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Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Ray Skinner
Conducted by Ron Frankum
February 13, 2001
Transcribed by Tammi Mikel

Ron Frankum: This is Ron Frankum of the Vietnam Archive in Lubbock, Texas. The date is February 12, 2001.

Ray Skinner: [tape skips] refer you to the June issue of the Vietnam Magazine.

RF: Yes, in fact, I have a copy of that in front of me.

RS: You have a copy of that?

RF: Yeah, I've read that. There was another couple of articles written about the operation.

RS: Did you ever get a hold of the book by Tom Dooley...

RF: Deliver Us From Evil?

RS: Deliver Us From Evil?

RF: Yes, I've read that.

RS: You got that? Okay.

RF: In fact, we have a small collection of Dr. Dooley's here.

RS: I just ran across another ^{? article} [?] last night. In the Air Force Magazine, October 1998, page four, in the letters to the editor. That's the official Air Force Magazine, October 1998, page four, there's a letter to the editor. I don't have the letter, I just made some notes here on the inside of a...that is relative to who is Tourane. Tourane later became known as Danang.

RF: Well, I'll see if I can't find that here. I would think we'd have a copy of it.

RS: Air Force Magazine, October 19...if you want I can read it to you now.

RF: Oh sure, yeah, if you have it right there.

RS: "February 1954 the USAF established detachment of maintenance personnel at both Tourane Air Base," parenthesis, "Later renamed Danang," parenthesis. "Tourane provided," parenthesis, "Inspection and repair as necessary," parenthesis, "Capability for the D-26 and the [Dousan] for the C-47." [Dousan] must have been another location.

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"These detachments on the C-119 detachment [?] were all named for Tay Air Force Personnel from Japan and Clark," unquote. That's a quotation. Then the new paragraph, quote, "I've never seen anything written about these operations although you did publish a photo of Tourane in April 1997 Flashback," quote, Flashback's the quote, signed Lieutenant Jack D. McDonald, USA Air Force, Fairfax, Virginia. That's in Air Force Magazine October 1998. In my mind was who was Tourane later, and that was Danang.

RF: Yeah, Danang, yeah, the French...

RS: That was our R&R stop off place between Haiphong and Saigon.

RF: Oh, okay. Well, I'm wondering... I have a series of questions, and also I should say, too, we don't have to do everything in one day, so it's really up to you. You need to let me know if you want to take a break or if you want to stop.

RS: Also there's a crew's book of the Operation Far East, 1954 about the USS Montrose.

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RF: Oh really?

RS: 212, yeah.

RF: I haven't seen that.

RS: It has a map. Inside shows a map of where the ship went during that time. It goes from Hawaii on, it's south Pacific.

RF: I wonder if it's in any of these...

RS: There's pictures in there, too, of the operation. I don't know where... if [?] has an extra copy I could probably make some prints.

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RF: Certainly I would love to be able to see that. You're also... you're in San Diego, too?

RS: I'm in San Diego, right.

RF: My parents live in Del Mar.

RS: Oh, okay.

RF: I'm sure I'll have an opportunity to come out perhaps. I might be able to.

RS: This has some pretty good pictures in it of our Passage of Freedom Operation.

RF: I know that Jim is going to send me... Jim or Phil is going to send me some material.

[Marsella] ✓

RS: I sent him some pictures, also.

RF: Oh, good.

RS: Okay, I guess that's...those are the references I wanted to do.

RF: Well I appreciate that. That's good to know. Really, the first question I have is your position aboard the USS Montrose and how you came about getting to Indochina.

RS: I was recalled to active duty in August of 1951. They recalled me. I was in Missouri and I had a telephone call about 5:30 in the morning. I was in San Francisco working and it was the Navy recalling me back to duty. I'd always been...my experience was always in there. They sent me to a Naval Air Station Spokane, and then in 1954, early, they reassigned me to ^{the change of station} the [?] orders to Montrose and I joined the Montrose...it was either [Coby or Ukuska] so they were already in when I got there. That's how it came about. I went ^{Ukuska in} [?] active duty in...that was September or so of about 1955.

RF: What rank did you hold...

RS: I was lieutenant commander.

RF: Lieutenant commander?

