ORAL HISTORY OF STEVEN WEINSTEIN

September 29, 2004
MR. CLARK: Okay. We're rolling.
Okay. This is an interview at
the Hampton Inn, Elmsford, New York, the 29th of
September, 2004, approximately three-thirty p.m.
Interviewers are Wayne Clark and Mike Russert.

INTERVIEW

BY MR. CLARK:

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

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

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

A. High school graduate.

Q. Did you enlist or were you
drafted?

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

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

A. Yes, I did.

Q. You went to the Army?

A. Yes, I went into the Army.
Q. Why?

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

Q. What was that?

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

Q. And when did you go in?

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

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

A. Fort Dix, New Jersey. They gave me a subway token which got me up to the Port Authority Bus Terminal and a ticket and then I got on a bus. Next thing I knew I was in Fort Dix, New Jersey.
Q. How long did you spend there?

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

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

A. Well, I went on to advanced training and I went up to Fort Devens, Massachusetts from there to go through the Army Security Agency's Morse Code School. Now I knew Morse Code before I went in the Army and you had a thirty-nine-week course and in that thirty-nine weeks they expected you to copy twenty they called it groups per minute, it was twenty words per minute as I knew it, Morse Code. Now I knew Morse Code before I went in the Army and it was no problem to copy thirty words a minute. And the only problem is you had to do it on a -- on a
typewriter which they called the mill and it was
only upper case, no lower case. And I had never
typed before and the odd thing about it was there
were no letters on the keyboard, so I found myself
looking down at the keyboard saying I can't do
this. And I finally got the knack of it and I went
through the thirty-nine-week course in four weeks
and got promoted to Spec. Four.

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

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

Q. Okay. After Devens?

A. Well, first of all it took a
while to get started in the course because they had
to run a background check on you. You had to be
able to get a top secret security clearance with
crypto access. And unfortunately my grandfather
was born in Russia in 1892, so when they started
doing the background check, you know, they brought
up the fact that he was born in Russia, they wanted
to know if he was still in contact with any of his relatives there. I said as far as I know. And --.

Q. Was he still living at that point?

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

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

A. Well, I had never experienced anything like that. I mean I'm an only child, you know, I'd lived at home with my mother and my
grandfather. But to cook for three or four hundred people was very interesting. The quantities and the size of the pots and what they did in the kitchen was very interesting. You had to get up at three-thirty in the morning to get set up for breakfast. I mean they were very long days. The weather was starting to turn in Massachusetts, starting to get very cold up there. And I just said -- and they said to us oh, by the way, if you don't get your security clearance we're turning you over to -- to the Department of the Army and it's up to them what they want to do with you for the remainder of your enlistment. And like I really panicked because I thought about carrying a rifle in the jungle and I said no, this is not for me. Also by the way, they told us that oh, the Army Security Agency is a great thing to go into because they're not in Vietnam. And I go oh, wow, I said there it is, I won't go to Vietnam. Well, I later found out that the A.S.A., as it was known, is not called the A.S.A. in Vietnam. It was under a cover name which was the 509th Radio Research Group, which was really the 509th Anti Tank Group. So they basically told me a little bit of a story
which aggravated me at the end when I got my orders
to report to Saigon.

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

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

Q. Uh-huh.

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

And we had -- well, first of all, I'll go back a little bit. I got sent to Vietnam in April of 1968. Okay. Way ahead of my class because I went through the thirty-nine-week course in four weeks and I got promoted. So I was basically in Vietnam already almost six months before the rest of my class came over. And you know, they put me down in front of a typewriter and we had two columns marked three ninety receivers and they'd give you a list of frequencies that you had to monitor and you would copy what they were sending. And we had -- we had three tricks as they called it. They were three shifts and you worked eight-hour shifts. You usually worked seven days a week and you got a day off. And then you would rotate. Sometimes you'd work four to twelve, sometimes midnight to eight, sometimes eight to four. And at the end of the time they would take all your copies from you, you know, everything you typed and they would in turn give it to the crypto guys who would go over it.
Sometimes the guys would send a lot of traffic, in other words they were sending orders to the subordinate units, you know, to relocate here or relocate there. I later saw some of the copies after the codes were broken and some -- sometimes you could spend your entire eight hours just copying one guy. It happened to me several times. I must have had over two hundred sheets of paper which is copying this one guy for almost eight hours. In fact I took a break. Somebody took the head phones from me and took over for me so I could, you know, go the bathroom and get something to eat.

