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**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Dewey Barich
Conducted by Kelly Crager
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Transcribed by Mark Steven Varela**

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 Dewey Barich. Today is 28 March 2016. I am in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of Texas
3 Tech University. Mr. Barich is kind enough to join me by telephone from somewhere
4 between Little Creek and Dover, Delaware this afternoon. Mr. Barich, to begin the
5 interview, I would like to get some background and biographical information from you if
6 I can. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

7 Dewey Barich: It was 17 February 1940 in Mt. Pleasant Michigan. My dad was
8 working for the State Department of Education as I understand it and that's where we
9 happened where the family was living at the time.

10 KC: Okay, what was your dad's name?

11 DB: His name also was Dewey. Different middle initial but it was Dewey F, for
12 Fredrick, Barich.

13 KC: What about your mother? What was her name and what did she do?

14 DB: Mom's first name is Verna. Eddie was her maiden name. She was a
15 registered nurse. I don't think she was working at that particular time, but she
16 was college educated registered nurse and she did work in nursing later on again.

17 KC: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

18 DB: I have three sisters. One older and two younger.

1 KC: You mentioned that you were born in 1940.

2 DB: Correct.

3 KC: This was during the early stages of the second World War and certainly
4 before the US gets involved. Although you would have been very young throughout the
5 course of the second World War, do you have any memories of that taking place?

6 DB: (Voice breaks) Yes, I do sir. I'm trying to get it together here.

7 KC: Would you like a moment?

8 DB: My earliest recollection as a child was the night, we put my dad on the train
9 to essentially go off to war. He had applied over a period of time for commission, and we
10 see their commission in the Navy. We were living in Kent, Ohio at that time and the train
11 station that he left on was in Rivera, Ohio. I remember us, it would've been my older
12 sister and I and mom driving him to the train station while he was leaving to go to basic
13 Navy training, he had commission as a lieutenant. I think actually his commission was
14 lieutenant JG (Junior Grade). He didn't start out as an ensign. I believe he started out as a
15 JG and it was in Naval Reserve, and he was in the landing ship business, LCI. Landing
16 craft infantry. A lot of their training was done in Solomons, Maryland. That's basically
17 where he was going that night but that's the earliest thing that I can remember but it
18 was a significant part. It was also difficult for me because I never forgotten that.

19 KC: That would've been a really difficult thing for a young boy to see.

20 DB: Well, of course I didn't understand it at all but it I knew where he was
21 leaving. Just something about that night has stuck with me. Of course, the fact that he
22 went through, and I have his records and so on, I know the effort that he went through to
23 get a commission because he was at that time, he would've been thirty two, thirty
24 three years of age with three dependents and not real high on the list to be drafted
25 certainly but he saw his duty to get involved more directly in the war
26 effort. He initially as I understand it had tried to get a commission in the Marine Corps
27 and they didn't have a place for him. So, he took the navy commission and was involved
28 in that operation and his flotilla that was the term they used. His flotilla left out
29 of Solomons area. Solomons, Maryland area and went down through the Panama Canal
30 and west across the Pacific. I've seen pictures later on of the ships. Ships are not the right
31 word. These were big boats and flat bottomed because of the landing craft of course. The

1 flotilla was escorted as he described it. It was destroyers or something went all the way
2 across the Pacific that way and he was involved in MacArthur's returned to the
3 Philippines. Took part of the landings in the Philippines. He was on the beach, they
4 pulled in on the beach. The landings that were going on at the time, the lady gulf situation
5 and several of the craft were on the beach there and the one next to his took a direct
6 kamikaze hit and it was carrying a lot of the ammo for the flotilla, and it got real nasty for
7 them. He was evacuated out and he came back through Hawaii and San Francisco. In
8 fact, to an atlas and was in a hospital there. I remember going with mom and my older
9 sister to—not at all clear about that stay. It wasn't physical wounds, it was more of—I
10 don't know what they call it now, post-traumatic stress or something. Maybe that's what
11 they call it now. My mom would say in talking about it that he was in a very fragile
12 state. Affected him quite a bit. The trauma of that incident and the young men under his
13 supervision were wounded and killed in that attack. He made it through obviously
14 and came back to Kent where he was the—let's see if I can remember it. The director of
15 the industrial arts program at Kent State University before and after. That's where he was
16 working when he got his commission. Then he came back to that job, and I remember
17 that. I remember very specifically in August of '45, the night of V-Day. I was playing at
18 a friend's house just a few doors down from where we lived there. I heard the car horn
19 honking. It was my dad just wanting to make the noise because the word had just come
20 through that they had signed the end of the war documents there. I remember we drove
21 over. I thought it was to Akron, but people told me it wasn't. Someplace where they were
22 having a spontaneous parade. I'm trying to remember that night. Those events were, I
23 guess larger in many ways in the course of my life. I'm sure for a lot of people in the era.

24 KC: It speaks an awful lot about your father and his devotion to the country. It
25 seems that he was not—it wasn't necessary for him to do what he did, but he chose to do
26 it anyway.

27 DB: That's basically the way I see it. As I say, given his age and his
28 dependance. That's not to say he would've been drafted or called in some way, but he
29 chose not to wait for that and at that time he had at least one brother that was in
30 the service and in the course a lot of friends and so on that were involved directly in the
31 war effort. He was a very patriotic about it. He and my mom both were first generation

1 born in this country and my dad's background was Serbian. They were—he and my mom
2 were very poor and grew up in Hibbing, Minnesota iron ore region and that's where both
3 their fathers were involved in the mining. The iron ore mining up there. That was the
4 oldest born in this country. He had an older brother that had been born in the old country
5 in Yugoslavia, but he was the oldest one. First born in this country.

6 KC: That certainly speaks to his character and belief in country.

7 DB: Yes, yes sir absolutely.

8 KC: He suffered this obviously difficult experience difficult episode there in the
9 Pacific. Was this something that he came to terms with and dealt with pretty
10 successively as he moved through with your mom?

11 DB: Well, he stayed—if I understand your question, he stayed active in the Naval
12 Reserves long after the war. He attended the monthly meetings or whatever. I remember
13 he was being at Akron They met at some faculty there in Akron, Ohio. But he stayed
14 on an advanced to I think when they finally said “We don't need you on the list anymore,
15 I think he was a lieutenant commander in the Reserves. But he kept that as apart of his
16 life. I remember the two weeks sessions during the summer he would be called to
17 active duty as a reservist. But yes, it was an important part of his life for sure.

18 KC: Outside of the war which obviously had a tremendous impact in your life,
19 what else do you remember about growing up? What was the kind of the
20 neighborhood you grew up in? Tell me about school, tell me about being a kid in
21 Ohio growing up in the 40s and 50s.

22 DB: Okay, well as I say. I can go back about '43, that was when he left. We were
23 living in town in Kent. It was on Oak street I remember that. I couldn't tell you the
24 house number, but I do know it was Oak Street. We were renting a home at that point
25 and shortly after the war ended, we were advised that that owner of the home had a
26 relative, a son I believe, coming back and he wanted him to be able to move into that
27 home so we had to find a place and my parents did find a place a little bit outside of town
28 and purchased it with the help of a good friend of my fathers who actually held
29 a mortgage on the property and we lived there until 1952. Dad had taken a job with Ford
30 Motor Company at that time was the director of their industrial art awards program. His
31 office was up in Dearborn, Michigan. That's where we left and came back to Michigan. It

1 was going up outside of town. I remember mom in particular like to garden. We had a
2 couple of acres there and I remember raising rabbits. I had one sister born shortly after
3 the war about '47. Then we looked outside of town, so we had those activities going
4 on. No real close by neighbors living in the country, people lived a little farther away. It
5 was good, I attended for grade school it was the school associated with Kent State
6 university which had an education department and there was a Kent State University
7 school. I went through kindergarten through sixth grade there then I transferred
8 out to what was called Franklin Township local school. It was just a public school out in
9 the Township, and I remember wanting to do that because when I was at the Kent State
10 school, we had summer school because of course they had some student teachers that
11 needed work, so we had six weeks summer school period and I really hated that. One of
12 the motivators for me was to go to Franklin Township school so I wouldn't have to go to
13 summer school. We went out there, I also remembered being in the soapbox derby. That
14 was a big thing for me growing up. At that time, the soapbox derby was really a big
15 thing. Of course, the nationals were held in Akron which were very close which
16 contributed to the fact that it was very popular in our area. I completed two years in that,
17 building a car and running that race. I finished third the second year. I finished third in
18 the run. But that was a big deal. That was somewhere in '52 in that fall we made the
19 move to Ypsilanti, Michigan. Again, we had property outside of town. Not a farm, but
20 in farm country and I think we had four acres. We were there and I got into the poultry
21 business along with school and high school and sports. I was interested in sports, but I
22 wasn't very good at any of them, but I did play football. I attended that
23 Roosevelt school. Roosevelt High School which again at that point was associated
24 with Eastern Michigan University which was I think was called Eastern Michigan
25 Normal College or something like that and then later they just changed the name of
26 it. But it was a teaching school as well. So, the high school was associated with that
27 institution. It's no longer there, it was close sometime after I graduated. They dropped
28 that function of the school. As I said, it was active in 4-H and had the poultry business
29 primarily egg business. Had a couple hundred laying hens there. Most of my high school
30 days and made some money that way and made that money to buy a car and do some
31 other things. My youngest sister was born the fall we moved to Ypsilanti. She was born

1 in Michigan. We lived in the country; we didn't have real close neighbors. Lots of friends
2 but just the fact that we lived out from town. Didn't necessary have the interactions.
3 The day to day interactions like during the summer where you have kids and so on
4 that you get involved with. Didn't have so much of that after I got my car of course that
5 was a little different. They were good times. I enjoyed that time of life. That area where
6 we were. It was good.

7 KC: That's definitively a terrific look at the local version of growing up
8 there. I wonder if you can pull back the lens a little bit and tell me about what you
9 remember about what was going on in the world. Obviously, this is the beginning of the
10 Cold War. You have the Korean War taking place. All of these different things between
11 the US and Soviet Union around the world. Do you remember any of those kinds of
12 things going on?

13 DB: I do remember the start of the Korean business. Because of course that was
14 the Pacific and the seventh fleet. We were somewhat concerned that my dad might get
15 involved in that in some way which of course did not happen, but I do remember that.
16 The Korean War and all those activities going on. Certainly, the Cold War. I knew what
17 was happening there. In my high school days, I was developing quite an interest in the
18 Air Force, so I certainly kept up on particularly the activities of Strategic Air Command
19 and what they were doing and what was involved. I had quite an interest of being able
20 to recognize airplanes and things of that sort. I had great interest in aviation. So, I
21 certainly knew about those kinds of things and of course would've been my senior year in
22 high school was when the Russians launched Sputnik and also along about that same
23 time, the U2 shot down over Russia with Francis Powers. I remember that event and very
24 much aware of the Cold War and thinking that my dad done what he had to do, and it
25 looked like it was just going to be our turn to however you want to phrase it I guess to
26 keep the country free. It was going to follow us. I developed a desire to be in the
27 military while I was in high school. When I first heard about the Air Force Academy
28 while I was in high school. Of course, the first class answered at the Air Force
29 Academy entered in '55 must've been because I graduated in '59. I was very much aware
30 of that institution, and I really wanted to attend, and I started working on the appointment
31 process during my high school days and I actually applied and took the physicals in my

1 senior year and at that time to be a nominee to the academy you had to be
2 pilot qualified. Physically pilot qualified and I was not because of my eyes. I have
3 something like 20/25 or 20/30 vision and some depth problems so I was not eligible to
4 enter with the class I would've entered which would've been at that point '62. The class
5 of '62. In '58, I entered in '58.

6 KC: So, you graduated high school in '58?

7 DB: Correct. I was still interested in the military but obviously that
8 wasn't opened to me at that time, so I entered the University of Michigan. I enrolled the
9 University of Michigan. Took classes in the summer. I went right from high school to
10 summer school at the U of M. In fall I joined the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training
11 Corps), so I was active in ROTC in the U of M. During that time, they changed the
12 requirements, the physical requirements of the Air Force Academy to allow if you were a
13 navigator qualified which basically was a 20/50 vision and I could fit that, so I applied
14 again for an appointment to the Air Force Academy and I didn't have—I applied and
15 took all the tests and so on, but I didn't get the appointment. There was a process
16 involved and each congressman and senator has a certain number. I can't make the
17 appointments. I didn't achieve that; I didn't get that appointment. So, the Air Force
18 offered a hundred of us who were qualified and didn't get appointments gave us
19 the option of enlisting in the Air Force Reserve and attending preparatory school. Air
20 Force Academy Preparatory School which at that point was '59. The Air Force Academy
21 combined with the Naval Academy at—combined with Air Prep School at Bainbridge,
22 Maryland and we attended that and that gave us an additional approach, a different
23 additional possibility because the reserve component also had appointments
24 available. So, by listing and going through this program we were eligible for the
25 appointment through the Air Force Reserve. As it turned out, I got my congressional
26 appointment while I was going through an Atlas Prep School at Bainbridge, Maryland.
27 That's how I actually got my congressional appointment. It was third times the charm.

28 KC: Yeah, I guess so.

29 DB: So, I enter the academy that summer of '60 and I graduated in class of '64.

30 KC: It must've made you feel really good to get this appointment to get
31 this congressional appointment.

1 DB: Yes, absolutely. Long time coming.

2 KC: What had change Mr. Barich? What had changed when you applied the first
3 time and this time?

4 DB: Basically, it was the physical things which made me eligible then it was-
5 maybe my congressman was Representative George Meiler maybe he got tired of seeing
6 my name come through. And thought, “let’s appoint him and get him on his way. Open it
7 up for somebody else.” Certainly, grow up a little bit during those periods of
8 time. Eighteen to age of twenty. Had that experience at the university and then
9 the enlisted time even thought it was all school time, it was still enlisted time and all
10 those things occurring made people grow up a bit.

11 KC: How are you adjusting to the new military aspect of your life and education
12 prior to Colorado Springs?

13 DB: I didn’t have any problems with the military I guess you say I adjusted very
14 well. I always had a respect for authority, and it just wasn’t a problem for me. I certainly
15 enjoyed the contacts. The good friends I still have actually from classmates from
16 there. That was—it was good. I guess I was a pretty good fit into the military.

17 KC: I don’t want to assume anything here, but one might assume that your
18 father’s role and experience in the military had an effect on you and your desire to go to
19 the Air Force Academy and certainly achieving that would’ve been great beforehand.

20 DB: Yes, my father was very supportive of it. Although I have to tell you I wasn’t
21 pushed at all. I wasn’t pushed at all. They were just—both my mother and my father were
22 supportive of it. My father more than my mother. My mother worried things about that
23 she never understood and didn’t care for necessarily.

24 KC: What kinds of things?

25 DB: Well, for example, when I was a freshman, we called those doolies at the Air
26 Force Academy, freshman year. I remember one—it may have been the first parade that
27 we had after basic training, after basic summer when we were—the class
28 was integrated into the wing, and we had a parade and I passed out at that parade standing
29 at attention for the parade. I got I think was seven demerits for it and I told them
30 about that, and my mother was just horrified by the fact you get demerits for passing out

1 at the parade. But you weren't supposed to do that. It's against the policy. Those kinds of
2 things she didn't have a lot of patience with.

3 KC: Yeah. That's often times a mother's role.

4 DB: You bet.

5 KC: Tell me about the Air Force Academy. This is a pretty
6 new organization, pretty new outfit when you arrived there. Tell me about the place, tell
7 me about the education.

8 DB: Yes, it was very new. We were actually the 6th class to graduate the class of
9 '64. So, they had not been at the facility very long. I think we were the first class to enter
10 and graduate from the completed facility. Completed as it was. Education was
11 balanced education was a basic Bachelor of Science program and at that time there were
12 several majors that you could select from. Political Science, Engineering, one or two
13 others. It grew exponentially since then. The number of programs they now offer. But at
14 that time, it was those basic ones. They put me into the engineering category, the
15 engineering major which is what I graduated with. Bachelor of Science with major in
16 engineering. Very broad education. Poli-sci classes and psychology and the hard
17 sciences. Math, electrical engineering and all those things. Intramural sports are a major
18 aspect of the academy program. I was interested in the rifle team, so I was on the rifle
19 team for all four years. I was captain of the team my senior year. We did a lot
20 of traveling, we had matches all around the country actually. I enjoyed that aspect of
21 it. Had summer programs at that point. The second summer, the summer between our
22 first and second years—sometimes people did get a little confused because we talked
23 about fourth class year, third class year and so on and that's basically freshman,
24 sophomore, junior, senior. Senior being your fourth year. The summer between our fourth
25 and third class we had a tour of bases. We spent time with the Navy and the Army. The
26 major commands of the Air Force SAC (Strategic Air Command) and TAC (Training,
27 Advising, Counseling) I don't remember doing one specifically for the defense
28 command, but we had those other tours, and we go to those different places, we spent a
29 week with the Navy on a destroyer. I spent most of that being seasick, I remember that
30 vividly. We all got a chance to go supersonic at some point. I was in a F100 out of
31 George Air Force Base (AFB) and that was kind of a thrill.