RS: I was supply officer, and also handled...supply officer handles ^{all this} [?] material for procurement, storage, and all the food service, and we had a ship store, ^{I mentioned a commissary--} that's your toothbrushes and candy, like a PX, and [?] in food service and all the payroll and all the disbursement of cash, and so forth.

RF: Oh, okay, actually a little bit later on we can talk about some of that because that means you had a direct contact, then, with the refugees themselves.

RS: Right.

RF: When you heard about the deployment to French Indochina at the time, how aware were you of the situation?

RS: Let's see, we...I think the first time we heard about it we were...we got a radio dispatch, and I'm not sure, but it couldn't have been somewhere around August. It came out of the clear blue sky. We were independent. See, the whole squadron was in the ^{far} east but we were all by ourselves at that time and we were on...we'd just been to Korea and then headed back towards Sasebo and then that's when we...it might have been somewhere between ^{Kubi or Kube} [Coby] and [Pissan] we got that radio message to proceed to Sasebo and top off and then go to Indochina. So we left Sasebo I got a [?] before me 11

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August, 1954 we left. We departed Sasebo for Indochina and we got...that was all a rush because we had no advanced notice. That's [?] Sasebo and topped off and I got food and items so I topped off [?] ^{with rice} and somebody on the beach had already prepared an order for the food stuff because about the only thing we could get was rice and God, we had a million cases of soy beans and canned corned beef, that was the basic...and tea, that was the basic rations that we topped off with.

RF: And were you personally aware of what was going on in Indochina at the time?

RS: Vaguely. No, I ^{really wasn't particularly interested.} don't remember anything in particular. Not me, I don't know a lot about the command, but we had no inkling that we were going to end up doing what we did.

RF: Sort of out of the blue?

RS: Right.

RF: I wonder, actually, I am interested in the types of preparation that you did do for this trip.

RS: Repeat that, I [?]. ^{[mumbles] coughs} Ask me again.

RF: Sure, I'm actually very interested in the types of preparation that you did before getting into Indochina, and certainly as a supply officer I imagine you had more preparation than a lot of the folks on board at the time.

RS: Well actually, the ship, when we leave the US we're fully loaded and the ship was...it can carry, transport, 1500 Marines and then we had around 400 crew, somewhere along there, for it. So it would handle 1500 Marines but we were not prepared to handle the refugees. For that matter, we didn't even know what they ate. I didn't; I had no inkling that we were going to end up in there. We were not prepared for carrying that many refugees. That's one of the reasons we went into Sasebo and [?] ^{somebody} on the beach, somebody in the Navy command had forewarned Sasebo, our base at Sasebo, and they had all the food stuff ready for us and that was the big item that we stopped off for.

RF: Is the food? In fact, as I recall, if I'm not mistaken, the Montrose carried more than 1500 refugees at a time?

RS: Oh yeah, we carried up to over 2,000, right. We really packed them in. Plus, we made some [?] on the fantail the crew as a deck force got 50 gallon drums and split them length wise and around the fantail installed these half 50 gallon guns and piped seawater into them so they were available for washing clothes and bathing and whatever they wanted because I think we were running into trouble on our fresh water distillation equipment because the refugees were not too indoctrinated in about conserving fresh water.

RF: Right. I believe also, if I'm not mistaken, those 50 gallon drums served as...they were supposed to serve as latrines...

RS: Yeah, right.

RF: ...originally, but they weren't used as latrines in the beginning.

RS: Right, yeah, right. I remember I had trouble with showers overflowing [?] they would drain in the showers, we had them overflowing, too. *block off the*

RF: And that was as a result as just...

RS: The usage by the Vietnamese people, not being familiar with how to live aboard ship.

RF: Which seems reasonable.

RS: That is correct, you're right.

RF: Did you find that your primary responsibilities aboard the Montrose, did they change at all as the refugees came in?

RS: Yes, in one respect not knowing...now the Marines are pretty well disciplined and when they had the food line they were going to chow down [?] get in line and so forth, but the refugees did not have that sort of training, so we had to provide what we called the master at arms, and we used our own crew, storekeepers and cooks and bakers and strikers and everything else to try to maintain the lines, the food lines and so forth, and in addition the deck force provided quite a few crew members in order to maintain the food lines. *+ they knew how to*

RF: Was it, in the food lines themselves, was it just a matter of not knowing what to do or was there disruption?

