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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Chuck Bagley
Conducted by Jason Stewart
Date 21 February 2011
Transcribed by Aaron Kellerhals**

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

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1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech
2 University conducting an Oral History interview with Mr. Chuck Bagley. Today is
3 February 21st, 2011. I'm in Lubbock, Texas, in the Special Collections Library on the
4 campus of Texas Tech, and Mr. Bagley is joining me from Florida. Is that correct, sir?

5 Chuck Bagley: That's correct.

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

8 CB: In Portland, Maine, on 16 May 1944.

9 JS: Could you tell me I guess a little bit about your parents? What were their
10 names, and what did they do for a living?

11 CB: They just both passed away within the past few years, but my father was
12 named Tom Bagley. He was actually born in Quebec, Canada, in an Irish-Canadian
13 community. And his father died young. His mother and three kids immigrated to New
14 Hampshire where they had family, so he grew up in New Hampshire and graduated from
15 the University of New Hampshire in '41. Was not a World War II vet because he was 4-
16 F. He had a bad leg and—so anyway, he didn't go to World War II. And my mother was
17 born in South Portland, Maine, and that's where I grew up, was South Portland, Maine.

1 JS: Now, as a kid growing up, did you have any interest in the military at all? Did
2 you—well, also, did you follow what was going on in the world? For example, with the
3 Cold War?

4 CB: Yes, I did, yeah, I was always interested in the world outside Maine, and I
5 was very interested in the military. I always wanted to go into the Navy and fly. That was
6 my goal from probably my early teen years. I had it all pretty well planned out to get my
7 degree and go to flight school in the Navy. Very fortunately, it worked out that way.

8 JS: Do you know what influenced you to do that?

9 CB: No, I guess just a little bit—just the romanticism of the whole thing and just
10 the adventure of it. You'd see photos, and of course, you know, having been brought up
11 after World War II. You'd see the things at the movie theaters, and there was a lot of
12 World War II stuff, so you were kind of aware of all of that around you, and of course,
13 there were veterans all over the place. That was just always—as I say I was really
14 fascinated with getting away from Maine and getting out and seeing the world.

15 JS: Well, I know you mentioned your father did not serve in World War II. Did
16 you have any relatives that did?

17 CB: Actually yeah, his brother who is in fact my namesake, in fact he was killed
18 in Sicily in August of '43 and I say I'm named after him. But he was the only—that was
19 the World War II vintage, then one of my brothers was a helicopter pilot in Vietnam too
20 and he's fine. In fact, he lives very close to us here in Florida.

21 JS: Where'd you go to high school?

22 CB: In South Portland, Maine at the local South Portland high school and
23 graduated from there in '62.

24 JS: Okay, and as you were going through high school, was it at this point that you
25 decided you wanted to be a naval aviator?

26 CB: Yes, even before that so I knew I had to go to college and—so anyway that
27 was my plan right there. Yep, I took the college prep courses in high school with all that
28 in mind.

29 JS: So, after graduating from high school, was it directly into college at that
30 point?

31 CB: Yes, yep.

1 JS: Okay, where'd you go to college?
2 CB: The University of Maine.
3 JS: What did you get your degree in?
4 CB: Actually in history. And I started out in pre-med, but I was just too lazy to
5 pursue it and then just went to history. During my college years too, you could actually
6 take the—you had to take the aptitude test for naval aviation, and the physical. So, I took
7 that actually after my sophomore year to make sure I could pass them. I actually signed
8 up for the Navy before my senior year. I got accepted in the program, and I raised my
9 hand, so I was officially in the Navy but in the inactive reserve. And then your OCS
10 [Officer Candidate School] class was contingent on graduating.
11 JS: So, is order deferred until graduation then?
12 CB: Right, so I mean you couldn't go to OCS without getting a degree anyways,
13 so they had to get a copy of your degree before you could even start. But anyway, I
14 started OCS four weeks after I graduated from college.
15 JS: So, I'm assuming you were in college when Kennedy was assassinated.
16 CB: Yes, yep.
17 JS: Could you talk a little bit about what you remember about that?
18 CB: Yeah, I just remember I was in a French class at school when it was—of
19 course, it got announced and so everything got cancelled after that. It was something
20 we've obviously never been exposed to, that never had had that kind of turmoil. I was
21 living in a dorm then. I eventually moved into fraternity house but at the time I was living
22 in a dorm and anyways it's just kind of a—everyone spent the weekend as I recall—I
23 think it was on a weekend, wasn't it? Or a Thursday or anyway you know pretty much
24 huddled around the TV sets and that sort of thing, just trying to find out what it was all
25 about.
26 JS: What year did you graduate from college?
27 CB: '66.
28 JS: '66, okay. And of course, during that time of course, things were beginning to
29 heat up in Vietnam. Were you paying attention to what was going on?
30 CB: Yeah, quite a bit. There was—they were starting to get the little protests for
31 on campus. So, I was obviously on the much more conservative side, but they really

1 hadn't heated up that much as I left. There were a few long-haired types. Most of us were
2 pretty conservative at the time.

3 JS: What did you think of the protest movement?

4 CB: Oh, I—you know, as you can probably imagine, I didn't think much of them.
5 They were not my favorite people.

6 JS: Had you formed much of an opinion on the War at that point?

7 CB: Yeah, you know—well it just basically I was certainly no geo-political
8 expert, but you know we—the big thing was at the time was the Domino Theory, one
9 goes, and the others fall and being very anti-communist, I felt that we had to draw a line in
10 the sand. So, I was anti-protest and pro the effort at the time.

11 JS: Well, knowing that you were going to go into the Navy, did you think at that
12 time that there was a possibility that you would eventually be going to Vietnam as well?

13 CB: I hadn't really thought that much about it, but it certainly was a possibility.

14 JS: So, you graduated in '66, and then did you say it was four weeks later that you
15 were—

16 CB: Yeah, I had my OCS class date at Pensacola at end of June '66, and that's—
17 yeah, four weeks later, I was in Pensacola.

18 JS: What did your family think about your decision to join the Navy?

19 CB: I think my father was pretty much for it. He'd always regretted he hadn't had
20 the chance to go in—my mother really never said much, so I expect she was probably not
21 for it.

22 JS: Well, I guess if you would—if you could talk a little bit about OCS, a little
23 about what it was like, and I guess a description of the training?

24 CB: Yeah, well it was a fairly short period of time, about twelve weeks so you'd
25 start at the end of June and by mid-September were ensigns. But we had guys from all
26 over the country of course, and we'd been assigned—we had about thirty-five guys in my
27 OCS class, and we got there—it was actually, even though it's Navy, it was run by the
28 Marines. We had a Marine gunnery sergeant who ran us around, and then a Marine
29 captain who was our class officer and he—those two worked in conjunction together. But
30 the gunnery sergeant, they—well, the first ten days they'd start with what they called us,
31 “Indoctrination Battalion,” and we'd walk around in these big baggy suits, actually

1 somewhat like flight suits, and you know were shaved heads and just all the molding us
2 as a unit and taking your individuality away is what those first ten days were. Making us
3 against them. But anyway, the gunnery sergeant taught us the marching and all that sort
4 of thing. A lot of physical stuff, we're up early in the morning running. We did a lot of
5 swimming, but after the first ten days it got settled into more of a routine, the running in
6 the morning, the breakfast, everything always information. Then we'd spend a great part
7 of the day in classes, you know, naval history and leadership and all that sort of thing.
8 Nothing really aviation related really. That would all come later. It was really molding
9 you into the Navy. Then a lot of swimming. Swimming was big, and running cross
10 country courses, obstacle courses, so a lot of physical fitness. A lot of class work time
11 and learning how to wear uniforms, and just they were just on us all the time to mold us
12 into armed civilians.

13 JS: Did you find that you were adjusting pretty well? Or how did you—

14 CB: Yes, yeah, I liked it as much as I thought I would.

15 JS: The Marine instructors that were teaching you, were they Vietnam vets? Or do
16 you know?

17 CB: Actually, our class captain was. But the gunnery sergeant, he was a World
18 War II vet actually and I don't think he—a lot of them—we had different battalions, but
19 my particular gunnery sergeant I don't believe was. I think he was pretty much towards
20 the end of his career and that may have in fact been his last assignment. But like I say, a
21 lot of them, probably eighty percent of the guys at Pensacola at the time were.

22 JS: Did you go through some sort of weapons training there as well?

23 CB: Yeah, we must have because we marched with rifles. We must've done
24 something on the range. I just don't recall it if we did any at that time.

25 JS: Overall, did you think the training was sufficient as far as preparing you to
26 serve in the Navy?

27 CB: Yes, at least to change us from civilians to get a handle on what the military
28 was, yeah, it was—it did the job. It was really—it was pretty much heavy immersion; I
29 mean we were just pretty much at it twenty four hours a day and had very little time away
30 from—after our—the last couple of months we would get liberty on weekends and get a

1 chance to go to the beach. But most of the time we were pretty well immersed, so I think
2 it was pretty good training really.

3 JS: It was at during this time that you tested to be qualified for flight school? Or
4 did that—

5 CB: Well, no, prior to that—prior to even going to Pensacola we'd been tested.
6 You'd all had passed the aptitude test and the flight physical, so I mean once successfully
7 getting out of OCS then you were guaranteed the opportunity to go to flight school. So,
8 we're all pre-tested.

9 JS: Well, did most of the guys that went to OCS with you, were most of them
10 wanting to go through flight school as well?

11 CB: Oh, yeah, we were all in that same track. Right.

12 JS: Well, any memorable moments? Funny moments, anything like that from
13 OCS that stick out that you could possibly mention?