1 KC: I bet.

2 DB: We saw Army down by Ft. Benning. Basic parachute school there. The
3 summer between my second class and first class year we had one of the options we could
4 do is go through the basic airborne course which I did so I have that experience.

5 KC: Tell me about that, why did you choose to do that?

6 DB: Well, it's one of these things for me it was to kind of to prove myself that I
7 could do it and prove to some other people maybe that I could do it. There was sort
8 of prestige involved in having done that. I was very thankful for the opportunity and
9 the experience. One of the things that I do remember because we were mixed in with the
10 Army troops that were going through the course the basic course—we were with younger
11 guys, a year or two younger than us. Most of them were right out of high school and so
12 on. I remember being in formation in the mornings and they'd be doing roll call and they
13 would be guys missing. That was unheard of for us. Nobody missed roll call or anything
14 like that. They had guys that were AWOL (Absent Without Official Leave). During
15 our second class year at the academy, we get a semester or two of law and some
16 basic military law. I knew the terms and all but have never experienced
17 it. Seeing somebody actually go AWOL. As I said, it was foreign to me. It was kind of an
18 eye-opener. I remember also we had some officers go with us because as cadets of course
19 we needed some supervision from the academy too. So, we had some officers going
20 through the program with us and they would be appointed as company commanders of
21 some of the basics. I remember one of the captains we had from the academy with
22 us telling us, the cadets, how it was interesting to him how he interacted—how it was
23 different for him with us as it was for him with the Army guys because the level of
24 intelligence and that sounds awful but the level of intelligence and experience, he can
25 relate it to us better than he can relate it to the army guys. He had said how much easier it
26 was working with the cadets than it was with the army guys.

27 KC: That stands to reason too of course given the level of education and
28 motivation and things. A lot of the Army guys who had been draftees and AWOL would
29 make sense to them where you are a cadet, you wanted this appointment, you worked
30 hard for the appointment it wouldn't make sense to you for sure. Well, tell me about the
31 school itself. What did you have to go through?

1 DB: Well, the toughest part physically was the summer, basic training. All the
2 obstacles and obstacle courses and very tight discipline, very strict
3 discipline. Everybody watching you, yelling all of the time. I think I went
4 through at least—we roomed with two to a room. I had at least three different roommates
5 during my first summer because they found out that this isn't what they wanted, and they
6 left. So, there was that going on. An attrition. We lost about a third of the entry prior to
7 the end of the summer. We were about thirty percent attrition. So, it was physically
8 tough. It put the strain on you mentally. Learning facts and so on and being able to
9 respond to them and being able to answer questions. It was demanding in that way. I
10 talked to some of my classmates now we get together, and we think about never want to
11 do that again. We are all grateful for the experience, but we never want to do it
12 again. Just the very first day when we report in, I remember going through the
13 initial check in and there were these very nice ladies that were handling the
14 administrative chores and taking down our information and so on. They gave us our
15 number. Our cadet service number. It was obviously a very unique number. I remember
16 them emphasize very firmly, "When you leave here, don't forget that number!" Because
17 you step outside the door and that's when they would say "Who are you, mister?" And
18 you had to recite and if you didn't know your number, you're in big trouble. It
19 was that kind of thing that I would remember of the highlights or lowlights of
20 the experience. A lot of discipline, a lot of education. Honor code of
21 course was very important aspect of cadet life. I like to kind think of it as the work was
22 hard. The studying and course load that we carried and all the other
23 activities. The workload was hard, so I like to say the work was very hard. Life was
24 easy. Life was easy and some of the things like you didn't have to worried about what
25 you're going to eat today. You didn't have to worry about what you're going to put on
26 today. Some of those very basic things I know from my son being in school later
27 on and worry about those things an awful lot. Some of the aspects of military life are easy
28 where the work was hard if that is making any sense to you the way I'm describing it.

29 KC: Yes, sure. While you're going through the academy, this is essentially the
30 presidency of John Kennedy. What did you think about Kennedy? What did his
31 presidency mean to you?

1 DB: Well, I didn't vote for him. But he was our president, and he was our
2 president, and he was—I remember very well where I was when he heard that he had
3 been assassinated, been shot. We were eating lunch and Mitchell hall was the dining
4 hall there at the academy. Everybody started eating and then we got called to attention
5 and this never ever happened after initially sat down and eat. There was no
6 break. This day there was a break, and they made that announcement that he had been
7 shot. Policy wise, I don't remember worrying too much about it. I know
8 we went through some drills during the Cuba Missile Crisis activity because they wanted
9 us to be able to get undercover possibly. The need for that so I remember us going
10 through some exercises where we lead down through the athletic buildings and tunnels
11 and so on be more underground in the event of a nuclear-type attack because that was
12 of concerned. Of course, he was certainly a part of that. Policy wise, I don't think we
13 really formed a negative opinion certainly. We were aware of the buildup; the
14 starting build up in Vietnam even then. I remember that was my reason, we had to take a
15 foreign language selection. We had to have a foreign language and I chose French
16 because of the activities going on in Indochina I figured if any of them, that might be the
17 one that might be of benefit. But it was because of the active activities going on in
18 Indochina at that time.

19 KC: That's really interesting. You mentioned that you were aware. What were
20 you aware of? We're talking about its Indochina, it's Vietnam, Laos in the earlier days
21 drew a little more attention than Vietnam did. What do you remember about what was
22 going on there in the early 60s?

23 DB: Well, when we took our trip from between our third and second years.
24 Between third class and second class years. My trip was to the far east, and we were
25 about to at that point to talk to fighter pilots that were making runs in south Vietnam
26 even at that point which would've been summer of '63. We knew that was going on. I
27 don't remember thinking that it would've ever get as big as it got. By the time we got
28 involved in it, it was much larger. The built ups and so on. I don't know what else to add
29 there.

30 KC: No, that's cool. I thought it was interesting that you were as aware as you
31 were. Enough to take French as a language to help facilitate if you wound up being

1 that part of the world. Very interesting. You graduate in '64 and you want to fly. Pick up
2 the story there, what do you want to do next? You're an Air Force Academy graduate, it's
3 1964. What's next for you?

4 DB: As you said correctly, I didn't want to fly and actually when I took my
5 physical the start of my first last year, the first time ever my doctor said you got a heart
6 murmur. That really threw me. Long story short, somebody else determined that it wasn't
7 a heart murmur, so I was still eligible for flight school for pilot training. I had to get a
8 waiver for my vision. I didn't have 20/20 vision but for an academy graduate it
9 was pretty easy to get that waiver as long as you were 20/50 or better you got
10 the waiver to get the pilot training. So, the selection process for pilot training basis was
11 based on academic standing. How you ranked in the class. By the time you got down to
12 me because I was down in the four hundreds, we graduated with almost five hundred, I
13 think. I was well down the list. So, there was only two bases left and one was Laredo and
14 Laughlin was the other in Del Rio. I think those were the only two. Maybe Moody in
15 Lowndes County, Georgia. I got Laredo and my roommate at the time, his father was in
16 the service also, but they lived in Texas for a number of years, so he was familiar with the
17 area and all. That was kind of how I decided on Laredo. So went to Laredo, entered
18 into pilot training class of 66A. Now, everybody asks why it is 66A and you're in 1964
19 well by the time graduates, we would be the first class in the fiscal year of '66 and that's
20 how the class numbers were assigned. The classes were at Laredo, and I think at Laughlin
21 also. About half the strength of the pilot training classes at some of the other bases and
22 we were told that was because we didn't have as much air space to practice in. You see
23 we were on the border with Mexico and so we didn't have 360 degrees of flying
24 area. So, the classes were smaller, so it was a much more intimate situation and that was
25 nice. We got of course obviously academy graduates. There were Air Force Reserves,
26 National Guard, and ROTC graduates attending. That was a real good experience and
27 being at Laredo was a good experience as well. I initially started out wanting to be a
28 fighter pilot like I guess everybody. As I progressed through the program, I got to
29 realizing that you know I'm living not that good. I'm really don't have that fighter pilot
30 edge. At the time of graduation, I selected multi-engine. For me it was 130s. C130s
31 actually they were still flying C124s at that time and some of us had that high on our lists

1 because the guys were getting so much flight time in the 124s that they would be able
2 to upgrade very quickly. That was high on my list but not at the top. 130s were actually
3 on the top of my list. At that point we could take 130s and Military Airlift
4 Command, MAC, which were a more refined I guess you might say type of flying or the
5 attack 130s which did a lot of the assault work and so on. It was kind of a transition time
6 this would be in the mid-sixties a transition time where the Military Airlift Command was
7 getting out of the passenger holding distance and getting into the more directly into
8 the more distinctly combat type operation as opposed to flying a lot of schedule routes
9 and those sorts of things. My assignment after pilot training was to Charleston.
10 Charleston AFB and flying C130s H models. Of course, along the way I got married as
11 well. I met my wife as I was a senior at the Air Force Academy. We wanted to get
12 married at the chapel at the academy chapel, but we didn't want to be a part of Junior
13 League. That mad rush. We elected to get married during my break in pilot training we
14 had a break of about ten days or two weeks or something and we arranged to get married
15 at the chapel in December of '64. She had family have been stationed at Colorado
16 Springs and made a lot of friends there. Family at that point, the father was still in the
17 Air Force, and they were in Montana. Malmstrom AFB, Montana. So, to get everybody
18 together, we had her folks coming in from Montana and my folks coming in from
19 Michigan. Very good friends, a lot of coordinating to make the wedding happen my
20 coach from the Air Force Rifle Team was a very senior chief master sergeant. He pulled
21 in a lot of chips apparently because again this was December and this class of four
22 classmen at the academy went home for Christmas. My class did not go
23 home at Christmas, but this class did so there were no cadets at the academy so there was
24 no saber guard availability. But this master sergeant chief called out to six of
25 his friends to be the saber detail, so we get to walk under the raised sabers which is a
26 unique aspect of marriage at the academy chapel.

27 KC: Yeah, that's really cool. He must've thought very highly of you.

28 DB: I guess he did but he was that kind of a guy.

29 KC: That was very interesting, that is kind of nice.

30 DB: Yeah.

1 KC: Alright, so you get married in the meantime but you're now in C130s. Tell
2 me about the C130. Give me the layout of this bird, what was going on with the C130.

3 DB: Okay. Well of course, 4-1 engine prop, primarily cargo if we carried troops
4 there would be seats along the sides and one row of back-to-back seats down the
5 middle. Air drops were made out the back. Cargo air drops were made out the back. This
6 model had two external wing tanks. I don't remember precisely what the range was. I
7 know we flew Travis to Hickam route. That's the longest over water route. So, we
8 had good range operating up around 28,000 feet for cruising. Our missions when it got to
9 Charleston in '65, '66 we still had embassy support missions so my one year at
10 Charleston I saw more of the world than I did probably the rest of my tour in a relatively
11 short time. I remember having one of my first missions was we going down range where
12 we went into South America and then across to Africa. It was still called Leopold at that
13 point. Stopping at Ascension and then into Africa and then out back to Ascension
14 and back out another member we called "Shadow Route Extension" where we flew to Air
15 Base in Shadow Route, France while they were still letting us operate there shortly after
16 that kick us out of France. Again, that was embassy support so got down to Italy and
17 Israel. Let's see we went down to India and Pakistan. Those type of missions again were
18 primarily diplomatic support. I remember one mission we had up to Greenland. We had
19 to go to Thule, and we flew up to some place in Canada and then were scheduled to go all
20 the way up to Thule and back. We kept getting weather delays. We take off and start
21 getting up there and have to come back. But I finally did make it up there and one of
22 the interesting things about that town is that the runway at Thule was painted white and
23 the reason for it is because it was built on permafrost, and they wanted to be able
24 to reflect the sun so it wouldn't heat up the permafrost. So, it was a white colored
25 runway. The only white colored runway I every remember seeing landing on. But that
26 was the reason for it.

27 KC: That's interesting. I've heard people talk about Thule before, but I have
28 not heard that.

29 DB: There was a couple of bases. Greenland, I think was another place where you
30 could only get in there one way. You could only fly in on one direction because it was the
31 end of a fjord so you could only go in that one way and have to come out the same way

1 actually. Then we had at that time again mid-sixties, so we did have some support
2 to Vietnam. One mission I remember we went up to some place in Rhode Island and
3 picked up some Navy personnel and these were what we called stage operations. One
4 flew and the airplane would go pick up a load, fly to another point. The load in the
5 airplane would stay together but the crew would change, and another crew would
6 take these leapfrogging the crews all around to keep the airplane moving, we didn't have
7 to wait for the crew to get rested. This was very common in the airlift business. The
8 staging of crews. I remember another one we went down to Laughlin and picked up
9 a group of sentry dogs, guard dogs, and their handlers and started them on their way
10 to Southeast Asia. We would fly—those particular routes we fly and end up at Travis on
11 the west coast Travis AFB and then to Hickam and then to Wake Island and into
12 the Philippines and up to wherever in-country and back the same way.

13 KC: You are really seeing an awful lot of the world here.

14 DB: I did. Absolutely.

15 KC: It must've been very exciting, a lot of fun.

16 DB: I was, you see an awful lot of the worlds from 30,000 feet. It's not like being
17 able to live in some of these places and mix with the local population. You do see a lot of
18 the world. Not necessarily on a tourist kind of situation.

19 KC: You see a lot of air and a lot of airports, I guess.

20 DB: Exactly.

21 KC: Well, you mentioned that you made these trips to Vietnam. We're looking at
22 '65 '66. I mean, the war is ramping up here. What did you know, what did you
23 understand about what was going on there at this point?

24 DB: Well, we knew that the North Vietnamese weren't happy with the way that
25 South Vietnamese were running things. They wanted to invade, they wanted to
26 unify. They called it unification. It was getting to one of these Cold War stand offs with
27 Soviets and the Chinese supporting the North and the US a lot of allies, Australians on
28 the south side. Knew the politics were kind of sticky in South Vietnam. From a transport
29 pilot point of view, the buildup was going on. One trip we had I remember being a Tan
30 Son Nhut. My uncle, my father's brother who was still in the service at the time was a
31 maintenance officer at Tan Son Nhut. We were there just long enough to call him up

1 and have him come over. I surprised him he would have salute. He wasn't expecting a
2 salute. You see somebody with the same last name on the nametag was kind
3 of interesting too. But certainly, there was a lot going on and I had classmates by this
4 time, of course classmates from pilot training that were involved. A good number of
5 them are back seaters in F4s so that activity was stepping up. Had the other classmates in
6 fighters. Those are the ones that we heard a lot about. We knew that the South
7 Vietnamese didn't want to be communist. They did not want that to happen. That
8 was evident to me at that time and later on when I was stationed at country. I will always
9 think that we let them down. Not militarily but politically we let them down by not
10 supporting them after we pulled our main troops.

11 KC: So, you got an advanced look at what's going on out there before you get
12 involved, before you get your orders to go over there. So that probably is going to
13 influence you what you're seeing and what you're doing when you go over there. Now,
14 you're not ready for that just yet. How long do you stay with the C130s before you
15 transition to the 123?

