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ORAL HISTORY OF STEVEN WEINSTEIN

September 29, 2004

1 MR. CLARK: Okay. We're rolling.

2 Okay. This is an interview at  
3 the Hampton Inn, Elmsford, New York, the 29th of  
4 September, 2004, approximately three-thirty p.m.  
5 Interviewers are Wayne Clark and Mike Russert.

6 INTERVIEW

7 BY MR. CLARK:

8 Q. What is your full name, date of  
9 birth, place of birth, please?

10 A. My full name is Steven Louis  
11 Weinstein. I was born on 29 March, 1948 in Newark,  
12 New Jersey.

13 Q. Okay. What is your educational  
14 background prior to entering the service?

15 A. High school graduate.

16 Q. Did you enlist or were you  
17 drafted?

18 A. I was drafted and within thirty  
19 days of being drafted I enlisted.

20 Q. Okay. Did you have a choice in  
21 service?

22 A. Yes, I did.

23 Q. You went to the Army?

24 A. Yes, I went into the Army.

1 Q. Why?

2 A. They offered me something the  
3 other branches couldn't and I thought I would take  
4 advantage of it.

5 Q. What was that?

6 A. Well, I was a Ham Radio Operator  
7 before I entered the service and I wanted to work  
8 in communications. And only the Army offered me  
9 that chance. They said we have a very elite group  
10 called the United States Army Security Agency and  
11 you would fit in perfectly. And I said let's give  
12 it a try. They said unfortunately it's a four-year  
13 enlistment. I thought about it and I said okay,  
14 you've got me for four years.

15 Q. And when did you go in?

16 A. I went in for basic training July  
17 11th, 1967.

18 Q. Okay. And where did you go for  
19 basic training?

20 A. Fort Dix, New Jersey. They gave  
21 me a subway token which got me up to the Port  
22 Authority Bus Terminal and a ticket and then I got  
23 on a bus. Next thing I knew I was in Fort Dix, New  
24 Jersey.

1 Q. How long did you spend there?

2 A. I believe it was eight weeks. I  
3 mean it's still a blur because it was during the  
4 month of July and August which were the hottest  
5 months and it was an extremely hot summer and they  
6 had to limit a lot of the basic training because of  
7 the heat. If it went above ninety degrees they  
8 didn't want you out in the field or doing anything  
9 strenuous.

10 Q. In retrospect do you think you  
11 had enough training -- sufficient training there or  
12 did you go on to an advanced --?

13 A. Well, I went on to advanced  
14 training and I went up to Fort Devens,  
15 Massachusetts from there to go through the Army  
16 Security Agency's Morse Code School. Now I knew  
17 Morse Code before I went in the Army and you had a  
18 thirty-nine-week course and in that thirty-nine  
19 weeks they expected you to copy twenty they called  
20 it groups per minute, it was twenty words per  
21 minute as I knew it, Morse Code. Now I knew Morse  
22 Code before I went in the Army and it was no  
23 problem to copy thirty words a minute. And the  
24 only problem is you had to do it on a -- on a

1 typewriter which they called the mill and it was  
2 only upper case, no lower case. And I had never  
3 typed before and the odd thing about it was there  
4 were no letters on the keyboard, so I found myself  
5 looking down at the keyboard saying I can't do  
6 this. And I finally got the knack of it and I went  
7 through the thirty-nine-week course in four weeks  
8 and got promoted to Spec. Four.

9 Q. So you went in basically knowing  
10 that you'd be in -- into communications and that's  
11 basically where you went through then?

12 A. Right. I went in to become a  
13 Morse intercept operator. The M.O.S. was o five H  
14 twenty. And that's what I was going to be trained  
15 for and that's basically what I did.

16 Q. Okay. After Devens?

17 A. Well, first of all it took a  
18 while to get started in the course because they had  
19 to run a background check on you. You had to be  
20 able to get a top secret security clearance with  
21 crypto access. And unfortunately my grandfather  
22 was born in Russia in 1892, so when they started  
23 doing the background check, you know, they brought  
24 up the fact that he was born in Russia, they wanted

1 to know if he was still in contact with any of his  
2 relatives there. I said as far as I know. And --.

3 Q. Was he still living at that  
4 point?

5 A. Yes. Yes. They asked him if he  
6 still had family there, he said he had no idea, he  
7 came to the United States in 1915 and had not made  
8 contact with anyone in Russia. Well, it took about  
9 I'd say a good twelve weeks before my security  
10 clearance came through. And during that twelve  
11 weeks I spent most of it on K.P. at Fort Devens.  
12 They had a very famous mess hall there called  
13 Consolidated Mess Number Four, Con-Four as it was  
14 known. And I started out in the kitchen and then I  
15 became -- since I was there so long I became a  
16 D.R.O., a dining room orderly. And finally my  
17 clearance came through and I was able to start the  
18 school. And it -- it was an interesting  
19 experience.

20 Q. Could you tell us a little bit  
21 about it?

22 A. Well, I had never experienced  
23 anything like that. I mean I'm an only child, you  
24 know, I'd lived at home with my mother and my

1 grandfather. But to cook for three or four hundred  
2 people was very interesting. The quantities and  
3 the size of the pots and what they did in the  
4 kitchen was very interesting. You had to get up at  
5 three-thirty in the morning to get set up for  
6 breakfast. I mean they were very long days. The  
7 weather was starting to turn in Massachusetts,  
8 starting to get very cold up there. And I just  
9 said -- and they said to us oh, by the way, if you  
10 don't get your security clearance we're turning you  
11 over to -- to the Department of the Army and it's  
12 up to them what they want to do with you for the  
13 remainder of your enlistment. And like I really  
14 panicked because I thought about carrying a rifle  
15 in the jungle and I said no, this is not for me.  
16 Also by the way, they told us that oh, the Army  
17 Security Agency is a great thing to go into because  
18 they're not in Vietnam. And I go oh, wow, I said  
19 there it is, I won't go to Vietnam. Well, I later  
20 found out that the A.S.A., as it was known, is not  
21 called the A.S.A. in Vietnam. It was under a cover  
22 name which was the 509th Radio Research Group,  
23 which was really the 509th Anti Tank Group. So  
24 they basically told me a little bit of a story

1 which aggravated me at the end when I got my orders  
2 to report to Saigon.

3 Q. Okay. I guess, you know, if  
4 you'd just tell your -- your training, your  
5 specific training, tell us about that.

6 A. Okay. Well, like I said, I  
7 copied Morse Code.

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. I'd say ninety percent of the  
10 communications from the N.V.A. and the Viet Cong  
11 were in Morse Code. Their subordinate units all  
12 kept up with their headquarters in Morse Code.  
13 They had certain schedules they kept and we knew  
14 what frequencies they were on and we would set up  
15 and listen on those particular frequencies at that  
16 time. Most of the communications were encrypted.  
17 They were in five character groups which we in turn  
18 would turn over to the crypto guys who had the keys  
19 to most of it and they were able to break the  
20 codes. Occasionally we would get a message in  
21 plain text English which was very interesting and  
22 that usually is a -- they were in trouble if that  
23 happened. I'll never forget copying one in plain  
24 text mentioning B-52's and I literally froze

1 because they were in the middle of a B-52 strike.  
2 They were letting the headquarters know that they  
3 were being bombed.

4                   And we had -- well, first of all,  
5 I'll go back a little bit. I got sent to Vietnam  
6 in April of 1968. Okay. Way ahead of my class  
7 because I went through the thirty-nine-week course  
8 in four weeks and I got promoted. So I was  
9 basically in Vietnam already almost six months  
10 before the rest of my class came over. And you  
11 know, they put me down in front of a typewriter and  
12 we had two columns marked three ninety receivers  
13 and they'd give you a list of frequencies that you  
14 had to monitor and you would copy what they were  
15 sending. And we had -- we had three tricks as they  
16 called it. They were three shifts and you worked  
17 eight-hour shifts. You usually worked seven days a  
18 week and you got a day off. And then you would  
19 rotate. Sometimes you'd work four to twelve,  
20 sometimes midnight to eight, sometimes eight to  
21 four. And at the end of the time they would take  
22 all your copies from you, you know, everything you  
23 typed and they would in turn give it to the crypto  
24 guys who would go over it.

1                   Sometimes the guys would send a  
2 lot of traffic, in other words they were sending  
3 orders to the subordinate units, you know, to  
4 relocate here or relocate there. I later saw some  
5 of the copies after the codes were broken and  
6 some -- sometimes you could spend your entire eight  
7 hours just copying one guy. It happened to me  
8 several times. I must have had over two hundred  
9 sheets of paper which is copying this one guy for  
10 almost eight hours. In fact I took a break.  
11 Somebody took the head phones from me and took over  
12 for me so I could, you know, go the bathroom and  
13 get something to eat.

