is or what an
13 adjutant does, could you talk a little more about that assignment?

14 TC: Yes, the Psy-Op battalions don't have, didn't have then I don't know what
15 they have now, didn't have anything like a vice commander/deputy commander, so the
16 adjutant was the guy that took care of everything from personnel—and in this case
17 because the Psy-Op battalions are generally small, it's the administration of the battalion
18 that your responsible for. Not the command but the administration, in other words the
19 flow of paperwork. There's volumes of paperwork, I'd never guessed until I got involved
20 with it, but the old sergeant major grabs me and says, "Okay, Lieutenant," and he knew I
21 was a lieutenant and he was a sergeant major, but it was quite clear he knew a lot more
22 than a lieutenant did. So, he sat me down and walked me through every time something
23 new showed up, he'd explained to me what had to be done. Often, I'd have to ask him,
24 "Okay, what's the recommendation here?" So, he'd say, "Let's recommend this or let's
25 do that sort of this." The education of a young lieutenant by an old NCO.

26 JS: How long did you do that before actually getting into—

27 TC: I got there in January, right after the New Years. Psy-Op school was—so
28 maybe four, five months, maybe five months I was the battalion adjutant. Then the old
29 man had agreed that if I agreed to be the adjutant because he knew I didn't know
30 anything there was going to be a real learning experience with a lot of long hours, that
31 he'd send me to Psy-Op school which he did. I must've gone about May or June because

1 let's see I went on leave right after the Fourth of July before going to Vietnam. The other
2 thing that I learned up until the time I went to Psy-Op school, even though I was the
3 battalion adjutant, was I was still on the duty roster for being duty officer at the Special
4 Warfare Center. I did that more than once and it was kind of interesting because the old
5 NCOs, the old Special Forces NCOs, I'm sure they'd seen more than their share of
6 lieutenants. Once you picked out the supernumerary who was excused then and could go
7 home, and they posted guard mount, the officer did not post the guard, the senior NCO
8 for each of the three squads, when it was his squads turn—every two hours I think was
9 the switch. They went out and posted the guard, I insisted on going a couple times just to
10 see what was going on, and they, "Well, if the lieutenant insisted," he couldn't tell him
11 "no." But, outside of that the Officer of the Guard had his own room in the guard
12 barracks. The senior NCOs sat and played poker. Well, I didn't want to sit in a room and
13 read a book or whatever, that was what they expected you to do just stay out of their way
14 so I'd sit there and watch them play poker—they wouldn't play poker with the officer,
15 that was another no-no. It was interesting talking to them, that's how I learned who they
16 were and what their backgrounds were, the Special Forces NCOs. But it was kind of
17 interesting. The only thing the officer had to do was there would be classified messages
18 that would come in maybe once or twice a night over at the comm. center. Only the
19 officer could go over and sign for them and you transported them back to the John F.
20 Kennedy Center; they were always addressed to the commander who was a lieutenant
21 general. You put them in the general's safe at night. It was only later I learned that, you
22 know, most of them while they were classified secret, they were pretty routine stuff, it
23 was kind of a silly exercise in a way. You went out once in a while—you and your driver
24 in a Jeep would go out and make sure all the guards weren't sound asleep and you'd take
25 the senior NCO with you sort of thing. That was about all there was to Officer of the Day.

26 JS: Once you actually got into the Psy-Op school was the training like?

27 TC: Well, anything from how to prepare leaflets, the different themes you could
28 put into leaflets or broadcasts. There was no expectation that you spoke any foreign
29 language to do actual broadcasts. You need a good year or so of language training to get
30 accents correct and everything. Then there was a look back study of the history of
31 psychological operations beginning basically with World War I, World War II. This

1 particular major liked to have us go over in great detail the British and Kenyan, the early
2 '50s as I said. Then there was a look at what we were doing at that time in Vietnam. The
3 organization, there was a Psy-Op battalion assigned to each of the core areas of Vietnam.
4 Support personnel to do everything from print leaflets to create broadcast tapes and that
5 sort of thing. Themes to be used in the broadcast and in the leaflets those sorts of things.

6 JS: Did you learn to speak any Vietnamese?

7 TC: Very little. When I got to Vietnam, I was an assistant brigade S-5 and I had a
8 Vietnamese Army sergeant assigned to me as well as a Psy-Op direct support team which
9 consisted of a U.S. Army sergeant, a U.S. Army Spec-4, and two Kit Carson Scouts.
10 Those were the Vietcong that had changed sides, and the two Kit Carson Scouts and the
11 Vietnamese sergeant spoke all the Vietnamese I needed. One of the three would always
12 go with me, usually the sergeant when I was working with the Vietnamese and I needed
13 Vietnamese.

14 JS: How about—much about the culture and that type of thing.

15 TC: Yeah, we did do a good deal, well I shouldn't say good deal, we did do some
16 of Vietnamese culture but there was no attempt to really differentiate except between the
17 Vietnamese, who were lowlanders, and the Montagnards, who were mountain people.
18 There was no real look at the various groups that made up the society in Vietnam, the
19 Roman Catholics as opposed to the Buddhists and who was who and what their outlooks
20 were because they were different. There was no attempt to differentiate between city-
21 Vietnamese and the farm-Vietnamese, the countryside peasants. There was no real
22 information on land ownership. I learned that by osmosis more or less when I got to
23 Vietnam. But those were the kind of things that would have been helpful. It would've
24 speeded things up when I got there, and there was really very little of that. I don't think
25 the Army really paid much attention. I don't think the United States government paid
26 much attention to that. I mean there were big differences. Both in their interests and then
27 their outlook on the war and the communists.

28 JS: So overall how would you rate the training there?

29 TC: As far as the training on how to be a Psy-Ops officer, it was pretty good. You
30 got to play with the equipment, the loudspeaker equipment, whether it was to be put in
31 helicopters or aircraft—how to print leaflets, but when it came to being targeted toward

1 what you were going to find in Vietnam, it was all pretty generic. There wasn't any
2 attempt to provide shades of grey so to speak. That, to me, was one of the big keys in
3 Vietnam when you were trying to do psy-ops. You needed to know who your target
4 audience was other than a) Montagnards or b) Vietnamese. Makes a big difference.
5 Whether they were wealthy landowners, tenant peasants, or merchants in the towns and
6 cities and whether they were Roman Catholic or Buddhist. That, there wasn't much of.

7 JS: You said that the commanding officer there felt he pretty much knew
8 everything there was to know based on his experiences in Kenya—

9 TC: No that wasn't the commanding officer, that was one of the instructors in the
10 Psy-Ops course.

11 JS: Okay sorry, All right well the instructor there did he—had he served in
12 Vietnam as well?

13 TC: I don't believe so but don't hold me to that one. I couldn't say for sure, but I
14 don't think so.

15 JS: He based most of what he taught you guys—what he was teaching on those
16 experiences he had in Kenya.

17 TC: Mhmm. Of course, the Mau Mau were from one particular tribe in Kenya, the
18 vast major—well all of them were. That was a lot different than what you found in
19 Vietnam. Because while the Montagnards have tribes the Vietnamese don't and the splits
20 in the Vietnamese culture among the Vietnamese were—part of it was based on where
21 they were on the social ladder and what they did for work or to earn their food, and the
22 other part of it was religion. The Roman Catholics, many of whom were refugees from
23 the North, were hard anti-communists most of them. The Buddhists tended not to be so
24 much. Where I was in Vietnam, we didn't have any Cao Dai or very few Cao Dai so I
25 couldn't even address where they fell in it.

26 JS: And these deficiencies in the training program, did you not really become
27 aware of these until you were actually there?

28 TC: That's correct.

29 JS: Well, anything else we should say about the training program, any memorable
30 moments?

1 TC: Not that I can think of Jason, you know it—no I can't really think of anything
2 on the Psy-Op training.

3 JS: Was it at this point then that you received your orders for Vietnam?

4 TC: I volunteered to go to Vietnam. Because I learned somewhere along the line
5 that I could volunteered to go to Vietnam as a Psy-Op officer. Because I knew I was
6 going. So, I figured I might as well go do something I was trained to do, and was semi-
7 interested in. So I volunteered to go as a Psy-Op officer. It also meant that I knew exactly
8 when I was going. I didn't have to wait till the last minute to get orders.

9 JS: Overall, how did you feel about that, how did you feel about going?

10 TC: I had given it a lot of thought long before I enlisted in the Army, about
11 whether I was willing to serve or not and I figured if I didn't serve there was no use
12 hanging around the United States frankly. You can't have it both ways. I just kind of
13 decided, okay, I guess I'd stayed and then I got married and that kind made—that was an
14 extra reason to stay in the States. That being the case, then I figured I'd make the best of
15 it. Some of the classes I'd had mostly at the University of Michigan, I kinda knew the
16 history and what to expect basically in Vietnam. The Army and the U.S. military weren't
17 really interested in teaching it to people, the history, except the high points or the low
18 points. You know from the American standpoint.

19 JS: How much time did you have off between completing that last training and
20 actually going?

21 TC: You would ask me that [laughter] mind. You know thirty days jumps into my
22 mind, but I wouldn't hold—wouldn't bet on that. May have been a little less.

23 JS: What would you have done during that time?

24 TC: Visit with my parents' and my wife's parents', and it was summer because I
25 went over in early August. So probably went to visit my parents first if I remember and
26 then visit—my wife is from Rochester, New York outside Rochester. Her parents had a
27 summer cottage up in the Finger Lakes, so we probably went up there for a while.

28 JS: Overall, how did your family feel about you going?

29 TC: Oh, I think my dad was worried. He did not serve in World War II because he
30 had a birth defect, he had real short fingers on one of his hands—his left hand. He tried to
31 enlist in the Marines and the Navy surgeon general said nope, you can't serve. Yeah, he

1 was kind of worried, my mother I don't remember. I don't remember anybody else saying
2 much of anything. I do remember that when I was home on that leave, one of my father's
3 fellow professors had been an infantry lieutenant in World War II and badly wounded in
4 the jaw in France by a sniper. I could remember going out to his—he lived on a farm, he
5 and his wife and son, and I bought a .45 because one of my good friends from when I was
6 in elementary school and high school was a missile artillery officer, he was my age and
7 he'd gone ROTC. He'd said, "Oh, there's a shortage of .45s so you might wanna get
8 one." He was the one guy I knew who served in Vietnam, he went over a little before I
9 did. So, I went out and bought a .45 turns out there was no shortage of them. Spent time
10 out on this professor's farm practicing with the .45. The .45 as you well know isn't
11 exactly the most accurate weapon in the world. This professor was concerned you know,
12 if I was an infantry officer you needed as much practice you'd get with a .45 and he had
13 as much fun as I did practicing with it and fooling around with it. Outside of that I don't
14 remember anybody saying much about going to Vietnam.

15 JS: You said you left for Vietnam in August?

16 TC: Yeah, I went out to Travis Air Force Base, and it was the trip, if anything
17 could go wrong it did go wrong. Got to Travis and we were supposed to take off late in
18 the afternoon. In the old brick passenger terminal out there, they're calling every other
19 flight but the one I was one, and we wait and we wait and we wait and we wait and
20 finally about nine o'clock at night they call our flight and we go walking out the door and
21 you walk down a sidewalk to the edge of the parking apron area. Instead of an airplane
22 there's a line of buses. They load us on the buses and take us to a motel. The reason is
23 because the airplane needed an engine change. So, they do the engine change, and we
24 take off the next morning about eight-thirty, nine o'clock and the route was Travis,
25 Honolulu International Airport, Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Bien Hoa Air Base. We get
26 to Honolulu and we got two hours off. So, everybody jumps off and they've got two
27 things in mind: call home and get drunk. So, everybody calls home, and then we go get
28 some drinks, two hours later we come back and it was like Niagara Falls under the
29 aircraft because they had a hydraulic leak so they said come back in two hours. Now
30 we've all had our phone calls so there's nothing much but go find something to drink. So,
31 we do that, two more hours we come back and get on the airplane, they'd buttoned it up.

1 Can't start number four engine, which was the one they'd had to change at Travis,
2 because the driveshaft in the starter motor was broken. So now they say come back in
3 four more hours. So four more hours and we all come back and sit down and most of the
4 passengers are enlisted guys, and there's maybe five or six of us lieutenants and there's
5 the captain. No, I take it back he was a major; one field grade. They're counting noses
6 and the major's missing. So another lieutenant and I, who hadn't had nearly as much to
7 drink as the rest of them, so we go looking for him. Well, he was passed out on a bench.
8 So, the ol' grab the ankles grab the arms and carry him back [laughter] literally. Get on
9 the airplane man there were some sick guys on that airplane between Honolulu
10 International and Kadena. We got into Vietnam twelve hours late, we got in at midnight
11 instead of noon.

12 JS: Was it a civilian airliner?

13 TC: Yes, it was. Flying Tiger, if I remember but don't hold me to it. I think that's
14 what it was. Because we had stewardess as I remember that they're the ones who sent
15 two of us lieutenants to find the major.

16 JS: You said you arrived in the country at Bien Hoa?

17 TC: Bien Hoa Air Base, and they bussed us—this is midnight, one o'clock in the
18 morning, and you step off and you get hit with the double aromas of *nuoc mam* and
19 burning human waste. It's August so it's nice and hot and humid even at one in the
20 morning and you go, "Man, what kind of place is this?" Nobody told us about this aroma.
21 They bused us over to Long Binh, to the 90th Replacement Battalion. The rest of the
22 journey, once I got there with everybody else, they figured they'd process you out in
23 forty-eight hours. What they didn't know was the first—the first full day we were there
24 not the day we got in at one morning but the next day, was the last MPC conversion day.
25 Military payment certificate, in other words, the paper money we used. They would
26 change them out periodically to prevent the Vietnamese from hoarding them or even
27 having them. When they did that they shut down every base. So here we are sitting at
28 Long Binh, and all of a sudden, I'm looking out the window—or out the open area out
29 towards the fence around Long Binh and there's all these mama-sans outside with
30 bundles of MPC throwing them over the fence. What the heck is this? That's when we
31 found it was MPC conversion day and nothing was gonna happen for twenty-four hours.

1 So, it delayed all of us getting our assignments or division assignments. I guess I should
2 tell you one more thing just to add to the strangeness of arriving in Vietnam. On the trip
3 from Bien Hoa Air Base to Long Binh base we're driving along and all of a sudden, we
4 come to this area that's lit up like broad daylight, high noon. And there's guys outside in
5 whites playing tennis. That was the Air Force [laughter]. We're going man this is really
6 crazy and then comes MPC day and the next day everybody's getting their orders and
7 they got transportation slips or their division came to pick them up if they were in the
8 Saigon area. There was a chaplain, a major, a Lutheran from Minnesota and myself. Were
9 the only ones assigned to the 23rd Infantry Division and it took us a while to figure out
10 who that was because we never heard of them. That's the Americal Division. Well, that's
11 way up in I Corps, southern I Corps. The Army gives us our flight schedule and the
12 tickets to get on the airplane and they bus us over, back to Bien Hoa Air Base and we get
13 on a C-123. We're a day after—everybody else that came in with us has already gone.
14 So, we get on it maybe nine, nine-thirty ten o'clock in the morning. Neither one of us
15 knew exactly where were going. Chu Lai, where's Chu Lai? We ride along and this 123
16 stops at I don't know where-all, along the way. It's like the local bus it stops at every
17 stop. At about four-thirty, four or four-thirty we land at Cam Ranh Bay. We sit on the
18 back of the plane and everyone else gets off the airplane. The chaplain looks at me and I
19 look at him and we shrug our shoulders and pretty soon a crew chief comes back and
20 says, "You guys getting off?" "Oh no, we're going to Chu Lai." The guy says, "Not on
21 this plane. Not today you're not. This is the end of the run." The Army and Air Force
22 weren't talking to each other. "Oh, really?" While they had us at Long Binh the Army
23 policy was you couldn't use a telephone. They didn't want you making any
24 arrangements. Here we are at Cam Ranh Bay, so we walk over—we're like we're in
25 country. We walk over to the BOQ (bachelor officers quarters) and get a room and then
26 we go find a phone and I call the division G-5. He says, "Where are you?" I said, "I'm
27 trained Psy-Ops officer headed your direction." He said, "Where are you?" I said, "Cam
28 Ranh Bay." He asked, "When you getting in here?" I said, "We've got a flight
29 tomorrow," turned out to be a direct flight to Chu Lai, no stops at Nha Trang or anyplace.
30 He said, "Okay, when you get here," he said, "When you get to Chu Lai, get off the
31 airplane, don't worry about your bags there'll be Sergeant"—he was an E-8, I don't

1 remember the guy's name—"he'll be right at the bottom of the steps follow him and go
2 over and get in the Jeep and don't ask anybody any questions and don't say anything."
3 Okay, so the next day that's what happened and the chaplain had called the division
4 chaplain and kind of got the same instructions. So we get there and I get in the back of
5 the Jeep and the sergeant E-8 goes over and picks up my bags and drives me over to the
6 division G-5 and they hid me out for three days. Well, the division G-5 got his good
7 buddies at division G-1 to cut a set of orders assigning me as an assistant brigade 5
8 because they couldn't get any trained Psy-Ops officers. The infantry guys were picking
9 them all off at the combat training center which is where you went for the first seven
10 days. I already had my orders and then the sergeant drives me over to the combat center
11 for the last three days and it's over on the beach at Chu Lai. I walk in and this Spec-4 is
12 sitting behind the desk. I walk up and tell him who I am and he says, "Where have you
13 been?" Then he looks at me for a second and "You got orders, don't you?" I said, "Yep."
14 He says, "Ah-ha. Okay, well you might as well enjoy yourself on the beach because
15 you're not going where the rest of them are going." That's how I wound up as the
16 assistant brigade S-5 for the 11th Brigade of the division.