16 DB: Okay I was at Charleston just about a year and the way that it was working
17 was that a block of assignments would come down to each base and so on and there
18 would be so many helicopters and 123s some other types in there and they would look for
19 volunteers. I looked at it where that list came down and I didn't want to fly helicopters. I
20 figured that I was going to serve at some point. Going to have to go at some point and I
21 knew I had classmates that were literally in the line of fire. I also felt an obligation to
22 the country. I received an outstanding top-notch education at the academy at the
23 taxpayer's expense. One of the things for me was that they expect to get
24 their money's worth, and I was wanting to get involved in that, so I did opt to go to 123s.
25 like it said, I really don't want to fly helicopters. I don't recall what
26 other types were available. So, I volunteered for that. I had been just a year at
27 Charleston. Really just getting into there. Of course, my request was accepted, and I was
28 assigned to the 123s and the schooling for that was down at Herbert field
29 in Florida. Right next to Eglin AFB. That training, wife and I went down—for that we
30 got there I'm thinking it was November of that year, maybe a little earlier than
31 that. Maybe October of would've been '66. During that check out, they had a couple

1 of instructor pilots had flown with Ranch Hand in Vietnam. Ranch Hand being the
2 organization that sprayed the defoliate and stuff. Agent Orange and couple other agents
3 that we used over there. They made a good sell. I was really impressed. They had talked
4 about a real spree that they had developed in that outfit. Long story short, I opted for
5 that. I was probably one of the more junior people they had into that program. One of the
6 things at the time was—the Air Force was looking for people to fill those
7 assignments. They were looking for recent people, people that has recent experience. And
8 so invariably they were older guys that had that experience. So, we had a lot of older
9 people. We had majors and lieutenant colonels that were in as strictly as basic crew
10 members. But at that point I was a second lieutenant. I was first lieutenant at that time, so
11 I was one of the real junior people. They haven't had anybody as junior as I was to go
12 into that program. It involved a little bit different training. We still got the same school.
13 We still learned about making basic airdrops and short fuel landings, that kind of stuff
14 assault landings. We got all that, but we also got formation flying and that was the real
15 kicker. I don't think there was anything for me at least, there was nothing more exciting
16 than flying close formation at fifty feet. It was a real kick. Whether or not you get shot at,
17 that came with hit but low altitude formation flying was really something. The program,
18 we got some of that at Herbert. Then they sent us up to Langley, Virginia because there
19 was a unit up there, I think they had four airplanes. Again, this is mid-sixties. These
20 folks did the anti-mosquito spray along the east coast. They come up; in fact, they
21 flew them up to an area in Delaware. They would spray for mosquito control. They had
22 obviously the spray and some of the formation that they did on regular basis. They sent
23 us out to Langley, and we flew with them to get more formation experience and
24 there were certain maneuvers that we make in the spraying business. You watch
25 crop dusting; they make a run and then they pull up and make a turn. We called that
26 a Plum Tree Turn because you go ninety degrees to the right and then come back around
27 and if you look at that from above it would look like a plum tree and that's how the term
28 got there. We learned about doing those kinds of things and that's interesting to do in
29 formation as well. We spent about a month at Langley and for me and my wife it was in
30 December that we were doing that. So, it was November, December it was pretty
31 cold there, but we spent three or four weeks getting that checked out. We were off to it.

1 KC: These guys from the Ranch show up in Charleston and say “We’re going to
2 fly you at low air speeds, at low altitudes people are going to be shooting at you and
3 you’re going to be spraying over the top of them and you’re going to be flying
4 in formation making these difficult turns and that’s something that appealed to you?”

5 DB: Yes, absolutely. Call me crazy. Also call me very young and that’s
6 something that I noticed over the years. You become much more cautious later
7 on in life. For me that was a real kicker and of course it’s not like they were losing a lot
8 of people. The survivability of the airplane has been demonstrated so it wasn’t like you
9 were on a suicide mission or anything but certainly you’re going to be getting some
10 additional attention that the (inaudible) weren’t going to see.

11 KC: Yeah. So, we’re looking at the end of ‘66 going into ‘67. You’ve been
12 through your training at Herbert and then up in Langley. Your wife obviously knows that
13 you’re going to Vietnam. You know you’re going; she knows you’re going. What were
14 her thoughts and the thoughts of your family on going over to this conflict?

15 DB: Of course, before I volunteered for the assignment, I briefly talked over with
16 her and she said “That’s your call. What you want to do assignment wise, that’s your
17 call.” She was I guess you can say okay with it. We had started the process of buying a
18 house there in Charleston, that’s how quickly things changed. Of course, she was
19 disappointed in that aspect of it, but she also asked if she could stay with my
20 parents. Actually, with my parents and my younger sister who were living in Ypsilanti,
21 Michigan at that time that she could stay with them for that year. They agreed to that, so
22 she did have that support. She was okay with it. I didn’t get the feeling that she was I
23 shouldn’t say not concern but she was able to deal with it. I think quite of it was of course
24 her father’s experience. She was a military girl, and he was in World War II and was still
25 flying at the time I got my assignment.

26 KC: What about your parents?

27 DB: Similar to apprehensive I think but also understanding. Particularly in
28 the case of my father. I didn’t find out really much until quite a few years later that my
29 mom was not at all happy with what I had chosen career wise. I remember shortly before
30 she passed, saying if she had to do it again, she would never agree for me to go to the

1 academy. But she was a trooper and kept that under her hat. I know my dad was proud
2 and supportive.

3 KC: Did you have any kids at this time?

4 DB: We did not. We did not have any children. My oldest daughter was born after
5 I got back from Vietnam.

6 KC: So, you had holidays with the family.

7 DB: Yes, we did have that. I don't remember exactly when we left but it
8 was shortly after the holidays that I flew out. That was kind of a difficult time.

9 KC: I bet.

10 DB: With regards to kids, I think that might have made a difference on the
11 assignment also, the fact that I didn't have any children. It was somewhat—I know other
12 people that were in that operation that I flew with in Vietnam and had families there. It
13 made a little bit of a difference; I didn't have quite that responsibility. Certainly, had a
14 wife but I didn't have kids.

15 KC: So, there you are in Michigan, the holidays are over, you said your goodbyes.
16 Do you head to Travis after this?

17 DB: Yeah, flew out commercial from Detroit Metro to must have been San
18 Francisco and probably bus up to Travis. Something like that.

19 KC: Take me on this trip to Vietnam.

20 DB: As far as I can recall. Let's see. I had to go through the Philippines. I want to
21 say it was non-stop to the Philippines. It may have been a stop involved there but of
22 course this was a charter flight and all military people on there. I had to go through Clark
23 through the Philippines because we had to go through jungle school infamously known as
24 Snake School, but I didn't see any.

25 KC: Can you tell me about jungle survival school?

26 DB: It was very abbreviated course in survival. I had actually after pilot training
27 before Charleston in between those assignments had gone through the Air Force Survival
28 School. At that time, it was held at Stead. All held up in fair trial at Washington, but our
29 course was Stead close to Reno, Nevada. But the one in Clark basically were teaching us
30 how to make things in the Jungle, make it be able to sleep if you got make a bed and so
31 on. I remember the damn jungle rats over there. Huge rats. If you were a person who

1 didn't like rats and so on, you would probably have a hard time. I kicked them away. We
2 got instructions in kinds of things you could eat and particularly for the fighter guys, they
3 went through the jungle extraction and those aspects of survival and recovery. We went
4 through those, and it was actually that may be the only time I was in the helicopter was
5 when they pulled up out of the jungle there after spending a night or two just paired up
6 with another guy and basically trying to evade the natives, they had looking for
7 us. Trying to locate us. We were practicing invasion of them. That didn't take very
8 long, few days and then another charter over to Tan Son Nhut. That's where we landed. It
9 could've been Bien Hoa I'm not sure. My assignment was to Bien Hoa. The Ranch Hand
10 unit had move up to Bien Hoa from Tan Son Nhut not too long before I got there but by
11 the time, I got there they had been settled up at Bien Hoa. That first day was kind of
12 interesting because we got in there and got to talking and found out Ranch Hand had lost
13 the first airplane and crew that day in signed in. Four or five of us were coming over at
14 that time. They were lost on a trail in Laos and that was somewhat of a comeuppance
15 because up to that point they haven't lost the crew. They had some difficult
16 airplane problems, but they haven't lost anybody. That was the day that they did.

17 KC: What was the mood within the unit?

18 DB: The way of things it opened up a few bunk spots. It's the way things
19 worked.

20 KC: What was the mood within the unit when this news was broken?

21 DB: I wasn't close to the unit at that time because what they did to us Ranch
22 Handers when we first got in country, they assigned us to a trash hauler outfit to go
23 around and to get some in-country experience. Communication wise and just
24 general familiarization with things before we actually went to the unit. So, by the time it
25 was probably two weeks before I got to actually sign into the Ranch Hand outfit at Bien
26 Hoa. I know from experiences later on, my door it probably had a big bash is probably
27 what they did that night. That's kind of the way we handle things. We had some dark
28 days also while I was there.

29 KC: You said they probably would have had a bash for this? Interesting.

30 DB: That's one of those places where you make your toast, and you throw your
31 glass into the fireplace and that kind of stuff.

- 1 KC: Yeah, sure.
- 2 DB: That's the way most of the guys handled it.
- 3 KC: We might be a good point to stop for today Mr. Barich.
- 4 DB: I agree.

Interview with Dewey Barich

Session [2] of [3]

Date 31 March 2016

1 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager continuing an oral history interview with Mr.
2 Dewey Barich. Today is 31 March 2016. I am in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of Texas
3 Tech University and Mr. Barich is joining me by telephone from his home between Little
4 Creek and Dover, Delaware. Mr. Barich, we left off last time, you just arrived in-
5 country, and we'll talk about your time at Bien Hoa and getting acclimated, but I wanted
6 to go back to this loss of the Ranch Hand plane that you mentioned at the end of the last
7 session. You mentioned that it was the first time that it happened. It was kind of a
8 sobering experience in a number of ways, and you mentioned that the Ranch Handlers
9 probably had- you used the word "bash." Can you explain the kind of attitude and the
10 approach to things within Ranch Hand that would lead them to want to—I don't want to
11 say celebrate but sort of I guess in a way to deal with the emotions of having lost a
12 comrade there, more than one comrade lost in this plane. What was about Ranch
13 Hand that would make a party make sense?

14 DB: That's a good question and at this particular event, of course timeline again I
15 have arrived in-country and that same day is when this had happened. We lost the
16 airplane and the crew. It was the first time they lost a crew. They had airplanes—or at
17 least one airplane recalled previously they had gone down but the crew had
18 survived. So, this was as I'm understanding it this was the first time, we lost a crew, and I
19 was not actually in the outfit until about two or three weeks later, but I can tell you
20 that when similar events occurred during my year, that was kind of the way we handled
21 it. I'm sure that some people would back off—but I remember one of my more senior
22 people in our flight later on when an event occurred like this and you know he said
23 "Come on over to the club, and I say "Well, it was a close friend of mine and I didn't
24 want" he said "Oh, come over. Don't draw back. Let's go over and we're going to have a
25 quick party, we're going to remember them and that was kind of the way it was. I don't
26 know how other units would handle it. It didn't occur often with us but in my time, in my
27 year we had several instances of loss like this. That seemed to be the way it was. It was
28 always kind of "Let's have this bash" is the best word I can use to talk about it,
29 and we'll have it, and we'll go on with life. But there was a very high esprit de corps. We

1 were somewhat unique. The outfit had been I'm sure some of the other Ranch Handers
2 have told you have been kind of taken under the arm of a General Ky and his—I think he
3 was the vice president of the country at that time some high ranking official and he had
4 his own squadron they were flying A1Es at the time when we were over there. But their
5 signature outfit was a purple scarf and that's where we got our purple scarf from that
6 connection. We wore them all the time and we wore them when we flew and that was
7 kind of a unique thing for us. We were somewhat infamous for having some pretty wild
8 parties at the club and it seemed to be at the peak they be more—I won't say violate but
9 more active in the case where we had a loss of some kind like that airplane went down
10 or later on some others as well. For me, I look at that time I spent in the Ranch as quite
11 likely the highlight of my career. When it occurs in your first couple years of service and
12 then everything else is kind of downhill from there that's kind of unique too. You kind of
13 get spoiled. But living with a group of guys that were doing the same thing you were,
14 having the same exposure certainly close quarters was just a very for me really rewarding
15 experience. I talked earlier about the flying and so on. It was really unique, and you get to
16 thinking of yourself as invincible I'm sure other people going into combat feel that they
17 are invincible also, but we had that idea that we were and that the airplanes we flew could
18 really take it and for the most part they did. There were exceptions. We kept their count
19 for how many times their aircraft were hit, and we have in a week's time we have lead
20 ass of the week sort of thing for whoever took the most hits in the given period of
21 time. Looks like we got a certificate when we left the unit. It was the puncture
22 provider certificate the provider being the Fairchild name for the airplane. Everybody that
23 flew and took hits they get that certificate, and it would show how many hits they
24 took. That was a big thing. We had kind of a convention where the first time a new pilot
25 or navigator came into the unit, the first time they get hit they had to buy the bar that
26 night and it was a big thing. We had a couple of times where it took a long time for
27 the guy to get hit so he wanted to be apart of the group and he wasn't until he taken his
28 first hit and some of them got kind of worried about it because they didn't really feel they
29 were apart of the unit until they taken some ground fire or have been hit by ground fire
30 not just taken ground fire. That became a regular thing for having a party also. Somebody
31 getting their first hit.

1 KC: Certainly, a tightknit group there of support involved in the mission and the
2 other Ranch Handers that I talked to felt very similar to what you were saying.

3 DB: I would think so. I don't remember—often times in groups there are certain
4 friction between certain individuals and all and if there was it was at a minimum. I don't
5 remember any fights between individuals anything like that. The group was really
6 together and whatever personal animosities that might exist, I don't recall it ever coming
7 to our head. I just don't remember anything like that at all. It was really a bunch of guys
8 that got along well together.

9 KC: Remind again when you arrive in-country.

10 DB: It was January of '67.

11 KC: January of '67 alright. You mentioned when you came in country you went
12 to Bien Hoa. You're going to spend the first couple three weeks really kind of finding the
13 lay of the land, learning the radio communications, flying ash and trash. Tell me
14 what sort of things you're doing and learning during that very brief period.

15 DB: Well actually I was PCS (Permanent Change of Station) to Bien Hoa but
16 during that time I was in Saigon because that was where the one trash hauler outfit that I
17 was attached to for that time was. We would fly those missions as a co-pilot, and we
18 teamed up with a pilot, a boat master and we'd fly their regular support missions which
19 usually involved several short trips around the area picking up stuff that needed to get
20 move for the most part sometimes troops and so on. But yes, getting familiar with
21 the radio ground support that we need and get familiar with some of the smaller
22 bases more runways and so on and frequencies to be able to contact them on because the
23 Army did a lot of FM a lot of their connections were on FM. That was not something that
24 we normally have. We did have FM receivers as I recall, transmitter receivers in the
25 airplane. We didn't use it very much after I got into the Ranch but that was one thing. We
26 went around collected a notebook with radio frequencies, so you had some contact way
27 of knowing. It was more just of flying around the area around the landlord's areas that
28 were—it was interesting to me because being able to get in and out of some of those very
29 short fields which was what the 123 was designed for and learning from the pilots that
30 had been over there for awhile, how to get in and out of some of these places give some
31 exposure then to the other types of personnel that were around a lot of the Army guys that

1 we would fly and support. It was primarily—while I was there, I didn't get very far
2 from that area of Vietnam, flying out of Saigon. I'm thinking we probably didn't
3 get much north of Cam Ranh Bay and so on. I don't recall anything farther north in-
4 country than that. Certainly, got a look at things and that was pretty much the extent of
5 it.

6 KC: Alright so you go through this for three weeks and then you head back down
7 to Bien Hoa as part of the 12th. Their command squadron, the Ranch Hand outfit. Before
8 we get into the nuts and bolts of Ranch Hand, can you tell me about Vietnam
9 itself. When you arrived in-country, what did this place look like to you? What kind of
10 sense or feel did you get of Vietnam?

11 DB: There were a lot of activity going on Saigon, Tan Son Nhut. Just an awful lot
12 of activity. You get the charter flights coming in with troops and you got cargo being
13 delivered. You got first thing in the morning most of the flying was VFR (Visual Flight
14 Rules) of course. But I remember going out in the morning for first takeoff from Saigon
15 in the morning and all kinds of airplanes. You got the CIA type airplanes, you got Air
16 America which was a contractor that flew like the airplane that came over from the
17 Philippines to Saigon, it was operated by Air America. But they did a lot of other stuff
18 too but the first thing in the morning takeoffs there would be this—I remember a
19 particular airplane called a Philias Porter was a turbo prop single engine
20 turbo prop, and they could take off in what looks like a couple hundred feet. Just take off
21 and climb out. Heaven only knows where they were going. So, they would be just a
22 real hustle and bustle of activity. Off the base I remember kind of being just a lot of
23 people moving around, people moving on motor bikes or on bicycles. Sometimes you'd
24 see like a family of two or three people riding on a motor scooter going places. Activity
25 never stopped. All night, day night operations of course. Of course, they were
26 reconnaissance flights, some reconnaissance flights up over North Vietnam taking off
27 from Tan Son Nhut. I remember running into a classmate of mine from the academy that
28 was flying RF4s he talked about doing their reconnaissance flights primarily from there
29 because we would come back and their cameras and film and so on would be evaluated
30 immediately there at headquarters at Tan Son Nhut. That's kind of what I remember. Just
31 a bustling place particularly in the Saigon area.

1 KC: Tell me about the lay of the land of that part in III Corps. That part of
2 Vietnam. The climate, the geography, the floor, et cetera.

