

ATTENTION: © Copyright The Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. The following materials can be used for educational and other noncommercial purposes without the written permission of the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. These materials are not to be used for resale or commercial purposes without written authorization from the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University. All materials cited must be attributed to the Vietnam Archive at Texas Tech University.

**The Vietnam Archive
Oral History Project
Interview with Drue DeBerry
Conducted by Kelly Crager
22 July 2008; 4 August 2008; 11 August 2008
Transcribed by Cecily Darwin**

1 Kelly Crager: This is Kelly Crager of the Vietnam Center and Archive at Texas
2 Tech University beginning an oral history interview with retired U.S. Air Force colonel
3 Drue DeBerry. Today is 22 July 2008. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Colonel DeBerry is
4 joining us from his home in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. Good morning, Mr. DeBerry.

5 Drue DeBerry: Good morning, sir. How are you?

6 KC: I am doing very well, thanks. We really appreciate your willingness to sit
7 down and talk to me this morning. To start off with, Colonel DeBerry, let's start off with
8 some biographical information. Can you tell me when you were born and where?

9 DD: Sure. I was born on the 14th of February 1938 in Madison County,
10 Tennessee, which is a rural area about eighty miles to the east of Memphis, Tennessee.

11 KC: What were your parents' names?

12 DD: Robert Thomas DeBerry and Frances Marie DeBerry, Frances Marie Walsh
13 DeBerry, W-A-L-S-H, DeBerry.

14 KC: What did your parents do for a living?

15 DD: They were sharecroppers.

16 KC: Sharecroppers, really?

17 DD: Yep. I was born in a sharecropper's cabin there in Tennessee. The doctor
18 came to the home and delivered me.

19 KC: Did you have any brothers and sisters?

20 DD: I do, one of each, both of them are younger. My brother is Robert Thomas
21 DeBerry, Jr., and my sister is Lily Frances DeBerry Bondaruk.

22 KC: Very good. Tell me about growing up as a sharecropper's son in Tennessee.

23 DD: I don't remember really anything about that because about two years or so
24 after I was born before either my brother or sister arrived, my parents decided that

1 sharecropping was not going to be a successful enterprise. They moved to Memphis and
2 my dad went there looking for employment. I have heard family stories about the
3 sharecropping days that indicated that it was a hand-to-mouth existence with lots of work
4 and very little return.

5 KC: What kind of work did your father find in Memphis?

6 DD: He worked initially for—with a Buckeye Cotton Oil Company in Memphis. I
7 am not sure of the nature of the work there. He did that for a year or two and then as
8 World War II was picking up he went to work for the Air Force in a civil service position
9 at Mallory Air Force Depot in Memphis and he was a warehouse man managing the
10 storage and distribution of items of equipment that were needed by then the Army Air
11 Forces in World War II.

12 KC: It sounds like World War II was beneficial for your family financially like it
13 was for so many families across the country.

14 DD: Well, like so many families, it turned us in a different direction. Dad stayed
15 with Air Force supply activities after the war was over and, in fact, he ultimately retired
16 from that position in '76 or '77, something like that.

17 KC: What about your mother? What did she do?

18 DD: She was a homemaker. She stayed home and took care of the kids and made
19 sure that we thrived as best we could.

20 KC: What kind of life did the DeBerry family have there in Memphis as you were
21 growing up?

22 DD: It was pretty mobile at least for the first few years. I could remember from
23 my grade school days that I attended probably half a dozen different schools. We were
24 frequently moving from one place to another for various reasons but we were relatively
25 unsettled. Although Dad had regular work, the income was not great. It was a pretty basic
26 existence.

27 KC: What about your childhood? What sort of things did you do as a young boy
28 in Memphis?

29 DD: Sure. Well, let's see, what I recall from my childhood days is primarily—I
30 played some sports, not on any active team or anything like but neighborhood pickup
31 games of baseball or football or that kind of thing, I enjoyed that. I also worked a lot. I

1 began working at a fairly young age. First of all was pushing a lawn mower around the
2 neighborhood offering to cut people's lawns for a few bucks. I sold things door to door. I
3 remember selling Christmas cards and that kind of thing. I also worked at the local
4 football stadium in a position that was called a hustler. I would sell popcorn and peanuts
5 and Cokes and hotdogs and that sort of thing at football games or other athletic events.
6 My dad had a second job. He also worked there at the football stadium. He ran one of the
7 concession stands.

8 KC: What about school?

9 DD: I can't remember the names off the top of my head of all the early schools
10 that I went to but by the time we were in the third grade, I was in the third grade, I started
11 at—I went to Bruce School, an elementary school from there to Belleview Junior High
12 School and graduated from Central High School and that was a much more stable life
13 than the first two or three years of my school time there in Memphis. Those three schools
14 were located fairly close to each other. You could walk from one to the other. We were
15 living at that time—when I started at Bruce we lived in a public housing area there in
16 Memphis called Lamar Terrace. We lived there for a while. Dad's economic situation
17 continued to improve. We got to a point where we had to move out of there because he
18 was making more than was allowed for people to live there. We bought a—they bought a
19 house nearby and so we stayed generally in the same area that we were at. I mentioned
20 the football games and that sort of thing working, the other thing that I did was pretty
21 consistent throughout my high school and junior high school and even earlier was interest
22 in library work. I began working as a page, someone who shelved books at Memphis
23 Public Library when I was quite young. I can remember I was making about twenty cents
24 an hour shelving books at the library. I always have loved books and I used to on a
25 Saturday morning I would get up and catch the local bus to go downtown in Memphis
26 and go to the main library down there and usually spend most of the day, half a day down
27 there. After I had been doing that for a year or two I one day—I had gotten to know all
28 the people that worked there. I asked whether or not it might be possible to get a job
29 there. The next thing I knew I was working there.

30 KC: So with this interest in books and learning is it safe to assume that you were a
31 fairly good student in high school?

1 DD: I think I was above average but not a great student and the reason is because
2 I don't believe I really applied myself as hard as I should.

3 KC: What sort of classes did you like, what subjects?

4 DD: Always loved history, English, that kind of thing. Less so in the sciences. I
5 didn't take chemistry in high school. I did take physics and biology and lots of math but
6 my favorite subjects were history. I became fascinated at a very early age, fascinated with
7 military history, World War II. I have continued to read on that topic until today.

8 KC: When did you graduate high school?

9 DD: 1957.

10 KC: In 1957, okay so as an above average student as you described yourself, how
11 aware were you as a seventeen or eighteen-year-old young man of the U.S. role in the
12 world, foreign affairs and things like that?

13 DD: That is an interesting question. I knew some things that were going on. I was
14 very familiar with the Korean War because I remember reading—I was a newspaper
15 delivery boy also and I remember reading in the afternoon newspaper about that just
16 about every day so I was pretty familiar with what was going on in the Korean War; less
17 knowledgeable in what was going on as far as Europe was concerned. I think I had
18 probably a little bit better understanding than most, most of my contemporaries, my age
19 group, in terms of our role in the world.

20 KC: So you graduate high school in 1957. What did you hope to do once you
21 were finished with high school? Did you have any career ambitions? Did you have
22 anything that you particularly wanted to pursue?

23 DD: I decided a year or so before I graduated from high school that I would like
24 to go in the military. In particular, I wanted to go to the Naval Academy at Annapolis. An
25 interesting—the way I got onto that—there was a girl. You know there is always a girl.

26 KC: Of course.

27 DD: There was a girl that I became very seriously interested in my junior year in
28 high school. I think her mom recognized that there was some serious interest there, too,
29 and her mom suggested that I needed to think about what I was going to do with my
30 future. She suggested that I ought to consider the Naval Academy. I started down that

1 road and I applied for admission to Annapolis and was not accepted because I didn't have
2 any high school chemistry.

3 KC: Oh, really? So that came back to haunt you didn't it?

4 DD: Yep, it did in more ways than one. When I didn't get accepted for the Naval
5 Academy, I noticed one day in a magazine or something, an article about the newly
6 established Air Force Academy. The first class of cadets went in, entered the Academy,
7 Air Force Academy in 1955 and this must have been '56 when I saw the article in a
8 magazine or newspaper and I decided that what I really wanted to do in the Navy was fly
9 so why not do it in the Air Force? It would be even more appropriate. I applied for
10 admission to the Air Force Academy and despite the fact that I didn't have chemistry
11 they accepted me. I learned some interesting things about the difference between the two
12 schools. The Naval Academy was pretty strict on their prerequisites for admission, the
13 Air Force Academy was much less so, requiring instead of formal courses or educational
14 experience if you could pass the entrance examinations high enough you were accepted.

15 KC: Okay now you have been accepted to the Air Force Academy.

16 DD: In the summer of 1957.

17 KC: In the summer of 1957. Now, obviously this is in the midst of the Cold War,
18 Eisenhower administration, all of this. Now, as a young Air Force cadet what did—I
19 should ask you this, did you have any idea what you might be getting yourself involved
20 in?

21 DD: More and more so I did. That is part of the training at the Academy. You get
22 exposed to those kinds of things pretty rapidly and, yes, I can remember very clearly as a
23 freshman you are under some fairly demanding disciplinary systems there. As a
24 freshman, I went to breakfast the morning that the Russians launched Sputnik. One of the
25 things that we were required to do was to come to every meal prepared to talk about
26 current events so I arrived that morning at breakfast as all of the freshman did and the
27 news had broken about, oh, seven or eight o'clock, I guess, that morning in Colorado.
28 None of us really knew much about it so we spent the rest of the day learning everything
29 we could, which wasn't very much, of course. I can remember one of the upperclassmen
30 asking me what Sputnik was and I said it is a satellite and he says what does a satellite
31 do? I said I don't know, it circles the earth, you know. I did this in a very respectful way

1 not an I don't know but a very respectful way. It circles the earth and gathers intelligence
2 and sends signals out. The next question was, well, what kind of signals, just keeps
3 digging and digging. With that kind of a persistent questioning, you learn pretty quickly.

4 KC: Sure, sure. Let me ask you this, then. What was the overall impact on you in
5 particular or the Air Force Academy in general of Sputnik? Did this change your training;
6 did it change your approach in any way?

7 DD: I think the—it was probably similar to what occurred across the country. The
8 things that I remember were renewed interest in science and it—of course, the Air Force
9 Academy is a—you graduate there with a bachelor of science degree and the sciences
10 were already quite important but they became even more so, I think.

11 KC: Okay, well, take me through if there is such a thing as a typical day at the Air
12 Force Academy, take me through a typical day. What were you were doing there, the
13 classes you were attending, etc.?

14 DD: Let me digress just a little bit and tell you that I attended the Air Force
15 Academy as a member of the class of 1961, from July of 1957 until February of 1958. In
16 February of '58 I was dismissed from the Academy for academic deficiency. Believe it or
17 not, I had flunked chemistry. In addition to the chemistry, I had problems in math, too,
18 but chemistry was the one that got me. I was dismissed from the Academy in 1958,
19 February of '58. I went back home to Tennessee, to Memphis, entered Memphis State
20 University immediately within the day of getting home and started working towards a
21 degree there. Part way through that experience of being back in Tennessee I decided that
22 I wanted to take another shot at the Air Force Academy so I reapplied, got a second
23 nomination from a different congressman in Tennessee, competed again and won a
24 second appointment and went back to the Academy in the summer of 1959 as a member
25 of the class of 1963. I subsequently graduated in 1963, so all of that colors a little bit of
26 anything that I have to say about the Academy. You asked me about the typical day,
27 typically we would—in 1957 we went to classes from about eight o'clock in the morning
28 to about 3:30 or 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon. That was the standard academic day. You
29 might have three or four, or four or five classes during that period of time. I took math
30 which we did daily. I took math, chemistry, English, history, philosophy, those are the
31 ones that I can remember off the top of my—mechanical, let's see, was it mechanical

1 drawing, off the top of my head from that first semester there. We also went to classes on
2 Saturday morning. We had classes six days a week. Saturdays were usually just a half a
3 day. The heavy sciences—this might be in part in a reflection of what was going on in
4 terms on the emphasis on science. The classes that you took on Saturdays would be
5 usually math and one of the sciences. In my case it was chemistry. We would do six days
6 a week in math and in my case chemistry and then the other five days we would add to
7 that, humanities and social sciences.

8 KC: What about physical training?

9 DD: That was in the afternoon. There was always a physical training course, too,
10 a regular PT (physical training) course in that schedule. After classes—around four
11 o'clock we had intramural sports, everybody participated in either intramural sports or
12 inter-collegiate athletics. I played the typical things, football, rugby, lacrosse, judo,
13 handball, squash, those kinds of things as far as intramural sports are concerned.

14 KC: Okay. Now, you graduated in 1963, you say?

15 DD: That is correct.

16 KC: Okay, with your B.S. from the Air Force Academy. Well, let me throw
17 another Cold War topic at you: the Cuban Missile Crisis. You are still in the Air Force
18 Academy at this time. How did this effect you?

19 DD: It happened that when the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred I happened to have
20 come down with the flu and I was in the hospital at the Academy. The Academy hospital
21 is on a ridge and from that ridgeline you can look out the south side of the building and
22 see Cheyenne Mountain, which is probably ten or twelve miles away. Cheyenne
23 Mountain was then the sort of the heart of our retaliatory response to any kind of an
24 attack and would obviously have been a primary target of the Russians, had the missile
25 crisis gone beyond the point that it did. While I was laying there in the hospital bed we
26 had access to a television set, had I been back in the cadet area I wouldn't have so I was
27 able to watch a lot of the stuff that unfolded as far as the Cuban Missile Crisis is
28 concerned. I saw it on TV. I saw President Kennedy make his speech, just the stuff that
29 developed from it. I was aware of what was going on in terms of the national scene. The
30 local scene there within the hospital, the minute that this thing really started getting pretty
31 serious I recall the hospital staff moving people from the rooms that were on the south

1 side of that building, moving the beds out in hallways and closing the doors and trying to
2 do things that would offer some sense of protection, but I don't think anybody took that
3 very seriously because the idea of having a building up on a ridgeline within line of sight
4 of what would have been probably in the top three or four targets in the country, there
5 was not a lot that you could do to protect yourself from that.

6 KC: Sure, sure.

7 DD: I think I saw the impact locally in that people were trying to prepare for it, go
8 through the drills, anyway. Nationally that I was able to follow a lot of things that were
9 going on, on television.

10 KC: You graduate in 1963. Obviously this is the year later on, of course, that John
11 Kennedy is assassinated. What were your thoughts on that? Again, how did that affect
12 you in particular?

13 DD: The assassination of President Kennedy?

14 KC: Yes.

15 DD: Okay, when that occurred I was a student navigator at James Connally Air
16 Force Base in Waco, Texas.

17 KC: Now, this is where you went through advanced training.

18 DD: Yes, that is right, after graduating from the Air Force Academy.

19 KC: Okay.

20 DD: In November of '63, I was a student at James Connally Air Force base in
21 Texas and our typical day there would be classroom experiences probably in the morning
22 and then maybe laboratories of some sort in the afternoon. We went to the morning class
23 and we all knew that the president was supposed to be down the road in Dallas but the
24 news of his assassination didn't break until just about the time we got ready to break for
25 lunch. I can remember we were pretty much dumbfounded. It was really a shocking thing
26 to realize that the president of the United States had been assassinated and that everything
27 was suddenly in considerable turmoil, personally and professionally. That raised all kinds
28 of questions in our minds about what would be the next steps and what was going to
29 happen.

30 KC: What did you know of the new incoming president, Lyndon Johnson, at this
31 time?

1 DD: Okay, let me see if I can remember that. I knew he was from Texas and I
2 knew that he had been the Speaker of the House, as I remember. He was in the senior
3 leadership of either the House or the Senate. I can't remember which one. I didn't know a
4 lot more about him other than that. I seemed to recall knowing that there was some sort of
5 a conflict between he and President Kennedy, but that maybe subsequent information that
6 I picked up.

7 KC: Sure. Well, what about your advanced training there at Connally. Again, take
8 me through a typical day there in terms of—I think what I am trying to ask you is what
9 type of preparation were you receiving here? Were you flying planes at this point or
10 would this be later on?

11 DD: We flew and attended academic classes at the same time. The navigation
12 training program was progressive in that you would start off very basic and you would
13 add more complicated techniques as you went along to try to learn. The very first thing
14 that you learned in navigation training, at least back then and I suspect it is somewhat
15 similar now, would have been dead reckoning. If you know time and distance and ground
16 speed you can start at one place and with knowing the heading then you could figure out
17 where you are going to be and you would take a map, if you are supposed to be over
18 some small town in Texas in ten minutes you look out the window in ten minutes and if
19 you are over that small town you can be pretty sure that you are at the right place. If you
20 can see the water tower, you can be even more certain of where you are located usually.

21 KC: Sure.

22 DD: So it started like that and then it got progressively more challenging. We
23 went into radio aids for navigation and then we went into celestial navigation. A typical
24 day would be you would go to class in the morning and you might be—initially, the first
25 two or three weeks you would go to class and you would learn the techniques for dead
26 reckoning navigation and there would be problems that you would work through and
27 things that you would do in class. After finishing the academic portion of that, you would
28 start a flying training that would be on that same subject. Simultaneously with the flying
29 program for dead reckoning navigation, you might start the next phase of academics,
30 which would have been—I don't know, just for example I would say celestial. If you are
31 doing celestial classes during the day, you might be flying then in the afternoon or maybe

1 one day you would fly and the next day you would be in the classroom, something like
2 that. That is the way it would be working.

3 KC: Okay. What types of aircraft were you flying here?

4 DD: T-29s. That was the standard Air Force training aircraft for navigation called
5 the flying classroom. It would carry about ten students and a couple of instructors. Each
6 student would independently have a bank of instruments in front of him and he would
7 navigate the airplane and one of the instructors would be keeping up with the position of
8 the aircraft and then you were graded after it was all over with, with the procedures that
9 you had followed and the alter headings that you had figured for the aircraft and that kind
10 of thing.

11 KC: Okay. What is your assessment of the training you received both at basic at
12 the Academy and there at Connally in preparing you for your experiences later on?

13 DD: I think the training was absolutely outstanding. The Academy preparation
14 was intense, very demanding, encouraged self-discipline and those are things that came
15 back I think to benefit me later in my Air Force career. At James Connally the training
16 program was directed towards comprehensive understanding of navigation because when
17 you completed that training program at James Connally you could go to any aircraft in
18 the inventory, the Air Force inventory that had a navigator aboard. That ranged from B-
19 52 bombers to KC-135 tankers to C-124 transports to C-130 tactical air lift or the back
20 seat of a fighter so it could be just about anything. So you had to learn all dimensions of
21 navigation. The Air Force had a philosophy then that either pilot or navigator when you
22 completed the training program you had to be universally assignable, meaning that if they
23 needed you in fighters that is where you went, if they need you in transports that is where
24 you went.

25 KC: Okay, now you mentioned—

26 DD: You ask about the Academy training, let me add one more comment in there,
27 just a second. I had to get—I had a navigation introduction, introduction to navigation
28 program at the Air Force Academy. The Academy itself did not have any—when I
29 graduated in 1963 did not have a program that lead to a rating, an aeronautical rating but
30 everybody, at least as I remembered, everybody took a course if you were flight
31 qualified, if you were qualified to fly, you were also required then at the Academy to take

1 a course in navigation. I took that course and that was of considerable help in getting into
2 the training program at James Connally but the training at James Connally went well
3 beyond everything that we did in the Academy.

4 KC: Sure, sure. Were any of your instructors experienced combat pilots, I mean of
5 course from the Korean War?

6 DD: At the Academy they certainly were, a number of them were, as a matter of
7 fact. When I arrived there in 1957, of course, we had been out of the Korean War only
8 about four years and when I arrived at the Academy in '57 that was the third class to be
9 appointed. There were no upperclassman that were at that point qualified to run the
10 program so we still had Air Force first and second lieutenants who were serving in the
11 capacity of upperclassmen at least for our first summer training program. Many of those
12 guys had combat experience from Korea. There were captains and majors or a few a
13 captains, a lot of first lieutenants and a few second lieutenants. The second lieutenants
14 didn't have any combat experience but the first lieutenants did.

15 KC: Okay. What kind of things are they telling you?

16 DD: Well, they spent most of their time in the typical military stuff but we heard a
17 few things. I remember hearing a war story every now and then and that, of course, is
18 always the kind of thing that you were really interested in hearing because you could see
19 on the horizon that you might be in a similar situation someday down the road. I can't
20 recall anything specific. I can recall names of some of the people and I also knew that
21 with the completion of my summer training program there in the summer of 1957, a
22 number of those guys were going to be reassigned because the upperclassmen were going
23 to take over starting in the academic year. These lieutenants who were called air training
24 officers were going to be reassigned elsewhere either within the Academy complex or,
25 90% of them were going back to some place to fly. The air training officer that was
26 responsible for my element, my group of about ten guys, was a Lieutenant Payne P-A-Y-
27 N-E. Lieutenant Payne was a navigator, as a matter of fact, and his objective was to go to
28 B-58 Hustlers, which was a brand new very fast bomber aircraft that was just coming
29 online. My recollection is that he got that assignment, so we heard a few stories like that.
30 We had a number of other people there who had combat experience in the Korean War
31 and a number of them that had World War II experience who were senior officers.

1 KC: Well, you graduate—

2 DD: It was an impressive bunch of people. The Air Force was making a particular
3 effort to find people who were highly motivated towards flying with combat experience
4 and to put those people in front of the Academy cadets as role models to encourage us to
5 follow in their footsteps and that worked very well.

6 KC: You finish up in 1963, you graduate. You are going to be assigned where?
7 Where did you want to be assigned? What did you want to do?

8 DD: Well, I knew the first thing I was going to do would go to flying training
9 program. My initial assignment out of the Academy was to go to a pilot training program.
10 I didn't last very long there. I had a depth perception problem that prevented me from—I
11 just couldn't land the airplane. I washed out of the pilot training program, went to the nav
12 training program and I knew that it would be—my future would be somewhere in
13 airplanes. I was going to be flying something. As we worked our way through that I
14 became pretty convinced that what I really wanted to fly was airlift of some sort. I liked
15 the idea of the airlift mission because you were always doing; you were always flying
16 and doing things. I liked that better than the bomber mission because it seemed like those
17 guys were spending a lot of time on alert rather than flying.

18 KC: Sure, sure. So where did you receive this training?

19 DD: The navigation training?

20 KC: Yes, yes.

21 DD: That was all at Waco. That was a full year at Waco. When I graduated from
22 there I had a—we could put in our preferences for where we wanted to go next. My
23 choice for assignment out of navigation training was to go to C-135 airlift aircraft. There
24 were four squadrons as I remember that had been authorized in the Air Force to use for
25 strategic airlift, four squadrons of C-135s. These were airplanes that had started down the
26 production line at Boeing to be C-135 tankers. When President Kennedy was in office he
27 made a decision he and his secretary of defense made the decision that we needed to have
28 increased airlift capabilities, faster airlift capabilities. They took the equivalent of about, I
29 am trying to remember how many airplanes, probably less than fifty of those KC-135s.
30 They strengthened the floor of the airplane. They remodeled the door on the side of the
31 airplane and made it capable of carrying cargo. That was the airplane that I wanted to go

1 fly. I ranked pretty high in my class at nav training and I got my first choice. I ended up
2 going to C-135s at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey.

3 KC: Okay. Now, once again, take me through your training there in C-135s.

4 DD: That was interesting too. You arrive as a brand new—I am a second
5 lieutenant still, brand new. I am rated as a navigator but I am not qualified in that aircraft
6 yet. The training program was conducted right there at McGuire. Those airplanes were
7 located in two places, either McGuire in New Jersey or Travis Air Force Base in
8 California. In each instance, the local base provided the transition training that was
9 needed for navigators to get up to speed to fly the airplane. That squadron had been in
10 existence for about two years when I arrived, when I reported in. It was the only, four
11 squadrons, these four squadrons were the only jet transport aircraft that were in the
12 inventory. When those squadrons were initially manned about '61, I guess, late '61, early
13 '62, the Air Force went through and found very highly qualified people to put in the
14 airplane and upgraded them and fully manned those squadrons. One other guy, Dick
15 Mallchok and I got the assignment to C-135s at McGuire out of our training class at
16 James Connally Air Force Base. When we arrived, we discovered that we were the first
17 two new navigators that had been assigned there since the initial cadre of people started
18 the squadron a couple of years earlier. In the meantime, all of those guys that had been
19 there were highly qualified aviators already. They checked out in the airplane quickly and
20 all of them upgraded to instructor or flight examiner and they ended up practicing their
21 craft on each other trying to demonstrate their teaching credentials and everything to
22 other people who were already qualified in the airplane because they didn't have any
23 students. When Dick and I arrived at the squadron, we were seen as fresh meat and
24 everybody in the squadron wanted to fly with us so we had a really intensive program. It
25 lasted six or eight weeks. [I misspoke here. The squadron kept me and Dick in training
26 status for six or eight months – not because we were so inept – but because there was a
27 lot to learn and most of the navigators in the squadron wanted to fly with a real student.]
28 And it involved going through a short ground school that taught us about the forms,
29 paperwork, and that kind of thing that was required in what was then Military Air
30 Transport Service, MATS. We learned all the paperwork and how to keep our records
31 and everything and then we started flying. I flew my first mission and the squadron was

1 over to Europe. We went over and spent several days flying around various places in
2 Europe and back. You would fly, be home for a day or two, and fly again. The flight
3 schedule was such that you would be gone—if it was something to Europe, you could be
4 gone two or three days, if it was something out in the Pacific, it could be a week or ten
5 days. We would fly for an extended period of time, be home for a few days and then go
6 back and fly again. Usually with a different instructor each time so after five or six weeks
7 of that I had flown with just about everybody in the squadron and I had demonstrated to
8 them that I knew what I was doing so soon thereafter they gave me a check ride and
9 turned me loose.