14                   Q. So he's basically on the radio  
15 for eight hours himself --

16                   A. That's right.

17                   Q. -- setting --?

18                   A. And I got a lot of respect for  
19 their communications people and I always said to  
20 myself I wonder what the person on the other end  
21 looks like. And you know, to sit there, you know,  
22 like that, he's probably in a hole somewhere in the  
23 jungle and be sending this information. And then  
24 they developed a new tactic. We would copy the --

1 all of a sudden they would just disappear. They  
2 would change frequencies on us in the middle. It's  
3 like they had prearranged to go to frequency B. So  
4 we'd have to find them again. But in the meantime  
5 we would miscopy, so I was -- my first tour in  
6 Vietnam was in Plieku in Central Islands. I was  
7 with a unit called the 330th Radio Research  
8 Company. And we had one of three set ups in  
9 Vietnam called Project Y Band and it was very  
10 highly classified at the time. We couldn't talk  
11 about it. What we did was we recorded entire  
12 frequency spectrums. In other words we had special  
13 tape recorders that would record an entire spectrum  
14 of frequency and date it so we could -- so somebody  
15 could go back at a later time to that frequency and  
16 that time and find the guy and then when he changed  
17 frequency they could actually go back and find them  
18 and then turn the tape back and get the missing  
19 copy. It was an incredible thing. I couldn't  
20 believe that could be done.

21 And I later ended up working on  
22 Project Y Band. In fact in Plieku it was called  
23 Project Mustard. They -- all three of them in the  
24 country were named after spices. One was Coriander

1 and the other was All Spice. I don't know whose  
2 idea this was, but they're all named after spices.  
3 And it was actually an absolutely incredible thing.  
4 I mean when guys would miscopy, you know, end of  
5 their shift, they would turn around and give us the  
6 times and frequencies and the guy who was on, we  
7 could take that tape, put it back in the machine,  
8 go back to that frequency and time and then tune  
9 around and find the guy and get the missing copy.  
10 And to this day I still think it's incredible that  
11 it can be done.

12 So we would copy -- like I said,  
13 we'd work seven days a week, maybe we'd get a day  
14 off. And after a while it really got to you  
15 sitting and copying Morse Code. We were known as  
16 ditty buffers. That's what the guys called us.  
17 And it could really give you headaches sitting  
18 there for eight hours listening to that. I was  
19 used to it being a ham operator. I didn't mind it,  
20 but some of the other guys really found it tough.

21 Q. So on the bases where you were  
22 you couldn't discuss what you were doing at all  
23 with them?

24 A. No.

1 Q. No one had an idea of what you  
2 were doing?

3 A. No. No. We were in a place  
4 called Engineer Field in Plieku. It was mostly  
5 engineers. In fact the entire hill was engineers  
6 except we were at the far end of the hill away from  
7 everybody else. And you couldn't get near our  
8 company. We had our own M.P.'s and everyone wore  
9 security badges. And we had a big antenna field,  
10 you know, we had wire antennas set up in all  
11 different directions for all different frequencies  
12 and people wanted to know what we were doing there.  
13 We couldn't talk about it. You know -- you know,  
14 checking propagation, you know, for sun spots. You  
15 know, we'd give them excuses. Everybody wanted to  
16 know what we did. We had Monitsons that came onto  
17 the base to work for us. You know, they did our  
18 laundry, they made our beds. I think everybody did  
19 that. They had no idea what we did.

20 One of them asked me one day what  
21 we do and I told her, I says we play with radios.  
22 You know, she like sort of looked at me kind of  
23 funny, but we couldn't say anything more. So you  
24 really couldn't talk about it. You know, we had

1 our own enlisted men's club, we -- we didn't mingle  
2 with the other people. But the crazy thing was we  
3 were at the very edge of the hill, the very end of  
4 it. We had our perimeter on two sides, we had to  
5 pull our own guard duty. The -- the colonel from  
6 the engineering unit made us pull our own guard  
7 duty. Now every one in our unit had top secret  
8 security clearances.

9                   When the commanding general of  
10 A.S.A. in Vietnam found out about it he came up and  
11 he raised hell with the engineers and saying these  
12 people cannot pull their own guard duty. If one of  
13 them is captured there's big problems. So they  
14 ended up giving us our own guards. You know, I  
15 used to pull guard duty, spend the -- you'd work  
16 all day and then you'd spend the night sitting in a  
17 bunker there with a fifty caliber machine gun. And  
18 the next day you'd have to go back and copy code  
19 again. So you know, it was really bad. You had to  
20 be Spec Five or above not to pull guard duty, or  
21 E-5 or above. So finally we got our own private  
22 guards and they -- they put an A.P.C. down there  
23 and a couple of forty millimeter anti-aircraft guns  
24 were on the perimeter. And that was it for guard

1 duty.

2 Q. Now when you were -- were  
3 receiving these radio transmissions in code were  
4 the messages legible?

5 A. No. All were encrypted they were  
6 in groups of five usually numbers. Okay.  
7 Sometimes they would actually mix letters in with  
8 the numbers.

9 Q. Uh-huh.

10 A. And we learned to copy five and  
11 then a space, five and then a space, and you copied  
12 five groups of five, a double space, and then  
13 another group. So we double spaced between it so  
14 this way when the -- when the crypto guys broke it  
15 they were able to translate it. Now what would  
16 happen, at least two or three times a year, the  
17 North Vietnamese would change their codes.

18 Q. Uh-huh.

19 A. This was sort of similar to what  
20 happened in World War II with the Germans. And  
21 when they changed their codes we immediately --  
22 then they knew there was a problem because they  
23 couldn't break it anymore. So we had to rely on  
24 captured documents from guys out in the jungle who

1 actually overran bases to get the papers we needed  
2 to get the codes.

3                   After a while the -- the crypto  
4 guys actually broke out a sequence. They knew what  
5 the next code was going to be and they used these  
6 sheets called rotas. I remember I -- I said I  
7 don't know where these -- these names came from,  
8 they -- and some of them had like one page -- every  
9 day they would use a different code. They had like  
10 a one-day tag which was sort of like the Germans  
11 used too in World War II. It was very similar. So  
12 they would change every day. You copied a guy and  
13 what was like three two five one six one, they were  
14 something else the next day. You know, they were  
15 very smart. I guess they were -- they had an idea  
16 they were being copied, but I don't know if they  
17 ever realized how much of the stuff was being, you  
18 know, broken.

19                   Q. So did you -- you were with the  
20 Army under -- were you under the C.I.A. or --?

21                   A. No. We -- the Army Security  
22 Agency was the military branch of N.S.A. We worked  
23 directly under the National Security Agency. In  
24 fact in years the A.S.A. actually had a detachment

1 at Fort Meade, Maryland, but now A.S.A. has since  
2 been disbanded. It's now called INSCOM. I forgot  
3 exactly what it stands for. It's at Fort Belavore  
4 is where the headquarters are.

5 I was down there a few years ago  
6 for a reunion and the commanding general at that  
7 time, believe it or not, was a spec five -- a spec  
8 four with me at Plieku. He's now a two-star  
9 general. He's in the reserves though. And when I  
10 looked at him and I said you look very familiar, I  
11 said you were at Plieku in 1968. He goes yeah. It  
12 turns out we went over together on the same flight.  
13 And he -- he stayed in and got a second star. And  
14 I was like shocked when I told my wife.

15 Q. Okay. Now -- now you say you did  
16 two tours over there?

17 A. Yes. After my tour -- well, the  
18 mistake, of course I learned afterwards was by  
19 going through the thirty-nine-week course in four  
20 weeks it left me a half a year ahead of everybody  
21 else. So I got sent back to a placed called Bento  
22 Farms, which was located outside of Washington D.C.  
23 in a town called Warrenton, Virginia.