3 DM: As I'm remembering it now, the IV Corps was ways out and that was flat.
4 That was delta. Then in the III Corps, it started getting into more mountainous
5 terrain. West there was some higher hills and so on and then the northern part of III Corps
6 you get even more of the hilly country. It was pretty country, guess you can say you see
7 the best of a lot of places from an airplane, above some of it. Looking down, you don't
8 necessarily see all the nitty gritty. Just the general concept of it. For the most part, when I
9 arrived it would've been opposite from the monsoon season, so it was relatively clear.
10 Not a lot of clouds later on when you get more into the monsoonal time. You'd
11 have cloud covering and have to be concern about more clouds, but we generally could
12 fly a VFR all the time. I remember being at that point I've forgotten some of
13 the details, but I was more familiar with the places where the ground troops were
14 stationed and their activities of course we kept up with that and with the television news
15 the *Armed Forces (Radio) Network*. I forget exactly what that was called but we paid
16 attention to what was going on and what the weather was in various locations and that
17 sort of thing. I think that's pretty much it.

18 KC: You joined the 12th. Explain to me what the 12th Air Commandos Squadron
19 was. Tell me about the command structure, tell me about the people, tell me about how
20 things operated there.

21 DM: We had a somewhat different from what my initial experience in the Air
22 Force was where we were assigned to a flying squadron because the commander of the
23 12th was also the commander—he had maintenance people under him as well. It wasn't
24 just operations people, he had maintenance folks under him directly. So other than that
25 aspect of it and we had a squadron commander and then we had—I'm thinking it was I
26 want to say it was three flights, ABC as far as the flying aspect goes. Of course, we
27 would have a standardization people. The navigation section we had a senior person in
28 charge of that and the flights—the way the schedule generally ran would be two flights
29 would be responsible for manning the missions for the day and there would be one back
30 up flight that essentially have filled in if the two primaries didn't have enough people
31 to man the mission and draw from the third flight. Most of the time when I was there, the

1 flights were not fully manned, so it was almost everybody flying every day in
2 many cases. We would on an operation basis we would pick up the frag orders very early.
3 Usually getting up would be like four, 4:30 in the morning and one of the first things we
4 do is go to the secure area on the base and pick up the frag order for that day's
5 missions which would tell us who the fire support was going to be and those kinds of
6 details. We would know the missions at least the day before because the navigators
7 working with the lead pilots on a mission would do all their map work and figure out how
8 we are going approach a particular target and get all their landmarks down that they
9 needed to make it. It was pretty important to be accurate with the spray runs. That was
10 handled on a daily basis. I remember when I got to be a lead pilot every afternoon before
11 the mission we would go over with the navigators and stuff how we wanted to do
12 particular tactics we would deploy on a given target so then when we came in and do
13 the briefings in the morning before the flight, then we had all those details ready to
14 go and then we can add to it who the fighters were going to be and where they were
15 coming from and that sort of thing. As far as command structure goes, it was commander
16 officer and that was pretty much a typical squadron set up.

17 KC: Alright, so you talked about the general approach, the skeletal part of how
18 the thing operated and before you go out on the mission of course you get up
19 early because you had fly early in the morning before the temperatures and things
20 like that changes and well go into in a bit as well. But you also mentioned the fighters
21 that would be on station. Can you talk to me about the kind of support, fighter support, or
22 gunship support that you would have for a typical mission?

23 DB: It could be F100s when we were flying out of—well the support could come
24 from anywhere. When the fighters go out and they're giving us support for a particular
25 day where at Bien Hoa then very frequently their lead would come, and we can talk face
26 to face with them. But that didn't happen very often. The spot we would get with the
27 F100s, A37s, F4s, once in a great while we would get A1Es but A1Es were mostly
28 assigned to rescue. A cover for rescue operations so we didn't get them very often. We
29 would like to have more because speed-wise they were able to stay with us. When we had
30 the hotter fighters, the F100s or F4s they would have to make continuous passes along
31 our run on targets that require suppression they would have to make a loop. String along

1 and lay down either any machine guns 120 millimeter for the most part or the best was
2 the CBU, cluster bomb units and they would lay those alongside of us. The A37s were
3 very good because they were slower, and they could a lot of stuff and they could loiter for
4 a long time. So, on missions we get some kind of a glitch. Sometimes it would be
5 weather, sometimes it would just be coordination but the A37s could stay on target for a
6 longtime they go up and shut down an engine and could just stay on target for a long time
7 just orbit around there until they are needed to go. So those were the three main types
8 of fighters support we got. When they would come from another base like Phan Rang
9 or someplace else to support us then all the briefings would have to be done over the
10 radio after we made contact with them. Make a typical mission fly out to the FAC
11 (Forward Air Control) we would be working with, we make contact with him, and he
12 would either have the fighter support checking in and we go over where the run was
13 going to start. Sometimes we asked him to market with a smoke rocket but in many cases
14 the lead navigator would already know where he wanted, it was more of a visual thing to
15 help the pilots spot the actual beginning of the run and so on. We had particularly when I
16 was in-country, we always had some kind of recuse on station also. If not the jolly green,
17 then some sort of Army medivac. We later on we didn't always have that helicopter
18 recuse support on with us. I don't remember exactly why; it was probably just a matter of
19 not having enough resources to always have that and of course we seldom needed it but
20 that was their function to be on standby there come pick somebody if the airplane went
21 in. I think most of us felt if we went down, we were going to survive because the airplane
22 was as solid as it was so having somebody come in and pick you up that was something
23 we thought about and figured we would be able to do if it ever went down. I don't know
24 how realistic it was. During my time in country when we lost an airplane, nobody
25 survives so maybe it was wishful thinking on our part to think that we can survive a crash
26 landing but that's what we thought at the time.

27 KC: And it would've been comforting none the less.

28 DB: Yeah, exactly. I think before I got there before I got in-country, that was the
29 case. They had at least one airplane go down. It was controlled enough that people
30 survived from it.

1 KC: Getting back to the kind of fighter cover you might have, say you're on a
2 mission and you're receiving fire from somewhere. What would happen next?

3 DB: Well, the first time, when we go on target and if we—some targets were
4 suppression targets. In other words, the fighters that look over the area just as we were
5 starting to make the run. Other times we would—in fact most of the time we would
6 be making a run and if we started taking fire, the first thing that would happen whoever
7 was flying they recognize it would call for smoke and the flight mechanic in the
8 back would was operating the spray pump had a stash of smoke grenades and he tossed
9 one out the door on either side, the doors were opened. The two doors were opened, and
10 he would launch one of those out and the idea was that would mark somewhat close, and
11 you have to figure out airspeed, when you took the fire and so on, but it would give
12 the fighters some idea as to where it was coming from. Of course, at that time by the time
13 they got in, we would've been passed it, but it would give them an opportunity and give
14 the fighters an opportunity to work that area over. So that's the way that generally
15 happened. I can remember a lot of our flags were three-ship formation. Sometimes we
16 have six or more airplanes and one of the things we used to say "Happiness is being
17 number six when lead call is taking fire" because you do! By the time you got to
18 wherever it was that they be all ready for you. The element of surprise was now
19 gone. Lead took very few hits. It was always somebody farther back in the formation that
20 if it was a hot target, it was somebody back there that was taking the heat.

21 KC: Yeah, congratulations number six, guess what's coming.

22 DB: Yeah. (laughs)

23 KC: I guess in those cases it would be really nice to have the 37s or A1Es a little
24 bit longer loader time and the ability to really work an area really good.

25 DB: Right. Some of the targets—and it was just a few times. One in
26 particular I was on we were going into A Shau Valley and A Shau has a—I get choked up
27 thinking about because it was a place where a lot of bad stuff happened, not just to us but
28 a lot of stuff happened. That's where Bernie Fisher got his medal of honor for picking up
29 a pilot that had gone down in an A1 and he went in and picked him up and flew back out
30 all the time under fire. But it was a known infiltration area. Once again, we were tasked
31 to go in there and spray. They wanted clear the canopy in that area. But we had the time

1 in particular that I remember and recalling. We had a six ship formation that was to go in
2 and fly north to south and being down in that valley that was the best way to do it
3 because to the south it was open. If you had to go the other way south flying north that
4 was the closed end of the valley so it was always better to go north to south. That
5 particular day they had setup for two flights of F4s, so we had seven or eight F4s
6 and they set up racetrack patterns to fly on either side of us as we were making the
7 run. They would come in with CBU smoke. I forget the terminology on it. Whether it
8 was CBU-24—I'm not sure exactly what but these cluster units and the idea was if they
9 get it down low enough, then the smoke would obstruct any view from the ground
10 towards us. So, they are making these racetrack patterns flying along and dropping this
11 stuff and then they of course also had the real CBU, and they could lay that down and
12 sometimes they had another one that was—I should've remembered the name of it but it
13 was just one large collection of these cluster bomb units, and they could go in and drop
14 right at the beginning of the run. Being on the ground in that environment I thought well
15 everybody is going to have their heads down and that was the purpose of it was
16 to suppress any activity on the ground before we got there. As we were getting there it
17 was real important to us that they lay that stuff down as we were going and not go in and
18 lay it down and us follow. We wanted to have it and lay that stuff down as we
19 were going, and I got some footage of all that type of activity and its pretty
20 impressive. On this day when we were doing A Shau like that they also had on station,
21 they had the jolly greens on station for us just in case. Everything when pretty well as
22 far as activity goes on that particular mission. I had one or two times when we made that
23 run into A Shau but it was something that we really got. I remember that day we got up
24 early of course to do it and the weather was bad so we had to wait several hours actually
25 before we could take off and go to it. We were in Da Nang at that time, and it wasn't too
26 far from Da Nang, but we were behind schedule on it and sitting around waiting for that it
27 was- we were expecting it to be a much tougher than it turned out to be but that's the way
28 war goes. You never know, you prepare for the worst and hope for the best and in this
29 case, everything turned out well. I also remember coming back from that mission
30 because it had been successful, and we had some old guys leading it and they wanted to
31 make an impression at Da Nang coming back from this mission. So, in the air coming

1 back they briefed us that we come in a V-formation and of course that's very contrary to
2 Air Force doctrine as to how you are supposed to land a formation. You don't do this,
3 but we come in a V-formation and as I recall it was left traffic so normally you come
4 right echelon and lead would brake and then on down the line, we brake to the left. Well,
5 we would come in on a V-formation so the last man on the left side is the one that had to
6 brake first. It was very unorthodox and as I recall, now I was very junior, so I never got
7 involved in being reprimanded for what I did or didn't do very seldom. But these guys,
8 they really took heat from the wing commander and everybody because it was such a
9 break in procedure for us to do what we did. We were really excited about it and the fact
10 we had been successful in that mission.

11 KC: Coming back from A Shau, obviously it was renowned for being a nasty
12 place. Lots of NVA (North Vietnamese Army) in there.

13 DB: Yes. Because of the infiltration routes and so on and as I say that's where
14 they wanted us to go in and spray. Kill off as much of the jungle canopy as we could and
15 we're back in there several times during my year in country. While I was there, we didn't
16 do anything outside of Vietnam. That airplane that we lost that first day over in Laos.

17 KC: Mm-hmm. When you're flying missions over the A Shau, are you flying out
18 of Da Nang?

19 DB: Yes. We would rotate one flight up to Da Nang. Generally kept one flight up
20 there. I guess on this mission they must've brought another flight in because we had that
21 many, maybe not. We would rotate and go up there and the missions out of Da Nang
22 were always more—we were always more concerned with ground fire from flying out of
23 Da Nang. Most of the missions out of Bien Hoa in III and IV Corps area were never as
24 bad as going into I Corps or II Corps. It just wasn't. We sprayed the DMZ (Demilitarized
25 Zone) one time I remember I think we had 11 or twelve airplanes in that formation.
26 Again, we didn't get any heat from it, but we were expecting because that's as close as I
27 got with North Vietnam was right in the DMZ.

28 KC: Going into the A Shau it sounds like they were extra prepared with the
29 flights of F4s, with the Jolly Greens on stationed but you guys were prepared for some
30 bad stuff to happen there.

1 DB: Yeah, yeah, we anticipated it and as I say that particular day worked out
2 well. If anybody got hit, it wasn't very much. I really don't recall anybody getting
3 worked over too bad on that mission. But there was so much—the F4s were really
4 good at laying that stuff down, I got some pictures and types of movies of some of that
5 type of activity, and it was pretty impressive, it was comforting to us. Once in a
6 while they get in a little too close and we had one or two times we would get a cracked
7 windshield or something because of that stuff going off just too close to us. We never had
8 any real serious incidents that I'm aware of.

9 KC: That's pretty close if you're cracking windshields and things like that. How
10 often did you fly out of Da Nang for these missions up north?

11 DB: I say maybe seems like five or six weeks we get rotated up there, so I had
12 to think it back. Looking at my diary at was trying to place some of that stuff get some of
13 that fresher in my mind. But it was more like every four or five weeks we'd rotate up
14 there. When it got into the season where it was just really cruddy flying weather then
15 there was no point to it for sending a flight up there because for many days you
16 couldn't fly, you couldn't get on target. You could fly, but you couldn't get on target. But
17 a lot of it I would say probably four to five weeks. Every four to five weeks you go up
18 there and spend maybe two weeks something like that flying missions out of Da Nang.

19 KC: You mentioned the weather so let's talk about that for a little while. What
20 sort of things would you have to take into consideration both in mission planning
21 and actually carrying them out that were connected to the weather? What sort of weather
22 conditions did you have to concern yourself with, how did it affect you?

23 DB: Well temperature was an important fact and that's why we flew early in the
24 morning because as air heats up and the spray doesn't settle down. It rises so that was a
25 factor. Winds also, if the wind is too high it is not affective on the spray, it spreads it out
26 too much or you can't be sure of exactly where it's going so that's a factor. Just cloud
27 cover. Obviously you have to be VFR to fly but you also had to get there and we didn't
28 have any station keeping capability in the airplane at all so we wither had to fly above or
29 below the clouds and if you had to go through them, you had to go through them
30 rather quickly we had some procedures involved and got a formation into unexpected
31 what we avoided—every once in a while you encountered a situation where a

1 formation was suddenly in clouds then you couldn't see anybody you had to break
2 formation and give each airplane a heading to fly so you could spread out and then once
3 you got out of the clouds you then had a chance to bring them back together. So, we had
4 that to deal with. That was the major thing. Probably the thing folks might not think
5 about would be the temperature business the idea that you had to get in while it was still
6 cool so the spray would settle.

7 KC: What about the geography? Obviously, it would be different from down in III
8 Corps flying up through the A Shau or up in I Corps or wherever it might be.

9 DB: Yeah, it was a lot hilly-er up in—mountainous is probably a better term. The
10 farther north it went. The targets would be smaller these smaller areas that they wanted us
11 to deal with and it would be valleys or lower sides of the mountains and so on. When we
12 were doing those encounters, it was very loose formation, it was almost an individual
13 type thing where you're flying together but you weren't flying in real close because of
14 the idea of trying to pick out particular spots of the target that we were supposed to be
15 getting. I got too close to a side of a hill one day and put a wingtip in a tree and that's
16 how close we were getting but it was just one of these things we're flying along, we were
17 very close to the side there, kind of lift the wing to get over and then back down level.
18 Lift the wing kind of got out of rhythm and I didn't get the wing out in time, so I brought
19 back a piece of bamboo and that wingtip, and I got a little excited. My flight commander
20 made me go over and report it as a safety incident. We finally were able to convince him
21 that it was probably a VC (Viet Cong) tree so we're going to write it off as a combat loss.
22 (laughs)

23 KC: There you go. It does speak to how low you guys are flying and how close
24 to these things you are that would be the case. Like you say, you got to get in
25 rhythm going up and down and up and down to avoid these hills and the trees you're
26 going through. Like I said, you guys are awfully close to the ground going through this.

