Richard Verrone: This is Richard Verrone and I’m doing an oral history interview with Mr. Richard Hamilton. Today is April 10, 2003, its approximately 8:37 AM Central Standard Time, I am in Lubbock, Texas. Mr. Hamilton you are in Frisco, Texas is that correct?

Richard Hamilton: Yes.

RV: Okay, why don’t we start with a brief biographical sketch of yourself, sir. Could you tell me when and where you were born and a little bit about where you grew up?

RH: I was born in Portland Oregon in 1932. [During] my early years my father happened to be doing quite well [and] at that point, and we lived in a nice section in northern Portland which was fairly close to the airport. My life I guess as a small boy was pretty normal, in those days anyway. We had a lot of vacant lots and places to play and we did all sorts of fun stuff with the other kids in the neighborhood. About the time that World War II was getting close my father had a problem with work and we ended up moving to a smaller house and a little less costly to us I believe. In that area I also made new friends, we had [did] all the standard stuff that kids do in those days, which was mostly outside. We didn’t have TV obviously so it was mostly outside events and playing in the neighborhood, that sort of thing. My father unfortunately had a problem with alcohol and my family broke up about 1942. But [I was] at that second location in
my life is when Pearl Harbor was bombed, and I happened to be down at a little corner
drug store and found out about it by guys talking about maybe they would have to go to
war, and [when] I came home and asked what that was about and then we listened to
Roosevelt’s speech that night I recall or the next day, and suddenly life changed for
everybody pretty much. My uncle who had been in World War I and had been gassed,
mustard gassed was called to work and he was considered, oh what would you call it, to
the point of where he shouldn’t be working [disabled] and then I thought wow, that must
be something because my Uncle Jack was called in to help in this war effort. And it just
kind of was across the board I think for kids my age, which was about nine, I guess. We
started seeing all these little things show up as far as helping the war effort. My dad went
to work for Kaiser shipyards; my uncle was there, there was this sort of thing. After
about a year I guess it was, my family spilt up. We moved to a little town in southern
Oregon, Klamath Falls and there they had a veteran’s hospital that they’d opened for
guys coming back that had been wounded and mostly these were people [soldiers from]
in the Orient, the Far East group, Pacific group. And we did stuff there that I recall, and
that’s when I would, my mom went back to work and then as there was such a shortage
of guys. So all the kids I knew had no fathers. I mean everybody was split up so we
were all kind of on our own and became the so-called men of the house. And we did our
chores and had little things you had to do. In those days like my grandkids and even my
kids were surprised about saving the tin foil off of wrappers, cigarette wrappers, making
oleo margarine out of little white blocks and getting the yellow on your hands. Gas was
rationed, fuel oil was rationed, everything meat was rationed. We saved bacon grease
and took it down to the butcher, and he put it in a big thing [vat], which was used in
[making] munitions. There were always flags in every window just about it seemed like
where the little red, white and blue symbol [flag] with stars on it as the number of people
that were serving, those were very noticeable. And as I said, my sister was almost three
and a half years, I guess a little over three and half years older than I, and she had
obviously at that age become a teenager and kind of was off by herself. But I became
very interested in models, airplanes, that sort of thing, and actually went to work for a
man that ran a little bike shop, which also sold models and he’s the one that got me
interested in model airplanes and making models and doing that, and of course all us kids
knew all the statistics. Now, instead of baseball players we knew all this stuff about airplanes, what they did, how many fast they would go all this kind of stuff. So we had all the latest version and would compare notes so to speak.

RV: Now was your father with you at this point or was he serving?
RH: No, no he had, he had moved back to Illinois actually, which was his home and we were in southern Oregon, my sister and I and my mother. So we were there for some time. We had projects that we would do for the hospital, which was even, I learned to knit actually to. We knitted these little squares and then people sewed them squares together, they were better than we were, and made them into afghan blankets for the soldiers so they could sit outside and have a blanket over their legs.

RV: Did your mother work at the hospital?
RH: No she worked, she was a bank teller, she had done that before my dad and mom got married, and so she went back to the banking business, primarily it was all run by women just about. And that was something that was all noticeable and we all knew, but there were very few men except the older ones or those disabled. But as I said even my uncle had been disabled and was working. So this was kind of commonplace and something we got used to. It wasn’t that we didn’t have any fun or stuff in those days; we did all kinds of stuff but primarily on our own initiative. My neighbor friend I know, we used to really enjoy going out and camping on a weekend, and I had a little .22 rifle and we would go out, he did too and we’d go out and shoot stuff and live out by ourselves. We were ten and eleven years old and something you just cringe now. But this is basically how I grew up and my mother then, as the war was starting to move down and get a little more, in the final stages, you know we ended up moving back to Portland and in those days. Then she also had started having problems with alcohol herself so she ended up finally losing a job and that’s one of the reasons we moved to Portland and some of the people were being repatriated as far as men coming out of the service at that point, starting to come back to jobs and of course the women were losing theirs to the guys who had served so this was kind of the standard.

RV: Let me ask you a question about during the war years quickly?
RH: Do you remember any procedures that you had to go through living on the west coast with the threat of the so-called invasion of the Japanese and things like that?
RH: Actually I do. As a matter of fact this, not too far from where I was at the time, the Japanese, one of the balloons came down and they sent these balloons all the way across from Japan and they floated on the jet stream and then dropped and one hit probably, thirty, forty miles from my house and started a small fire. They had incendiary bombs on them and started a fire in the forest there and that was a big scary thing, and also the Oregon coast for whatever reason got shelled by a submarine. So I think Oregon was strangely enough one of the few places that actually was attacked I guess other than Alaska and the Aleutians and all that. But it, the other thing that was happening at that time was the airline industry was still needed but it was kind of fledgling at that time. DC-3s were the primary airplane, and as the war started tuning down and they were already seeing the drop in the number of people they required, they let some of the guys out of the Air Corps to become pilots or second pilots on the airliners because the pilots were getting really old that were still allowed to continue flying in the airline. Matter of fact my aunt and uncle ended up taking one in as a boarder because there were very little housing and they lived fairly close to the airport, and I met a guy that probably had a great influence on me that I didn’t know until probably thirty years later that introduced me to flying.

RV: Now had you been interested before this in flying?

RH: Well, models and I flew models; we had gas. I had a little gas model, I found an old engine and we rebuilt it and got it running when I was down in Klamath Falls and then when we moved back to Portland there was kind of a place there where I’d lost those friend and those things I was doing, and suddenly this young man showed up that was, you know the old straight teeth and crooked smile kind of guy. I think was in his twenties at the time, or barely and he made models too, so we made a model together, which he primarily did all the good stuff and helped me make it and I’d never forget it. It was a little P-40 Warhawk with a big, you know the Charge-2s on the front and that stuff but he took me one day and said, “Come on I’m going to take you somewhere.” And he took me out to this little grass strip next to the big airport and took me up in a PT-19, which was an open cockpit airplane and threw me in the front seat with a parachute, I could barely see out. We had one of these voice tubes that you holler in and he took me up and we just did everything.
RV: This is your first time flying.

RH: Yes, and it was just wow, and then after that he took me up, oh I don’t know a few more, it seemed like a ton but it was probably only five or six more times in Piper Cubs and then again a couple of times in that Fairchild PT-19, but I guess after doing acrobatics and that kind of thing I was hooked. So that’s where I always said that someday I’m going to be a pilot. So anyway that’s kind of and you know I, in the meanwhile I was in high school and doing stuff and.

RV: How old were you when you went on this flight?

RH: My first flight was probably, I guess twelve or thirteen, and it was kind of a jumble in there as far as events from the, because it all seems like it kind of moved together and the same time in there when I was in high school I moved in with a friend’s family because my mom was having problems and my sister did the same thing. So we were kind of actually living with another guy in school and grew up that way and went through high school and played all the sports and did all the stuff you could do. The only other thing I remember is even in high school because I graduated in ’49, ’50 actually. Legally ’50, but I was through school in ’49 and all our teachers were about sixty-five or seventy, it seemed like anyway. There were a few others but the young women, a few, but primarily they were older because everything had shut down and so they recalled all these teachers. So my idea of teachers in high school especially were all these seniors; so now I have a greater respect for them.

RV: What kind of student were you?

RH: I did pretty good I guess, I don’t know. I can’t even remember the grading system now come to think of it but it. I probably came out with a high B average probably and I did. One of these guys that was my advisor in high school had me put in for scholarships and I did win two to the University of Oregon, which were pretty decent scholarships. And the, I was all set to go to college and then my mom had a relapse and her father died back in Illinois and she asked me to go with her, so I ended up going with her back to Illinois that first year so I ended up missing a year of school and finally her problem didn’t get any better, so I ended up just leaving and going out on my own and I ended up with this best friend kind of helped me out all the time. He conned me into going back and getting those scholarships instead of enlisting in the Navy, which I was
going to do then. And as a matter of fact it was kind of funny because I didn’t try to
enlist in the Navy, and I wanted to be a Navy pilot then and they said you can’t be
because you’ve got these allergies, which I’d been allergic to egg my whole life so I
couldn’t take a lot of shots and stuff that you were supposed to take.

RV: When was this when you tried to enlist in the Navy?

RH: Oh, it was probably ’50 or ’51. ’50 I guess.

RV: In Chicago or back in Oregon?

RH: No back in, back in Oregon. And let’s see. Well, I mean it was just
primarily a thing of my good buddy who I lived with, his father and stuff they supported
me, gave me. I went to work for his company for a while till school came, and then I
went to school. Got in ROTC, which everybody had to do although the Navy didn’t want
me I didn’t get any draft deferment, so you always had to worry about that when you
were in college, if you did bad or got below X grade point, which was basically two
point, anything below you started getting trouble with the draft board. So the other is that
I wanted to be an architect at that point, and I couldn’t do it because I didn’t have enough
math to make it in the time frame, and that was one of the problems with our seniors in
high school was very few of them were versatile in anything up to basic trig so you didn’t
get much above that so. Anyway, I got out of school. I was the first one in my family to
have a college degree. My sister had to drop out after two years because my mom had
spent the money that was left us for school. So anyway, I went, I started school with
thirty-five bucks and I ended up I think $180 in the hole because I, it was a lot easier I
guess to get work in those days, but I did everything from sample cigarettes, God forbid,
who knew at that point.

RV: You sampled cigarettes?

RH: Yes, working for R. J. Reynolds and I got twenty-five bucks a month and all
the cigarettes I could smoke, which was great. I was a houseboy at a sorority, which gave
me all my meals. I was a house manager in a fraternity and that gave me my room so
actually all I had to do was, and I had two scholarships and actually I got a third one for
playing tennis, so I ended up borrowing three hundred bucks every semester and then I’d
pay it back over the summer. So I was, I basically got out broke but I still had, I had
gotten through and done about everything all the other kids did except have a car.
RV: What year did you graduate?


RV: Okay, and tell me about the ROTC experience.

RH: Oh, we had an Air Force ROTC, which had the old, what you call Pinks, they were the old kind of pink, tan pants and the dark tops. And we went through and marched a lot and we had, which I participated in, a, our little rifle whatever club and because I had learned to shoot when I was teeny and pretty normal. You wander around and supposedly learn everything that’s going on, but it’s not really a whole lot other than just basic stuff. But anyway it’s.

RV: How did you like that military discipline and lifestyle?

RH: Well we didn’t have much then, I mean that wasn’t it. The other thing is I think its just, our society was just a lot different then, you had more discipline. I mean I grew up with basically no folks around on a regular daily basis. So, I mean my mom was always there in the evening and we had food but also we had to learn to cook, we had to learn to clean up, we had to do that stuff because she was working. It just kind of was a normal thing I think, more then for kids but. So actually as far as discipline and the things you’re doing, that’s what you saw your whole, at least mine, my teen years is, that’s what we learned about, that’s what we knew, we knew people, the rest of it, service, so it was kind of a different thing and everybody did their part as it was always called and we would go to the theater on Saturdays and see the newsreels about stuff going on but that was the only kind of thing you really noticed.

RV: Did you have an aspiration to go ahead and get into the service, into the Air Force as soon as you got out of college or did you want to use that as maybe a financial thing for yourself?

RH: Well I didn’t have a choice. I mean I had to report and I got out in school and sometime in June I guess ’55. I didn’t actually; my class to go into the service wasn’t until, because I was accepted for pilot training. So my class wouldn’t start until the following year, so I went in I believe the middle part of January in ’56 and went through a very basic one-month of what they call pre-flight and then went right into pilot training.

RV: What was that experience like?
RH: Oh, pilot training was great except we had all these, in those days the actual,
your initial primary flying training was handled what they call by contract so your
instructors were contract instructors, they weren’t in the service. They had all been in the
service however at that point and most of them were hotshot fighter pilots out of the
Navy and whatever. Mine was no exception, he’d fought in the Battle of the Philippine
Sea and whatever and gotten a bunch of zeros and these guys were all heroes to us,
especially because we grew up watching them you know, on the newsreels. It was fun.

RV: Where did this take place?
RH: This was in Maudlin, Missouri, boy a bad spot.
RV: Really?
RH: I mean there was just nothing around there. We were 150 miles from St.
Louis and 150 miles from Memphis, and other than that we had Bald Knob, places like
that in northern Arkansas primarily, a few places over in southern Illinois or not too far
from Paducah, Kentucky but there was really zero. So we didn’t, we tried both sides
when we got far enough along where we could actually take off a whole weekend. We
tried Memphis and that wasn’t fun for us and we decided we liked St. Louis better. There
was more to do for us to go up there and just visit real restaurants and have real food and
listen to real jazz music, that kind of stuff, which somehow I ended up liking jazz, that
was a big thing. But we got through pilot training and then again it. The way the
military worked, in those days anyway is that everything was graded, everything you did
was a checkride, the checkride had grades, whatever. You ended up in your class, which
there was a morning class and an afternoon class, half of you went on both sides and all
that meant was you, like I was a green hawk and then we had green eagles and you both
flew at opposite parts of the day. And you basically flew for eight hours and you had
four hours of academics and that just kind of went on, twelve-hour days, just forever and
normally we got off Saturdays if we weren’t falling behind. Otherwise we’d have to fly
on Saturday but we didn’t have academics on Saturday. But I don’t remember now, I got
so that our instructors were all powerful and they could, their basic thing was they either
put you in fighter training, or they put you in, which in those days was jets, or they put
you in multi-engine training, which was reciprocating which were going to B-25 bomber
training. So I was fortunate enough to get high enough grades in whatever to get selected into the jet school.

RV: Right. Now let me ask you, how did flying by yourself, how did that feel, was it natural to you or did you really have to put a lot of effort into it?

RH: Flying, the, what you learned real fast and at least for me was when you learn to fly it’s like driving a car or rising a bike or anything else. There’s a technique to it until you finally get your hand-eye coordination, and in this case your feet and the rudders and whatever, and get used to the idea that you can drop like in an elevator and get those kind of things under control, which takes about probably five or six flights. And from then on it all becomes a mental thing because you have to know where you go; you have to look for places you could land if you had an emergency. You have to do whatever. You have to keep looking around for other airplanes and pretty soon that’s the hard part, and you think you can do it all by reading the book and you can’t. I think on my solo ride I did what they said, which they wouldn’t let you out of sight of the field. You know to shoot landings, but my first really solo was I went up and I thought, well I’ll get ahead of the game, I’ll do some acrobatics because I read the book. I thought I was going to kill myself, I ended up straight down, going too fast, scared and got out of it and of course I got back and my instructor looked at me and he said, “You didn’t do something dumb did you?”

RV: What was your answer?

RH: Like, “No, sir” but I think I was probably redder than a beet and he knew I was lying, but I think most everybody did that, you just didn’t want to admit it.

RV: Right. Did you feel comfortable behind the stick, after, you know you did the book training, you had that down, but you said more by feeling is how you would fly so did you feel comfortable or was it a long process?

RH: Oh, I felt great. I don’t know, it’s really difficult to try and explain to somebody. I already tried to do this with my wife and I never could even though she was a stewardess in those days, flying is one thing, but being up in a little airplane where you just kind of become part of the whole scheme of things. But this guy, the airline guy that gave me my first flight, he told me what you call playing with clouds, and you just do acrobatics and get up close to a cloud and then you roll upside down and try and put your
head in it, but not the rest of the airplane. I mean you want to get really close but you’d
kind of do that and it’s just a, I don’t know, just kind of a freedom and I don’t know, you
get kind of part of a, the whole, it seems like you just fit in.

RV: And at Mauldin did you have this feeling or was it later?
RH: Yes, I did. When we got to fly, when there were little clouds around because
most of the time they didn’t want us messing around till we got our instrument training
done, but we all went off and tried to fly formation together and do everything you’re not
supposed to do. But the only thing is, the only control they had on us, they said if you
screw up, you’re not going into fighters, so.

RV: That caught your attention.

RH: Yes, that always got our attention. We kind of, we used to, we were right
next to the Mississippi River, and we used to roll upside down, open the canopy of the
airplane and throw oranges at barges and stuff. They served us in the mess hall you know
they served us these green oranges, and they were just awful so they’d be a great bomb so
we always thought we were bombing these guys. Of course I don’t imagine we came
within a half a mile of them.

RV: You never hit any of them?
RH: I don't know of it anyway, I doubt it.

RV: How high up were you when you were dropping the oranges?
RH: Oh a couple thousand feet probably.

RV: Okay. How long did the training at Mauldin last?
RH: It was basically six months.

RV: And from there where did you go?
RH: My next base was Laredo, Texas and that was T-33 jet training and.

RV: When did you arrive there, I’m sorry?
RH: Oh that was still in ’56. I think it was around September so we lucked out
and got in at the tail end of the summer and it was a real different experience going into
the next stage, which was advanced training. It’s not so much that it was the jets,
although they were really impressive to us after getting out of reciprocating airplane, but
fuel was really a, you had to manage everything, and you move faster so it’s just, the job
became a little faster. They washed out, I don't remember, right off the bat we lost five or six guys just because they had trouble landing because of the difference in speed.

RV: Really? You mean they were killed.

RH: No, I mean they washed them out, they just said you’re done flying. So, and we did have two crashes I think when I was in my pilot training there and let’s see, yes I believe it was two and we lost, I don’t know, probably ten or fifteen guys just from not being able to handle the training.

RV: How did you handle the jet?

RH: I did pretty good. The goal always for us was to graduate high enough to get into fighters. So I wanted, my big dream was to get into F-86s and I missed it by one. And so then I had a choice of F-84s, which at that point they were having a lot of engine problems and my instructor said, “Why don’t you go back and become a T-bird instructor, and you’ll at least built up a lot of flying time quick” because instructors get a lot of flying time and the Air Force was cutting back on flying a little bit at that point.

