

Interview with Kenneth Houp by Dr. Baldwin at the Jessamine
County Library in Nicholasville, Kentucky, 6/26/97.

B: Ken, can we begin by talking a little bit about your personal background. Tell me a little bit about yourself and your family history.

H: Yes. I'm 55 years old, and I was born on June 4, 1942. I have lived in Jessamine most of my life with the exception of four years in the Air Force and for three years in Frankfort. I still work in Frankfort, and I commute back and forth. The Houp family has been in Jessamine County since the 1870's. If you go outside the county and see the name, they will know they're from Jessamine County. I am married and have two children. One of them is named Jessamine, and other one is named Emily. Jessamine is 22 and Emily is 18. I've been married 28 years, next week, July 3. I graduated from Jessamine County High School in 1960. After graduation, I went to University of Kentucky for a year and was the first Houp to go to college. I didn't realize even in those days how expensive colleges were, so I dropped out after one year. I dropped out of college and went in the Air Force and saved the money I needed to finish school. Anyway, that's a little bit about me.

B: You say you're a native Kentuckian and your family has been here for generations. What was your family's attitude about military service for its young men?

H: Well, my family was very supportive of military service. My older brother was in the Marine Corps in 1955; and my younger brother, who is about ten years younger, was in the Army in the mid-70's. We had uncles that had spent 18 years in the Army, and surprisingly, in some of the rural areas, their support for the military and the efforts is maybe carried over from World War II and Korea, but they were very supportive. I'll give you a quick example. The short time I was in Arkansas for a couple of years, a lady in Arkansas who worked with me gave me two female cats and I brought them from Arkansas to High Bridge. While I was gone overseas, my mother promised me to never get rid of those two cats. But because they were female cats and they just kept having kitten, my mother was so worried about me being overseas that she felt guilty that something would happen to me if she got rid of those cats. So, she was sort of like holding onto the cats for me. And when I returned, I had 37 cats (laughter). And I said, "Mother, why did you keep all of those cats?" She said, "Oh Lord, son, you're overseas and something would have happened to you, I don't know what I would have done with those cats." So you know, I think there is, in rural areas particularly, a lot of support for people in the military. I think all of that changed in the urban areas when I returned about 1967. During this time is when you begin to see a tremendous buildup of animosity toward veterans. As a matter of fact, I never told I was a veteran while I was going to school. They just thought I

was an older man. There were a few teachers who knew something about me, but the kids were still marching, and it just wasn't a comfortable feeling. It was not a comfortable feeling, but those were the younger people's attitude. Primarily, I think the older people in rural areas were very supportive.

B: So what influenced to join the Air Force then instead of the Army or the Marines?

H: Well, my brother had been in the Marines, and I had already heard all of those Marine stories. I didn't want to hear about the same fleas at Paris Island biting you and you couldn't scratch them. And along in those areas, they had some drowning down there in the swamp, and it was not something that appealed to me. So I didn't think the Army was much better, but I thought the Air Force that I could probably learn something in the Air Force other than how to fire a weapon. I thought I could learn something, maybe a skill or trade, that would be useful to me. It wasn't the attraction of flying, those kinds of things. Still today, I don't like to fly, but that's why I joined the Air Force. It seemed to be a little bit more of a civil community to be in the Air Force than it was to be in the Army or Marines. In addition, I knew they would give me an opportunity; it was like a job and gave me an opportunity to save some money. And little did I know what I was getting into when I got into the Air Force.

B. So you were 20 years old? Is that right?

H: Yes, I was 20 years old. I had gotten my draft notice from the Army, and the time frame on this was 1963. When you look at Vietnam in terms of what was going on in 1963, there is not much activity. There is some military advisory people there, not from the Air Force. Maybe they were from the Air Force, but I don't know, but they were generally ground people training them how to defend themselves. There were very few troops there. I had no idea that I would end up in that area, Southeast Asia, when I joined.

B: So there wasn't a lot of consideration of it being a war unit to fight?

H: No, it wasn't. That all developed within those four years from '63 to '67 is when the ball started rolling. In 1966, the first time I went to Vietnam, there were probably 50,000 troops in Vietnam. And while I wasn't exposed to some degree, and later I will tell you why and how, but we still had people who were beginning to figure out that this was going to be a guerrilla war. They didn't understand much about it. They didn't know what a punja (?)stick was. People were still getting bitten by snakes and tigers. There were no permanent or few permanent facilities. It was still an out-of-a-tent operation, and then within 18 months or so, I mean it just transformed. When I left in February of 1967, there was probably in excess of 500,000 troops there.

And it was a city--I mean all the towns were just cities that the American occupied, practically. It really was.

B: So when you went into the Air Force, you told me you went to Lackland Air Force Base, is that right?

H: Yeah, I went to Lackland Air Force Base in March 18 and experienced the normal eight weeks boot camps. I had no difficulties whatsoever. I went through the same experiences where they keep you to midnight the first night and then by the time, they let you go to bed and they beat on garbage cans and have a fire drill and all of those kinds of activities. And I met people that I still today talk to. I have a friend Henry Melody in Chicago that we went through boot camp together. When I'm in Chicago or thereabouts, I call and talk and visit him. The thing that I also remember most about the 20th day of March in 1963 in San Antonio at Lackland Air Force Base is that the temperature got to 110 degrees in March. I'd never experienced that before in my life as most other people, and we thought it was the greatest thing in the world because we didn't have to go outside and march because the temperature was too hot. And I was thinking that in mid-March, you know in mid-March how hot it gets in Texas during that time of the year. Obviously, in Kentucky, it doesn't happen, but while we were there, we got to go off base once. We got to go see the Alamo while I was there. I've been back many times since, but those were about the only activities we had on base.

It's the same process that everybody goes through. There's no candy bars and there's no Pepsi. The fun of the training begins when you know somebody that's got guard duty at a canteen, and you can talk them into getting some drinks and putting them into his canteen and giving everybody drinks of Coke and things like that. It was just routine training. We trained with calisthenics and the weapons. M-1, I think, is what I trained on. I think I ended up being a sharp shooter or something. I know they gave you some kind of reward to their experts, but I don't remember what all that was. So I was there those eight weeks and then I got my orders to go to Arkansas. Arkansas, the name of the Air Force base was Blytheville, (spells out name) pronounced "blyth-ville" in Arkansas. It was a strategic air command base, a SAC base they called it. And it was part of Second Air Force. I can remember as a child when I first saw a diesel train. I remember the first jets having everybody look up and say that's a jet. But when I got in there, this was B-52 base. I had no idea and had never connected those B-52's with Vietnam or any of that kind of stuff. I just knew there was lots of training and that you could never sleep because planes were going all hours of the night and they would make lots of noise. If you have not heard a B-52, I say it would wake up the dead. And later on, when they dropped bombs, they also would wake up the dead. I mean they would for probably 35 miles, you know, you could