24 Q. When did -- when did you go back?

1 A. Well, I came --.

2 Q. You went in April of '68.

3 A. I came back in April of '69, I  
4 had thirty days leave and then I reported to Bento  
5 Farms. So basically what Bento Farms was, we  
6 duplicated what we did in Vietnam with the tapes  
7 from the Y band set up. After the Y band tapes, a  
8 week later they were shipped back to the United  
9 States and they were shipped to Bento Farms where  
10 they got rooms full of guys sitting and copying  
11 everything all over again just in case the --  
12 something was missed. It gives them a chance to --  
13 to get it again. So basically I was duplicating  
14 the mission which was a week and a half old because  
15 by the time the tape made its way back it was at  
16 least a week and a half. So I was at Bento Farms  
17 probably for about five months and I said, you  
18 know, I said I don't particularly care for this.  
19 And then I heard that they were shipping guys out  
20 for new assignments and A.S.A. had some very  
21 unusual assignments. One of them was Shemya,  
22 Alaska, the very end of the Aleutians where they  
23 copied the Russians. There was another assignment  
24 in Sinop Turkey right on the -- on the -- what is

1     **it, the Red Sea -- not the Red Sea --**

2                     **A.   Black Sea.**

3                     Q.   -- the Black Sea where I had --  
4     they also copied the Russians.  They -- we also had  
5     bases in Okinawa, in Japan, Germany of course, but  
6     being single chances are I would go to one of these  
7     what they call a hardship tour again, you know,  
8     because you could go -- if you're married they  
9     wouldn't send you to -- to Shemya because you  
10    couldn't bring your wife.  So I said, you know, I  
11    said the last thing I want to do is to spend a year  
12    in -- in the Aleutians.  I said -- so I went back  
13    and I asked the Colonel of the base, I said can I  
14    ask you something.  Can I volunteer to go back to  
15    Vietnam.  And he looked at me and he goes why.  I  
16    said well, I know the mission.  I said why should  
17    send somebody back who doesn't.  I said I do have a  
18    request though.  If I do go back I want to go to an  
19    aviation unit.  The Army A.S.A. had five aviation  
20    units in Vietnam, doing something called A.R.D.F.,  
21    Airborne Radio Direction Finding and that's what I  
22    wanted to do.

23                     So the Colonel said to me well,  
24    you know, he said if you can pass your flight

1 physical I'll send you back. I said I have one  
2 other request. I said when I get out in February  
3 I'll have five months left, I want in early out.  
4 So he looked at me and he started to get my time  
5 being from New York, you know, the way New Yorkers  
6 are. He said will you do it. He says you pass  
7 your flight physical. So they sent me to Walter  
8 Reed Army Hospital, took the flight physical and  
9 the doctor who gave me the flight physical was very  
10 interesting. He's wearing a doctor's white robes,  
11 but I noticed his uniform was hanging up in the --  
12 in the vestibule there. He was a two-star general.  
13 He was the flight surgeon of the Army. And I was  
14 shocked when I found out that he was a general, but  
15 he was a doctor. And I passed the flight physical  
16 with flying colors. So then I told -- the colonel  
17 said you can volunteer for the unit you want. So  
18 we had a unit in the Trang up the coast in Camron  
19 Bay, 144th Aviation, and I knew where it was. It  
20 was right on the beach. It was a gorgeous place,  
21 almost like a county club setting. The hooches  
22 were right on the water. You'd get up in the  
23 morning, you'd go for a swim. So I volunteered to  
24 go back to the 144th and they cut August 144th and

1 thirty-days leave, I showed up at Travis Air Force  
2 Base Rafee Oakland and got sent to Travis and flew  
3 into Vietnam again. I got to our headquarters in  
4 Saigon and I showed them the orders.

5 Q. And when -- when did you go back?

6 A. This was February of 1970. I  
7 believe it was February 11th, 1970 was the exact  
8 date. And I landed back there. I was assigned to  
9 the 224th Aviation Battalion which was in Long-tang  
10 which was south of Saigon. So I show up with the  
11 orders and they look at it, say well, we have a  
12 problem and we can't send you to the 144th. And I  
13 go what do you mean. We need you at the 138th.  
14 And I go where's that. He goes Da-Nang. And I go  
15 oh, and I realized Da-Nang was pretty close to  
16 D.M.Z. and I always hear Da-Nang on the news and  
17 it's always everybody's always getting shelled and  
18 rocketed. And I go -- I didn't like it, but I had  
19 no choice. And I got sent up to Da-Nang and it  
20 turned out to be a pretty good assignment. The --  
21 the barracks were really nice. We were like two  
22 blocks from the air field. Da-Nang was a very big  
23 installation. I mean you had to big swimming pools  
24 there, you had movies, you had -- you know, the

1 P.X. was first class.

2 We were there for four months and  
3 the colonel in charge of the Air Force there  
4 decided our planes were too slow for them. We flew  
5 these twin Bonanza's -- twin Beach Bonanza's and he  
6 basically asked us to leave the air base. We were  
7 the only Army aviation unit on the air base. So  
8 they sent us up to Fubi (phonetic spelling) which  
9 was about sixty miles north of Da-Nang because we  
10 had a fuel station up there, the 833 Radio Research  
11 Field Station which was the biggest out -- A.S.A.  
12 out post in the I-COR. So they figured it would be  
13 nice to have us close to the A-field station  
14 because all our copies went to them and all our  
15 information went to them. So they sent us up to  
16 Fubi and I spent the eight months till I got back  
17 flying out of Fubi.

18 Q. Now what -- can you describe the  
19 differences and -- and what did you do this time  
20 over the first time?

21 A. Okay. Well, being an aviation  
22 unit, the -- the missions were four hours. So we  
23 had five different areas we flew. We flew south of  
24 Da-Nang down through Chu-Liu and that area, we flew

1 a mission in the Asho Valley going towards the  
2 Laotian border. We flew a mission along the  
3 D.M.Z., we flew one in the very north corner  
4 between North Vietnam and Laos. So basically what  
5 we did is, as I said, if I did A.R.D.F. which was  
6 Airborne Radio Direction Finding. And we would go  
7 along and I would sit in between the pilot and the  
8 co-pilot in the back of the plane, I had two  
9 receivers, I'd find an M.B.A. signal, I'd copy it,  
10 identify it and then what we would do is we would  
11 D.F. that signal. The pilot would do a three sixty  
12 and look for a null in the signal where the signal  
13 and when he found a knoll he'd go back and he'd fly  
14 into that knoll. And we had special equipment on  
15 the dash of the plane which gave us our ground  
16 locations. They would fly a certain distance and  
17 then go right. And what he'd -- he'd do some  
18 strange maneuvers with the plane, make the plane go  
19 like this (indicating). It would actually get you  
20 a little seasick in the air. And then they would  
21 mark the location and they'd approach it from  
22 another angle. They'd do this from four angles,  
23 they tried. And wherever three of them fell or  
24 they all pointed that was the location on the

1 ground where the transmitter was. And I'd say six  
2 times out of ten we got it right. Sometimes the  
3 equipment malfunctioned. We'd go up there and  
4 suddenly one of the -- because the -- the Doppler,  
5 the gadget on the dash that would give us our  
6 location would suddenly start freewheeling. When  
7 it did that we couldn't do anything anymore, we'd  
8 just turn around and go back. We'd abort the  
9 mission.

10 One particular mission stands  
11 out. We got five fixes where they all crossed in a  
12 particular spot. And in fact the pilot was so  
13 thrilled to see this we had secured there the  
14 ground. We called it in to tell them that we've  
15 got this location and they asked us to stay in the  
16 area and they scrambled Phantoms from Da-Nang. And  
17 they -- they scrambled in that are.

18 A. We stayed at eleven thousand feet  
19 of in the distance and we -- I was listening to the  
20 guy sending and they came in, made three or four  
21 passes, boom, come right past us, dropped bombs  
22 right on the site in the middle.

23 The guy stopped sending. And  
24 they called us from the ground, well, what's

1 happening. I said we don't hear them anymore, he  
2 stopped sending. So they felt pretty confident  
3 that they -- they hit the site.

4 Well, two days later they brought  
5 the radio in to show us. They -- they brought  
6 the -- they sent, you know, troops in there, they  
7 found the site, they found the body of the guy with  
8 the radio still strapped to his back. It was made  
9 in China. And the key was strapped to his leg.  
10 The guy was explaining it, brought the entire radio  
11 in. Had quite a bit of blood caked up on it. It  
12 was all Chinese. He wanted me to see the radio.  
13 And the guy said this is the radio you were  
14 copying. And they said there were about eighty or  
15 ninety M.B.A. killed at that site. They -- they --  
16 you know, they had pictures, they showed us the  
17 pictures of it. And in fact our unit got a  
18 citation from that fix. I really wanted to keep  
19 the radio as a souvenir, but they wouldn't let me.

20 So that was -- that was a  
21 pretty -- it was a good day. It really made me  
22 feel good. You know, I -- we accomplished  
23 something because that unit had moved down across  
24 the D.M.Z. from the north and we were following it.

1 And this fix showed that they had moved something  
2 like sixty miles since the last fix and they were  
3 probably about twenty or twenty-five miles to the  
4 north and west of Da-Nang. And it was not a place  
5 for them to be, a unit that big. And it disrupted  
6 everything for them.

