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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Albert Camp  
Conducted by Jason Stewart  
Date July 14<sup>th</sup>, 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.

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

1 Jason Stewart: This is Jason Stewart with the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech  
2 University conducting an Oral History interview with Mr. Albert Camp. Today is July  
3 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011, we are in Lubbock, Texas in the Special Collections Library on the campus of  
4 Texas Tech. Okay Albert why don't we begin if we could, if you could tell me a little bit  
5 of biographical information about yourself. First of all, when and where were you born?

6 Albert Camp: Well, I was born in Niagara Falls, although I considers myself a  
7 Southerner, Georgia particularly, but my father was career Army and that's where he was  
8 stationed, he was stationed at Fort Niagara when I was born. I've never been back, I left  
9 there at six months of age and came south to be honest with you. I was born in 1940 so  
10 basically up through '45 we were military, but I was so young I don't remember very  
11 much of that. I do know that, for example, Daddy was there to settle the seas, he was  
12 always in a training command, and we basically shuttled between Texas and Ft. Benning  
13 in Georgia. He retired right after the war ended, and they did try to settle in Columbus,  
14 Georgia because they had loved Benning, it was one of their favorite stations, but they  
15 found out fairly quickly that being in the Army and being retired were two entirely  
16 different things. The social life, the friends they had, that type of thing, it was really sort  
17 of the divide being retired and they decided very shortly to go back to their little  
18 hometown called Bartow, Georgia. Which I had always considered home and build a

1 house and retire there and that's what they did, so from the time I was basically eight  
2 years old Bartow was home, and no matter where I've lived if you ask where home was,  
3 it was Georgia, that's just me. I don't understand people today who don't have roots of  
4 that nature you know, my family's been there two-hundred years. Anyway, I grew up in  
5 rural Georgia basically. When it came time to go to college, I spent one year in a little  
6 north Georgia junior-college called Young Harris but, in a way, I really did not expect—I  
7 expected to spend two years there, I loved it, and again I think it was the smallness that  
8 appealed to me, you weren't a number. Unfortunately, Mother and Daddy talked to a  
9 cousin of my mother's who was head of the physics department at Emory University in  
10 Atlanta, and he said, "Well, if he's going to transfer as a sophomore, he really ought to go  
11 ahead and do it and get in now," that was in July, and I never expected to be accepted.  
12 Unfortunately, I was, so I ended up at Emory University. I never liked Emory; I've never  
13 liked Atlanta. But my sister and her husband, he got out of the Navy and flew for Eastern  
14 (Airlines), that they were based in Atlanta, so I basically had sort of a home-away-from-  
15 home there although I always lived on the campus. I was a history major mainly because  
16 it was very easy, I didn't have to study. I could read the text the night before, a couple of  
17 days before the final and pass, and that's what I did. I regret that now in many ways. I  
18 spent much too much time playing Bridge, but this was about the time that Vietnam, that  
19 was the early '60s, that Vietnam was becoming what it became. Although Daddy retired  
20 when I was about five, I was very proud of the fact that my father was career Army. He  
21 retired as a bird colonel (a full colonel, distinguished from a lieutenant colonel). Friends  
22 that used to come visit and that they used to go visit were, quite honestly, most of them  
23 were West Point graduates, Daddy was not. But I grew up with, I don't know what to call  
24 it, I mean it was just the military was something you did. Even if you didn't make a  
25 career of it, you owed something with this country. Now that sounds small seal whatever,  
26 but nevertheless that's what I grew up with and it was funny, in college as I say Vietnam  
27 was becoming and the draft was enforced at the time and was a big consideration. I had  
28 many friends who strictly stayed in school even after they graduated, or they would  
29 change their major to extend the time so that they didn't have to go in the military. They  
30 found out quite early that that was something I didn't believe in, and you didn't talk to  
31 me about that. To me, this was something you did. At about that time there was no

1 question, at the beginning of the War anyway, as to whether or not it was right for us to  
2 be there, if this was a War we should fight, why were we there, that type of thing, that  
3 never occurred to me, to a lot of people to be honest with you. Not to the extent that the  
4 protesting and all of that, that took place much later. But nevertheless, because you were  
5 in the generation that was beginning to be drafted, for us it was a concern and a topic that  
6 we talked about quite often. But there was never any question, to me, about the fact that I  
7 would go in the military, it was simply which branch did I want to go in and that type of  
8 thing, that was my attitude. I decide, I didn't like to sleep out in the wilderness like I did  
9 with the Boy Scouts, and I decided I'd much rather be in the Navy. So, I joined the Navy,  
10 I actually raised my hand and said, "I do," in July of 1962 but I didn't report to OCS  
11 (Officer Candidate School) or start active duty until January the 11<sup>th</sup> of 1963. I went to  
12 OCS at Newport, the basic officer training. I didn't like OCS, I won't say I liked it, but  
13 you know it was four months I had to go through in order to be an officer and I make no  
14 qualms about the fact that I'd much rather be an officer than an enlisted man, and so I  
15 went to OCS. When I graduated from OCS or when I was commissioned, it was May 22<sup>nd</sup>  
16 of 1963. My first duty station was air controller training at Glynco Naval Air Station  
17 which is right outside of Brunswick, Georgia. I was back home to be honest with you,  
18 home was ninety miles away, I went home every weekend. But I went through the  
19 training and that was fine, basically it was air controller training and what we were taught  
20 to do was to take a plane that was in the air, you had bogies coming in and you had to  
21 maneuver your plane to get behind the bogie coming in so that the pilot could shoot him  
22 down. Like all training, or particularly training in anything that dealt with flight or the air,  
23 weather has a lot to say about when you do what and how long it takes, and that type of  
24 thing. So, I guess we basically did get out of that one fairly on time, we may have been a  
25 bit late, but it was a total of five months' training. I went there in May, got out in late  
26 October, early November, and went to the USS *Pocono* which was an amphibious  
27 command ship based in Norfolk, Virginia. It was an old liberty hull, the round bottoms,  
28 and while we carried COMPHIBLANT, Commander, Amphibious Forces, Atlantic, who  
29 at that time was John S. McCain, the present senator's father, and the son of the World  
30 War II admiral. But because McCain, and this was common scuttlebutt in the Navy, he  
31 wanted to outrank his father. Literally, and he made no bullocks about it. He went from