17 JS: Was that further training that was going —

18 TC: Yeah, it was supposed to be the last training to prepare you to go out into the
19 fields in Vietnam. Booby traps, and those kinds of things what to look for. I did go
20 through some of that training just because I was curious. It turned out it was a good idea
21 because, yeah, well I wasn't going to lead a platoon I'd spent a lot of time running around
22 in the field with only one other person. Came in handy on occasion.

23 JS: Then you were based out of Chu Lai?

24 TC: No, out of Duc Pho. LZ Bronco, landing zone Bronco which was the brigade
25 headquarters. Twenty-five miles south of division. We were actually physically separated
26 from the rest of the division by the 2nd ARVN Division. They were sandwiched between
27 us and the rest of the Americal Division.

28 JS: Did you go there soon after arriving at Chu Lai?

29 TC: As soon as the seven days were up I was there. They sent a helicopter up and
30 picked me up and off I went.

31 JS: Could you talk a little bit about LZ Bronco and Duc Pho?

1 TC: Sure, let me take a little break first. I'll be right back.

2 JS: Sure, absolutely.

3 TC: Okay, Jason. LZ. Bronco, LZ Bronco was located on the coastal plain of
4 Vietnam about three to five miles inland from the South China Sea. It was built around an
5 old volcanic cone, at least that's what I think it was, so the surrounding countryside was
6 completely flat. You could see the Annamite chain of mountains to the west maybe ten
7 miles. This volcanic cone, the brigade kept halftrack of quad .50-caliber machineguns,
8 105-millimeter howitzer and spotlights up there for base protection. The perimeter of the
9 base ran completely around the volcanic cone. It was about three-quarters of a mile to a
10 mile east of National Highway 1. The main north-south road in Vietnam. There was a dirt
11 access road that went out the National Highway 1. All four of the brigade's battalions had
12 their rear area there. The battalion forwards were all at firebases scattered around the area
13 of operation. Brigade headquarters was there, there was a 4500-foot pierced steel plank
14 runway for small fixed-wing aircraft. There was an assault helicopter company, a couple
15 of medevac helicopters, a small clinic called Admission and Disposition, A&D for short.
16 What else? The 20th Engineer Battalion had their rear area there. Think who else was
17 there, artillery, while I was there after I been there about seven—eight months they even
18 brought in a couple 8-inch howitzers, self-propelled. That was a big event because they
19 didn't bother to tell anybody and the first fire mission was over the base, in the middle of
20 the night which had everybody hanging from the ceiling or wherever they were sleeping
21 thinking, "What the heck is Charlie throwing at us now?" The Annamite Mountains at the
22 most they were ten miles to the west across National Highway 1, well within 122- and
23 107-millimeter rocket range of the base. We used to get rockets about three times a day:
24 breakfast, lunch and dinner. That's about the only thing that really stands out—the
25 surrounding area outside the perimeter was mostly rice paddy except going towards the
26 beach and that area was an extension of a famous *Street Without Joy*. If you're familiar
27 with Bernard Falls books, *Street Without Joy* and that place nobody went out there
28 because it was wall-to-wall unexploded ordnance, booby traps, mines, you name it so
29 nobody ever went out that way.

30 JS: How about things like quarters and housing and things?

1 TC: Quarters, all the buildings on the base whether where you slept or were where
2 you worked or whatever, were half wood and half screening. The wood came up to about
3 your waste and then it was screens from there up with a wood shingle roof. I'm sure it
4 was one basic design that could be modified for brigade headquarters offices,
5 headquarters company. The hooch that I slept in, the front part of it was kind of unused. I
6 think if there were transits or somebody had a lot of people in the front was used for
7 sleeping. The back part where I stayed, and the guy I was replacing had his bunk back
8 there, or his bed, the back quarter or less of the building had been walled off at some
9 point and it was up against the side of the volcanic cone for protection as much as
10 anything. There was a sandbagged bunker right out the backdoor which is where we went
11 out. That's where we slept and when the guy, I replaced left when he rotated some of the
12 lieutenants had scrounged and gotten together a bunch of concrete from the engineers and
13 build an underground bunker to sleep in when the rockets got especially bad. Otherwise,
14 you didn't get any sleep. You were up two or three times a night diving into bunkers to
15 avoid the rockets. So, in order to get some kind of rest they had built—well, I think it was
16 a four-room bunker that had two or three beds in each room. That's where you slept
17 because the side of the hill that was used for brigade headquarters and everything was the
18 side that faced the mountains so there wasn't much protection. These building were
19 scattered all around the base of the mountain inside the perimeter. When you drove
20 outside the perimeter the access road up to National Highway 1 and you did a left turn if,
21 I recall, and you were in the village. Fair-sized village, called Duc Pho on National
22 Highway 1. The old railroad that ran from Saigon to Hanoi the roadbed was west of town,
23 but you could clearly see it because it was elevated above the rice paddies. It was over
24 almost up against the mountains, at the time I was there, there was no train running and in
25 fact the track—the rails had been removed. National Highway 1 was dirt, that was the last
26 piece of the road I understand that was not paved. They paved it in the late spring of
27 1970, the 20th Engineer batt—I think it was one of the companies—the 20th was given the
28 job of finishing the paving because before it was paved it was a real problem with mines.
29 The engineers had to run a mine sweep every morning before anybody drove on it. We've
30 got some pictures of what happened when the Vietnamese couldn't wait. Charles was out
31 every night planting mines and then the engineers would come by every day and pick

1 them up. Find them and dig them out, pick them up and that went on until they paved the
2 road. The first paving job, it was to be the unit's last job before they were sent home, they
3 must've paved it by spraying oil on it or something because it didn't last more than a day
4 and they didn't get to go home. They had to come back and repave it. That was kind of
5 the setting of LZ Bronco, there was always an artillery presence there. Not just top of the
6 hill but down below they had a 155 before they got the 8-inch howitzers. Pair of 8-inch
7 howitzers.

8 JS: In the area surrounding LZ Bronco, was there much of a Vietnamese
9 population in that area?

10 TC: Yes, yes there was. It was pretty decent rice farming area so there was—Duc
11 Pho was, like I said, a village. It was the district town, and it was probably ten thousand
12 people or so.

13 JS: Overall, what was the brigade's total area of operations?

14 TC: The brigade's area of operations ran from the I Corps/II Corps boundary at
15 the south up to about the Song Be River which was maybe ten—fifteen miles north of
16 brigade headquarters. We had four battalions: One of them the 3rd of the 21st had the area
17 down on the II Corps boundary. We had our own little seaport down there Sa Huyn, so
18 we didn't get supplies through division. We had our own seaport, little one. And they
19 were trucked up about ten miles. The 1st of the 20th had the area around the brigade
20 firebase around Bronco and their forward firebase was about, as the crow flies maybe
21 five miles northwest of LZ Bronco. The 4th of the 3rd had the northernmost section of the
22 brigade area was up just south of the Song Be River adjacent to the 2nd ARVN Division.
23 Then the 3rd of the 1st if I remember correctly, they were the ones that had the mountains
24 to the west. And their firebase was out there. And then west of us was a couple of
25 Vietnamese Special Forces camps out to the Laotian border.

26 JS: I guess now, if you could talk a little bit about the unit itself that you were
27 assigned to—

28 TC: The 11th Brigade?

29 JS: Yes, sir, of the brigade and I guess your impressions of the brigade and some
30 of the people you came in contact with.

1 TC: The Americal Division was an unusual unit, its make-up. It's never been
2 assigned to the continental United States. It was first activated in World War II from
3 troops scraped up on New Caledonia in the southwest Pacific and the name comes from
4 Americans in Caledonia. For administrative purposes I don't know about during World
5 War II but during Vietnam it was given the number 23. But other than the bumper
6 numbers—well, no, even the identification markings on all the vehicles were AMCAL
7 not 23rd ID. Three brigades, it was activated in Vietnam from three independent brigades:
8 the 196th and 198th Infantry Brigades and the 11th Brigade. The 11th was activated at, I
9 think, Fort Devens, Massachusetts, and sent over to make up the third brigade of the
10 division. (The division) was activated in '67 because the Marines had been in the area
11 before the Americal Division. Because we were so far from division headquarters, we
12 weren't an independent brigade but we certainly did a lot of things on our own. What
13 affected the other two brigades farther north, usually we were having a different
14 experience. Because of the geography the provincial capital of Quang Ngai City was
15 north of us about twenty miles, about two-thirds of the way to Chu Lai the division
16 headquarters. There was a MACV compound in Quang Ngai City and that's where the
17 CORDS office was. As the assistant brigade 5 I had to go there on occasion to conduct
18 business with the Vietnamese, either provincial officials or the MACV folks. The Special
19 Forces camps west of us were Vietnamese Special Forces, not American. Between us and
20 the rest of the division, as I said, was 2nd ARVN Division which was a very good ARVN
21 division. We'd go up there on occasion to conduct business, I'd go up and work with
22 their division G-5 on occasion. Beyond that it was a pretty typical American infantry
23 division, I'm sure.

24 JS: At the time that you arrived how did morale seem to be?

25 TC: Morale was pretty good. The only time I remember morale being really bad
26 was in the spring of 1970 there was a real problem at division. We didn't have it at our
27 area, but division they were having some real racial problems. To the point that we had to
28 send up some additional MPs to help them keep things under control, but as I wasn't
29 directly involved, I couldn't tell you the details.

30 JS: You mentioned the racial issues which was a question I was about to ask, but
31 what else—what about—were drugs an issue? Did you ever see any problems—

1 TC: There were drugs. I would on occasion walk around the base in the evening
2 after dark and you'd walk by certain barracks, and you could smell the marijuana. That
3 was pretty obvious. I couldn't tell you who because of course the minute I walked in the
4 barracks: boom, it would all disappear. It wasn't my business to police marijuana. I
5 wasn't the headquarters company guy. But you know, it would all disappear. I had some
6 ideas of who it was, but I could never prove it. The other place that you had some
7 problems, racial problems. There were a couple incidences where it seemed to me that the
8 normal policy was after an enlisted guy had done, yeah eight to ten months out in the
9 field in a line company, if it was possible, he'd be found a job in the rear somewhere. I
10 know on at least one occasion, and I'm sure there were others, where the color of your
11 skin determined how soon you got to come back to a rear job. In fact, there was one court
12 martial that I sat on that they were trying to court martial a guy he'd been out in the field
13 eleven-and-a-half months. Which was well beyond what was normal. He walked away
14 from his company, claimed he got lost and walked away. Depending on who you were
15 listening to, neither side could prove it. One of the things that he indicated he was real
16 unhappy with was that he saw all these other white dudes get to rotate out of his company
17 to rear companies and he was kept out in the field. And there was one other occasion
18 when I got called out with a helicopter and a loudspeaker because they had lost a guy.
19 Turned out to be an African American (lost) up a particular valley. This guy had to be
20 one of the luckiest Americans alive because he managed to walk ten miles down this
21 valley and not find any Vietnamese and survived. Of course, we were out trying to find
22 him with the loudspeaker so we could pick him up. (The battalion that he belonged to
23 was 3rd Battalion, 1st Infantry.) He wasn't court martialed or anything, because nobody
24 knew for sure what had happened. How he got separated from the rest of his company.
25 But again, he was an African American and then as I said there was the problem in the
26 rear area up at Chu Lai and my guess is the other part of the problem up there was you
27 had a lot more people in the rear who had permanent jobs in the rear. Most of the people
28 that were at brigade headquarters had some time in the field. There wasn't that friction
29 between the field guys and the rear echelon guys. For which the field guys—even brigade
30 headquarters was almost all field. We had a rather not nice name for the guys in the rear

1 and a badge to go with it. Instead of the Combat Infantry Badge they had a fan with the
2 laurel wreaths around it.

3 JS: How about tensions between the so-called “lifers” and draftees? Did you see
4 much of that?

5 TC: Not much unless, I’m sure there was a little almost by definition but not a
6 whole lot because most of the guys in line companies were draftees. You didn’t get too
7 many guys to volunteer to go out to the field in Vietnam by 1969. The other thing was,
8 most of the officers, there were a few exceptions, the officers you stayed away from the
9 most were the lieutenant colonel battalion commanders who were trying to make colonel
10 and we had two of those that’ll stick out in my memory as being real jerks. One got
11 relieved and the other one should have been. They had to redo the helicopter landing pad
12 on his forward firebase because he insisted on flying his own helicopter and he wasn’t
13 real good at landing and he clipped the roof of the headquarters building a couple of
14 times. The other guy that got relieved, I’d say I didn’t have a run in with him, but I
15 landed on his firebase one night to pick up his battalion S-5 who wanted me to assist him
16 on a mission. This guy, lieutenant colonel comes out and he’s drunk as a skunk, and he
17 wants to know who’s landing on his firebase at this time of night. I identified myself and
18 what was going on, oh, okay, fine. But his favorite trick was, we learned later, to take his
19 command-and-control helicopter and go out and find some Vietnamese farmer out hoeing
20 his rice paddy and he’d hover ever lower over the farmer until he got the farmer scared
21 enough to run and then he’d shoot them and say he say he’d shot a Vietcong. That
22 worked okay until the day the farmer got scared and threw his hoe up in the air before he
23 ran and the hoe went into the tail rotor and brought the helicopter down. Then the
24 lieutenant colonel had to explain how his helicopter got shot down with a hoe. The
25 brigade commander wasn’t amused. He was a Korean War vet with a Medal of Honor,
26 and he was livid, to say the least. The other officer you watched out for was, we only had
27 one that I knew, he was the assistant brigade commander for a while he was a five
28 percenter from West Point, top five percent of his class. He had great theory but not too
29 much practice. He’d been moved up pretty quickly. I had a run with him one day, as did
30 other officers, because it was going to be by the book and there were no deviations one
31 way or the other. I had the run in with him, again just like at the Special Warfare Center

1 at Bragg, there were a series of Officers of the Day, during the day it didn't mean
2 anything but at night the headquarters company always supplied one Officer of the Day
3 and as well as manning, I don't know, ten or twelve bunkers around the perimeter. And
4 the Officer of the Day was the guy responsible for overseeing the perimeter guards at
5 night. We had one chemical corps captain assigned to the brigade because that's what the
6 TO and E (Table of Organization and Equipment) called for. What he was supposed to be
7 doing nobody could quite figure out, I mean he was kind of useless. The only chemicals
8 we had were Agent Orange to keep the grass out of the perimeter fence and tear gas. He
9 only used tear gas once and that's what got him sent home. I'll get to that in a minute, but
10 they decided to improve his, I guess, standing they made him headquarters company
11 commander for a while. He'd never had any infantry training in his life, and I happened
12 to be the poor guy that drew Officer of the Day the first night he's company commander.
13 He calls me in before we have the guard mount and distributes people to the bunkers. He
14 said, "I want you to go out and walk the perimeter fence twice." I'm going, "Walk the
15 perimeter fence?" The problem was, it was a double fence with about ten feet in between,
16 and he wanted me to go walk the outer fence. The problem was that there was a lot of
17 unexploded ordnance between the two fences especially the little rounds from the M-79
18 grenade launchers a lot of those tended to be duds. I just look at him and I said, "There's
19 no way on God's green earth I was going out and walk that outer fence." "Well, you need
20 to go out and see if there's any holes in it." I said, "No, I don't." I said, "One, we got
21 night vision goggles," and I said, "Number two, if Charles gets inside the first wire he's
22 got ten feet to go before he gets to the second one and I don't think he's going to make it
23 because we also have the search lights up on top of the hill." So we went round and round
24 and round. Well, he reported me to the assistant brigade commander. The next morning, I
25 get called in to see him and he wants to know what's going on. So, I explained it to him
26 very politely, I said, "I politely disagreed with the captain." I said, "I didn't think it was
27 my job to go out and walk through that unexploded ordnance." He kind of, for whatever
28 reason he hesitated and the brigade commander, I didn't realize, was standing behind me.
29 He was a Korean War vet; infantry guy, won a Medal of Honor. He kind of cleared his
30 throat and I turned around and looked and went [Gulp]. He said, "Yeah, I think the
31 lieutenant's right." He said, "You," the lieutenant colonel, he said, "You need to talk to