7 And I remember they said -- a  
8 two-star general came up also to thank us. He sat  
9 in on one of the briefings and he wanted to thank  
10 us because it knocked that unit back, you know -- I  
11 don't even know what happened to them after that.  
12 So that was a particularly good feeling.

13 Q. Could you relate any other  
14 incidents like this?

15 A. Well, one other one I'll relate,  
16 I had about three weeks left to go in Vietnam and I  
17 figured I had been there already a year and eleven  
18 months.

19 Q. Uh-huh.

20 A. I was getting short. We all know  
21 the term, you know, we were short-timers. And we  
22 were flying up just south of the D.M.Z. and I'm  
23 looking at the dash of the plane and a little light  
24 comes on in the bottom left corner of the -- of the

1 plane -- of the dash. And I've never seen this  
2 light before. I knew the whole dash, you know. So  
3 I -- I tapped the co-pilot, I pointed down to that  
4 light and he hits the pilot. They're looking and  
5 they're hitting it with their fingers and it won't  
6 go out. Well, it went out for a second and came  
7 back on. And the two pilots are talking to each  
8 other and the next thing I know the pilot takes  
9 the -- the throttle and pulls it out. We go  
10 straight down. We were almost at eleven thousand  
11 feet. And we're like going down. It was the  
12 wildest roller coaster ride I ever took. And  
13 they -- they -- they leveled out at about a  
14 thousand feet on the South China Sea and so I said  
15 what was that all about. So the pilot said to me,  
16 see that little light. I said yeah. Well, it went  
17 off when we went down. He said you see the letters  
18 I.F.F. and I said yeah, what is that, I've never  
19 seen that light come on. The only time I see it  
20 come on is when they start the plane up, all the  
21 lights would come on. You know, they'd hit a  
22 button, it would illuminate everything so you'd see  
23 it. He said it means interrogation friend or foe.  
24 I said what does that mean. He said we were being

1 locked onto by radar on the ground, probably from a  
2 SAM site. And we knew there were SAM sites north  
3 of the D.M.Z. We had warnings to stay out of  
4 certain areas.

5 Well, needless to say, we got on  
6 the ground that day, I resigned my flight status,  
7 because it was volunteer, you know, bye. I already  
8 had my hours for the month, they had to pay me my  
9 flight status. And I just sort of did things on  
10 the ground for those three weeks. Three weeks  
11 after I got home, March 4th, 1971 one of our planes  
12 was shot down in that area and five members of that  
13 flight were lost. And they think it was that same  
14 SAM site that locked onto us that shot that plane  
15 down. And I got a letter from one of my friends.  
16 I was home a couple of weeks. They told us -- sent  
17 me the letter that the plane was shot down. And  
18 one of the guys lost was a guy who slept next to  
19 me. His name was John Strong from Oregon.

20 I guess it really didn't sink in  
21 until about four or five years ago I was in  
22 Washington and I went to Wall and I saw their names  
23 on the Wall. And it really -- it sort of shook me  
24 up a little bit to see that and the pilot's name,

1 co-pilot. When N.S.A. had the dedication from our  
2 unit the wife and son of the pilot of that plane  
3 were at the dedication. And I was the only one  
4 from that time frame who knew the pilot and was  
5 there then. And she came over to me and she was  
6 asking me about -- they said in the report that he  
7 flew into North Vietnam. And he -- he was sort of  
8 a hotshot, he was. I flew with him once, Captain  
9 Marker, I remember him. And he was a real hotshot,  
10 he liked to do maneuvers with the planes. And she  
11 claimed that he didn't fly into North Vietnam, it  
12 was the co-pilot.

13 Well, about a year ago they found  
14 some of the remains of the plane. In fact I had  
15 volunteered to go back to look for the remains.  
16 And they were putting together a team. They wanted  
17 to find the remains because of the classified  
18 information that was on the plane, but if it was  
19 hit by a SAM I doubt if anything survived. But  
20 they did find some pieces of metal from the plane.  
21 It was a spot they said they'd interviewed  
22 villagers there who remember when the plane was  
23 shot down and they remember -- they said they took  
24 the bodies from the plane and they buried them.

1 But no one had been able to recover the bodies. So  
2 that was a little --.

3 Q. But it was inside South Vietnam?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Oh, it wasn't?

6 A. It was North Vietnam. It was  
7 north of the D.M.Z. Yeah, I believe they said it  
8 was twelve or fourteen miles north of the D.M.Z.

9 Q. Oh, so he did hit him?

10 A. Yeah, they did stray north. Now  
11 they were saying that since the plane was hit maybe  
12 the plane went down in the north. It may not have  
13 been hit in the north. But we occasionally strayed  
14 into the north. I remember on one particular  
15 flight the ground control guy asked us -- our call  
16 sign was Van Guard and whatever the tail number  
17 was. He goes Van Guard so and so, do you know  
18 where you are. So the co-pilot looks at the pilot  
19 and they're looking at the controls. So the guy  
20 comes back on again, he says I suggest you do a one  
21 eighty immediately. But we had gone twenty miles  
22 into North Vietnam. And he said they're going to  
23 scramble MIGS after you. And I go oh. That may  
24 have been one of the flights where I took the

1 pictures along the D.M.Z. But yeah, we  
2 occasionally did it. If we were working a signal,  
3 we're trying to figure out where it is, sometimes  
4 we would get pictures north of the D.M.Z. And they  
5 told us if it's north of the D.M.Z. don't go after  
6 it, it's not worth it. So that -- that -- that  
7 really shook me up, you know, when they said the  
8 plane went down.

9 Q. Were you allowed to go into Laos?

10 A. We occasionally did. They did  
11 go, a lot of anti-aircraft in Laos. I mean we flew  
12 between ten and eleven thousand feet because we  
13 didn't have oxygen on the planes. And we were  
14 sitting ducks. I mean a lot of the hills there  
15 were five and six thousand feet and they put an  
16 anti-aircraft gun at five thousand feet we could  
17 easily get shot down. They -- they didn't like us  
18 doing it, but if we were working a fix and we -- it  
19 was a good fix and we needed that extra -- to come  
20 in from another angle, then you know, they'd say go  
21 ahead and do it. And it always made me a little  
22 nervous, you know, because that was such a no man's  
23 land. You know, we fly -- even go across the  
24 border there we could actually see the Ho Chi Minh

1 Trail, you know, right along and suddenly we're  
2 going into Laos. You know, from ten thousand feet  
3 you could easily see vehicles moving down the Ho  
4 Chi Minh Trail. It was very strange to fly over it  
5 and see that.

6 I don't know what the people on  
7 the ground thought of our planes. You know,  
8 they -- they flew very slowly, they were very loud.  
9 They made a lot of noise. The engines were  
10 extremely loud. And I -- sometimes we'd -- we'd be  
11 working on a fix and we'd fly over an area.

12 A. Suddenly a guy would stop  
13 sending. We'd fly away from the area, he'd start  
14 sending again. So evidently they were suspicious  
15 of what the plane was doing flying around. I don't  
16 think they had any idea what we were doing, but  
17 they weren't taking any chances.

18 Q. What kind of markings did you  
19 have on the planes?

20 A. Just said U.S. Army, I mean that  
21 was it. You know, a tail number of course, then it  
22 had our battalion -- our -- our planes -- our  
23 battalions -- we were known as the Lonely Ringers  
24 and the logo was like a pussy cat. It was -- it

1 was really a tiger and it had its tail sticking up  
2 with a bandage on the tail. It was a really cute  
3 little thing and they had it on all the planes.  
4 But again I have no idea if they have any idea what  
5 the planes were doing.

6 We also had a couple of planes  
7 later that did something called side-looking  
8 infrared radar. They actually -- they'd fly a  
9 straight line and they'd look for body heat. It  
10 could scan the ground and look for any body heat or  
11 any movement. We had two of those. I never flew  
12 in one of those. Those guys -- that was special.  
13 We didn't -- we couldn't even look at those planes,  
14 you know, even with our top secret security --  
15 security clearance we didn't have the need to know.  
16 So we couldn't even walk over there and look at  
17 them. I do have one picture I took of one of them  
18 on the ground, but they're -- they're very  
19 interesting planes. They were O.B. ten Broncos.  
20 It only had a pilot and an observer. So the  
21 observer had to know how to fly the plane in case  
22 something happened to the pilot. With me I was up  
23 there with a pilot and a co-pilot, so if something  
24 happened to the pilot hopefully the co-pilot could

1 fly the plane because I sure couldn't.