10 KC: They turned you loose. Where you going next?

11 DD: Well, when I said turned me loose, they turned me loose to go out as a
12 qualified line navigator.

13 KC: Oh, I am sorry I thought you meant the end of school. I am sorry.

14 DD: No, no, no. The training program, the transition program into 135s was not
15 like the other—not like the training program at Waco. You didn't go through and
16 graduate. You underwent the training until the point that they felt that you were capable
17 of navigating by yourself. At that point, they put a flight examiner on the airplane and
18 you do the entire mission with him looking over your shoulder to see that you are doing
19 things safely and properly. I can remember having that check ride going across the North
20 Atlantic and I came out of it with highly qualified results on the check ride. The next time
21 that I went out on a crew, I was the only navigator on the airplane. The trip that we went
22 on was out someplace in the Pacific to maybe to Thailand or someplace and then to Japan
23 and then back home and so I was the only navigator on the airplane. That was kind of an
24 interesting experience because, you know, you get out over the North Pacific and you
25 can—you need to pay close attention to what you are doing or you can end up getting
26 lost.

27 KC: So you were going to stay with this squadron, then.

28 DD: Yes.

29 KC: What was this squadron, was it the 30th?

30 DD: It was the 40th MAS, the 40th Military Airlift Squadron at McGuire.

31 KC: All right.

1 DD: I think it was the 40th, let me see. I don't remember. I was in the 30th and the
2 40th. I am pretty sure it was the 40th.

3 KC: Okay.

4 DD: I can check that and tell you later for sure.

5 KC: What was going to be the assignment of this particular squadron?

6 DD: The primary mission of that squadron was support of forces in Europe. This
7 was in 1964 that I started. Things in Southeast Asia were still at a fairly low degree of
8 involvement at least for the airlift forces. Our primary mission was to, one, provide cargo,
9 high-priority cargo to U.S. forces in Europe. Two, we hauled dependents, we carried
10 passengers on a number of our flights and we had extra crewmembers that would fly in
11 the capacity of an airline attendant stewardess on the airplane to take care of the
12 passengers. If some guy was assigned to a base in Germany we might haul his—he would
13 go over and be there for a couple of weeks and then we might be the way that his wife
14 and kids were delivered to Germany a little bit later.

15 KC: Okay.

16 DD: So hauling passengers and cargo. The other mission that particular wing, our
17 squadron had was to provide support to embassies in India and Pakistan. A lot of the stuff
18 that was going into and out of India and Pakistan was highly classified, could not be
19 carried on any commercial aircraft so we had to have military aircraft that would do it.
20 We had a mission every week that went around the world. We would go from McGuire to
21 Charleston, South Carolina, and from there through Madrid, Spain, through Dhahran,
22 Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Karachi. If diplomatic relations [between Pakistan and India]
23 were such that we could continue on then we would go from Karachi to New Delhi,
24 Bangkok, the Philippines, Honolulu, Travis Air Force Base and back to New Jersey. That
25 was a five-day trip that we would make around the world. One week we would go east
26 and the next we would go west.

27 KC: This is all in the C-135.

28 DD: C-135s.

29 KC: Okay. Now, how long were you doing this?

30 DD: I did this from, let's see, I got there in November, October, November of
31 1964 and I was in that squadron until 196-, late 1966, as I recall. At that time, the Air

1 Force started bringing 141s, a new transport aircraft online and I was selected to be the
2 initial cadre in a new squadron that formed with 141s. I think that was the 30th Squadron,
3 30th was at McGuire, 40th I think was the 135 squadron. I did that then for a year. After
4 four years there at McGuire I was selected to go back to graduate school and do a
5 graduate degree in history.

6 KC: Why were you selected?

7 DD: I had been identified as a—to go to the Air Force Academy to teach and you
8 had to have at least a Master's degree to teach there. The Air Force sponsored me in
9 graduate school at the University of Oklahoma. I was there from 1968 to 1970.

10 KC: Was this something that you wanted to do?

11 DD: I did. As I mentioned earlier, I have always had this passion for history so I
12 wanted to get a graduate degree in history and I wanted to teach. I knew that if I did that I
13 would not be giving up airplanes forever. I also knew that I needed to be more than—to
14 be, to have a successful Air Force career I needed to be more than just a line navigator.

15 KC: Okay.

16 DD: This was an opportunity for career broadening that would give me—put
17 some more arrows in my quiver.

18 KC: Sure, sure. Now, you have entered graduate school going after a Master's
19 degree in history in Oklahoma. What areas were you studying in? Military history, I think
20 is probably safe to assume.

21 DD: Well, that would have been the one that I would have wanted to do but I was
22 destined to teach American history at the Air Force Academy so it was going to be
23 something in American history. What I did was a degree in American western history
24 under, I studied primarily under a gentleman by the name of Walter Rundell, Jr., who was
25 a western historian there at the University of Oklahoma. I did a fairly broad coverage of
26 American history and along the way I picked up some European history courses too in
27 addition to the required American history courses. Where I could conveniently do so I
28 would work in military history. For example, in one of the American western history
29 courses, a seminar that I did, I did a paper on the development of Army—how the Army
30 helped conqueror the plains or something like that. I can't remember the title of it right
31 now.

1 KC: Sure.

2 DD: The Army on the western plains and before the Mexican War or something
3 like that.

4 KC: Okay. What was the topic of your Master's thesis there?

5 DD: It was social and economic conditions in Oklahoma oil boom towns. That
6 was a topic that I came to because I didn't know anything at all about the oil business and
7 it seemed like everybody there in Oklahoma did. Every time you would turn around
8 people would be talking about this or that or the other so I went to the library and tried to
9 find a little bit about it. There were some things but not a great deal. As I poked around in
10 the archives at Oklahoma, I luckily came across a collection of oral history interviews
11 that had been done by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) in the late 1930s,
12 people in oil in Oklahoma. These were oral history interviews with people primarily by
13 job category. The guys that built the tanks to hold the oil, the people who built the
14 pipelines, the drillers, oil field cook, that kind of thing. It turned out to be a gold mine of
15 information.

16 KC: The darndest thing, oral histories are actually useful.

17 DD: Oh, man I will tell you. I became absolutely convinced of the importance of
18 oral history through that experience. The oral history, I have got all of the documents, the
19 published documents and things that provide one view of what was going on but then
20 when you are able to pick up an oral history. One of the people who was interviewed that
21 I remember quite clearly was a woman by the name of Sadie Purley Dugget who owned a
22 [tent] restaurant that moved from boom town to boom town to boom town. Her
23 description of what was going on was not always the same as you would hear from an
24 executive Pure Oil, or one of the drillers.

25 KC: Sure, of course.

26 DD: It provided a spice that was really important.

27 KC: Yes, it certainly adds a richness to the official documentary evidence so it
28 affects the average person, which is again one of the major reasons why we are trying to
29 do this with the program here. All right, well, before we digress too far into the
30 usefulness of oral histories let's pick it up. You graduate from the University of
31 Oklahoma with your Master's degree in 1970.

1 DD: Correct.

2 KC: Now, at this time had you been ear marked, were you going to go to the
3 Academy to teach or was the conflict in Vietnam becoming of more priority for someone
4 in your position?

5 DD: Well, I had been ear marked to go to the Academy and teach. When I first
6 went to Oklahoma. In the fall of '68, I am a student at Oklahoma and the conflict at
7 Southeast Asia really had intensified at that point. The Air Force made the decision that if
8 you had not had a permanent assignment in Southeast Asia your next assignment would
9 be in Southeast Asia and I fell into that category. Although I had flown in and out of
10 Vietnam on a routine basis for four years, that didn't count as a permanent assignment
11 over there, of course. When I graduated from the University of Oklahoma, I received
12 orders to go to Southeast Asia. With some suggestion, that coming back from Southeast
13 Asia I would then go to the Academy and teach so the history degree was still going to be
14 used.

15 KC: Okay, now you mentioned that you were in and out of Vietnam on these
16 around the world trips, I guess. As you were making these stops, brief stops I assume, in
17 Vietnam were you picking up any sense of what was going on there?

18 DD: Oh, yeah. The around the world flights that was something that I flew
19 occasionally but I didn't fly that on a weekly basis. You would pick up, maybe fly those
20 trips five or six times a year and then somebody else would fly them. By 1965, middle of
21 1965, the focus of our mission at McGuire had shifted from '64 to early '65 the focus of
22 our mission was on Europe. From '65 onward, the focus of our mission was Southeast
23 Asia.

24 KC: Okay.

25 DD: So we were hauling in primarily cargo. We did have a passenger delivery
26 service that we were running also and that was where you would pick up a lot of the
27 sense of what was going on. There is two or three ways to answer that question. Our
28 squadron had a permanent presence, permanent, temporary presence at El Toro Marine
29 Corps Air Station in southern California. About every other day, we had an airplane that
30 would transit El Toro, pick up eighty Marines and fly those Marines to Da Nang in the
31 northern part of South Vietnam. Those guys would get off the airplane in their spiffy,

1 creased, highly shined shoes, and you know, looking as you would expect troops to look
2 as they come out of basic training. They would get off the airplane in Da Nang and
3 waiting on the ground would be about eighty guys that would be caked in mud and they
4 would look like they had just crawled out of the war and, as a matter of fact, they had.
5 The new guys would get off the airplane, the guys that had been there for a year would
6 get on the airplane and we would fly them back home.

7 KC: What was the atmosphere on those flights, atmosphere, the environment
8 taking those new young Marines to Vietnam? What are they thinking? What is going
9 through their minds the best you could tell?

10 DD: I was working up front on the navigation so I didn't get to see that as well as
11 a lot of other people did but the little bit that I saw I will try to answer it on that basis.
12 There was a sense of excitement, these guys are eighteen, nineteen, twenty years old.
13 They are off to war and they are joking with each other trying to cut the tension and
14 speculating about maybe going over and ending the war single handedly, that kind of
15 thing, the cocky young people. I anticipate that your next question is what was it like
16 coming back.

17 KC: Yes.

18 DD: Yeah. Those guys would get on the airplane and strangely enough, the one
19 thing that I remember in addition to the fact that they got on the airplane and most of
20 them went right to sleep was they were concerned about what was going on back home.
21 This was—in early '68, for example, '67, '68 we are talking about riots and we are
22 talking about that kind of thing in Los Angeles and we are going back into southern
23 California with those guys. They were eager to hear what is going on back home, what is
24 going on back home. We would try to reassure them that things were under control.

25 KC: About how many of these missions did you fly?

26 DD: Oh, my goodness. Well, probably several hundred [missions in and out of
27 Vietnam – some cargo and some passenger.]. That would take a little bit of doing to sit
28 down and figure it out. I have got a total of just under 5,000 hours of flying time. It is not
29 just with these two squadrons. I had other flying assignments later on but I got nearly
30 3,000 hours of flying time in 135s, I think, so we were flying those things a lot. My
31 average workday or work experience there was for the first couple of years that I was at

1 McGuire I would be home for maybe four days a month and gone for the rest of the time,
2 so we were always flying. The squadron was manned at—by the time I got there in 1964
3 the squadron was manned at about 70%, which meant that we only had 70% of the people
4 that we needed to fly the missions that were assigned to us. So you were just gone all the
5 time.

6 KC: Sure, constantly.

7 DD: I got married the day after I graduated from the Academy. My wife was
8 understanding about those absences. We would be gone maybe for a week, home for a
9 night or two and then gone again for two weeks and on home for another couple of
10 nights.

11 KC: Okay. Well, you have seen the war in the faces of these men who were
12 coming back. How closely were you following the war generally, following the news,
13 following the events taking place throughout this time throughout, say, '65, well '65
14 through '70?

15 DD: I followed it as closely as I could. Of course, flying as much as I was flying I
16 had to depend for a lot of my information on things like the military newspaper, *Stars*
17 *and Stripes*. Every now and then, I would get a chance to pick up the Honolulu
18 newspaper or Los Angeles paper or something like that and read it. I tried to follow it as
19 closely as I could. We could tell when things were really heating up. I can remember
20 flying a mission from Bangkok and we over flew Vietnam on our way to, we were on our
21 way up to Tokyo in '68, January '68 when Tet was going on. We could hear things on the
22 radio occasionally. We could see things going on, on the ground. The big picture was a
23 little bit more difficult to come by and that I got from local—those Armed Forces Radio
24 Network, which is a program we could listen to on the radio in the airplane occasionally.
25 We would pick up the *Stars and Stripes* newspapers, our newspapers back home, so I
26 followed it pretty closely.

27 KC: What were your impressions of it then?

28 DD: That we needed to get in there and win the war. One of the most difficult
29 things that we faced was the political constraints on us trying to fight the war with one
30 hand tied behind our back. The very idea that the North Vietnamese could bring in
31 missiles at Hanoi or Haiphong and we couldn't destroy the ships that were bringing those

1 things in for political reasons. Instead, we had to wait and fight those missiles one at a
2 time when they were shot at us. We didn't take any missiles when I was flying the 135s
3 and 141s but we knew the guys that were. We would sometimes go into Saigon and there
4 would be a group of eight or ten or twelve flyers that were there trying to get a hop out of
5 Saigon. They would be up to Japan for a few days they would have for rest and
6 relaxation. Every time we ran into guys like that, we made every effort that we could to
7 get them moved onto their next—wherever they were trying to go. I can remember one
8 time that we landed at, this is in 135s, landed at Saigon and had—there were probably a
9 dozen guys there, fighter pilots who had a few days off for rest and relaxation. We didn't
10 have any seats to put on the airplane so we ended up putting tie down straps across the
11 floor, the cargo floor of the airplane and had those guys sit on the floor back to back with
12 a cargo strap tied down across the front of them on each one of those guys. Then they
13 would link their elbows and hold on and we took off and flew them up to Japan.

14 KC: I can't imagine those kind of accommodations sat well with fighter pilots.

15 DD: Well, they were always making wise cracks about "Why don't you fly a real
16 airplane?" and that kind of thing. I can remember one of those experiences, too, when we
17 were deploying a fighter wing from the United States to Southeast Asia; this would have
18 been in 1965. We would fly—transports would fly with maintenance people and that sort
19 of thing so we took off with the maintenance people, the fighters took off and flew a
20 loose formation or, you know, close by and we went as far as Honolulu and that night a
21 fighter pilot was bragging at the bar about something that he could do and that we
22 couldn't do in transports. One of us, I don't remember who, said the next that you just
23 watch us tomorrow and we will show you something that you can't do in a fighter plane.
24 So we took off the next day, we are flying along, nothing happened, and the fighter pilot
25 came up on the radio and says, "Well, when are you going to show me?" The guy says, "I
26 already did. I went to the back of the airplane, took a leak, had a flight lunch and I am
27 back in my seat." That shut him up.

28 KC: (Laughs) I imagine it did. Well, I think you have pretty well described what
29 you have seen in Vietnam and the progress of the war and, like you say, the constraints
30 that were restricting American activities. You are also in touch with what was going on

1 back home, as you mentioned before. Describe the scene relating to the Vietnam War at
2 home, as you saw it.

3 DD: I saw that from the perspective of a student at Oklahoma from '68 to '70.

4 KC: Which wasn't Berkeley for sure.

5 DD: I am sorry.

6 KC: Which Oklahoma is certainly not being Berkeley, for example.

7 DD: That is exactly right. I was really, really glad that I was at Oklahoma for that
8 reason. I was able to keep up with events a lot more closely while I was there in graduate
9 school. I was aware, of course, of what was going on at Kent State and those kinds of
10 things. As a graduate student, I am still a serving Air Force officer. I went to class in
11 civilian clothes but I kept my hair cut short, which was not common among all the
12 students and the instructors knew why I was there and what I was doing, who I was. I can
13 remember I took one course I will mention, I had taken some European—I took one
14 course in the French Revolution and I walked in the first day of the class and the
15 professor announced he says, "Well, the title of this course is the French Revolution but
16 the emphasis is on revolution and we are going to be talking about how to make
17 revolution." This was a young instructor. He hadn't been there long at Oklahoma and he
18 was from some northeastern university where he came out spouting fire and brimstone.
19 He was looking to make a revolution right there. I waited until the end of the class and I
20 went up and made sure he knew who I was and asked him if he figured this was the right
21 course for me to be taking. He said, "We are going to cover the French Revolution," but
22 he said, "I want to stir some stuff up, too." I said, "Well, I am not here to stir stuff up. I
23 am here to get an education." He said, "You will get an education." So I made the
24 decision to stick with the course and I got an A in it, but he was a pretty radical guy.

25 KC: Very, very interesting.

26 DD: The other perspective that you would be interested in, I guess, is before I
27 went to graduate school it was in the summer of '68, for example, we had the ship that
28 was taken up off the coast of North Korea.

29 KC: The *Pueblo*.

30 DD: *Pueblo*. We had the assassination of Martin Luther King. We had the
31 assassination of Bobby Kennedy. I can remember that with *Pueblo* we experienced a very

1 quick military buildup in Korea and peripheral the bases around Korea as a result of the
2 *Pueblo* incident. I was in 141s then. We would—the way we operated was kind of like—
3 here is my western history coming into this, kind of like the old Pony Express. You take
4 an airplane with a crew and you fly as far as that crew could go and land the airplane at a
5 predetermined location where there would be another crew in place. We would get off the
6 airplane and there would be a crew there who would be rested and ready to go. The
7 airplane would be on the ground maybe two hours or less and the new crew would get on,
8 they would fly off and we would go to bed and rest and we would take the next airplane
9 that came in as soon as we were rested and ready to go. That operation was in full swing
10 like that during the *Pueblo* crisis and I can recall landing at Elmendorf, which is one our
11 primary transit bases for that. We would land at Elmendorf and be maybe number
12 eighteen or nineteen in the stage, which meant that there were seventeen or eighteen
13 crews ahead of us that would be taking airplanes out. We asked the command post how
14 long they expected us to be on the ground and they would say you have got twelve hours
15 and at the end of twelve hours there will be an airplane waiting for you. That is how fast
16 we were moving airplanes through that system.

17 KC: Picking them up and setting them down, it sounds like.

18 DD: Did I get off track here? I think I did.

19 KC: No, no, no. No, that is perfectly fine. I think that is very important, what you
20 are discussing, what you saw relative to the Vietnam War both over there and in the
21 United States and it is certainly a big part of it especially in 1968, as tumultuous of a year
22 as that was and the *Pueblo*, of course, only added to all of that. So you see the expansion
23 of the U.S. military effort not just in Vietnam but in other places and it was instructive, I
24 think, in the power that the United States could expect to project at that time and what it
25 couldn't expect to project, for sure. Now, coming back to the home front just briefly here
26 you have described what you seen on a campus at the University of Oklahoma there in
27 Norman, but what about outside of Norman? What about the general impression you
28 were receiving around the country?

29 DD: Primarily it was from television. You ask that question and the image that
30 immediately pops into my head is of the girl on one knee at Kent State crying about the
31 guy that has been shot there. My impression was it was a very, very unsettled time. It was

1 a period of uncertainty. You had to kind of get from day to day rather than try to
2 anticipate what was going to be happening weeks or months or years down the road. That
3 comment that I made about the Marines coming back from Vietnam wanting to know
4 about conditions in LA, that kind of thing, that was a real impression. Another one was
5 when we would go through Travis, for example, and pick up a load of Army or Air Force
6 people that we were hauling over to Southeast Asia and walk through the terminal at
7 Travis Air Force Base in 1968, early 1968, late 1967. You would see people that were
8 just sleeping on the floors, they were—anything they could do to find a place to sit or rest
9 or whatever. Much, much overcrowded conditions with lots of people moving. When
10 they would get to that point, they would end up getting stuck for two or three days and
11 we just didn't have the facilities to cope with it in many cases.

12 KC: Sure.

13 DD: That is maybe a little bit unrelated to the subject but as crewmembers we—
14 let me tell you a little bit about the crew day.

15 KC: Please.

16 DD: I think you would find this really interesting.

17 KC: Please do.

18 DD: Under MAC, MATS, MAC, we were—MATS is Military Air Transport
19 Service and about 1966 it became Military Air Transport Command so it is MATS first
20 and then MAC. Under that command as a crew, a basic crew which would be a pilot,
21 copilot, navigator, flight engineer, and a load master, five of us. We could work for
22 sixteen hours before we had to stop and rest. When we stopped to rest we could be on the
23 ground for, we had to be on the ground for ten hours. In many cases we would be there
24 for twelve to fifteen hours but very seldom any more than that. You would take off out of
25 Travis and you might fly to Honolulu that would be seven or eight hours, by the time you
26 pre-flight the airplane, get the airplane in the air, land it at Honolulu you have burned up
27 most of crew day, your twelve or thirteen hours. We would go to bed and get our crew
28 rest and get up the next day and fly on to maybe to Guam, same sort of a deal. That all
29 worked pretty well, but by the time you get into this thing, you know, breakfast could be
30 anytime of the day. Sometimes we would end up in a situation where you might fly from
31 one point A to point B and it might only take two hours and for one reason or another you

1 weren't going to go any further than that. You might have a maintenance problem on the
2 airplane, for example, but if the airplane could be fixed in twelve hours and you are on
3 the ground for two hours then you have got, you have been flying for two hours, I mean,
4 you are on the ground for twelve hours, you are not sleepy or ready to go to bed so people
5 would have real difficulty trying to cope with that kind of a schedule. That led to lots of
6 heavy drinking. I can remember folks landing and drinking heavily just to be able to go to
7 sleep so they could wake up and fly again the next day.

8 KC: What about you?

9 DD: I got a little bit off my track there and I don't remember exactly where I was
10 going. Oh, I know. I was going to say that—we were talking about facilities at Travis for
11 the passengers. The facilities throughout the system that we were flying for the aircrew
12 were a little bit better. The way they made it a little bit better was they kept the officers
13 clubs open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week every place that we went. For
14 example, you could land Yokota Air Base in Japan just south of Tokyo, you could land
15 there at six o'clock in the morning and go over and get breakfast or you could land there
16 at six o'clock at night and you could go over and get a meal. It might not be breakfast but
17 you can get a meal. Or you could land there at two o'clock in the morning and you could
18 go over and get a meal and the bar was open, too.

19 KC: Okay, now, you got your orders in 1970. What month, I should ask.

20 DD: Well, I graduated in May of 1970.

21 KC: Okay.

22 DD: My orders, my initial orders were to go to the 776th Transport Squadron, a C-
23 130 outfit stationed at CCK (Ching Chuan Kang Airbase) which was, I can't pronounce
24 the Chinese name for this. It is an air base that is on the southern tip of Formosa.

25 KC: Okay.

26 DD: This was supposed to be for fifteen months of remote duty. The mission of
27 that outfit was to be the tactical airlift support for combat troops in Vietnam. They had
28 this squadron stationed outside of Vietnam just because there was no room on some of
29 the bases there. We were able to fly in and out and do our thing. I started through the
30 training program in June, I guess, a couple of weeks after—maybe I had maybe two
31 weeks' leave after graduating from Oklahoma. I started through the training pipeline. I

1 had to again get re-qualified now in a new airplane. I had been off of a flying status. I had
2 not been flying for a couple of years, so I had to get re-qualified in a new airplane and
3 take off and get ready for that. There were, I think, three or four different schools that I
4 had to go through, various places around the country. One of the schools that I was
5 required to attend was at Lowry Air Force Base in Denver. My wife and kids and I are in
6 Denver and I had been through maybe four or five days in that program, woke up one
7 morning and my right leg was totally paralyzed from the hip down. I couldn't move it. I
8 had a high temperature and it was swollen to almost double the size. My wife
9 immediately when she woke up we got in the car and went to the Air Force hospital at
10 Lowry. They took a look at it and said they couldn't deal with it and sent me to the Army
11 medical center at Fitzsimmons. I went over there and they admitted me into the hospital
12 and I was hospitalized for the next twelve weeks with that condition. They were never
13 able to diagnosis the cause of the illness or the cause of the problem. The fever slowly
14 went down, the swelling slowly went down but in the process of this happening over that
15 twelve-week period of time the rest of the people in my training class went ahead through
16 the other schools that they had to go to and there were thirty of us total, so those other
17 twenty-nine guys went through all the training programs. While I am laying there in the
18 hospital at Fitzsimmons trying to recover from this those guys left for CCK. They went
19 commercial from the United States to Taipei and then a C-130 outfit sent an airplane
20 from CCK up to Taipei to pick them up. They got on the 130 heading for CCK and hit a
21 mountain and killed every one of them.