RS: Mainly knowing what to do because we were running two food lines and eventually I think we ended up running three food lines, and we also tried as a suggestion

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of another ship of issuing food to the so called tribal chiefs, the heads of each family, and that did not work well.

RF: Why?

RS: Because we found that some people were hoarding and there was money exchanging hands, so we were...I think I mentioned that in the one report, that there was some...

RF: There was a bit of graft, perhaps?

RS: Yeah, right, yeah, so we maintained strict food lines and we used our own personnel and we got the feeding done much, much faster than trying to issue in bulk to the heads of each family.

RF: How long did it take to feed the population aboard?

RS: To begin with, I think our first trip, gosh, our crew worked, gosh, 17 to 18 hours trying to get everything set, but later on...we fed twice a day as I remember and when we operated the food line we got them through in a hurry. I can't remember how many hours but it was a reasonable length of time. Then, we also...oh, we had tea. It was a big steamer kettle with tea we dispatched freely. Then also we had tried milk, reconstituted milk, reconstituted milk, and in order to keep that bound of the volume adults were eating and drinking a lot of it and I felt it not getting to, a lot of it, to the babies and young children so we set up separate lines for milk for the little kids and they really went through [?] milk. ^{hundreds of gallons of}

RF: I bet that was probably a good seller.

RS: Yeah, right.

RF: Was there problems with the food that you had that you were given with the particular Vietnamese dietary needs?

RS: I think maybe [mark] mentioned one trip is some of the - I think it was the second trip - people coming down with some stomach problems. Did [Dr. Mark or Mark] cover that with you?

RF: Actually we didn't really get into much of that.

RS: There was some dysentery and some diarrhea and so forth and the doctor came to me and said he inspected all of our galley spaces and all the equipment and he couldn't find the source for where there'd be any cause for diarrhea. I had had...oh, and

he was unable to talk with any of the native Vietnamese. He couldn't speak French and of course not Vietnamese, and I tried out my high school French and I couldn't understand...I could understand "Bon jour" and "Mon ^{ami} ~~a mi~~" and so forth but I couldn't understand...except for mal, I knew the word mal, M-A-L is sick, but I couldn't figure out. Then I happened to remember when I was a kid one of my best friends, family friends, were Catholic and I remember the boy was my age, he was nine or ten or eleven, same as I was, and he was always bitching about having to go to church and he didn't understand all that Latin they talked, the priest talked in Latin at the service, so I happened to think of that and saw that we had some Catholic priests aboard, the natives, so our padre, the Catholic priest, discussed the system and made contact with a native Vietnamese priest and came up with the food was the problem and the ^{rice} ~~ration~~ was too wet, and also that we were feeding...the food was too rich, and the sardines and all that oily food. These sardines were in little tiny cans like you buy in the store, the flat cans, and so we decided that we should dry cook the rations dryer and not feed them so many sardines, and that seemed to improve the situation.

RF: So really the food was just too rich overall?

RS: Right. I kind of like that story because our Catholic priest got together with the native priest and talked...discussed the situation in Latin and eventually got back to speaking in English.

RF: I suspect there probably weren't too many cases in our history where Latin was the communication in French Indochina!

RS: Right.

RF: I do, actually, have a question so I don't forget it, so I'll jump forward just a little bit and then we can go back. You mentioned that the ship had the ship store where you could buy candy and cigarettes and things of that nature. One of the things that I've read and heard quite a bit is that a lot of the sailors really put out a lot of their own money to give things to children, candy specifically. Is that true in your experiences with the children?

RS: I didn't get too close to that but I wouldn't be surprised. I'm pretty sure that that crew would just...because our crew was...I really liked ^{some members} ~~and I could~~ ^{really liked to} ~~get~~ ^{give to the} ~~[?]~~ native young children. I have some pictures of that, I don't know if I can find

them. Our crewmen had a good time with the native children. I can't...I was not at their window and [?] but I wouldn't be surprised at the amount of...oh yeah, I could remember casually seeing there were kids running around with candy. Yes, okay, yes, they did. But, I don't know to what extent that was true.