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

A. That's right.

Q. -- setting --?

A. And I got a lot of respect for their communications people and I always said to myself I wonder what the person on the other end looks like. And you know, to sit there, you know, like that, he's probably in a hole somewhere in the jungle and be sending this information. And then they developed a new tactic. We would copy the --
all of a sudden they would just disappear. They would change frequencies on us in the middle. It's like they had prearranged to go to frequency B. So we'd have to find them again. But in the meantime we would miscopy, so I was -- my first tour in Vietnam was in Pleiku in Central Islands. I was with a unit called the 330th Radio Research Company. And we had one of three set ups in Vietnam called Project Y Band and it was very highly classified at the time. We couldn't talk about it. What we did was we recorded entire frequency spectrums. In other words we had special tape recorders that would record an entire spectrum of frequency and date it so we could -- so somebody could go back at a later time to that frequency and that time and find the guy and then when he changed frequency they could actually go back and find them and then turn the tape back and get the missing copy. It was an incredible thing. I couldn't believe that could be done.

And I later ended up working on Project Y Band. In fact in Pleiku it was called Project Mustard. They -- all three of them in the country were named after spices. One was Coriander
and the other was All Spice. I don't know whose idea this was, but they're all named after spices. And it was actually an absolutely incredible thing. I mean when guys would miscopy, you know, end of their shift, they would turn around and give us the times and frequencies and the guy who was on, we could take that tape, put it back in the machine, go back to that frequency and time and then tune around and find the guy and get the missing copy. And to this day I still think it's incredible that it can be done.

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

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

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

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

One of them asked me one day what we do and I told her, I says we play with radios. You know, she like sort of looked at me kind of funny, but we couldn't say anything more. So you really couldn't talk about it. You know, we had
our own enlisted men's club, we -- we didn't mingle
with the other people. But the crazy thing was we
were at the very edge of the hill, the very end of
it. We had our perimeter on two sides, we had to
pull our own guard duty. The -- the colonel from
the engineering unit made us pull our own guard
duty. Now every one in our unit had top secret
security clearances.

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

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

Q. Uh-huh.

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

Q. Uh-huh.

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

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

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

A. No. We -- the Army Security
Agency was the military branch of N.S.A. We worked
directly under the National Security Agency. In
fact in years the A.S.A. actually had a detachment
at Fort Meade, Maryland, but now A.S.A. has since
been disbanded. It's now called INSCOM. I forgot
exactly what it stands for. It's at Fort Belavore
is where the headquarters are.

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

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

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

Q. When did -- when did you go back?
A. Well, I came --.

Q. You went in April of '68.

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

A. Black Sea.

Q. -- the Black Sea where I had --

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

So the Colonel said to me well, you know, he said if you can pass your flight
physical I'll send you back. I said I have one
other request. I said when I get out in February
I'll have five months left, I want in early out.
So he looked at me and he started to get my time
being from New York, you know, the way New Yorkers
are. He said will you do it. He says you pass
your flight physical. So they sent me to Walter
Reed Army Hospital, took the flight physical and
the doctor who gave me the flight physical was very
interesting. He's wearing a doctor's white robes,
but I noticed his uniform was hanging up in the --
in the vestibule there. He was a two-star general.
He was the flight surgeon of the Army. And I was
shocked when I found out that he was a general, but
he was a doctor. And I passed the flight physical
with flying colors. So then I told -- the colonel
said you can volunteer for the unit you want. So
we had a unit in the Trang up the coast in Camron
Bay, 144th Aviation, and I knew where it was. It
was right on the beach. It was a gorgeous place,
almost like a county club setting. The hooches
were right on the water. You'd get up in the
morning, you'd go for a swim. So I volunteered to
go back to the 144th and they cut August 144th and
thirty-days leave, I showed up at Travis Air Force Base Rafee Oakland and got sent to Travis and flew into Vietnam again. I got to our headquarters in Saigon and I showed them the orders.

