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**The Vietnam Archive  
Oral History Project  
Interview with Barton Kent  
Conducted by Kelly Crager  
Date: 9, 11, 18 June 2015  
Transcribed by Hailey Stewart**

[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 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager conducting an oral history interview with Mr.  
2 Barton Kent. Today is 9 June 2015. I'm in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of Texas Tech  
3 University and Mr. Kent is joining me by telephone from his home Bainbridge Island,  
4 Washington. Mr. Kent to begin this interview I'd like to get some biographical  
5 information from you if I could. Let's start with when and where you were born.

6 Barton Kent: Born in Shreveport, Louisiana on January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1946.

7 KC: And what were your parents' names?

8 BK: My father was Harold Kent, and my mother was Janice Kent.

9 KC: And what did they do for a living?

10 BK: My dad was in the oil business, he was primarily in the oil exploration  
11 business, owned a seismograph company, which ultimately was in Houston, Texas; and  
12 spent his whole career in the oil business.

13 KC: I'll be darned. What about your mother?

14 BK: She was a housekeeper.

15 KC: Uh-huh, yeah. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

16 BK: I was an only child, and then eleven years later there was twin brothers.

17 KC: Oh, is that right?

18 BK: Yeah.

1 KC: That's really interesting. Now did you grow up in the gulf area. Did you  
2 grow up in—you mentioned off the record a little bit ago that you grew up mostly in  
3 Houston, is that correct?

4 BK: I grew up in Houston, yes sir.

5 KC: Tell me about growing up in Houston in the 1950s, what was Houston like?  
6 What was life like for you there?

7 BK: Well, normal childhood I think, it was—lived in a community called West  
8 University and started the elementary school there and moved to a new development area  
9 in southwest Houston, Westbury. Went to junior high and senior high there and had  
10 traditional growing up experience through hot and humid Houston. Did the boy  
11 scouts/cub scouts and all that type of thing, and then in high school I was in the ROTC  
12 (Reserve Officer Training Corps)—interested in the military, and played sports and what  
13 not, so just a normal childhood, nothing too extreme.

14 KC: Yeah. What piqued your interest in the military?

15 BK: Well, it was a combination—I just—one of the things that came together—I  
16 had a, and still do, an uncle that went to Annapolis and became a naval aviator. He during  
17 the summers would invite me to where they were stationed throughout the country and he  
18 was—exploding commanders, interiors, so forth, and so on. He took me to Annapolis,  
19 actually wanted me to go there, but the—so he was I think probably—of course my dad  
20 was in World War II in the Navy but didn't think it a career like my uncle.

21 KC: Yeah. Well, that's interesting, so both your father and your uncle served in  
22 the second world war then?

23 BK: Yeah, my uncle actually graduated just at the end—graduated from  
24 Annapolis just as the end of World War II but ended up in Japan as part of the initial  
25 forces that went in there within Hiroshima and so forth. So, he got just the tail end of it,  
26 but not actual combat.

27 KC: Yeah, okay, and what did your father do in the Navy-German war?

28 BK: He was on a destroyer; he was a communications officer of some kind. He  
29 never really talked much about it.

30 KC: Yeah, so was—you think this was kind of a lot of the influence that  
31 encouraged you to get involved in the military?

1 BK: Yeah, I think definitely had some part of it.

2 KC: Yeah, huh interesting. Well, tell me about school, you mentioned a boy  
3 scouts and some of the sports. What other sorts of things did you like to do?

4 BK: Well, just—really very traditional, normal childhood. Played sports in  
5 school, was never very good, but just played sports. The normal—at that point in time, I  
6 think, the education in Texas, you learn more about Texas initially then you did the  
7 United States, and then after you've had the Texas history you became aware it was part  
8 of the United States. Loved history, and read a lot about history, and so forth. Gravitated  
9 from Texas history down to U.S. history and what not. I did a lot of reading and loved  
10 history.

11 KC: Now with this kind of background, Mr. Kent, you're growing up in the 1940s  
12 into the 1950s, obviously the 1960s and the dominate global issue—the international  
13 community is the Cold War. What do you remember about the Cold War growing up?

14 BK: Well, it was a significant influence, because—the whole era during that time  
15 was definitely on the front burner all the time, and I can remember in school having the  
16 air raid drills, where you'd drop and get under your desk and so forth, and there was a  
17 constant threat hanging over—somebody was gonna attack somebody. It was  
18 predominated—well not predominate, but it was a factor from elementary school on and  
19 discussed every day, and in the news. The Cuban Missile Crisis was, of course, really big,  
20 everybody thought that was Armageddon. So, it was definitely an influence.

21 KC: Yeah, now, speaking of the 1960s, you're coming of age to a degree here,  
22 you're in your teenage years going to high school. Of course, Kennedy is elected  
23 president in 1960, what are your memories of the Kennedy Administration or the man  
24 himself?

25 BK: Well, my dad was a republican, so I can remember he wasn't too thrilled,  
26 but the—John Kennedy—the whole Camelot thing and something really new to politics I  
27 vividly remember, because you watched everything the family—the Kennedy family and  
28 what not. And I think most people sensed that this was something different, my circle  
29 was family and what not, they were definitely not in favor for what he was doing going to  
30 do—being a left-winged liberal from Massachusetts, Catholic, and so forth. But  
31 personally, as a kid I was thinking he was kind of refreshing and unique. But, when he

1 was killed, actually, we had gone over to Rice Stadium to hear him speak prior to that  
2 and I still remember that, and the whole remember where I was when it was announced  
3 that he had been assassinated, and the whole weekend after that is very vivid.

4 KC: And where were you? Where were you when—

5 BK: I was in the lunchroom in high school.

6 KC: What was the reaction?

7 BK: Well, everybody—they told everybody to go to their classrooms and I  
8 remember they—I think it was over the loudspeakers or something, they broadcasted—  
9 the radio—broadcasted what was going on for a while. Everybody was, of course,  
10 shocked. At home we were glued to the TV the rest of the time and the whole weekend  
11 transpired, and Ruby being killed on national TV, and then the funeral—the whole  
12 nation, or I was, stopped for that period of time.

13 KC: Yeah, one of those unique moments in history of course.

14 BK: Yeah.

15 KC: Okay, so you're making your way through what you call a normal childhood,  
16 growing up in the Houston area, going to school, doing the things that kids are supposed  
17 to do, you have an interest in the military, you're going through ROTC. What are your  
18 thoughts about what you're going to do after high school? Are you considering going into  
19 the military for sure? Are you looking at college? What was going through your mind?

20 BK: No, I wanted to go to college, and my dad wanted me to go in the oil  
21 business. When I was fourteen, I got out of school one day and the next day I was in the  
22 swamps and we became a Get Physical group, which was my dad's company. He wanted  
23 me to learn the business from the ground floor up, which I did, or the swamp floor. So,  
24 every summer from that point forward I'd worked in the oil fields and do physical work.  
25 In high school I worked offshore, that was—learning the oil business—I didn't really  
26 want to do it. I was trying to figure out a graceful way to not do it—I was trying to go to  
27 college.

28 KC: Did you have any inclination of where you wanted to go?

29 BK: I went to Stephen F. Austin the first year.

30 KC: Okay, why'd you choose Stephen F?

1 BK: It was a combination of friends that were going up there, it was away from  
2 home, but not real far. It was really of combination of friends that were going there.

3 KC: Mm-hmm, and what were you going to study?

4 BK: History.

5 KC: History? Okay. Now, when do enter, I should ask you this, when do you  
6 enter Stephen F. Austin?

7 BK: I graduated in '64, so it was the fall of '64.

8 KC: Okay, so fall 1964. Now this is the time that Vietnam is beginning to become  
9 a little more well known in the United States. Obviously, things have been going on there  
10 with the United States for a number of years, and not just Vietnam and Laos, et cetera.  
11 How much did you know about what was going on in Vietnam there, say '64?

12 BK: I was following it closely, and reading and watching the news, and see that it  
13 was escalating and as time brew it became more noticeable. So, I followed it, and read,  
14 and was keenly interested in it, because it was a—in my mind and a lot of others it was  
15 the good versus the bad, us versus the communists, draw the line in the sand and the  
16 domino effect and all of that. I had a lot of interest in it.

17 KC: Yeah. Well, what was your—because you were so interested in this, what  
18 was your opinion on the way things were shaping up there? Both politically and  
19 militarily? Did you know? Did you have an opinion?

20 BK: Well, early on I was too naïve to really fully understand what was going on,  
21 and again it was portrayed as, “We’ve gotta stop communism somewhere and this is  
22 where we’re going to do it. These are the bad guys and we’re the good guys.” It was all  
23 kind of black and white, and simplistic. I can remember at Stephen F there were some  
24 groups there that were not in favor of it, doing the folk songs and all that type of thing,  
25 but they were very small. But there were some dissenting opinions about—it wasn’t  
26 wildly discussed in school.

27 KC: Yeah, and what did you think about those who were opposed to the war at  
28 this stage?

29 BK: Well, you know, I didn’t agree with them. I felt that this was starting to do  
30 something and that was the place to do it.

31 KC: All right. Now you said you went to Stephan F for what, two years?

1 BK: Yeah, it was in the second year when I became more interested in the  
2 military and about doing something, I was looking at the Marine Corps PLC (Platoon  
3 Leaders Course) Program. I wanted to fly, and my dad had an airplane, and my uncle was  
4 a pilot and all that, and I'd always wanted to fly. And the Marines had the program I was  
5 looking at and one day I would see a recruiter from the Army (inaudible) and that when I  
6 found out about the Warrant Officer Program for the army and it didn't require a four  
7 year degree, and I was actually at that point I think it was more afraid that the Vietnam  
8 War would be over, and I would miss it. So, I saw an avenue to be able to fly and to be  
9 involved.

10 KC: Interesting, so you decided to sign up right there huh?

11 BK: I did.

12 KC: Yeah. Leave college and join the Army, that's quite a step.

13 BK: Yeah, my dad, that phone call wasn't real good.

14 KC: I was wondering about that, yeah. How did that go down?

15 BK: He wasn't happy. I was called everything with idiot or moron, but basically  
16 he said, "you're crazy. First of all, how are you to fly helicopters are horrendously  
17 dangerous, they can fall out of the sky, and if they didn't fall out of the sky then you'd  
18 get killed in Vietnam." So, he was pulling punches initially, then he mellowed out.

19 KC: What about your mother?

20 BK: She wasn't happy either, but she was less vocal.

21 KC: (Laughing) Okay, sounds like dad had some very serious plans for you.

22 BK: Yeah, he was an oilman.

23 KC: Yeah.

24 BK: A self-made oilman.

25 KC: Yeah, sure. All right, well you leave the Stephen F. Austin after your second  
26 year, you've joined the Army, pick up the story there. Where do you go to basic training?

27 BK: Yeah, joined in May of 1966 and processed in Houston and went Ft. Polk,  
28 Louisiana for basics.

29 KC: So, you go to Ft. Polk, well at least you should be acclimated to the weather  
30 there, I would think such as it was.

31 BK: Yep, yep, and mosquitos.

1 KC: And the mosquitos, right. Well, tell me about your time at Ft. Polk.

2 BK: Well, it was one of these things I just wanted to get it over with, because you  
3 had to do it—I had been accepted into the flight training program, but you had to go  
4 through that door to get there. So, I accepted it, and went there and because I had had  
5 ROTC in high school I knew how to march, left and right and so forth, so they made me  
6 the platoon leader. We had basic training there, and of course there were draftees as well  
7 as the volunteers, and basically, I just wanted to get through it and moving on with life  
8 and get to flight training.

9 KC: Yeah. You obviously had a very clear set of goals you're trying to  
10 accomplish here, but what about the others? What about the draftees that you mentioned?  
11 Was there a difference between those who had enlisted and those who were drafted?

12 BK: You know, I didn't—I've heard a lot of talk about that. I really didn't see a  
13 lot of differences, everybody did what they were supposed to do, and I mean you always  
14 had certain individuals that you'd have problems with, but the training rigorous enough  
15 that you either did it or you were gone or in trouble. So, I never really discerned a "I am a  
16 volunteer," versus "I'm a draftee," other than on your serial number. You could tell who  
17 had been inducted and who had volunteered.

18 KC: Mm-hm yeah. Well, what was your routine like there in basic? Just give me  
19 the basic day. You know, a lot of people already understand what this would be, but for  
20 someone who might not understand or for future generations of the Kent family, what  
21 was it like for you in basic training?

22 BK: Well, I can remember vividly arriving there in the busses from Houston, a  
23 group of us had been inducted in the station in Houston and put on bus and sent to Ft.  
24 Polk way up there at night. As soon as we got off the bus, the drill sergeants were lined  
25 up screaming at us in their Smokey Bear hats, running around with their hair on fire, and  
26 that's how it started. Lined us up to get our heads shaved and I remember all that. Then  
27 we were—Ft. Polk was basically a World War II wooden building, just as they'd had in  
28 World War II. We were assigned barracks, open bay barracks or bunks and so forth.  
29 Open bathrooms, and just basic living, and the old mess halls that they had in World War  
30 II and company areas. It was a self-contained little city in south Louisiana there—start  
31 early in the morning and go all day, and late at night, then you're so tired of course you

1 have no trouble sleeping. Just had a whole routine, you never had a minute to yourself  
2 almost, so you just endured it, just did what you're told to do and tried to make it easy for  
3 us.

4 KC: And for you it sounds like again this was just another step toward your  
5 ultimate goal, which was to fly.

6 BK: Right.

7 KC: So, would you characterize it as being any sort of cultural shock or anything  
8 or you just understand that these are steps, they're making us go through and we just  
9 gotta go through it and move on?

10 BK: Yeah, exactly. It was part of the deal and just go with the flow and get  
11 through it.

12 KC: After eight weeks you finish up, sounds like you did reasonably well, you're  
13 a platoon leader with your ROTC experience before obviously helped out. So, what's the  
14 next step for you?

15 BK: Went home, had a short leave. Bought my first car.

16 KC: What'd you buy?

17 BK: A new 1966 Mustang.

18 KC: Wow.

19 BK: Bought that for \$2,100, and my dad had to co-sign it because going to flight  
20 school you got promoted—you were a candidate. Going from officer to candidate but pay  
21 wise and rank wise you were nearly a sergeant, so I could afford the car and figured I  
22 better buy a car if I'm going to Vietnam, I won't have chance a second time there. So,  
23 had the car, drove it to Ft. Wolters and started flight school. That was my first car.

24 KC: So, you go straight from basic training warrant officer headed to Ft. Wolters  
25 for helicopter, the primary helicopter training program there or whatever.

26 BK: Mineral Wells.

27 KC: Mineral Wells, yes. Tell me about this, what was your first experience like  
28 with the whole helicopter world? Because there's gonna be an awful lot of classrooms  
29 involved in addition to the basic flying elements that you would be getting involved in.  
30 Take me through your time there at primary Ft. Wolters.

1 BK: Well, before we get there—Ft. Polk that’s one thing—because we were  
2 going to flight school one particular day they took, there weren’t that many, but the  
3 people who were going to flight school they took us to the airfield there at Polk to give us  
4 a “orientation ride.” That was my first helicopter ride. H-19, which was an old  
5 resupinating engine, pre-Korean war era helicopter on wheels. Loaded us in, and—I’d  
6 spied helicopters, I mean watching T.V I grew up with Whirly Birds or whatever it was, a  
7 TV show watching this, and those helicopters hovered. When this one—they started it  
8 and it started shaking, I thought we were gonna come apart on the ground, and then we—  
9 cause this thing is so underpowered and its hot—this thing couldn’t hover we had to roll  
10 down the runway to get this thing off the ground. I remember thinking, “Oh my God what  
11 have I done here this thing is a disaster.” So, that was the first experience of helicopters,  
12 and that wasn’t too encouraging, so when I got to Wolters, I was looking forward to it,  
13 but I was a little concerned too. At Wolters the first thing—the first four weeks is called  
14 pre-flight and has nothing to do with helicopters. It was to weed out if you could  
15 withstand the discipline and the training and so forth, and hopefully be some kind of an  
16 officer. It was strictly military, with the TAC (Training, advising, and counseling)  
17 officers screaming at you, it seemed like twenty-four hours a day, running all over the  
18 place, eating square meals, absolutely no time to yourself. They would purposely try to  
19 get rid of people, and they did.

20 KC: And again, do you realize it’s just one more step that you’re gonna have to  
21 go through?

22 BK: Yeah, every—all away along the process it was that goal of being an aviator,  
23 and you knew you had to go through these doors to get there. It was either put up with it  
24 and did your best or you weren’t gonna be there. They had no qualms about busting  
25 people out. You were gonna be a E-1 private with a rifle more likely in the swamp of  
26 Vietnam than (inaudible) there was that motivation stay involved and succeed.

27 KC: Alright, well after this initial phase take me through the training you go  
28 through. Take me through the academic portion. What things were you working on in the  
29 classroom?

30 BK: Well then, we had an area at Wolters that was preflight with the old World  
31 War II barracks then we moved, they call it up the hill at Wolters, and they actually had

1 concrete barracks with rooms and the area was built specifically for the flight training  
2 program and so they were modern by anything we'd seen before. The living conditions  
3 were better, and we had two to a room. We had the military aspect of—the whole thing  
4 had to be spit shined and everything had to be in place, and constant inspections, you had  
5 TAC officers that followed you every step of the way and were constantly in your face—  
6 a lot of screaming and hollering still, less as you started to evolve through the training  
7 process. We'd go to academics for the half the day, and flight for half the day. Start out  
8 with basic aerodynamics, and just the whole gambit of Aeronautical courses, and the  
9 weather, and navigation, and all that type of thing, aerodynamics. Then we would start—  
10 everybody of course was looking forward to the flying aspect, and then we finally  
11 evolved to that, and got into a routine of academics and flying, which was very long days  
12 and very long nights.

13 KC: What did they have you flying there?

14 BK: Our class was split, because they were ramping up the numbers that were  
15 training for Vietnam, they had to divide the aircrafts. And the original aircraft they used  
16 was a H-23, and that's what I got, and the other half of the class was in the Hughes T-65,  
17 so we didn't have a choice we were just assigned it.

18 KC: Tell me about your instruction there. What sort of guys were training you?  
19 Were these guys experienced Vietnam pilots? Who was training you there at Ft. Wolters?

20 BK: Initially, pre-solo, it was combination of—well they were all civilians, there  
21 was a contractor there, Southern Airways, that had the contract for training and for the  
22 maintenance of the aircraft. So, they were civilian pilots, a lot of them were ex-military,  
23 I'm gonna say most of them were, and some of them were still with the National Guard  
24 and so forth. The instructor I had, I mean you stayed with one instructor by and large, I  
25 did. They were excellent. I mean I heard mixed stories, some people the extremer type  
26 guys and others were like mine, which was much more approachable and really a good  
27 instructor. The quality of instruction I thought was excellent.