RF: It seems to make sense I guess from what I've heard. When you arrived in the north, did you have an opportunity to travel ashore?

RS: In Haiphong?

RF: In Haiphong, yes.

RS: No, we never did. Everything was loaded [?]. I never did go on the beach at Haiphong. I don't think anybody did. I don't remember. I don't recall anybody going ashore at Haiphong.

RF: Did you ever interact with any of the land based officials when they came aboard?

RS: I did not. I don't know if...

RF: Well how did the refugees then get aboard?

RS: They came on a ladder. They came up the side.

RF: Did you get a chance to really get an idea of what the general condition of the refugees were when they first got onto the Montrose, their parents or their health or wealth or emotions?

RS: They were very serious faced, and most of them had very little...they didn't have much gear. Maybe they had a big kerchief with all their belongings in it, and maybe had a long stick with a bundle on each end of the stick over their shoulder. I think some of them were really...how do you say it, puzzled, really didn't question just what was going to happen to them. I don't remember there being fright.

RF: Do you think there was some elements of fear?

RS: Pardon?

RF: Do you think there was maybe some elements of fear of the unexpected?

RS: There could be, yes. I think it would be natural for anybody. It was a totally strange environment for them, and coming onto this big old ship and all these giant Caucasians and they were very, very small people. I'm only 5'9" and I was a giant compared to the size of these people.

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RF: I guess there's probably a lot of unexpected with the...

RS: The fear of the unexpected...I think a lot of them had the fear of the unknown.

RF: Yes, absolutely. In your own personal interaction, how did the refugees respond to you?

RS: Are you talking about the personnel ship?

RF: You yourself.

RS: Oh, me?

RF: Yes.

I had
RS: I really didn't have...I really didn't try to get involved with them because that was more than I could handle just getting them fed and so forth.

RF: So you didn't have to worry about language barrier or anything of that nature?

RS: No. As I said, nobody spoke their language, that was...and then a lot of...well, I'll tell you the enlisted personnel did a marvelous job. We had a Master at Arms and other deck force and our own people directing our food lines and so forth and they did an outstanding job.

RF: Are there any stories along those lines, any stories you could share along those lines of how they...because I imagine it's a tremendous undertaking to do what you guys did, from the Masters of Arms just to getting people organized?

RS: I cannot have it other than I can see the cooks out in the white aprons and their white caps just leading the...see, we did all the feeding on deck.

RF: Up top?

RS: Yes, on top side, and we'd cook the food down in the galley and have to bring it up and we'd bring it up top side and they ran two and at times three food lines and I can't remember that we had a great deal of trouble. Then we had the deck force provide a lot of Master at Arms. I use the Vietnamese word Master at Arms, I'm just talking about anyone assigned or used in that regard. He may not have been designated Master at Arms but they assumed the role.

RF: Right, in a sense it sort of...which actually goes into the next question about how you improvised, and that I guess would be a good example of improvising.

RS: I had the...I can't think of his name, warrant officer, he was outstanding in getting all the deck force. He'd ask for volunteers and I'd presume that sometimes you're appointed to volunteer. He did a marvelous job in controlling or guiding the people to the food lines. With 2000 natives aboard, why it was quite a task.

RF: Oh absolutely, and it would be in some cases overwhelming but it was still handled pretty well. Now the Montrose, it made four trips in the operation. I know you didn't have a lot of interaction with the Vietnamese, but did you get a sense from your shipmates of changing attitudes of the refugee population on the second and third and fourth trip?

RS: No, I can't...I didn't...I wasn't close enough to them because we never did speak the language. I know our crew, they were more proficient in proceeding trips. The first trip was a lot of experimentation and then they settled down to a routine.

RF: More business as usual?

RS: Yeah, right, yeah.

RF: Where did you disembark the Vietnamese?

RS: We went...let's see, going south, we'd stop at...no it's not Tourane, that's the return trip. We'd go down to Saigon and then finally we got to the Saigon River, I think it was about 50 miles, and disembark right in Saigon proper. I think we tied up...right across the street literally was a hotel, the main entrance right on the corner of the hotel, the corner of the building, and I can't remember the name of that hotel but it was like a stone's throw from where we were tied up on the river and where we offloaded the disembarked refugees at this hotel and I can't remember the name of it.