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

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

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

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

A. Okay. Well, being an aviation unit, the -- the missions were four hours. So we had five different areas we flew. We flew south of Da-Nang down through Chu-Liu and that area, we flew
a mission in the Asho Valley going towards the Laotian border. We flew a mission along the D.M.Z., we flew one in the very north corner between North Vietnam and Laos. So basically what we did is, as I said, if I did A.R.D.F. which was Airborne Radio Direction Finding. And we would go along and I would sit in between the pilot and the co-pilot in the back of the plane, I had two receivers, I'd find an M.B.A. signal, I'd copy it, identify it and then what we would do is we would D.F. that signal. The pilot would do a three sixty and look for a null in the signal where the signal and when he found a knoll he'd go back and he'd fly into that knoll. And we had special equipment on the dash of the plane which gave us our ground locations. They would fly a certain distance and then go right. And what he'd -- he'd do some strange maneuvers with the plane, make the plane go like this (indicating). It would actually get you a little seasick in the air. And then they would mark the location and they'd approach it from another angle. They'd do this from four angles, they tried. And wherever three of them fell or they all pointed that was the location on the
ground where the transmitter was. And I'd say six
times out of ten we got it right. Sometimes the
equipment malfunctioned. We'd go up there and
suddenly one of the -- because the -- the Doppler,
the gadget on the dash that would give us our
location would suddenly start freewheeling. When
it did that we couldn't do anything anymore, we'd
just turn around and go back. We'd abort the
mission.

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

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

The guy stopped sending. And
you called us from the ground, well, what's
happening. I said we don't hear them anymore, he
stopped sending. So they felt pretty confident
that they -- they hit the site.

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

So that was -- that was a
pretty -- it was a good day. It really made me
feel good. You know, I -- we accomplished
something because that unit had moved down across
the D.M.Z. from the north and we were following it.
And this fix showed that they had moved something like sixty miles since the last fix and they were probably about twenty or twenty-five miles to the north and west of Da-Nang. And it was not a place for them to be, a unit that big. And it disrupted everything for them.

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

Q. Could you relate any other incidents like this?

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

Q. Uh-huh.

A. I was getting short. We all know the term, you know, we were short-timers. And we were flying up just south of the D.M.Z. and I'm looking at the dash of the plane and a little light comes on in the bottom left corner of the -- of the
plane -- of the dash. And I've never seen this light before. I knew the whole dash, you know. So I -- I tapped the co-pilot, I pointed down to that light and he hits the pilot. They're looking and they're hitting it with their fingers and it won't go out. Well, it went out for a second and came back on. And the two pilots are talking to each other and the next thing I know the pilot takes the -- the throttle and pulls it out. We go straight down. We were almost at eleven thousand feet. And we're like going down. It was the wildest roller coaster ride I ever took. And they -- they -- they leveled out at about a thousand feet on the South China Sea and so I said what was that all about. So the pilot said to me, see that little light. I said yeah. Well, it went off when we went down. He said you see the letters I.F.F. and I said yeah, what is that, I've never seen that light come on. The only time I see it come on is when they start the plane up, all the lights would come on. You know, they'd hit a button, it would illuminate everything so you'd see it. He said it means interrogation friend or foe. I said what does that mean. He said we were being
locked onto by radar on the ground, probably from a
SAM site. And we knew there were SAM sites north
of the D.M.Z. We had warnings to stay out of
certain areas.

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

I guess it really didn't sink in
until about four or five years ago I was in
Washington and I went to Wall and I saw their names
on the Wall. And it really -- it sort of shook me
up a little bit to see that and the pilot's name,
co-pilot. When N.S.A. had the dedication from our 
unit the wife and son of the pilot of that plane 
were at the dedication. And I was the only one 
from that time frame who knew the pilot and was 
there then. And she came over to me and she was 
asking me about -- they said in the report that he 
flew into North Vietnam. And he -- he was sort of 
a hotshot, he was. I flew with him once, Captain 
Marker, I remember him. And he was a real hotshot, 
he liked to do maneuvers with the planes. And she 
claimed that he didn't fly into North Vietnam, it 
was the co-pilot.

Well, about a year ago they found 
some of the remains of the plane. In fact I had 
volunteered to go back to look for the remains. 
And they were putting together a team. They wanted 
to find the remains because of the classified 
information that was on the plane, but if it was 
hit by a SAM I doubt if anything survived. But 
they did find some pieces of metal from the plane. 
It was a spot they said they'd interviewed 
villagers there who remember when the plane was 
shot down and they remember -- they said they took 
the bodies from the plane and they buried them.
But no one had been able to recover the bodies. So that was a little --.