1 chief of naval—what’s it called, CHINFO (Chief of Naval Information), Naval  
2 Information is basically publicity, that type of thing for the Navy, which was normally a  
3 dead-end place, that was what you did before you retired. But McCain was the rare  
4 exception, he managed to go back to the fleet as Commander Amphibious Forces,  
5 Atlantic. But since he basically was very ambitious, the telephone lines, and this is the  
6 way the captain of the ship put it when he retired actually and left the ship, he said it was  
7 the first he had ever realized that a telephone line could be stronger than the cable by  
8 which you were anchored. Because McCain wanted to go back and forth to Washington,  
9 and in Norfolk you’re right there, it’s no problem, and he did quite often. But we very  
10 seldom left port, we basically went out one weekend every two months so that the  
11 enlisted personnel could draw their sea pay. The rest of the time we stayed in port in  
12 Norfolk, that was not particularly pleasant. In many ways it was boring, and since I was a  
13 bachelor at that time, I don’t know how it is now, but I could live off base if I wanted to,  
14 but I had to fund the whole expense myself. Only when you were married did you draw a  
15 quarters allowance and those types of things, so I was basically stuck aboard ship.  
16 There’s not much to do aboard ship, and Norfolk even at that time was basically  
17 unfriendly to Navy personnel. The old cliché, I’m not sure I ever really saw a sign that  
18 said, “Navy personnel or seaman and dogs keep off the grass,” but really that was the  
19 attitude of the civilians in Norfolk. We really were not, I didn’t think and of course I’m  
20 not sure I really had—not living off the ship—had an unbiased view of that, but I was  
21 never really very happy in Norfolk, bored a lot or whatever. So, I stayed there through—I  
22 reported in November, and I stayed there about a year, and then I applied for, a friend of  
23 mine aboard ship and I decided we wanted to go to flight school. So, we applied, and he  
24 finally chickened out at the last minute, I didn’t. I was sent to Pensacola for pre-flight. As  
25 far as the shipboard service was concerned, we did do one operation right before I left as  
26 a matter of fact, where we did a joint exercise with the Spanish Navy. It was the largest  
27 amphibious operation since World War II, and it was McCain’s baby of course, and so I  
28 did get a taste of what sea life might be like. We did fueling at sea, refueling, that type of  
29 thing, we went sailed in close formation, blackout at night, and so I at least got a little  
30 taste of it. Went to Pensacola—

1 JS: If I could, sorry I don't mean to interrupt, but could you talk a little bit I guess  
2 about, what were your actual duties there? What did you do?

3 AC: Okay, I was OI (Operations) Division officer, which is basically Combat  
4 Information Center, CIC (Combat Information Center). The kids that ran the radars and I  
5 suppose could repair them or whatever, but they were the eyes of the ship at sea, 'cause  
6 it's always dark in there then lit only by the radar reflections and that type of thing. But  
7 the radar and the sonar were basically what I was dealing with. I also was the tactical  
8 publications officer for the ship, where I found out then, maybe this is true of all  
9 bureaucracy, first time I ran into it however, once something is classified, you're stuck  
10 with it forever, because nobody will take responsibility for declassifying it or getting rid  
11 of it. I will say that was sort of amusing because there was one manual that we could find  
12 that the Spanish Navy had access to for communications. Spain was not a member of  
13 NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and this was years after World War II and  
14 NATO had been there for a long time and most of your communications manuals and that  
15 type of thing, I suppose also with the advancement of technology or whatever, were out  
16 of date. But we finally got one and we found one other for the admiral staff. But anyway,  
17 that's neither here nor there I suppose. We did, as I say, go out every now and then, we  
18 did a couple of exercises, again four or five days, with Marines from—what's the base in  
19 North Carolina?

20 JS: Camp Lejeune.

21 AC: Yes, Lejeune. But we would go out and do exercises there, amphibious type,  
22 whatever, but again we were the command ship, so we didn't really carry very many. We  
23 were mostly staff, the Marines we carried were not the ones that landed on the beaches  
24 and that type of thing. That's about it as far as Norfolk was concerned. Even though  
25 Vietnam was becoming, as I say, more and more prominent, I don't even remember when  
26 the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution was, but nevertheless Vietnam was the war. Although we,  
27 being based on the Atlantic coast and being on a command ship and particularly with  
28 John S. McCain, that was a peripheral thing to us at that time. But that's about it, I of  
29 course stood watches on the quarterdeck, I did manage to qualify for officer of the, OD,  
30 officer of the day, anyway whatever it's called now. That let you stand watches and run  
31 the ship basically while you were underway, but there again that was just some lucky