1 headquarters company commander.” He said, “We don’t need to be taking casualties
2 doing foolish things like that.” That was the last I heard of it. Shortly thereafter we had a
3 prisoner escape from the stockade, Vietcong—err excuse me, North Vietnamese
4 lieutenant. The brigade and the rear battalion areas they spent most of the day looking for
5 the guy. Couldn’t find him anywhere couldn’t find any holes in the wire, either. Then it
6 dawned on somebody that instead of going out to try to get out, he’d escaped right before
7 dawn, he’d gone over and was hiding in one of the caves on the side of the volcanic cone,
8 hill in the middle of firebase. Now everybody’s scratching their heads how in the world
9 are we gonna flush him out of whichever one he’s in? The company commander says,
10 “Well, we’ll just use tear gas.” That was a good idea except he didn’t check the wind. I
11 don’t know how much tear gas he expended late in the afternoon and he gassed everyone
12 on the base except the prisoner [laughter]. Again, the brigade commander wasn’t
13 particularly amused. He decided at that point he didn’t need a chemical corps captain.
14 Outside of that, morale wasn’t bad. Yeah, we had some times when we took some pretty
15 bad losses. Spring of 1970 was pretty bad, that didn’t help morale a whole lot. In fact, we
16 had one incident where we lost about fifteen guys at one time and one place from a booby
17 trapped 500-pound bomb that when it dropped was a dud. The North Vietnamese who we
18 normally saw, we didn’t see many Vietcong up our way, had booby trapped it and it was
19 the battalion that was out in the mountains and they had one convenient pickup point for
20 patrols in this river valley rather narrow. They finally got to the point I guess intel guys
21 picked up intel that even a North Vietnamese had figured out that this would be a
22 wonderful place for a booby trap and the battalion commander ordered all his company
23 commanders not to use that point for a pickup point and this captain disobeyed the order
24 and fortunately for him he was one of the fifteen killed, because I lost three people that
25 day. They were out supporting the company in the field. Happened to be standing in the
26 wrong place at the wrong time. While I don’t recall any Americans being killed on
27 National Highway 1 by booby traps certainly there were Vietnamese that were. They’d
28 go out first thing in the morning in their little three-wheeled Lambrettas even load a cow
29 on the back of one of them. They—you thought they knew where the booby traps were
30 and didn’t believe there were any. I have to admit I don’t know the reason, and they’d get
31 out there before we’d swept the road for mines and on a couple of occasions, they found

1 the mines for us. There were a couple of other fairly significant ambushes along the way
2 where one of the battalions would lose more than one person at a time. We got a few
3 people wounded in the brigade firebase with rocket fire. I recall, but as I wasn't working
4 in the medical field, I have to admit I really don't know how many. But the one where the
5 500-pound bomb went off that made newspapers back in the States, because my wife sent
6 me a copy, said, "Was that your unit?" Yeah, it was. So, there was that sort of thing.

7 JS: We are coming up on the two hours for today. Do you want to go ahead and
8 take a break for today?

9 TC: Sure let's go ahead and do that.

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Interview with Tom Cossaboom
Session [2] of [2]
Date: 18 November 2010

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5 JS: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University,
6 continuing an oral history interview with Mr. Tom Cossaboom. Today is November 18th,
7 2010, and this is interview session #2. Last time where we'd left off you had already
8 begun your tour in Vietnam. I wonder if we could begin today with if you could talk a
9 little bit about your position as S-5, what an S-5 does.

10 TC: Actually, I was the assistant brigade S-5 for the 11th Brigade of the Americal
11 division. The S-5, during the Vietnam-era and I assume still today is a bit, is involved
12 with planning and executing psychological operations and civil affairs activities in the
13 brigade area of operation. On the psychological operations side, we had attached to the
14 brigade S-5 office a direct support detachment from the 7th Psy-Op Battalion consisting
15 of sergeant, a specialist-4, a Vietnamese Army sergeant—staff sergeant in this case and
16 two of what were called Kit Carson Scouts. Those were Vietcong that had taken up the
17 offer of the Chieu Hoi Program to surrender to the government of South Vietnam and
18 then had agreed to work for the government of South Vietnam after proper clearance and
19 that sort of thing. They were actually the ones that carried out most of the Psy-Op
20 activity on the ground. Broadcast missions, showing movies in Vietnamese villages all
21 those kinds of things. They were also the ones that printed leaflets either campaigns that
22 we at the 11th Brigade had come up with or, as I'll get to in a minute, all of the flying
23 missions which were flown by a special ops squadron of the U.S. Air Force. The actual
24 squadron headquarters was at Nha Trang Air Base but there was a part of the squadron
25 that flew out of Da Nang that supported us with both C-47 for leaflet drops and O-2B the
26 Cessna Super Sky Master specially modified with loudspeakers for any broadcast
27 missions. On the civil affairs side we had attached, and I gotta tell you I'm not sure
28 attached from where probably engineering somewhere, a direct support team consisting
29 of a lieutenant and a couple of enlisted guys. They were responsible for any civil affairs
30 type projects such as arranging to have schools repaired, schools built all that sort of
31 thing. I don't mean just schools, any kind of thing that dealt with the public with the
32 single exception maybe of repaving or paving National Highway 1 which was done in the

1 spring of 1970. The portion in Quang Ngai province south of Quang Ngai city was the
2 last piece of National Highway 1 to be paved. In addition, we also did a couple of
3 medical programs, in one particular case the brigade got a call from the Vietnamese
4 Special Forces detachment out in the mountains west of the brigade area of operations,
5 alerting us to the fact the Montagnards and Vietnamese Special Forces thought that
6 perhaps there was an outbreak of bubonic plague so we put together a medical team from
7 the personnel that were assigned to the brigade headquarters or on support and I took the
8 team out and we spent a couple days inoculating all the residents of this Montagnard
9 village.

10 JS: So much of this was I guess what you would call the hearts and minds kind
11 of—

12 TC: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

13 JS: As far as the structure of I guess a typical day if there was such a thing could
14 you talk a little bit about that?

15 TC: Normally the brigade S-5 who was a major normally went to the brigade staff
16 meeting, not always. I normally did not go. I'd get to the office maybe six-thirty in the
17 morning if we were doing any broadcast missions and you could do broadcast missions in
18 a number of different ways. You could actually have the Air Force land the O-2 at LZ
19 Bronco and normally I'd go with them with a series of tapes if it was something that we
20 had generated locally. Other times we would have the tapes at LZ Bronco and simply
21 broadcast them over the radio to the aircraft and tell the aircraft what area we wanted it
22 broadcast in. Selecting the area was based on intelligence from the field companies in the
23 brigade. If we knew a company was out in the field and they expected to encounter strong
24 resistance for example or we were gonna do bombing missions the Air Force was or we
25 were gonna do Ranch Hand spray missions with Agent Orange on occasion we'd go in
26 first and broadcast and see if we could get a couple to surrender. If it was the local
27 Vietcong, sometimes that was successful, if it was North Vietnamese regulars of which
28 we saw quite a bit they never surrendered. They weren't interested in that. Regardless—
29 depending on what we were gonna do for the day if there was a broadcasting mission of
30 either kind, either I had to get down early and get the tapes and go over to the airfield, or
31 go down to the office once in a while we did a live broadcast using the Vietnamese Army

1 staff sergeant, Sergeant Minh, and we'd do that from the office early in the morning
2 normally before breakfast. Then we'd break for breakfast if we had the chance and then,
3 again it would depend on what kind of resistance the brigade was running into, what kind
4 of missions we'd plan from there, what kind of requests we had the battalions—each
5 battalion had an S-5, normally a captain or a lieutenant, who would request support for
6 either a field sweep you know field operations, or in the case of the two battalions that
7 were down on the coastal plain where there were a number villages they'd ask us, you
8 know, show movies, do almost anything in the particular village. So, we'd sit down and
9 plan the operation and normally I'd do the planning and then I'd brief the major on what
10 we were up to and he'd say, "Okay, let's both go to the staff meeting and you brief" or, it
11 would depend on exactly what was going on. The same was [true for] civil affairs
12 activities. I would work with the engineer lieutenant from the civil affairs unit, planning
13 what he was gonna do. He'd make suggestions or he'd have requests and we'd kind of
14 work it from there. The same with the Psy-Op side because the direct support teams were
15 the ones that actually did the broadcast missions and they had their own vehicles. They'd
16 do the broadcast. If it was go to a village or show a movie or do whatever they would
17 provide the team to go out in the field, that's how we lost part of the team. When there
18 was some kind of operation going. The other thing that we periodically were called on to
19 do was the division commander on the Sunday afternoon division staff meeting would
20 normally rotate through the three brigade S-5's to provide him with a briefing on what
21 was going on and often I was the one that had to go to Chu Lai to do the briefing because
22 neither of the majors particularly wanted to go up and do it so it got delegated [laughter].
23 The other thing that I had control over was the impressed funds. These were the
24 Vietnamese funds that were used for reimbursing usually the peasants, if we did some
25 specific damage to something of theirs. The best example I can think of is the artillery
26 battalion that was on LZ Bronco, at one point they had a sling load of ammunition that
27 they'd dropped just outside the firebase and of course to secure it we had an armored
28 cavalry squadron 1st [Squadron] of the 1st [Cavalry] that was stationed at the firebase and
29 they went out with their M-551 Sheridans. APCs surrounded where it was dropped until
30 they picked it up and in the process of which they broke all kinds of dykes on the rice
31 paddies. So I wound up going out and one trying to establish who owned the property and

1 whose rice crop it was, which was interesting, and then determining what was a
2 reasonable payment to either a) to allow the local peasants to go out and fix it, if we
3 destroyed the crop and it was early in the season and this happened to be early in the
4 season, there wasn't really any crop loss they just had to replant the rice so we had to buy
5 them some rice seed, things like that. That was particularly interesting because the first
6 day I went out I got a call from the artillery guys "How fast could I get there?" Because
7 they were embarrassed that the sling had broken. When I got there, course the
8 Vietnamese peasants are standing around not real happy, so I gathered them with the help
9 of Sergeant Minh and talked to them. What became clear was many of them owned the
10 property. In the part of Vietnam, southern I Corps, most of the farms were really small.
11 So it wasn't absentee landlords, it was local ownership. And to determine who it was to
12 get paid I finally decided with the help of Sergeant Minh the best way to do it was to ask
13 them to bring out their deeds. I hadn't—never dawned on me that they'd have property
14 deeds. Sure enough, I went back the next day with Sergeant Minh and they all had their
15 deeds dating back to French colonial period, with nice map attached to each one so you
16 knew who owned what and then made the payments based on that. The other thing I'd get
17 called on, on occasion to do is when the U.S. Army would capture rice from either the
18 Vietcong or the North Vietnamese and normally it was unpolished, in other words brown
19 rice. Vietnamese, like most Orientals, won't eat unpolished rice. They just don't like it.
20 So before we could give the stuff away to the local villages we had to go get it polished,
21 and that meant as I discovered I had to go down and negotiate with the local black
22 marketeer in Duc Pho village because she, it was a she a relatively young woman, owned
23 the rice mill. So, the negotiation was how much of the rice was she gonna get to keep?
24 Usually worked out to about somewhere between ten and twenty percent depending on
25 the time of year and how good the rice crop was. It meant I had to go down with Sergeant
26 Minh, although she spoke pretty good English, I took him along just in case. Had to go
27 through eating a meal with her, negotiating—it took most of an afternoon to get it worked
28 out, it wasn't something you could do quickly. Then it was kind of interesting to watch
29 because we'd run a couple deuce-and a halves [2/12 ton trucks] down with the rice because
30 we usually captured it in large quantity. And I either had one of the Kit Carson Scouts or
31 Sergeant Minh stand around and watch and just make sure there wasn't a little extra one

1 going out the backdoor. Because I didn't know, but it turned out she was reasonably
2 honest, but I had no idea.

3 JS: Reasonably honest for a black marketeer.

4 TC: She made a lot of her money—well, I'm sure she made money on the rice,
5 don't get me wrong, but there was no other way for us to get it polished. She had the only
6 rice mill in town. Everybody else went to her, too, when it was rice harvest time to get it
7 polished. So, it was things like that that the brigade S-5 was involved with.

8 JS: Were you guys also involved with a program of, I'd heard a few guys mention
9 this before, buying weapons to get them out of the hands—

10 TC: Yes, we did that principally two ways, and there was little if any turning in of
11 weapons except to the engineer companies. I said National Highway 1 in southern
12 Quang Ngai province was not paved and before you could drive it each day there was an
13 engineer mine sweep team that went out to make sure the Vietnamese hadn't left us some
14 souvenirs overnight. They would often be approached with a dud hand grenade, most of
15 the weapons we saw probably wouldn't have fired if you'd want it to. They would make
16 the payment and then I would reimburse them from the impress funds that I had. That got
17 interesting only once really. We had a new chief warrant officer who was in charge of the
18 mine sweep team, and his first day on the job they brought him all kinds of odds and
19 ends. When he was all done collecting and paying, he came to see me with the stuff still
20 in the quarter ton trailer behind his Jeep, wanted to know what he should do with the
21 stuff. I took a look at—took one look at I thought this stuff is rusty, who knows how old
22 some of this is, might've been French a little of it, the hand grenades and so forth. I said,
23 "Take it over to EOD and get rid of it and come back and talk to me when you're done."
24 But that was how that was worked, it was a pretty standard operation. The other people
25 that got a little of that turned in, the first squadron 1st Cav, their duty was to protect
26 National Highway 1 and they had a string of either Sheridans or APCs parked out along
27 National Highway 1, well from the 2nd ARVN boundaries to the north all the way down
28 to the II Corps boundary to our south. And they would get stuff turned into them, too.

29 JS: It sounds like you would have a lot of interaction with Vietnamese civilians in
30 your job.

31 TC: Yes, I did.

1 JS: Could you talk a little I guess about—just about your general impressions of
2 the Vietnamese and kind of where they stood if you could get an idea. I'm sure it
3 depended on person to person, but their views towards American presence there.

4 TC: The Vietnamese peasants, you know, the ones that I would have to deal with
5 if there was some damage done either truck convoys if you ran over somebodies kid that
6 called for a payment, or somebody got hit with a truck and didn't get killed, due to
7 someone speeding up and down National Highway 1. Even the dirt part didn't mix real
8 well, going through village with the population and that was not unusual to have
9 accidents. As best as they could tell from talking through an interpreter their basic
10 attitude was, they just wanted to be left alone, to go on with life whether they were
11 farmers growing rice or had little shops sort of thing. The local government officials I
12 would deal with them on occasion when we had a common interest or a common problem
13 that we had to work. They were reasonably cooperative. By that I mean as long as they
14 did not perceive you were trying to take advantage of them or you had something that
15 you wanted from them that you weren't going to pay for or if you were going to pay you
16 weren't going to pay what it was worth. Then they would become—let's put it this way
17 there would be long negotiations if that was the case. In most cases they were pretty
18 gracious—it reminded me of later when I lived in Turkey for a while, you actually—if
19 you thought you were going to do it the American way of a quick handshake
20 negotiations, and settle on whatever you were planning on doing, it didn't work that way.
21 Often you would have to go and have a meal with them, which wasn't bad except for—I
22 don't know if you know what *nuoc mam* is?

