

F-105F 62-4429
15 MAY 65

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

WITH

COL BEN M. POLLARD



SPONSORED BY THE
ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATES
OF THE
UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
CLASS OF 1965

FOREWORD

One of the oldest and oft-used sources for reconstructing the past is the personal recollections of the individuals who were involved. While of great value, memoirs and oral interviews are primary source documents rather than finished history. The following pages are the personal remembrances of the interviewee and not the official opinion of the United States Air Force Academy or of the Department of the Air Force. The statements contained herein have not been verified and the USAF Academy does not assume any responsibility for their accuracy.

These pages are a transcript of an oral interview recorded on magnetic tape. Editorial notes and additions made by the interviewer or transcriber have been enclosed in brackets. When feasible, first names, ranks, or titles have been provided. Only minor changes for the sake of clarity were made before the transcript was returned to the interviewee for final editing and approval. Readers must therefore remember that this is a transcript of the spoken, rather than the written, word.

RELEASE STATEMENT

KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS:

That I, Col Ben M. Pollard,

have on (date) 5/11/72, participated in an oral, magnetic-taped interview with Dr James C. Hasdorff covering my best recollections of events and experiences which may be of historical significance to the United States Air Force.

I understand that the tape(s) and the transcribed manuscript resulting therefrom will be acquired by the Association of Graduates of the United States Air Force Academy, Inc. for placement into the United States Air Force Academy Library and that at the Air Force Academy Library the tapes and transcripts will be open and available to the public for inspection, research and reference.

I do hereby voluntarily give, transfer, convey, and assign all rights, including copyright, title, and interest in the memoirs and remembrances contained in the aforementioned magnetic tapes and manuscript to the Association of Graduates of the United States Air Force Academy, Inc., hereby relinquishing for myself, my executors, administrators, heirs, and assigns all ownership, rights, title, and interest therein.

DONOR *Ben M. Pollard*

DATED 5/11/72

Accepted on behalf of the Association of Graduates of the United States Air Force Academy, Inc. by:

Richard M. Copcock
RICHARD M COPPOCK, Lt Col, USAF (Ret)
Executive Vice President

DATED:

22 February 1993

Ben Pollard Resume

Full Name: Ben M. Pollard

Born: Shelbyville, Ky.

Education: BS and MS in Mechanical Engineering from Purdue University

Most Significant Recognitions:

American Institute Of Aeronautics and Astronautics

1) Distinguished Speaker, 2) President's Award, 3) Associate Fellow

American Society Of Engineering Educators

1) Unique and Meritorious Service Award

Purdue University

1) Distinguished Engineering Alumnus Award

2) "Old Master"

Air Force

1) Silver Star (two), 2) Legion of Merit (two), 3) Bronze Star for Valor (Two), 4) Meritorious Service Medal, 5) Air Medal, 6) Purple Heart (two), 5) Numerous other awards and decorations

Work Experience:

- 54-55 -- Research Engineer for Caterpillar Tractor Co.
- 55-56 -- Pilot Training for the US Air Force -- Fighter Aircraft
- 56-59 -- All Weather Fighter Instructor, Instrument Instructor, and Maintenance Test Pilot
- 60-61 -- Masters Degree, Purdue University
- 61-66 -- Instructor and Assistant Professor, Aeronautical Engineering Department, US Air Force Academy (USAFA)
- 66-67 -- Advanced Fighter Training in the F-105
- 67-73 -- Assigned to Korat Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand in F105's
 - Shot down on May 15, 1967 and remained Missing in Action Status for 3 1/2 years
 - Changed to POW Status in November, 1970
 - Communicator and taught engineering clandestinely while a POW
- 1973 -- **FREEDOM**--Released on March 4th, 1973
- 73-74 -- Associate Professor, Aeronautical Engineering, USAFA
- 74-76 -- Deputy Commandant for Military Instruction, USAFA
- 76-81 -- Commander, USAFA Preparatory School
- 81-86 -- One of founders of STARNET Corporation -- a long distance telephone company
 - Highest Position in Corporation--Executive Vice President
- 1986 -- February -- had seven heart by-passes and retired.
 - Today: Consulting, working with several volunteer organizations, and helping start up a new business.

Married: To Wonderful wife --Joan (Joan H.)

Children: Both Purdue Mechanical Engineers

- A. Virginia Lorenc is an Engineer for Hewlett Packard as is her husband (They live in Rancho Bernardo)
- B. Mark Pollard is a computer designer for LaPiné ~~Company~~ ^{Company} Engineering, and is married to a manager of Businessland Corporation (They live in San Jose)

Hobbies: Computers, Gardening, and Skiing
(Ben)

Hobbies: Singing, Sewing, Cooking, and Skiing
(Joan)

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"THE LITTLE RED-WHITE-AND-BLUE SCHOOLHOUSE IN HANOI"

USAF Academy Oral History Interview
11 May 1992
Taped Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard
Conducted by Dr. James C. Hasdorff
Transcribed and Edited by Mary Ellen Monday

H: To begin the interview this afternoon, Colonel Pollard, I would like to get a little family background on you. First of all, when and where were you born?

P: I was born in Shelbyville, Kentucky, on the 27th of February 1932.

H: And how large a family did you come from?

P: I was an only son.

H: What profession was your father in?

P: My father was a banker, insurance man, and a farmer--all at the same time.

H: You grew up in the Shelbyville area?

P: Yes. It's a small farming town.

H: What part of Kentucky is that in?

P: Thirty miles east of Louisville, between Louisville and Lexington, in the Blue Grass region. The farm that we owned has been in our family for 200 years. I still own it today.

H: What inclined you toward the military?

P: When I was 7 years old, my dad was driving me out to the farm, and we stopped at a little place, and the guy had a little Cub, 65-horse Cub, and they took me for a ride. I started

building model airplanes, and just one thing led to another. I just liked to fly airplanes; I've liked airplanes all of my life. I went flying yesterday. (laughter)

H: How did you set about achieving this goal?

P: Not directly, really. I wanted to be an engineer, and when I graduated from high school, I had a scholastic scholarship, but it really was from the Purdue football team. After a couple of years, I found out I couldn't be an engineer and a football player, and I was a lot better engineer than I was a football player, and so I got very involved. I mean, I was in engineering--and frankly, I still hadn't considered the military. This is a joke, but the draft board came along--it was Korea at that time--and they gave me 10 days to give them one reason why they shouldn't draft me. I thought, "Hey, I really want to complete college." So I went down--I was in ROTC [Reserve Officer Training Corps] at that time as a sophomore, but I hadn't thought about going into advanced. It was only a two-year curriculum--so I said, "Man, I'm a volunteer." So I did that. Then I went to summer camp, and they let me fly in a T-33. I said, "You're going to let me do this? You're going to pay me to fly in this airplane?" And from that time on, I was hooked. So there wasn't a direct goal. My goal was always towards engineering, but happenstance put me into ROTC--advanced ROTC--and put me in the back seat of a T-33, and I have been flying every day since then.

H: And the rest is history.

P: And the rest is history.

H: Where did you take your flying training?

P: I went first to Mirana Air Station, I guess--anyway, it was a little civilian-run field outside of Tucson [Arizona] for primary training, and I got T-34 and T-28 training there; then I went to Laredo [AFB, Texas] and got more T-28 training there and upgraded in a T-33; and then I went to advanced training and checked out. I went through all-weather interceptor school and got in the T-33 and the F-86D and went all the way through Class 56L. From the beginning time, when I entered pre-flight until the time I was flying the F-86D, I was always in the same class. Very unusual.

H: And you set your sights on being a fighter pilot?

P: Absolutely. There was a shortage of fighter pilot assignments, and we realized not everybody was going to get a fighter pilot assignment. At Mirana we used to go cut out all the accidents in the accident reports and pass them around the room and point it out and try to scare people out to the bombers so that we got the fighter assignments. When I got to Laredo, there were hardly any fighter assignments. In those days, there were way too many pilots, so you had a choice. When we went into pilot training, you only had a two-year commitment after you completed pilot training. When we got to the time to choose aircraft, they said, "You've got to extend for two years if you are going to get a fighter assignment, either that or you are going to go to a radar assignment," you know, a ground station somewhere.

Joan and I went home, and we talked it over. We put down all the pluses and minuses. We decided I was going to get out and

go back to work for Caterpillar as an engineer. I left for work that day, and I came back that night and said, "Joan, I signed up." (laughter) So anyway, I guess I can't say no to airplanes, so even when my logic said, "Don't do it," I signed up. At that time, by the way, the airplane, the F-86D, was a real killer airplane. That was not one of my better days--Joan found out I was going to the F-86Ds and knew I'd done it over all our good intentions. It was one of the high points of our marriage! (laughter)

H: When did you get married, by the way?

P: We got married in 1954, October 1954.

H: A hometown girl?

P: No, I met her at Purdue. Her father was a professor at Purdue, and so we met while I was going to school.

H: And it was Purdue where you were . . .

P: I was an undergraduate, and I also got my master's degree there at Purdue, so I have a BS and MS in engineering from Purdue.

H: All right, and where was your first assignment then?

P: I went from Laredo Air Force Base to Perrin Air Force Base [Texas], as I told you, where I first was an instrument instructor in a T-33; then I was an instructor in the F-86D, which was just really wonderful. We flew in every kind of weather. The worse the weather, the more we flew. We had

special minimums, and we just flew all the time in airplanes that really were demanding. Then the last year I was in maintenance flight test, so I got a tremendous amount of hours and experience. After that, I said, "Hey, I just can't fly forever." I decided I needed to expand and get back into engineering. I signed up for the Air Force Institute of Technology--I guess is what we called it then--and they assigned me back to Purdue in Mechanical Engineering, in Propulsion, to get my master's degree. In February 1960, I went back there.

H: I've heard a lot of stories about the old F-86D, that it was an electronics man's nightmare.

P: The problem was, when it worked, it was great, but it didn't always work. It had a fuel control system--without today's stable solid state electronics--with vacuum tubes, and it could fail in less than ten seconds. The engine could go from running absolutely normal to the turbine melting down because of one little short circuit in a vacuum tube. So it was an exciting airplane to fly in terms of watching where you were going. It was tremendously short on fuel, and it was heavy. So it required--it really taught me how to fly. It was not an airplane for a guy who didn't know what he was doing. And to teach other people to fly it really was fun. It was one of the few airplanes where there were no two-seated versions. The F-86 had no two-seated airplanes. So whenever you checked your student out, you sent him up there, and you just got on his wing. His first flight and your first flight in the F-86D was always truly a solo. You'd never been in the airplane before. So it was really kind of interesting.

H: Did you have any close calls in the -86D?

P: Oh, I got a student up on his solo flight, and all hell broke out. We took off and the weather came in, and I had him up above weather on his first flight, where he couldn't see the ground. I knew where we were, but just to get him back on the ground when he couldn't see it was a little bit exciting, particularly when we had little fuel. It was tricky, but I did get both of us back on the ground safely! I went out one time and landed the F-86 as a tornado came in, and so I ended up landing downwind with a 45- gusting to 60-knot tailwind with the runway lights out and four inches of water on the runway. Also, there was an airplane on the runway, and the tower didn't know about due to the pouring rain. To this day, I don't know how I got it on the ground, because I couldn't have bailed out. I would have been killed if I'd bailed out. There was a tornado right beside the field. We really learned how to fly there. We flew a lot, and we flew well. We had a lot of confidence.

H: Let's talk about what happened after you went to graduate school. What was your assignment after that?

P: I got a letter or a call--I can't remember which--and someone said, "Do you want to teach at the Air Force Academy in the Air Department?" I've got to tell you, I had never even heard of the Air Force Academy. I swear I hadn't. I know it's hard to believe, but I swear I hadn't, but it sure sounded nice. Joan thought she would be interested in riding horses, and I always thought I wanted to learn to ski. We never rode any horses, but we have done a lot of skiing. One night the AFA [Air Force Academy] representative was in Champagne, Illinois,

and after a whole day of classes, we got in the car and drove through a thunderstorm to Champagne, Illinois, through the back roads in Indiana, and had an interview. Joan drove back because I was so tired! Joan was with me just to keep me from going to sleep. Someone was babysitting with our son. We drove back, and by golly, they called and said, "Come to the Air Force Academy," but in order to do that, I had to graduate six months early. I had to sell the house early and take a loss on the house, but we thought the AFA was neat. Well, it turned out that was the understatement of the year. We had 13 wonderful years; Joan was there 15 years. I guess our kids and we think of Colorado Springs and the Air Force Academy as our home.

H: What progressed from there?

P: As I said, when I was at the Air Force Academy, I was teaching aerodynamics. First I taught thermodynamics, propulsion and heat transfer. Colonel Marschner was my commanding officer there, a wonderful man. He was also a new arrival, and he said, "Everybody here is going to learn to teach everything," so he made us all learn to teach everything. The Aero Department was formed out of two departments. Just before I got there, there had been a Department of Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, and Propulsion. The other department was the Department of Aerodynamics and Gastronamics and Design. As you might guess, the department members wanted to keep teaching the same old subjects, the same old way, but Colonel Marschner had other ideas. Colonel Marschner said, "Everybody is going to teach everything," so if you had been in thermodynamics, you went across and taught gas dynamics, etc. He really expanded my knowledge base, and by the time I left

in 1966, I had been a course director several times; I had taught most of the courses; I had really, really expanded. I wrote textbooks back there for the courses and came out of there with a tremendous background, and you'll see later that this had a big impact, because I taught college engineering courses in Hanoi and ran aerodynamics and thermodynamics courses--I called them aerodynamics "Hanoi Hilton" style--out of some of the things we did at the Academy. So I really had a lot of opportunities--and I was an early arrival at the Academy. I had bosses that really trusted me, and so it was a good time to be there. Things were changing. The "Majors for All" program came in, and I was also a part of that.

Interesting enough, Karl Richter was a student of mine, as well as Lance Sijan [Lance P.]. In the early days when I got there, freshmen could not go home for Christmas, and so the freshmen, we had--I forget what they called it now--anyway, you--our family--would take some freshmen under your wing, and Lance was one of my students. On Christmas of his first year at the Academy, he brought his girlfriend to the AFA for the holidays, and she stayed at our house along with another cadet's girlfriend. So Lance's girl stayed at our house. Lance, from then on, would come up for extra help in thermo from me, and we were together off and on all the way through his stay at the AFA. I worked with him and all of his troubles. He had a lot of trouble in aerodynamics. Then after he graduated, I ended up meeting him out at George Air Force Base [California]; so we kept crossing paths until I would find, later on, that Lance had died in Vietnam.

It's funny how you keep crossing the paths of people. Leroy Stutz [Leroy W.]--we'll talk about him later. Don't let me

forget to tell you about him--and a lot of these things that occurred.

Then in 1966 Boeing called me and wanted me to become a propulsion engineer on the 747. I thought, "This is what I would really like to do." I really wanted to do this. We, Joan and I, talked, and talked, and talked, and talked about whether we should get out. The war was--in late 1965 is really what we are talking about. You know, in 1965, the war was just kind of a--a lot of people didn't even know about it. We finally said, "Well, we're going to get out, and I'm going to be an engineer." Then General Moorman [Lt Gen Thomas S.], the Superintendent, talked to me, and General McDermott [Brig Gen Robert F.] talked to me. I said, "I just really want to do this. I really want to be an engineer." Anyway, for one reason or the other, they talked me out of it, and I ended up going to Vietnam.

And lo and behold, I signed up for the A-1, which was a prop-driven airplane, because I thought it would be a one-year assignment. I would get it out of the way, and then I was going to get out of the Air Force and go be an engineer for Boeing, because they still said they wanted me within a year. Well, the assignment came down, and I was in F-105s. At that time, the F-105 was carrying all the mail into North Vietnam, what little was going on. Airplane losses were severe. Because of the losses, it had a bad reputation. I've got to tell you, this was not the happiest day in Joan's life. You know, "What in the world are we doing?"

I'm not a fatalist, but I do accept things pretty much as they are. So I just took it, but then when we went to McConnell

[AFB, Kansas] and saw, you know, the widows and families of the missing all around the base, it became exciting days. But anyway, I did, again, kind of fall into the F-105. I was assigned from the Air Force Academy in the summer of 1966 to McConnell Air Force Base. It is really interesting, because at that time there were three people from Perrin, either at the Air Force Academy or who had just left the Academy, who were going to McConnell--excuse me, I've forgotten his name now. I'll think of it maybe--anyway, two of us flew down in a T-33 from the Air Force Academy--"Ward Dodge," who was an AOC and I flew down to McConnell. We went down to Derby, Kansas, and found two of the worst-looking places you've ever seen. But one was a little better than the other, so we flipped a coin to see who got it. Ward won and got the better of the two places.