14 CB: No just the usual laughs, nothing really in particular, I think.

15 JS: Where did you go to basic flight training?

16 CB: Well, that was all in the Pensacola area, so after OCS then they have what
17 they call a "pre-flight phase," and that's six weeks. And that's when they started to get
18 into the aviation academics. No flying, but that's when all the guys from the ROTC
19 [Reserve Officers' Training Corps] programs around the country and the Naval Academy
20 and us OCS grads all came together, so the class was split up that way. You had, like I
21 say, Naval Academy guys, ROTC guys from around the country. So anyway, so the
22 hassle of being in OCS was over with, you were a commissioned officer albeit very
23 junior. So, we had a good time there, and that was right at Pensacola before we went out
24 into the training fields, just all of the academics. Everybody starts the same place out at,
25 at the time it was Foley Airfield, and you start out in T-34s. Again, it was all academics
26 and flying. We get about twenty-five hours of flight time, and of course you were graded
27 on everything. At the end of that primary phase, they split the path and students that went
28 jets would go to Meridian, Mississippi and those of us that stayed in props went to a field
29 a little bit further outside Pensacola flying T-28s. Am I getting too far ahead of myself?

1 JS: That's okay. I did have a few questions but that's okay. Well, one thing I
2 wanted to ask, you mentioned the OCS guys versus ROTC and those that are coming in.
3 Was there any sort of hierarchy of sorts, OCS above ROTC, anything like that?

4 CB: Not really, but in reality—well, yes. I guess there is really—I think the Naval
5 Academy guys were probably considered at the top of the lists because they'd actually
6 had been in the Navy for four years, so they were obviously much more Navy oriented
7 than we were. We were brand new guys. But that quickly went—relatively quickly went
8 away. We all became pretty friendly and then when you got to the flying portion, we
9 found out we're all pretty much the same, but they were definitely the better trained. And
10 of course, the ROTC guys too, they'd been immersed in it much longer than us OCS guys
11 had.

12 JS: You mentioned initial training was with, was it the T-34?

13 CB: Yes.

14 JS: Okay, and how did you do? Did you enjoy the flying?

15 CB: Yeah, in fact I should've mentioned when I was a kid back in Maine, it was a
16 grass strip down out a couple of miles from the house. My brother and I had actually
17 taken some lessons, so I'd actually had soloed in an old aircraft when I was about
18 eighteen or nineteen. I couldn't afford much more than the flight lessons, but I had soloed
19 anyway. So anyway, I had done some flying. Yeah, I did pretty well, I took to it pretty
20 well. I was very comfortable doing it.

21 JS: Did you feel that the initial training you had helped you at all?

22 CB: Yes, I do. Even those very few hours I had, I had probably like ten flight
23 hours, and yeah, I think it helped a bit because there were some guys that hadn't flown
24 and then we had some guys that had two thousand hours, so it was just a wide range of
25 experience.

26 JS: Was there much of a washout rate in that basic flight training? Or did most
27 everybody make it?

28 CB: Yeah, it was fairly high. I don't recall the numbers but probably at least thirty
29 percent.

30 JS: What type of things would generally wash people out? Do you remember?

1 CB: Probably a variety of things, I think a lot of the guys went there with the full
2 intent of washing out. There were guys that didn't want to go in the Army, so they joined
3 the Navy, go to flight school for a couple weeks and then just say, "Oh, this is not for
4 me," and then—other than that, the occasional guy like that, there was just the physical
5 inability or to think three dimensionally and just to, just not really adaptive you know,
6 without the—what am I trying to say, without the aptitude for it it's just—I think that
7 was. I can't think of anything particular.

8 JS: Well, I know you mentioned that I guess was it after basic that people were
9 divided into jets versus props?

10 CB: Yes, after that well the primary flight phase, right? Right.

11 JS: Was that when you would fill out a dream sheet of sorts? Or did that come
12 later?

13 CB: Yes, I mean you did. In fact, we did that during the primary phase, but it
14 really depended on your grades. So, the guys with the top grades usually got jets, but you
15 know depending on when you finish the primary phase some weeks, they would just pour
16 everybody into the jet pipeline, so that wasn't always the case but generally that was the
17 case, the guys with the top grades got the jets, the guys with the lower grades would go
18 props.

19 JS: You mentioned that sometimes they would just send everyone, was that
20 depending on critical need?

21 CB: Exactly, yeah.

22 JS: What did you want to do? What line did you want to go to?

23 CB: Actually, I did want to go in the jet line, I think I did realize then that that's
24 pretty tough stuff, I mean you're a single pilot and eventually flying on carriers single
25 pilot day and night, and I don't think I would've made a good single pilot aviator at the
26 time. I think later in my career I did, but at that early phase I don't think I would've done
27 that well.

28 JS: You said you did your—the advance training there in the Pensacola area as
29 well?

30 CB: Yes, and T-28s. We did in fact get carrier qualification—we did do carrier
31 landings and that was the end of our fixed-wing training.

1 JS: Could you talk a little bit about that? What the carrier training was like?

2 CB: Well, that was great, we spent about three-weeks doing field-to-air landing
3 classes at a little airfield just over the line over in Alabama. Learning the system, the
4 meatball system that you land on carriers with. We did eleven flights of those, and then
5 we went out to the carrier. It was fascinating. We did two touch-and-go landings, six
6 arrested landings, and of course, we didn't get catapulted in this T-28, so you'd do the
7 arrested landing, and then they' unhook you, and you'd line up straight down the deck
8 and take off under your own power. So, it was pretty neat, I'm glad I got a chance to do
9 that. And being students, they sent us out on a perfect day, they weren't about to send us
10 out in crummy weather. It was pretty neat.

11 JS: So overall at this point with the basic flight training and then the advanced,
12 did you feel that the training was pretty good as far as preparing you to be a pilot?

13 CB: Yes, yeah, certainly, yeah.

14 JS: Any memorable moments during any of this training? Any unfortunate
15 accidents, or anything like that that sticks out in your mind?

16 CB: Yeah, we certainly had a few, in fact before I went out to the carrier a couple
17 weeks, we'd had two guys killed. So, you were getting training accidents at different
18 phases, yeah, we lost a number of guys in flight training and that was always kind of
19 sobering of course because we hadn't—you weren't used to that in your normal life, so
20 that kind of got your attention. Generally, the odds were in your favor.

21 JS: After you completed that training in the T-28 what was next for you?

22 CB: They split the path once again, for those of us in the prop pipeline and you
23 would go multi-engine aircraft or helicopters, and I wound up going helicopters.

24 JS: How did you feel about that?

25 CB: I would've preferred to go the multi-engine route because at the time I kind
26 of had the airlines in mind, and obviously that was the better pipeline to be in to
27 eventually go to the airlines. So, I wound up going helicopters.

28 JS: So, then the next thing was helicopter transition training, I guess?

29 CB: Yep, and that was all piston driven helicopters at the time, the little bubble H-
30 13 helicopter was our initial trainer and we soloed in that. We were only, it was only
31 about four months' time before we got our wings, but anyway the little bubble helicopter

1 the H-13 and then we went to the bigger H-34 which again was piston driven, that's what
2 we get our wings on, so hadn't touched a turbine aircraft yet, well anytime during flight-
3 training, it was all pistons driven.

4 JS: Was the transition into helicopters difficult? Or was it fairly easy for you?

5 CB: I always tell people it's like riding a bike, and once you learn how to hover,
6 they fly like normal aircraft. Initially when you're learning that, that hover business was
7 difficult. But you know it's like anything, once you get that you're good to go. Then they
8 fly like normal airplanes when you're flying, generally like normal aircrafts. You were
9 very comfortable with the air, you're very comfortable talking on the radio, so you had
10 air-sense about you because you'd already been flying for a year in fixed-wing aircraft,
11 so it was just a matter of mastering the hovering and the other little idiosyncrasies of
12 helicopters.

13 JS: Did you enjoy flying helicopters?

14 CB: Yes.

15 JS: Was this training also take place there around Pensacola?

16 CB: Yeah, I never left the Pensacola—at the time, all of—yeah. So that was in the
17 Pensacola area.

18 JS: Your instructors that were teaching you, were these Vietnam veterans?

19 CB: A lot of them were, we had a lot of Marine instructors and almost every one
20 of them were Vietnam veterans, a lot of the Navy instructors were not, but the Marines all
21 were. In fact, most of them had flown the H-34 in Vietnam.

22 JS: Would you mind describing the H-34?

23 CB: It has wheels, and the wheels are not retractable, so it has two main landing
24 gear and then one tail wheel, very high—you had to climb very high to get up in the
25 cockpit. The engine was like thirteen-fifty or something like that horsepower. Very noisy.
26 It did the job, but yeah, it was a big 'ol lumbering thing and it was used primarily for
27 troop transport.

28 JS: You said once you completed this training you got your wings at that point?

29 CB: Yes, and of course during your training you'd put in the dream sheet for the
30 squadron you'd want to go to after you got your wings, and I'd heard about this—how
31 three of the Seawolves in Vietnam because we were all in the system and we knew what

1 was going on and so I heard all about and it was something that I wanted to do. Plus, I
2 had a brother who was in Vietnam flying helicopters, and it was something that I wanted
3 to do. So, I put that down as my top choice, not a flight school, and that's what I got.

4 JS: So, you had kept up pretty closely then with the developments in Vietnam?

5 CB: Yes, yeah, once we were in the system as we were then, this is February of
6 1968 when I got my wings so yeah, and of course Vietnam was heating up and the
7 protests were heating up, and more and more people going over—we had a lot of people
8 over there at the time so yeah.

9 JS: Your brother was already there?

10 CB: Yes.

11 JS: Had you had much contact with him while he was in—

12 CB: Writing back and forth.

13 JS: Did he, given the fact that he had already been there, did he give you any sort
14 of advice or anything to prepare you?

15 CB: I suppose he did, I just don't recall what it was. Probably gave me some
16 insights into what was going on. Yeah, I just don't recall honestly.

17 JS: Well once you got, I know you said you put the Seawolves as your number
18 one choice, did you—before being assigned to the unit—did you have any other training?

