World War I or Vietnam and they got most of the facts right but they miss the essence because it’s a incommunicable experience.  
  
Memoirs are the place to find them. Memoirs don’t tend to be political; they tend to be realistic. I’m talking about guys with lead over their head.  
  
C: Ok, I have not read anything by Robert McNamara, I probably will now.  
  
Well, he wrote a book trying to excuse himself.  
  
C: Yes  
  
Idiot, idiot. Got a lot of us killed for no reason at all.  
  
C: what I got from so many people that the war should not have lasted six months maybe a year tops.  
  
It would have lasted two weeks if they would have let us go when we went into North Vietnam in the first time.  
  
We went into a place about 15 miles north of the DMC, do you know what I mean about the DMC? Some ammunition dump, big, ammunition dump. And they knew we were coming. We had guys on that mission from World War II and Korea, from both, and they said they’ve never seen flack like that before they knew we were coming. Well, we lost six that day. We were shooting them in the toes. We should’ve gone to Hanoi, and shot them between the eyes if we were going to go to war.  
  
Oh no, they didn’t want to upset China. Which was totally unprepared for war, they had no nukes they, had no air force, they had no navy. We were worried about China!  
  
C: why were they involved then if they were unprepared?  
  
I heard you, but I have no idea what you mean.  
  
C: why did China get involved? What was their motivation?  
  
They didn’t, we thought they would be. They had 1.3 billion people. Well, they thought at a certain point quantity becomes quality and thought that they would come down invade or protect the people. See they were communists; North Vietnam was communist. And they allowed supplies to come through there on the north eastern or north east railroad. If you are going to go to war, you better be prepared for everybody.  
  
When I pulled nuke alert, the United States was funded, funded and equipped to fight two: fight the Soviet Union, and China at the same time, and we would’ve done it. They were poorly prepared for a major war. Right now, we are and they are getting there.

So, if you’re if you’re worried about somebody. . . if you’re going to do something well I don’t know if we’re gonna do something we better not get them too mad or they’ll come in and help these North Vietnamese. No, if you can’t handle that then you don’t go.  
  
Just stupid politically stupid.  
  
C: do you believe it was motivated by money by hope of money? I’ve heard about Seaboard.  
  
No, I don’t think it had anything to do with money. I think Kennedy was terribly embarrassed about the Bay of Pigs. He was president then and it went horribly, and when it came time to be tough, he started putting troops in Laos and started the Green Berets and he was going to show that it was a war, and it was.  
  
Anyways, you better start  
  
C: this is Cara Vanderree of the Ashland City Library, and today we are interviewing Colonel John Morrissey about his experiences in the Vietnam war. This is funded by the national endowment for the arts reading project, and is being in conjunction with humanities of Kansas.  
  
C: just as a couple of questions, you served in the Vietnam war what branch of service Air Force what was your rank when you retired colonel and where did you serve I served mostly in Thailand that’s where the air war was in north Vietnam was from. I was at Korat and Takhli the two F-105 bases. There were two other bases in Thailand: Ubon and Udorn, they we F-4s, and the Nakhon Phantom called it. The Naked Phantom but it was on the Mekong River.  
  
They were the ones who had the rescue helicopters and aircrafts would go out and look for my mates that were shot down.  
  
C: I interviewed a man who worked  with the Navy he was backseat, and they would pick up pilots who were shot down in the water that was their whole job to look for, because evidently they were paying the Vietnamese people to go get them.  
  
Well, I’m not quite sure what you mean because if you got shot down off the shores of North Vietnam, they would come and get you put you in jail or kill you and we wanted a rescue.  
  
C: they try to pick them up if they had been shot down. OK you enlisted.  
  
No, officers do not enlist.  
  
C: what do you do?  
  
We volunteered. I was in ROTC all volunteer. It’s just a terminologies, but it matters.  
  
C: where were you raised?  
  
Kansas City area  
  
C: when did you volunteer?  
  
Again, I went to KU to be in the Air Force ROTC program, all state funded schools used to have to do that, all of them.  
  
C: I didn’t know that  
  
Well, now you do.  
  
So it’s four years you go to classes every year as freshman and sophomore and then if you wanted to continue you’re in the advanced program and you get paid at least $26 a month and then when you graduate you say you receive a commission as second Lieutenant. Then, when you are a second lieutenant, then if you were physically qualified, they could see that you could talk and walk and had a degree, you went to pilot training. If you were physically able to, maybe you went into navigator training or some other like financial. Something in the Air Force there are plenty of people. Very few pilots only 3 1/2% of the Air Force or pilots the rest are support. Maintenance, payroll, bases, buildings engineers, stuff like that.  
  
So in August of 1960 I became a second lieutenant. The pilot training, we were cutting back on everything, I don’t know why. Korean War was over so there wasn’t as many people going into the military.