The guy who had rented the house before me was killed flying F-105s over there, so it was a strange existence. After we left Derby, Bob Barnett took my house over. We had known each other at Perrin. He and Anita moved in, and the hard luck continued. He went over to Thailand, and he was shot down, but he did survive. Bob Barnett also taught at the Academy. In fact, he was AOC, I think. Anyway, that was not a very good house I lived in in Derby, Kansas.

I went to F-105s there at McConnell Air Force Base. I loved the airplane. Interesting story about the F-105, by the way. While we were at McConnell, we had a secret briefing near the time before we were going to go overseas. An officer from the Pentagon came in and said, "You need to know that the turbine wheels"--are you a pilot?

H: No.

P: Anyway, a turbine wheel is the rotating mass that's most critical in the airplane. It's large; it's fragile, and it has to be perfectly balanced. Anyway, they had taken the turbine wheels of the F-105s down to the Eastern Airlines maintenance terminal and found out that 98 percent of the turbine wheels were defective. It would be like having your front wheel of a racing car cracked; and you are going to go out and run the Indianapolis 500. They told us that McNamara's [Robert] Boys had run this through a computer and determined that the F-105 would only be in combat for another year, 1968, and then it would be withdrawn from combat; the airplane wasn't any good, and therefore; it was cheaper to lose six pilots and twelve airplanes--the forecast rate--over the next year than to fix the airplane. So we actually went into combat with airplanes that were terribly defective. As it turned out, the airplane was retired in the mid-80s. Obviously, the Air Force finally fixed the turbine wheels, but McNamara is not a name that we like to talk about in this family. He found solutions in computers but did not understand people at all. A side story. Sorry.

When I did get to McConnell, the first thing I did--we got there two weeks early--I went out and started what we call sniveling rides. If there would be an instructor going somewhere, I would just jump in the back seat. I found the F-105 to be just the most unbelievable airplane I've ever flown in my life. It was big and really just simple and fun to fly and just went like hell. It was 14 feet to the top of the canopy. You just felt like you owned the world. It just

did whatever you told it to do. I fell in love with the airplane

Joan's love affair with it was practically nil because she knew what was happening to its pilots, but I really did; I loved the airplane. We always say there were people who flew the F-105, and people who wished they did. It was an airplane that carried the mail to the worst places in North Vietnam, went "downtown," as we said, and it went down low when not everybody else would do it! So I'm proud to have been a F-105 pilot--if you haven't guessed that by now! (laughter)

That's how I got to McConnell. That's what I did. It was six months, and during that six months we spent about a month at George Air Force Base [California]. There we got our range training, aerial gunnery, firing a missile, and during that time, Joan went back to Shelbyville, Kentucky, and rented a little house back there. We assumed that I was only going to be gone six months, maybe seven months at the most, so that seemed like the obvious solution. Then we would be on the way to Boeing or whatever. That's what was supposed to happen! "The best laid tales of mice and men often go astray."

H: Yes, that's true.

How quickly did you get to Southeast Asia then from there?

P: Pretty quickly. I finished training; we had about 15 days leave, and then I flew over to the Philippines, spent 5 days in the Philippines at a wonderful jungle survival school. Also, I had gone to survival school up in. . .

H: Stead [AFB, Nevada]?

P: No, the other one.

H: Oh, up at Fairchild [AFB, Washington].

P: Fairchild. Yes, I went to the one up at Fairchild in the summer of 1966. I can't say enough good things about those training programs. They turned in really handy in Southeast Asia, and you'll see later that they really made a difference. I couldn't use everything I had learned, but I'm a believer of it, and you'll find out later that this had a big impact when I returned home, because I believe so much in SERE training.

Anyway, I got over to the Philippines in March, went through this jungle SERE program, and when I got through, I expected to be assigned to Korat. That's where I was going. Korat, Takhli--I can't remember.

Anyway, when I came out of the jungle, they handed me a letter and said, "Report to Yokota [AB, Japan]." I didn't know what the hell was going on, but they said it was for a special assignment. So I got my orders, got a seat on a C-141, and flew to Yokota. I walked in there, and in the first briefing was told, "The Navy is over North Vietnam in the deep packages"--do you know what I mean by Package V and VI?--the Navy was over deep Packages V and VI at night with the A-6, and the Air Force had no airplane that could do it. Politically, the Air Force was looking bad, and therefore; three-fingered Jack Ryan, who was, I think, PACAF [Pacific Air Force] Commander at that time, said that he wanted us to do the job. He had looked into the B-58s and said we couldn't

afford to lose a B-58; we couldn't afford to lose a B-52, and so we were going to have the F-105 do it at night against Package V and VI, single-ship, night, low-level, terrain avoidance bombing, in the -105, and I was going to be one of these people.

I thought--NOW YOU TALK ABOUT CONCERN!--and I put that in capital letters with exclamation points, because the F-105 had a terrain avoidance radar system that no one that I knew of would fly it at night in real weather! I had never met anybody who would do it consistently. It had vacuum tubes in the terrain avoidance platform--we did not have an inertial platform, which tells you how close you are to level. We had just a gyroscope which had a 600-foot error, minimum, built into it, and you didn't know whether it was plus or minus. It could be either 600 feet low; it could be 600 feet high, and you never knew which it was. The airplane simply was not prepared to do the job. They put terrain avoidance in the aircraft, but it was really meant to drop atom bombs from 1,500, 2,000, 3,000 feet. Now we were talking about a wholly different environment, going in at a very low level, in a country where the charts all said terrain detail--unreliable! The terrain avoidance system was simply not designed to do the job we were supposed to do. Also, the bombing system couldn't put an average bomb closer than 1,000 feet, but whose own bomb destruction ability was only 45 feet! We all said, "What's going on? What are we doing?"

It turned out I was the senior officer there--a new major. The decision was made that they would take eight people from Yokota, who had combat time, and put them in the front seat of the airplanes, and they would take eight new guys who were in

the pipeline--I was just picked at random. I mean, literally eight people at random. The engineer would try to upgrade the radar to try to, hopefully, increase the accuracy by doubling the antenna sweep rate. Hopefully, we could improve our accuracy up to 750 feet, maybe even 500 feet. Remember, that's a 500-foot kill distance with a bomb with a 40-foot kill distance! The plan was for the people at Yokota to fly in the front seat for 15 missions, and then we (backseaters) would start swapping seats, or we would move into the front seat. They'd give me a front seat, and we'd bring new people over to go in the back seat, because they felt the mission required two people, and it really did!

We started practicing these missions all over Japan, and it was the biggest mess you've ever seen. Three-fingered Jack Ryan came over to brief us. As I said, I was the senior guy so I was the spokesman. I had five reasons why we shouldn't do this. We couldn't hit the broad side of a barn; the terrain avoidance wouldn't work; we weren't trained for this; nobody, even in the States, would even fly this mission, period, and we were going to go over and check it out the first time in combat! The first time we were going to fly this profile was to be in combat in an airplane no one trusted in the States, believed could do it. I had a fifth one that doesn't come to mind now. General Ryan said, "Do you have any questions?" I said, "Yes, sir." I introduced myself; I was a brand new major. You talk about green. I said, "Sir, we have some questions." I started through about the second item, and he said, "Major Pollard, I thank you. Please take a seat." I said, "Yes, sir." He said, "The Navy A-6s are over Vietnam, Package V and VI, at night, and the Air Force is

not, and you're going." And that closed the question and answer session!

We saluted smartly and said, "That's okay." By the way, we kind of got even because we decided to have our own patch. We decided we needed a name for the outfit, so we had one of the most unusual patches made--and if I find one, you might want to make a copy because it's a hell of a patch. We called ourselves "Ryan's Raiders," and in the middle was a two-seat F-105, and across the top of it, it said, "Ryan's Raiders." Across the bottom it said, "Peace Was Our Profession," and through the back seat of the airplane was a golden screw! (laughter) Because we thought we had been screwed. Here were pilots who were put in the back seat of an airplane, doing what we were doing. Anyway, as you might guess, it really is one of the famous patches. And we sent them to Ryan. He knew about them; he really did. We kept thinking he was going to court-martial us, but nothing happened! What are you going to do to guys flying this kind of mission?

We flew down to Kadena, Okinawa, to check out on bombing accuracy. I was flying with Don Heiliger [Donald Lester]. I wish I could give you names of all the people who flew in Ryan's Raiders, but I don't remember them all now. Isn't that a shame? Anyway, Don and I flew down to Okinawa.

We got there, and they wanted us to immediately go out on this bombing range and check the accuracy of this new radar. Remember I told you we had been trying to tweak up the radar. The guy said, "Hey, you can't go at night. You are not checked out on the bombing range at Okinawa." He said, "You're not checked out on the bombing range in Okinawa, and

besides that, the Japanese on Okinawa are really upset. If you have a long or short bomb and it hit on any of their little patches of food, they will be up tight. You've got to get checked out. We want to make sure you know the range so you don't get the Japanese all mad at us. Besides that, there is a typhoon coming in, or a squall anyway." We said, "Fine." We hadn't even started walking to the door, and someone called, "Come on back. We just got word from General Ryan who said you're going to go out no matter what tonight. We are putting practice bombs on your airplane right now."

We got a briefing, and we took off, and we were in a four-ship, I think--two from Ryan's Raiders and two from Okinawa to lead us around the range and area. Anyway, we took off and dropped about three bombs, and then the weather just went to nothing. Zero, zero! It was awful. Lightning, pouring down rain--it was just horrible weather. We floundered around, broke up into singles and finally got on the ground. It was really, really hairy!

[End Tape 1, Side 1]

P: I was saying when the tape ended that I couldn't believe how happy the wing commander of Kadena was. He was so happy to have us on the ground and the airplanes all right, because this was really a bad, bad storm. And again, it shows that the crews were really, we all could flat fly the airplanes. Of course, the front seater and the backseater could both do everything in the airplane. We went ahead and flew--I think we flew three missions the next day. We were doing a little bit better. We were dropping, I think, 700-foot bombs. We had more accuracy, right to left accuracy, than with the

normal bombing system, but all of our worst fears in terms of the terrain avoidance system--all the problems we expected to have with that system, we were still having.

Then we flew back to Yokota and continued our training, and then in late April, I think it was about the 19th, somewhere two-thirds the way through the month, we got the word that we were going to go south. I mean, we were going to go to war, and there was no warning. I said, "Well, where are our pay records? Where are our orders?" They said, "You don't have any. We don't have time to give you your pay records. We don't have time to give you your medical records, and you don't have any orders." So we leaped out--of course, the people at Yokota that were there, like Don Heiliger. At that time, you know, we were together in the plane, and those people were on TDY, so their records didn't have to go with them. But for us, the backseater/new comers, this meant suddenly you're leaving your records behind and, man, you just don't do that, particularly going into combat. This is an illustration of the pressure Ryan was placing on the unit!

Anyway, we flew down to Kadena that next morning with just no warning. By the way, I darn near froze to death in Japan because I thought I was going to go over to the Philippines, go through survival school, and go to Vietnam, and I packed accordingly. Instead, I went up to Japan in the springtime, and it was cold in Japan, so I darn near froze to death up there.

Anyway, we flew down to Okinawa. It turned out an old friend of mine, Charlie Bishop--we taught at the Air Force Academy in Aero there, and he was Thud driver. I remember having supper

that night at their, Charlie's and Mary's, house before we jumped off to Thailand.

The next morning we had four flyable airplanes. We had eight Ryan's Raiders aircraft, but only four of them were ready to go, and so four aircraft leaped out the next morning to fly with a tanker across from Okinawa to Korat. No orders, nothing, man! We took off, and we were out about, I don't know, an hour or two. Number three or number four airplane got a hydraulic leak in their flight control system--you always flew as pairs over the water--so when they lost their flight control system, if you are not half way, you turn back automatically with your buddy aircraft. Both of those airplanes turned back, and the other two of us pressed on. We flew on in, flew just south of the DMZ [demilitarized zone] over Da Nang and let down and landed in Korat. We got there about dark.

We got out of the airplane, and Korat, as all those bases were, was really impressive; it really was. There were airplanes everywhere and action, and the finest crew chiefs, finest airplanes, finest maintenance, finest everything in the world. You really got a good feeling.

I got out of the plane, and here was General--at the time Colonel Chairsell [William S.]--who was the wing commander. He said, "Major Pollard, I want to talk to you." Remember, I was the senior guy again. I had no authority, but I was senior. Hell, I didn't even have an organization, but I was senior. I said, "Somebody grab my stuff and take it on down to the hooch--living quarters--and I'll be there. I don't know what's going on."

I went down to Colonel Chairsell's office, and he sat me down and said, "Now I want to tell you something. We've heard all about this damn Ryan's Raiders, and we've heard you are going to go into deep Package VI, and you've got to do all this right away. That's not the way it's going to be! I don't like this mission! I don't think the airplane is fit to fly this mission, but if you are going to fly it, you are going to get an orderly checkout; you're going to get a night mission, locally. You're going to get a day checkout; you're going to go up on the tankers; you're going to take two and a half days to go through the rules of engagement. You're going to get moved into your hooch, and maybe a week from now, you'll start flying the mission. So all this rush stuff you've heard about, let me tell you right now,"--I can remember him looking right at me--"Nobody is going to push me into rushing this operation, because I think it's wrong." Remember, I'm a junior major. I'm a new guy, and this colonel flies combat every day, and I'm the new guy on the block. So I just saluted smartly and said, "Yes, sir."

As you might guess, our morale wasn't the highest in the world. Some of the Raiders were really, really worried--really worried about the mission. While I was at Korat, it never dawned on me that I would get shot down. I'm not saying I'm smart. I'm just saying that's the way I think. I just don't think negative thoughts.

I think they gave me a Jeep, and I drove down to the hooch. We were starting to unpack, Don Heiliger and I, and found that they had given us special hooches. You could cover the windows with blackout curtains, because we were going to be sleeping days and flying all night. I hadn't been there 30

minutes, and I got word that said, "Bring all your people back down to Operations." I said, "This is really weird." So we all went down there, and they put us in the Operations Room. By that time of night, the day missions were back, and things were pretty quiet. Colonel Chairsell gave the briefing. He said, "I'm sorry to tell you, I have no control over this."-- Remember this was about 7 o'clock on Monday night. And he continued, "I have no control over this. You have targets on Wednesday night. You are going to start your briefings tonight on the Rules of Engagement." You have heard of those, I'm sure, haven't you?

H: Yes. I've heard a lot about those.

P: It turned out it didn't affect us because of the kind of the flights and targets we had, but the rules made us madder than hell. Colonel Chairsell said, "You've got a target. Your first target is 10 o'clock on Wednesday night, Package V at Yen Bai, and you are going to go down the Red River. I'm sorry. I've done everything I can, but those are the orders." It turned out that some 54 hours after that, we would, in fact, go down the Red River. I said, "Okay, if anybody is going to go first, it's going to be me," so we started briefing that night. We got a little supper, and after supper, the briefing started. We were briefed that night and all day, all afternoon, all night on Tuesday. We got up the next morning and did our flight planning. Remember, we hadn't seen anything or met anyone; we'd just dropped in from out of the sky. So we went down and met some of the crew chiefs. Again, the crew chiefs were perfect. The airplanes were perfect. They always were. The crew chiefs--there was an

elan that you just couldn't measure, and we had absolute faith in them.

Anyway, we did our flight planning all that day, and then we got the SAR, search and rescue, briefing. In every one of our missions, the briefing was, "There is none." If you fly at night over North Vietnam in deep Package V and VI, there is no search and rescue. If you don't make it to the water, and if you don't make it back, even at night, there is nothing till you get back to water. Boy, our SAR briefings were really, really short.

So that night we took off, I guess, I don't know, 8 o'clock or so and climbed out and hit the tanker, and we went up the Red River--because I think we were running north, northwest--and we hit Yen Bai that night at 10 o'clock, some 50-some hours after we landed at Korat. The other airplane went out about two or three hours later and hit a target in Package I. So one of the packages was not as tough as the other. When I got back, Chairsell was right there on the apron to meet the plane. He was happy to have us back. The mission went pretty well, okay! We had gotten reasonably good at using the weapons system, but we still couldn't hit anything because the airplane was designed to drop atom bombs. That was our problem. But I think we probably hit the airfield somewhere. Anyway, we got back!

Then my problems started because, you see, we were flying at night, but everybody on the base worked in daytime, and everybody wanted to hear about this crazy group. So the Wing Commander and the Operations officer, the number two guy, and the Chief of Maintenance, everybody wanted to talk about these

airplanes. So I would fly all night and then these people would come in and say, "Well, somebody is in here from Seventh Air Force," or "There is somebody in here from Nellis [AFB, Nevada]," or maybe, "There's somebody who wants to tweak this airplane up with this kind of radar improvement." So I would fly all night and then work all day. I really don't remember a lot about what happened at Korat. I mean, I never even got off the base. I, one time, was making a tape to Joan and went to sleep right in the middle of the tape. That's the one night I didn't get a letter off to her. I had gotten a letter or a tape off to her every day, but I was just falling down fatigued.