19 CB: Oh, oh, yes, in fact I got my wings in February of '68 and I got us—we did
20 the transition to the Huey in Fort Benning, Georgia, so I didn't have a class date until
21 April of '68 and so the next two months I did what they called "Operation Feedback",
22 and they send guys—they sent me back to New England, to South Weymouth Naval Air
23 Station, the air station I'd been recruited out of in the Boston area for flight training, to do
24 this Operation Feedback which was going onto college campuses at the time and selling
25 the Naval Aviation program. We would administer the aptitude test and then for people
26 that passed, organized for them to go to South Weymouth to take the flight physical. So, I
27 did that for two months, and that was kind of fascinating because the protests were really
28 getting cranked up and we got thrown off a bunch of campuses, I even got banned from
29 my own alma mater—well not banned, but they wouldn't let us set up in the Student
30 Union, and we had to go to some building away from the Student Union. Anyway, that
31 was kind of fascinating to do that for a couple of months. Anyway, after that I went to

1 Fort Benning, Georgia and met up with—we had about eight guys going through the
2 Huey transition at Fort Benning in April of '68, and our instructors were all Army
3 warrant officers, they were all Vietnam vets. So, we get about twenty-five hours on the
4 Huey and then we're on our way to the West Coast for SERE [Survival, Evasion,
5 Resistance and Escape] school, and language training, and weapons for three weeks at
6 San Diego and then off to Vietnam. It was interesting though, when I was at Fort Benning
7 Martin Luther King was killed in Memphis, so we got a number of days off because our
8 instructors because they were all Huey pilots and we weren't yet qualified, they were on
9 standby for about a week to fly to Memphis or any other place in the country because
10 there were disturbances everywhere because of that. So that was kind of interesting. Did I
11 get ahead of myself there?

12 JS: No, no, not at all. I was just going to ask you a little bit about the Huey
13 training, and how you did with the Huey.

14 CB: Yeah, yeah, real well and they were really good instructors, these Army guys.
15 They did the basic transition of course, you know you learn about the Huey, the power
16 plant and all about the aircraft, and then get out and fly it. They'd—because we were
17 going to be flying gunships in Vietnam, they were all outfitted with gunships, so they
18 took it out to the range, this is at Fort Benning, we fired rockets and the machine guns
19 from the helicopters. It did a good job, and in the very short period of time they had us
20 they got us at least qualified in the aircraft, so we knew something about it. Because the
21 only Huey's the Navy had at the time were in Vietnam with the Seawolves so that's why
22 rather than us doing our training, or at least our transition training, in Vietnam they had
23 us go through this little Army outfit. Yeah, so, we knew enough, we weren't as—I always
24 said we weren't nearly as good as pilots as the Army pilots because number one they had
25 more helicopter time. Coming out of Pensacola we probably had about seventy-five hours
26 of helicopter time and the Army guys, of course, they'd just been totally immersed in
27 helicopters, they had twice as much helicopter time as we did. But you know when
28 you've only got a hundred and sixty hours at school, not a lot.

29 JS: Any sort of rivalry of sorts between you guys and the Army guys?

30 CB: Oh, just friendly rivalry, just insults back and forth but it was all in good
31 humor.

1 JS: You mentioned after that you went to SERE School?

2 CB: Yes, yeah, we—yep. In fact, another guy and myself, after we finished up at
3 Benning, I had a little Volkswagen Bug and most of drove across country, so he and I
4 drove—the eight of us, anyway we drove in different vehicles—drove to San Diego. We
5 had a week of language training, a week of weapons training up at Camp Pendleton, and
6 then SERE School at Warner Springs, California, it's up in the high desert country. A
7 week of that and then off we went.

8 JS: Well would you mind, I guess talking a little bit about the SERE School and
9 some of the language training as well, what those were—

10 CB: About the—I'm sorry?

11 JS: If you wouldn't mind talking a little bit about—I guess what the SERE School
12 was like for you?

13 CB: SERE School sure, it was really—we went out there, we lived off the land for
14 like five days. Just hiking, we're sleeping in tents, foraging around for food, and we had
15 instructors, Special Force types—they were Navy instructors, but I don't recall what their
16 specialties were. They helped us get oriented in just living off the land, but the last two
17 days we had to be captured so we'd start the "Evasion" phase the last two days and once
18 you get captured you get sent into the POW [Prisoner of War] camp—in this mock POW
19 camp of course. All of the guards for the POW camp, they'd speak these fake foreign—
20 with a fake foreign accent and they were wearing different uniforms. So, they slapped us
21 around and put us in the black boxes for a while. Just did different things, fed us crappy
22 food and just tried to get you to break and admit to war crimes and that sort of thing. But
23 there was never anything—they did hit you; they could hit you physically with an open
24 hand, but they couldn't use a closed fist on you. So, they'd slap us around, but it was
25 nothing really brutal, I guess if you took it really seriously you could've played with your
26 mind, but you knew there was an end to it you knew you were there for two days and
27 then you were going to go back to San Diego and drink beer.

28 JS: Well, how about the language training? What type of things were they
29 teaching you?

30 CB: The language training?

31 JS: Yes, sir.

1 CB: Yeah, it was, I was trying to remember that the other day. I remember
2 because they had phrase books and that sort of thing, so it was language and culture, you
3 know telling—and geography. So, it was—we spent pretty much the whole day in
4 classrooms just learning about the history of Vietnam, and some very basic phrases and
5 that sort of thing.

6 JS: You also said you went through some weapons training as well?

7 CB: Yes, and we went up to—because we'd had minor stuff at Pensacola in OCS
8 as I was trying to recall, but we got up to Camp Pendleton and we had Marine instructors
9 and we fired M-16s and of course, .45s and .38s because we were going to have a
10 sidearm in Vietnam. We threw a grenade, just for the experience of throwing a grenade,
11 and then just got good weapons training from guys that knew what they were talking
12 about.

13 JS: Overall did you find that all this training, the weapons training, the SERE
14 training, and the language and culture training, do you find that it was useful as far as
15 preparing you for Vietnam?

16 CB: Yeah, I mean we're better off having it than not having it, so yes it gave you
17 a little bit of a handle as to what you were going to be facing. So yeah, it did the job I
18 thought.

19 JS: Is it once you were finished with that training then it was on to Vietnam at that
20 point?

21 CB: Yeah, yeah, and of course, they had us scheduled on a flight, in fact we flew
22 up to—we flew out of Travis Air Force Base up in northern California. You talked to
23 these guys all the time and they were military charters, we actually flew on Braniff
24 Airways, about a hundred and eighty guys. At the time they were stretched 707s or DC-
25 8s and they didn't have the range to fly, like you can fly across the Pacific now in a—
26 anyway we flew from Travis to Honolulu, and then Honolulu to Clark Air Force Base in
27 the Philippines and then into Saigon.

28 JS: What was your first impression of Vietnam upon arrival?

29 CB: First impression of Vietnam? The incredible heat hit us, we landed right
30 around noon time, I don't recall the day of the week anyway. It was mid-May of—can I
31 just put the phone down here for one second Jason?

1 JS: Sure, no problem.

2 CB: Just one second, I'll be right back.

3 CB: Okay, I'm with you. Yea just the incredible heat, anyway oddly enough we
4 must've landed just before a thunderstorm because we were in this terminal because it
5 was just—it was very disorienting over there. Hundreds of Vietnamese running around,
6 all civilians—well not all civilians but airport workers and things, then this thunderstorm
7 hit, and we had a bolt of lightning hit just outside the terminal, this is probably a half-
8 hour after I landed, I thought that was kind of interesting. Yeah, and just, you could see
9 these, of course, there was—nothing was modern at the time, but the air fort was a little
10 bit run down. We sent that first—actually we got—we were told before we left the States
11 where to go when we got to Tan Son Nhut which as you know is the airport there at
12 Saigon, so anyway we eventually after we got in-processed papers stamped because we
13 didn't have passport of course, you just had your orders. We went to this helipad, we
14 were told to go to, and we eventually got a lift down to Vung Tau which is on the coast,
15 about thirty-five miles away. In an Army helicopter in fact. Yep.

16 JS: Where's Vung Tau where you would be based out of primarily?

17 CB: That was our squadron headquarters at the time, right, so we had—that's
18 where all of the ad men, and the personnel, and the medical, and the CO [Commanding
19 Officer] and XO [Executive Officer] and all the maintenance, it was all done there at
20 Vung Tau. But all of our detachments were down in the Mekong Delta so you'd, as I
21 recall, did about a week of in-processing there again. You know classes from guys who'd
22 been down in the Delta telling us what to expect, and then we get assigned to
23 detachments. So in about a week, after about a week in Vung Tau we were out on
24 detachment.

25 JS: Before we get out to your detachment, could you talk a little bit about Vung
26 Tau itself? Could you describe it? Also, if you wouldn't mind some of the personalities
27 that you ran into, you don't have to use specific names, but if you could just talk a little
28 bit about what Vung Tau was like?

29 CB: Yeah, it was—actually my wife and I went back there last year so I got a
30 chance to check it out almost exactly forty years after the—but it was we—it was a very
31 busy airbase, again mostly Army and they had a lot of helicopters there, the Australians

1 had their headquarters there. So, it was a big, busy airbase. But around the coast there
2 were some really nice beaches. But we, the Seawolves, we actually—the officers had a
3 billet just off the airbase, we were about half-a-mile off the airbase in an old French villa
4 we called it, where we lived. So, we lived there, we ate our meals there, showered there
5 and everything. We had a bar, and of course a kitchen. So that's where we lived for the
6 first week before we went out on detachment. We lived right downtown, I mean there
7 were Vietnamese shops right there beside us, so it was really kind of fascinating we were
8 out in the economy then.