Typical Americans, after World War I we disbanded, World War II starts we did not have an Air Force big enough to be an arrow club: enough troops. Typical America. Nothing will happen to us until it does.  
  
So anyways, I went to pilot training. It took a year because cadets, the Air Force Academy people had to go first they were getting paid full-time as soon as they got out.  
  
I went to Laredo Texas. I thought great. I will be glad to get out of here, Kansas City was too hot in the summer in too cold in the winter. Talk about naïveté, I went to Laredo Texas, no air conditioners down there. Spent a year in pilot training and I finished first in the class. So I had my choice of assignments. Let’s say there was 38 people in the class, I believe there were 38. Then personnel come in with all the different types of aircraft’s that need, well need sessions, and there was one F100, and I wanted to be a fighter pilot worse than anything.  
  
C: why?  
  
Because when you grow up in World War II, and you see these fighters flying overhead, well, I mean it was just . . . Well, would you rather drive a Ferrari or a 16-wheeler? And I love to fly though, and if you’re going to fly, who wouldn’t want to fly one of those oh my God. So, I finally got the pilot training and I was furnished first and I took the F 100 assignment. I went to Luke field in Phoenix that is where all the F 100s training was done in those days.  
  
They had more trainers of 100s in Luke field than we had in the entire Pacific in fighters. That took about nine months.  
  
On the first day that we went with our squadron to learn to be fighter pilots, Keith Wilkins got up and said I’m gonna mention something to you. Why are you here? Of course a lot of guys . . . Well, that’s wonderful but you’re here to learn to kill people. You’re going to do it with bullets or nuclear weapons. If it bothers you now it’s time to take a different career field. Nobody got out of that room, because we remembered World War II, and where if we lost, we would’ve had to learn a new language and we would have to learn to use a new kind of money and we wouldn’t have much control over that.  
  
Of course, I’ve always believed in the republic, and I knew the price of peace is eternal vigilance. And I wasn’t going to watch from an office desk.  
  
So anyways, I got that done in nine months. It was a little rough in those days. I mean 100s weren’t fully baptized. I remember on two different occasions we lost five in one day before sun up and noon.  
  
C: in training?  
  
In training!  
  
C: ok!  
  
In fighters! One pilot, one sea, one engine.  
  
Then I went to Nellis and checked out. I got an assignment which I wanted to the F105 the newest and the latest. Incredible airplane. That was just, wow, unbelievable airplane.  
  
My assignment from there was to go to Okinawa to a fighter wing. Wings ?? squadron. (at 12:09) I want to 12th squadron, and the squadron had four flights in it and the flight has about eight people in it. One of the primary jobs there was to set nuclear alert, 24/7.  
  
It was the 18th wing and we had 18 on five-minute alert, and the targets in the center of Shanghai, ICBM sites in Siberia, and people like that. . . I mean, Japan were like that, but they could not have nuclear it up there by treaty, so they would go down to third base in Korea and would send an alert. And they would send an alert in Thailand, in Italy, in Germany and in England. I think that was about it I mean with the fighters with nukes.  
  
Soviet Union did not have anything like that. China did not have anything like that. Korean War they think we fought Koreans but in the air world in North Korea, way up north, there were four bases in Mongolia maybe 20 miles across the ?alley river? Maybe not that far. The Soviets had at least 500, not at one time, about 300 at one time. They cycle through there to give their pilots some experience in the war only about 15 or 20% of those planes were flown by North Koreans. We only had 186 F86 is there. And our kill ratio to theirs was about 9 to 1. Nine of them went down for everyone of ours.  
  
Soviets in the second world war, used airplanes at the extension of artillery, not really for air-to-air combat. But those megs were after the B 29 that we were using to bomb the air fields. Of course, the B 29s were in the position to defend themselves from the megs. So we got the F 86 is over and put an end to that nonsense.  
  
In the December 1964, they took our flight. We took six airplanes down to Da Nang on a day’s notice, and you were always going to go somewhere on a day’s notice or a half a day’s notice, our job was to escort the EC the C1 30s that were going between Hai Phong and Huineng island with intelligence gatherers: voice, communications, linguist. Our job would be the top cover for them. Well, they shot down every meg that I ever saw but there weren’t any there. They had a navy destroyer down there with radar, so there was nothing going on.

Went back in the next month, at the end of the month, six of us from the 12th squadron, they said OK 12th squadron, you guys can go home now. Home! Pack, you are deploying with the squadron in the morning. Be at squadron at seven. They didn’t tell us where we were going. We got there and we packed up and we went to Da Nang. There was an F 100 squadron from England Air Force Base from Louisiana. We felt that something was going to happen. Then one night about 11 o’clock, of course we were all at the bar, you must evacuate we think there’s going to be a mortar are rocket attack. You gotta go to Kursk we never heard of Kursk we thought they said Clark, we were going back to Vietnam. It was an interesting night flight over there when you light that burner it turns the midnight into noon. We got there, landed, and stayed there and started flying missions into Laos. Remember Kennedy now, keep those bad boys out of Laos.  
  