feel the ground jar; it is just amazing. But anyway, the B-52 base is there. I was a very routine kind of assignment, almost like a job. I worked in the accounting office, paid bills, and ordered things. Much of the Air Force products such as batteries and fuel and those kinds of things came from various depots. I can remember how nice it was to see Bluegrass Army Depot, all the way down there in Arkansas. I'd say, "I know where that is; I know where that is." And Avon. I'd say, "I know where that is, I know where that is." But it was a typical administrative chore. I met lots of good friends down there and I still have some of those friends. One thing that I noticed is that Kentucky people get along well with people from North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. We can get along with them fine. They usually don't get along with people from Ohio. I think it is because of that it's the hillbillies, and so forth. But later on in life, I learned why they get along so well. It's because they're the same people. The families, you know, came from those same kinds of areas. Anyway, I met lots of friends. While I was there, I got to go to Houma, Louisiana, one time with a Cajun friend of mine. Clark Pelligran was his name. I still contact him and this is where you have those houses on stilts. They still speak French, and those are real experiences. And from down there, I hitchhiked around the country some with a friend over in North Carolina, Bobby Gadsey. We still communicate,

and we're still friends. He's down in Jacksonville, Florida, now. So I met lots of friends that are still lifelong friends. If we're in those areas or if they are in these areas, they stop by. It's not quite like the next door neighbor, you know. One of the disappointing things that I have found in some of those friends is that as we grow older and life changes and family changes and so forth, you have a lot more life long experiences. That little narrow window is all that you have still in common. And the more you talk with them, after awhile, it becomes disappointing because you run out of things to say. All you can do is go back through the experiences and you think about the times you shared and a few things. Once you finish that, it becomes a loss. That's sometimes disappointing in a military friendship. It's not like civilian friendship because in a civilian friendship, you can continue talking about your family and what you've done lately and so forth. But anyway, so I was there about two years. I can still name lots of people. St. Donald Foster from Kansas is someone of the people I am still looking for. I am still looking for Morris Varian, who was of Philippine descent, who was in the Air Force and a fellow who I learned about Edgar Casey. Here I was from Kentucky and I had never heard of Edgar Casey. He was reading a book called There is a River. He said, "You ought to read this book." And, of course, I have read several books after that time about Edgar Casey. And

so, there are still lots of good memories about all of those people. This Morris Varian fellow had gotten out of the Air Force so when I went overseas I was able to spend a couple weeks with him on my way overseas. He wasn't married, and I wasn't married so I don't know where he is. He graduated from the University of Oregon, but so I was there those two years, like I say, primarily administrative. Blytheville, Arkansas, is on the Mississippi River, south of Paducah across from Dyersburg, Tennessee, so geographically, it wasn't very far from home. So Donald Foster, my supervisor, would permit me to come home on weekends and so I got in the habit of hitchhiking home from down there. I would bring friends with me, and some of those friends would even come on to my house on the weekends that I couldn't come home. They knew how to get here, and my parents would let them in. You know, they had met girls up here and those kinds of stories. But I remember one Friday in November, 1963, I was outside on U.S. 61, outside of Blytheville, Arkansas, hitchhiking, and a fellow stopped and picked me up. In those days, if you had your uniform on, people would stop and pick you up and buy your meals. I mean they would treat you so nice. But anyway, this fellow stopped and picked me up, and I said, "I'm going up to Sikeston, Missouri." Straight up to Sikeston, Missouri, and then I'll go from Sikeston to Cairo, Illinois, across the Ohio and Mississippi. It's where they come together there and come

pass Cairo, Illinois into Wickliffe, Kentucky, and then Paducah, right at the very western point of Kentucky, you might say. But anyway, the fellow stopped, picked me up, and I got in so I says, "I'm headed up toward Sikeston." He said, "Shew, shew! Be quiet." And didn't want to talk. And I said, "Where are you going?" He said, "Listen, listen, listen." He was listening to the radio. He said, "Son, haven't you heard, they shot the President." So you know, it's one of those "I remember where I was when President Kennedy was assassinated." I know all kinds of things went through my mind such as I should go back. I thought they know where I am. They'll call if they need me, but anyway, it was during the time that I was there that occurred.

B: After your two years in Blytheville, were you able to make any choices about what you wanted to do in the Air Force or did they sort of say this is what you're going to do?

H: Yeah, there wasn't any choices. And like I said, it was sort of like a regular job. There was not pressures or anything, just normal life. I, being a couple years older than most of them, got along well with the superiors and so forth. And I became the barrack's chief and this is not a source of pride. It means you had to make sure the barracks were clean, and you had to make sure somebody else does it and so forth. But during my experiences as barrack's chief, I did get a taste of what the military was

like in those other uniforms. And during that time, there were joint exercises between the Air Force and Ft. Bragg and the 101 First Airborne in Kentucky and Tennessee, the Clarksville area down there. What happened was that they had to camp out on the grounds. These were paratroopers and soldiers, and, of course, we lived in air-conditioned barracks. After awhile this joint maneuver, I believe the name was Operation Goldfire, had went on for about four or five days; we were in watching a movie when the paratroopers from the 101 First decided to run us out. And they did (slight laughter). They took the movie away from us and ran us out. Then it got to be worst. They wouldn't let us get to the chow hall because they had to eat outside. It was because they had to eat outside and endure the elements and that. We would get ready to come out of the barracks and we would have to look around. We couldn't see any of those guys. We'd go to the chow hall, but it was just like a roughneck animosity. These guys are serious. Little did I know that a lot of that was part of the orchestration and part of the Vietnam training. At the time, you don't see that. You don't put the equivalence of what really that exercise was for. It only makes sense later on, you see. Now I know what they were doing. That's why they were at the SAC base, and that was what they were practicing. But anyway, that is just one little sidelight of it. I have a copy of my orders. I'm not sure exactly, but October or so

in '65 is when I got a notice and orders. I thought I was going to live the good life at Blytheville, and I got some orders that I was going overseas. (Pause--looking for dates on papers) but anyway it was about October '65. I had obviously never traveled before much, and so I was anxious to find out what it was about. So I got the orders and I got to come home for two weeks. Actually, I could have taken 30 days, but I decided to stay a shorter time at home. Well, I decided this is going to be my chance to see this country so I decided I would hitchhike from Kentucky to California because I had already found out how easy it was to hitchhike with uniform. So, I did. I hitchhiked from High Bridge over to Versailles and some of the interstates were completed partially in those days and some weren't. I hitchhiked from here to St. Louis. Now, I had met a girl Sharon Wood. I wouldn't want my wife to know that name, but (laughter) she was a girlfriend of mine. We corresponded all the time I was overseas. Anyway, I met her parents and stayed at their house for a few days. I didn't want to act like I was all that poor because I did get some travel money and so forth, so I took a bus out of St. Louis to Denver. And so, there was a long stretch through there, and so then in Denver, I decided to go back into the hitchhiking business. So I then hitchhiked from Denver up through Boulder, Colorado, across through Estes Park, and ended up through Laramie, Wyoming. Anyway, all of that comes down

through Salt Lake City, Utah. And so at Salt Lake City, Utah, (pause) I just knew the Mormons were there, and I didn't know much about Mormons. Kentuckians, we had never been exposed to any Mormons. I just knew Salt Lake City and Mormons. I decided that I'd hitchhike on over to Reno, Nevada. I left out of San Francisco, Travis Air Force Base, which is where everybody was shipped out in those days.

Later on, they were shipped out of other bases, but I left out of Travis. Reno was between there so I got to see the bright lights of Reno and played the slot machines and maybe lost \$5. I quickly learned that wasn't something that I needed to be doing. So then I had gone into San Francisco.

B: When you would hitchhike, did you tell people you were in the Air Force and that you were going to Vietnam.