23 JS: Yes, sir. I do.

24 TC: I always joked that they played hide the *nuoc mam* game on the Americans.
25 You'd go to the meal, and you could smell it, but you didn't know what it was in. The
26 version they had, boy, was it enough to take the top of your head off. It could be in the
27 salad, it could be in the rice, could be in the—usually if there was any kind of meat
28 involved it was chicken or duck, could be in that. Then they'd sit there when you found
29 it, so to speak, and delay as long as they could before they dragged out the beer. But aside
30 from that there wasn't a great deal of friction. I can remember getting stuck in a
31 Vietnamese village one night, we were there to show a film, and it was right down on the

1 I Corps/II Corps boundary near the little—well, it was the Vietnamese village that
2 accompanied the little seaport we used of Sa Huyn. I had the infantry battalion that
3 worked in that area, the battalion S-5 was along with—I had the whole Psy-Op direct
4 support team, three-quarter ton truck and a couple of Jeeps. The deal was as soon as it got
5 dark we would show the film and then supposedly arrangements had been made that we
6 would then drive on to the Navy base and stay overnight there. Because this was a village
7 that was contested. I don't know whether it was the Navy or the infantry platoon that was
8 helping to guard the Navy base—somebody didn't get the word right. When we get ready
9 to leave, they had already closed the gates, locked them the whole nine yards. And there's
10 no way in. So, we wound up spending the night in the village and the mayor made sure
11 we were put up—I suspect he put the word out where we were. We obviously had two or
12 three vehicles I've forgotten which, and one, two, three, four, five, six, seven people so it
13 wasn't as is we were hiding. About two in the morning the Vietcong tax collector came
14 through with his armed escort, and they stayed away from the houses we were in and we
15 left them alone. Because we didn't know how much support they had and we didn't want
16 to find out the hard way. So those kinds of things—it was kind of live and let live at least
17 as far as the local Vietnamese were concerned. The last thing they wanted was a fire fight
18 in the middle of their village. I didn't want one because I didn't know how many
19 Vietcong were along with the tax collector. So that kind of thing wasn't unusual, we
20 got—I got hung up once on National Highway 1 the engineers were replacing a culvert
21 after a flood. We had a flood in the fall of 1969. I was going up to Quang Ngai City with
22 a Jeep? I think it was just one Jeep. Past a platoon—there were two platoons of U.S.
23 Army troops living in these villages right where the engineers were replacing the culvert
24 and they were using a—what do you call it, a scissors bridge on an armored chassis as a
25 temporary bridge during the day only. So, I stopped on the way north and asked them
26 what time they were picking the bridge up. And they assured me it would be five o'clock.
27 Okay fine. So, I went up and conducted business up at—I was probably up at province
28 headquarters in Quang Ngai City. Came back at quarter to four and the bridge was
29 already gone. I'm going oh man and we're a long way—then I remembered the two
30 platoons living in the village so we spent another night in the village. There was no real
31 problem once we figured out oh well it's just right back up the road a quarter of a mile.

1 Those were the kind of things I don't care how well you did coordination and planning,
2 something would change and you'd be left high and dry and you better have a backup
3 plan.

4 JS: When instances like that happened, would you guys be pretty apprehensive
5 about spending the night in the village was it—

6 TC: No, no because there was basically half of a U.S. infantry company in the two
7 villages. The company commander had his CP (command post) there; he was glad to
8 have company to talk to other than his own people on occasion to find out what was
9 going on. This was part of the program—let's see if I can remember the name, where we
10 actually starting in the fall of '69 and certainly increased in the spring of 1970 where the
11 Marines and the U.S. Army —

12 JS: The CAP (combined action platoon) program?

13 TC: Yeah, that's it, the CAP program. In fact, these two villages happened to be
14 the first two right on National Highway 1 that the 11th Brigade was trying it in.

15 JS: You mentioned about showing films occasionally. Could you talk a little bit
16 about those—what type of—what would the message be I guess getting into that side of
17 your job as far as the Psy-Ops were concerned.

18 TC: Normally they were regular Hollywood entertainment-type films that was a
19 lot of it. For some reason both the Vietnamese and the Montagnards—we went out and
20 did it a couple of times for the Montagnards, too—they enjoyed that kind of thing. My
21 guess it was a diversion from the humdrum regular life, frankly. Life in a Vietnamese
22 village wasn't real exciting. And in fact, I really questioned—except when there was an
23 election going on, how often—much information got to these villages. I mean they were
24 basically rice farmers and a few small shop owners, and as long as the central
25 government or the provincial government or the U.S. Army or the Vietcong or the
26 Northern Vietnamese left them alone, they really didn't have a great deal of information
27 on the outside world, with one exception I recall. That was when Ho Chi Minh died.
28 They all knew that. He—I think was it Uncle Ho or his number two? His home village
29 was in the 11th Brigade area of operation right along National Highway 1. Little place
30 called Mo Duc. So the locals knew definitely who Ho Chi Minh and I can't think of the
31 guy's name—I don't think it was Ho. I think it was his number two came from this

1 village. There was one Vietcong sniper lived in the village, he must've been ninety-nine
2 years old because he couldn't hit the broadside of a barn. Every time you'd drive
3 National Highway 1 you'd have one shot fired at you. You'd hear the bang of the rifle but
4 you never heard the bullet going by never mind anybody getting hit. So we joked well
5 let's not get rid of him. They might get somebody that's better. As far as showing the
6 films go it was for entertainment purposes most of it. We did not show any Vietnamese
7 government films, we figured that was up to them and I never—if those existed I never
8 saw them. The Vietnamese knew how to grow rice so trying to teach them how to grow
9 rice wasn't part of the equation. So, it was basically entertainment. It wasn't a real
10 frequent occurrence, but we did do it. I think on even one occasion we wound up going
11 up to the 2nd ARVN Division headquarters and doing it up there once. We got a special
12 request. It was some, I don't know, it was the anniversary of the establishment of the
13 division or what the reason was, Jason, but they wanted—they were having a little party
14 and we said, "Okay, fine. If you want a movie we can probably do that, and get away
15 with it."

16 JS: Continuing I guess on the Psy-Ops side of things, I want to ask you about the
17 training you had received in Psy-Ops. I know we talked about it, but did you find it to be
18 applicable here? That it was valuable in what you had learned?

19 TC: Yeah, some of it was. The thing that I wish that we didn't get back in the
20 States in the way of training was any of kind of real detailed information on the
21 Vietnamese peasants, what their life was, what they were interested in, I can only
22 speculate why. We certainly got enough training on the look of a typical Vietnamese
23 village, I mean there were enough of those set up to practice search missions in the
24 village and we used them both at Bragg and there was one at Benning, for that matter.
25 And it was general discussion of themes or campaigns, but the missing link to me was
26 that when I got to Vietnam, trying to figure out what the locals in southern Quang Ngai
27 Province what their interests and concerns were. Most of it was more targeted for the
28 what the interests or concerns of the central Vietnamese government or the U.S. military.
29 Such as having an election for president of Vietnam which meant about as much to the
30 average peasant as whether the moon was made of green cheese. They could've cared
31 less, as long as it didn't impact their daily life either in a positive way or a negative way,

1 it wasn't of interest to them. And as I said the only exception to that that I'm away of was
2 when Uncle Ho died. Somebody way up the line on the American side or the Vietnamese
3 government said I got the bright idea for a nationwide campaign about how terrible Uncle
4 Ho was. That was like trying to convince Americans that George Washington was a bad
5 guy, for most of the peasants at least in Quang Ngai Province. We had leaflets, we
6 dropped leaflets, and you're going right. And you just kind of knew that the local attitude
7 goes, "Well, okay, this is dropping paper on us and this is silliness." From the standpoint
8 of being prepared for your particular area of operation, yeah, the technical side was good
9 but the actual designing campaigns, that was something you kind of learned while you
10 were there, you learned from your predecessor. I was fortunate enough to have, I don't
11 know, two months overlap with my predecessor, who was not a trained Psy-Ops guy. He
12 happened to be an armor officer, a lieutenant. My guess is he got sent to Vietnam and
13 there wasn't that much armor in Vietnam, so they found another job for him and that
14 happened to be the assistant brigade 5. So that was probably the biggest single thing
15 missing from my training in the States.

16 JS: Once you got there you found—would you say that the civilian I guess the
17 villagers' main concerns were like their family and their farm and just being left alone?

18 TC: Yes, exactly. Were they gonna have enough to eat, were their kids going to
19 get to go to school. Things like that was their principle concern. If they'd had direct
20 experience with occupation by the communists, it might've been a little different. If
21 they'd done collectivization which they did afterwards, you know the Vietnamese peasant
22 likes his little piece of the ground where he can grow his rice. He's not much interested in
23 collective farms. If they were Catholic, and we didn't have a lot of Catholics, unlike other
24 parts of South Vietnam, many of the Catholics were refugees from the North. They'd left
25 in '54 because they knew they couldn't get along with the communists. They tended to be
26 the—at least in South Vietnam, I think they tended to be the ones who were the most
27 hardcore Vietnamese anti-communists. We didn't have a whole lot of those.

28 JS: So based on their experiences that they had already fell under while they were
29 living up north?

30 TC: Yes, in the Red River Valley. And they tended to be at least for while the
31 classic example of that, of course, was the Diem family, they were Catholics.

1 JS: On the—as far as the direction of the message of the Psy-Ops and who it was
2 targeted towards, would it be primarily targeted towards civilians or Vietcong?

3 TC: Actually, it was two-pronged. One towards civilians, about all the good
4 things the South Vietnamese government was doing for them. Whether that was true or
5 not was another story. Sometimes it was, but the Vietnamese government had only
6 limited resources and Quang Ngai Province was not a rich province. It didn't grow a lot
7 of rice, a lot of it was subsistence agriculture. The big rice growing area was much further
8 south. As far as the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese, Vietcong was—we ran the
9 Chieu Hoi program, we had the standard nationwide Chieu Hoi leaflet, in fact I gave
10 examples I had—you guys should have them in the archives there. Has a South
11 Vietnamese flag on side and explains the program. We had a few guys that actually used
12 them. I was surprised, I was rather dubious but on occasion—in the year I was there we
13 maybe had ten, twelve Vietcong use them. The biggest problem was how do you get
14 close to the Americans, or the South Vietnamese or the 2nd ARVN without getting
15 yourself shot? That tended to be, I think, their greatest challenge from the debriefs that I
16 got. If they lived in the village—if they were village Vietcong, then it wasn't nearly so
17 difficult for them to wander away. But we had a lot of North Vietnamese Army regular
18 units, either passing through our area or assigned to our area and those guys were 1)
19 tightly controlled and 2) they didn't like us at all. I don't remember ever getting a Chieu
20 Hoi who was regular North Vietnamese Army.

21 JS: Did you ever hear any information about any feedback from them about why
22 they chose to—Chieu Hoi?

23 TC: Yeah, life was miserable. Usually lack of food, it was an area that we
24 controlled fairly well even after dark. So, it was kind of tough for them. I was there from
25 August of '69 to August of '70. We had, in Quang Ngai Province we had basically two
26 whole infantry divisions one American, one South Vietnamese. A lot of it—of those
27 troops were out on the coastal plains so if you were a Vietcong from one of those villages
28 along National Highway 1 on the coastal plain, there wasn't a great deal of opportunity
29 for you to do a lot of resist—there was some I mean there was even hardcore Vietcong
30 that lived in a few of the villages. Many of them had joined when two or three years or
31 five years before when South Vietnamese government control in that area was rather

1 weak, and as the pressure built up on them, they crossed over. And actually once they
2 went through the debriefing and indoctrination program, they could go back to their home
3 village if they wanted they could become a Kid Carson Scout if they wanted. I suspect
4 that had a certain appeal to them because 1) it meant a steady income and 2) it meant you
5 didn't go back to your village where everybody knew you'd changed sides which could
6 be rather hazardous to your health.

7 JS: So by doing so, it afforded them some protection?

8 TC: Right, and of course we had the CORDS (Civil Operations and Revolutionary
9 Development) people telling us the security of every village in the area. I'm not sure how
10 accurate some of the reports were because we knew there were a few villages that were
11 always a problem and yet CORDS would say, "Oh yeah, they're secure." And we'd
12 chuckle.

13 JS: As far as the—I know you said that the Psy-Ops program was kind of two-
14 pronged in the way it was targeted, but could you talk a little bit about I guess, the basic
15 general message of each. I know you talked about—the one side being pro-government
16 but how about the other?

17 TC: Yeah, each of the campaigns either highlighted the advantages of supporting
18 the South Vietnamese government as far as democracy, or the disadvantages of
19 supporting the Vietcong/North Vietnamese. One, we tried to differentiate between the
20 North Vietnamese and the Vietcong, arguing that the North Vietnamese weren't really
21 Vietnamese, they were invaders. Well, that wasn't true obviously but that was part of the
22 theme—general theme. The other part was it was in your personal interest to get out of
23 the war, change sides and go back to being a rice farmer or whatever you'd been. On
24 occasion we would run a campaign that talked about how tough it was for the peasants
25 living in North Vietnam. Now that was aimed at the civilian population, for the military
26 population, for the hardcore North Vietnamese we would try to play on homesickness and
27 the fact that they would never see home again, because a lot of them didn't, with leaflet
28 drops, more than broadcasts although sometimes broadcasts, if we were running an
29 operation such as a Ranch Hand—an Agent Orange spray operation, which we did on a
30 couple of occasions—support those with broadcasts from the O-2B. We would emphasize
31 the fact that it was probably in their interest to get out from under the spray before we

1 started spraying, and these were in areas that we didn't control. You know the route in the
2 mountains where we knew that there was a supply trail ran through the area. Sort of cut
3 open the jungle canopy so we had a chance to see just how much usage was going on.
4 That was one way to do it. I have to say those weren't my favorite missions because if it
5 was Vietcong, they would tend to disappear at the first opportunity, if it was North
6 Vietnamese that was a different story. On a couple of occasions, we got a lot of hostile
7 fire in return, and I would ask the Air Force pilot who I knew, he was a good friend, I'd
8 ask him if there was any dirt around for this infantry guy to go dig a foxhole. And he'd
9 ask did you want to win an Air Medal? I said, "No, thank you. I can pass on that."

10 JS: Was any of the propaganda focused—did it ever focus on things like
11 Vietnamese belief in the spiritual world and the wandering souls? I've heard a little about
12 that kind of propaganda. Did you guys—

13 TC: Boy, no, not that I remember, not in our area anyhow. I don't ever recall
14 using that type of thing.

15 JS: Was this—were talking a little bit about the Vietcong and the NVA you
16 touched on this a little bit but could you talk a little bit more I guess about your
17 impressions of the two, and maybe some of their strengths and weaknesses that type of
18 thing?

19 TC: Sure. The Vietcong weren't, at least in our area, trained military individuals.
20 They were individuals that for whatever reason had supported the communists or Uncle
21 Ho and I think a lot of it was nationalism as opposed to communism. I don't think they
22 had a real good concept of communism, I'm pretty sure they didn't. But clearly Uncle Ho
23 was a hero, and he'd helped run the French out and they weren't popular. I also kind of
24 suspect that many Vietnamese viewed us a nothing more than replacing the French as the
25 overlord. The French had used the Emperor Bao Dai for the last few years of the French
26 colonies there. We were propping up the South Vietnamese government, and I suspected
27 they equated that with Bao Dai's government. For them and as long we didn't damage
28 their property or really inconvenience them, most of the local Vietcong except for a few
29 hardcore and there were a few hardcore communist and or nationalist, left us alone. They
30 may have worked among the Vietnamese population. Most of the Vietnamese population,
31 I am ninety-nine percent certain, were strong nationalist. They had the Chinese there for a

1 few centuries then they had the French and then they had us, none of whom were popular.
2 Not because of communism but because they wanted their own country. I don't think the
3 average Vietnamese peasant thought much beyond that. Now the North Vietnamese on
4 the other hand, and some of this is based on what I've read since, draftees—if you drew
5 the unlucky straw and were going to get sent south, you kind of figured you probably
6 weren't going to come back north in one piece. For a lot of them, towards the end of the
7 war, those were the lucky ones and a lot of them did get to go home. For the average
8 North Vietnamese draftee sent south, he probably knew he wasn't coming back. Many of
9 them were—had certainly been indoctrinated since 1954 if not before, depending on what
10 part of North Vietnam they came from. They certainly—the North Vietnamese
11 government didn't go in for really strong collectivization. They did a little bit right after
12 the 1954 ceasefire, but they ran into such opposition that, and there were other things to
13 do like keep the population fed, that they kind of backed off on that. The average North
14 Vietnamese peasant boy didn't really see, hadn't really experienced collectivization and
15 the confiscation of property and all that sort of thing. That came after the war ended in
16 '75. So there wasn't a lot on the communists' side, there was a lot of the nationalism
17 side. We're the people that got the French out of here. We're the people that are going to
18 get the Americans out, and you need to help as a good Vietnamese. That was kind of their
19 pitch and if that didn't work, they made sure they had in most of the units moving south,
20 I'm pretty sure they had a political commissar who made sure there wasn't any talk
21 around the campfires about, gee, maybe there's something else better to do than this. So,
22 they were fairly tightly controlled. That also made it more difficult for them even if they
23 were inclined to take advantage of something like the Chieu Hoi program. The other
24 thing is the North Vietnamese units, were out in areas where there wasn't much of a
25 population unless they had a particular operation they were gonna run. They didn't live in
26 the villages where they would come into contact—contact with the South Vietnamese
27 government people or the U.S. military.