Then, on 2 March 1965, rolling thunder begin. That was the aerial attack on north Vietnam. That was the first flights, that we ever had to go into North Korea airspace. Actually the gulf of Tonkin maybe few of them got over the land but those were navy guys. Alverez, I think was shot down. They said there were torpedo boats after the fleet. Didn’t get any.  
  
Anyway, that’s when the air war started in north Vietnam. And I was on that and it was about 2:10 in the afternoon, we lost three airplanes, and all three were rescued. One of them had been shot down on their first mission in North Korea. The other two, had been around for a while, one was on Robbie risers wing, he was a ace in Korea. He flew in World War II. He eventually had his picture on time magazine, 67 squadron. My friend Boris was on his wing, and got nailed, the plane’s warning lights are on. He jumped out and he got about over to hills and he got them out. That was the beginning.  
  
Rolling thunder ended in 1968 when Johnson said, “ok, we’re not going into the Nehai area anymore and rolling thunder is over.” All of that, all of that.  
  
When the war first started, I am saying that in January 1965, there were 495 F105Ds, that was a single seat, most current version, the other versions did not get in the war. By the end of 1968 or early and 69 we only lost 397 of them in combat.  
  
So a plane shot down, will three things can happen. Dead right there, or the parachute doesn’t open or you get killed in the cockpit, are you get on the ground or die there. Or you can be captured or you can be rescued.  
  
There wasn’t that many of us I mean, there was only two bases. And each base may be had at one time and 75 airplanes and probably 100 pilots.  
  
Any event, the loss rate was something like this: 50% of the pilots that went over there and flew the 105s were shot down. Just 50%. And if you were rescue, you went back to the squadron and one at it. I know guys who were shot down three times. And ones that never came back. So it was kind of a personal war. In south Vietnam our F 100 pilots they had four bases of them. But they were not equipped to go to North Vietnam. The speed and they had wet wings, and if you hit them in the wings, you know fire. That was the plane that was developed in 55, 56 after Korea. They were using them for close air support, night and day setting alerts, at night, find the friendlys and give them a hand. And so it went.  
  
So we were not getting anywhere. They were not quitting and we were not winning. But we were playing offense and they were playing defense.  
  
Of course, I will not get too deeply into it but the man who ended up in the prison camps in Unai, it is impossible to give them do credit, and for the incredible torture that they went through. I mean, they wanted them to write terrible things about their country. Very few of them said oh yeah and do that.

Not the ? star wall ? 21:22 patriots. Remember Robbie Reisner, who I previously mentioned? He was in solitary confinement. He was the rank he was the leader, weren’t allowed to talk to anybody, but you could pass a note. But finally, we got the tap code you’ve heard about that? By the way that tap code the book by Smitty Harrison and his wife, that is the story about how the tap code got going. And it’s the only book that I’ve read I’ve been aware of a lot of them that has the wife writing half the book and the husband and the feelings they had on the same days.  
  
Well, anyhow, Robbie didn’t like the way he was behaving or misbehaving, 17 months and can solitary confinement. Now, I don’t mean like, I forget its name devils island, Papillion? 22;36 they put him in there, and then the other one where over in Europe-Germany, they put him in solitary, and he throw the ball with no light none darkness may be a radio station and they’re talking about how wonderful communism is, and they slip some food under the door. I think he got out about at night maybe 15 minutes and then go back in. Still wouldn’t talk. Well, that’s just some of it.  
  
Then there’s the physical like Jeremiah Denton I think he wrote the book when hell was in session.  
  
C: yes, I read, ok.  
  
I had that speaker in my room one, one night God, he had to do something about that speaker. And within five minutes it quit. Anyways, I’m getting off subject I guess.  
  
Then there was the phony war. We didn’t take our airplanes back we didn’t take our troops back. Phony war really started and 69 and the Air Force wasn’t really going. They went into Laos. In 1969, we might have lost eight 105s, eight or nine. Instead of 130 or 20. I 70 we may have lost one in Laos. Laos had no megs or missiles, they had a lot of guns.  
  
Then and 71, started heating up a little bit but 72 Nixon sent his guy Kissinger to go talk to Chungnahai to make some arrangement, said that we were leaving, but we are not running. That arrangement was made, of course Mao wanted Taiwan. Which that’s not going to happen. Which that’s not going to happen. Of course, there was a rather harmless agreement, you know Chinese and the Vietnamese are ethnic enemies.  
  