2 So -- but it was interesting  
3 experience, it really was. And I'm glad I went  
4 back to an aviation unit. It was -- I mean I  
5 learned a lot. And you know, being in the air,  
6 working a four-hour mission was fantastic. It was  
7 a lot better than eight hours a day, seven days a  
8 week. We got two days off at a time and if I  
9 caught a very early mission I'd be back by ten in  
10 the morning and I'd have the entire day off to do  
11 what I want. Although they found stuff for us to  
12 do, you know, painting rocks, things like that.

13 Q. When did you leave?

14 A. I left on February the 10th, 1971  
15 and I realized that I'd got back to Oakland one day  
16 early. I should have gotten back on the 11th.  
17 They got me out on a flight earlier and all the way  
18 back I kept thinking I'm coming back one day early,  
19 I said they may say we're not giving you the early  
20 out, you're back one day early. I had five months  
21 and a day left. And I was so scared, I said  
22 they're going to keep me for the five months. But  
23 I went -- it was interesting. We were supposed to  
24 land at Travis Air Force Base, we ended up landing

1 at San Francisco International Airport because  
2 Travis Air Force Base was socked in in fog. And  
3 here we are landing at San Francisco, getting off  
4 the plane in jungle fatigues. Everybody's looking  
5 at us I remember and then they bussed us to the  
6 Oakland Army-Navy -- Army Terminal and I spent two  
7 days there processing out and that was it. They  
8 didn't say anything to the fact that I got back one  
9 day early. I was scared. I said that's it,  
10 they're going to have me there for five months and  
11 they're going to do what they want with me, but it  
12 didn't happen. I don't think they could get me  
13 now.

14 Q. Now you have some photographs?  
15 Do you want -- did you want to get some of those  
16 on -- on tape?

17 A. It's up to you. I have quite a  
18 few photographs. I always took a camera up with me  
19 on the flights. Back in those days they didn't  
20 want us to show the photographs around because  
21 the -- the areas we flew were classified. They  
22 didn't want anybody to interpret the pictures  
23 knowing where we flew and why we flew in those  
24 areas. But I always took a camera up on the flight

1 with me because I just thought it was interesting.  
2 A lot of times we could spend four hours up there  
3 and hear one signal. So we'd just fly around, you  
4 know, sort of like you're sightseeing. We'd draw a  
5 line from one point, then go up and down that line  
6 and then we'd fly across and we'd -- we'd fly over  
7 Kai Son, for example, quite frequently. By that  
8 time Kai Son was abandoned already. There was a  
9 big -- big bomb crater in the middle of the runway.

10 And it was interesting, we always had these  
11 lists of emergency runways in case we encountered a  
12 problem and we had to make an emergency landing.  
13 There were three air fields in the Ashlo Valley and  
14 I remember flying over these air fields and looking  
15 at them. I mean it was just potmarked with B-52  
16 craters. I said there's no way we could ever land  
17 there. Absolutely no way. One of our flights went  
18 up one day and we -- we took all the secure  
19 information with us in a big canvas bag and the --  
20 the -- the -- the observer would carry that bag out  
21 and put it in the plane. Well, that particular  
22 plane had a problem with the door on the side and  
23 at eleven thousand feet the side door opened up and  
24 all the classified documents got sucked out of the

1 plane.

2 Q. I can imagine what went on?

3 A. And I remember what went on.  
4 They sent a couple of infantry groups in there to  
5 try to find the documents. I mean at eleven  
6 thousand feet who knows where they ended up or even  
7 if they made it to the ground. And if they did,  
8 you know, what condition and who would know -- you  
9 know, I don't think they ever found them. But  
10 after that we had to put the stuff in, lock the  
11 door and then put masking tape around the edges --  
12 edges of the door to make sure it didn't open  
13 again. So it was a little scary to have that  
14 happen.

15 Yeah, I do have pictures. I have quite a few  
16 pictures.

17 Q. Did you ever have orders, for  
18 example, when you were in the -- in the air with  
19 something like that to destroy it if you were hit  
20 or something?

21 A. Yes. Absolutely. In fact we  
22 carried -- we -- we carried pronite grenades with  
23 us in the plane to destroy the equipment in the  
24 plane, to destroy the navigational equipment in the

1 plane and also to destroy the bag. We had such --  
2 I forgot what it was, it was some sort of an  
3 incendiary grenade that we took up with us in the  
4 plane that we carried in that bag. And it was --  
5 it was up to me, observer, to destroy that, to make  
6 sure nothing happened to it.

7 We also carried a little device  
8 up there called the K.Y. twenty-eight and that was  
9 a secure air to ground and I used to bring that  
10 unit up with me to the plane. Okay. It would sit  
11 in a frame at the back of the plane and I would  
12 plug it in. Every day it would be keyed  
13 differently so the secure air to ground would be  
14 different every day. It was my responsibility to  
15 make sure that that was brought out, that it was  
16 plugged in and working. And then I had to bring it  
17 back and that also had to be destroyed if something  
18 happened. If the plane went down that definitely  
19 could not fall into anybody else's hands. And now  
20 we have things that are so different. You know,  
21 this was like antiquated compared to the way things  
22 are now.

23 Q. Are you on this reset did you  
24 have much contact with other units or --?

1           A. We really didn't. We were -- we  
2 were on the side of the air base at Cubai with  
3 helicopter units. There were a couple of a Cobra  
4 gun ship units, there were units with chinooks,  
5 with -- with Healy Slits, the most unusual hewies  
6 I've ever seen with the mini guns on the side. And  
7 I'd never seen that before. And you know, then the  
8 Cobras came in there, but we were the only fixed  
9 wing at that -- at Cubai at that time. And we had  
10 our own separate company area, we ate at the 8th  
11 Radio Research Field Station and to get into that  
12 field station you had to show your badge, your  
13 security badge because -- and they had their own  
14 private security, they have their own M.P.'s. You  
15 couldn't get near that place. You know, it was a  
16 very -- very secure area.

17           But it's really funny. During  
18 the rainy season the Montson's that worked with us,  
19 we couldn't get our clothes, as anyone who was over  
20 there knows with six, seven months of steady rain.  
21 I'd have a three hundred watt light bulb going in  
22 my locker trying to keep my clothes from turning  
23 moldy. But we used to take our wet clothes with us  
24 up in the planes and we'd get up to ten thousand

1 feet and we'd get above the clouds and the sun and  
2 we'd string the clothes out of the plane. When I  
3 think about this it was so funny. Somewhere I have  
4 a picture of all the, you know, clothes hanging in  
5 the plane and we'd come back, all the clothes would  
6 be nice and dry and the Mantason's couldn't figure  
7 out how we dried the clothes because nothing would  
8 dry on the ground. I didn't want to tell them I  
9 brought them up above the clouds in the sun to do  
10 it. And I can -- when we left they just couldn't  
11 understand it, you know, like how do we do this.  
12 You know, how do you do that, they'd go. And I'd  
13 go I can't tell you. So sort of a chuckle now when  
14 I tell that. You know, you can think of the  
15 creature comforts, you know, for six months of  
16 steady rain, you know, you were just so -- so tired  
17 of dampness. And you know, nothing was dry, but at  
18 least we've got nice dry warm clothes.

19 Q. Were you aware of the anti war  
20 movement back home?

21 A. Yes, I was.

22 Q. What were your feelings?

23 A. You know, I was the only one of  
24 my friends, I had six very close friends, I was the

1 only one who went in the service. All of them went  
2 off to college and two of them got drafted and one  
3 of them got into the reserves somehow. I think his  
4 father pulled some strings somewhere, got into the  
5 Air Force Reserves at Stewart Air Force Base, the  
6 other one went to Canada. And he stayed there  
7 until they granted amnesty. And we're still  
8 friends. You know, he -- he didn't know how I  
9 would take it. I said to him, look, I said if  
10 that's what you wanted to do I have no qualms with  
11 it. I went -- you know, maybe if I was a little  
12 older and a little wiser I would have had second  
13 thoughts about it. But at that time I wasn't, I  
14 did what I had to do and thank God I came home in  
15 one piece. So fifty-eight thousand names are on  
16 that wall in Washington and every time I go down  
17 there it -- I look at that and I think about, you  
18 know, what those people could have done. And tens  
19 of thousand more were dying afterwards. So --.