28 JS: You talked about a lot of the peasants not actually understanding what
29 communism was, this was more of a nationalist response. Was there any attempt on the
30 part of Psy-Ops to explain what communism was to them?

1 TC: There was a little bit. Certainly, when Ho Chi Minh died there was. But it
2 was also pretty clear that that was kind of a losing proposition. In the stuff I turned over
3 to the archives there are some Vietcong propaganda leaflets also, because they did do
4 some of that, that we picked up and I wound up with them because they were brought to
5 me to have them translated and see if we could take advantage of whatever they were
6 pitching to the local peasants.

7 JS: Do you remember much what their kind of propaganda said?

8 TC: Yeah, most of it dealt with the fact that the Americans were invaders, just
9 like the French, and you needed to join the Vietcong to help drive out the invader. The
10 other thing you got was the Americans were taking all the food, and they needed to be
11 driven out of Vietnam so the Vietnamese could have the food and so forth. And how
12 great Uncle Ho was, he was the great national hero. That was pretty much it, of the stuff I
13 saw let's put it that way.

14 JS: How about any particularly memorable messages that you guys disseminated,
15 anything that particularly stands out? I know you talked about themes but any particular
16 message that kind of stands out?

17 TC: Not particularly. Other than the anti-Ho Chi Minh campaign when he died.
18 As far as campaign, it was more a case of actual action, I think I mentioned it. About
19 October of 1969 there was a tremendous flood in southern Quang Ngai Province. I'd
20 never seen rain, anything like it. Quang Ngai Province got the monsoon in the winter, and
21 I hadn't been through a monsoon at that point and it started raining what I thought was
22 pretty hard. It rained like that for about eighteen hours, eighteen—nineteen hours, and I
23 kept asking people that'd been there I asked is this the monsoon? No, no, no you'll know
24 the monsoon. Once I went through it I knew what they meant. Then about ten o'clock in
25 the morning it started raining so hard you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. It
26 rained like that for about four hours. At that point it looked like the South China Sea had
27 moved ten miles inland. Everything was underwater. We were fortunate because we had
28 the high ground around the volcanic neck. Culverts washed out. Vietnamese villages
29 flooded. I never saw such a sad sight as Vietnamese up in the palm trees trying to stay
30 halfway dry. So we went out after that, after the water receded and helped rebuild
31 villages, repaired National Highway 1, those kinds of things. I'm sure it made an

1 impression on the Vietnamese, a good impression. The damage was nothing we had
2 caused or the South Vietnamese government or anyone else and we stepped in to help
3 them. When the monsoon came it was a cold rain, and I'm sure you've heard it described,
4 the water actually does come down in a very distinct angle, it doesn't fall straight. It's got
5 a real slant because of the wind that comes with it. It's cold, at least in Quang Ngai
6 Province because it's further north. I've never seen anything so miserable as a
7 Vietnamese standing around in these—you'd go to Vietnamese village and there'd be
8 puddles of water everywhere and you would think, I don't know how many generations
9 of Vietnamese have lived in Vietnam lots of them obviously, you'd think they'd figured
10 out that—the monsoon was due was time to dress warmer. I never ever saw them really
11 adapt their clothing to the winter monsoon which surprised me.

12 JS: One more question about the propaganda, was it generated primarily on your
13 level or was the general message coming from a higher level?

14 TC: Both. There were national campaigns such as the Chieu Hoi, the anti-Ho Chi
15 Minh sort of thing, and the one at the time of Vietnamese elections. Those were national
16 campaigns with the material basically leaflets and broadcast tapes prepared at least at the
17 corps level, which would've been the 7th Psy-Op Battalion. I'm sure the basic idea came
18 from Saigon, not the Saigon government so much as the Americans in Saigon. And then
19 there were some campaigns that we generated locally based on local conditions. So there
20 was both. And the local conditions maybe we were going to do, or had just done a sweep
21 in an area and the campaign for the next week or two weeks or whatever it happened to
22 be was if you don't want this to happen again, maybe it's time for you to either a) turn in
23 the Vietcong living among you or if you are Vietcong take advantage of the Chieu Hoi
24 Program, and go back to being a farmer or whatever. So, it was both. And the third, well
25 the second theme that we would generate locally is if we were doing something to
26 improve their standard of living, like paving National Highway 1, those kinds of things.
27 Or you could help yourselves and help us if you turned in any ammunition and
28 armaments you may have or tell us where they're located if you know where they're
29 located. Those kinds of things.

30 JS: Was there one kind you found to be more effective than another?

1 TC: Usually the local themes. Something that they had knowledge of, if they
2 hadn't seen it themselves, they knew somebody that had. Whether it was paving the road
3 or passing out free rice or whatever. Those tended to be a little more effective than the
4 national themes except for the Chieu Hoi and the Chieu Hoi was effective especially
5 when we'd just gone through an area. Then you'd—that was when if you were going to
6 get a Chieu Hoi was usually within the first few days after one of our units had finished a
7 sweep somewhere.

8 JS: Was there—did you guys have any sort of method for I guess quantifying
9 effectiveness?

10 TC: The closest we came were two things. On a more common level was the
11 monthly CORDS report on village security and district security. Granted, they weren't
12 perfect by any means but it was one way to measure. If we'd run an operation plus had a
13 campaign in a particular district, usually we didn't target an individual village that was
14 extremely rare. Then you'd look at the next couple of months of CORDS reports on
15 village security and so forth and see if they had changed. And the other one was if you
16 ran an operation, ran a campaign and you got a Chieu Hoi or two that was an indication
17 that there was some effectiveness there. And then we'd sit down, if it was a Chieu Hoi
18 guy, we would sit down with them during the interrogation to find out why they had
19 changed sides. You would also look for, and CORDS would too, if there was any
20 Vietcong activity in a particular village. One of the things you'd get on occasion would
21 be a pro-Vietcong or pro-Ho Chi Minh banner up somewhere. Especially on Uncle Ho's
22 birthday. You'd say, "Okay, how many villages was that reported in?" Sometimes those
23 banners were designed to entice the Americans who would be on a sweep through the
24 village to go grab it and then it was booby trapped. That happened on occasion, too. But
25 if it was just a banner up with no booby trap attached then you'd go, well, okay, there's at
26 least an active cadre or two in this village or in this area.

27 JS: On the civil affairs side of things, I could see where this is intricately tied in
28 together with the overall Psy-Ops mission, but did you feel that that was the more
29 effective way of reaching them and kind of garnering their support?

30 TC: Well, it didn't necessarily have to be a particular civil affairs activity but you
31 were more effective in garnering support if you had something tangible to point to that

1 you had done when you ran a Psy-Op campaign. If it was all theoretical, your chances of
2 reaching the local peasant were pretty slim with the local population, And it certainly
3 was slim as far as reaching the Vietcong. But if you had something to point to, you'd just
4 run an operation and you'd picked up five of their buddies or killed seven of their
5 buddies, that got their attention. If it was the local peasant and you had just helped repair
6 damage from the flood or paved National Highway 1 or donated captured rice or
7 whatever, because don't forget the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese on occasion
8 would levee a rice tax. And this was the rice we were capturing on occasion. If you could
9 point to something tangible, you stood a much better chance of seeing some kind of
10 positive reaction, whether it was Vietcong changing sides, a little more intelligence from
11 the locals in a particular village about, well you know you might check Joe over there he
12 disappears every night or every third night sort of thing. Or he was—we understand. We
13 didn't see it personally, we kind of heard that maybe he's the one that put the pro-
14 Vietcong banner in the village on Ho's birthday or those kinds of things. So, you would
15 get a correlation, it was hard to get a direct correlation. You could kind of infer it from
16 what you saw happening on occasion but there was no guarantee that because you did A.
17 and B. then C. would happen.

18 JS: Would local villagers sometimes I guess come to you guys to complain said
19 look the Vietcong are harassing us or they're doing this or that?

20 TC: They wouldn't come to us directly at the brigade. It was more likely either if
21 you had a CAP program and you had a semi-permanent presence in the village area, or
22 you had vocal village or district officials and they would come more to the CORDS
23 people or the local Vietnamese military presence, the 2nd ARVN Division had obviously
24 had a Psy-Op program too. So, we would get it indirectly.

25 JS: Did you guys ever have much contact or work with the Phoenix Program?

26 TC: No. I knew it existed, again that was run more on the civilian side than on the
27 military side, I believe. We would get obviously intelligence from that, but as far as
28 actually working with it, not a whole lot. I mean once in a while as I recall they had
29 Phoenix teams, a person or two that would go out on a sweep in an area that they were
30 interested in, in our area of operation. As far as the Psy-Op or civil affairs no, we didn't
31 have any direct involvement in that. We might derive some benefit from any intel they

1 picked up but that'd be about it. We knew there was obviously a list of people we knew
2 that were hardcore Vietcong or hardcore communists in our area of operation but trying
3 to find them was a challenge, let's put it that way. Once in a while we would.

4 JS: You guys had heard a little bit about Phoenix. Were you hearing any of the
5 negative rumors that were going about them?

6 TC: Not particularly attached to Phoenix. We heard some not-so-good rumors.
7 Once in a while the Vietnamese would go out with us. Now not Vietnamese regular
8 military like 2nd ARVN, but they would be Vietnamese government operatives. Yeah, on
9 occasion we'd hear some negative feedback on their activities. Abuse of prisoners on
10 occasion, not very often though because we didn't get a whole lot of prisoners. I think the
11 only prisoner I remember seeing that was of interest, we managed to capture a North
12 NVA lieutenant. He was not a happy camper. He wasn't about to cooperate with us. And
13 then on another occasion we picked up a senior member of the province communist
14 leadership. He's the guy, I think if I remember correctly, broke out of the stockade and
15 we had the chemical officer try to use tear gas to get him out of the caves on the side of
16 the volcanic cone. Not successfully I might say. Those kinds of things were few and far
17 between.

18 JS: You've talked a little bit about working with ARVN occasionally. Could you
19 talk a little bit about your impressions of them? They have a rather mixed reputation.
20 What was your take on them from what you saw?

21 TC: The 2nd ARVN Division which was adjacent to us to the north had a real
22 good reputation and anytime I was dealing with them, it wasn't often but I would on
23 occasion, I was impressed with their professionalism. I have nothing but good things to
24 say about them, I can't address some of the other ARVN units but certainly the 2nd
25 ARVN Division was supposedly, we were told at the time, was one of their better
26 divisions and everything I saw indicated that. They were effective in the field and they
27 knew what was going on in their area of operation and it was also in Quang Nga Province
28 so when there was anything going on at the province level that was usually where we
29 met, a couple of times, their division G-5, they had the same organization as the U.S.
30 Army, basically. They'd invite us up or we'd invite them down to discuss common
31 concerns sort of thing in the Psy-Ops civil affairs areas there. So yeah, I was impressed

1 by them. The only negative I'd have to say, let me think again this was dealing with
2 impressed funds, we had wounded some of their guys, two or three, and they were in the
3 ARVN division hospital up in Quang Ngai City. I remember flying in there to make
4 impress fund payments and you landed at the helicopter pad and before you walked into
5 the hospital you walked by this stack of new coffins, and I thought boy that's not a
6 morale builder. Beyond that real minor thing, yeah, they worked well with us and I would
7 hope we work well with them.

8 JS: Another question I wanted to ask you, as you know particularly after—with
9 the history of things that have been written about Vietnam since the war and things that
10 have been said, there have been some things written about American soldiers abusing
11 villagers, random killings, that kind of controversial thing. You were seeing villagers and
12 talking with them on a daily level, from your perspective is there much truth to that?

13 TC: Not that I'm aware of. The population density in southern Quang Ngai
14 Province is rather thin and most of its concentrated right along National Highway 1. Boy,
15 going up and down National Highway 1 and stopping in the villages on occasion, I don't
16 remember any of those kinds of problems. Doesn't mean it didn't happen. The only
17 exception to that of course is My Lai. That happened a year before I got to Vietnam and
18 I'd never heard of it until, I can't even think of the photographers back here in the States
19 that released the photos—

20 JS: I can't remember—

21 TC: Didn't take me long to figure out where My Lai was, it was between Quang
22 Ngai City and LZ Bronco, closer to Quang Ngai City. And even before I knew anything
23 about My Lai, I knew it wasn't a great area to operate in. When the story started
24 breaking, it was interesting because it was the 11th Brigade that was involved. It was Task
25 Force Barker, which was a task force made up of I think companies from two infantry
26 battalions if I remember correctly. Lieutenant Colonel Barker had been killed since then,
27 so he wasn't around. There were still a few guys in the brigade rear area, maybe ten at the
28 most more likely five, who had been in Task Force Barker. Now they weren't necessarily
29 involved with Lieutenant Calley's company, in fact none of them were as it turned out.
30 But I can remember when the story started breaking and there were congressional
31 requests for an investigation and everything, the 11th Brigade made sure those guys went

1 to their battalion rear areas and stayed there. It was pretty common in the U.S. Army in
2 Vietnam, that when you were involved in a task force type operation that ran for a while
3 you got a special patch on one of the front pockets of your fatigues. Well, they
4 confiscated the Task Force Barker patches real quick. There were no news men that I
5 recall ever getting in LZ Bronco, they couldn't get there unless the Army flew them in.
6 Driving down National Highway 1 wasn't good for your health. On a particular Sunday,
7 and it was one of those days that I was tasked to go up and brief the division commander,
8 as I was walking out to the helicopter the 11th Brigade S-1 major, whose name escapes
9 me, handed me this big eight-and-a-half by eleven manila envelope and said would I
10 deliver it—was I going up the division? Yeah, could I deliver this to the division IG
11 [Inspector General]? I said, “Sure, no problem.” We were running a little late so when I
12 got up to Chu Lai I went right to the briefing, did my dog and pony show, and when it
13 was over then walked over to the division IG's office. This colonel, the division IG, I'd
14 barely stuck my nose in the door, and he lit in to me, about where in the heck had I been
15 and why hadn't I gotten [purposeful mumbling]. After I got a chance to get a word in, I
16 said, “Wait, wait, wait a minute. Nobody said anything about this was—had to be here
17 yesterday.” Well it turned out it was all the brigade's records from Task Force Barker,
18 and they were going to Washington for the congressional hearing. They had an airplane
19 sitting on the ramp at Chu Lai waiting to take them. Well, the colonel finally calmed
20 down because he realized I had no idea, I didn't even know what I had. He told me, he
21 said you know what that is? I said I have no idea what that is. So that was my connection
22 with My Lai. I'd flown over the area, at that point most of the villages were abandoned
23 for obvious reasons. I think there were four little settlements, My Lai one through four, if
24 I remember correctly. That was my connection with My Lai.

25 JS: It had a reputation as a pretty bad area?

26 TC: Tough area, yeah. When the U.S. military first went into that area prior to
27 Lieutenant Calley, the Marines were the first ones in there and they had a real tough time.
28 It lies west of National Highway 1 and maybe ten miles south—southeast of Quang Ngai
29 City. Kind of rugged terrain.

1 JS: I know there's been—there was talks of attempts by the Army to cover it up
2 and to not let that information come out. From your experiences, and also from what
3 you've read since then, do you think that that's true or not?

4 TC: You know, I really don't know. The only thing I would say is that when I got
5 to LZ Bronco and the 11th Brigade I had no idea. I knew nothing about My Lai until it
6 appeared in the newspapers. Was that deliberate or simply—well, that was a finished
7 operation, and they moved on to something else, I don't know. And the other thing is of
8 course Lieutenant Colonel Barker had been killed later if I'm not mistaken, killed in
9 action later so there—there was nobody really to talk to there. It had been, about maybe
10 fifteen months since it had happened, if I remember again correctly. And you figure a
11 year of duty was the normal tour of duty so the chances of there being many people there
12 that had been involved—there weren't many there were two or three that I knew of.
13 Enlisted guys all of them. There were no officers. So, was it deliberate or not? I don't
14 know. My guess would be it was more simply a function of the personnel rotation
15 system.

16 JS: Going back to something you talked about quite a bit earlier or towards the
17 beginning of this interview, I thought you were talking about the bubonic plague outbreak
18 there. Now I was curious if you could talk a little bit more about that.

