RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH CARL BURNS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES OF WORLD WAR II

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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MANALAPAN, NEW JERSEY
OCTOBER 8, 2004

TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Mr. Carl Burns on October 8, 2004, in Manalapan, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

Sandra Stewart Holyoak: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. I would like to thank you for taking time to sit with us today and for welcoming us into your home here in Manalapan. To begin the interview, Mr. Burns, could you please tell us where and when you were born?

Carl Burns: How about April 16, 1942, St. Michael's Hospital, Newark, New Jersey.

SH: Could you tell us a little bit about your father? He had a very interesting name.

CB: Dad's name was William McKinley Burns and I don't know where the McKinley came from, whether it came from the President or what have you. I don't have a long family history of people being able to tell me. He was a good dad. He also was born in Newark, September 21, 1907.

SH: Was he the son of immigrant parents or had the family been here for a long time?

CB: He would be second-generation. There is a little bit of family history, which I think I show here [the pre-interview survey] as Scotch/Irish, and I think … his family came over in the 1850s, '60s, so, that's the best that I can determine. The Scotch/Irish thing is interesting to me. I kind of joke to people who are either Scotch or Irish that my family resolved this situation 150 years ago by two people getting married. [laughter] … His Aunt Mary actually was a Catholic seamstress for a Church of England minister and his wife in Dublin, Ireland, and a little bit of family history there, … the wife of the minister made sure she got the same education as her kids and made sure that she stuck to her religion, even though it was not hers.

SH: That is very interesting. When the family immigrated, do you know how many family members came over or where they settled?

CB: No, I have to guess New Jersey. I think, on my dad's side, that's pretty much where they stayed.

SH: As a young man, did you know your father's family?

CB: No. Both his mom and dad died at a fairly young age and Dad was raised by his sister, who was seventeen years older.

SH: Can you tell us what your dad did? What stories did he tell about his growing up in Newark and his education?

CB: Not very much, because, I think I checked education here [on the pre-interview survey] someplace, yes, he did a lot of things, until I came along, and then, he … went to work for the Fireman's Insurance Company, which, you may or may not know, sits on Park Place in Newark, right behind the Episcopal Church there. That's where he met my mom.

SH: Can you tell us then, please, about your mom, where she was from and a little of her family background?

CB: Gladys Dennerlein Burns. So, we always ignored the Dennerlein, because, as I think with Frank Kneller's family and other families, [they] didn't want to admit that they were German and this is World War I stuff, not World War II residue. She was also from Newark. She died in a nursing home in Piscataway and, yes, she was real German. So, she was the authoritarian in the family. Her dad came from somewhere around Berlin and her mom's background was Mainz, … which is kind of southeastern Germany, pretty close to France, which is where Gutenberg printed the Bible.

SH: Did they ever talk about how they came to this country? Were there any stories?

CB: No, again, it was, I think, their grandparents. Again, on her side, a whole bunch of German names, Shwing, Phennig. [laughter]

SH: You mentioned that she was very German in some of the traditions that she kept. Did she have family members here when you were growing up?

CB: Her mom and her dad and her sister.

SH: You knew them.

CB: Yes, Grandpa Dennerlein. … One year when I was in college, … I lived with him down in Ocean Grove, you know about Ocean Grove, where the Methodists only drank their liquor in the closet. [laughter] … I lived with him one summer and I guess I was seventeen then and I worked down there. So, he and I became very good buddies that year, eat all that good stuff, like doughnuts. [laughter] …

SH: On the pre-interview survey, you wrote that they were Republicans. Was it pretty rare to be a Republican in Newark?

CB: I really don't know where that came from, other than, I could think, from my mother's side, it was probably looking up to be something better than the rest of the neighborhood, but I can't [really say].

SH: What was the neighborhood that you grew up in like? What was the ethnic mix?

CB: I grew up in Irvington, until third grade, but that was about as far as, here, from the woods, to Newark, and it was mostly white, but you're bringing something out of my mind. I'll tell you about my first friends. One of my first friends, … I'm less than eight here, I guess, was Larry, the black boy who lived in a house behind a billboard and Larry taught me how to climb up the billboard, [laughter] the old wooden ones, and I never, until [my] older years, figured out that a large part of the neighborhood was Jewish, because we kind of bordered the Weequahic section of Newark. So, my second friend was Julie and Julie … taught me how to sell used comic books and I still have the wagon upstairs. … Other than that, it was fine. It was a fine neighborhood.

Everybody was kind of in the same position. I know my mom and dad got their first car when I was living there. …

SH: What did your dad do at the Fireman's Insurance Company?

CB: He was a mid-level administrator, if I can put it that way. I forget what the terms nowadays would be, … he wasn't an adjuster, but he worked with adjusters on the outside. He would come out [and] look at what happened to your house or what have you.

SH: You said that your mother and father met there.

CB: Well, I don't know what comptometer operator means, so, you may have to go back into an old dictionary. I think it was something like a sophisticated adding machine. Everything back there was, you know, "Chic-a-chic-a-chic."

SH: Did she continue to work for a while after they were married?

CB: Off and on. Hahne's Department Store is one I remember. She went back to work … when my sister went to college. For extra funds, she worked in a women's lingerie store, is that the right word? but … she was basically a mom.

SH: Did they talk at all about World War I? Did they have any recollections about the war?

CB: No, but, again, a family connection, my mother's brother, Milford, died in an accident. He had the family change their name from Dennerlein to Dennerlin, to supposedly mask the fact that they were German. So, that was residue from World War I.

SH: It was at his behest, then, that they changed the name.

CB: Right. I still know it's German. [laughter] …

SH: Did they ever talk about the Depression and how it affected them?

CB: Yes, but not much, because … neither my mom or dad were very wordy in what they talked about. I do know that [my] grandparents lost the house in the Vailsburg section of Newark because of that, so that kind of caused a whole bunch of problems, but, no, neither my mom or dad would talk. It was hard to draw them out, if I can put it in those terms.

SH: You have an older sibling.

CB: Yes.

SH: A sister, I believe.

CB: Claire is seven years older than me. …

SH: What would be a typical dinner conversation? What was the interest of the day?

CB: Well, first of all, we had to have dinner at exactly five o'clock, because that's when my father would come home. So, he couldn't even take his tie off, loosen his collar, … and, Sandy, I don't think there is anything unique here, but we did have dinner together and it was at five o'clock and it was, "How was your day?" or what have you and my dad would ask things, how was everybody else? and my mother would say, "I took care of everything before you got home." [laughter] It used to tick me off a little bit, because all the other guys in the neighborhood would eat dinner at six. I was out … [when I heard], "Carl!" except that I'm out here playing stickball. [laughter]

SH: You mentioned having the first car in the neighborhood. Did your father commute by car or did he commute by public transportation?

CB: No, it wasn't the first car in the neighborhood, it was our first car, the first car that I remembered. No, we took good, old PS, well, the Public Service bus, from, … whether it was Irvington or Kearny, … I guess we didn't get to Kearny yet. It's only five or six miles or something like that. So, he was a straphanger.

SI: You were born during the Second World War and grew up in the aftermath of that war. Do you think that World War II had any impact on your life, perhaps in the movies you watched and the stories you heard from the fathers of friends?

CB: Boy, here's something I didn't put down. When I was very young, I was known as "Blackout" Burns, because my mother had to feed me the bottle in the bathroom. … There were no lights, because there were blackouts and I do remember the, if wardens is not the right word, it's close enough for me, to make sure that the black shades were pulled down and what have you. Back in second grade, my mom and dad were very much involved in the PTA at Grove Street School and I saw the movie, and you guys may remember, with the three brothers on the ship. …

SI: *The Fighting Sullivans*?

CB: Could be, could have been, which pretty much changed the way people were assigned in the military ever since, not put siblings … in the same unit or what have you. My dad was too old to serve, whether that was lucky or unlucky, but he hit thirty-five by the time they wanted him and that was the cut off. I had toy plastic soldiers, I guess … every one of us had [them], back then. … I probably have, … you know, to fast forward, more personal, not personal, but recollections of the Korean Conflict, just because of the age that I was at that time. I mean, mostly, everything from World War II was just, except for these few things I mentioned, … what I heard afterwards. On Ruth Ann's side of the family, she had all of her uncles and her dad served in World War II and they had their own stories, … but that's my adult life, when I heard those. …

SH: Did your father and mother ever talk about how the war impacted their lives, as far as housing, their jobs or rationing?

CB: Certainly rationing. I don't remember any specifics. I told you about the blackout stuff. I don't know what jobs my dad had back then, but I know … he drove a laundry truck. I remember those things. He was a security guard at one point. So, I think employment was, pretty much, you went to what you could find. I can remember, back in those days, too, and I don't think [it has] anything to do with the war, but there were rag wagons, horse drawn wagons that came around and they were collecting rags for the military effort, old shirts or whatever, knife sharpeners. …

SH: When you would play in the neighborhood, what did you play? Were you playing at being soldiers? What was the game? You talked about stickball.

CB: Well, that would, again, be the next stage, I mean, in Irvington. Again, we moved to Kearny when I was eight. …

SH: That would be about second grade.

CB: Yes. I remember, … I guess we lived in a, you'd call it a four-plex, a four-family … house, and the neighbor next door, there's another name, was named Joey. They got the first television in the neighborhood, one of these round screen Philcos, [laughter] you know, went over and watched it, and I remember watching a baseball game on it. That's the first thing I remember [watching on TV]. It was probably the Yankees. That's probably why I'm a Yankee fan. [laughter]

SH: Why did you move from Irvington to Kearny?

CB: Sandy, I really don't know, except [that] a cousin of my mother's moved to a house, a two-family house, in Kearny and there was an apartment, what do I call them? a railroad flat, which means everything went front to back, like a railroad car, and there was a unit available and, for some reason, they decided to move and, again, it was only five minutes from downtown Newark. We were always kind of gravitated towards Newark, because of, well, my dad's job and [our] church membership. …

SI: Which church did you go to?