1 fluke. One of the guys that I used to stand, Vern Nobles, watch under, taught me as you  
2 were underway that the officer never stands and looks at the compass all the time, you  
3 have to keep watch your distance from the different ships and that type of thing. The  
4 easiest way to keep your, roughly, ship headed in the right direction is to find you a star  
5 on the right hand of you, something that you could look away from and still find when  
6 you went back and I caught a helmsman who, I won't say he went to sleep, but all at once  
7 that star was whirling off to the left you know, and we were, this was the exercise going  
8 to Europe with the Spanish Navy, and we were closed quarters and you did not vary  
9 because you would run into the ship next door, and I screamed at him. I was the first one  
10 that actually caught it, but it was only because I happened to be looking at that little star  
11 at the moment, I never understood, I'm not mechanical, I never understood the  
12 engineering aspect, I was always terrified of having the conn because you don't stop a  
13 ship the way you stop a car, you don't have brakes that work quite that way. I was never  
14 comfortable underway on the quarterdeck or any of those things. As I say it was strictly a  
15 fluke that I qualified as officer-of-the-deck underway. I was also a Reserve by the way, I  
16 was not a Regular Navy. Anyway, that was about it for Norfolk. The training command  
17 for pilots and naval flight officers, which is what I ended up as, are—I spent more time  
18 waiting than I did actually either going to school or getting hands-on training flying.  
19 That, again, was because of the weather and was just the way things were, and I presume  
20 it's still that way today. I did go through pre-flight, and then I started flight training, pilot  
21 training, at NAS (Naval Air Station) Saufley which is right outside of Norfolk, Virginia  
22 Beach I think it is. I washed out of flight school, basically I requested it, but nevertheless.  
23 I don't know how much this had to do with it, or what the underlying cause was, but I  
24 was afraid to fly. I was not afraid to fly if somebody else was flying, but for me to  
25 actually fly the airplane terrified me. Even though I got all the way through and at the end  
26 of your pre-flight, or your beginning flight, you have to solo in essence. What you do is  
27 you go out to one of the little outlying airfields, and your instructor lets you land, he hops  
28 out, and you have to make three or four touch-and-go's. I did that, but to be honest, I was  
29 so tense that I didn't know whether I would be able to use my legs, I was just paralyzed  
30 when he got out. Sort of a combination of me and my instructor decided flying was not  
31 for me, but as I say I didn't mind flying, I loved flying, and he used to take me up at night

1 when he would go up sometimes just to play around and do acrobatics, and that type of  
2 thing, he'd take me with him, and I loved it. But not to be the pilot, so they made me  
3 switch to flight officer school, Navy navigator basically, or at least that's what I ended up  
4 with was aerial navigation. That was a very tiny part of being a flight officer, most of  
5 them ended up in the backseat of a jet, you know that type of thing. But I went from there  
6 to Corpus Christi and that was the aerial navigation. I did spend sixteen-weeks I think it  
7 was back at Pensacola going through basic naval flight officer school. I did quite well as  
8 a matter of fact. But you were sent from there to whatever basic duty would be your first  
9 assignment. So, I knew when I left Pensacola that I was going to Corpus Christi for  
10 celestial navigation, and from there I would go to a transport squadron. Not 'combat' in  
11 the main sense of the word, and again it took forever at Corpus, and you spent more time  
12 in the officer's club or whatever, reading, playing around. If it was summertime go to the  
13 beach than you did actual flying because the weather determined that, and inevitably bad  
14 weather had caused classes to backup, and so you virtually had a long waiting period  
15 before you actually begin flying, and then when you did fly that could be extended, the  
16 period of time flying, if you had bad weather and weren't able to fly at the time. So, I  
17 went from there to Naval Air Transport Squadron VR3 in New Jersey, we were based at  
18 McGuire Air Force Base. This was sort of a funny situation, there were only two Navy air  
19 transport squadrons, and the reason was the Air Force had looked around and realized  
20 that SAC (Strategic Air Command), their main reason for existence, the thing that made  
21 them so important and powerful as far as the military was concerned, you had submarines  
22 that could do the same thing, they could stay out on location much, much longer than a  
23 plane flying around in the air could. So, SAC was becoming less important and that  
24 scared the Air Force, so the upshot of it was the Air Force was going to take over all  
25 transport flying for the military, period. So, whereas we had had a lot of Naval air  
26 transport squadrons, at the time I was there, there were only two of us left, one on the  
27 East Coast, one on the West Coast. The one on the West Coast was based at Moffett  
28 Field, we were at McGuire Air Force Base and basically, we were assigned to the Air  
29 Force. The only connection we had with the Navy was the fact that they paid our basic  
30 salary, and we wore Navy uniforms and flight suits versus the Air Force, that was the  
31 only way you could tell us apart, the planes we flew were Air Force. There again,

1 because of the situation, we really had two basic types of flying there. There was what  
2 they called the shadow stage which you would go to Europe and spend thirty days based  
3 in France, and then fly cargo all over Europe. Or if you weren't on the shadow stage, you  
4 were going from McGuire—basically the circuit was you left McGuire, you went  
5 someplace in States, picked up the cargo you were gonna take, and went to Travis Air  
6 Force Base. You crew rested, you got off, you were only able to fly for basically eight  
7 hours of flight time, but your pre-flight and all of that had to be considered too, so it was  
8 more than eight hours. But after that, you did what you called 'burned out', and you  
9 would have to go back into crew rest, but theoretically the way it should've worked if  
10 everything was a perfect world, you got off and spent the crew rest time at Travis, the  
11 airplane went on to Hawaii. You caught one coming in after you had crew rested, the  
12 crew got off, you got on, and you went to Hawaii but there again you crew rested there,  
13 then you picked up the plane that was coming in behind you. The normal circuit was  
14 McGuire, to Travis, to Hawaii, to Wake Island. Although it was not a destination, we  
15 always stopped in Guam one way or the other. You could buy your gallon of duty free  
16 booze, I'm serious. But you didn't crew rest or anything there, you went from there on to  
17 the Philippines, at Cebu. It was actually Ebuena Air Base but that was an island, the main  
18 island that you were connected with, although you had to take, got in what they call a  
19 bonca over to Cebu, and sometimes, depending upon whether or not the crew rest trailers  
20 on Mactan were available or not, you might end up in Cebu City which we did several  
21 times. But from there you caught a plane that was coming in, you went into Vietnam,  
22 dropped your cargo, picked up anything if there was anything to go, from there up to  
23 Japan, Tachikawa. From Tachikawa you crew rested there, you caught a plane coming in  
24 and you went back to Alaska, and from Alaska you overflew Canada and ended up at  
25 McGuire Air Force Base. The whole thing took usually about nine to ten days, and we  
26 flew under—or we didn't fly under Air Force regulations. The normal Navy attitude  
27 would've been, you get home, you spend the night, get up, run out and brush your tail  
28 and go to work the next morning. Well, that's not the way the Air Force operated, the  
29 joke used to be that the Air Force operated—they would decide to build an Air Base. The  
30 Navy would go in and build the runways and all the hangars, and then start on the  
31 officer's club and run out of money, and Congress or Washington would say, "Oh, well