19 TC: Sure. We got a call one day from—I don't even remember how the call got
20 routed but it started with the Vietnamese Special Force captain who was in charge of the
21 special forces camp that was a good twenty-five miles west of us out in the Annamite
22 Mountains. They had an outbreak of bubonic plague, and could we help and it was our
23 area of operation even though we had nobody out there. So the brigade commander and
24 the brigade S-5 looked at me and said hey, and the commander of the medical company
25 on LZ Bronco said get a couple med-techs, couple of medical technicians and we didn't
26 take a doctor I don't believe, round up some bubonic plague serum and take them out
27 there and take Sergeant Minh for a translator and set up a what's called a MEDCAP
28 (Medical Civil Action Program). So, we did and coordinated with the South Vietnamese
29 Army captain and flew out, spent most of the day in this remote Montagnard village.
30 Remote to the point that they still had the little chicken bone altars where paths crossed in
31 the village, that sort of thing. Explained to the village chief what the process would be if

1 they wanted that, which they did. The med-techs examined—some of the villagers had
2 looked like they were sick, whether it was bubonic plague or not we were never sure, but
3 getting the inoculation wouldn't hurt. So, we spent the day doing that and then the village
4 chief insisted that oh we had to have a meal. We'd come out to help them so that was the
5 least they could do. And as I was the only officer present for the trip, I got to sit in the
6 seat of honor and get all of the Montagnard food. I'm looking at this Vietnamese Army
7 captain and he's laughing because he knows he doesn't like Montagnard food any more
8 than I do and it was my turn instead of his turn today [laughter]. It was an interesting
9 experience. Boy, you talk about, I won't say primitive that's not the right word, but a
10 remote place to live. Just in the day I was out there both talking to Vietnamese Special
11 Forces in particular about North Vietnamese military activity in the trails around the
12 village and that sort of thing. Vietnam and southern I Corps wasn't that wide as far as
13 flying from the coast all the way to Laos. So there was a good deal of North Vietnamese
14 Army transit activity carrying supplies south, supplies and troops south. But that was my
15 one experience with the bubonic plague there was going out to that village.

16 JS: Did you guys take any kind of precautions to keep from contracting it
17 yourselves?

18 TC: Yep, we had to get the shots before we went. Sure did because that wasn't
19 one of the standard series of inoculations you got going to Vietnam. So, yes, got it first.

20 JS: Did you ever go on any other type of I guess more general type of MEDCAP
21 kind of missions?

22 TC: Yeah, we would run them in some of the villages down along National
23 Highway 1 on occasion. It usually was nothing so serious as bubonic plague, it was more
24 checking the kids or anybody else that thought they had sickness. We didn't do dental
25 because there was a dentist or two in Duc Pho village as a matter of fact, I wouldn't have
26 gone to them. For that kind of thing we would go out, distribute food packets if there was
27 no real sickness per se, give the kids a little candy or something, I know that's a terrible
28 thing in this day and age, but we would do that on occasion as part of the MEDCAP.
29 Checked out their general health, if possible, check and see if they'd had any inoculations
30 obviously most of them hadn't and we didn't have enough to pass out everything to kids
31 they're supposed to get. But it was more general/physical checking. If there was some

1 child or adult that was really sick we would get them to the Vietnamese hospital up in
2 Quang Ngai City. Let me get a drink of water just a second, I'm getting hoarse. Okay,
3 Jason, the one thing I do remember doing on a number of occasions was going and
4 running like a small eye clinic because as I recall there was a I think it was an eye
5 infection that if you caught early wasn't a problem, but if you didn't could cause the loss
6 of sight in an eye. So, we would go out to a particular village and that, we did have
7 enough material, it was putting drops in the eyes, antibiotic drops of some kind. Which
8 again was then a chance to do a little Psy-Op campaign. One to encourage other villages
9 to come to the next one of these that we ran and bring their children. Also say, see this is
10 the kind of thing we do, we're not out here to kill you.

11 JS: In regard to the Montagnards. Did you get an idea of sorts of what their
12 attitude toward the war was? Was it similar to the Vietnamese?

13 TC: Yes, except, well two things: One, the Montagnards and the Vietnamese
14 don't necessarily like each other. They're different cultures, speak a different language.
15 The Montagnards are even more remote than the Vietnamese peasants in southern I
16 Corps. Unless of course they had a special forces presence in their particular area. And
17 that was usually either South Vietnamese or U.S. Army Special Forces were their
18 window, what little they had on the outside world, and they weren't really all that
19 interested. I don't think now I don't know, I only ran into them a couple of times. I will
20 say that on one occasion there was a Montagnard Regional Forces company that was
21 down on National Highway 1 guarding one end of the bridge over I think it was the Song
22 Be River which sat between Quang Ngai City and LZ Bronco. And it was in the 2nd
23 ARVN—it was right on the border of the 2nd ARVN and our area of operation. At one
24 point there was a Vietnamese—well, there was a fairly large Vietnamese town on the
25 north side of the bridge and that end of the bridge had a local popular forces company
26 which had Vietnamese—lowland Vietnamese not Montagnards. On the south end of the
27 bridge where the Montagnards were there was not a settlement so they had their camp
28 and their families, they always traveled with their families. The Vietnamese town had
29 electricity and the Montagnard camp didn't, and the Montagnards would keep asking the
30 Vietnamese could they have some electricity and the answer was always no, so they just
31 tapped in one day. And a firefought erupted shortly thereafter. So, I got a call from my

1 boss, brigade 5. I'm sure the brigade commander had said—get somebody down there
2 and see if we can't stop the fighting between the Montagnards and the Vietnamese. And
3 actually, I got the call—go take an OH-58 helicopter and again Sergeant Minh the
4 Vietnamese Army sergeant and put your loudspeakers in your helicopter just in case you
5 need to do it from the air first. So, I wound up flying down there, and the bridge over the
6 Song Be was an old French bridge one span of which had been dropped I assume by the
7 Vietcong or the North Vietnamese and there was a temporary Bailey bridge replacing that
8 part of the span. There wasn't any real shooting going on when I got there but there was
9 definitely some tense relations. So we landed on the bridge and I wound up first talking
10 to the Vietnamese—a couple of the Montagnards spoke Vietnamese, so I spent the day
11 negotiating between the two sides walking back and forth across the bridge. We finally
12 got it straightened out and I'd been authorized to offer the Vietnamese town payment for
13 the electricity. Once they heard money was involved, they got a lot more interested in
14 sharing their electrical supply, which I think we had probably had supplied them with the
15 generators at some time in the past. But I spent a day going back and forth on this bridge
16 in negotiations.

17 JS: One other question about the Montagnards, I know you mentioned about
18 having to eat with them. Could you talk a little about that, what some of the food was if
19 you knew what it was?

20 TC: Unfortunately, I did. The rice was okay, I'm not sure what the greens were.
21 Some kind of leaf some kind of plant that they'd picked in the jungle or were growing.
22 Some monkey meat.

23 JS: Oh, boy.

24 TC: Yeah, you tell me “Oh, boy.” No *nouc mam* that was the good part, no *nouc*
25 *mam* they don't—at least this village didn't have it. Mostly because there isn't much in
26 the way of fish to make it. That's about it, that was the meal. The Vietnamese Special
27 Forces had C-rations so we got some of that—and we had brought our own food, too, but
28 it wasn't polite to haul that out in front of them. But that was the meal. And what the
29 heck did we drink? You know I don't remember what they had to drink.

30 JS: Did they ever ask you to drink I guess a rice wine with them?

1 TC: Yeah, there may have been one little glass of that, the village chief and
2 myself and the Vietnamese Special Forces captain. That's probably what it was at least a
3 little—you know like a shot glass. Then beyond that, probably water, or tea, no I'll take it
4 back, it was tea. They had access to tea because of the South Vietnamese Special Forces
5 presence.

6 JS: Are there, let's see, any other incidents or aspects of the job that we haven't
7 discussed at this point?

8 TC: Boy, I'm trying to think. I guess briefly the field operations, and those tended
9 to be well—we would do them with almost any of the battalions, we had four battalions
10 out in the field, the most difficult one was the one battalion we had that was out in the
11 mountains. They must've had a grand total of maybe two or three villages total in their
12 area of operations. Which was out, and again I think it was either the Song Be or the
13 Song Tra Bong. I'm trying to remember which river it was. It was triple canopy jungle
14 and there were only a couple of places where you could do much. In fact, that's where we
15 lost the Spec-4 from the Psy-Op direct support team, Sergeant Minh and one of the two
16 Kit Carson Scouts were all killed at the same time. In the river valley there was one bare
17 hill that was good for a pick-up and drop-off point. So much so that intel had picked up
18 information that the Vietcong—actually North Vietnamese in this case had decided it
19 would be a good place for a booby trap. So, the word went out that that hill was not to be
20 used for any reason. Well, that was a nice set of orders but then the question becomes
21 okay after you've been slogging through the jungle for a couple of weeks, where else are
22 you going to go for a pick up? And in this particular operation I had part of the psy-op
23 ground team out there and sure enough a company commander decided that was going to
24 be the pick-up point and nobody realized or didn't register, The booby trap was a 500-
25 pound U.S. Air Force bomb that was booby trapped. And I think we lost about a total of
26 twelve people total including that battalion's S-5 and three people from the Psy-Op direct
27 support team that I had out there. In fact, the loss was such that it made the newspapers
28 back in the States because fifteen people all at one time was relatively unusual. That was
29 spring of 1970 late spring and the team wasn't fully reconstituted when I left in August
30 1970. One it was —to find somebody like Sergeant Minh who spoke really good English
31 as well as being Vietnamese. He was a northern Catholic, his family were refugees in '54

1 from the Red River Delta area. Find somebody like him I'm sure in the Vietnamese Army
2 was tough to do. I'm not sure how he wound up working with the Psy-Ops guys. But he
3 made life a lot easier for me and everybody else because of his command of both
4 languages.

5 JS: Did you ever talk to him much about his experiences earlier?

6 TC: Yeah, I would on occasion. He was just a relatively young kid when they
7 came south in '54. This was, fourteen years later. My guess is he was in his late twenties,
8 so he was maybe twelve—fourteen years old when they came South. Obviously, he
9 didn't make the decision his family did. His parents had since died, or were killed I don't
10 know which, and he had one other brother who'd been killed in action with the South
11 Vietnamese Army. But he had no use for Ho Chi Minh or any of the communists. He was
12 pretty hardcore. He lived—there was a compound, a couple compounds—but he lived in
13 one of the compounds with his wife and kids, two I think if I remember, that was right up
14 against the perimeter wire of LZ Bronco. So, yeah, I talked to him obviously when we
15 were on a long helicopter flight somewhere or we were going to go up and visit 2nd
16 ARVN. We'd exchange ideas and I'd get a little inside into his feelings and some of his
17 life experiences up to that point. He was always a cheerful guy, ready to do anything.
18 Had a lot of good ideas, too. He was not afraid to say, "Hey, maybe we'd ought not to do
19 that, sir. How about if we tried this, or this, or this, sort of thing?" which was really
20 helpful. Because he, of those people that I worked with day-to-day, probably had the best
21 insight. The Kit Carson Scouts tended to be, the two that we had, were peasant boys or
22 peasant young men, they were—both of them had families, each one had I think two kids.
23 And they, too, lived in the compound right next to the firebase right adjacent to it so we
24 could support them. There was also a compound, there was a Korean presence, Korean
25 civilian presence on the firebase. Now I'm not sure how that worked I got to admit. That
26 was one of those deals, let's put it that way. There were maybe one, two, two or three
27 Korean males probably in their forties and—I don't think they had any family with them.
28 And they ran various enterprises on the base. Now don't ask me how that got set up, that
29 wasn't my area of responsibility. The only reason you were aware of them often was
30 when the wind was blowing the right way and you were downwind from cooking *kimchi*
31 and you were going, "What the heck is that smell?" They were on the firebase, and then

1 you had—sad to say there was a group of senior NCOs who were better black marketeers
2 than the Vietnamese woman downtown. Their expertise—LZ Bronco didn't have really a
3 PX, we had what we called a PX and it was the backroom of one of the hooches so
4 called. And they got things like candy bars, maybe soap. I'm trying to think of anything
5 real exciting—well at one point they got some fans and that is the only reason I became
6 aware of what was going on because I heard the complaints. Got a shipment of electric
7 fans in and the NCO, I think he was an E-7 I know he was, and a couple of the senior
8 NCOs bought up all the fans and then turned around resold them at a fifty percent markup
9 for the enlisted guys on the base. And that's probably what ended their little scheme,
10 they'd been doing other things like that also. In fact, there was a regular group of NCOs
11 at different levels of command who were involved in big time shenanigans. One of them
12 was, I don't know how many sets of carpet they ordered for various NCO clubs up and
13 down South Vietnam and they had them all stashed in a warehouse. I mean you couldn't
14 have used up the carpets fast enough. But they were getting the kickback on it. I
15 remember when the story broke as it was right about the same time as the fan deal
16 occurred on our base, and everybody goes I wonder if those—it was three or four
17 individuals—I wonder if they were involved. And they tended to be first sergeants; you
18 know guys that had access to the rear area enlisted troops. Not good.

19 JS: I'm going to ask you, as far as the Kit Carson Scouts are concerned, did you
20 guys feel that they were trustworthy?

21 TC: I only worked with two of them, and yeah, I'd say so. In fact, one of them
22 was killed when the booby trap went off. I had no reason to think they were not loyal,
23 let's put it that way. Plus Sergeant Minh, who obviously spoke Vietnamese—Kit Carson
24 Scout's English was marginal. I mean I could understand most of what they were saying,
25 the basic stuff, and they could make themselves known if they needed something or if
26 they had an idea. But if it was anything of any great detail then it had to go through
27 Sergeant Minh to get a translation. And I'm sure he would've blown the whistle if he
28 thought there was a problem with either one of them. So, yeah, I had no reason to think—
29 and we didn't discuss classified with them, didn't discuss classified with Sergeant Minh
30 either, for that matter. And the most classified we saw would be where there was going to
31 be a mission. Now Sergeant Minh I'm sure could pick up enough that he had some idea,

1 the Kit Carson Scouts as a function of—okay, which one of them is going out with the
2 team—the broadcast team or whatever team it happened to be and they didn't know
3 normally where they were going till they got there.

4 JS: Regarding the incident with the 500-pound bomb where several team
5 members were lost, was that the only time that your team took casualties?

6 TC: Yes, that was the only time that either the—the civil affairs lieutenant was
7 wounded in a rocket attack on the base. Scratched, flesh wound on his neck because we
8 all joked he got a Purple Heart—it was after hours in the evening and it was an unusual
9 time for the rocket attack and he was sitting talking to somebody and the rocket landed in
10 the open area in front of where he was sitting and I think he was probably even having a
11 drink if I remember a beer, so we all joked he's probably one of the few guys that
12 wounded while drinking a beer and got a Purple Heart for drinking a beer. So, yeah, they
13 were the only three.

14 JS: When you were not on duty, what were some of the ways you guys would
15 spend your free time?

16 TC: Because it was a brigade firebase, but it was still relatively forward, you
17 could get a call anytime to do something. Especially with the Psy-Ops because we did fly
18 night missions on occasion, so when I had time off if you want to call it that—I never
19 really had a whole day time off. There was no such thing—didn't make a difference if it
20 was Saturday, Sunday, or a weekday. But you could either—I could if I wanted to if I had
21 a book I was reading, assuming my wife had sent me a book or something like that that
22 was of interest. We had what we jokingly called the Officers Club, it had a ping pong
23 table, a little bar, the bartender was the sister of the local black marketeer as I found out,
24 which was interesting. And they would show a movie—and I'm trying to think of how
25 the movies got there it came down through the headquarters company—and it had a
26 literally—it was same hooch-style construction except the roof was not metal it was like
27 palm fronds sort of thing. So, when the monsoon came—it tended to be like I said a cold
28 monsoon—so you didn't really want to do anything except maybe play ping pong or have
29 a drink and that was really about it. Time off could be if I was out on a mission most of
30 the nighttime off might be seven o'clock in the morning, so it would vary. The only day I
31 recall having much time off was—let's see it was either Thanksgiving or Christmas and

1 the only reason I remember is because my boss, the second major, supposedly had one
2 year of pro-football with the Detroit Lions as a linebacker. And he decided we were
3 going to play flag football, his idea of flag football was a lot different than everybody's
4 else's and the next day half the staff looked like they'd gone hand-to-hand with the
5 North Vietnamese Army, and the colonel had a fit and he wanted to know what
6 happened. Because he'd seen part of the game, he didn't stay around for the whole thing,
7 and we played on gravel because there wasn't no real dirt, nor certainly there was no
8 grass. His staff looked like they'd been through the mountains [laughter]. But beyond that
9 I don't recall any real days off, per se.