CB: Second Presbyterian Church, Washington Street in Newark, down by the library and the museum. … Everybody who went there did not come from Newark. A very famous minister, before my time, Reverend [Lester Harrison] Clee, who, if he was alive nowadays, he would have one of these crystal cathedrals or what have you, and that's where, I mentioned, Ray Mortensen's dad was the sextant there. I don't think I ever met Ray, but, obviously, when I saw your interview, I remembered. If you want me to keep on talking about the church, I can.

SH: Sure.

CB: I lived there, not like an orphanage, [laughter] but I mean I was there a lot, particularly as a teenager. I went to Sunday school and [more] Sunday school and, when we weren't around,

we're down at Grandpa's in Ocean Grove. I went to the Methodist Church in Ocean Grove and … got my little card signed, so [that] I could get perfect attendance, [laughter] and then, I went to the church service and all of us teenagers sat up in the balcony in one place and we always came in a couple of minutes late and the minister's name was Reverend Erhardt, I believe, and he'd … always pays us homage. "Glad you guys could make it. Good to see you again," because it was kind of a social event, … and then, we went to Sunday night youth group. We got back together again, and then, I remember, maybe once or twice during the summer, when we'd get done with … still going to Sunday school, as a teenager, sixteen, seventeen, it would be a day like today, but in June or July, when the weather's nice. We'd go up to our parents and say, "Can we skip church, go down to the shore?" and, once in a while, they'd say yes. [laughter] A large part of my life, a big, old church, beautiful; right now, I think it's closed or somebody's going to buy it, because of the redevelopment, but [I] used to climb the bell tower, which we weren't supposed to do. [laughter] [It] had a big gymnasium, so, we [had] basketball games and what have you up there. That part of my life, it was a very large part of my life, so, enough church. [laughter]

SH: When you made the move to Kearny, was it hard on you? Were you looking forward to the third grade? Did you care?

CB: … I really didn't know. It was bigger on my sister, Claire, who was seven years older. I remember, we commuted from Kearny to Newark to Irvington to complete the school year, because it was not the end of the school year, but, you know, [when] you're young kids, you make friends pretty quick, because, again, you go out in the street. Stickball was a big game. We used to play it both ways, bouncing it off the street and playing against the wall. Playing against the wall was probably the most popular. …

SH: Did you have after school chores?

CB: Chores, a-ha, take the garbage out. I still do that. Isn't that interesting? That's good training. Emptying out the coal ashes from the furnace; I did do windows, the old-fashioned way, where you hung your butt out the window. That's the way you did it, two stories up, and I'm sure Mom had me doing other things.

SH: What was your relationship with your sister like, since she was seven years older? Did you try to muscle in on her group of friends or were you quite content to have your own friends?

CB: … I think if I did, Sandy, she probably was pretty firm in telling me up front to get the heck out of the way, particularly when, again, here, I'm eight and she's fifteen, so, … she brings the guy home from high school to sit on the front steps. She certainly didn't want me hanging around. …

SH: You minded her.

CB: Yes, kind of. No, we really didn't have any sibling rivalries, because we were so far apart.

SI: Did you partake in any other activities in Newark? Did you go to Bears games or anything else downtown?

CB: No, the Bears were gone by then.

SI: Really?

CB: Yes. Let me think; it was pretty much all church related. [If] you're talking about other jobs, the church had two bowling lanes down in the basement. I was a pin boy, the old-fashioned way. [Mr. Burns pretends to manually arrange a set of bowling pins.] … It's amazing how many of us, people my age, were pin boys, one place or another. In the big public bowling alleys, it was an African-American job, but, for churches and golf courses, it was kids of family members or what have you. …

SH: Did you get an allowance?

CB: Did I get an allowance? Even in high school, I got two dollars a week, so, the rest of it, I had to earn. So, two dollars a week would let me take my girlfriend to the movie and that was about it.

SH: The movie was the extra activity. Did you go to any sporting events?

CB: No, not a lot of things in Newark, but with some of my dad's friends at work, I remember, one guy, his name was Jimmy Clooney and he didn't have any kids, so, I remember, [if] he got tickets for something, I went along to see, like the NIT games in … the old Madison Square Garden. I did see [the] football Giants play in Yankee Stadium, saw the Brooklyn Dodgers play at Roosevelt Field in Jersey City, which most people don't think ever happened, but it did. That was the year before they moved. So, they played one game against every National League team at Roosevelt Field. Again, that's five miles from my house.

SH: How did you view academics? Were you an enthusiastic student?

CB: Which stage of my life?

SH: Let us just start from the third grade.

CB: I was actually pretty good, right through eighth grade, because it was probably easy. In fact, in eighth grade, I was promoted a half a semester, along with four females, Sandy, because the school was too full. In Kearny, we're still on half [years]. I graduated in January of 1960, so, … Kearny was the last school system to have this dual thing, and then, in high school, I started falling behind. … I found some subjects too challenging and there was too many other things going on, sports, girls, staying away from Mom, you know, whatever teenagers do. I'm still convinced the main reason I was admitted to Rutgers was because I was the editor of the school newspaper and of the yearbook. …

SH: Can you tell us about the extracurricular activities that you were involved with from junior high on?

CB: Choir, intramurals. I guess, up through freshman year, I was good enough to play basketball and football, and then, I kept on breaking bones and doing other things. So, my mom didn't even know that I was playing freshman football for a while. … Dad was the only one that would sign and, boy, did he get his butt chewed. [laughter] I remember … breaking my arm in one game and my parents were not there, I don't know why, at that point, because she knew, and [they] came to the hospital, and so, not only did they have me wrapped up, but I'm still in my football pants, underneath the sheets, and my mom comes up and puts her hand on my leg, right at the knee, and she says, "My God, he broke a leg, too." [laughter] Let's see, what else in high school? German Club, a whole bunch of journalism things, when I stopped playing the sports, because, quite frankly, I wasn't good enough at that level, even though we had lousy teams. I became an announcer … at the football games. I was a stringer, another Frank Kneller connection, for the *Star-Ledger* and the *Newark Evening News.* So, I would call in the scores and write stories and what have you and I could probably tell you forty things I did as jobs, to make money, that won't do me any good on my resume nowadays. …

SH: Please, tell us.

CB: Well, I told you, I sold newspapers, no, not newspapers, … used comic books and, in that neighborhood, when I moved to Kearny, again, I used to collect newspapers and metal junk and take my wagon down to the town dump and sell these things for thirty-five cents, whatever, whatever the cost was. I was a bagger in a Shoprite Supermarket in Kearny, where, if you were lucky and you carried the bag out to the old lady, she'd give you a quarter tip and put it in her car, worked in a drugstore. I told you about the stringer stuff. The rest of it, a lot of things I did in college, but we can get to that later. …

SI: How did your parents feel about your education? Were they encouraging you to look forward to college?

CB: Very much so. My sister was the first family member to go to college. She went to what was then Jersey City State, which is now New Jersey State University, and commuted. Very much, not only supportive, but, when I brought home my C-pluses from school, I certainly paid for it and … that's something that stayed with me, in terms of raising my children. … As I told my kids, and this basically came from my parents, "There's two things I can give you in life. One is to make sure you get the best education that you deserve," and deserve was part of that, "and second was to shape your values and anything else you get is God's gift or luck and you go get it." So, yes, that was a very strong message that I had growing up.

SH: Did you have heroes as a young man that you tried to emulate?

CB: Sandy, I don't think I ever had a hero. I mean, I played dress up as cowboys, a cowboy. I told you about all the time I spent at church and how much that influenced my life, but I wouldn't category anybody as a hero. [It] may be something that was missing in my life, I don't know, don't know why. I never had a mentor, either, nobody that I would call a mentor.

SH: In your high school, was there someone who encouraged you to go to college, perhaps Rutgers or another institution?

CB: Very little counseling. If you're trying to get [an answer to], "How did I get to Rutgers?" I applied to Montclair State, Rutgers-Newark and Rutgers-New Brunswick and Rutgers-New Brunswick, I keep on telling people, it was a financial challenge for the family and, honestly, for me, it was somewhat of an academic challenge. So, I said I was doubly challenged and, again, that's why I did, … on the financial side, so many odd jobs at Rutgers, … to get through.

SH: What was your job the summer before you went to Rutgers?

CB: I remember, now, … this is going to be February through August, because I graduated in January and I worked at the Fireman's Insurance Company. … I don't know what the definition would be, but I was an IBM punch hole card sorter. This is [in] the days before computers, where you had the punch cards and run them through a sorting machine for, you know, whatever they told me was … whatever the sequence was going to be, whether you're going to do, I don't know, shareholders by birth date or by zip code; I guess we had zip codes back there. I don't even know. We didn't have; jeez, you're making me remember, our phone number began with (Wyman?). They weren't numbers either, that's the first [part]; … I put in seven, instead of, what did we put in? eleven. [laughter]

SH: Did your family take vacations together?

CB: Yes. Now, how far back do you want me to think here? Well, we always went to Ocean Grove, because Grandma and Grandpop had … the house down there. I went to, where do I remember? Niagara Falls, Fort Lauderdale. Again, me and my grandfather were roommates. We ended up being roommates a lot of times when I was a kid, [laughter] Cape Cod, … and I'm sure there are other places. … Yes, I always went away. Even though there wasn't a lot of money, there was always enough to take a week and go someplace. …

SI: Before we go into Rutgers, throughout your elementary and high school years, when I think of those times, I think about nuclear air raid drills and Cold War stuff. Do you remember any of the drills, having to watch movies or sit in bomb shelters?

CB: Probably, Shaun, but I can't pull anything out of the back of my mind. Yes, I'm sure there were drills and things that you had to do. Again, as I said, I remembered the light wardens, whatever the heck their name was, coming down the street and making people turn their lights off and what have you, but there were bomb shelters, here we go, in the schools, in the basements, and so, now, I do remember that. There may even been one in the church, but I can't think of where it might have been in there.

SH: I think they were called Civil Defense drills.

CB: Yes, right. I'm going to guess [that] they were yellow signs that pointed the way to it, … yellow with black on it.

SI: Was the Cold War something that was on your mind?

CB: No, I was too young. I mean, it was just a …

SI: … Even through your teenage years

CB: At that point, there would have been …

SI: Did you follow any events?

CB: At that point, it probably would have been over, right? … Well, you're [Sandra] shaking your head no. They were still around, but they probably have thirty-year-old canned goods and the same stuff we ate in the Army in Vietnam. …

SH: It comes out of the Korean War. There were SAC airbases and missile silos.

