

Interview with Korean War Veteran William Donald Sinclair, April 2, 2004

Victor H. Fast: This is 2, April, 2004. We're at Bill Sinclair's home at 3007 Shelton Drive. I'm Vic Fast, the interviewer. The cameraman is Jason Brown. And we're interviewing Bill Sinclair, State Representative of Colorado. Bill, tell us about your early life.

William Donald Sinclair: Well, I was in World War II. And I've earlier been interviewed on that. Then I got back out of the armed forces, went back to school. And I was — in 1947, I was contacted by mail and asked if I would like to compete for a regular commission in the new United States Air Force. So talking to one of my family members, who was an Army officer, he encouraged me to do that. And so—

VF: Not the old Army Air Corps.

WS: Not the old Army Air Corps. I had been in the old Army Air Corps in Italy in World War II as kind of a punk 19 year-old kid. But I did get commissioned. And then I got out. I had wanted to go to pilot training, but I was a navigator in World War II in B24s and flew 17 missions. And then came home and went back to college. And so when this letter came, I did apply and I went to Fort MacArthur in San Pedro, California. And there were dozens and dozens of other fellows there. And I was just a lieutenant. And I was pretty low on the totem pole. And here were all these majors, lieutenant colonels, generals, and so on. And I was taking these exams. And about the second day — it was a three-day affair — I said, "Well this is crazy," you know, "they're not going to take me. They want — look at all these guys with all these ribbons, and decorations, and stars. I'm just nothing." So I called my uncle who was counseling me, and I said, "I'm not going to finish this." And he said, "You get back in there right now and you finish those exams." And he was right, because they didn't want all the stars. They wanted a Christmas tree. And the base was made up of hundreds and thousands of lower ranks, and when you got to the top, eventually there was one Chief of Staff of the Air Force. So I did get regular commission. And many weeks went by. And then I received some orders — and telling me I had to report to what was then called, Fairfield Suisun Army Airfield — later, Travis Air Force Base. And I thought to myself, well what are these crazy folks doing sending me orders to go on my reserves — I had been in the reserves at Long Beach, California — to go on two weeks of active duty in the middle of winter? And I called — well, I think I mentioned earlier that at class one of my profs said, "You know, Bill, there were two FBI agents here looking for you today." And I said, "Whoops." And so I got on the phone. To make a long story short, they said, "Get yourself up here." So I went to Northern California from Southern California and I reported in. And they all said, "Oh, you're the one. The general wants to see you. He can hardly wait to get his hands on you, I guess." And I did go in and see. It was a General Archie Old. He was a brigadier general. He later became a lieutenant general and was the commander of the 15th Air Force. And he said, "What's all this nonsense that you want to resign your commission and go to West Point? Why would you want to do that?" And I said, "I want to go to pilot training, General." And he said, "Lieutenant, there's almost 1,500 officers on this base, and only five of them are regular officers. And I'm one of those five, and the other colonels are the remaining three. And you're the fifth. And you're talking about giving up a regular commission? I can send you to pilot training." So indeed, he said, "You go back to your quarters. Think about this for 24 hours. You