28 CK: Tell me about the bird you're flying?

29 BK: Well, it was a resupinating engine, two—well it was theoretically a three  
30 blade helicopter, the Army had it for a number of years. It was a bubble helicopter, so  
31 small. They—you know it was a good basic trainer. It actually used an unlimited basis,

1 when I first got there, it was a scout helicopter which I wouldn't want that thing flying  
2 and it was. It'd been around a long time before I got there and they kept it for fair number  
3 of years afterwards, and actually flew them again in the National Guard when I got out  
4 there.

5 CK: What was your first experience like in one of these things?

6 BK: Well, the first—the instructor would fly and show you, “okay this is a  
7 helicopter, and this is what we do.” You knew the controls from the ground before you  
8 got in there, and they all sounded pretty straightforward until they actually gave them to  
9 you, and then all Hell would break loose. It was a good thing that Texas is a big state  
10 because when I learned how to hover, I was all over it. Of course, the summers were hot  
11 and you're in this bubble helicopter, there's a greenhouse effect, and then you've got the  
12 instructor sitting there looking at everything questioning if you're going to damage the  
13 aircraft or hurt yourself or him, so there's a bit of pressure. But they start you with one of  
14 the controls, and then they add another control, and they just go progressively from there,  
15 and you've hopefully grasped it. The goal is to be able to solo the aircraft in about eight  
16 to ten hours, and some people could do it, a lot of hand eye coordination. The control  
17 system on the Hilliard itself was very sloppy, it wasn't very precise, there was a lot of  
18 lags you had to factor into the control when trying to quick time it, figure it all out. Of  
19 course, you had to control the RPM (Revolutions per minute), it didn't governor like the  
20 other one did so that factored into it. It was just a matter of hand eye coordination and  
21 getting it, and like I said some people could get it and some didn't, and they would be  
22 either recycled or bust them out.

23 KC: Yeah.

24 BK: And the ones that had more trouble than anybody were the older guys, cause  
25 in the warrant officer program they had older NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officer) that  
26 could come in and sign up for it, and if they pass the initial test, they could do it. But they  
27 were pretty—these guys were pretty quote old; they were in their late 20s or early 30s.

28 KC: Wow, that's ancient.

29 BK: Yeah. They were set in their ways; they'd been in the Army awhile. They  
30 were E5/E6s, and they hadn't been learning, particularly in a subservient role like this,  
31 and some of them just couldn't hack it. They didn't make it, you know.

1 KC: Mm-hmm. But is it something you picked up on pretty quickly?

2 BK: Yeah, I soloed in about eight hours. It wasn't easy, but yeah, it came to me  
3 and the more you did it the easier it got. Of course, they kept expanding what you were  
4 doing and different maneuvers. After you got through the initial stage, it was more a  
5 natural learning progress versus this huge pressure of, "Can I do it or can't I do it"?

6 KC: Yeah. And feeling more calm and more confident as your abilities get better  
7 too. One of those things that stands for reason, I guess.

8 BK: Yep, yep.

9 KC: So, you're flying these things, you're feeling pretty good about it, you're  
10 soloing. When did you graduate out of primary?

11 BK: I started in the June of '66 and finished in December. From that time, you  
12 would go to Ft. Rucker in Alabama for exams, and they were having issues with  
13 availability of aircraft instructors and what not, so they asked for extra—one of the few  
14 things you volunteered for in the Army Corps was they asked if anyone wanted to  
15 holdover, and because I was from Texas, and it was coming up on Christmas I thought  
16 that would be good. So, I stayed next to a month there, and they called you a super  
17 senior; you'd run around and help the TAC officers scream at people.

18 KC: That must have been rewarding.

19 BK: Yeah, it was a little payback, but it wasn't—you had a lot of free time which  
20 was good, and then had the opportunity to spend Christmas at home.

21 KC: Well, that's outstanding. After Christmas of 1966, you're going to advance  
22 there at Ft. Rucker.

23 BK: Right.

24 KC: Tell me about Ft. Rucker. Tell me about advance pledging.

25 BK: I drove my car out to Ft. Rucker, and it was, again, a lot of World War II era  
26 buildings at that time, but it was much more relaxed than Wolters. We were in a  
27 company, we had TAC officers and so forth, and had to maintain military discipline and  
28 what not, but it was nothing like Ft. Wolters. It was much more relaxed. But we began a  
29 routine of going to grounds school half a day and flying half a day, and of course flew  
30 nights in planes, but it was a lot less pressure in the sense that you'd been through the  
31 Wolters experience, and it was—we had time to do other things, so it's more of a normal

1 life. And we were, of course, flying the Hueys which everyone wanted to do and that was  
2 just a lot more fun, easier. So, we prepped for that in different stages of the flight  
3 schooling from the—they called it Contact Training, which is where you actually  
4 transition into the aircraft, you do the emergency procedure and all that type of thing.  
5 And then, you'd go into tactics and learn to fly the aircraft, and actually a few used it to  
6 get—they would try to replicate what you would be doing in Vietnam as much as they  
7 could. And then, formation flying, combat-assaults, and sling loads, and all that type of  
8 thing. So, they tried to train—and all those instructors were all actually at Ba Gia and so  
9 they tried to make it as realistic as possible, which was hard to do, but that was the intent,  
10 and we went through that—finished that and we were graduating conditions and warmup.

11 KC: I wonder if you might expand a little bit more on some of the training here at  
12 Ft. Rucker, for instance the classroom training. You've already been through the basic—  
13 the basic things you need to know by the helicopter and how it operates and flies, and you  
14 talked about, you know, the meteorology and things like that. How did the classroom  
15 training—classroom experience differ from what you saw there in Mineral Wells?

16 BK: Well, it was more specifically like Vietnam, and—well initially it was about  
17 the aircraft—learning the aircraft and doing it more complex—and the turbulence—and  
18 the mechanics and whatnot about the aircraft, and once you did that it was into the use of  
19 the aircraft or combat insertion and resupply—formation flying was really big. We did a  
20 section on flying gunships, learning what they did, and we actually went out and flew and  
21 shot the weapon's systems. Then we'd do quite a bit of night training, where'd you land  
22 and set up remote LZs (Landing Zones) throughout the area and do all the  
23 communications work using all the code books and that type of thing. We did a survival  
24 school on the ground where you'd go out and try to replicate—they had a Vietnam  
25 village and try to replicate what it was like to be in the woods for several days and nights,  
26 eating what you could and so forth. But they tried to make it as realistic as possible—  
27 what you were gonna see in Vietnam, but they couldn't—I mean, there were so many  
28 things they couldn't do because Vietnam itself is such a diverse country, and forest rain  
29 and environment and conditions. So, it was a general approach to what you were gonna  
30 see in Vietnam.

1           KC: Yeah. Well, you get yourself to the Hueys here at this stage, and like you say,  
2 “Everybody wanted to fly the Hueys,” it must have seemed like a Cadillac to you guys, a  
3 great, big, heavy Cadillac after the Hiller.

4           BK: Yep, yeah.

5           KC: Tell me about your first experience with the Huey flying this—what was it  
6 like? What were the controls like? What was the overall process like flying this big bird?

7           BK: I thought it was so much easier, because—much more stable aircraft and it  
8 had a governor around the engine, so you didn’t have to maintain the RPM which  
9 reduced a lot of the control inputs on the aircraft. You just applied power and reduced the  
10 power and it maintained—and so overall it was just a much simpler aircraft to fly—like  
11 training for rotor rotation for the Hiller—would come out of the sky like a rock—flying  
12 characteristics and rotor rotation weren’t all that great, but the Huey was tremendously—  
13 very easy to auto rotate the aircraft. So, just on whole it was a much easier aircraft to  
14 fly—much more comfortable, and everybody loved it.

15          KC: Yeah, so you acclimate to the Huey pretty well it sounds like?

16          BK: Yep.

17          KC: And you mention that these guys, the trainers, most of them had been to  
18 Vietnam, experienced pilots there, and you said you’re trying to replicate the  
19 circumstances as well they could, but what are they telling you about flying in Vietnam? I  
20 mean, it would seem very simplest to say, “What kind of pointers are they offering you?”  
21 But what kind of things are they telling you about what you’re going to be doing, what  
22 you’re going to be seeing, how you should approach these kinds of things?

23          BK: Well, they had different instructors, so different ones had their own take on  
24 it; but there wasn’t any—nobody got into any of the real negative aspects—they didn’t  
25 really go into a lot of what they saw in combat. At that point in time, I mean helicopters  
26 had been over there for a while, but they hadn’t seen a lot of heavy action—I mean some  
27 had, but not generally speaking as though the whole country involved, and so it depended  
28 on who you were with—what instructor you’re with. But they would talk about the living  
29 conditions that they saw in their particular unit, and what the routine was, and what to  
30 expect from a flying standpoint as far as day to day. Some of them flew gunships—of

1 course they had a different perspective than the guys who flew the slicks, so just varied as  
2 far as the individual went.

3 KC: Yeah. Now of the two which would you prefer: slicks or the gunships?

4 BK: Well, when I was in training I kind of liked the gunships, but it wasn't really  
5 shit I had to do, because we had very little exposure to it really, like one day of actual  
6 flying the aircraft. When I got to Vietnam, I figured I don't want to fly gunships, because  
7 I didn't like flying around, sitting there and getting shot at not knowing what to do about  
8 it.

9 KC: Yeah, I'd think so. You mentioned though the weapons training earlier.  
10 What sort of systems did they work with you on? What were you training on?

11 BK: They fired—standard gunship, which carried fourteen rockets and had—the  
12 training aircraft had the M60 machine guns—the flex guns, you had four M60s on a flex  
13 pod on the side of the aircraft where you could—the co-pilot would seek and take a sight  
14 and rotate it, and the guns would turn and point, and they could shoot. Then we fired  
15 what we called a Frog, which had—it had the rocket pods on the side and nineteen rocket  
16 pods on each side, and they had a turret in the nose that fired the 40 millimeter grenade  
17 launcher, and you could at a site, you could turn and rotate—move, and the turret in the  
18 front would rotate and fire the 40 millimeter grenade. Those were the two I remember  
19 that we actually fired in training.

20 KC: How much time did you have working with these weapon systems?

21 BK: Brief—just brief combat experience. They didn't want you going in and  
22 blowing stuff up.

23 KC: Right.

24 BK: We were on a range at Ft. Rucker, and you can only do so much.

25 KC: Yeah.

26 BK: But they just wanted to expose you to it.

27 KC: Right, just in case you get over there and they have a need for a gunship  
28 pilot you'd be, at least, familiar with it.

29 BK: Yep.

30 KC: How it works. Okay. So, your time there at Ft. Rucker, another positive  
31 experience, you're feeling good about things?

1 BK: Yeah. Rucker, like I said, was a much more enjoyable from a personal  
2 standpoint as far as having some free time to do some things.

3 KC: What sort of things would you do?

4 BK: Oh, play handball, Tennis, went to Pensacola a couple weekends. Some of  
5 the guys actually would have a house in Pensacola—cause by and large you had the  
6 weekends free, which we didn't have at Wolters. But you had time to do things like that,  
7 and see the local area, which there's not that much to see in south Alabama. Go to the  
8 club—it was a much more normal life.

9 KC: Mm-hmm. So, you finish up there—obviously you know you're going to  
10 Vietnam, I mean you're a helicopter pilot, you're a warrant officer, all of this training is  
11 not being wasted on so you can fly around in the states or Germany or something, you  
12 know that you're going to Vietnam.

13 BK: Yeah.

14 KC: Are you still continuing to follow the war as closely as you can?

15 BK: Yeah—didn't dwell on it, we didn't have a TV in your room kind of thing,  
16 so you didn't get the nightly news unless you went—had to be somewhere where there  
17 was something—read the newspapers and the magazines when you had time, but you had  
18 such limited time for a lot of stuff like that that I didn't follow it there as closely as I had  
19 prior to going in; but I definitely stayed, you know, aware of what was going on. The  
20 military didn't really go into the politics, of course, or any of that type of thing, but there  
21 wasn't any discussion over pros and cons—I mean they gave you the history of why—  
22 what Vietnam was and why we're there, but it was normal.

23 KC: Yeah, and the whole U.S. presence there still made sense to you at this point,  
24 did it not?

25 BK: Yeah.

26 KC: So, you finish up at Ft. Rucker. When would this have been? The spring of  
27 1967?

28 BK: Yeah, I finished in June.

29 KC: June of 1967?

30 BK: Mm-hmm

31 KC: All right, so is it this point where you get your orders for Vietnam?

1 BK: Yeah, just prior to graduation everybody would get orders and, of course, I  
2 had orders for Vietnam, and the majority—some were assigned to stateside units that  
3 were building up for Vietnam, and that type of thing, but the majority of us were going to  
4 Vietnam.

5 KC: Yeah. Do you have any leave after you graduate?

6 BK: I'm sorry?

7 KC: Was there any leave? Do have any time off after you graduate before you go  
8 to Vietnam?

9 BK: Yeah, yeah, I had some time to come back to Houston.

10 KC: Mm-hmm.

11 BK: And get ready—get everything ready, and you had to of course—prior to  
12 leaving you had to sign all the papers and the insurance, and that type of thing. But had  
13 some time to go to Houston, grab my car up in Jackson, saw friends, and that kind of  
14 thing—ready to go.

15 KC: Yeah. Are you excited to go?

16 BK: Yeah, mm-hmm, I was eager.

17 KC: What about your family?

18 BK: By then they'd accepted it—actually they drove out to Ft. Rucker when I  
19 graduated for the graduation party—ceremony. So, they were much more accepting, but,  
20 you know, there was always that concern that something might happen. They were far  
21 removed, but it wasn't discussed either.

22 KC: And you mentioned that you were somewhat eager to go, but do you have  
23 any trepidation? I mean you're headed into a warzone in an animal that shouldn't be able  
24 to fly but does; with people shooting at you. Do you have any trepidation? Any  
25 nervousness or worries about what you're getting yourself into?

26 BK: No, I—again it helps being young and somewhat naïve—no—you know,  
27 part of this process is your pumped up, your training is such you think you know  
28 everything. You think you're the greatest aviator who ever lived with 210 hours. I mean  
29 that's part of the process the military was good at, and no I—I mean obviously I realized  
30 something could happen and we had people killed in training—I saw people killed in

1 training, so I mean, that brought it home that this is a dangerous business, but I was ready  
2 to go.

3 KC: Yeah. Just to go back just a little bit, you mentioned that you had seen some  
4 people killed in training. Can you describe those instances—what happened?

5 BK: Mm-hmm. Well, the first one was at Ft. Wolters, they would launch—I think  
6 it was 400 or 500 helicopters a day from the various—the main heliport at Wolters and  
7 two satellite ones, and so you had this tremendous amount of helicopters going in the air  
8 every day and coming back, and we're very inexperienced people—some with instructors  
9 and some solo. So, by definition, that was ripe for problems. But then you have just the  
10 normal training accidents where people make mistakes and they get hurt, so it was a  
11 fairly dangerous environment. But my first experience, etched in my mind, was the  
12 recovering on the main heliport at Ft. Wolters, which was the biggest one. They had these  
13 lanes that you would fly back—various colored lanes you would fly back that you would  
14 be assigned in a single file type formation kind of formation, or loose formation. You had  
15 to stay certain altitudes with the plane, and I was with my instructor and the other aircraft  
16 went parallel to you coming in while everybody stays in place where they're supposed to  
17 be in line flight. But that particular day one of the aircraft got the wrong place and hit a  
18 Hughes—had the rotor blades sheared off by the skid of a Hiller that they got tangled up  
19 in, and we were going in—and I'm barely keeping this helicopter right-side up myself  
20 when suddenly something went by the aircraft out of the corner of my eye—a Hughes  
21 was falling and crashed. We landed—turned out—the instructor grabbed the controls and  
22 landed and turned out it was a guy a couple rooms down from him, and I couldn't  
23 recognize him because he was totally smashed but then I saw his nametag. So, then I  
24 realized that this is, you know, serious—and we had, of course, other accidents. But that  
25 brought it home—this is dangerous, but that was part of it.

26 KC: Yeah. Were there any other incidents like this?

27 BK: There were other accidents—personally wasn't involved in many,  
28 fortunately, but yeah, we had a fair number—not really any fatalities, but we had injuries.

29 KC: Okay, let's get you back to Houston, you're getting ready to leave. When do  
30 you leave for the west coast?

1 BK: In the early part of July 1967, went from Hobby Airport to Oakland Army  
2 Depot there.

3 KC: Okay. Describe for me the experience of traveling to Vietnam.

4 BK: Well, I've got pictures of leaving home with my family all lined taking the  
5 departure picture, and I'm in my uniform. I remember getting on the airplane with my  
6 wings on and all that feeling pretty good. Went to San Francisco and then went to the  
7 depot onto the army dump on the way to shipping—in fact I've got the letters I wrote my  
8 parents starting in Oakland—it actually helps my memory, because we just sat in a BOQ  
9 (Bachelor Office Quarters) at Oakland for a few days waiting for assignments and the  
10 aircraft going to Vietnam. We didn't really have anything to do.

11 KC: Were you able to get out and see Oakland or San Francisco at all?

12 BK: No, no we were stuck on the base.

13 KC: You were stuck there?

14 BK: Yeah.

15 KC: Okay. So, after a few days of what must have seemed like just interminable  
16 boredom there, you're finally going to go. Take me on this flight to Vietnam.

17 BK: Well, I was reading these letters the other day, and—typical Army you get  
18 up at three in the morning for transit to anything, and we were bussed from Oakland to  
19 Travis Air Force Base on the east bay and the airplane was broken. I remember sitting  
20 around forever—to get her in the sky again—we were supposed to stop in Hawaii, I  
21 remember—Continental Airlines 707, full of 150 GIs (Ground Infantry) or whatever it  
22 was and off we go. Because of the delay they went to—I think it was Lanai Island, which  
23 was nine hours or something that I write in this letter about how I've never been on an  
24 airplane that long. And from there I think we went to Manila and then finally to Saigon.  
25 Of course, getting to Saigon you're absolutely exhausted and so forth. It was a long trip.

26 KC: What was the atmosphere like among those who were on the plane over?

27 BK: Well, the airplane was mixed as far as enlisted and officers—they didn't  
28 segregate you, everybody just kind of mingled and, of course—really everybody was just  
29 real quiet, there was no real discussion about it. It was only, “okay we're here, let's”—  
30 wanted to get off this thing and get on with it, so it was a mixed bag of officers, enlisted,  
31 and varying ranks—different fields, the whole thing.

1 KC: So, you arrived there in early July 1967, come into Tan Son Nhut. The doors  
2 open on the plane, “Welcome to Vietnam,” what takes place?