CB: Right, yes. …

SI: Was the Cold War on your mind at all?

SH: Was it called that?

CB: Well, sure, I mean, you couldn't …

SH: What about your *Weekly Reader* and things like that?

CB: Yes, out by what's now the shopping center out there in Piscataway, which used to be Hadley Field, which was an airport, there was a missile base and, now, I remember missile bases being all over the place. There was a military, again, because of my parents, all the frequent trips from Kearny to Ocean Grove and my dad would always go a different way, you know, the Earle Ammunition Dump [Naval Weapons Station Earle], and then, there's Camp Evans, which is in the papers now, where they have to clean it up. Actually, Camp Evans probably did a lot of radio frequency work and things like that, Marconi related things or what have you. … It was there, Shaun, but neither then nor now did it make a major impact, I guess, is what I'm telling you.

SH: Did you have an interest in history even in junior high and high school?

CB: Yes, probably because it was one subject I did well in. My career paths which I never pursued, I very much thought of becoming a minister. When I got to Rutgers, I kind of changed my mind. [laughter] [I] always enjoyed history. I was going to become a teacher, and then, the whole Vietnam thing came into play, so, that kind of changed everybody's, not everybody's, but, yes, probably everybody's, most everybody's direction in life, and then, [when] I got back from Vietnam, I said, you know, the reality was, "Gee, I've got to start making some money and get a job," and, for some strange reason, I decided to go into the financial industry.

SH: As a young student in high school, who was the first President that you remember?

CB: You mean from high school training?

SH: Well, as a young boy.

CB: Oh, growing up, well, Harry S. Truman, because he fired MacArthur.

SH: You remember that.

CB: Yes, seeing him on television, I think. I can't say that. For some reason, I remember being let out of school early one day, during that Korean [War] era.

SH: Was it for the tickertape parade, perhaps?

CB: It could have been, yes. I remember, people had two signs in their windows, one was for, "I have a son in Korea," but I forget what that meant and the other was the Dugan's sign, the Dugan's truck, … it's the Entenmann's of the '50s, who would deliver stuff. It was probably the parade, and then, really, nothing. … I remember, Eisenhower was accused of playing too much golf, but that was probably okay. Maybe Bill Clinton should have played more golf. [laughter] We still in [the] military here, a little bit? Yes, then, really nothing until I got to Rutgers and found out we were a land-grant college and I didn't know what that meant, and then, I found out part of the process was, "Go pick up your ROTC uniform, with these black shoes that you're going to have to spit polish." … So, that was, you know, the next awakening, and then, Vietnam wasn't even a big thing, either, until, where am I now? '62, when, you know, I pretty much figured, "I'm going to go, one way or another, so, I'd better pick my own way to go." …

SH: There were no discussions in your family about Nixon's Presidency. Sorry, not his Presidency; he would have been Vice-President, under Eisenhower.

CB: … Right. For one reason or another, my parents were Republicans, so, there wasn't any discussion. I do kind of remember, you'll know better than me, when they wanted to move the Speaker of the House ahead of Nixon, the pecking order, because he wasn't qualified. I don't remember the details, but I do remember that as a big issue.

SI: You entered Rutgers at the same time the Kennedy Administration took office.

CB: Right.

SI: I am going to ask you to confirm or dispel common notions about the era. When Kennedy became President, was it like the dawn of a new era? Was there a lot of optimism that you remember? Did you feel that optimism, the changing of the guard?

CB: No, personally, no; when you get to talk to Ruth Ann, yes.

SH: Was there any discussion in Kearny about the fact that he was a Catholic running for President?

CB: Well, at this point, where am I? my parents moved back to Newark. In the fraternity house, which would be my closest connection, we probably only had [no] more than one or two Catholics until 1960 anyway, so, it was a very Protestant organization. So, it didn't bother me, one way or the other, but, you know, you always heard the talk going around, how he's going to report to the Pope and what have you. … You know, I guess I was apolitical at that point in my life and I still pretty much; I shouldn't say I'm apolitical, but I'm open-minded on who I vote for, and so, you can't classify me as either Republican or Democratic.

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CB: I'm trying to think whether it was with my peer group. I guess there were some pretty strong opinions, but I don't remember. I do remember exactly where I was when Kennedy was assassinated. I was doing a pre-flight check on a [plane]. I was in a ROTC flight program. I was doing a pre-flight check on the airplane … with my flight instructor and I just turned the radio on and it just said the President had been shot. "Wonderful, now, I've got to go fly." We were actually so civilized at times back there, we went to the Dean of Student Affairs and said that, "Gee, we've got this party scheduled for," I don't know, whatever night it was, "should we still do it?" or what have you, "and we don't think we should," and so, what we had was, I don't know what you want to call it, a mourning with the girls, … the girlfriends and all, from Douglass. I mean, we just kind of [gathered], no beer, no nothing, no band. We just kind of hung around, because everybody wanted to hang around. …

SH: To back up a bit, can we talk about your senior year and your decision to go to college? You spoke about making an application. Can you talk about coming to Rutgers and what you saw?

SI: What were your first days like?

SH: Do you remember any initiations or hazing? When did you decide to join the fraternity?

CB: Arriving at Rutgers. I lived on the third floor of Frelinghuysen, facing George Street. I could probably pick the room out if I drove by.

SH: Who was your roommate?

CB: Bob (Knox?). Bob Knox came from Verona and Bob's mother had just had a brain operation, so, that was a big impact on his life and his adjustment. Bob and I still e-mail each other and what have you, but … you're kind of overwhelmed. I mean, it was great to be away from home, but here you are and we had to eat the terrible food over at, I guess the building is still there, across from Frelinghuysen. It used to be an old steel building, with the big smokestack. …

SH: It is called Records Hall now, I think.

CB: Is that what it's called? [laughter] Yes, so, you had to go stand in line. The first message, I forget whether it was a gathering of [freshman], probably during freshman orientation, and I don't know how many of us there would have been at that time, and we got the old message, "Look to the guy on your left, look at the guy on your right. Two of you will be gone by the end of the semester," … or the year. "Well, that's wonderful news," [laughter] and we were the first class to fool them. It was a housing shortage; some things don't change. So, they had to get rid of us. We were the first ones, there were only one out of three [that] didn't make the cut and maybe it wasn't one out of three, two out of three, but that's close enough. So, actually, there really was a housing shortage. … You mentioned hazing. Fraternities get such a bad reputation for hazing, but, as first semester freshmen, we were hazed by everybody else. I've got a poster, not a poster, … it's down in the room wherever we meet for the World War II thing [the Crossed-Keys Room of the Rutgers Club], too, from back from 1915 or something like that. … You had to wear our ties, we had to wear our dinks. They would tie your ties together.

SI: You still had to do that.

CB: Yes, in 19[60].

SH: Did the sophomores do this to you?

CB: Basically, yes, basically, basically the sophomores. When we had to pass places like Zeta Psi, you'd have to go sing, "On the Banks of the Old Raritan," and make sure you knew all the [words], do push-ups on the street, if you didn't know what [they were] or what have you. There was actually some competitions between the sophomore class and the freshman class. Of course, the sophomores really didn't care, so, the freshmen outnumbered them and [I remember] pushing the big ball around the field or something like that. You know, nothing you couldn't handle and kind of fun, in the spirit of things.

SH: Did you attend the football games? Did you get right into the activities that were offered? How often did you go home?

CB: Yes, we all pretty much went to football games, sport jacket and ties. It's probably Section 102 now or something like that, is where they put all the students. At least I did; I went to pretty much all the sporting events, got involved in, I don't know, ROTC was one thing. That took a lot of time and, again, … all of us were in it. Every Wednesday, I think it was Wednesdays, one o'clock, we would run … down College Avenue to the back of the Barn [the College Avenue Gym] and form up, and then, with the flags and the (what?) formations and rifles, sometimes rifles, and march down to Buccleuch Park and do our military stuff. … Adjustment really wasn't hard. It was just a different environment. Same as it is nowadays, you find your own little group, no matter what it is, or groups, as it may be. …

SH: Did you think that you would join the fraternity or was that a surprise?

CB: Okay, back then, there was no Student Center. What we had was the Ledge. Is it still called the Ledge, in-between Frelinghuysen and Hardenbergh on George Street?

SI: Deiner Park now.

CB: Well, no, that's that little one-story building there [the Student Activities Center]. So, they would try to arrange stuff for us and I said, "There's got to be something better than this." Back then, again, fraternities probably represented, not probably, I know they represented more than fifty percent of the male student population. So, if you wanted any social life …

SH: Rutgers was still all-male at that point, correct?

CB: Yes. I'm not so sure when it went [co-ed]

SH: 1972.

CB: Was it? Okay, so, that was … where you had to go look and I fell in love with the six pillars at the house at the end of College Avenue.

SH: To go back to the ROTC, you spoke about doing the Air Corps end of it. How was it set up?

SI: Did you have a choice?

CB: … No, first two years, there was no choice, so, every one of us are in, tall, short, fat, skinny, athletic, non-athletic, I mean, you were in. That was part of the land grant situation, I believe, and then, junior year, it became optional. I stayed in for a couple or three reasons. Number one, I think it paid us thirty-five dollars a month. [laughter] Number two, at that point, I had figured that Vietnam, … it was an invitation just waiting to come in the mail. "So, if I'm going to go," and I thought that's what the odds were, "I'm going to go as an officer. I'm not going to go as an enlisted man," not that there's anything wrong with being an enlisted man, but you want more control of your life. I got into the flight program, Sandra, for a number of reasons. After going to ROTC summer camp at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, I decided I didn't want to be an infantryman and I also had this what I would describe as somewhat of a fear of flying. So, I figured this was something that I wanted to see if I could conquer. I also had, we were talking about grades before, a problem with attention in school and academic things. I said, "Well, this is something; I've got to see if I can conquer that and what better way than to put your life in your own hands and other people's hands." So, I don't regret any of that. Probably, in the fraternity, probably three-quarters of the guys in my class were still in ROTC. Probably, two years later, there was nobody. I mean, that's how fast attitudes and what have you changed.