So, I took his advice and did that, and it turned out to be good because the F-84 had real problems. And they were grounded half the time and all my buddies that went into them just sat around a lot, so it was tough. But I went to a T-bird training and what you do there is, we went through I think it was three month course and this time we had our wings, we got our wings at the end of the course.

RV: Okay, at Laredo.

RH: Yes. And the only, the one thing I didn’t mention is that in those days also we had, we had what they called aviation cadets, and these were guys primarily that had about two years of college and they wanted to fly or they couldn’t afford the school or whatever, but they went into that program and they were treated as cadets until they graduated and earned their wings. And at that time they got their second lieutenant bars as well as their wings the same day. In our case I’d already gotten my second lieutenant bars, and then I got my wings as a student officer. So they did away with that program not much longer, and required everybody to have their four years before they could go into pilot training. So I went through the school, it was about a three-month school, we did everything we did in advanced training except we did it all in the backseat. So you learned how everything was different and you got to the point of where you could by
rote, even when you’re pulling Gs to just talk and tell people exactly what they should be
doing. So it was a, it was actually really a good job.

RV: Where did this take place?

RF: I had to go back to Laredo. It was one of my only problems, and that’s when
I learned that you could fry an egg on the wing of an airplane at noon, which we actually
have a picture of somewhere.

RV: Oh, you actually did this?

RF: Yes. I think it was 116 or something and the airplane’s sitting out there in that
sun and that wing gets so hot you just crack an egg and it just turns into a nice little
brown, doesn’t run, anything, just sits there like in a skillet. Laredo actually turned out to
be a pretty fun place. Most everybody, well I’d say most, about half of us were
bachelors. The other half were young married guys, this is the instructors. All the
students primarily, very few of them were married, almost everyone was single, and it
was the same old deal, training is always the same. Air Force is pretty much the same
way. You have twelve-hour days and some days you don’t work at all, but when you
work you’re normally working pretty long hours. But I ended up living with two other
guys and we rented a house in Laredo and had parties and did everything all the young
bachelors do. We had a, one of the highlights of when you’re in advanced training is
taking your, what they call the student cross country, and you have to plan and go, fly at
least four flights I think it is, and most of us did five or six, and you have to go different
places and you tell the student where it is they want to end up and almost everyone
wanted to go to Las Vegas. But you end up, things like that and then you see okay, then I
want you to go to Kansas City, I want you to go to Albuquerque, I want you to go to so
and so, and then they have to flight plan it, do everything, get everything right and then
you see if they know what they’re doing. Some of them are at night, some of them are
day; if there’s weather we’d usually try and get into a guy into at least some real weather
and that sort of business and we’d usually party wherever the end was, whether it was
like Vegas or somewhere, and we had a group that was going into San Francisco, to
actually Hamilton Air Force Base which was right next to, I guess that’s San Rafael, it’s
right nest to Salcalido and the north San Francisco and, neat place. And we started going
out there and then we spent an evening in the city which was really fun, they had all
kinds of jazz places and really nice, fun places to go and that’s where I ended up. These
guys had met a group of stewardesses that were flying for American, there were about I
guess six of them, all lived in one flat down in the city and I got fixed up with one and
ended up marrying her.

RV: That worked out well for you then.
RH: It was great.
RV: Yes, sir.
RH: But I and then, things I mean we were talking about getting married and all
that kind of thing, and then the situation, and that was 1958, ’59 early and the military
just had lost every, especially Air Force had lost money for almost anything but the
Strategic Air Command. And they were just doing away with fighters right and left and a
bunch of us decided that if we wanted to continue flying fighters we were going to have
to get out and go in the Guard, and that made Fran happy because she thought she’d
rather not live a military life and move around all the time. We’d rather be, and I ended
up moving to Fresno, California where we had a Guard unit that a couple of guys that I
know had buddies and friends, getting into a Guard unit at that point was even hard to do
because you’d have to go interview and interview in the air. So I passed anyway and was
accepted into the Guard and then we ended up, they had F-86s but the all-weather kind,
the interceptor kind so that was my, I finally got to fly an 86.

RV: How was that for you?
RH: It was fun. You could get it thirty-five, forty thousand feet, and point straight
down, plug in the afterburner and you sometimes could make it through the speed of
sound but it was really tough. But I had a really good time in the Guard; it’s probably the
most professional group of pilots I’ve ever served with as far as one small squadron. The
guys were just fabulous. And instrument pilots, I’ve landed, I literally landed one time at
Hamilton Air Force Base absolutely zero-zero, I couldn’t even taxi. It was so bad they
had to come out and find me and try and tow the airplane off the runaway.

RV: What did you do in the Guard specifically, what were your duties?
RH: Well I was a, I was both, of course I had so much T-33 time, T-Bird time, I
was an instructor, instrument instructor, and I also was just a standard pilot. So we flew
an air defense mission and actually we picked up a commitment for standing alert, air
defense alert for the west coast and the Guard did that at those times and actually we
going on active duty for one day, twenty-four hours active duty when we served, and of
course I always had a job so I worked, I would sit alert at night, so I’d go in there at six in
the evening and get off at six in the morning. And normally we’d get a practice scramble
or whatever. Of course we had to jump out of bed, throw everything on, go over to the
airplane and get airborne in five minutes and surprisingly you can do that, but you
normally slept in a flight suit, just pulled boots on and a zipper and the ground crew
helped get everything going because you were jumping in and strapping in. But we did
that and everything was fine and I was working for Proctor and Gamble and working in
their promotion department, and my boss was in L.A., I used to actually fly a Guard bird
down there and land at L.A. International, have somebody from the company come pick
me up and then we’d go in and when we had our meeting, it was really kind of keen
because everybody else would walk in in suits and I’d walk into the hotel in a flight suit
and then change for the meeting but I did that for a couple years. In 19 I guess, what was
it? ’61, I can’t remember the month, but in ’61 is when the Russians decided they were
going to close off Berlin, and so the military had very few active duty fighters and what
they did have they were sitting nuclear alert so they had hardly anybody else that knew
the air to air program or anything else so they activated a bunch of us in the Guard and
lots of us ended up either briefing to get people across to France primarily is where they
ended up going, France and Germany. But get them there or somewhere and they had to
of course high flight, which was over Greenland. It would go McGuire, you’d get
somehow to McGuire, New Jersey and then you’d go to Newfoundland and Sondrestrom,
Greenland and then Prestwick, Scotland and then you’d finally get across to wherever
you were in the continent. And everybody had to wear poopy suits and that kind of stuff
to do anyway. That only lasted probably four and a half months, and I went back to work
and everybody kind of normalled it out and then we started getting more problems
coming around the world at that point. And the preludes to the Cuban thing was, the
primary thing was putting these nuclear missiles in Turkey and this kind of stuff around
the continent of Europe and the Russians and Khrushchev had just taken over and all that
stuff. So we got reactivated again, this time they activated us for a minimum of six
months. So I really couldn’t do much about it and we ended up in Florida at MacDill in
Tampa, Florida, which just happened to be about thirty miles from where Fran grew up. So it was kind of neat for us in the way because we met the grandparents and although we’d met them. I mean we lived right there, so this was fun and the kids could grow up knowing their Grammy and Papa and that kind of stuff. So when I got there, I had so much T-bird time again I ended up being a T-bird instructor as well as checking out in the F-85F, which was the airplanes that we brought in. So I started doing both. The Cuban crisis hit, which was kind of a fiasco actually from what they say on all the movies.

RV: How so?

RH: Oh, I was, well just to give you a quick example, let’s see. I was flying F-80, I mean T-33s. The thing had started and we found out there were missiles down there and we had a, Tampa was about ready to sink because we had so many fighters there, everything in the inventory practically. We had 175 or something F-84s. I don’t know how many Guard units they recalled and everything else, they were all in the Guard, and we had a few F-100s. I think one wing of them, which was about sixty I guess and reconnaissance airplanes, all kinds of junk. So I was down doing a test hop in a T-bird and we had an engine change and it was one of those things you just get used to, and I was walking back and it was fairly late in the afternoon. I was walking back to our squadron, which was probably a quarter of a mile and I saw this big, red book laying on the ramp and I walked over and it says top secret on it. I pick it up. It’s the operations plan for Cuba and I thought, oh boy. So I pick it up and I didn’t really look at it. Of course I peeked a little bit, and I walked into the air division, which was next to our squadron where the bosses worked and I walked in and I said, “Who do I turn this thing into, I don’t what else to do?” And they all gasped and said, “How in the hell did you find that?” I said, “It was laying on the ramp.” “Oh, god.” Then they said, “Are you cleared for top secret” and I said, “Not that I know of” and they said, “Well you are now.” And so that’s. I got involved in that and then suddenly after they made me, they cleared my clearance and then they made me and put me in charge of ferrying photos, which all our reccy guy, you remember all those photos about the.

RV: Yes, sir.
RH: The SA-2s and all that junk, so I started ferrying those up to Washington and primarily to South Carolina where our 9th Air Force headquarters was. But we had so many airplanes and nobody knew how anything worked. The Guard is kind of unique in that, first place we were on the bottom of the list for any of the uniforms or anything. So Guard pilots had stitched up flight suits. They wore funny patches. They had brown boots instead of black boots, which were shined. I mean we flew with Chippewa boots, which we flew because we were flying over the Sierras all the time when I was in our Guard unit. So we had those insulated boots, which we could get good ones from the military. So we ended up with this rag tag militia running around, it was kind of funny, but LeMay came down to visit us, and guys jumped up, he looked around, just about died.

RV: What was your impression of LeMay?

RH: He was just like his pictures. I’d met him later when I was an attaché in Portugal, but and he’s already retired and whatever and I asked him about that matter of fact. But he was a tough looking guy, he had that cigar always sticking out of his mouth and he kind of walked around like a bulldog. He wasn’t a real big guy, and it was kind of funny but he was an impression but everybody knew about him and knew who he was and we all had respect for him because he really stood up for the Air Force. But it was funny because then suddenly within a week everyone of us had new flight suits, we had patches, we had all the stuff, black boots and just nobody ever really said much about it other than that happened.

RV: That was LeMay’s doing?

RH: Yes, well I’m sure it was or whoever, one of the, he had an entourage of guys with him, so all kinds of generals and everyone so someone somehow found flight suits and all the rest so we could at least look decent. And all of a sudden the whole thing was over. I was, I’d checked out in the F-84 and had a little bit of experience so I was a spare because I hadn't had that much experience as far as the weaponry they were going to drop, and it just suddenly pretty much was over. The other thing ironic thing is we were all left alert, everything else, we all went home, we picked up our wives where they were at, did this whole thing and the next day Kennedy gets on the news and says “We’ve just concluded this agreement and the war is over.” But it had been over for twenty-four
hours, so that was the first time I realized some of these guys fudge a little bit from the political side.

RV: Yes. How did you think the Missile Crisis was handled over all?

RH: Oh, it probably would have been a real mess because we didn’t know how to work together with people. I’d guess, the Air Force went their way, the Army went their way, the Navy went their way. There wasn’t any real training programs or anything. I mean this war right now is probably the epitome of how guys learn how to cooperate and work together, but as far as those days, even within the Air Force, we had the bomber forces, we had the fighter forces, we had the training forces and never the twain shall meet. You just really never knew anybody or did anything with those guys, now they’re even based together. So it was light years different and the training itself in those days was very limited to just exactly what your role was. So consequently if you were an interceptor pilot; that’s all you did. You had no idea of working with anybody else, what their mission was, anything, you just knew yours by heart, and that’s a lot of the people that we ended up later then going into war in Vietnam. So they were somehow trying to integrate all these guys from the bomber forces. A pilot’s a pilot, so they started just assigning people to Vietnam, and then you’d end up with a guy out of the bomber command, you’d end up with a guy that was an interceptor pilot, you’d end up with a guy that was a reconnaissance pilot, never dropped a bomb in his life and just took pictures. You’d end up with all these guys, they went through about a four-month training program and they found themselves in Vietnam. So we weren’t very, we were short-sighted I guess, everyone had their little niches, that sort of thing, and of course we were happy within those and did our things but we didn’t realize until actually we got into the combat, at least I didn’t how important it was to do things that we didn’t do.

RV: Why did that happen?

RH: I think primarily because we just got fixated on the nuclear war and we worried about nuclear bombers coming over here, so we really wanted to shoot them down, so that’s our interceptor force. And we really worried about the huge mass of the Soviet Army to come roaring across the Ful De Gap into Germany and we needed to stop them. So the way you stop them when you’re littler than they are is nukes. So primarily fighter pilots learned how to drop nukes and fly low-level, high speed. So we had a huge
group of people that learned that job. The training people were in the middle, and probably as it turned out had more overall experience because you did more. And its kind of funny; we had a few TAC forces that were actually I guess what you’d call fighter-bombers and air to air, but it was kind of divided up in those days two for, you were either an air to air pilot or you were a bomber, an attack pilot. So everything got too much specialized where you’d, and a lot of that too I, I’m not just saying it was leadership, I’m saying it was the way airplanes were designed, what they did, that sort of thing.

RV: Why do you think it changed?

RH: Oh, I think a lot of it came out of the guys that served in Thailand, quite a group of guys, even out of my own squadron, a lot of us all at least made colonel, some of us that were there made general. Follow on, when they finally got the younger group, and we were mostly Guard guys, and you never promoted a Guard guy to even colonel or general hardly and in those days. And so the guys that came in behind us a little bit, the guys that served in the, at Ubon for example in the 8th TAC Fighter Wing, which is what we turned the field over to when we left. The Wolf Pack became well known, it was Robin Oles and Chappie James and Bill Kirk and all these guys and they all made general, and so they became the leadership and they knew how things were and the problems that we’d seen. So I think we had a huge change of leadership and I don’t know, not that I lived a long time and kind of like to be a historian, I’ve looked back and its kind of, I think its almost like John Adams’ brother Brooks came up with this big thing about our whole world, our whole civilization is always run on a sinker, kind of ups and downs, and the leaders are developed on the ups and then it gets bad and it kind of spawns a new group of people that overthrow the leader and whatever and they become leaders and it kind of does work that way. But I think that’s what happened because the guys that were the three-stars in Desert Storm were guys that I knew as captains and majors, so they were the ones that saw how some of the ways we were taught and trained was wrong.

RV: And they were able to make the changes later.

RH: Yes. Actually when I got out of my second tour and everything, we started working on the particular job I had, we started working on that policy. But it wasn’t until
the early ‘70s that this really we could, that the younger guys got strong enough to influence.

RV: So after your time here in Florida what happened? Did you re-enlist in the Air Force, or did you stay in the Guard for a while longer?

RH: Well I decided that I’d already given a long time, and might as well stay in and then they started throwing you little things like they said. We all checked out in the F-84 and we became combat ready and did our whole job there in the F-84, and I was a pretty good gunner and they [??], some of the senior guys would say, you probably should go to the weapons school. You’re a natural at this or whatever, so I kind of thought, well maybe I’ve got a chance and by that time we’d had our kids growing up, Fran was there. She got where it’s actually a good life, it’s not an easy life but is a lot of camaraderie with the people that you’re with all the time. And so we were there I guess, when was it? A year and a half to two years after Cuba, and we heard we might be getting a new airplane and that’s when they were, the Air Force decided and this was part of it too, but this is when they decided that we should have these multi-purpose airplanes. That we needed an airplane that could be an interceptor; we needed a bomber and that’s what McNamara’s big thing was. Well, the F-111 was a big failure. It was too big, it was underpowered, it had all kinds of problems. It ended up finally when they put it into a mission it could do it was a good airplane, but it wasn’t this all weather, they even wanted them to land on carriers. So they said the F-4 can be modified to be pretty good and it would do a lot of jobs well. It could carry anything we had. We could make it a nuke bomber. We could make it an air-to-air airplane. We could make it an attack airplane. So the F-4 kind of came out with those credentials, so it was originally called the F-110. And they, we happened to be in obsolete airplanes with a lot of people, with a lot of, lot of experience and a lot of gunnery experience. We just didn’t have very good airplanes. So somewhere someone decided we ought to be the guys that get into the new airplanes first. Of course that’s when we found out we were going to get F-4s and we started out with Navy ones that they had to put a stick in the back seat and check some guys out and then I ended up going to Tucson, Arizona at Davis Monthan for our checkout, and it was. That’s what where we got married up with our gibs they call them; they were pilot system operators and of course that in the military becomes an acronym,
PESO. And the back seaters were actually pilots, they weren’t navigators, and they
didn’t like that title very well. So we just started calling them guys-in-backs so it became
GIFs and GIBs, guys-in-front, guys-in-back, and that kind of stuck and its kind of, it
really is funny because that became the worldwide, just zing like these names just come
out about different things, but regardless of what you’re supposed to call them they just
end up what they guys want to call them. So we did that.

RV: This is 1964?

RH: Yes. And in between all this stuff is when they were trying to bring us up to
what they call worldwide status, which means you have to go through water survival
schools, you have to go through the escape and evasion survival schools. That stuff, and
so sprinkled in here during this last year I guess about ’64 all this happened. I went
through Stead, which was in those days our survival school, everyone in our unit literally
went through, we just owned the thing for awhile while they hustled us all through the
school and sea survival. We went through that a couple of times, everybody did, which
turned out to be one of the best things I guess that ever happened, although it was
miserable.

RV: Why is that?

RH: Oh, it was either cold, they put you in these poopy suits and they always
leaked, they gave us a bad one and you end up with this ice water from your knees down
and then you sweat in them so bad too and that fills them up but flying in an airplane with
one is really awful but.

RV: Why was it one of the better experiences?

RH: Oh, because as it turned out later in Southeast Asia, you’re sanctuary was the
water. If you could make it to the water you’re probably going to live, so everyone was
tuned to that and they all knew they could get out of an airplane and get in the water.
You didn’t hit the ground so hard or end up in three hundred feet of jungle canopy. It
was sure better to be out there in the water so that became an important thing. The
survival school was a good experience after the fact; nobody liked it. I’d actually, some
of us had grown up when we were kids out camping really kind of liked the outdoors as
far as the trek part of it. We had to walk, I don’t remember what it was now, thirty-five
miles I guess in this horrible mountain terrain up and down, cold weather, whatever, no
fires, and get to a spot by compass and you did it in groups of two. Well those are,
actually they became kind of funny. Some of the stories about people at Stead were
always famous but it’s. Other people actually dropped out and chose not to fly because
they didn’t; it just scared them to death.