1   sorry about that, but you've got the runways, you've got the facilities, you can fly so it's  
2   done." The Air Force goes in, and they build the officer's club, and they build the  
3   officer's quarters and the enlisted quarters, and then they start on the runways and the  
4   hangars and that type of thing, and they get halfway through it, and they run out of  
5   money. Congress says, "Oh, well you can't operate because you don't have runways, so  
6   here's some more money." But basically, that was sort of the attitude that we, at least in  
7   the Navy, considered ourselves in relation to the Air Force. But the Air Force regulations  
8   at that time were, for a crew that went out, for every three days you were gone you had a  
9   day off when you got back. That did not count, however, or they did count in there—no,  
10   the Air Force did not count the weekends, so if you were gone ten days, you may only not  
11   have covered a weekend. Our captain of our squadron decided that we would go the Navy  
12   one better, so for every three days we were gone we got a day and we got to count the  
13   weekends, so we got those two extra days to count and sometimes if you left on a Friday  
14   you were gone one weekend and you didn't get back before the next weekend was over,  
15   so we would get those four days counted and we got extra time. But it was not at all  
16   unusual to come back and have five days off, depending on how long—because if you  
17   were crew resting and the plane coming in, for some reason, was late you could burn out  
18   and have to go back into crew rest, so the crew right behind you would take it, and you  
19   would take their place and catch one, but it could take longer than your normal ten,  
20   eleven days to make the circuit to Vietnam and back. I have, many is the time, I've gotten  
21   back on a Friday, had the weekend, all the next week, and the next weekend where I  
22   didn't have to do anything. I didn't have to get dressed, go to the squadron, sit around, or  
23   do anything like that. But that was, again, simply our captain's way of making us a little  
24   different than the Air Force. It was funny, or I won't say it was funny, I'm sure that the  
25   things we carried were important, but I used to say that we carried everything from dirt to  
26   dogs because quite literally we did fly a plane of dirt. But it was diatomaceous earth used  
27   in filtering systems, so you know it really wasn't dirt, and we did carry some military  
28   dogs one time, the whole plane was filled with the dogs and their handlers. Knowing my  
29   hearing now and how keen the dogs were, I've often wondered if they were subject to the  
30   deafness of the wave, 'cause the joke in the squadron used to be, and I don't consider it a  
31   joke anymore believe me, when it came time to retire instead of a gold watch they handed

1 you a hearing aid, saluted, and off you went. That was not really quite so farfetched.  
2 Many is the officers I've known that you get in the officer's club or the crew rest  
3 situations where there would be a bar or something like that, and because of the noise  
4 they had very big problems communicating with you. It was not at all unusual to see  
5 somebody sitting there with his hand cupped behind his ear so that he could understand  
6 what you were saying. I've often wondered, since there's no way to prove it, I still  
7 believe that's what caused my hearing was, but it's not the type of thing that happens  
8 immediately. It's something that takes place over time. I know when kids first started  
9 carrying boomboxes on their shoulder and hell they had it up so high that the whole  
10 world could hear, a lot of your articles about that would say, "They're going to regret that  
11 years from now." But there's no way to prove it, so I had no military disability or  
12 anything like that, but I'm still convinced that's what is the root cause of my hearing loss,  
13 it started in my early fifties. But anyway, I did get two trips to Europe but only—well one  
14 of them was only overnight, spent the night in Frankfurt. But I did go one time, and we  
15 were not supposed to know what we were carrying because what we were carrying was  
16 not supposed to be, but we carried, and we flew with an augmented crew. They can fly  
17 around the clock or at least eighteen hours. We had two navigators, we had four pilots,  
18 and two engineers, that type of thing. You weren't caught with that eight hour flight time  
19 and nothing else, but we took radar equipment to Iran, Mashhad was the place that we  
20 delivered it. It was just south of the Soviet border, but we weren't supposed to be doing  
21 that, so we were never told what we were doing, carrying, but that's what we did.  
22 However, we burned out of starboard on an engine as we—we landed in Tehran, but we  
23 had to get a final flight plan up to Mashhad and back. The pilot and the co-pilot went in  
24 to, and one of the other navigators, I didn't go, went in to file the flight plan for Mashhad  
25 and one of the—oh co-pilot was left, decided he would save everybody a little time and  
26 have the plane right ready to go when they got back, so we were refueled and all that and  
27 he burned, I won't say it's his fault, but nevertheless he was the one who burned the  
28 starboard round but we did manage to get it started. We went on up in Mashhad, dropped  
29 it off, never shut the plane down, turned right around and came back to Tehran. There we  
30 did shut it down, and they couldn't start it again. They had, again sometimes you think  
31 well you know your hundred dollar toilet seat and that type of thing, these things actually

1 happened. We couldn't get that engine started—by the way I never did say, we flew C-  
2 130s.