H: Yes, I'd tell them. Yes, I'd tell them where I was headed, but you see at the time, I did not know that I was going to Vietnam.

B: So I see.

H: See I thought I was going to Taiwan. And in those days, Taiwan was called Formosa. So if I said I was going to Taiwan, people thought that was Vietnam or something. No, I did not know because that is what I thought I was going to, but they were very interested and the kinds of stories you get out of hitchhiking are just great. I mean you get that feeling of just how great the American people really are. I mean when they are feeding you and all that stuff, but I

also tell the stories. Some of the older people, would say, "What part of the Army are you in boy?" I said, "Well, I'm in the Air Force." And they'd say, "In the what?" And I say, "The Air Force." And they'd say, "Oh, the Army Air Corps." You know, they still had a different frame of mind. They'd say oh yes, the Army Air Corps. Other people would say, "Now, you're in the Air Force, right?" I'd say, "Yes, that's right. And I'm on my way overseas or Blytheville"; it depended on where I was hitchhiking. And they'd say, "Let me ask you this. Do you know, David Winthrop?" And I'd say, "No, I don't believe so." They would say, "Well, he's in the Air Force too." (Laughter) And I would say, "Is he at Blytheville?" "I'm not sure where he is." You know some people just thought they had that kind of kinships. I've been in automobiles where either the father was a World War II veteran or Korean War or those kinds of things. He would explain to his wife all the stuff about service and why I wouldn't take my coat off. This was because I'd be out of uniform. And why I couldn't take my tie undone and all of those kinds of things. Anyway, all of the hitchhiking days were good experience. I remember Bobby Gadson and I got in hitchhiking one time going across Tennessee and a deaf man picked us up. He told us when we got in that he was deaf. So my friend Bobby Godson would get to talking to him. And I would get to laughing, and Bobby would say, "Were did you get this car? What a piece of junk!" And he would just say

those kinds of things and I mean just all of those kinds of experiences. Anyway, I hitchhiked then on into San Francisco. I had never been to San Francisco. Morris Varian was there, and I called him. I stayed probably about five days or so with him. He took me all around. Actually, he was from Oakland, but he took me all over San Francisco and Oakland too. And this was 1965 and in the fall of the year. He and I had been friends in Arkansas so he said, "Well, I tell you what; we'll go in town tonight, and I'll take you to a place where you can just pick out any woman you want to pick out." So I said, "OK." We went down to San Francisco, and these were nice looking attractive ladies and they were dancers. Even go-go joints weren't even going in those days, and so we got there and had a drink. He said that normally the routine is that somebody will probably come over and sit down by you. If you like their looks and their body and everything, you make a date with them. After the dance, you all can talk about the price and those kinds of things. I said, "OK." I say once again, I was not married in those days. Sure enough, a nice attractive blonde lady came over to me. I never was a big fan of blondes, but she sat down and talked. I bought a drink and didn't get into a real cozy situation. It was only a semi-cozy situation. It was the hand on the leg and those kind of things. I said, "Say, I'd like a date after the show's over." And she said, "OK, Ok." She said, "Now, I got to

dance one more time and after I dance, we'll come back and make the arrangements." So they go and they dance a late at night dance together and their finale. They finished. They ripped their wigs off and dropped their evening gowns and they're men. (Laughter) And my friend just died laughing. Just died laughing. I thought, "That guy fooled me." There I was, you know, he knew what was happening all the time. He knew they didn't make dates and all those kinds of things. That was the sort of the things I remember. And that was . . . (tried to remember the name of the place), but I've forgotten what that was. I think the thing still goes on because when I later went back to San Francisco, I told my wife about that place where I almost got a date. But those are the kinds of things that I remember when I was with Morris Varian. I enjoyed it so much that I've been back four times since then. My last trip, I took by eighteen-year-old daughter to San Francisco. Surprisingly, she loved the Haight Asbury area and the tie-dyed stuff more than anything, which was a kind of throw back to my day when that place was the scene of protesters and things like that. Out of Travis Air Force Base, it was eighteen hours of flying to Taipei. If you have never been on an airplane for eighteen hours, the one thing we did get to do was stop and refuel in Honolulu. The flight then took us onto the Phillipines, Clark Air Base. So we had to spend the night at Clark Air Base before we got on to Taiwan. Incidentally,

they flew a commercial jet. I mean there was nothing but soldiers on it, but it was commercial airline with stewardesses and very much. I guess the Air Force had just leased those. Anyway, I remember going over Guam and seeing the entire island of Guam below you. In Hawaii, as we landed, I wanted to see as much of it as I could out the windows. Since that time, the Clark Air Force Base has been wiped out by a volcano. At that time, it was the largest Air Force base in the world. I had one interesting experience there. I went to the airman's club to get a hamburger and a beer there that night that we stayed there. The airman's club was a very large facility. I don't know how to compare it, but it was almost like the Fayette Mall. It was a really big place. And while we were there, I began to get my first taste of foreigners from the Philippines, which were called Nationals, that were working there also as clerks. While we were there, a group of about eight Philippines came into the airman's club with machine guns and shot the walls up. They lined everybody against the wall and started taking watches, billfolds, and everything. It was only 8 of them, and there probably was 200 to 250 airmen in there. They never got to me, and they probably only did it for fifteen or twenty minutes and then they ran out. They shot a few more times, and I said to myself, so this is an air force base. And they explained to me that because it was such a large base that it was very difficult

to monitor, patrol, and I begin to think, "Security is bad here." And so a guy says, "So you want to go into town." And I said, "I don't think I want to." Some other guys who had been around a long time said listen, "Stay out of that town." They told me all kinds of stories about how adept they were at picking pockets. They'd take a razor blade and cut your pants and get your wallet without you even knowing it. That was my first taste of violence in the Air Force. So I said, "This is scary." But fortunately, we were only there this one night. Then, we flew to Taipei, Taiwan at the Taipei Airport. This was very close to Thanksgiving because I remember eating my first Thanksgiving away from home. Anyway, when we got there, I noticed again lots of black headed people. I said that it is a learning process, but at the time I didn't realize it. The first thing I noticed was that there were a lot of foreigners over there. It was only later on that I realized that I was the foreigner. Those were the kinds of feelings you have. But Taipei is in the northern part of the island and it's the capitol and that was not where my orders sent me to. My orders sent me (looks on paper) to a place called Chu-lin-chu (?) Chu-lin-chu is located in the northwest corner of Taiwan, near the harbor of Keelung (spells out Keelung). There were winding roads and very steep mountains in getting up to the base. I noticed lots of communication things outside. I report in and say, "Here's my orders. You know,

I'm an accounting specialists." They's say, "An accounting specialists? What are you doing here?" I said, "I don't know; here's my orders." They said, "We get paid from the Phillippines; they got your orders mixed up; you need to be in the Phillippines." I said, "Well, here's my orders." So they'd said, "Well, wait around here; wait around here and they will probably be some changes and you will get your new orders. They will probably put you in the Phillippines cause that's where the work in accounting and finance is." I said, "Fine." So, I was there for two weeks and did nothing because the finance base wasn't there.