RV: Wow, how did you do?
RH: Oh, I liked it. Other than in this judo whatever training that I never had done,
this guy that was a good buddy of mine actually, he was a football player from
Northwestern, I got paired up with, I couldn’t throw him over my shoulder if I had to, but
he could pick me up like a feather and the instructor used to holler at him to quit laying
me down, throw me down like he’s supposed. We did one day and gave me the fake
knee, except he didn’t fake it and he broke a rib. So I ended up with a taped rib for most
of my experience there. But we learned knife fighting, all this kind of junk, which
actually I think it gave you a lot of confidence in case you ever got in a spot you knew
where to stick the knife that wouldn’t make a guy yell out loud and that kind of stuff. But
the real sobering thing too was our escape and evasion part of it, which we literally got
captured by Russians who were all dressed in Russian uniforms, spoke Russian, had a
couple of Orientals with them to make it, throw it in. We were captured, stripped of our
clothes totally, I mean we were naked jaybirds, threw a black sack over your head and
threw you in these little, about five foot by five foot cells, and with a wet can as I call
them, one of those big old cans that was your latrine and that’s all you had. And they’d
call you out and you’d hear all this noise going on and beating people and this kind of
stuff and you start conjuring up all this stuff that’s happening, and of course it wasn’t but
we thought it could have been and the longer it went the more it went, the more you
started believing it. Then you were taken out to be interrogated and you hear women’s
voices and stuff and here you are and you’re all together with a black sack over your head
trying to seem like you’re normal and these guys whacking you on the arms and
whacking you on the butt and whatever with these little riding crops and they did smart
and asking you questions and then they’d sit you down like a little milking stool, which
was a one-legger and if you did anything you’d fall over if they pushed you and they’d
interrogate you and ask all this stuff. Well we’d been through what you’re supposed to
say, and it’s amazing how you start changing, and the guy said if you’re going to change
from the serial number and all that then tell them lies. Boy, I told the biggest lies in the
world. I just lied away and then they said, “Great you’re a friend of the people” and
whatever and they sent me back to my cell and I was thinking boy, I’m good. And about
ten minutes later they came and got me, “You lied.” And they showed me at that point,
they had a picture of my wife, they had stuff, a dossier and I thought oh my god and it
looked really, suddenly it became kind of real, and then they threw me in one of these
little bitty boxes that obviously they’re not big enough to get in but they somehow get
you in there and that didn’t help with my rib either. But they do that stuff and finally
you’re getting to the point of where you tell more lies and you just keep up the lying and
they keep catching you and you keep doing it again. But it’s actually kind of what really
happened later in Hanoi. But we also learned the whole thing was just kind of, oh boy its
over and we all went down, had a big steak dinner at Harold’s Club, whatever, a big
prime rib I guess it was, and everyone was all happy and then I got back to my room and
they said, you’re staying here and for another week to two weeks. So I ended up going
through some kind of a, at that time it was all classified but what they do is teach you to
tap code, all kinds of code stuff, how to write letters, how to do all this stuff in case
you’re ever captured. And that has kind of a two sides to it. At first you think oh boy,
I’m all being prepared, and then they think wait a minute, maybe they’ll figure since I’m
prepared they’ll send you into a bad place. So anyway I went through that and I had to
write letters to a post office box for a couple of years until I went to Southeast Asia and
try and keep this ability to do this stuff. And its kind of a, as it turned out, its kind of the
same thing as the, I think they guy that invented the tap code as far as our own prisoners
had been through this school too and he knew a lot better than I did because I didn’t keep
up with it as I should have. But, so anyway.

RV: How long did your time in Arizona last in total?

RH: Well, when I, I mean just to check out in the F-4 was short, it was oh; couple
months. Probably sixty days, fifty days, but we did most of the basic missions without
heavy gunnery or air-to-air. We went back to MacDill to do that. So I was picked to be
an instructor I had to, another guy and I had to go out and get, I think we had to have fifty
hours as a first pilot in the airplane before they could make us an instructor, and so we
went out and just flew a couple of weekend just all around the country trying to get time.
RV: You’re flying in the F-4?

RH: Yes, in the F-4 and this is, Stead and all those schools were all before I got in
the F-4, so that was pre-Arizona actually. Once we got in the F-4 then it was just,
everyone was hell bent on getting time and getting through all this stuff and getting
combat ready which meant everybody had to qualify in gunnery, everybody had to
qualify in air to air gunnery, everybody had to qualify in low level navigation, everybody
had to qualify in the nuke deliveries. We had to do all the missions now. So everyone
just flew, flew, flew for a while. And I guess, let’s see I probably had maybe two
hundred hours in the airplane and I was probably one of the high guys by the time I
actually went to Ubon but.

RV: So you went back down to MacDill?

RH: Yes, we went back to MacDill at home and did all our stuff and we were on
our regular gunnery range and that’s how we learned to bomb in that airplane and how to
do rockets and how to do all the same stuff we’d been doing in the F-84 and F-4 is a
pretty good airplane. Its’ a different airplane to fly and then we didn’t have a gun in
those days, and once in a while they’d hang a gun underneath, which they came out with
at the last minute. But we could go shoot the Gatling gun that we had down in the Sioux-
20 I think it was that shot .20mm at such a high rate, which was great except you couldn’t
use it air-to-air because we didn’t have a computing sight, it was the old Navy sight. So
the airplane was prepared quickly. We learned a lot of missions all of which weren’t
very well. They still wanted us to concentrate on the low level navs and the nuke
deliveries, which I can understand that but it was, our primary mission was going to
Europe and dropping a nuke on the bad guys or China because we did both ways. But
that was the emphasis and we had heard, I had heard anyway in this school that
Vietnam’s a mess and they all said you’re going to end up there. And I didn’t, I believed
them but it’s one of those where if you don’t have to believe them why, and I didn’t get
back into that business at all too much. We were just kind of trying to learn the airplane.
And suddenly then its kind of like that little story I did, I was sitting in the squadron as a
scheduling officer and a buddy of mine walks in and says, “Hey, guess what. We’re
going to go to Thailand” and then our ops officer came in and says. “Shut up, you can’t
tell anybody, your wives nobody, this is a secret, its TS you know” and what kind of
stupid stuff is that? But we said, “What’s our mission?” and he said “You’re going to
give air support for the 105s that are going to be there.” And we though oh boy, we’re
going to get our MiG You know. And so we all went out and started, I started talking to
the guys about scheduling air-to-air and doing all this, uh-uh, we can’t do that, we’ve still
got to concentrate on nuke deliveries. Oh, come on, but anyway that’s kind of how it all
started.

RV: Okay. What did you know about what was happening in Southeast Asia,
about American policy there?

RH: Not a whole lot. I’d heard some stuff and actually in this little school I went
through I learned a lot more than. It didn’t make sense until a little later actually a lot of
the things I learned but I had learned at that time about Diem, about some of the guys that
had been. The U.S. had picked as leaders for South Vietnam and they actually were kind
of like picking a guy in, one of these tribal chieftains in Africa and paying him a lot of
money and expecting him to do what you want, he does what he wants. So it was kind of
a mess and we knew it was a mess but we just never; at least I never did really think, you
know I was in Florida. Why would they move us all the way to Southeast Asia, that’s
twelve time zones or whatever, eight I guess and, but suddenly it happened. So we were
all running around, getting excited, trying to figure out what we were doing and we were
supposed to keep all this a secret, and my wife came home from a coffee one day, and the
Wing Commander’s wife had told them and everyone was in trouble.

RV: So much for top secret.

RH: Oh, yes. Well the Wing Commander’s wife knows everything. So then the
wives knew but they were trying to keep quiet because they said it could hurt people if
they did this and they had these big stories so everybody tried to play it. So we
scrambled around and flew, flew, flew, flew and got combat ready and had to even get
our ORI, our readiness inspections and that stuff. And the first guys to go were our sister
squadron, the 45th, and they left I think April, something like that of ’65. And we went
on, they were going to stay for ninety days, which they did and we ended up going and
got there in July of ’65 and they had actually stayed a little longer. And we flew
squadron airplanes from MacDill non-stop to Hawaii and then we went from Hawaii and
we were supposed to go non-stop to the Philippines and they ran out of tankers. So we
couldn’t get enough gas, we stopped in the Marianas at Guam and then flew into the
Philippines and the following day; then we were transported by the C-130 up to Ubon.
RV: How did you feel going into a war zone?
RH: Oh, it is kind of funny, I think it affects you but you don’t really, this whole
thing was, it starts affecting you, because Fran and I talked about it and we thought.
When are you leaving, it finally came time to leave and we thought, I don’t think we
want to take the kids out there to the base and watch us take off because it means that
what if you don’t come back. It’s kind of like you’re taking off and you might not come
back. On the other hand I was gone all the time for these temporary duty things, so its just
one of those, hey, I’ve got to go temporary duty, only this one is a little longer and okay.
I mean the kids didn’t worry about it at all. So we left them there when we left, and Fran
had a babysitter and we were, or I think her folks came by or something, but she just
came out. And there was photographers all over the place taking our picture, and I
remember looking around on the airplane and kind of looking at this group of people and
there were crowds hanging around and I thought this is kind of funny. Here we’re going
to this secret place and the news people are out there taking pictures, even one the wives
had some kind of a sign, don’t go to war or something and that disappeared. And I said
my good-byes to Fran, climbed into the airplane, we took off. And I didn’t see her again
until November 22nd I guess it was. And our deployment is long as you can imagine,
these are ten-hour flights. I did lose an engine, we had an oil pump break about eight
hundred miles out of Hickham, out of Hawaii, and my wingman had to stay with me and
we dropped down altitude a little bit. Of course the F-4 was a new airplane, a good
airplane and the other engine just no problem, but we got there and we got a couple
hours, what we called our freedom time and ran over and had a My Thai and did that kind
of stuff in Hawaii and ran around looking at stuff because most of us had never been
there. And they put us into crew rest, which means take a sleeping pill and go to bed and
nobody slept hardly. I mean you just don’t do that anyway, kind of an okay and half of
us, I don’t think, I didn’t take one I don’t believe. We had a test program on go, no-go
and the go pill is Dexedrine, which I guess now is what amphetamines, drugs and those
things, I mean your eyes get a fixed stare and you can’t do anything and you want to dig
holes or do anything, trying to then sleep in the middle of that was just impossible, and
we were supposed to go twelve hours, sleep twelve hours, go twelve hours and take the nebutols or whatever the other one was, Secanol and so we just basically proved it didn’t work for us and so I never did use them. We all carried them but.

RV: So you did not really use them that often?

RH: No, well I never did. We even flew nine-hour missions in Thailand but you’re pumped up enough without worrying about giving yourself extras.

RV: Right, right.

RV: Okay, sir when you arrived in Ubon, what were your first impressions of the air base?

RH: Well we got there in the afternoon, fairly late, I don't know after two o’clock, probably something like that. When we got off the airplane we had a waiting line of guys that were going to get on it. These were people out of the 45th squadron that we had known and a lot of them just kind of got in a file mostly which were the back seaters and just getting on the airplane and they were getting ready to leave. And it just seemed kind of odd because we didn't have kind of a big reunion with them and first thing we noticed was our little squadron building and its just kind of a look around and you see a base and it didn’t look anything like a real Air Force base. And there was a very small ramp on the south end, I guess it was the southwest end of the field, and there was one hangar and a bunch of airplanes sitting out front and the airfield itself was to the east, and it was just out in the middle of a rice paddy. And there was, it smelled. It’s one of those smells you smell when you get somewhere you just kind of all of a sudden take a breath and you realize it had a distinct odor and it smelled. We looked around, it was real hot, there were a lot of puffy clouds, kind of reminded us of MacDill because it was that late afternoon thunderstorms popping up and you could see actually even rain a distance away, coming out of a couple of the thunderclouds and that’s kind of typical of MacDill. And by the time we kind of got organized and were standing around waiting to get our junk off the airplane we heard that Dick Kearn, who was a guy in our squadron had been shot down, he and Ross Fobare who were good friends, had been shot down by the first SAM, and that was not real good news. And then we started asking what had gone on, what had happened. This was our guys from the 47th squadron, they went over, I think there were eight people or ten people, something like that, our commander, ops officer, a
lot of the senior guys went over and they went to do lesson one to see what it was like flying in other, with other pilots that were flying in combat that knew what was going on. So they were there for the advance team and everyone started asking what happened, and what happened, and we finally ended up getting a few of the guys that we knew that were the regular pilots, not the bosses and they told us. They were just sitting there shaking their heads and they told us just this horror story of our, as it turned out we had, our squadron commander, our ops officer, who was the second guy in charge, the 45th squadron commander and another guy, they were flying around together, which is probably not a smart thing to do is put all the bosses together. They were up north flying around over the northern part of Vietnam way west, just above the Black River, and not Hanoi but the other, quite a ways from Hanoi. But they were flying around basically on the tops of clouds, wispy clouds. Well nobody had ever shot a SAM at us before, this was the first one, and of course it came right out of, boiling out of the clouds and there was no chance to do anything and we didn't have any electronic countermeasures or anything in those days to tell us it was even fired. So, and they were in close formation because they’d been in and out of weather and that’s another thing you’d never do, you’d always fly in a combat spread or something. So we were just sitting around saying that couldn’t have happened. And it did happen because then we found out the other airplanes actually even got some collateral damage because this thing blew up right in the middle of them and he happened to be the number-two man, which was on one side of the formations. So he took the direct hit, the commander’s airplane, the flight leader’s airplane and a couple of the, one of the other airplanes actually took some damage. And they, one of the had to actually stop at Udorn, which was on the way back, right on the border just south of Vientiane, Laos and to check for battle damage, make sure he wasn't leaking fuel, he thought he’d lost fuel but he’d just lost a gauge. So we got out stuff and tried to be ushered through the squadron building, which had been taken over by us and I remember the 47th squadron, the 15th TAC fighter wing was one of those that was developed early in the war, in the World War II, it was one of the original old squadron wings. It was stationed in Hawaii and if, I’m sure you probably don’t even remember but there was a cartoon character called Little Abner, and he lived in Dog Patch and they had all this stuff and they made, Heap Al Capp, who was the guy made these cartoon
characters. Ours happened to be a turnip termite, which you’d have to kind of know the
whole story of the cartoon to get the drift but still it’s a bug and it was sitting on this silly
circle, it was green and silver and whatever and this turnip termite was there, and our
back, the one backseater had already pulled this sign out he’d had pointed by the Thais of
our squadron insignia and stuck it on top of the roof. And we looked around and there’s
bugs everywhere, and you could hear the noise, and it stunk and we turned around and
thought, well maybe this is, kind of fits in. And so they finally got us bunked down and
we moved into hooches, which is an experience. Hooches are basically open buildings
with two roofs on them and the sides are primarily screen and fans in there, and there’s
no air conditioner whatever and basic light bulbs running down the ceiling. But we had, I
guess the rooms were about fifteen by fifteen, and we had two racks which would be
double bunks, metal, kind of narrow maybe three and a half feet ones, something like
that. And these metal, gray metal Air Force lockers which we had almost everywhere, all
the places had them, and then a foot locker and that was our home and we went in and
dumped our stuff, what we could and stuck it in the locker and everyone kind of got
acclimated and started looking around and where’s the john? And it was still an open
shed privy basically but just larger, I think it was a six-holer or something like that.
There weren’t any paved streets. It was just all red dirt, and the sidewalks and stuff were
basically these, they looked liked ladders, you know I call them behind the bar things,
whatever. But I worked as a bartender for a while and behind the bars you have these
slats that you walk around so if you break glasses or anything, its underneath, it’s not on
the thing, but that was our sidewalks. We had a meeting and got together real quick and
said okay, we’re going to get organized and we didn’t want to get organized. We were
tired; we were mad about hearing about what was going to happen. We knew we were
going to have a day and a half to get ready before we started flying but our guys said no.
We had to do this first, and I was the scheduling officer so we had to come up with a
mock schedule. And I had to go learn all the system and we had our little command post
and of course those, for those that don’t know it, the Air Force runs what they call frag
orders, fragmentation orders. And every time you come out with a mission, it was on
these fragmentation orders that come out and they were all coded and they have to be
translated and then there’s frequencies, there’s call signs. There’s all this stuff that you
would be doing, the targets, the alternate targets, the second alternate target, that kind of stuff, the ordnance that would be used. All that stuff comes floating in from in this case it was coming out of Saigon. And so I had to learn how to do that and we’d get them together and how we’d print a schedule and we had to do our own because nobody had copiers or anything so we came up with a. I can’t even remember what they called it now but it was one of those where you have the ink on a roller and you roll them out.

RV: A mimeograph machine.

RH: Well I guess it didn’t even; it was something else. I can’t even remember, but old and we had radios and we had to trade all this stuff and set up our own radio frequencies and stuff and make sure the antenna worked on the roof, because everybody took their stuff with them, this was all grow mobility gear. And kind of got the layout of the land, decided who was going to do what, who was going to fly what day and come out with schedules and we got our flight gear all set up and got our harnesses fixed and got out survival gear squared away and our helmets and what we would do and then got a couple of briefings and the next day was kind of the same thing. It was just all briefing about where things were and if there were any friendlies we learned suddenly there that we had guys in Laos, we had guys in, all over the place and what the Navy was doing and they just basically gave us a quick rundown.

RV: What did they tell you specifically about operations in Laos, do you remember?

RH: No, at that time it was just, we’ve got friendlies there. They primarily run rescue operations out of there and some of them speak English so you don’t have to worry, some of them we think are Thais, they fly out of there, we knew the Thais flew up to Vientiane all the time. So we just knew them and we found out what kinds of airplanes were there because we hadn’t really been briefed to any extensive, which bases had which 105 units and these were. Everybody there was on these ninety-day rotationals at this time. The guys out of Okinawa, 105s and 105s out of Japan were rotating in, and they were rotating on a thirty day basis because they’d come in, fly, just fly, fly, fly, fly and they’d go right back and they were sitting nuclear alert, so they were going home and then sitting alert for a week and seeing their family for a week, turn around and come back, almost that fast. So and we found out we weren’t going to be all
air-to-air guys either, we were going to do mostly bombing and that kind of made
everybody mad, but we hadn’t really heard anything that was going on because they just
didn’t share it in those days either, even though our intelligence people got some of it,
they didn’t brief us because we weren’t supposed to know. And it was kind of a quick
day. We learned we had a mess hall; that was the only place we had to eat. We learned
we got a dollar ninety cents a day per diem and that was to cover our expenses. And
while we were away our families got nothing different, they just continued getting regular
pay, the rest of the stuff.
   RV: Was the dollar ninety adequate?
   RH: Well, not at all. I mean what can you do with a buck ninety? And military
officers normally don’t get free meals at a mess hall. You normally have to pay a
surcharge so that basically covered our surcharge for about a week, but other than that it
was something. So we got all settled in. Finally figured out what we were doing, got our
clothes settled, found out what we had. We also got out stuff that had come up from
Clark that we had shipped probably a month earlier. That was our mobility gear and we
didn’t realize they were actually going to ship it because people, when you had these
mobility gear things, you had to have six pair of underwear, six pair of socks, underwear,
shorts, whatever, a couple of just specific things so nobody put anything good in them. Of
course it all showed up and we had it, and it had been out sitting in a field in Clark in the
Philippines and gotten all wet. So we had this moldy junk show up and it was pretty bad
because we didn’t bring a lot with us, there’s not a lot of room in an F-4 to carry
anything, we just stuffed it in by the side of an ejection seat. So we basically got there
with not much. And finally got squared away and we were used to doing this anyway, so
we got square and figured out who was going to fly and whatever and.
   RV: What was morale like?
   RH: Pardon me?
   RV: What was morale like?
   RH: Oh everybody was, we wanted to get out MiGs and we were going to do
good and we were all, figured we’d won the bombing thing on our ORI, our squadron
was the best bombers we thought so we thought we were going to be good at it. So that
was the thing. And then I think I, I didn’t get to fly for two days I believe because I was
the scheduler and our flight somehow ended up, it was either the second or third day by
the time I got to fly and we flew two flights at the same week, in other words, A and B
flight would fly one day, or they’d fly, what was it, three days in a row and they’d pull
duty for a day. So your off day, you just hung around and were desk officer, watch this
or post to the board or did something like that. And most guys just slept or laid around or
did nothing there wasn’t any place to go at that point. And so I think we had the second
shift so I still had to do the scheduling and the rest of it and then we got guys all checked
in on how to do the schedule so that when we flew we didn’t have to do it. So that all
worked itself out pretty quick and we jumped into things and generally just started flying.
We had some, I think basically easier missions they thought in Laos and in the southern
part of Vietnam, North Vietnam. And they were primarily I think when the very first
ones were bridges, interdiction type targets.