20 Q. But you went back to Vietnam --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- after --?

23 A. I've been back twice.

24 Q. Why did you go back and --?

1                   A. Okay. First of all, as I said,  
2 I'm a ham radio operator. This past July was forty  
3 years that I got my ham license in high school.  
4 One of the things I always wanted to do was to  
5 operate ham radios in Vietnam. I just said I  
6 wanted to do this. Vietnam had about two or three  
7 radio operators and most of them were Russian.  
8 Very difficult country to talk to. And for ten  
9 years I was sending letters to Hanoi asking for  
10 permission and you'd get a very polite letter back,  
11 no, not at this time.

12                   When President Clinton  
13 established diplomatic relations with Vietnam I  
14 sent a letter off again and they said a little more  
15 favorable now. Meanwhile I had spoken to a  
16 Japanese fellow in Saigon named Huero and I said to  
17 Huero, I said can you help me get a license. So he  
18 said to me fax me the front page of your passport  
19 and a copy of your ham radio license, which I did.  
20 I faxed it directly to him in Saigon and he says  
21 let me see what I can do. My wife and I went on  
22 vacation, we were in the Caribbean for a week, I  
23 come home and my fax machine spit out a report and  
24 on the report the last number was it said Saigon --

1 or actually it said -- you know, actually it said  
2 Saigon, Vietnam on it. And I'm going who sent me a  
3 fax. And I looked around and on the floor was a  
4 fax with a copy of my ham radio license and Vietnam  
5 call sign. And it was good for ten days. This was  
6 February, effective March 20th to March 30th.

7 So I had like four weeks to plan the trip, get  
8 the visas, get the hotel reservations and most  
9 importantly was get the visas. Luckily living in  
10 New York I went down to the United Nations, I saw  
11 the Vietnamese Mission to the U.N., I gave them my  
12 passport. I showed them the radio license. In  
13 four days I got my passport back with the visas. I  
14 called -- I did some checking, I found a nice hotel  
15 in Saigon. I called them on the telephone. I woke  
16 up at three in the morning, twelve hours  
17 difference, the time, I called them and a girl  
18 answers very nicely in English and I told her I'd  
19 like to get a room in your hotel. She said yes. I  
20 said by the way I'm calling from New York and she  
21 said New York? She couldn't believe it. And  
22 booked the flights. My friend, Les, went with me.  
23 Les is a little bit older. And we arrived in  
24 Saigon just shy of thirty years to the day that I

1 had arrived -- we arrived March 20th, I had arrived  
2 April 23rd, 1968, just a month shy of thirty years.  
3 And it was an absolutely incredible experience.

4 Q. Now had you been in Saigon while  
5 you were in the service?

6 A. Well, we went through Saigon.  
7 Our replacement -- we had about a week in Saigon --

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. -- before I got assigned to the  
10 field units. So I got a little bit of taste of  
11 what Saigon was like. But coming back again, we  
12 landed at Tonsonuit. It was the strangest feeling  
13 being back there again. I didn't know what the  
14 Vietnamese people would think. We were treated so  
15 nice and we went -- when -- when the young people  
16 heard us talking English, everyone wanted to talk  
17 English. I just had a wonderful time. So we -- we  
18 were taken to the club radio station there and we  
19 operated ham radio. We made six thousand eight  
20 hundred contacts throughout the world. It was a  
21 big success.

22 We opened the door to ham radio  
23 in Vietnam. Now a lot of Americans have been there  
24 or going to operate radio in this country. My

1 host, two Vietnamese, one named Hal and the other  
2 named Bokoi, both are from Hanoi, but they live in  
3 Saigon now. And Hal surprised me and took me up to  
4 Cubai for a two-day trip. You know, I told him I  
5 was stationed in Cubai, so we went up, I landed at  
6 the same air field that I used to fly out of and we  
7 spent two days in Wei which was the old Imperial  
8 Capital and toured the whole area, just had a  
9 wonderful time.

10 Q. What were the differences that  
11 you saw in Cuba?

12 A. Well, first of all, there's no  
13 sign the Americans have ever been there. The area  
14 where our barracks were, nothing there but trees  
15 now. I just stood there looking at it. I couldn't  
16 believe it. In -- in the -- in the eight months I  
17 was in Cubai we very rarely went into Wei. Wei was  
18 not a very safe place. And they warned us about  
19 it. The closest I ever got to Wei was about a half  
20 a mile. I remember driving in that direction and  
21 then turning around because they warned us not to  
22 go into Wei because there was a lot of sort of like  
23 what's going on now insurgency, a lot of, you know,  
24 Americans are getting shot at. I said it's the

1 last thing I need.

2 It -- I mean there's still a lot  
3 of signs of the war there. We -- we went -- we  
4 toured the Citadel and the old Imperial Capital and  
5 we were walking around there. I came to this wall  
6 and I was looking at it and you could see it just  
7 potmarked with bullet holes. And I said to my  
8 friend Hal, I says this is bullet holes, I said  
9 from shooting. He said yeah, he says a lot of --  
10 lot of -- lot of shooting here. And we took a boat  
11 ride up the Perfume River almost to the D.M.Z.,  
12 almost to Dong Hau. And it's peaceful now and  
13 everything is green. I mean it was -- everywhere  
14 we went it was just -- we were like -- we were a  
15 curiosity to the people.

16 We were just to of us and the  
17 former emperor and there were a group of I thought  
18 they were probably high school students, they were  
19 all tiny, very small girls and boys and -- and they  
20 heard us speaking English and they came -- a girl  
21 came over, are you Americans she asked us. I said  
22 yes. So she called over the whole group. Turns  
23 out they were university students from the  
24 University of Wei. And they all wanted to know

1 what we were doing here. So I said to the girl  
2 well, I was here thirty years ago. And she looked  
3 at me, she goes, thirty years ago, she said that  
4 was during the war. I said yes, I was here. And  
5 she said -- she looked at me and her eyes were like  
6 why did you come back. I said well, I always had a  
7 lot of respect for the Vietnamese people. The  
8 country was beautiful, I wanted to see it again.  
9 And they all wanted to have their pictures taken  
10 with us. I think that was probably -- I think we  
11 were the first Americans they ever met. And one of  
12 the girls said you're not what I thought Americans  
13 were like. So I said to her what did you think  
14 Americans were like. She didn't want to answer.  
15 So we had copies made of the pictures and that  
16 night -- it turned out the university was a block  
17 from our hotel, so they came over and met us in the  
18 lobby and we had copies made and we gave it to her.  
19 For about two years I wrote back and forth to one  
20 of the boys and one of the girls from the class and  
21 I just lost track of them now. I'm sure that, you  
22 know, they're finished with the university and they  
23 must be doing their thing now.

24 But English is taught at the

1 schools there. Little kids speak English. I -- I  
2 just had a wonderful time. I just wish it was  
3 easier to get there, which I think it will be next  
4 month because United's going to start flying  
5 directly from San Francisco to Saigon, the first  
6 direct flight to the U.S.

7 Q. So is it still a called Saigon?

8 A. That's the other interesting  
9 thing. When I got on the radio I kept saying that  
10 I'm in Ho Chi Minh City, so Hal said to me, he goes  
11 no, no, no, he said say Saigon. But I said wait a  
12 minute, I said that's -- but he said no, no, no, he  
13 says you're in Saigon. So I'm telling everybody  
14 not to wear grappers we're operating -- we're  
15 operating in downtown Saigon, so one guy gets on  
16 there, he says you're not in Vietnam, he said it's  
17 not called Saigon anymore. I said to him excuse  
18 me, I said you're telling me I'm not in Vietnam. I  
19 said I know where I am. I said it's still Saigon.  
20 The air -- air line ticket, the code for it is  
21 S.G.N., which is Saigon. I mean it's still called  
22 Saigon. You go into the post office, the general  
23 post office, a big picture of Ho Chi Minh hanging  
24 on the wall. You know, it didn't bother me.

1 I had such a good time that a  
2 year later I took my wife back on a second trip.  
3 I -- I felt it was safe enough. And she had such a  
4 wonderful time. She said -- but walking in Saigon,  
5 some of the streets are tree lined set up sort of  
6 like Paris because the French built all the  
7 streets. She said I can't believe I'm walking in  
8 Saigon. I mean it's -- it's just incredible. I  
9 met so many Americans living there. It's -- it's  
10 absolutely incredible, you know, former military  
11 people that went back there to live. And I often  
12 thought to myself if I knew Vietnam was like this I  
13 said if I were twenty-five years younger I would go  
14 back there. I could be very successful there, you  
15 know, help the country rebuild, help the people.