3 JS: C-130s, okay, all right.

4 AC: Yeah, but we did. Every morning we would get up, now the first night  
5 (inaudible) sun, don't believe me. We were on the fifth floor I think it was, and there was  
6 no water above the third. No air-conditioning. But that was only the first night. We  
7 were—in order to get into the engine or fix the starter or whatever, it took a special set of  
8 winches. There was not one in Europe at the time, so they had to fly one from the US  
9 over. Well, somebody in Italy decided that was not priority cargo, so they offloaded it.  
10 That just extended the time. Finally, they sent also, when it finally came, they sent a  
11 technician or a mechanic from Greece and they did actually get the starter changed, but  
12 we spent a week. Every morning we'd checkout of the Royal Tehran Hilton, go down and  
13 sit under the shadow of the wing to be out of the sun, then we would go back at four  
14 o'clock, check back into the Hilton and spend the night. We did that for one full week,  
15 but we did get the starter changed and got it started, but as we were coming back the  
16 engine caught fire landing in Greece to let the mechanic off. The plane commander, he  
17 was actually the executive officer of our squadron, walked in and told them he wanted the  
18 engine changed, he did not want it fixed, he wanted it changed and when they had it  
19 changed, they could call us, and we would come pick up the airplane. So, we spent  
20 another week in Greece, in Athens which was actually pretty nice, but it was funny, it  
21 went over the end of a month and I guess at that time you didn't necessarily have your  
22 automatic banking, you picked up your paycheck. Those of who were bachelors on the  
23 crew had no paycheck to pick up, and credit cards were not as frequent or common as  
24 they are today, we had one guy, one lieutenant JG (Junior Grade) who had an American  
25 Express card and hey there was the bazaar in Tehran, you got to go shop or that kind of  
26 thing. We couldn't do anything as far as spending money, most of us, because our  
27 paycheck was sitting in the squadron waiting for us to pick it up, it wasn't in the bank, we  
28 couldn't write a check, we were out of money. But he took everything that anybody  
29 wanted on his American Express card, we all paid him when we got back. That type of  
30 experience, again I hate to say it, it wasn't uncommon. I guess as far as the flying goes,  
31 that was about it. The Air Force did convince the military, the government, that we

1 shouldn't have any Navy squadrons at all. So, they closed the squadron at Moffett, and  
2 they closed the one we were flying with, and the Air Force took over all military  
3 transport, all of the Army still had there's, we didn't. I was sent from there to the Naval  
4 Academy. I've forgotten the captain's name who had become commandant of the  
5 Annapolis, but he decided that Annapolis is different from your other service academies.  
6 In both West Point and Colorado Springs, they take military, send them out to get their  
7 Ph.D.'s, but they're kept in uniform and then send them back and their duty station  
8 basically I think for life becomes as an instructor at whichever academy they were there.  
9 The Naval Academy is different. I don't know how and what the ratio is now, but at the  
10 time I was there it was about fifty-percent civilian versus military. But that again is sort  
11 of skewed because most of your military were not sent into your academic departments,  
12 at least as far as things like History or that type of thing. If they were instructors, they  
13 were sent to or they were assigned to departments like weapons or whatever. But it was a  
14 technical side of it, and most of the academic personnel were actually civilians, and a lot  
15 of this was a result of, and don't get me wrong, the people I worked with anyway and I  
16 was in the English comma History comma and Government department, E, H, and G. The  
17 reason I said the commas was with some point, and this was while I was there, a group of  
18 Congressman came over from Washington to tour the Academy and one of them wanted  
19 to know, "What was all this emphasis on English history for? Wasn't American history  
20 good enough?" But anyway, the captain who was commandant of the Naval Academy  
21 decided he was going to bring the Academy up to academic standards. So, the only  
22 military people who were sent there to teach, other than being a company officer or  
23 something like that and a lot of those were Marines, would be people who were  
24 academically prepared. One thing I did, I never wrote the thesis, so I didn't get a Master's  
25 in History, but I did do the coursework for it, and did it twice as a matter of fact, I did it  
26 again after I got out. But anyway, we were sent to, I ended up in the English, History and  
27 Government department, I was lucky. I could just as easily have ended up, knowing the  
28 way the military, you're a warm body and you are sent and you will do whatever you are  
29 sent to do, doesn't matter whether you are qualified you'll get it on the job or whatever. I  
30 could've been sent to weapons or math or whatever, engineering which would've been  
31 terrible because I'm not a mechanical person. But anyway, I spent two years then

1 teaching midshipman. One semester I would teach English, beginning, just basic courses,  
2 mainly English literature as starting and it was mostly English, we did get the last half of  
3 it into American, but you started with the Romantic poets. Or the rest of the time I spent  
4 with History, and that basically what the way we taught it, the way the course was set up  
5 was basically 1603 the death of Elizabeth, World History just a survey course up to the  
6 present, you never got to the present, there was never enough time. I did also while I was  
7 there end up working with the debate team, which if you've never been exposed to  
8 collegiate debate, it was a shock to see people stand up and talk for ten to fifteen minutes,  
9 whatever the time of your speeches, and then your rebuttals. Never pausing, they spoke in  
10 paragraphs, they didn't speak in sentences, it was amazing what those kids could do. We  
11 had never had a decent debate team at the Naval Academy, but the guy that was doing it  
12 while I was there had ended up, I moved in with him and we shared a house in the last  
13 year I was there. They sold the apartment complex I was into the city of Annapolis for  
14 public housing, and Annapolis could not afford or absorb four-hundred families dumped  
15 out on the local economy. The guy that had been rooming with Phil, sharing the house  
16 with him, was Marine who was being reassigned to Vietnam. So, Phil said, "Ed is  
17 leaving, you need a place, would you like to move in?" And I did. But I had known Phil  
18 because I was working with him in debate prior to that. Playing around on the Internet  
19 about a year ago as a matter of fact, I googled Phil Warken to see where he was or if he  
20 was still around, he was about five years older than I was, and he had died. Although at  
21 the time I left he was threatening to quit debate. You had to, when you were assigned  
22 academically, you were expected to have some extracurricular activity that you  
23 participated in. It could be a soccer coach or whatever. I ended up with the debate team.  
24 Phil, the same thing was true of the civilians, they were soccer coaches part time too. Phil  
25 was threatening to quit debate, it could be very time consuming, and we ended up with  
26 what became my team. The year after I left there, actually two years after I left there,  
27 ended up as the runner-up in the national collegiate debate. This was not parliamentary  
28 debate, this was God what's the other term for it—anyway he evidently made a Navy  
29 powerhouse in debate, and you got to know certain coaches, the schools were known for  
30 their debate coach. There were certain schools that were known as debate powers,  
31 Northwestern being the main one. Northwestern, Dartmouth, Georgetown, those were