Q. But it was inside South Vietnam?
A. No.
Q. Oh, it wasn't?
A. It was North Vietnam. It was north of the D.M.Z. Yeah, I believe they said it was twelve or fourteen miles north of the D.M.Z.

Q. Oh, so he did hit him?
A. Yeah, they did stray north. Now they were saying that since the plane was hit maybe the plane went down in the north. It may not have been hit in the north. But we occasionally strayed into the north. I remember on one particular flight the ground control guy asked us -- our call sign was Van Guard and whatever the tail number was. He goes Van Guard so and so, do you know where you are. So the co-pilot looks at the pilot and they're looking at the controls. So the guy comes back on again, he says I suggest you do a one eighty immediately. But we had gone twenty miles into North Vietnam. And he said they're going to scramble MIGS after you. And I go oh. That may have been one of the flights where I took the
pictures along the D.M.Z. But yeah, we occasionally did it. If we were working a signal, we're trying to figure out where it is, sometimes we would get pictures north of the D.M.Z. And they told us if it's north of the D.M.Z. don't go after it, it's not worth it. So that -- that -- that really shook me up, you know, when they said the plane went down.

Q. Were you allowed to go into Laos?
A. We occasionally did. They did go, a lot of anti-aircraft in Laos. I mean we flew between ten and eleven thousand feet because we didn't have oxygen on the planes. And we were sitting ducks. I mean a lot of the hills there were five and six thousand feet and they put an anti-aircraft gun at five thousand feet we could easily get shot down. They -- they didn't like us doing it, but if we were working a fix and we -- it was a good fix and we needed that extra -- to come in from another angle, then you know, they'd say go ahead and do it. And it always made me a little nervous, you know, because that was such a no man's land. You know, we fly -- even go across the border there we could actually see the Ho Chi Minh
Trail, you know, right along and suddenly we're going into Laos. You know, from ten thousand feet you could easily see vehicles moving down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. It was very strange to fly over it and see that.

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

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

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

A. Just said U.S. Army, I mean that was it. You know, a tail number of course, then it had our battalion -- our -- our planes -- our battalions -- we were known as the Lonely Ringers and the logo was like a pussy cat. It was -- it
was really a tiger and it had its tail sticking up
with a bandage on the tail. It was a really cute
little thing and they had it on all the planes.
But again I have no idea if they have any idea what
the planes were doing.

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

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

Q. When did you leave?

A. I left on February the 10th, 1971 and I realized that I'd got back to Oakland one day early. I should have gotten back on the 11th. They got me out on a flight earlier and all the way back I kept thinking I'm coming back one day early, I said they may say we're not giving you the early out, you're back one day early. I had five months and a day left. And I was so scared, I said they're going to keep me for the five months. But I went -- it was interesting. We were supposed to land at Travis Air Force Base, we ended up landing
at San Francisco International Airport because Travis Air Force Base was socked in in fog. And here we are landing at San Francisco, getting off the plane in jungle fatigues. Everybody's looking at us I remember and then they bussed us to the Oakland Army-Navy -- Army Terminal and I spent two days there processing out and that was it. They didn't say anything to the fact that I got back one day early. I was scared. I said that's it, they're going to have me there for five months and they're going to do what they want with me, but it didn't happen. I don't think they could get me now.

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

A. It's up to you. I have quite a few photographs. I always took a camera up with me on the flights. Back in those days they didn't want us to show the photographs around because the -- the areas we flew were classified. They didn't want anybody to interpret the pictures knowing where we flew and why we flew in those areas. But I always took a camera up on the flight
with me because I just thought it was interesting.

A lot of times we could spend four hours up there
and hear one signal. So we'd just fly around, you
know, sort of like you're sightseeing. We'd draw a
line from one point, then go up and down that line
and then we'd fly across and we'd -- we'd fly over
Kai Son, for example, quite frequently. By that
time Kai Son was abandoned already. There was a
big -- big bomb crater in the middle of the runway.

And it was interesting, we always had these
lists of emergency runways in case we encountered a
problem and we had to make an emergency landing.