SH: The first two years were mandatory. In the third year, three-quarters of your classmates …

CB: My fraternity, yes.

SH: … Are still staying in.

CB: Right.

SH: What about your senior year?

CB: The guys that were still in junior year stayed the senior year.

SH: They did stay.

CB: Right.

SH: You were referring to the next two classes.

CB: Correct, and the guys that weren't, even in the classes before or after, you know, got themselves into graduate school, got themselves married, I'm not so sure about that, or they had children. I forget what the exemptions were, married with children and graduate school, … probably, and then, … most everybody ended up going anyway, at some point.

SH: When did you make up your mind about what your major would be?

CB: I think we had to … declare our sophomore year. Again, rules were a lot different back then and, again, history was always something I was interested in, so, it was a choice between history and political science. So, I don't think we had minors back then, but the political science was probably, in terms of nowadays, would have been a minor.

SH: Who was your favorite professor?

CB: You see it here [on the survey]. You know … part of this story, Dr. Sidney Ratner.

SH: Why was Dr. Ratner your favorite?

CB: Because I got good grades. [laughter] He taught, what? American economic history and I forget what the other course I took from him [was], it was similar, and it was down at that first floor room on the left in Bishop House, which I still think there were French doors there back then, but I could be wrong. Dr. Ratner, he lectured from his book. So, you had a choice of either reading the book or going to class [laughter] and Dr. Ratner couldn't see [too well]. He could see you, but he couldn't see the door.

SI: He could only see about six feet away.

CB: Right. So, he would always take attendance. So, the first five minutes was attendance, and then, particularly on days like this, us smart guys who sat in the back row went out the doors by the time class [ended] … and he had good things to say. His books were good, but, you know, he couldn't see. I said, "What am I sitting here for? Let's go play touch football," or something. So, we'd go home and read the book. However, if I had listened to him closely, American economic history, the one course was based around canals and railroads and, if I had really listened to him, I would have bought a whole bunch of real estate around exit ramps on Route 80

and Route 78, [laughter] because that's where it all [happened], wherever the cities grow up, where the canals end up, where the rivers converged. [laughter] …

SH: What did you do during the summer? Did it revolve around your ROTC program or did you have a summer job?

CB: Two summers, I worked for, let me fast-forward this one, one summer, I worked at Otis Elevator in Harrison, New Jersey. They used to hire kids during the summer to do inventory and things like that. One summer, which would have been my sophomore summer in college; I also worked at Otis, one time, in high school, but I forget what year. That's the summer I moved in with my granddad down in Ocean Grove and I worked in an Acme as a checkout person, back when the checkout job was hard, because you really had to look and punch things in and the ladies would stand there, [laughter] make sure you didn't punch the wrong number in. Junior year was ROTC summer camp, which was six weeks.

SI: Can you tell us about that? What was it like?

CB: ROTC summer camp? It's essentially a boot camp, you know, so, it's really not much different than somebody being drafted, back then, or enlisting right now, except [that] we were officer potential, officer candidates. Yes, I could tell you, got my hair cut, kind of looked like yours right now, maybe even a little bit shorter. [laughter]

SH: Was that pretty different from what the rest of the kids were wearing on campus?

CB: Yes, well, you know, it grew back by the time the six weeks were over, but, you know, it was the … same old stuff. I think I wrote something there.

SI: Was it physically intense?

CB: Yes, yes, and, again, they would call it hazing nowadays, if we did it at Rutgers. … Our sergeant was Sergeant Brown. He told us he was the meanest … in the world and, "I'm going to turn you ladies into men after this six weeks is over." [laughter] … For his own reason, we had the furthest barracks from the parade ground and, every Saturday, again, it was, you know, march in formation down the hill and what have you and he said, "That's for a purpose, ladies," and, you know, you did all the [routine], up at five in the morning and go out and do your running and do pull-ups before you could eat meals and clean your own latrines and all good basic stuff, stuff that makes you a good husband. [laughter] Yes, it was pretty intense, but, again, you know, like the fraternity, one of the things that the military does to you or for you is, you do bond. In this case, you're bonding as, like, a pledge class in a fraternity or, you know, grunts in the military. … So, you gripe about the Sergeant together, … all thirty of you or what have you. "We're going to beat that platoon next door." …

SI: Were all of the Rutgers men kept together?

CB: No, no. We were very much separated, I shouldn't say separated, but dispersed.

SI: You met people from all over.

CB: Yes. That's another military discussion there. You want to take a short break?

SH: Sure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SH: During the break, we discussed the training that you received in the ROTC at Rutgers. How well prepared were you? Did that prepare you for summer camp and your further training?

CB: There was … very little overlap between what we went through at summer camp and what our training was in ROTC, on campus. I mean, we did do field drills up at the Heights, back where the president's house is and what have you. Most of it was academic. In fact, … in junior and senior year, the required courses were, we had to take something outside of a military program, so, it had to be in liberal arts or something like that. So, it kind of served two purposes and there was a list of things we could take and, I don't know, maybe Sidney Ratner's class was one of them that I took. I can't remember what they were. So, it was pretty much to make you a well-rounded, disciplined person, I guess [that] is what you learned on campus, and, when you got to summer camp, it was to make you a member of a disciplined team, which I think going into the military is basically about. I don't want to say that, you know, it's not in terms that you were nothing, but it's essentially, "You're nothing without your platoon mates," or your squad or what have you and to work together as a team. So, that was a very strong influence on my life.

SH: You also spoke off tape about the Scarlet Rifles and the competition that you had with the Air Force ROTC.

CB: … The Queens Guard was heads and tails above everybody else and we could never, never come close to them.

SH: The Queens Guard being the Air Force.

CB: The Air Force, right. I mean, they were awesome. So, I forget when I dropped out of the Scarlet Rifles; I guess when I figured that, like the football team, it's going to be one and eleven or something. [laughter]

SH: Did you march at the football games?

CB: No, no, I never got that far. … I know I never got to the first unit, … I forget what we called them back then, but, again, it was interesting, very much disciplined and skillful, very skillful.

SI: When did you become aware of Army Aviation? Did you find out about it and apply or did somebody come and give a talk?

CB: It was an option in the ROTC program and I didn't opt for it until after summer camp at Fort Devens. You know, my number, Shaun, could be wrong, but I would guess there was probably twelve, fifteen of us that opted to go into the program. I mean, hey, you get your private pilot's license, you'll do something that was kind of exciting and, in my case, overcome some, fears is probably too strong a word, doubts [about] whether I really wanted to do it. First time I was ever up in an airplane, you heard this one, it was [with] (Ned Harold?), who died in Vietnam, went through the Air Force flight training ROTC and invited our housemother. He wanted to take her up and they needed two other guys, (Buddy Green?) and myself, with five bucks in our pockets, so [that] we could afford to rent the airplane. I went, "Oh, my God, what am I doing up here?" That was good training, too, took a lot of time, you know. It's forty-five minutes to get to the airport and forty-five minutes back and I actually went through, I still have some vision problems, occasionally, but I would go snow-blind. So, flying during the [winter], even with glasses on, I looked down. … I did most of my hours and … put this one on fast speed, probably in May, the month I graduated, because I couldn't fly during the winter. I'd walk into Scott Hall during the winter and walk in the door and I couldn't see, because my eyes just wouldn't adjust … from light to dark, right.

SI: What kind of plane did you train on?

CB: Oh, boy, I'm probably going to have to get back to you on that. We trained on two; … one was a Piper Cub. No, the first one was an Aeronca Champion, which was an old tail-wheeler, and you really … had to know what the heck you were doing with that thing, because it was not student friendly, if I can put it in those terms. [laughter] …

SI: It was difficult to taxi and get up.

CB: Yes, right. … The three-wheelers were a heck of a lot easier, as opposed to the two-wheeler, with the little tail wheel back there. … The instructors would say, "If you can't learn to fly this, you don't deserve to be pilots." …

SI: Do you think that learning to fly on the tail-down plane helped you later on in your flight training? Was it an advantage?

CB: I don't know. We can get to helicopters later and there's a similar story. All I can tell you is that the biggest pucker factor in your life is when your trainer says, "I'm getting out." You're going up all by yourself and he thought you were really good at that point, but, then, there's nobody yelling in your ear, "Watch your altitude, watch your," and there's nobody but [you]. [laughter] Then, he said, "Now, you've got to come back down, put this on the ground." I mean, getting it off was not a big problem, flying around up there is not a big problem, but getting this little thing down is. [laughter]

SH: Before we leave Rutgers, I would like to go back and talk about your joining Zeta Psi and some of the roles that you filled within the fraternity in the four years that you were at Rutgers.

CB: Again, we go back, it started, you know, one of the reasons was social issues, a place to be able to party, if I can put it that way. I rushed half a dozen fraternities, Chi Psi, Phi Gam, can't

think of the names of the others, just kind of became very comfortable with the brothers that were there that were doing the rush. I told you, I was impressed by the six pillars on the house. It was something far more than I ever experienced, pretty much sought leadership positions from the beginning. We could only rush second semester freshman year back then. They can only do that now, which was another bone of contention I have with the school, about right of association, but another day. I was pledgemaster in my sophomore year, which means I was in charge of harassing the new guys and, you know, getting them into shape and learning about the history of the place or what have you. Then, I went through, you know, recording secretary positions, vice-president, and then, my senior year, I was president and, as I tell my young presidents now, one of the best leadership training things, one of two leadership training things, the best in my life, … one was being president of a bunch of sixty guys who didn't want to listen to what you wanted to say and that's tough and it's a great experience and, you know, I will still say that out of classroom experiences at Rutgers were as important or more important than in class and that was probably the most important of my experience there.

SH: You were involved in the Inter-Fraternity Council.

CB: Yes. Part of that came because, if you were a president, you were part of it. I also edited, we had a newsletter back then, so, I was an editor of the newsletter, again, quite influential back then, as I don't believe it is anymore. I also washed dishes at the fraternity house. I waited tables.

SH: Is that how you covered the financial aspects?

CB: Back then, if you were president, you got free room and board. So, there was some payback, and so, for the times before and after I was president, I would wash dishes, wait tables, do a whole bunch of odd jobs around campus.

SH: You talked about having a housemother. Was it the same woman through all four years that you were there?