3 BK: Probably what everybody in the world says, “hot and humid.” Hits you like  
4 a wet blanket, and that was it—the smell, the smell. I’ve got a lot of pictures and what  
5 not, but you can smell the smells of Vietnam. That was our awakening.

6 KC: So, once you’re off the plane, where do you go?

7 BK: They put us on busses and a thing that I remembered was army busses—they  
8 had wire on the windows—so they wouldn’t throw hand grenades through the windows. I  
9 can just remember driving the streets and looking out through the wire and thinking,  
10 “okay, this—we’re sitting ducks here if anybody wanted to do anything” stuck in the  
11 traffic and so forth going through the replacement depot, and again everybody was so  
12 tired, you’re just like a zombie. Looking at Vietnam was like with all the traffic, the brick  
13 saws, and all the horse cars and whatever—buffalo carts. Culturally it was a real  
14 awakening for somebody who’s never been out of the country other than Mexico.

15 KC: I bet it was.

16 BK: Yeah.

17 KC: So where do you go? Where do you stay while you’re awaiting orders?

18 BK: Went to replacement depot in northeast Saigon at Long Binh.

19 KC: Mm-hmm. I guess, what, the 90<sup>th</sup> I guess?

20 BK: Yeah, the 90<sup>th</sup> replacement center. Up there in very basic quarters, and so  
21 forth, a just holding the normal drill of paperwork and sit around and wait. We had no  
22 idea where we—I think they’d given us a—because the orders had actually changed  
23 several times as to where you were going, but you really didn’t know and once you got  
24 there they would need to change, and they would assign you wherever they needed you.  
25 So, we just waited for the orders to go someplace and finally they came through.

26 KC: And your orders were to where? What unit?

27 BK: To the—it was the 13<sup>th</sup> Combat Aviation Battalion down in the Delta, the IV  
28 Corps. So, I remember we flew down on a caribou with our duffel bags and what not and  
29 arrived at the battalion. Sat around there for like a day or so, then we got the assignment  
30 for the company—the battalion had four companies throughout the Delta, and so we—  
31 they didn’t ask you where you wanted to be.

1 KC: You were just going.

2 BK: You were going.

3 KC: Did you know anything about the Delta region?

4 BK: Well, again, in flight school they'd given you the broad overview of  
5 Vietnam—pull out the map and this is that and this is the other and this is the culture and  
6 pictures of—but I really had no idea, no I mean. I knew it was flat and I knew it grew a  
7 lot of rice, and that was about it.

8 KC: Mm-hmm. All right, so welcome to the Delta. What unit or what company  
9 did you get assigned?

10 BK: Get assigned to the 121<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter Company in Soc Trang, they  
11 were the Soc Trang Tigers. I think you've talked to them.

12 KC: Yes, I attended their reunion a few years ago.

13 BK: Yeah, they were in Lubbock I know. I missed that one. But it was one of the  
14 first units to go to Vietnam. They'd originally gone to the 93<sup>rd</sup> Transportation Company  
15 and been assigned in Da Nang, or to—up north. The irony of it is the Army was up there  
16 and the Marines were down in Soc Trang—aviation helicopters, and the military finally  
17 figured out “Wait a minute, we got the Army where the Marines are, and the Marines are  
18 where the Army is,” and you just do something. So, they assigned a guy, Burt Leech,  
19 who was in the 121<sup>st</sup> to go to Soc Trang and accept the airfield from the Marine Corps.  
20 He was army captain and went to Soc Trang and signed the papers to accept the airfield,  
21 and the marines had their emblems—the Marine Corps emblem underwater tower there  
22 and Burt became the airfield commander suddenly, and the Marine guy was a Colonel,  
23 and Burt's first order was to have them paint the Marine Corps emblem out of the water  
24 tower. The Marines weren't too happy about that, and so they were supposed to leave the  
25 next day to go up north, and they made their displeasure really known to Burt. He was  
26 probably at that reunion. He's still going—a really good guy.

27 KC: Yeah, that's pretty funny. All right, now you're with 121<sup>st</sup>, you're down in  
28 Soc Trang. What's the—

29 BK: Yeah, by the time I got there they'd become the 121<sup>st</sup> Assault Helicopter  
30 Company, so they were one of the original aviation companies in Vietnam. I want to say  
31 they arrived in-country in 1962, I think they were in Soc Trang by 1963. They became

1 the Soc Trang Tigers, and they were—Soc Trang was an old airfield, I think it was built  
2 by the Japanese in World War II. The Japanese had actually stayed there when they sank  
3 the British ships off of Singapore down in that area, the Repulse I think it was and what  
4 not. Some of the aircraft had flown out of Soc Trang. So, the unit itself for most units—it  
5 was actually considered a premier unit, because it had been there quite a while and they  
6 had a lot of experience. Actually, when I got there were guys on their second tour. So, it  
7 was a somewhat of a prestige unit, which I didn't know at the time. The conditions we  
8 had—the airfield itself was much nicer than a lot of places in Vietnam. So, really, from  
9 that standpoint it was a very lucky assignment—it was a great unit.

10 KC: Describe the base there at Soc Trang. Give me some of the details. What did  
11 this place look like?

12 BK: It was south of the town of Soc Trang, which was a little village. Like  
13 everything in the Delta, everything revolved rivers—that was the only way of getting  
14 around. There's one road, at that time it was Highway 1, that ran from the Delta—south  
15 of the Delta all the way up north—the north Vietnamese quarter but went to Saigon from  
16 where we were. It ran right by the base. So, the base had a runway—you could land  
17 C130s. The buildings themselves—a lot of them had been built by the Japanese, the  
18 hangars, and the quarters, and then the Army—well the French had been there too, well  
19 the Japanese, French, and the Americans—the Marines, and then the Army. They had  
20 been through quite a few iterations of people there—in fact we had Mama-sans that did  
21 the laundry and shined your boots and so forth—steamed the place and so forth. The  
22 Mama-san we had she had been through all of them—she spoke Japanese, she spoke  
23 French, and she spoke English. A little bit of both or some of them all. But her whole  
24 thing was she didn't care who came as long as they paid her. So, she's seen them all. We  
25 had an officers' club, the Tigers' Den they called it, and it was—had air conditioning,  
26 which was unheard of almost.

27 KC: I bet it was, yeah.

28 BK: The rooms—we had little rooms that were bamboo basically walls, and big  
29 bamboo beams in the ceiling went all up. They were hot, but the full goal at life once you  
30 get up there was to get a fan, which was hard to come by wasn't it, I guess. But, by  
31 Vietnam standards, we had latrines, we had showers, we had a bed, and so by Vietnam

1 standards it was pretty good. I mean we actually had a swimming pool and a little library,  
2 chapels and a PX (Post Exchange) so—saw a lot worse, I'll put it that way.

3 KC: Mm-hmm yeah, well it sounds like a pretty good assignment for you overall.  
4 Not just the physical layout of the place, but the kind of history that the unit has—the  
5 success and experience that they have. Can you tell me about the people? Tell me about  
6 the command structure. Tell me about the people who were with you when you come in.

7 BK: Now, we had two companies assigned to Soc Trang: the 121<sup>st</sup> and the 336<sup>th</sup>,  
8 which are all part of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, so we shared the field. Some of the people that  
9 were there were—traveled with me. We'd gone all the way through flight school—there  
10 weren't that many. And then there were, like I said, experienced, varied people who were  
11 on their second tour and they were kind of revered because they were like the resident  
12 experts. And then, they had the guys like me and the enlisted guys and what not that were  
13 brand new. It was like a little city, we had all kinds of different people, we have air traffic  
14 control, we have phonetics, and we had assault units there too, we had a bird-dog unit,  
15 and then, very supporting with the maintenance unit, and the communications unit. There  
16 were probably somewhat around 400 people there. Different—like I said it was a self-  
17 contained little city, because we had to be because we couldn't get—at the end of the  
18 food chain, as far as supplies went if it were a southern most unit in Vietnam—most  
19 everything came by air because they couldn't transport it over land because they would  
20 get ambushed—the majority of it came in by air. And there was a lot to be brought in the  
21 surrounding area, it was like “Wow.”

22 KC: Tell me about the people. What's the command structure when you get  
23 there? Who's in charge?

24 BK: When I first got there it was a guy named Denny McCrager, he was a major  
25 in charge of our unit. A really good guy wasn't there for all that long after I got there.  
26 They would cycle the people through—particularly the senior officers. They would  
27 usually come in to get their ticket punched for their career to be a commander, and the  
28 121<sup>st</sup> was premier unit to be a commander because, like I said, it had made recognition.  
29 And then, they would move them to battalion headquarters and that type of thing. But the  
30 overall—the majority of the people we had were all dedicated. They were, you know,

1 career Army and good people. There were always occasional ones you had problems  
2 with, but that wasn't the majority of them all.

3 KC: How were you welcomed into the unit?

4 BK: Well, initially you'd come in and we would fly the transport aircraft, the  
5 Slicks, and that was your first assignment. And so, you would get checked out, get a unit  
6 check out, just like you'd take check ride at Ft. Rucker. And again, you were pumped up  
7 and, of course, you thought you knew it all. You'd be assigned as a co-pilot, and the first  
8 assignments would be what we'd called a "Mash 'n Trash" where you would go out to  
9 pick up people or pick up supplies and take it into outposts or a village—you were just an  
10 aerial taxi basically. Mine was an experienced pilot, and by experienced, I mean he'd  
11 been there maybe two or three months. You would fly at least 100 hours a month,  
12 sometimes 150, and it was great. After a few weeks you start to fly combat assault, where  
13 you fly into formation. Combat assault, of course, were (inaudible) because you're flying  
14 in formations of usually two sticks of five aircrafts—ten aircrafts, and then you go and  
15 pick up the troops and you keep formation into the LZ—pick up the troops, and  
16 sometimes they were under fire and sometimes they weren't, and then you'd insert troops  
17 and then try to get out of there as fast as possible. And then, you had to come back in to  
18 resupply them if they were still in the operation, and then eventually extract them. So, the  
19 combat assault was the most amazing aspect of the whole thing. That was where the  
20 steepest learning curve was for me.

21 KC: I wonder if you might take me through this in a little more detail, Mr. Kent.  
22 You know, from say your first combat assault that you can remember or just one in  
23 general. How does the planning take place? When does it take place? What are you going  
24 to be focused on doing? Take me through in as much detail as you can in combat assault  
25 from your perspective.

26 BK: Well, they would—usually the night before they would give you the  
27 assignments. Who you're going to be flying with in operations—they had operations  
28 officers and staff. They would get their assignments from battalion, and we would be  
29 supporting in the Delta, which was one of the negative things was that we'd be  
30 supporting primarily south Vietnamese ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam)  
31 troops, which I didn't know going in, but it became apparent very quickly that they

1 weren't the most aggressive ones compared to the Americans. They had American  
2 advisors with them and that type of thing, but the brunt of the people we transported  
3 would be ARVN. We'd get the assignments, we'd get the aircraft, and they would have  
4 somebody from operations come in and wake you up, it was always early—early  
5 morning, really dark—get our gear together and have breakfast. Then we'd go to the  
6 aircraft, and usually we would fly—form up on the airfield in formation, have a lead, a  
7 trail, or a path. The lead—everybody would fly off with him and maintain a forty-five  
8 degree angle of the aircraft with a stepped up motor—distance away and try to keep as  
9 tight as possible without running into somebody. Then we'd fly to a staging area where  
10 the troops would be in various places around the Delta. We worked everywhere from  
11 basically Saigon south to the tip of Vietnam—to the Cambodian border to south China.  
12 And so, we'd go to the staging base where the troops would be and be around  
13 commanders and advisors and found out exactly more details and then the gunships  
14 would go out and pick the LZs, based on the coordinates and what not. They would select  
15 the LZ, mark it with smoke, and then the transports would come in from porting points—  
16 various reporting points and I would be in a command and control aircraft above  
17 everything with a ground commander in it, and they would be communicating with the  
18 ground troops as well as the invasion people. They would call for insertions, and the  
19 gunships would prep the LZ, and usually the actual assault into the LZ they would be on  
20 either side of the slicks going in. The slicks each had M60 machine guns on either side  
21 and they could—depending on the situation they could tell them to be firing—two  
22 gunners in the back would be firing on the free lines or whatever going in, and the  
23 gunships would parallel that and fire. The troops would come, and some places you could  
24 land, some places you couldn't, some places—the problem we would have quite often  
25 been the aircraft were very, very heavy and it was hot. You're landing in rice padding,  
26 the mud, water flying around and you're getting shot at, but it compounds the issue, and  
27 you're trying to maintain the position of the aircraft you're flying on for the whole  
28 time—that's what you're looking at, you're not looking around at the LZ. The  
29 performance of the aircraft—some places you'd just run out of power and have real  
30 problems from that, so that was always the concern. Now, those were things you learned.  
31 A lot of that was technique and the flying—you evolved over the course of this thing.

1 And then the troops would jump—they would usually start jumping out before you were  
2 on the ground, because they wanted to get out of there, and as soon as they were out, we  
3 were gone. Depending on how many loads you were moving in, you would continue that  
4 process until they were all in and then you would support them with supplies and what  
5 not. Somedays you'd fly all day long and into the night. Other days it was quick. It just  
6 depended—the combat assaults you were—when you knew you were gonna do those  
7 everybody—interest level got a little more than the evening before.

8 KC: Yeah, I'm sure. Like you said this could go on, potentially, you know all  
9 day.

10 BK: You never knew, yeah.

11 KC: Yeah, yeah. Depending on the size of the operation, how many troops back,  
12 you had to pick up more soldiers or what is going to be an ammunition, and what they're  
13 engaged in. Yeah, there are an awful a lot of balls up in the air, I guess. And do you  
14 remember your first combat assault?

15 BK: Not really. I can remember one of the first ones, recovering back to one of  
16 the stage fields with the extraction and flying in the tight formation coming in.

17 KC: Take me through this one. Take me through the whole thing if you can.

18 BK: Well, we—at the end of whatever the operation was they would—we would  
19 go in, land, and hopefully—and quite often the extractions were under fire because the  
20 bad guys knew where these guys were. The South Vietnamese were very predictable, I  
21 mean they just did the same thing all the time. The VC (Viet Cong) would figure all that  
22 out of course, and so they would wait for these extractions, and it would be there. So,  
23 they could be under any—and so the—we'd go in, get the troops on—they would be  
24 covered in mud and stink, and then we'd pull them out. Then we'd go back, and I  
25 remember coming into—one of the first times I was actually flying the aircraft and  
26 coming in, trying to maintain formation, but I was way too fast, and everybody flared to  
27 start landing and I was way too fast—almost ran into the aircraft in front of me. I had to  
28 fly basically almost through the formation, because I couldn't stop. Scared the hell out of  
29 me

30 KC: I bet it did.

1 BK: Of course, the aircraft commander wasn't real happy and by then he'd  
2 grabbed the controls. But that was—that was when I remember—I realized I didn't know  
3 everything.

4 KC: Sometimes that's a very good realization.

5 BK: Well yeah, if you survive them. You're learning steps—you go on and you  
6 don't do it again.

7 KC: And you mentioned—you used the word "flare." For someone who's not  
8 familiar with this term, can you explain what that means? It's obviously very, very  
9 important for a helicopter pilot.

10 BK: Yeah, well it's like an airplane too. When you come into land, you're at a  
11 certain speed and then as you go to actually land—you're coming in on the approach and  
12 you actually go to land—either hover or on the ground in case of a helicopter or an  
13 airplane, when you're only above the ground you pull back on the control, so that slows  
14 the air speed. In a helicopter, you transition from a flight to a hover mode, well it takes  
15 more power to hover than it does to fly, cause of the air flow through the rotor system.  
16 So, you're coming in—particularity with a heavy aircraft you have to plan to go straight  
17 to the ground because you can't hover, so as you're coming down, you're pulling back on  
18 the stick and the nose is coming up, and you're anticipating your speed. Then to begin to  
19 hover, or to go to the ground, you gotta start coming with power because you're  
20 transitioning from a flight mode to a hover or a landing mode. So, the flare is basically:  
21 pull the nose up and the tail down, and then level it when you're supposed to land. You  
22 just don't want to be too steep when it happens. Sometimes guys would hit the tail and  
23 knock the tail rotor off, and that wasn't good.

24 KC: Right. Well, I'm glad you were able to explain that. So, you come in a little  
25 hot, as you say, and the aircraft commander took control over it. What happens at this  
26 point? Does he chew you out or anything or just lets you know that he's displeased or  
27 what goes on?

28 BK: He didn't chew me out, but I remember just feeling like—plus you've got  
29 the crew in the back, so they know what's happening and you feel like a heel. You think,  
30 "Well, you know, you could have killed everybody here, and other people if you had

1 plowed through the formation.” No, it was very humbling. I felt horrible, and just didn’t  
2 want it to happen again.

3 KC: All right, what do you do when you’re done with one of these? You’ve been  
4 out flying—say this is an extended day that you had today. You brought a lot of troops in,  
5 you’ve been resupplying, the extractions taken place. What happens when you’re done?

6 BK: Well, the routine, and again in these letters I talk about this. The normal  
7 thing would be you were tired, and depending on when you got back, we had, like I said,  
8 we had an officers’ club with an air conditioner and cold beer. We’d go to the O Club to  
9 the Tigers Dens, and typical military buddy sit around—eat, so we’d have dinner and eat,  
10 go to the bar, and talk—the whole war stories thing would get bigger and depending on  
11 who they were. We did have a room that had a projector in it, and we’d get movies very  
12 infrequently—I think we watched *Bonnie and Clyde* like three days in a row. You know,  
13 some of the guys would go to movies, some would just go back and go to sleep and read,  
14 but there wasn’t a whole lot to do in this little field—you’re around your friends, you’re  
15 around people all the time. But again, it’s a lot better than a grunt having to live out in the  
16 jungles and sleep in a water filled hole, and that type of thing.

17 KC: Yeah, sure. You mentioned getting dinner. What sort of food would they  
18 serve you there to relax your plight?

19 BK: The food wasn’t so good—I mean, we had Vietnamese cooks—we had a lot  
20 of Vietnamese that worked on the base. We had waitresses—Vietnamese waitresses. But  
21 the food, a lot of it was freeze dried that type of thing—powdered eggs, powdered milk,  
22 powder this, and powder that. Occasionally, we’d get access to some decent food—some  
23 steaks or some fresh food using the Air Force—expunge it with the Air Force. They  
24 always lived well. But, by in large, it was pretty mundane and boring food. But I was, for  
25 a while, the pay officer, so I’d have to go to Saigon to get the pay and it was all in cash—  
26 military certificates that we use for cash. But we could go to Tan Son Nhut, and we had a  
27 lay about there for battalion, and he had all the contacts, and we’d tell him what we  
28 wanted and what we needed trade—we’d take old weapons we’d gotten from the ground  
29 troops and stuff, VC stuff, and flags. We had a—actually had some make VC flags that  
30 we would throw in the mud and shoot with bullets and tell them it was captured in some  
31 battle and take that to Tan Son Nhut and sell that stuff and then we could buy decent

1 food. A lot of Air Force weenies around today, I'm sure, that have these flags on their  
2 walls telling how they captured these things when we actually had Mama-san make them.  
3 You had to do what you had to do, and we had some very resourceful people.