There were three air fields in the Ashlo Valley and
I remember flying over these air fields and looking
at them. I mean it was just potmarked with B-52
craters. I said there's no way we could ever land
there. Absolutely no way. One of our flights went
up one day and we -- we took all the secure
information with us in a big canvas bag and the --
the -- the observer would carry that bag out
and put it in the plane. Well, that particular
plane had a problem with the door on the side and
at eleven thousand feet the side door opened up and
all the classified documents got sucked out of the
plane.

Q. I can imagine what went on?

A. And I remember what went on.

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

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

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

A. Yes. Absolutely. In fact we carried -- we -- we carried pronite grenades with us in the plane to destroy the equipment in the plane, to destroy the navigational equipment in the
plane and also to destroy the bag. We had such --
I forgot what it was, it was some sort of an
incendiary grenade that we took up with us in the
plane that we carried in that bag. And it was --
it was up to me, observer, to destroy that, to make
sure nothing happened to it.

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

Q. Are you on this reset did you
have much contact with other units or --?
A. We really didn't. We were -- we were on the side of the air base at Cubai with helicopter units. There were a couple of a Cobra gun ship units, there were units with chinooks, with -- with Healy Slits, the most unusual hewies I've ever seen with the mini guns on the side. And I'd never seen that before. And you know, then the Cobras came in there, but we were the only fixed wing at that -- at Cubai at that time. And we had our own separate company area, we ate at the 8th Radio Research Field Station and to get into that field station you had to show your badge, your security badge because -- and they had their own private security, they have their own M.P.'s. You couldn't get near that place. You know, it was a very -- very secure area.

But it's really funny. During the rainy season the Montson's that worked with us, we couldn't get our clothes, as anyone who was over there knows with six, seven months of steady rain. I'd have a three hundred watt light bulb going in my locker trying to keep my clothes from turning moldy. But we used to take our wet clothes with us up in the planes and we'd get up to ten thousand
feet and we'd get above the clouds and the sun and
we'd string the clothes out of the plane. When I
think about this it was so funny. Somewhere I have
a picture of all the, you know, clothes hanging in
the plane and we'd come back, all the clothes would
be nice and dry and the Mantason's couldn't figure
out how we dried the clothes because nothing would
dry on the ground. I didn't want to tell them I
brought them up above the clouds in the sun to do
it. And I can -- when we left they just couldn't
understand it, you know, like how do we do this.
You know, how do you do that, they'd go. And I'd
go I can't tell you. So sort of a chuckle now when
I tell that. You know, you can think of the
creature comforts, you know, for six months of
steady rain, you know, you were just so -- so tired
of dampness. And you know, nothing was dry, but at
least we've got nice dry warm clothes.

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

A. Yes, I was.

Q. What were your feelings?

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

Q. But you went back to Vietnam --

A. Yes.

Q. -- after --?

A. I've been back twice.

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

When President Clinton established diplomatic relations with Vietnam I sent a letter off again and they said a little more favorable now. Meanwhile I had spoken to a Japanese fellow in Saigon named Huero and I said to Huero, I said can you help me get a license. So he said to me fax me the front page of your passport and a copy of your ham radio license, which I did. I faxed it directly to him in Saigon and he says let me see what I can do. My wife and I went on vacation, we were in the Caribbean for a week, I come home and my fax machine spit out a report and on the report the last number was it said Saigon --
or actually it said -- you know, actually it said
Saigon, Vietnam on it. And I'm going who sent me a
fax. And I looked around and on the floor was a
fax with a copy of my ham radio license and Vietnam
call sign. And it was good for ten days. This was
February, effective March 20th to March 30th.

So I had like four weeks to plan the trip, get
the visas, get the hotel reservations and most
importantly was get the visas. Luckily living in
New York I went down to the United Nations, I saw
the Vietnamese Mission to the U.N., I gave them my
passport. I showed them the radio license. In
four days I got my passport back with the visas. I
called -- I did some checking, I found a nice hotel
in Saigon. I called them on the telephone. I woke
up at three in the morning, twelve hours
difference, the time, I called them and a girl
answers very nicely in English and I told her I'd
like to get a room in your hotel. She said yes. I
said by the way I'm calling from New York and she
said New York? She couldn't believe it. And
booked the flights. My friend, Les, went with me.
Les is a little bit older. And we arrived in
Saigon just shy of thirty years to the day that I
had arrived -- we arrived March 20th, I had arrived April 23rd, 1968, just a month shy of thirty years. And it was an absolutely incredible experience.