Mysteriously, other people began to show up for the same reasons. They were people who were being cross-trained from one technical skill to another skill. I didn't know what the other skill was, so while I was there, a guy said, "Just come down to the day room and maybe empty some waste baskets and something, sweep up, but outside of that I don't know what you need to be doing." So I'd go down to the day room, which is the place where people come in, report in and so forth. I'd empty waste baskets and sweep the floor and fool around. Eventually, I think there were sixteen people who showed up there, all with orders that didn't fit what their specialty was. Then we got the order that came down and said, "You individuals have just received a top-secret crypto clearance." I didn't even know what crypto was, but obviously I do now, but top-secret crypto clearance is a

communication clearance. If you noticed on my orders it was completed by the background investigation that was completed 20 October 65, filed District Office No. 10. That happens to be Louisville. But let me tell you real quick about the crypto clearance. After the service, after I had gotten out of the service, I came back to my community of High Bridge, which still had some of my relatives. Many of those people had not been much out of High Bridge, maybe just a few miles, and . . .

B: We're going to stop and turn the tape over.

H: After my top-secret crypto clearance was completed, I had found out after I had gotten out of the Air Force that they had come to my high school. They had interviewed Ms. Jetter, who is a French teacher I had; and they had interviewed Bill Maxwell, my basketball coach. They had also interviewed people at High Bridge. My favorite story is about a third cousin of mine, whose name is Homer Houp. Homer didn't have a lot of exposure to the world outside of High Bridge, but he had seen Sergeant Bilco and some of the TV movies in those days. Homer later told me that that they had come in here and asked him questions about me. He told them that he hadn't seen me in years and that the last time he had heard was that I was in college or maybe in the Army. He said that they wanted to know what kind of dealings I had and wanted to know if I was related to him. He just wanted to tell me that they didn't get anything from him.

(Laughter) He said, "Now tell me what did you do? Did you steal a jeep? (More laughter) So I said that I didn't steal a jeep. I just appreciated that he wanted to reassure me that if anything bad had happened to me that he wasn't the cause of it. If I had gone to jail for something, he didn't tell them a thing. It turned out that this was what the questions were and that is why they were talking to them. But anyway that was an interesting story and sideline.

B: So you did know you were being investigated?

H: No, I didn't know any of that stuff. As I told you, I was just there and people were asking why I was there. I'm saying, "I don't know; here's my orders." So I think 18 people showed up at Chu-lin-chu. When the final orders came down, they said that we were going to cross-train you. You exemplified some scores, and I had taken French in high school and so forth. They were going to cross-train me to learn a language. Now, I thought, "Oh God, I hated French." I thought what are they going to do? They said that you're going to be trained. Normally, they're trained in Monterey, California, but this was, I guess, a special deal. First, of all, you're going to have a tutor; some are girls and some are boys. I thought that I liked the sound of that. I hoped that it would be a girl and it was. These tutors were with us with the exception of your sleeping hours. Obviously, they forewarned us that these aren't girls you sleep with. Of course, we did our own testing to find out

and they were right. They weren't girls you sleep with. We went to the campus at Taipei University for the main courses. It was going to be concentrated. I didn't have to worry about writing Chinese. All I had to do was listen and learn to speak it and listen. Then they sent me back from Chu-lin-chu down to Taipei. That's a different groups. One was 6213 and one was 6987. The 6987th was at Chu-lin-chu, and 6213th was at Taipei; so we were right on campus with college students. Obviously, they were all Taiwanese or Chinese, and I learned the difference. I had thought that they were all Chinese. On campus, except for our sleeping hours, they would spend with us. And it was just amazing. I fortunately was assigned a girl. She was about 25 and not married. She was a beautiful black-headed girl, very intelligent, spoke perfect English, and so she'd take me to movies and I'll tell you why this is part of this strategy. We had to learn, as we learned the language, about the whole Chinese culture. It was almost to the point of how they acted and thought and presented themselves. They taught us the foods and how to eat them. I'll tell you one story. She'd picked out a dinner restaurant in a very nice hotel. I quickly liked Chinese food. Chu-lin-chu was a long ways, and that was the only place for American food. I think it had some kind of Southern flavor to it, but I don't know what it was. I really enjoy it to this day. Anyway, we were in this restaurant, and I was looking around at the

other people eating. I was in sort of an elevated position, and I never will forget that I had froglegs that night. That was something that I would eat here to. I was looking over to this round table with Chinese businessmen and one American. I kept looking at this guy, and I thought, you know, outside of a few soldiers you normally don't see anybody else. I kept looking at this guy, and I suddenly realized I knew him. It was John Glenn, the astronaut, the current Senator, and so I said to myself, "I'm going to meet that guy." Of course, you know Glenn had just did the first astronaut, did the partial orbit, and all that. The thing that got my attention about the table was they had three or four big fish. The eyes were still in the fish, and you're thinking, "Oh, they're picking out the meat with chopsticks and dipping in the sauce and all this kind of stuff." That what's got my attention and that's when I saw an American. So I don't know when he arrive; I just saw him in the restaurant after I got there. I sort of timed my meal and tried to continue our conversations with the tutor until I saw them get ready to leave. I made sure I got to the door at the same time he did. He was as anxious to see me as I was to see him. He asked me what I was doing there. And I said, "Well, I'm in the Air Force and they're sending me to a language school, and I am studying Mangrin (?) Chinese. What are you doing here?" He said, "Well, I'm Vice-President now of RC Cola, and we have a plant in Taichung."

Taichung was further south than Taipei, and I didn't even know they made RC over there, but they did. And we must have talked for 20 minutes. I told him that I was from Kentucky, and he told me that he was from Ohio, those kinds of conversations. Then a big limo pulls us, and he hops in the limo and he waves goodbye. I wave goodbye and I have never seen him since. That is an interesting story, a sideline there. And I got one more, but I don't know when to tell you. But anyway, you know we learned to shop and make change in Chinese. It was fascinating, and it was so easy. I was so scared because the sentence structure in French, to me, is backward from English. In English, you have the subject, verb, direct object; and in French, it is all rearranged. In Chinese, the sentence structure is just like English. You didn't have to worry about which word you said before the other one. You don't have to conjugate verbs in Chinese. You don't have to worry about past tense and present tense. They've got one word. It sounds Spanish, but it's not. If they put the word "loc" (?) on the end of a question, it means past tense. It doesn't mean any other thing other than that's already happened. If you don't put it at the end of the sentence, it is present. And the same thing is in regard to a question. If they ask you a question, they put "ma" (?) at the end of it, and you know it is a question. If you don't put it, it's a statement. Those were the things that really became easy. The hard

part began when many of the words had about three different sounds. And to distinguish between words--the word "understand" for example is "I" and if you say "I understand," you'd say (?--couldn't understand Mr. Houp); and if you'd say--(pause) another word like similar to understand "comprehend," you know it has a different inflection. It is something that takes really good hearing and listening. I am sure we speak fast to them, but actually we speak slow, at least I do. They speak really fast. I mean that becomes difficult, but sentence structure and all those are fine. We learned a lot about the culture in that whole process. I developed another friendship with another girl name Denise, who also helped me a lot and took me around to some of the aborigines in Taiwan. These are the pure Taiwanese. There was great animosity between the Taiwanese and the Chinese. Taiwanese loved the Japanese; of course, Japan occupied that island from 1900. In 1600, the Dutch occupied, but when they ran Chang Kai-Shek out of China in 1949, he came to Taiwan and slaughtered there on main street about 10,000 Taiwanese, who were trying to resist him. And Denise, whose name was Shunchin, took me to a place in the caves where those skeletons were buried. I mean I saw real skeletons of Taiwanese, who were slaughtered. She was Taiwanese, now, and of course, they had been taught Chinese. They still had their Taiwanese language and culture, but she was Chinese. I mean she grew

up with the Chinese culture, and the Taiwanese sound like Chinese to some extent. For example, like "wa" is "I" in Chinese; there's "ga." I learned a lot about those things in terms of what took place in Taiwan. This is part of the whole cultural indoctrination.