1 some of the finest coaches and they produced the finest teams, but I convinced Phil that if  
2 he wanted to do that, he couldn't do what he had normally been doing at what was the  
3 normal course through the academy as far as debate is concerned. He had to take a very  
4 junior team and give them, excuse me, give them the experience at the national level,  
5 really, the very top flight tournaments if he wanted a really topnotch team. We had two  
6 young men, one of them ended up in the Marines and he was the football type, and it hurt  
7 to hear him when you first started debating, he had never debated before, one of them  
8 was very good in high school, debater. But he taught himself to debate, he bought himself  
9 a tape recorder and he would find an empty room and do his, and by the time they got to  
10 be seniors, first class, they were just fine as any team in this country. They had been my  
11 team, that last year I was there, and Phil took them even while I was there, he gave us  
12 good tournaments, we didn't go to the rinky-dink ones. But he took them then as his  
13 team, and the Naval Academy tournament was a good tournament, it was a well-  
14 respected tournament. But in reading his obituary, he stayed with debate, and he  
15 evidently became a national power, and they renamed the Navy debate tournament as the  
16 Philip Warken Memorial Debate Tournament. But that was an experience. It was also,  
17 and I used to do this because I was still in the mode of, "Hey, this is the military," and I  
18 would frankly tell them, "Hey, if you don't like the Navy or when you go out on your  
19 summer cruises and you come back and you're convinced, tell me, I will help you get  
20 out. Or if for that matter if your wife doesn't like it, when you get out and you get  
21 married and you want to make a career of it," because let's face it they were academy  
22 graduates, they were ring knockers, they had a pad that they wanted. "Then don't mess  
23 around, get out. If your wife's unhappy, you're not going to be happy." But I used to take  
24 a day every now and then, because really the Naval Academy was not, except for the fact  
25 that you wore the uniforms and that type of thing and your coursework might be  
26 different, it still wasn't the fleet. It wasn't the way a normal Naval officer would live, or  
27 what you would do aboard ship, or anything like that. Every now and then, we were  
28 encouraged to do this too those of us who were military, take half your period, take the  
29 period, just talk to them, let them ask anything they want about what Navy life for an  
30 officer or junior officer anyway is really like. I would do that. Again, the reason I got out  
31 of the Navy, well there's several reasons, being gay didn't help. By the time I got to the

1 academy I was a full-blown alcoholic, and if I had stayed in, if one hadn't got me the  
2 other would. There was no, "don't ask, don't tell," at that time, and there was no—and  
3 they did begin to do this fairly soon after I got out, because a lot of the problems that  
4 people came back from Vietnam with were related to drugs or alcohol and you could get  
5 treatment, but at the time I was in, forget it, I would've been kicked out, I was a drunk.  
6 But that's neither here nor there. Obviously if you've seen me around here, I'm not an  
7 alc— well, I'm not a practicing alcoholic, I am an alcoholic, I will always be an  
8 alcoholic, and by God if you want any help don't waste your time, go straight to an AA  
9 (Alcoholics Anonymous) meeting, and it was years before anybody told me that. But  
10 anyway, I've been sobered for twenty-five years and the five years before that I was just  
11 periodic, but the fifteen before that I was drunk the whole time. There were a couple  
12 times I did go into treatment to try to dry out, and I might last maybe a week or a month.  
13 I won't blame that on the Navy, although I will say that the availability of alcohol made it  
14 quite easy if you were so inclined to do nothing but drink to the extent that you did  
15 become physically addicted by alcohol. But anyway, again that's neither here nor there,  
16 but the reason I got out was, and God if anybody knew the benefits of military retirement  
17 hell my father was a retired colonel, sure I did. Every time I went home if they were  
18 headed, because you know you had a yearly physical to go take and all that, and he did, a  
19 couple of times, towards the end of his life he developed malignant tumors in his bladder  
20 and once a year he would go over to Ft. Gordon, they'd cut him open, scrape them out,  
21 and send him home. But he actually made money, he had an insurance policy that paid  
22 him *per diem* basically and so I knew the advantages of military retirement, but as I say  
23 being both an alcoholic and gay, one of those would've gotten me. The real incident that  
24 caused it was I went to Washington and went to the Pentagon and talked to the Navy and  
25 said I wanted my third year of Annapolis. There were four or five officers from my  
26 squadron that had gone to the Academy at the same time I did, and they were Academy  
27 graduates, and they got a third year. I wanted a third year, I was not an Academy  
28 graduate, and I was told, "You will go to the fleet." I said, "Like Hell I will, look at my  
29 release date, and write my orders." So, I got out basically for, the alcohol and being gay  
30 were the two main reasons and currently, but the actual cause of it was that interview and  
31 as I said, "Well hell, I'll get out." And I'm very glad I did, because I really would've