report back down here at 8:00 o'clock tomorrow morning and tell me your decision. If you want to resign your commission, you know and I know that you can do that. Nobody can keep you in." Now, keep in mind that this was 1948, and things were a lot different. Nobody wanted anything to do with the military. And the military was very hurt and hard put upon to obtain personnel resources. So anyway, I, of course, listened to the wisdom of this older man and said that I will go. And he told me that they would put me on the line flying as a navigator on the Hickam run. And a month went by and nothing happened. Then, I was switched around to be a route briefing officer. And I thought these were all just interim duties. And finally, a young lieutenant of my experience in my own squadron got orders to go to pilot training. And his name was Hal Mott. And I remember him to this day. And I said — we had a little farewell party for him. And at the party, we all had a drink or two. And he was loose-lipped. And I said, "Hal, you know I don't understand. You're going to pilot training and I'm not going." And he said, "Don't you know? You're not going." And I said, "What?" And he said, "Yeah. The wing personnel officer said you're a smart ass young lieutenant who's hobnobbing with generals. He's going to fix your wagon, so ha, ha, ha." Well, that was pretty bad news. And I still was just civilian enough to know that there was something amiss there and I was going to take care of that. So I did indeed go down the next morning, late in the morning when I can get away, to the wing personnel. And it was lunch hour. And I went in to see the personnel major. He wasn't in. The sergeant major was there. I asked him, "Where are my orders? Where are all those papers I filled out?" He said, "I don't know anything about it." I said, "Fine. I'm going to see the general and yours is the name I'm gonna give him." And he said, "Now wait a second, Lieutenant. I don't have anything to do with this." And I said, "Well, you better make up your mind right now, because unless you give me some information, you're going to be the fall guy on this." So he went like this to me. In this big empty room full of desks, took me up to the little platform with the bigger desk, and picked up the out-basket, and there were all the papers I had filled out. They had gone nowhere. And the plan was to send me to Guam to be a route briefing officer. So I hustled down to see the general. And when I got in there, I told him, I said, "You promised me that I could go to pilot training and you're not keeping that promise." And he said, "What do you mean?" And I explained what had happened. And he kind of turned all red in his neck. And he said, "Lieutenant, you go back to your quarters. You clear the base. You pack your bags and you be here with bags at 8:00 o'clock in the morning." And at 8:00 o'clock in the morning, I went back to see the general. And he handed me orders shipping me to Randolph Air Force Base to begin my flight training.

VF: Texas?

WS: Texas, right. And guess who went to be the route briefing officer in Guam?

VF: The major.

WS: The major, yes. And the message here is, don't mess with those generals. They can be good guys, but they can really be bad guys too. And so that's what got me started in my second phase of my military experience, which was the Korean War. I went to pilot training. I graduated in July of 1949. I was at Randolph Air Force Base. And when I finished there, I went to the fighter school at Williams Air Force Base in Arizona. And I got orders to go to Hamilton Air Force Base to fly jets. They were F84s, which was a big airplane in those days. In the Air Force, you got to fly lots and lots and lots. I finished my career at 6,000 hours. But in those days, in a fighter, I was really flying three and four missions every day. It was incredible. And when I wasn't flying a jet, I was towing a target in an F51. And it was just crazy. There was no limit to how much I could fly. It was really marvelous. But I had gone through my flight training at Williams Air Force Base in F51s. And then when I got checked out in jets up in Hamilton Air Force Base, I continued to fly the F51 in a tow capacity. So when the Korean War came, we were immediately directed to send all kinds of personnel to the war. And I don't know how others felt, but I felt we were terribly unprepared for that war. There was some really bad things that

happened. But then they looked at my records to send me. They said, "My gosh. You've got all these F51s, we're going to send you to F51s," a propeller driven airplane. Well, I didn't want to do that. That was going backwards in my career. And I had no choice. They rammed that down my throat. So I went to the fighter gunnery school in Las Vegas, Nevada. And when I graduated there in December of 1950, early in January, I left to go to Korea. And I was assigned to F51s. The trip over was uneventful. We flew, as opposed to World War II, when everybody went on boats — ships I should say. And we went to Japan, which was a staging point. And Tachikawa Air Base was the place where all the personnel actions were taking place to process people there up into Korea. And at this stage in the war, the Chinese had come clear south and pushed the American forces back to what was called the Pusan Perimeter in those days. In fact I was stationed at Tagoo Air Base which is in Southern Korea. And they were actually mortaring portions of the base at that time on and off. When I got in Japan, my uncle, who was the colonel I talked about earlier, was the J-6 on MacArthur's staff. And so he — when I called him, he said, "Come on over right away." And I said, "Well, I got all these friends of mine." And he said, "How many are there?" "Well, there's six." And he said — including me — he said, "Fine. We have bedrooms for all of the them." Well, we went to this magnificent Japanese home. And it was one the Mitsubishi's — which our occupation forces had taken over all of those kinds of properties in Japan. So here we were, six lieutenants, all living in private bedrooms in this one home. It was amazing. I was very impressed with that. I remember that very well. Eventually, I went over to personnel in Tachikawa and said, "You know, this is terrible. I mean, I don't want to go to F51s. I want to be in jet fighters. That's what I trained for. Isn't there anything I can do about this?" And so the sergeant who was in charge says, "You want to go to jet fighters?" And I said, "Yes. Can you do something?" He says, "Sure. Sinclair, you just went to jet fighters." I got such a kick out of that. All these grandiose personnel plans that they had, and here's the sergeant just changing the whole world for me. I loved that.