22 KC: Oh, my goodness.

23 DD: I am laying in the hospital the day that all this happens. I had a good friend
24 on the other end that I had served with at McGuire who knew that I was coming and
25 when the plane crashed, he didn't know that I was not on it. He watched the causality list
26 come out and my name wasn't on it and he got on the phone and was able to find my
27 wife. "Where in the hell is Drue?" "Well, he is in the hospital." "Well, he is sure lucky to
28 be in the hospital." Because I was supposed to be on that airplane. In the meantime, I
29 gradually regained the strength in my right leg. I am cleared to duty with two weeks of
30 convalescent leave in between being released from the hospital and my first duty
31 assignment after that. The orders were rescinded that I was suppose to go to the airlift

1 outfit and I received new orders that now assigned me to the AC-130 gunships at CCK,
2 or excuse, me at Ubon, Thailand. That becomes the new phase.

3 KC: Let me ask you one more question.

4 DD: Let me stop for just a moment and get a drink of water. I am getting really
5 dry. Excuse me just a second. If I digress or get off on the wrong track here, you pull me
6 back.

7 KC: Oh, no worries, no worries there. Let me ask, I think this is a pretty good
8 place to maybe take a break for today.

9 DD: Okay.

10 KC: But before we do, before we get you to Ubon, because like you just said, it
11 begins a whole new phase and maybe it would be best for us to start fresh on another day
12 with this.

13 DD: Okay.

14 KC: But one last question I would like to ask you today, Colonel DeBerry, is you
15 say that this aircraft crashed and that you were supposed to be aboard it. Explain to me
16 what your thought process is here. Explain to me what you are thinking. What is going
17 through your mind when you receive news of this?

18 DD: It was—that was really kind of hard to deal with. Excuse me just a second
19 (pause). All kinds of things go through your mind, you know. I guess the one that—the
20 first one that went through my mind is: “Thank goodness I wasn’t on that airplane.” The
21 second one was, this illness that I experienced that the doctors can’t explain, they can’t
22 understand and yet that one thing intervened in a path that I was going down and made a
23 difference in life or death. I guess—I really feel like we are all placed on this earth for
24 some purpose. I think the ultimate conclusion that I came to was that my purpose hadn’t
25 been fulfilled yet and I still had some things to do. I was thankful for the opportunity to
26 do them and I made my mind up that I was going to just to the very best job I could at
27 whatever came down the road at me.

28 KC: Now, was this—

29 DD: I had been given to what amounted to a second chance.

30 KC: Was this belief religious or spiritual in nature, do you think?

1 DD: Yes. I have a strong faith, strong religious beliefs. I don't talk about it a lot
2 but I do. I do believe that it was a divine—well, I can't say divine intervention because I
3 don't believe that divine intervention caused the deaths of those other guys, but it's one
4 of the mysteries of life.

5 KC: Very, very interesting. Well, let's go ahead and take a break right now and
6 we will pick it up again at another day.

Interview with Drue DeBerry
Session [2] of [3]
4 August 2008

1 KC: This is Kelly Crager continuing an interview with Col. Drue DeBerry. Today
2 is 4 August 2008. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Mr. DeBerry is joining us from his home
3 in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. Good morning, Mr. DeBerry.

4 DD: Good morning, Mr. Crager. How are you today?

5 KC: I am doing very well, doing very well. Now, you had mentioned a moment
6 ago that there was something that you wanted to add to the record from our conversation
7 last time so let's go ahead and pick it up there.

8 DD: Sure. We had discussed last time the fact that I entered the Air Force
9 Academy in 1957 and was dismissed in 1958, returned in 1959 and graduated in 1963.
10 The thing that I had neglected to say was that the course that really got me while I was at
11 the Academy was chemistry. When I returned to the Academy in 1959, I had an
12 opportunity to take validation exams, which were actually the final examination that the
13 Academy had offered the previous semester in various different subjects. One of the
14 subjects that I validated was chemistry and I felt very proud of that.

15 KC: I remember that chemistry was giving you a little bit of trouble in both high
16 school and here, as well.

17 DD: So I never had to take another chemistry course.

18 KC: Well, it was important that you got that off your chest then, for sure.

19 DD: You bet.

20 KC: Now, when we left off last time you were on your way to Thailand, to Ubon,
21 Thailand, and it was December of 1970.

22 DD: Correct.

23 KC: You were to be assigned to the 16th SOS, Special Operations Squadron. Is
24 that correct?

25 DD: Yes.

26 KC: Okay, can you pick up the story there? When did you arrive in Thailand and
27 where do you go from there?

1 DD: Okay. Let me start with when I left the States. I left Denver, or excuse me,
2 Colorado Springs and it would have been the 10th of December and got to—the first stop
3 was Clark Field in the Philippines. At Clark I went through a jungle survival course. I
4 was there for about ten days and then went into Bangkok from Clark and I can't
5 remember the exact date of the arrival. I do remember I had arrived in Bangkok while the
6 Bob Hope show was up at Ubon, which was going to be my base of assignment. I got to
7 Ubon the next day as the Bob Hope show arrived at Bangkok to do a show there so I
8 missed both coming and going.

9 KC: Timing is everything.

10 DD: Everything.

11 KC: Now, you are with the 16th. What is the mission of the 16th? What is their
12 purpose there in Ubon?

13 DD: Okay, the 16th at that time was a very unique squadron. It was the only one of
14 its kind in existence in the Air Force. We flew AC-130 gunships, the AC meaning that it
15 is a gunship. We flew primarily to patrol the trails, the Ho Chi Minh trails through Laos
16 and Cambodia. Our objective, our purpose was to destroy as much of the traffic on those
17 trails as we possibly could and to stop it if we possibly could.

18 KC: Now, when you say destroy the traffic, this obviously is a gunship and not a
19 heavy bomber. What are your targets along the trail?

20 DD: Anything that was in hostile, what we defined as hostile territory that was
21 moving was a valid target with some exceptions. The things that—we had specific
22 locations where we suspected there were Americans being held as POWs (prisoners of
23 war). We had specific locations where there was some sort of cultural or other artifact
24 that we were not supposed to strike. If we saw something moving on the ground, we
25 generally were free to attack it. The kinds of things that we were after, there was all kinds
26 of things, as a matter of fact. The primary thing was trucks but the North Vietnamese
27 were using, in addition to trucks they were using sampans or some sort of little boats on
28 some of the rivers that were in that area. They were using elephants. They were using
29 guys with bicycles and bags of rice on the bicycle and they would go pushing the bike
30 down the trail. We had equipment on the airplane where we could use to pick up these
31 things. Once we found it we would do our best to destroy them.

1 KC: What kind of equipment was this?

2 DD: We had—again, this is the early model of the AC-130 gunship. We had one
3 device that was called a night observation device. It was a little bit like a telescope. We
4 always flew at night and this thing would collect the ambient light from stars or moon or
5 whatever was out and amplify things that you could see on the ground. It is like looking
6 at a green monitor for a TV set or something like that because you get shades of green is
7 what you see on the—when you look through the NOD (night observation device). That
8 was one of them that we used. A little bit later we got a television set, a low light level
9 TV set, LL [TV], a low light level television set that we could use. We had, what else?
10 We had another device that would look electronically for traffic on the ground and finally
11 we had a device that was infrared that we could use. All of these things were controlled
12 by four or five navigators—excuse me, my throat is bothering me—four or five
13 navigators who sat in a little air-conditioned booth in the back of the airplane with the
14 electronic devices and everything that they would use and they could track the things on
15 the ground. The one exception to that was the guy who was using the night observation
16 device actually, again a navigator, actually sat in the crew entry door of the C-130. That
17 is on the left side just forward of the leading edge of the wing. He would sit on the floor
18 with his feet hanging out into the air stream and that low light, that night observation
19 device would be something that was mounted on a swivel there and he could lean
20 forward against a wide leather strap, hold that night observation device, and watch things
21 on the ground which is an exciting place to fly.

22 KC: It really sounds like it. Would he call out what he saw or how would he
23 communicate with the pilot and the gunners?

24 DD: He would, but he would—more importantly all of these devices were
25 electronically linked to a fire control system that was located at the navigator's position
26 inside the airplane. When the night observation guy, for example, picked up a truck on
27 the ground, he could follow the truck on the ground with his night observation device.
28 There was a crosshair on the—a fixed crosshair on the device and he would try to keep
29 that crosshair directly on top of the truck that he was tracking. Electronically, that
30 information would be fed through the fire control system of the airplane and from the fire
31 control system it would then be fed to a sight that was in the left window of the aircraft.

1 Now, remember we are flying at night. It's dark, hopefully very dark. The pilot can't see
2 anything on the ground unless it's a gun flash. He would be flying the airplane but his
3 head would be turned to the left and he is looking at that gun sight. The gun sight that the
4 pilot would see was a piece of glass. Etched in the center of the glass is a crosshair.
5 Superimposed on that glass electronically from my fire control system would be a
6 moveable crosshair. If he could get the moveable crosshair aligned with the fixed cross
7 on the sight, that would indicate that everything was set and he could fire the guns at that
8 point, as long as I had cleared him on the fire control system. He would fire and the round
9 would be away. That is how that worked. It's a lot more detailed and I will take you
10 through it here step by step if you would like.

11 KC: Yes, please do.

12 DD: Okay. Like I say, the guy on the—any one of the tracking devices is tracking
13 a target on the ground and that is fed into the fire control system. The fire control system
14 was a real antique sort of piece of equipment. It did some things for us but it didn't do
15 anything terrifically well. If what we had to do was to try to compensate, this was my job,
16 compensate for winds and altitude variations or air speed variations or angle of bank
17 variations in the aircraft at the moment that the guns were fired. The night observation
18 device operator would be on the interphone and as he is tracking the target, he might say,
19 "Tracking, tracking," something like that. The information in my fire control system I
20 would already have cranked in what I thought was the prevailing wind direction and
21 speed. Just before the pilot would fire the flight engineer would call out on the
22 interphone, or I guess this would happen as the pilot fired the gun. The flight engineer
23 would call out the angle of bank, excuse me, he would call out the airspeed that the
24 aircraft was actually making at that time. The copilot would call out the angle of bank
25 that the aircraft was in. The pilot who had just pulled the trigger would call out where the
26 pipper, this moveable crosshair, was located in relation to the fixed crosshair on the
27 target. You might get something like—the observation, the last guy would say,
28 "Tracking," and the table navigator would say, "Clear to fire." I have got the air speed or,
29 excuse me, I have got the winds and that kind of information cranked into the airplane.
30 The engineer would say—I don't remember all the numbers so I will just use some
31 imaginary numbers here.

1 KC: Okay.

2 DD: "162." The copilot might say, "Twenty-eight degrees." The pilot would pull
3 the trigger and say, "One mil low and one mil to the left." Now, all of that information is
4 coming over the interphones back to me, the table navigator, and my job was to plot that
5 as quickly as I could on a little computing device, handheld computer that I had. At the
6 same time the round is on the way now towards the ground. The night observation device
7 guy is still watching that round, watching the target on the ground. The shell would
8 impact and just as part of this example, let's say the shell impacted a mil high on his
9 night observation device. So now we know what all the parameters, the moveable parts of
10 this thing, were like at the moment that the pilot pulled the trigger and we know where
11 the round hit on the ground. I could compute that through a manual system that we called
12 triple tweaking and come up with a correction then that I could put back in the fire
13 control system. That correction was intended to compensate for maybe the gun mount
14 might get a little bit loose, one thing or another that was not working exactly properly.
15 We would fire that first round and I would crank a correction into the fire control system,
16 we were still in orbit around this target and we haven't destroyed it yet so we would fire
17 another round. The second round would go through the same procedure and usually about
18 the time you fired the third round you could make the decision as to whether or not you
19 wanted to put that round of ammunition through the driver's seat or through the
20 passenger's seat of the vehicle.

21 KC: Wow.

22 DD: Yeah, it was pretty effective.

23 KC: That is incredible and very, very complex.

24 DD: It is very complex. The thing that always amazed me about it so much was so
25 much of it really depended on the table navigator being able to integrate all of this
26 information, do it quickly, and crank our correction into the gun sight. The other folks on
27 the crew, they are trying to do one thing. The thing that they are doing is critically
28 important, each one of them. The guy—that is the table navigator is trying to take all of
29 the inputs from each one of those people and integrate them and come up with a solution
30 to correct the aim of the gun.

31 KC: So essentially you are coordinating all the fire. It is all running through you.

1 DD: Yeah. The guns wouldn't fire until the table navigator turned a switch that
2 cleared the guns to fire; it was all part of the electronic circuitry. Of course, in addition to
3 being responsible for tracking the target, the table nav was the only guy that really knew
4 where the airplane was located over the terrain. With regard to those POW locations that
5 I mentioned a minute ago or cultural sites or anything like that in addition they tried to
6 integrate all the other information to try to figure out exactly where the airplane was and
7 exactly where the round was going to impact. We were cleared to fire within a certain
8 distance. I can't remember what it was of those things but it was a pretty short distance.

9 KC: Now, you mentioned you have these men with you who are using the
10 tracking devices and, of course, the pilot and copilot. How many men were on one of
11 these gunships on a given mission?

12 DD: Generally, it was fourteen or fifteen.

13 KC: Fourteen or fifteen. Okay. What was the rest of this group doing?

14 DD: Okay. I will just start at the front of the airplane and work my way to the
15 back.

16 KC: Sure.

17 DD: Of course, the guy in the left seat is the pilot, the aircraft commander. His
18 responsibility is the safety of the aircraft and tracking the targets through that gun sight
19 that I mentioned a minute ago. But he can't see anything on the ground. All he can see is
20 those two crosshairs, the one fixed and the one moveable. Copilot, responsible for—
21 while we are in an orbit around the target the copilot was responsible for controlling the
22 airspeed and—let's see what else? He managed some of the radio traffic that we had and
23 there was a lot of radio traffic within the airplane and outside of the airplane too. I will
24 talk about that more in a minute.

25 KC: Sure.

26 DD: Flight engineer, his responsibility was to monitor aircraft instruments for the
27 pilot and the copilot and just back them up on what they were doing. Then when the
28 round was fired, it was his responsibility to call off the airspeed to the table nav.
29 Immediately behind the flight engineer, table navigator. Table nav was a term that we
30 came up for that position. Normally that is just a navigator position and the guy that sits
31 there was responsible for knowing the location of the aircraft for safety in flight, which is

1 the traditional navigator responsibilities. We added to his responsibilities a fire control
2 system that he would, where he would integrate all of that information. In addition to
3 keeping up with the fire control system, with the location of the aircraft over the ground,
4 the location of various prohibited areas on the ground that we couldn't shoot at, he also
5 was responsible for keeping score. We tried to keep up with how many rounds were fired
6 at us from the ground and how many rounds we fired and the specific location where all
7 this was taking place, so it was a pretty complicated job. The table navigator was the only
8 guy on the flight deck who had any light to work with. The rest of the flight deck was as
9 dark as we could get it and still fly the airplane. The way we did that was we had a couple
10 of pieces of heavy canvas that were attached to the ceiling of the flight deck and draped
11 over the back of the navigator and his table where he was working and all of his
12 instruments. It went over his back and down to the floor of the aircraft. Outside of that,
13 the objective was that outside that little area where the navigator was working you didn't
14 want to see any light at all because any light that was showing there might be seen from
15 the ground and light was the last thing we wanted anybody to see on that airplane from
16 the ground. On the flight deck itself all of the flight instruments were dimmed to down to
17 as low as you could see them and instead of white light they used a red light which is not
18 as visible from the ground as the white light was.

19 KC: Sure.

20 DD: Now continuing on, I will talk some more about the nav position later on but
21 continuing on from the navigator's position as you went towards the back of the aircraft
22 the very first thing you encountered in the cargo compartment of the aircraft would be
23 this booth that would normally have—wait a minute. The night observation device guy
24 would be sitting in the seat in some early models of the airplane. Later we removed that
25 guy and took the night observation device out and relied on the low light level television.
26 You would go past the night observation device guy and the next thing that you
27 encountered was a booth that was sound proofed, air conditioning, it was really pretty
28 nice in there. Usually four navigators were sitting in that location. One of them was
29 operating each one of the different pieces of equipment that I mentioned. Then behind
30 that booth within the cargo compartment of the aircraft would be the gunners. I don't
31 remember exactly how many gunners we had back there but it is usually about three or

1 four at least. We had on the airplanes that I flew we had three different kinds of
2 armament. We had 7.62 mini-guns, which is a relatively small weapon. We had two of
3 those mounted. All of these are mounted on the left side of the aircraft if you are sitting in
4 the pilot's seat it would be on your left side. We would have the 7.62 mini-guns belt fed
5 weapons that fired at very high rate of speed and really put out a lot of ammunition at one
6 time. Behind those, 20-mm Gatling guns, a little bit larger weapon that could be used to
7 attack in addition to trucks could be used to attack troops or whatever as could the 7.62s
8 the smaller caliber weapons. A pair of those and then behind the 20-mms we had a pair of
9 40-mm recoilless rifles[Similar to Bofors antiaircraft guns]. If you recall seeing some of
10 the old World War II movies of aircraft carriers in action in the Pacific you would see
11 these guns, as the Japanese aircraft would be attacking the ships there would be guns on
12 the side of the ship that would be firing at the aircraft, it was pom-pom guns, boom,
13 boom, boom, boom.

14 KC: Sure.

15 DD: A pair of them and that is what we had in the back of the airplane, the same
16 weapons. Those things were crew-fed so the gun crew at the back of the airplane would
17 be feeding those with the clips of, I think it was four shells, that they would drop in.
18 Sometimes we could fire those things pretty fast so that would keep the gun crew pretty
19 busy, could keep them pretty busy in the back. They didn't have a lot to do with the other
20 two weapons other than to just make sure that there were no jams, if there were a jam
21 then be able to clear and to get the brass up. All of the brass that resulted from firing the
22 rounds would be ejected back into the aircraft and these guys would—they had a big
23 barrel and a coal scoop, excuse me, coal shovel to scoop up the brass and dump it into
24 that barrel. They were trying to keep that stuff off the floor as best they could because it
25 is all pitch black in the back there, too, and you step on some of that you could fall and
26 hurt yourself.

27 KC: Sure.

28 DD: Okay that is the gun crew. At the very back end of the airplane was a—we
29 always flew with the back door open, the ramp door on the C-130 was open and level
30 with the floor of the airplane. The way that door works in the back of the C-130, it is a
31 clamshell. Most of the door lifts up into the tail of the airplane when you open it and part

1 of it lays down level with the floor. On the very aft end of that part of the door that was
2 level with the floor we had initially, when they first started flying these airplanes they had
3 initially installed a huge searchlight that was used to, supposedly, to identify, to point
4 towards the ground and light up the traffic down there so we could see it. Well, you can
5 imagine that it didn't take long for everybody to figure out that while we lit them up they
6 saw us, too, in that thing. That position was—that piece of equipment was eliminated
7 from the airplane pretty quick. The guy who operated it was called an illuminator
8 operator. They tried various things to achieve this same purpose but ultimately what they
9 ended up doing was the illuminator operator position was retained on the crew and this
10 guy—this is hard to believe but it is true—this guy would be suspended underneath the
11 airplane on a steel cable, his ankles would be on the aft edge of that ramp that I was
12 talking about a minute ago. We had some foam rubber there, something or other, to put
13 under his—to keep it from being very painful for him but the steel cable would hold the
14 guy. He is upside down underneath the airplane at about a—if the airplane were flying
15 level he would be down at about a 45-degree angle into the air stream. He had a very
16 large facemask, bubble-like plastic facemask over his head. He had an intercom
17 microphone headset with it. His job was twofold, actually. The most important from our
18 perspective was that as the guys on the ground fired at us they would be firing
19 ammunition that included tracers. He could see the tracers coming up at us and he could
20 tell how close it was going to be to the airplane and could tell the pilot which way to
21 dodge to miss it. His other job was to help identify or help find the targets on the ground
22 because if a gun was firing at us we didn't have any devices on the [aircraft] that could
23 necessarily see that gun; infrared might be able to see him some but not much. So the guy
24 on the ground would fire a short burst maybe five to ten rounds towards the airplane and
25 he would go quiet and another gun 200 yards away might then fire the next time around.
26 It was hard for us to pick out—because we were going to attack those targets that were
27 shooting at us, as well as the trucks that were moving. The guy who was hanging
28 underneath the airplane, this illuminator operator in addition to his headset, microphone,
29 face covering and everything, he had tucked under his left arm two or three relatively
30 large—how to describe these?—they were flares that were friction ignited. He would take
31 one of these flares in his left hand, remove the cap off of the flare with his right hand and

1 ignite the—strike one against the other, which would ignite it, and then he would throw
2 that thing towards the ground when he saw the gun fire at us. A gun would fire and he
3 would light the flare and throw it right towards the spot on the ground that is now black,
4 the spot on the ground where he thought the gun was located. The next time that gun fired
5 at us we had a relationship between the fire that is burning on the ground and the gun pit
6 where that gun crew was shooting at us so we could go about attacking those guys on the
7 ground. In addition to the guy that is hanging out the back end of the airplane trying to
8 tell us which way to dodge and trying to mark the guns on the ground we had another
9 guy, enlisted man, who sat on the right side of the airplane and his job was also to tell us
10 about ground fire that was coming up at us. That was his only responsibility was just to
11 identify stuff that was coming up at us. You have got the pilot concentrating fully on the
12 gun sight, you have got the other two guys the flight engineer and the copilot
13 concentrating on the flight instruments. The navigator is concentrating on his problem of
14 trying to resolve the targeting information and you have got these two guys that are
15 responsible for looking outside the airplane to see the ground fire that is coming up at us
16 and help us to avoid it. The guy on the right side of the airplane would be looking outside
17 the orbit that we were flying. The guy hanging underneath the airplane would be looking
18 primarily behind the airplane and within the orbit that we were flying. We would be
19 flying a circle, basically, around the target on the ground. Everybody else was
20 concentrating on something else and these were the two guys who we really relied on as
21 our eyes outside the airplane. That covers the crew. I don't remember how many that
22 adds up to but it was fourteen or fifteen. We would sometimes fly with an instructor that
23 would be in one of the positions giving instruction to a new guy in the squadron or we
24 might have a guy onboard that would maybe relieve one of the other positions
25 occasionally, something like that. But normally there was about fifteen guys. All of them
26 on headset and all of them could be talking at one time or another. It got to the point
27 where in a normal, for me, in a normal airlift environment when you get ready to talk on
28 the radio it would be, pilot, navigator. Need to alter heading to 230 degrees. With that
29 many people on the interphone you just couldn't—you didn't have time to take that much
30 time away from the, off of the system. Instead of identifying yourself and identifying who
31 you were speaking to, it got to the point—we always flew with the same people in the

1 airplane if we could but it got to the point to where you could identify the voices. The
2 illuminator operator hanging out the back end of the airplane would say, “Triple A. Ten
3 o’clock. Break right. Triple A. Three o’clock. Break left,” or something like that. We
4 knew his voice and you could always tell if it was going to be close because his voice
5 would jump an octave. If it jumped two octaves, you just hung on. The guy—the time
6 that became really critical would be when the guy hanging out the back end would call,
7 “Break right,” and the guy looking out the right side of the airplane would call, “Break
8 left.” you knew there wasn’t much you could do to be able to avoid them. We took our
9 share of hits and took our share of targets off the ground, too. We were a very effective
10 weapons system.

11 KC: I have got to ask you about this illuminator operator.

12 DD: Yeah.

13 KC: There you have a man literally dangling from the back of the plane upside
14 down.

15 DD: Right, no parachute. He couldn’t wear a parachute because of the—those
16 flares we called logs. He had the logs under his arm and there was just no way for him to
17 manage everything he had to do with the parachute. Of course, when he called out break
18 right or break left and particularly if his voice had jumped that octave, he would break or
19 left, the pilot responded immediately. I mean it was an instantaneous thing. When the
20 pilot turned the airplane, it turned pretty violently. This guy’s one contact or his two
21 contacts with the airplane was that steel cable that held him from his back and then his
22 ankles which were on the aft edge of that ramp. The pilot would turn the airplane, this
23 guy would go sailing off into space, one of the gunners would go over, the steel cable
24 went up into a hoist up above the ramp. The gunner could reach over to the cable, grab it
25 and pull it back in. He and another gunner would raise this guy back up into the airplane
26 and put him back on his perch so he could go back to work. Those guys that did that were
27 all volunteers, they were nineteen-, twenty-year-old kids. Some of them were, when I got
28 there, some of them were on their second tours and that was more exciting than a carnival
29 ride, I am sure. That was one position on the airplane I never had any desire to fly.