B: How long of a process was that for you?

H: Well, this was about, I think, 12 weeks. One eight-week course session, then we got out for a couple of weeks, and then we went back for four weeks. Something like that. All these guys who had showed up, we would sit around, but the attractions were so much finer in other directions that there wasn't a lot of hanging around each other. At night time, we didn't sit around and speak Chinese or anything. After the process, we go back to Chu-lin-chu and then we find out why Chu-lin-chu exists. The Japanese during their occupation of Southeast Asia from World War II days must have hollowed out every mountain over there. I am probably exaggerating. Chu-lin-chu now is very close to Quemoy and Matsu and mainland China. It was a site that had, I don't quite know how they worked, but if you walked inside a computer room and you saw some of those tapes that go zip, zip, you know how they turn. I mean its just a kind of I don't know what was there, but inside that was lots of antennas. In those days, the satellite dishes, the big old round ones were on everything. There had been GI's before we were and we had talked to them, they had said, "Oh, yeah,

you're now a 292." A 292 was a Air Force speciality code for communication people, so we didn't have any idea what they taught us. They said:

"Well, here's how it works. We had AWAX planes in the air at all times, and we bounced the signals off those AWAX's into China. Now, we have working with you approximately 40 Nationalist Chinese. Nationalist Chinese were the Chinese that are from China with Chiang Kai-shek, OK. So those people were older, and these were like the children and relatives of these people and were Nationalist Chinese, no Taiwanese, Nationalist Chinese. And they assist you in what goes on. And here's what happens. They're going to do most of the work. You watch them, you listen, you report and so forth. But they still have relatives in China; they talk to their relatives all the time."

And that is the reason for part of how it is working. And so, the (pause)--I don't know who they were in China, you know, you just heard them. But they could be farmers plowing behind buffaloes and they'd stop and say, "A train is going by." You know, just simple basic intelligence stuff, just anything--a train is going by. It has one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten--count the cars. How many cars it had on it, whether they were boxed cars, flat cars, what was on the train. Many times it would be jeeps, tanks, you know, just anything of any nature.

There would be the monitoring of airways all the time. We knew when the Chinese tested the hydrogen bomb in the Sinkaing Province. We knew exactly when they were going to test it. We had intercepted all the air flights. There's not a plane, not a major military aircraft in China, that goes anywhere what we don't know where it is going. Any communication that is taking place, that's all intercepted. Now, (pause) when we would go back from the night time and sometimes go down town as they say in China to catch a girl, it was amazing that you could carry on a good conversation with all the ladies. Even the bar girls would say, you're one of those 292's. I mean even the man on the street knew what we were doing up there due to exposure over time. The truth of the matter is, we never knew totally. I mean this stuff was taped and put in together, but we didn't do any analysis. We didn't know. We just listened and if a guy was talking to his parents or his grandparents, whatever, just basically monitoring. We had the headphones and we could hear all that stuff too: the air flights, the trains, any kind of exercise games and so forth. I thought that was our world. Well, it wasn't long until they said, "Well, you got some other places you need to go to." I went to three different places in Thailand. I went to Thailand before I went to Vietnam. I got my first taste. I went to Tainan, which is the southern part of the island also. I rode the train down there, but when on leave overseas, particularly

the Air Force, you are to go from one place to another. You go down to the terminal, and they put you on a plane. It might be a helicopter, or it might be a C-130. Whatever is going out of there in your direction, you get on it. They are military aircraft because there are no commercial airliners coming out of there. I mean you get to sit on wooden bench seats and stuff like that. The time I went to Thailand, when I came back, I got on an airplane and I smelled something. This was a C-130, coming back to Clark Air Base. Clark was like the hub; everybody went to Clark. I got on this plane and wooden seats back there, and I could see it was loaded down. Soon as I got on the plane, the smell, a smell that I already knew because I had lived on a river at High Bridge, and I knew what dead people smelled like--drowned people, people who had been under after awhile. So when I got on the plane, I knew that smell so I said to the load master, the guy who manages the weight and all that stuff, I said, "What have you got in those body bags back there?" He said, "What do you think we got in those body bags?" I said, "They stink or something. Is one of them split or something?" He said, "Na, it's just odor, just the odor on this plane. There is none of them split." So it meant there had been quite a few on there before and this and that and another. And I said, "Who are they?" He said, "GI's, Americans." I said, "Is that right?" I said, "Where are they?" He said, "They're getting killed everyday

in northeast Thailand." And this is '66, and I'm thinking, "Hum, and there was lots of combat in northeast Thailand." Americans were getting killed, and they were never registered as Vietnam casualties. Later on in life, I saw the whole issue of Cambodia and going across the border and all that kind of stuff. But northeast Thailand, if you look at the map of Thailand, you got a little place comes out there, and it is closer to Vietnam and also it is closer to China. And so why I was there, it was just another post that was broadcast to another part of China, you know. Like I told you, some of those things like weather reports were absolutely not interesting. I mean what the temperature was, what kind of weather was going on there, and all I can conclude is that it all got fed into the computer and went somewhere--I suppose, the Pentagon or somewhere, where you had teams of people that just put it together, analyzed it, but I don't know. It wasn't part of my job. I just knew it went somewhere else. The part that relates to Vietnam, we would fly into Da Nang. I was at a place called Phubai, (spells out) which is between Da Nang and Hue. Da Nang and Hue are in what we called then the I-Core area. The I-Core, which I later understood was really a Roman numeral I. They called it "I." It was not "eye," it was not "i" with a dot; it's written like a Roman numeral. It's an I-Core area. Hue, as you know, is an ancient capitol of Vietnam. Da Nang is a major air base there; these planes are fairly close to

the coast, not far off the coast. Phubi was an area, another place there, that had Marines guarding the perimeter. We had no weapons. We had no weapons or any of those things. We would fly to Da Nang. Then we would fly then by helicopter to into this site. It was nothing more than another communication outpost. Only one time did we have danger and that was when we were sort of halfway hovering to begin to land, and the helicopter got shot at and got hit. It did not really crash, but fell more than anything. It turned everybody upside down and scared everybody, and so there was some shots coming into the plane. We had no weapons, and we didn't know what was going on. Somebody said, "Oh, there they are; there they are." So you could look at a distance and think you could see somebody. And we said, "Oh God, what are we going to do?" We looked and one guy dirtied on himself and maybe somebody broke his leg but it wasn't too bad. Just like in the John Wayne movies, the Marines saw what had happened. And here they came. And they surrounded us. And they fired off a few shots and everything, and got another helicopter in, but I don't know what happened to the rest of them. Well, while the other helicopter came, we smart-aleck Air Force guys decided to joke around. We said, "You guys ruined a good thing." We said that we didn't need any weapons. So we were ready for some hand-to-hand combat. Some guy said, "Oh, I want to bit a juggler vein into." And so we were