VF: The little sergeant.

WS: Yeah, the little sergeant. They're not so little. Anyway, I did go over to Tagoo, and that was a real shock to the system. Because when I got there, the weather was bitter cold. And we lived in (hooches) Where there'd be maybe 20 or 30 officers sleeping on cots in a big wooden building with a tar paper roof. And we got checked out very quickly. And when the wing commander found out that I had been trained in Mustangs and not in F80s — which was the airplane that we were flying — and that wing — this was the 49th wing — and I was assigned to the 8th Fighter Bomber Squadron. And he called me down there and said, "How did you get here?" And fortunately, I knew a lot of people in that unit, and one of them was a Captain Basusko. And he said, "Colonel, this guy can fly anything. Let me give him three rides and a trainer and I guarantee you, he'll be a fine addition to our company here." So he bought off on it. And away I went and I started my missions. And I remember getting checked out. And these airplanes were really the first jets that the Air Force had, F80s. They had a trainer version which we called the T33, which had two pilots in it. But these airplanes had huge wing tanks on them. And you had to learn how to rotate the airplane on take off. And when the summer months came in Korea, and it got hot, there was a lot of trouble getting them off. In fact, we used to use (?J-tow?) To get off occasionally. If you had a good bomb load, or lots of rockets, and you had these huge wing tip tanks, it was important to know how to do that. And one of the — one of the fellows that came along afterwards, was a friend of a friend. My friend in that wing was — who came after me — was Colonel Jack Broton. He wasn't a colonel. He was a lieutenant. Just like me, a West Pointer. And incidentally, the whole West Point class that preceded that was wiped out in the Korean War. They really took it on the chin, most of them in the ground forces. And where we had heavy losses, they lost all these young lieutenants. It was really a tragedy. Part of that, I chalk up to the terrible way we were prepared for that war. We were totally unprepared. We had become an occupation force in Japan. And we just weren't ready to fight a war on a combat tactical level. In event, this individual I'm attempting to

describe — we took off, and I had (wrote) On my wing and I was leading the element. And he took off just ahead of us. And he overrotated the airplane on the takeoff and crashed. And he had napalm on the airplane, and it was just a huge fireball. He was killed almost instantly. And we flew right through that fireball in the airplane after him, which was dangerous because it could get flamed out. And that close to the ground, you can be in really serious conditions. But we had a lot of terrible accidents like that. These were the days when jet airplanes were very new. And today, if you were to read the book "The Right Stuff," Thomas Wolfe describes that era very well when he's talking about the astronauts and how in those days we killed so many people. It was just incredible. Because of lack of experience, and advancing technology, and new kinds of airplanes — and trying to train in combat, really. I flew a hundred missions. That was a tour. And I signed up for a second tour so I could stay. Yeah, I was young and foolish. And I had eight missions on my second tour. When they found out that 5th Air Force in Japan — which was the controlling Air Force agency over in that part of the world — was keeping all this combat talent, and Air Force Headquarters came down and really hammered. And almost literally over night, three or four of us were picked up and sent to Japan — not home — but to Japan. And we were sent to the 35th Fighter Group, which was made of up of various National Guard units and Mustangs — F51s. Because, again, I had this experience. They didn't let me go home. They sent me to Japan. And these units were not combat ready. And we were trying to get them to be combat ready. And they were really in bad shape, frankly. They were people from Wyoming, and Arizona Guard, as I remember, and various guard units — kind of conglomerate group from various states that had been folded together and made into a combat unit. And they were training. I know you're interested in what I thought of Tagoo. It was — it had no charm. There was no attraction there for me. I loved Japan. And later had two assignments there — and later in my military career. But I never had any love for Korea. It was a bitter cold nation surrounded on all sides by water. The people were — the culture was so alien to me as a young man, that I didn't have any attraction to it. And the North Koreans were such vicious enemies and so brutal — but we took care of them. And air power in that war was predominant. In fact, I remember a particular mission when we caught a mixed Chinese and North Korean division in the open. And we just attacked them with napalm. And we killed hundreds and hundreds of Chinese and North Korean soldiers. I couldn't see how they could possibly stand in the midst of all this conflagration. I remember distinctly one soldier standing under a little tree. (They don't know what big trees are like we do here in Colorado.) But around him was just devastation, bodies everywhere. The — later in my tour in Korea, I was sent to be a forward air controller. And I was stent to the 101st Airborne, the 107th RCT, and I did two months duty with them. And that was a great experience for me. I loved it.