9 JS: What type of things were you doing during that first week? Did you have any
10 assignments? Anything to do?

11 CB: I think we'd have all our shots by that time. In fact, the shots we would've
12 got in San Diego. And of course, the Doc—our flight surgeon, and the corpsman
13 would've checked our medical—you would've gone to all the departments to check in
14 with personnel, and ad men, and each department would give you a little briefing and
15 course you wouldn't get a flight physical, but you'd get that on your birth month anyway.
16 As a matter of fact, I'd already had—that was in fact my birth month I'd already had my
17 flight physical back in San Diego, but anyway they'd check our shots and see if we
18 needed anything. Show us the malaria pills we had to take every day. Trying to think, did
19 I answer your question right?

20 JS: Yes, sir. Sure. Yes, sir.

21 CB: But we really had a good time, you know classes during the day and drinking
22 at the bars at night, get a chance to go to the beach quite a bit. So, it was a pretty pleasant
23 week.

24 JS: You mentioned classes, is that further introduction to the—

25 CB: Yes, again the guys that had been out on detachment and were back at
26 headquarters for their last couple of months in-country and they'd again tell us about the
27 ropes and what to expect out on detachment. But we didn't do any flying at that time as I
28 recall in Vung Tau.

29 JS: You mentioned living right there in town, and living on the economy, I guess
30 some interaction with the Vietnamese? What was your first impression of them?

1 CB: The poverty really, that was—that kind of hit you, the poor people really
2 didn't have much. We had come from so much, but they seemed happy. And they were, I
3 mean they had made do with much less than we did so they weren't nearly as spoiled as
4 we were.

5 JS: Yes, sir. Did most of the locals there in Vung Tau, did they seem pretty
6 friendly? Or—?

7 CB: They did, really. Yeah, they were, yeah. I never really fenced any real
8 hostility, maybe I was naïve, but I just didn't.

9 JS: So, after a week there you were sent out to detachment at that point?

10 CB: Yes. So, we'd—and as we got assigned—because we had a bunch of aircraft
11 back at Vung Tau, they were in various phases of maintenance and we had administration
12 aircraft that would take people—so anyway they flew us out to detachments, and we all
13 went to different detachments. Yeah, just grab your suitcase and your flight gear and off
14 you go.

15 JS: Where were you sent to?

16 CB: I was sent to an LST [Landing Ship, Tank] in the very southern part of the
17 Delta down in the last finger of the Mekong River, the Bassac sections. Yeah, the Harnett
18 County it was, a lot of LSTs and we had seven detachments when I was there. Three of
19 them were on LSTs parked up rivers, and they would just move up and down the rivers.
20 So that was where we were based was on this LST, but we actually spent—well we spent
21 time on that, but we spent a lot of time elsewhere too, but that was our base.

22 JS: For possible future listeners that aren't very familiar with LSTs, would you
23 mind describing what an LST is?

24 CB: Yeah, yeah, it's I think it—I never knew much about my Navy ships to tell
25 you the truth, but I think it stands for Landing Ship, Tank. They were used for transport,
26 and they have a ramp at the front, I think they were used during World War II for
27 transporting probably tanks and different heavy equipment, so they could drop that ramp
28 and the tanks or other wheeled vehicles could roll on out. But also, on the deck there was
29 a big flat area which we could get two helicopters on and that's what we had, was our
30 two helicopters on board and then a lot of the boat guys, the PBRs [Patrol Boat, River]
31 which you've probably talked to some of those guys, the river patrol boats. We had a

1 bunch of them tied up beside us, and then some Vietnamese Navy would be there too.
2 The river boats and then us, with the helicopters, and like I say a few Vietnamese, but the
3 ship I'm trying to think how long it would—I can't think of the actual length but
4 probably the ships personnel was maybe a hundred, a hundred-and-fifty people on board
5 actually operating the ship, and then those of us from different commands like the
6 Seawolves and the PBRs would be attached to it. So, there was really—it was really good
7 living because the food was much better on board the ship. But like I say we moved up
8 and down the river a lot and we'd get off. Because I was on that for nine months, we'd
9 live on land for two-weeks and then go back to the ship.

10 JS: Again, you don't have to use specific names if you don't want to, but could
11 you talk a little bit about the other guys in the detachment, and what it was like?

12 CB: Really, we were a really small detachment, it was two helicopters, so we had
13 eight pilots, and then eight enlisted guys who were varying specialties like avionics,
14 metal frame specialists, jet mechanics, weapons specialists, so that sounds really well
15 done. You'd have a guy who was a specialist in one thing or another for the aircraft, and
16 then of course, all the pilots, and when you first got there, you were—the most senior or
17 the training pilot would—you'd wind up—you'd start off as his copilot and he would—
18 so you'd fly with him all the time in the copilot seat of course firing the machine guns.
19 That's the way we made up the actual aircraft crew was the most junior pilot, and the
20 most senior pilot would fly together, and as you'd get more and more into the system and
21 a new pilot came in, you'd relinquish that seat and kind of move up into a more
22 responsible seat. Then you'll eventually make Aircraft Commander as time went on. We
23 got really close because we were together all the time. Of course, I had that guy I started
24 out with, with a guy by the name of John Abrams, he was my training pilot and I had
25 stopped flying with him one—the week before he was killed, and then this new pilot
26 come in and takes my spot, a fellow by the name of Jim Romanski, but he was flying
27 with John Abrams and on July 13th '68 they were shot down and killed and I was flying
28 right behind them in another aircraft, so that was a bad day. We'd lost, of course, those
29 two pilots and then two door gunners too. Yeah, four in one day, that was kind of rough.
30 We got new pilots in, and new door gunners, and you just kind of pressed on. of course,
31 you never forgot those guys. But that was very early in my stay in Vietnam, and that was

1 the worst thing to ever happen was that incident in July. After that there was—very lucky
2 to get—get hit a few times, but nothing as severe as losing a whole crew of guys like we
3 did then.

4 JS: A crew would be four guys to a—

5 CB: Pardon me? Yes, four guys. The two pilots up front, the copilot firing the
6 flex-mounted machine guns and then the pilot would fire the rockets. And then the two
7 door gunners, one on each side, they held an M60 machine gun, and they had about two-
8 thousand rounds of ammunition for each door gunner and then we had about eight
9 thousand rounds of ammunition on board, the door gunners firing two-thousand each and
10 the copilot firing four-thousand and the pilot firing fourteen rockets, so we were pretty
11 well armed. But yeah, four guys on the aircraft, and we always travelled in a light fire
12 team, two helicopters with a fire team lead, he was the most senior pilot, and he would
13 direct the operation and both aircraft would follow his direction.

14 JS: Could you talk a little bit about the mission of the Seawolves? What your
15 primary role was?

16 CB: Our primary role was to be close air support for the river patrol boats, and
17 then the SEAL [Sea, Air and Land] teams that we support on many occasions. And as
18 you can imagine it all became very political, that's why the Navy was there in the
19 Mekong. That was the Navy's biggest presence was in the Mekong Delta because of the
20 massive canals and of course, the Mekong River itself, so we had hundreds of boats up
21 and down the rivers. So, the Army had pretty much—there was Army down there, the
22 Army was more North, there was one Army division that was the 9th Army Division that
23 Dong Tam, that was the only big American Infantry presence in the Delta. So, most of it
24 was Navy in the Delta and again our mission was supporting the river patrol boats which
25 are going up and down canals, looking for VC [Viet Cong] tax collectors and just bad
26 guys in general. And then the SEAL teams going in and doing what SEAL teams did, you
27 know stealing people for intelligence, and just doing SEAL stuff.

28 JS: Overall how was moral when you arrived? Was it pretty high?

29 CB: It was—yeah, it was really good. I guess aviation is in general a kind of
30 motivated anyway, guys are really there because they want to be there. Yeah, our moral
31 was very good. We weren't singing we were all—I guess we're all beer drinkers is what

1 I'm trying to say, and we didn't see any dope and that sort of thing at the time, at least I
2 was blind to it, and I don't think it was a problem, we were all mostly drinkers and that
3 sort of thing. But moral was quite good.

4 JS: I guess if you could talk a little bit about what a typical day would be like if
5 there was such a thing? What the daily schedule would be?

6 CB: Yeah, in fact what we—the way we operated, we would be on for twenty-
7 four hours, and off for twenty-four hours. We changed crews at seven in the morning, so
8 you'd get up, have breakfast. Of course, you'd go pre-flight the aircraft and make sure it
9 was ready to go. And then we would, normally after breakfast—or sometimes before
10 we'd go out on our early morning patrol and just start flying around the area, and we'd
11 often be out there looking for cooking fires. The poor 'ol VC down there in the trees,
12 cranking up their cooking fires to have their breakfast and the smoke would come wafting
13 through the trees so we'd go shoot down through the trees. So, we'd often do that, going
14 out on an early morning mission to look for cooking fires, and then we'd—if we didn't
15 have—then we were just on scramble status the rest of the day. If the river boats doing
16 what they were doing, or the SEALs doing what they were doing called us, we were
17 standing by ready to go help them. If nothing happened during the day like that, we
18 would go on a patrol in the evening, and then all night you're on standby too until seven
19 in the morning when the next crew took over. So, it was some days were just very
20 humdrum, and other days were really exciting.

21 JS: On those early morning missions and things just looking for the enemy, would
22 you find them very often?

23 CB: Yeah, yeah, on occasions. I was trying to give you a percentage, maybe ten—
24 twenty percent of the time, but then of course you couldn't just roll in and shoot, it was
25 all very structured. You knew what sector you were in, you'd have sector advisors,
26 American advisor living in Vietnamese villages, so you'd call him because we knew the
27 frequency. And these frequencies would change every couple of weeks, so we'd call him
28 and tell him what we saw, which we have a cooking fire at such-and-such coordinates,
29 and I assume he would get with his Vietnamese counterpart, and they'd say, "Good guys,
30 bad guys," or whatever, they pretty much had the decision of life and death over these
31 people I guess because they could say, "Yeah, those are no doubt bad guys, so yeah, go

1 ahead and do a run on them,” and we would. Anyway, that’s the way it was structured in
2 almost all cases, you had to go through a sector advisor to get approval to do any
3 shooting. So, I hope they were right.