going on like that. The Marines didn't think that was a bit funny. So, they slapped one guy and said, "Shut the fuck up." And I realized then that these guys are serious about this stuff, and they don't think this war was very funny. Here we were sort of making fun of the job they're doing. It became a self-realization that this is serious business. These guys are getting shot at every day. Don't be talking about this stuff around those guys. I believe they would have smacked us, but anyway that was the only episode that I think of any combat interest (pause). I got to know the Nationalists Chinese pretty good, who worked inside those mountains. Like I said, there were no Taiwanese because the Taiwanese were still the farmers and so forth. There's an expression and I hope I don't offend anybody. They say, "In Southeast Asia, the Chinese are the Jews of the Orient." I never realized that until I went to Thailand. If you go to Bangkok and if you go into a restaurant, it is Chinese. All the businesses are Chinese people. Now, these aren't people who have been there a long time. All of a sudden you realize that if you were in the Fayette Mall and if you went to all the stores, they'd be Chinese operating those stores. I see some of that in reverse now when you see lots of Iranians, Jordanians, Indian people. You go to Gattlinburg and you see Indian people in some of the jewelry stores. That is sort of the way it was. So you had no problem going anywhere because you could always find anyone who spoke

Chinese. So it made things much easier. I got an incense pot from a fellow, who had brought it from mainland China. It's a bronze, three-legged pot about this big. It's Ming Dynasty, 1346. I've been watching TV about these appraisals and one of these days. I bought a sword back one time that was from the Montyard (?) tribesmen, which were the central Vietnam highland people. They were sort of like the aborigines type over there. They were early Vietnamese people. I didn't realize it, but I traded that off for a watch at a gun show one time. I been looking for that sword ever since. It was encased in wood. I don't know why I did that. But, you know, maybe I could tell you some more. Let me tell you the sad part about all this was. You see, you don't really, you're doing your job, you're doing what you're supposed to do and like I say, you don't always know how things fit in, and I think it affected me now about opinions when people say, "What do you think about Bosnia? What do you think?" I say, "I don't know about Bosnia." You know, deep down inside, I know that we don't know all the facts. We don't know what going on in Bosnia, and I just use that for an example. The fact that it was revealing to me was that our whole mission was containing China, watching China, which would have been something that nobody ever knew, nobody had even thought about those kinds of things. The other aspect is that the Vietnamese, although I have a great deal of respect, probably for the North Vietnamese

more than the South. I mean I sort of felt like they were kind of lazy in their own country. I'm not sure. They sure didn't have the commitment we did, but there were military advisers in Vietnam also that we had picked up. There were a few Russian advisers to the Vietnamese that we had picked up at one time. We knew they were there. And later on, we got the reports back. But I tell you what they did. If these Chinese advisers or Russian advisers got killed in combat, the Vietnamese would cut their heads off so we couldn't identify them. Well, when you see a body that's about six foot tall with no head, you say, "Hum, you know that's not a Vietnamese." The Chinese are pretty good size people and, generally speaking, big people. Now, we didn't have to do any identifying, but we knew where they were, where they were supposed to be. It was sort of like gossip; we didn't know for sure but word got to us. They had found some, and they had been decapitated. Not that all I ever knew, but there apparently weren't many. I would say that it was probably our efforts that we knew that they were there. And they were also up in that same area. Like I say, there weren't many. Probably, there weren't over 15 or so, but there may have been somewhere else, but I'm talking about the information we had picked up, that's all we got. I'll tell you one more nice story I had while I was over there. When I was still going to school, a guy and I were in the airman's club one night drinking beer, when a guy came in

and sit down at the table with us. This is probably ten thirty at night, and we were probably drunk. The guy next to me says, "Mmm." He was not wanting to move his lips. What he was saying to me was "That's Steve McQueen." And so somebody said, "Are you Steve McQueen?" And the guy said, "Yeah." We said, "Ah, what are you doing over here?" And he said, "I came over here to get some hamburger and some beer." Finally, we figured out that was him. So we said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "Making a movie." "What's the name of the movie?" He said, "Sand Pebbles." "So where were you?" He said, "Up at Keelung." Which is that harbor there. I am sure they made it other places, and we said, "Is that right?" He said, "Ha, man, where do you all find your women?" "Oh, well, there's this place called Peito (spells out), where they have hot sulfur steam baths and so it was a process of sort of like buying cows. Four or five guys sit and they parade as many girls as they want. And part of the episode was a hot steam bath and a massage and all of this kinds of stuff. So we said, "Hey man, Peito is where you want to go?" And he said, "Where is it?" And the prices when I was over there early on was five dollars, and it finally went up to twenty dollars. I mean this was for an all night room and bath. And so, we went out and jewed, I hate to use these terms, but everything over there is bargained. I mean you get in a taxi cab and you say, "How much money to a certain place?" And the guy would give you

a figure, and you'd say too much money and close the door. So everything is negotiated. I don't know what it is. Probably the only thing that is not is food. If you eat on the street. I used to eat beef, shredded beef, and green peppers. It cost a quarter. So there weren't any bargaining in food. So I said, "I'll hunt you down one of these taxis and send you to Peito." So we sent him to Peito. He shows back up the next night and says, "Man that was a great place." He said, "Tell you all what, I'm going to invite you up to Keelung." So we had to work it out so we got to see Candance Bergman, Richard Chrinna, and Steve McGueen shoot a portion of the "Sand Pebbles" up there. So that was also an interesting sidelight to that story up there. Now, what I was going to tell you was that I got out of the Air Force and flew back from Taipei to Toyko. We came back over top of the United States and Alaska. We came back over into McCord Air Force Base and got discharged out of McCord Air Force Base. I was out there a few days. When you are getting these papers, they're just papers and you don't have any idea of their value or the importance. Those are the things that I think about for what it's worth; you know, you don't see anything. You don't know the background investigation, and you don't see anything about any service in Vietnam. You don't see any of those kinds of things. Like I told you, it was all VOCO, which means Verbal Orders of the Commanding Officer. It was that you did get a set of

orders to go here and that you just went. In September of 1967, incidently I didn't hitchhike back from McCord, I flew back. In September of 1967, a friend of mine that I had known, and I still communicate with his mother, she called me and said, "Well, (this is a fellow called Thomas O. Prince of Mt. Pleasant, Tennessee) Tom's dead." I said, "Tom's dead." I had left before he had. And so I go down there to the funeral, and I talk to the his mother and we shared some stories. What the sad part about all of this is that the Red Chinese from Mainland China had infiltrated the Nationalist Chinese. So, many of these Nationalist Chinese that I was working with were Red Chinese. I don't know when it occurred, but I would say it was late summer and I mean I'm just going by Thomas. Anyway, the Red Chinese came into that Phubai and blew that place up. It killed all those Americans. It killed forty some odd Chinese, some Nationalists, and some Red Chinese. But they destroyed that site. I don't how many people were there when it happened. I do know that it was blow up, but I don't know about the Thailand sites. I know that obviously Chu-lin-chu was still there, but the Phubai site got blown up. And whoever was in there got killed.

B: And that was your friend Thomas?

H: Yes, Yes.

B: How long was that after you have left?