VF: On the ground?

WS: On the ground, yeah. And I was ashamed because I was supposed to be able to deliver the air. And the equipment I had was so poor. It was highly unlikely it would work. I had a Jeep with radios with big vacuum tubes that high in them. And you're driving over rocks and all this. You can imagine how difficult that was. But the paratroopers really took good care of me. And we went in at (Munsun) And that was big push to test the Chinese and see what they — how they would react. And I remember so well that the battalion commander that I was assigned to was very concerned about our being cut off up there. We were penetrating — what do they call that — reconnaissance in force — sounds like to me, if I remember that term. We had some fire fights. I did not get endangered in any way. I remember real well the battalion commander pulling me into his tent and talking to the other officers and said, "Don't let this man get killed. I'm charging you not to let that happen." Made me feel good, but it wasn't the way things really should have been. And, "Because," he said, "he's the only guy that can get us there." And air was important in that war. It was just as important as the ground forces were. The Navy had a lesser roll accept at Wonsan, which is very famous. And I won't address that.

VF: Supply Navy.

WS: Yeah, yeah, that's right. Well, they had — we had a brilliant commander in General MacArthur in spite of his egotism. Everybody was trying to tell him he couldn't do that in Wonsan Harbor. And they had all the reasons: The tides, the weather, the dangers. And he insisted he knew what he was doing. And as I remember reading history — signed a piece of paper that said, "If anything goes wrong, it was my fault." Of course, it was a huge success and strategically brilliant. But we had different missions. And one of things I remember about this era is that — you're booklet asked to talk about the food. We had terrible food. It was terrible. It was so inconsistent. And you would have thought being in the Air Force that they would — and having a mess haul — that everything would have been terrific. But the supply was so irregular, that I remember for three days one time we just ate one kind of food. That was all they had — breakfast, lunch, or dinner — that was all. Not a tragic event. But another humorous instance was that the code word for rockets was graham crackers. So we order a lot of new rockets, and what they send us was tons and tons of graham crackers. Oh, these crazy things that happened. When I left the Army, my replacement there was a young lieutenant from my squadron. And he came early, which surprised me, because most of us didn't want to go on that. We wanted to continue to fly combat missions. And I left two days early on account of his being so eager. And two days later, he was killed. They were overrun by the Chinese, and my replacement was killed. If I had been there, I guess I might not have made it. One of the things that was unique about this wing, was that we had a sister airfield in Japan which was called Tsuiki. It was on the Japan Sea and on the main islands of Honshu. And we would fairy airplanes back-and-forth. And the commander of that base is still here in Colorado Springs. He is a very famous colonel from those days. We would, if we had real serious maintenance problems with an airplane, we would fly it back and pick up a new one and bring it back into Korea and use that for combat until something broke. Now, this is not to say that we didn't have maintenance. We did. But upper-level maintenance, we didn't have that capability, or it was delimited. And so we crashed a lot of airplanes. I got all shot up on a mission one day up near Wonsan. And when I came back, I had no brakes on the airplane. So I landed on a normal landing. When I applied brakes, nothing happened. They were gone, because the hydraulic lines to the brakes had been shot out. And I crashed into a stack of PSP, pure steel planking, which was our runway. They stack this stuff up and they'd have to replace it. They were planks you know about, perhaps, 24 to 30 inches wide and they interlaced with each other. And they provided a steel surface with holes in it so you could stop. And they would stack these replacements up along the side of the runway. And when I first applied my brakes, one brake connected and the other didn't. And so the airplane veered very slightly. And as I went down the runway, I finally hit one of these taxied airplanes, tore the gear off the airplane. There wasn't any — I wasn't injured in any way.

VF: But that stopped you?