30 KC: I can imagine. You will forgive me if I say this, that seems absurd to have
31 such a high piece or a piece of technology that is so highly capable and cutting edge as it

1 was and as complex as it was, all the firing systems and all of the tracking systems and as
2 complex as the system was to have an individual hanging upside down out of the plane
3 pointing out where fire is coming from.

4 DD: Right. But it also—I agree with you completely but it also reflects how crews
5 in a combat situation, how crews adapt the equipment that they are given to use to try to
6 do as effective a job as they can because nobody wants to go back to the same target
7 twice.

8 KC: Sure.

9 DD: Nobody wants to—our goal was to stop the trucks from moving. If we went
10 out at night and saw no trucks moving, no trucks at all, we figured that we were being
11 successful. Whatever we could come up with to make it work. I will give you some other
12 examples as we go through this. The other thing to remember is we were flying C-130A
13 models. These were the oldest C-130s in the fleet. These airplanes had been built in the
14 1950s and the reason we were flying the old A models, tactical airlift, C-130s were pretty
15 precious resources. They [the Air Force] felt that the older airplanes were expendable.
16 Well, that made the crews feel real good about it.

17 KC: Sure, sure.

18 DD: As you can imagine about flying those airplanes and we didn't want them to
19 be expendable at all. We coped as best we could. Each one of these airplanes, and we had
20 thirteen or fourteen of them, I guess, maximum while I was over there, we would fly
21 eight or nine of them a night, each one of these airplanes were almost hand built and the
22 electronics in the airplane were very, very complicated because of all the different sensor
23 devices that were used to track targets on the ground. If you got an airplane that had some
24 sort of a bug in the electronics, it could be a very frustrating thing to try to fly. The
25 weapons, I mentioned that the guns the same as were used on the aircraft carriers in
26 World War II and the ammunition that we fired in those guns in some cases was pre-
27 World War II. I remember one night noticing one of the shells that had been fired from
28 the 40-mm gun, in fact, I brought—I took that shell back to my BOQ (bachelor officers'
29 quarters) room that night, it had 1939 stenciled on the bottom of the shell so it was old
30 stuff that we were firing.

31 KC: Old planes firing old weapons.

1 DD: Old planes firing old weapons and, generally speaking, old crewmembers.
2 The enlisted guy hanging out the back end was a young guy. The gunners were, it would
3 be hard to characterize them I think other than to say that they seemed to be, the ones on
4 my crew, anyway, were about late twenties maybe early thirties. The navigators and the
5 pilots were generally older folks, thirties and maybe in the forties. What had happened
6 when I got over there in 1970 they needed to go around and scoop up some more people
7 to populate some of these weapons systems. They had taken fellows that, navigators in
8 particular, that had been in staff jobs, various places around the Air Force and maybe
9 senior majors or lieutenant colonels that had not flown for a while and they pulled those
10 guys back in the cockpit. There are several things to be said about that. The first thing is
11 it was great to have the resource, the people who were trained and qualified to fly and
12 could be pulled in from a staff job some place to put into an absolutely essential position
13 on an airplane to fly at that time. The other side of it was some of these older fellows
14 were a little bit unhappy about being pulled back in the cockpit at that point in their
15 career. Some of them were about ready, many of them were about ready to retire.

16 KC: Sure.

17 DD: Then pulled back. One of the guys I can remember in particular. One of the
18 senior officers in our squadron was a lieutenant colonel navigator and this guy had held,
19 he was a highly technical guy, had held a pretty significant job in some sort of foreign
20 technology division, I think. Being a staff officer investigating the technology that other
21 air forces might be developing to use against us. When he is pulled out of that job and put
22 back in a position that a captain or a lieutenant can handle on an airplane that is a tragic
23 loss for the staff, since you don't have the captain and lieutenant to fill the job it is nice to
24 be able to pull that guy in to do it.

25 KC: Sure, sure. Now what kind of—you mentioned the fire, the triple A fire, etc.
26 What kind of fire would you generally be receiving?

27 DD: Most often, it was 37-mm. So they were firing 37 up at us and we were firing
28 40-mm down at them. We had the high ground. We were out gunning them. We were a
29 little bit more devastating than they were.

30 KC: What kind of altitude are you flying?

1 DD: Generally, and I don't remember the exact numbers, but generally ten to
2 twelve thousand feet, something like that.

3 KC: Okay.

4 DD: We flew as you can tell from what I have already said, we flew with the
5 doors on the airplane open all the time so there is no pressurization or anything like that.
6 No heating or cooling in the airplane and totally dark so it is a fairly uncomfortable place
7 to be flying. We are flying around at ten to twelve thousand feet shooting at those guys
8 on the ground and their weapon, that 37-mm that they were firing at us had a, if I
9 remember correctly, a range of about twelve to fourteen thousand feet.

10 KC: Was the 37 the most effective or were there other weapons that were a little
11 more effective against you?

12 DD: Yeah, the 37 was the most numerous, I wouldn't say—you know, it is hard to
13 say whether it was more effective or not, it was pretty damned effective. We also had
14 occasionally would take some bigger stuff. They had a 37 and a 57-mm that could get up
15 to 40,000 feet, I would imagine. They had an 85-mm, I guess, it would definitely get up
16 to 40,000 feet. They had some bigger stuff but they didn't have a lot of it and that was
17 great from our perspective. The problem was that the 37 was a lot more mobile than the
18 57 or the 85-mm guns. If we got into the tri-border area around where North Vietnam,
19 South Vietnam, and Laos came together we could almost always count on encountering
20 some of the heavier stuff. Very seldom did we encounter that along the trails in Vietnam
21 [should have said Laos instead of Vietnam] although we did occasionally encounter some
22 of it. One night in particular I recall we were on the target we were at the about the
23 second or third orbit around this target still firing away trying to get the guns settled
24 down. We took a round in the left inboard engine of the airplane that completely
25 separated the engine from the rest of the airplane. I mean it was a pretty devastating hit.
26 The left inboard engine—that tells you something, the airplane is flying in a left-hand
27 turn and that left inboard is just outside of where the pilot is looking. Although he can't
28 see anything on the ground, he could sure see it when that hit the engine out there.

29 KC: Sure.

30 DD: The engineer can't see any of that. He is watching the instruments up front.
31 You heard this big boom and some expletives that I won't put on the tape. The first thing

1 the flight engineer said was, “It looks like we are losing number two.” The pilot says,
2 “Like hell. It’s gone.” We pulled out of the orbit, took the airplane back to Ubon and
3 landed it that night. We had only been on that target—we had only been in the target area
4 maybe twenty, thirty minutes that night. We took the airplane back and landed it and
5 declared an emergency and all that stuff, you know, and got down safely without any
6 incident. We chocked the airplane, got off, the maintenance officer for our squadron who
7 happened to be my roommate on the base there, the maintenance officer met us and he
8 says, “All right, you guys. You have messed up one of my airplanes but you are in luck.
9 We have got a spare.” They just moved us over to another airplane and we took another
10 airplane out and went back and found the same target.

11 KC: That night?

12 DD: That night.

13 KC: Wow. That is incredible.

14 DD: It is kind of like getting bucked off of a horse. We were all shook up. I don’t
15 want to underrate that. We were shook up. Had that been a split second timing difference
16 between where we were and where that shell was it could have put us on the ground real
17 easy.

18 KC: Now you say it shook you up. Can you explain what you are going through
19 when you know this has happened?

20 DD: Yeah. Well, that is really kind of funny, actually. When it happens you don’t
21 think about so much about, you know, “Hey, we are going to crash.” That is not what you
22 are thinking about. You are thinking about, “What the hell should I be doing next? What
23 can I do for this crew and this airplane?” That is the kind of thing you are thinking about.
24 Then when we got off the target and were away from the trails, we are not getting any
25 more ground fire, and we are twenty minutes or so out from the base where we are going
26 to land, that is when everybody starts shaking. I thought that was really amazing to
27 experience that. We had another—I am diverging. I am scatter shooting you a little bit
28 here but it covers the same question. We had another mission one day that we flew that
29 all—most of the time we flew at night, nearly all the time we flew at night but this one
30 mission we got one afternoon about four o’clock. We all kind of laughed and shook our
31 heads and said, “This is not going to be much fun.” But we had a new guy that was

1 calling the shots. He said the gunships were doing so good at night that the trucks were
2 moving at night and during the daytime too. Why don't we send some gunships out in the
3 daytime and see what we can do with them? My crew drew the short straw to get to try
4 that out. We went out to an area that was pretty hot. The target area was around Tchepone
5 which was a river crossing, a little town, pretty good-sized little town on the ground there
6 where the river crossed. The truck traffic was generally funneled into that area so they
7 had lots of guns in that area, too. We thought we had a target on the ground and we
8 pulled in and didn't complete the first orbit before it seemed like all of Southeast Asia
9 opened up on us. We started getting very accurate and heavy ground fire. We tried to pull
10 out of it and the shells would be exploding all around us. I mean just whichever way you
11 turned the fire was following you. In the process one of my responsibilities on the
12 airplane, I guess anybody on the UHF (ultra-high frequency) radios could have done this,
13 pilot and copilot, navigator. When I saw how serious it was I immediately went to guard
14 frequency on the radio and called in to let our folks know that we were under fire and we
15 were taking some pretty heavy stuff and we might be going down. The word that you
16 used to convey that information is pan, P-A-N, pan, pan, pan, Spectre 1-3, pan, pan, pan.
17 So I let them know. There is another example of where we were all so intent on—up in
18 the crew compartment up front in the airplane we were so intent on trying to get the
19 airplane away from the target area we weren't worried so much about crashing as we
20 were about let's get the heck out of here in a hurry. The guys in the back end I am sure
21 were just holding on for dear life and trying not to get slung out of the airplane as it
22 jinked and moved around. 130s are pretty maneuverable airplanes and you get a pilot
23 who sees 37-mm blowing up all around him he is going to move that airplane whatever
24 way he can to get it out of there and he sure did.

25 KC: Wow.

26 DD: It is that kind of a thing. You would have moments of some real concern but
27 most of the time it was just a very intense, very business-like job.

28 KC: Do you think this is a result of your training or do you think that it was
29 instinct that kicked in or how would you explain that?

30 DD: I think it was more training than anything else.

31 KC: Okay.

1 DD: The training—and not just training on the airplane. I am talking about just
2 the cumulative years of military experience. You just have to be able to deal with stuff
3 like that.

4 KC: Now, you mentioned that you had only been over the target in this one
5 particular instance where you lost the number two engine about twenty-five minutes,
6 thirty minutes. How long would you typically be over the target in a successful mission?

7 DD: We had enough fuel, usually flew with enough fuel in the airplane to fly for
8 about five hours.

9 KC: Okay.

10 DD: It would be maybe five and a half hours. We would be on target usually
11 about four hours a night and that is four hours that guy is hanging out the back end of the
12 airplane.

13 KC: I assume he would occasionally be brought up, reeled back in, as it were.

14 DD: Yeah.

15 KC: About how often?

16 DD: It depended strictly on the circumstances. We would—let me describe a little
17 bit the way we worked. The Ho Chi Minh Trail was not one trail but many trails.

18 KC: Sure.

19 DD: Snaking off through the jungle and our typical mission assignment would be
20 to go to a specific area. We had Laos divided, as I recall, into thirteen areas and so they
21 would put one gunship in each one of those areas or they might put one gunship in early
22 in one area and another gunship in there late that evening so you didn't cover them all but
23 you tried to cover the ones that were the most intense. If you got into the trail area—we
24 would be flying circles down the trail so you would fly a circle and you would move a
25 little bit south, fly another circle and a little bit south, and fly another circle. If you were
26 moving from one part of the area to another where you were looking for targets they
27 would haul that guy in and he could rest for a couple of minutes. But if you were over the
28 target area where you might be taking ground fire or where you were actually taking
29 ground fire you would be outside the airplane.

30 KC: So how long might he be hanging upside down in the middle of all of this?

1 DD: Well, one night we got—again, I am not real good at remembering the
2 specific numbers, but our crew found a string of trucks. These guys must have been
3 driving a ridgeline, that was the best that we could figure out. There was not any place for
4 them to go left or right. They had to get from point A to point B along that ridgeline.
5 There were thirty-five trucks maybe in that line. We picked off the guy in the lead and
6 they couldn't go around him, and we picked off the guy in the back so they couldn't go
7 behind him. For the next three and a half, four hours we worked our way down the line
8 and got everyone of them.

9 KC: Like a turkey shoot.

10 DD: We had guns firing at us all the time so that night the guy hanging out the
11 back of the airplane probably didn't get inside the airplane more than once or twice
12 whenever. He would get knocked off of his perch. He would be pulled in and maybe get a
13 drink of water and take a quick leak and get back down on there as quickly as he could.
14 When he got off his perch like that, we would generally pull off the target for a couple of
15 minutes but we could get right back to it real quick.

16 KC: And you say that yours was one of what, maybe fifteen, sixteen of these AC-
17 130s and all of the others followed the same pattern of having this observer hanging out
18 the back.

19 DD: Right.

20 KC: Okay. Again, you mentioned that this was not something that was necessarily
21 part of the SOP (standard operating procedure) but something that developed gradually
22 because you found out that it was effective as a matter of—

23 DD: That happened before I got there so I don't really know the circumstances or
24 the way that happened. I did hear the story after I got there about the initial equipping of
25 the airplane with a searchlight and an illuminator operator. They removed the search
26 light; they actually among the crews at least, changed this guy's title. Instead of
27 illuminator operator we called him the looney operator and everybody laughed.

28 KC: Sure. Did you ever lose any of these looney operators?

29 DD: We had one guy hit one night on my crew.

30 KC: Can you explain that to me?

1 DD: Took a 37-mm in that aft ramp and he was hurt. They pulled him in, gave
2 him first aid, and we went back and landed and he survived but he was evacuated out of
3 the base and that was the last we heard of him. While I was there in that squadron and I
4 was there from—I flew, I think, maybe the 26th or 27th of December was the first time
5 and I flew through about June of the following year. In that six or so months that I was
6 there flying, we didn't lose a crew, didn't lose an aircraft, didn't lose a crew member, so
7 that was pretty fortunate. They had lost a couple before I got over there and lost a couple
8 right after I left.

9 KC: A low rate of turnover like that I think would be important for your morale
10 for one but important for your safety and effectiveness. Did you find that to be true?

11 DD: Absolutely. The Air Force personnel system responded to that by, I am sure
12 it was requested by the folks, the people there, requested it at the base, to keep the
13 squadron manned like they did. The weather played a huge factor in the way we flew
14 over there. In a period from about December through June was called the dry season and
15 from June to December was called the wet season. The wet season was much more
16 difficult for us to operate and was much more difficult for the bad guys to operate, too.
17 The dry season the truck traffic picked up immensely and our responsibilities picked up
18 immensely, too. What they would try to do is bring in new people at the—have new
19 people in place so that they could train and be ready to go when the dry season kicked off
20 and then rotate them during the wet season. You can't do that 100% and, in fact, I got
21 there just at the beginning of the dry season so I got there a little bit later probably then
22 would have been ideal. By the time I left in June we were looking at a lot of people
23 starting to turn over. As a matter of fact, my orders were to go from Ubon to go to Saigon
24 and work over there for another six months. The folks that had been there since maybe
25 September, October of the previous year were starting to think about going home and
26 their replacements I am sure were in the pipeline to come over.

27 KC: After you have gone out on one of these missions, again, working all night
28 on this, what do you do when you get back to Ubon?

29 DD: Oh, man. I mentioned in our last interview that there was a real temptation to
30 drink to relax after flying some of the airlift missions that I flew, regular airlift missions
31 that I flew. You would come back from these, the gunship missions, you have got to

1 understand that to get in the air it took or three hours or maybe four hours of pre-flight,
2 briefings, and planning. You get the airplane in the air, you fly for five hours. I don't
3 know. It was about a twelve-hour day with about half of—about two or three hours on the
4 front end and two or three hours on the back end and then flying in the middle. You come
5 back from a mission and now after the intelligence people telling you what to expect
6 when you go over the trail in terms of enemy resistance, you come back from the mission
7 and I mentioned earlier that I was having to keep score of who fired where and when. I
8 would have to go in and spend some time with the intelligence folks telling them about
9 the results of our mission. We struck a target at these coordinates and we got ground fire
10 from that area and so many rounds, we expended so many rounds and destroyed seven
11 targets and then we moved onto the next place, that kind of a thing. That took a little
12 while to go through and we would work our way through that. Flying even at ten or
13 twelve thousand feet with the airplane unpressurized underneath all of that canvas with
14 my lights on I got really hot under there. By the time I got back and landed, I was very
15 dehydrated. The first thing that I would do when I walked in the squadron was start the
16 debriefing. Somebody would hand me a beer and I would drink that beer and I would
17 have another two or three in the course the debriefing. I get back to my BOQ room
18 maybe shortly after dawn usually. En route back to the BOQ room I would usually go by
19 the officers' club and have breakfast and I would have another couple of beers with that. I
20 would go on back to the room then and sleep and get up at maybe two o'clock in the
21 afternoon or three o'clock in the afternoon and go back down to the squadron and start
22 briefing for the next night. I don't want to imply that I am an alcoholic or ever was
23 because I wasn't, but the beer after a long, dry flight like that, man, that tasted good.

24 KC: I would think that—

25 DD: Just about what it would taste like after a hot Texas day cutting the grass.

26 KC: Well, I wouldn't know anything about that, of course.

27 DD: No, I am sure. (both laugh)

28 KC: How many of these missions a week would you fly?

29 DD: My first string of missions—I flew eleven straight and then I got a day off
30 and I flew another usually ten or twelve and a day off. It was—you would be—you

1 would fly a string of them and then get one day off. That was the most wonderful day I
2 had ever experienced when I got that first day off that I had.

3 KC: What would you do on your days off? What would you do on your days off?

4 DD: Believe it or not, if I had a little bit of time, I was working on a
5 correspondence course. I mentioned earlier that I had graduated from the University of
6 Oklahoma before I got the orders to go to this assignment. There was a course that I
7 hadn't been able to take while I was a student at Oklahoma and I talked the instructor into
8 letting me do it by correspondence with him and so he signed me up. If I had a little bit of
9 time, I would go work on that.

10 KC: What was the course?

11 DD: It was British Imperial history. Dr. Mahl, M-A-H-L, I think was the way you
12 spelled his name, wonderful professor at Oklahoma. I did this by doing, reading books
13 and doing book reviews so I was writing book reviews by pen for critique.

14 KC: Okay. Did you ever get a chance to take advantage of any R&R (rest and
15 relaxation) facilities?

16 DD: Yes. After we had been flying for maybe two months or thereabouts, the
17 crew became eligible for three or four days in Bangkok. They took us off the flight
18 schedule for three or four days and sent us down to Bangkok and we had a good time
19 down there. There was a train that ran from Ubon to Bangkok. We got on that and rode
20 through the night and got up the next morning and we were in Bangkok.

21 KC: And the entire crew would go together?

22 DD: Well, we all got off at the same time, not necessarily everybody went to
23 Bangkok but the officers on the crew did, on that particular instance, pilot, copilot, and
24 most of the navigators. I mentioned earlier that they had pulled a lot of the navigators
25 back to flying duties from sort some of staff functions. I intended to mention and forgot
26 to that we had some really highly educated people on my crew. We had three or four guys
27 with master's degrees, a guy with a PhD. At least that. I don't remember the rest of it.
28 The guy with a PhD was one of the navigators back in the booth. We would get just about
29 ready to take off and we would do a crew check to make sure everybody was in position.
30 When it came Gene's time to answer, he would say, "The doctor is in," (laughs) and off
31 we went.

1 KC: What sort of things, and feel free to not answer this question, what sort of
2 things would you do in Bangkok when you were there in R&R?

3 DD: Rest, mostly. There was a hotel there in Bangkok that had been taken over by
4 the military and it was sort of—it was the place that you went through on your way to the
5 base and when you got some time off it was a place you went to, also. You would go
6 there and you would maybe go out for dinner, have a nice dinner someplace if you could
7 find it and that kind of thing. There were some folks that would be out chasing gals. That
8 is kind of normal. I wasn't involved in that. Most of us were more interested in just kind
9 of relaxing than anything else.

10 KC: Sure.

11 DD: Sit down, put on a swimming suit and go out and sit in the pool for a couple
12 of hours and not worry about flying that night. That was a real relief.

13 KC: Well, describe for me, if you can, the facilities there at Ubon, the entire air
14 base there.

15 DD: Okay. Let me think about that for just a second and get a quick drink of
16 water. Okay, I arrived there in December of 1970. When I first got there my first—I
17 didn't have a room assigned to me. I was in the barracks because we are getting this crush
18 of people in and some of the folks that were rotating out hadn't left yet and there just
19 wasn't enough rooms to put air crew in two-man rooms which is normally what we did.
20 We were in two-man air-conditioned rooms, usually pretty nice, relatively small,
21 relatively quiet because we had to try to sleep during the day while everybody else
22 working and work at night while everybody else is sleeping. When I first got there and
23 started flying I was in this open-bay barracks and you would get to sleep a little bit and
24 about one o'clock maybe or even earlier somebody would come tiptoeing in and wake up
25 two or three people to go out and fly, that sort of thing. Pretty quickly, I got moved out of
26 that into a two-man room. The open-bay barracks was one of these quickly constructed
27 wooden structures with screen wire on the sides and no air conditioning at all. Excuse me
28 just a second, my throat again. Okay. And the two-man room was nicely air conditioned
29 and quiet. The places that we—the only place to eat on base was the officers' club or the
30 enlisted mess. We would go to the officers' club and typically—the typical day we would
31 go to the squadron late in the afternoon and get through our briefing, take about thirty

1 minutes maybe forty-five and go by the officers' club and have dinner and then head for
2 the airplane. The officers, we saw the officers' club usually twice a day, once in the
3 morning and once at night. Not very many people ate lunch there, I don't suppose. I
4 frequently did not I just didn't have time to. I remember their Wednesday night special
5 was really funny, I thought. I would get into the club around five or six o'clock, maybe
6 seven o'clock depending on what time I was flying that night and sit down and the menu
7 would announce all the spaghetti you would care to eat plus a free glass of wine. I would
8 have the spaghetti but not the wine, of course, because I was about to go flying. I always
9 thought that was really funny, all the spaghetti you would *care* to eat. The club, they took
10 pretty good care of us. It was all staffed with Thais. I am sure that there was an American
11 manager in there somewhere but the floor staff was always Thais and the cooks were all
12 Thais and everything, too.

13 KC: What kind of relationship—

14 DD: There was a nice library on base and when I had, if I could find an hour that
15 is where I would go and sit and read for that correspondence course I was talking about.

16 KC: What kind of relationship did you, personally, and the Americans in general
17 have with the Thai population?

18 DD: I thought it was pretty friendly. As an air crewmember about the only people
19 that I saw on a regular basis would be the waitresses in the club and there were women
20 that came in and cleaned the rooms for us. You might sometimes see those but most of
21 the time you didn't because they would be there in the afternoon while you were off to
22 fly or to get ready to fly. It was a pretty normal relationship, I thought. The one thing that
23 really impressed the heck out of me was there were some Thai families that lived on the
24 base, quite a few that lived on the base and just off the base. Every now and then if you
25 had fifteen or twenty minutes you might take a little walk. You didn't talk to anybody
26 necessarily but you are just looking and listening and that kind of thing. I was always
27 impressed, and I am sure that this is not a representative, but I was always impressed that
28 you would pass one of these homes where a Thai air force family was living on the base
29 and there would be kids playing or whatever and it was wonderful just to hear the sound
30 of kids. I never ever heard a kid cry. If a kid even started to cry a parent or another adult
31 would sweep that kid up their arms and take care of them. I was really impressed with

1 that. The Thais that, the few Thais that I encountered there at Ubon and the ones that I
2 met in Bangkok, I was very impressed. I think Thailand was a wonderful country and I
3 hope it still is.

4 KC: Did you have any contact with any of the South Vietnamese?

5 DD: No, not there, not in Thailand. When I went to my assignment after Thailand
6 I went to Saigon and that would have been in June. I don't remember the exact date, but
7 in June of '71. I encountered South Vietnamese there. Do you want me to talk about that
8 now or do you want me to wait until we hit that—whenever you are ready for it a little bit
9 later.

10 KC: Well, let's pick up on that in just a little bit.

11 DD: Okay.

12 KC: For sure, but the reason I asked that question I was interested to know if there
13 were any—if your unit served in sort of advisory capacity or you had visitors from the
14 South Vietnamese air force who were watching you who might go along on these
15 missions to observe things like that.

16 DD: Yeah. To the best of my knowledge that never happened, not while I was
17 there at any rate. It could have happened I suppose a little bit later as we got towards,
18 more deeply into the Vietnamization process but I don't believe that it happened while I
19 was there.

20 KC: Okay. Well, now that you have mentioned your time in Saigon, is there
21 anything else that you would like to discuss or anything else you would like to mention
22 about your time with the 16th here at Ubon?