27 DB: Yeah, and the other thing I had to be very conscience of was you live on
28 power on the airplane. Later on, they got the K models which had the two jet pods on
29 them. I'm sure that improve an awful lot. We just have the two resets that's why it
30 was really critically important to plan a mission so that you're always going
31 downhill. You'd hit yourself going uphill on occasion that would happen due to planning

1 there or some other situation, maybe the FAC wanted to go in some place, and we get in
2 there and find out we didn't have anyway to get out. I remember one instance of—it was
3 after I got check down as an instructor again, we on a mission in a hilly area and
4 somehow, I didn't oversee the planning on it closely enough because we got in a situation
5 to where we had to go over a ridge. We had to go up over a ridge. I remember going
6 over the ridge and checking the airspeed. We were at ninety-five knots and that
7 was very borderline stall. Very close. I look at my diary and I had an entry in my diary it
8 was saying "I almost got it today. Almost bought it today" because that was probably
9 as close, I would come to crashing. It was not because of any hostile fire it was simply
10 because we were too low and too slow. We couldn't get out of it. We were able to kind of
11 float across and obviously made it out but that was a concern of us. The situation being
12 too close to the ground. I think of the saying that the pilots have about the three most
13 useless things to a pilot and one of them—the first one is one way behind you. Altitude
14 above you. Then the third can be field-grade navigator or can be whatever. In our case the
15 altitude above is useless and that was what made our mission more dangerous was the
16 fact that if something happens when you're at a hundred or fifty feet, you don't have time
17 to do anything. Everything happens so quickly that you don't have time. You're first
18 reaction has to be the right one. If things happen at altitude. You lose the engine or
19 something or you got some time to think about it check with somebody or something or
20 attempt to get it started again or something but when you're down on the deck and
21 something bad happens, you just don't have time to go to very much in the
22 way correcting the difficulty.

23 KC: Mm-hmm. I've had people tell me about that before heading the wrong way
24 into a valley or whatever it might be and all of the sudden you got a hill in front of you
25 and you go that low to the ground and that slow of speed, you can't get that nose in time
26 if you're not really careful and that can happen to you really quick and if you got a flight
27 of three or more you're in a lot worst shape.

28 DB: Exactly. The situation I had I think we were probably in what they called
29 "Ground Effect" where the fact you're so close to the ground you get kind of an
30 additional boost think of it like a cushion of air underneath you to keep you from
31 impacting to get you over the top. Like I said, we were flying the airplanes before they

1 put the jet pods on it and figure out the way you go into the manual for the airplane and
2 figured out weight wise we'd be taking off with a full load of herbicide there's a thousand
3 gallon tank so generally we'll work about ten thousand pounds or so and if for
4 some reason you had to have a full load of fuel, well if you took off with that and you lost
5 an engine your rate of climb was a -50 ft/min. So, you had to get rid of that herbicide. We
6 had this big dump valve supposably. If something like that would happen, the procedure
7 was obviously to pull that handle and dump the herbicide. Same thing if you're on
8 target as far as that goes. Get rid of that weight so you have a better chance of being able
9 to climb out of it. That was a big consideration. If we had somebody riding along with us
10 normally two pilots and unless you were lead you didn't have a navigator. If you had a
11 navigator he'd be sitting on a seat across where the radios are we put a jump seat across
12 the console and navigate me. But if he wasn't there and there was somebody else,
13 we brief them on the handle, that's where the dump valve handle was. I remember one
14 mission we had one of the fighter pilots wanted to go along with us. I'm not sure why he
15 did but he did. He was an ensign and we got in a situation, and he got excited and pulled
16 on the handle and he broke the damn handle! (laughs) He broke that handle.

17 KC: Obviously you were able to get out of that situation without dumping it.
18 Goodness gracious. What was the story on that one? What had happened there?

19 DB: We were taking fire, and somebody called fire and he just wasn't—I think it
20 was a situation where we wanted to exit the area as quickly as possible, so he was
21 directed to pull the handle. Whether it was a faulty handle, or he was over exuberating on
22 it when he pulled it, it came off.

23 KC: Did you typically go with a less than a full tank of gas?

24 DB: Yes, we would just fuel for what we would normally or what would be
25 required for the mission. Very seldom would we take off with a full load. You just
26 wouldn't need for the places we were going.

27 KC: It wouldn't make sense if you found yourself in a bad situation then that's
28 just extra weight you can't get rid of.

29 DB: Right.

1 KC: I've heard stories of having someone hitting the dump valve and come back a
2 few weeks later you see a gigantic brown spot in the middle of the jungle, and you can
3 tell somebody had been there already.

4 DB: Yeah, and that was a big deal too because depending on where it happened,
5 particularly in this southern part of III and IV Corps a lot of rubber plantations. We were
6 told that Michelin any trees because of the spray well they had to be compensated for.
7 I forget what the dollar value was, but it was pretty significant. I had one mission where I
8 flew where when we were spraying and suddenly the spray stopped and the flight tech
9 said "We're all out of spray" we couldn't have been out of spray because we haven't
10 been spraying that long so I had to conclude that there had been some kind of leak on the
11 way in when we must have drained it somewhere and so I remember having to report to
12 the squadron commander that this happened. I don't know where we dumped that
13 stuff but somewhere we did. Sometime later somebody is going to see a big splash
14 somewhere and it apparently because of a leak. You started out with a full load of
15 herbicide, and it's supposed to take about three or four minutes to spray and if it only
16 takes a minute and a half it's because some of it got leaked before you started spraying.

17 KC: Would you typically go with the full thousand gallons and spray the
18 full thousand gallons?

19 DB: Absolutely. Never remember doing a partial load of herbicide.

20 KC: While we are on the subject here talking about the tank, tell me about the
21 mechanisms by which you sprayed these things. Tell me about the spray system from the
22 tank, the pump, the lines, the nozzles. Tell me about that entire system.

23 DB: Okay. The thousand gallon tank was obviously in the cargo and behind
24 the tank was the spray pump it was a separate fuel pump that had to be started. The flight
25 mechanic would have to start that pump, it wasn't apart of the aircraft system it was a
26 separate pump, separate motor on that and he would have to get that started and that's
27 what provided the pressure for a spray. From that tank, would lead out to the booms in
28 each wing and also to a tail boom. We had a tail boom as well. The flight mechanic was
29 charged with operating that system, so he had to be there during the run. They had a box
30 without a top on it. This box was made out of armor plated, this is not like solid metal
31 material it was material with some metal in it but also some fiber and so on and the

1 idea was that it stop ground fire from coming in. it was his cover so he would get the
2 pump started and he crouched down in that box while we were on target and as I
3 mentioned earlier about the smoke grenades, that was also his call was to have those
4 smoke grenades ready so if we started taking fire, he can lob one of those out. I did have
5 one experience. In fact, it was the first mission that I was on in Da Nang. My first
6 mission out of Da Nang where we were on a hot target. That particular mission I was in
7 the jump seat, it was my first run and rather than making that run as a co-pilot they would
8 give us a ride or two on the jump seat to observe how things actually were. During that
9 run, we took some fire, and the rounds came through that box that flight mechanic was in
10 and as I say, he was hunched over and that round came through the arm hole of his flak
11 jacket and creased him across the chest and impacted and remained in the other side of
12 box that he was in. I remember doing the divert into Marine base south of Da
13 Nang. we made that landing in there to get him to the hospital. I remember I was directed
14 to make the radio calls to alert them that we were coming in and had wounded onboard.
15 He survived but he was a bit of a hard case to get to fly again. I think he did fly again but
16 he has some issues because of that incident. That was the only time that I was on
17 the airplane where we had somebody wounded. I was in formations where it
18 happened but that was the only time, I experienced somebody getting wounded on the
19 airplane I was on.

20 KC: Tell me about the maintenance of system. Both the aircraft and the spray
21 system.

22 DB: Of course, the maintenance on the airplane was pretty typically of recent
23 requirements. The spray part of it the biggest thing was making sure the nozzles were
24 cleaned. I don't remember there being much of an issue on the herbicide sprayers. I
25 remember we had one airplane that was fitted up to do mosquito spray. We called it
26 the "bug bird" seemed to me they had more of an issue with the spray nozzles. One thing
27 to remembered when we were spraying, we walked too concerned about what the spray
28 pattern looked like coming out. I just don't ever recall having make a write up on the
29 forms about difficulty with the nozzles or something like that. If the pump didn't work
30 that certainly was a major thing. The rest of it seems to me the system worked pretty
31 well because I just don't recall having to do any write ups about the spray system itself.

1 KC: Overall it's a pretty simple system. You're looking at a tank, you're looking
2 at a pump, you're looking at booms and spray nozzles. Pretty simple stuff for
3 someone who grew up in farm country.

4 DB: Yeah, I think so.

5 KC: Can you take me through a typical day for you from when you get up and go
6 through the briefing and getting everything ready on the planes and getting the
7 herbicide. Take me through a typical day for you.

8 DB: Well, I get up. I seem to recall setting my own alarm. Dressing, going to the
9 mess hall for breakfast and then down to the squadron ops. Getting a briefing if I was a
10 lead, I do the briefing. If not, just sit in on it. Then we would pick up our—each of us
11 carried a .38 and a M16 on the flight so we picked the weapons up and go out to the
12 airplane. Very basic preflight because it's a very basic airplane so it was really pretty
13 simple. Then we had the times, start engine time and taxi out times and the formations
14 pretty much what was normal formation procedure. Lead taxis out and we know who's
15 where and so we get the correct order. Taxi out, do the engine runup which was new to
16 me, in my only recent experience was on the 123s so the engine runups with the mag
17 checks and that kind of thing and then the lineup, everybody on the runway and we took
18 off and I'm trying to remember what the interval was, but it was probably fifteen seconds
19 or something like that interval. Off we would go, make the joy numb on the turn out on
20 traffic and fly a fair loose formation until we got to target. We would normally be up
21 35,000 feet and then when lead would call it, it was throttles basically to ideal and just
22 get down as quickly as possible and lead would go spray on and everybody else would go
23 spray on at that point and then we would stay in formation during the run and when we
24 were finished with the run we had procedures again for getting out as steeply as possible
25 and join up if necessary join up and come on back. Then normally two lists a day, we
26 would go in, land the airplane, taxi back in order to get the planes close to where the
27 riverside was stored, we actually had to back up, so we did and then we go along the
28 riverside again. Go and get briefed on the second mission to fly in. When I finally got
29 back it was almost always before noon. Like I said I took the rest of the day off. Didn't
30 have a lot of required activity during the day unless you are leaving the next day, so we
31 had opportunities for some recreation. I remember I learned how to play squash and

1 handball while I was in-country. So, we had those opportunities. Sometimes you could go
2 into town for whatever reason. I was taking squadron officer school correspondence
3 course while I was over there, so I was able to take time to finish that off. Sometimes
4 just laying out in the sun we would do. Then in the evening dinner obviously relatively
5 early so we can get to bed to be able to get up at four o'clock in the morning
6 again. Whether it was pretty lazy days in the afternoons as I recall.

7 KC: Can you describe the living conditions that you had there both in terms
8 of quarters and food and just the layout of your area there in Bien Hoa.

9 DB: Yeah, we had what we called hooches. They were to be maybe thirty feet
10 wide and maybe fifty feet long. Maybe longer than that. Up front in the common area we
11 had a refrigerator—where the TV was and obviously some chairs or whatever. Each of us
12 had a cubical with a bunk and a locker. That area wouldn't be more than ten by ten or
13 so. All open no screens of course but no sidewalls because it was pretty hot there. Opened
14 buildings and without air conditions. Our quarters at Bien Hoa had air condition. When
15 we got up to Da Nang, they did have air conditioned quarters up there which was a good
16 and bad thing. If we got incoming rockets or something and they blow off—I remember
17 our quarters at Da Nang would blow in the window areas so sometimes it was better to be
18 in a building that had opened sides because at least the concussion of the blast would not
19 have anything to knock over. It was blow through things. But that didn't happen to me, I
20 could only remember one or two times when we were scrambling under the racks because
21 of the rockets coming in. That was I think both times where I was up in Da Nang, it was a
22 more hostile environment up there. The officers' club was air conditioned. The PX (Post
23 Exchange) on base. Of course, the typical medical facilities. Must've been a packaged
24 door. I didn't drink much but some people did. That's pretty much it. I do know that after
25 I left, I left in January of '68 and about two weeks later is when Tet happened. They told
26 me that the hooch I was living took a direct hit. It was no longer because it took a rocket
27 and blew it up.

28 KC: Life is all about timing.

29 DB: Yeah, for sure.

1 KC: You talked about being rocketed up in Da Nang. Obviously, this was not
2 unique to your outfit in being rocketed. Tell me about the environment up there and tell
3 me about being rocketed. What's that like for you?

4 DB: Well, I'm not sure whether there was a siren or something that would go off
5 or simply the explosion that you would hear. Or maybe but I just remember—you
6 knew when it was happening. If you're sleeping—in my case it always happened at
7 night. So, under your bed was the safest place to be, that's where we went. In my case,
8 neither one of them lasted very long. Just kind of a nuisance type thing. Not
9 preliminary to an attack or ground attack or anything like that. Just probably trying to
10 keep people awake sort of thing. For the enemies' point of view, they weren't really
11 effective. They didn't stop anything in the instances that I experienced.

12 KC: Let's take you back down to Bien Hoa and kind of your off time if you
13 will. You mentioned there's a club, you got racquetball or squash or whatever it might be.
14 What about the communications home? Do you write your wife?

15 DB: We had mail service and I had sometime over there after the first couple of
16 months I bought tape recorders and I sent her one and I had one, so we had tape
17 recorders. But that was it, there wasn't any phones. I don't know that anybody
18 could've—maybe there was some provisions for HF contact or something like that if in
19 fact you had the radio. But nothing like they have today!

20 KC: That's for sure.

21 DB: Mail was as I recall came in bunches. You get mail but it would seem like it
22 would be held up and suddenly you get two or three letters that were mailed at different
23 times but arrived at the same time. It was periodic correspondence, certainly not on any
24 regular basis. But I kept in touch and people were able to mail me things. Really,
25 I remembered being fairly impressed. We were getting that on a regular basis.

26 KC: What sort of things were you getting in the mail?

27 DB: I had one of my sisters send me—she decided she was going to send me
28 some paperback books just on a regular basis. She would select them and send them to
29 me. So, I got those. I don't remember getting any food. I know other people did get
30 cookie boxes or something like that but of course I was taking that correspondence
31 course, so I get that stuff through the mail. Other than that, it was mostly just

1 communications type stuff with my family. My dad and mom and wife were
2 corresponding.

3 KC: You mentioned this correspondence course you're taking on a couple of
4 separate occasions. So, you're thinking about the Air Force as a career then I would
5 assume?

6 DB: Oh absolutely.

7 KC: You really enjoy what you're doing there in Vietnam it sounds like.

8 DB: Oh yeah, yup. I did, I have to say that. In many ways it was the highlight of
9 my career of twenty-one years including academy time. My time during Vietnam is the
10 one I pick most often.

11 KC: What kind of news were you receiving if any about what was going on back
12 in the states?

13 DB: Certainly, we were getting it mostly through the *Armed Forces Radio* and
14 TV. Again, timeframe wise this was '67 basically all of '67 and I'm from Michigan and
15 that's where my wife was. My mom and dad and my wife were there and younger
16 sister actually as it turned out. In Detroit, my dad worked in Detroit his office was in the
17 city. They had riots. Severe race riots in Detroit in June of that year and I remember my
18 wife telling me they had plans to go to a game and then I didn't hear a game or
19 some event in Detroit. I didn't hear anything then from her for some time, but I knew all
20 that was going on over there. In that way I was more concerned about her than I was
21 about me because I just didn't know whether they gotten involved in any—bad stuff in
22 Detroit or not. So, I was somewhat apprehensive for a period of time. See that was also
23 one of the Arab-Israeli conflicts was in '67 and was certainly aware of that going on. I
24 seem to recall knowing that there was not as bad as it got later, civil unrest regarding
25 what we were doing. My wife and some correspondents questioned why we were there,
26 why we were doing what we were doing. But she was in the civilian environment and
27 that was different. We were more mission focused, so I wasn't—I didn't have those. I
28 didn't have that high level concern. My attitude was "This is where we are making a
29 stand now." My dad took part in World War II and bad things were going to happen and
30 this is a bad thing but this is where we are making a stand now so I was proud to be
31 there and doing what we were doing, trying to contribute I like to think—when I was

1 there we were still talking about winning the damn war and it wasn't until after I gone it
2 deteriorate to the point where we weren't trying to win it seemed like and eventually
3 obviously it didn't. But as far as knowing what was going on we were pretty
4 well informed as to what was going on back home.

5 KC: What about the music? I mean we look at the Vietnam era as being this era of
6 incredibly intense period of productivity of rock and roll even country music and
7 Motown! All this great music flowing around. What kind of music did you listen to in
8 Vietnam?

9 DB: Wow, I don't remember doing much of that actually. Let me see, I can't say I
10 have a real strong memory of anything like that. I know some of the shows that would
11 come through to play at the club or whatever, obviously did not leave much of
12 an impression on me one way or the other.