We had experts come over from Nellis, and they said, "How do we train for this?" They heard about what we were doing--our mission. I said, "What you've got to do is start flying at night in weather with a hood down where you can't see." And they said, "We won't do it. No way!"

I was having some morale problems. Some of our guys [Ryan's Raiders] were becoming a little spooky. There were a few people at Korat, a few pilots, who were really acting strange. Korat was losing a lot of airplanes, and it was affecting some people. I remember one night sitting down at a table and there was Maxine McCaffery. You've heard of Maxine? She did Sijan's picture at the Air Force Academy. She also did the one of Karl Richter. Anyway, Maxine was there, and she was painting. We sat down, and we had a supper, and that was the night that Swede Larson [Gordon Albert] and Jim Hughes [James Lindberg] had been shot down. So the squadron commander and the ops officer for one squadron were shot down in one flight. She said, "Boy, this is a pretty grim day!" because she had

been painting these guys, and they had been shot down. That was the first and last time I would see Maxine until I was released. I would end up seeing Maxine many times after I returned.

Anyway, about--I don't know how many days--10 days after we started flying, I lost my first airplane. They were attacking Ronh Ferry, and someone up that night--one of the airplanes flying at night--saw a flash and Ronh Ferry area. We never knew for sure what happened. I think most people felt that their terrain avoidance failed them. Anyway, something happened; they probably flew into a mountain, or they could have been shot down. We just didn't know.

Anyway, I was to fly that night to the steel mill in Thai Nguyen. We took off, and when airborne, our radar just went sour. We couldn't paint anything; it was just totally out. So our secondary target was to call a radar site in Laos and another one in South Vietnam. Between them, you would go up, and the two sites would give us radar vector. They would start you toward Mu Gia Pass, and then they would command, "Fly this air speed on this heading, exactly at this altitude," and they would start counting nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, and you would drop on a target in the Pass on their count because you couldn't come back and land with those bombs. You don't want to land with a load of bombs if you can help it. So that's what we ended up doing that night--ground radar bombing the Pass.

It turned out Mu Gia Pass is about a hundred, hundred and fifty miles at most from Ronh Ferry. I came back and landed, and I had a call from a colonel down at Seventh Air Force. He

just reamed me up one side and down the other. He said, "You guys don't have any guts at all. You aborted your mission on the steel mill so you could deliberately go look for your downed airplane." I was, at this point, both tired and mad and upset at losing my airplane and probably losing a crew! I really told this guy off--the guy had never flown combat in his life! In fact, I don't think, if I remember right, he was even rated. I asked him if he had ever been over North Vietnam at night. "No." "Do you know that there are no lights in all of North Vietnam if there isn't a gun shooting at you?" "No." "How in the hell are you going to look for a downed airplane at night? We didn't get within a hundred miles of where they were. Radio effectiveness is line of sight, and it isn't close to that distance! We're doing our job, and get off our goddamned backs!" He never did apologize; he just hung up. We agreed to disagree. That was the kind of war it was--stupid!

At the same time at Korat, the rest of the wing considered us to be lepers. Nobody wanted to fly our mission. Everybody was afraid of the mission. I'm using the wrong word--they just didn't think you could hit anything, and they thought flying single-ship attacks at night into North Vietnam, below the top of the mountains, in weather, seemed to be a great way to commit suicide! You see, if you get hit with triple A or you get hit with a SAM [surface-to-air missile], you may or may not make it, but if you run into the side of a mountain at 600 knots, it's going to just ruin your whole day. So people just stayed away from us. (laughter)

I really worked to support my crews. If I had a late takeoff, say three o'clock in the morning, I would go out to the flight

line early in the evening and see our crews off and then go down and spend some time with the crew chiefs. I wanted to know them, let them know how important they were, because I knew our lives depended on them.

I can remember several occasions we'd go out to a mission airplane, and there wouldn't be any bombs on the airplane, and it was 10 minutes, 15 minutes before start engine time, I remember there was a big, black master sergeant there; he was the load crew crew chief for the bombs, and he was just a wonderful guy. He would say, "Don't worry, Major Pollard, we'll have those bombs for you." And you'd look up the ramp, and here would come this bomb carrier with crew chief's guys running beside it--no shirts on, and gee, they just did a wonderful job. We didn't really preflight the airplanes because the maintenance was so good. I always checked the fuses on the bombs, for I have kind of a thing about checking bomb fuses. We did totally trust the airplanes and the crew chiefs. It was a wonderful set up.

Within a few days, we had eight people/four crews that were going to have lots of missions. You normally flew 25 days and then took 5 days off for R&R. For the day fighter pilots, that worked well, for a full wing of pilots, for the large number and constant rotation made the 25/5-day rotation easy for the wing. It was a much different matter when you only had four crews and all would reach the 25 cutoff at about the same time. We were all going to end up there at the same time.

How do you get your crews rest/R&R [rest and recreation]? I finally said, "I'm going to just let one of my crews go on

R&R. The rest of us will fly more, but we've got to start some kind of rotation." I got in all kinds of hell with Saigon! "How dare you let some of your people get a rest when they've only flown eight or nine missions?" I said, "Because we've got to get into some kind of rotation." So my first two people/crew went home, after about eight missions, to Japan on R&R, because again, I just felt like you had to plan ahead. I remember getting a lot of guff from people about that decision.

There were a lot of people coming to see the Ryan's Raiders operation--both from the United States and a lot of people coming from Seventh Air Force. I guess they had to show their bosses that they were in on the latest gimmick, because this was General Ryan's baby.

Anyway, my 11th mission was to the Kep railroad yards. I remember that night because we always had a Wild Weasel aircraft go with us for SAM warnings, and the Weasel pilot said, "Hey, let me tell you. I'm going to go with you, but there are three SAM sites operational around there. I can't help you, so I'll stay outside the SAM range, and I'll talk to you, but I'm not going to go into the SAM ring. You're on your own!" That was typical. So we had no SAR, and we didn't have any SAM suppression at all. We were carrying two jamming pods, two sets of cameras, six 750s and two 450 tanks, so we were just heavy and dirty. I think we were two thousand pounds over gross. [Telephone interruption]

It was interesting. We had been at Korat for quite awhile and never had a pay record or orders. I never had any money. I never had anything. I had not one piece of paper with me.

About every four or five days, a sergeant would come down from Personnel and say, "Hey, you guys don't have any orders. You don't have any pay records, and you lost that first crew." This guy just went berserk. He said, "What are we going to do?" I said, "Don't ask me. The Air Force sent me down here." We couldn't even sign anything. We didn't even know for sure where we were assigned within the wing! I don't think right now I could tell you the name of the squadron and the wing that I was in. It had no meaning, because I didn't even have a piece of paper. I had nothing. Of course, the Personnel people--the Personnel wienies, as we called them--were just going out of their minds. I finally had to borrow some money from someone; I didn't even have any money to buy anything. I mean, how can you borrow any money when you don't have a pay record? They couldn't pay me. It was weird, and I was shot down that way.

Point of fact: About six months after I was shot down, Joan got a letter from a fellow, and he said, "Your husband borrowed \$50.00 from me," and Joan said, "You know, boy, what a rip-off artist. My husband never borrowed any money in his life." Anyway, he convinced her he was telling the truth. In fact, he made general. He convinced her that he was the real McCoy, and she paid him. When I came back, one of the first things she said, "Did you ever borrow \$50.00? You never borrowed any money in your life." (laughter) I said, "I didn't have any money. I couldn't even live. I couldn't even buy a stick of gum." That's a true story.

I was shot down without any pay records, any orders, or anything.

H: You were discussing the rules of engagement awhile ago. That's one of the primary topics that come up in these interviews, the notoriety of those so-called rules of engagement. From your vantage point, how did you assess the things?

P: They were absolutely unbelievably stupid. But it was affecting the day people more than us. The day pilots would come back and say somebody shot at them, and they couldn't shoot back. They'd come back and say, "We saw a boat unloading in Haiphong, loaded up with SAM missiles and putting them on the dock." Then they would watch the SAM being moved out into the hinterlands, thinking that with one raid they could have knocked out 500 SAMs. The United States would let them move the SAMs out into the countryside, and the day fighters would have to go in and try to get them one at a time! Stupid!

As you probably have noted, President Johnson [Lyndon B.] and McNamara are used interchangeably with swear words with all of the prisoners that I know, because it was just a stupid war. I think we all really appreciated it when Bush [President George] said about Desert Storm, "Just tell me when it's over." If you are going to fight a war, at least don't play this micro-escalation game, and don't try to pick targets from the White House.

The rules of engagement were stupid. We got the rules briefing, but in fact, because we were flying at night, single ship, against mostly deep Package V and VI--targets such as Hanoi, Thai Nguyen, Kep, those kinds of targets--they really didn't affect us. We were on the Doumer Bridge as our target

one night and were out at the airplane when the flight was cancelled. I think I would have wet my pants on that one--single ship, downtown, against the Doumer Bridge! But that's the kind of missions we were on. We had a couple of easy ones, like Ronh Ferry, but most of our missions were really bad news targets. The only thing you knew when you came in on target was that everybody was shooting at you because you're the only aircraft up there.

I remember when we went against the steel mill. Don Heiliger and I developed a tactic wherein we would come in from the north, and we'd run straight at the steel mill. Right behind the steel mill was a big mountain range that runs along the Red River. We would go running at that mountain at 600 knots, or just as fast as it would go. Actually, it would be about 525, and then when the bomb would release, the airplane would jump right at 600 knots, and then we'd start counting, after bomb release, and watching our radar. We would turn within two miles of this mountain, so that they couldn't see us against that mountain with their SAMs. So we were running straight at a mountain in the middle of night at 600 knots, a thousand feet a second. We didn't have a whole lot of people going to sleep in cockpits up there. NOTE: This was done with our archaic radar bombing system.

Anyway, the night we went up, as I told you, we were briefed, no SAR. As always in all of those packages, the Weasel that was with us said, "Hey, I'll go up with you, but I can't help you at all. I'll just be up there." I always wondered why, if he couldn't do anything, they sent them. Actually, I don't think anyone in the senior command realized that the Weasels weren't going into the target with us. I didn't blame the

Weasels. Don't get me wrong. But why send them if they can't help you? As it turned out, it paid off to have a Weasel along on the night we were shot down.

Our target that night, 15 May 1967, was the Kep railroad yards about 60 miles northeast of Hanoi on the Hanoi-China railroad line. It was a very important target. Our plan was to fly over Da Nang, pick up our tankers, fly north--tremendous thunderstorms that night--and refuel. We dropped off the tanker right at the 19th with the Weasel bird still with us. He stayed high, and then as we got close to the coast, we coasted in right on the deck. In fact, we had to climb to come over the coastline. We came in--we had special permission. There's a buffer zone between China and Vietnam, and you weren't supposed to go there. We received special permission to fly into that buffer zone because we wanted to coast in over the buffer zone and run right down the railroad valley so the SAMs couldn't get us. Their SAMs were everywhere that night. They really had a SAM ring up around there, as advertized in our pre-takeoff briefing.

We came down the valley and picked up the target. Everything was going fine, and about 15 seconds out, they caught us in search lights. We were running at 1,000 feet above the ground and chose to press on--dumb! We couldn't maneuver because we were dropping on the computer--we couldn't do any turns; we couldn't jink; we couldn't do anything. Everybody has since asked me, "Why didn't you just drop your bombs right there and and go and get out?" and I can't answer that, except to say there's no substitute for stupidity. (laughter) We pressed on, right in the search lights. Have you ever hunted doves?

H: Yes.

P: You know how easy it is to hit a dove coming in. It's the easiest shot in the world. The whole sky lit up. They hit us about three or four seconds before bomb release. We pressed on and got the bombs off. Then we had a choice: If we went right, we flew away from the SAMs. If we flew left, we could go right to the water. We chose to go right. BIG mistake! Don said, "Break?" I said, "Break right!" Or he said, "Break right!" I don't know; we just did it. I don't have the slightest idea who actually made the decision; it was made in one or two seconds. The aircraft was really hurt; the forward fire warning light was on; the aft fire warning light was on. We were losing hydraulic systems, including our flight control systems. You could see fire on the airplane. So we started climbing. We wanted to get out of the SAM ring because we were now sitting ducks, flying/climbing well above the terrain and with few remaining instruments. Our plan was to get out of the SAM ring and then turn east to the ocean, but the airplane started to go out of control. We finally said, "Hey, it's time to get out of here," because we couldn't turn. The airplane, for all intents and purposes, was out of control, and the backseater goes first. Since I was in the back seat that night--I think the next mission, if I remember right, we were supposed to alternate. We were going to start alternating the flights, because we could both do everything.

Anyway, I bailed out first. All we had left was what we called the little "peanut" gauges. They're the little backup gauges. We had lost all of our AC power. We didn't know how fast we were going, but my guess is we were transonic, somewhere about 600 KT and in the 15,000-foot altitude range

when we bailed out. I got beat to a pulp during bail out, and I was unconscious half of the time coming down. I don't remember much of the descent. I know I was in the parachute for some time, but I really don't remember hardly anything. The next thing, I woke up and I was in the jungle. It was about 10 o'clock or 11 o'clock at night.

Let me back up . . .

[End of Tape 1, Side 2]

H: You wanted to back up.

P: Anyway, we were to find out after our release that the airplane circled and crashed in China. For three and a half years, Joan would know only a couple of things. One, when we were hit, we called, "We're hit, and we're coming out." And the Weasel--remember the one that was circling up there?--heard that, so he knew that we were hit and we were coming out. Navy radar tracked us and saw when we parachuted. We had chaff packed in with our parachutes, so when you bailed out, that chaff would separate and form a blip on a scope. So the radar operation saw two blips near our airplane--so they knew at least two seats had separated from the airplane in flight. It didn't mean that there was anybody alive, and they certainly didn't know where we landed. We were so close to the border that they didn't know whether our parachute landed in China or whether they went into Vietnam. All Joan would know was that we were hit coming out, that two seats separated from the airplane, that the airplane crashed in China, and that we could have been captured in China. Of course, in those days, to be a prisoner in China was awful.

H: What was the exact date of this now?

P: That was on the 15th of May of 1967. Anyway, when I got on the ground and I woke up, I was in just terrible condition. I was in excruciating pain, and I didn't know why. The survival action when you are in that situation is to hit the ground running because the bad guys are going to come to where you bailed out or landed. So, you want to get as far away from the point where you hit the ground, bury your parachute, and get away. And what did I do?--By the way, I was hung up in the trees on my parachute with my feet just barely touching the ground. The trees were what we would call a secondary jungle, not particularly thick, but jungle.--I released myself from the parachute, fell to the ground, and passed out! I remember waking up in awful pain and realized that one leg of my G-suit had been totally torn off. I don't know if you know how tough a G-suit is. It's the toughest nylon you've ever seen, and that was completely gone. With it, I had lost my really good knife; I lost a lot of ammunition, and I lost a lot of water.

I only had one bottle of water left, so I drank that. If you are short on water and you are in shock--and I knew I was in shock--it's better to get some water until you can stabilize your thinking. There was a vine that I had seen in the Philippines that was what we called "The Water Vine." I happened to be right up against a tree that had one, so I cut that and put my water bottle under it, because at night this vine will drip water until the sun comes up. So I put my water bottle under it, and I went to sleep. I did not wake up until the sun came up the next morning. How's that for hitting the ground running?

When I woke up the next morning, I was just in an awful shape. Blood was everywhere. My groin area was huge. I finally had to split my flight suit open with the little pocket knife that comes in a parachute. It was just an old-fashioned case knife--and I cut open my flight suit. I found that my scrotum was, oh, I don't know, big as a grapefruit, and I was black from my waist to my knees from internal bleeding. My scrotum was full of blood. I had cuts, bruises; I had some burns, but mostly, I was just in terrible condition. I was also paralyzed from my waist down. I'm pretty sure what happened was that during the ejection, my legs flailed terribly and probably pinched the nerves in my spinal column. The pain--it wasn't paralysis--was just too much to take. I was in bad shape. You can't hit the ground running under those situations. I couldn't move. I couldn't walk; I couldn't do anything, and I was on the side of this steep hillside in the jungle.