CB: Yes, yes, Mrs. Badgely, who was a tough old lady, but the housemothers would all get together on Wednesday afternoon and have what they would call their teas, but they weren't drinking tea. [laughter] … It was very much more formal and she would be at dinner every night, so, dinners were pretty [formal]. Well, we had china, white china, you know, nothing very expensive or what have you, real coffee cups and tablecloths and waiters would wear jackets.

SH: What did you wear to dinner?

CB: Tie and a jacket and long pants, until April 15th, and then, the guys were allowed to wear Bermudas or whatever. Yes, dinner was very much of an event.

SH: What were the social highlights of the fraternity house?

CB: Parties.

SH: Were there formal parties?

CB: Well, the school was a lot more formal back then. There was Military Ball Weekend, there was the Soph Hop and Junior Prom, I guess they called them. We would have more formal events at the fraternity, when we had dates there and there'd be red candles on the table and what have you, and then, we'd go party afterwards. … There were a lot of structured events and, with hindsight, what I'm trying to tell the young guys today is, we didn't realize it back then, but the reason we had so many structured events was that the place got cleaned up and we all acted like gentlemen at least twice a month.

SH: What about your interaction with the University administration? How closely monitored were the fraternities?

CB: I'm not so sure I want this in, both less and more monitored than today. I think we had good relationships with [the administration]. Again, it's a much smaller place, Sandra and Shaun. We were basically College Avenue, with a few people up at Busch in some expanded dormitories and we were all-male, although we did interact very much with the Douglass women. I think it was a lot more open, a lot fewer detailed regulations and a lot more interaction, although, when we got in trouble, we got in trouble. We paid for it.

SH: Who was the President and the Dean of Men at that time?

CB: … Mason Gross. What's the name of the show?

SI: The Old Gold quiz show? [Mason Gross appeared as the host of *Think Fast* (1949-50 on ABC) and as a judge on *Two For the Money* (1952-53 on NBC; 1953-57 on CBS, sponsored by Old Gold Cigarettes).]

CB: It was whatever, a quiz show; he was the answer man. Mason was wonderful. Howard Crosby was dean. He's got the plaque someplace at the Rutgers Club and the Dean of Fraternities, because there were no sororities, I think was Dean (Daubins?), another guy who was very approachable. That's an important word, which I don't think exists today in the environment, maybe because the University is so large or what have you, but everybody was approachable and I don't think they were any less strict, but it was more personal. I mean, the interaction wasn't things like, "Hey, you're a fraternity, you're bad." It was, "Hey, one of your members did something bad, let's deal with it." It's a big change in life.

SH: What about Kirkpatrick Chapel? Was there still mandatory chapel?

CB: No.

SH: Were there gatherings and convocations?

CB: No, that was not mandatory. You do know the Kirkpatrick Family donated the money and two of their sons were Zeta Psis. Maybe you don't know that. …

SI: Were you as interested in the history of your fraternity then as you are now?

CB: No way, no way. [laughter] We were, you know, taught all the old stuff and we did know that, well, then, we were the second longest active fraternity. Delta Phi was the longest on campus and, since they are no longer there, … we're now proud to be the survivors, also being the longest active social organization at Rutgers College, [laughter] which is amazing.

SH: The interaction between Douglass and Rutgers College, what were some of the events that you remember?

CB: Events or interaction? Okay, unless you wanted to date a townie, the only other place to find a girl to date was Douglass and we did both. We always made sure that we had a fraternity brother who came out of St. Peter's High School or something, so [that] we had connections [laughter] … with the high school girls. Be careful here; the girls were snooty and I guess that ninety percent of the good looking girls go someplace and the other ten percent go to Douglass, but, cut that one out, … that's not true, [laughter] because I married [one]. As you know, I married Ruth Ann, who came from [Douglass]. You just had to look, look very hard. I think it was pretty good and there was a lot of interaction. Even [though there were] two separate campuses or what have you, classes … tended, at least in your upper years, to be co-ed. I mean, you could go back and forth. …

SH: You talked about making the decision to go into flight training, rather than the infantry, and you were making that decision based on many things, I am sure. Were there any protests or discussions about Vietnam? Were there those who were opposed to what was going on in Vietnam or the nuclear armament build up?

CB: I think, Sandra, I was in a two-year time warp, if I can use that phrase, and, probably, every two years, it changed dramatically. Of course, we had discussions, you know. We had a lot of guys who decided that they didn't want to do it, they were going to avoid it and go to graduate school or do this or do that, but nothing was [too one-sided]. At that point, it was just a personal choice. Whether it was philosophical or not, I don't know, whether it was, "I don't want to expose myself to a combat situation;" I'm sure it was both of those. While I was in Vietnam, it certainly turned the other way and Ruth Ann was back home, so, she was putting up with having me there and the demonstrations and the famous professor, whose name I will never remember, because I don't want to remember, … well, you know, which gets me to fast-forward [to] some of my F words back here. I was more concerned about family, … and that includes Ruth Ann and my parents, and what was going on back here than I was about my own situation. …

SH: When you were coming out of Rutgers, everybody knew their number was going to come up, so, they were making decisions to go one way or another.

CB: Correct, yes.

SH: However, there was no thought of either avoiding it all together by going to Canada or being actively opposed to it.

CB: There probably was on campus, but, … certainly, at that point, it wasn't the group that I was associating myself with. You know, within the people I knew, at that point, it pretty much came, you know, [to] a few close … fraternity brothers, a few close friends elsewhere around the campus and the people that were involved in ROTC. So, you know, maybe I was insulated or isolated from some other stuff that was going on, but, to the best of my knowledge, … and I'm sure there were some places and there were probably protests and what have you, but I certainly didn't go near them or what have you. It certainly was not the situation that developed into '67 and '68 and what have you.

SH: When did you first meet Ruth Ann?

CB: There's a very good short article in one of the *Rutgers Alumni Magazines*. Do you have that? You do.

SH: For the tape, please.

CB: … That's the Douglass-Rutgers connection and, as the young guys do nowadays who sit on the front steps of 18 College Avenue and watch all the young ladies drive by, the Douglass busses used to drop off the Douglass girls to go to journalism class at Van Nest Hall. …

SH: Right across College Avenue.

CB: Right across. I think in her article she wrote she said Winants, but … it was Van Nest Hall and, second semester of my senior year, I didn't have a steady girlfriend. I had extra time, because I only had to take four courses and I said, "Gee, there's this two-credit journalism course. I used to be [interested in journalism]. Let me go take journalism, take a course and see what would happen," and she was pretty much right. I walked into the class late that first day, because I wanted to see where all the young ladies were sitting, so [that] I could pick the right chair, [laughter] and there was this tall, dark-haired lady, girl, I guess, what we called each other back then, and Ruth Ann sitting next to some chit-chat mate of hers and I decided, "I'll pick the short blond with the miniskirt on," and then, as later facts would find out that the tall dark-haired one sitting in the back was actually dating Bill Bradley back then. So, I wouldn't have won that battle. [laughter]

SH: Bill Bradley, the former Senator, basketball player.

CB: Oh, yes, basketball player, Senator, [laughter] and then, I continued to show up late and, as I said, I used to show up and she would make sure that there was an empty seat next to her. … We only dated three times. I forget what I got in that course. I probably got a B from the professor. He knew something was going on between us, I guess. We dated Junior Prom Weekend and one or two other times, and then, I said, "I've got to cut off this relationship, because I'm;" it wasn't even a relationship. Maybe in her mind it was. I said, "I'm going into the Army. I'm going away. I know I'm going to Vietnam and, you know, this is just the wrong time and the wrong place to do things," but, as you know, she's very persistent and she's paying for it now, thirty-nine years later. [laughter] Oh, yes, she used to make me walk her to the bus; actually, the bus, on the way back, was down by [where] the grease trucks are now. That's

where it stopped to pick them up and take them back. I had to stand there with her and all the guys in the house, they're going, "Oooh, you finally got one," but one of the best things that has ever happened to me, as you know.

SH: Were you engaged by the time you graduated?

CB: Boy, here comes a long story. No, I went to Fort Knox, Kentucky, for my armor basic training in July and August of '64 and we corresponded. I corresponded with things like, "Hi, Ruth Ann, the weather's pretty hot out here and I'm sweating like a dog and see you," and she would write two-page letters back, [laughter] and then, I came back, before going to Fort Hood, so, that's the end of August, I guess, and we decided to get more serious. I guess that's the proper term, and then, I went to Fort Hood, Texas, and, funny story, … I used to spend forty bucks … a month on telephone [calls]. I was making 220 dollars a month as a second lieutenant. [laughter] I mean, telephone calls today are nothing, but, every Sunday night, it was my many nickels, forty bucks on the telephone, and, "When are you coming back? When are you coming back?" So, we still hadn't done anything. I said, "I'll be back for Christmas." I tried to fly back. Of course, probably, back then, twenty percent of all military personnel that were stateside were stationed in Texas and, probably, half of those are coming home for Christmas leave. So, I couldn't come home. I couldn't get out of the airport. I remember this stack of standby cards and I finally found out I was down here. So, I took the train back. So, it took me a day-and-a-half to come back by train. We got pinned, a fraternity pin, and then, back again I go, and then, in between Fort Hood and Fort Wolters, which was the helicopter training, I got another leave. My timing could be off here; [we] decided to get engaged, again, not my choice, but I said, "Yes." That's partially true.

----------END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO----------

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Carl Burns on October 8, 2004, in Manalapan, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

SB: Sandra Stewart Holyoak. Please, continue with your story of courting your bride.