13 KC: Right. Tell me about some of the shows that you saw or were aware of.

14 DB: Oh just—you got a band from the Philippines or something and they have a
15 female singer, small band something like that. Again, I don't recall I need to go through
16 my diary. I don't remember anything that really made a great impression on me. I think
17 because I was there over Christmas just before I came back, just before I finished up and
18 came back. I believe that Bob Hope was on one of his tours. Did not come to Bien Hoa. I
19 have an opportunity at all to see him, but I think that did occur during my final month
20 of in country time. Those were always- we heard at least they were always well
21 perceived. Like I say, I don't remember. I didn't hear him actually, but I talk to folks
22 that had attended the shows and he was a great moral booster with his shows.

23 KC: What about R&R (Rest and Recuperation)? Did you get a chance to go
24 to R&R?

25 DB: Yes.

26 KC: Where did you go?

27 DB: I went back to Hawaii. I met my wife in Hawaii for whatever it was, four or
28 five days. That was a good time. I was very grateful for that. That was I think in
29 September of the year I was there. It was well past halfway. It was more like two thirds of
30 the way through the tour. We had a good time there; it was nice from whoever to arrange
31 that. I was quite appreciative of that. We did that touristy type things while we were

1 there. She had been working as a secretary for an engineering firm there in Ypsilanti
2 where she was staying. When she interviewed for the job back in January, that was one of
3 the conditions she said, “At some point, I'm going to get a call and going to have two
4 days to get ready and leave.” She told her new boss, she said “That goes with the
5 territory. I'm going to do that so be forewarned that’s going to happen” they
6 were real good about allowing that to happen, so we didn’t have any problems that way.

7 KC: Was it hard to go back to the grind after leaving Hawaii, R&R?

8 DB: I don’t recall that being the case. By this time, we were starting to think
9 about the next assignment, so things were really winding down from that aspect. I have
10 been I think by that time I had been upgraded to IP (Instructor Pilot). I had remembered
11 this but going back through my diary, I realize that they asked—they, my squadron had
12 asked higher ups for a waiver so I could check out as an IP. I don’t remember now
13 whether the wavier was because of the flying time or the rank or what but it took a while
14 for that to come through. It eventually did come through, but it was a situation where we
15 were losing—on a rotational basis, we lose the most experienced people. You had to fill
16 those IP slots and so on had to be filled with the most experienced people. At that point, I
17 was one, so I did get that made that upgrade and I was still a first lieutenant. I think that
18 probably came through the R&R time as well. I don’t remember exactly.

19 KC: Well, that probably takes us to a good point to stop today, Mr. Barich.

Interview with Dewey Barich

Session [3] of [3]

Date 6 April 2016

1 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager continuing an oral history interview with
2 Mr. Dewey Barich. Today is 6 April 2016. I am in Lubbock, Texas on the campus of
3 Texas Tech University and Mr. Barich is joining me by telephone again from his home in
4 Delaware. Okay Dewey, last time we had you circling the drain as it were for your tour
5 there with the 12th. You mentioned there was a couple of things that you wanted
6 to discuss before we get rolling. So go ahead and tell me about the things you wanted to
7 bring up today.

8 Dewey Barich: Okay well first of all just kind of a short mentions. Going through
9 my diary I found an entry during some mission, not one I was on that the lead pilot in
10 aircraft came under fire and they elected to pull off target and that's the only time
11 during my year there that I ever recall that happening. I certainly wasn't in the formation
12 I don't know all the specifics about it. As I mention in my notes that they were also flying
13 into the sun which may have been a factor. But that was not the mentality of any of the
14 flights that I was on or certainly any of the ones I led. Because we never took that heavy
15 of fire or my mentality that we're not going to do that. If anything, my impulse was to get
16 lower. Get down closer to the ground if we started taking any sustain fire. I think that was
17 pretty much the attitude of the rest of the guys, like I said this particular incident I don't
18 know the details on it, but it certainly wasn't typical.

19 KC: Now you guys went out there and there was a mission to accomplish and that
20 was it was all about. For you and others of course.

21 DB: Yeah, that's kind of the history of the Air Force. Not to have been turned
22 away by hostile fire. Again, I wasn't on that particular mission at all, so I certainly want
23 to second guess but it was not the mentality that most of us had. I remember the heaviest
24 flyer I encounter was I took fifteen hits one day and it was a mission that we were
25 not supposed to make multiple passes over a hot target. The way that this thing laid out
26 and I was the lead pilot, so I had to accept the responsibility of planning it for so long—
27 but the way this particular target worked out was we did a spray run and then within
28 a fairly short distance did another spray run. I was pretty sure that the first run would
29 wake everybody up and the fact that we were not going back over that target I guess

1 made it legal for us to continue on and hit the next target. But the next target by this
2 time were up and coming at us and I had planned the mission that we were pretty sure
3 where the hostile fire would be coming from. And I had planned the mission so that I
4 would be closest to that. We were on echelon right which put everybody to the right of
5 me and we were figuring that the hostile fire would be coming from our left and that's the
6 way it worked out. We just got worked over pretty well. Again, my thought was once we
7 started taking it that we wanted to get down as low to the ground as we could. Absolutely
8 as low to the ground as we could. Everything worked out but it was an eye-opener for me
9 that day. The other thing I wanted to mention particularly as it came toward the end of
10 my stay which I was there in-country from January '67, January '68. At Christmas of '67
11 we had a squadron party, and it was a goodtime I got some footage of it. At this party, the
12 Vietnamese—they were flight mechanics were officially observers and some of the
13 missions we flew required that we have a Vietnamese observer on the mission. To get the
14 details of that and the legality of it, it's all available on other sources as to why this was
15 so on. But we had these men and there was half a dozen or so and at this party they had
16 drawn up like a big Christmas card and they had written on it, I like to read it I have it up
17 on my screen here and I would like to enter this in. It simply states "It is coming
18 Christmas and New Years' Time and the 12th Air Commando Squadron men are
19 thousands of miles from home. At these times, they are in my country fighting beside my
20 people for freedom. We have nothing to give you but my thanks. Many years ago, when
21 the Chinese invaded this land, King Quang Trung came with his army and fought with
22 us against our enemy. Now is the same. At a time when all men of all lands wish to be
23 with their families you are here fighting with us so that we may have freedom
24 again. Please give to each men our many thanks." It is signed by the airman that wrote it
25 out and mentions all the Vietnamese observers. You had asked me early on in this
26 interview about my feelings on the war and the causes and prosecution of it and so on and
27 this kind of summarized it for me. I would say it was happenstance, but it happened
28 toward the end of my tour because it was Christmas time but this kind of wrapped it
29 up and that's the way I felt pretty much about the recent for us being there. It has stuck
30 with me all this time. After I got back home, my father was a member of the Detroit
31 Rotary Club. I had to dress that club after while I was a cadet still, it was probably

1 my first class year. At some point I'm not sure whether there was a particular reason
2 for it, but he had asked if I do that which I did. After I finished my tour and came back,
3 he again asked me if I would address the club. I did I finished it up with this same
4 message I read to you. That was very meaningful to me, and I talked to a few other Ranch
5 Handers that were at that same event and they recalled it as well.

6 KC: It was certainly a very powerful statement.

7 DB: Well, it was, and you know these were enlisted people. I don't know how
8 well educated the work on this card was very good whoever did the lettering was well
9 done. It was a very professional looking job. It seemed to be genuine to me. It didn't
10 seem put on, there was certainly no alter ego motives for them it. It was heartfelt. I
11 remember feeling that way about it.

12 KC: After a full year of going what you were going through with the 12th it
13 obviously had special meaning to you guys and feeling good about the mission you're
14 trying to achieve. You mentioned certain missions that Vietnamese would have to fly
15 with you. You said the legalities and technicalities can be found elsewhere. But can you
16 comment on them from what you understand or what you remember about those
17 technicalities?

18 DB: There were certain progress that we were going after crop—I'm trying to
19 remember the term, some of it was rice obviously but some of it was not. These were
20 in Viet Cong controlled areas and those were the missions that the legalities were greenlit
21 between the US and South Vietnam required that there be an observer. I suspect the
22 reason for it was that they just wanted to be sure we in fact were hitting the proper
23 targets. So that was the technicalities of it. Those targets were generally the hot targets
24 also. Those guys were exposed probably more often because those were the missions that
25 they flew. They were exposed more to the fire on a permission basis than the rest of
26 us. The last majority of our targets were not "hot targets". They were in very uninhabited
27 areas but those areas that we were obviously populated and that's where we got the most
28 resistance.

29 KC: Yeah, and it would stand a reason as well. Number one, destroying
30 foodstuff is—that could be a lot more tricky business for a variety of different ways. One
31 of course being that you're literally taking the food out of the mouths of the people who

1 were there. Of course, from the America side of it, from the ARVN (Army of the
2 Republic of Vietnam), it would be a matter of denying the enemy important
3 foodstuffs which would be the whole purpose of it.

4 DB: Yeah, that was it. Like I said, those were Viet Cong controlled areas and that
5 was the enemy. Also, on those missions we flew with VAF, Vietnamese Air Force
6 markings on the airplane. We had a way of changing that, so those missions were done
7 that way. I remember thinking, if I'm going in, while I'm over here I just hope it's
8 with a USAF (United States Air Force) markings on the airplane! I didn't want to crash
9 and burn in a VAF marked airplane. If it was going to happen, I want it to be on a USA
10 airplane.

11 KC: Yeah sure, I think we all understand that. You mentioned that these would be
12 hotter targets because the VC would be there and they have something important to
13 protect rather than it be someplace out in the jungle and they would have people around,
14 they are willing to protect the people perhaps, but certainly protect the food supply and
15 things like that. Again, the legality and the questions whether or not it's right to do this if
16 you have Vietnamese observers and you have Vietnamese markings on the plane. It
17 would at least appear to the outside to some degree that this was a South Vietnamese
18 operation to do this sort of thing and not the Americans necessarily behind it. When you
19 are going after rice and other foodstuffs, I would assume that this would be a different
20 kind of chemical rather than orange which was from broadleaf, correct?

21 DB: Yes. That was what was called Agent White. It was described to me as a
22 desiccant, a drying agent. So, we could go down, spray that, and you could come back
23 later that day and it would already start to be turning brown. Because we are just drying it
24 out very quickly. Supposedly, their crop would still be good but of course no one would
25 want to consume it because he would think it was bad. But it reacted very quickly—I'm
26 sorry it wasn't white. It was blue. That was Agent Blue. Orange and White were
27 herbicides and blue was the desiccant. Blue missions were pretty much—they were
28 potentially the hot missions if we were spraying Agent Blue it was more likely to be a hot
29 mission.

30 KC: You also mentioned previously about you going into an area to spray an area
31 that would be pretty hot. You mentioned once you get ground fire, you want to go

1 lower. For someone who might not understand why that would be the case, I mean
2 human nature makes you want to get away from danger. Why would you want to be
3 going lower?

4 DB: When you almost had to been on the ground and see an airplane go over you
5 at a hundred feet or even fifty feet it just looks like a huge target where that same airplane
6 drops down even though it's just another fifty feet it becomes less of a target and that was
7 the theory that I operated under. Because I also made up in my mind if I started taking
8 fire, I wasn't leaving I'm going to press on. Getting down closer to the ground it reduces
9 the target that they had to shoot at. When it's up higher it's easier to see. Like I said you
10 almost have to been on the ground and have an airplane to fly over you to understand
11 the perspective that it gives. That's pretty much it.

12 KC: What kind of fire would you typically receive? Small arms? AK47?

13 DB: Yeah, AK47. We had a few instances where we got .50 cal. .50 caliber
14 fire. Actually, the equivalent of it which was 12.2 millimeters or something like that. But
15 that would be the automatic fire. I remember one mission where I described to you that
16 our flight mechanic got wounded. That was that type of fire, .50 cal. type fire. I had a
17 good friend, still have he's still alive who got into a situation where they were taken
18 quad-mounted .50 caliber fire and they got really hosed. In fact, he got a silver star for
19 bringing it back, taking that fire and bring it back. But that was more unusual, it was
20 mostly the small arms .30 caliber stuff. Because we were still in country and there wasn't
21 much active heavier stuff in the aircraft fire or missiles, during my time there I don't
22 remember any missile fight grounded air missiles or anything like that. While I was
23 there it wasn't smaller stuff and the one hit that disabled the engine that I had that was .30
24 cal. Well, placed that certainly could do a lot of damage but we kind of figure they never
25 really—they the enemy were not really good shots, and they could never lead very well.
26 That was the story behind the purple nose and had a disk painted in purple on the nose of
27 the airplanes and the idea was we said "Well if they are aiming at that, they'll never hit
28 up. So that was one of those amusing things that we did.

29 KC: Yeah, kind of get them off the scent a little bit, I guess. Give them a target to
30 hit they wouldn't be able to use effectively against you guys.

1 DB: Another interesting thing I was thinking about was markings on the airplane.
2 The airplanes were camouflage painted as were everything in-country. We had a
3 situation where you would have the FACs, the forward air controllers flying above us,
4 and it would be difficult for them sometimes to see us because of the jungle we be flying
5 over jungle canopy and the camouflage as intended would blend into that. So, to make it
6 possible for them to observe us, there was a stripe painted wingtip to wingtip in
7 international orange. Bright orange to use for emergency type stuff and we had those
8 stripes painted on top of the wings. For all intents and purposes like when the airplanes
9 were on the ground, the camouflage worked well and that stripe on the top was not a
10 deterrent to the camouflage but when we were flying and needed to be able have the
11 FACs see us.

12 KC: I'm glad you mentioned that you brought that up. It's something that you
13 don't hear all that often, but it makes perfect sense given that obviously the Viet Cong
14 don't have the air assets to not bother you guys but will help in seeing you. Whether it's
15 the gunships or the fast movers, the forward air controller people can see from the top,
16 I'm really glad you brought that up. You also mentioned that when you would receive fire
17 you would go down to a lower level. How did you communicate this with the rest of the
18 flight? Do they see you doing it? It's not radio or anything like that as far as
19 communications?

20 DB: The only comment we would make is when somebody started taking fire if
21 anybody called started receiving hits, you'll call that out over the radio. If it for the
22 airplane was taking the flyer on the intercom you'll tell the flight mechanic, you say
23 "smoke" and he'd pop one of those smoke grenades and tossed it out the open door. But
24 that was the only communication about it. It wouldn't be everybody go lower or
25 anything like that. It was just "We're taking fire and if it was heavy enough then it
26 certainly started to get down closer to the ground. Most of those targets were the open
27 area targets so you could get lower there. When you're flying over jungle canopy,
28 obviously you could get as low as the tallest tree. Another factor in that sense was it
29 would take multiple passes to get the canopy eliminated because you go across at one
30 point and the herbicide would get to the upper level of the canopy and over a period of
31 time those trees would die off but below it would start to grow would have to be taken

1 out also so sometime later would be probably—months later perhaps you have to come
2 back in and this was somewhat of a problem in that now you got dead trees sticking up
3 and you're trying to get the spray down as low as possible but you obviously can't run
4 into a tree so when you had to go back in on areas that had already been sprayed
5 sometime before and you had a dead trees standing up we had to be very aware of that.

6 KC: Mm-hmm. When you're flying lead, you typically have a navigator isn't this
7 correct? Can you talk a little bit about the role of a navigator? A lot of guys have
8 expressed some real serious admiration for what the navigators were able to do given the
9 circumstances. Could you talk about the navigators and their role?

10 DB: Well, they did the mission planning. They get the order for where we were
11 going to go and get out their maps and they would plot the points and try to put up any
12 visual references for it. The kind of navigation that they needed to do was not necessarily
13 something that they got a lot of training in school for because we were working off
14 of army charts, not navigational charts and so you're trying to pick out ground references
15 so you could direct the flight and they were sitting between the pilot and co-pilot right
16 across the radio panel. They put almost like a saddle seat across the radio panel and the
17 navigator would be sitting on that and we would be communicating of course on
18 intercom, and he would be directing you know "See that tree" or something he'd be
19 referencing his map and pointing out landmarks and so on so that the pilots could
20 then find the correct spot. The flights were directed in a large part by FAC, we always
21 had a FAC in charge of the overall mission. Sometimes we would have FACs layer—
22 shoot out a smoke rocket to mark a point and the navigator would coordinate that with the
23 pilot also as far as the actual location. The navigator would compare that mark with the
24 charts that he has, and we could adjust. You know, you could be a little more right or left
25 of that whatever. The navigators were very important from the planning of it to the
26 setting up the mission.

27 KC: Okay thank you for that. Also, you become an instructor pilot sometime
28 around the time you took your R&R to Hawaii which is around September is that
29 correct?

30 DB: Right.

1 KC: Can you tell me about being an instructor pilot? What did that require and
2 how did you go about instructing other pilots and checking them out?

3 (Editor's Note: Interviewee asks for a break.)

4 KC: Okay Dewey, pick it back up again with instructor pilot. Again, what did it
5 require to become an instructor pilot and then how would you go about your business?