So during linebacker two, second night, could’ve been the third one wave of the B-52s hundred maybe 30-40 of them exited through southern China and China did not respond. Well, you can see them now and the guys are looking at the radar’s scopes in ? Ninoy? 25:18. No, this isn’t good. Of course, Le Duc Tho who replays ho Chi Minh was in Paris, with the peace talks with Kissinger.  
  
There was a cable, we were reading their messages, wire cable. I don’t know who was running ? it? 25:35, but they sent a message saying that you must stop, you must not go ? 25:36 quickly or the people will not be with us. And that is what happened.

January 23, 1973, linebacker Two, by the way was 11 days before Christmas: 19 to 29 December of 72. All of it went to Hanoi, some to H Nug? 26:05. I remember the first night I was back there, and we had a section of us that had to go look for the cruise for the B-52s that were shot down. We didn’t lose that many. I thought they would lose more. First night they handed 126 B-52s, with 120, 500-pound bombs going to downtown Hanoi. It is nearly impossible for anybody to imagine what that would be like. Now there’s no off-limit targets except for our POW camps. Took 11 days then we quit.  
  
Of course, April 25, some people say April 30, the north, and there wasn’t any north then they came down unopposed and went into Saigon. Because the democratic house and senate cut the funding that had been, the United States of America had verified that it would work in the July before. So we aggregated on a sacred treaty and of course we are still doing it like Afghan, with the withdrawal. You do not want to trust these politicians it’s all about power, and I, me, I. I don’t trust any of them.  
  
So when I came back from the war, I was sent to the army command staff college, I thought that was odd, but it was in Fort Leavenworth. In the Air Force sent seven a year. Their class was about 1000, maybe 1100. They had over 150 officers from our line nations, they had over 150 officers from our line nations. And the Navy, and the Marine Corps, not a lot for join up ability. You don’t just want the army acting like the army. They have to cooperate with the Navy and Air Force. That was somewhat lacking. Now there is about 50 or 60 Air Force people in that school. I thought oh my God but I loved it, I just loved it.  
  
C: why?  
  
Because, I was in section 13 I believe there were 47 or 48, all the people in my room, almost all were young, my age army guys that I’ve been shot at & ally officers from different nations. It was sort of a big picture thing. It was quite exciting, I thought.  
  
We stayed there a year and then you were going to be assigned another assignment, and I was afraid I was going to go to the Pentagon, I was thinking about retiring are resigning before I go to the Pentagon. Instead, I was asked to stay there and teach the history of air warfare for three years. Wow, that was wonderful.  
  
I remember one of the classes, just as a technique, well, I had British, and I had German, and I had American, I had our Air Force, and I forget, there’s one other country that was involved in World War II. So I said we were going to discuss the battle of Britain and leading why. The purpose of the course was did nations use their money to properly develop an air force and what happened to those who didn’t. And I said we’d have to use some examples. So we’re going to do that, what’s going to happen is I am going to show you a movie in the next class in the, next class, the whole movie, the Hollywood version. But you are going to watch it as if you were one of the people who were there: you will be Churchill you will be Graying you will be Hitler you will be raider the German Navy; I had two German officers, you will be doubting Air Force guy, the air, Marshall, and all this stuff. Look at it from their point of you. And when we get back in the following class, it’s like you died and gone to heaven, and you’re going to have an opportunity to say why did you do this and why didn’t that work? It was amazing the effort that went into it.  
  
The Germans, Norwegian, or a jap or an is Israeli is there if they want something facts well, they are going to get it from their country. Well, essentially, then I’ll quit on this, Churchill said to Hitler, he asked Hitler why didn’t you invade England? He was a German and he said he will have to ask raider was the chief of the Navy raider said, well we had to get 3 1/2 divisions across the channel in one day to be able to dig in and have any hope to conquering those pesky fighters in Britain. And to do that we would have had to take in all the barges that carried food from the fields through the canals, through the cities to be turned into food. We would never get any of those barges back. Because it’s going to go across the English Channel. You would never get any of that back, I mean barges are not ships they’re not built for that. Of course, we would have had to wait for a calm day, which never happens and all that stuff that happened to the English years ago. So after he told me that I thought well. I think we’ve got to go against Russia because that’s where the oil and food was. He forgot to mention in there that Germany had about 70 million people. And it wasn’t Russia it was the Soviet Union and they had over 480 million. And at a certain point quantity becomes quality. So it was very enjoyable. And I thought it was a good way to to get things going. I enjoyed that sort of teaching. It was really amazing and I learned so much. About World War I in particular.