RV: In Laos were you dropping on the trail complex?

RH: Yes, there was what’s called the route five was the basic thing that wound
around, and we found out that they shot at you a lot from a couple places and we almost
always went to the North Vietnam over Laos. In other words we didn’t, we just took off
went right over Laos, went that way. And that’s where all our tankers were, up on the
border and actually they went into Laos when we were refueling. We refueled every
missions, sometimes twice. But we kind of got into that and we found out we had a
mission because the 104s that were flying out of Da Nang were called home and so we
picked up what they called a Queen Bee mission which was to protect this electronic C-
130 that was flying around up off of the coast of Haiphong and collecting intelligence
data, and so we went up there and everyone, we’d had three tanks on board this and
sparrow missiles and sidewinders and went up there for guard these guys. And the MiGs
had some barreling off the coast and you’d pick one up and then they’d turn real quick, so
they just faked it all the time. And we chased one every now and then, the guy would get
overzealous and he’d come a little too close, and I got behind one but I couldn’t have
cought him by the time we had overflown the coast so they made us break off.

RV: Were you, I mean was that frustrating, did you want to follow it in?

RH: Oh yes, I mean you wanted to go zap him, but you had to get pretty close
from the tail to shoot anything. And those missions last sometimes seven hours, that kind
of stuff so we’d go out there and we didn’t have water, we didn't have. I broke a tooth on
a pork chop sandwich they’d left the bone in one day and that was our mess hall but they
didn’t know much better but that’s kind of how we, and we carried baby bottles that
someone told us to buy and everyone had two or three baby bottles, we’d fill them full of
water and stick them in your G-suit pocket or wherever because we ahead no other way
to get water and that long a mission, you needed something. But we did that for a few
days and then it kind of got to the point where most of the pilots started sitting around
gripping and complaining. We had a little club annex thing, and guys would go in there sit
around having a beer and pretty soon it started people saying, “My god, so and so did
this, this was really stupid.”

RV: Other pilots you mean?
RH: Yes, and primarily it was our flight leaders and our commander, ops officer
and assistant ops officer. Hardly any of them had really much experience dropping
bombs. And the other problem was we didn’t have tactical ranges then, so the only thing
you did was go in and fly in a circle and drop bombs in a range and those are very
controlled because you don’t want people getting in trouble running around different
direction, and so its primarily a training or a checkout kind of thing so people just fly
around in a circle, all at the same altitude all above the ground, all at the same speed and
if you think about it as a gunner sitting on the ground, even if its all optical, you pretty
well solve a lot of problems. You now he’s going to be on this corner at X time just
about here, so you don’t have to aim the gun a lot and then they’re going to come roaring
down low level coming from this heading so if we all concentrate our triple A at this one
spot, someone’s bound to fly through it and that is kind of what started happening. A few
guys picked up holes and they started complaining to our gunnery officer and some of the
other younger guys, these guys are trying to kill us and we need to bury these things and
do something a little different. So a lot of us, and a lot of the different flights
experimented around and said okay, like our flight commander happened to be a
reconnaissance pilot. He’d never had gunnery in his life until he got to MacDill and that
was very small so he didn’t, he could see anything because he was used to it but he wasn't
the greatest bomber in the world but at least he said, “I understand what’s happening,
let’s try splitting up into two ship formations when we get around the target area and kind
of attack separately from two different guys and we can call where we are and we
shouldn’t have any problem running into each other. And besides that might be better
than getting hosed. So most of use started doing stuff like that except out base
commander and ops officer. Our ops officer was just awful, and he had flown his whole
life in Strategic Air Command, bombers and then he got into fighters but these fighters
were nuke carrier and he never did anything different ever, until he got there. And he’d
do anything; he was fearless. He’d go anywhere he wanted except he insisted you do
“follow me” kind of thing and so it got to the point where no one wanted to even fly with
him. And so this started picking up and it wasn’t long, it was probably two or three
weeks and a few guys as I said had taken holes and then suddenly they started getting us
into more complicated missions. And we started getting into the Hanoi area and we
started getting up there for, with 105s and trying to bomb and then we would secondarily
hang around as long as we could could to try and provide some sort of MEDCAP for the
105s. And not too long after we were there, it wasn’t probably more than three weeks,
they found out where this SAM site was that shot down Dick Kearn. So they decided we
were going to take out that SAM site and teach them a lesson. Up until that time our rules
of engagement, you couldn’t attack a SAM site.

RV: Why is that?

RH: Because they hadn’t shot at us yet, and the other was that we couldn’t attack
an airfield because they’d never attacked our airfields.

RV: Now what did, what did you do personally and what did your unit think
about such limitations?

RH: We all thought it was idiocy and the other thing that, we had these rules of
engagement and every thing in those days of course was grease pencil board, so we had
this huge grease pencil board and it was the rules of engagement, it was just full. You’d
see these things and they’d change about once a week so you had to make sure of what
you could do or what you couldn’t do. And every time they’d some out with another one
it seemed like it was stupider, and these came out of Headquarters Air Force or
Headquarters whatever, and the Pentagon, someplace. But it was things like, if you shoot
at a, if there’s an anti-aircraft battery posted in the city, in the town square you couldn’t
attack even if they shot at you because you might hit somebody else. And of course
those days a good bomber we could maybe get fifty, sixty feet from the target, that’s an average. So those things came up and that was frustrating, but most of us learned to live with it, but it was pretty crummy when you’d fly over Phuoc Yen airport and see MiGs sitting on the ground and you couldn’t attack them.

RV: Right, I can imagine.

RH: And yet they’d shoot, just everybody’d open up and shoot at you, but we could go bomb the ammunition dump that was on the one end of the field, but we couldn’t bomb the field and that kind of stuff. So there were a lot of restrictions that really made people mad.

RV: And this is early on in the long scheme of conflict.

RH: Yes, this was July, August of ’65 and we, well another one too is we’d go out over these things and we’d see these sampans and different stuff coming down the coast and they’d be in groups of three and four and you know they were carrying stuff, you could actually we’d go buzz them every once in while if you had gas and you could see munitions on them and we’d say “Let us hit those.” “No, they could be fisherman” and so its kind of like they’re trying to do today, only they had really no control over it. And you’d see junks and stuff and they’re going down there and then they’d shoot at you but you couldn’t shoot at them.

RV: And they knew this so they were.

RH: Well, yes they obviously knew it because they could get away with it and so we kind of fought that off and the combination of guys that really didn’t have much experience and the rules we had to follow started irking everybody, so we got pretty surly, pretty quick. And so what you’d end up doing and I was the scheduling officer, but you’d end up putting people that didn’t care what they flew and you’d try and give like, well our ops officer, we tried to give him kind of an easy target or one that probably wasn’t going to get him shot at too bad and then you’d put guys in there that didn’t mind flying with the guy and try and control it a little bit and then the tougher targets we tried to put the people that were a little better qualified that had tried to use different tactics.

RV: Who actually picked the targets?

RH: They came out of Headquarters Air Force and that was another problem.

They’d have what they called Joint Chiefs of Staff targets, JCS targets, and they had a,
the Air Force had a huge book and it a bombing manual, one of these things and it told
for example they’d say a double span bridge, 182 feet long with three abutments
whatever, it will take eighty-two fighters dropping X amount of bombs on it. And so
they’d say okay, divide eighty-two by four, come up with how many flight you’re going
to pout out, put a couple of spare flights for anybody that dropped up, all the tankers up
and they’d say hit JCS one which would be a bridge. And so you’d end up there within
five minutes of each other, eighty airplanes in a row in a big stream coming from the
same direction and all trying to bomb this bridge. And of course they, we usually, bridges
weren’t a fun target because one they were really hard to hit with a visual bomb and
secondly they’re strong if you really hit them. I mean if you just hit the top or whatever
the bomb goes off doesn’t hurt the bridge, but you had to get the abutment where the
bridge was held on, learn how bridges were made so you can get the weak point, but
that’s not, they wanted us to blow out the middle and things like that. But things like
that, those JCS targets were generally really crummy, people hated them because they
were all done just academically, they had nothing to do with any kind of sensible
targeting it seemed like.

RV: When you got over the target, did you guys compensate for that, or did you
follow the instructions?

RH: Well, I mean you just did what you had to do. We tired to split targets and
do whatever but when you’re in a. We’d go in there, normally we were the seconds, the
guys in or we’d go in first with maybe two flights. Go in and drop everything we were
carrying in one pass, pull off and then we’d go up and orbit so we could look for MiGs in
case MiGs came to attack the strike force. And the poor thuds for the time they got there,
the 105s, all the gunners were awake and they were all. They figured out what’s going,
and the poor 105s would take the brunt of it. So those poor guys would come in and of
course the 105 was a great airplane, but it was a nuke bomber. It wasn't made to be a
dive-bomber or an air-to-air machine. So again we had another mix-match, you know
another mix matched airplane trying to do the lion’s share of the bombing. And I mean
they did about as good a job as you could expect and most of the guys there in those days
were pretty experienced, especially the 105 guys because they were flying out of Japan
and Okinawa, and they’d been trained and they’d been up there for quite awhile. And we
had quite a bit of experience although not in the F-4 so much but most us had 150 hours
to two hundred hours in the airplane, which is not a whole lot. But that’s kind of the way
it went, it didn’t make much difference what the target was, there was always something
that seemed to kind of make guys mad. And we had successes in there too where we’d
catch up with something. We’d find out it was a barracks area that was supposed to be
full of guys that were going to go into South Vietnam and someone got some intelligence
and we’d get put on it. And we carried, the F-4 primarily, our primary weapon at the first
was ten 750-pound bombs, and that was a huge payload in those days and that’s more
than a B-17 carried. We just destroyed this one barracks and apparently it was really,
there was all kinds of guys inside, and we hit them really super early in the morning but
someone let us do that actually. It seems like the successes were where someone in the
Air Force that knew what they should be doing directed it, but when they came out of
these JCS things and whatever, most of them were just awful.

RV: But you guys had no choice, you had to follow what.

RH: Yes, you just do whatever they say do, and of course we’re young and that’s
the way you do it anyway, and guys gripe but they didn’t gripe that much. We hadn’t had
any losses until this one target we lost a guy and he bailed out over water but he got out
of it, and we just didn’t have any, other than the original shoot down we didn’t have any
of those and so.

RV: Did you have any personal incidents that you recall from this TDY that were
just kind of stand out?

RH: Oh, yes lots of different ones. As a matter of fact I was talking about the
original shoot down is we were in there to bomb this, to be back up and MiG Cap and
whatever for this SAM site. They decided since they shot down Dick Kearn they were
going to kill the SAM site. So they got this huge strike force, again they went into the
manual and said its going to take sixty-something whatever 105s to bomb it, and they all
came in in these huge formations, well if they had any radar at all you could see these
guys in a big huge stream and us too flying above them in MiG Cap and they came in and
they’d actually move the missiles and had fake missiles up there and set up AAA and all
kinds of stuff from every direction around this so-called SAM site, there wasn’t anything
there. And they just murdered the 105s. I think they shot down three or four airplanes,
and that was just, what an eye opener to us, to see this kind of leadership coming out. How stupid could you be? And we were one of the last flights remaining as all this came out, and we were orbiting over on the other side of Phu Can airport, which was their primary base watching to see if they scrambled MiGs. And we heard a rescue attempt coming in and that’s when we saw what happened in Laos. But this gray helicopter, CH-3C I remember, it was just the one before the Jolly Green, came fluttering along out of nowhere and was calling in stuff and we suddenly immediately became, tried to give him rest cap and as far as keeping MiGs off him, but we had nothing to strafe with or shoot at the ground. And he got in there and by golly he pulled out one of these pilots, a 105 guy. And he was getting shot at and they were screaming and you could hear all this stuff over these frequencies, and we watched him coming out and he was taking lots of fire that we could see from tracers and he made it to a little spot. All of a sudden we thought he was going down and there was this little bitty kind of place on top of a hill, and he sat down on it. And that’s when we learned about Lima sites, and that guy actually went in there, there were I guess three on board, they were all CIA guys and they went in there and hand pumped fuel out of sixty-gallon drums into that helicopter to make it back and apparently they had a hard time getting there. They had this poor pilot that was down there with guys all around him and apparently they just yanked him out of the middle of them. As a matter of fact I even met the guy later at Kohrat when we had a meeting and this guy, he. If there was anybody that you wouldn’t think would be a hero it was him. He was little bitty, oh not little bitty, but he was probably five four or five, maybe weighed 130 and blondish hair, big smile and pretty young and he was Dutch. And he was flying contract for whoever it was, they changed the name so Bird and Son or somebody who was all these CIA guys in their flying, they were all contract people just working for nobody. And it just kind of struck me at that point that you always kind of see these guys that are heroes, you know that are John Wayne and these big guys and they’re all tough and whatever, and here’s this little bitty guy that boy, he really, you know the guy that’s kind of like pulling this woman out of Iraq, its just one of those incredible things.

RV: And you got to witness it?
RH: Yes, and I saw it. That was a biggie. We had lots of different missions that
were tough. I, as things progress and the missions got dumber and dumber, the Navy was
always, we always kid the Navy about, being very conscious of their image and they took
pictures all the time and you’d always see Marines and you still do today, but you always
see Navy or Marines doing something, and you never saw the Air Force. And when we
first got the F-4s back at MacDill they equipped us with gun cameras. I mean cameras,
they were camera pods that actually fit on the end of the wing where our drop tanks were,
and they were set up for us to photograph the Mercury capsules when they were ferrying
them out of Cape Canaveral and we put up six, seven F-4s and all make these runs and as
the Mercury finally got fired and came up we were supposed to pull up and photograph
the separation of the capsule and I never got a picture of the thing. I was always on the
wrong end of the string. But we did get some pictures where you actually whip up and
pull a huge big climb, plug everything going like hell in supersonic and you pull up and
try and catch it and get photographs of this. And some of the guys did really well. We
all got to do it off and on, or some of us did and so suddenly they came, the Air Force
came up with this idea, we need pictures. So they said, “Hey, guess what, the F-4s at
Ubon are already wired. They’ve got these camera things, so we’ll just ship them some
cameras and we’ll send a couple of enlisted photographers from the Air Force
photography whatever at Norton and get these great pictures to show what everybody’s
doing over there.” And our main job was to take pictures of 105s because they were the
primary workhorse and wanted to do that and they said, “Well, wait a minute. We’re
going to have this enlisted photographer in the back that doesn’t know how to run the
radars or anything, we can’t carry missiles that we can fire, we can only carry radar
missiles that requires the backseater to do that, so we’re going up there unarmed basically
even though we had missiles on board, and we were supposed to take pictures of
these 105s as they bombed the target.” So I got one of these missions and we did, they
went to the tanker and we got pictures of them as they were joining up, getting on the
tanker and the back guy, he was shooting shots of all the different guys and they were
waving and great, and taking pictures up close of the bombs hanging on the bottom of the
airplane and that kind of stuff, and we went in and finally they said okay, we’re going
into this target and we didn’t really, we weren’t briefed on where the target was. Well it
was really a nasty target, I mean right close to Hanoi and so I, these guys all, they bunch
up and they do whatever and got all ready and we decided we’d take these last two guys,
the three and four man and I’d follow them down and take the pictures as they were in
their dive bomb pass and take pictures of the target and then I could also get the bombs
from the guy in front of them as they hit probably. So we did this and all of a sudden,
you’re concentrating on what you’re doing, you don’t pay any attention and the guy in
the back is just screeching and screaming and all of a sudden I actually pulling up, once I
got the pictures and started to pull off I realized we were just covered with flak, just
everywhere, and this guy was just screaming his head off and then I have to whip around
and get the next flight coming in. Well this time all the gunners were awake and they
were really mad, so I got to go through it again and this time the guys screeching before
we even start. I’m telling him to shut up and go cold mike and he didn’t know how to do
it and so finally we got through with it, and amazingly made it through this whole thing
and didn’t seem to have any problem and whipped out of there and all the 105s, that’s
their design to go low-level at high speed and these guys went low-level and they just
walked away from us. And here I am with no way to fire a weapon, four hundred miles
from home at about a thousand feet, about point nine mach trying to get out of town by
myself. So I got back and I couldn’t believe it. I finally got this guy to shut up and get
sensible and we pulled up to altitude, I had to get a tanker because we were out of gas,
went back to Ubon, I went in, we looked at the airplane, we were going to unload the
thing and one of the pieces of flak had photographed the explosion, I mean the camera
had photographed a piece of an explosion that had hit out in front of us and a piece of it
actually hit the lens of the camera but I didn’t get hit at all and I came back and just
probably blew my top and screeched a lot at our commanders and took off for the club
and said I’m having a drink. But after two other guys flew those same missions and they
came back with about the same way I did, and they said you’re going to have to court
martial me of fly another one of those, that’s the dumbest thing in the world. So they did
finally say well maybe that’s not smart and stopped them, but that was one of the great
things that happened there too.

RV: Right. How, your commanders, how much did they really listen to you and
what your complaints were, what you guys said?
RH: They didn’t.
RV: Why did they not listen to you?
RH: I don't know as a.
RV: That seems to go against logic, that they are simply not going to listen.
RH: Well it is. Our commander had just the highest credentials you can get in the Air Force almost. He was a Thunderbird leader, flying 100s. I mean he fit the part every time, you know the old straight teeth, crooked smile, good looking, swaggered, I mean he just was perfect, and we thought oh, boy we’ve got this wonderful commander. But he didn’t know a whole lot about bombing. He was a great pilot, and he also didn’t like some of the tough missions and we finally realized he was scheduling himself for the easy stuff and then the ops officer was kind of the exact opposite. He wanted the tough stuff and to prove himself all the time and he was just a horrible tactician so he put his guys in jeopardy every time, as a matter of fact I think he lost all but two airplanes we lost, so and we lost I think about six airplanes I guess.