6 DB: The higher ups they have to decide who was going to be the instructors
7 and of course they had to have some experience but also have the knowledge of the
8 operations in the airplane and so on. For those of us in the instructors in the ranch, pretty
9 much it was teaching the procedures that were unique to our operation. The types of
10 formations we would fly the radio procedures and things like that and anytime we were in
11 a situation where we could go back and for example shut down an engine and make sure
12 they understood how to—the dash procedures for restarting an engine and flying those
13 kinds of things. You can't do that kind of stuff on a formation mission but there were
14 times when you can break off and you could go over and make sure that they were
15 staying current on those kinds of things. The mechanical systems the airplane. But it was
16 primarily teaching them—mostly by showing the procedures that we used or what it was
17 like to make those rapid descents and the techniques for we would talk about for example
18 if an airplane in formation lost an engine and they were still—particularly if you're still
19 on target well then the theory was if you could get somebody underneath them, fly
20 underneath the good engine and block that engine from the potential of the good engine
21 also being shot out, that was something that we talked about doing. I don't recall
22 necessarily ever practicing it, but it would just be another form of formation flying. But
23 that was something we talked about. Then also when the aircraft commander was wanting
24 to upgrade to lead status, again being selected by the powers that be, the instructor would
25 fly with them and go over all those procedures that lead pilots needed to know.
26 Coordinating with the FAC and with the navigator, working to make the missions run
27 smoothly. Lead pilots course did their briefing on a particular mission and of course after
28 having planned it with a navigator but the techniques for a particular mission most of
29 them are pretty straight forward but every once and awhile you'd get a target that might
30 require a different not necessarily standard or routine procedure something that you have
31 to do because the way the terrain was or something like that.

1 KC: And were you still going out on spray missions yourself?

2 DB: Oh yes, absolutely. Most of the training was done on a mission actually.

3 KC: How many hours did you have to accumulate before you were checked out as
4 an instructor?

5 DB: I'm not sure what they used. I have been in-country I guess six months or
6 so before they started talking about me upgrades so I would've accumulated four five
7 hundred hours I guess by that time. One of the things—major reason they had to get a
8 waiver for me was I was just a young pilot, so I had to accumulate thousands of hours
9 like some of the other guys had. I would be instructing people that had a lot more flying
10 hours than I had but they had not had the in-country experience, so it was the instructor's
11 job to give them that type of instruction. As an instructor I learned things from senior
12 guys techniques. I remember for example flying with our ops officer one time and he
13 pointed out to me that he could fly in formation and the reset where they got the
14 propellers turning. If you could focus on that airplane, you could tell when the plane that
15 you were flying off of generally leave. Made a power adjustment because you could see it
16 in the prop. It's a little hard to describe but just a very tiny adjustment and because the
17 prop would rotate just a little bit—I don't mean the spinning motion, but the blade would
18 turn just a little bit to keep the speed constant. That's the way the propeller worked. It's
19 not a fixed pitch, it's a variable pitch so as you adjust the power on it, the blade has
20 to rotate a little bit to keep it spinning at the same speed. If you were watching for it, you
21 could see that and that was something that I hadn't pick up at that point and he had of
22 course a lot more flying hours than I did. He mentioned that to me but that was after I
23 checked out as an instructor. I learned that little technique. Other than that, it was for the
24 most part the guys we got in had been through background of spray training in the
25 states there was a time because being undermanned we got some guys that came in that
26 were just there to fly as co-pilot. They had not had any of that spray training, so they have
27 not experienced being the control of the throttles on target. On target, the co-pilot had to
28 control of the throttles primarily and it was his job to make power adjustments to keep in
29 formation so that the pilot who had both hands on the yolk and could completely override
30 the co-pilot on the power but it was primarily the co-pilot's job to keep the front to back
31 position with power adjustment. When we got those fellas in, they said they did not get

1 that training and that's kind of a unique situation that we had. That's not the normal way
2 of flying formation. Later on, in my career for example we did an ariel refueling and
3 that's simply a flying tight formation and the pilot has complete control of that. You
4 know you fly with one hand, and you work the throttles with the other but on target we
5 had worked out these other procedures and as instructors that's what we talked and
6 refined with the other pilots. So, it's more a matter of experience in-country that
7 we got as they were say I have fewer hours than a lot of the fellas. But at
8 some point, even though you have fewer total hours you're the one that got all the
9 experience in-country so you're one of these to pass that on.

10 KC: You're coming close to the end of your tour. Take me through the last few
11 days of your time there in Vietnam. What's going on for you?

12 DB: Well, we wanted to for the most part we part we flew right up until maybe a
13 day or two until we got on an airplane to fly out. Not a whole out of some of the
14 equipment you have to check in that they been issued have been assigned. I remember
15 getting- I knew where my next assignment was. Probably maybe even two months before
16 I left. I knew I was going to be going to Travis and I was going to C141 school. That was
17 always of interest. We talk about that if we had any other baggage that had to be
18 shipped, I think I remember it was in November we had a repair facility, a depot
19 level maintenance facility at Taiwan that we would take airplanes up and they would do
20 a really thorough overhaul on the airplane. That was kind of a R&R type of situation. We
21 take an airplane, fly from Vietnam to Clark, Philippines and up to Taiwan. Drop the
22 airplane off and pick up wounded that had been worked on. Spent a day or two in
23 Taiwan, Taipei and bring that airplane back. While we were in Taipei, a lot of us did
24 pick up some furniture items. I picked up like a bar and a chest. Beautiful hand carved
25 chest and they carried it up and we brought it back on the airplane and then we shipped
26 them home as a whole baggage and that was kind of a plus item that we got for being
27 there. So, we took care of that close to the end there when the shipping could get
28 authorized. Let's see, that was pretty much it. We used the term "How many days did you
29 have?" and we'd say, "Well I got a five wake ups and bag drag." That meant you have
30 five days to go and then drag your bags out to the airplanes. That terminology was kind
31 of unique to the situation as I recall.

1 KC: Yeah. Well, take me through that day when you're leaving Vietnam.

2 DB: You know I don't remember that too much. We left and I'm trying to
3 remember now whether had to go down to Saigon to get on the airplane or
4 whether we actually got on one at Bien Hoa. I don't recall that too much. I'm not sure
5 why that is. I'm not sure why that is. It obviously didn't register so much with me. I knew
6 we came back, and we landed at Travis. North of San Francisco there. I had a sister living
7 in San Francisco, so I had told them I was going, and they were expecting me, and I got
8 transportation down there I think it was bus or something. She and her family lived in the
9 Ashbury District which you may understand but the younger folks don't but that was
10 a real hippie neighborhood in there and I was so concerned because I was in uniform, and
11 we have been hearing about the welcome home that a lot of guys were getting. So, I came
12 in in-uniform in the Ashbury. I didn't have any issues. I spent the night with them
13 and that was the time when my young relative asked me if I killed any babies in Vietnam
14 and I of course ensure that I haven't, but she was influenced by that area of San
15 Francisco. But I spent the night with them and then the next day got on to a commercial
16 flight to I think it was to New York actually. My wife's parents lived on Long Island, and
17 she had gone there. I think as I recall I had spent some time with them in New York. But
18 again, that's kind of hazy. That's interesting, those things obviously weren't significant
19 enough for me to remember. Of course, I spent time with her folks, and we spent time in
20 Michigan with my folks before we left. While I was at home, I picked up a new car I had
21 arranged. We picked that up in Michigan and my training assignment to 141s was
22 that Oklahoma City I think our Air Force Base we drove out to Tinker. I had also—I
23 know on that trip I stopped off with my wife and I we stopped off at the home of a good
24 friend who had been killed that I been very close to. I think I mentioned that previously
25 about a mission in September where we were flight with the back up and there were
26 two squads, one for mission and one fore pick up of an airplane that had been left at
27 another base and I was selected to fly the mission and he was selected to go pick up that
28 other airplane and the airplane that he was on crashed. It killed him and a bunch of other
29 people. On our way out to Oklahoma from I guess it was from New York, I stopped off at
30 his wife's and his parents there in Kentucky we spend the night there and continued

1 on out to Oklahoma to spend another night with some friends of my wife and up
2 to Oklahoma city.

3 KC: Let me ask you a few things that came up. One, you mentioned that when
4 you came into San Francisco you stayed with a cousin and this cousin asked you if you
5 had killed any babies. This is you know a pretty famous refrain from the Vietnam
6 war. This was a cousin and obviously completely different life experiences who you
7 were and who she was, and we certainly understand that.

8 DB: Was a niece actually.

9 KC: Is a niece, I'm sorry a niece.

10 DB: And very young at that point. She was—maybe four, five, six. I understood
11 it completely where she was coming from and why. It was somewhat of a shock but again
12 given the times and area, I understood where she was coming from. Years later when we
13 were all adults and I mentioned that to her, and she did not remember it. She did not
14 remember it, so it wasn't as memorial to her as it was to me. She of course apologized
15 which wasn't necessary, but it was sign of the times. Absolutely sign of the times.

16 KC: Well, you mentioned obviously she was very young. To a large degree, we
17 understand that children say these that they hear around them, and the environment was
18 different and all that. But still, to me it would seem that this is a very poignant picture of
19 ones' experience from the Vietnam War and everything else going on around. You
20 mentioned that it was a shock. Is this something that hurt you when you hear it even
21 though you understand where it comes from?

22 DB: To an extend, it does because that's not the traditional—America servicemen
23 aren't known for killing babies. The idea that this thought was perpetuating was
24 uncomfortable to say the least. To take your fellow citizens back home actually believing
25 those kinds of things. That was hurtful. The fact that she repeated it wasn't so back it was
26 the idea that she had to get that from somewhere and that was what was uncomfortable
27 about it. Basically, I didn't experience the spitting on and so on other guys went through
28 but my status was quite different. I was in the military career, military. Came back and
29 obviously some contact with civilians but then we were station at military installations.
30 That training I went through with other military people. What I'm saying is it was
31 somewhat shielded from a lot of that interaction with the protestors with the war

1 protestors. I didn't have to integrate back into the civilian population directly. I was more
2 separated from that. That made a difference. I guess it makes a difference to this
3 day because I can't relate to some of the feelings that guys have to endure that. You
4 would like to spend a year at a bad place but serving honorably when you came back you
5 would have at least some element of respect from the population and they didn't get that.
6 It was one of the few times in American military history where you didn't have that. You
7 didn't get that respect. But the fact that for me personally being in the military and all, I
8 did have some of that respect from the people I flew with or that I now associated with
9 now that I got back. Sometimes shared experiences, but some of them they haven't been
10 over yet looked with respect at my service and so on. That was different for me. It made
11 it easier! Absolutely made it easier for me. Some of these fellows but guys get drafted,
12 whatever length of time they were in having to spend a year over there and then come
13 back. They just wanted to get away from that and they weren't getting any of that—they
14 got no respect. That was tough on them. To this day it's tough on them, I know.

15 KC: You also mentioned that on your way down to Tinker from the
16 east coast that you stopped by family's home and Kentucky family friend that
17 you lose. What do you say to these folks who lost their son in war, and you knew him?
18 What was that experience like for you?

19 DB: It was pretty tough. They were a very welcoming family. They actually
20 wanted us—my wife and I to stay with them. We had booked a hotel motel and stayed
21 there. I begged off saying we'd been visiting and then when other people for almost
22 continually since I been back, and we just wanted to be by ourselves. But we talk a little
23 bit about my friend and their son and husband. I didn't see the gray side, but they told me
24 about it. It was difficult for me because I knew that if it wasn't him, it would've been
25 me. I couldn't bring myself to explain that way to them. They asked me why the crash
26 occurred and so on and I obviously had been directly involved, I couldn't tell her exactly
27 why I just felt really bad about the fact that we had lost people in that manner. It's been
28 hard enough to lose them on a spray mission. But to lose them that way was bad. To this
29 day I have problems with it. (Voice breaks) I've been to the wall. I've taken the rubbing
30 of his name and my family understands that if his name wasn't there, mine would've
31 been. I think that's one of the more typical things were. I know people have experienced

1 the loss of someone that they fought besides, and you never get over wondering why it
2 wasn't me. Why was he the one. Just never forget that. You never forget that.

3 KC: This is obviously something that only you can carry for sure. But what about
4 your family? Has the support there—has that helped? Has time helped to any degree?

5 DB: Oh yes and I don't mean to imply that I got PTSD or anything like that, I'm
6 blessed that way. I don't feel like I have any of those traumas other than other people
7 have. For example, my son got his doctorate at A&M. Texas A&M, and he dedicated it—
8 in fact, let me see if I can get that out. He dedicated his—not his thesis but—

9 KC: Dissertation.

10 DB: Yeah, and the inscription that he said that's in his dissertation I'll try to get
11 through this. It goes this way. "There are times in our lives when a brief moment
12 profoundly alters forever our perception of our own existence. However, they may affect
13 us, these moments define us. I call such events 'moments of transition'. There is a place
14 where people go to look back and remember they go to honor, to grieve, to remember and
15 then a few fortunate cases to heal. There is a wall at that place. Historic and reverent. On
16 that wall are the names of thousands who are no longer with us because they paid the
17 price for freedom. It is because of such sacrifices that I and others have had the freedom
18 to what we had wanted instead of what was needed. One name on that wall is closely linked
19 to one of my moments of transition. This work is dedicated to the memory of that name.
20 Because I will never forget." And he has my friend's name there. When he did that on his
21 own, he knew the story and there was a surprise for me when we went down with him
22 when he graduated and got his doctorate there. He showed me that copy of his
23 dissertation, and I have made a copy of it. I carry that with me in my wallet. I bring it out
24 every once in awhile. It's one of those things. One of the tougher aspects of life is
25 wondering why some events happen the way they do and this one is very close. My
26 friend—we were very close in age and experience and we just kind of hit it off. Flew
27 together several times but as I say being close in age, he had family and had children. I
28 did not have children at that point. Tasked after his death go through personal affects
29 that's one of the things of course has to be done. They ask me to listen to the tapes that he
30 had correspondence basically with his family. The idea of that is you don't want to send
31 anything back that you might not want them to know about. Somewhat delicate situation

1 perhaps but in this case, there wasn't anything like that. But they asked me to listen to
2 those tapes, so I did. That was part of what happens when somebody passes like that and
3 leaves personal effects responsible for getting them back to the family.

4 KC: Also had to be incredibly difficult to do. What your son wrote was obviously
5 a very important thing. Very poignantly stated. You must be really proud of him for that.

6 DB: Yeah, you know I don't often have this chance to talk about those
7 things other than seems like Memorial Day. Particular that or Veteran's day we call some
8 of those things. I think about it often though wondering why. But so do a lot of other
9 folks.

10 KC: That's the role of family too is to know things like that. What was your son's
11 degree in by the way?

12 DB: It is in solid state chemistry. He works with magnetometers analyzing
13 samples. He works for Smith Klein now. After graduation he had some time at Salt
14 Lake doing his post-doc there and then some more at Kansas. KU. Now he's working
15 fairly close now in Pennsylvania, so we get to see him more often now.

16 KC: That's good. Well, let's take it back your Air Force career again Dewey. You
17 go down to Oklahoma and you said you're going be in the 141 is that correct?