I had to get out of there, and I had to get water. You'd think in a jungle there's lots of water but there really isn't during the dry season. I could hear a stream down below me, and I headed for it. I tied my feet together with something--I don't know what it was. The real sad thing was that when I released myself from my parachute, the dinghy and everything went up with it into the trees, and with it was the morphine. Everything was up there, and it was just three feet above me, but it might as well have been on the moon! If I could have stood up, I could have gotten it. There was no way in the world I could get it. There was morphine; there was water; there was medicine, everything that I needed, and I couldn't reach it. It might as well have been on the moon. Well, there was no sense crying over it, so I took something, maybe

vines--I don't even know what it was, probably took pieces of material from my flying suit--tied my legs together and started sliding down the mountain feet first. It was the only way I could go. There would be hours when I couldn't recount what happened, so I'm sure I was unconscious at least half the time. I would know where I was, and I would wake up, and I was still there and two hours had passed. All I know is that I was unconscious a good portion of the time.

About three o'clock in the afternoon, I got into a ravine. Something had fallen across this little dry creek bed down the side of the mountain, and the sides of this creek bed were about three feet. It was not a creek, just a ravine with something across it. The sides were so steep I couldn't get over on my own. I couldn't go up; I couldn't go back. I just couldn't do anything more. I was near a trail, and the water was really close by. Shortly, two or three Vietnamese hill peasants came by, saw me, and just ran away, literally ran away! I knew it was all over. I just couldn't take any more captives!

So I threw my gun away--no, I guess I broke my radio and threw it away, broke the antenna off it, and buried my gun. I don't think they found it. They probably did, but I like to think they didn't. (laughter) They came back about 45 minutes later and, boy, they were really vicious. They grabbed me and started to tie me up, and I immediately passed out because of the pain. Finally I woke up, and one way or another I convinced them that I really was hurt and couldn't do anything. I think the blood and everything finally convinced them. They stripped me down to my shorts. I think by that time they could see that I was really, really in bad shape.

They finally found my dinghy, cut some bamboo poles down, fixed a vine contraption underneath my dinghy, and put me on it. Four guys got on the ends of these poles, like a crisscross, and carried me down to this little stream. There they floated me down the shallow stream. They just walked me down to the first village in my floating stretcher.

Actually, they weren't too bad, in terms of treatment, in the first village. But the next morning when they started to carry me out, they started beating me at each village we entered. It was typical treatment for every POW. You would come into the village; they would start stoning you; they'd take their rubber shoes and start beating on you, and they'd kick you. The women were particularly vicious. They'd kick my legs and found that I'd scream, so that got to be a real game. It was really exciting to go into a village. This went on and on until some time late in the afternoon. I got into one village, and some guy came up and gave me a shot. I said, "I need morphine." I don't know if he understood. He gave me some kind of shot, but it didn't kill the pain. Whatever it was, it didn't work, so I have no idea what it was.

Sometime that evening they threw me and someone else in the back of a jeep, and I assumed it was Don Heiliger. We started driving to Hanoi on the roughest road you've ever seen. So you can imagine bouncing in the bed of a pickup truck, on a rough road, with a broken back. Frankly, I had no idea what happened on the trip. It's was unending, unbelievable agony, just pain at levels--it's not a very good thought. We finally got to Hanoi. [Interruption]

We got into Hanoi. I didn't know it at the time, but they carried me on a stretcher into what I later would find out was New Guy Village in the Hanoi Hilton.

H: How much time transpired from the time you were shot down until the time you got to Hanoi?

P: I really don't know much about the first two weeks after shoot down, because I think I drank water out of the creek that wasn't boiled. I got dysentery, and I soon started hallucinating from the pain and dysentery and torture, and so any time I might tell you would not be reliable. My guess is two days, maybe three, for the trip to Hanoi, but I really don't know.

I was in my first cell it seemed like for about 24 hours. All I know is that when I got to the first interrogator, the guy said, "I'm sorry"--they never said they were sorry--"I didn't get to you sooner, but I had so many people that were shot down." It turned out there were a lot of people shot down in that time frame. Anyway, after about 24 hours, if my time is right, they carried me into the cell and sat me on a stool. I guess I was able to sit up. In fact, I'm sure I was, but they knocked me off of it after awhile. Of course, I couldn't get up anymore.

The interrogator went through the name, rank, serial number, date of birth things, and then asked what I was flying. What was your target? I held out, and they started the rope trick on me, combined with beatings. I didn't last long. I don't think they got much information because I was essentially unconscious--not because I was brave, not because I was

devious--I just simply was out of gas! I must have been out of my head as well. So I don't think I was in torture that many hours or that many days, because all they had to do was kick my feet. Anyway, I went through the rope trick, and I've got the torture scars that go with it.

I don't know how long I was in New Guy Village, but I ended up in the Gold Nugget, unconscious, and other ex-POWs say I was raving at night. I was literally out of my head with dysentery, back pain, and so forth, just in horrible condition. Mel Moore [Ernest Melvin, Jr.], a Navy commander at that time--Ernest Moore is his given name--heard this and did the bravest thing. Can you imagine? He called, "Bao, Cao," got the interrogator and asked if he could be placed in my cell and help me. The Vietnamese just never, never did this. There wasn't any sympathy or care. But for some reason on that particular day, they let him come in with me. He literally saved my life.

When he walked in the room, I was stark naked, and I was raving in agony. The Vietnamese had actually given me some sugar milk, some condensed milk. I hadn't drunk it. I was as near death as you could possibly be, but Mel started nursing me back to health. I told him within six hours of his arrival that I was okay. He told me later that it was more like 24 to 48 hours after he began to get some food and water down me and had talked to me that I began to act rationally. I was still in agony. I couldn't even lift a foot up due to back pain; I couldn't even get outside to bathe.

Mel would bring me a little bathing water, but he kept saying, "You've got to walk, or you are going to die." I said, "But

I hurt." He would reply, "You've got to walk." I replied, "It'll hurt." He said, "Damn it, walk!" It was the best thing he ever did! He finally got me going, although it hurt like hell. Unfortunately, I had no control over my kidneys for some time due to the bailout injuries. In fact, I didn't have much control for six months. It turned out my pelvic bones were cracked during bailout, and to this day, I have trouble with both kidneys and a lot of back trouble, and very loose hip joints--plus many other major medical problems. I had to permanently retire, medically, in February of 1986.

Mel taught me the tap code, the command structure, and so forth, and within three months, I could get around. The pain was terrible, but I was getting around. I was beginning, by September, to at least do leg lifts, trying to do whatever exercises I could, and I started to communicate. We were in the Gold Nugget for about, oh, a month and a half or so. Then we were moved into the Desert Inn. In August, I guess, Bill Franke [Fred Augustus, Jr.] moved in with us. Bill is just a wonderful guy and now lives in Escondido. He's a retired Navy captain now, as is Mel Moore. Here I was: This lone Air Force guy with these two Navy guys, an A-4 driver--Mel--and Bill was an F-4 driver. It really was a good mixture, and we got along well.

We were in that cell on the night of October 21st, as I remember, the night the Rat--a nasty interrogator--and the guards got drunk and came into the Desert Inn and started torturing right in the cell block! You could hear the prisoners yelling, "My God, you are killing him," and you would hear terrible screams! The next thing you'd hear, they'd open up another cell, and you would hear more screams.

It was just an unbelievable night. The gong never rang that night in Little Las Vegas. They would just come into one cell after the other, torturing prisoners. They got to our cell, hit the door, but the door never opened!

H: Why was that?

P: We don't know. We were next, and the door never opened. To this day, I have no idea why.

H: The Lord was looking out for you.

P: You talk about scared! You talk about just sheer fright. Out of that experience, one guy did die, Norm Schmidt [Norman]. He went to an interrogation in the next two days, and he never came back! In fact, I met his widow at the River Rats Convention about two weeks ago. But anyway, it was just awful! A lot of the problem went back to Jim Stockdale [James Bond], who was SRO [senior ranking officer] of Little Las Vegas. Jim is a saint and surely the bravest man I've ever known. Anyway, as SRO, he had put together a plan to try to help the POWs who were being tortured. The plan was, if the Vietnamese started torturing a POW nearby, we were supposed to go Bao Cao, Bao Cao, meaning we wanted help. Every POW was supposed to start shouting at the same time, trying to show our resistance and trying to get the Vietnamese to stop. Well, the best laid plans sometimes go astray! The Rat, who was drunk, just went berserk when we all started to shout Bao Cao. He must have thought he had a riot on his hands. Anyway, he just went berserk! He ultimately killed, or had killed, Norm Schmidt.

They started breaking up cellmates. There were people moving night after night, and all kinds of things happening. Torture was heard in the distance from Heartbreak. Those were really wild days! Communicating was very, very difficult with tremendous risks. We were trying to get through to a new POW, Terry Uyeyama [Terry Jun], who was in the cell next to us. Our plan to deliver a message by taking straws from our whisk brooms and tying them together with pieces of thread taken from our pajamas and towels. We also used pieces of our toothpaste tubes to make the 8-foot long string of broom straws--plus the small message. We slid it across in the water trough that ran between the rooms, but there was a 7-foot open space between the guards. If the guards saw that linked straw and found the message, we would surely be tortured. We were trying to get to Terry to pass him the tap code, and so forth, knowing that if we got caught, boy, it was bad news.

The food was horrible, and it seems that we were getting about 900 calories per day. Still, I was getting stronger by Christmas; I had pretty good control of my kidneys, and I could walk! Then in the springtime, a Vietnamese guard by the name of "Big Ugh" set out to get Bill Franke, literally trapped him, and they accused him of trying to communicate. It was all a frame, but Bill was pulled out and tortured, and we didn't see Bill again for three years. So Bill was gone.

Mel and I were together until early June of 1968, and then there was a big cell shuffle. Suddenly, they came into the cell and said, "Roll them up," and we'd roll up our blankets and so forth. We were blindfolded, handcuffed, and I was led to a truck. There my legs were chained, and then we rode for

about an hour. At the other end, the Vietnamese threw me into a cell. The lights were out, and I then suddenly realized there were some other POWs in there. I introduced myself, told them who I was and gave them my shoot-down date and rank, and I asked, "Who are you?" They said Doug Clower [Claude Douglas], a Navy lieutenant commander--F-4 driver--Captains Gene Smith [Richard Eugene, Jr.], Bob Stirm [Robert Lewis], and a wonderful guy--I'll think of it in a minute--Dick Dutton [Richard Allen]. These three were all F-105 jocks.

As we literally babbled at our good fortune in having five POWs in an apparently large cell, I found out that none of them had ever communicated with another POW. They had been shot down for nine months, since October, and they had never communicated at all! They didn't know anybody; they didn't know the Tap Code; they didn't know how to communicate; they didn't know the SRO's policies, you know, the "Back U.S." policy and so forth. They knew nothing. I said, "Hey, they've made a mistake, and they are going to pull me out." So I quickly taught them the Tap Code, told them who the SROs were, and gave them the camp policies. I told them about "Cag" Stockdale and the "Back U.S." policy.

When the lights came on, we saw our new cell. The Vietnamese had put new boards over a raised part of the concrete, and the board--our bed--was literally black with ants. So we spent the rest of the night telling about each other and killing ants. We talked all night long because I was giving them information as fast as I could. That was the rule. Of course, these guys just knew nothing, so I had to pass on, essentially, a year's information.

The next morning I said, "Now, we've got to communicate." Well, they had all been tortured and were really skittish. I said, "I'll show you how to do it." Well, damn, if I didn't get caught the first time we communicated and got slapped around, so I really showed them what I knew. (laughter) Actually, they hadn't learned how to watch for guards, and one slipped up on us.

Luckily, we were in a new camp. Everybody was new--guards and POWs--and the guards weren't really trying to do that much at first. The SRO--I think it was Render Crayton--named it Camp Hope--at Son Tay. It seemed to be an unusual camp, for it seemed to be people who had either been hurt badly or were fairly junior. We don't know why, but there weren't any senior officers there, and the treatment at Camp Hope was probably better than it was at the other camps, by and large. I was really fortunate to be there, because it gave me more time to heal.

I lived in what we called the Beer Hall part of one of the buildings. We had the Beer Hall, Cat House, and Opium Den buildings at Son Tay, and we very quickly had very good communications throughout the camp. I would remain in Camp Hope until the summer of 1970. The food out there was terrible. We often were without bath water for weeks in the summer and couldn't bathe.

Some interesting things did happen. I was walking one day, looked down, and saw some tobacco plants. I'm from Kentucky and own a tobacco farm, so I convinced the guard to let me pick up these plants. I found a little place in the yard, and I planted those tobacco plants. Later I found some mint and

licorice plants, so I soon had a garden of licorice, mint, and tobacco. For some reason or the other, the Vietnamese thought that was really funny. Pretty soon I had a pretty good garden, and POWs going to the bath would come by and pick some leaves. About then we started getting a bunch of sugar rice, just a plate of rice and sugar. Sometimes it would be in the form of soup. POWs would take a piece of this mint and add it to the soup for some flavor. I was sort of a hero for my mint garden, I guess, in the camp. I kept raising tobacco, so some of the POWs would roll cigars the next Christmas from those plants. They were probably the worst cigars ever known to humankind. I never smoked as a POW, but others reported them to be the worst cigars they had ever smoked. But I did raise tobacco in Hanoi. I guess you can't get the country out of the boy.

The Vietnamese were raising vegetables--kohlrabi, garlic, and so forth--in the camp, so we did get out a little bit to work as a group--cellmates--in the garden in the middle of the camp. Of course, when you are working out there, you are using a hoe, spade, bamboo pole and so forth--they beat the clods to pieces with pieces of bamboo--Well, if you were hitting the ground with a tool, you could send messages. POWs working in the yard or cleaning up the camp always meant a good session of camp news via "sweep" gossip.

I always remember John Frederick [John W., Jr.]--a brave Marine who died in a POW camp in Vietnam of some kind of disease in 1972--when he was working in the garden at Son Tay. He was out there with a great, big bamboo pole about three inches in diameter and about six feet long, and the last thing he beat out was, "This pole is too damned heavy!" (laughter)

We had really good communication in the camp because the buildings were laid out in an L-shape. It was easy to communicate compared to the Las Vegas because we always had a line-of-sight with the Cat House. We were also, as I said, getting out to get a little exercise and some taste treats. They raised some garlic, and while we worked, we stole garlic buds and thus improved the taste of our food, but not the quantity. Frankly, we were starving!

By December of 1968, the POWs in Camp Hope were in horrible condition. I guess I was down to above 130 pounds, with a 14-inch neck; it's 17 1/2 now, and I weigh 210. At this time, I also started to have a lot of stomach problems. It wouldn't be until I came home that I found I had ulcers and colitis, but I was getting sicker with bad stomach pains and dysentery. But with all the parasites and worms coming out of our mouths and everything else and defecating into rusty buckets and barrels, how would you ever know that you were bleeding? In fact, I'm glad I didn't know. (laughter) It would have probably scared me to death.

Communication went well throughout the camp, and the treatment wasn't too severe. The Vietnamese asked everyone for a written biography, as they did in all camps. If you didn't give them a biography, you would be made to sit on a stool for long periods of time. I remember watching Swindle [Orson George, III], I think, sit on it for 21 days and nights without sleep. I couldn't take anything like that; I'll tell you I couldn't. I really respected people who could. What almost everyone did was to write drivel and lies in stilted, backwoods English and, with few exceptions, the Vietnamese

bought it. Frankly, I don't think they cared, at least at Camp Hope, as long as you wrote something.

I forgot to tell you: Before I got to Camp Hope, when I was in Hanoi, the Vietnamese used to put on movies in the courtyard. You've probably heard about the propaganda movies they would show in the compound. They would put up a maze of little squares, put blankets over them, and we'd sit there to watch movies about the riots back in the U.S. Anyway, I felt this hand come underneath the blanket, and someone grabbed my wrist, and started tapping the code: "Who are you?" "Ben Pollard." He said, "I'm Leroy Stutz [Leroy William]. Did you teach at the Air Force Academy?" "Yes." He said, "You gave me a C in thermo!" (laughter) We both went to Son Tay, and one day our cell was working out in the yard, and I heard Leroy snapping his towel in the washroom. I tapped out, "Hi, Leroy, B. P." He got a broom out there and started sweeping code, "Hell, why didn't you give me an F?" (laughter) Meaning, of course, he wouldn't have been in Vietnam if I had done that.

Son Tay, I think of all the camps, things went as well as they could go there. The camp commander really wasn't that bad compared to other camps. We only had one crazy guard, Big Ugh, who was a crazy guard. He was, I think, literally, sadistic and probably paranoid. I don't know the psychological name, but we're sure that he probably tortured Norm Schmidt and Atterbury [Edwin L.], to death.

We had a guard, and this guy could really torture you. He was very, very efficient, but he never would step over the line. He was just like a machine. If you were supposed to get so

much food, you got that food. If he was supposed to torture you a certain way, you got tortured that way but never any more and never any less. He was the weirdest human being I've ever seen. You'd see him going to torture somebody, and the next day you would see him out laughing with the other Guards. Psychologically, I never understood him. If you were going to be tortured, you wanted him. Big Ugh was another story; he was so vicious and would go into a torture session and go berserk. If you were in a room with Big Ugh, if you weren't frightened, you just didn't understand!