RV: How did you deal with the knowledge that any of these missions could be your last mission, that you could die, just basic fear?
RH: Oh, it’s a real lie if anybody said they weren’t scared, we all were but it was a, it was the whole idea that you had to be tough was stronger than the fear, and so everybody basically hid it. They all would complain a little bit but, as a matter of fact my wife who is a psychologist basically said that fighter pilots are a sub-culture, that they’re all nuts. We kind of did the same thing, and I think it’s just generally as a fighter pilot anyway, and I haven’t been anything else or that’s the way I learned. If someone crashes or if someone makes a mistake and does something wrong, you look at what the guy did. And you look at, you try and go through it in very logical, piece by piece manner and say where is it he screwed up? And then you say if I ever get there, I’m not going to do it. I might have lived. So when we started losing people, which we all did in September basically is when we lost literally everybody but Dick Kearn, September of ’65 it was like every couple of days we’d lose somebody, and we lost them dead, we lost them to, we know they were prisoners, you know that sort of thing. But every time that happened you’d kind of sit back and you’d try and find as much out about the mission and how it went and where you were and that’s why a lot of us had put it in the flight leader and
said, he put him in jeopardy and so most of us kind of zeroed in on the ops officer and
even our commander finally shipped him off the base for a while by himself. He didn’t
even have anybody with him but that was kind of generally it. We were also, most of us
were, had, somebody would have to become summary courts officer, which had to go
through and pack the guys clothes and do all that stuff and that was tough. I did for one
of my best friends, and that’s hard to do it. And everybody would go to the bar and
they’d toast the guy and probably toast him way too many times and that might happen
for two days but it was kind of, then it had to be over. I don't know, it was just kind of a
funny thing, but that that’s just the way most people handled it. People cried out in the
night, sometimes.

RV: In their sleep?
RH: Yes.
RV: What would they cry out?
RH: Oh, a guy’s name, “Break, break!” “Do this!” different things and nobody
ever really, nobody ever really said much about it or ever really admitted it, but I know
I’ve woken up a number of times after stuff and you wonder if you were noisy. You kind
of worried somebody would find out if you were scared so. But I think it’s a combination
of a lot of different things the way that happened, and we lost all these people all at the
same time it seemed like and it was just like two or three of them were really, really close
and which even in a squadron, although you know everybody and you’re close, you’re
not as close. So those things kind of got to us and in the meanwhile someone would go
home and then you’d hear something from the family and all that stuff is going on at
home that nobody can tell anybody what’s going on and we were, letters would cross
mid-Pacific somewhere and you’d hear this stuff that’s going on at home, and then even
some of the guys would write, like my backseater’s wife would say, “Fran’s have a tough
time of it.” But you couldn’t do anything.
RV: How often did you write her?
RH: Oh, almost every day. And I, this other, probably one of my best friends
even until today is, he was a, you know kind of a photo bug, and we finally got this little
PX and I bought a camera and we walked on our days off or whenever we had time off
we’d just go walking in the countryside and take pictures, and consequently I got lots of
pictures of little Thai kids and Buddhist temples and junk and water buffalos and
whatever, but it was good to get out and just do something. And some people read, I just,
I’m an avid reader but I just couldn’t concentrate on reading.

RV: Why not?
RH: I don’t know. I just couldn’t make myself sit down and do it. I needed to be
outside in the open, it just was good for me. And we got to get off base and go
downtown and some of these little Thai restaurants weren’t bad and actually it was better
than the mess hall. And we’d go down and get haircuts about every third day; it was kind
of something to do, so it was always good to get away. There was a, they had a couple of
clubs down there. I can’t, oh yes, one was, I think the big favorite was called the King
Star, and they’d have these Japanese rock bands come in. They were just awful and they
were not, most of us didn’t really go. Our enlisted really liked them and generally that
was the only thing they even got to get off the base, and they’d go down there but they
drank this old, miserable, what they called White Cock. It was, had a rooster on it but it
tasted like that awful oh, kind of sweet bourbon stuff, Southern Comfort. God, it was
awful and so they had good beer though, they had this Sing Hai beer so most of us drank
beer. And we had some Australians that came out from Pa Nang in Mai, the Mai Lai and
they were really good guys and they. We’d fly against them sometimes when we had a
chance coming back from a mission and they helped us a lot as far as if we ever were
going to really meet an enemy because they flew these souped up F-86s that really
behaved like MiGs. So it gave us a lot of practice, which we just did on our own, it was
illegal but we all did it. And that kind of stuff and lots of; we had really crummy
munitions at first. The propellers would spin off the end of the bomb and then they’d all
be armed while you were carrying them. And if you hit a bird or sometimes even if you
dropped them when the explosive charge drops them off the rack they could blow up. So
we kind of got through that, we had some really crummy, I shot a bolt up missile at the
Phan Hua bridge, which was probably one of the scary ones and all it did was just draw,
it leaves a big, white plume right where it came from and it was just like an arrow so I got
about three SAMs shot at me instantly so I just left.

RV: What did you do to evade those?
RH: I just turned the missiles straight up and we had a little controller in the
cockpit you actually steered it and I just pointed it toward the, what I thought might make
it into the bridge and just left, broke and the SAMs just went on. But we had some real
missile problems; they had this old Korean. A lot of them were Korean stuff and they
weren’t meant to fly on fast airplanes. We had a terminal velocity fuse, VT Fuse which
has a little radar in it that’s supposed to blow up five hundred feet above the ground say,
and that was supposed to be a great weapon for anti-aircraft or for SAMs or whatever and
they thought boy we can put that fuse on the nose of our regular bombs and we can bomb
with those and that will be a great weapon. They just didn’t realize that it wasn’t made to
go that fast. So they were still armed like most of them with little propellers and 105 guy
was flying with one and the little propeller armed it and he pulled up to get fuel, a tanker
and when he got five hundred feet from the tanker it blew up. And we had been
scheduled, Gemini, my backseater, had been scheduled to fly one of those missions the
day before and got grounded for weather. You think of those things after the fact but
that’s the kind of, thinking we got a lot of this thinking out of the Pentagon because we
weren’t allowed to do it ourselves, and even though the generals that were over there, a
lot of them were good fighter people tried to do it, they just, it was always taken out of
their hands it seemed. And the ruled changed weekly.

RV: What rules?
RH: One week we could shoot at these guys and the next week we couldn’t shoot
at them and then we could shoot MiGs and then we couldn’t shoot MiGs and then we
could attack SAM sites and then we couldn’t attack them.

RV: Why was that do you think?
RH: I have no idea. I think it was all the political idea of when they had talks and
they said, “If we don’t do this the Vietnamese will become nice and let us do it” I don’t
know, I mean I’m just, that’s kind of a facetious statement but its.

RV: I understand what you’re saying though; it was based on political talks in
order to.
RH: Well the politics had to be involved in it I’m sure and of course after the war
I read a lot of good books about guys that actually did research and looked at some of
these things, and in fact a lot of that was true, but the whole idea that we were in Laos
and all the rest of. Actually that’s funny too as this my flight commander and I flew a mission in Laos one day and they had a couple airplanes we always had loaded with kind of a mixed load, we’d have a gun and rockets and we’d have bombs and napalm. And if we got a call from these guys in Laos that they were in trouble. We became their close air support and they flew around in these little T-28s or O-1s and would give directions to us where the guys are and whatever, and it was usually these little Lima sites that were on top of a hill somewhere. I know Ray and I got scrambled one evening, it was just about the end of flying we thought and we got scrambled, and they sent us up to this guy. We talked to him and he’s obviously an American because you can’t miss an American talking versus a Thai or an Australian or somebody, and apparently Vang Pao who as now everybody knows was a Lao commander of our buddies that supported the CIA effort, he was in trouble up at this one place and we came in. It was evening and the bad guys, when you say the Army’s attacking him, but the Army is about probably 150 people, but anyway the bad guys were in one place and we came in and worked them over pretty good and got a couple of really good lucky hits and stopped them. And it was dark, literally, I mean we were really bombing in the dark in those mountains is really tough. Laos is really a strange country. You almost have to see it to believe it, but it always, these karsts that stuck up out of the ground were just sheer granite looking, gray granite looking cliffs that just would stand up like a knife blade, and they’d just be out there. Maybe some of them would be on the edge of a little thing that was maybe a couple hundred yards wide and then it would drop off on the other side. All these little valleys and stuff and these huge jungles and just all these little things and it was really kind of pretty because every morning you’d have clouds over the little valleys and it was, I don’t know, it just kind of looked like, I think I said before one time it looked like one of those things, you went to one of those bad movies, they said this land was forgotten and the dinosaurs were walking around. It kind of reminded me of that kind of thing. Anyway, we got these guys and came back and we were, went over to the bar and boy, we’re happy with each other and we did a good job and boy the next morning or late that night some time, I got told early the next morning, we had gotten a commendation from Ambassador Sullivan. He said nice going, you really did it great and all, how wonderful and everything and we thought, oh boy, we’re going to get a medal out of this one. And
we were just patting our self on the back and I think it was about ten o’clock in the
morning, we got a thank and our commander and everybody ran us down and said, “You
didn’t say anything did you?” or whatever, “Give me that thing back. Any copies you
made, did you make copies?” We had to swear to heaven that we didn’t and they took it
back. They said, “Wait a minute, we can’t say that,” because we aren’t there so they took
away so that was kind of like, oh, come on.

RV: Can’t you keep it a secret?
RH: But I’ll never forget that, it was really funny.
RV: What did you think of the United States being in this supposed neutral
country?
RH: Oh, you know it didn’t even dawn on me at the time that anything was really
wrong or different whatever with that. I just knew that it was politics and the Chinese
were building roads up there and we knew that and we could see them, but they were
Communist Chinese, not North Vietnamese. There were things going on all over that
poor old country and the poor people down there are just like American Indians kind of,
they were just naturous, they don’t. All they did was grow poppies and a little millet and
that was life and we came in there and screwed it all up. The Plain of Jars was another
one. I did a low-level run over that time, just one because everybody wanted to do it and
see it, but these burial jars they have up there are huge, they must be ten, fifteen feet tall,

RV: And no one knows how they got there.
RH: That’s right, I mean it was just, some civilization had them and they made
these things and they know they’re full of bones, but I don’t know Pol Pot or somebody
from Cambodia or who. But I don’t know, this was kind of a thing that went on and I
was young and most of us were and we were very political and these things just happened
and finally you got to realizing by the time we were there awhile that this stuff was
habitual. So most of us decided the way we were going to stay alive was to just kind of
keep it to yourself, don’t say too much and just do what you need to do. So we
developed our own tactics, we talked about it; we did certain stuff. We always ran in
and any time they’d say “I want you to bomb on this heading” we’d go in and say,
“That’s a dumb heading because it puts us right here, let’s bomb out of the sun” and we’d
just change it around and never tell anybody. And the other thing I think that irked
everybody the most was that we really were winning that war to a degree.

RV: In Laos or in Vietnam?

RH: In both. We actually were shutting down stuff. You could tell, when we first
got there, there was a lot more firepower coming back at you, the MiGs started flying,
then they suddenly all went down, we had no MiGs flying at all. The railroads quit
running. Trains we saw them at first, we didn’t see them later. Supplies, there weren’t as
many boats in Haiphong harbor. I mean all these things were happening and we were
making some headway in spite of the leadership, and of course after we left, which was
shortly after that Christmas, that’s when the administration says we’re going to stand
down for Christmas and Tet, so they re-supplied everything and of course were three
times stronger than they were when we were there. But I think frankly that’s just me but I
think we had a good shot at it, of really controlling that situation if we’d have let some
people that knew what they were doing really run it.

RV: Meaning in Washington and?

RH: Well and just let the military run it. I think most of the guys that are fighter
guys knew what it took to be safer and what the, how to put a lot of this stuff out of
business, we weren’t going to shut down things but.

RV: You could certainly make an impact.

RH: Yes, but some of the dumb stuff that we did, run all these little sonobuoys
and junk and throw them into the trees and supposedly know where all these trucks are
and then try and go out and surprise them, well they usually surprised us, and I think they
knew more about than we did.

RV: How effective was your interdiction on the Ho Chi Minh Trail complex?

RH: We made a good start in a couple places, and as I said early on and we
owned Route 5, which was the northern parrot beak which went into the Maguia Pass and
some of that, but we really did run a lot of that. We seeded that thing with bombs and
then they got smart, how to handle those but we’d do different things. We put into time
delay stuff, we did lots of different stuff that worked, and we even started flying at night
which the F-4 could do, but unfortunately our airplanes were painted white on the bottom
and it wasn’t a great deal at night under a flare.
RV: Did you prefer daytime or nighttime flying?

RH: Oh, daytime. We didn’t do very much night in those days and they started doing more and more of it later but we flew probably maybe ten different missions of night flying in our whole squadron, so it wasn’t a lot. It was all, I mean that’s the other thing that came out of Washington is somebody said and I don’t know if it’s true, that McNamara or whoever up in the JCS area wanted to know what was going on when they came in the first thing for their morning briefing. So, they scheduled that thing, anyway they started scheduling their briefings around first light target hits. So they would stay later or whatever and twelve hours difference, however that worked, and they’d do them at the time, we’d either do that or we’d have these late afternoon ones. So it kind of got to the point of any JCS targets that ever came out. You knew when it was going to be, what time it was and it was, that was, kind of really feel like don’t give us an edge here. Put us into these gigantic formations with all this warning, do whatever and put us in when they know we’re coming, but it kind of got that way. So finally we got through it and we finally got some R & R, got to go to Saigon, or to Bangkok for a couple of days.

RV: How was that?

RH: It was great. We all Buddha-ed our self out, there’s so many Buddhas running around down there, you had to go see them all and snake farms and elephants and the Thai, formal Thai dancing and lots of good food, but that’s all we did was eat and buy presented for Christmas because we were thinking about that. So everybody got their little three-day stint and that included flying down there and back.

RV: How long was this TDY?

RH: We ended up mid-July I guess until I know we left on November 20 out of Ubon. The reason I know that, we became godparents to my buddy’s daughter who was born on November 20. As a matter of fact I ended up leaving my second tour on the same date, which is really ironic.

RV: What did you think of the Thai civilians?

RH: We didn’t see them a lot. We saw mainly little Thai guards. We had some guys down in these restaurants that we met although a lot of those were Indians. We, Russ and I actually, who, my buddy who took pictures, we talked a lot to a group of monks and I’d taken Great Religions and some stuff in school and knew a little bit about
Buddhism and we went out and talked to, these guys were college educated that we talked to, a couple of them. And we’d go out there and have tea with them and sit around and we took little gifts and stuff and it was somebody it was really fun to see. But the average guy running around the street, we had a favorite barber but he didn’t, they didn’t say anything. Most of them couldn’t speak any English at all, but of course Bangkok was a huge city, a lot of them spoke English down there but that was just a whole different ball game then up there in the countryside. But we finally made it through and lost all these guys in, I think it was two and a half, three weeks. Everybody but the guy that we lost the day we got there, and so the end of the tour was really kind of nasty, everybody was really ready to leave and we got out of there on November 20 on a 130, I think there were two airplanes. We got to be the first group that left, we got down toe Clark, the Philippines and we were supposed to stay at the Ambassador’s Officer’s Quarters and they didn’t have rooms, they’d done something else and taken the quarters for some meeting or something so they put us in this old, dilapidated, condemned housing that had been enlisted housing and it was just one giant bug. I mean Thailand was bug capitol of the world, but boy Clark was a close second I guess. But I was sure happy to get rid of snakes and centipedes and bugs and frogs and rats, which we had routinely.

RV: Did you have encounters with snakes in Thailand?

RH: Oh, yes all the time.

RV: Inside the barracks?

RH: Not, well we didn’t really have much of an inside; it was usually outside under these little slates. And somebody would see a crate, crates mostly, we did see a couple of small cobras but they’d get down on the, we had some revetments for guys that put these what they call light-alls, they didn’t all our maintenance at night, most of it and they’d be down there with all these lights and these light things would make a lot of warmth and these snakes would crawl up there out of the rice paddy and our enlisted saw them most of the time, but if we happened to be down there for some reason you’d see one. Rice bugs, those were huge, big gray beetles. They were probably two inches long, Thais ate them like toothpaste, they’d just pop the head off and shupe.

RV: Did you ever try that?
RH: No, no, we didn’t have *Survivor* in those days. I’ve eaten a bug or two but I
think that was later.

RV: So Clark was pretty bad then?

RH: Oh, Clark was a mess and we all took off and said to hell with them and we
thought boy, all we needs a shower and we’re going to get clean clothes, well we didn’t
have anything. All we had is what we carried and flight suits, which were pretty grubby
you can imagine by then because our washateria was a couple of Thai women that carried
them down and beat on them with a rock and everything was brown. We took stuff home
just to show our wives, it was so bad and all your socks were tube socks, they just
stretched them that way to clean them, so they were sometimes to your knees, it was
really kind of odd. Anyway we ended up at Clark, went to the club and got thrown out of
the club because we were drunk and disorderly and all that kind of stuff, kind of had a
next day of sobering up until we got to the, I think it was the following evening and we
all piled on a DC-8, stretch DC-8 and flew back to Travis and then non-stop, turned us
around, refueled the airplane and flew us to MacDill. It was a fast, long trip, but it was
great homecoming.

RV: I can imagine, I can imagine. Why don’t we take a break sir? Okay, why
don’t you go ahead, sir? We took a break and where we left off that you had come back
from your TDY over in Thailand and you’re back at MacDill. So what was your reaction
basically getting back, this is early on in the war for the most part, in late 1965. Did
people ask you about Vietnam, what was happening there, things like that or was it more
of a hush-hush topic?

RH: No, actually they did. It, when we got back of course everyone wanted leave
and just wanted to be with their families so at least everyone was trying to get thirty days
which they’d asked for, but nobody ended up getting that, there was always something
coming up. As a matter of fact in my case I had to go up to the Pentagon with another
guy from MacDill and I think there was five 105 pilots and we were supposed to give this
briefing. Build a briefing on what was happening and some of the good stuff and they
said, “Don’t worry, tell everything” and we did, so they just literally threw us out of
there.

RV: Oh, really?
RH: Yes, we never, the highest the briefing went was a full colonel and he said, “That’s it, we’re never going to get this through anybody.”

RV: Why?