I always tell people if you want to understand World War I, you’ve got to 71dreadnought by Massey, and the reason for that is, they were going to build this incredible battleship. And the taxes that were required. And furthermore, you got to meet every political leader in Europe. Than the guns of August by Barbara Tuchman, I said you will meet them all there. And if you really want to know what happen in the war, BH Labelle Heart, because that will take you down to the battalion level. You’ll see how the war was executed by both sides. So anyways, that was fun.  
  
By the way, my friend Chuck Boyd, I just can’t say enough. Shut down twice and captured the second time. Parachute open about 20 feet in the air and hit the ground hard. 22nd of April 1966. He went through it all, and then came back, and he had not gone to college. He had two years of college so he could be in aviation. So he gets back, lots of time to reflect in prison. One of them was fighter pilots are rascals. They were running around with airline stewardess, and everything else and he was married. So his wife waited for him. She said I waited for you, but there’s going to have to be some changes. Chuck was in bed in San Antonio, I forget the hospital, Brooks I think. I thought about that too. And what I would like to do is, I’m gonna tell you something. I learned a lot up there and I made some horrible mistakes in life. He told me later he made every effort in life to rectify those mistakes. Some of them were irreparable. And I will take those to the grave. so anyways, they did, they renew their vows. So they said, would you like to go back to college and get your degree, yes. She lived in Oklahoma. He lived in Northern Iowa. So he picked KU, because it was halfway. He went and got a house in the country. He wasn’t really wanting to go tell everybody about the war. And she got a job teaching. Any event, after two years you’re doing really well would you like to get a degree in international relations? And he did. I’ll run on with this, eventually he gets to be a four-star general. The wife, while he was a four-star general, he was a number to man in Europe, she died of cancer, lung cancer. He retired, and then he was the chairman for group called national interest, Nixon started it, but it had Kissinger, and Republican that was speaker of the house can’t remember his name.  
  
C: McCain  
  
So he became chairman of that, and then he started taking up flying again. I mean, we got reacquainted as soon as he came back, he went widow, and he ends up marrying Barbara Tuchman’s daughter, Jessica. I got to meet her, I said, yeah, I got to use your book.  
  
C: I do want to hear, you keep mentioning .. . OK when did you say that they opened up North Vietnam and allowed you to go in and do your job?  
  
They allowed us in, you’re talking about combat not visiting after the war?  
  
Linebacker Two March 1965. We were supposed to go in there and it was called gradual escalation that might convince them to be good boys. We all looked at each other, all you’re going to do is piss them off and make them fight harder. You should start with Hanoi and work down.  
  
C: yes, one of them mentioned you had 275 jobs, and you started with the least, and then went to the highest in Hanoi?  
  
Oh, those were the targets from the joints chief of staff, you couldn’t pick your own targets. Professionals couldn’t pick targets; they didn’t know how to run a war. That’s what you go to Fort Leavenworth for. Then of course the Russians and the Chinese were sending them thousands of an anti-aircraft weapons and ammunition. I mean if we would’ve gone up there on March 2 they wouldn’t have had anything but a red Ryder BB gun. Anyways, it was just fool’s gold. Now when we went up there unrestricted was linebacker two, just 11 days worked out pretty well. We went down there where they lived.  
  
Do you know I have to give Hitler credit when he went into Russia, he went in with everything he had. Damn near made it. He forgot winter. He didn’t forget winter reason was he was a month late getting started. They were going in there and the Italians were supposed to Handle Greece. They couldn’t handle a ping pong game. And so now he can’t go because the allies in there on the flank. Not good. So he had to stop send four of his divisions to maintain law and order. And got going in June, which he should’ve got going, probably last of April, when the ground firmed up. Last of April beginning of May. I think they might’ve made it except for they have 70 miles from Moscow and the weather turned cold and they didn’t have any winter clothes. They were Germans. They didn’t need that stuff they were going to be war build. How it happened so they dug again and the Soviets counterattack and push them back 100 miles, it could’ve been 125. Well, as most wars in Europe go, they wait until spring. But then Hitler split his forces into three. Group North was going to Saint Petersburg, group center was to take Moscow, and group south was to go to Stalingrad. None of the three worked. My take is when they drove them back, when they sent the divisions to Greece, that was probably the tipping point. But once polis?? 41:00 surrendered the sixth army on about maybe two or 300,000 soldiers, with only 17,000 who lives through it. And Manstein couldn’t, great general, but couldn’t stop it. Russians ran out of people.  
  
The battle of Kursk and Ukraine, the Germans thought they had it. This is it. They called up the youngest ? 41:18 they built new big powerful tanks, and so the battle starts and they wanted to flank them and go into the fronts. So they sent the tanks out. You know tanks do not go through ponds like you see in the movies. It’s flat grounds or roads. So the Soviet tanks started coming over here, big tanks, boom tanks, boom, boom. But in about five minutes over 2500 Soviet tanks came over the hill. Well, you’re never going to win.  
  