[End Tape 2, Side 1]

P: As I said, Big Ugh killed people. There's no getting around it; he was scary--tall, thin, by tall, probably 5'8", very distinctive-looking guy.

By Christmas of 1968, we were in bad, bad shape in Son Tay. You'd peak out a hole and see people working in the yard collapse. You would faint in your room from just standing up, and when you got up again, there would be stars in your eyes. We were starving to death. I'm sure we were getting no more than 900 calories a day, no protein, no fruit. I mean, we were really in bad shape. If we had come home in that time, you wouldn't have seen what you saw in 1973.

Our normal guard wasn't a bad guard. He looked at us one day, while we were working in the yard, and he went down and cut some canes of sugar cane--they grew in a ditch that went through the yard--and brought us some stalks of sugar cane. We sucked the sugar out of it and got a little nourishment. It was wonderful! But surprisingly, from December of 1968 on,

our treatment began to improve. Anyway, the food never got that bad again. December of 1968 was a real low point for the POWs in Son Tay.

I had not received any letters; some of the others did. [Interruption] I hadn't received any letters or packages, and it would really hurt when other POWs in the cell would get letters and packages. We had one POW in the cell--I will not name him--but he would go into deep depressions. This was not an unusual thing up there. He would just curl up in a ball and pull the blanket over his head. Often, it would happen after someone got a letter or package, and he didn't get one. I know three or four who did this, but this particular guy was in our cell. Of course, you can't let a man continue to do this. You can die doing that. So we would put up with this for awhile and finally--I don't know why I was elected to do it because Doug Clower was senior in the room--I would take action. Anyway, I for some reason got the job. What I would do was just say or do something really bizarre or say something really bizarre about this guy. I'd call him names; I mean, just anything. I don't know why nobody else would do it; they wouldn't do it, so it was my job. Finally, he just came out from under his blanket in a rage and would call me every name in the book--what a rotten human being I was, and what right did I have to say those things about him? Then he was perfectly okay within two hours. He would be normal for four or five months, and then he would go into another depression. My thoughts? "Uh oh, geez, I've got to go through this again." I really didn't need that problem. I would see this in three different people while I was in Hanoi, and it didn't seem to happen just to the weak or feeble.

We had two other roommates in that cell while I was there. Dave Burroughs [William David] was there. Dave taught at the Air Force Academy in the English Department, a super guy. Are you going to interview Dave Burroughs?

H: No.

P: Oh, he is a super guy.

H: Where is he located?

P: He lives in Phoenix [Arizona]. I can give you his name and address. He's really a super guy; he taught in the English Department, a bright guy also. Rob Doremus [Robert Hartsck] moved in when Dave arrived, and Rob is now Secretary/Treasurer of NAMPOWs; I'm President of NAMPOWs, and so I'm in touch with him all the time. They joined us there in Son Tay, so at one time, we had six guys in that cell.

As I said, the food started to get a little bit better after Christmas of 1968, and then Ho Chi Minh died, and I guess that would be in the fall of . . .

H: September of 1969.

P: September of 1969. [Interruption] Ho Chi Minh died. We had a hard time keeping a straight face as the loud speakers droned on and on about this "great man"! From that time on, treatment started to get a little better. I don't know whether there is any significance at all, but we do know that, at about that same time, Melvin Laird released the fact to the world that we were being tortured! So who knows whether our

better treatment was because suddenly the whole world knew that torture was taking place in Vietnam, or whether Ho Chi Minh died. Anyway, the treatment did begin to improve. People started to get more packages, which meant we got vitamins.

The vitamins really helped many POWs. Dick Dutton [Richard Allen] had 105 boils on him at one time and ran a temperature, I am sure, of 104 or 105. I mean, if you ever had one boil, imagine having 105 boils. He was covered with boils. With vitamins, the boils began to disappear. Letters were also coming in to people who had never received a letter. People were even getting thermal underwear. Letters were coming in, which really helped.

Unfortunately, I wasn't getting any mail. Talk about depressing, it is very depressing when two or three people get a letter in your cell and get to write home, and you don't. But we were no longer being tortured, and basically, it never occurred again after Ho Chi Minh died. There were beatings and a lot of people in isolation for a long time, but what I call torture didn't happen again. So the treatment was slowly improving. We started getting a little food early in the morning. Instead of just two meals, we got a little **FRESH** bread--no mold or weevils--early in the morning. We got another blanket. Worn-out clothes were replaced. Senior Vietnamese officials came into the cell and asked us if we were tortured. They really came in and asked if we were tortured! Before that the word torture could not be used, and using it could mean a rifle butt in the head. You use the word torture and you would probably get knocked off a stool.

Suddenly in 1969--in the fall--this high muckety-muck from Hanoi that we had never seen before was asking, "Have you been tortured?" And you'd say, "Hell, yes, we've been tortured." So obviously, they were taking bad press somewhere. POWs got to go to a little church service on Christmas Eve of 1969, if they wanted to. We continued to get more and better food, and we were getting healthier. They also started putting more people in the cell. That's when Dave Burroughs [William David] and Rob Doremus [Robert Hartsck] moved in. Then we had, for some reason, a bunch of Catholic POWs moved out of the camp. We never did figure why that happened. It was a funny move that occurred, and we never understood. Of course, we often had no idea what was going on concerning moves; they never seemed to make any sense.

In the springtime of 1970, they decided they wanted us to write some propaganda, and so forth, and they had me on a stool again. For some reason, the camp commander came in while I was being interrogated, and they were hitting me on the side of the head, like they used to do, and raising thunder. He said, "What do you think of our 'lenient' and 'humane' treatment?" They used to always torture you, and the last thing they always wanted you to sign was a statement thanking them for their "humane and lenient treatment." You were always tortured to get you to sign that document! To this day, it's so bizarre I can't understand it.

Anyway, the camp commander wanted to know what I thought of the treatment, and I said he was a "barbaric savage." Well, I have been stupid in my life, but this was the height of my stupidity, other than turning right instead of left over Kep. He just didn't appreciate this at all! One thing you don't

want to do is go around, in a prison system like that, looking for trouble. There's enough trouble without going out and looking for it. That's one of the absolute rules. Don't make trouble when you don't need it. You don't prove a thing, and I didn't. They left me on that stool for I don't know how many hours or days and, thankfully, suddenly they took me out.

There was in the Opium Den a cell within a cell at the north end of the building. So there was a door with a little box that was about three feet wide and about four feet high, and then it opened to another box and here was this cell. So there was no light--except, well, you could look under the door--and there was no ventilation at all, and we were going into hot weather. It was early May. It was grim city! The temperature started to soar, and the cell was stifling. Finally, I just stripped--the Vietnamese didn't want to ever see you nude, but what the hell. A lot of them were homosexuals, but, surprisingly, they did not want you even in the nude, but shoot, I was just burning up! I had boils all over my body and heat rash. Finally, I just said, "To hell with it," and I took off all my clothes and lay on the cement to kind of keep cool. I was burning up. I would guess the temperature in the cell was 130 degrees sometimes. You only get two liters of water a day, plus whatever was in the soup, so I was just about to die. I knew they weren't torturing, so you can be a little braver. I said, "To hell with you," and they just left me alone.

Meanwhile, the cell next to me was passing the message. Jim Warner was in that next door cell, and he was a really bright guy. I remember him telling me--via the Tap Code--about DNA and RNA through the wall. I had never heard of these before

I was shot down. I had read a lot of science bulletins and so forth, but I never had heard of a DNA molecule or RNA. Jim also taught me some Spanish, and I was teaching him some calculus and thermodynamics through the wall. So everybody in the camp was trying to help me because I was in trouble. This went on, with everybody helping me, because that's what we always did. The object was for everyone to help anyone in trouble.

Of course, we were continually hearing over the camp loudspeakers some of the antiwar tapes made by Wilber [Walter Eugene] and Miller [Edison Wainwright]. We had heard earlier that Black [Jon] and some others had gone home early, against the orders of the SRO. Everyone was really mad. Those early releases continued almost to the end. One of our major orders was that we would all go home together. "Back U.S.;" "Stay off the air;" "Communicate;" "Don't kiss the Vietnamese goodbye;" "Unity before self," and "All go out together." When people went home early, oh, that really hurt! This really made people mad, and the broadcasts by Wilber and Miller--long after the torture ended--added to our anger. To this day, their names are substitutes for curse words!!!

Treatment continued to improve for most POWs, and meanwhile I was sitting out in the hotbox. Then one night the Vietnamese came in and told me to "roll up." It was cool outside the cell. I hadn't bathed in a month, so you can imagine how filthy I was. They led me to the back of a truck, and we rode an hour or two. I could hear the gates open to Heartbreak courtyard and immediately knew where I was. When you walk into Heartbreak Hotel, there's a metal grating in the floor, in the Heartbreak area of the prison, and it makes a clanking

noise. I walked across that and said, "Oh, damn! I'm back at Heartbreak Hotel!" And that's just the worst place. Nothing good ever happened in Heartbreak. They either tortured you in nearby New Guy Village or Cell 18, or they tortured you directly in Heartbreak. So when you heard that rattle, you'd know you were in trouble.

They threw me, blindfolded, into a cell, and as soon as the door closed, I started tapping on the wall. I found out that next door to me was--by the way, this was mid-June of 1970--Bud Day [George Everette]. Next door to Bud Day was Jack Fellowes [John Heaphy], and we could hear other people, but they wouldn't communicate. We started finding out who was SRO--Bud Day was senior--who we were; what camp we were in; what was going on; what was the posture at all the camps; what we had been doing; who had gotten letters, and so forth. It turned out none of us had written or received a letter! We would later find out that in the spring of 1970, Kennedy came back from Paris with 331 names of POWs that had been given him by the Vietnamese. I don't remember the exact number. Kennedy told the world that these were all the POWs who were still alive in Hanoi. There were six names missing on that list, and they were the six of us that were in Heartbreak Hotel! So we were lost in the system. I'll tell you in a second what I think happened, but that's neither here nor there. So six of us were literally lost in the system, and Ted Kennedy had declared us dead! As you might guess, Ted Kennedy is another curse word in our household.

We began to really communicate. I was in the first cell, so I would clear the door to the cell block, and the others would tap. Heartbreak, in the better times of my torture, was not

that hard a place to communicate in if you were brave and knew what was going on. The only problem was that the rats would come around the door to the cell block to get into Heartbreak. I would be looking under the door for guards. The first time the rat would see you, and you'd see him, was about a foot and a half away, running wide open. You'd be eyeball-to-eyeball with a huge rat! The hardest thing in the world was to keep from blinking, because if you blinked, the guard could sneak by you. So it really took a lot of nerve sometimes when those rats came around that corner!

We were trying to communicate with the other three people in Heartbreak, and we finally got in contact with another person. This man had been tortured very badly at the Zoo, Camp America, and for whatever reason had a lot of guilt that he had broken. The fact is that nobody had been able to stick with just name, rank, and serial number! I never met one. Maybe near the end of the war when they weren't torturing, but I never met anybody that was tortured who didn't have to go beyond name, rank, and serial number, and so forth. It bothered us all, but it really bothered some people. I think we'll all go to our graves feeling guilty that we didn't hold out longer, didn't do better, didn't do more things, weren't braver, weren't stronger; at least I will. I think most of us will, because we found out we weren't Superman. You know, we see all the John Wayne and James Bond movies, and you really think you can be that tough. It turns out you are not a hero at all. When the ropes are on you, you very quickly find out how human you really are!

Be that as it may, where was I? Darn it! Sorry, I've lost my train of thought.

H: You were talking about things were improving a little at a time.

P: Okay. We were trying to get in touch with these other POWs in the cells. We finally got in touch with the man in Cell 4 and found out that he had been tortured and, apparently, had this terrible guilt of what he had done. He hadn't done anything; trust me. I mean, he was tremendously brave, but for some reason, the guilt got to him. It was for no reason, because he hadn't done any worse than anybody else, probably less. He started faking that his hands were paralyzed to get the Vietnamese off his back. Now everybody had had paralysis of one sort or the other because of the ropes, but he played it after the paralysis was gone, and he had done it so well the Vietnamese even gave him shock treatments. I don't know about you, but having an Oriental quack giving you shock treatments, who had probably had six months of medical training, isn't my idea of a good idea! We tried to tell him--he was Naval Academy graduate and bright--"You've got to start eating." He wasn't eating. We said, "You've got to start eating. You've got to start cleaning yourself up. Things have changed. They are not torturing anymore. We can get away with a lot more. We are able to communicate." He said, "No. They are after me! They'll find out about my hands!" I said, "No, XX; things have changed. You've got to change with it because you cannot continue to not eat and not bathe and do these things. Things have changed." He said, "They're after me." And yet he could talk about prize-fighting. He really loved prizefighting and all kinds of sports. About that, he was totally rational, but about himself, he was not rational.

It turned out that there was another man in the cell block that had been beaten insane. He had gone insane under torture. People had seen him get hit across the face twelve times with a fan belt and not blink. In all the time he was with us in Heartbreak, we would hear him every now and then making noises. He never spoke. He would sometimes kick the door and scare the living thunder out of us. But essentially, he never said a word. Robby Risner and Swede Larson were living in Star Chamber across the Heartbreak courtyard from us and exercised in the yard, and we gained contact with them. They flashed through the window one time, "Who is the man who walks around the courtyard and looks at the birds?" This was our man who acted like a two or three year old--a retarded two or three year old. He never spoke, never said a word, and we never gained any contact with him.

The last of the six was a Navy commander who had been in Heartbreak, we think, for four years without ever gaining contact with another American. We believe he may have gained contact with a Vietnamese early on in Heartbreak, and shortly after that, they came in and tortured him. The POW thought this South Vietnamese POW had turned him in. He apparently decided that everybody living on both sides of him would turn him in, and so he decided to never communicate again! This was a deadly decision. He had lived in isolation for four years, and he was in bad shape mentally. He really was.

Now remember, we couldn't talk directly to him--by mid July we had gained confidence in our communication procedures and believed the Vietnamese could/would not torture us for communicating. So with great care, we began to talk under the doors to the other cells while the rats and I cleared the

doorway to Heartbreak--We could only talk under the cell door. We found that he was the senior guy in the cellblock but was often irrational! About himself, he was totally irrational; about everything else, he was rational. We'd say, "Hey, they gave you some milk. Great!" And then we'd find the milk in his bucket--we had to empty the latrine buckets for the guys who were in trouble--he said, "I don't need it. I'm allergic to milk." And two days later he would be talking about life at home and said, "Boy, when I was at home, I used to drink a gallon of milk a day." We'd say, "Hey, _____, you told us yesterday you were allergic to milk. Now you say you drank. . . ." "Well," He would never respond to such questions. The Vietnamese gave him bean curd, were giving him vitamins. We would find the vitamins and bean curd in his bucket the next day. So the guy was really in trouble. We were trying to tell--excuse me, I have to be careful what I say here because there are a lot of people who could get hurt--"You've got to change your resistance posture. The Vietnamese don't want anything anymore. In fact, they want to get you out alive. They're short on prisoners. A lot of pilots didn't make it, and now they need live bodies."

About that time, on about Labor Day of 1970, the Vietnamese came to us and suddenly wanted all of us to write home for nobody had written home or received a letter. It turned out we were convinced, one, that various camp commanders had put us in Heartbreak by saying we were crazy. Why? Because we knew one guy was crazy--not crazy; he had been beaten insane. Two others were in serious mental trouble. Bud Day and Jack Fellowes had just raised holy hell in the Zoo, and I'd called the commander a barbarous savage. I just think the camp commander figured, "Hey, I want to get rid of some bad

actors." and each just shipped off his troublemakers as mentally sick POWs. I was a troublemaker. I think that's really what happened. I think we were looked upon as six crazy people, and it's not a good feeling, in retrospect. But I'm almost positive that's what happened. Talk about conjecture; that's what this was/is. Bud, Jack, and I did agree to write home and were glad to do it.

The SRO POW wouldn't write, although we kept pleading with him. The Vietnamese were giving the SRO and the Naval Academy grad letters from their families. The Naval Academy grad with the hands fetish got two wonderful letters from his wife, which he read to us: "We worry about you, and we want to hear from you. It's so important." He said to us, "I can't write. They really want to find out about my hands." We said, "Well, you've got to write." He finally went in and even told the Vietnamese he was going to write but then got in the quiz and wouldn't do it. It cost him his life!!!