4 KC: Yeah, cage the stakes to case the stakes.

5 BK: That's it!

6 KC: So, you had these facilities here you mentioned, you know, the library,  
7 chapel, you know the officers' club and things. Obviously, sleep is going to be a very  
8 important thing for you, I would think, in addition to just blowing off steam,  
9 decompressing after a tough day, and those kinds of things. What other sort of things do  
10 you do? Are you listening to music? What kind of music are you listening to? Writing  
11 letters, I know that you've mentioned that on a couple of occasions, that seems like it was  
12 pretty important for you as well. What sort of things do you do in your off time?

13 BK: Well, the biggest thing to do over there when you first got there was—like I  
14 said, we had the luxury of having a quote “Room” and you'd try to get the room fixed up  
15 as much as you could. We had a bunk, and little cabinets and stuff. So, you'd try to get  
16 that fixed up. Some guys had all kinds of elaborate stuff in the rooms—got them shipped  
17 from home or bought somewhere. The first goal was to get a fan, which once you get a  
18 fan then at least you could survive and help you sleep. The next thing was to get a stereo  
19 system, because it was cheap. Everybody wanted a stereo system, so that was kind of rite  
20 of passage. So, you'd order that when you could afford it through the PX. You'd get the  
21 reel to reel tapes and speakers, and the whole thing—and amplifiers. Some guys would  
22 set it up in their rooms, and I never did but I kept it in my room. Then I realized we  
23 would get mortared and rocketed and stuff. When these things would hit, you know,  
24 they'd wipe out the room, so all my stereo gear under sandbags and they were still in the  
25 boxes. I was thinking if it was hit—a mortar round will turn you into hamburger meat,  
26 but you know, they had my stereo gear to still be there to go home, and I'm sure the  
27 rationale behind all that is a—. So, guys would read a lot. We wouldn't wear civilian  
28 clothes when we're off duty—I didn't have any flown over, and them, you known,  
29 shipped from home—I shipped some over. We'd get stuff shipped from home, food—  
30 canned food and what not occasionally. The airfield itself would get people coming

1 through—we rarely had entertainment. Prior to me being assigned there, there was a gal  
2 named Martha Raye. She was a TV performer and what not at that time.

3 KC: Oh yeah, the troops love Martha Raye.

4 BK: Yeah, and before I was there, she apparently liked to go to Soc Trang a lot  
5 and hang out. There was a flight surgeon there, who still lives in Pueblo, Colorado—they  
6 had a big battle one night and she was due to perform that night. Well, they had this  
7 battle, and a bunch of people were injured and wounded and what not—they just had a  
8 small little dispensary in Soc Trang, and just one flight surgeon, and some medics—very  
9 limited facilities. Anyway, he was overwhelmed, and Martha Raye walked in and said,  
10 “Well do you need some help”? And he goes “Do you know anything about medicine”?  
11 And, She said “Yeah, I’m a nurse.” Well, she wasn’t a nurse, but she’d been around that  
12 type of family for much, and she rolled up her sleeves and they were doing amputations  
13 and everything else and she was helping. He’s written a couple books, actually, about  
14 he’s whole experience in Vietnam which is really interesting and really a nice guy. So,  
15 we would occasionally get some performers through—they were usually Filipino or  
16 something like that, but that was rare. We never got the Bob Hope or anybody. We had  
17 diversions of all kinds—pets for people—GI’s very good at finding those. We had all  
18 kinds of pets much to the chagrin of the allergic.

19 KC: What kind of pets did you acquire?

20 BK: Oh god, we had a—well before I got there the unit was called the Soc Trang  
21 Tigers, the reason being was they had a tiger. They’d gotten somehow—it was a little  
22 tiger. There’re pictures of it—I’ve got pictures of it. Little tiger grew in to be a big  
23 tiger—but this tiger would roam the base and they called him Tuffy, so the unit became  
24 the Soc Trang Tigers. But they’d have people fly in from some place and come around  
25 the corner and here’s this tiger walking. So, at some point, the CO’s (Commanding  
26 Officer) said “We gotta get rid of it. It’s getting too big.” They actually got it, somehow,  
27 figured out how to get the thing to the zoo in Toledo, Ohio where he resided for the rest  
28 of his life making more Tuffys.

29 KC: I’ll be darned.

30 BK: Yeah. But it was—that’s how the Soc Trang Tigers came in. It was a patch  
31 we have, has the tiger on it and all that. But we had—I had an otter, a little otter. We had

1 dogs—about four. We had a monkey. We had one sea officer—he was a big guy, but he  
2 came in through the lift climber—very smart guy. He had a Ph.D., but he spent all his  
3 career basically in the Pentagon thinking about war and talking about war, but not doing  
4 war. To get promoted, he had to participate, so they assigned him to the 121<sup>st</sup> because it  
5 was prestige unit, and he came in—traditionally when somebody would come into the  
6 unit in the officers’ club, we would welcome them by saying motto pledge and pick  
7 banana trees and stick the banana tree in the fan. The guy would come in and we’d hose  
8 him down. Well, this guy came in—he looked like George Patton when he starts pearl  
9 handcuffs and shined boots, and he went from looking like that to looking the Green  
10 Weenie real quick the first time around the Tigers, so he got really mad. By then I was in  
11 the gun platoon, and we were the rebels, and we were the ones doing it. He called one of  
12 the inspections the next morning for us, and of course we didn’t even rise to stand to  
13 attention at this point—and came in and we were all lined up, and at the end we had the  
14 monkey in the cage, and we had a little flight suit for him with his name on it, and he bent  
15 down to look at the monkey and behind him and—well the monkey reached down took a  
16 handful of crap and threw it in his face.

17 KC: Oh no.

18 BK: And all of them spun around, fall down over each other, and give the orders  
19 “All monkeys from the Soc Trang be on the airfield by 18:00” and that kind of thing. We  
20 just, at that point, hid the monkey—didn’t let him see it. Typical GI’s, there was always  
21 something that wasn’t supposed to be there.

22 KC: Right, right. What about music? What sort of music takes you back to  
23 Vietnam as it would? What sort of things were you listening to?

24 BK: All the standard stuff at the time. In the O club the tradition was the song *I*  
25 *wanna go home*, they would always play that at night. All the popular music of the  
26 time—all the folksongs and that type of thing.

27 KC: Beatles, Stones, Motown—those kinds of things?

28 BK: Yeah.

29 KC: All right cool. Now you also mentioned that a lot of guys liked to read. What  
30 sort of things were you all reading?

1 BK: The library had, you know, limited stuff. I subscribed to *The Houston*  
2 *Chronicle* I had that. The mail was sporadic depending on what was going on and you  
3 were bottom of the food chain so it would take a while. But I think I subscribed to *Times*  
4 or *News Week* or one of those, liked many of them. You get books sent from home.

5 KC: What about the morale of this unit? Seems like it would be pretty strong, I  
6 would guess it. Did you find that to be the case?

7 BK: Yeah, the morale was overall—we didn't seem to drug or any of that kind of  
8 stuff, I never saw any of it. Of course, it was aviation—couldn't be doing that kind of  
9 stuff and fly or working on the aircraft. But yeah, I would tell you overall the morale was  
10 good. I mean, it's kind of a two section thing because I was a pre-Tet, and then of course  
11 we went through Tet. And then, post-Tet, it was a different atmosphere. But the unit—the  
12 biggest negative of the whole thing was ARVN according to the ARVN, and the more  
13 you were there the more you came to the realization that they couldn't help it—just didn't  
14 have the will to fight. So, here you were out risking your life for these people who didn't  
15 want to fight. Not like we can interact like that, and that was demoralizing—we wanted  
16 to—we knew what you could do and what could be done, and you're hamstrung with  
17 these people who wouldn't fight. That was the most demoralizing and it wore on you,  
18 particularly after Tet, but there was nothing you could do about it.

19 KC: I wonder if you might go into this a little bit more. I know that you  
20 mentioned this on the questionnaire that you filled out about the overall kind of negative  
21 image you had of the south Vietnamese units in terms of willingness to fight and things  
22 like that. Do you have any examples of this? Where do you think this came from? Give  
23 me your thoughts on this.

24 BK: Well, what really haunted me one time—the Vietnamese had helicopters—  
25 UH Helicopters, but they operated the old Sikorsky H-34s which was a suffocating  
26 engine and what not—the U.S. Marines operated those up north at Da Nang. But, the  
27 south Vietnamese had them where we were, and so we would work with them. They just  
28 were not aggressive. They didn't have gunships so by then I was flying the gunships and  
29 we were supporting them on the extraction. One evening, late, you know, it was getting  
30 dark, and they come in with nine—ten aircraft and they take off with nine, there's one still  
31 in the LZ running, and they don't speak English anymore and they're gone. And the

1 plane's got a machine gun on it, got the radio, got all the equipment on it—and the VC  
2 are coming out of the tree line, and you can see them, and so I just came and blew the  
3 plane up, because otherwise it would have just been shooting at us with that stuff. The  
4 only reason they left it is they'd taken a couple of rounds and some of the guys got  
5 wounded, and they just left the aircraft. Anyway, I was talking to one of the South  
6 Vietnamese folks one time and he asked me "How long are you going to be"? And I told  
7 him—I said "I don't know how long I'm gonna be here. I'm not going home. I got a  
8 family—I have no end to this. I might be doing this for the rest of my life if nothing  
9 changes." It put his perspective on it. But I had to end it, so there was that element of it.  
10 But the ground leadership—their ground leaders were really not good. I mean, there were  
11 certain units that were, Special Ops, Rangers, and that kind of thing; but their basic ones  
12 were just poor—they had no leadership.

13 KC: You mentioned the letters home on a couple occasions so far. What sort of  
14 things would you put in these letters home? What sort of things would you get back? It  
15 seems like this was pretty important for you.

16 BK: Yeah well, the letters I have are the ones I sent home—my mother saved  
17 them. I only got them a few years ago. They just detail from Oakland day on there—  
18 talking about the group coming home and I was shot, we talked about all that—nothing in  
19 detail. It just gives a—it gave me insight in a lot of things that I'd totally forgotten  
20 about—day to day stuff. A lot of the letters are complaining about pay, because the pay  
21 was always screwed up and I would have to get a checking account at home and they  
22 were gonna—it was bad, and I'm whining in these letters like a little three year old, and  
23 find it hilarious. I talk about life and Soc Trang, but I never really told them a lot of the  
24 stuff—most of the stuff. It was definitely glossed over. There were probably times where  
25 they were expecting frustration and the desire to go home.

26 KC: Okay. Well, Mr. Kent I think we've probably got to a good point to stop for  
27 today.

28

**Interview with Barton Kent**

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

**Date 11 June 2015**

1           KC: This is Kelly Crager continuing oral history interview with Barton Kent.  
2 Today is 11 June 2015. I am in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of Texas Tech University.  
3 And Mr. Kent is joining me by telephone again from his home in Bainbridge Island,  
4 Washington. Okay, Mr. Kent before I turned the recorder on you were talking about these  
5 letters home again. Can you expand on those a little bit? Just, you know, what was the  
6 content? Maybe the purpose of the things you're writing to your parents. How does it feel  
7 to look back on these things and reread them after all these years?

8           BK: Well yeah, I have the letter that I wrote home—it was all to my parents—the  
9 ones I have. My mother obviously had saved these, but they're still in the original  
10 envelopes, the return address is where I was and there's the stamps, and so forth. The  
11 postage marks and what not, so it has the dates when they were sent and so forth, but it  
12 details basically the time from Ft. Wolters—when I arrived at Ft. Wolters for training up  
13 to going to Oakland Army Depot for transition to Vietnam and then the trip, and the time  
14 in Vietnam and coming back. Early on I was very impressionable—seeing Vietnam up  
15 close and personal was obviously for the first time was obviously eye awakening, and I  
16 briefly kind of talked about that in the letters. The early letters are such that—the  
17 terrain—the place being pretty nice as far as our conditions—living conditions, the base,  
18 the unit, and so forth and so on. But as I go through the year things become a little less  
19 favorable. I don't get into a lot of discussion about the actual conflict or what we were  
20 doing—very limited, but more about things we were doing—just day to day life.  
21 Basically, the common theme was I was bored—with the routine that you get into there's  
22 only so much you can do on an Army airfield surrounded by the enemy, which we were.  
23 So, it was very limited as far as the—and it wore on you, obviously as I reflect in these  
24 letters, cause there just so much you could do. I actually look forward to the flying,  
25 because it would get you out of there and give you something to do to pass the time, but  
26 then as things went on and it got closer to going home it was reflected in the letters that I  
27 was definitely looking forward in going home, and actually was counting the days. It's  
28 interesting to go back and read them after all these years and provide some insight on  
29 how things were day to day.

1           KC: Yeah, I would think so, and I would assume also—kind of put you in touch  
2 with, you know, your own thoughts and feelings though it's been, you know, almost fifty  
3 years now, I guess. It would still, I would think, spark a lot of these memories that  
4 probably don't seem that long ago once you start to think about them.

5           BK: Exactly, yep. Pretty much.

6           KC: Yeah. That's really interesting. Now the—we left off last time, and you were  
7 kind of discussing what life was like there at Soc Trang and the airfield and kind of the  
8 day to day things that you were doing both in terms of getting ready for action—you  
9 talked about going out on a number of missions. Are there any other things that come to  
10 your mind about this early part of your tour that you want to discuss? Any of the  
11 personalities, or the events, or missions, or anything that comes up?

12          BK: Well, what came to realization as I got into this—or the flying was that—in  
13 fact in one of the ways I've talked about explaining normal type of flight we would fly  
14 from this village to that town to this and that—go to Saigon, come back here, just hauling  
15 things and people around. I mentioned one time hauling the wife of a Vietnamese general  
16 to Saigon to go get her hair done—sitting at Tan Son Nhut waiting for this woman and  
17 her girlfriends to come back from the beauty parlor and I thought that was ironic cause  
18 that's not what I signed up to do.

19          KC: That is pretty bizarre, how did that come about?

20          BK: It was just—typically you'd just get assignments—just the flights, and you  
21 had no idea what you were gonna do until you were given those assignments. And that  
22 particular day it came up, you know, “Take General so and so's wife and her friends to  
23 Tan Son Nhut and wait there, and she was gonna get her hair done and do some  
24 shopping,” and she did. That's when it started becoming, you know, a little bit of the a  
25 “This is not what I spent a year plus training in hoping to do is to haul women around and  
26 getting her hair done.” I was looking forward to the combat aspect of it, that just wasn't  
27 really it. But it was part of it, and as things evolved in the combat side, we became  
28 disillusioned, because of the—again supporting the ARVN, and their lack of aggression,  
29 and doing the same thing over and over. And we would insert them in the morning, they  
30 wouldn't spend the night—we'd pull them out in the afternoon, and they'd come out after

1 pillaging the local villages of their chickens and ducks, and things. Their lack of  
2 incentive, that was demoralizing to us.

3 KC: Yeah, that was really interesting. So, typically it would be a morning  
4 insertion and an afternoon extraction?

5 BK: With them, yes.

6 KC: Yeah.

7 BK: The times we had exceptions were when you would work with their more  
8 elite units—the ranger units and their Special Forces people. They were good, but they  
9 were limited. But even their basic linemen all had American advisors, and of course we'd  
10 work with them, and they were liaisons, and the advisors would be very, very frustrated  
11 with trying to get motivation. They needed to become aware of “Here we are out here,  
12 risking our lives and for what”? Cause it wasn't near as aggressive as we'd expected.

13 KC: Yeah. Well, again, that's really interesting. If you were on, say a typical  
14 mission of bringing the ARVN soldiers in, you know, how would that mission take  
15 place? Obviously, you're going to be briefed probably the night before—what's going on,  
16 where you're going, coordinates, formation, who's all going, that sort of thing. But that  
17 morning, when do you get up? What is your routine, and how does this mission work?  
18 Take me through the process.

19 BK: Well, we'd get up early—you know 4:30-5:00 in the morning type thing  
20 usually, and be awakened by Runner for Operations, and then we'd get our stuff together  
21 and have breakfast, and go pre-flight the aircraft—we'd have certain times we'd crank  
22 the aircraft and everybody would line up at our base in Soc Trang in formation and then  
23 we'd take off and fly to—most of the time we'd fly to some other site in the Delta from  
24 Saigon south in the IV Corps area down to go pick up the troops. And hopefully they'd  
25 be there on time, and what not. We'd liaison again with the American advisors and get  
26 the coordinates and the location of the LZs, and then we'd load the troops. We'd usually  
27 carry six of them, sometimes eight, because they were smaller than Americans we could  
28 put more in—lighter weight. They would usually sit three on in door on each side of the  
29 troopship, and then we'd have a crew chief and gunner in the back of course—if we carry  
30 more they'd be in the middle. They weren't strapped in, or what not, they'd just sit in the  
31 door. Then we'd take off in formation and go into the LZ and they would get out as soon

1 as possible, and we'd get out of the LZ as soon as possible. And then they would do their  
2 thing during the day, and we—the gunships would support that during the day and  
3 usually in the afternoons, we'd come back and extract them. I mean there were  
4 exceptions where they'd get into contact and get tied up, and what not, but that's not  
5 usually what their intent was. It was to get home at night.

6 KC: Take me through landing troops in a hot LZ. What would take place there?

7 BK: Well, the whole intent was as a slick pilot you were to maintain your flying  
8 formation. Ideally, you were in a two V's of five. You wanted ten aircraft going in the  
9 LZ's, because you wanted to place an adequate number of troops on the ground that if  
10 they got into contact before you got addition people in, they could defend themselves—  
11 form up amongst themselves. Ideally, you went in with the ten aircraft and go in with the  
12 V five, if possible, but a lot of the LZs weren't big enough so we would modify the  
13 formation into a trial or staggered trial or whatever it took to get into the LZ. You try to  
14 maintain a formation that's tight as possible and close as possible. You just focus flying  
15 off the aircraft you're flying off of. Of course, there was a lead ship, and he had the map,  
16 he had the coordinates, and he had the challenge of landing the aircraft as optimally in the  
17 LZ as he could where the other aircraft behind him could get in. So, we're going in—in  
18 all the Pentagon's conditions—the slick side two M60 machine guns on the side  
19 receiving fire—when there were friendlies on the ground, that type of thing, they would  
20 allow the gunners in the back to fire, just hopefully suppress the fire, but realistically they  
21 probably made more noise than hurt anything. You just get on the ground, or get as close  
22 to the ground as soon as possible, and get out—very limited radio calls, try to keep it  
23 brief. The trial ship would call the flights down, and then the trial ship would call the  
24 flights ready, and then everybody would go. And again, things happen—if somebody got  
25 shot up, they couldn't get out, and so forth—everything would change of course, and you  
26 would adapt to whatever the situation was to get your people out or whatever they tell  
27 you. I mean there was a routine, but it was the exceptions to the routine that always got  
28 exciting.