23 DD: There are probably dozens of things that I should mention. Let me just say
24 this, I—the word “enjoy” is hard to apply to an environment like that but, in fact, I did
25 enjoy being part of a very highly professional group that felt like they had a job to do and
26 went out to do it every night. We worked really hard and we felt like we were making an
27 impact on the war. We felt like there were nights that we would come as a squadron as a
28 whole, that was fourteen or fifteen airplanes. We were scoring for a period of time there
29 from probably February through March we were coming back with at least 200 kills a
30 night, which is a pretty impressive number, I thought.

31 KC: That really is.

1 DD: One of the other—it was a great, great group of people to be associated with.
2 I flew with a crew that was—we all felt like we were in the same boat, you know,
3 working our way through that assignment and we depended on each other. If that guy
4 hanging out the back of the airplane didn't call the ground fire at the right time then we
5 knew that our lives were in his hands there for a few seconds. The same way with the
6 pilot and with anybody else on the airplane. It was a very tightly integrated crew. It is
7 amazing how that works when you have got fourteen or fifteen people on the interphone
8 at the same time. That was a real experience to learn that. Some of the other things, oh,
9 there was more to—let me tell you a little bit more about the gunship.

10 KC: Please do.

11 DD: You asked if we got off anytime and that sort of thing. About May of that
12 year I became eligible for R&R. R&R is rest and relaxation. If you wanted, the Air Force
13 would fly you, the military would fly you back to Honolulu and you could meet your
14 wife, enjoy a week there with her, and then go back to the war. Or if you wanted to try to
15 go home, you could do that pretty much on your own. Or if you wanted to try to get your
16 wife over to Southeast Asia, you did that pretty much on your own. I had a good friend
17 from my previous days of flying MAC airlift by the name of Neal Emper. Neal and I
18 were both table navigators and we were both up for R&R at about the same time and we
19 decided that what we were going to do is to have our wives come over and join us in
20 Bangkok. If they came over to Bangkok we had almost two weeks time, you got all the
21 travel time plus the week that you were suppose to get in Honolulu so we had almost two
22 weeks of time together in Bangkok and we made that decision. My wife was living in
23 Colorado and Neal's wife was living in Philadelphia and they came independently. With
24 Neal's wife, Carol, flying east out of Philadelphia and around to Bangkok and my wife
25 flying out of Denver west around to Bangkok, we thought that was kind of fun. We spent
26 I guess it was about twelve days actually in Bangkok and down at Pattaya Beach on the
27 sand and the water and that sort of thing. I had a chance to have some really nice meals
28 and just relax a little bit so that was really a great experience to be able to do that. It turns
29 out, this kind of links between the two of them, it turns out that that was listed in terms of
30 my time and availability the way the squadron let us do that. They called that a long crew
31 rest or crew break, crew R&R, or whatever and it was the equivalent of three days, I

1 guess, of crew break. It was never recorded as one, as the one R&R that I was eligible to
2 take in my one year remote over there. When I got over to Saigon my name popped up on
3 the roster as eligible to go on an R&R. I thought about that for about five minutes and I
4 said, “Nope. I have already been. Let somebody else go in my place.” So I didn’t go that
5 second time.

6 KC: Wow. That is pretty generous of you, I think.

7 DD: It was financial, too. My wife was back in Colorado dealing with the first
8 house that we had ever bought and I was trying to live on the minimum amount of money
9 that I could. I was really tempted because I could have gone to Australia. In all of my
10 travels, I have never been to Australia and someday I still want to see that. I thought
11 seriously about it for about five minutes but then I decided nope. I stick—I knew the
12 rules. Even though I had skated on the—as far as their accountability was concerned and
13 I wasn’t going to do that.

14 KC: Okay. It certainly sounds like you believe your efforts there and any efforts
15 of the 16th SOS were certainly very, very successful. I should mention I believe this was
16 operation Commando Hunt or part of that. Isn’t that correct?

17 DD: Right.

18 KC: The interdiction of the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. Were you also part of—
19 and this is about the same time although I am not sure of the dates—were you also part of
20 the invasion of Laos, South Vietnamese, Lam Son 719.

21 DD: Yep, sure was.

22 KC: Tell me about that. Before we get you to Saigon tell me about that, your role
23 in that.

24 DD: Yeah, okay. I mentioned earlier when I talked about the armament on the
25 airplane, that we were set up with three different calibers of weapons. The smaller caliber
26 weapon was more effectively used against troops. We call those missions TIC or troops
27 in contact. If we had Americans or South Vietnamese on the ground that were under
28 attack by the bad guys we could fly to wherever those guys were under attack and with
29 that 7.62 mini-gun you could just put a wall of lead almost around the, it’s a little
30 encampment or something like that. You could just fly the orbit and put a wall of lead
31 around those guys, a very effective weapon system. We used that some in 719. I flew

1 maybe a couple of nights on 719 but not—you know, honestly I can't remember, it may
2 have been more than that but I know it was at least a couple of nights because one of the
3 things that I remember pretty clearly from that, this was in early February, late January, I
4 guess, in 1971. We went out one night with instructions to contact a road watch team on
5 the ground in Laos. These guys were ahead of the invading force and their objective was
6 to see how the bad guys were reacting to the invasion by the South Vietnamese and we
7 were trying then to use our firepower to cut off their movement of troops. The North
8 Vietnamese committed a number of PT-76 tanks to counter Lam Son 719. We were—
9 with a 40-mm gun we could take out a PT-76, so we were hunting tanks that night. We
10 also were flying with a, there was a forward air controller, a FAC who was flying in the
11 same area that we were flying. That reminds me of a whole bunch of things we will have
12 to go back to it in a minute.

13 KC: That is fine.

14 DD: There was a forward air controller flying in that area and he was working
15 with some of the guys on the ground, I guess. He was a mile or two away from us and we
16 were talking to him and trying to talk to our guy on the ground. I remember the forward
17 air controller was flying a single-engine prop airplane, got shot down. We heard from
18 him after he got on the ground for just a few minutes. He survived the crash, parachuted
19 out of the airplane and landed. The last thing we heard from him was that he was going to
20 have to go off the air because the bad guys were coming and I don't know whatever
21 happened to him.

22 KC: Wow.

23 DD: The other group that we were working with on the ground, the road watch
24 team this was a—are you familiar with LERP (long range reconnaissance patrol)?

25 KC: Yes.

26 DD: Okay, this was a LERP team, I think. There was one American, maybe two,
27 probably eight or ten Montagnards and they were positioned along some of the trail areas
28 watching for the traffic and calling us in. I was talking to those guys on the ground, too.
29 That really does—that is kind of a different experience for an Air Force person because
30 we are usually thought to be at some distance from the combat and not exposed to the
31 same kinds of things that the guys on the ground are and we aren't. But vicariously at

1 least when you are talking to those guys you hear this guy say, “The bad guys are
2 coming. I have got to go off the air,” you know, that really kind of hits you pretty hard.

3 KC: Sure.

4 DD: Same way with the road watch team. They were—you could barely hear
5 them on the radio. They were almost whispering because they were fairly close to one of
6 the camps. They could see trucks or tanks or whatever pulling in and they would count
7 them, pull back far enough so that they could call us and tell us and we would go in and
8 try to strike the targets.

9 KC: Okay.

10 DD: You know, the one thing we haven’t talked about—I thought about this just a
11 second ago—the one thing we haven’t talked about yet was some of the other tactics. I
12 mentioned that when the guns on the ground started firing at us what we would try to do
13 is to mark the target down there, the guy hanging out the back of the airplane with his
14 log. He would ignite that and try to throw it towards the ground. High tech. Throw it
15 towards the ground and hit as close as he could to the gun pit that they had been firing at
16 us. Of course, he can’t see it, either. By the time he has got the thing ignited the guns stop
17 firing so he is guessing. He throws it towards the ground. That gun comes up at us again
18 and now we know when he can see the gun and he can see the log still burning on the
19 ground and it would burn about thirty minutes. He would strike another one and throw it
20 down and try to get it closer to the gun pit. Now he has got some information to work
21 with and he would tell me that maybe the gun pit was located midway between the two
22 logs that are burning on the ground; that would be an ideal circumstance if you could do
23 that. We always flew with—we flew in what was called a package, one AC-130 gunship,
24 three F-4 fighters, and a C-135 tanker. The tanker was anchored, was flying an orbit over
25 Thailand. The fighters would have to move back and forth between us and the tanker to
26 refuel because the fighters couldn’t fly the length of time that we could fly over the
27 target. We would always, always have one fighter over us. Frequently we would have
28 two over us depending on how close we were to where the tanker was located or how
29 close the tanker was to us. The third fighter would either be en route back to join us or
30 still refueling on the tanker. The guy in the back of the airplane that throws the logs at the
31 ground says, “I’ve got a mark on the ground one side of the gun pit and another mark on

1 the other side of the gun pit.” I would relay that information to the fighter that was
2 overhead. The fighter could then, using the two marks on the ground as a reference point,
3 could roll in and start going down after those guys. The fighters were usually flying at
4 about 25,000 feet, roughly. They would fly down usually through our orbit. We had some
5 coordination to do there to make sure that we didn’t run into each other, but the fighter
6 would go down and try to put his ordnance in the gun pit between the two logs. The
7 fighter was our primary defense against ground fire. Our primary mission was to go after
8 the trucks. We tried to do that and rely on the fighters to take care of the guns on the
9 ground, to suppress them. Every now and then, we would fire at the guns or every now
10 and then, we would put fighters in on the trucks so it wasn’t exclusive role but that was
11 kind of the way it worked. We had two guys that were really crazy fighter pilots; most
12 fighter pilots that I have met seemed to be inclined in that direction.

13 KC: I think that is universal.

14 DD: But these guys in particular were crazy. They are flying around with all their
15 lights out, too, just like us. Every now and then we would wind up with two of them
16 overhead and there was a gun that was really, really persistent that we couldn’t get rid of.
17 The lead guy would say, “All right. Lead’s in,” and he would turn on every light on his
18 airplane and he would go screaming down towards the ground just as fast as he could
19 towards where he thought the target was. Sure enough, the gun couldn’t resist the
20 temptation; he would start firing at that guy. His wingman would be maybe ten seconds
21 behind him totally blacked out. Now, the lead, the guy that is all lit up, his job would be
22 to evade the ground firing and get the hell out of there as long as they were still shooting
23 at him. The guy behind him, the wingman’s job was to target that gun pit and go after
24 him. That was pretty effective. It would be “Lead’s in,” and then the next thing maybe
25 five or ten seconds later you would hear was “Two,” and that is all you would hear. You
26 would know that number two was coming right along behind him.

27 KC: Wow. That is incredible and brave.

28 DD: Another little piece of technology that developed while I was over there,
29 laser target guidance system. We could put a laser target designator on a target on the
30 ground and if we had fighters that were equipped with laser target guidance weapons then
31 we would designate the target, the fighter would drop the ordnance that would home in

1 on where that laser target designator was pointed on the ground. We used that pretty
2 effectively against trucks, too. Let me see if I can remember how this worked. The guy
3 who would be doing that usually was the fellow that I mentioned, the night observation
4 device operator, the NOD. With that device, he is sitting in the left, in the crew entry door
5 of the airplane pointing out the door, where the door used to be on the airplane. He had
6 added to his night observation device another device that would put out the laser on the
7 target. He could pick up the gun pit on the ground with his night observation device and
8 then he could turn another switch on and that would turn on the laser target designator.
9 We came up with all kinds of little stuff, how we used that. One of the things that we did,
10 let's see if I can remember the words that were used because they were kind of unique.
11 Oh, okay. If the fighter overhead, and we had been talking back and forth and he knew
12 we were having trouble with a particular gun down on the ground there and if he is
13 equipped with the laser guided munitions he would say, "Woof, woof." When he said that
14 that told all of us on the airplane that he was in position, he had ordnance that he could
15 deliver, he was ready to go. I would tell the night observation guy, who couldn't hear the
16 fighter pilot, I would tell the night observation guy that we had laser weapons ready to go
17 and to light them up. He would put the laser target designator on the target on the ground,
18 hold it there, and tell me that he has got it. He had turned on the music, the music was the
19 laser. "I turned on the music." I would go back to the fighter pilot and say, "Beep, beep,"
20 and that told him that we were ready to go. The next thing you knew that fighter was
21 coming down through our orbit usually heading for that gun. It was really funny; we
22 sometimes wondered whether or not the North Vietnamese were listening to us. You said,
23 "Woof, woof," "Beep, beep," and every gun in Southeast Asia stopped.

24 KC: Huh.

25 DD: I mean that was really remarkable. He would stop. We have already got him
26 identified and got the laser on him and the guy would go in on the ordnance and that
27 would usually finish that gun off.

28 KC: So even though it sounds like they were probably listening in on you, you
29 were still able to—

30 DD: Oh, yeah, they were listening for sure.

1 KC: Wow, incredible. Now, were all these F-4s equipped with this laser device or
2 was it a hit-and-miss kind of thing?

3 DD: It was kind of a hit-and-miss. The later part of my tour more and more of
4 them. We got that device for the first time a month or so after I got there on our airplane.
5 Once we had it on our airplane and the fighters would start getting the ordnance, too, then
6 we could work together and that developed better and better and better. But the—let's
7 see, something went through my mind there about that. It was a pretty effective system. It
8 worked pretty well. There was another part of the tactics and the engagement that I didn't
9 tell you about. The C-130 airplane is just not capable of flying against surface-to-air
10 missiles, at least the A-models weren't. About, I guess, the second or third month that I
11 was there we started getting frag orders from Saigon that would include some comments
12 occasionally, not frag orders but intelligence orders that would include some comments
13 that there might be some SAMs that were being, surface-to-air missiles, that were being
14 moved down the trails to fight off the gunships. Sure enough, about the second month
15 that I was there, that would have been February or March, February, I guess, we started
16 getting an occasional SAM firing at us. We didn't have any tactics to defend ourselves
17 against that. We didn't have anything that would counter that guy at all. We had to kind
18 of work something up. This was kind of interesting to see how this developed and this is
19 aircrews in an emergency situation trying to respond to an offensive threat that hadn't
20 been anticipated. The first thing that the squadron did was call Saigon and ask for a
21 briefing by some of the folks who had been flying in North Vietnam, particularly the F-
22 105s, North Vietnam trying to evade SAMs and how they dealt with them. We had a
23 couple of fighter pilots, F-105 fighter pilots that came over and told us this is what they
24 did. They said that if you could get the missiles launched and it is coming at you, if you
25 could get the missile to turn sharply, violently, it could lose radar guidance and that what
26 it was depending on was radar guidance. What the F-105 guys would do is to, the missile
27 is coming up at them and they would roll off on one wing and start screaming toward the
28 ground and the missile would tip over to try to follow them and when it did it would lose
29 guidance and then the 105 guy would pull up and go on about his business and the
30 missile would crash in the jungle somewhere there on the ground. We thought, in the
31 130s, "That sounds pretty interesting, but how do you do that in a 130?" The 105 guys

1 said, "That is up to you guys. You figure that out." What we started doing was the guy
2 that is hanging out the back of the airplane, now this is honest to goodness truth, the guy
3 that is hanging out the back of the airplane with the logs would be the first guy on the
4 crew that would know we were being tracked, missiles firing at us usually or maybe the
5 copilot because he might have an indicator, one of his gauges up front might indicate that
6 the missile had been fired. The guy hanging out the back end would see this thing coming
7 up at you from the ground. His job was to estimate—this is pitch black at night—his job
8 then was to estimate when that was about a mile aft of our airplane. At that point, he
9 would call, "Break," and the pilot would pull the power back on all four engines and roll
10 over on the left wing and go screaming towards the ground. The table navigator—that's
11 me—is responsible for knowing where the airplane is over the terrain. I am working as
12 fast and furiously as I can to know exactly where the airplane is and exactly how tall the
13 terrain is below us because it varied a thousand, fifteen hundred feet in elevation. I would
14 do the best I could in determining where the ground elevation was. We would go down
15 close to 500 foot above the terrain and then pull out. Sure enough, the missile would tip
16 over and try to follow us and, sure enough, if we survived the dive the missile would
17 crash in the jungle and we could go about our business. That was a scary proposition to
18 do that.

19 KC: I would think so. What about the observer out the of the back of the plane?

20 DD: He is off flying in the breeze at that point.

21 KC: So you didn't even reel him in for that.

22 DD: Don't worry about him then. He is back there where he has got a perfect
23 view. He can see what's happening.

24 KC: Goodness gracious. You mentioned that the AC-130 was maneuverable. I
25 wouldn't have guessed that you would have been able to maneuver so quickly that it
26 would respond quickly enough to evade the SAM.

27 DD: It is amazing what you can do when somebody is shooting at you.

28 KC: (Laughs) I guess so.

29 DD: I mean it really is amazing. It was—I went through that maneuver maybe
30 three or four times in all. The North Vietnamese had trouble getting the missiles down the

1 trial to begin with and hopefully, we were taking some of them out as they came down. It
2 depended on more sophisticated electronics than they could sustain in Laos.

3 KC: Sure.

4 DD: The missile is coming down the trail, it is getting bounced around, jostled,
5 shot at, and finally they get some place where they want to set it up and launch it and they
6 have got some sort of radar guidance system that they used with it and all of that stuff has
7 been subjected to several days on the trail with all kinds of rain and humidity and that
8 kind of thing. Their equipment didn't work real well. As the war progressed after I left
9 the squadron, I guess a month or two after I left the squadron, they lost one airplane and a
10 little bit later they lost another. I think both of those were lost to the SAMs. I am not
11 positive on that.

12 KC: You have talked about how your tactics would change as a result of what you
13 were seeing there on the ground. How did the enemy, and I assume this is mostly VC. Is
14 that right?

15 DD: Right.

16 KC: How did their tactics change?

17 DD: No, no, no. I am sorry. It was North Vietnamese forces that we were—there
18 was a specific unit I am trying to remember, 557th Transportation Battalion or something
19 like that was a primary—don't depend on those numbers but anybody that is interested in
20 looking can get that information. [This unit was Group 559, a North Vietnamese Army
21 unit created to expand and maintain the Ho Chi Minh Trail.]

22 KC: Sure. How would the—

23 DD: They changed.

24 KC: How so?

25 DD: Let's see if I can think of a good example. You know, they did change and I
26 can't think of anything that I could tell you that might not still be classified.

27 KC: Oh, okay.

28 DD: There are things that I could tell you but I rather not talk about it.

29 KC: Sure. Could it be something like you are calling in the fire on, say, these 37-
30 mm guns. They were small enough to pick up and move much more easily than were the
31 57s and the 85s, like you mentioned. Would they move their sites around?

1 DD: Oh, yeah, and they moved the guns, too. They would, typically the way the
2 traffic moved down the trail you would have a truck that would drive maybe two or three
3 miles, one driver would drive that truck two or three miles and he would get to some
4 place and he would get out and another driver would get in and drive it another two or
5 three miles or maybe a little bit longer than that. I don't remember the distances. The idea
6 was that that one driver knew that stretch of road well enough that he could drive it in the
7 dark without any headlights or anything. He knew where all the pull-offs were that he
8 might be able to hide. There is a lot of karst formations in Laos. These steep cliffs that are
9 sometimes eroded and occasionally there would be caves. If the driver knew that an
10 airstrike was coming his way, either an AC-130 or anything else, he could pull off the
11 road and hide in one of those tunnels until the strike aircraft had left and gone someplace
12 else hunting and they could hear us on the ground. The guy is driving along in the middle
13 of the night pitch black and he hears an airplane overhead, he doesn't have to ask what
14 country it's from, it is always going to be from us. He would generally try to hide his truck
15 and get it out of the way so that we couldn't see it or whatever. So there are tactics like
16 that. There is one I thought of that I can tell you about. One of the things that we saw, I
17 saw this myself, was one night I was flying in the back in the booth in the back of the
18 airplane and watching a low light level television and we saw a truck pull over to the side
19 and try to hide the truck. We had already got him. We had him identified and we were
20 rolling in to go on the attack. If that happened, if they knew that you had them pegged
21 they would usually jump out of the cab and run to get as far away from the truck as they
22 could. This guy jumped out of the cab of the truck, his left hand was still handcuffed to
23 the steering wheel.

24 KC: Wow.

25 DD: That is as far as he could—you could see him on the ground, you could see
26 him on the ground. We took the truck out and I am sure we took him out, too. One of the
27 changes in their strategy was to if they had guys that they thought were expendable they
28 could handcuff them to the steering wheel.

29 KC: So regardless, they were going to stay with that truck so they would have to
30 save it. That is incredible.

1 DD: There were other things, too. This stuff as I talk about it, it seems to come
2 flooding back to me. I am sorry I can't give it to you in a straight chronological order.

3 KC: No, no, no. That's fine, that's fine. We're are doing fine.

4 DD: Let me tell you about a couple of other missions I flew.

5 KC: Sure. Please do.

6 DD: As long as this is contributing to the record and I think it probably is.

7 KC: Absolutely, absolutely.

8 DD: Okay. The way we received our assignments and I mentioned the thirteen
9 areas in Laos, the command post in Saigon sent us a message that was assigned an
10 aircraft this area and another in that area and might send one guy occasionally over to
11 South Vietnam to protect some sort of troop movements over there or whatever. It was
12 not always Laos that we were flying over but most of the time it was Laos. One night my
13 crew picked up our orders and it looked unfamiliar, the assignment looked unfamiliar. I
14 went over and plotted out the coordinates on the map that we were suppose to fly to,
15 where we were suppose to start working. I'll be damned if it wasn't in North Vietnam.
16 We were up between—what was the town that was overrun by the North Vietnamese and
17 the French? Dien Bien Phu. Between Dien Bien Phu and Hanoi there is an east-west road
18 up there, and it was along that road that we were supposed to work. I looked at that and I
19 said, "Gee, whiz." I called the aircraft commander over and I said, "Look, this is what
20 they are"—we re-plotted and checked the coordinates, re-plotted and we both realized
21 that that was a suicide mission. There was no way we were going to survive that. We
22 went over and talked to the intel officer who was a young second lieutenant, bless his
23 heart. All he knew to do was to do what he was told to do. We said, "Hey, look, this
24 doesn't look right." He pulled out the frag order and said, "Yep, that's the way the
25 message came in and that is where you are supposed to go." We talked about that among
26 ourselves for a couple of minutes and said, "We're not going. Get somebody else. If you
27 want to you can ground every one of us, take our wings away or whatever, but we are not
28 going on that mission because that's not survivable." Then we got some more senior
29 people involved in it and we finally compromised and said, "Look, if you will go back to
30 the command post in Saigon and ask them to retransmit, to verify the coordinates for this
31 specific mission we will fly the mission." They resent the coordinates for where we were

1 supposed to strike and somebody had transposed some numbers. We were supposed to be
2 in Laos.

3 KC: Holy smokes.

4 DD: Yeah. We did do one mission that went over North Vietnam but it was not in
5 any great extent. We were flying—I mentioned the tri-borders area earlier and we were
6 flying down in that area and we picked up some target that eventually led us into North
7 Vietnam and I can't remember where it was now. We weren't there for very long and we
8 got the hell out of there as soon as we could. Because that was a very highly defended
9 area. We lucked out.

10 KC: You have mentioned what could have been an incredibly costly snafu. Was
11 this something that stayed with you? I mean, you are flying dozens and dozens and
12 dozens of these kinds of missions and you are going by the coordinates that are given to
13 you. Did that give you any reason to question what you are—

14 DD: That is why the very first thing I always did when I got a frag was go to my
15 maps and plot it out and see where it was. If it was in one of those thirteen areas and there
16 was nobody else fragged into that area, and I could tell that, then we were pretty sure that
17 we were going the right place and we didn't question it. In that one instance we were
18 going someplace where nobody in the squadron had flown, to the best of our knowledge,
19 where we knew what the defenses were like. Yeah. War is a human activity and people
20 make mistakes. The planning is only good until the bullets start flying and then what you
21 do after that is largely improvisation and you do the best you can with it based on all of
22 the experiences that you have had until that point. I was concerned about it but not overly
23 concerned. It was a matter then of every mission after that me going back and having
24 them confirm it. Some airman in Saigon had transposed some numbers and it could have
25 cost fourteen lives but we were fortunate. We caught it.

26 KC: Wow. Were there any repercussions over this?

27 DD: Not to my knowledge. I mean, there probably were half a dozen people in
28 Saigon working on it and there's no way of knowing. I wouldn't have wanted there to be
29 any repercussions because the system—it was my responsibility to check, you know. It's
30 not just—we are not going to depend on that two striper in Saigon to tell us where to go.

31 KC: Right.

1 DD: It was my responsibility to check that. If it does not look quite right then I
2 asked some questions about it, so that is what we did. Some other things that keep
3 coming back to mind here about some of those missions. About March or April—you
4 were asking about tactics—about March or April we started getting indications that the
5 North Vietnamese were moving some of their fighter aircraft a little bit closer to where
6 we worked in Laos and we got a little concerned about that because we had no defenses
7 against a fighter other than the fighters that were our escort. They were there primarily to
8 suppress the ground fire so in some cases, most cases, I suspect they carried a minimum
9 air-to-air munitions, mostly air-to-ground munitions. When we got indications that there
10 might be some fighters getting ready to bounce us over Laos, at least one of those fighters
11 going forward was fully loaded with air-to-air stuff, so that was a tactic on their part that
12 forced us to do something in response to it. It could have degraded our capabilities just a
13 little for hitting the targets on the ground but probably not as long as we had the other two
14 guys there. We just tried to keep at least one airplane over head that had ordnance for
15 ground attack on it.