C: you would have thought they would have read the Napoleon.  
  
Oh yeah, they forgot the Napoleon.  
  
C: what is it never get into a land war in Asia?  
  
Well, except Napoleon did get into Moscow, but there wasn’t any food. And they burned all the wood.  
  
C: well, that brings up another, if an army fights on its stomach. Did you ever go without?  
  
No, of course not!  
  
C: I am sorry with all the stuff that was going on. You always had planes, you always had repairs, you always had support staff?  
  
Yes, absolutely! Nobody was attacking our bases. We were in Thailand. In a few times in south Vietnam, they would have a rocket attack on Ben Het get a few airplanes. They never occupied any of our bases in south Vietnam.  
  
C: so you never felt want or need and you always had ammunition and everything you needed?  
  
Except for we were running out of airplanes. Oh, McNamara canceled the order for the last 800 of the 105s to buy a F4s a Navy airplane because he thought all the all the services are to be flying the same airplanes for economic reasons and spare parts. You just can’t beat that can ya.  
  
C: how long were you in service, because you were there at the beginning?  
  
How long I was in the air?  
  
C: how long were you in Vietnam?  
  
Let’s just put it this way, I flew in the war during parts of 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 72 and 73. It might’ve been two months or it might’ve been six months.

It might’ve been two months and might if it’s six months.  
  
C: it was a part of each year  
  
Not 67 then the phony war of 70 and 71 I was still in the US Air Force fighters weapons school shoot after I left the 12th squadron, and we always kept a pilot in one of the three airplanes in use: the 105 the 100 and the F4 in the squadron. And if they needed anything, well, we were helpful. That’s how I got a lot of my missions.  
  
So I got to see the air war developed. Then being a linebacker to, there was four maybe five of us and Kursk who been on the first mission March 2 of 65 and when we were being briefed on it, they said it was B-52’s all night and UA7, I had to fly to A7, the 105s were gone. I spent two years in the A7 operational test and valiant squadron.  
  
C: so you were very comfortable with this airplane?  
  
Oh yes, and I had been a flight commander, and that was over, flight commander in a A7 wing right there in Tucson, where I finished a test. Then I got to D flight commander in the 3, 5, 4 squadron, that’s not worth writing down. I said men, I don’t know how it’s been around here before but I’m going to get you ready for war.  
  
Look, Vietnam is not over, the Cold War is not over. We’re not here to go out to gunnery range and come back and go to the bar. We are going to learn how to fight wars.  
  
A wing of a sevens were tasked to go back to Kroc. Not back over to Kroc, because the peace talks has stalled. But they were not manned for more war time. This was in September 1972. But they needed more pilots. And we were the only other fighter wing with A7, so I volunteered my flight, and got to do it!   
  
I had some warriors in my flight, I had Tom King, who had a tour in F4s, 105s, went to Laos, was a Raven FACs, no one knows about those.  
  
C: I don’t, what is that?  
  
They were flying forward air control airplanes to find targets to help general Vang Pao army. The war in Laos had never been covered very well. But in my five best, there’s that book.  
  
Any event, we got there and I’m telling you we did good work. I didn’t lose anybody.  
  
But Tom was a warrior, and I did not need to explain anything to him about war.  
  
Mike ?? 47:30 had a year in south Vietnam in F100s. But the rest of them had not seen war.  
  
C: do you mean they were young, how young?  
  
Of course they were young! Fred Buel? 47:43 was the youngest, I don’t know you go to college, you go to pilot training, 23 maybe 24. I was born in 39, and we’re talking 72, I was 33 I guess. I’ve been a major for a while.  
  
Then, after the Paris Peace Accords, well I guess we’re all done. No Cambodia was not part of the Paris peace accord. So a lot of the bad guys went to Cambodia to continue their great hope for communism. By the end of January after the Paris peace accords were going to war in Cambodia. Not on the ground. I Cambodians we were giving them air support. My last mission over there I think was in June 23,24 of 73. I ended up with about 481 hours of combat time. About 120 missions into north Vietnam. You know you just don’t go up there and come right back. I’d be like going to London and Berlin right back. We were going fast it took about two hours and 20 minutes.  
  
Cruise speed was 480 kn. About the same distance a little more maybe. Takli was further away.

C: how many years did you spend of your total life in service?

Well, that was some precision, August 1961 to June 30, 1985, 25 years. Loved it! People were confident, had integrity, first things first. I just thought it was great. I would do it all over again, again, and again.

None of this nonsense that you see anymore.

C: would you join the modern military?

Well, now I am older, and I have to put myself in a mindset of being 19 or so. The old story that things aren’t as good as they used to be, but maybe they never were. I guess compared to what, you know. The chief of staff of the Air Force now said in two years he wants the majority of white people to be the majority of officers. Now think about that?