RH: Well, it was too, we said all the stuff they didn’t like. But it was basically we all said the things that were wrong with our weapons, the guns, not having a gun, the engine smoked, the missiles didn’t work, you know all that sort of thing, and the 105 guys said the same thing. You’re using this the wrong way and this kind of thing, and then we started getting into the briefings and why they were having us at the same time and the JCS schedule and all that kind of stuff. And it just got worse and worse, so finally they just said we can’t do this and we came back. And frankly nobody really cared too much and neither did our commanders.

RV: What did you think about that?

RH: I didn’t think too much of it at the time. I just kind of thought well that’s kind of standard. I wasn’t real interested in that business at that time anyway. I just wanted to meet my family over again and see my kids and fix things that were broken and all that kind of junk you do when you’re gone for a while. So we ended up getting back and right after we got there we cleaned up squadron and opened the thing up that had been basically closed and we found stuff from the guys that were shot down and dead and all that kind of stuff and that was kind of sad and everyone got medals and all that kind of stuff and the little ceremonies and we’d find things here and there. Finally it was, oh maybe a month or so, six weeks and then it just kind of, we all got busy again, and I was asked if I would go and teach in the academic section because we were starting these replacement training unit program there. So they wanted guys that had been there to have a little more credibility as far as teaching. So I went down to teach and the other good deal was that they promised that they’d put me in for the fighter-weapon’s school and I’d get a full colonel’s OER, my evaluation report and signed by him and all that stuff.

RV: What rank were you at this point?

RH: I was a captain. So I went down to the academic section and we looked over the curricula and the syllabus that they had invented for us and we decided we’d change it because it really wasn't current. So we did a lot of changing and shipped out all that kind of stuff. So that’s a process that takes, you have to go between commands and all that
junk but we just taught in regardless and sent it up and they eventually put it in. We
talked about the, don’t go down the same thing when you shoot, different stuff that keeps
you alive and started teaching that. I remember this one class I had, which was probably
the second class, which was academic class, probably four or five months after I got back
was loaded with full colonels. I mean really good background credentials on these guys.
And I remember they were really interested in all this leadership stuff, so I thought boy I
got an opportunity here to tell them stories, and we did and talked about stuff and I
actually spent extra hours with two or three of these guys that ended up getting promoted
to general and some of the ended up as commanders of, one of them ended up as
commander of Ubon, but really good guys and they were going into combat and they
realized they were getting guys that were bomber pilots and what else and they couldn’t
count on a lot of extra leadership coming from the pilots themselves. And they were
making big changes where the backseat pilots a lot of them were going to have to turn
around and go back as front seat pilots. So they were going to have some experience
there but they had guys that were also brand new in the front and hadn’t done any
gunnery but at least they knew what was going on. So those things came up and a lot of
different things, in the midst of all this we got a new model of the F-4, which was the F-4D. I’d flown only the C and it had different equipment. It had some warning gear for
missiles and that sort of thing. It had electronic warnings. It had a better radar; it had a
radar bombing system that we didn’t have in the C; some things that really did help but
they weren’t really big changes. We still had bad missiles; the missiles weren’t firing the
way they should. We had a lot of problems with what the, that was primarily in the radar
guided missile, the falcon, I mean the Aim-9, Aim-7, I’m sorry that. We just plugged
along in there; it was different. We invented different places, kind of in south Florida
down by the Everglades where there’s nothing, and we found little points and places
down there and we’d pick out where they were and we had an inertial navigator on the F-
4 so we could pinpoint pretty close to where it was within a couple of miles. And we
would make these guys develop a flight into that region and then pop up when they got to
a certain point and then acquire the target and make attacks on it. And we’d divide the
flights up so we’d be attacking from different headings and that kind of stuff. It turned
out to really be a neat deal because half the time especially all of us were missing it at
first and then we got to where we knew what to do and then you got to know how to look for stuff, and then you could tell people that and it just kind of moved into a different stuff. We started doing offset bombing off little dams and things that were there. The only range we had however was still that old gunnery range where you went around in a circle, but we tried to emphasize the point that you just can’t do that. But that was good then and someplace in the middle there where I felt I was doing okay, I got a call and was going to the weapons school, so that was a neat deal. Everybody wants to go to the weapons school. They only take oh what is it, about sixty something pilots a year and run them through the fighter weapons school. You learn everything there is to learn about the weapons business basically. It’s out at Las Vegas, at Nellis, there’s huge ranges out there, which means you can go and just do anything, literally for miles and miles without anybody even knowing you’re there. I got to take the family out; we rented a little place and took the kids and all that business.

RV: When was this sir?

RH: Oh this was, oh let’s see ’67. I think it was, oh I can’t remember now, it was something like March of ’67 I think, and we went out there and it was almost a four month course, three and a half months, and we spent six days a week, twelve hours a day and really hard, for me especially. The first week we got there they started out a program and said, “Well, we’re going to review a little bit of trig. We’ll take a day and a half here, that ought to be enough” of which I’d never taken. And gave us slide rules, we didn’t have calculators then, and just said, “Okay, here’s some problems and anybody that needs help, wants a little extra help, come on in.” And I went in, I said “I don’t know any of this” and I tell you this guy spent probably eight hours with me. I went home, stayed up all night, used one of my dexadrines and finally came in for our test, which I passed by one point and I think he was kind. I just, oh my god is this is what this school’s like. It turned out I mean I could literally build with my eyes closed. Tell every event that happens in four different nuclear weapons, how you put them together, how they work, how you take them apart, how you do all this stuff. And it went on to everything from how you load weapons, how you pout in the fuses, how you take them out, we did it all practically as well. Then we’d go out and drop them and there were live weapons and different stuff that we, and a lot of them were all new, we hadn't seen the
new stuff, we were using up the old Korean War junk. We discussed a lot of different things of what was wrong with our system and had a really good air-to-air course, which we hadn't had ever. I don’t know, by the time I walked out of there I was just one big massive number, but I felt so good and I don’t know, its another one of those things that its kind of like an empowering. You’ve got the data that now you think maybe people will listen to you.

RV: How long did the school last?
RH: Almost four months. And it’s a really, they just call it your Master’s Degree in fighter pilot, and they still have the same thing. It’s changed a lot because now they’ve brought in all these ranges up there and they have what they call a red flag, which they bring in dissimilar aircraft, you fight air to air with different airplanes, everything’s tracked, its all the new modern technology now. That was really quite new to us when we were there. So we came back and that’s when we did a lot more work as far as setting up the syllabus for the training, for the replacement training. I went TDY a couple of times back to Southeast Asia to see some things and look at a couple of weapons we were playing with, trying to see if they’d work and one of them was the very primary program that would be the laser guided bomb. We played with that a little bit, it didn’t work.

RV: So you would go over just to kind of check out the weaponry and see?
RH: See if it would work, see what kind of things in the terrain and look at different stuff, see if it would explode. We worked on you know this brand new bomb that they’re talking about, this twenty thousand-pound or whatever, it’s a fuel air bomb, in other words we called them the butane bombs. But what you do is you drop a charge that breaks up at the right time and it sprays liquid butane, and just as its gassiest then you fuse it. You fuse it with a whole, huge bunch of solid, like pellet explosive stuff and all this has to work just perfect and then it of course blows and they’re just mammoth explosions. So we tried to make these work and it didn’t work very well. But played around with some of that stuff and I was having a ball and we were getting along great, everything was fun, and I got a call from the personnel people and they said, “You got a new assignment” and I said, “But I’m not ready, it’s not time yet” and they said, “Yes, it is. You’ve got an S prefix, you’re a weapons officer, you’re going either to Turkey or Libya.”
RV: Wow, big change.

RH: “Which one do you want?” It’s like eww. So, Turkey was all nukes, which I wasn’t, just one mission and Libya was the gunnery range for Europe, and we were going to develop a tactical range down there for the people in Europe so that then we had some more training besides just running around low level. So I put in for that, got that assignment, we all went over with our family. A guy that was my sponsor, which you always have a sponsor in the military when you move, someone writes and says this is what you need, told me all this stuff because he’d my squadron operations officer after I got back from Ubon and I really trusted him. We went over there and it was just, it was like Ubon only worse. When they vented the airplane at about ten thousand feet coming into land at Wheelis we could smell Libya and it was just all swill. And then there, the first night we spent in the BOQ with the kids and at four o’clock in the morning you hear donkeys braying and the people are calling people to prayer and oh, boy. And we lived in a twenty-five foot by eight-foot trailer, and with four of us. It was just miserable.

RV: Wow, how long did you have to stay there?

RH: Well I was there until after Kadafi took over the government. They had a coup while I was there and I flew out and left my wife there with her kids, with these Libyans running around shooting in the air.

RV: Why did you fly out and leave your wife?

RH: Because we had to take an airplane to safety, so that’s another one of those fun things you get with the service. But I left my survival pistol with Fran though, so she had something like twelve shots anyway.

RV: So tell me about, what was Libya like?

RH: It was miserable. I mean there was, it was just poverty, poverty, poverty off the base except for the oil people.

RV: What city were you near?

RH: Tripoli.

RV: Tripoli, okay.

RH: And communist influence there, a lot of unrest, the king was sick, he was dying, they knew they were going to take over, the radical Muslims were already alive and well, which we really didn’t know much about then. But this was after the Six Say
War and whatever had happened and so we had a lot of real mad Arabs running around and they ended up taking over the government. It turned out it wasn’t a, it was pretty much of a bloodless coup, they did zap a number of the king’s party but what it amounted to is they just said, “You’ve got to get out of here.” Well I didn’t even get back for something like five weeks and then I was back for a week and I was back in Italy then running a school there at Aviano, which now has grown up. We started training our pilots there to go to Southeast Asia.

RV: Your job at, in Libya and in Italy was as an instructor pilot?

RH: Yes, I was what they call a weapons officer for the wing, and that’s an instructor flying as well as the weapons programs. And so in Europe for example the weapons officers was primarily responsible for the nuclear lines that everybody hits, briefs them, makes sure everybody knows what they’re doing, all that stuff as well as regular training. But we set up a little special school and it turned out there were eight of us that were weapons school graduates there doing the training. It was a fun school it was just, again I had to leave my family down there in a bad place and of course we’d had, there were very little amenities and we lived in these trailers and it was pretty bad living. I finally, and before I left though another job I had there was I ran the missile test program. We had three of them in the world, one was in Philippines, one was at Wheelis and the other was at Eglin in Florida, and we shot the only in the world the test that’s ever been done is low-level sparrow shot. You see, or radar missiles and found all kinds of problems with them and we proved what was wrong in Southeast Asia and this time we documented it because we had all this carrier wave stuff, but that showed up later in a warehouse and never been looked at.

RV: So they did not implement what you?

RH: Never implemented any of it. But we finally got out of there and got up to Germany and we thought oh, boy we’re moved up to Bitberg and I thought oh, man we’ve got a couple of years up here. This is going to be wonderful and then I, I hadn’t been there a month and I got a thing from the guy saying, “Guess what, you’re going to Kohrat, Thailand for your second tour. You’re going to be the wing weapons officer there.” So that was just at Christmas time, ’69 I guess it was. So by March I guess it was, whatever, February or March, March I guess actually I was in Philippines going
through the snake school, which was now our jungle survival school and another sea
survival.

RV: Had it changed much from the first time you went through those schools?
RH: Quite a bit, they did a lot of different stuff but schools are always the same
kind of things, academics in the morning, do practical in the afternoon or however it
works, one way or the other. And it was good, we did helicopter pickups, which were
really good because you never knew when you might be down in a jungle and we used
the new equipment, the jungle penetrators and all the stuff they didn’t have when we
were there the first time. And I got looking at all kinds of stuff and then I suddenly got a
surprise and said my assignment’s been changed from Kohrat to Phu Kat, and I wondered
why and it turned out this guy that knew a general real well said he didn’t want to go to
Phu Kat, he wanted to go to Kohrat so they sent him there. So I ended up in Phu Kat,
which was a closed base in Vietnam, you can’t go off base and we had Koreans guarding
us there.

RV: Tell me about the Koreans.
RH: We didn’t see them hardly ever. Since there was nothing to do and I didn’t
like to hang around inside or watch movies and didn’t do much reading, again I liked to
wander around. So I became friendly with the military police and the guards and the
Army guys there and wandered around all the different units that we had posted there, to
find out about their stuff. We could go fly with other people and do all kinds of stuff
actually which I did. But we would go out for example and you’d get to go fire a .50
caliber machine gun into a fire zone at night and all that stuff, which I got a kick out of.

RV: So that was your entertainment basically?
RH: Well, that kind of stuff, you couldn’t just go to the bar all the time, that was
about all the entertainment you got, and they’d have some of these movies that came in,
they were all cut up because the special forces guys would take out all the girly pictures.
So you had these strange movies. And it, it wasn't real fun. We had a strange outfit
there, it was only two squadrons of F-4Ds and it was kind of a mixed bag as far as a
mission, and I knew the Wing Commander he moved in, and I knew him well, as a matter
of fact I had been one of the guys that had taught him academics. He was one of those
guys that came over as a colonel and he got that job. He made me the Wing Weapons
officer, although I had to be still fly as the flight commander in one of the squadrons
because we just didn’t have that many people. They were having some problems there,
and I found a bunch of junk that was wrong and typical stuff and they hadn’t had a wing
weapons guys to really go out or somebody trained to look for it.

RV: What kind of problems did you find?
RH: Oh, bombs weren’t going off, they were. Napalm was doing funny stuff.
Guys were doing bad tactics generally and were dropping the bombs before they would
arm, things like that, they didn’t know how to set the settings. So I don’t, it’s pretty basic
stuff when you’ve worked in that but it’s. You go out and find out what the guys doing
and you say, “Look, the bomb either does this or does that,” a bomb is a pretty simple
device and you’ve got two choices basically when you drop a bomb, well it’s actually
three, but you drop it with a nose fuse or your drop it was a tail fuse and where the fuse
goes off blows the bomb up in that direction. That’s pretty simple, but if you want to
blow holes in the ground you let the tail fuse work in other words. So if you’ve got
suspected caves, which there were a lot of in Vietnam, these guys would dig these holes,
then you’d drop bombs that way and that way it puts a lot of force into the ground and
collapses a lot of these tunnels. But if you’ve got guys in the open or up or in trees or
whatever, you want to do it the other way. So we just taught our guys a little more of that
and how to do different missions and how to look for stuff. The Wing Commander was
real happy and I was just saying, I ought to go talk to our forward air controllers. He said,
go ahead and we had a squadron of them close, some of them were flying out of Phu Kat,
others at Qui Nhon, and so I went and talked to those guys. They’d never been trained
ever on weapons effects. So I mean it was so fast they’d gone out and really didn’t know.

So I sat down with these guys and started saying what pilot’s see when they’re fighter
pilot sees, and when they tell them this or that, what that means to the pilot. So we started
a little training program in Vietnam and I went around to probably six, seven different
units and then we checked a guy out from Saigon that picked up on the whole thing that
was running the FAC program for the whole 7th Air Force thing and they started doing it.
It was a fun project because once we got these FACS to know who they were working
for, and we all had the same call sign so they knew it was us. And they’d come in and
our guys would always ask these same questions: How far is it from the, you know did
you hit the target? No. Which way is it? What kind of target is it? And they’d say, “We
think there’s some caves there and we think whatever,” and then we’d say, “Okay, now
we’re going to do this” and a lot of times they used to have us come in and just drop
napalm trying to burn off the foliage so they could see under it themselves, they weren’t
sure what was there. So we didn’t do that kind of stuff, we started working the other way
around and taking a little more time. Usually its, everybody’s worried and get it off and
drop everything in one shot, whatever. Well they didn’t shoot at you hardly at all in
South Vietnam. I mean it was kind of like a gunnery range and we just, after we started
this thing our bomb damage assessment stuff just went straight up, and the FACs started
saying they wanted to work with us and that kind of stuff. And so therefore it became
kind of one of those go on a traveling road show. So I did that for a while which was
nice because I got a kick out of it and I felt it was needed.

RV: Well, this is 1970, right?
RH: Yes.
RV: Now this is amazing, you’re training the FACs and revamping some of the
tactics and giving new information in 1970?
RH: That we did in ’65.
RV: Yes, why?
RH: It’s that same thing. I truly believe that we had this group of senior officers
that just felt they knew the way it was supposed to be and that’s what you do.
RV: But this is a war, this is not war games.
RH: That’s right. But the other response is that we can’t get in, and the same
thing, the same rules apply there, they changed weekly or daily or whatever the rules of
engagement. And we had a lot of the same rules, you couldn’t do this if you couldn’t do
that and if you couldn’t see this, you didn’t do that. So you almost, guys would go in and
troll until somebody shot at them, then they’d say, okay this looks like it’s a safe one we
can hit, which is kind of dumb and I just said that’s not worth it. You’re not worth
getting killed down here by some idiot just shooting a rifle.
RV: So you were able it implement some of this stuff?
RH: Well, we did some of it, and we also then, since I was there and I knew some
guys, they came in with a couple of new weapons for us to play and I got to help test on
those and some of them were, actually the neatest one that I think we had was nothing
more than what they call CS Powder. It’s stuff that’s loaded in hand grenades and you
can throw it in and when it explodes it blow this powder out with the liquid and it makes
your eyes water, its like tear gas and it also makes you start throwing up and you also
throw up from the back end. So it, it’s a very effective thing if you can get it on
somebody or get them to breath it. So we did some tests with it and the first really
effective one, we had one of these where they had these little triangles built all over
Vietnam where these Special Forces guys ran them as like a bastion of help for the people
we were trying to help, and VC would come overrun them every now and then and they’d
just slaughter anybody that was in sight. And we’d get a call and it was usually at night
or something bad, and we responded and carried some of this stuff this one night and we
told the guy to put his gas masks, tell his troops to put their gas masks on, that we had
dumped napalm and it didn’t stop them and we had I think four of these things left and
we hadn’t used and he said, “Okay, they’re on the wire here” they had guys climbing
over the wire to get in their compound and we dropped this stuff and he couldn’t believe
it. These guys were all just out there in the open basically and this stuff hit and it spreads
like crazy and they all started getting sick, so they ran for it. So it was really kind of fun,
and it probably didn’t kill anybody or many and they were sicker than dogs and they
didn’t know why.

RV: Now this would not be considered chemical warfare would it?
RH: No, it isn’t actually. So I don’t know, somebody might say it was, but it
doesn’t kill you, it just makes you sick. It’s kind of like pepper spray as well as the stuff
that makes you nauseous. And I know it doesn’t kill you because every now and then
some dummy would get one of these grenades and roll it in a shower or someplace.