H: Well, you see I left in February of 1967, and like I told you it was probably a half a million troops there then. They were playing games as you know during the war because they purposely did not want to know how many people were in Vietnam. I would probably say that from the surrounding areas of Thailand and Phillipines and Taiwan and maybe from the island of Japan or not, I bet there was another 100,000 involved in some kind of activity. It may not have been combat, but there were lots of other people in Vietnam. They weren't the ground pounders and so forth. But anyway, I know there wasn't much there because you could tell by looking at the building and all and those kinds of things when you first got there. I don't know how many were in that site. I knew that there was probably 15 Americans and probably 40 others. I say others, but it is 40 Chinese now. Like I told you, it never once entered by mind. I wasn't smart enough; I didn't understand. After all, you're in a situation--you're in a job--you're not in some intellectual capacity analyzing all this stuff. You don't realize that. Only later on are you able to put things together. Like I told you, the training exercises and the other thing that I can always remember-- if they've got these relatives over there in China that's doing this watching, why didn't they come to? Why didn't they run them out? But, you know, you don't really question those things and no wonder we were able to get such good intelligence. I am sure some of it

was real and not real, I don't know. Somebody else deciphered all that, I guess. I do know the hydrogen bomb detection in the Sinkiang Province in China in 1966--I know we picked that up and I know that happened. That's for real. I don't know what else. Now, I don't know what was real and what wasn't real.

B: Was the Air Force aware of the infiltration at all? Do you suppose they accepted some of that as a given?

H: You see, I don't know. I was so caught up in this because of the effort they had gone into the teaching of the language and culture. I thought if I learned the language that it didn't matter what Chang-Kai-Shek did or how Taiwanese viewed Japanese and vis versa. In those days, there was still a lot of Japanese there. At the time you are there, you really don't know about a lot of that stuff. I don't know what the Air Force knew about. There was another site on Taiwan that I never went to, but I went to a site at Taitung. We were there for thirty days in a row and then go back to Taiwan for thirty days. Probably, we were there three to five days before we hit our next shift. During these days, we did all our playing. All in all, the thing that I've grown from that experience, most of the things are positive. Here's a boy from High Bridge, Kentucky, that became educated in the Chinese culture. My wife loves it all too. I guess she has inherited it from me. We have a room in our house of nothing but Chinese

paintings. The culture aspect was invaluable. The part that I miss was that I never had to learn to write in Chinese. I still know some basics. I know how to write a few numbers and some basic things. I do like calligraphy and things now. It was a very positive for me. I learned a lot from the people I was exposed to. There is a book out on the days that I remember reading on the plane going overseas. It was called The Ugly American. I thought that it was terrible, and I thought that when you are in those places that you have to conduct yourself well. I had a vision of not becoming an "Ugly American." One morning, while I was in Taipei, I was catching a bus from there to the airbase. You get on a crowded bus and they have no numbers; it's just whatever you can pack them. The bus got really full. My point is that you don't understand other people's culture. Three and four people were standing in the aisle. I noticed that there was a pregnant lady that was standing. She looked really miserable. I wanted to give her my seat. I told her that she could have my seat, and she just looked at me. I didn't want her to think that I was flirting with her, so I squirmed around to where I could give her my seat. By the time I got turned around, a guy was sitting there grinning. He knew what I was doing, and he beat her to it. That made me pretty mad and I had learned a few curse words in Chinese. I told him that he was a crazy old man and tried to get my hand up so that I

could jerk his ass out of the seat. I got him mixed around in the seat and there wasn't enough room for the lady to sit down. She didn't even understand what I was doing and didn't understand that. He thought he was smart in finding a good opportunity to get a seat. It takes a long time to know that you weren't communicating with these people. They didn't understand what it meant to give them a seat. They don't understand lines. If you get on a train or bus and you are younger and stronger, you will get a good seat. If you're older and slower, you will not get a good seat. There is no such thing as a line. We went with this tutor to a Clint Eastwood movie. We had gotten there early and were just talking before the movie started. As the starting time got closer, the crowd began to build up. I thought it was odd that they locked the glass doors that lead to the hallway to the movie. People outside began to get impatient and couldn't wait until the first movie ended. They began to shake the doors. Some guy came out and scolded them and some words were exchanged. They opened the door and people just ran in there. Here they are in this movie with no place to sit. I just didn't understand that. Why would you rush into a movie with no place to sit? I got hit by a bicycle that tore my shirt. I was on campus one Sunday morning and I was outside walking. I was walking by this benjo, which is a Japanese term. The French called it a latrine, meaning a ditch where the sewage flew by. A benjo

is the same thing. It was just a canal with grey and greenish water running down out. This is a human interest story, even though it might be redneck and uncultured. I got away from there, and I got so far away and a pain hit me. I thought, "My God! What am I going to do? I can't make it back to the base." Now, the children and teenagers would use the bathroom in public and in the streets. Generally, older people would not. They would use public areas. There wasn't anything around, so I said, "Well, I'm a country boy and I've been in the woods before." I decided that I'm going to sit on the side of this benjo ditch and let it roll down from there. So while I was sitting on the side of this ditch, a big bus and truck came by. They ran this guy on a bicycle off the road. He hit me with my pants down, and I was thinking that I was going to fall in that ditch. I remembered that besides me being terrified that I was going to fall into that open sewer was that he tore my shirt. (Laugh by Baldwin) It taught me that trains have right away over buses and buses have right away over cars and cars have the right away over bicycles and then bicycles. The people are at the bottom of the scale over there. I remember also that taxis at night would not use their lights. They staved their lights, and they would use their horns instead of their turn signals. Those were the things that stuck with me. After I got out of the Air Force, I had saved a couple of thousand dollars and I was

always grateful to Lyndon Johnson because they reenacted the GI Bill, which gave me one hundred-thirty-eight dollars per month. I realized that I was twenty five years old and that I was behind with school. I enrolled at intersession at Eastern Kentucky University. Well, let me say this. I went down and thought was going to be able to do what I had always desire as a boy at High Bridge--that was to draw unemployment. My biggest heroes at High Bridge were those that drew unemployment during the winter time because you can play cards in the winter time at the store and I thought it was a good life. I went to draw unemployment and they found me a job because I was a veteran. They got me a job working for Kentucky Financial Company. I was a door-to-door loan collector. I was one of those kinds, and I didn't know any better. I knew the speech and the angles, and this is during the first of March. That was another incentive to think about school. I told them that when this job paid for my enrollment that I was going to quit the job. Looking back, it taught me a lot. I fed more kids and bought more milk. When you knock on a door and there is a woman and child there, mostly on High Street and their husband works on a horse farm in Florida, they don't have any money. When you give them those stories about repossessing the refrigerator, and they tell me to take it, you soon realize that it wasn't my world. I found myself loaning money and buying bread and milk. I felt like that I wasn't doing this

Company any good. I can relate to these people a lot better than I can to the Kentucky Finance Company. In June, I started intersession. I took a course under Brason (?), and it was a Wildlife course. I found out that with a year gone to UK that I didn't have to take ROTC and that I had a language credit. I couldn't believe that I was almost a junior with extra credits. I did intersession in June of 1967 and summer school and intersession. I did two semesters and intersession and summer school and intersession and two semesters. I started in June of 1967 and graduated in June of 1969. I was almost back on schedule. I majored in political science and minored in psychology. Minorng in psychology was the greatest experience because it convinced me that all those damn people are crazy. I was only minoring in it because I had already taken so many courses and I had more hours in it than anything else. Some of the worse people that couldn't fit into society that I've ever seen in college were psychology people. They are out of it and couldn't function in the real world. I'm always embarrassed to tell people that I'm a psychology major. I did learn more about Homer and about a great aunt that was catatonic

B: So, life at college was very different for you than for the other students.