C: in the majority?

Does not want white officers in the majority. I mean we’ve got 6% of the population is male blacks, and of that maybe 2% fit for service. You know we’ve got to get them in there because you know someone bought a slave. I mean it’s just unbelievable. It’s so bad.

It kind of reminds me of the Antoinnette in the French Revolution, 1787. Things got so bad to the people that they didn’t care. There were just a few causing it then the guillotine became, I mean. But he was finally killed. I think we should let Biden eat cake. That’s what he saying to us let them eat cake.

C: that was a lack of education and training of any value.

Well, that is kind of what’s going on now. We don’t have education we have indoctrination. And we do not have the ability to speak freely. Because if you do, like Tucker Carlson, you’ll be gone. They are going to sequence him out.

C: the founder of Fox News just died

Yes, and of course his wife was speaking for him and what went on. I have not read the complete issue.

C: and I am at the point where I don’t get the full information.

Well, no one does!

C: so how do you make an informed decision?

I think you think about what probably happened, in a non-political way. For instants, we’re shooting them in the toes when all we had to do was for a couple of days go up there. We all felt that way.

C: if you serve for 25 years, what age were you when you left the service?

My birthday is July 31 and that was 1985, OK let’s do this, if you take 1931 from 1985 I was 44 (54).

C: OK, you’re still a young man, what did you go to next?

Well, I’ll tell you what I did, I bought my little Pitts airplane, I was giving instruction and was doing very well in competitions. So I started an aerobatic school in my own hometown.

About six months later, I raced through it, and people wanted to form an aerobatic team, four ship aerobatic team of Pitts. They asked me if I would be team leader, and I said I would. And they were all fighter pilots from the war. That knew how to fly formation. That has to come naturally. And we went on the road for four years. Big shows, 24 locations a year.

After that Blue Shaddick, who had a been a prisoner of war, could only see in one eye, they did not do that to him, it was being controlled, but when things went down, there was not medicine. He got out and bought a Pitts and he enjoyed life. He is another one they sent to college. They sent him for two years, and he graduated summa cum laude from Troy University. Good pilot, still get along, still alive.

Took him and two others, we work the deck.

Then I talked to Lou, and I said Lou every year I talk about what almost went wrong, I think we’ve had enough of this. We were never late for a show. Never had an accident. The pay was pretty good. I think I’ll just go back to teaching aerobatics.

Then I got the idea when I was in Nellis, when I was in the weapons school, I came back to the weapons, school, not at the end of the 1966, I couldn’t believe I could go back to the weapons school. There were only 13 officers, I do not know how I got selected for that, but I’m glad I did.

I would fly to Kansas City, Richard ?? 57:50, would casually go see his family, I looked down to see this beautiful grass crest runway, wow! And when I got out of service, I thought, that would be a wonderful place, and I found out it was Harold Krier hometown. That is the bloodline of America’s aerobatics right here!

So my wife Linda, aerobatic pilot, I mean 30 points for being world champion in 1990 in Switzerland. She had a beautiful airplane, a French built cap. That was the initial of the designer, all wooden. So she let me use her airplane and I flew down, I called Bill Shaw, who was the mayor, and told him my idea. He said well, come down, and let’s talk about it. Very gracious man! He said that sounds pretty good. He said I’ve got an idea, let’s just try it and see if it works.

First year we tried it and it worked great. I don’t know then there was some kind of conflict with the people over at the airport so after 93 and 94, the airport certainly was not available for two years. I said, but if you are in the mood, call us and we will come back. We took it to Washington and other places before coming back. We came back in 96 or 97. And we have been here ever since. I don’t know and other places before coming back. We came back in 96 or 97. And we have been here ever since. I don’t know if I’m coming back though. Love it, but being 84.

C: you are still a young pup.

I kind of feel that way until all the radiation and this.

C: but if it is worth doing, please do it as long as you can.

Nobody hast to tell me that, just . . . On my last day I just want to slide into third base with a big smile on my face. Safely.

C: it’s more fun when the plane is reusable.

I had to eject once when the engine quit. It was Northern Nellis, I got hurt a little bit, but not bad.

C: when just looking back when you think about serving in Vietnam, how do you feel about your service?

Great!

C: OK you knew you did what you were supposed to do to the best of your ability?

Yes. All of us we were war were two boys. The guys who did Korea and World War II, we wanted to be like them. Wing commander that was shot down in World War II shot down in Korean and he’s back, lead from the front follow me type. You don’t get to be around a lot of people like that.

C: yes, they were rock stars

If you hear a fighter, pilot talk too much about what he did, this bears some scrutiny.

We have our reunions, and I am embarrassed that used to click on the most beautiful, and it that’s off of, that comes on, but none of the other pictures do.