16 KC: Wow. Let me—I am looking at the time here. Why don't we put a pause on
17 this interview for today and pick it up at another time. Would that be all right?

18 DD: That would be fine.

Interview with Drue DeBerry
Session [3] of [3]
11 August 2008

1 KC: This is Kelly Crager continuing an oral history interview with Col. Drue
2 DeBerry. Today is 11 August 2008. I am in Lubbock, Texas, and Colonel DeBerry is
3 joining us again from his home in Highlands Ranch, Colorado. Good morning.

4 DD: Good morning. How are you?

5 KC: I am doing very well, thank you.

6 DD: Good.

7 KC: We just mentioned off the record that we wanted to get into your time in
8 Saigon with the study of the Vietnamization of the war and the CHECO (Contemporary
9 Historical Examination of Current Operations) project. But you wanted to mention
10 something about the transition from the 16th SOS into this position in Saigon. How was it
11 this position came about and what was this process where you went from one to the
12 other?

13 DD: As the—everything in Southeast Asia at that time, particularly in with
14 operations in Thailand, revolved around the weather. As we approached the summer, the
15 seasons changed. During the late winter and spring of the year was called the dry season
16 and that was the time when most of the transportation was moving on the ground in Laos,
17 the transportation that we were trying to stop. As it moved into summer, mid-summer and
18 fall was the rainy season and it was because the conditions on the ground were so
19 primitive it was very difficult for the North Vietnamese to move things down the Ho Chi
20 Minh Trail that time of year so there was less need for the AC-130 gunships, although we
21 still patrolled. We were a little bit less effective, too, because of some of the weather
22 conditions that existed. We were still effective enough to be able to tell whether or not
23 trucks were moving on the ground. As we approached that transition from dry season to
24 wet season, those of us that had been there for a full six months started receiving orders
25 to go elsewhere in-country. One of the things that happened was a number of by-name
26 assignments came down, this individual is going to go and do this specific job at one
27 place or another. For me that was an assignment to go to Saigon and work on the
28 headquarter staff there in an office called operations analysis, headquarters 7th Air Force

1 operations analysis. Our responsibility within the little group within the ops analysis
2 office—my responsibility was in CHECO, which was Contemporary Historical—I can't
3 remember now the name of everything that is involved in that acronym but it was a
4 Contemporary Historical Analysis of Current Operations, I think is what it was.

5 KC: Okay.

6 DD: I thought that was a pretty neat thing in that I had finished a master's degree
7 in history only a year or so earlier and it was an opportunity to put that to work. While
8 I—in many ways I regretted leaving the AC-130 outfit because I hadn't been there the
9 full year. I was pleased to be going to something where I felt like I could make a
10 contribution, so I went down to Saigon to be part of the CHECO effort.

11 KC: Now, before we get you to Saigon tell me about the process of actually
12 leaving your unit. You had been with these guys for quite a while and you had seen an
13 awful lot of action, an awful lot of combat. What was it like leaving the unit?

14 DD: It was pretty tough in some ways because, you know, you hated to go off and
15 see those guys stay behind that you had arrived with and keep on. They had to keep
16 about, oh I don't remember how many but we will just use a number that I will grab out
17 of the air, maybe about 30% of the experienced people were retained so that they could
18 train the new guys that were coming in as replacements. Some of that training would take
19 place, most of the training would take place in the United States but that 30% that was
20 retained in Thailand would take care of theatre orientation and the local area check-out
21 and that kind of thing for the new guys that were coming in. I hated to go off and leave
22 those guys but that was just one of the things. As a tradition we had and I am sure that
23 other units in Southeast Asia had, too, we had a going away party we called it in
24 Thailand, the Thai words Sawadee party to say farewell to somebody that was about to
25 leave and that was always a big occasion and a lot of fun, enjoyed that. It was just one of
26 breaks, you know, one of the things that happened. You would do your best and move
27 onto the next job.

28 KC: When did you leave the 16th and move up to Saigon?

29 DD: I don't remember the exact date but it was sometime in June. I don't think I
30 told you this last time but a couple of weeks, three weeks maybe, before I left Ubon to
31 come back to, to go to Saigon, within the unit we got orders within the 16th SOS we got

1 orders to send an airplane back to the United States for a modification. Not only were the
2 people turning over but some of the airplanes were turning over, too, as we approached
3 the less busy time of the year there. My crew was tagged to ferry that airplane back to
4 Greenville, Texas, which we were all tickled to be able to do. They were looking for
5 somebody that could handle over-water navigation and that is one of the reasons that they
6 picked my crew because I said I could do that. We were home for a week maybe,
7 probably less than that in the States and then back to Saigon. I flew another mission, two
8 or three, four missions, combat missions, and then got the orders and then left.

9 KC: Okay. So you get to Saigon. Where is your headquarters located within
10 Saigon itself? What part of Saigon are you in?

11 DD: We were at Tan Son Nhut Airbase. We were within the 7th, was it 7th, I think
12 it was 7th air force I think that was there at Tan Son Nhut. We were within in that, part of
13 7th air force part of the overall command headquarters there at Tan Son Nhut.

14 KC: Okay. What is going to be your part in all of this?

15 DD: I am a writer, a historian. When I arrived they had a job for me, an
16 assignment for me. The first task that I had was to go through some papers that had been
17 written by predecessors that had not been completed and not been pulled together as a
18 publication. I had four or five papers that had been completed or had been written by my
19 predecessors and I went through and edited those and stitched them together and put
20 together a publication that dealt with all of the VNAF (Vietnamese Air Force) air
21 divisions. I wrote one of the papers for that, too. The *VNAF Air Division's Improvement*
22 *and Modernization*, I think. I can give you the exact title of it, if you would like here.
23 Give me just a second.

24 KC: Sure.

25 DD: The title of it was *The VNAF Air Divisions* and it was a Project CHECO
26 report in 1971.

27 KC: Okay.

28 DD: So I finished that. That took a month or six weeks. Then with that
29 background, that experience under my belt I took on an individual CHECO report and the
30 one that I did then that consumed most of the rest of my time there was *Vietnamization of*
31 *the Air War*.

1 KC: Before we get to the Vietnamization part, what were your conclusions, as
2 well as those of your predecessors, about the modernization of the VNAF? What was
3 your report saying?

4 DD: Basically, I think we probably collectively—although I never had a chance to
5 collaborate with these guys individually—I think collectively they would probably have
6 said that as a group, the Vietnamese air force personnel would probably, that is what we
7 were interested in was the air force, the Vietnamese air force personnel were probably
8 under-appreciated. They were more capable of doing things than we frequently would
9 give them credit for. One of the places where that really came home—I was in downtown
10 Saigon once with a couple of other guys from the office and somebody else that was
11 visiting there and this other fellow was talking about how the Vietnamese would
12 probably never be able to maintain their own aircraft and do that kind of thing because
13 the technical challenge was just too great. They couldn't go that fast from not having an
14 air force to having an air force and being able to maintain it and operate it. The guy that
15 was making these observations was sitting with us. We were in a Vietnamese taxi. It was
16 an old Citron from probably early 40's, 1940s, it ran like a top, and the Vietnamese driver
17 knew exactly how to maintain it and he kept it running all of those years. I kept thinking
18 to myself now, "You know, if they can't—if they can maintain these old automobiles and
19 keep them running"—and they were all over town, all over Saigon—"by golly, I bet you
20 they could maintain airplanes, too." I went into it with a fairly positive attitude, I think,
21 with expectations that the Vietnamese would be able to do the job. I think that was maybe
22 a key to a lot of things because a number of—your opinions and everything, what you
23 bring to the task shapes what conclusions you draw out of it, I think, of the experience. I
24 am not talking so much about writing history but I am talking about the actual training of
25 the Vietnamese.

26 KC: Oh, absolutely. Once again, before we get you into this Vietnamization
27 project, which I definitely want to go into more detail on that. Can you tell me what it
28 was like for you individually to move from a combat outfit in the 16th to essentially
29 sitting behind a desk doing research and writing? What was that transition like?

30 DD: It was a real transition because at Ubon we were tightly focused as a unit on
31 what we were trying to do. So we were working and it was very cohesive as a unit. In

1 Saigon, my responsibility was pretty much—it was my responsibility to do this report.
2 There were going to be other folks in the office that would review it and help me out with
3 any of it that I needed but it was my responsibility to put it together to do it. So that was
4 one of the big changes going from a group responsibility to an individual responsibility.
5 The other was things that I could remember off the top of my head here, living quarters.
6 We had fairly nice quarters in terms of combat conditions at Ubon in that they were air
7 conditioned and reasonably quiet. At Tan Son Nhut, I was living in a little—it was in a
8 barracks and I had an individual room. The room was about ten-by-ten-by-ten, which is
9 quite small. You could get the bed in there and that was about it. One wall of that room
10 was screen wire just like you have in your window at home. You lay down at night to try
11 to go to sleep and you could look out that screen wire and you could see off in the
12 distance you could see artillery fire taking place. Away from Tan Son Nhut, we weren't
13 under attack at Tan Son Nhut while I was there, but at least the war seemed a little bit
14 closer there than it did at Ubon. At Tan Son Nhut when you went downtown you had to
15 be a little bit careful about that, where you went and we usually we would go in a group
16 of two or three or four. That was not the case certainly over at Ubon. It felt much more
17 secure at Ubon than it did at Tan Son Nhut. That is some of the differences that I saw.

18 KC: One of the things that I hear veterans say is that when they left combat in
19 Vietnam and then went back into the regular Army or regular Air Force or regular Navy
20 with its regulations and its discipline and the saluting that this was a big change for them.
21 Was this the case for you?

22 DD: It didn't seem to be.

23 KC: Okay.

24 DD: We were a pretty spiffy organization at Ubon. I didn't feel that because we
25 were flying combat that we were in some way less of a military organization. I thought if
26 anything we were probably more so.

27 KC: Okay.

28 DD: That may have been some—if I were a member of a long range patrol out in
29 the jungle someplace and then gone to a staff job, that transition would probably have
30 been a lot more severe.

1 KC: Sure, sure. Okay, now take me through this study of the Vietnamization for
2 CHECO. How did you take on this particular topic, this particular area of study? Was it
3 something that you chose or was it something that was chosen for you?

4 DD: It was a topic that had already been selected beforehand. They needed
5 somebody to write on that topic. It was not as sexy, maybe, as some of the other things,
6 some of the other topics. Somebody did a study of Lam San 719, I think, while I was
7 there. Somebody else was doing the defense of one of the LIMA sites. Those kinds of
8 things involving direct combat were a little bit more exciting to write about. Somebody
9 had to do the training part of the story, too, and so it became me responsibility to do that.
10 It turned out to be a pretty interesting subject. It was one that I would not have selected
11 for myself but after I got into it, I came to more and more appreciate the fact that that
12 really was one of the important elements of how we were going to wind that war down.

13 KC: Sure. Now your focus was more on the training of South Vietnamese rather
14 the arming and equipping, tactical, strategic changes.

15 DD: Actually, it was a little of all of that.

16 KC: Oh, okay.

17 DD: It was—training was one part of it and I did quite a little bit of that. In
18 addition to the training, it was just the administration and organization and that kind of
19 thing within the Vietnamese military. I came across some really interesting stories that
20 perhaps I ought to share with you.

21 KC: Please do.

22 DD: Oh, let's see. Oh, one of them that I recall had to do with the Vietnamese Air
23 Force personnel system was pretty much a manual system when we started assisting the
24 Vietnamese in the mid to late '60s. By 1970, we had decided, we being the Americans,
25 had decided that to be effective the Vietnamese Air Force needed to have a computerized
26 personnel system. I always kind of chuckle when I think about that because I know some
27 of the glitches that we have encountered in our own personnel system as a result of
28 computers. The story was that in 1966-'67 the Vietnamese recruits who were undergoing
29 basic training for the air force at Tan Son Nhut would at the end of the their training
30 program would gather outside the window of the building that housed the Vietnamese
31 personnel headquarters. The sergeant would open the window and he would have a

1 written document and look out and he would identify the individuals in that crowd and he
2 would say, “Nguyen you are going to go to Phu Cat,” and go around and name people
3 and tell them where they were going to go, reading off of his list. After we gave them the
4 IBM personnel management system that they ended up with they would gather outside
5 the window and he would open the window and he would post this sheet, long computer
6 printout sheet fan-folded that would tell people where they were going to go and it just
7 became a lot more impersonal to do it that way which was kind of characteristic, I think,
8 of the larger United States Air Force trying to help this considerably smaller Vietnamese
9 Air Force cope with their environment with using the tools that we provided rather than
10 the tools that they were accustomed to using. One of the other stories, the Vietnamese Air
11 Force would—once a man had gone through his basic training or had his assignment or
12 got moved from one base to another, for that matter, he would in just about every case he
13 would take his family. If he was from Saigon and he was going to go to a new base that
14 was being created maybe up in the mountains, his family would go along with him. Now,
15 there would be in most cases there might not be any quarters there for them. What would
16 typically would happen is the Vietnamese enlisted guy would build a house for his family
17 to live in while at the same time he was trying to perform his duties. We looked at that
18 and we said, “You know, one of the things we can do,” we, the Americans, one of the
19 things that we can do is to help those guys out with this construction project by giving
20 them a concrete block making machine so concrete can be provided and mixed up and
21 put into this machine and out from the other end of it comes a formed concrete block that
22 can be used for building materials to build a house. That sounded like a good idea until
23 the machine arrived and the machine would produce concrete blocks that were fifty
24 pounds or so in weight. The Vietnamese are relatively small in stature and in strength so
25 you would have a guy that was maybe ninety or a hundred pounds total trying to lift a
26 fifty-pound concrete block up over his head to put it on a wall to build this house for his
27 family. It became more and more of a chore the higher that wall got. Pretty soon that was
28 something that just didn’t work very well at all because the Vietnamese, not only did he
29 have difficulty doing it, because he was having difficulty doing it he was losing face in
30 front of his family. It’s really interesting to see how some of the cultural things play into
31 this.

1 KC: Oddly enough, that sounds somewhat symbolic for the American effort and
2 Vietnamization when you think about with the advent of technology and a lack of cultural
3 understanding and the damage it is doing to the individuals with that certainly not being
4 the intent. That is a very interesting juxtaposition there.

5 DD: I thought so, too, and I do believe that by and large, I hate to use the term but
6 I will, the bureaucracy, the military bureaucracy, failed to understand and deal with the
7 cultural issues that were involved in many cases.

8 KC: Sure.

9 DD: I believe on an individual level you would encounter an individual who had a
10 pretty good understanding of what was going on and while he might not be able to
11 change the nature of that block machine, he could do things in his personal relationships
12 with the Vietnamese that would help out. We had Air Force teams around the country
13 that were working with Vietnamese units to try to train them in one thing or another.

14 KC: What sort of things?

15 DD: Primarily it was aircraft maintenance. One of the things that I remember, for
16 example, was you get a—the U.S. Air Force had the philosophy—excuse me, I have got a
17 little frog in my throat today—had the philosophy that you train a pilot to be capable,
18 universally assignable. Universally assignable meaning that he could go from big
19 airplanes to small airplanes to helicopters and back to big airplanes if you needed to
20 move him around like that. The same was true of the maintenance program, you teach a
21 guy how to maintain jet engines and he ought to be able to maintain jet engines on lots of
22 different airplanes with a little bit of specialized training for the specific airplane he was
23 going to, so it was a much broader type or preparation. Somewhere along the line we did
24 make the decision that we were going to focus more tightly with the Vietnamese so
25 instead of teaching a guy to maintain large jet engines on transports, which they didn't
26 have, we were going to train them to maintain the specific engines that they had available
27 to them. They were flying F-5s, which is like a T-38 aircraft, two seat. The F-5 is a
28 fighter aircraft, two-seater. They had a couple of other more sophisticated airplanes and
29 they had some pretty basic stuff, too. One of the things that I got into was how do you
30 prepare the training materials, the manuals and that kind of a thing to support the training
31 of these Vietnamese? Our solution to that was to take the—you are dealing with training

1 materials in English and Vietnamese who spoke only Vietnamese and in some cases
2 could read and some cases couldn't read. What we did is bring a lot of those Vietnamese
3 guys back to the United States and teach them English in some cases teach them how to
4 read, as well—you know, their initial exposure to that. You would bring them back and
5 you would keep them here in the United States for a year maybe and teach them English
6 and other things and then send them, or maybe give them some training programs on the
7 maintenance activities here in the United States and then send them back to Vietnam to
8 maintain the airplanes. After being exposed to the better life that Americans lived here
9 for a year or so and then to go back to Vietnam—back home to Vietnam—that was a
10 little bit—that undercut a little bit of the moral, I think that the Vietnamese.

11 KC: Yeah, I was certainly going to ask you that question. That would have to be
12 quite a shock to come here and then move back, especially under those conditions.

13 DD: You bet. That is exactly what was happening. Not only that, it was costing us
14 a heck of a lot money and time and manpower to move them from there back here and
15 then send them home hopefully trained and in many cases they weren't as fully trained as
16 they should have been so there was still a lot of learning for them to do. But at any rate,
17 they went through that. We couldn't just give them—for example, a helicopter. I did an
18 article for *Air University Review* on Vietnamization. One of the photographs in that
19 article is of a training manual that we used for the Vietnamese, a young Vietnamese guy
20 who would be maintaining a helicopter, a Vietnamese helicopter. We ended up going
21 more and more to pictures where a guy could pick up the manual, "I have got to replace
22 the light bulb in this rotating beacon that is on top of the helicopter and how do I do
23 that?" It was a step by step with photographs not just with words. There were words
24 there, too, but more photographs than words and that one way to solve it.

25 KC: Sure.

26 DD: But I came to the conclusion, and I said so in that article, that we really
27 needed to learn to export the training rather than to import the students to the United
28 States. One of the primary reasons we didn't do that is because we did not have people
29 who were capable enough in Vietnamese to go into their environment and teach them in
30 their environment. We brought the Vietnamese into our environment and taught them
31 English and then we could teach them the basics of whatever the maintenance was

1 [maintenance task] was and then send them back. That created a much longer pipeline to
2 get an individual from being recruited into the Vietnamese Air Force until he is actually
3 productive and expensive and demoralizing so there were lots of things about that that we
4 did that weren't as good as they should be. I am really pleased to see that with the Iraq
5 situation today that it seems that we have taken that lesson to heart and instead of
6 bringing the Iraqis back to the United States to try to teach them English we are sending
7 people to Iraq. Maybe teaching the Iraqis English and learning a little bit of Iraqi
8 ourselves but we are at least trying to do the training on site rather than to bring the
9 students back to the United States.

10 KC: Sure, that is a very good point, a very good point. What other areas did you
11 tackle under this study of Vietnamization?

12 DD: I mentioned a little bit ago about maintaining those old automobiles. I got
13 interested in how the Vietnamese were doing with, as far as advancing aviation
14 themselves were concerned. I went to, oh, what was the name of the base? I can't recall
15 now. It was a little bit north of Saigon and on the ocean, as I remember. But at any rate,
16 this was a base that was one of their training centers within Vietnam. It was one of the
17 Vietnamese Air Force's training centers. They had manufactured from parts, I guess,
18 things that they had built themselves and things that they had taken off the shelf. They
19 had manufactured their own airplane, which I thought was a pretty impressive
20 accomplishment. I visited with the base commander there and talked to him about that a
21 little bit and he said—I asked him, "Does it fly pretty well?" He said, "Yeah, it flies
22 great." We walked out to the flight line and he got in it and flew it around and came back
23 and landed. He didn't offer me a chance to ride in it but at least he did demonstrate what
24 they were able to accomplish like that.

25 KC: Sure. It doesn't seem like it was a matter of ingenuity lacking in the
26 Vietnamese people because we see examples of that over and over and over again in this
27 conflict.

28 DD: Exactly right. That's exactly right.

29 KC: It is a matter of making the—what the Americans wanted and having the
30 Vietnamese understand the way the Americans wanted it and there is this massive divide
31 there. Was that something that you saw throughout this study of Vietnamization?

1 DD: I think pretty much.

2 KC: That is a very leading way to put that, but I will put it that way anyway.

3 DD: I think that is true and I think the examples that I have given you about the
4 IBM computer and about the concrete block machine highlights that fact because there is
5 definitely a cultural boundary there that you have got to cross. We have got to cross it and
6 they have got to cross it, too. We have got to find some sort of common ground when you
7 are trying to teach them the newer technologies that they haven't been exposed to yet.
8 But they have a lot of experience in other areas and what we perhaps could do better at
9 would be trying to find ways to take that guy who knew how to maintain that Citron and
10 teach him how to maintain a helicopter. I don't know that we actually tried to do that. It
11 may have been that the system was big enough and complicated enough that we couldn't
12 do that. That would have been one way to try to tackle that, I think.

13 KC: Sure. What were your general conclusions—and this is a very large, wide-
14 ranging report that you are doing for the 7th here. What were your general conclusions or
15 a thesis, if you will, after your study?

16 DD: That comment that I made a minute ago about exporting the training rather
17 than importing the students is really the fundamental conclusion that I reached. That's in
18 an open publication, unclassified publication, *Air University Review* that I published. The
19 conclusions in the CHECO study were all classified. Subsequently all of that, at least the
20 two that I did, has subsequently been declassified. I don't know if you guys have that in
21 your archive or not.

22 KC: I don't know that. I don't know the answer to that.

23 DD: I did try to search your archive a couple of days ago and see if I could find it
24 there and didn't see it, so maybe I just didn't find it or maybe it is just not there yet.

25 KC: I will make a note to see if I can look that up later on today. How long did
26 you work on this project?

27 DD: I'm sorry?

28 KC: How long did you work on this project?

29 DD: The Vietnamization, that took me about four months. It was a thesis-length
30 study. It's about 120 pages, something like that, I think.

1 KC: Okay. Now here is a historian asking another historian how they started
2 research project so whoever listens to this in the future will have to bear with us here.
3 How do you approach a project like that? It is still so new at the time and it is still
4 transforming at the time and still moving along. How do you approach a project such as
5 to study the effectiveness of Vietnamization? Where do you begin for this project?

6 DD: Well, I started with trying to define what Vietnamization was supposed to
7 mean.

8 KC: Okay. How did you do that?

9 DD: Basically, it meant different things to different people. But I figured that the
10 best way to define it, and I am giving you all of this from memory so in the event I
11 misspeak and some other historian comes across this in the future, I hope that he or she
12 understands that this is things that occurred forty years ago, thirty-five years ago. I began
13 reading the speech that Richard Nixon made in Guam in, I think it was 1970, when he
14 announced the Vietnamization program. So I took it from there. I said, "If the
15 commander-in-chief says this is what Vietnamization is that is what Vietnamization is." I
16 started—I used that sort of as my baseline to try to compare and judge and evaluate as I
17 pulled the history together. From that, I had looked at other, whatever documents and
18 there were quite a few that were available at Tan Son Nhut either in MACV (Military
19 Assistance Command, Vietnam) headquarters, a lot of stuff there, or in the 7th Air Force
20 headquarters. From that, then, I went and talked to Americans who were training
21 Vietnamese. I remember I found one American detachment assigned to a Vietnamese unit
22 there at Tan Son Nhut so of course, those guys are nearby and I went over and talked to
23 them. I can remember there was a Colonel Broadway there who I did an oral history with,
24 as a matter of fact. At least I felt like it was an oral history in that we interviewed and that
25 I recorded, I took down his observations on how this all went along. It was really pretty
26 interesting the insights that you could gain, the closer you got to the training process
27 where the interaction took place between a Vietnamese individual and an American with
28 the training. The closer you got to that the more empathy you could find on the part of the
29 American and the more understanding, the more effectiveness you could find. The further
30 away from that you got the fuzzier things became and Vietnamization might mean

1 something at a headquarters level and could mean something significantly different at the
2 unit level.

3 KC: Sure. Well, let me ask you this, I think you are in a unique position to be able
4 to explain this to me. You said you started with Nixon's definition from his speech, you
5 say, in Guam. Was there a more useful definition that you found as you worked your way
6 through, a more useful general definition or did you stick with Nixon's and then just see
7 how others interpreted it?

8 DD: I pretty much did the latter. I stuck with what the president said and tried to
9 look and see how others interpreted it.

10 KC: Okay.

11 DD: It was a—you know, the guy who is over there flying, well, an AC-130
12 gunship, for example. The guy who is over there flying an AC-130 gunship,
13 Vietnamization to him means the Vietnamese are going to take over and fight this war
14 and I am going to get the heck out of here. The guy who is at the training level it is a little
15 bit different perspective, "I am going to stay here with these guys and make sure that they
16 really learn what they have got to do so when I let them go they can defend themselves
17 and they can do what they need to do."