H: I had two close friends over there. The head of the department was a guy named Delional Pettingill. He would

help me with jobs. I would make some extra money by codifying the ordinances of Richmond for Mayor Mickwarder. Since I was in pre-law, he told me that I needed to know how to codify ordinances and so I did it and made some extra money. I was also close to Se Gem Kim (?), a North Korean. I was pretty close to him, and he even came to High Bridge Park for picnics. There is an English teacher named Brooks that I was also pretty close with because he had been in the military. There was only about three people who knew very much about me. Being on campus, there was all kinds of anti-war protesting. I remember one time us veterans got together to build a float for homecoming, and it fell through. While we were building a float, they started demonstrating about us building a float, so we just forgot about it. It taught us that we were closer to grown ups and these were just kids. They needed that freedom and their demonstrations. They don't know what the real world is and what is going on. You just put them out of your mind because you know that they don't have the foggiest idea about the overall movement. Later on, I had a few dates. I remember a girl from Indiana, but as soon as found out that I was a Vietnam veteran, she was afraid of me. It wasn't a normal college life, and I suspect that's why I made all straight A's. As a matter of fact, I am a charter member of the political science honor club. I just concentrated on school work. I would come home to High Bridge on the

weekends, and my mother worked in a factory and she would give me ten dollars to take back. I would take back jars of green beans and whatever you could to make do.

B: Were you involved with any of the ROTC folks?

H: No. I didn't have anything to do with any of them.

There was no level of communication. Today, I could've communicated with them and taught them, but at that age I couldn't deal with that.

B: The situation had probably changed a lot.

H: Yes. Time changes a lot of things.

B: After you came back and you saw the war develop as it did, did you see your activities any differently in that light?

H: I think I did. Later on, I've come to realize that generally speaking that many of these people, at a much younger age, had more maturity than I gave them credit for. They saw a bigger picture, at least some did. Somewhere in that movement were a few individuals that saw much more than I was able to see at that time. It would be great for people to experience what I've experienced. If I had a son I would say to do it, but if I had a son that I thought would be in combat, I really think that I would have made my way to Canada. That's what I would have done. I think they saw that aspect much deeper than I could see it. I didn't understand any of that stuff in those days. I hadn't been exposed to any of that stuff. Everything that I knew about

military life was positive and good. I believed that I was doing the right thing because I was in the military. I had no other person or exposure to be challenged intellectually about international issues. Looking back on it, I would have probably voted for Robert Kennedy. I love Lyndon Johnson and I felt so sorry for him. They don't get that way by themselves. I've worked very closely with three governors, and I know how governors and presidents get into trouble. It's usually the people who surround them. I felt sorry that Johnson had got himself into a posture with this war. It just kept on. Had Kennedy lived, he would not have de-escalated the war. He would have gotten more confrontational. My first vote was for John Kennedy. I never liked Nixon, and I still don't like Nixon. I went to visit Lyndon Johnson's grave in Texas because I really appreciated him. I simply didn't have the intellectual capacity and understanding and I wasn't educated about a lot of those issues. I don't hold any animosity towards those kids and it doesn't bother me that they did what they did.

B: Do you think that your military service, as you've described it, was just a progression down the line to schooling and jobs.

H: Yes.

B: From what you've said, I don't get the impression that it changed your life in profound ways.

H: No. Other than it gave me exposure to other cultures and it got me out of High Bridge. The military gave me the basis for saving money and for getting an education. It was a tool that I used, and I used it to the best of my ability while I had it. It was a very positive situation. I've often thought that everybody that has ever been in the service says that "Well, if I would've stayed in, I could've retired by now." I also really think that the Air Force in itself is much more brighter and smarter. I think they can deal with people that are intellectually better. It's not a confrontational process as opposed to training someone to shoot and kill somebody. It takes different types of training. As a result, the motivations are different. You can see that if you were trained to kill people that you would have a different attitude than if you were spying on them.

B: Have you ever participated in veterans' organizations or activities?

H: No, I have not. I'm not much of a joiner. I did participate heavily from my influence in Frankfort for getting the Kentucky Veterans Nursing Home in Wilmore, which is in Jessamine County. It is the only state supported veterans nursing home. If you are a Kentucky veteran, you can go there. If you have the means, you can pay for it. If you don't have the means, there is no charge. I've tried to use my influence in different ways. The reason that I've

never went to any of the veterans' organization was that I got started out on the wrong foot. When I was younger, I got exposed to the Jaycees. I went to the Jaycees' meeting with a friend of mine, who was a lawyer. He told me that I would really love it. So, the president gets up there and tells the group that they have a prospective member with them tonight. He said that we have Ken Houpp up here from High Bridge. He told them to say "hi" to me. They all said, "Hi Ken!" in unison. I thought, "Where in the hell am I?" It was kindergarten kind of stuff. I thought to myself that I was just too critical, and I let them go on. It wasn't a lot better later when they said that so-and-so had birthday, and they began to sing "Happy Birthday." I thought that this is miserable. It was a collection of do-gooders, and some of my same attitude got over into the veterans' organization. Over at Eastern, I joined the veterans' club. The guys had a different attitude than I had. They were more adamant about wanting to confront the demonstrators. They really wanted to fight it out with them. I could see beyond that. Some of this exposure with those veterans wasn't very good. They weren't people that I could deal with intellectually. Later on, they tried to get me to join the VFW and to tell you the truth, I'm not the kind of guy that wants to wear those funny American Legion hats. I used them to get support for the Veterans Nursing Home, but I'm not much of a joiner. My wife and I aren't

very good joiners. I didn't want to sit around and debate about whatever war. I enjoy the World War I veterans because they have a totally different attitude. They have the kind that probably goes back to the support of the military. These other people try to keep in the minds of other people. They always want people to know that they are a veteran and that the reason that you are able to prosper and endure is because I put my life on the line for you. Those are the people that I don't even want to be around. I've never talked as long about my experience in the military as I have with you. I told you in the beginning that I would have never done it if I hadn't found the value of what would be consistent with an oral history project. My wife's grandfather was a World War I veteran and was smart enough to keep a diary from 1917 to 1919. He kept it about the ships he came over on, where he camped at night, where he engaged in combat, and all this. I told my wife that he was a guy with a third grade education, but he is the smartest guy I've ever seen. Why wasn't I smart enough to do that? This is the most I've ever talked. Most of it is because I don't have a lot in common with most people. It's like friends in life--some you like and some you don't. There are a couple of nice veterans. If you look back at the time I was there, it was very early. It was early Johnson years; it was build-up; and it was going strong.

While I was there, people hadn't got tired of the war. They sure did by the time I was out.

B: In a lot of ways, I think the later developments have obscured that early history of the war and the understanding of what actually motivated people to go and what was done. For that reason, I'm really glad that you agreed to participate in the project. You've shared some very useful information. (Pause) Is there anything that I didn't ask that you would like to share?

H: No, I can't think of anything. I probably talked too much and got off track with some of the stories. I can't think of anything else that I did that would be worthy of it.

B: Well, thank you very much.

H: Thank you.