29 KC: Yeah, I think that's the way life goes, isn't it? If you continue to support  
30 these guys on the ground, you gotta go back and get ammunition, or food, or water—

1 where would you do that? Would you be going back to Soc Trang, or would you be going  
2 to different bases?

3 BK: No, we'd go to the satellite bases around the Delta—usually where we  
4 picked up the troops, they'd have supplies there and ammo and fuel and food and water,  
5 and that kind of stuff. Then, if there were wounded, they would—they'd try to send in the  
6 DUSTOFF (Dedicated Unhesitating Service To Our Fighting Forces) aircraft—medevac  
7 aircraft but depending on the situation at times the slicks—we would haul wounded out,  
8 depending on the conditions. That wasn't ideal, but again, you just do what you had to  
9 do. Then, I mean, there were times we just hauled bodies out. They did get in contact—  
10 the only way to get them out was to just load them up and fly them out.

11 KC: Yeah. What kind of impact did something like this have on you as a young  
12 man? Flying in combat, hauling out wounded, hauling out KIAs (Killed in Action)—do  
13 you have time to think about this while it's going on or afterward? What kind of effect  
14 does this have on a young man's body and mind?

15 BK: Well, you don't—while you're doing it you don't have time to think. You're  
16 just responding to the training and doing what you're supposed to do, and you're looking  
17 out for each other. But, again, when you're down you have time to think—you see that  
18 stuff and it's not something that you forget, and you process it, and just like “okay, it's  
19 gonna be somebody else.” I mean it was a lot harder, frankly, when it was somebody, you  
20 knew, of course. The Vietnamese you kind of distance yourself in a way, but we'd get to  
21 know some of the Vietnamese—not necessarily the ground troops, but the munitions  
22 people, and they became, you know, friends. So, that impacted you a great deal more than  
23 just—cause the other stuff you tend to distance, and it was impersonal. But, I mean, when  
24 you would haul the bodies, it was—the smells were just overwhelming. We'd learned  
25 that you spray Vicks—put Vicks up your nose—that's the only way you can handle it,  
26 because they're right there on the aircraft. So, you did stuff like that, that weren't  
27 normal—weren't part of normal life, but you did it and it became normal.

28 KC: Well, are there any particular missions that kind of stand out here in your  
29 early part of your tour?

30 BK: Well, the first one where I actually—we got hit by ground fire and that one  
31 (inaudible) cause I didn't know what it was.

1 KC: Tell me about that. Take me through this episode.

2 BK: I was a co-pilot still, and we were up on the Seven Mountains area, which is  
3 in the northwest corner of the Delta right on the Cambodian border. The Delta is of  
4 course flat, but the mountains are fairly tall, and they protrude, so they're distinctive.  
5 They were kind of a base for the U.S. Special Forces operations, which we really liked  
6 working with—the Special Ops guys—the Special Forces Green Berets they were  
7 phenomenal. We were up there resupplying them and moving them around and what not.  
8 Going into a little outpost—one of the Special Forces outposts and suddenly I heard—I  
9 was flying, and I felt the aircraft shake and heard the noise, and I mean I assumed we  
10 were taking fire, but I didn't know we'd been hit. We landed, and there weren't any lights  
11 or warnings or orange or anything like that, but it was just—they'd hit a couple of rounds  
12 in the belly of the aircraft right behind the pilot seat but didn't do any real damage.

13 KC: What were hit by?

14 BK: Small arms. Oh, and we'd taken some rounds in the rotor blades too, but that  
15 was the first time. After that, you never forget what it sounds like when a bullet—when  
16 you're taking fire.

17 KC: Again, is this an episode where you see this—you recognize what it is  
18 finally. Is there a fear factor taking place here or not until the mission is over with?

19 BK: No, there's no fear. And frankly, even afterwards—you expected stuff like  
20 that. In the slicks we didn't go looking for trouble we were trying to avoid trouble, and it  
21 wasn't a daily thing where we took fire. It was part of the game, and that's it—deal with  
22 it.

23 KC: Now you were shot down on more than one occasions, isn't that correct?

24 BK: We were hit, and we went down—we didn't fall out of the sky. We took  
25 rounds and, you know, knocked out systems where we had to go down. They were  
26 controlled landings, but we were down. We couldn't—we were in enemy territory.

27 KC: And when did these occur?

28 BK: That was in the gunships.

29 KC: Okay, so this was a little later on then?

30 BK: Mm-hmm.

31 KC: Okay. Well, let ask you about that. When do you transition to gunships?

1           BK: Well that came fairly—the realization fairly soon that I wasn't really  
2 enjoying—I mean flying the transports, as we discussed it, was stuff I really didn't think I  
3 signed up for. And again, when you did get shot at you couldn't do anything about it, and  
4 so the gunships were—they were out looking for trouble—to go out and suppress the  
5 enemy and do things. I decided I'd rather be doing that, than just taking women to get  
6 their hair done and the other stuff. So, to get into guns and the unit—there's a gun  
7 platoon and it was called the Vikings, which was part of the 121<sup>st</sup>. It was one of the  
8 original gun platoons ever been used in Vietnam. When they first over there, they were  
9 experimenting with how to do these things and what not. It had a reputation. It was a bit  
10 of a fraternity thing, you had to be a volunteer and be invited, and go through some stuff  
11 like that, and be accepted by the unit. So, I started that. There was a fella there named  
12 Gary Daily who was back on his second tour, and he was an older guy—he'd been in the  
13 Pennsylvania Guard prior to that. He was in his thirties, so he was really old, but he had  
14 flown guns all during his first tour and was a real pioneer in the use of gunships. He was  
15 a warrant officer, and we had a captain that was a platoon leader, but Gary Daily ran the  
16 unit. He was kind of—we called him the gun god—you had to go through Gary to get to  
17 guns, so you were very intimidated when you had to fly with him and what not. Gary  
18 Daily had flown in April of 1967 before I got there—I had gotten there in July. It's Easter  
19 Sunday in battalion had major exercise—several aircraft shot down and battalion  
20 commander had gone in to try and get the people out, and he was killed. Jack Dempsey,  
21 who they named Dempsey heliport after at Wolters. Gary Daily and another one of the  
22 experienced gun guys, had gone in the LZ which had a smoke generator and what not on  
23 it, and screened the LZ—they allowed the DUSTOFF and the others to come in and get  
24 these people out and look at the wounded. Sort of make multiple passes to screen the LZ,  
25 and the downed aircraft from the enemy was located along the tree lines. They took—I  
26 think it was 113 hits—Huey, which is a lot for any aircraft, but 113 hits and flew the  
27 aircraft back. Of course, they jumped the aircraft when they got back. They put Daily in  
28 from then on and got the GSC (Global Strike Command) and so forth and so on. He was  
29 a great guy. But anyway, to get into the Vikings you had to go through Gary.

30           KC: Yeah, so it was pretty intimidating like you say.

31           BK: Yeah. So, I got accepted and started with the Vikings.

1 KC: Now when did you start this?

2 BK: In October.

3 KC: October? Okay.

4 BK: Once you got accepted then you went out and did a couple training flights—  
5 see where you're at, cause you start in the left seat as a co-pilot gunner. The gunner  
6 would fire the flex kit—the machine guns. They got to carry and fire those and get the  
7 hang of that again, then start your first mission. One of my first missions I got shot, so I  
8 had kind of a short career there for a while.

9 KC: Well, tell me about this. How did this all take place?

10 BK: We were north of Soc Trang. It was up near the Tan An area, which is south  
11 of Saigon—closer to Saigon than Soc Trang. We were supposed to support resupply of an  
12 outpost and we did the morning recon. We escorted the Chinooks in—nothing  
13 happened, then resupplied this outpost—then when we went back, landed and refueled,  
14 and what not—had lunch with the Chinook crew, then we went back out. Normal routine  
15 was we'd go out—we'd recon the area that they were going to land in. They stay high  
16 and we'd go down low and recon the area, and assuming it was okay we'd go out and  
17 escort the aircraft in. We were reconning the area and we had just started that, and we  
18 took fire, and we took—I think it was thirteen rounds and it hit on the left side of the  
19 aircraft, which was where I was and it hit me in the ankle—and it just tore the ankle and  
20 hit the Crew Chief, who's the gunner in the left side—hit him in the chest. Of, course, he  
21 had a chest protector on. The only thing I can remember is getting hit, and I said I was  
22 hit—I knew what that was—it felt like somebody hit you with a baseball bat. I looked up  
23 in the sight for the flex gun—just hanging there so I—with my vast experience of  
24 gunship I grabbed that thing and started shooting, but then we were trying to disengage.  
25 You always broke away from the fire. The pilot was firing rockets just to make noise, and  
26 we broke. Our wing ship was covering when we broke, and we cleared the area. The pilot  
27 seats in Huey gunships—you could pop the seat where it leans back and leaned the seat  
28 back and pulled me in the back. It pulled the Crew Chief—the Crew Chief that got  
29 knocked out of the aircraft. He had a monkey strap—a harness, but he was kind of  
30 hanging out of the gun mound outside the aircraft. He had pulled him in—he'd been hit  
31 in the chest protector which is a Kevlar and a dog gone plate it shatters like glass—all

1 into his neck and his face, of course, was bleeding. I looked down at him, and I saw this  
2 big hole in his chest and saw blood everywhere and I just thought he was dead. The  
3 gunner pulled me on top of him, trying to get my boot off and all of sudden Crew Chief  
4 start moving under me. I looked down—I said, “I thought you were dead,” and he was  
5 screaming, “Get off of me!” Turned out he just had a very sore chest, but he wasn’t  
6 seriously hurt.

7 KC: Wow. What was the extent of your injury?

8 BK: Well, I was hit in just above the ankle—broke the fibula and the intercom  
9 was shot out, and what not. We went straight back to Soc Trang and there were some  
10 medical facilities. We haven’t had a small defense like that. Went back there—went into  
11 the dispensary and the flight surgeon was there with medics—did the pulmonary to stop  
12 the bleeding and so forth and debride the wound I remember that. Then they evaced—put  
13 me in a DUSTOFF air van back to the U.S. 9<sup>th</sup> Division, which was at Dong Tam—north  
14 of Soc Trang—they flied me over. They had a—it was a complete division base, and they  
15 had an evacuation hospital—which was like a MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital)  
16 op. It was a whole air and blew the thing up but a complete hospital though. So, I was  
17 there—and had more doctors, but I remember being there with the IVs (intravenous) and  
18 depending on drugs and stuff and they got mortared at night. Things started deflating. By  
19 then, I’m on these drugs so I’m not really caring about too much, but I could remember  
20 thinking how funny this was that things were deflating, cause the nurses were running  
21 around squealing and stuff. There wasn’t really anything I could do—I was just lying  
22 there. But anyway, the next day I got evaced up to 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Hospital in Saigon and was  
23 operated on. In both those places the thing the thing—one of the negative things was I  
24 remember—I mean there were seriously injured people in there, you know, missing legs  
25 and what not—dying. They just were so crowded—just wall to wall with patients. That  
26 was bad, because there was nothing, I could do except sit there and lie there, and I just  
27 felt so sorry for these people. The doctors and nurses and medics were all just  
28 overwhelmed. So, it was—the conditions there in Vietnam—the medical conditions were  
29 kind of primitive from that standpoint just because they had so many people. So, after  
30 one or two surgeries there, they evacuated me to Japan because they became overloaded  
31 there.

1 KC: And where did you go in Japan?

2 BK: Flew in a litter in a 141 up to Tachikawa Air Force Base and we were  
3 transferred over to Camp Zama. They had busses that had litter capability and medical  
4 busses, and we were backed over to the Camp Zama, which was an Army field in the old  
5 west point through Japan and prior to and during World War II it was an American Army  
6 base—still is. They have hostel there—little Japanese house. But the conditions there  
7 were much better. They had a separate officers ward, and it wasn't crowded. The  
8 facilities were—everything was much better.

9 KC: How long were you there?

10 BK: Well, I had another operation then I was in a cast, then got discharged from  
11 the actual ward—in quarters(??). We got into a lucky cast, and I had met the—it was a  
12 fella in the ward with me who was a civilian from Hawaii. He was a teacher there, an  
13 American on the base. He was Japanese-American, and he had Appendicitis or  
14 something, but anyway he got out. He and his wife they lived there, and they lived on the  
15 economy, and invited me to their house and went to dinner—really kind and took me  
16 around Japan—showed me the place. It was just a really great experience. They were  
17 just very, very nice people—had two children. They took me and an infantry guy—an  
18 infantry officer who was in the same boat as I was in basically—he was an outpatient at  
19 that point. They took he and I all around that area and showed us Japan. It was really a lot  
20 of fun. So, I was enjoying that, but then I had a—the funny part was—and my uncle was  
21 a Naval officer, he was a O6 (captain) and was on the staff of a three star admiral in  
22 Hawaii. They were in that area—been to Korea and then they came to Japan on quote  
23 “inspection checkups” despite it being Christmas in December and I think they really  
24 went on a shopping trip. Anyway, my uncle knew I was in the hospital, and he got a hold  
25 of me and said, “You should come down to Tokyo and have dinner with us,” and I was  
26 like, “Well let me out of here,” little army guy and what not. And so, they said, “We’ll  
27 take care of that and try to get a pass.” So, I got directions written up in Japanese on how  
28 to get to Tokyo from Zama—it’s about 40 miles, I think. So, this infantry guy—invited  
29 him to go with me and we—I’m on crutches and he’s all bandaged up, he didn’t look too  
30 good. So, we went to the train—got on the train and away we go—went to the American  
31 Officers’ building in Tokyo and met my uncle. That night we had dinner with his

1 Admiral—of course, here I am—I had no clothes, I had nothing other than what I had on  
2 my back. The guy—the Admiral asked us—asked me if we wanted to go to Hawaii with  
3 them the next day, and I said, “No, I can’t do that. I’m in the Army here. I’m supposed to  
4 go back to Vietnam. I’m in treatment and all this,” and he said, “Well, I’ll write the Army  
5 General,” and he said, “You just get your stuff ready, and we’ll go tomorrow.”

6 KC: Huh, what was this Admiral’s name by the way?

7 BK: I can’t remember, but he was a real funny guy. So, I went back to Zama and  
8 got thinking anything would happen. Well, I guess, the army colonels said, “Be ready at  
9 whatever time it was afternoon and we’re going to go to Atsugi,” which was a Navy base  
10 where the Admirals airplane was— “And you’re going to Hawaii.” And I about passed  
11 out. I get an Army Staff Guard pick me up—take me to there and here I am hobbling  
12 around on the ramp, and there’s the Admiral—they’re all happy. Going on this airplane—  
13 it was a big four engine airplane which is recent, but it was like a C-54, or a HG-7 type  
14 airplane. Went inside, and there’s this thing with like a—you know a corporate—we’d  
15 say a corporate jet is—it had tables, and doilies, and Filipino stewards—he had a  
16 bedroom in the back—and off we went. We landed in Midway, and they treated me like  
17 king, and then we landed in Hawaii and my Uncle lived there—stayed with him. The  
18 Admiral invited me to a Christmas party at a big house out at Pearl Harbor—showed me  
19 the bullet holes from World War II and where’d we been attacked and all this. Anything I  
20 wanted he basically—the guy just—the Navy treated me a lot better than the Army.

21 KC: This story is just incredible, Mr. Kent.

22 BK: It was. My uncle—he got a Navy S2, which is a twin engine and anti-  
23 submarine warfare aircraft. He got the airplane, and he and I just spent one day flying  
24 around all the islands and looking at the land and the—now of course I’d never been to  
25 Hawaii. My uncle—my personal pilot and personal airplane—so that was great.  
26 Anyway, it was a super deal and I brought trip order to do physical therapy, and they  
27 couldn’t understand what I was doing really. That was another issue—trying to explain to  
28 the Army what I was doing there and what the heck was going on. So anyway, I had  
29 orders to back, so when I went back to Japan—of course, by the time I hit Japan the  
30 Army was ready to get rid of me and send me back to Vietnam. Back to it—on my way  
31 back to Vietnam real quick. It was quite an experience.

1 KC: That's quite a Christmas.

2 BK: It was, and my family came out from Houston.

3 KC: Oh really?

4 BK: It was totally—it was something nobody was anticipating.

5 KC: Yeah, that's really a bizarre set of circumstances there.

6 BK: Yeah.

7 KC: But obviously, you know, incredibly fortunate.

8 BK: Yeah, from that standpoint it's fantastic. My uncle, who's still alive—we

9 looked at all the pictures and it was a great experience.

10 KC: Yeah. Well, that's really cool. When you get back to Japan you say that

11 they're basically ready to get rid of you—ready to send you back to Vietnam, and this

12 would have been January of 1968, correct?

13 BK: Early January, yep.

14 KC: All right now. Things are gonna go south in late January of 1968 pretty

15 quick—quite a departure from your Christmas in Hawaii. But take me back to early

16 January of 1968 when you get back to your unit. You know, you've been gone for a

17 while now. What have they been doing? What's your reception when you get back? What

18 is your routine when you get there? Are you ready to hit the ground running, so to speak?

19 What goes on when you get back to your unit?

20 BK: Yeah, well that was—I got back, I think it was in the first week of January—

21 cause while I'd been gone there was an overwhelming sense of—I felt guilty that here I

22 am not there with the guys. So, there was a bit of that, and some in some aspect I wanted

23 to get back and get on with it. So got back, and everybody—actually the unit had been

24 told that I was going home—I wasn't going to come back. So, they packed everything up,

25 but fortunately hadn't shipped it home yet—so I had to redo all that. But got back and did

26 normal things. Took a few days to get going again. My records were all screwed up—

27 trying to get all that straightened out. Had to get another check ride to get back up to

28 flight standards and did that. By then, I mean, things had already been ramping up as far

29 as activity level, and they were, of course, telling me about all that. And we'd basically

30 been mortared more, and attacked, and that kind of thing, and the activity level had been

1 increasing—but nobody had talked about some kind of major conflict. So anyway, I just  
2 basically just got back up to speed flying when the Tet hit and from that point forward.