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

A. Well, we went through Saigon.

Our replacement -- we had about a week in Saigon --

Q. Uh-huh.

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

We opened the door to ham radio in Vietnam. Now a lot of Americans have been there or going to operate radio in this country. My
host, two Vietnamese, one named Hal and the other
named Bokoi, both are from Hanoi, but they live in
Saigon now. And Hal surprised me and took me up to
Cubai for a two-day trip. You know, I told him I
was stationed in Cubai, so we went up, I landed at
the same air field that I used to fly out of and we
spent two days in Wei which was the old Imperial
Capital and toured the whole area, just had a
wonderful time.

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

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

It -- I mean there's still a lot

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

We were just to of us and the
former emperor and there were a group of I thought
they were probably high school students, they were
all tiny, very small girls and boys and -- and they
heard us speaking English and they came -- a girl
came over, are you Americans she asked us. I said
yes. So she called over the whole group. Turns
out they were university students from the
University of Wei. And they all wanted to know
what we were doing here. So I said to the girl
well, I was here thirty years ago. And she looked
at me, she goes, thirty years ago, she said that
was during the war. I said yes, I was here. And
she said -- she looked at me and her eyes were like
why did you come back. I said well, I always had a
lot of respect for the Vietnamese people. The
country was beautiful, I wanted to see it again.
And they all wanted to have their pictures taken
with us. I think that was probably -- I think we
were the first Americans they ever met. And one of
the girls said you're not what I thought Americans
were like. So I said to her what did you think
Americans were like. She didn't want to answer.
So we had copies made of the pictures and that
night -- it turned out the university was a block
from our hotel, so they came over and met us in the
lobby and we had copies made and we gave it to her.
For about two years I wrote back and forth to one
of the boys and one of the girls from the class and
I just lost track of them now. I'm sure that, you
know, they're finished with the university and they
must be doing their thing now.

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

Q. So is it still a called Saigon?

A. That's the other interesting thing. When I got on the radio I kept saying that I'm in Ho Chi Minh City, so Hal said to me, he goes no, no, no, he said say Saigon. But I said wait a minute, I said that's -- but he said no, no, no, he says you're in Saigon. So I'm telling everybody not to wear grappers we're operating -- we're operating in downtown Saigon, so one guy gets on there, he says you're not in Vietnam, he said it's not called Saigon anymore. I said to him excuse me, I said you're telling me I'm not in Vietnam. I said I know where I am. I said it's still Saigon. The air -- air line ticket, the code for it is S.G.N., which is Saigon. I mean it's still called Saigon. You go into the post office, the general post office, a big picture of Ho Chi Minh hanging on the wall. You know, it didn't bother me.
I had such a good time that a year later I took my wife back on a second trip. I -- I felt it was safe enough. And she had such a wonderful time. She said -- but walking in Saigon, some of the streets are tree lined set up sort of like Paris because the French built all the streets. She said I can't believe I'm walking in Saigon. I mean it's -- it's just incredible. I met so many Americans living there. It's -- it's absolutely incredible, you know, former military people that went back there to live. And I often thought to myself if I knew Vietnam was like this I said if I were twenty-five years younger I would go back there. I could be very successful there, you know, help the country rebuild, help the people.

I was back there at the same time as the -- the story of the -- oh, well, around -- with Melie Massacre and some of the other events, but the one with the dropping of the Napam, the famous story where the girl -- the Napam, but when 60 Minutes did the story on the pilot that landed his helicopter when he realized that they were striking Vietnamese civilians, well, I was there the same time that Mike Wallace and the crew were
there in 1968 and his audio engineer happens to be
a friend of mine here in New York. And we were
walking in Saigon and I hear somebody scream my
name and I turn around, it's my friend, Lonnie.
He -- he looked at me, he says what are you doing
here. And I said well, I like the area. He's also
a ham operator. I tell him I'm here operating
radio. I said what are you doing here. He said
I'm here with Mike Wallace and the whole crew,
we're doing a story on this helicopter pilot and
his door gunner. I said you're kidding and sure
enough they did the story. I was still -- I had
just gotten home when the story was on T.V. and I
saw the story. They went back to the village, you
know, they interviewed some of the civilians that
were there. And I said I can't believe I was there
the same time. It was just like so weird to run
into my friend from New York twelve thousand miles
away. I mean when somebody yelled Steve, I wasn't
going to look, I mean, you know, I didn't expect
anybody to know me there.