18 KC: Okay, very good, very good.

19 DD: So your definition of Vietnamization depended in part on where you stood,
20 where you stood within the organization at what level and your proximity to Vietnamese
21 forces. Were you working with them or whether you were working totally without them?

22 KC: Okay. Now, as you searched this from the very, very top down to the most
23 basic level with individuals and their training or, like you said, the pilots who just wanted
24 to get the heck out of there, where did you see success and where did you see failure
25 according to their own definitions of this?

26 DD: Ah, what a wonderful question. I will be honest, I wish I had thought have
27 asking that question myself when I was doing the study. (Laughs) Let me think about that
28 for just a second. Rephrase it again.

29 KC: As you looked through this or looked at the idea and then processes of
30 Vietnamization at these different levels where did you see individuals/and I am speaking
31 of Americans and or Vietnamese—where did, in your studies where did you see them

1 believe they were achieving successes? Was the Nixon version, based on what you saw, a
2 success and on down the line?

3 DD: Okay And I did look at it like that. I guess I misunderstood a little about the
4 way you phrased it originally. It definitely was at the unit level, the Colonel Broadways
5 of the world that I mentioned that I spoke with, he could see that they were making some
6 success and he was pretty positive about it. By the time you get up to headquarters level
7 we as a nation, we Americans are sometimes really impatient.

8 KC: I have heard that.

9 DD: We see a job that needs to be done and rather than delegate it to somebody
10 and allow them to make a few mistakes, we sometimes tend to just jump in and do it all
11 ourselves. The higher up in the chain of command you got the more likely something like
12 that was to happen. The further away you got from direct contact with a Vietnamese unit
13 the more likely something like that was to happen.

14 KC: Okay. What about the individuals who you were seeing? What about not just
15 the Broadways but the people who he is training and the other people who are trying to
16 train? What about the Vietnamese? Do you believe at these different levels they were
17 feeling that they were adequately trained?

18 DD: Yes and no. The U.S. Air Force has a skill level system that we use to
19 identify the level of training and experience that a person has, an individual has. For a
20 while and later after I left Vietnam I was a group commander in Air Training Command
21 responsible for training jet engine mechanics, among others. You take a man out of basic
22 training and put him into our training program and at the end of that training program he
23 received a number that would correspond to the specific skill, aircraft engine
24 maintenance, for example, and there would be a four- or five-digit number that would be
25 associated with that. The last digit of that number would be either a three, a five, or a
26 nine, three, five, seven, or nine. Three would be the entry level training for that position
27 and if the guy graduates from the program, he gets the three level, which means that he is
28 trainable to a higher skill level. If he got a level five after a little bit of experience and
29 everything, the five means that he is more or less able to work independently. Then the
30 seven and the nine have to do with levels of supervision as well as independent work. A
31 Vietnamese guy would go through the training program and we tried to use the same

1 system over there. A Vietnamese young man would graduate from this helicopter training
2 program that I am talking about and would be a three level but one of the requirements—
3 and this is a little fuzzy and I am not real positive of all this, this is the way I remember
4 it—one of the requirements we had was, for example, for an American enlisted man to go
5 over to maintain airplanes in Vietnam, he had to have at least a five level AFSC, Air
6 Force specialty code. We expected the Vietnamese to mirror the way we were doing this.
7 The guy would graduate as a three level and supposedly he would go to a unit and be
8 under the supervision of somebody that had higher skill levels and he would then learn on
9 the job, on-the-job training. He would learn the next—he would earn the next skill level
10 up. When we tried to introduce that system over there the Vietnamese needed to move
11 this guy, they couldn't leave him at a training base. They needed to put him out some
12 place and have him start doing the job. He would graduate maybe from the training
13 program at a three level and almost overnight he would become a five level and then he
14 would be moved someplace else. They did not take the time, the Vietnamese did not take
15 the time and apparently we didn't enforce it, to have this man learn, the individual—to
16 practice his skills under the observation of a more knowledgeable person for a period of
17 time. If you do that long enough that entire system starts breaking down because you
18 have got people that are in supervisory positions pretty soon that really don't have the
19 basic skills that they need. There was some of that that was going on and it reflected, I
20 think, the impatience I think on our part to get them taking the responsibilities and it
21 reflected in part their own views that they weren't—they wanted to do things a little bit
22 differently than the way we did it. The result was sort of the worst of both worlds.

23 KC: Surely, I think it would be fair to categorize this as being unfair to the
24 individual who is being evaluated and then thrust into this before he is ready.

25 DD: Of course, there is a whole different attitude, too, as far as individuals are
26 concerned. We send an American enlisted man over to someplace in Vietnam to maintain
27 airplanes and he's got a year and he starts crossing off the days on the calendar until he
28 comes back home. A Vietnamese guys graduates from the training program and goes to
29 maintain airplanes and he's got a lifetime ahead of him.

30 KC: Right.

31 DD: It's just a different attitude.

1 KC: And completely different circumstances for both sides, for sure.

2 DD: Exactly.

3 KC: In your research on this, were there any particular instances in which you
4 were blocked by bureaucracy, by the military not wanting to open records or they weren't
5 as forthcoming to you as you would like for them to have been?

6 DD: Not at all. I had access to any records that I could identify I could have
7 access to.

8 KC: Wow.

9 DD: That included not only Air Force records; I went over to MACV
10 headquarters, which was an Army command. There were Air Force people there because
11 it was multi-service but I can remember going over there and working with an Army
12 colonel, female colonel, and looking for records of specific things I needed to find and
13 get my hands on and she was very helpful.

14 KC: Very good. Do you suspect that there were things that, not that you were
15 denied anything because clearly you weren't, but do suspect that there was information
16 that was simply made to where you could not find it, that would not even be aware of it.

17 DD: No, I don't think so.

18 KC: It was just completely wide open for you.

19 DD: Yeah, I think so. I think it was completely wide open. Now, the other side of
20 that was we tend to generate lots of paper and as a historian you understand that and so
21 you could be buried in the paper almost the first step into a project like this if you are not
22 careful.

23 KC: Oh, absolutely.

24 DD: It's very difficult to organize and to find your way around within all the
25 documents that you could find. If there was a problem associated with writing a study
26 like this in a combat zone it was not the inadequacy of the information but the excessive
27 information. A lot of it you had to evaluate it pretty carefully. If you really wanted to you
28 could probably pick a point of view and find documents to support that point of view
29 rather than to investigate all the information and then from the information then derive
30 your conclusions.

1 KC: Sure, that makes perfect sense. Were you given a staff to help you with this
2 project or was it just you?

3 DD: Just me.

4 KC: Wow.

5 DD: I had somebody that—there was a typist, an American who was assigned to
6 our office as a typist. I guess there probably were two or three of them. Within the
7 CHECO office itself there were about a dozen, maybe fifteen of us, that were there in
8 Saigon. There were a couple of guys over in Thailand up north at Udorn, I think. Within
9 the office the task for me was to decide what I needed to go find, go find it, and bring it
10 back, read it, digest, and start writing. Once I had written the document, this is all in long
11 hand, I would write it out in long hand and give the paper to a secretary and she would
12 type it for me. There were typewriters there but it was a little bit—I felt a little bit more
13 comfortable doing it long hand rather than just sitting down at typewriter and doing it.
14 She would type it and I would proof it and revise it as necessary and we would work from
15 that point forward with a typescript. Interestingly, the job—we started at seven o'clock in
16 the morning and we worked until seven o'clock at night so it was a twelve-hour day with
17 about an hour off or maybe forty-five minutes off for lunch.

18 KC: That is quite a schedule for a historian.

19 DD: Yeah, it is. I am glad that I was a younger man then because that was fairly
20 grueling to try to be creative, be insightful, and pull together the research and put it on
21 paper. At the end of a day, boy, you were glad to see seven o'clock roll around.

22 KC: Sure. Now, you began this project in July, June or July, of '71 and you said it
23 was about a four-month project so that takes you into the fall of 1971. When you
24 presented this, who did you present the findings to or the study to and how was it
25 received?

26 DD: Okay. Initially it was presented to the head of the CHECO office who was
27 Colonel Tom Wade. Colonel Wade and a couple of the other senior people within the
28 office read the paper and they made no suggestions for changes to it. It went from there
29 on through the, I guess it went through 7th Air Force there in Saigon. From 7th Air Force
30 it went to PACAF (Pacific Air Forces) at Honolulu and was finally—I guess it was
31 accepted at the PACAF level. I did not have the opportunity to go and brief these

1 different steps face to face; everything had to depend on the written word. It went through
2 and was published with—there may have been some minor changes to my words through
3 the paper and I frankly have not gone back through and looked at it close enough to tell.
4 Because once it was published at PACAF with the blessing of PACAF, it carried a secret
5 or top secret classification and I can tell you what that was here in just a second. It looks
6 like it was a top secret, no, it was a secret document. It went all through the staff process
7 and then was published as a secret document. I didn't see it again until, oh, I would say
8 maybe 1985.

9 KC: Really?

10 DD: Right. That's kind of the way, though, that's not surprising within the Air
11 Force. It's not a thing where you have the collaborative effort with the writer on
12 something like this as much as you might have in a more collegial process at a college or
13 a university or with a publisher. You have done your job, you have done it to the best of
14 your knowledge, best of your ability, and it works through the system. If somewhere
15 along the line somebody wants to change your conclusions, they can do it.

16 KC: That's reassuring. (Laughs)

17 DD: Yeah, right. Well, you just have to be convincing, I think, in your arguments;
18 either that or you have to be so obtuse that they don't understand the innuendo of what
19 you are saying, one or the other.

20 KC: How well was it received?

21 DD: It was received well within my office at 7th Air Force. Beyond that, I really
22 don't know.

23 KC: Okay. I didn't know if there was a process or—

24 DD: There is no kind of peer review process or anything like that.

25 KC: Sure, sure. I guess my question would have been if there were a higher
26 ranking individual who were involved in a particular aspect of Vietnamization who
27 would get a copy of this or would see the conclusions that you drew, your arguments, and
28 say, "No, I don't agree with this. I think that he is wrong in this way." I didn't know if
29 there would be any, I don't want to necessarily say open forum, but any way of someone
30 who is affected by this one way or another, whether or not they could present their
31 conclusions in contrast to yours.

1 DD: If that happened, it would have happened probably at PACAF or at
2 headquarters Air Force level. I am so far removed from there over in Saigon that there is
3 really no way for that kind of a face-to-face interface. You know, back then we are
4 talking days before cell phones and notebook computers and internet and all that sort of
5 thing. So it never happened that way. The thing that might happen, and I have seen this
6 kind of thing from the other side when I worked at headquarters Air Force, a paper would
7 be written and it would come up through the channels and it got to a plans officer maybe
8 in the Pentagon who has to make a decision on something that's going on now or in the
9 future and he is using that paper as one of his sources of information. As that plans
10 officer, you might argue against the paper in your own paper of what you are preparing.
11 That doesn't make a lot of sense, I don't think, if I think back through my words there but
12 you understand what I am saying.

13 KC: Yes, absolutely.

14 DD: The paper ends up having to stand on its own merits. It can be challenged
15 along the way but that challenge does not necessarily return to the author that originated
16 the paper.

17 KC: Okay, very good. So you have devoted so much of your time and energy and
18 resources into this study and here it is, again, in the fall of 1971, what is your next
19 project? Are you going to have another project for CHECO?

20 DD: I worked on a couple of other things within the office, I don't remember
21 what but by this time I am settled in enough to the process that I could edit and work on
22 some of the other papers that others were producing. They would pass a chapter to me
23 and I would spend whatever time was necessary to read it and critique it and there was a
24 little bit of that. Actually, I finished up the second paper. I guess it must have been in
25 November so there was not a lot of time left at the end of that process.

26 KC: Okay. Well, when do you get your orders to head back to the United States?

27 DD: In December.

28 KC: In December. Okay. What was it like for you to receive these orders? What
29 did it mean for you to have to leave Vietnam?

30 DD: I was pretty happy. (Laughs)

31 KC: I bet.

1 DD: I was pretty happy to leave Vietnam. This was a grueling assignment. I
2 honestly, I enjoyed the work. It was tough work because of the long hours and everything
3 associated with it, but I was glad to leave. It was not so much that I was anxious to leave
4 Vietnam as it was I was anxious to get back home, back to the family. I had gotten my
5 assignment when I left Vietnam, my assignment to the Air Force Academy so I was
6 looking forward to returning to Colorado and to starting a new phase of my Air Force
7 career, this time as a teacher.

8 KC: Very good, why don't you take me through that part of it? Take me through
9 your time at the Air Force Academy.

10 DD: Okay. I returned to Colorado in mid to late December, I can't remember the
11 exact date. I know I did get home in time to celebrate Christmas with my family. The
12 year prior when I left for Thailand our Christmas had been on the 10th of December and it
13 was on the 25th of December in '71, so that was kind of nice. I got back and the semester
14 started the third or fourth of January of 1972 and I was initially given the responsibility to
15 teach a military history course. This was one of the larger courses taught in the history
16 department and there were probably fifteen instructors that were involved in teaching that
17 course because every cadet had to take it.

18 KC: Sure.

19 DD: And it was a one-semester course so I walked into the classroom and it was
20 mine to do with. The way the courses are organized at the Academy, and I will speak
21 both from my past experience and what I know of from the present, is each course before
22 you walk in the door of the classroom each course has a syllabus that's carefully laid out
23 that defines the reading assignments and the expectations for the entire semester. There is
24 enough detail in that to get you started. Within each lesson, the instructors are reasonably
25 free to cover the material in the way that they want to cover it as long as they cover the
26 material. That's the expectation. I had no formal preparation for teaching whatsoever.
27 Had I arrived in the summer, which is the normal routine at the Academy, had I arrived in
28 the summer there would have been some sort of a short training program about this is the
29 proper classroom procedures and that sort of thing so I just had to jump in the water and
30 figure that out on my own, which was not difficult. I started off teaching sophomores and
31 I had four sections of students, which at that time we had about twenty to twenty-two

1 students in a section so I had roughly eighty to eighty-five students, I guess, for the
2 semester. I enjoyed it very much. The teaching came naturally As you can tell, I like to
3 talk. I have always been really enthusiastic about it. The one thing that caused some
4 difficulty is my degree at Oklahoma was American Western history. The last time I had
5 taken a military history course was there at the Academy as a cadet and that was then we
6 are talking seven years earlier, seven or eight years earlier. That was a little bit of a
7 challenge to get into it.

8 KC: And course preparation.

9 DD: I am sorry.

10 KC: A lot of course preparation, I would think.

11 DD: Exactly. I found it necessary to do a lot of background reading and a lot of
12 preparation and particularly that first semester to prepare my class notes as carefully as I
13 could and then depend on the intelligence of the students to help get us through it. The
14 way I teach, I like to ask questions and argue both sides of the answer with the students
15 or with another student who will step in and take one side of the issue or whatever. The
16 cadets at the Academy, that is the way they liked to learn, too. It was just a very exciting
17 involvement. One of the things that I have got to say about that entire experience of
18 teaching at the Academy is there is a lot of training going on, training and teaching and
19 education going on. It's not just the students who are learning. It's the instructors who are
20 learning, too, from the experience.

21 KC: Oh, absolutely, absolutely.

22 DD: Not only do you learn more about your subject matter but you learn more
23 about how to manage in that kind of an environment and other things, too. That first
24 semester, then, was the military history course. At the end of that semester we had several
25 students that had failed the course and in order for them to stay with their class, they were
26 required to give up their summer leave and repeat the course during the summer. I was
27 selected to be the course chairman for that summer training program, which it was almost
28 a summer semester. It was longer than three weeks because they had to give up some
29 other things, too, but they gave up just about all of their leave to have to stay there. So
30 that was the military history course.

31 KC: How long did you teach it at the Academy?

1 DD: That was it.

2 KC: That was it. Okay.

3 DD: That was the last time I taught it, unfortunately. Well, that was the last time I

4 taught it on that assignment at the Academy. I taught the fall semester following that.

5 That would be the fall of 1972. I taught an American history course. One semester and

6 you go from the beginning to the end in one semester. A pretty good challenge.

7 KC: Yes, indeed.

8 DD: I am sorry.

9 KC: I said yes indeed, quite challenge.

10 DD: We used Carl Degler's book on American history and that is a very fine book

11 in terms of raising questions and stimulating discussion. That's the way we tried to teach

12 the course is lots of discussion.

13 KC: Very good. Well, where did you move onto after your time at the Air Force

14 Academy?

15 DD: I left the Academy in—what would it be? The summer of 1975.

16 KC: Okay.

17 DD: Let me mention a couple of other things about the Academy before we leave

18 it.

19 KC: Oh, please do, please do.

20 DD: I was there for the equivalent of seven semesters. I taught seven different

21 courses, so in some cases I would teach the same course twice, like the military history

22 course, but in very few cases did that happen. I might be teaching, for example, I taught

23 the American history course a couple of times, maybe three times and I might in addition

24 to teaching the American history course be doing a course on Indians in the American

25 West or something like, a special course for a few students. It was a lot of preparation

26 and a lot of hard work. It was one of my most rewarding experiences in the Air Force and

27 one of the things I wouldn't take any amount of money for, that experience. I met some

28 really wonderful and interesting people in the form of my students. I have maintained

29 contact with a number of those students to the present day.

30 KC: Terrific. It's very rewarding in a lot of different ways to be able to teach.

1 DD: It sure is. I never got my PhD in history. I wanted to do that but never was
2 able to do it. One of my students did go on to get his PhD in American Western history
3 and I am going to be visiting with him this next week.

4 KC: That is terrific. That's got to make you feel very good to have helped inspire
5 a student of yours to move on to that level.

6 DD: I prepared one guy [to compete] for a Rhodes scholarship in history and I
7 prepared a number of guys that went on and did graduate work, some of them in history
8 and some of them elsewhere, but it was very exciting. It's not the graduate work or that
9 kind of thing that really is the satisfaction in this. It's to see those guys go on and be
10 successful as Air Force leaders. I had some of my students went right on up to a general
11 officer level and they have done quite well.

12 KC: That is terrific. Certainly very, very fulfilling, I would think.

13 DD: Yeah.

14 KC: After 1975 when you leave the Academy where do you go?

15 DD: The Air Force was going through the pangs of post-Vietnam by '75, although
16 I guess we still had a few people in there up until '72 or '73 but not very many. By '75
17 there was a lot of turmoil within the Air Force. One of the things that happened was the
18 Air Force introduced a system in the early '70s that required rated officers to have a
19 certain number of months of flying experience at various stages along the way in their
20 career. It was called the gate system, G-A-T-E system. I had—I was a few months short
21 of what I needed to meet the next gate, which was coming up on me pretty quick because
22 when I left in '75 now I'm twelve years in the Air Force, so I am coming up on the next
23 gate requirement and I needed to go back to a flying assignment. Had that might not been
24 a requirement I might very well have been able to go back and do my PhD in history and
25 that would have been one of the things that I really wanted to do and maybe come back
26 and teach again at the Academy. The gate system diverted me from that course back to
27 flying. I went to C-5s at Travis Air Force Base in California. From the Academy I went
28 through a tech training unit at Altus Air Force Base in Oklahoma for maybe six weeks
29 where I learned the aircraft systems on the C-5 and then reported into a C-5 squadron at
30 Travis the 22nd MAS, as I remember, Military Airlift Squadron. I flew C-5s then for the
31 next couple of years. Very good airplane, the C-5. It got lots of bad press occasionally but

1 I think it was one of those situations as we see even today sometimes of where an Air
2 Force weapons system becomes a political instrument within our society, almost
3 sometimes more than the military instrument that it is intended to be.

4 KC: Oh, absolutely. That is certainly the case. When do you leave the Air Force?

5 DD: I didn't leave the Air Force until 1988.

6 KC: Is that right?

7 DD: Yeah.

8 KC: So what were you doing after the C-5s, then?

9 DD: From the C-5 assignment, I was there until December of '77. I went from
10 there to Armed Forces Staff College at Norfolk, Virginia. That was a six-month
11 assignment. From Norfolk, Virginia, when I graduated from that program, I was assigned
12 then to Mather Air Force Base in California. So I had moved from Travis, to Norfolk, to
13 Mather and Mather and Norfolk [Instead of "Mather and Norfolk," this should read
14 "Mather and Travis."] are just down the road from each other back to California. I was
15 operations officer in the 452nd Flight Training Squadron there at Mather. We were a
16 navigator training squadron and we brought the young guys in and gave them the
17 necessary training so that they could go out the other side of that training program and go
18 fill a cockpit someplace for the Air Force. I did that for a while. I thought I was going to
19 be there for a longer period of time. I was there actually only about ten months. At the
20 end of that ten-month period of time I got orders back to Washington, D.C. What would
21 that be? The third move, I guess, across country in a little over a year. I went to
22 Washington, D.C., and I was assigned to the Office of Air Force History as a historian,
23 writer, and ultimately as a branch chief in that office.

24 KC: Fantastic. Now, you must have found this to be, again, very, very rewarding.

25 DD: Yes.

26 KC: How long were you here and what were you doing here?

27 DD: My responsibilities at the Office of Air Force History again was as writer and
28 my topic was—the office at that time had a number of books going on the Vietnam War
29 and my topic was to explore the consequences of the Vietnam War for all of the rest of
30 the Air Force outside of Vietnam.

31 KC: Oh, okay.

1 DD: Isn't that an interesting way to do that?

2 KC: It really is. What were some of your conclusions here?

3 DD: That study was unfinished. I got through about four really long chapters of
4 the study, about half the study, and I was reassigned out of that office to something else.
5 My conclusions were not final by any stretch of the imagination. Basically, if I could try
6 to sum that up, I would say that we were through most of the Vietnam experience. The
7 Air Force outside of Vietnam was very much in a reactive mode. We were trying to cope
8 with ever-growing requirements in Southeast Asia. We were trying to manage people's
9 careers and lives so that they would continue to grow in their career and the Vietnam War
10 was continuing to interfere with that. Of course, Vietnam and the combat experience and
11 all that sort of thing is very much a part of an Air Force career and something that
12 everybody needed. It got to the point where—just as a quick aside here. The Air Force
13 Air Medal was—I don't believe I want to talk about that. There is not enough there that I
14 can remember that I really want to talk about. The equipment, airframes, personnel,
15 logistics system, all of that kind of thing was impacted very much by the Vietnam War.

16 KC: Very good. You said that you were pulled from this position. What did you
17 think about that? Were you enjoying your time here? Did you want to move onto
18 something else or would you rather have stayed?

19 DD: I was ready to move on. I was enjoying the work at Mather and we were very
20 comfortable there. We'd bought a house and thought we were going to be there for a
21 while. The opportunity to work at the Office of Air Force History I thought was very
22 attractive, also. I was not eager to move to Washington, D.C. I could have gone there, I
23 suppose, after I finished Armed Forces Staff College if I'd have pushed real hard for it.
24 Washington is an expensive place to live and it was certainly true in 1979 when we
25 arrived there, that it was an expensive place to live, even more expensive than California
26 so I wasn't real eager to do it. Once I got into it I really enjoyed the work there, enjoyed
27 working with the people and the responsibility.

28 KC: Now, did you stay in this position until you retired or did you move onto
29 something else?

30 DD: Nope. I was there for two years working on—looking back, this was in '79,
31 '80, '81. Looking back on twenty years to what was going on in Southeast Asia and

1 within the Air Force outside Southeast Asia. I am looking back for that period of time
2 and I was asked to move out of that job to an air staff job in long range plans. So I went
3 from a Friday afternoon studying what was going on twenty years ago to Monday
4 morning trying to shift gears and think about what needed to be happening twenty-five
5 years into the future.

6 KC: Well, that shouldn't be much of an adjustment should it?

7 DD: It was a little bit of an adjustment because when you are thinking about the
8 past you have got documents to look at and people to talk to and things to put the story
9 together. When you are thinking about the future, it becomes a little bit more speculative.

10 KC: Of course.

11 DD: I was recruited into the Air Force long range plans division specifically to
12 work on an issue for the secretary and the chief of staff. The question being: What does
13 the Air Force need to do to prepare itself to [help] defend Europe in the next century?
14 Which was a broad enough question that could go just about any direction you wanted to
15 go in it.

16 KC: Sure.

17 DD: At that time on the air staff in long range plans, we had a briefing system that
18 we were using. It was called an interchange briefing. The responsibility of the briefer was
19 to get as smart as he possibly could on a specific topic, in this case the Air Force future in
20 Europe. Then take a briefing to the secretary [of the Air Force] and the chief [of staff of
21 the Air Force]. It was a two-hour briefing and in the course of that briefing raise
22 provocative issues that would stimulate the secretary and the chief to comment and to
23 respond to whatever those issues were. It was an interesting way of doing it. That way
24 you can use one staff officer's mind to kind of lay the framework for this senior officer to
25 respond to whatever the problem is that is being discussed and offer his views based on
26 his experience and his very senior point of view to respond to that and offer comments
27 that become useful then—his is the gist of it—become useful then to the rest of the staff
28 in preparing for whatever future events are being discussed. One of the conclusions that I
29 drew—and this was in 1983 that I did this—one of the conclusions that I drew in that
30 briefing and presented to the chief and the secretary was that because of the long history
31 of the drive for unification within Germany, the unification of the German state, I felt

1 quite sure that that attitude was still prevalent among German society and that East
2 Germany and West Germany would be unified, I said, by the end of the century. I missed
3 it by ten years.