4 JS: I know you mentioned working with the Navy SEALs. Could you talk a little
5 bit about them and, I guess, your impressions of the SEALs?

6 CB: Yeah, well to this day I remain impressed with those guys. They really were
7 an impressive group of people. Now the SEAL team was made up of about eight guys,
8 and in fact oddly enough you’re probably familiar with this guy’s name. When I first got
9 there, the SEAL team we were supporting was—it was very hard for SEAL team because
10 two of the guys were officers, mostly it was one officer and seven enlisted, but this SEAL
11 team had—by a guy by the name of Bob Gormly who was a lieutenant, and then the
12 lieutenant junior grade, which I was at the time too, by the name of Dick Marcinko, and
13 Marcinko has written a bunch of books, *The Rogue Warrior Series*, you may be familiar
14 with it.

15 JS: Right, yes, sir.

16 CB: Yeah, so anyway, Crazy Dick Marcinko he was there, and he was staff then
17 because he was older than us because he’d been in the Navy as an enlisted man and then
18 had worked his way up the ranks so he was a lieutenant junior grade, same rank as I say
19 it, and he was just a big guy with a handlebar moustache, and just crazy as you can
20 imagine but they were just great to be around. They were just a bunch of really intelligent
21 guys, and crazy too. But they had a lot of guts. It was great working with them, we’d get
22 a chance to hang out with them at the bars in the evenings too, so we got to know them
23 pretty well.

24 JS: They were then also based at the LST as well then?

25 CB: Pardon me?

26 JS: They were also based at the LST as well then?

27 CB: No.

28 JS: Okay.

29 CB: No, no they’d come from different bases. Sometimes you keep fading out
30 there, I don’t know—

31 JS: I’m sorry, I’m hearing a little bit of—

1 CB: Let me move to another room, I think maybe I'm too far away from my base.
2 We live close to the airport; I keep trying to go outside and talk but every time an aircraft
3 goes over. Tell me whereabouts do you live in Lubbock, anyway?

4 JS: I live in southwest Lubbock, a little ways away from the University. Are you
5 familiar at all with Lubbock?

6 CB: Yeah, because our kids are out here, my daughter-in-law's—yeah, they live
7 really close to campus, right close to fraternity road there, they were on like fourteenth
8 street I think it was.

9 JS: I live down pretty close to the mall, the South Plains Mall area?

10 CB: Oh, okay. Yep. Yeah, I was just kind of curious, yeah, we enjoyed Lubbock
11 it was—are you from that area originally?

12 JS: I'm actually from south Alabama originally.

13 CB: Oh, where? Like Mobile?

14 JS: Yeah, from Mobile.

15 CB: Oh, okay, yeah, back in the Pensacola there, then you know that area then?

16 JS: Yeah, pretty well. Yes, sir.

17 CB: You know, and I mentioned the carrier landing because it was at Foley,
18 Alabama, yeah. It was an old airfield, I'm trying to think—Barin Field, I was trying to
19 think of it because there were stories about Barin Field, I think it's with one "R," maybe
20 it's two "R's", B-A-R-R-O-N. But I guess British pilots had—some British pilots had
21 been there during the War, and it was known as Bloody Barron Field anyway. Yeah,
22 good 'ol Foley, Alabama. Okay, yeah, I digress anyway.

23 JS: No problem, no problem.

24 CB: Where were we? Talking about the SEALs. I'm trying to remember how
25 many SEAL teams were around the Delta time, I just don't know. Maybe three or four
26 SEAL teams, maybe not even that many. But they'd be on different bases, usually at Binh
27 Thuy, which became our eventual squadron headquarters right in the heart of the Delta.
28 Right near Can Tho. But they travelled around like gypsies too, wherever somebody'd
29 want to do an operation, the SEALs would just go setup usually an Army base because
30 the Army was predominant. Even small bases around the Delta.

1 JS: Would you guys know much about what types of things they were doing? Or
2 would you just be on call for if they got into trouble?

3 CB: They would talk to us, they'd let us know before what they were planning,
4 and where they were going to be. We'd know where they were going to be, where they
5 hoped to come out, and usually they would need us on extraction. So, we kind of had that
6 planned to be where they were going to come out.

7 JS: Well, how about the PBR crews? Could you talk a little bit about your
8 impressions of those guys?

9 CB: Yeah, they were like us, not as elite as the SEALs. And again, they were very
10 motivated guys, they were on the PBRs because they wanted to be, and we got very tight
11 with those guys too, particularly the ones on the LST because they were tied up to the
12 LST like we were. So, we'd see them in the wardroom, with the officers anyway for
13 meals because the enlisted guys ate in a different area, but you were all on the same ship,
14 so we'd see them often and talk with them. We'd work with them like we did with the
15 SEALs, if they were going to go up a small canal, they would let us know, and often
16 times we'd fly over the top of them anyway just to hopefully keep somebodies head
17 down so the bad guys wouldn't be shooting at them. And then we were there to help them
18 get out if they needed any air support. But they were a good, motivated group too.

19 JS: Okay, when was your—do you remember your first encounter with the
20 enemy?

21 CB: First encounter with the—sorry?

22 JS: With the enemy?

23 CB: Yes. Yeah, when we first got there because I told you as the most junior
24 copilot you would fly with the most senior pilot, and I was flying with that John Abrams
25 who died there in July. We had a, what they called a “free-fire zone.” It was at the end of
26 one of the peninsulas, an area called Long Tuon. We get down there and practice rocket
27 runs and things like that. I'd been there a couple days, and what I thought was a practice
28 rocket run on this area and they started shooting back, and he told me that my eyes were
29 as wide saucers, I'll never forget that he was sitting there laughing at me as these tracers
30 were coming up. I remember that.

1 JS: What would be the—if you could talk a little bit about typical tactics that you
2 guys would use in rolling in on an enemy?

3 CB: I'm not hearing you too well, Jason.

4 JS: I'm sorry. Let's see. Let me try again here, okay. What would be the typical
5 tactics I guess if you wouldn't mind talking about them, about when you spotted an
6 enemy, what would you do at that point?

7 CB: Yeah, well, of course, usually, unless they were firing at us, we would have
8 to get approval. Like say you see some people in a sampan along a little canal, and they
9 have a couple of young males probably not a family out fishing or something, and they'd
10 be dressed all in black, the center of the sampan would be covered up which is probably
11 weapons. So, you'd have to call the sector advisor and say, "I've got two young males,"
12 and they'd say yay or nay, if they did say yes, you'd start—you'd either shoot them or get
13 them to stop and then the river boats would come get them. Those would be very small
14 targets, against a hard target like somebody firing from a bunker or something along a
15 riverbank, we'd do our kind of classic thing was just what we called a Wagon wheel
16 pattern. The fire team lead he'd say, "We're going to roll in on this bunker." He'd give us
17 a direction you know, "Zero-three-zero fire two rockets, break right." So, he would go do
18 his thing and the second helicopter would be a quarter-mile behind—no, not that far
19 behind, trying to think, a couple hundred yards behind, do the same thing. As soon as the
20 lead would break right, then you were on the target firing your two rockets, copilot firing
21 machine guns, and the door gunners firing on the target. Then we'd break right, and by
22 the time we'd broken he'd be back around behind us. So, we kind of kept this little
23 circular pattern going to keep the target suppressed.

24 JS: I guess changing gears just a little bit here, if you could talk a little bit about
25 the enemy, about your impressions of them and their capabilities.

26 CB: Very honestly, thinking of helicopter—you very rarely saw people. The
27 Mekong Delta was the best place to be as far as bad guys and bad guy weapons because
28 number one, we had very few North Vietnamese down there, the ones that were there
29 were in-transit. So, we had the common garden-variety VC, the farmers by day and
30 guerillas by night type people, and the weapons were not that sophisticated, I mean they
31 did have AK-47s and the occasional .50 caliber. Until the end of '69, well I left in mid-

1 '69, but early in '69 they started getting some bigger stuff done, some radar-guided stuff.
2 Yeah, 37 millimeter stuff, Russian made, that was really tough for helicopters to deal
3 with. But when I was first there it was, like I say, common garden-variety weapons like
4 AK-47s which could certainly hurt you, but it was nothing bad like the radar-guided stuff.
5 But we haven't had a lot of respect for them, they were doing what they thought to be the
6 right thing too. It was kind of a grudging respect for them.

7 JS: From what you could tell from your perspective, what would be their tactics
8 for dealing with you guys?

9 CB: Yeah, they well—I know they didn't like us. They used to call helicopters
10 "Muttering Death", I know some of the Vietnamese would tell us that, the Vietnamese
11 soldiers on our side would tell us that, so the VC called us in Vietnamese was "Muttering
12 Death", however they say that in Vietnamese of course. So, I know they didn't care for
13 helicopters, but they didn't have much to fight us with because there was, like I say, just
14 the AK-47 but of course that time when John Abrams and his crew went down in July of
15 '68, they brought us down with a .50 caliber. So, they did have a few heavy weapons.
16 Normally they would leave us alone, I think they wanted to do their own thing on the
17 ground and not mess with us because it was really generally more than they could handle.

18 JS: So, when they generally tried to break contact with you guys—

19 CB: Yes, yeah, I don't think they—they didn't really want to engage, they wanted
20 to avoid us because we definitely had the edge on them. If a couple guys start popping at
21 you with an AK-47 they were definitely outgunned.

22 JS: Were they ever a threat to I want to say the LSTs?

23 CB: Actually no, although there were rumors that they had some sapper squads,
24 you know people that were trained divers that could attach mines or some explosive to
25 the hull of the helicopter—hull of helicopter, in the hull of the LST. In fact, I recall I
26 think the LSTs used to—they always had a guard. They had guards walking the perimeter
27 of the LSTs all the time, and I think they used to throw grenades in the water on occasion
28 just as a preventative. I know they did it in the harbors, like in Vung Tau harbor, where
29 there'd be a lot of ships. That was kind of routine, was to throw grenades over the sides—
30 I don't know if a ship ever got blown up by a sapper, but there was always that thought or
31 possible threat.