16 I was back there at the same time  
17 as the -- the story of the -- oh, well, around --  
18 with Melie Massacre and some of the other events,  
19 but the one with the dropping of the Napam, the  
20 famous story where the girl -- the Napam, but when  
21 60 Minutes did the story on the pilot that landed  
22 his helicopter when he realized that they were  
23 striking Vietnamese civilians, well, I was there  
24 the same time that Mike Wallace and the crew were

1 there in 1968 and his audio engineer happens to be  
2 a friend of mine here in New York. And we were  
3 walking in Saigon and I hear somebody scream my  
4 name and I turn around, it's my friend, Lonnie.  
5 He -- he looked at me, he says what are you doing  
6 here. And I said well, I like the area. He's also  
7 a ham operator. I tell him I'm here operating  
8 radio. I said what are you doing here. He said  
9 I'm here with Mike Wallace and the whole crew,  
10 we're doing a story on this helicopter pilot and  
11 his door gunner. I said you're kidding and sure  
12 enough they did the story. I was still -- I had  
13 just gotten home when the story was on T.V. and I  
14 saw the story. They went back to the village, you  
15 know, they interviewed some of the civilians that  
16 were there. And I said I can't believe I was there  
17 the same time. It was just like so weird to run  
18 into my friend from New York twelve thousand miles  
19 away. I mean when somebody yelled Steve, I wasn't  
20 going to look, I mean, you know, I didn't expect  
21 anybody to know me there.

22 But it was -- I strongly -- I  
23 mean I realize it's going to be hard for some  
24 people to do, my friend's brother said to me he

1 wouldn't go back to Vietnam for all the money in  
2 the world. I realize a lot of people had very  
3 difficult times there, it was not a picnic getting  
4 shot at, living in the jungle, you know, but I  
5 think for me it was a great experience. I realize,  
6 you know, I was a non-combatant, but just being  
7 there, you know, you could just as easily have been  
8 rocketed and killed as anybody else. It -- it just  
9 did something to me. It made me feel totally  
10 different and I strongly urge people to -- to make  
11 the trip back while you can, you know, to get rid  
12 of those ghosts, because so many of my friends  
13 still have it.

14                   And we talk about this all the  
15 time. I'm the only one of a group of eight other  
16 veterans, you know, that have gone back and I just  
17 think it was a wonderful experience. My friends  
18 brother, he wouldn't go back. He said oh, he just  
19 started ranting and raving. I said well, I'm sorry  
20 you feel that way. I said I think you would feel  
21 different if you went back.

22                   Q. How do you -- in retrospect  
23 looking at your time in the service how do you feel  
24 about your time in the service, how -- how did it

1 in fact change your life?

2           A. You know, that's an interesting  
3 question. It definitely changed my life. I had  
4 never traveled out of the United States before  
5 that. In fact I had never been out of the New York  
6 Metropolitan area. Getting on an airplane to -- to  
7 California was the first time I'd ever flew that  
8 far. And then getting on a plane, I remember we  
9 left California, stopped in Hawaii. We stopped in  
10 Guam, we stopped in the Philippines. I mean the  
11 trip took forever to get to Vietnam. And landing  
12 in -- in Saigon, we did it at night, I remember  
13 women and children waiting there to get on that  
14 flight and take it back. I was like taken back by  
15 it. I said what are women and children doing here.  
16 It turns out they were the family of civilians that  
17 were working there. And of course this was a month  
18 or two -- you know, a month after the big Tet  
19 offensive in '68. They were still evacuating all  
20 the family members out of Saigon.

21                   I think it was a great  
22 experience. It -- it made me aware of what the  
23 world is like. You know, a lot of Americans never  
24 leave the United States. They don't get to see the

1 rest of the world. What they see is what they see  
2 on T.V., but unless you experience it yourself it's  
3 not the same. And I just -- I think it was a  
4 wonderful experience for me. And like I said,  
5 I'm -- I'm just thankful I came home in one piece.  
6 I didn't come home with any problems, you know, I'm  
7 not -- maybe when I came home every time a car  
8 would backfire I'd jump and things like that, but  
9 in the long run I -- I came back a better person.  
10 And it made me change. I mean I -- I went over  
11 there a month after my twentieth birthday. I had  
12 been twenty March 29th, 19 -- you know, 1968. I  
13 went over April 23rd. So it was a month after my  
14 twentieth birthday. I'm going to be -- I'm  
15 fifty-six now. So a lot of years have gone by, but  
16 I still feel that way. For me it was a great  
17 experience.

18 I don't think my mother thinks it  
19 that way. She just told me she has all the letters  
20 I sent to her from Vietnam, which I -- I had no  
21 idea she kept. And I also just recently spoke to a  
22 very, very old girlfriend of mine who I had not  
23 spoken to in probably twenty-five years and she  
24 also told me she has all my letters from Vietnam.

1 I couldn't believe it. I said how come you saved  
2 them. She said I couldn't throw them away. She  
3 says do you want them. I said I'd like to see  
4 them. You know, I really would, but I said to my  
5 mother I'd like to see the letters I wrote because  
6 anyone who was over there, you know, postage was  
7 free. You just wrote free in the corner. So --  
8 but overall it was a great experience. I'm looking  
9 forward to making a third trip back, hopefully this  
10 year for the Lunar New Year for Tet. I think  
11 they're all different. I don't think anybody would  
12 be shooting at me. My Vietnamese friends want me  
13 to come back, so with the new direct flight we'll  
14 see if we can get it to work.

15 Q. Okay. Why don't you show us some  
16 photographs?

17 A. Okay. Well, I don't know if you  
18 want to see new ones or old ones.

19 Q. Well, you can show us some of  
20 each.

21 A. Okay. Well, let me take this  
22 out, pull this book out so you can get an idea.  
23 This is from my trip back this time. I don't know  
24 how you want to -- how you want to put this.

1 Q. I think that would be interesting  
2 to look at.

3 A. Well, I don't know, I mean do you  
4 want these?

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. Yeah, I don't know you want --  
7 you want to do this.

8 Q. If -- if -- well, the bloodshed  
9 first --

10 A. Yeah. Okay.

11 Q. -- if you'd just hold it and hold  
12 it up in front of you.

13 A. Yeah. Okay. This is a very  
14 interesting -- I guess you'd -- I think we'd call  
15 it a document or very interesting piece of --

16 Q. A document.

17 A. -- I guess it really is. This is  
18 a bloodshed and for people who were in World War II  
19 anyone who flew in World War II these were usually  
20 sewn inside your flight jacket. Well, in Vietnam  
21 our flight jackets didn't have these, but everybody  
22 was issued one. And basically what it says on it  
23 is if -- if -- if you're shot down and you -- you  
24 give this to someone and they return you to safety

1 they'll be rewarded. And it's in about twenty  
2 different languages which most of the languages  
3 that are available in Southeast Asia, some of them  
4 I'd never heard before. Some are Filipino dialect,  
5 it's Burmese, there's Thai, there's Laotian,  
6 there's Chinese modern, there's Mandarin. Some of  
7 these again I don't know what they are. This was  
8 issued to me. I guess I should have returned it,  
9 but I thought it was such an interesting thing to  
10 have, but I somehow kept it. And it's been folded  
11 up for the last thirty something years. Whenever  
12 we went up on a flight the only thing we took with  
13 us was this. No identification.

14 Q. What kind of material is that  
15 made of?

16 A. It looks like some kind of silk.

17 Q. I think -- I think they're made  
18 out of rayon.

19 A. Is it rayon? I don't know.

20 Again, I -- I thought about, like I said, ironing  
21 it, but I think it would take away some of the  
22 character of it. There is a serial number on the  
23 bottom of it which is -- which was issued to me.  
24 Nobody ever asked me to return it, so I thought it

1 would make an interesting souvenir. And I think  
2 I'd like to probably end up donating it to the  
3 museum because I think it would be something  
4 interesting for the exhibit.

5 And we flew in these planes. I  
6 don't know how well you can see these.

7 Q. You can -- I can focus right in.

8 A. You can?

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. Okay. Well, the top one is  
11 the -- is the R.U.A.D. which was a Beachwood.  
12 Okay. Pilot, co-pilot, and observer. I sat  
13 between them. And bottom is how we got in the  
14 plane. We climbed in the door. Now one of -- I'm  
15 going to flip this to the next page because one  
16 of -- about halfway through my tour there they sent  
17 over three of these planes. It was a special  
18 direction finding project called left jab. And  
19 this is the plane -- one of the planes that was  
20 shot down March 4th, 1971. It did direction  
21 finding by lowering a pod underneath the plane.  
22 Instead of the plane going back and forth they  
23 rotated the pod. So the plane could fly in a  
24 straight line. And these -- the crews were very

1 specially trained in Fort Huachuca, Arizona and so  
2 these are -- these may be the only known pictures  
3 of this plane in the air in Vietnam. And I -- I  
4 remember seeing it the first time we -- when they  
5 were up in the air with the planes.