4 KC: Wow.

5 DD: When you give these briefings, you give it to the secretary and the chief but
6 you give it to him in the presence of a number of other senior Air Force officers. As I got
7 to that point and made that conclusion, I was stepping on lots of toes.

8 KC: I bet you were.

9 DD: There were lots of people who were saying, "Well, you know, if that happens
10 then what?" Then this and this and then this just really snowballed. What does that say
11 about what the Air Force is going to be doing in the future in Europe? Well, to me it said
12 that we were going to have a lower profile in Europe, a lower presence probably with a
13 need for longer reach to operate either from the continental U.S. or from bases that would
14 be outside of that area.

15 KC: You would have been stepping on toes, like you said. People with a very real
16 and vested interest in maintaining and building up U.S. forces in Europe, I would think.

17 DD: Absolutely. The general that's there who is in-charge of civil engineering in
18 Germany is trying to get the funds and the support to build bomb-proof shelters for
19 fighter airplanes in Germany and I am telling him that those fighters may not be there in
20 ten years or twenty years or thirty years. That just goes absolutely counter to what he is
21 trying to do. It's a good experience in lots of ways. It makes you think and that was the
22 whole idea. The secretary and the chief could mull over that stuff and basically what would
23 happen is they would respond in the course of the briefing. The chief would say, "Wait a
24 minute. Now, tell me again what you—and you would go back and you would cover
25 something maybe using the words a little bit differently. He would say, "I don't think
26 that's going to work at all." The people in the staff are sitting around the walls watching
27 this thing would nod their heads and make a note. The next time I said something he
28 would say, "Yeah, that sounds like it's right on," and they would make a note about that,
29 too. They would use that, then, as senior-level guidance to try to mold what they were
30 doing to prepare the Air Force for that future.

1 KC: That would have been, I think, very intimidating in a lot of different ways, it
2 is like you were—

3 DD: My knees were knocking.

4 KC: I bet they were. It's like the Coliseum in ancient Rome and they open up the
5 gates and the lions come out, I would think.

6 DD: Exactly. I wasn't a lion.

7 KC: (Laughs) So where do you go after this? You are here in the mid '80s?

8 DD: Okay, I finished that briefing up I did that in '82, 1982. I misspoke a minute
9 ago. I finished that up. It took about six months to put that together and I worked on a
10 couple of other things within long range plans and then the summer of '83. Let me think
11 back a minute. Yeah, I think that's right. Let me look at my notes. I have got something
12 here about my—some career notes I can find. Well, I don't see it off the top of my paper.
13 Okay, I was in long range plans from '81 to '82, so this would have been in the spring of
14 '82 that I gave this briefing. I went over in the fall of '81 and did the briefing in the
15 spring of '82. As luck would have it, one of my objectives for a long time in the Air
16 Force had been to be involved in a very selective program that was called Air Force
17 Research Associates. Are you familiar with that?

18 KC: No, I am not. Explain that to me.

19 DD: It's a program that I suppose is still running, that for a year the Air Force
20 would pull an officer from routine Air Force assignments and place him in some
21 academic, usually academic, environment, Council of Foreign Relations, other places like
22 that around the world. I had always wanted to do that and I figured, you know, I probably
23 didn't have much of a chance at it but I kept it alive by mentioning it on my career
24 objectives whenever I had the opportunity to. I was picked up in the summer of '82 right
25 after that briefing to represent the Air Force at the Atlantic Council of the United States,
26 which happened to be there in Washington, D.C. There were about a dozen of us that
27 were selected for this program. Two or three of us were in Washington, two or three were
28 outside the United States, one up in Canada, a couple in England, I think, and various
29 universities around the country here in the United States. I was in the—I was Air Force
30 research associate and a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council of the United States from,
31 that would be from '82 to '83. My responsibilities in that position were to represent Air

1 Force views and positions to the people within that environment and to also listen to their
2 views on various positions and reflect them back into the air staff. It was totally a
3 unclassified environment so I had to be a little bit careful about some of the things that I
4 did but I was able to work for that year for that year. I worked on the question of—
5 questions revolving some around NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Alliance) but some also
6 around the Caribbean Basin and that became the real focus of my work for that year.

7 KC: That's incredible that you were—it shows an awful lot of trust in your
8 abilities, the belief in you to be able to move in and out of these circles as you were for
9 the Air Force.

10 DD: That's why it is such a small cadre of people on an annual basis. It serves
11 multiple purposes. It puts an Air Force presence on the ground someplace. If these guys
12 are dealing with Caribbean Basin initiative and they, for example, are various issues of
13 the Caribbean—it is easy for the academics to start looking at the economic and the
14 political and the social and that kind of thing and maybe forget that the Caribbean
15 Basin—this is in 1983, now—the Caribbean Basin was a primary corridor for the transfer
16 of military equipment to Europe in the event we had a problem in Europe that we had to
17 cope with. As an Air Force representative, you can kind of help keep that stuff, keep the
18 issues that are important to the Air Force at least on the table so that they can be
19 considered.

20 KC: Absolutely, so they don't forget about the Air Force, so to speak.

21 DD: Yep. And at the same time those academic guys can tell me, "Well, now,
22 look. We see down in Grenada, we see these political conditions developing and these are
23 things that—we are not sure where this is going to lead to." Of course, we had the
24 Grenada operation while I was at the Atlantic Council and that's what it led to. I am able
25 to take their views—this was in downtown Washington, D.C. a few doors away from the
26 White House. I was able to take the views of those guys back to the air staff on a regular
27 basis. I could find the right office in the air staff that would be dealing with this or that or
28 the other and go in and sit down and have a twenty- or thirty-minute conversation with
29 whoever the responsible officer was managing that question. That was very important
30 information for him and I could get his views and just work back and forth between the
31 two sides of the street.

1 KC: Sure. As a liaison, for sure.

2 DD: Exactly.

3 KC: Well, here is the next question: Where do you go from here?

4 DD: Okay, I was in Washington, D.C., for a total of four years and I left there
5 then in 1983. I went to Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois. I was the deputy commander
6 of the student group there and within a few months I was commander of one of the
7 technical training groups. Chanute was responsible at that time for training all of the Air
8 Force mechanics, various different kinds of mechanics, firefighters, weather people, just
9 a whole range of different things; technical skills that the Air Force required. So I was
10 there for a year. A good part of that year I was the commander of one of the tech training
11 groups and prior to that the deputy commander of the student group. We had, I don't
12 remember the exact numbers but probably—I would guess maybe 3,000 students that
13 would be going through that school. The various courses would run anywhere from six or
14 eight weeks to six months to a year. We had both enlisted students and officer students. I
15 had, for example, in my group, I had all of the weather officers that were going to go
16 through and go out to be weather forecasters for the Air Force and I had all of the officers
17 that were going to become maintenance officers, they would be supervising all the
18 maintenance activities out in the Air Force, which was a pretty broad responsibility. I did
19 that for a year and at the end of that year, towards the end of that year, I learned that my
20 father had terminal cancer and he lived in Colorado Springs. I asked the Air Force for the
21 opportunity to—the doctors had told us that he had less than six months to live and I
22 asked the Air Force to be reassigned to Colorado Springs so I could be near he and my
23 mom during that period of time and the Air Force was kind enough to make that
24 assignment. I came back to Colorado Springs in the summer of 1984 and I was assigned
25 again to the Air Force Academy. On this occasion instead of being assigned as a
26 classroom instructor, I was assigned as a staff officer working for the superintendent. A
27 new position that had been created to manage the interface between the Academy and all
28 of its graduates, the graduate community. I was the director of alumni programs to start
29 with.

30 KC: Your career continued to evolve in different—

1 DD: Different ways. It's been a wonderful career. It's been extremely broad. I
2 have been able to do lots of different things and all of them were a lot of fun. When I
3 went back to that staff job at the Academy I asked if—to begin with, the responsibilities
4 were not as fully time consuming as I was accustomed to and I asked if I could have the
5 opportunity to go back in the classroom and teach, teach one course. I went back and
6 taught military history for a couple of semesters and doing the other stuff that I was
7 doing, too. My primary responsibility initially was this graduate interface. We wanted to
8 know how the graduate community was fairing out in the Air Force, what the Academy
9 could do that would make that better for the Air Force, those kinds of things. Plus, the
10 graduates get together about every five to ten years for reunions, each class does, and my
11 office was involved in that. This was a new position that had been created that had
12 previously had been part of another staff function that was abolished. The other staff
13 function had—the guy in that job had left and they reorganized the staff extensively and
14 created this new position and the title was director of alumni programs. I did that for a
15 few weeks and said, “You know, there's got to be more. There's more that I can do than
16 this.” So I started looking around and the Academy had no program in place, no plan or
17 activity in place, to allow people who wished to make donations to the Air Force, to the
18 Academy, had no plan or program in place for that to happen. We had our Association of
19 Graduates and they would accept gifts for the Air Force Academy but we needed an
20 office on the staff there that managed that from the Air Force's side and so I created that
21 operation there. My job title changed from Director of Alumni programs to Director of
22 Development and Alumni Programs.

23 KC: Continuing to add more and more things to this varied career.

24 DD: Yeah. I was there and I was in that job for four years and while I was there, I
25 was able to put in place a multi-million-dollar endowment for the Air Force Academy. I
26 was able to complete a project that had been on the books there for probably thirty years
27 and it had not been successful. The Academy did not have a visitors' center that was built
28 for that purpose. What the Academy had at that time was a building that had been
29 originally built as a foundry before the Academy was built. This was a building that was
30 left on the property when the Academy was established. This had been over the years had
31 been developed into a visitors' center but it was unsatisfactory for lots of different

1 reasons. A whole string of superintendents had tried to create a new a visitors' center at
2 the Academy and the staff officers that had had that responsibility had been unsuccessful.
3 I'm sitting in my office there about six months into my tenure in that job and was called
4 to attend a briefing with the superintendent. One of the things that the Air Force had tried
5 to do that year was to get Air Force funds to build this visitors' center because we have—
6 we were the top tourist attraction in Colorado and we didn't really have any toilets
7 available for the visitors that were coming here, so it was a bad situation.

8 KC: Yes, it is.

9 DD: This old visitors' center that was down near the south gate of the Academy
10 had inadequate, if any, water. I don't think it had toilets in there. Maybe they had the
11 Porta-potties or something like that outside. It was unsatisfactory. The superintendent
12 called this meeting and it was me and the Director of Plans for the Academy and the
13 Academy civil engineer and he said, "Well, we have just got the word from the air staff
14 that the visitors' center has been scratched off the list again this year so the Air Force is
15 not going to build a visitors' center." He turned to me and said, All right, DeBerry. You
16 think you're a development guy. I want you to go out and build me a visitors' center." I
17 said, "Yes, sir." So I started down that road and within less than two years of that we had
18 about a seven-million-dollar building that I was responsible for. I was responsible for the
19 design, the construction, and the funding of that building.

20 KC: Wow.

21 DD: We had it finished and the supt had said, "I want this job done and I want it
22 done before I retire from the Air Force." Well, we got it done a few days before he retired
23 from the Air Force. It was completely paid for when we opened the doors. It was selected
24 as the outstanding design project for under ten million dollars for the Air Force for that
25 year and then a few weeks later was selected as the outstanding ten- million-dollar project
26 for the entire Department of Defense. I felt like that was a really nice success. At the end
27 of that four-year period of time, I retired from the Air Force feeling that I had made a
28 useful contribution not only to the Air Force but to my school, too.

29 KC: You know, that is really an incredible way to wrap up this career. Not only
30 were you involved in combat, you know, in the Spectre, the AC-130s for about six
31 months, you are involved in policy evaluation with the CHECO study of Vietnamization.

1 You served in various staff positions, you served as a historian, you serve as a director of
2 development here, as well as an instructor. You've seen so many different things in the
3 Air Force and your time there, what, twenty-five years with the U.S. Air Force? I would
4 think that it would offer you a unique perspective on the developments of the Air Force.
5 Let's take this back to the Vietnam aspects of it. What can you tell me from your very,
6 very broad and varied and successful experiences in the Air Force? What can you say
7 about the United States Air Force presence and its abilities and what it achieved in
8 Vietnam?

9 DD: I think the Air Force did pretty much what was expected of it. The combat
10 mission by all measures was successful, all measures that I am aware of. We did impede
11 and in many cases stop the flow of traffic down the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The Air Force
12 was able to do a great deal in the north, up in North Vietnam in terms of convincing the
13 North Vietnamese that this was not a war that they were going to be able to win
14 militarily. I think the Air Force grew and evolved through that period of time. We were
15 moving, remember, from 1964, let's say, Gulf of Tonkin Incident, we were moving from
16 a period where the Air Force had been primarily built and designed to deliver nuclear
17 weapons. That was the state of the Air Force in 1961 when the Kennedy administration
18 came in. The Air Force was primarily for massive retaliation built to deliver nuclear
19 weapons to detour the Soviets or anybody else. In 1961, soon after Kennedy and
20 McNamara got in office, there was more and more expectation that the Air Force would
21 be able to play a larger role in counterinsurgency with the various different things that
22 would not be a nuclear component. We had to turn pretty sharply, I think, from 1961
23 through about 1964. By 1964 we are able to place, '64, '65, were able to place tactical
24 fighter squadrons in Vietnam that can do the tactical air-to-ground kinds of missions that
25 you expect of a tactical Air Force. At the same time, those same pilots, they would rotate
26 from an F-105 outfit in Kansas, maybe, to an F-105 outfit at Takhli, maybe, in Thailand
27 and pick up the responsibility to go north, North Vietnam, and take out various targets up
28 in North Vietnam with conventional weapons. That pilot would be in that job for a year
29 and he would rotate out of that job back to the United States. He would now be current in
30 all of his tactical requirements but he would be non-current in all of his nuclear
31 requirements. We ended up, the one-year duty assignment to Vietnam ended up creating

1 a huge turmoil within the Air Force as far as training was concerned. We soon
2 discovered, too, that as we started off with sending people over to Southeast Asia the first
3 people that went were the people who were sitting in cockpits in fighter aircraft, the first
4 people that were sent over there in fighters. Those guys—we told them we were going to
5 send them over for a year and bring them home. We sent them over for a year and
6 brought them home and left the fighters behind and sent new people over to take their
7 seat in that fighter. About maybe the second rotation we still had fighter pilots that were
8 available to do that, so we sent the second generation of fighter pilots over. By the time
9 we were ready for the third generation of people, this would have been in '67, '68, you
10 are now starting to have to pull people from other airplanes. They are not fighter people.
11 Basically, they are transport guys, tanker guys, that kind of thing. When you send those
12 guys over you have to put them through a fairly intense training program because they
13 are used to flying with four engines at 40,000 feet straight and level. Now as an F-105 or
14 F-100 guy they are going to go over and they are going to face SAMs and they are going
15 to face triple A and all kinds of things down where it's real close and personal above the
16 targets in North Vietnam. You had to put those guys into this training program. At the
17 same time that that is happening the fighter pilots in that first couple of generations are
18 coming back from Southeast Asia and we don't have any fighter cockpits to put them in
19 because the fighters are all still over in Southeast Asia. This is a gross generalization but
20 this is basically what was happening.

21 KC: Sure.

22 DD: The fighter pilots were coming back and now they had to transition from
23 fighters into the bombers or tankers or airlifters or whatever. We found ourselves in a
24 huge training exercise because the Air Force Chief of Staff felt and the Air Force, I think,
25 in general felt that it was not right to send the same group of people, those fighter pilots,
26 over repeatedly. You send them over for a year, bring them home for three months and
27 send them back for a year, bring them home for three months and back for a year. Rather
28 than do that, the Air Force believed that it was wise for—to spread that responsibility out
29 just for the wear and tear on the individual and the families involved. Also, because of the
30 experience that was to be gained in flying combat. If you have a large population within

1 the Air Force that has combat experience you have got a better Air Force than if you have
2 got only a small group that's got that experience.

3 KC: Sure, sure. Absolutely.

4 DD: That is kind of a long-winded answer to your question. I am not sure I
5 answered it.

6 KC: No, no. That is exactly the sort of thing I was looking for, it's immediate and
7 it's long-range consequences of this and I think you have done a terrific job of summing
8 that up. I have just a few more questions for you, Colonel, before we move to the close of
9 this interview.

10 DD: Sure.

11 KC: In the very just general, analytical, interpretive questions that there may or
12 may not be any right answer to, but I will ask some of these questions to you anyway.
13 What do you think about U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia in general and Vietnam in
14 particular from the beginning?

15 DD: We got pulled in inch by inch into something that we weren't fully prepared
16 for. I mentioned the transition that was taking place after 1961. The Air Force on sort of a
17 crash basis came up with a number of small, tactical counterinsurgency type
18 organizations and I am thinking about Mule Train and Agent Orange, the herbicide
19 distribution and that kind of thing. We kind of—it's kind of like learning how to swim.
20 We stuck our toe in and then stuck our foot and then stuck our ankle in, we did it by
21 degrees and not because that was the way the Air Force wanted to do it but because that
22 was the way the political leadership wanted us to do it.

23 KC: Sure.

24 DD: And we are responsive to the political leadership. I think that we—militarily
25 we had every capability of winning that war. I would define winning as for South
26 Vietnam to remain independent from North Vietnam. I am not using democracy in that
27 definition or anything else because it was not a democratic nation when we got there and
28 I don't think that was a military responsibility. The military responsibility was to defend
29 their borders. As long as the U.S. military was there, the Air Force and the rest of the
30 Navy and the Army, the Marines, as long as we were there the borders were defended so
31 I think militarily we did the job that was expected of us and I think it was the right thing

1 for us to do. I remember in my time at Tan Son Nhut we—I described very briefly the
2 living arrangements there. The dining arrangements, there was an officers' club for the 7th
3 Air Force headquarters and that was really the only place nearby that we could go for a
4 meal so that is where we would eat. During the day while we were off at work there was
5 a Vietnamese woman called a hooch maid who would come around and sweep the floors
6 and clean up the latrines and make beds and that kind of thing. They even shined shoes.
7 They would take care of some of the personal needs like that. This Vietnamese woman
8 that did that for me was a woman by the name of Bao. At the end of the day, we [CHECO
9 writers] would get together, two or three or four of us, and we would go over to the
10 officers' club for dinner. Sitting there in the officers' club one of the old hands the first
11 night that I was there said, "Now, the thing you want to do is you want to get a table over
12 in this section over here because if we get over here in this section the best thing on the
13 menu is fried chicken. If you get over in this section, the waitress will bring you at least
14 one breast and maybe a leg when you order fried chicken." Sure enough, we went over
15 there and sat down and I realized after a few days of all of this that the woman who was
16 the waitress there was the same woman who was my hooch maid during the day. As I
17 learned a little bit more about her, and I never did learn enough, but I learned a little bit
18 more about her. She was forty-ish, her husband was a Vietnamese Air Force lieutenant
19 colonel struggling not only to defend his country but to take care of his family and his
20 wife is there shining my shoes. That was a poignant experience for me.

21 KC: It really says a lot, doesn't it?

22 DD: Yeah, it really does. It made me think quite a little bit. But at any rate, we did
23 enjoy our fried chicken and we did get our rooms cleaned up and that is the way they did
24 it.

25 KC: Sure, sure. Well, let me ask you this, what did you learn about yourself from
26 your experiences here in Vietnam?

27 DD: I learned that I could handle myself in combat, for sure. I learned that you are
28 so damn busy, could be, or were so damn busy that you didn't have time to really be
29 afraid until you got back home. Until you started home anyway, got off the target and
30 started home. I learned that. I learned that I could interact with Vietnamese people,
31 people of—non-American people. I had not done much of that in my past. I learned that I

1 could write under pressure. To complete a 100-, 120-page paper that was going to be
2 reviewed by all the way up the chain of command and do that in about four months that
3 was a pressure cooker environment. Those kinds of things. I think I learned that—I felt
4 like I measured up to my own expectations for what I should be doing at that point in my
5 career.

6 KC: Very good, very good. What sort of lessons do you think the U.S. should
7 have taken from Vietnam and do you think that it has?

8 DD: I think we have to the extent that as we talked earlier about the training
9 activities, it seems to me that we are not bringing Iraqis to the U.S. to try to train them.
10 Now, there is—you're dealing with a totally different country, you are dealing with a
11 very old civilization in Iraq that has had some fairly sophisticated technology, so there
12 are people there that already have some technical capabilities. Whereas in Vietnam we
13 expected those folks to be more primitive. In many cases, they were but in some cases,
14 they were more technologically capable than we expected them to be. I think—I hope we
15 have learned that you have to deal with nations as individuals, with individual
16 capabilities. And that you have to evaluate the cultural and the social environment in
17 which the activity, whatever it is, is taking place and to try to apply whatever you can
18 learn from that social-cultural environment to the military problem at hand and resolve
19 that for the faster and better. Fewer lives lost, fewer resources expended.

20 KC: Very good. Now, that wraps any questions that I might have of you, Colonel
21 DeBerry. Do you have anything else that you would like to add?

22 DD: Honestly, I can't think of anything else right now. I think we have gone
23 through and we have covered the entire thing pretty well. I will say that after I retired
24 from the Air Force I went into development work for a while and I did that. I was the vice
25 president of development for the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs.

26 KC: Wow.

27 DD: I did that for a while and then I went back into something more related to the
28 Air Force. I was an information management guy for Jeppesen Sanderson Company here
29 in Denver and subsequently for Information Handling Service. Both of them are large
30 suppliers of information for the military, for the Air Force in particular. So I was able to
31 do that. I also was invited on two different occasions to return to the Academy for a

1 semester and teach so I felt very proud of being able to do that. We mentioned, in the first
2 interview I told you that I had gotten off to a bit of a bad start at the Academy by failing
3 chemistry and math and getting kicked out of the school as a result of it. My chemistry
4 prof—and it was the chemistry that really got me—my chemistry prof subsequently
5 became the dean at the Academy. When I came back as an instructor in the 1970s he was
6 the dean. That was kind of an interesting experience. But I obviously did okay in my
7 teaching responsibilities there because I have now had four different occasions, four
8 different assignments at the Academy to teach. I found that extremely rewarding. I am
9 probably the only instructor that has ever served on the staff at the Academy that was
10 ever kicked out of the school.

11 KC: Did you have any—I am sorry. Please, go ahead.

12 DD: I am probably the only graduate of the institution that was kicked out and
13 returned and went through the basic summer training program a second time and
14 subsequently graduated. There are few little things like that that are first, I would prefer
15 that it had been otherwise, but that is the way it worked out.

16 KC: I was going to—

17 DD: All in all, I have got to say that I absolutely love the Air Force. I love the
18 career and if I could just stop the aging process and stay with it, I would have done it.

19 KC: Good luck with that, by the way.

20 DD: Yeah.

21 KC: You said that when you went back the same professor whose course you had
22 flunked in chemistry was the dean. Did you have any interaction with this person when
23 you came back?

24 DD: Occasionally.

25 KC: Did you really? Did he remember you?

26 DD: No, he didn't.

27 KC: Okay.

28 DD: The only time I had any interaction with him was on social occasions that
29 there would be a reception or something like that that we would attend. I always kind
30 of—I was always very aware of the fact that he had been my chemistry prof and he
31 would occasionally look at me as we were going receiving line, look at me with sort of a

1 quizzical look on his face like, “I know I remember you from somewhere but I am not
2 sure where.” I never told him.

3 KC: No, I bet you would probably rather keep that behind you.

4 DD: I didn’t try to hide it, either, but I never told him. I did try very hard to use
5 that experience as a motivating device for cadets, so I talked about the experience freely.
6 If I had students who were having difficulty in my courses or in other courses, I tried very
7 hard to convince them that the help was available there if they would really seek it out
8 and really apply themselves. The Academy’s objective was to graduate cadets not to
9 flunk them out of the school. They would be much smarter, if they really wanted to
10 graduate from the Air Force Academy they would be very much smarter to do it right the
11 first time rather than follow my example and do it a second time.

12 KC: Having learned the hard way you had a unique perspective on that, for sure.

13 DD: Yeah, yep. I can’t think of much else that I would add to the entire interview
14 that we have had. I will say that this has been a pleasant experience, actually. I have not
15 sat down and put any of this stuff on paper but I think I may try to do that now.

16 KC: Well, terrific. I hope that it was a very positive experience for you. It
17 certainly has been for me personally and for our overall effort here in the Oral History
18 Project at the Vietnam Archive. On behalf of the Vietnam Archive and myself, I would
19 like to thank you very much for your participation, Colonel DeBerry.

20 DD: Well, thank you very much. I have enjoyed it.