Bud Day talked the Vietnamese into letting him visit the SRO that I talked about who had been in isolation for four years. Bud was with him for three hours, and he said that he was just absolutely filthy. He went into the shower and washed him and got him all cleaned up. In the middle of the bath, the guy turned to Bud and said, "Have there ever been any cases of homosexuality in North Vietnam?" (laughter) You've got to know Bud Day to know how much Bud wanted to kill him! As far as I know, by the way, interesting enough, there were no cases of homosexuality that I know of at all in Hanoi. It just wasn't an issue. Anyway, for some guy to say this to Bud Day when Bud's trying to save his life; it was funny but pitiful! (laughter) That's a true story!

Bud spent three hours with him in the cell and got him cleaned up. He ate a little good food while Bud was there, but the next day he was throwing food away again. This cost him his life!

On October 21, as I remember it--Bud Day disagrees with me on the date, but that's what I remember--the cell block opened just after 9 o'clock at night, and three POWs left--the guy who was completely insane, the SRO, and the Naval Academy grad. They were never seen alive, and when we came home, their bodies were shipped home. The Vietnamese reported that they had died of natural causes, all three, on October 21, 1970! They walked out of that cell upright that night and were probably dead by midnight. Of course, Bud, Jack, and I will always live with the guilt of why we couldn't save two of them; we were so close. Why? Because within a month, they opened the cell doors of Heartbreak, and we could spend a couple or three hours together each day. If we could have ever gotten in that situation with the two of them, we could have probably saved them. Not for the one guy across from me who "looked at the birds," but for the other two, I think we could have gotten them home. Just by a month! Just by a month!

The treatment continued to improve. I was moved to Cell 5 in Heartbreak in November of 1970 and could see the other side of the camp. I could see there was one camp where the Vietnamese would bring in young kids that looked like they were about 10 years old, with chains between their wrists. They were too little to put in handcuffs. They would be in the prison for a couple of days, and then they would take them out.

I could also look into the women's area. I could also see the sky the night--November 20-21--the Son Tay raid occurred and the firefight overhead. Then I saw, a few days later, when they moved the people from Camp Faith into Hanoi. I believe the Vietnamese were afraid the United States would also try to break the prisoners out of Faith. So I watched as many POWs moved into what would be called Camp Unity. I also watched, prior to the United States POWs moving in, as the Vietnamese emptied the camp of all Vietnam prisoners--I think most were civilians, including the women. Boy, it was good to see other POWs, because we really, the six of us, were really concerned. But now, for the first time in six months, we could hear other Americans. And they were in big cells! We could hear people laughing and joshing, and here we were. We were cut off from humanity. Our spirits really picked up--and all because of the Son Tay raid!

But on the night of about the 18th of December, we were moved into Little Las Vegas, into the--I've forgotten the name of that cell block at the south end of the compound, but it's immaterial. Very shortly after that, John McCain [John Sidney II] moved in with us. He was a great cellmate and really funny. By the way, several of us got a package. It wasn't much--in fact, my package had one pack of gum; that's all--but we got packages before we left Heartbreak. Then on Christmas night, we got a big meal. Then all of a sudden, all hell broke out--Christmas night of 1970. The Vietnamese took every bit of our belongings, everything--clothes, items from packages, photos, blankets, everything. We stripped and were carefully searched, thoroughly! Finally, they came back and tore the cells to pieces. We later found out they found microfilm and some other stuff in someone's package. Not in

ours, but in some POW's package from home. The Vietnamese just tore our stuff to pieces and then gave us back a little of it, like soap, but no toothbrush. We lost forever all our letters, vitamins, and so forth, from the packages. I, by the way, had gotten one letter by that time.

Joan's first letter had something that was interesting. There were five lines in the letter, and the second line was the best line, I think, anyone ever got up there. She said, "The kids are happy, healthy, and normal, and we love you." Is there a better line ever written in a letter to a POW? That's the first letter I got.

By the way, while I was gone, within three months after I was shot down, Joan lost her mother. Joan had an operation and had a heart stoppage during the operation. Our son had closed heart surgery, and my father died one month before Joan got her first letter from me in November of 1970. Joan would go for three and a half years before she even knew I was alive. She's a tough gal; she really is!

We moved over into Camp Unity that Christmas night. Our group was moved into cell block number seven in Camp Unity, with the meanest, nastiest, craziest bunch of guys that were ever there. There were many senior people: Stockdale, Denton, Robbie Risner, Sam Johnson [Samuel Robert], Harry Jenkins [Harry Tarleton, Jr.]. This really was a crazy bunch, including the guys who had been in the Alcatraz--and you've heard about Alcatraz, I'm sure. Well, the Alcatraz bunch was with us. John Dramesi [John Arthur] was in there; George Coker [George Thomas], and George McKnight [George Grigsby] were there. You name it, they were in there. You can

imagine, we just talked and talked and talked. Our SRO, Stockdale, quickly had the whole camp organized. This was the senior cell, except the full bulls--colonels--were in a separate area where the Vietnamese women had been kept. We quickly established contact with them. But they--John Flynn, and so forth--had really had no contact with other POWs for years, so they left it to Stockdale to initially run the camp until they could come up to speed. So Stockdale was running Camp Unity, even though he was not the senior officer.

[End Tape 2, Side 2]

P: In early February, our cell decided we were going to have a church service. We knew that was legal under the Geneva Conventions, and we were going to push this. Of course, the Vietnamese still weren't recognizing SROs, but they weren't torturing, and that made it easier. We could be braver. We were getting outside at least a few hours per day in our area, so things were looking up. Stockdale told the Rat what we were going to do. Robby Risner was going to lead the service, and four guys were going to sing. The Rat said, "It is forbidden. You are going to have a political rally!" Stockdale told him again what we were going to do and what we were going to say. Anyway, there was a big confrontation. On Sunday morning--I think on 7 February 1971--we had a church service. We had POWs in Cell 7 who were agnostics, but they were all in favor of this action just because everyone felt we needed to push this issue. So we had the service, and the "Bug"--also known as the Rat--was out of his mind, shouting, "You do not do this," and all kinds of stuff.

About four o'clock that afternoon, the Vietnamese came in with AK-47s and burp guns, and took Robby and three or four senior people. When they started doing this, we just started raising hell and started singing the Star Spangled Banner in our cell. Pretty soon, the whole camp picked this up. Well, you could imagine! This was North Vietnam; this was in a war; this was communism! The Vietnamese went berserk. You just don't do this in a Communist system. Then the POWs in all cells started singing something else. They were saying, "We're cell number seven;" "Where is number six?" and so forth. I thought, "If somebody throws a hand grenade or pulls a machinegun in here, and we get mowed down for saying we are cell number seven, I've got a problem here." (laughter) But so help me, that's what went on!

We finally quit, but I don't know how. Probably we collectively got smart enough and thought, "You can just push this so much," and common sense finally took over. The Vietnamese started pulling senior people out of all the cells, one after another. They would take the SRO of a cell out--they never officially recognized rank, but they always took out the senior guy and then the next guy, and so forth, and said, "You will obey." And the SRO/POW would say, "No." Anyway, they kept pulling people out and saying, "If you don't do what we tell you, you will pay the price." No one bit.

Finally, they must have realized they didn't have enough cells to hold all those people in single cells, because they didn't want to move them out of the Hanoi area, because of the Son Tay raid. So the Vietnamese finally pulled out 20 percent of the POWs, and our resistive posture stayed the same! It all goes back to the Code of Conduct. When an SRO leaves, the

next senior man steps up and takes over, and if he goes, the next guy says, "Whatever he said, I say the same thing," and so forth, and the structure held! Finally, they just couldn't pull anymore SROs. The POWs who left ended up spending, some of them, six months to a year in semi-isolation at different places around the city. But it held. Boy, that was a great night.

Our cell, number 7, had a lot of problems. We had some POWs who had psychological problems. We also had another problem because, about this time, the problem of Wilber and Miller and Bob Schweitzer [Robert James] and propaganda broadcasts rose again. These POWs had been on the radio a lot, along with some other people. Stockdale's "plums," as we called them--the regulations--said it was our job to try to get these people back into the fold. "Do not drive a repentant sinner to his grave."

One night, Bob Schweitzer was placed in our cell. Now, we are talking about some awfully tough people who had been very badly tortured, were super resisters, and some had been in Alcatraz. If you are Bob Schweitzer, this was the last cell you wanted to be in. And Bob's rank made him the senior man. He was commander of that cell unless we relieved him, and that's hard to do (Code of Conduct). Like the "Caine Mutiny," you just don't go around relieving SROs without lots of evidence. I'm not going to say who the SRO in the room was when Bob Schweitzer arrived, but he did not take kindly to this change. Two other POWs joined the ex-SRO in undermining Bob's actions. Can you imagine being Bob Schweitzer? He had been on the radio, talking about how wonderful the Vietnamese were, how terrible the Americans were, and now he walks into

this cell! Now could he command men who hated his guts and thought he's a yellow coward? Do you have any idea what it must have been like? Hell on earth!

It turned out that his best friend, prior to shoot down, was Nels Tanner [Charles Nels], a true hero and veteran of Alcatraz, and Nels Tanner was my best friend. We spent a lot of time with Bob. Nels and I were trying to help him out, because we felt that's what the "plums" required. We didn't try to condone what he did. Bob had to face that himself. We just wanted a functioning cell SRO. The real fact was that Bob was weak. He was a guy that was a hail-fellow-well-met, and he liked to have people like him. You have met these people? So he wanted the Vietnamese to like him and, boy, when they found his weakness, look out! Then the Vietnamese put him in with Wilber and Miller, and Miller just took him apart and sucked him right into being a collaborator. But Bob really wasn't bad; he was just basically weak. That's my feeling. Unfortunately, the ex-SRO, who had been there before Bob, cut Bob's feet out from under him, and other POWs did a lot of things to make his job absolutely miserable. Those were terrible days, just terrible days! I understand the feelings of the ex-SRO and the other POWs, but what they did only made the matter worse for everyone!

About this time, we realized that we had time and better health, so people started teaching Spanish, German, Russian, and French, and another POW was teaching parachuting, or telling us about it. Dick Stratton [Richard Allen] was teaching philosophy. It was wonderful to hear a guy talking about Plato and Aristotle and Epicureanism in that hell hole. Another two people had been Toastmasters, and they started a

Toastmasters Club. By the way, I got a Toastmasters course completed while I was in Hanoi. Toastmasters damn near got us in isolation because the Vietnamese thought we were having a political rally during one of our sessions. We also had a man who tried teaching English, but nobody could teach English because everybody was an expert, but no one knew anything! But Spanish, German, French, Russian, philosophy, and psychology were soon being taught regularly.

Then someone found out that I had taught at the Air Force Academy. They came up to me one day and said, "We'd like you to teach us everything you know about thermodynamics, aerodynamics, gastronomics, propulsion and design." I said, "Hey, Von Karman [Theodore] couldn't do that. I don't have a library; I don't have a slide rule. We've got to have a mathematical base, make sure everybody knows mathematics. Do you know how long that will take?" And the guy said, "Time is not a variable!"

H: Very true.

P: Anyway, I thought about it, and I said, "Okay." This was about February or March--some time in 1971. I said, "If I am going to do this, I need help." Luckily, I got two great people to help me with the math classes: Bob Shumaker [Robert Harper] and Norlan Daughtrey [Robert Norlan]. We put together and taught a course in algebra--a tough course; then we went to trig. Meanwhile, Bob remembered the expansions for sine and cosine, and between us, we came up with the expansions for Log Base 10 and the conversion to Log Base E. These took 30 minutes per number to calculate, but we ended up having a set of trig and log tables from 0 to 90 degrees with five-place

accuracy, and Log Base 10 and Log Base E for a thousand numbers, again with five-place accuracy. Each number took 30 minutes of calculate. What our students--aero students--would do was to take a piece of broken roof tile that we would steal from the yard and then work out the equation on our concrete bed. We made sure it was right. We then took a piece of bamboo, curved in the shape of an ink quill, and wrote--with dye or pill ink or whatever you had--onto a piece of stolen toilet paper. We would always make two or three of these math tables, and then we would pass one of them on to another cell. We were being inspected regularly, and we didn't want to lose those tables. So soon we really ended up with great math tables, and we learned to make slide rules, log log duplex decitrig, slide rules. Anyway, I had about 20 POWs in the course who had a sound math background, and then we went into calculus, differential and integral calculus. Bob Shumaker was a tremendous help in teaching math. When math ended, I was on my own.

I started teaching thermodynamics, the first and second law, flow equations, combustion, and so forth. I then taught gastronomics, including incompressible flow, compressible flow, shock waves, Reynolds numbers, dimensional numbers, nozzle design and inlet design, and rocket and gas turbine engines. Then we did a little heat transfer and ended up with aircraft design. We ultimately ended up designing a jet engine. My students also did homework. Of course, when you live only three inches away from your instructor, it was easy to get help. I taught two lessons a week, which turned out to be a real grind. Without any textbooks, I had to derive all the equations, write all the problems, and so forth. It was similar to writing a textbook in an educational vacuum.

By the middle of 1972, I was really ill. I didn't know at the time what I had, but I was again getting very ill. So I finally ended up teaching--I think I had 80 or 90 lessons. Some people went on to get college credit for what they had learned in that course. I think I ended up with about seven students at the end, because mine was not the average course. (laughter) As you might guess.

I moved a couple of times in the summer of 1972 to various cells in Camp Unity. Also, the bombing began to return to Hanoi, and the Vietnamese moved some POWs up to a camp on the Chinese border. During 1972, we were in contact with the Thais and Max and, through them, to the senior people. The story of the bravery of Max, Chi Cham Harnovee, and Profon is too long to tell, but record it that they are considered by all ex-POWs as TRUE heroes! Nels Tanner and I were the primary communicators most of the time, so I was spending a lot of my time communicating and sending some very complex coded messages.

Then, as you know, the United States and Vietnam were negotiating in the fall of 1972. The peace negotiations fell through after the election, and the United States started bombing on the 18th of December. It was the most unbelievable sight to be downtown, ground zero: To see those SAMs, to see hundreds of SAMs leaping off the rails, and AAA blasts, and a B-52 falling, burning, from 35,000 feet. I will always remember it! The first thing that happened that night was an F-111--I think it was an F-111--came over and dropped several bombs. From then on, it rained bombs all night long. It went on like that day after day, and bombs would hit so close that bomb fins actually fell into the courtyard. I could see the

tile roof lift up, and our cells leaked from then on--all the cells leaked like sieves from then on. The POWs were up on their concrete beds cheering. We were probably dumb because some Vietnamese guard could go berserk with a machinegun and kill us all.

The Vietnamese guards were so scared that they just disappeared. We never saw a guard during the bombing. They all got in holes dug in the ground and disappeared. They were scared to death. On the 29th or 30th of December, the bombing stopped, and then about a month later, the Vietnamese told us that a peace agreement had been signed. They also gave us copies of the agreement. They also told us how we would be released, i.e., in order of shoot down, and those who were ill would go first. By the way, Miller and Wilber went out with the sick and injured first but were not hurt or ill.

The first group, who were shot down before July 1, 1966, went out, and I was supposed to be in the second group two weeks later. But between that time, a group of twelve POWs left--out of the agreed upon release order. By the way, Don Heiliger left in the second unscheduled group. Then the day came when I was supposed to go, but nothing happened!!! The Vietnamese decided that the Americans had been obdurate or whatever--one of their stupid words they used--and we were told the release process had stopped! Imagine what that was like. The day we were supposed to go, and we didn't go!!!

Nels Tanner and I, on the day that we actually left--4 March 1979--were working on a new communication code, a really complicated one, and planning for the next two years in Hanoi. That's the way we worked it. You held on. If things were

really tough, you set time frames you could handle. You'd take the next week, the next day, the next hour, the next minute, and so forth, so you knew you could handle the time frame. The day we went home we were planning for the next two years.

On the 4th of March of 1973, we left the prison on buses, crossed the Doumer Bridge to Gia Lam and got on a C-141 and headed for freedom. We smelled the perfume on the nurses; we laughed; we cried, and we landed in the Philippines free men. It was just about dark, and the wind had unfurled the American flag. The flag was in a spotlight, and it was the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

I met Maxine McCaffery as soon as I got to Clark Air Base. She was there doing artwork for the United States Air Force, and I called Joan as soon as possible. Our first call was I love you, I love you, I love you; we didn't say anything meaningful. We did that on two or three calls, and finally, about 50 hours after I was in the Philippines, we finally got an open circuit and, for an hour and a half, we really talked. The big thing we were talking about was how to make sure when we met the kids that I would greet the kids first to make sure that they knew how important they were to me. I flew back to the States, and I met them at Sheppard Air Force Base [Texas], and we had a wonderful reunion.