CB: Okay. We got pinned, which was a tradition back then. I think we got the pinning because we didn't have an engagement ring, truthfully, didn't have the money to buy an engagement ring. I think we did order it then, and so, as soon as I get back to Fort Hood, I went to the Army federal credit union or whatever the heck it was. I got a loan, so [that] I could pay for this ring. … This process continues here. There's a relationship between my dad and Ruth Ann that's, I think, unique and important. So, I paid for the ring and, again, whether I was at Fort Wolters or still at Fort Hood, and this would be the spring of '65, … I couldn't come back. So, Ruth Ann got engaged by my dad, picked up the ring, put it on her. So, he was my surrogate, so-to-speak, and then, at that point, we were going to be married … some time in '66, but, then, we knew I was going to Vietnam. So, Ruth Ann, … as organized and bullheaded as she is, that's the wrong term, determined as she is, decided we were going to get married before I went, as opposed to when I came back. … So, we got married on Labor Day, September 6th of 1965. So, the whole family and everybody else who wanted to have a nice, long weekend had to come to a wedding on Monday. At this point, I was in flight school at Fort Rucker, Alabama, and had to beg,

borrow and do whatever else you had to do to get one day's leave out of flight school, which they didn't want to give anybody. Two of our best friends actually got married that same weekend, George and Tootsie, but they were from Mississippi and Georgia, so, that was a lot easier for them.

SH: Did the family come down to Alabama?

CB: No, I came up here, right. I came up here. …

SH: Did Ruth Ann go back to Alabama with you then?

CB: Yes, and we moved into the Daleville Inn, which is the place I talked to that young lady about, [a student at Rutgers University], if it's still there, which was a second-class garden apartment complex. I'm sure it's third-class, probably, right now, but there were a whole bunch of us newlyweds. I mean, it was filled up with newlyweds.

SH: To back up, what about your commissioning, when you graduated? How did that work? Was it part of your graduation or separate?

CB: We got commissioned in the old gymnasium in the morning, in a rather formal ceremony, and then, we had graduation in the football field in the afternoon.

SH: Did you graduate with cap and gown or did you wear your military uniform?

CB: Cap and gown. The morning, obviously, was uniform. So, it was an all-day event.

SI: I want to go back and ask you a few questions about your aviation training while you were still in college. First, could you talk a little bit about the process of learning to fly and maybe about the first time you soloed and how you felt about that? You mentioned that you had a fear of flying. How quickly did you overcome that?

CB: Pretty fast. I think the fear was a fear of the unknown, mostly, and, in my first experience, … you go up the first time and you're in a small plane and the pilot goes like this, [Mr. Burns indicates that the pilot did a number of aerobatic turns and rolls] to make you say, "Am I going to fall out of the sky?" or what have you. I guess, Shaun, the first two, three, four hours were probably pretty much with the instructor doing most of the flying. You certainly didn't take-off and you didn't land. You'd get up there and, you know, fly in the sky, but he'd take over. I forget how many hours, with the fixed-wing, it took me to solo. I remember, pretty much to the minute, how many hours it took me in a helicopter in flight school, but just one day, … the instructor just says, "Okay, let's bring it in, put it down," and he said, "Good-bye. [laughter] It's all yours." "Wow," and it really is. I mean, I think anybody you would ask that has flown will tell you that moment is, "Here I am," and I guess I'm done with that, unless you want to pursue it.

SI: From what I understand, there were two tracks you could take. Either you could do enough hours to solo or you could take an extra amount of time to get a pilot's license. Which one did you opt?

CB: … To fulfill our obligation, if I remember, we had to do, whatever, thirty-six hours or something like that.

SI: Did you wind up getting a license?

CB: No, again, because of the eye problems I was having and to finish it at the end, and then, I was graduating. … So, I never got my fixed-wing license.

SI: Do you remember anything about your instructors in that period that stands out?

CB: Not specifically, although I can remember some from the Army helicopter training, but, no, I don't. I remember the owner of the airfield, the owners, the man and the woman, were pretty old back then, too. I think the airport is still there. It's in Pluckemin. It used to be called Somerset Hills, not the one where they do the air ballooning nowadays, what have you, all-in-all, a positive experience.

SI: Were there any close call moments that you recall or anything else from that first experience of learning to fly?

CB: No, other than the pucker factor with soloing. [laughter] … You're too young to know, it's like, I'm old enough that I learned how to drive with a stick shift and having to pull up to a traffic light on a hill and have a car behind you two feet and you've got to figure out how the heck you're not going to back into it. [laughter]

SH: On an icy day.

CB: Oh, well, yes, or have three other teenagers in the car with you, when you're not paying attention, but that was probably more scary than flying.

SI: After you were commissioned, you went to Fort Knox, to the Armored School. Why did you go to the Armored School?

CB: Because Aviation was not a, I've got the wrong words here; … you had to join either Signal, Armor, Infantry, Artillery or something and Aviation would be an add-on. So, that's probably the wrong terminology that I'm using, but, again, I chose Armored School and, if you want to be inside a tank in Kentucky, July and August, [laughter] but, anyway, so, I learned how to drive a tank and change the breech block and do all that other good stuff. Actually, I guess Fort Knox, well, it's between Louisville and Cincinnati.

SI: Did you consider staying in the Armored Corps?

CB: I was, always. I mean, once you go through that, that's where you are. You're an armor officer or what have you. So, when you walk around with your things on the officer's uniforms, that's the one you wore. … Aviation was just a part of it. I think, when I get to the guys I went through flight school with and served in Vietnam, we were probably from every possible unit in the military. What else can I say about Fort Knox? It was hot. … They let us take off the top of our fatigues when we're out there training, but, [if] you wanted to climb into a tank in Fort Knox, Kentucky, in July or August, I mean, as you went in, you could just feel the sweat just come right up your body. …

SI: Which type of tanks were you training in?

CB: … This is stuff that you're not going to pull out of my mind. … That's all right, you can ask the question. [laughter] … This is stuff I don't store. I really don't know.

SI: Was this your first time in the South?

CB: Other than that family vacation to Florida. … That's another great part about the military, it's really the first time you met anybody from the South. It's really the first time that some of these guys met anybody above the Mason-Dixon Line.

SH: How integrated were the bases at that point?

CB: Amongst the officer corps, hardly at all, geographically integrated, but in terms of ethnically, racially, not very much at all. … Again, in today's terms, we probably had more foreigners than we had African-Americans, I mean foreigners meaning officers from friendly countries that were going through our training programs. Yes, this was both at armored school and flight school.

SH: Which countries?

CB: Western Europe, I can't give you one, but I know … we had, going back to flight school, Thai, Laotian, Mexican, I don't want to call it foreign, Puerto Rican. That was, and still is, a unique situation.

SI: Did you get to know any of these foreign officers?

CB: Yes. I couldn't tell you their names today, you know, but we did the same thing. We'd hang out at the same places and what have you, but, you know, I never got up tight, I mean, close bonded.

SI: In both the Armored School and the aviation school, was it a mix of guys like yourself, ROTC graduates, and career Army people? Were there people who were older than you, captains, majors, higher ranks?

CB: No, everybody would have been a second lieutenant and the route to becoming a second lieutenant could be very many ways, ROTC, West Point, Officer's Training School, which,

probably, they were probably enlisted men who applied for and got accepted to Officer's Training School. At least in Armored School, I think most of us were pretty young. When I got to flight school, completely different story; flight school, the first time I ever met a warrant officer. I couldn't figure out what a warrant officer was and I'm still not sure what they are, but they're someplace between an enlisted man and a commissioned officer. So, we had a lot of warrant officers, had a lot of older guys, for one reason or another, career military people [who] decided they wanted to go to flight school, and then, again, a bunch of us young guys, a year, a year-and-a-half out of college.

SH: Was the flight school only for Army personnel?

CB: Yes, yes. … Actually, we all thought we were going to fly airplanes, fixed-wings, as they call them, … when we got out of college and went through that training, and then, the Army said, "We don't need you guys flying planes anymore. We're going to teach you how to fly helicopters, because that's what we need."

SH: Did you have a choice or did you volunteer?

CB: No, no. They had enough guys that could fly the [fixed-wings] and I think the only thing the fixed-wings did in Vietnam … were observation planes or whatever, if I can put it that way. They're just going to hang up there and they certainly weren't weapon platforms or anything. So, the Army decided, "We're going to build weapon platforms," and the helicopter was the machine, … the air machine, of today.

SI: At the time that you went into helicopter training, what had you seen on TV about how helicopters were being used in Vietnam? Were you aware of this?

CB: No, no. That was all taught in flight school and, as I think I mentioned at that seminar that one day, … most of the tactical training was the wrong thing to teach us. I don't know what else [to say]. So, we had to learn on the fly. How's that?

SH: Who was teaching you? What kind of experience did they have?

SI: Were they civilians or military?

CB: Okay, Fort Wolters, Texas, which was the basic helicopter training course, where we were flying the, and, again, I'm not good on designations, I call it the bubble helicopters, I think …

SI: OH-13?

CB: I'm not even so sure that's right. I may pull it out. We were flying the Hillers version there. That was contracted out to a private company, Southern Airways, but they were all former, most of them were former warrant officers that [had] served in the military. At Fort Rucker, when we got to fly the Hueys, and some of the guys got to fly what was called the "Hogs," which is the one that looks like a one-humped camel, if you ever [see] the old ones. Guys in the first half of the alphabet got to fly the Hueys; … yes, that's a very democratic

system. I think that was a mixed bag between civilians and Army personnel. You know, I can't fault any trainer that I had, other than the tactics, which they were not teaching us, the tactics.

SH: Did anyone mention if they had experience in World War II or Korea?

CB: Probably had some Korean [veterans], some of the Southern guys working [there], yes. I'm trying to think what the contract guys in Texas [were]; yes, we had some. They were old enough to have been in Korea, flying helicopters. …

SI: To focus on the tactics for a minute, from what I have read, 1961 to 1964 was the period where they started developing helicopter tactics, in Vietnam, based on what was happening on the ground. Are you saying that it was not filtering back or the situation was just changing so fast that it was worthless?

CB: I don't want to say worthless. If you watch some of the stuff that's coming out of Iraq now, … you see the helicopter sitting up there, like that, as a firing platform. Maybe they've got so much firepower now that they could do that. That's what we were, initially. "Here's the tree line and come up here and go boom and go high." Well, you know, the enemy hears you. Anyway, anyway, basically, what we learned, Shaun, was, you're either one to ten feet off the ground or over a thousand feet, because any place in-between, you were in trouble, in danger, unless you were doing actually a fire run, [in] which you would come down from a thousand feet, if you were flying a gunship or something, and then, you'd get your tail out of there as quick as you [can]. You couldn't probably make another run, but we essentially learned to fly on the ground or up above, because the reality was, back then at least, and, again, this is what could be different today, most of the weapons that the Vietnamese or the Vietcong had couldn't get up to a thousand feet or be accurate. … If you're in-between, you're just too big of a target.