But it was -- I strongly -- I
mean I realize it's going to be hard for some
people to do, my friend's brother said to me he
wouldn't go back to Vietnam for all the money in
the world. I realize a lot of people had very
difficult times there, it was not a picnic getting
shot at, living in the jungle, you know, but I
think for me it was a great experience. I realize,
you know, I was a non-combatant, but just being
there, you know, you could just as easily have been
rocketed and killed as anybody else. It -- it just
did something to me. It made me feel totally
different and I strongly urge people to -- to make
the trip back while you can, you know, to get rid
of those ghosts, because so many of my friends
still have it.

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

Q. How do you -- in retrospect
looking at your time in the service how do you feel
about your time in the service, how -- how did it
in fact change your life?

A. You know, that's an interesting

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

I think it was a great

experience. It -- it made me aware of what the
world is like. You know, a lot of Americans never
leave the United States. They don't get to see the
rest of the world. What they see is what they see
on T.V., but unless you experience it yourself it's
not the same. And I just -- I think it was a
wonderful experience for me. And like I said,
I'm -- I'm just thankful I came home in one piece.
I didn't come home with any problems, you know, I'm
not -- maybe when I came home every time a car
would backfire I'd jump and things like that, but
in the long run I -- I came back a better person.
And it made me change. I mean I -- I went over
there a month after my twentieth birthday. I had
been twenty March 29th, 19 -- you know, 1968. I
went over April 23rd. So it was a month after my
twentieth birthday. I'm going to be -- I'm
fifty-six now. So a lot of years have gone by, but
I still feel that way. For me it was a great
experience.

I don't think my mother thinks it
that way. She just told me she has all the letters
I sent to her from Vietnam, which I -- I had no
idea she kept. And I also just recently spoke to a
very, very old girlfriend of mine who I had not
spoken to in probably twenty-five years and she
also told me she has all my letters from Vietnam.
I couldn't believe it. I said how come you saved them. She said I couldn't throw them away. She says do you want them. I said I'd like to see them. You know, I really would, but I said to my mother I'd like to see the letters I wrote because anyone who was over there, you know, postage was free. You just wrote free in the corner. So -- but overall it was a great experience. I'm looking forward to making a third trip back, hopefully this year for the Lunar New Year for Tet. I think they're all different. I don't think anybody would be shooting at me. My Vietnamese friends want me to come back, so with the new direct flight we'll see if we can get it to work.

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

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

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

A. Okay. Well, let me take this out, pull this book out so you can get an idea. This is from my trip back this time. I don't know how you want to -- how you want to put this.
Q. I think that would be interesting to look at.

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

Q. Yeah.

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

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

A. Yeah. Okay.

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

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

Q. A document.

A. -- I guess it really is. This is a bloodshed and for people who were in World War II anyone who flew in World War II these were usually sewn inside your flight jacket. Well, in Vietnam our flight jackets didn't have these, but everybody was issued one. And basically what it says on it is if -- if -- if you're shot down and you -- you give this to someone and they return you to safety
they'll be rewarded. And it's in about twenty
different languages which most of the languages
that are available in Southeast Asia, some of them
I'd never heard before. Some are Filipino dialect,
it's Burmese, there's Thai, there's Laotian,
there's Chinese modern, there's Mandarin. Some of
these again I don't know what they are. This was
issued to me. I guess I should have returned it,
but I thought it was such an interesting thing to
have, but I somehow kept it. And it's been folded
up for the last thirty something years. Whenever
we went up on a flight the only thing we took with
us was this. No identification.

Q. What kind of material is that
made of?

A. It looks like some kind of silk.

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

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

Again, I -- I thought about, like I said, ironing
it, but I think it would take away some of the
color of it. There is a serial number on the
bottom of it which is -- which was issued to me.

Nobody ever asked me to return it, so I thought it
would make an interesting souvenir. And I think I'd like to probably end up donating it to the museum because I think it would be something interesting for the exhibit.

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

Q. You can -- I can focus right in.
A. You can?
Q. Yeah.
A. Okay. Well, the top one is the -- is the R.U.A.D. which was a Beachwood.