WS: That sure stopped me, yeah. And I had pictures of that somewhere. Uh, we had some really — I mentioned earlier — some missions where people were killed because of lack of experience. I recall one mission when a fella by the name of Becker — who was very popular — could not drop his napalm. He could not release it on the target. He had to carry it. It wouldn't come off. Usually, if they don't drop automatically when you push the button on the stick to release the armament, then you have a panic button which you can push and it will drop away on that. But nothing would work. And he came back and landed. And the hitting of the airplane on the runway released these tanks, who went rolling down the runway and then exploded. And he roared into all that and crashed. And I remember so well. We all rushed out there. And he was there. He was all — he was — he didn't live but maybe an hour or two. And he was conscious though. And he was so burned. I never seen anything like that, like hamburger steak. And he kept saying, "Moto." That was the name, a nickname, of one of my friends. "Moto, I'm burning. I'm burning." And the fireman who was there was so emotionally involved,

he turned a hose on him. But that rolled his body down, you know, the runway. And this individual, Moto, just hauled off and socked that fireman — emotions which get away. Uh, after a fair amount of missions, you got so much R and R and Japan was the place you went. And the Japanese people were very hospitable. You know, you either like the Japanese, or you don't. And I like them very much. I think they're — there are many traits in their culture that I admire. And they made available some of the finest hotels in Japan to the Army, Navy, and Air Force people to have R and R. And I remember going to the Fujiya Hotel, which was a very unique hostel resort of the first order, very five-starish in today's terms. And we would — the thing that I found was fascinating, that I wanted salad. I never saw a tomato or a leaf of lettuce in Korea. But there, you can get just about anything you wanted. And we would tease the Japanese waitresses. And they were very emotional, and became very attached to people who that they would serve you at your table. And over a period of ten days or something, they got to know you pretty well. And we used to tease them. And we would wait until the meal was all through and we'd had desert. And then keep in mind though, this is kind of — for those days, a pretty posh menu. And then we would say more mashed potatoes and gravy. And they would — they'd get all excited and really rip them up. They didn't understand that at all. And when we would leave, these young girls who were our waitresses would cry. And you know, the Japanese don't display their emotions very much. But if you told them, "I'm going back to go into combat now," they would get very emotionally involved. It was kind of interesting. Another interesting mission we had was one in the middle of the night. Actually, we took off. It was really dark. And flying formation and taking off is more difficult at night than at any other time. And we went clear up to North Korea and caught trains out. They moved their logistical support on trains at night because then we didn't harass them. So when we got word of this, we planned a special mission to go up there at night so we'd arrive at twilight, not quite yet dawn. But we took off and flew up there and it was very dark when we took off. It became twilight, and we caught — I caught a train in the open. And there wasn't any train when we finished. It was really amazing, because these cars — the engines began to explode as we'd shoot them up. And the box cars had munitions, obviously, and some of them would go off. And really spectacular thing that sticks in my mind

VF: Fireworks.

WS: Yeah, fireworks. Very good analogy. I agree. I got a DFC for that one, so that was something that sticks in my head. One of the interesting things that happened when I was there was Bob Hope came. And Bob Hope, for those that are viewing this, is and was a very famous comedian, very prominent World War II, and very famous for entertaining the troops. And so I was appointed as his gopher, you know. I was the project officer. I was his Batman. And he was really a nice guy. And so at one point in the — it was still — the show was put on that night and was recorded on movies and then sent back to the states. But before that happened, he — we were walking somewhere, and he said, "I have to go to the latrine." And I said, "Oh, okay. Come on I'll show you where it is." So I took him over to the officers's latrine. Now, you have to understand that we were in the field, more or less. Not like the Army, but — and the facilities we had for bathrooms, toilets were benches with holes cut in then and a troth underneath. And outside we engineered this 50-gallon drum with a little electric motor that would pump water up into this 50-gallon drum. And there was a spring device in there so when it got enough water in it to weight, it cocked and let all this water come down and flush out this troth. Well, the only thing wrong with that was, we were receiving very occasional mortars. And so I forgot to tell him about the 50-gallon drum, because it was like somebody hitting that thing with a sledgehammer. And Mr. Hope was ensconced, I take it. I wasn't physically in the room. The whole place was empty accept for him. And that thing went ka-boom, and he came running out with his knickers around his ankles, saying, "Jeez, what was that?" I said, "Oh, my gosh." So that night he got off his standard Bob Hope line and said something to the effect that, "Tagoo, that's the place where you can go to the latrine and get combat fatigue." He broke everybody up. They all knew what he was talking about. And