SI: Can you tell us about when you first started training in the helicopters? You had trained previously in fixed-wing aircraft. What were the differences? How did you react to this new challenge?

CB: Very few similarities, other than you take-off from the ground, you go up in the air and you come back, okay. [laughter] Fixed-wing is probably easier to learn how to fly than a helicopter. The biggest problem with the helicopter is learning how to hover. The hover term is getting it up off the ground and staying within three feet of the ground and being in control of it. I can compare it to learning how to ride a bicycle when you're a kid. You have no clue and, all of a sudden, right, all of a sudden, you've got it, and so, instead of going like this and this and this and sweating and losing two pounds sitting there, all of a sudden, you pick it up. … It's all anticipation, and then, balance, the same thing as riding a two-wheeler bike, when they take the training wheels off and, all of a sudden, you're there and you say, "I got it." That was really the hardest, I mean, by far, the hardest thing to do and, again, the second hardest thing is, going back, same thing as fixed-wing, that's when your trainer says, "It's all yours," and he hops out and he says, "Take it around and bring it back." "Oh, my God, here I go." Helicopters, another thing you had to learn to do pretty quickly after that, after you begin soloing, … is how to autorotate. We would practice that with the instructors, because, even after you soloed, the instructor would come back to teach you the next phase of what you had to learn and

autorotation is, essentially, cut the engine and you've got to find a place to land and to put it on the ground. So, again, that's pretty much of a pucker factor, when the instructor says, "Now, do it by yourself," and so, what you do is, you cut the engine and, with the helicopter, the blades keep on going and one of the other things you learn is, you always; … well, it's the same thing with an airplane. You always want to know where you're going to put it down. So, no matter what else is on your mind, you have to know, "There's a field over here or a field over there or tall buildings there. You don't want to go there." So, you always have to have that in mind. … Autorotating, essentially, when we practiced it, you know, the engine was still running, but you put it on idle, essentially. You come down to about ten feet and pull up the collective and go, put it down. Actually, it became fun, once you learned how to do it.

SH: White knuckle fun, maybe. [laughter]

CB: Well, you know, everything, the first couple of times, is, but once you learn that, you know, you can do it, [you are okay].

SH: How often were there accidents, maybe not fatal accidents, but where you bent up a lot of Uncle Sam's equipment?

CB: Personally, three times, two [that] I remember very specifically, the third, no, for some reason, I don't. I had an engine failure.

SH: This is in training.

CB: No, this was in Vietnam. Oh, back to training? Training, there was mostly a whole bunch of fender benders, if I can put it in that terminology, but I don't remember anybody getting killed in training. Guys got hurt, helicopters got bent up or what have you and that's what training's all about.

SH: During training, did you have any interaction with the ground crew, the mechanics who worked on the helicopters?

CB: In flight school? … No, very little, because … you took a different helicopter out every day. Your most contact would have been with the [flight instructor]. I think, mostly, we had the same flight instructor, you know, for some reason, except, you know, sick days or what have you, you would get somebody else, but that's who your contact would be with.

SH: Was there camaraderie among your fellow trainees?

SI: Was there any bonding?

CB: Oh, yes, we were pretty cocky, too, because, "We're helicopter pilots, hey." Of course there was a bonding, "We're better than the rest of these guys." Three of my best friends from [my] military experience, and, again, I was talking about this, because I talked to a couple of them the other night, getting ready for this, we went to armor school together and we really weren't buddies or pals or what have you, but, six months later, when we got to Fort Wolters and

kind of looked around, … these were three faces that you knew when you didn't know anybody else. So, that's where we began to bond. Two of them served with me in the same unit in Vietnam. George and Tootsie were the couple that got married the same weekend that Ruth Ann and I did. So, yes, we were pretty close, but, you know, you really didn't bond much beyond that. How do I answer this? Military combat experience kind of makes you [feel like] you don't want to get too close with too many people, because they may not be around tomorrow. Yes, … I think I described this once before, I say to the guys at the fraternity house, "You think … you bond as a fraternity brother, but [with] the few people, then, you go through combat experience with, it's a different and stronger bonding." There was something I probably wanted to follow up there. We were talking about military training and I still have a part of the teacher in me. One thing you learn to do in the military is, you've got to teach. I mean, you're teaching all the time and one of the basic tenets in military teaching, and it still is, tell them what you're going to tell them, tell them, and then, tell them what you told them, three times, make sure it gets in there. I had to write … training manuals, when I was at Fort Hood, … waiting to go to flight school; they didn't know what to do with me. They didn't want to give me a platoon or anything. So, they said, "Go to the motor pool and take these training manuals and put it into language that these guys can understand." So, I don't know how, I still don't, I had to change oil. [laughter] There's this great thing about the military, "All right go out there while I find the guy … that can speak English. … What the hell are you doing here? What are you doing? How do you do it?" and I said, "Use the manual." He said, "Well, give it to me in two pages," and then, we would, again, tell them what we're going to tell them and tell them again. …

SI: When you went into Aviation, did that add any time to your tour?

CB: Yes. Normal obligation was two years. If you're going into Aviation, it was three years, because we essentially spent most of a year in school, probably nine months, I guess, between the two helicopter schools, which was okay. When I got back, skip to the end, I went back to Fort Wolters, because I was a short timer. I came back in April and I was out in July, so, I was a short timer. So, that's when I was assigned to the med evac unit and I actually got my commercial helicopter license when I was there, never able to use it, but that was also a very nice time with Ruth Ann in our marriage, because she graduated from Douglass that May. So, we had six weeks at Fort Wolters together and she learned how to do ceramics, … lay around the swimming pool for half a day or what have you, [laughter] a big difference than being in [Vietnam].

SH: You were training other people when you came back at Fort Wolters with the med evac unit.

CB: No, Fort Wolters, I was not training people, but every place you are in the military, you're essentially training people. I was put into, again, the med evac unit because I … didn't have enough time to become a trainer or to stay with the students.

SH: Why could you not use your commercial helicopter license?

CB: Make a long story short, I tried … to get hired by Ronson Helicopter, and I think they still fly helicopters around here, and was all set for … a check out or something or other and they, all

of a sudden, decided that they only wanted part-timers who could work during Monday through Friday and not Saturdays and Sundays and I had already decided I was going to become a banker or what have you. … That was very quick and, at that point, I just said, "Fine, that's the end of it."

SH: Before you go to Vietnam, what were you hearing about what was going on in Vietnam?

CB: Very little, really, very, very little.

SH: It was still a very insulated world for you.

CB: I think so, right, right.

SI: Did you ever get to talk to anybody who returned from Vietnam?

CB: No, probably not until I got to flight school, actually. My numbers could be wrong, but I would think, in 1964, we probably had one hundred thousand troops in Vietnam. When I got there in '66, we probably [had] about quarter of a million and, when I left in '67, probably half a million; those are probably pretty good numbers. So, I was there during the build-up.

SH: What did this transition school at Fort Benning consist of?

CB: Transition? Holding pattern. We were sent to Fort Benning, most of us out of my flight class that graduated from Fort Rucker, were sent there and the idea was that they were going to form a new, I'm going to say a division, but that's probably … not that big of a unit, and sent us over all at once and things began escalating. So, after about six weeks, they split us all up and some of us, most of us, went to the 25th Infantry Division in Hawaii and they were pulling people from all over the world to beef up that division to its full combat strength. Remember, they were bringing in guys, poor guys, some of the older guys who were stationed in Anchorage, Alaska, and they move them to Hawaii [laughter] and you talk about blood thinning. So, they built this up, the 25th, to its full combat strength.

SH: What were your duties and your responsibilities when you were in Hawaii?

CB: Playing cards. [laughter]

SH: Were you good at playing cards?

CB: No. [laughter] It was probably the most terrible two weeks of my life. So, I left my bride back home and here I am, in Hawaii. [laughter] We did go back two years ago. … We were just waiting around to be shipped out. Most of us had not flown for at least a month, so, we had to, you know, go back and … get in our hours and what have you.

SH: Where did you do that?

CB: Schofield Barracks, interesting place, though, a lot of World War II history. …

SH: Did you look at it that way? When you were there, getting ready to go to Vietnam, did you go to the *Arizona* Memorial? Did you look around Schofield Barracks?

CB: Yes. Again, we had an awful lot of time. It's my first trip into a submarine. We'd joke with the guys on the submarine. "How can you do this? How can you fly a helicopter?" "How could you be in this little tin can?" [laughter] … Yes, [we] went to [the] *Arizona* Memorial, toured Schofield, I mean, saw all the important bullet holes or what have you in the place. It's rather awesome, but awful lot of time. Time is not good, and then, we went, … it's not US, I don't know what the Merchant Marine ships were called, the first initials …

SI: SS?

CB: I thought there was an M in there someplace, but, anyway, it was called the *Gordon* and, some funny stories there, we finally get the word and, in the military, you never get a lot of up front notice. …

SH: Did you take the *Gordon* from stateside to Hawaii or from Hawaii to Vietnam?

CB: No. That's another story; let me backtrack.

SH: Please.