RV: Oh, boy. That’s a bad joke.
RH: Yes, it was not a fun one. But we did that. We had a thing on cluster bombs
that we did and we worked with the Vietnamese on that. We had a squadron of the guys
that dropped the Agent Orange in 123s at Phu Kat and they would go out and they would
take six of them and they’d go out and hit this area and they usually had an area that was
like a valley, and they’d go up this alley and they’d drop the stuff. And then we would
come along behind them and where they’d done this about a week later, when the foliage
is all fallen off, and we’d drop these little bomblets and they’d laid there and then what happens is when someone gets near them they shoot out these little strings and when someone gets near enough to pull on one of the strings, they’d go off. So we had these things, we’d go seed with them and then the Koreans would go chase the VC or the bad guys into this valley and they had to go kind of up the valley and we’d just run them over these things, so it was very successful, it wasn’t real nice but that’s what happened. But we did that and we basically started the night bombing program in Cambodia.

RV: What do you mean, you basically started it?

RH: Our squadron was, we were the first ones that went over and started working at night in Cambodia with flares again. Again we had that capability and we taught them how to do it. But we’d go over and work with FACs and they. It was primarily river traffic is what we were after. They were bringing stuff down the Mekong and they’d do it at night in these sampans. We’d go over and interdict them and usually blow them up but.

RV: So you were flying these missions you’re saying?

RH: Yes. And we got involved with a couple of spook missions in Laos while I was there, which on the other side of the mountain in Laos from Vietnam. We had some guys stationed there again, part of that group, the Raven FACs, they were getting hurt real bad one time and we went over there, we actually had to abort into Ubon and refuel. That’s the first time I’d seen Ubon since I’d left, it was all paved streets, swimming pools, beautiful club, great quarters, it looked like an American base. I was really amazed.

RV: Can you go into any detail about what you did there in Laos on those missions?

RH: We just provided support for the FACs when they were calling in strikes of this bad group here in this tree line, whatever. We’d go in and bomb them or strafe them or drop nape or whatever and try to hold these guys off and actually they ended up losing in the long run. But they snuck a pretty good sized I guess battalion or bigger of North Vietnamese and they were a lot better than the regular guys we were used to. That happened. I got sent out with the Navy for almost a month, I guess it was three weeks or more where I became part of the CTS-77 staff, which was Carrier Task Force Group
Seventy-Seven in the Tonkin Gulf so I earned my Tonkin Gulf patch, but I flew over there a couple of times, primarily the Air Force go-between for the Admiral, whoever was in charge. It was fun, it was just, I’ve been on as many carriers probably as most Navy pilots but I think I, I was in a couple in the Med when we were running a program with the Navy shooting missiles. I was on two of them there and then I ended up I think on six different ones in the Tonkin Gulf. Some of these that are still running around I’ve been on but it was different. We found out a lot about how the Navy worked versus how we worked. We had a lot of stuff that we could pass to them to help them out a little bit. They had some stuff that I took back and passed along, again its one of these where you don’t share a lot of stuff. It’s almost as bad as later when I got in the intelligence business to realize how nobody tells anybody what the other one knows. And just as an outset on that, I had no idea we had twenty-nine agencies in the United States that had full intelligence systems, and if you think that isn’t tough trying to talk to each other. That’s just what’s so neat about this whole Iraqi thing, is they’ve got these guys not only working together, they’re sharing everything. They’re out there living together; they’re doing all the same stuff. They all got the same thing in mind and that’s a goal, and the military is running them all.

RV: And that was not the case in 1970 and later.

RH: Certainly wasn’t, and it wasn't in ’70 either. We had some of the same problems. As a matter of fact we had a little inkling thing going on and we went up and I was one of the few guys that had flown in North Vietnam and we did I think two missions where we went up there and did orbits on trying to, in case we needed to provide MiG cap for a couple of guys on some of these little special missions they were running. Generally I didn’t see very much fire. There was a lot of small arms stuff, you could see tracers, machine gun type stuff, small cannon, .23mm cannon was a bad weapon, it was tough, but we didn’t get a whole lot of stuff like we got in the North so it wasn’t, personally to me as scary. I did a lot of different things. I wish I had flown more because I liked to fly but I felt like I was doing something.

RV: It sounds like what you were doing was very constructive and helpful to the war effort, despite the fact that it was late in the war.
RH: Well it was, and I felt good about it. I know it was surprising, they were putting together some stuff and they were looking again for F-4 qualified S-prefix, which is weapons school guys and said, “Where can you get some” and they were saying, “Whose done more than half a tour?” And it turns out that General Ols, Robin Ols was going to become the Chief of Safety in the Inspector General’s office, and he was looking for people that had early F-4 experience in Thailand, and of course you pop that in and you know only so many names pop out and he recognized mine so I ended up going to Norton Air Force Base in California and working in the IG Safety Shop.

RV: Now how long did you actually stay at Phu Kat then?

RH: I was there till; as a matter of fact I left there on 20 November 1970. I was supposed to be there until the following, what was it, March, and they cut the tour short and actually the reason they did that is they actually ended up moving the F-4s out of there, back up to Da Nang, and so they didn’t need a weapons guy.

RV: Okay, let me ask you a couple questions about Vietnam. Did you have any more contact with Vietnamese civilians then, I know you said it was a closed base?

RH: Actually none except people running around the base like a little woman that did, was a cleaner or every year you’d see a whole bunch of Vietnamese when the bread fruit would come ripe, ripen and I happened to be there when it did and they attack all these bread fruit trees and you see a lot of them and they kind of sit around and give you thumbs up and kind of don’t say much but we really had absolutely no go-between. I met a few guys when I went down to Saigon a couple of times down there that were working in the MACV complex but not really.

RV: How different was Saigon this time around?

RH: I just, I hated it down there. I’d been there a couple of times. I came back one time I think after Ubon delivering an airplane and it just, it was this huge bureaucracy and there was so much corruption going on down there. There was always somebody was doing something, they were either. They had some deal running this or they had some deal running something else or somebody was selling washing machines or somebody was doing. You heard all this junk that was happening and frankly I think half of them were a bunch of drunks, but.

RV: You talking about the U.S. military personnel?
RH: Well a lot of different ones but some, and a lot of the joint staff was there and  
a lot of them and the civilians that came in there to work didn’t really do much, we had  
more interference. Even at Phu Kat we had some of these so-called news people running  
around every once in a while, and they’d come up and they were a real pain in the neck.  
They drove our commanders nuts, they wanted all kinds of super special treatment. They  
wanted all kinds of junk and I didn’t, I wasn’t really involved with them with my job but  
I heard about it. And I flew with the helicopter guys there, I flew with the Army on some  
of their missions, I flew with the guys in the old Caribous that were going up supplying  
these guys in these little camps, and the 123s. I even flew with those, dummy dropping  
Agent Orange, not knowing I was putting myself at risk, but fortunately nothing  
happened. But I got shot at a lot of times in those little airplanes.  
RV: Right. What were your impressions of the enemy in general?  
RH: It’s hard to really say anything. They were persistent guys. I think anybody  
with a cause can be dangerous and give them a weapon so it’s hard to say. I don’t think  
there was a lot of real organized stuff going on that I saw while I was there. You’d see  
organization of moving equipment was really a big. The Vietnamese were really good at.  
They could move stuff, and it was incredible how much junk they would carry and get  
down there and the amount of people that just carried stuff in their arms. And that kind  
of stuff, but I never really witnessed much. I couldn’t even talk to any of the soldiers or  
stuff around because they were all Koreans in our base. And I did talk, I went out a  
couple times to, I think it was the first, the Big Red One, it was an infantry unit and I flew  
up there a couple of times with a couple of the guys. As a matter of fact I, we had a  
bunch of stuff we’d get in our squadron all the time about the drug problems and different  
stuff on that and these guys wanted it, so I’d give them all these handouts and all this  
material about what drugs do to you. I never witnessed much. I asked questions a couple  
of times about did these guys worry about fragging or some of the stuff I’ve heard and  
they. Generally no, they’d heard of a case or something but I think a lot of that stuff at  
least when I was there was overblown. He said they did have a big pot problem and guys  
would sit around with nothing to do and they’d just sit there and smoke pot, but other  
than that I didn’t hear anything about guys on hard drugs and supposedly down in Saigon,  
which again it was supposed to be the big mother of all sins and that supposedly had
harder drugs as well as acid, and every now and then some kid would get down there
from the Air Force and get some acid, even there or I guess later in Thailand, at Bangkok
or someplace and come back and have one of these bad trip things and go nuts and they’d
have to get rid of him or do something, but we didn’t, our enlisted were really good. We
didn’t have problems like that. Our maintenance people were hard working dedicated,
poor guys didn’t have much to do but I was always really proud of those guys, especially
the weapons people. I worked with them very closely and they had a hard job but.

RV: How would you judge morale in the field in 1970?

RH: It was kind of a mixed bag. Our unit I think was quite high. The Navy was
high and most people are on the carriers. I tell you those guys eat like they do on cruise
ships and when you think about it, you cramp up five thousand guys on a boat you better
feed them good or you’re going to be in trouble. So they eat real well, they have lots to
do. They’re kept busy by design, they run shifts, so those guys working three shifts a
day, eight hour shifts and somebody’s busy. Air Ops are always interesting. They’re
always having something. They have what they call unwraps when those destroyers and
the supply ships come up alongside and do all that stuff and pass stuff over. That’s really
fun to watch, its kind of like refueling and they do refuel too. But it’s just a different
kind of life. I think the Navy did well. Our guys were for the most part happy. We had
some of the guys that were in the other, some of the FAC pilots wanted to be fighter
pilots and they were mad because they couldn’t, but they were happy when they felt they
were doing something good, and I think a lot of it was just motivation. By not having
very many people to help them out, they were just kind of isolated and have to live by
themselves. But from my standpoint it wasn’t what I’ve heard from all these guys that
talk about problem, problem, problem in South Vietnam because I just didn’t see that
much. We had a few cases of guys doing stuff but that was actually in 1965 in Thailand.
I don’t think we had, we never, we didn’t have one court martial and as far as I know I
don’t think we had. We put one guy on report I think because he kept taking stuff to,
stealing stuff to take off to try and catch this girl that he was after. But he just, his
biggest problem was that he was not too smart.

RV: How about race issues, did you ever see that?
RH: Actually no. We had a number, we didn’t have any black pilots at Ubon. I think we had one black pilot in the other squadron I was in at Phu Kat but we had a lot of black enlisted and we didn’t have any problems that I heard of. And that was pretty far along I guess when you say ’70, when did it actually get over, ’72, ’3?

RV: Yes, sir.

RH: So, I think a lot of stuff was written about, because people were, had nothing to do, but as I said that probably was the biggest pain in the neck we had was visiting dignitaries that thought they were doing some good and it caused more trouble that anything else.

RV: What was your opinion of the indigenous forces of Vietnam?

RH: You’re talking the?

RV: ARVN, the Vietnamese Air Force?

RH: I didn’t really see them much. Every now and then we’d see the little A-37s working a place, and I talked to FACs about them and they said they generally were good. And they’d gotten rid of the F-5s by them I believe or they still may have had a couple. But they primarily flew those and they were in choppers and we supported them with close air support a number of times. On the one hand that’s, you don’t know that much about what’s going on and as I said in some cases I’m glad I didn’t. I don’t think I’d have been a real good infantryman.

RV: Why do you say that?

RH: I just, I don’t know. It just, there’s a whole difference between being in your airplane. I’ve heard guys say that when you get into combat on the ground with people, you become they become like, you hate them. You just, you just get so uptight about the things that are happening and I don’t think you feel quite that same way. I don’t think I could say at all I had any hatred for the North Vietnamese gunners or whatever, they were doing their job trying to get us. I think maybe I would have felt that way on the people that when I got back and found out what they were doing to our prisoners but I don’t think it was that kind of a thing. It’s a, I think from a, I don’t know, maybe it was just me, I talked to Fran about it an awful lot when I came back from Ubon and it was, she would just say, tell me how I felt, what was all those things that guys in general don’t talk about. And actually she was the only one I could ever kind of really feel comfortable
saying what I really felt like. So I shared a lot of stuff with her and it is funny, it’s a hard
ting to say but you have to disassociate yourself a certain amount about feelings. I
guess you’d say that when you fly, when you do your mission, otherwise you’d go nuts
trying to think of all the what you might do. Would you be hurting somebody when you
did this? Would you kill somebody, would it be woman and children, I mean that has
nothing to do with it, you just try and do your job. It’s a hard kind of thing to explain, but
those that did it with you, you established a real bond and strangely enough nobody ever
talked about it much. But its funny how when you’d see somebody that was in your unit
from Taiwan, I mean from Thailand it was just you’d go out of your way to make sure
you said hello and whatever, it was just, you just had a pull there. And I do think that,
you’re bonded for life when you get into an experience when you’re sharing danger.

RV: Yes, sir. Did the Air Force ever give you guys counsel or advice on how to
handle possible psychological fallout?

RH: No, mainly it was the stuff that we had gotten or had been, actually our first,
the only training I had and actually I passed it along about he stuff that I had gotten in
that school, that survival school. But then they did have some programs at Clark when
you came in, they called part of the snake school, the jungle survival school that they had
a week there that they skipped me because I went in and talked to them and they said
you’ve got everything. But they talked a lot about how you behave if you become a
prisoner and the kinds of things that you want to try and do and what and kind of review
it all for everybody, which I thought was good but they don’t. I would guess that if you
would go ask for it from a flight surgeon they would put you on a psychiatrist or
somebody. We had one guy that kind of disappeared that was really irrational as far as,
and I don't know why, he was a backseat pilot, but when we got there he just became
kind of irrational, he tired to carry a three-foot machete with him.

RV: In the plane?

RH: And different stuff and it got to where he was almost paranoid about trying to
carry weapons and trying to find grenades and everything in case something happened
that he’d be prepared. They finally just said hey, I don’t think we, he’s going to be able
to handle this, but I never really ran into him after that, they probably just got him out.
RV: How did you handle the thought of possibly being shot down and being taken prisoner?

RH: Oh, actually once I had gone through that school and some of the rest of it I thought well, I have training, I know what I’m supposed to do, if it happens, it happens. I don’t want to think about it. I got way more important stuff to consider. And especially in a fighter when you’ve got not only your backseater to take care of but you’ve got six other guys to take care of, and you can’t overtax them. You’ve got to always fly up to the limitations of who you’re flying with and you’ve got to think about that, and don’t commit somebody to something they can’t handle. And the older and more experienced you get, the more of that you start worrying about. But I think, like I’d said before when you were really scared, this stuff came out at night when it was, for some reason like quiet and you’re laying there in bed and you think I can remember missions today, the ones I screwed up on and the things I did good, and my god, that’s a thousand years ago. But some of that stuff just imprints, and as I said before you look for mistakes when you fly. Every time you take off in a fighter you’re betting your life in a way, and especially the older airplanes, the newer ones are much more reliable but you still are doing that. You can have an engine fire, you can have a something or else, somebody throws a bolt in the front, you don’t know it. And all that stuff happens in seconds, and you’ve got to be able to react. So you’re always pretty tense and try and make sure you’re not, you don’t get complacent. So most guys that I knew anyway, when they got in the cockpit they became a lot different. I mean you could walk out and be shaking and get in the airplane and suddenly you’re just totally. I had a backseater I flew with at Phu Kat that did that. And I mean he really, we’d be getting briefings and he’d kind of almost like he had Parkinson’s and then we’d get up to go out and he just solid as a rock and was good. But it was just his method of coping I guess. So everybody had little things that I always felt better if Fran was around because I could talk to her, but it is kind of funny. You’ve got really good buddies and other people that fly that know how you feel but you don’t talk to them, at least I didn’t. I don’t know many people that did.

RV: Is that basically what you said earlier, kind of more of a bravado, you kept it to yourself?
RH: Yes, it is. If anything you get loud and noisy and sing songs or go to the bar and have a big, we even used to go in the bar on these really bad missions when I was at Ubon and we’d walk in, our bartender’s name, he was a little Thai guy, and his name was Buffalo, whatever reason. And you’d walk in and you’d put your hand on the counter flat and you’d make a noise and you’d say “Buffalo, gin” and he’d look around at you, get a big smile and he’s walk over with an old fashioned glass and just plunk a full bottle of gin in front of you. And you’d sit there like John Wayne and pour a big swig and kind of look at it, not say a word and take a big swig and try not to wince too bad and sit back and the other guys would all kind of do that and then we’d all talk. It was, some of the nutty things you do, but I guess that’s all part of coping too.

RV: Yes, that’s your way to deal with it.

RH: Yes.

RV: When you looked back at your experience in Thailand, flying over Laos and North and South Vietnam and then again when you were at Phu Kat, what would you say was the bravest action that you witnessed during that time, what comes to mind?

RH: Oh, right off the bat I think of that guy that, that rescue guy, and actually when I think about it I was on the rest cap for Robbie Risner when he got picked up, and that’s again another case where two .23mm guys were shooting out of towns and we couldn’t attack them, and the helicopter was trying to get in there and they shot one down, they actually, the second one came in, picked up the helicopter crew and they still couldn’t get Risner. I think rescues are probably it. We even had a guy that was shot down over the Gulf off of this one mission in North Vietnam, and he was out in the water and they started shelling him from coastal batteries, he wasn’t very far offshore and this HU-16, this old Albatross, the twin engine little Drummond sea plane came roaring in and sat down and sat there with these big spouts going up in the water that were probably twenty-five feet tall from these shells going off and he just taxied over to these guys and picked them up, pulled them in, turned around, took off. So, it’s different stuff like that. We didn’t have any, I don’t know, I mean just, guys were sometimes. I watched a flight of 105s go into a really tough target right off of Hanoi when I was trying to rest cap, I mean MiG cap and it was so bad, I mean it was just like don’t go in there, forget it and these guys rolled in, went in there and two of them got shot down. You just knew it was
going to happen. So seeing other guys just do that kind of stuff sometimes is pretty
amazing and I don’t know, I’ve seen, rescues I guess are the most important. I’ve seen a
couple of FAC guys that were taking real heavy fire in South Vietnam that just kept
doing it until they got guys, got results, and you know those poor guys are flying around
in little puddle jumpers, you know right off the ground so they could get hit by anything.
But I don’t know, it, a lot of it is you kind of conjure up what you think is going on and
that’s, you find out that’s usually dangerous, so you just don’t do that but you try and just
play only what you know and attack what you know, so that’s better. I’ve seen guys do
some good stuff, but it was kind of expected. I don’t think anything was, ever felt that it
was something extraordinary other than when someone would try and save somebody and
that of course I do think is extraordinary, those guys really were amazing and that little
guy in particular that I saw. I guess that’s the main thing.

RV: When you look back at your service in your mind’s eye, what do you see,
your service in Southeast Asia I should say?