18 DB: That's correct.

19 KC: Okay, take me through your time with 141s and take me through the rest of
20 your Air Force Career if you can.

21 DB: Sure. The course at Tinker get that checked out, finish that up. Fly out
22 to California, Travis AFB which is north of San Francisco between San Francisco
23 and Sacramento. Major effort of our time was support against Southeast Asia, so we flew
24 that route. We logged a lot of hours. Three hundred, well over a hundred hours a
25 month during the time I was there. Routes basically we would take a load from Travis
26 and go through Hickam, to Wake Island. Go fly to Clark in the Philippines. Go in-country
27 and back up to Yokota Air Base in Japan. Then back to Travis and that was a typical run
28 for us. So, I was there for three years. Had a three month tour to squadron officer school
29 in Alabama. That was the only break I had while I was at Travis. We were there for three
30 years. I got an assignment to go to San Diego State and get my master's degree in
31 management. Similar to MBA but it was not exactly the same. After that I was assigned

1 to systems command and at Wright-Patterson AFB in Ohio. We were there for three
2 years. While I was there, I worked initially on very junior person in what was called
3 SCADP, Subsonic Cruise Armed Decoy Program and that was a program to develop a
4 decoy that B52s can carry in the event of an attack on Russia. These decoys would
5 be launched and would appear as airplanes and would confuse radar and so on. At some
6 point they decided to arm them so they could in fact carry weapons. I was in that program
7 for awhile until that program got cancelled. I was working on a program where we were
8 developing a simulator for ungraduated pilot training—a more sophisticated simulator
9 with visual sonar—I'm talking about this, and this happened in the '70s so people today
10 listening to this probably would not understand that this was breakthrough technology at
11 that point. Computer generated imagery and that kind of stuff. These are simulators that
12 we were developing were multiaxial movement and the idea was to be able to get all your
13 training except for the final check, all your training would be on the simulator. I left the
14 program before it got that far along so I don't know whether they were ever able to reach
15 that. That seemed to us, those of us that are pilots, that seemed to us to be a very lofty
16 goal to be able to do all the training in the simulator. Most of us felt they did more flight
17 training than what they were contemplating. But that was the theory. So, I was there for
18 three years, which was from '72 to '76. We left there in the summer of '76 to go to Dover
19 AFB and get checked out to fly the C5. So, I got that training, and we were out of
20 Vietnam by that time. This was just after—a year or so after the last Israeli-Arab conflict
21 were. I'm not sure which one it was in the early '70s. The unit that I was assigned to here,
22 they've been involved in bringing supplies over to that. But that happened before I got
23 here. I was able to talk to people about what those missions were like and so on. I
24 continued to fly, I upgraded to instructor pilot and flight examiner in C5 and finished my
25 last couple of years teaching in the simulator. Going through all the pilots and crew
26 members have to complete the one week simulator course every year and we taught that
27 and when I finished up and retired in '83. Started a small business for awhile. Kids go off
28 to school, grow up and a wife gets a different kind of job and I do the road work and go
29 to the shows that I was going to and eventually got kind of tired with that so I'm not
30 going down the road anymore but basically doing the same kind of work that I was just
31 doing it at home. We live on two acres. You mentioned an acre, we live on two acres here

1 in Delaware. Very close to the Air Base, in fact on the final approach on the north-south
2 runway. When we're flying, we're pretty much aware of it.

3 KC: Can you tell me about the state of the Air Force in the '60s, '70s, and
4 '80s. What did it look like from your perspective? The services went through some
5 changes, good and bad probably as a result of Vietnam at the end of Vietnam and then
6 through the '70s and into '80s. What was your perception of the Air Force during that
7 time?

8 DB: Well of course there was still Cold War. So that was still important. I'm not
9 sure what you're asking here.

10 KC: Well, I'm thinking about, and this pertained more specifically to the
11 Army. But you know there were often times breakdown in morale. There were racial
12 issues in the country and in the military. There is a drug issue in the military and as well
13 in the country. The services took some steps to deal with that. That's the kind of thing I'm
14 talking about. The makeup of the Air Force. What sort of sort of changes, if any did you
15 see in the Air Force during this time?

16 DB: I was still in Travis where we had the race riots there. It was about the time
17 we were leaving actually in '72. I know they put much more emphasis on education,
18 trying to educate people about differences and we were also in my situation we also
19 began to get women into the officer corps and the academy started accepting women
20 and by the time I was—about 1980 I guess here at Dover, we started getting female
21 navigators. We didn't get any pilots initially, but we got navigators, female navigators
22 and that was an adjustment certainly. We hadn't had any—all the crew members had
23 been male so there were some adjustments we had to make on a much lower level than
24 perhaps what you're looking for but—

25 KC: Tell me about them.

26 DB: Okay, one of the basic crew on the C5 when I was flying—it's changed but
27 when I was flying basic crew was pilot, co-pilot, and navigator. Those would be the
28 officer positions. Then there would be two flight engineers or one flight engineer and
29 usually two load masters. When you get to quarters and start checking into quarters,
30 there was three officers. So, the senior officer would get a room by himself and usually
31 that was the aircraft commander but not always. The other two would be both together

1 would have mostly been two-man rooms. When you introduce a female into that mix,
2 now she has to get a room by herself regardless of what position she might hold on to a
3 crew. So that meant that the aircraft commander probably isn't going to have a room by
4 himself. Minor thing but an adjustment certainly that we have to make. As I say, that was
5 happening about the last year or, so I was actively flying. I didn't have problems myself.
6 I looked at them—of course I was much older at that point, and these were lieutenants for
7 the most part and I looked at them because I had three sisters, that was just like having a
8 sister around. So, it wasn't a problem for me. I don't remember it being a major problem
9 for anybody. But it does change things. Say you get checked into the queue and you
10 say "Let's go over and get something to eat" well if the female involved has to take a
11 little longer to get ready well it's just like waiting on your wife sort of thing and this was
12 one of the changes. I suspect it goes much smoother now than it did then, but it was a
13 change, it made things different.

14 KC: Those initial days are always going to be more difficult until things kind
15 of get worked out, for sure. You come home in January of '68. Do you continue to follow
16 the war at all?

17 DB: Absolutely. Shortly after I got home is when Tet happened. It was two weeks
18 after I left in-country that Tet occurred and of course people were asking as if I was some
19 kind of expert about what was happening, and I was concerned obviously. The anti-war
20 aspect of that time or if you haven't lived—I don't know how you could begin to try and
21 understand it. For me with a background—military training background, we survived the
22 battle of the Bulge in World War II. We are going to survive Tet and of course we did.
23 The Vietnamese, North Vietnamese, the Viet Cong they took a tremendous hit during that
24 and as far as on the ground goes, we survived and won the day essentially. But it was
25 back home it was in the congress and the media, and the anti-war forces really jumped on
26 that and that's when we started hearing about not winning the war, we weren't thinking
27 about winning anymore, we think more about prosecuting the war. I remember having
28 that thought that I was fortunate to been in-country when we were talking about winning
29 the war and later on that idea faded. It obviously did because we did pull out. Looked
30 around high and dry as far as I'm concerned.

1 KC: Do you remember late April 1975 when the North Vietnamese captured
2 Saigon?

3 DB: I do remember that. That was a tough time certainly because again I think we
4 let them down. We pulled out our people and we didn't keep up with the supplies that
5 we had promised. So that was a difficult time. I also remember when the POWs
6 (Prisoners of War) came home as I had one more classmate in particular because he
7 came—I was at Wright-Patterson at the time in Ohio. He lived in that area. He was
8 a classmate, but I didn't know him personally. But he came home, and I remember we
9 had a party at the club for him. I'm trying to remember the time frame when that
10 would've been. I don't know exactly but he was on the flight that came out of North
11 Vietnam. I do remember the fall of Saigon, absolutely. Another interesting aspect, when I
12 was at squadron officer school at Montgomery at Maxwell AFB, we had in our class
13 a South Vietnamese Air Force Major attending the course with us and he could
14 speak fairly good English, so we learned something about his perspective on things
15 and after we finished, I lost touch with him, but I often wondered what happened to him
16 and his family because they would've been on the list certainly. When things went south
17 and got overturned. Putting those people in camps and so on, I would think that South
18 Vietnamese military would've been high on the list for those to kill or certainly put in
19 those of education camps.

20 KC: Let me open another line of questioning Dewey. The Air Force did a long
21 term study of Agent Orange affects using Ranch Hand of course as a major part of the
22 study. Were you apart of the Air Force health study?

23 DB: Yes.

24 KC: Can you tell me about that?

25 DB: Yeah, they asked for volunteers. The study basically was setup with
26 everybody that been in Ranch Hand and as I recall we ended up with thirteen,
27 fourteen hundred of us. Then the other group was people primarily as I understand
28 it C130 crew people that were in and out of country at the same time. But generally, they
29 had the same exposure except they didn't do any spraying. I guess you might call them
30 the control group. I'm not that familiar with the terminology for studies. But that's
31 basically what they were doing. They are matching them against us and initially I think

1 we went every two years we would go. The first one was somewhere in Houston as
2 I recall, and they would just do a very thorough blanket of studies. Lot of bloodwork.
3 Lots of psychologically questioning. Mostly I'm thinking it was the physical type of stuff,
4 the blood work and that they were very interested in. So we went, the first one was two
5 years and I think the second one was two years later and then it seems to me that they
6 were five years apart and it ended up being a total of about twenty years. The last one
7 was '02 or something. They would keep us advised as to what they were finding and so
8 on. The guys who went we really enjoyed it because it was almost like a reunion, and
9 you'd find something that you were with, and you served with. That was pretty nice. In
10 fact, because these would take a period of time to do, obviously they didn't take all 1,200
11 and sent them all down there. They would take a much smaller number and take them
12 over a period of probably months actually. We had the opportunity to select the time we
13 would go so we could get together with a buddy and say, "Can you go now or whatever?"
14 So, we got kind of a mini reunion. Only thing we had to be careful about was the people
15 running the testing didn't want the doctors to know who was who. Who had the Ranch
16 Hand experience and who was the other guys because they didn't want to distort
17 anything. But it was a very thorough, they got a lot of records and in some cases was
18 helpful because it was a very thorough physical exam. One of the things they discover in
19 my case was I needed to be taking a thyroid supplement because I had a condition where
20 you need to have a thyroid supplement. But that would not have come up until I had some
21 major symptoms, I guess. So, It was beneficial particular after you got out of the service
22 because it gave you a real good physical to take the results back to your doctor and
23 enter into your record so that was helpful that way. The results were published of course,
24 and, in some cases, they found out that those of us that have been exposed were doing
25 better than those that haven't been. But they weren't any major findings as a result of it.
26 Findings in a sense that was a higher rate of cancer. As I recall some soft tissue things
27 that they thought maybe there was enough of it to give some idea that there might be a
28 cause and effect but there just wasn't anything real staggering despite what's being
29 reported now about the effects of Agent Orange. In our experience it wasn't the case.
30 KC: You touched on some of this already, but can you just give me your feelings
31 and your thoughts on the Agent Orange controversy in general.

1 DB: Yeah, from my own experience, I didn't suffer any effects from it. I'm
2 convinced of that. I think that the problems that people have particularly as we all age are
3 problems of an aging population. I don't think there is a connection to Agent
4 Orange exposure. Certainly, to allow anybody that had been in country during that
5 time to claim that the difficulties they may be having now because of Agent Orange
6 exposure seems to be unrealistic at the least and pure folly at the worst. I understand
7 that people have veterans of the experience, Vietnam experience have a desire to get as
8 much out of this and have a lot of blame for something for perhaps what they perceive
9 as their problems. But I don't think the science is there to connect it to exposure to agent
10 orange. I think I may have relayed it to someone I came in contact with who had been
11 flying in the reserves and had flown with some of the airplanes that we had used in the
12 Ranch Hand operations. They were brought back and being cleaned up and me modified.
13 Taking all the spray stuff out of it. He'd been flying those. He developed a form of
14 cancer, and he was convinced that it was his exposure in the airplane. It had been years
15 since he's spraying it and the science indicants the dioxin just can't be past that way. His
16 mind, he's convinced in other people in similar situations are convinced that was the case
17 and it's become more political than scientific. That's where we are with it. I have chosen
18 not to get too involved with it. I avoid veteran groups that are really pushing for this
19 conversation for this exposure because I just don't think it's right. Worse than that in my
20 mind is the fact given the limited resources that the VA has to deal with serious problems
21 that the amount of resources that are being spent to compensate people for so call Agent
22 Orange exposure is detracting from people that have serious problems. Resources—I
23 don't care who—resources are limited in some way. Whether it be the number of dollars
24 or the number of doctors or whatever but when you fill up the system with people that are
25 not, deserving isn't maybe right but that's the word I can come up with—are not
26 deserving of that compensation. Then the people who really need it aren't going to get it
27 and aren't going to get it in the quality that they should be getting it. That's bad.

28 KC: Well, I got just a few more questions for you Dewey. Since the end of the
29 war, and again you paid attention to this, you watched it through the bitter end. What do
30 you think about the perception of the American Vietnam veteran since the end of the
31 war?

1 DB: I think time has been good to the perception and that would be my
2 thought. Other people might not feel that way, but it seems to me that more people have
3 been able to accept the idea that their service in Vietnam was honorable. They may not
4 agree with the politics, but I think there's more acceptance of the idea that the service
5 was honorable. I know that not everyone feels that way but it's certainly better than it
6 was. I think that's evident by the way the military seems to be treated. Guys and gals
7 coming back and involved with these Southwest Asia business. They seem to be getting
8 better treatment and I think that's rubbed off onto the Vietnam veterans. My personal
9 experience is trying to make clear. It's different because I was not in the civilian—didn't
10 have to mix with the civilian population directly. I was somewhat sheltered by being
11 career military and not having to endure constant criticism or whatever. The atmosphere
12 was different. But I like to think that the Vietnam vets are more accepted now.

13 KC: Do you read any books or watch any films about the Vietnam War?

14 DB: Oh, I have, I could tell you right off. But I remember I read one book about
15 the B52 raids in Christmas time of I think it was '72? Those missions. I read another
16 book about—I'm sorry I don't have the titles, but it was kind of an analysis of the whole
17 thing and the politics of it. How we got into it, how it played out and the idea that it
18 was—we didn't win the war, essentially, we walked away from it. I don't have the name
19 of that book.

20 KC: It's okay.

21 DB: It was pretty interesting idea because it seemed to justify for me that I have
22 contributed.

23 KC: What about movies?

24 DB: Let me see. I guess there was that one about soldiers. It was about the 1st Cav
25 and they're getting dropped in the Ia Drang Valley.

26 KC: Mm-hmm. *We Were Soldiers*.

27 DB: Yeah. I was familiar with that story before I saw the movie. But I have seen
28 that movie. I think it's well done. I had a brother-in-law who just passed actually. He had
29 divorced and remarried and so on. He was a marine up in the I Corps and was in some
30 really bad times. He ended up getting a Navy Cross for his action. Developed an alcohol
31 problem that I will always be convinced is a result of being in that action. Getting

1 involved in that. Just having to take over when senior people were killed or wounded and
2 so on. Went to his funeral at Arlington and it was supposed to be a flyby because Navy
3 Cross recipients' rate that and it happened to be a terrible rainy day so he couldn't have
4 that. But that was another one of those experiences there. He had two children I know of
5 from his marriage to my sister. We were there being close here. My daughter and I went
6 over and represented our part of the family.

7 KC: Just a couple more questions for you Dewey. Looking back on your
8 experiences in Vietnam, the tour you spent there. How do you think they most affected
9 your life?

10 DB: Okay. I made some friends, not as close to them as I would like to be, but I
11 think about them often. Part of going into something like that is you wonder how you're
12 going to react. How you're going to react under fire and of course all the training, all the
13 academy training, the flight training, all the training is leading you up to that. But you
14 don't really know how it's going to be. I am satisfied that I held up pretty well under
15 those circumstances. That's been a blessing to me. The idea that served with real good
16 people is something I think about frequently. I have a flagpole, in my front yard and
17 make a point every morning take the dog out with me, and we run the flag up and bring it
18 down at night. That's comforting to me. Speaking about the flag and what it represents.
19 Yeah, I did serve the idea that I had the honor to carry my country's colors into battle.
20 Very important to me. I have a bumper sticker sign I made up and put it on the back of
21 my truck which says "For those who fought for it, freedom has a flavor that the Protected
22 will never know. I consider myself blessed to have experienced that to then one of the
23 protectors. It was worth any of the hardships of that for me. I have no regrets over my
24 service. None at all.

25 KC: One last question I like to ask. Looking back on this, fifty years ago whatever
26 it may be. We are still struggling with the legacy of the Vietnam War. What it means,
27 what it was supposed to mean, the lessons learned. All of those different kinds of
28 things. It's kind of a touch stone of American Politics and foreign policy in a lot of
29 ways. From someone who was there, your perspective what do you think is the legacy of
30 the Vietnam War. What do you think the Vietnam War means?

1 DB: For me it was a place we had to make a stand. That's what I view it. Various
2 times in our nation's history there's been times where we had to fight. This was one of
3 those times. We had to show some resolve, we did for awhile and not so much. But it
4 certainly started out for me. It started out to be a time and a place where we got to fight
5 this thing. There's an enemy, we got to fight it. If we don't, it's better to fight it over
6 there than over here. That's kind of my attitude and the idea that was my generation's
7 war. Every generation seems to have one but that was ours. I'm not happy with the results
8 so much but for me it was something I was called to do as a member of the professional
9 military. We could commit to helping out a group of people like the card I read in the
10 beginning there about helping to stand by somebody. My regret is that we didn't
11 really finish the job. But at the time I felt like we were showing that we could take a
12 stand against communism. We could commit to it. I guess that would be my takeaway.

13 KC: Well Dewey is there anything else you'd like to add to the interview before
14 we bring it to a close?

15 DB: I don't think so. I have enjoyed this. I remember some rough times but in all
16 I have enjoyed this. I think it's somewhat cathartic. A cleansing sort of thing to get it out
17 to know that it would be recorded and later on somebody would find it interesting.

18 KC: Well, it's certainly been my pleasure.