Six or eight years after my return, and after much illness, I decided I wanted a local general practitioner to handle little medical problems. I chose the local internal medicine physician who happened to have built the house we now live in. When I first went to see him, he said, "You look familiar,"

and I told him my history. He said, "Where did you go through your recovery status?" I said, "Sheppard." He said, "You know, I was one of the doctors during homecoming at Sheppard." I said, "Well, the guy I had I think his name started with a 'G'." He said, "My name is Shoengold." He had, in fact, been my homecoming physician and is my doctor today. Isn't it a small, small world?

I completed my homecoming hospital stay in seven days and went back to the Air Force Academy. I then, in about two months, became very, very ill with ulcer colitis, and it ultimately caused me a lot of problems. I initially returned to the Aero Department to four courses--two courses that fall and two courses that spring. I also was an associate professor, a course director, and was promoted to full colonel. I became the Deputy Commandant for Military Instruction in the summer of 1974 and was responsible for all the flying, soaring, parachuting, and the ballooning programs. I also was responsible for all the formal military instruction at the Air Force Academy and all the formal part of BCT. Lastly, I was responsible for the navigation program and the SERE--survival program. In fact, I taught communications to every SERE class for the entire eight years I was there, plus I spoke to every class the last hour before they would leave SERE training. During that last hour, I would always sit on stage and chat with the SERE grads and ask if anyone had any questions about the real thing! "Ask anything you want." So for eight years after I came back, I talked to every SERE class.

I am very proud to be the father of the "Soar for All" program. When I took over as Deputy Commandant, only 50 cadets soloed each year in a glider. During my two years, the

soaring detachment increased our yearly cadet soloing to 350, and the blueprint for the "Soaring for All" program was nearly complete. Parachuting was in an even worse condition and had a black eye in the eyes of the Superintendent and Commandant. Also, only 50 cadets got their jump wings by jumping at the AFA.

In order to clean up the problems in the parachuting program, I had to instill a very severe safety program with an emphasis on positive command and control over all jumps. I ultimately had to fire the Parachuting Commander, brought in an Army major to run the program the way I wanted it run, and things turned around. The incident rate dropped dramatically; parachuting became the pride of the senior staff at the Air Force Academy. They won the national collegiate championship for the first time in years, and we increased our number of cadets getting their jump wings from 50 to 300. We also put in place the present program to let any cadet, who wanted to, jump. This involved us first obtaining two Twin Otters as our jump aircraft.

Lastly, when the women entered the Academy, every program received special attention. We were, at that time, using parachutes--condemned--designed for backout from high-speed aircraft. The chutes had been condemned for age but were totally okay for slow-speed jumps. They were notorious for "hard pulls"--the D-ring was sometimes hard to pull. When I briefed the Superintendent that the cadets, including the women cadets, had and would be jumping using "condemned" but still safe parachutes, the Superintendent lost his cool. He, like I, realized that if a woman cadet was badly hurt or killed parachuting in a condemned chute--no matter how safe it

was--the Air Force Academy would be drowned in bad press. Within a few months, we got rid of those old chutes and bought brand new, easily operated sport chutes--at a cost of \$250,000. I am very proud of the changes I made in the soaring and parachuting programs. I also was a sailplane instructor!

I was the Deputy Commandant during the arrival of the first class with women at the Air Force Academy, and my team worked hand-in-hand with the Commandant for the cadet wing in running that first co-ed, BCT. I have too many stories about those days to bore you, but needless to say, I worked like hell for my two years as Deputy Commandant for Military Instruction.

I was medically grounded in the winter of 1975-76, so I was no longer eligible to be a Deputy Commander, but they wouldn't let me move to my new job as Commander of the Prep School until I and my team got the women through the first BCT. So in the summer of 1976, I ran 50 percent of BCT, parachuting, soaring, SERE--survival school--and also started the Prep School's fall semester. It turned out that that job I had in the Commandant's area now has two full colonels doing what I did, plus I had the Prep School during the incredible summer of 1976!

I went from there to Prep School and was Prep School Commander for five years. I also remained a soaring instructor. As I told you, I kept teaching while in the Prep School. I also had a proposal to make a major change in the Academy curriculum that I put through to General Tallman. Although I almost got lynched by the faculty for its contents, it turned out to be the basis of the new curriculum, reducing the

number of technical hours required for graduation. You know, we have the core curriculum, and my proposal turned out to be the basis for the new core curriculum that's now--1980s--used at the Academy. Basically, my proposal reduced the number of core courses, for I thought there was too much emphasis on academics. I thought the Air Force Academy needed to prepare cadets to first be warriors! Not everybody had to be a scholar, but they damned well had to know how to be a soldier. I thought we were losing cadets--didn't graduate--that we shouldn't. So I'm really proud of the things I did at the Air Force Academy. I'm proud of the "Soaring for All" Program; the Parachuting Program was about to be thrown out when I took it over. I fired a bunch of people, set tough rules, and after I took over, we won the national championship every year after that. Lastly, I was directly responsible for the overlooks that border the west side of the airfield. I noticed that during jumping periods and soaring, tourists would pull off on the beam or plow down, causing many near accidents. I talked the civil engineers into leveling several areas and putting in several loads of rock. Today, they are the overlooks, complete with a T-38, that are so popular with the people. I don't get credit for the airplanes. I just got the idea, "Let's have a tourist overlook so people won't hit each other." I had a lot to do with many changes in airmanship, and a tremendous lot to do with SERE.

I commanded the Prep School for five years and put chemistry and physics in the program. I think I also doubled the number of minorities at the Prep School. Then in 1981, I got very, very ill. My health was going downhill, and so the Air Force said it was time for me to go. So I left on a medical retirement with 60 percent disability.

A man from San Diego had heard what I had done in Hanoi and the Academy via an Airline magazine. He called and said, "I'm starting a long-distance telephone company. Would you like to join it?" I ended up joining his team as a vice president. We went to Phoenix and started a long-distance telephone company called STARNET. We ultimately moved the company to San Diego and built it up to 500 people working nationwide. I built the switching stations in many of the major cities in the United States. It was quite an experience to go from being a professor to building switching sites and the vice president of a company. Then Ford Aerospace bought it from us, and I continued to work for them.

In November of 1982, I had colitis so bad that I had to have a colectomy. This healed the colitis--no colon, no colitis! But on March the 4th, 1983, I had an emergency operation for an intestinal blockage. Seven days later, the same thing re-occurred, and I had my third major operation in as many months. I returned home, but within a month, I had another blockage. I ended up in Balboa Naval Hospital for 25 days on hyperalimentation--I was totally fed via tubes. Doctors have since told me that they have seen few people, as close to death as I was, who survived!! In May of 1983, I had my fourth four-plus hour surgery. This one took and, although I still have many problems, I have not had another abdominal operation.

In late January/early February, I had a heart attack and seven bypasses. This fixed my heart, but I had a lot more health problems, so I finally had to retire a second time for my second full medical retirement. Now I'm a MacIntosh computer freak, and I've got about 20-25 people locally that I teach on

the computer. In fact, that was one of them that called me up a minute ago. I also have people all over the country that I help. One of my students has bought a half million dollars worth of MacIntosh equipment as a result of my training. I've got people in practically every state, many ex-POWs--Dick Dutton [Richard Allen], Dick Stratton, and so forth--all over the country that I've gotten started on computers. I'm also on the board for the La Jolla Cancer Research Foundation, and I speak from time to time. I'm national president of the Vietnam ex-POWs, NAMPOWS, Inc., and was very busy during Desert Storm. I guess my phone must have rung 8 hours a day, sometimes 10 hours a day during that time.

The real story, though, is Joan. As I say, my kids are just doing superbly, and it's all her doing. But that's a different story.

H: Well, let me back you up a little bit, and ask you some specific questions.

P: Sure.

H: One thing in John G. Hubble's P.O.W. book, he talks at some length about the Cuban interrogators.

P: Fidel, as we called him, was the one. It was Fidel who beat the POWs insane with the fan belt. I talked about this fellow when talking about my story in Heartbreak Hotel in 1970.

H: That was the Cuban?

P: Fidel hit him--the insane POW--across the face with a fan belt. That was Fidel. I never saw it happen or met Fidel, but I talked to lots of people who did. In fact, I was with one of them this weekend. I also think that Fidel was involved with the Naval Academy grad who said his hands were paralyzed, but I'm not sure. I know Fidel was responsible for beating the guy insane. Everything I know about Fidel is secondhand.

H: Also, one of your fellow POWs, Col John Fer, wrote a paper for the Air Command and Staff College in May 1974 entitled, "Leadership and Followership in the Prisoner of War Environment." Anyway, I took some quotes out of his paper that I'll present to you, and you can make your own comments.

P: In fact, I wrote one for Air Command and Staff College called "Aerodynamics, Hanoi Hilton Style."

H: John Fer noted "There were cases whereby SROs did not seize the initiative of command when required." What was the situation in your own particular case?

P: That never occurred in any cell I was in. I know of one full colonel that was relieved up there because he did not/would not assume command, but not in my cell. Remember, I told you about the time when Bob Schweitzer walked in--who had been broadcasting for the enemy--and even then he was recognized and acted in the full capacity as the cell SRO because, as "Cag" Stockdale said, "Don't drag a repentant sinner to his grave." Literally, those are his exact words, because Jim heard that we were having all kinds of problems because of Schweitzer.

By the way, Schweitzer came home in 1973, and about nine months after he came home, he hit a bridge in a car doing about 120 miles an hour. Many people feel he may have committed suicide. No one knows it, but it's not fun to be-- as Black [Jon] has told you--a traitor. You didn't want to be one of these guys. We're not a very kind group towards people who collaborated with the enemy! I have some sympathy for Schweitzer, certainly more than I did for the guys who came home early, because, for all his mistakes, Schweitzer did come back; he did stand up, finally, to the Vietnamese, and he was a pretty good SRO under conditions that no human being should have to endure.

Anyway, every SRO in every cell I was in acted very well, except for the one in Heartbreak. I told you that in Heartbreak in 1970, we had the Navy guy who had been isolated for four years. We recognized him as SRO and treated him with great respect, but frankly, he really couldn't function as the SRO. We gave him all the respect we could, but he was confined in one cell and we were in other cells, so there really wasn't much he could do anyway. He didn't know anything. We listened to him but, for all intents and purposes, Bud Day was running the cell block. The SRO was not acting rational, and secondly, he had no information to work with, but he was not relieved. We treated him with total respect.

In fact, even the colonel who was relieved for cause--there was one colonel relieved for cause--was always treated with respect. As other POWs have told me, the colonel was in a terrible mental shape and terrified of the Vietnamese guards. If a guard came into the cell, he would start shaking, so he

was relieved for his own good. He apparently was pleased to be out of the hot spot.

We had one instance in Cell #7 that I do remember. One POW-- not the SRO-- hadn't held up very well during the hard days. When times got better, he decided he would show everyone how brave he was. So one day in 1972, he called to the guard, "Go screw yourself," basically, and worse words than that. The Vietnamese took him out, beat him black and blue, and he told everything he knew about our clandestine communications system! So instead of making himself look better, guess what?, he looked worse.

Remember I told you a basic rule for POWs was not to go around looking for trouble because the enemy has the guns and the muscle. I also had two more cases of guys going into deep depression in cells. One man, who lives in this town right now, whose eating behavior, or lack thereof, was bizarre. We were lucky we got him home. He's got a big job today, but every time I look at him, I don't know how we got him out alive, because he almost starved himself to death as a POW.

Remember the POW that I told you was acting like a two-year-old? Other POWs--cellmates--had to force feed him for a time while he lived in the Zoo. They probably kept him alive for a year or so longer than he probably would have lived.

The final answer to your question is: Nobody in any cell that I lived in ever was relieved for cause. We may have worked around a problem in Heartbreak; we never relieved the SRO.

H: Fer pointed out that "Continuity of command from one SRO to his replacement was often not smooth or definitive, even considering leadership style."

P: Well, that was true. The SRO that Schweitzer replaced certainly was not very kind to Schweitzer. He cut Bob's legs out from under him at times. So Fer was correct. But let me tell you, it was tough to be an SRO. I had nothing but sympathy for them. I really did. Personally, I felt that anybody who had the job deserved every support we could give them, and Cag Stockdale, as our often senior SRO, was the bravest and the best. I've just never met anybody like him! I don't know how anybody could be as brave or as smart or as insightful or as courageous as Jim Stockdale could be. And those are his bad points. I haven't even told you his good ones yet. (laughter) I mean, there aren't enough good words to talk about Cag Stockdale in my book. Unfortunately, not many SROs could fill the shoes of Jim Stockdale, and every POW, including the SROs, made plenty of mistakes. It was sometimes tough to support some SROs, but it was vital to discipline, command, and control.

H: Fer noted that "Discipline was not instilled effectively and with equity by all SROs."

P: Yes, that's true. I remember one of our SROs saying--I don't know why--"Do not communicate," when we were in Camp Unity. They had reed mesh walls about 10 feet high separating cell exercise areas, and this SRO said, "Do not talk through these to the next cell. " It seemed dumb but agreed! The next time we went out to bathe, the SRO walked right over to the fence barrier and started talking through it to the POW next

door--talking about a girlfriend or somebody! I told him, "My God, damn it, what are you doing? You just told everybody not to communicate through the fence." He said, "I just forgot. You understand."

Well, we had things happen like that, and when you saw a leader behave in that irresponsible manner--unfortunately, this particular SRO did this kind of thing often--it was upsetting! This SRO had been terribly tortured and beaten. We are talking about SROs who had been prisoners for seven years. None of us acted normally all the time! It was especially tough to be an SRO and enforce discipline. POWs had been up there for many years, most had been terribly tortured, and so forth. We had no idea if or when we would be freed. If a POW refused to obey the command of an SRO, what could you do to punish him? Put him in a prison cell on Nam? The SROs were not perfect, but neither were their cellmates--and they had very few options!

[End Tape 3, Side 1]

P: And let me tell you, some of the people who bitched the most about the SROs, when the chips were down, wouldn't communicate, wouldn't help drill holes through the walls so we could pass information, wouldn't take risks! I don't mean John Fer. I never was with John at all, so I don't want to imply that, but I'm just saying that there were a lot of people who complained about the leaders, but when the chips were down and the going got tough, they were not there. It would be nearly impossible to walk in the mocassins of some of those SROs. Jim Stockdale, Bill Lawrence, Larry Guarino [Lawrence Nicholas], and some of these guys, and Red McDaniel

[Norman Alexander]. In fact, I would include Bob Schweitzer in that group because he endured a true hell on earth when he walked into Cell #7 and became our SRO.

Consider Red McDaniel: His torture came after the escape of John Dramesi and Atterbury [Edwin L.]--Atterbury was killed later by the Vietnamese. The Vietnamese went through the cells in the Zoo and systematically tortured POWs. They took Red out, and over a week's time, Red received over 700 lashes with a fan belt. He returned to his cell, and the POWs who had lived with him didn't recognize him. They said, "My God, Red, what happened?" He told them what happened. They said, "What did you have to tell them?" He hadn't told them much, but obviously he told the Vietnamese something. His cellmates said, "Red, we've got to tell the rest of the camp what happened." Now remember, his cellmates wanted to communicate, and if they got caught communicating, everybody was going to get tortured, including Red--who had just been tortured. You know what his answer was? These were the bravest words I heard in North Vietnam. He said, "Would you please keep it short?" (laughter)

Another good story I've got to tell you concerns Cole Black. Cole Black was shot down in late May or early June of 1966, and he hadn't had any contact with any POWs. The United States bombed the oilfields around Hanoi that summer and, boy, were the Vietnamese mad! They pulled a bunch of POWs out and put them in a parade, marching through Hanoi. Cole was in that parade and, suddenly, the Vietnamese shackled him to another POW and started dragging him and the other POWs through the streets of Hanoi. They had bullhorns, inciting the populace, and people were beating him. The crowd went out

of control and started to even beat the guards. The Vietnamese were moving the POWs to the soccer stadium, and it looked like the POWs were going to be lynched. I mean, it got totally out of control! Guys were unconscious, and other POWs were dragging their buddies along. Cole Black turned to his unknown POW at his side and said, "Do they do this often?" (laughter) In fact, that was the only time it occurred. I'm sorry; I'm off the subject. Go ahead.

H: Fer pointed out that "There should be no multiple command structure. All services must be integrated into a unified organization for smooth, effective operation." Was there interservice rivalry problems that affected things?

P: Not really. I never saw it. The only thing is, sometimes the Navy promotions were kind of weird. The other services thought the Navy tended to have more senior people. But as far as I was concerned, I didn't see it as a problem. Now I've heard cell blocks that said they had problems, but it didn't happen in any cell in which I lived. That's all I can tell you. To me, it did not seem to be a problem. In fact, most of the cells I was in were commanded by Navy SROs.