I'm sure the audience that viewed that show never knew what he was talking about. But that was kind of a fun thing that sticks in my head. Another unique thing was my squad commander was a very famous — he later became a brigadier general. His name was Ben King. And he was totally selfless. He flew all the missions. He had over 200 missions when I joined that squadron. And he was pushing three hundred. And you can't do that very long without not being around very much. And I greatly admired him. I know that I flew one mission with him where we were trying to blow up a tunnel, and we had delayed fuses on our bombs. And the idea was to skip this bomb into the tunnel and then it would go off and do a huge amount of damage. And it would keep them from using that rail line. And so he sent me in first. And I went in and skipped my bomb in and it went off and dust and everything came out. And he came down — and they had incorrectly fused his bomb. So when it hit, it went off instead of skipping. And he almost — he had a lot of damage on his airplane from that. And he almost got blown out of the sky. We made it back home.

VF: He must have been a hell of a flyer.

WS: He was a great, great leader. He's still alive, as far as I know. And very — he was a great tactical leader, a man of the field. I can't say enough about Ben King. They had all kinds of tricks that — the Chinese, particularly — that they would play on us. One was — an almost devastating trick — was that we had a radio homing beacon on the base. So you came back, homed in on this beacon, and did an approach procedure if the weather was — usually, you'd fly your missions at say 20,000 feet, and let down. And if the ceiling was below 5,000 or something, you had to do an instrument-type approach. And what the Chinese learned was that they could duplicate that homer, so that up to the north of the field about 60 or 70 miles, they had a false homer. And on this mission, we came back and we were low on fuel. We were always low on fuel, because we constantly cheated to try to give close air support, or try to destroy the target, or particularly if the migs came to try to get us, we'd use up more fuel. And we had cheated. And so when we let down on the false homer, there was no air base. And — gosh I'll never forget this. And the flight leader said, "I don't know where we are. I have no idea where we are." And my indication was that I was getting signals further south on my radios. And so finally I asked him — we were just kind of flying around trying to figure out what to do and our fuel was dangerously low. And so I asked him for permission to break off and go on my own. And he said, "Anything you want." I did. And I did — climbed up and flew to where I thought the base was. And I let down, and it was the base. But the totalizer on my F80, which was a numerical depiction of the balance of gallons of fuel, was running backwards. That was terrible. And one of the — it was either three other guys. Basusko made it back and later crashed in a river bed. And he was injured, but not killed. And I can't remember what happened to Bill Savage. But I do remember when I came back, and I was trying to land and on the final approach I got cut out by another airplane — panicked, you know. And so finally, I'm on the ground. And I can't believe I'm still flying this airplane. It was incredible. In today's world, I would have jumped out or ejected. And I remember Colonel King climbing up on the ladder and saying, "Where is your flight? What's happening? What's going on?" And I said, "I don't know." I didn't know. He must have thought I was an idiot. Later, the one fella who was injured was — we had a Mash, a medical team there on the base, a big central place, mainly for Army personnel who were wounded. And they took Becker over there. And I went to see him right then, as soon as I got out of the airplane and got debriefed and could go over on the other side of the field where this medical outfit was. And that is not what you saw in the TV. Nothing at all like — it was very gory. Really depressing. And a lot of guys getting arms amputated and things, blood all over the place. I mean, that's common I guess for a field hospital, for a doctor. But I had never seen anything like that. He shoved his leg — on the crash, he shoved his leg right through the side of the airplane and it was fractured in several places. And he was cut up and broken up in some other places, but he wasn't going to die. And he later was evacuated. It was something. Let's see, what else to talk about? I think I told you about the game the Chinese played. They did other things. For instance, they would park a

tank car, a rail tank car, at the foot of a hill — a single tank car. And if this was a track, and this was the hill, they'd put a tank car right here. And that was for green pilots who would see that and go after that and fly into the hill. And I was one of those. I almost got killed because I was so fixated on causing that thing to blow up. And there wasn't anything in it, and it wasn't going to blow up. And I didn't know that. And when I looked, when I adjusted my vision looking out of the site, looking up, I realized I was going to fly into the hill. And I rotated the airplane. And you have this sensation that the airplane isn't going around up in a loop like this, but it's going down flat. As a pilot, you pick all that up. And I missed that hill so my jet steam dusted off all the top of the hill. And that taught me something really important. Don't do that again. Let's see, what else can I tell you about?