6 Q. You never flew on that?

7 A. No. They didn't even let us go  
8 near those planes. We didn't have the --.

9 Q. You didn't have the need to know?

10 A. Yeah, we didn't have the need to  
11 know with those either. And I don't know how well  
12 you can see this, but this was Cubai. This was the  
13 air field at Cubai. We're coming in to land and  
14 this picture was a little off, but you can see the  
15 runway. And straight out in the distance is the  
16 South China Sea. And -- oh, talking about the air  
17 fields, these were the emergency air fields in the  
18 bottom of the Astro Valley that we had to use in  
19 case of emergencies. And you can see all the bomb  
20 craters around it. It wall done by B-52's. This  
21 particular picture is Kei Son. That's the runway  
22 at Kei Son. It's maybe hard to see, but there's a  
23 giant bomb crater in the middle of the runway.  
24 The -- it had been long abandoned already by this

1 time.

2 And these pictures were taken  
3 along the D.M.Z. All of these pictures are looking  
4 into North Vietnam. This picture on the bottom  
5 corner will show you all the B-52 craters along the  
6 D.M.Z. It was just incredible. We actually flew  
7 into a B-52 strike one day. And just the  
8 concussion at eleven thousand feet was absolutely  
9 incredible. We were being thrown around like a  
10 toy. And it's what we lived in over there.

11 Anyone who served in Vietnam knew  
12 these as hooches. I don't know where that word  
13 came from, but six of us lived in one of these  
14 things. And it looks kind of ratty, but somehow we  
15 managed to survive in there. There were no  
16 windows. It was just screens, and in the rainy  
17 season it was extremely cold and the place used to  
18 flood. You'd walk in mud, but it was an  
19 experience. It really was.

20 And then -- okay, these are -- I  
21 don't what other ones I have of interest. Some of  
22 the pictures from Saigon, but then -- oh, this --  
23 this is an interesting picture. I don't know how  
24 well it will come out. This is the Imperial City

1 of Wei taken from about six thousand feet. And  
2 what's interesting about Wei is that the entire  
3 city is walled. There is a moat around it and you  
4 really don't see it until you're above the city.  
5 And we would take off from Cubai and fly directly  
6 north to Wei which was about twelve miles. And  
7 there were bridges that crossed the Perfume River  
8 and we would update our navigational equipment on  
9 those bridges. Then we would go off to work on the  
10 mission. But I always wondered what the city  
11 looked like and on this trip back I got a chance to  
12 walk around the city of Wei and actually inside the  
13 old Imperial Castle.

14 So now I have a couple of --  
15 well, I took a lot of pictures on my trip back in  
16 1998. I mean again it was an absolutely incredible  
17 trip. This I think is probably one of the better  
18 pictures. This is myself and my friend, Les. We  
19 joined a -- this is on the street in Saigon. It  
20 was about a hundred ten degrees outside and my  
21 friend Huero stopped and decided to get iced  
22 coffee. Vietnamese have the best coffee I have  
23 ever tasted. They grow it in Vanny tours (phonetic  
24 spelling) in the Central Highlands. Incredible

1 coffee. So there we are two big Americans sitting  
2 on these little plastic stools on a sidewalk in  
3 Vietnam in -- in Saigon. All these Vietnamese are  
4 walking by us and looking at us. And they're like  
5 what are these people doing here. You know, we got  
6 the funniest looks. But it was absolutely  
7 incredible.

8                   And this picture was interesting.  
9 That's the Ritz Hotel in downtown Saigon. During  
10 the war all the war correspondents stayed in that  
11 hotel. They have a pool on the roof and they said  
12 they used to sit up there drinking at night and  
13 watching the rockets fall on Saigon. It's  
14 absolutely incredible hotel, beautiful hotel.

15                   And these are various pictures  
16 operating the ham radio which is why we went back.  
17 And then the next day we flew up -- we flew up to  
18 Cubai. And there's a picture of me in front of the  
19 passenger terminal at Cubai, which had not changed  
20 in thirty-two years. The building looks the same.  
21 The control tower is off to the side. Absolutely  
22 incredible.

23                   And this -- these pictures were  
24 taken in Wei. This is the bridge -- well, not the

1 actual bridge, but this is the bridge that we used  
2 to update on. I found out in 1975 the Americans  
3 destroyed the bridge and tried to keep the M.B.A.  
4 from advancing south. They bombed the bridge. So  
5 this one was rebuilt. But I actually got a chance  
6 to walk across the bridge. That was an interesting  
7 experience.

8                   And then we went up and down the  
9 Perfume River on a dragon boat. I mean the country  
10 is beautiful, the people are friendly and I just  
11 want to flip real quick -- ah, outside the old city  
12 are American tanks and howitzers they have been  
13 sitting there. We -- we asked the driver to stop.  
14 Actually my Japanese friend, Heuro got a kick out  
15 of this. He wanted to take a closer look at them.  
16 A couple of A.D.C.'s, a couple of tanks, a hundred  
17 seventy-five millimeter howitzer, just sitting  
18 there. I mean there's no signs or anything like  
19 why they're there. It looks like we left them  
20 there leaving the country. So kind of -- kind of  
21 interesting that this stuff survived.

22                   And I want to go very quickly --  
23 there was -- we went back to Saigon, but I wanted  
24 to get to -- oh, the old American Embassy in

1 Saigon. Now this had been closed off. I mean I'm  
2 sure everybody's seen the pictures of people being  
3 air-lifted off the roof of this thing. When I went  
4 back the following year the building was gone.  
5 They -- they knocked it down. So I'm glad I got a  
6 chance to see it.

7                   And here's a picture of --  
8 there's the helo pad on the top of the building  
9 where a lot of the people were rescued out of there  
10 with a Saigon. This is the Presidential Palace.  
11 You see the famous picture of the M.B.A. tanks  
12 coming through the gates. Well, the tank that  
13 knocked the gates down is sitting to the right of  
14 the palace on a pedestal. And it was just so weird  
15 to see this, so --.

16                   One thing that struck me, I'll  
17 turn this sideways for a second, if you can just  
18 zero in on this picture, this was on the side of a  
19 building. And it's a map of Vietnam and on the top  
20 it says "Vietnam is not a war, but a country."  
21 That sort of said it right there when I saw it. It  
22 was on the side of a store. And I just had to take  
23 a picture of it, you know, showing the whole  
24 country, you know, reunited, so --.

1                   And I just -- I mean to -- to --  
2                   oh, while I was there I celebrated my fiftieth  
3                   birthday, which was very interesting. So my  
4                   Vietnamese host decided to throw a birthday party  
5                   for me. And I had an incredible cake and we were  
6                   in the middle of operating radio and they made us  
7                   stop and my friend, Hal, came with his sons and  
8                   Bokoi with his daughter, brought me flowers. And  
9                   we had a birthday party. And it was really nice,  
10                  the picture of me cutting the cake. My fiftieth  
11                  birthday. So it was a very memorable fiftieth  
12                  birthday. My twentieth I spent in Saigon and my  
13                  fiftieth I spent in Saigon. So -- and --.

14                   MR. RUSSERT: Well, we still have  
15                   about thirty seconds.

16                   MR. WEINSTEIN: Okay. And I mean  
17                   these are -- I want to very quickly find brand new  
18                   churches in Saigon. For a communist country I was  
19                   very surprised to see churches. And they're all  
20                   over the place. A lot of brand new high rise  
21                   buildings. There are two forty-story buildings  
22                   there. And then we left out of the old Tonsonuit  
23                   Airport, which is now the International Airport and  
24                   it was just an incredible experience. And there's

1 my friend, Les, and I and our two Vietnamese  
2 friends as we left. And it's just an incredible --  
3 I mean when I think about it now the fact that I  
4 went there, it's still a dream.

5 MR.Clark: Okay. Perfect.

6 MR RUSSERT: Okay. Well, thank  
7 you very much.

8 MR. WEINSTEIN: Thank you. Oh,  
9 my pleasure.

10 (The interview concluded))

11 PWSS

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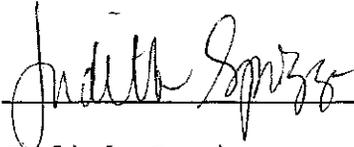
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24

1                   This is a transcription of the audio  
2 provided to us. It is completed to the best of our  
3 skill and ability. The transcript consists of  
4 pages 1 through 65 inclusive.

5

6

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Judith Spriggs", is written over a horizontal line.

7

Judith Spriggs

8

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