H: Hubble's book refers to some incidents where Navy officers primarily felt that they should only take orders from their fellow Navy people.

P: I never saw it.

H: Fer stated that "Junior officers were often the most senior POWs due to an earlier capture date." Did this situation cause any particular problem?

P: Junior officers were what?

H: "Junior officers were often the most senior POWs due to an earlier capture date."

P: Some POWs were shot down as captains in the Air Force in early 1965, but by 1972, they were lieutenant colonels. But in our rank structure, we couldn't know this for sure. So they were still considered to be captains. Thus majors shot down years later would outrank the captain shot down in 1965. Cells worked this problem out the best way they could. There was some griping, but at least in the cell blocks that I was in, it wasn't a big deal. But I've heard of cell blocks where it was a real problem.

We did have a lot of problems in some of the cell blocks. Cell seven--that I was in--at Camp Unity was notorious for the problems. Our toughest times were near the end, because we had too much time and nothing to do. You know, we had been living with the same people for years. Some of them you had lived with for six years. It's a problem when you are that close. Remember, you are often living in a cell seven by seven with no windows. Imagine, some people were together, in such a cell, for three years. I know one group, two people were together for three years, and for two of those years, they never spoke! I mean, no marriage could exist under those conditions. Imagine if you couldn't get away from your wife for one second! Imagine living like that! Nothing was private. Nothing you could do that your cellmate didn't know about. Under those conditions, every weakness you had, every flaw, every irritant you had was magnified to your cellmate. Trust me, being a POW was tough; being an SRO was damn tough.

I said that in Hanoi, and I still believe it. I was never an SRO in Hanoi.

H: John Fer commented on that very thing. He said, "The great stress associated with closely confined prison conditions where an otherwise innocuous habit can be the cause for tremendous friction."

P: (laughter) He told it right! You see, have you ever watched any of these Vietnam POW movies? There's one called the "Hanoi Hilton." In the "Hanoi Hilton" movie, they showed the riot scene, where the riot took place in Cell #7 after the religious service. After the riot, within three minutes in the film, everything is back to normal, and POWs are all back in big cells and everything is okay. But it actually took 18 months from the night it happened to the time things got kind of back on an even keel. People do not understand how slowly things got better. Many people started getting letters in Vietnam in September of 1969. It was a year later before I wrote home, and I only got three more letters until the day I went home. I mean, you just can't believe how slowly things happened in Hanoi.

H: Fer observed that "Religion was a positive and effective asset in resisting the enemy and keeping hope on a high plane." Was religion of particular importance in your own situation?

P: It was, but I've got to tell you that I saw people who were agnostics who behaved very well. You'd better believe in something. In some people, it was family. That was the most important thing to me, I've got to tell you. I always remembered my father. One time he told me, "You know, our

family goes way, way back, and there has never been a scandal in this family, and I'll not be the first one to do it." When I was in Hanoi, those words kept ringing loud and clear in my mind. I also kept remembering Joan and the family. But for many others, it was religion that kept them going. I wish it was as simple as John said. I think religion was important and very positive, but there were other things that had the same thing.

The POWs we hated were the men who kept saying we were never going to go home for 10 or more years. We had one guy who would get up every morning and say, "Just 10 more years before we go home." We wanted to kill him! We also had another guy, Sam Johnson [Samuel Robert], who is now a U.S. Representative from Texas. Sam was the other way, and I love Sam. He's a wonderful guy. He saw promise in everything that happened. Almost anything that happened, Sam would say, "We're going to get out next week," or next month, or by Christmas. No matter what it was. Anyway, you couldn't help but get your hopes up, and then nothing would happen. I felt it was better to keep a more even keel than that, but if you are going to have the two, you'd rather have the Sam Johnsons all day long than this guy saying, "Only 10 more years." Geez. Remember, a POW's life is not like being in a prison in the United States. We didn't even know if anyone in the United States knew we were alive. What if someday you got a message, clandestinely, from the United States that said, "There's nothing we can do; you are on your own"?

H: Very true.

P: Sorry guys. "You are expendable." It was an unspoken, sometimes spoken, fear of every POW.

H: Bud Day, in his book, commented on the fact that there were two types of POWs in his camp, the eternal optimist and the eternal pessimist.

P: I don't think it was quite that--I think the vast majority of people were in the middle, leaning towards being the pessimist. If you weren't a little bit of a pessimist in Hanoi, you probably weren't very rational, because mostly bad things happened. The extreme pessimists and the eternal optimists had a lot of problems. I mean, both would get up--one of them was always down and dragging other people down with him, but the eternal optimists--people would want to kill them--because they would get your hope up unreasonably. So I think most people were centralists on the pessimistic side. That's a wimpy answer, I think, but that's what I think. People have often asked me that question, and I still believe it.

H: Fer wrote that "A number of subordinates did not recognize the continued necessity for military discipline in a POW camp."

P: I never heard that in any cell I was in, and I certainly disagree. Discipline saved us from ourselves, and it saved many lives!

H: He was also talking about some of those camps to the south, where I understand things did get a little out of hand.

P: I just don't know anything about that. I really don't.

H: Fer also stated that "Junior officers, in some instances, did not fully support their leaders when decisions were counter to the junior's desires."

P: I can think of one SOB, son of a bitch--excuse me--who undercut leaders and did things that I thought were wrong. He cut Schweitzer's legs out from under him and was disruptive in the cell block. When he came home, guess what he did. The same thing. He ultimately got thrown out of the Air Force. He made full colonel, but he finally was forced to retire, because the very same things he did in Hanoi finally caught up with him back here in the real world.

Change of subject: Do you know how Joan was briefed by the Air Force concerning our expected condition upon our return? They told her that when we come home--she was briefed by psychiatrists--50 percent of the POWs would only live six months; 50 percent would be alcoholics, and as many as 50 percent would be homosexuals. This is what our wives were told was going to happen. I can tell you that there was no homosexuality in Hanoi that I know of, none, zero. I think I would have heard by now. We had two confirmed suicides when we came home. I have also heard that many of the Army enlisted people have had many drinking, drug and psychological problems. I'm getting that from Bill Reeder [William S.]. Did Bill talk to you about this? NOTE: Bill Reeder was stationed at the Air Force Academy in the History Department and/or an AOC. He is the expert on Army POWs.

H: I haven't talked to him yet.

P: NOTE: I have a feeling about why the average POW did so much better in Hanoi than was predicted. Consider the many challenges it took to become a pilot. He had to have a college degree, be in perfect health, be well coordinated, have the desire and have the talent to complete pilot training. He then must be picked to be a fighter pilot, complete advanced training in the new aircraft, and become competent in the weapon system. He must also complete SERE and be an effective officer. When he got to Vietnam, he must survive a high-speed bailout, capture, travel to Hanoi, and initial torture. Out of every 5,000 people who enter college thinking they want to be a fighter pilot, probably only 1 in 5,000 can/could survive this winnowing process. It produced disciplined, dedicated, bright, motivated people who were really tough and very mature in most cases. This certainly was not true of the normal junior Army enlistee who became a POW--and it made a big difference!

Fighter pilots are, I believe, really not the norm, but they are also different. They are almost all extroverts, and most are egotists. You put a bunch of egotists, extroverts, who absolutely know they know more than anybody else in the world, and they survive because that's what they've been doing all their lives. Now you tell this fighter pilot POW that he is going to have to follow the commands of some guy that hasn't been shot down half as long as he has, because the FNG SRO just happened to be more senior at his shoot down. In fact, this FNG SRO came into the service five years after the older POW, so he was promoted while the POW was stuck in Hanoi. And remember, by 1969 we were all squirrely. I mean, we were all flaky. (laughter)

I'm just saying, if you talk to a psychiatrist, I think they will tell you that it was amazing how well we did. As I told you, they thought we were going to become homosexuals, alcoholics, and be dead from suicide in five years. None of that happened, and I attribute it to the selection process that put us into those cells.

H: Kevin McManus [Kevin Joseph] said he really was ticked off at those so-called psychiatrists.

P: I need to tell you a story about Kevin. I lived with him for some time. Kevin hadn't known his wife-to-be long when they got married in Hawaii. After seven days on R&R [rest and recreation], he went back and was shot down and didn't see her for almost six more years. The marriage stood together--a great story.

I think Kevin is referring to the message given to our wives before our return about us returning as alcoholics, homosexuals, and so forth. I also think he, myself, and many others were mad at the interviews that we had with the shrinks during our post-release hospital stay. I finally told my shrink to go stuff himself and never saw him again--good riddance!

I think you have to keep your eyes on the doughnut, not on the hole, because I think there were a lot of positive things that occurred, and I think history will look back and say, considering everything that happened, you couldn't write a whole lot better scenario. I'm not talking about me, because there were a lot of POWs who were a lot braver than I was. I keep coming back to Cag Stockdale and some of these people,

Larry Guarino and Bud Day. There were just a lot of brave people up there. All the people in Alcatraz; everybody in Alcatraz. That was the real nightmare over at Alcatraz.

H: Fer wrote that "Early releases damaged morale, weakened the concept of resistance and set a dangerous precedent for wars of the future."

P: I thought it was worse than that. (laughter) They were about 10 feet below McNamara [Robert S.] and Johnson. As far as we were concerned, their performance was inexcusable! Only Doug Hegdahl [Douglas], a seaman who fell off the back of his ship, is respected by other POWs. Doug was told to go home by Dick Stratton, his SRO, and I don't know of anybody who bears Doug Hegdahl bad feelings. The rest of the early releasees knew they weren't supposed to go home, were told not to go home early, and I have no sympathy for them whatsoever. They were turncoats who failed themselves, their service, their fellow POWs, and their country!

H: According to John G. Hubble's P.O.W. book regarding the release of Black, Matheny [David] and Overly [Norris], "The news that the three had accepted release came as a shock to many POWs, and the departure statement sparked bitter anger at the Plantation. Indeed, the effect on morale was so devastating that Doug Hegdahl got word that his orders to leave if he got the chance were rescinded." What was your recollection of that?

P: Oh, it was bad. I mean, if they had been in our cell block, they would have been lynched; they really would have been. And then to find out that one of them, Black, was an Academy

graduate was terrible. Some of the statements they made, some of the things they did, I mean, I don't know how they could think they could live with that for the rest of their lives. I can't imagine how they can look in the mirror, and I'm sure they are going to go through hell the rest of their lives. Bud Day lived with Overly and John McCain. Overly did help Bud Day and John McCain, who were both in poor physical condition, get well, but Overly was convinced his wife would die if he didn't come home. Bud is convinced of this. Somehow in Overly's mind, he was convinced if he didn't come home his wife would die. I have nothing good to say about the early releasees. That's the kindest thing I can say about them. Only Miller was worse! Col Ed Miller was a true traitor, and I am sure he will rot in hell!

H: According to Hubble, "Ramsey Clark came to Hanoi in August. Most of the prisoners regarded his visit as more serious than Fonda's. Clark, after all, had been Attorney General of the United States, a cabinet officer in the administration that had committed the Nation to war in Vietnam. He, too, saw some POWs, Gene Wilber, Ed Miller, and a few others. The meeting was tape recorded and played over the camp's radios, so that the other prisoners could all hear him offer legal aid to the anti-war prisoners should any require such help following their return home." What was your own personal reaction to all of this?

P: The tape was terrible on the morale of the camp. I thought it was terrible. Yes, there's nothing I can say except total contempt. You know, it's one thing to be antiwar in the United States. It is totally different to be in the arms of the enemy in Hanoi and saying detestable things about your

country. Frankly, I hope he and Jane Fonda fry in hell and any of the rest that did it.

H: As far as your own return, did you have any adjustment problems?

P: When I left, my son, Mark, was eight, and when I came back, he was 14 and the man of the house. He was making decisions, helping Joan, and here I came home. I come in and make decisions, and suddenly Mom is paying some attention to somebody else. We both had to adjust. My daughter didn't even recognize me when we first met and cried the first minute or two. But you just can't believe how wonderfully Joan had done, and her strength and her training really paid off. To this day Mark and Ginny's manners are perfect, you know, what I call the old southern way. They are competitive and couldn't be more successful. Both are successful engineers.

But there were some adjustments. I remember we went to the White House for the big POW dinner in May, and all the wives looked beat. Apparently, most POWs, including me, would go to bed at one o'clock in the morning and get up at four and say, "Let's go!" At least I was trying to make up, catch up, for those lost six years. And I'm still doing it! I was up at 4:30 this morning, working on the computer. By 5:30 I read the paper; at six o'clock I went out and walked and did exercise. By seven I had made three phone calls, and I was out picking stuff out of the garden. I've already done four different projects on the computer, and I've been to a political meeting today, and I'm with you. And it's six o'clock now. So I'm still at it. "Lord, give me patience and give it to me right now!" Heaven help Joan. To answer your

question, I'm still adjusting. I still lose my keys all the time. Since I came back, I can't seem to keep up with my keys or my glasses. I don't worry about little things like that. And I am forever impatient.

H: Would you say there was any difference between the Academy graduates who were POWs versus those from other walks of life?

P: Not really--no better and no worse, except for Black! They were just a lot of brave people there from every commissioning path.

H: As a final question, is there any advice you would offer for future POWs?

P: I truly believe in the Code of Conduct and think SERE training is invaluable. I just think you can learn a lot in SERE. The Code of Conduct worked. Many people have suggested that POWs just tell the enemy everything. Just admit everything; it's okay. But that produces an even worse problem. Behaving like Wilber, Miller, Overly, Black, and so forth, causes a POW to lose his self-respect. And once you give in to the enemy, they just keep wanting you to do more and more bad things. If you don't keep saying no, you don't keep your pride! Once you lose your self-respect, you're on a downhill road to a permanent place in hell. I think POWs have to keep resisting, have to keep their self-respect. The Code of Conduct gives the POW the rules and procedures that work. I truly believe in the Code of Conduct. I think it's an amazing document.

H: Which brings up an interesting point. It appears that the later shoot downs, the 1971-72 group versus the earlier ones had a different interpretation of the Code of Conduct.

P: Yes, that was interesting, because they came into Camp Unity and they were immediately talking on the radio. They said the services had told them to do this in SERE. This made the "Old Guys" mad! John Flynn, the SRO, told them to get the hell off the radio. "We don't give a damn what they told you in the United States. This is the way we are running it in Hanoi." The new guys couldn't believe what they heard, but Flynn persisted. Imagine now, you are the SRO for these new guys. You've got to say, "Hey, the big boss--SRO--just told me what the colonels and the generals told you in the United States is wrong." That literally happened. Joe Kittinger was that "new guy" SRO.

H: Kittinger [Joseph W., Jr.]

P: Yes, Kittinger was the SRO. His bunch of young Turks were saying, "We're going to get on the radio. We want our name to get out as we were told in the United States." Joe held his ground, convinced his new guys that the senior SRO was in command, and they had to obey. Shortly, all were obeying. I was proud of John Peter Flynn, Joe Kittinger, and those new guys who trusted in the system and the Code of Conduct.

[Interruption]

H: Are there any subjects or topics that I haven't brought out that you would like to address before we close out?

P: As I said, sometimes you ought to talk to Joan. But that's another story. I think the women's side is really quite interesting, and what they did with the children, and how they raised them, and the pressures they were under is an untold story. Joan got her first letter from Cora Weiss, who is a Communist. She was told we were going to come home alcoholics, were going to die in six years, and were going to be homosexuals. The Jane Fondas were always on the radio and TV. Black, Overly, and so forth came back early to tell them "what it was really like to be a POW." The Air Force never said, "Hey, maybe these guys aren't for real." The wives went through real hell. As I told you, Joan lost her mother; my father had a heart stoppage, and Mark had heart trouble. She was also very active with the League of Families. It was tough. Then they had to put up with us (me) when we came home--you know, we were as wild as a March hare.

H: Let me put another tape on.

[End Tape 3, Side 2]

P: Let me show you how far we were from civilization when we returned from Hanoi. We were back at Sheppard during homecoming and had some friends from Perrin come over to Wichita Falls. They were in the room, and we were talking. Suddenly Joan said, "We have to be somewhere. We have to go." So we were saying goodbye. I just stood up, talking to them, and this was what I did. [Motioning] Joan said, "What are you doing?" (laughter) I unzipped my pants. I mean, I just unzipped my pants to put my shirttail in. I had no idea what I was doing. When you live in an all male, crude world for many years, It's easy to forget what you are doing. There

was no modesty in Hanoi, and here I was in front of these people acting like I was in Hanoi. Joan was in shock!!! She said she thought, "What have I got? What's going on?" That literally happened.

Anyway, those are the two stories, and I quit.

H: All right. On behalf of the Association of Graduates, I certainly appreciate you taking the time and interest to sit for this.

[End of USAF Academy Association of Graduates Oral History Interview with Col Ben M. Pollard]