VF: You could maybe mention something when you came back.

WS: Yes, well I'm going to tell you a little bit. There's three of us that still hang together. Keep in mind, I came back in September of 1951. And I got a spot promotion to captain. And of that group, three of us — four of us still hang together. Only three of us were Vietnam vets in this experience. Where two of us were both colonels, retired as colonels. The other fella retired as a major general. And we hang together very tight now. And the fourth person was one of those who went through all the previous units with us. But when he got to Las Vegas, he broke his — he went skiing and broke his leg. So we lost him. And he never got to our outfit in Korea. He went somewhere else. I don't remember where it was. But the four of us still hang together, and I think that's important. One thing I think is interesting because it's in the textbooks. We had a — at Tagoo we had a reservoir on the base on a slight hill. And one man's duty was to protect the water by adding disinfectant and so on to the water. And he went away on leave and no one replaced him. So everybody on a certain day on the whole base got sick. And as you know, from the Orient, you can really get sick very quickly over there. Because, we Caucasians are not — we don't have the same immune system. And many, many people — the wing went down out of combat readiness because of everybody on the base being so sick. And of course, I'm sure that when they found out what had happened — and I being only a lieutenant in those days didn't know — but somebody's head probably fell off, because you do not lose a wing for combat readiness because of that kind of an incident. But it actually did happen. And it's in the textbooks at _ college and other places.

VF: Bad water main.

WS: Bad water, yeah. Really bad. I remember being so sick myself, I didn't know which end was up. After they got wise to the fact that the 5th Air Force was keeping this repository of combat experience and not rotating it back through the Air Force — General Vandenberg was Chief of Staff of the Air Force in those days — and when he found that out, he really blew his cork. And there was a mass exodus of all of the experience out of there going back to all of the units in the States. Because at that time, we were starting to build up the air defense command. Keep in mind, we're talking about 1951. That was over 50 years ago. So eventually, that caught up with me. I was in Johnson Air Base in — outside of Tokyo. It was known to the Japanese as Aruma, the home of the baka bomb. The baka bomb was a piloted bomb, kamikaze-type operation. And I was — Summerly called forward and said, "Hey, you're going home very quickly. Go pack your bags. How about going tomorrow?" And that's what happened at that particular time. Okay let's take a trip. Let's take a break here a moment. (Whereupon, a break was taken.) We're not going to fly. Actually, the latrine overflowed and flowed down the isles. There were no seats. It was kind of buckets. And I did reach home. And the interesting thing is that my home was Los Angeles and I got orders to Long Beach Air Force Base for my next assignment. This isn't like I was not continuing my military career. So unlike many of my peers, I wasn't home and getting out of the service. I didn't want to. In fact, I went on to have a 32-year service period. And it seems to me that one of the things that needs to be said, is that there is

currently going around, for instance, a clip that says things like this, "It isn't the politician that wins the war, it's the soldier. It isn't the journalist who tells the story, it's the soldier," and so on. And this is repeated and repeated for all the various levels of commitment. That was my second war. I was still going to have one more in Vietnam. But at that time, of course, I did not know that. But, I think the one thing that's important to recognize for those who will be looking at this video, is that I wonder where we get men like we had in those days. Where do we get such men who go off to defend their country; who ask very little and receive very little, frankly? Without them, those who might be viewing this video might not have had the privilege to view it. And I'm very impressed that somebody would be interested in my meager contributions to the Korean War as a young lieutenant flying fighter planes. And I think it's quite significant that these conditions prevail so that those who are looking at this now have the freedom to do that. Otherwise, if we hadn't had the capability and wherewithal to go and defend ourselves in that great scrap — which later ended with the collapse of Communism — I think that probably people would not be looking at this film now. And I think that's about all I have to tell you

VF: Freedom isn't free.

WS: Freedom isn't free. Very well put.