Okay. Pilot, co-pilot, and observer. I sat between them. And bottom is how we got in the plane. We climbed in the door. Now one of -- I'm going to flip this to the next page because one of about halfway through my tour there they sent over three of these planes. It was a special direction finding project called left jab. And this is the plane -- one of the planes that was shot down March 4th, 1971. It did direction finding by lowering a pod underneath the plane. Instead of the plane going back and forth they rotated the pod. So the plane could fly in a straight line. And these -- the crews were very
specially trained in Fort Huachuca, Arizona and so
these are -- these may be the only known pictures
of this plane in the air in Vietnam. And I -- I
remember seeing it the first time we -- when they
were up in the air with the planes.

Q. You never flew on that?
A. No. They didn't even let us go
near those planes. We didn't have the --.

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

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

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

And then -- okay, these are -- I don't what other ones I have of interest. Some of the pictures from Saigon, but then -- oh, this -- this is an interesting picture. I don't know how well it will come out. This is the Imperial City
of Wei taken from about six thousand feet. And what's interesting about Wei is that the entire city is walled. There is a moat around it and you really don't see it until you're above the city. And we would take off from Cubai and fly directly north to Wei which was about twelve miles. And there were bridges that crossed the Perfume River and we would update our navigational equipment on those bridges. Then we would go off to work on the mission. But I always wondered what the city looked like and on this trip back I got a chance to walk around the city of Wei and actually inside the old Imperial Castle.

So now I have a couple of -- well, I took a lot of pictures on my trip back in 1998. I mean again it was an absolutely incredible trip. This I think is probably one of the better pictures. This is myself and my friend, Les. We joined a -- this is on the street in Saigon. It was about a hundred ten degrees outside and my friend Huero stopped and decided to get iced coffee. Vietnamese have the best coffee I have ever tasted. They grow it in Vanny tours (phonetic spelling) in the Central Highlands. Incredible
coffee. So there we are two big Americans sitting on these little plastic stools on a sidewalk in Vietnam in -- in Saigon. All these Vietnamese are walking by us and looking at us. And they're like what are these people doing here. You know, we got the funniest looks. But it was absolutely incredible.

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

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

And this -- these pictures were taken in Wei. This is the bridge -- well, not the
actual bridge, but this is the bridge that we used
to update on. I found out in 1975 the Americans
destroyed the bridge and tried to keep the M.B.A.
from advancing south. They bombed the bridge. So
this one was rebuilt. But I actually got a chance
to walk across the bridge. That was an interesting
experience.

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

And I want to go very quickly --
there was -- we went back to Saigon, but I wanted
to get to -- oh, the old American Embassy in
Saigon. Now this had been closed off. I mean I'm sure everybody's seen the pictures of people being air-lifted off the roof of this thing. When I went back the following year the building was gone. They -- they knocked it down. So I'm glad I got a chance to see it.

And here's a picture of --

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

One thing that struck me, I'll turn this sideways for a second, if you can just zero in on this picture, this was on the side of a building. And it's a map of Vietnam and on the top it says "Vietnam is not a war, but a country."

That sort of said it right there when I saw it. It was on the side of a store. And I just had to take a picture of it, you know, showing the whole country, you know, reunited, so --.
And I just -- I mean to -- to --
oh, while I was there I celebrated my fiftieth
birthday, which was very interesting. So my
Vietnamese host decided to throw a birthday party
for me. And I had an incredible cake and we were
in the middle of operating radio and they made us
stop and my friend, Hal, came with his sons and
Bokoi with his daughter, brought me flowers. And
we had a birthday party. And it was really nice,
the picture of me cutting the cake. My fiftieth
birthday. So it was a very memorable fiftieth
birthday. My twentieth I spent in Saigon and my
fiftieth I spent in Saigon. So -- and --.

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

MR. WEINSTEIN: Okay. And I mean
these are -- I want to very quickly find brand new
churches in Saigon. For a communist country I was
very surprised to see churches. And they're all
over the place. A lot of brand new high rise
buildings. There are two forty-story buildings
there. And then we left out of the old Tonsonuit
Airport, which is now the International Airport and
it was just an incredible experience. And there's
my friend, Les, and I and our two Vietnamese friends as we left. And it's just an incredible -- I mean when I think about it now the fact that I went there, it's still a dream.

MR. Clark: Okay. Perfect.

MR RUSSELL: Okay. Well, thank you very much.

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

(The interview concluded)

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

Judith Spriggs
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