1 screwed up at some point, it wouldn't've been very long, and instead of—well I would've  
2 been more of disgrace and the black sheep to my family than I actually was. But the  
3 things that I have thought about later, I still by the way believe that everybody owes this  
4 country a debt, as the cliché goes, freedom is not free, it has to be bought and paid for,  
5 and we're the people who do it. I have no tolerance for anybody who doesn't feel that  
6 way, and I understand because I have a niece for example who has children, my uncle in  
7 my little hometown, the one who's still alive that's still left, his children obviously don't  
8 feel that way. But that's the way I felt. I've thought particularly lately with Iraq and  
9 Afghanistan, the difference between the military then and the military now and the War  
10 then and the wars we have now, and what the attitude is and why the attitude is there or  
11 whatever. Literally say what you will, I'm firmly convinced that the government and the  
12 military completely censor everything now. But for Vietnam, much more so than any  
13 other war, and because of television, you have the war in your living room every evening  
14 and twice on Sundays, and it wasn't touched up, it wasn't censored, you saw the  
15 wounded being put on stretchers and landing when the caskets would come home.  
16 Obviously the—and of course there were some other things that go to make that up, but  
17 the response or the attitude of the general public about war or whatever war you are in at  
18 the moment, I'm not sure we'll ever have another World War II where it was a simple  
19 world, and you truly were fighting for the right as opposed to the wrong, that type of  
20 thing. Like it or not, and this was particularly—to Hell, we used to say it, the attitude at  
21 least of the people that I was served with and in the places I served, the attitude was this  
22 is only war we got, don't knock it. But that particularly, the Naval Academy, because  
23 they were there for career you know, and they needed a war for their record so that they  
24 could be promoted and whatever. I never, and I guess this again was because of my  
25 father, I had a great deal of trouble readjusting to civilian life. Now that was exacerbated  
26 by being gay and being an alcoholic, but I never understood, yes, see my ponytail? I  
27 never understood at that time long hair. I didn't think very much of people who went to  
28 Canada. I didn't understand the student uprisings or demonstrations or that type of thing.  
29 I really had a great deal of problems dealing with the world and whatever, and basically  
30 the alcohol really exacerbated it. Before I sobered up, I ended up even working for the  
31 Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and being busted for drugs, because I sold



1   them. Nursing homes sent them to us to be destroyed, and it was quite easy for me to  
2   smuggle them out. Being an alcoholic, I was into trying anything and everything, you  
3   know. Again, seeing a psychiatrist, which I had done, was a shameful mark and was  
4   reason for you to be suspect and not to be promoted or retained in civil service, that type  
5   of thing. But it was all mixed up, I'm not blaming anything or anybody, it was just the  
6   way it was, I didn't understand my contemporaries primarily, the people I was faced with  
7   or thrown with when I got out of the military. I've grown older and wiser. There's a  
8   saying in AA, "You start your growth and development the day you take your first  
9   drink." I think that was quite truly my case. You live for the bottle, so you don't learn to  
10   live. I didn't know what anybody did at night if you didn't get drunk, what did you do?  
11   The idea of watching TV, or reading a book, or going bowling, or dancing or whatever,  
12   that was just the world, I went straight out of college into the military, and everything  
13   combined, I just didn't know how the real world lived and it wasn't until I sobered up  
14   that I began to live and think like I think a normal human being does. But I no longer  
15   think that "It's the only war we've got it, don't knock it." Sorry, I don't think we  
16   should've been in Vietnam ever. If I have any feelings toward somebody who went to  
17   Canada, it's more a feeling of admiration for their courage and whatever it took to do  
18   that. I, in many ways, don't like the world today, don't get me wrong, but I am a liberal in  
19   everything in my politics. Everything else I'm very conservative, I don't dress  
20   outlandishly, it took me forever to get nerve enough to grow a ponytail but damn it out  
21   here the wind blows, and my hair never has had any body, and I look like a banshee  
22   without it. But I'm glad and I'm proud of the fact that I did serve. I was very moved  
23   when the Wall, the Touring Wall came to Tech. I've never visited the Wall in  
24   Washington, I haven't been to Washington to be honest with you, but I intend to do that  
25   before I die. We were, and this again is part of the reason I think that I feel, I'm a little  
26   bitter at the way the military and the people were treated when we came back, or when  
27   you got out or whatever. I'm sorry, it's a very admirable thing to do, unfortunately I also  
28   feel we shouldn't be in Iraq, I never thought we should've, I never thought we should be  
29   in Afghanistan, sorry about that. Hey, 9/11, well hey I'm sorry but one of these days I  
30   fully expect some terrorist to get an atom bomb and to use the damn thing. But that's life,  
31   life happens and like it or not in spite of all you can do. I don't believe in whatever was a

1 there a payment and didn't know about the Bush Doctrine. We wouldn't stand for  
2 anybody coming into our country. Why should we have the right to go into theirs? So  
3 anyway, I have in my old age become very opinionated about certain things, I've never  
4 even discussed them, I don't have an occasion to. But I do feel very strongly about  
5 certain things, and as I say one of the things that I have always felt and still do, is that  
6 freedom ain't free, you pay for it, you do your part, and if it's not military by God then  
7 find some way to serve this country. I would be all in favor of a required obligation for  
8 people in the civilian world, the sequel to the military, you know something. I'm very  
9 proud of the fact that I did serve and didn't screw up in the military. I have a great  
10 admiration for people who do go into the military and who are part of the military. I don't  
11 know, I just have very strong feelings about it. I do think, by the way, that the Vietnam  
12 Archive ought to be one of Texas Tech's crowning glories. I've always felt that the  
13 attitude behind it, and this again was not the reason or is—you need someplace where  
14 you can go and study it this passionately. Like it or not, Vietnam I think came the closest  
15 to being a civil war, which was my major as an undergraduate, I was (inaudible) the area  
16 in graduate school. The divisions that it caused in this country and that type of thing. I  
17 never will be anything but a little bit bitter at the way we were treated and that type of  
18 thing. But I can live with it. I don't think I have anything else to say.

19 JS: Well, I have a few questions if you don't, not too much but just a few more.  
20 When you were talking earlier about making the circuit to Vietnam, all the way to  
21 Vietnam and then coming back, could you talk just a little bit about that? How much time  
22 would you guys spend time in Vietnam when you would make one of those trips?