RF: Did you get a chance to have some shore leave when you were down in Saigon?

RS: Just went on the beach and that's about...the enlisted personnel, I can't remember. If they had a watch they could go aboard. I think I went ashore a couple of times, but I didn't see too much to look at. There was a giant gambling casino and that's about the only thing I remember. Then there's the hotel across from the ship.

RF: I imagine when you were tied up you probably still had more work than anyone else, anyway.

RS: Yeah, I really didn't see too much to see in Saigon.

RF: Did you get to experience any of the births or the deaths of the refugees on the ship? I know that the doctor, he mentioned I guess it was seven births that occurred.

RS: Yeah, I didn't get involved in that. It seemed there may have been a couple of deaths but I'm not sure about that, but there was if I remember two or three births, but the doctor said there was seven?

RF: I think he was...I'm going to hopefully be able to go back to the ship logs and they will be in the ship logs.

RS: I don't know.

RF: He remembered a few very well which I think is kind of neat. Were there any cases of sabotage by the Viet Minh, the communists, at all on the ship?

RS: Not that I know of. No, I don't really know of anything that happened in sabotage. There was a couple involving the food, but I don't remember anything that could be considered sabotage.

RF: Well the people that you worked with, your own particular crew, was there a general sense or general attitude about the operation itself, how you felt about it?

RS: The crew really...our crew really responded well, particularly...the ^{big} day load was on our cooks and our commissary department, and they got volunteers to help them carrying food up from the galley to the top deck, that was a lot of weight to get up there. I think our troops reacted to that very well. They were very positive about the operation.

RF: Were there any cases where individuals expressed disagreement with the majority, would you say?

RS: I don't know, I think, I don't know of any. I know ^{they're} at times the biggest thing the troops...some of our personnel, they wanted to go home. ^{there in this} operation [?] but just roaming around in the far east, I know troops...see, that was at the end of Korea, in '54, toward the end of Korea, and a lot of people were finishing their tours and they wanted to go home and became severely ^{homesick}, but that's not related.

RF: That seems reasonable.

RS: That's not related to the Passage of Freedom Operation.

RF: Were there any individuals in the crew that stood out particular to you during the operation?

RS: I just mentioned...

RF: The cooks, yeah.

RS: The warrant officer, he was a deck force warrant officer, and I can't remember his name. He was outstanding. Of course the doctor did a good job, and I think my cooks and bakers and commissary did an outstanding job. Then, I had [?] my storekeepers and dispersing personnel, they were very cooperative in taking on additional tasks.

RF: After that, that first trip and you guys became more aware of dietary needs and things of that nature, how did you...how were you able to change the supplies to suit the needs of the people? Were the supplies available in Danang?

RS: The supplies came out of...we had I can't remember how many tons of rice. The diet remained the same.

RF: The consistency was different?

RS: Yeah, right, the sardines and the corned beef and the rice and tea, that was pretty...that was about it.

RF: How long did the trip take from north to south?

RS: What was it, two to three days. Let's see, we went from Tourane down to...I'm referring to my notes here, to Danang to Henrietta Pass via Haiphong, August 16th to August 17th, and then from Henrietta Pass to Saigon on the 18th to the 21st, so that would be from Saigon to Tourane. Well, I can give you some itinerary here; we went from Sasebo to Tourane Indochina, August 11th through August 16th, then we went from Tourane, that's Danang, via Henrietta Pass via Haiphong, August 16th through August 17th, and then we went this Henrietta Pass to Saigon was August 18th to August 21st. Now here's another trip, Saigon to Tourane, August 22nd to August 23rd, and then Tourane to Henrietta Pass August 24th to August 25th, and then Henrietta Pass to Cape St. Jacques, August 26th to August 28th, and then Cape St. Jacques to Tourane August 29th to August 31st.

RF: So it's about a two to three day journey?

RS: Oh yeah, oh gosh yes.

RF: And you basically were working about 17-18 hours a day?

RS: Yeah, right, yeah.

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RF: What types of things did you do in addition to what you've already talked about? I can't imagine how you were able to do everything you were able to do!