10 JS: Did you get a chance to go on R&R (rest and relaxation)?

11 TC: I went on both leave and R&R. Went on R&R and met my wife in Hawaii
12 and then went on leave to Hong Kong. The leave was a little unusual. I had to pay my
13 way back to Vietnam. I probably was one of the few guys that did. Because I spent a lot
14 of time working with the Air Force guys flying. When routine maintenance was due on
15 C-130s they went to CCK (Ching Chuan Kang) Air Base in Taiwan, with a stop in Hong
16 Kong on the way. Well, my Air Force buddies and I—asked me to go along with them on
17 leave to Hong Kong and we flew on—had to be a Marine C-130 out of Da Nang to Hong
18 Kong and the deal was we would meet the return flight from CCK back to Vietnam at a
19 particular bar in Hong Kong. I think the leave was a week and we had like I don't know
20 like four—five days in Hong Kong. Five days I think because it was a little flexibility
21 time there. Well, we went back to the bar when the meet was supposed to take place and
22 learned—I have no idea how communications were done, your guess is as good as
23 mine—that the airplane—they'd found some real problems with the airplane and they
24 wouldn't be going back for a while. So, then the choice was, okay, how do we get back to
25 home so to speak, and the only way back was a commercial ticket on Cathay Pacific into
26 Saigon and then catch flights up country so that's what we did. Yeah, it was inexpensive
27 enough, fifty bucks I mean who was going to fly commercial, though, to Vietnam. So
28 that's what we did. I spent four or five days wandering around Hong Kong, went over
29 and looked over the border fence to see Communist China. Went to the floating gardens
30 and the floating restaurants. Found the most interesting restaurant, we got tired of being
31 propositioned in every bar and restaurant we went into, so we finally found the one that

1 was used by the junior officers of the British garrison. There were no working girls in
2 there so we could sit around and talk to the Brits, and they would talk to us asking us
3 what's it like in Vietnam? And we'd ask what's it like being stationed in Hong Kong?
4 Because most of their troops were Gurkhas, the officers were British but the troops were
5 Gurkhas. We said, "Gee, what's that like?" And they said, the one captain I'll never
6 forget him, he's laughing he says, "Oh, it's not a real problem at all. Once in a while we
7 got to down to soothe some Chinese merchants feelings," I said, "Why?" He said, "Well
8 they think they're going to short change some Gurkha when he buys a beer and they
9 don't give him the correct change." And he said on at least one occasion he'd had to go
10 down and soothe the feelings because the Gurkha got a little upset when he asked for
11 correct change the third time he just reached over and grabbed the Chinaman's hand and
12 whacked it off with his kukris, you know the curved knife. Like I said that's what they do
13 in Nepal when you cheat them. The Chinese usually knew not to fool with the Gurkhas
14 but once in a while you got one that thought they could shortchange them. Outside of that
15 the Gurkhas were never a problem. He says if you had a problem you just sent them
16 home and that was the biggest disgrace that they could have. So that was the extent of
17 the R&R.

18 JS: Did you ever catch a USO show?

19 TC: No. Wait a minute let me back that up. Yeah, once there was one USO
20 show—I can remember when Bob Hope came around, he didn't obviously come to LZ
21 Bronco but he did go to Chu Lai, and I wasn't particularly interested in going so I traded
22 off with somebody else who had duty I forgot even what the duty was. I stayed at LZ
23 Bronco and some other lieutenant got to go up and see Bob Hope. On occasion there
24 would be, a very few occasions there would be shows and or Donut Dollies come to LZ
25 Bronco but they couldn't stay overnight, that was a no-no. There were no females
26 allowed overnight even though the helicopter company, the assault helicopter company
27 that transported them down and back on occasion they would have all their helicopters
28 break or try to and the colonel would call the company commander, I gather, and there
29 was a discussion and suddenly they'd have a helicopter that flew [laughter]. But there
30 was really no place to put them up and that was the biggest single problem—plus it
31 was—the base would get as I said—until the last couple months I was there in the

1 summer of 1970 the base got rockets usually three times a day at mealtime. To the point
2 that the division never had an IG inspection, division IG didn't want to come down and
3 spend the night on LZ Bronco. When they did have one in the spring of 1970 or early
4 summer of 1970 it was a mess [laughter]. Well, personnel assigned to the 11th Brigade
5 unlike the other two brigades of the division were just assigned to the brigade and then
6 the brigade had to cut their orders assigning them to the particular battalion. Whereas for
7 the other two brigades they were actually assigned directly to a battalion and a company
8 right from division headquarters.

9 JS: As far as the rocket and mortar attacks and things on the base, I can't
10 remember if we were talking about this during the recording or afterwards, did you say
11 that they were fairly routine as when you pretty much know when they were coming?

12 TC: Yep, breakfast, lunch, and dinner was pretty standard. And those weren't
13 really a problem because the accuracy wasn't real good and I've forgotten whether they
14 were 107-millimeter or 122-millimeter rockets, they could've used either one and I don't
15 recall anymore which one. And we'd try counter-battery fire; we had counter-battery
16 radar the whole nine yards. We did finally solve the problem by saturation artillery fire of
17 all of the known launch sites simultaneously—well, what we did was put sensors out so
18 we could detect motion and anytime we detected motion we not only fired at the site
19 where we detected motion but at all the other known launch sites. We finally after about,
20 I don't know, three months of doing that we finally got lucky and nailed the team that
21 was firing the rockets. And what they'd do is stick a delayed fuse using a lit cigarette as a
22 delayed fuse, so if you fired—when you got motion detection when they were setting up
23 that's when we finally got them.

24 JS: Is there any other memorable or even funny type moments that we haven't
25 discussed at this point?

26 TC: I don't know, let me get one more drink of water and let me think about that
27 for a second while I do that. Hold on.

28 JS: Sure, absolutely.

29 TC: Okay, yeah, one of the things—I guess the exit from Vietnam was about as I
30 don't know about unusual, to me it was unusual. On my coming in through the Saigon
31 area, Bien Hoa, I went out through Cam Ranh Bay, and it was a function of go up to

1 division headquarters and spend, I don't know, two or three days, two days I think is
2 what it came down to up there and then fly down to Cam Ranh Bay. When I had come in
3 to country, there were about ten other second lieutenants that came in at the same time.
4 And had come into the Americal Division. It was interesting to see how few of them were
5 there to go home. I want to say two maybe three of the ten, the others had either been
6 wounded or killed. Then from division we flew down to Cam Ranh Bay and spent two,
7 maybe three nights in the replacement battalion down there for out-processing. And in the
8 course of that there was a sapper attack on Cam Ranh Bay in which North
9 Vietnamese/Vietcong, I don't know which, got inside the wire. And we were staying in
10 these two-story wooden barracks, again they were wood up to about waist level and then
11 screen from there up, and it was I don't know midnight, one, two o'clock in the morning
12 and we heard the explosions. It turned out whoever the attackers were hadn't quite gotten
13 their intelligence right and what they attacked was the dump for trash and used
14 equipment. That's what they were blowing up. But in the meantime, all the usual sirens
15 went off and we'd been told that when the sirens went off we were to go downstairs
16 outside and there were bunkers outside each of the hooches. Well, this other lieutenant
17 and I from the Americal Division we were—I guess we were the only two that actually
18 came down to Cam Ranh at the same time. We looked at each other and we looked out
19 and you could see guys running around outside with helmets and weapons and were
20 going, you know, we survived a year out in the field area, and these guys here in the rear
21 they're busy running around like you know they don't know what they're doing, I think
22 we'll just stay right here because chances of the Vietcong getting into—getting one of the
23 hooches on the base isn't going to make any difference whether we're in a bunker or not
24 so we went back to sleep and everybody else spent the night running around. And it
25 turned out I don't think anybody on the base actually got hurt that day, the response team
26 rounded up the Vietcong fairly quickly. Or North Vietnamese. I don't know which they
27 were. You kind of learned to deal with that extra noise and you learned to evaluate fairly
28 quickly where the danger was and watching these guys in the rear running around armed
29 to the teeth and we thought, you know, they have no idea who or what they're chasing
30 and it'd be just like them to start shooting at the wrong place and the wrong time.
31 Because we'd had the same thing back up at LZ Bronco, after a while you learned how to

1 sleep through the night regardless of what was going on, whether we were firing .50-
2 caliber machineguns or whatever it was. And you didn't realize, I didn't at least, until the
3 Air Force guys on a couple occasions stayed overnight—they wanted to see what it was
4 like getting close to the field. We said, "Sure, fine. You can stay. We'll find you a place
5 to sleep. No problem." The next morning, they usually departed fairly early, seven, eight
6 o'clock in the morning after eating breakfast. Man, they didn't show up 'til nine-thirty
7 and about nine-thirty the major looks at me and says, "Maybe you better go find out
8 where our Air Force friends were." And they were just getting up and they were—"Man,
9 didn't you hear all the noise last night?" "Noise? Noise? What noise? Oh, there was
10 shooting going on?" And I said, "Oh, that was just a .50-caliber machinegun up on top of
11 a hill." The quad-fifties. Kept them awake most of the night I guess, didn't bother us at
12 all—the only thing that bothered me was when they brought in the eight-inch
13 howitzers—two eight-inch howitzers and I think I said earlier. Didn't tell anyone and the
14 first fire mission was diagonally across the base and that—man, we thought the North
15 Vietnamese must've brought artillery down from North Vietnam. But aside from that you
16 adjusted fairly quickly to that sort of thing. You could also pick out what wasn't normal
17 sound and I don't mean a real loud one like the eight-inch artillery. At one point we had
18 Vietcong get inside the wire and one of them threw a satchel charge into the artillery
19 ammo storage. And for some reason, the satchel charge didn't go off. It must've landed
20 just right, but you know there was obviously a response and you're going wait a minute
21 that's some kind of different firing going on than the normal H and I fire from the top of
22 the hill. Harassment and interdiction fire. That sort of thing would wake you up.

23 JS: Anything else before we talk about coming home?

24 TC: Ah, the last thing coming home. Got on the airplane and I flew back into
25 McChord Air Force Base, it was an Air Force—must've been a 141. We get to McChord
26 and instead of letting us, out processing us through customs and because I had a follow-
27 on assignment. I had still four months left on active duty so I'm back to Fort Bragg.
28 Turned out to be a benefit at that point because I didn't have to go down to Fort Lewis
29 and out-process. I just went right to Sea-Tac Airport and flew home for some leave
30 before going to Bragg. Somebody had gotten intelligence that there was one or more—
31 there was an individual on the airplane bringing drugs back, so we went through the same

1 kind of treatment that you get now at any commercial airport in the United States. To
2 include sticking pencils in talcum powder and squeezing tubes of toothpaste and the
3 whole nine yards and I must've been about seventh or eighth guy in line to process.
4 Because they let those of us who were—going on with a commercial flight as opposed to
5 going to Fort Lewis to out-process. They had first processed—they had about the fifth
6 guy in line, sure enough, they found the drugs he had them in a big can of talcum powder.
7 Once they did that then they just kind of waved us through sort of thing. I thought that's
8 just what you need, you're on the way home and you got to sit around and wait because
9 some fool thinks he's going to smuggle drugs in. He was some Spec-4, if I recall
10 correctly, was the one that got caught. He got to go to Fort Lewis, too, instead of going
11 home. But that was about it that was the year in Vietnam.

12 JS: What was your reception like upon arrival home? Did you run into any of the
13 anti-war movement—

14 TC: No, none. I flew from—this was August 1970 and I don't recall anything
15 particular at Sea-Tac. I had—there was a program or there was an opportunity to
16 purchase commercial airline tickets when you're in Vietnam for your flight from—once
17 you knew you were going, for example, into Fort Lewis or into McChord. You could buy
18 your ticket in advance without necessarily a reservation. But you could buy the ticket in
19 advance at a discount rate. I don't recall any problem. I got on the first flight headed out.
20 I was going to Rochester, New York. Probably changed planes in Chicago if I had to
21 guess. I don't remember anybody saying anything. No, I travelled, if I recall correctly, in
22 civilian clothes but because I was on leave, so I travelled in civilian clothes. I think I
23 probably changed at McChord after I went through customs. And I don't remember
24 anything, anywhere along the line, because I was travelling alone, there wasn't a group
25 of us or anything. So, no, I don't remember anything. I'm sure there wasn't. I mean I've
26 seen all the stories and that sort of thing, but certainly on that day at Sea-Tac Airport or
27 Chicago O'Hare for that matter there was nothing going on.

28 JS: The one question I meant to ask you a moment ago, it may be kind of a silly
29 question, but when it was time to leave Vietnam and come back home, how did you feel?

30 TC: You know, I probably didn't give it much thought until I got to Cam Ranh
31 Bay and then I kind of thought, and realized how few of the lieutenants that had gone in

1 with me had gone home earlier one way or the other. You thought, “Well, I guess I was
2 just kind of lucky.” And the other lieutenant who I knew kind of had the same attitude.
3 Luck of the draw that we’d wound up in one piece without, in my case, any holes and his
4 case was only one hole in his fatigues for the year he’d been in Vietnam that was kind of
5 the way he referred to it. Hadn’t ruined our health records. It was kind of luck of the
6 draw. If you were in the wrong place at the wrong time, well, you didn’t get to go home
7 right away. But beyond that, I didn’t give it a whole lot of thought. I was kind of like,
8 “Okay, the year is over. I did what I was supposed to do for the year. It was interesting.”
9 Probably wouldn’t have gone to Vietnam any other way if it hadn’t been for that. But
10 beyond that not a whole lot, really. When I came off leave, I got sent back to, like I said,
11 to Fort Bragg to the Psy-Op unit and spent the last four months of my active duty tour as
12 a lane grader for guys going through Psy-Op training down at Eglin Air Force Base. Or
13 Tyndall AFB. Was it Tyndall or Eglin? Tyndall, I guess. You know, running around out
14 in the jungle, the Florida jungle, training or evaluating the training of other guys that
15 were going through psy-op training at Fort Bragg. It was usually a function of—I’m
16 trying to think the training at Tyndall was maybe two weeks at a time, so I probably went
17 down maybe three times in the four months I had left. And then a couple of times did
18 training, again as a lane grader in central North Carolina around I think it was Ashford. In
19 the Ashford area there’s a big national forest (Pisgah National Forest) there and Fort
20 Bragg would use that for training, also, for Special Forces. In fact I, got lucky once there,
21 too. We were out with a group of Psy-Op civil affairs guys mostly—and Special Forces
22 training, mostly Special Forces would—I just learned to watch and the 82nd Airborne
23 would provide the quote “enemy.” We got overrun on this particular occasion, didn’t
24 bother me because I was a grader, so it didn’t do anything to me. But a couple of the
25 Canadian Special Forces captains who were going through training and a couple of—the
26 82nd also provided the local indigenous population types that were used with the Special
27 Forces trainees. We hid out and we were fortunate we didn’t get captured by the 82nd and
28 I was the only lane grader along. I don’t know where the Special Forces lane grader
29 went. The instruction I had was when this happened, which apparently was supposed to
30 happen at least once during the field training, go find a house and call this colonel who
31 was staying in a motel, I think it was Ashford, North Carolina, middle of North Carolina

1 and he'd eventually come and pick you up. So we picked a house and watched it and
2 made sure it wasn't being observed by the 82nd. It turned out that it was this old couple,
3 and it was really interesting, asked—explained who we were and they knew because this
4 happened fairly frequently, and they said, "Sure, come on in and you can use the phone."
5 So I called the colonel and he laughed he said, "Where are you?" I told him, he started
6 laughing and he said, "You'll be the last ones I pick up." I asked, "Why?" He said,
7 "You'll find out." Well, it turned out this old couple, they apparently, they'd had a son
8 or—he'd served in World War II, and they had a son that served in Vietnam. They
9 insisted on feeding us chicken and dumplings, homemade. That's why the colonel wasn't
10 in any hurry to come and get us because he planned to come and eat there, too. Really
11 nice couple, really nice people. The Canadians—the two Canadian captains, they were
12 kind of flabbergasted they didn't quite know what to make of it. The couple that was
13 feeding us and taking care—I think we were there for about four hours, four or five
14 hours. They were real intrigued at having two Canadian officers that really intrigued
15 them. A good time was had by all. We didn't get captured by the 82nd and go through any
16 of their shenanigans and that was even better still. That was—I was released from active
17 duty right before Christmas, the second anniversary of being commissioned.