23 AC: We didn't, that was the point, that's why I told you in the questionnaire I  
24 filled out, we were never allowed to stay in Vietnam. You left the Philippines, you took  
25 whatever you were taking, you went into Vietnam, you dropped the cargo, you picked up  
26 something and you went to Tachikawa in Japan. The main places we landed, or the only  
27 three that I landed, there was once we landed on something we shouldn't have.  
28 Considering the weight of the airplane, the temperature, the humidity and that type of  
29 thing, we couldn't take off until after dark. So, we did stay there that time about six  
30 hours, but normally we either went to Tan Son Nhut, Da Nang, or Cam Ranh Bay. You  
31 flew in, you dropped your cargo, you picked up whatever there was if there was anything,

1 a lot of times there wasn't, and you took off and you headed straight for Japan. I won't  
2 say that I was never shot at, I don't know. I know there were a couple of night flights that  
3 we took in that you could see the flash of gunfire, but I can't say that it was aimed at us  
4 and so far as I know an airplane that I was on was never hit or anything like that.

5 JS: Okay, all right. Well generally just dropping off maybe on the ground a few  
6 hours or so?

7 AC: Yeah.

8 JS: Okay.

9 AC: Yea.

10 JS: All right.

11 AC: Just as long as it took to drop it, we didn't refuel or anything there. Just drop  
12 the cargo, if there was any load it, and take off. Well yeah, that basically was it, and as I  
13 say, the rest of the circuit you—there were a couple of times, there was at one point  
14 where instead of going to Hawaii they were redoing the runway and we ended up going  
15 to Midway. This is an interesting little place, and the Gooney birds really do walk around,  
16 you have to kick them out of the way at times. They cannot land, they are funny, but I  
17 like the fact that I did go some places that nobody will ever go to. Midway being one of  
18 them, Wake Island being another one, and Wake Island is not one island, it's three.  
19 There's a little island south of Japan called—oh hell, it was on the tip of my tongue,  
20 Marcus. There was a LORAN (Long Range Navigation) station there that we ran, and we  
21 at one point volunteered to take a load of cargo to Marcus Island and drop it off and come  
22 back to Japan. Because of weather at one point, we did spend the night at Okinawa. As I  
23 say Guam, stopped for your gallon of booze. But the flipside of that is, and I found this  
24 true both of the shipboard life and of flying, the way to see the world is not through a  
25 porthole or a window seat of an airplane. You basically are on duty when you stop to  
26 crew rest, it's scheduled and timed for crew rest, and there's not time to go out and visit  
27 this attraction or whatever. A couple of times we would get stranded in Hawaii, what the  
28 hell, you know? Yeah, and we did, we'd either go to the pool or hit Waikiki, but you only  
29 had the eight hours, there was never any time to know what the world was about, to  
30 absorb the cultures of other countries, that type of thing. That again may have been  
31 unique to the type of service that I did while I was in. Leaving the ship, there was a guy

1 on the ship that was leaving at the same time I was who got sent to the Orkney Islands  
2 north of Scotland. That would've been a totally different experience and he got to stay  
3 there for two years, and I talked with him once or twice later. But that's not the  
4 experience I had, mine was in and out.

5 JS: All right, one last question I have for you. I know you were talking a little  
6 earlier about how early on you had the view of Vietnam that this is probably the right  
7 thing, we should probably be there. Then later you mention that your view had changed  
8 completely. Talking about your change on your view on Vietnam, could you talk a little  
9 bit more I guess about what brought about that change in your mind about—was there  
10 anything in particular that made you change your viewpoint?

11 AC: No, as I say I think it was primarily sobering up, number one, and giving  
12 some thought to it but basically it was growing up, it was becoming a man instead of  
13 being a teenager 'cause literally, and again I don't mean to stress this, but the world of  
14 the alcoholic is so totally wrapped up in alcohol that you don't think about anything else.  
15 I never really thought about it. When I did stop and think about it, it was no one thing, it  
16 was simply growing up, maturing, realizing there are different viewpoints, things are very  
17 seldom ever simply black and white, and becoming tolerant of people, that type of thing.  
18 As I say, I'm still bitter and I always will be at the way the Vietnam vet was treated. I  
19 don't think that was—I think that to me, that's a stigma and a black mark on this country.  
20 I don't care whether you like the War or don't like the War, but the people who do their  
21 job and in today's world, and I guess always has been to an extent, you've got to have  
22 some type of security for your country and that type of thing. Now that may be used  
23 wrong because of the way that our system works, where the civilian has the final word as  
24 to where the military goes and what they do. But nevertheless, the people who do serve in  
25 the military, that type of thing, I think they deserve admiration and a vote of thanks. We  
26 didn't get it, and that pisses me off.

27 JS: Sure, yes, sir. All right well is there anything else you'd like to say? Anything  
28 we haven't covered at this point?

29 AC: No, nothing that I can think of except that as I say, I'm very glad—and I'm  
30 particularly glad that I happen to be here, but I'm very glad that there is a Vietnam  
31 Archive, and that it does the job it does and has the direction and the values that you

1 have. I really think it's an important thing for this country, and I hope, I'm not sure that  
2 they do or will, but I would think that Texas Tech would take great pride in it. It's one of  
3 the unique things about Texas Tech. Everybody has a football team, everybody has an—  
4 enough of them have engineering schools or whatever. But everybody doesn't have, and I  
5 feel the same way about the Southwest Collection by the way, it's something unique and  
6 Tech should be very proud of that and very supportive. I also happen to think that it's  
7 very important, both of them for that matter, the Southwest Collection and the Vietnam  
8 Archive. The Center.

9 JS: Right, absolutely. All right, well I will go ahead and bring the interview to a  
10 close, but thank you for your time, Albert.

11 AC: Okay, I enjoyed it.

12 JS: All right.