RS: We had our...our commissary is the one that took the big hit, then we had to have the rest of the department to help the commissary. The feeding operation was the big thing, and then controlling the crowds during feeding, and that crowd, they weren't disruptive, it was just keep them in line and so forth because they...but the feeding was the big item, and the deck force, the 1st lieutenants were in charge of the deck force and that's where you have...that was the big problem. That's where the sleeping compartments were in keeping the showers clean and so forth, and the drains unplugged.

RF: Should be a constant challenge. Did you ever meet Dr. Dooley?

RS: Oh yes, saw him several times, yes. He was a young man, very outgoing, kind of like a Type A, just full of energy. He was very dedicated. You have his book?

RF: Right.

RS: He came aboard ship a two or three times. I can't remember just how many times. He was an unusual gentleman.

RF: What did you guys talk about?

RS: Just the welfare...my talk was just the welfare of the refugees and I guess we had conversations about what his future plans were and so forth and I don't remember too much about that, but I know he did intend to stay in that part of the world and work with the indigenous people.

RF: That's right, he did for several years. I think it's pretty much what I've been consistently told.

RS: I don't know if you have a picture of him, I don't think I have a picture of him.

RF: Oh we do, yeah. Actually, we have a small collection of his papers here as well. Did you take any sort of unique feelings or emotions away with you after the end of the operations besides being probably tired?

RS: Yeah, tired but actually...well, whenever I read now about the conditions in Africa and in the middle east and around the world, in India and so forth, I have a little more feeling as to just what they're...I realize just what some of their problems are because I saw the refugees view that all they had was the little bit they had in a kerchief,

that was their total belongings, and coming from...going into a strange environment. So, I have a little more sympathy now, empathy, whenever I read in the newspapers about what's happening in India and Africa and so forth.

RF: It certainly does give you a greater appreciation for how hard it would be to do that.

RS: And a greater appreciation for our own way of life and what we've done here in the United States.

RF: Absolutely. Well, you've already...earlier, when you characterized the operation as a success, but the question I've asked everyone is if you could turn back the clock and given the chance to do it all over again, would you?

RS: On this operation I would, yes, yes. I don't know how I'd improve it, ~~at this equipment~~ ^{you didn't have} equipment and whatever we had at that time, I don't know how we could improve the operation because I think our personnel did an outstanding job. I know one incident that our...I think I made tea in those big steamers. A steamer is bigger than a 50 gallon drum when you're talking...are you familiar with what I'm talking about?

RF: Oh yeah, absolutely.

RS: And then so and carrying all those gallons of hot tea up the ladders, those steep ladders to the deck, so one of our commissaries, Stuart, got a brilliant idea; he got a steep just on the side of a bulkhead and without further adieu he took out a torch and burned a hole in the bulkhead and then we brought a big steam kettle up [?] and installed it on the deck. That was really good, made it where you could have tea, all the tea you could ever make! ~~It~~ ^{All at once it} came up the ladder and jeopardized the integrity of the ship by burning a hole in the bulkhead! So we had to dismantle that operation and move it back down to the galley. But it is right that we didn't get permission to burn a hole in the bulkhead and that was a hole in the...it was in the super structure, not in the main hull.

RF: I guess that would be one of those lessons learned, right?

RS: Yeah, right.

RF: After the operation was over, did you have a more heightened awareness of what was going on in south Vietnam or south Vietnamese politics, or was it sort of the end of a chapter?

RS: That was about the end of the chapter because I went on inactive duty shortly thereafter. No, wait a minute, no, that was '54. I had another year. I didn't get out until '55, but aboard ship I could see that. That pretty much ended the chapter for me on that operation.

RF: In the 1950's...

RS: But, I already wanted to ^{know to this day to the} ~~A~~ what happened ^{to the} 8 or 9,000 refugees we carried. ✓

RF: Well, that's...I've been able to find some information on that but I can't link them to which ships, unfortunately. But even in the late 1950's President Eisenhower was...they were conducting nation building experiments. Was that even a part of your day to day experiences?

RS: Not that I know of. My job, I think, was kind of remote. I had...I thought I had all I could handle with the 1500 Marines aboard that confined space ~~[?]~~ ^{trying to feed everybody}

RF: Absolutely. You probably had all you could handle plus another five or 600!

RS: Right!