3 KC: Okay, now that we've got to this part in the timeline here—I'd like for you  
4 to take me through the Tet offensive. When it starts—what happens immediately. Take  
5 me through the progress and process of what you're going through and the unit is going  
6 through while this is taking place there in early 1968.

7 BK: Well, as soon as I got back on flight status and started flying and we were in  
8 missions almost every—I have all my flight records still from then, so they detail the  
9 hours you flew today and give you a little bit of summary of where you went. I can see,  
10 looking back, just the number of hours we were flying were—the gunships—a lot of  
11 times we would not fly those the total amount—total hours that say the slicks would,  
12 because they would do things during the day, whereas gunships—only time we flew was  
13 when there was a problem or looking for a problem. But, just looking at the flight records  
14 we were flying a lot like every day. Then the actual Tet—because I had flown all that day  
15 on an operation—something like eight or nine hours. The flight time, which a lot of flight  
16 time when you're going on the average length of time you flew a gunship was about an  
17 hour and fifteen minutes, so that's a lot of flight. We were going back and refueling,  
18 rearming, and what not. So, by then we were keeping a gunship over the airfield at  
19 night—all night, because of all the mortar attacks and what not. So, we would fly during  
20 the day, and get a break, and as soon as it gets dark—it would get dark, and we'd send a  
21 gunship up. So, we had one gunship go up for an hour, and the other one would go up for  
22 an hour and come back. Everybody—the biggest challenge was to stay awake—you're so  
23 tired. We'd have two pilots of course and two gunner crew chiefs in the back, and the  
24 gunner crew chief would be asleep—well as soon we got one of the pilots flies for thirty  
25 minutes and the other one flies for thirty minutes. Stick your head out the windows—try  
26 to get air and what not. You had an ADF (Automatic Direction Finder) radio—which was  
27 an Automatic Direction Finder, but it can also receive commercial broadcast stations, so  
28 we'd tune the radio to Saigon—crank it up—just to try to stay awake most of the time.  
29 Anyway, we were up that night and they told us that Tet—the celebrations—the  
30 traditional celebrations for the Vietnamese were—the planning was up in the air,  
31 celebrating and so forth. So that would be downtown in the village, and we were south of

1 there at the airfield. So they were, and we started seeing gunfire—could've been  
2 fireworks too, but it was all going off and then it went from going up in the air to  
3 suddenly going to Soc Trang—on the airfield. Mortar rounds started coming from every  
4 which direction and all hell broke loose, basically. We flew all that night—cause our only  
5 defense—our defense we had down there were supposed to be the ARVN and we had  
6 bunkers around the perimeter of the field and that type of thing. Well, they left—they had  
7 left before the attack. They knew something was coming and they left. So, our defense—I  
8 mean, we had people on the ground, at the field, you know the three or 400 people that  
9 were there—you had mechanics, you had cooks, and clerks, and that type of thing in the  
10 bunkers—and then the gunships. So, there were two gun platoons—the Vikings and the  
11 Thunderbirds, which were guns for the other company basically need aircraft. Ten  
12 aircraft they were available. So, we'd come in and we'd fire—come in and land—under  
13 fire, and refuel and rearm—never shut down, and go back out and as soon as you cleared  
14 the field you could start shooting because they were all around us. And that went on—  
15 and it seemed like it went on forever. We were taking hits and losing people. Aircraft  
16 were getting shot up, and mechanical problems happening as things progressed. Even  
17 during the day, we would take fire and stuff. We were sleeping in ditches—our personal  
18 weapons all lined up and what not. So, just the main thing, we're getting more and more  
19 tired—you're missing a week of sleep. The aircraft were just taking a horrible beating  
20 and we were getting short of people, cause of people getting hit. So, it was getting pretty  
21 bad, and we were running low on ammunition, running low on fuel—food, and  
22 everything else. The (inaudible) on the south end of the field—some of them were  
23 wearing a wire and we stopped them on the perimeter. So, it got down to a point where  
24 you were so tired you didn't—but you also didn't realize you were in a bad situation  
25 here, and we were at the end of the food chain in Vietnam again—the southernmost unit.  
26 Of course, all of Vietnam was under attack. It was difficult to even get any kind of  
27 support—everybody was in pretty bad shape. So, we were—kind of had an Alamo  
28 mentality at the end. It was like, “okay, they're gonna be here and what are we gonna  
29 do—this is going to be every man for himself kind of thing.” All of a sudden out of  
30 nowhere, when it was really desperate—it was in the afternoon—all of a sudden there  
31 were—two Air Force F-4s came roaring down and like firing at these people who were

1 on the south end of the field. It was like the movies. I mean everybody was up—jumping  
2 up and cheering, and what not. They were dropping bombs, and that stopped them. So  
3 that was a turning point, and then they were able to get a—a C-130 came in and this  
4 gunner would—it was unbelievable—he was taking fire all the way in—taking fire—  
5 never shut down—just dumping stuff out the rear end the whole time—fuel and ammo.  
6 From that point we started getting supplies and we were able to fight, but we—I mean we  
7 killed a lot of them. They came out of the holes, and we could see them, and really lot  
8 damage. It changed from that point forward—it was different, unfortunately. Cause  
9 before you had to ask permission to fire, and all that stuff, and by the time you did they  
10 were gone. They tried to take some—militarily we beat them. From that standpoint it  
11 becomes a different conflict going forward.

12 KC: How long did this heavy contact last?

13 BK: Most of February was intense. Not to the extent with the threat of being  
14 overrun, but they were all over the place. We actually found their main control  
15 headquarters, which was—turns out it was south from Soc Trang, and we were near it. It  
16 was a Buddhist pagoda. We would fly around it, and we'd see all these sampans and  
17 stuff, and we kept thinking there was something going on there. We couldn't get  
18 permission to fire. The South Vietnamese that were in command of the control aircraft  
19 wouldn't let us. Finally, as things evolved and kept getting worse, we asked for  
20 permission to fire—we call it recon but it's where we take the door gun and spray  
21 ammunition—spray fire around the area to see if we could get somebody to return fire,  
22 and we did, and all hell broke loose. They opened up and all these Buddhist monks had  
23 AK-47s under their robes and that type of thing. So, we opened up on it, and that thing  
24 went off like a roman candle, because it was their supplies in there—ammunition belts  
25 and what not—we leveled them basically. That kind of turned the tides, as far as, the  
26 heavy pressure. But, from that point forward I mean it was a lot of activity for us to do.  
27 The rules of engagement changed too, because we didn't request permission to fire and  
28 what not, we just took them out—much more aggressive.

29 KC: Yeah. Now what is your—obviously the defense of Soc Trang is the key  
30 here when you're under attack with rockets, and mortars, and VC sappers, and all this

1 stuff going on here. How far away from Soc Trang would you get to go out to search for  
2 these guys?

3 BK: Well during the actual conflict you took off—we were under fire. They were  
4 all over the place. They had actually—funny part was they had a 1<sup>st</sup> sergeant there. He'd  
5 been there for years—before I ever got there, and he was a living legend kind of thing.  
6 This guy—he must have had pictures on Westmorland, and everybody cause anything he  
7 wanted he got. He had his own quarters and same with my guy. It was unbelievable the  
8 way this guy lived. He was a wheeler dealer and during the—it's funny because we're  
9 taking fire from a building right downtown—with .50 caliber fire, which we couldn't  
10 contain right then—we didn't have—we weren't firing any. They're right downtown on  
11 the roof of this building firing right down the runway, and so we start shooting at them—  
12 the best we could—coming at it from different angles and putting rockets in and stuff.  
13 We're in refueling and rearming, and re-up in the middle of the night and the aircraft  
14 running, and this guy—1<sup>st</sup> sergeant guy—come running up and he starts screaming upon  
15 the engine and everything that we're blowing up his building. And I said, "Well yeah  
16 we're blowing up his building. We gotta get these .50 caliber." He actually had a  
17 restaurant or something down there, but we blew that thing up. But it was ironic, that here  
18 you have a guy like that in the mist of all this worried about if his business is getting  
19 blown up.

20 KC: And this goes on for most of February as you said. When you're not flying  
21 what are you doing? I mean, you gotta eat, you gotta rest, you gotta do the daily things—  
22 but you're constantly under fire here at Soc Trang. What is that like? What does the  
23 routine become during this month?

24 BK: It was just—you're so tired. Anytime you weren't in the cockpit you would  
25 just sleep or trying to—like I said we were in a ditch—parallel to the runway. We'd sleep  
26 in there the best we could. I remember getting so tired and so just exhausted, and I finally  
27 said, "I'm gonna take a shower." So, I went in and took a shower—the water still worked.  
28 I remember coming out and walking back to my ditch, and there's this bullet hit right in  
29 over my shoulder, actually I think it was my nose and it hit the sandbag that was right  
30 next me—I still have it. But I didn't care, I was just like, "okay." I just picked the bullet  
31 out of the sandbag and, like I said, still have it. You just accept—you're just so tired that

1 you got to the point where you just didn't care. Of course, that wore on you in flying,  
2 cause you're flying things it was glaring. Main thing I remember is just exhaustion, and  
3 how tired we were. And, of course, we lost people and that was very, very hard.

4 KC: How many people do you think you lost? Just roughly.

5 BK: Well, between the two units—you know we had a lot of wounded and we  
6 were trying to evacuate them because couldn't care for them. In the gun platoon we had  
7 four or five that were killed. I don't know, to be honest, how many in the whole base. We  
8 took a number of temps and the unit on the south end of the field took more than we did,  
9 cause they Army. We had them on the perimeter of ours, but they got tied up in the  
10 concertina wire. One of them was a barber—we had a little barber shop—the officers  
11 barber shop where we'd pay in corn husks—and this guy had been there for years before  
12 I got there—Vietnamese guy. He'd give you'd you a haircut and use straight razors to  
13 cut your hair. Of course, we all have flattops—enough to skin you. We found him dead  
14 on the concertina wire. He was a VC colonel, and he had maps on him and bunks where  
15 everybody was located, and what not. They knew—with all of them working on the base,  
16 I mean they knew who was where and what was where—they'd target certain areas.

17 KC: Yeah. You mentioned barber—what does this mean to you? This guy had  
18 been there for a long time and apparently y'all obviously thought he was a pretty  
19 innocuous character, and then to see that—what does that mean to you?

20 BK: Well, it was—the workers on the field they were—you kept your distance.  
21 There was never a friendship with any of them—they would come do their thing and they  
22 would leave—we knew the women and the mama-sans and stuff. We suspected them—  
23 some of them—not necessarily individuals, but just overall we just felt things would  
24 happen—somebody gotta know something.

25 KC: Yeah, sense of unease, I guess.

26 BK: Yeah, there was a sense of distress. We didn't—like where the gunships  
27 were on a ramp, we just wouldn't let anyone near us. So, there was that element prior to  
28 Tet, but then after Tet we were really suspicious. He worked there for years.

29 KC: Yeah, hm. What about eating? Are you—is it just C-rats (C-rations) or how  
30 are you feeding yourselves?

31 BK: Yep. Well during that thing it was just C-rats, yeah.

1 KC: Yeah, that must have gotten old.

2 BK: Well, it'd get old on a good day.

3 KC: I would imagine.

4 BK: Day after day they really get old.

5 KC: Yeah, and you guys are obviously, like you said, your kind of at the end of  
6 the food chain as you say down there so far south—the entire country is under attack for  
7 the most part. Are you guys screaming for supplies? Are you screaming for support?  
8 What's going on here at the upper levels?

9 BK: Yeah, there was—I mean there was all that going on, but again our battalion  
10 headquarters had been almost overrun over in Can Tho. Then our sister companies up in  
11 Ben Lang—that field was partially overrun. In fact, we actually got sent up there to help  
12 them because they were really in bad shape. Of course, Saigon was under attack and so  
13 forth. We didn't know all this—we just knew the broad base attack, but I bet we were  
14 more concerned about our own enemies.

15 KC: Of course, yeah.

16 BK: The intelligence would come in—I mean, we would hear, “This outpost has  
17 been overrun, that place, and this that, and the others.” It was—nobody anticipated that.  
18 Nobody thought they had that capability, so it was really surprising.

19 KC: Yeah. What is it like? I mean, you mentioned how exhausted you were in the  
20 flying. You know, there's also the aspects of you maintaining the aircraft and getting it  
21 up and flying, and making sure you've got the rounds loaded up, that you've got the  
22 rockets, that you've got the ammunition you need, that you've got the fuel that you need;  
23 all this taking place under fire. What does that environment like?

24 BK: Well it was—again you adapt and you do the best you can give the situation;  
25 and the mechanics, and the crew chiefs, and what not, you know they did a phenomenal  
26 job trying to keep these things going cause they not only had the aircraft that you have to  
27 keep going, but you have the weapons' systems—cause if you didn't have the weapons'  
28 systems the aircraft wasn't any good. They did a phenomenal job at patching stuff up,  
29 and the aircraft would get shot up to a point where you could cannibalize them and do  
30 whatever they had to do to keep them going. I mean, a lot of times they were under fire  
31 on the runway working on these things, and so they did a phenomenal job.

1 KC: That's just incredible. And who's—it's still the ground crews I guess that  
2 are providing the protection?

3 BK: Yeah. They were still the out there on the perimeters and the bunkers. They  
4 were on the line the whole time.

5 KC: Yeah. I would guess that when you're not flying, you're sleeping or eating  
6 or preparing to fly; and as soon as you're ready to go you're back up in the air again.

7 BK: That's it.

8 KC: Yeah. There'd have been no point in having you out there with a M16 up on  
9 the perimeter, I guess.

10 BK: Yep. Well, I remember one time—I went into the officer's club—there was  
11 nobody in it—just trying to find some food. There was a guy sitting in the bar, and there  
12 was nothing in the bar. He was supposed to leave that day to go home because he was  
13 DEROS (Date Estimated Return from Overseas). He'd had a pretty rough tour. Anyway,  
14 this happened, and he was stuck there, and I remember him saying that he couldn't  
15 believe it—that he was gonna have to go out on the line and help out, so he did.

16 KC: Yeah, that's pretty rough.

17 BK: Bad timing.

18 KC: Yeah, timing is everything I guess, isn't it?

19 BK: Yep.

20 KC: So, what kind of toll does this take on the aircraft there? How many of them  
21 came out still operational?

22 BK: It kept—obviously to last. As I remember I think at the very end we had like  
23 four aircrafts still going, cause the others we would cannibalize them. The other unit on  
24 the field was much worse—they lost more; I think. They actually—I know they had one  
25 that was shot out of the air. It crashed and burned. They were down to just one or two.

26 KC: You mentioned that toward the end of the month you see these F-4s kind of  
27 deliver you guys to some degree from all of this mess, and then you had the transports  
28 coming in—how close were you to running out of ammunition?

29 BK: Very close. We were rationing it as much as we could and looking around  
30 everywhere we could for additional supply. We were also really low on fuel. If either one  
31 of those had run out, well, then we'd have been in real trouble.

1           KC: Yeah. And all of the mortars, all the rockets, the shelling, the POL  
2 (Petroleum, Oils, and Lubricants), and the ammunition weren't hit?

3           BK: Some of the ammunition was, yeah. Not a lot—I mean not the big—where  
4 the big supply was. But, I mean, we'd have like rockets out on the flight line and these  
5 like little, mini bunkers; but the rockets were somewhat exposed. I can remember  
6 sleeping right by where a mortar round hit. Luckily, the rockets didn't go off, but it  
7 ruined them all. There was some fuel—I think a fuel truck, or something hit—I remember  
8 fire. A lot of the buildings were hit.

9           KC: Yeah, it must have just been a month of chaos that would have been  
10 incredibly exhausting. I, obviously, couldn't imagine that.

11          BK: Yep, it was.

12          KC: Okay, well tell me about this—once you guys start to get resupplied and  
13 you've kept their heads down—you've obviously taken your own toll on the VC who  
14 were around there. Tell me about the immediate aftermath of this. What are you guys  
15 doing? You mentioned it was kind of a different type of war in that you were no longer  
16 waiting to be fired upon. That you were going out, being more aggressive; the rules of  
17 engagement had opened up in your favor I guess quite a bit more. Tell me about the, you  
18 know, ending this phase of the war for you there at Soc Trang.

19          BK: Well, I mean, everybody took a VC and us. The activity level diminished for  
20 a while, because everybody was suspended. So, we kind of had to regroup, and they did  
21 too, I'm sure. Once we got to that then we—it picked up and we would—I mean the rules  
22 of engagement were such that if we saw certain activity in certain areas we'd take it  
23 under fire—whereas before, like I said, we had to ask for permission and that type of  
24 thing. We didn't pull any punches. We were very aggressive in that aspect. The tone of  
25 everything had a more aggressive feel to it. The conflict itself—we wouldn't see it in  
26 mass numbers or anything like that like you did with the Tet Offensive, but we did  
27 definitely have a fair amount of contact going on. One time we found an old—several  
28 companies—it had to be several companies in one depot area, and we actually thought it  
29 was friendly troops. They were—it was kind of a ditch that they were in, and then we  
30 realized they weren't friendly. We took them under fire. We met with a class actually had  
31 like a textbook (inaudible) took mine to fire the gunships. They started, basically not

1 running, but they were migrating out of this area trying to get away. I went to an area that  
2 was a beach—part of the South China Sea, and they popped out on the beach. Well, the  
3 Navy was sitting there with a patrol boat and decimated them. It was one of those things  
4 where everything went the way it was supposed to work which often wasn't the case.  
5 They actually—they found in that case—they found one or two Chinese—well they  
6 assumed they were Chinese—advisors, we noticed the bodies were much taller than the  
7 Vietnamese and bigger, and they put on the paper and what not that they were Chinese,  
8 which we had never seen before—particularly down there.

9 KC: Yeah, that's pretty far south.

10 BK: Yeah. Well, we did—we operated a lot up on the Cambodian border where  
11 their supply routes were and try to interdict them. Quite often that would—we actually  
12 went into Cambodia several times when that—we didn't go into Cambodia—politically  
13 we weren't acknowledging we were there. They gave us these blood chips—and if you  
14 went down, we told—our families would be told we were killed in Vietnam not in  
15 Cambodia. There was nobody coming to get you if you went down. We were working  
16 with Special Forces.

17 KC: Tell me about that. Give me some details on this—this sounds really  
18 interesting.

19 BK: Well, again it was up in the Seven Mountains area with the Special Forces,  
20 and they would get inserted into Cambodia—that's where their supplies were. They  
21 would go in, and either capture or kill. They would have intelligence of where some of  
22 their leaders were and stuff and go on in and get them—and do other things. They never  
23 really told us a whole lot. We would support them, and it was limited—we didn't just  
24 (inaudible) not a good thing if you got caught up there. But we would go in—that's the  
25 first time I ever saw a tank was up there—it was a north Vietnamese tank, and of course  
26 we couldn't take on a tank—never learned to counter that. We saw much bigger weapons  
27 up there. They had a lot of—they were particular to .50 Caliber weapons and had the  
28 37mm, which fortunately (inaudible). It was not stuff that we really could handle—that's  
29 where their supplies were. I mean there were Flex, and all kinds of supplies. So, we'd go  
30 work with Special Forces guys, and then get them out of there when they finished what  
31 they were doing with that.