18 JS: After you were back home and off of active duty, did you continue to follow
19 the developments in Vietnam?

20 TC: Yes, because I went back to graduate school, and this time at Ohio State
21 University working on a PhD, decided that it would be useful to have a little extra
22 income. I mean, I had the G.I. Bill, but it would be useful to have a little extra income so
23 I went over to Fort Hayes Reserve Center in Columbus, and asked about joining the
24 Army Reserve, an active Reserve unit. I didn't want to be inactive, there was no future in
25 that, no interest. And got picked up—in fact, I can still remember the sergeant. He was an
26 E-8 who his Reserve position was as the senior—second to the senior NCO in the support
27 group for 452nd Support Group and they needed a headquarters company commander and
28 when he found out I was an infantry officer and had the CIB and all that sort of thing he
29 said, "How would you like to be the headquarters company commander?" And I'd just
30 made captain, so I said, "Sure, that sounded all right." So, I started off—let's see, I did
31 six, seven years—seven plus years in the troop unit program in the Reserves first as a

1 headquarters company commander and then as a logistics officer, in the logistics shop.
2 And then as the group S-4, the logistician for group not to support other units. I had a
3 great time, as headquarters company commander of course we had any number of
4 enlisted guys who'd volunteered for the Reserves to avoid active duty in Vietnam, and a
5 lot of the training was obviously geared towards Vietnam-type activities as much as
6 logistics can be geared towards Vietnam as opposed to any other place but you've got to
7 provide support. The units—the subordinate units to the support group, we had things
8 like a maintenance company, a couple of heavy truck companies, can't even remember
9 the kind of unit that had a bakery, there was units that had mortuary, all of their kind of
10 training obviously was geared towards Vietnam even though in the end the Reserves
11 were never sent. The other place I ran into Vietnam-type activities is I had one individual
12 in the headquarters company, enlisted guy, he'd originally—well, he joined the Reserves
13 to avoid Vietnam, but he wasn't really interested in participating. And part of the deal
14 when you join the Reserves you had a six-year commitment to a Reserve unit, which
15 meant one weekend a month and two weeks every summer for annual training. Well, this
16 guy couldn't seem to make meetings on many occasions and after the usual process of
17 numerous warnings and written warnings and on and on and on, he managed to—I
18 assigned him as a truck driver. We were going to Fort McCoy, Wisconsin, for annual
19 training this particular summer. He was to be an assistant truck driver in the convoy.
20 Well, he didn't show up in time which meant a mad scramble to fill his position because
21 he wanted to drive his personal vehicle to McCoy. That privilege was only granted to
22 people not in the convoy and usually either more senior people or guys who had already
23 done convoy duty the year before. So that got him an Article 15 and then he missed a few
24 more meetings and I finally said, "Okay, that's it." So I processed him for active duty.
25 The Army in its infinite wisdom, made him an MP (military police). I heard later that he
26 didn't last very long as an MP and he was then a guest of the MPs for a while. Yeah, he
27 was AWOL and caused problems. We had two other individuals who joined the
28 Reserves, again I suspect to avoid Vietnam, and they soon decided that the Reserves
29 wasn't where they wanted to be because it was too hard of work so they transferred to the
30 Ohio National Guard thinking that'd be easier. Well, it was no easier than the Reserves
31 because it was again an active Guard unit and they wound up being processed for active

1 duty. I didn't have to do it, the Guard company commander did, who I knew. He and I
2 compared notes because we would get guys like that who'd tried to figure out which was
3 the easiest route to go. But the vast majority of guys in the Reserves were great guys and
4 they'd have done very well in Vietnam or any other active duty situation. Apparently the
5 active Army, at least a few of them recognized that because one year, our annual training
6 was done at Fort Bragg, to join up with an active duty logistics support group and I,
7 because I was company commander or later the S-4, I would be in on the planning for
8 annual training, and the planning usually included one or more visits to wherever you
9 were going, in this case Fort Bragg, and the active duty group commander a full colonel
10 decided that because of the experience level of the Reserve unit I was in, he would let as
11 many of his active duty officers or many of them go on leave as he could because we had
12 people that could step in and fill both jobs, both with the active duty and the Reserve unit.
13 And I happened to be one of them, the headquarters company commander active duty
14 one, was given two weeks leave while I was there and I was in effect the company
15 commander for both companies which was kind of interesting. The active duty first
16 sergeant did not go on leave so I had two first sergeants working for me (one active duty
17 and one reserve). And it was interesting, what I found interesting was this was the Army
18 in transition to deal with females in large numbers. And the active duty first sergeant
19 came in and said, "Okay, sir, when"—staff meetings three days a week and it was a
20 combined active duty/Reserve staff meeting, he said—"when you go in addition to—you
21 have to give the female briefing." I'm going, "The female briefing?" This was six years
22 after I'd come off active duty. I said, "The female briefing? What's the female briefing?"
23 "Number of females assigned to both your unit and ours, the number of those females
24 who are pregnant, the number of those females who are married and pregnant, and the
25 number of those females who are married." I kind of looked at him like, really? Okay. I
26 guess the thinking was that this somehow impacted—obviously the pregnancy did but
27 beyond that, married or not, that would impact the readiness of the unit. I said, "Okay." I
28 said, "Who comes up with those numbers?" He said, "I do." I said, "Okay. First
29 Sergeant," I said, "I expect twenty-four hours before I'm due to give that briefing I want
30 to see what the numbers look like just out of curiosity because I've never had to do this
31 before." And I looked at my Reserve first sergeant. I said, "And I guess we're going to do

1 the same thing so you're going to have to come up with the same numbers for our
2 people." Which we did. But that was kind of a new experience. The Army sure trying to
3 figure out—to understand how to deal with a new concept of having female members, not
4 just as admin personnel but anything from maintenance personnel on down, personnel,
5 and how the pregnancies would affect unit readiness. The marriage part I kind of
6 scratched my head and I thought, "Well, okay. Somebody has decided somewhere that
7 that impacts readiness, too. I don't know how." And then going through all the
8 paperwork to make sure that they had designated who was going to—if they had children,
9 who was going to take care of the children if they got called up to active duty or were
10 deployed sort of thing. That was the other real concern the military had was to make sure
11 the kids weren't left without either parent and no provisions were taken care of them. I
12 assume they still do that sort of thing. I know they do they have to. But beyond that it was
13 pretty routine. No big discipline problems that particular summer. In fact, the only
14 discipline problem I ever really had was the guy that I put on active duty. He didn't
15 believe I was going to do it, his attitude was well—his father came to see me and
16 wouldn't I consider one more—I said, "Nope, he's had plenty of opportunities. He's an
17 adult. He knows darn well what the consequences were going to be because I've
18 counseled him a couple of times previously." I said, "He's had his chances and it's not
19 up to you to take care of him anymore." I stayed in an active Reserve program until my
20 civilian job took me to Germany—or actually to Turkey. First I spent two years in Turkey
21 working for the Air Force as a historian, and I was still an Army Reservist then so I
22 spent—I got two, two-week periods of annual training in Germany taking care of the
23 shipment of family household goods and inspecting warehouses. It was all contract
24 operation at Ludwigsburg, Germany. So, it was interesting. I got to see how household
25 goods were shipped and everything from rat control in the warehouses, you name it. By
26 that point I'd changed to being a quartermaster officer. And then when I got to Germany
27 the Army wanted me to be a—well, run the impress funds, so to speak, for Operation
28 Reforger because I speak German. When there's damage to civilian property during those
29 training exercises you got to go out and pay the Germans for everything. Well, in the
30 meantime the Army also discovered in my civilian job. I was considered emergency
31 essential—I was titled as Emergency Essential Civilian which meant if we ever went to

1 war in Europe that I wasn't going to put on an Army uniform, I was going to remain an
2 Air Force civilian, and at that point the Army said well in that case we're not paying to
3 send you to annual training anymore so I was put in the inactive Reserve, which
4 effectively ended my military career as such.

5 JS: During this time period after you were off active duty, of course, everything
6 went downhill in Vietnam—what was your reaction to the actual developments in
7 Vietnam and eventually the fall of Saigon?

8 TC: I can't say I was completely surprised that the South Vietnamese government
9 as it was, once we left our combat role once the U.S. military left the combat role that the
10 communists clearly worked to undermine the South Vietnamese government and as we
11 found out later was apparently fairly successful. On the other hand there were a number
12 of South Vietnamese Army units, the 2nd ARVN Division and the 1st ARVN Division
13 which was further north in I Corps and were probably their two best divisions,
14 unfortunately stuck—unfortunately from the individual standpoints stuck with the fight
15 right to the end and we've all seen or many of us have seen the pictures of the South
16 Vietnamese trying to get out of Da Nang when Da Nang fell. That was pretty sad
17 situation. Given by that point it was more in the sense of a civil war than a war of
18 liberation. The outcome, I can't say I was overly surprised. I'm sure the Vietnamese
19 peasants by that point were tired having their sons drafted into the Army, anybody's
20 Army, North or South. The communists had been fairly successful in infiltrating the
21 South Vietnamese government even at the highest levels in Saigon we have since learned.
22 I guess I wasn't too surprised. I was kind of saddened to see what happened to the
23 individuals, but I wasn't surprised at what happened. It's just the popularity of South
24 Vietnamese government was never real high, in my personal opinion. The longer it
25 dragged on, we had them (the South Vietnamese Government) conduct elections were
26 clearly, I won't say shams but pretty close to it as far as freedom to pick who you want
27 sort of thing and I'm not sure that would've made a lot of difference. If you remember
28 way back in 1956 there were supposed to be national elections and we torpedoed those
29 because we had kind of a sneaking suspicion what the outcome would be. And I don't
30 think the outcome would've changed a whole lot between 1956 and 1975, frankly. You
31 might have a little higher percentage voting against the communists, but I don't think you

1 had a majority. Simply because Ho Chi Minh, despite all that the North Vietnamese
2 Army had done in Vietnam, in South Vietnam, I still think they would've won the
3 election simply based on the fact that they were fighting the colonial occupiers, whether
4 French or American.

5 JS: So still that nationalist viewpoint and still not an understanding of what
6 communism actually was and what was going to come later.

7 TC: They found out the hard way after the fall of Saigon. They found out the hard
8 way what Vietnamese communism was all about, because then, of course, the North
9 Vietnamese, the communists didn't have to worry about propaganda. Then they cracked
10 down hard, and the South Vietnamese found out the hard way what it really meant to live
11 under communism and what kind of personal freedoms they'd lost. Where I was in
12 Quang Ngai Province, you know, there was only one city of any size, Quang Ngai City,
13 and a few towns but in a place like Saigon where things had flourished as far as saying
14 what you want and doing what you want to do to a large extent that all went by the
15 boards when the Communists took over and people found out the hard way. They were
16 no longer free to do what they wanted to do. That was probably the real tragedy of the
17 fall of South Vietnam. A lot of people learned the hard way what communism was all
18 about and suddenly you had control at every level, strict control. It's kind of, to me, it
19 isn't amazing. I'm glad to see it happen as things are slowly changing in Vietnam, both
20 North and South. And I would hope in another generation or so that they wind up, well, I
21 don't know about Eastern Europe necessarily but certainly the Vietnamese are
22 hardworking and intelligent, reasonably well educated. Once the communist cadre gets to
23 be the third and fourth generation post-1975 that things will really start to loosen up and
24 change. I keep the thinking the same thing will happen in China sooner or later. There's
25 this dichotomy between the party wanting to maintain control of the politics and what's
26 necessary to develop a flourishing economy. There's a real dichotomy there because in
27 that kind of economy the centrally-controlled economy just doesn't work very well. The
28 Chinese have loosened it up a good deal and you know there's got to be friction and a
29 push and pull between the old party—party bureaucrats old or otherwise that are terrified
30 of losing political control through economic liberalization. On the other hand, you got

1 those who say we got to have economic globalization because we've got to be able to
2 feed this population of what 1.2 billion?

3 JS: Something like that—

4 TC: Whatever it is, you know the same thing is happening in Vietnam. They're
5 maybe not as far along as the Chinese but I suspect they'll get there pretty quickly. When
6 does the communist political control break down? And can they make it through a
7 peaceful transition to some other kind of political arrangement? China, unlike Vietnam
8 which until the French arrived, and even when the French arrived and the French took
9 over and made it a colony, they never really had a civil war like the Chinese had. So for
10 the Chinese there's this implantation, I don't know about the current young generation
11 but certainly up to that point, of what a civil war means and you do everything you can to
12 avoid that, to include really strict political control of the population. On the other hand,
13 China and Vietnam, from what I read and hear, certainly China and I think Vietnam, too,
14 is going through some really fast economic development. It will be interesting to see how
15 they transition. I think of what happened in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union when—
16 that strict political control and the centralized economy broke down, that's what finished
17 off the Soviet Union. They couldn't keep up economically; there was just no way out of
18 the box of we just can't produce anything or much that we can sell to make money to
19 continue the political control. So, I have great hope that the same thing will happen in
20 China and Vietnam. Now, we may not like in the United States what comes next, which
21 is Chinese nationalism. I think in the case of Vietnam it won't really impact us because
22 it's a small country, relatively speaking. So, if it is Vietnam—Vietnamese nationalism,
23 not the communist variety, I don't think it'll really bother us, frankly. It will a little bit
24 but nothing really—but China's a whole 'nother story. And we're seeing lots of Chinese
25 nationalism everywhere, including—among the population. Not the government, I mean
26 the government I think reflects it but there's a lot of Chinese nationalism out there, "Yay!
27 Look! We're finally doing something great. Finally able to feed ourselves and make
28 money and live a better life and buy a car," and do all those kinds of things. But as far as
29 Vietnam goes, I wish them well. I don't wish the communists well, but I wish the people
30 well.

1 JS: Well, speaking of those issues, how do you feel about things like, I don't
2 know, American trade with Vietnam—

3 TC: Fine. I don't have any problem with that at all. And if—I'd kind of like to go
4 back and visit Vietnam. It's kind of on my bucket list of things to do.

5 JS: That was my very next question.

6 TC: Well, you have to know I'm a stamp collector and I'm also a train nut, and I
7 would love nothing more than—I don't collect Vietnamese stamps, I just, they were
8 pretty cheaply made and not much interest, but I would like to go back and ride the train
9 from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh or Saigon. I expect Saigon will go back to being Saigon, too
10 frankly. Just like Chemnitz, Germany, was Karl-Marx-Stadt. I expect that it'll go back to
11 being Saigon, but I'd like to ride the train, I think it'd be interesting. I'd like to go back
12 and see Duc Pho and the area, just out of curiosity. From everything I read things are
13 changing fast in Vietnam and I'd just like to see. I'd like to see Saigon, I'd like to see
14 Hanoi, I spent a grand total of one night in Saigon when I was in Vietnam so it would be
15 of interest to me.

16 JS: I hope you get the chance to go back and do that.

17 TC: I suspect I will, I got a couple—it seems that my wife and I always have a
18 few foreign trips. We've spent twelve—thirteen—fourteen years of our lives living
19 outside the United States, find it interesting and enjoyable on occasion, so I expect we'll
20 get to Vietnam eventually. The only thing that holds me back is that long flight. That's a
21 lot of sitting, which I don't enjoy a whole lot.

22 JS: Well, is there anything else you'd like to—

23 TC: Not that I can think of, Jason, not that I can think of that deals with
24 Vietnam—I mean with my job in Air Force History program—especially the first years
25 from '70—let's see when did I go to work for the Air Force—'75. From '75 until I went
26 to Turkey in '78 a lot of the research I was doing was Vietnam related. I was working for
27 the Air Force logistics commander, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Did a study on the
28 attempts to create—what do we call it today when we've tried to do on the Mexican
29 border, create an artificial fence, so to speak, using sensors and that sort of thing. We
30 tried the same thing in Vietnam, didn't work there either. Did a study on Agent Orange
31 and the contaminants in Agent Orange that cause the problems with cancer. A number of

1 studies on Air Force operations in Vietnam, which other than the Psy-Op variety I never
2 saw one—oh, I saw F-4s in the sky and A-1s in the sky and dropping bombs but that was
3 always at a distance, or almost always at a distance. So, I had not a whole lot of contact
4 with that but the logistics of supporting the Air Force in Vietnam. So, I got a little,
5 probably a little different insight than a lot of guys that went to Vietnam and came home
6 and had nothing more to do with the military. It was interesting. I was fortunate in the
7 position I held when I was in Vietnam, the assignment I had, I got to see a lot more of the
8 area than most people did. Most of them had their little area of operation and that was it.
9 From that standpoint I was fortunate. I was fortunate I didn't have to spend more than a
10 couple nights at a time out in the field. I mean way out in the field, out in the rice paddies
11 that kind of thing. I saw enough leeches in what time I had out there to know I didn't
12 want to spend any more time than I had to. Yeah, it was interesting, there were the bad
13 times and there were the good times like any other military operation. But I can't think
14 of anything else really, not for the interview standpoint I got some questions about what
15 happens next. I assume it gets transcribed and all that sort of thing?

16 JS: Sure, yeah. Let me go ahead and bring the interview to a close and stop the
17 recording.