RH: Oh, I think I see, I try and look at I think to start with try and look at the good
things, and usually somewhere in there I get a rush about how unfair it was for my wife.
That she’s sitting back there with all these Jane Fondas and all the rest of them doing all
this stuff and trying to keep her mouth shut and not knowing. It was so bad when we
were there originally, the press knew that there was, there were Air Force F-4s flying in
North Vietnam and there were F-105 Air Force flying in Vietnam, or in Thailand
actually, they’d say Thailand. We were the only squadron there, so in the morning she’d
get up, turn on the news, the standard seven o’clock, stuff, getting the kids ready, and
they’d say an F-4 was shot down in North Vietnam today, Air Force F-4. Well, that
narrowed the odds real quick to about eighteen airplanes, and then they’d say how many,
whose flying and they’d have to sit around all day long until about five in the afternoon
when they finally got the word all the way back and passed along to our chaplain and
then they’d come out and knock on the door. So Fran had worked a deal with two or
three different people, but our next-door neighbor in particular who said he would,
anytime that came up he would check and see who it is and if it was me, he’d come tell
her.

RV: That had to be difficult for her.
RH: Yes, it really. I don’t know. It’s just an awful lot to ask I think, sometimes.

But it wasn’t us that, I think you worried more about your family than you did your own welfare but its, it’s not fun. I’m not saying I would want to go back in the service and go to war, it doesn’t mean I wouldn’t, and I think if I could or I was qualified I’d probably go tomorrow to help if I thought I could do something, but I think everybody would.

RV: What were your opinions and what are your opinions on the anti-war movement during the Vietnam War?

RH: Oh, I was sickened in a way. As a matter of fact, some of the people that did it too, I mean Jane Fonda was bad enough. There were people that I even knew their names at that time. My wife ran a VIVA office, where they had the VIVA bracelets. I don’t know if you’re familiar with those but she ran an office in southern California with those and just worked tirelessly at that stuff and that was in the seventies, when we first moved there to Norton. These things had come up all the time and I think I was, well I am an Episcopalian, was probably a pretty good Episcopalian until I got back from the second tour, and I had a priest tell me that I was a killer and that really made me mad.

RV: Really, an Episcopal priest?

RH: Yes, and it wasn’t just that. The guy, just like now in this war, the guy running the National Council of Churches is saying that we got a bunch of trained killers over there killing Iraqis, and that does get your attention. But I didn’t have, other than a couple of those cases I didn’t have any real problems. We didn’t have, actually when I went to be an attaché I went for an interview, Fran and I both went for an interview at the Pentagon and we’d just cross the Key Bridge and were coming in and entering into the main entrance of the Pentagon and there were a bunch of idiots out there throwing animal blood on people.

RV: What year was this?

RH: And that was, gee whiz, wait eighty something, and I don’t remember now what they were mad at. But you see that kind of stuff and I’ve seen a lot of it and its not, it just makes, kind of sickens you. I don’t know what drives; I just feel that people aren’t very intelligent because they hadn’t looked at the whole system. I don’t know, I didn’t, I felt that we were betrayed in a way because of our leadership, political leadership primarily, and actually even our military leadership at the top was just not up to speed
with what we were doing in the new requirements. I always thought in summary cases, god help us we didn’t go to war in Europe because there’s not doubt we’d of had to use nuclear weapons but if we ever got into a conventional war there it would have been a horrible mess.

RV: Why do you say that, because of the leadership problem?

RH: Because of the leadership right at that time, and I didn't have that opinion until afterwards but it kind of frightened me to think that we better get some people and then I was really happy to see a whole bunch of guys get promoted to general that I knew well, that I knew were good people, that I knew understood. Chuck Warner was the three-star that ran the air war in Desert Strike, Desert Storm and he just said, I’m not going to kill people to bomb a crossroads, drop your bombs from this altitude. When we get one that counts, I’ll put you down low, and that’s the only time I’m going to accept you coming back with holes in your airplane saying I went down to five hundred feet or something. So there’s times you risk and times you don’t but it’s nice to have somebody tell you that. And from talking to F-16 guys that are flying over here out to he reserve unit at Fort Worth that’s basically how they’re handling all this now. They know what works and what doesn’t work and when to take a chance and when not to. And this one guy I was talking to, he was a colonel over there that was one of the, the director of operations was saying the same kind of thing. That you always have zealots, you have guys that don’t listen, you have some people that make mistakes, but he said they are still mistakes and generally it’s that same old attitude that I had when someone screws up then they look at it and they say, well what outfit is he with, why was he risking his life down there, if that were me I wouldn’t have done that. So that’s how you cope, but I think it also ought to be part of leadership. So I think the way things are being handled now, the military’s fighting the war generally and that’s what they should and it’s too bad I think if we had military there, I’m not sure whether it would have been a huge outcome. I’m not sure, I don’t personally think the Russians would have come in with this domino theory thing, but if it were me I would have bombed the ships in Hanoi harbor and said you aren’t getting any supplies and also just interdicted totally the railroads in from China and then you just say, “Okay guys, you’re cut off.” That’s not the way it was being done from Washington then and every six weeks or so it seemed like somebody was trying to
do something different, so no consistency, worried about, whether the peaceniks,
protesters were actually causing people to do stuff I don’t know, but I just think the
administration under LBJ was very flawed.

RV: Sir, what did you think in April 1975, when South Vietnam fell, what were
your feelings?

RH: Oh, I just was glad to see it was over with. I think it had been prolonged for
so long, and I felt at least most of us had moved ahead. That we knew that it had to get
over with, someone had to just pull us out and get it done and finally it happened. So as
far as the political side of the settlement and that, I guess I liked some stuff, I didn’t like
some stuff, the rest of it. Military I think it was, it hurt the service in a way, all services
but as a result of that war I think really trying to put it in perspective, I think in a way it
forced our younger officers as they were promoted and moved up to realize and start
thinking that we need to start operating in a different mode. That the services really can’t
just argue over money, argue over funding and how many ships do I get or how many
planes do I get, how many Wings, how many whatever. There’s somewhere along that
line it started changing to how do we fight? How do we accomplish the mission, not
what do we get, what’s best for us; what we need to do and that sort of thing. And it
probably took the politicians along the same line. I want to build more ships. I want to
build airplanes in my factory; I want to do whatever. Stuff kind of started showing up at
the end of the war that nobody wanted but it, gradually the leadership started to look at
joint commands and that actually didn’t happen until the late, late ‘70s or early ‘80s. We
started looking at what kind of aircraft we needed that can do a mission that we really
needed to be able to do. Just smaller things but that’s when the F-16 was developed,
that’s when the F-15 was developed, all that stuff came out of, in the early ‘70s. All that
development happened then. Lots of new missiles, lots of new different things started
coming out as the result of the thinking and the people that were in a position now to say
this needs improvement. We also, I was fortunate enough in one of the jobs when I was
in the IG to work on a project that actually got us the Nellis Gunnery Complex and what
they call Red Flag, which they say ten flights at Red Flag is the same as six months of
combat to get you tuned into the thinking of what you might face in the modern war. The
overseas command started looking at different stuff. This is when guys that I knew as
captains and major started making general officer, and these guys, a number of them actually, Bill Kirk, who was a guy I worked with on the Red Flag project was a colonel when I worked for him and he ended up making four stars, was USAPE commander, heck of a guy and very thoughtful people. Most of these guys were, had Masters degrees. They weren’t just guys sitting around, a lot of them were aeronautical engineers, a lot of them very well trained, a lot of Academy graduates. It just took a long time to develop because you’ve got to break down that thinking that was going on by the folks in our own services as well as the folks or politicians.

RV: But it did happen you’re saying.

RH: But it happened, at least I feel like its almost happened today. We don’t get too many things rammed down our throat any more. There’s always exceptions but the military doesn’t just to have accept and airplane or a thing because the guy from Washington State wants Boeing. They’re starting to look at can it do this mission? And as bad as it is and you see how long it takes to try and develop an F-22, this is held up by political things, it isn’t held up by the service. They want their piece of the action or the piece of the pie and it isn’t the service that wants the changes, it’s the guys involved in it. So we’re a democracy and that’s how we work and we put up with it. Fortunately now there was a change from where, and I saw these things. We would bring guys in the ground-training environment when we were working the ranges at Nellis; helicopters started getting moved into the force structure. When I got out of the flying business, got in the intelligence business I found out the Navy SEALs and the special Delta Force guys and our Green Berets and all these guys started working together, and they started working not just attack or whatever but it was the total concept of what’s been happening today. And its marvelous to see that guys go in, they’ve got medics, they’ve got rescue people, they’ve got all kinds of equipment, different things that, its just unimaginable and those kinds of things I really wonder if we had years back what combat would have been like. But its still dangerous, guys still get killed, guys still make mistakes but it’s getting where it’s a lot better than it was. I mean who’d have thought you could have a war in one month and kill a couple of hundred people. I mean it’s just unbelievable. I think the progression has been just enormous since I was in Vietnam, and I don’t think the public really understood those changes. It never was sold to them. The military doesn’t go out
and sell themselves too much except within their own academy structure or in the
schools, the military schools, but you rarely get to see what the differences are but until I,
when I first heard that they were going to put embedded media people with combat units
I just cringed, and now I’d say thank gosh that these guys are there because now that
whole conspiracy theory stuff goes out the window. But I think we’ve learned some huge
lessons and there’s still, the politicians can still misrep the military and misuse them and
we’ve seen some of that recently. Somalia was one, some other stuff that was I think a
very big misuse of what our capabilities should be, but if we’re going to use power we
need to use it successfully and use the equipment we have at our disposal the best way we
can. We certainly didn’t do that in Southeast Asia in the 60s and 70s. We certainly
didn’t do it in Korea. We, look at the numbers of people that died in World War II.
When thousands of thousands of guys just storm a beach being shot at; its just sheer
numbers how many survived just by sheer luck not getting hit. Now we don’t do that and
I think that’s marvelous, I really do. The, I think the thing that I’ve seen and that’s as I
mentioned before just being over here talking to some F-16 guys and the follow-on
people, I don’t really think that our people have changed that much, they are still caring,
they’re still wisecracking, they’re still doing the same stuff, they still have the. I had to
laugh at this one general officer I ran into, he said “The only difference in the squadron
today then it was when you’re day is” he said, “when you go into the john and look at the
magazine on the back of the door” he said, “Then you had *Playboy* and whatever, he said
now you have *PC Magazine*.” Computer science, whatever, but he said other than that
and that everybody runs now, nobody smokes, they watch their booze a lot of that stuff,
they take better care of themselves. But he said, “The eagerness, the camaraderie, all
that’s still there.” Even the group I belong to called the Red River Valley Fighter Pilots’
Association, that was guys that had to fly over downtown Hanoi to be a member, so we
finally were all dying off, so they decided they’d let the guys in from Desert Strike and I
went to one of the reunions we had back at the 75th Anniversary of the Air Force, they
have it in Las Vegas and ran into all these old guys or whatever and then there’s all these
new guys and frankly it’s surprising. I think they would have fit in at Ubon and probably
done just as much or get in more trouble than we did. It’s a funny group; I think
Americans are really unique.
RV: Let me ask you a question about today’s Americans and the Vietnam War, what would you tell young people today about the Vietnam War?

RH: Basically what I’ve told you guys. I think we’ve progressed, they’ve moved to where now there’s so much more thought and the rest of it but the ideals haven’t changed.

RV: It’s become more efficient and better.

RH: Oh much, but the idea that, I mean these kids today, when you see these interviews what’s going on in Iraq, they have that same, “I’m over here because I think we can make it better.” And that’s the only reason that, at least in my thirty-three years in the service that I understood. It was, you did things to make things better and it isn’t that you go to kill people. It’s not even, that isn’t even the kind of thing you’re thinking about but I don’t know. It isn’t just military training because I was an ROTC guy, history major. I was right alongside of West Point guys before the Air Force Academy even came about, people that had gone to Citadel and whatever, that were really military trained and heck when we finally got into flying airplanes we didn’t have any different feelings for what we were doing it for. So it’s not some, it’s not some love of attack, killing, whatever and it isn’t for the idea the uniform looks good or whatever. You certainly don’t do it for the money and it’s just those kinds of things that go along and even today we’re so far behind because I just heard on the news on one of our breaks, if a young Army guy, a private or a Marine guy gets killed today his family gets six thousand dollars, that’s his insurance. And when, as a pilot they get more now and I don’t know what it is, but when I was in it was ten thousand, for a pilot. So they, the country still hasn’t I think paid the guys what they should be getting, but that’s sure not why they’re in. There’s lots more reasons, and some of it is family history, some of it is past things they’ve seen, most of us that I’ve run across and even a lot of us before either had an interest in other countries or had a pretty good feeling or had visited lots of places. And when you go to Thailand or someplace and see the absolute poverty and see how bad it is and think how different it is in our country, you see real quick that what these poor people are suffering and going through, you’d like to make it better. So I think that’s probably some of it. I have no doubts that the military has moved in the right direction. I’m so proud to see that these guys can do what they do, gee whiz, these carrier guys
today are flying seven or eight hour missions routinely. I flew probably five of those or six combat tours and those are taxing. Your body doesn’t, you’re in a pressurized set up where your body doesn’t, it gets rid of moisture real quick and you can’t carry enough water to be safe. So its just a really tough, difficult and the thing that a lot of these guys are doing now but you sure don’t hear a lot of them complaining. I think we’ve learned a lot of lessons, I’m not sure if the general public has been taught very much, it certainly isn’t taught in schools very well, at least in the public schools. A lot of history isn’t taught well, a lot about cultures isn’t taught very well and I think we’re making huge mistakes in our education system by not getting more involved. I saw how important that was when I was in Ubon and talked with Buddhist monks about how they lived and at least I knew a little bit about it and could ask them questions and when I asked questions I could see the light in their eyes and that I wanted to know and I wasn’t some heathen that came in just to pillage their country. So I think those things, and those things are taught at our academies. So we teach a lot of people but we don’t do that in our computer skills and the guy that becomes a programmer these days has nothing in humanities and there’s a lot to learn when you talk about Iraq and these countries. If you know what happened two thousand years ago it’s a little different to see how they progress and why some of the cultures are that way. I just am proud to sponsor these guys these days because most of them are very, very well educated. I don’t know what the real facts are, but I can guarantee you that a huge percentage of our Air Force officers and probably Army and Navy officers as well have Masters degrees, some of them doctorates, well educated. They’ve been all kind of places. They’ve done stuff. They’ve, as part of your training when you’re overseas you get involved in having to go places. In Germany for example, our young airmen and stuff were encouraged and taken for nothing to go see Birkenwald and Dachau and some of the places to see what that meant. And it’s important to do that and I think we do that in the service, which unfortunately we don’t do other places, but it’s a real sobering thing to see a death chamber. That’s just and I think that becomes part of the motivation of national service. Maybe, I’m sure a lot of people aren’t cut out to do that, they don't have the interest to get them there. I just have always had a great interest in people and what makes them tick and why they believe that way. I talked with the people in Libya, guys that could speak some English, had even
translators talking about stuff, asking them why they did this, why they did different things. I feel that I know an awful lot more than my neighbor about what drives people in the Islamic world. I think I know a lot about the Far East. I think I knew a lot about Europe and other parts in Africa, but I think that its just certain people that wasn’t to do those things, like you want to be a professor which I think is a wonderful, noble profession which I even considered once, but there was a little too much academics and not enough running around flying fighters for me, but there’s always that draw. I think that’s kind of like athletics, it’s. I don’t know if you ever drove a Porsche or something like that, but when you strap yourself into an F-4 or an F-86 or something like that and step down on the pedal, it’s about five hundred times better than that Ferrari and you can do it in three dimensions. So from, you have the feeling that you own the sky up to fifty thousand feet and can do, if you’re good at it you can do anything you want. So it’s been an interesting life, for me anyway. I hope others choose the profession. I hope others can learn from what I think we in the military have done. I think Vietnam was another lesson, I think if you go back and look at, if you do become a student of history and military you can go back to the through Klausewitz, you can go back to the First World War, you can go back to what drove Eddie Rickenbacker into doing stuff, you can say what drove Richard Bong into being a great fighter pilot in the second war, what could be so and so, how these guys were motivated and why they did the things they did, but its always evolved. And it seems like these wars; every time we have them we evolve into a regime. I think we’ve evolved now into a much different one, gosh knows what it’s going to go from here. It appears to be unmanned, which I think would be awfully difficult for me to sit in a trailer somewhere and fly an unmanned fighter out and attack something, it just doesn’t seem like the same deal.

RV: Let me ask you a question, have you been to the Wall in Washington?

RH: Oh, yes.

RV: What was your experience like there?

RH: Oh, I looked up primarily everybody I knew that was on it, which we knew quite a few people and also even through the VIVA project that Fran worked on, we had lots of people we knew that we almost felt we, you know we knew their families. When I was in that same time period I was flying these little T-39s around, executive, little
executive jets and we flew military wives that were, husbands were missing in action and they got free rides all the time by any of us that wanted a ride. We just put them on the airplane and we had permission to do it so we flew a lot of people around. And talking to these women that their guys were missing, they put in a lot, because the services in those days didn’t help them much. I don’t know that much about it now but I hope it’s better than it was then. If a pilot in our squadron was shot down and he had nothing extra, his wife got ten thousand dollars worth of insurance and his pay stopped the day he got shot down. So if he’s sitting there with two kids at home he didn’t get much. Well they’ve evolved a lot since then too but it still, by declaring somebody missing it’s a godsend to the family in a way because it at least gives them a little shot for awhile to get their act together. But that insurance money doesn’t go very far, so the guys today are better off but its even like the recent shuttle failure. The military guys I think now get something like $75,000 and the civilians get $700,000 so it hasn’t equaled itself but its still, I think its still a great job.

RV: Would you ever want to go back to Vietnam, Southeast Asia?
RH: No, actually I have no desire whatsoever.
RV: Why is that?
RH: I don’t know, I just, I would probably, I went back to Thailand, not as civilian. I went back later just going through and it had modernized, it had changed, it had, it just wasn’t the same as I had seen it and it. I thought I would have different feelings when I went there and I didn’t. It just kind of like my feelings were for the people that were there, it was interesting to see a lot of the same sights but it wasn’t. I didn’t go there to take over Thailand or whatever and it just didn’t, it just wasn't the idea that there was anything, it was the people I was with that were important. So I could go to Las Vegas or house down the street and reminisce more, feel more actual feelings about the war at someone’s house than I would by going back to the scene. I’m not sure that some of the guys that were on the ground say that’s a great help for them, but I don’t, it wasn’t for me to go to Thailand, and I don’t think it would make much difference.

RV: All right. Well, sir is there anything else that you’d like to add to our conversation today?
RH: Oh, I don’t think so. I’ve rambled on for a long time but it, I hope that somebody else is able to use this, they will use it in good faith and hopefully take some time to understand the new guy on the block and see what he’s doing. There’s always a private story there, not the political story.

RV: Right. Okay. Well this will end the interview with Richard Hamilton, thank you very much sir.