1 JS: Would most of the contacts with you had with the VC, would it be from
2 previous contacts with the PBRs, or where would the contacts generally come from?

3 CB: Yes, usually that or and then their Army units around too and they'd be out
4 there checking things out and oftentimes they'd be going back to their base, and we'd be
5 talking to them, and they'd say, "They just ran into something at such-and-such place, if
6 you guys want to go look at it, go ahead and see what you think." But normally it would
7 be the PBRs or the SEALs, or just something the Army dredged up. Or—then there'd be
8 different sector advisors that would call us and say, they'd ask us to check something,
9 and we'd be out on a normal patrol, and they'd say, "We've heard intelligence that there
10 was a unit at such-and-such a place. Can you go check it out?" And we would, and
11 sometimes we'd—in fact that was the only time I ran into a North Vietnamese unit, well
12 actually it was the SEAL team that ran into them about eighty North Vietnamese,
13 probably transiting the Delta to get from A to B, probably to get up towards Saigon. The
14 SEAL team ran into them, and then we supported the SEAL team on that. That was
15 probably the biggest unit we ever saw in the field, was those eighty.

16 JS: Any memorable contacts that stick out in your mind that you can possibly talk
17 about?

18 CB: Yeah, that eighty was very interesting, in fact we would get so close we'd
19 come right over the top of the SEALs I mean you know at fifty feet, and the expended
20 brass from—we had eight-thousand rounds of 7.62—and the brass off that would fall
21 down through the trees and I guess to a guy on the ground it would sound like your firing
22 on them. And we were right on top of the SEALs often like that, and they'd think—
23 they'd start screaming out that we were firing on them which we weren't, then they'd
24 start popping smoke, so we'd know where they are. So, I'll never forget that one because
25 Marcinko, crazy big Marcinko was still there and I was so afraid of going back to the
26 base that Marcinko was thinking were trying to kill him—which we weren't, we drank a
27 lot of beer and talked about it. And they were able to get away from those eighty North
28 Vietnamese, so it was very successful for all concerned. Yeah, I forgot about that brass
29 falling, that would often be a misperception on their part that we were firing on them.
30 And I'm sure sometimes we did, it probably wasn't just brass sometimes, I can't imagine

1 being on the ground and in contact with people and having all this brass fall out of the
2 trees at you.

3 JS: Any other memorable—?

4 CB: I guess everyday was, but just nothing specific—it's funny how you get into
5 a routine. Oh, gosh. We'd do some of the occasional medevac. We medevac'ed [Medical
6 Evacuation] a guy off a PBR one time, in fact there's a publication out there that credits
7 me with doing it. If you ever do a Google search of my name it says that I did this rescue,
8 and I was copilot. In fact, I was corresponding with a guy. I flew helicopters in the Army
9 Guard for years in North Carolina, and I was corresponding with a guy by the name of
10 Jim Sprankle who worked for Bell Helicopter in Dallas, and anyway he was asking for
11 stories, and I gave him this story about medevac'ing a guy off a PBR. We stuck one skid
12 on the PBR and picked this guy up and took him back to the LST for treatment. He
13 wasn't that badly wounded. But anyway, he was wounded, shot in the leg, I think.
14 Anyway, and I get credit for that, I told Jim Sprankle I was the copilot. But anyway it
15 was Commander Bill Harker was the pilot. But we did that, we did a couple medevac, did
16 a couple medevacs of Commander Harker. That one off the PBR, and then we
17 medevac'ed a Vietnamese guy, in fact he died he was hit by an RPG [Rocket Propelled
18 Grenade] fired from the riverbank by the VC. He was a Vietnamese Navy guy. We did
19 one other minor medevac, so we would occasionally do medevacs if we were light
20 enough, normally we were just way too heavy to do a medevac, you know to throw
21 somebody else on board. What else was I going to say? We had a few guys wounded in
22 the helicopters, a couple of the door gunners—I had three or four door gunners hit, again
23 nothing ever severe, but just shot in the hand type thing. We're very fortunate, some flesh
24 wound type stuff, nobody really hurt badly. One of our door gunners wrote some books,
25 you may be familiar with those two, that Dan Kelly who again he'd lived in the Dallas
26 area too. He just died last year of colon cancer, but he's written a couple of books about
27 the Seawolves, and he was one of our door gunners. I don't know if you're familiar with
28 those books.

29 JS: I don't believe so, no, sir.

30 CB: *The Seawolves of Vietnam*, Dan Kelly is his name. Like I say he's gone now,
31 but he in fact was one of the door gunners that got wounded one day with me too.

1 JS: I know you mentioned, I'm just looking here you mentioned in the
2 questionnaire, that you guys were also involved in operations a search for POWs
3 [Prisoners of War] in the U Minh?

4 CB: I'm sorry. You're fading out again.

5 JS: Oh, I'm sorry. Let me try again then. You mentioned in the questionnaire, I
6 was just looking at it right here, you said that you guys were involved in a search for
7 POWs, could you—

8 CB: Yeah, thanks for reminding me. Yeah, how could I forget that? That was,
9 yeah, we—in Christmas of '68, we went out to Duong Dong Island, which is off the west
10 coast of Vietnam, about sixty miles—I think it was something like that west of Rach Gia.
11 There was a big prison camp out there where they put North Vietnamese soldiers, it was
12 supposed to be the best nuoc mam in the country, not that I'm a nuoc mam fan. But that's
13 where it was made on Duong Dong Island. We were doing an operation out there with the
14 SEALs the week of Christmas, 1968, just looking for bad guys. Just the typical SEAL
15 operation, trying to gather intelligence and stealing the occasional bad guy for
16 intelligence when they could. Anyway, we didn't do too much on Phu Quoc Island, Phu
17 Quoc not Duong Dong, Duong Dong was a city, I'm sorry Phu Quoc Island. Anyway,
18 then we went to—after that, no prior to that before we went to Phu Quoc. In November of
19 '68 we went to a Chinese village called Ha Tien, it's at the very southern tip of the
20 Mekong Delta, it was a Chinese catholic village of all things and there was rumor to be a
21 prison camp in that area in the—I can't remember the name of, the U Minh Forest just
22 north of Ha Tien—Not Ha Tien, Nam Can. I'm getting all my towns—Nam Can, not Ha
23 Tien, Nam Can is at the very southern tip. Anyway, just north of Nam Can is the U Minh
24 Forest and there was a POW camp there, and in fact there was, and we worked there for
25 three weeks with the SEALs and the boats just going up and down, trying to find this
26 POW camp. Well anyway we left there and went to Phu Quoc around Christmas time,
27 and lo and behold about a couple weeks later a guy escaped out of there and he was the
28 famous Major Rowe, he'd been a Special Forces guy who had been captured, he'd been
29 an advisor in like 1963 and had been captured as a first lieutenant. He was a West Point
30 grad, and he'd been in POW camp for five years, anyway he escaped; he was running
31 across a rice paddy and an Army helicopter was flying by, and he waved his arms at them

1 and fortunately they went down and picked him up. Took him back to Soc Trang and
2 he—in those five years that he'd been in the POW camp, he had been promoted to Major,
3 so he was Major Rowe, and he wrote a book, *Five Years to Freedom*. And crazily enough
4 he was assassinated in the Philippines—I don't know—probably ten or fifteen years ago.
5 He was working as so many of those guys do as a CIA-type in the Philippines and was
6 killed by Communist rebels in the Philippines. But that's what we were looking for, for
7 those three weeks down at Nam Can was that POW camp. He escaped on his own, like I
8 say it was probably a month after we left, I don't recall the exact times, but they would be
9 in his book when he freed himself out of that POW camp, living in bamboo cages and
10 just the worst possible conditions. Five years that guy spent there. So yeah, that I guess,
11 now that you reminded me about it, that would've been the most fascinating operation
12 was looking for that camp for three weeks, and then at least he escaped so that was pretty
13 neat.

14 JS: I know you've mentioned the medevac from the PBR a few minutes ago,
15 would you mind talking a little bit more about that, and about what happened there?

16 CB: Yeah, sure the PBRs had been in contact, it was right along the main river
17 there, VC were firing at them from a bunker. They called us of course and we put a strike
18 in on the riverbank, hopefully to try and suppress the fire, and the PBRs stayed engaged
19 with them. Then this one guy was hit in the leg or foot, and they asked us if we could do
20 a medevac and we were, by that time, we'd put in enough strikes that we were light
21 enough, so Commander Harker said, he says, "Rather than me wait for a medevac, an
22 Army medevac, or you guys going on the bank," there about a hundred yards offshore.
23 We gave him a call, we said, "We're going to try it ourselves," so they had these big
24 antennas, so we said, we told him, "Fold up your antennas so they're not going to affect
25 our rotor blades," and we came down, he just stuck that one skid on the side on the PBR
26 and the door gunners grabbed this guy and threw him on board, and they were still firing
27 at us on the riverbank so we're kind of exposed, but our wingman was taking care of him.
28 Of course, the PBRs were firing at the riverbank too, so we were getting a couple shots at
29 us but nothing too bad. It was pretty good, we were still pretty heavy, and we started, as
30 we got him on board, we started losing RPM [Revolutions Per Minute] and so the door
31 gunners started kicking out the door boxes because they weighed, you can imagine two

1 thousand rounds in a big box can weigh a lot, so they kicked that stuff out. We
2 fortunately didn't lose too much RPM; we were able to keep flying speed and get out of
3 there. That was kind of dicey.

4 JS: How long did you remain copilot before moving over?

5 CB: About four or five months I think, yeah, I got in-country in May and pretty
6 much on detachment in June. I think I made aircraft commander October, November.
7 Yeah, so about four or five months right.

8 JS: You mentioned a little bit earlier, about occasional contact, occasionally
9 working with the Vietnamese Navy, could you talk a little bit about them and your
10 impressions of them?