C: OK, I was looking at pictures and they are interspersed. They are not just.

Pictures talk 1:01

1:03.16

Ed scour who got shot down. He is now going blind and I talk to him every day. If you read every word, especially when Kay Martin writes his little piece, the men talk freely . . .

C: yes, it’s at the very end

Do you see that guy in the middle?

C: yes

Are you young enough to remember Have Gun Will Travel, Paladin? That’s Paladin. He is a dead ringer for paladin. If you go up a little bit, you can see that he has a six shooter. And on his plane, you see on his right side? He put on his plane have gun will travel. And the guy on his left, is the guy, sad story there. They were coming back from a mission where we lost six in two minutes. First Sam site raid anyway his plane was horribly damaged and another guy. They finally got back into Thailand and one was looking, then the controls went, and that was a Bartimus. He jumped out in the shoot didn’t open and they got the body and brought it back to Kursk. There is a C141 sitting on the ramp with the back open, and there’s Bart and his forever box, they put the box on, and Will, dear friend of his, no wallet no nothing gets an American flag gets up there and puts the flag on Bart’s box, and lays on top of it. All the officers were like you can’t do that get him out of there the wing commander who been in two wars, said he can do whatever the goddamn he wants and come back when he wants. Now shut up. And will roll that casket. All the way to McConnell Air Force base in Wichita.

C: And had to meet the family

I don’t know I think he was just thinking about Bart.

And one of the guys next to him, that was Bruce Holmes. They used to mix us up together. But he goes back to McConnell and teaches people how to fly the 105, instructor, he had a house rented, Jack Redman with him. Bruce and his lady friend who was a nurse they were at the house and she said she’s got to go I am a nurse. Well, she said, will you drive me? He said well my car is out there take it to work and bring it back. Then he goes down the hall his bedroom. And Jack and his girlfriend come there and they are not there long and they see fire coming down from there. They never knew he was there, and they got out of the house. Only thing they saw in the morning was his teeth by the door. The fire was there, and the windows was barred to keep thieves out of the house.

I would say those were three men she has to deal with. They were wonderful guys. Will just died here about six months ago.

Tony Cushenberry just died. Look at that face. It’ll tell you all the stories that you need to know.

That picture right there is us sitting by our shack an hour and a half before we took off to go on the March 10 mission. On the left is Tom Bockman there is Charlie Copan our flight commander there’s Matt couch up in the door was Sam, I can’t remember his name, there is Ray Maas and then there’s Frank Tulip. And none of us had been to war so we were not fighter pilots yet we were pilots that flew fighters. When we came back, we were fighter pilots.

Website talk 1:09.31

Beautiful, beautiful airplanes! They remind me of the 1955 jaguar pearl; somebody knew what they were doing. A designer on that was a Russian. Yeah, they got out of Russia.

C: Larry Dean

Kansas major Air Force, Korea and Vietnam to wars that SS means a silver star with an oak leaf cluster.

C: what does that mean?

That means he has two silver stars. They are awarded it but you just put a cluster on it. That is a big deal. That is the third highest award in the Air Force. Then, distinguished flying cross, and three Oakleaf clusters means he’s got four distinguished flying crosses. Air metal and 15 Oakleaf clusters. That is a big deal!

C: how do you earn those?

Combat, only combat.

C: and he died of natural causes at home

No, he shot himself.

C: after he got home

Well, not right after. He came home from that warning went to Nellis and he was a 105 instructor. then they sent him to Tack headquarters. We knew when he got shot. Just me, I think he was really good at war. But when he got into the office and paperwork and dealing with people. And I’m sure there are other things, who knows. But I do know this he took a shotgun shell for dessert. I don’t know if it was a shotgun.

C: but I am ashamed. I’ve lived in Comanche county most of my life, and I’ve never heard of him.

This is what Rick said, he said, I kind of think he shot himself because of that wife. I mean she came out here and she was holy hell. Comanche County is dry and she said where is a bar where is a liquor store? Well somebody’s got to get me a bottle. Just get rid of her.

Well, we had another guy or two that came back, you know he had done well and was moving up. Well, you know what I’m talking about they all change when they come back.

C: is there anything that you would like the next generation the young kids is there anything you would like for them to understand about your service

My service no just said it was a great honor to go to war for our precious blood earn republic. You can put it in simpler terms. If you want to learn a new language, if you want to not have a scent of your money left over, Not get to vote or do anything keep on doing what you’re doing. It’ll happen more quickly than you think. The deep state does not want the people to find out what they’ve been doing. So now they’re in. Oh my God we’ve got to protect ourselves and to do that we have to get the FBI, department of justice, everybody to the same sheep of false music. I don’t know why people don’t see that obvious.