1           KC: So, you were kind of bringing them in—inserting them, and then pulling  
2 them out afterward?

3           BK: A lot of nights—night stuff, yeah. They actually—one of the funnier things  
4 was they actually—Special Forces would tell us about hearing helicopters come over or  
5 around their location at night—flying from the north to the south; and they weren't  
6 Americans. We went up there and spent several nights—camped out up there with  
7 them—waiting for these helicopters. What we were going to do I really don't know, but  
8 our radar control—we're looking for them, but theoretically they were gonna go pick  
9 them up on the radar and then vector us into them and we would shoot them down—I  
10 don't know how we'd do that in the middle of the night. We got launched several times to  
11 do that, and that of course never found anything. But we were all pumped up—we  
12 wanted a little air to air combat.

13           KC: That's really bizarre. I've never heard anything like that before. Interesting,  
14 yeah. So, what else about these missions with the Special Forces—was this what it  
15 amounted to for the most part? Was it just dropping them off and picking them up later?

16           BK: Well, from a gunship's standpoint, yeah. Only rarely would we—I mean,  
17 when we were there would we'd get called on to actually fire on someone, because we  
18 weren't supposed to be there.

19           KC: Right.

20           BK: And we didn't want to get totally engaged with these people. But we'd do  
21 anything—anything we could to support them. In fact, we were up there one time—it was  
22 during the day before—it was right on the Cambodian border—I mean, it could have  
23 been the Cambodian border, but we didn't know. There was a bunch of sampans, and we  
24 were shooting at them, and the gunner suddenly screamed that there was a ceasefire and a  
25 blonde haired guy in one of the sampans. So anyway, we came around—putting fire  
26 around it and what not, and this guy got out. Turned out he was an American GI who was  
27 getting an advisor down in the Delta, and he'd been captured and was being moved north  
28 in the sampan when we started firing into the sampans, and VC got all excited and he was  
29 able to pop out—they had him covered up—because he would pop out and wave, and he  
30 had blonde hair fortunately for him. We rescued him. He was one happy camper.

31           KC: Really? Do you remember his name?

1 BK: No.

2 KC: Huh.

3 BK: No, but he was happy.

4 KC: Yeah, I would imagine so. How did the rescue take place?

5 BK: Well, we're firing on these sampans and the VC—some of them got killed  
6 and some of them just jumped into the water. We two Chickasaw sound helicopters and  
7 they went in and picked him up, and we covered them while they while they did it.

8 KC: That's incredible.

9 BK: It was the only POW (Prisoner of War) that we ever had a positive outcome.  
10 We had another guy named James Rowe, and he was an Army advisor who had been  
11 captured way before I got there, and we constantly had intelligence about him being  
12 sighted in areas of the Delta; and we would launch and never could find him. One time  
13 we actually—in the middle of the night found a camp, and the fire was still going and  
14 there was a cage that was used for him, but they'd moved him. When I was there, we  
15 weren't able the guy, but afterwards they found him and rescued him, and that. There's a  
16 book about him—amazing book—and how this guy survived and was rescued and came  
17 back home so forth. He stayed in the Army—the Army over there he was a IV Corp  
18 military advisor attaché for the embassy in Manila, and was killed by a theft after all he's  
19 been through.

20 KC: Well, I'll be darned.

21 BK: Yeah.

22 KC: Ain't that something?

23 BK: James Rowe—he's penned an interesting book.

24 KC: Okay, we've got—Tet's out of the way, and you've mentioned you're a little  
25 more aggressive, where you're going, your tactics—take me through the last part here.  
26 What sort of things stand out in your mind in terms of missions, in terms of people, in  
27 terms of just the war in general? What's going on here? Take me through last half of your  
28 tour.

29 BK: Well, what we ended up doing a lot was we would—like the with the  
30 Vietnamese we'd inserted them inserted them in a LZ, but they wouldn't move a whole  
31 lot usually, so we would break away from them and start looking around in the peripheral

1 areas, and quite often we would find the bad guys and we'd take them under fire. We did  
2 a lot of that—not even being associated with the ground units. That, again, was part of  
3 being more aggressive and not politically worrying about what you were supposed to be  
4 doing. We had a lot of success with that. That kind of became the normal mode of  
5 operation. Nobody talked about it—I mean we didn't get any issues or concerns about  
6 anything, so that's the way we operated from that point forward and we were much more  
7 effective. We didn't really worry too much about it anymore, cause before it was such  
8 a—such an issue—we were really hamstrung.

9 KC: Yeah. You, obviously, had more of a relief to you too, I would assume.

10 BK: Right, that's your job—at least you're able to do it without being hand tied.

11 KC: Sure, sure—and y'all were doing that quite a bit from pilots to helicopter  
12 pilots for sure. Well, what is the—you mentioned you're being more aggressive, but  
13 what's the pace? Are you picking it up? Are you getting—you got the helicopters are  
14 being replaced, you got the pilots and guys being replaced as well—are thing picking up  
15 on that end as well?

16 BK: Yeah, you know from a supply standpoint, and everything started to, you  
17 know, get normalized from a people standpoint—got back to normal—whatever normal  
18 was which is normal. I went on R&R (Rest and Recuperation), and, you know—all that  
19 was good.

20 KC: Where did you go on R&R?

21 BK: Went to Australia.

22 KC: Tell me about that. When was this?

23 BK: That was in May. Went to—you had your of where you wanted to go and so  
24 forth, and so anyway I picked Australia. Went to Saigon and flew on a 707—Pan Am 707  
25 to Sydney. One thing that was interesting at that time Australia—politically they didn't  
26 want blacks coming there, and they were very open about it, and the Army was very open  
27 about it. The black guys they'd kind of just tell them, “You're probably not gonna be  
28 welcome there politically,” and they didn't like Asians either; so, it was apparently all  
29 white GI. But anyway, we went there—went to downtown Sydney and stayed at a hotel.  
30 The Army, of course, would tell you what's what and where's this or that. It was just, you

1 know, five days we stayed, and we had good food, and got to go around town—the  
2 Australians were very friendly—had a great time and fell in love with Australia.

3 KC: Yeah, what sort of things did you do or see?

4 BK: Huh?

5 KC: I'm sorry. What sort of things did you do or see there?

6 BK: Oh, just—King's Cross, which is in downtown Sydney—it's kind of a night  
7 spot and we'd go to those—the bars and sports, and all the stuff we would do. We did  
8 some sight touring. I remember going to the zoo and on a boat across the harbor there.  
9 It's such a shock going from an environment like Vietnam and living conditions and  
10 everything else and get off the airplane and here you are in the real world. You just don't  
11 turn the switch over night, and there was that element. But it was really hard to get back  
12 on the airplane.

13 KC: Yeah, I was gonna ask you about that. What was that like?

14 BK: Not good. I mean you had a hundred whatever—707 can hold 150 or so  
15 people, so you have all these GIs showing up—a lot of them looked hungover—getting  
16 back on the airplane, and 90% percent of them were asleep before the wheels before the  
17 wheels came up. We took off, and like I said everybody was out, and we landed in the  
18 Rhine base across country—we landed in Darwin up on the northwest corner—which  
19 was a joint civilian military base. They said, "We're gonna be here for an hour and get  
20 off." So anyways, everybody unloads and go up the terminal—most of them sleeping in.  
21 I had noticed on the ramp that the crew was up looking up at the rotor on the aircraft, like  
22 pointing and stuff, and I'm thinking, "Well that's not normal." And they poke around  
23 some more, and then they come in and announce that—they're sorry to announce the  
24 airplane has got a mechanical problem and we're gonna be delayed. Well, I've never seen  
25 150 guys come to life so fast. These guys popped immediately up— "Where are we and  
26 what are we gonna do?" kind of thing. And the Aussies—because it was a military base  
27 to the Air Force, they—actually they take us over to their side of the base in the middle of  
28 the afternoon or a weekday or whatever it was. They take us into the Officers' club and  
29 start a party—only the Aussies can do it. I remember they had go-go girls—I had no idea  
30 where they came from, and beer, and food—we were there for two nights and slept in the

1 quarters. Just a grand ole' time, and then load up and back to Saigon. So, we got an  
2 extension on our R&R.

3 KC: You seem to luck into that when you leave the country.

4 BK: Yeah.

5 KC: But you get back and it's May of '68, and you don't have that much time—  
6 you've got a couple months left in country. I guess we can call you a short timer now.  
7 What does it do to one to be a short timer? You're aware of when your time is up there.  
8 Does anything change? Does your attitude change? Does your approach to things  
9 change? Your routine change at all?

10 BK: Yeah, there was some of that. I can remember just ready to get of there—  
11 just wanting to go. I can remember—I remember lying in my bunk one time and the  
12 Vietnamese smoke these raunchy cigarettes, and they smell horrible. And they were  
13 outside the window—they were of course talking in Vietnamese and they're smoking  
14 these things—I just said, "I don't want any more of this." Stuff like that—just small  
15 things. From a combat standpoint, yeah, in the back of your head that this is down to the  
16 wire here and anything could happen. But then at the end—the very end, we would just  
17 fly at night—theoretically. But, by then everything had calmed down a bit—there wasn't  
18 much going on anymore, but we'd keep a gunship over the field at night. So, the short  
19 timers would just do the night flights. They'd just go up and fly all night, and sleep in the  
20 day—that was pretty benign. Then just looking forward to going home, but I—I had one  
21 hiccup that happened while I was asleep, and they came running and woke me up and  
22 they said, "We've got a mission—we've gotta go." Only two guys on the ground were  
23 the platoon leader and me. So, we jumped in the aircraft, and we said, "Well where is it?"  
24 well he said, "Just head north and we'll brief you on guard," kind of thing. We didn't  
25 know what had happened or what—we knew it was bad, because they were flying that  
26 one, I mentioned in the smoked generator and what not. Finally, we got coordinates to go  
27 to, and as we approached it, they said, "We have some downed aircraft," and they gave us  
28 a frequency to talk to about the actual site, and you could hear all this gunfire in the  
29 background where the guy was talking to us. They had downed aircraft—kind of like  
30 Easter Sunday thing prior to that—and they needed to get the people extracted out of  
31 there and wanted us to fly—screen up and down. So, we did—we dropped down to fifty

1 feet and started going back and forth. Of course, anybody that had a gun in the world is  
2 gonna fire at this smoke aircraft—and same thing as Sunday we just didn't think hits that  
3 they did. And we fly back and forth—which I didn't like at all cause here I am—I'm  
4 supposed to go home in a couple of weeks, and you're sitting here in Viking surprise, and  
5 as the co-pilot you had nothing to do—you just sit there. You couldn't fight back, and  
6 you could see all these rounds coming at you and hitting the mud in front of you and  
7 stuff—pretty helpless feeling. I was defiantly aware this was not a good position to be in  
8 a couple weeks before I'm going home. Anyway, we flew good, got the people out. We  
9 took some hits, but nobody got hurt. That was that, and we got out of there.

10 KC: I might not be correct here, but were you shot down twice?

11 BK: Went down twice.

12 KC: Went down twice?

13 BK: Yeah.

14 KC: Yeah. I don't believe we talked about that yet.

15 BK: We just took some rounds in the gunship—took the transmission out—the  
16 oil filters for the transmission, so we lost transmission oil pressure. Well, you can't fly a  
17 helicopter without the transmission. And we were real close to where we had taken the  
18 fire and where the activity was, so we had to get the thing on the ground, so we did. I was  
19 rarely scared in Vietnam, but I was scared—on the ground is not my element. But we  
20 landed on the rice padding and the goal was that if you went down, you would get the  
21 weapons off the aircraft—the crew chief and gunner would get out and get a perimeter set  
22 up as best you could. And we'd get out—the pilots would get out and I had a .45. We got  
23 behind a Declan—we're in the water up to your neck and mud. My wingman was still  
24 flying over us fortunately and putting fire on them as much as he could—and called for  
25 additional help. But it was starting to get dark, and the bad guys start coming out of the  
26 trees. So, I take this .45—hadn't fired it the whole time I'd been there—and shot a couple  
27 of rice patties cause these guys all had AK-47s and stuff, and all hell broke loose—all it  
28 did was show them where I was. And the gunners were firing and what not, but these  
29 guys were coming after us. We'd had a crew shot down that we'd gone and got the  
30 bodies, and I'd seen what they did to the bodies, and I told myself that I would never be  
31 captured.

1 KC: What did you see?

2 BK: Well, this was in slicks, and we had word that that aircraft was missing, and  
3 it was dark the time we got there. We saw it burning, and went in. I remember hovering  
4 around with a landing light on trying to see what was what. It was too dark, and we  
5 couldn't really do anything, so we went back first thing in the morning. Well, the crew  
6 had been—two of them had been basically skinned alive, and the other two burned in the  
7 fire crash. So, the guys had been skinned, you know—they were mutilated. They died a  
8 horrible death. And so, I got to telling that to myself, "I'm not going to—this is no way to  
9 go."

10 KC: And now you find yourself in the middle of a rice padding obviously.

11 BK: Yeah, with them coming after us. I mean, they hated the gunships too, cause  
12 we—we caused a lot of problems, and so we knew if they got us, we were in trouble. But  
13 anyway, these guys were coming and my .45 was worthless, but the other guys were  
14 using what they had and that kind of held them back—and then the wingman firing. By  
15 the time we got other aircraft—we got extracted. We got out covered in mud. Took the  
16 radios and machine guns with us. The next day they actually evacuated the aircraft with a  
17 Chinook.

18 KC: How long were you on the ground?

19 BK: It seemed like forever, but it wasn't—probably an hour or so.

20 KC: What goes through your mind and body in a situation like that? What are  
21 you going through?

22 BK: I would think that I was scared, cause that's not what you're trained to do—I  
23 wasn't—you know, rudimentary you're trained but that's not—you could see them  
24 coming so you knew that things were bad. Nothing you could do but sit there, and that's a  
25 pretty helpless feeling. The good news was that we had a wingman over us—we knew he  
26 was in contact with our people.

27 KC: Yeah, must have been frightening.

28 BK: Yeah.

29 KC: Okay, well we got you with a couple weeks left, you know, being shot at  
30 here—Viking surprise. Now take me through last couple of weeks. What's the pace of  
31 life like for you there in your last couple of weeks?

1 BK: Well, it definitely slowed down. I mean, we did the night flights and we'd be  
2 down during the day—I mean just pull your heels. Be normal Army—do the paperwork,  
3 rely on the unit, and turn in equipment—just kill time. Get the orders for your actual  
4 flight—what day it's gonna be and what not—you were ready. You sent home stuff—I  
5 mean I had my stereo gear—my precious stereo gear, and what you'd think to have, but  
6 they'd put a bag—crate together and ship all that home before for your personal stuff to  
7 take with you. Helicopters would pick us up, and the last thing they would do in gunships  
8 was they would do a fly by with trailing red smoke down the runway for anybody who  
9 was leaving. And get on the helicopter and go to Saigon—come home.

10 KC: Obviously, you were done with your time there—you don't want to spend  
11 any more time than you have to I'm sure—but do you reflect on leaving—leaving the  
12 guys that you'd been there with?

13 BK: Yeah.

14 KC: What's that like for you?

15 BK: That part was—you're bonded like you'll never be bonded with anyone else,  
16 and that was difficult cause you think, "Well, okay, you're leaving but they're gonna be  
17 here." But that was just part of it. Once you got out of there, you know—I'm ready for  
18 home.

19 KC: All right, we've got you in Saigon. Pick up the process from there—what do  
20 you do in Saigon?

21 BK: We went to Long Binh where we'd come into the place. That was one thing  
22 I wanted to mention was that when I came back from Japan from being wounded—I met  
23 a guy we were up—we were at Long Binh and met a guy there who was coming back on  
24 his second tour into Vietnam and flown with the Soc Trang Tigers. We got in the same  
25 plane and went back to Soc Trang together. He was a great guy. He wanted to fly in the  
26 Vikings, so even though he was an experienced pilot the first couple of missions he was  
27 gonna fly co-pilot. He got killed in Tet. I was flying down the wing, and we were right by  
28 Soc Trang field, and he took one round to the aircraft—we sat in armor seats with the  
29 plate at your feet and chicken plate on your chest—this one round it came right through  
30 the little crack between the two and hit him in the heart and he was dead. I mean, he was

1 dead there. Had a family in Alabama, and all that—he was a super guy. That was—when  
2 left Long Binh—that’s where we processed out and took the flight—came home.

3 KC: Take me on this flight. What is this one like for you?

4 BK: All I can remember doing is sleeping. It was a long flight—you couldn’t do  
5 anything at that point. Sleeping and ready to get off and get home. We landed at Travis  
6 (Air Force Base). There were several of us pilots, we got a cab actually at Travis and we  
7 we’re gonna go to San Francisco. That was surprising, cause as soon as we came off the  
8 base there were anti-war protesters. I’d heard some of that stuff but didn’t dwell on it—  
9 didn’t care about it. But these people we’re lined up, and women—young girls they had  
10 signs up—the whole thing and screaming. We were dumbfounded—we were all shocked.  
11 They hadn’t told us anything about that. So, we’re in this cab and we’re just going down  
12 the road. So got to San Francisco, and actually, I got out of my uniform—changed into  
13 civilian clothes—didn’t want any more of that—and flew to Houston.

14 KC: That must have been quite a shock for you.

15 BK: Yeah, it was.

16 KC: What did you think about these protests and the protesters at this point?

17 BK: I was repulsed, really, because you’ve been through all this and had all these  
18 people that, you know, been hurt and died, and everything else, and then this is the  
19 welcome home. Yeah, it wasn’t good.

20 KC: Well, why don’t we stop there for today, Mr. Kent?

**Interview with Barton Kent**

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

**Date 18 June 2015**

1           KC: This is Kelly Crager continuing an oral history interview with Mr. Barton  
2 Kent. Today is 18 June 2015. I'm in Lubbock, Texas and Mr. Kent is joining me by  
3 telephone from his home in Bainbridge Island, Washington. Okay, Mr. Kent, last time we  
4 had you—we had you coming home. You were in San Francisco. You talked about, you  
5 know, seeing the—those who were there protesting, and you mentioned that you took  
6 your uniform off. Now this was not an uncommon for a lot of guys coming back as I  
7 understand it, and often times—I think sometimes they were told to—they were told by  
8 their superiors there to take off the uniform just to avoid any sort of possible  
9 confrontation. But you get back to Houston—what's it like to be back home from the  
10 war? Here it is in 1968—what's it like to be home in that area?