11 CB: Yeah, well usually of course because of the language barrier, they would be
12 with an American advisor, a couple of Americans would be with a little Vietnamese unit.
13 The American advisors were really sharp guys, and they were some of the best of the best
14 sent to work with the Vietnamese. They were just, I always thought—of course, they
15 were outgunned. They had poor uniforms. They were poorly trained. They were just farm
16 kids who'd been—farm and poor kids that had been pulled into the military and a lot of
17 the Vietnamese officers, it was very much of a caste-system—if you're from a wealthy
18 family you became an officer no matter if you deserved to be or not. The pure
19 Vietnamese units, they were not very good. I can't imagine what it would be like fighting
20 a civil war in your own country, how motivated you are to kill your fellow countrymen.
21 So, it was always like they were, I always had the feeling that they weren't terribly
22 motivated, they just wanted to get through this damn thing and have it all be over with.
23 But certainly, a lot of them died, I mean I can't—they did their jobs. But poorly
24 equipped, and not terribly highly motivated the regular units. I never really thought—
25 we'd always hear rumors of great Vietnamese units, but I never saw one. I'm sure they
26 existed because they certainly existed on the other side.

27 JS: When you guys were not on duty, when you had a little off-time, how would
28 you spend your free time?

29 CB: I'm sorry?

30 JS: When you guys had a little off-time, how would you spend your free time?

1 CB: Yeah, usually, and like I say, we were off for twenty-four hours and we're
2 often—had been to air some base, and we just usually, you'd wind up going to the bars or
3 just reading—because we're always pretty much confined to the base. Yeah, just normal
4 pursuits like that, writing letters of course was—obviously no email or anything like that.
5 You couldn't make phone calls, that was pretty limited, so yeah, writing letters, reading,
6 just normal things like that.

7 JS: Did you guys ever participate in any sort of civic-action program type things?

8 CB: Oh, yeah, in fact we did. I went out on a couple of those too. We had a
9 wonderful flight surgeon, Clarence Spence his name was, he spent two years there, in fact
10 he was there when I got there and stayed for a year after, and he used to love to come out
11 on detachment and he used to love to fly along with us, and fire the machine guns but he
12 was very involved in the civil actions programs and when he'd get out there, he'd often
13 go to a village, PBRs would take him to a village, and he'd set up shop and just do
14 whatever he could as a Navy flight surgeon. I went on a couple of those with him, along
15 with the PBRs I'd be offered a, and the PBRs were going, and I'd go along with him, he
16 was a pretty neat guy. Those were good programs. He was a—this guy was really a fast
17 dang individual; he was a black guy, and you know the boxer, Joe Frasier?

18 JS: Yes, sir.

19 CB: Well Doc Spence looked like Joe Frasier and he loved to drink his beer so he
20 and I, both being beer drinkers, would sit around and drink beer and shoot the breeze. But
21 he had been a corpsman in Korea, he was a Navy corpsman with the Marines in Korea,
22 and then got out of the Navy and went to med school, and then came back in the Navy as
23 a flight surgeon. He was quite the character, unfortunately he's gone now too, but 'ol Doc
24 Spence was—any Seawolves that were there at the time that Doc Spence would
25 remember him pretty fondly.

26 JS: Was he the only flight surgeon for the entire Seawolf unit?

27 CB: Yes, and he'd have a couple of corpsman—oh, not a couple, I can't
28 remember how many corpsman he had, probably eight or ten actually. Yeah, he was the
29 only Sea—but when I first got this guy by the name of Doc Taylor, and then Doc Spence
30 came in just about a month after me, he probably came in-country in June of '68 and

1 relieved Doc Taylor, so yeah, he was it. There were other doctors around, of course there
2 was Army hospitals, but he was the only Navy Doc with Hal-3.

3 JS: From the time or two that you went on the civic action, when you went with
4 the Doc, from what you could tell about the Vietnamese were they appreciative of the
5 type of work that he and you guys were doing? Is that something that was needed?

6 CB: Yeah, they really seemed to be, I was trying to think what were some of the
7 common things that they were afflicted with, I'm trying to think back to the things that he
8 would do. They certainly seemed to appreciate the effort though, I was trying to think
9 what he was doing for the kids I think—I wish I could help you. It'll probably come to
10 me later. But I can remember a lot of smiling faces, and I, to this day, know the
11 Vietnamese word for “doctor” and it's “*bac si*,” so they'd be very happy to see the “*bac*
12 *si*,” oh, yeah.

13 JS: I know you mentioned a little earlier that you were on the Harnett County for
14 nine months. After that nine-month period, where did you go at that point?

15 CB: Yeah, actually another LST came in, the Harnett County—that crew got
16 relieved, but I can't remember what LST came in after that, and we were attached to that
17 for a short time. Maybe the Hunterdon County. All LSTs are named after counties,
18 anyway the Harnett and then something else came in. But yeah, after that, in February of
19 '69 the CO, he wanted me to come back to Vung Tau to be the awards officer. We had
20 this squadron newspaper called *The Wolfgram* and every detachment would send in—it
21 was a monthly publication, and detachments would send in news on the detachments and
22 get published in *The Wolfgram*. Anyway, he wanted me to come back to be—I guess he
23 liked my writing, so he wanted me to come back to be the awards officer so that's what I
24 did. I was kind of ready to go back to Vung Tau anyways so, so anyway I went back to
25 Vung Tau for my last few months in-country to be the awards officer, which was a lot of
26 fun really because there were no pressures in Vung Tau, you had the beaches, it was
27 really pretty pleasant. I left the Delta and did that for my last few months.

28 JS: Did you still do much flying as well?

29 CB: Yeah, actually because I was—there were very few of us experienced pilots
30 back at Vung tau, so every week I would take an admin-bird down to the Delta, you'd fly
31 all day you'd visit all seven detachments taking administrative packets out to the

1 detachments, and they would in turn send their stuff back, so like award
2 recommendations. So, I would actually physically fly out, and then physically fly all that
3 stuff back then do the paperwork when I got back. We'd process the awards, and then the
4 CO would have a meeting and he would make his recommendations, and all we did was
5 we forwarded that on to the Commander and Chief Pacific Fleet in Honolulu for the final
6 determination on the awards. To answer your question yeah, I did quite a bit of flying,
7 then some test flying to Vung Tau because like I say there weren't many guys that were
8 checked out Huey pilots, they were either new guys coming in-country who weren't
9 checked out or maintenance types that weren't checked out. So, I did quite a bit of flying,
10 still.

11 JS: Did you get a chance to go on R&R [Rest and Recuperation] while you
12 were—

13 CB: I did, yeah, I went actually twice. I went to Taipei after I been in-country for
14 about five months, and then went to Australia after I was in-country for eleven months. In
15 fact, in Vung Tau the Australian's had their headquarters, and at Pensacola we'd had a
16 bunch of Australian midshipmen in flight training with us because as the Australian
17 forces built up, they couldn't train all the pilots they needed to, so they trained a lot of the
18 Navy pilots with us in Pensacola, so I got a chance to know a bunch of those guys well,
19 and some of them were in Vung Tau when I got there. We used to get on there and hang
20 out with them, they were right on the base at Vung Tau. As it turned out one of the guys I
21 met who was not in flight school with us in Pensacola, I wound up marrying his cousin
22 and we've been married for forty-one years. So that was pretty interesting, the interaction
23 with those guys. They were a lot of fun to hang out with.

24 JS: I know you mentioned the beer drinking. Was it mostly Ba Muoi Ba?

25 CB: No, no, we didn't drink that much. Although I did have one last year when I
26 was there just for old times' sakes, and it was as bad as I recall it was. All of the
27 Vietnamese drink Tiger Beer from Singapore. No, we actually—we drank a lot of
28 Australian beer because of our close-ties with those guys we drank VB, Victorian Bitter.
29 The American beer was—we get a lot of Hamm's, I don't think Hamm's are even around
30 anymore, H-A-M-M-S. Then, of course, the Pabst Blue Ribbon and the Budweiser, but
31 usually Victorian Bitter whenever you could get it, or Hamm's.

1 JS: As you began to approach the end of your time in-country, did you continue
2 flying all the way up to the end or was there kind of a period where you stopped?

3 CB: Yeah, pretty much like I say, I wasn't flying missions against the bad guys
4 with the PBRs and SEALs but like I say I did those admin things from Vung Tau, so
5 from February to May, I left country in May, those three months—yeah, almost four
6 months actually, doing a lot of admin flying but no. We had the guns off these things so
7 there weren't any rocket pods—or there weren't any weapons on—any ammunition on
8 board, the weapons were there but no ammunition. Just admin stuff. And then during that
9 time, our squadron moved in May of '69 we moved, physically moved, the entire
10 squadron from Vung Tau to Binh Tuy, which is where the Navy had its biggest base in
11 the Delta. There was a U.S. Air Force-Vietnamese Air Base there, and then our Navy
12 base at Binh Tuy so we finally—because that's where all of our operations were, right in
13 the heart of the Mekong Delta so we finally moved down there away from the beaches of
14 Vung Tau. So, I was there for my last two weeks, and I left country from Binh Tuy in
15 May of '68.

16 JS: Did you develop any of the—I guess what's called the short timer syndrome?

17 CB: Yeah, yeah, I think everybody did, it was something everybody talked about.
18 Yeah, you started counting the days down, but you know I was in such a good situation
19 those last couple of months, I mean there I was living in a really nice place with very
20 little threat of anything bad ever happening, so we had it pretty good. I certainly had it
21 nothing like some of the guys that had been out in the field for twelve months. I can
22 imagine that would be really tough counting down the days for them.