RF: Well, I'm really towards the end of my questions, but I would ask you if there's any other memories or stories or history that you feel need to be included in this overall history of the operation?

RS: I don't know if I can make copies of reproductions on this yearbook of the Vietnamese operation.

RF: That would be fantastic.

RS: I can find...this is a restricted or a limited publication of the Operation Far East, The USS Montrose 1954. I can send you...make a Xerox copy and send you copies of prints of this and what I have on this operation.

RF: I would greatly appreciate that.

RS: I can also...on the inside cover there's a map showing our many routes throughout the far east throughout that period of time and also it gives dates of where we were and ^{I gave it to you south of} ~~A~~ Tourane, August 11th to 14th. ✓

RF: That would be very valuable.

RS: ^{2 11/11/54 -} ~~[?]~~ three days off of Haiphong to Saigon. Seems to me that...then going north, seems to me we'd stop at Tourane and that was an R&R so our shipboard people could go ashore on the beach, and then I had about 50 cases of beer and had them in the

hull so whenever we stopped at Tourane for a little R&R our shipboard personnel and the R&R party could have a beer or two. But, I don't think...seems to me I got the beer too late and ended up with 50 cases of beer and had to turn them in at [Ukuska] which broke my heart.

RF: Yeah, I imagine you and the rest of your shipmates! I would be very appreciative.

RS: I need your mailing address.

RF: Okay. You ready?

RS: Ready.

[gives Vietnam Archive mailing address]

RF: Well I certainly appreciate you taking the time to talk with me.

RS: You're welcome. If you were published I'd be interested in seeing what you published.

RF: Oh, absolutely. I'm at the beginning of the research stage now. I'm probably going to be able to go to Washington to the Navy yard and to the National Archives this summer and I'm going to a few reunions of some of the other ships that participated in the operation. I hope that in my timeline it's really looking like about two years, but I hope I can get it out there.

RS: Is this for a doctorate?

RF: No, no, I have a Ph.D. already. This is for...I just published a book on the U.S. and Australian relationship in Vietnam and this is just another...my next book.

RS: Do you have my address?

RF: I don't believe I do, no.

RS: Okay.

[Mr. Skinner gives Dr. Frankum his address]

RF: Great.

RS: I'll get this other stuff out to you.

RF: I'd certainly appreciate that. As I do a little more research, if I have some more questions, can I give you a call?

RS: Yeah, right, yeah.

RF: In case there's some things I need to clarify or something I found out?

RS: Yes.

RF: I'd appreciate that

RS: An article [?] written in Alaska, that's a pretty [?] I just redid that and that's pretty much...

RF: Yeah, he did some really good work I thought.

RS: Yeah, he did and then he's quoting me and I confirm that what he wrote is what I wrote.

RF: Good, good, I appreciate knowing that as well.

RS: Then you've got Dooley's book?

RF: Right.

RS: I'll send you this crew's book, I'll send you what's applicable from this crew's book.

RF: That would be fantastic.

RS: It won't be very good quality, but it may not be too bad either. Xerox machines are much better than you think.

RF: If I can't find the crew's book in the Navy yard, perhaps, if there's something that I would want to use for publication, when I come out to visit my parents, maybe I could just stop by and I could bring a scanner with me with a laptop computer?

RS: That's a good idea. That'll do it, yeah.

RF: It would be great to see it just to see, because I didn't even think about looking at crew's books and you've opened up a new area for me to start exploring. That's great.

RS: Somebody must maintain a library of all these crew's books.

RF: I think the Navy yard does.

RS: Oh, also while I think about it, there's a little Navy memorial foundation in Washington with Navy logs that might be kind of interesting [?] Navy log [?]

RF: I'll be going out to the Navy, the foundation, and their manuscript collection as well as the...

RS: If you've got a computer you can pull it up on the computer.

RF: Right, well I'll look for that more specifically. That would be great. Well, good, enjoy your morning in sunny California!

RS: Yeah, I will, but we already got rain today and more tomorrow.

RF: Or rainy California!

RS: Okay, fine Ron.

RF: Thank you so much.

RS: You're welcome.

RF: Bye.

RS: Bye-bye.

RF: This concludes the interview with Ray Skinner on February the 13th, 2001.