11           BK: Well, it was good. It was just good to be back and live a normal life, and see  
12 people, decompress—the transition period—I didn't take that long in Houston. I'd  
13 originally received orders to go back to Ft. Wolters to be an instructor, and then just a  
14 week or so before I was coming home, they were changed to the Hunter Army Airfield in  
15 Savannah, Georgia, which was further from home, of course, but I was really interested  
16 in going to Savannah and seeing that—the history and so forth—scope the area. So, I  
17 actually looking forward to that next assignment and ready to get on with it.

18           KC: Okay, so you come back here in '68. You wind up down at Hunter Army  
19 Airfield. Tell me about your time there.

20           BK: Originally, I was—it was Hunter-Stewart, with Hunter being the old Air  
21 Force base in Savannah itself and Stewart being the large Army base down south of it out  
22 in the swamps of beautiful Georgia. Originally, I was assigned to Ft. Stewart to be a  
23 tactics instructor. Ft. Stewart was an old World War II era base, and everything was  
24 wood, winter village type accommodations and I was staying in the BOQ (Bachelor  
25 Office Quarters), which was—my quarters in Vietnam were actually a little better, and so  
26 it was a little bit of a letdown to be around Stewart, and Hinesville, Georgia wasn't much  
27 to offer. I wasn't real thrilled about all that, but it was just part of it and getting  
28 acclimated to the area; and I realized that there wasn't a whole lot to do down in that  
29 area. I went through—we had to wait a period of time to get through the IP (Instructor

1 Pilot) school for tactics IP and got through that and started carrying classes as a tactic's  
2 instructors. An opportunity came up where I could get transferred up to Savannah to  
3 Hunter, which I jumped on because that's really where I wanted to be. So, I took that, and  
4 moved up to Savannah. Went through contact IP course where'd you teach the students  
5 how to fly the Huey and carried classes through there and really enjoyed that—  
6 thoroughly enjoyed Savannah and all the history and what not—did all of that as I could.  
7 I did civilian flying at a small airport outside of Savannah at Statesboro, Georgia—that's  
8 where Georgia Southern University was—and actually been instructing airplanes up there  
9 with the time off, because we only flew half a day at Hunter; so, we had a fair amount of  
10 time off. I would go up there and do that on the weekends, or even during the week. So,  
11 did a lot of flying and saw a lot of the country—saw a lot of the history of the area, and  
12 really enjoyed it. Savannah is a beautiful city. Of course, the Vietnam War was still  
13 going, and people were coming and going. Hunter was—basically replicated Ft. Rucker,  
14 cause Rucker wasn't able to keep up with the capacity during the peak of the Vietnam  
15 War, and Hunter was to fill that in. Then we started getting Vietnamese students in,  
16 and—which was interesting, because of course they—their technical background varied  
17 dramatically. Some of them had never even driven a car. They would send them over to  
18 San Antonio to learn English, and then they'd send them to flight school. I can only  
19 imagine how difficult that would be—if I had been sent to Vietnam to learn  
20 Vietnamese—to be in a foreign country and trying to learn how to fly, so they varied  
21 their skill level very dramatically. That was an interesting experience—an interesting  
22 challenge trying to teach them, and some of them were very good and some of them were  
23 not so good. So, we had that element that was interjected in with the Americans, and then  
24 we also had foreign students from different countries that we would carry through. Then I  
25 got transferred to the Flight Standards Division, which we actually trained the—CMOI  
26 Contact Method of Instruction, where we trained the instructor pilots. We would get them  
27 when they came back from Vietnam, and then train them to be the instructor pilots. That  
28 was a lot of fun. Actually, had an opportunity to do a lot of different things—we'd do  
29 check rides with a lot of the students, and the instructors. We had an opportunity—couple  
30 of the POWs—fellows that had been POWs had been repatriated and we had the  
31 opportunity to fly with them and get them recurrent and stuff. Talked to them about their

1 experiences and stuff, so that was a little different perspective. There weren't that many  
2 Army POWs, so it was interesting from that standpoint. We carried on—I had a  
3 roommate, and apartment in Savannah. There was the possibility of being sent back to  
4 Vietnam, even though you were gonna get of the Army. In hindsight, I wanted to get out  
5 of the Army. My roommate actually got sent back to Vietnam, and he was not a happy  
6 camper because he was going to get out of the Army and never really—they retrained  
7 him and sent him to Vietnam, and by the time he got over there he never really did any  
8 flying cause the separation factor. But it was always hanging over you that you would be  
9 going back, and you just accepted it if you had to; but didn't want to. The war was  
10 winding down—I mean it wasn't over, but it was winding down. The complexion of it  
11 was changing—they were doing the Vietnamization stuff. Then they came in and asked if  
12 people were interested in getting out early, and that about six months. I volunteered for  
13 that and got out six months earlier and was it.

14 KC: I wonder if you might go back a little bit. Your time as an instructor pilot,  
15 and instructor of instructors—what sort of things do you take from your Vietnam  
16 experience and relate to the students that you're talking to?

17 BK: Well, the time I was a tactics instructor we were teaching them what they  
18 were gonna do in Vietnam or trying to best convey what they would be doing in Vietnam,  
19 and of course a lot of that was based on what we did in Vietnam. We'd try to impart  
20 everything we learned both from the textbook and from real life and let them know what  
21 they would be doing and what they would be seeing. Of course, we had to follow—the  
22 instruction program is dictated by Army, but we also would add to that—embellish it  
23 with real life experiences when it was appropriate. You try to inject as much of the real  
24 stuff into the academic portion of it as you could without overstepping any bounds. The  
25 students I think they appreciated that—I know I did when I was going through flight  
26 school, and somebody would be able to relate directly what happened in a given scenario  
27 versus what theoretically happened. And by and large the students were good—there  
28 were always exceptions, but we didn't know that they were motivated. You could at that  
29 point, after all the anti-Vietnam stuff that we'd seen, but at that point they were still  
30 motivated to go and do the job.

31 KC: Tell me a little about the Vietnamese pilots that you would work with.

1 BK: Well, like I said they varied dramatically because I mean they had the  
2 language—I mean the majority of them didn't speak English when they came here, so  
3 they'd gone through condensed, crammed language school. Then there's language, and  
4 there's English, and then there's aviation; you take somebody who speaks English and  
5 throw them into an aviation environment—a particular learning environment—it's like a  
6 different language and you're not going to understand it. I can only imagine how difficult  
7 it was for so many of them. Mechanically, some of them were still very good—they  
8 would surprise you. They had—seemed to have a strong will to learn. The biggest  
9 problem was language, cause you say, “okay we're going to do this, do you understand?”  
10 because you didn't want them doing something else, and they would rarely ever say no  
11 because it just wasn't in their character; and then they would do what they thought they  
12 were supposed to do, and that wasn't the case. So, you had to, as far as an instructor goes,  
13 you had to really stay close and watch them, so you didn't get in a bad situation. They  
14 were eager students, and they tried very hard. I can't remember a single instance where  
15 you had a problem with somebody that had a bad attitude or something.

16 KC: Are you following the war very closely once you get back?

17 BK: I wouldn't say closely. I mean, we'd watch the news. I'd read the *Times* or  
18 *The Newsweek* or whatever about what was going on. Of course, we talked amongst  
19 ourselves a lot, because you know people would come back and go through the course it  
20 would be just normal conversation. You'd hear what their take was, and what had  
21 changed, and what was going on—where it was headed. It was a topic of conversation.  
22 The social—the friends you had—I mean it was within the military—you didn't relate  
23 much to the people in the community. Not necessarily by design or anything like that it  
24 was just—it was the people you had a familiar base with; you can communicate with.  
25 That's who we associate with—not that much in the community. But the city of  
26 Savannah—the town itself—we never saw anything anti-Vietnam there.

27 KC: So, when do you officially separated from the Army? You mentioned that  
28 you go an early out.

29 BK: I got out in January of '70.

30 KC: January of '70?

31 BK: Mm-hmm.

1 KC: All right. What did you hope to do once you left the Army?

2 BK: Well, I was going back to college. Literally got out of the Army one week,  
3 and the next week I entered the University of Houston.

4 KC: And what was your course of study there?

5 BK: Business. And that was a shock—well not a shock—well it was in a sense  
6 that here I'd just left the military after four years and enter school—it was like being on  
7 another planet because—they were kids—kids in my mind. I wasn't that much older—if  
8 I was any older at all. But I could not relate, because different context all together.  
9 They're priorities, and interesting stuff—totally different. It was a cultural shock from  
10 that standpoint—adapting. The thing that really helped was I joined the Texas Guard, so  
11 that provided an opportunity to be with people with common experiences—socialize with  
12 them and make friendships, and so forth.

13 KC: And when did you join the guard?

14 BK: As soon as I could. I had to fly—I actually flew to get off active duty. You  
15 know, the normal drill to get the papers processed and stuff. It was probably that summer  
16 before I was actually in the unit, which was Ellington Air Force Base in Houston. So, I  
17 would fly—I was instructing part-time out of Hobby Airport in airplanes, and then going  
18 to school, and then flying in the Guard. We were getting the first Hueys that the National  
19 Guard got. We were an airborne brigade—an experimental plane party that would round  
20 out units, so they'd be second airborne at Ft. Bragg. The only National Guard airborne  
21 unit—brigade. And so, we got the first Hueys the Guard got, so a lot of the guys that  
22 were in the unit prior that were—they were really old—they were Korean War guys. The  
23 Vietnam guys like me were just starting to get into the unit. We got the first three Hueys  
24 the Guard got and check people out in those and so forth. But the Guard was a lot of  
25 fun—you got paid—like a fraternity almost. We'd look forward to the weekends, and the  
26 other stuff that would come up. At that point in time the Army didn't look upon the  
27 Guard as anything very serious—it was like a big fraternity almost. I really enjoyed it.  
28 We flew all over the states. I'd take a Huey by myself and just go fly—nobody cared  
29 where you went—you'd just whatever you wanted. Obviously, it's changed dramatically  
30 over the years, but back then it was a totally different experience.

1           KC: Well as the war continues to kind of grind on and wind down—of course,  
2 you're in college pursuing a business degree, you're in the National Guard—Texas  
3 National Guard. What about early 1973? The Paris Peace Accords are signed, and the  
4 U.S agrees to remove all of its troops. What do you remember about that? What were  
5 your feelings on that?

6           BK: It was a sense that, among all of us I think that—it was no surprise. You  
7 know, everybody felt it was heading that direction, I think. It was good to get out of there  
8 and be done with it; because we surely weren't pursuing it aggressively and we weren't  
9 pursuing it militarily the way it should have been. It was mixed emotions—you felt like it  
10 was a defeat, but then you felt okay. If this first of the countries then so be it, and let's get  
11 on with it—but it in the rearview mirror. Yeah, there was mixed emotions.

12          KC: Let me take it to the next step—what about the fall of Saigon? Do you  
13 remember when that happened?

14          BK: Oh yeah. Just felt that it was pathetic, you know. The combination of—it  
15 was bound to happen because we weren't supporting the Vietnamese, and the  
16 Vietnamese—a lot of them, we felt, didn't have the will to fight anyway. So, when it  
17 happened it wasn't any surprise. It was, again, just reinforcing the sense that we failed—  
18 that it wasn't done right, and all that effort and the lives and money and everything else  
19 was wasted.

20          KC: When do you finish up your degree at University of Houston?

21          BK: Well, I actually ended up getting hired by the Texas Guard—again, like I  
22 mentioned, we were getting new aircraft with the Hueys, and we were getting brand new  
23 H-58s from Bell helicopter. The fella that ran the unit in San Antonio had been in my  
24 company in Vietnam, actually—prior to me being there—good ole' Texas aggie. He  
25 asked me to go to work there as a GS-12 flight instructor full-time. My goal was to fly  
26 professionally once I finished college, and this was an opportunity to fly and what not.  
27 So, I went ahead and did that, and moved to San Antonio and became a full-time flight  
28 instructor for the Guard. We flew airplanes and helicopters, and what not; and the Guard  
29 was growing then, as I mentioned, and getting new equipment and becoming more of a  
30 viable force. The fulfilling thing was helping out during disasters—when they'd have  
31 hurricanes or whatever—big storms. We would go out and help people, and that was

1 really the best part of it. We did that fairly often actually—so I enjoyed that for a period  
2 of time. I was going to night school in San Antonio, and actually finished up my degree  
3 there in business. So, I did that for about five years.

4 KC: So, you stayed with the Guard for five years, is that what you said?

5 BK: Full-time.

6 KC: Full-time?

7 BK: Yeah.

8 KC: Okay. So, that would've taken you what like 1975 I guess it would have  
9 been?

10 BK: Right.

11 KC: 1975—1976, that time frame, okay. Now do you stay in the National Guard  
12 part-time after this?

13 BK: Yeah. Well, at that point in time I was getting—one of the fellas in the unit  
14 worked for a company called Hughes' Helicopters—Howard Hughes, one of his  
15 entities—built helicopters—built the Rhode-6 for Vietnam, the BH-55, the stuff Mineral  
16 Wells for training. They had a commercial line. Anyway, he was marketing guy down in  
17 the Texas region—down in the central region of the United States. The fella was looking  
18 for something to fly for him, he had airplanes and helicopters, and I actually went into  
19 that—that was back in Houston; and flew corporately for three years and stayed in Texas  
20 Guard part-time during that period of time flying. After three years there I actually got  
21 offered a job at Hughes Helicopters as a sales manager for selling helicopters. So, I did  
22 that, and it became my career—spent the rest of my time in sales and marketing with  
23 helicopters.

24 KC: Interesting.

25 BK: Moved to California—became a regional sales manager and sold  
26 helicopters—civilian helicopters for Hughes Helicopters. Hughes Helicopters was bought  
27 by McDonald Douglas in 1984, and by then I was a Division Marketing Manager and had  
28 Regional Sales Managers working for me on the west coast and so forth. Then McDonald  
29 Douglas bought the company, and they invested in it. We were pursuing—we'd won the  
30 Apache Contract from the Army which we got sent the Hughes, because the company  
31 really needed that; and that's the reason McDonald bought the company. So, we had a

1 commercial product line, a military line; and McDonald Douglas built the brand new  
2 factory in Mesa, Arizona and we were in Culver City, California with Hughes—where  
3 Howard Hughes had built the Spruce Goose and all that. Then McDonald built the  
4 factory over in Mesa and moved everybody there. Then I went into International  
5 Marketing and had an office in Singapore—covered that part of Asia; and then ended up  
6 being the Area Manager for all of Asia for McDonald Douglas. I had an office in  
7 Cambria, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Seoul. Spent my whole life on airplanes bouncing  
8 around Asia for five years, and then came back—I managed both North and South  
9 America for the company in selling both military and commercial helicopters—did that  
10 for another four years; so, I spent nine years overseas. Got to do a lot of quality traveling.

11 KC: Yeah, sounds like it.

12 BK: Saw a lot of the world and all that—saw both the military and commercial—  
13 met some really interesting people and sold helicopters to Generals; everybody from Bill  
14 Gates to a guy trying to make a buck with a helicopter—seed owners like petroleum  
15 helicopters down in the Gulf of Mexico, and so forth. So anyway, it was a great career  
16 from that standpoint, and met tons of interesting people, and saw a lot of interesting  
17 things—spent a lot of time in China. The Army, from that standpoint, gave me the  
18 opportunity for a really interesting career.

19 KC: Yeah, it sounds like it.

20 BK: Then, I was going to retire—got recruited by American Euro-copter which is  
21 headquartered down in Grand Prairie. Franco-German manufacturer—actually worked  
22 for them for seven years doing sales.

23 KC: Well, I've got just a couple of last questions, Mr. Kent; and they're, you  
24 know, free and open for interpretation to answer however you see fit, because they're  
25 kind of broad ranging questions. The first is—looking back on your time in the military,  
26 especially your time in Vietnam, how do you think those experiences most affected your  
27 life?

28 BK: Well, the maturing period, obviously. The flying aspect of it from a pure  
29 flying standpoint—removing it from what you were doing—it was experiences you  
30 couldn't gain anywhere else. So, from the pure flying standpoint, it was very enriching.  
31 The relationships you formed at that point in your life when you're very young, you don't

1 realize at the time, but then as you grow older of course you realize that those are  
2 relationships you never would experience anywhere else; and they really don't go away,  
3 cause today we have this unit that we get together once a year and everybody is like a kid  
4 again. It's amazing what everybody remembers—it's like it was yesterday. So that period  
5 of time was very compressed—it made more impact on you than you ever realized when  
6 you were there or even when you were younger, but you realize later—both good and  
7 bad, but it doesn't leave. From that standpoint, it was a major life event. The Army as a  
8 whole, like I said, it opened the door and turned something I enjoyed into a career for the  
9 rest of my life—very fulfilling career and enriching career—so that was good. If I had to  
10 do it all over again, I'd probably do the same thing.

11 KC: My last question for you is another kind of broad one. We're looking at  
12 almost fifty years from your time in Vietnam—closing in on fifty years—sorry to break  
13 that bad news to you, but it is the truth—and Vietnam has come to mean a lot of things in  
14 the United States, you the war that is. What do you think is the lasting historical legacy or  
15 significance of Vietnam? When we say the Vietnam War, what do you think it means in  
16 the larger sense?

17 BK: Hopefully it was a learning experience for the country, which I think is still  
18 debatable. It's interesting, because here where I live in Bainbridge Island there's a fella  
19 here that I met who's French but has lived here in the United States for many, many  
20 years. He was in the French Navy when he was sixteen in Vietnam, and he spent almost  
21 two years there; and was at Dien Bien Phu when the French fell and were kicked out.  
22 And as he talked and related what the French did, it was so interesting because we did  
23 almost the same exact things, which were wrong. We obviously didn't learn from the  
24 French, because we made the same foolish as a country. You look at subsequent events—  
25 particularity when we were in Iraq, and of course, Afghanistan most recently. It again, we  
26 seem to go down—we have not learned from past engagements where there were  
27 mistakes, and that's disappointing, because you know people sacrifice and you should be  
28 able to learn from those. A lot of us don't feel like we have, and we continually make  
29 mistakes internationally—commit resources and people to these events that aren't well  
30 founded. That's the greatest disappointment I would think.

1           KC: Well, Mr. Kent, is there anything else you would like to add to the interview  
2 before I bring it to a close?

3           BK: No—like I say I'll gather this stuff I have and have Anna's email  
4 information and I'll be sending it on for what it's worth. It's a great thing to hear you,  
5 you did a great job then.

6           KC: Well, thank you. I appreciate that. Well, okay, we'll go ahead and bring an  
7 official close to the interview then.