23 JS: Anything else we should mention about Vietnam, before coming home?
24 Before we talk about that?

25 CB: No, oh, I know I had to—I actually had to spend an extra week there. In
26 addition to being the awards officers, you get all these other little jobs in fact in the Navy
27 it's known as the FLJO, The Shitty Little Jobs Officer so while being the awards officer
28 is my primary thing you get stuck with publications officer, and I was the classified pubs
29 officer too and my old boss, in fact Commander Harker he was back at Vung Tau when I
30 was too, and he had a hundred jobs too anyway he gave me this classified pubs job. We
31 missed a couple—itemizing the publications, we missed a couple and when it came time

1 for me to turn it over, when I was ready to go, we couldn't find a couple publications. Of
2 course, all the red flags go up, so I had to spend an extra week there until we could find
3 these publications which Commander Harker had forgotten to tell me he'd given to
4 somebody else in another unit and had forgot to log them out. So, we finally were able to
5 call him in the States and find out where they were. That was kind of funny but anyway I
6 just spent just an extra week there hanging out, so it was no big deal. When we left
7 country, you did so much hitchhiking around if you just go down to the airbase and see
8 who is flying where and that's how you get around. Like, I guess there's one thing I
9 didn't mention, like if I take an aircraft out to one of the detachments from Vung Tau
10 you'd get there and of course there was no way to get back, so they'd take you to a
11 local—the closest base and you'd just kind of hang out there and wait for the next
12 helicopter to come by. You'd kind of hitchhike your way across the Mekong Delta back
13 to Vung Tau, guys would say, "Oh, I'm going to Binh Long, you can ride along to there."
14 So, it was kind of interesting the way we got from A to B without transportation. The day
15 I left country, you know because I had orders, went to the airbase and get a C-130 ride to
16 Saigon then you'd just—again you'd just go to the desk and put your name on the list,
17 and when they filled up an aircraft off you went. As it turned out again it was a Braniff
18 contract flight, we flew to the Philippines and to Wake Island, and then Honolulu, and
19 then back to Travis again. So, I left from Travis and arrived back at Travis on a Braniff
20 aircraft. Yeah.

21 JS: This may be a bit of a silly question, but how did you feel about leaving?

22 CB: No, it's not silly, I ready to go—of course, you had orders, I knew where I
23 was going when I got back to the States, I went to a helicopter squadron in Lakehurst,
24 New Jersey actually. You're looking forward to that next phase. You were really happy
25 to have survived it and it was a fascinating experience, one you think about all the time.
26 But you know I was ready to go.

27 JS: What type of reception did you receive upon your return? Did you run into
28 any war protestors or anything like that?

29 CB: Yeah, no problems. You'd find family and friends very supportive, yeah, I
30 never ran into anything real negative. No nothing like that ever happened. You know
31 we'd have arguments with some people, of course, I was pretty supportive of the effort,

1 so I was obviously on the conservative side. Yeah, I actually kind of looked forward to a
2 confrontation with those guys because you know—anyway nothing ever happened.
3 Aircraft going, I gotta go back inside here.

4 JS: Okay, well I know you mentioned being supportive of the War prior to going,
5 did your having served over there and seeing it firsthand, did that impact your views at
6 all? Or did you remain the same?

7 CB: Yeah, I think a little bit, and as it all turned out I—it's, especially having
8 been back there last year like we were well in March of 2009, you kind of wonder what it
9 was all for. You see parts of Vietnam really prospering, doing well, and in other parts just
10 like they were back there forty years ago you know mired in poverty. Again, I'm no geo-
11 political expert but I guess I'll have to wait for the history to be still written, I don't know
12 if it was worth losing fifty-seven thousand guys for it or not. That's a pretty big number,
13 isn't it? You'd like to think that we did the right thing, and I honestly don't know. I still
14 struggle with that, and that's why I was fascinated to get back to Vietnam and talk to
15 those folks. You know it was interesting talking to the young people there, they refer to
16 everything as, "Oh, you were before 1975." Everything from their point-of-view is before
17 1975, so you were here before 1975. But they were just great to us when we were there
18 last year, it was a really neat thing there. So, I don't know, I don't know if we did the
19 right thing or not. I like to think we did the right thing, but they certainly like us a hell of
20 a lot better than they like the Russians, I know that. So that was gratifying, and they
21 treated us just great.

22 JS: Well, I'd like to ask you some more questions about that return trip, but before
23 we get to that let me ask you this: After you got back to the States, did you continue to
24 follow the War in the media?

25 CB: Did I continue to follow? Oh, yeah, oh, sure, yeah, because we were
26 obviously still very involved and heck, there I was. I was back home, and I was out of it
27 in May of 1969, and it had a lot of years to go so yeah, we followed it very closely.

28 JS: How did you feel about the way things were going? And also, the way things
29 eventually came to an end?

30 CB: I thought it was pretty much a lost cause you know talking to the Vietnamese
31 like we did so often when I was there—they were certainly, from my impression, they

1 were pretty supportive of Ho Chi Minh and of unification, so I think it was in their minds
2 pretty much a done deal. It was something that was going to happen, and you got that
3 feeling and we knew as soon as we left, the North Vietnamese were going to just drive on
4 straight to Saigon which they essentially did. The South Vietnamese, without our help,
5 couldn't have made it and they didn't make it. I always knew it was going to end that
6 way, not in the precise way it ended but that the North would wind up taking over the
7 South. It's still funny, you still see the divisions among the people, the South is—well we
8 didn't get to the North when we were there in March, we didn't get up towards Hanoi we
9 just stayed in 'ol South Vietnam. But you still see some, talking to some of the
10 Vietnamese, you see some divisions that—the Southerners are still a little different than
11 the North. Yeah, that was kind of our impression, whether true or not, they still seem to
12 be more entrepreneurial in the South but poorer because I guess more of the money's in
13 the North.

14 JS: How long did you stay there, in this return trip? Hello?

15 CB: Yeah, I'm losing you again there.

16 JS: How long did you stay during this trip?

17 CB: Last year?

18 JS: Yes, sir.

19 CB: Ten days.

20 JS: Ten days, okay. What was your general impression of the Vietnamese at that
21 point? Were they pretty friendly and willing to talk about things?

22 CB: When we were recently there?

23 JS: Yes, sir.

24 CB: Yeah, they were. The little bit we could because of the language barrier I
25 never really met somebody that was really fluent in English. The ones that spoke the best
26 English were the young ones, and all of their impression was before 1975 and they didn't
27 know much about it. Only what they'd been taught in school. But people-to-people they
28 were just really friendly, I mean we travelled all around, you can't rent a vehicle there, so
29 we had to get a guide and go with him, but we travelled with a family all around who—
30 get this. My wife organized with her nail technician here in Tampa—it was her uncle and
31 cousin that took us all around Vietnam. So, a Tampa, Florida, nail tech organized our tour

1 around the Mekong Delta and up to Nha Trang and into Da Lat. So, it was great. They
2 were a really nice family and treated us like family. Yeah, person-to-person we just got
3 on great. And I think that's generally pretty much the way it is. I'm sure there are some
4 hard cases on both sides that really carry some hard feelings, but generally it was real
5 nice.

6 JS: Well, did you get to see any of your old battlefields or areas where you were
7 based?

8 CB: This phone is just—I don't know if my phone is going back or—

9 JS: Okay, all right. Hello?

10 CB: Yeah, I can—

11 JS: Okay, all right. Sorry. Well, did you get to see any of your old battlefields or
12 areas that you were based while you were there?

13 CB: Yeah, we went to Vung Tau, and they tried to help me find my old
14 headquarters, where I say we lived like a half mile off the base, and it had just changed so
15 tremendously we couldn't find it. And then we went down to the heart of the Delta in
16 Binh Thuy, and we looked around there for a little bit and again couldn't find it because
17 most of my point of references is obviously from the air, and I had a bunch of photos that
18 I had taken and brought with me. But like I say the changes were just so great I couldn't
19 make out anything at the base. And then we didn't get rarely out in the boondocks where
20 all the action was anyway, or out to where some of the action would've been.

21 JS: Before wrapping up the interview, would you mind talking a little bit more I
22 guess about your career after Vietnam?

23 CB: Yeah, I wound up getting out of the Navy there in New Jersey, then we, like I
24 said earlier my wife's Australian, I wanted to go out there and live, so we lived out there
25 for five years. And I became a medical sales rep, I'd always been interested in things
26 medical, so I actually wound up working as a sales rep for Johnson and Johnson out there
27 selling hospital supplies. Then we came back, I thought I wanted to move back to the
28 States, we moved back to the States in the late '70s and we eventually wound up in North
29 Carolina, in the Charlotte area and I sold medical supplies for years. Then I—also I got
30 into the Army National Guard, so I flew Hueys in the North Carolina Army National
31 Guard for a number of years. Wound up getting twenty years in the military with my

1 combination of Navy time and my Army/National Guard time. Eventually got out of
2 medical sales and wound up flying hospital helicopters for the Carolinas Medical Center
3 in Charlotte, you know doing the medevac thing. Then an old Navy friend called us about
4 ten years ago and said he had a flight simulation job here in Tampa, and so we came
5 down here and I worked in flight simulation for my last six working years and retired off
6 of that a couple of years ago. So now I'm retired and play gold and don't fly helicopters
7 anymore. Run a lot, still drink beer a lot. So yeah, no complaints, but that's pretty much a
8 snapshot of what I was doing after Vietnam.

9 JS: Well, is there anything else we should cover? Anything else we haven't talked
10 about before wrapping up?

11 CB: No, I don't think so. You know you've reminded me of a couple things that I
12 maybe I should—if you wanted an addendum email maybe I should do that sometime
13 too.

14 JS: Okay, sure.

15 CB: I was going to ask you one thing. Is anybody in your family a Vietnam Vet?
16 Your father or anybody like that?

17 JS: Not my father, but I've got two uncles that served.

18 CB: Pardon me?

19 JS: Not my father, but I do have two uncles that served. Yes, sir. Well, let me go
20 ahead and bring the interview itself to a close, but I'd like to talk to you for just a few
21 more minutes if you don't mind.

22 CB: Yeah, sure as long as I can hear you.

23 JS: Okay, sure.