CB: We all got orders and we flew into San Francisco, … commercial airliner. I forget, it could have been TWA, but it doesn't matter and we had about five hours. So, this is enlisted men, this is officers and what have you. So, everybody decides, "Hey, San Francisco's a pretty hot town, let's go downtown." So, we all probably had a few too many beers to drink and what have you, but we did get back. We fill up this airplane. Literally, we're all going to war now, right, and we all got too many beers in us and this bride and groom get on the airplane and they get the last two seats in the airplane, which is all the way back. So, they got razzed. This poor girl was blushing like I don't know [what]. [laughter] "What the hell are we doing? We're leaving our girls back home," and it was all fun in spirit and, no, so, we flew to Hawaii, and then, we spent two weeks in Hawaii, roughly two weeks. … Was Wayne [Sandra's husband, a US Navy veteran] ever in Hawaii? no. So, you have to explore the island, which you should. So, we go downtown to downtown Honolulu one night and said, "Hey, we're going to go down here and party." We were in the car and, all of a sudden, we hear this fight going on and we look and there's chains and sticks going around. I said, "Let's get out of here. [laughter] … This isn't our neighborhood." Then, we're told to go on the *Gordon* and we lined up one night. … Again, I know, it's probably a ship that's designed to carry three hundred people, there's just three thousand of us, which is typical … military transport. So, us officers are standing there with our duffle bags, I guess we had two bags, whatever, a flight bag and a duffle bag, and they gave us our bunking assignments and I said, "Look at this, I've got Stateroom Number Twelve." [laughter] "So do I." "So do I." "So do I." So, there's fifteen of us in Stateroom Number Twelve, stacked like a submarine, actually, if you want to know the bunking arrangements, and then, that was boring, and then, they said, "We need an editor for the ship's newspaper." I didn't volunteer. I don't volunteer. So, my buddy, Russ, one of my guys from flight school and what

have you, says, "Burns was an editor of his high school newspaper, get him." So, while everybody else was looking at B-grade Westerns and playing cards all day, I was down in this cage, not much bigger than a bathroom, I guess, four enlisted men, but the good news was, I was the first one to get the baseball scores from back home and, you know, essentially, I don't know what you'd call it back then, but *USA Today* front page type of information. I got to edit it and put it out. …

SH: Did you save any of these newspapers?

CB: No. I did, but they're gone. They were, literally, four-page …

SH: Mimeographed.

CB: Mimeographed, yes, mimeographed, boy, there's another [thing]. …

SH: Was this just Army personnel onboard the *Gordon*?

CB: We had … a unit of Marines and I don't know how big they were and we dropped them off at Okinawa and we got to, I'm not so sure where off the coast of Vietnam, and we sat there for two or three days, again, rather uneventful, other than, I remember, … there were some Navy Seals assigned to us, to make sure there weren't being any bombs attached to the hull of the ship or what have you and they would actually send off percussion grenades or what have you.

SH: Were you in a convoy or was it just your unit?

CB: We were it.

SH: The Gordon, by itself?

CB: Yes, we were it, until we got off the coast of Vietnam, and then, there were a whole bunch of …

SH: Did you get to disembark at Okinawa?

CB: … No. That was probably just enough to let the Marines get off and we were gone again.

SH: How long did the trip take?

CB: Sandra, I'm going to say two weeks, but, you know, give me a couple of days [on] either side of that.

SH: That is still a long time.

CB: Yes, good thing I was in a cage, because, I mean, you literally see nothing, for two weeks, in the Pacific Ocean. I mean, there's nothing to see, and then, [I] strongly remember, very vividly, and, again, my terminology may be a little bit off, we were still anchored and they

brought up, I think they're called LSMs, which were smaller … than LSTs, so [that] you could get a platoon or thirty guys on. So, we hop into these things and here we go, into shore. So, at this point, we're all pretty much, "Oh, boy, here we are." They land this thing. We actually run on the beach, so [that] we didn't have to go in the water, … but the ramp came down and there's a US Army band playing the *Star-Spangled Banner*. "Wow, I don't know whether I like this or whether I don't like it, but this is certainly not what the rest of my experience is going to be like," but that was our welcome. That's the end of the *Gordon*, I think, other than the poor enlisted men down in the hold. It smelled like vomit for two weeks and we can get to this later, too, some of the enlisted men from my unit, 3/4 Cavalry, [pronounced "Three-Quarter," Third Squadron, Fourth Cavalry], smuggled a dog onboard, Chopper, named after a helicopter. So, Chopper spent the whole year with us in Vietnam. [laughter] … You guys want a break? You know, I can go on here, I'm okay, but I don't know whether you're [okay].

SH: We know you were in charge of the newspaper, but were you in charge of any men? Were you in charge of any work details?

CB: On the ship? no.

SH: There was no one who reported to you.

CB: No. I'm sure there were, but, as helicopter pilots, at that point, we were pretty much in charge of ourselves and that was it.

SH: Before you arrived in-country, how much information did you have about what you would be doing?

CB: I knew where we were going, Cu Chi. We didn't know what we were going to find when we got there. What we found was a cleared field, with nothing else. [laughter] The area was semi-secured; … there was no place to live. We essentially built our own hootches. So, as we got there, the building materials were there, the wood and the lumber with a, I call it a Sears and Roebuck kit, "This is how you put this thing together." I said, "Those guys, what the hell? I don't know how to use a hammer and a nail," but we put together our own hootches and put them where they belonged.

SH: What did you understand that you were to accomplish?

CB: Strategically? Well, there's two differences, strategically and tactically. We were supposed to win the thing.

SH: You were stopping Communism.

CB: Oh, yes, oh, yes, yes, domino theory was certainly part of our, what do you want to call it? education. That's why we were there.

SH: That was part of your stateside training.

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE ONE----------

CB: If I have to go back to, you know, the domino theory, that was certainly part of it and, yes, we did get some training classes on, "We're going there because we're stopping the spread of Communism." Again, we got, I call it "sensitivity training." You know, the Vietnamese are different than us, they have different … traditions and what have you. "Don't go downtown at night drunk, because you'll meet the wrong women." Oh, yes, so, all pretty much part of the training. Of course, at Cu Chi, we didn't get a chance to go downtown, anyway. … There was no downtown. You want to follow up on that?

SI: I have a training question. At any point in your training, did you have survival training?

CB: In a place called Fort Rucker, yes, yes. We were out there for three days, with no food.

SH: There was no doubt that your training was taking you anywhere but Southeast Asia.

CB: Well, some of it's generic, but, you know, it was all pretty much oriented towards, "This is where you're going to go." I mean, maybe, of all the guys I went through ROTC with, I think one went to Germany and one went to Korea and the rest of us went to Vietnam.

SH: You talked about sensitivity training. Were there other things that you were taught, to be respectful of their culture? Were there any humanitarian efforts that you were going to be involved in? Were you trying to convince them democracy was the way to go?

CB: No, we certainly, at least with the unit I was with, … were not involved with democracy training, if I can put it that way. There were units that dropped leaflets. I think that's still done nowadays, I guess, in Iraq and other places. … If you see that thing, [an article from *Parade* Magazine written by Ruth Ann Burns about her trip to visit Mr. Burns in Vietnam] with Ruth Ann being there, we did send the medical personnel to local villages who were at least friendly during the daytime and that mostly changed at nighttime. … Soldiers are no different from World War II or no different today, they have this thing about handing out candy bars, and then, some stupid Iraqi, in that case, throwing a bomb or something. We always liked to be with the kids and, when we got an opportunity to land on the ground, which we frequently did, the young kids would, I've got photo someplace, … always come up and say, "Hey, GI," and, back then, it was, "Number Ten." I don't know why it was ten and not one, but, "GI, you Number Ten." "All right." "Got any candy?" "Yes." "Need your shoe shined?" "Sure, why not?" [laughter] Then, we'd joke around and say, "Where's your older brother? He's probably the one that planted the landmine up there on the road this morning," but that was pretty much personal, I mean, and, again, … at least the officers, … most of us were in our early, mid-twenties, and then, the warrant officers and the younger guys were eighteen or nineteen. …

SH: When you get off at the shore, then, you were transported to Cu Chi.

CB: Yes, we sat there for I don't know how many hours, first learning how to deal with the heat in Vietnam. I think we went by Chinooks, helicopters. So, there were many Chinooks to get us all there.

SH: How far is Cu Chi from Saigon?

CB: Again, give or take five miles or so, twenty-five miles west on Route 1 in Vietnam.

SH: What were your first duties? You talked about having to build your own hootches.

CB: Build a hootch. We didn't have any of our own helicopters yet.

SH: You basically went in and built your base first.

CB: Yes, but this is where I first found out what the Army Engineer Corps does, a heck of a good job; secure the base, build your own hootches. The 25th Infantry Division, actually, there was a lot of armor attached to it. So, there were tanks and there were armored personnel carriers, and then, we were a very unique unit, the 3/4 Cav; I'll get back to that. What they did was, they farmed us out to around the country, to other people, and then, the helicopters started to come in, one or two at a time. So, when I got farmed out, I was actually able to bring one of the new HU-1Bs to this other unit, down in the Delta, and they were so happy to see me, because they were flying these things that were four, five years old that were underpowered and what have you. So, we, essentially, went to school, … again, you know, learning from people who had been there for a year or so.

SH: What did they teach you? What was the most important lesson they felt you needed to know to survive or be effective?

CB: … It was OJT, [on-the-job training]. [laughter] You went up in a helicopter and there you went and you ran into what you ran into. I can tell you, honestly, that if the other fifty weeks of my tour was like those two weeks that I was farmed out, I wouldn't have come back alive, yes. It was just [that] what they were going through at that point was so intense. Actually, the guy I was flying with most of the time, his name I will never remember, but he was a Rutgers grad, Class of '62 or '63, small world, right? …

SH: What were you doing when you were farmed out? What was your job?

CB: Either a pilot or a co-pilot, flying with these guys, mostly as a co-pilot, which did mean [that] you probably flew as much as the [pilot]. You've got two guys on the front seats. One guy would be in charge and the other guy would be second-in-command, so-to-speak. Then, you had a crew chief and a door gunner in the back.

SI: Were you flying slicks or gunships?

CB: Gunships, at this point. I can tell you a couple of incidents. … You want to talk about what you pick up from life, we were out, … they had some Vietcong unit backed up against the river line and in the fringes of a jungle or what have you and I get up there and I said, "What are those two big helicopters back there?" and he said, "That's the Hogs," as I described before, … "Vietnamese generals watching what's going on." "Oh, that's interesting." I guess generals do

that and we're attacking … these guys. We're going in, we're going in, going in, we're going back and rearming, going in, going in, it's endless stuff. I said, "You know what? They're all coming out of these," I'll call them foxholes. Again, you know my foxhole stories, but these are round holes. I said, "We're going right at them." I said, "Let's be like football [players] or something; let's come in from the side. [laughter] … You know, they were all looking out that way, let's get in that way." So, that ended that battle pretty quick, but that was not military training … and that's where I knew I killed, … not that day, but another day, my first human being, which was pretty upsetting. It started with, sometimes the new guy notices more than the old guys; we're flying over these rice paddies and I turned to look and I said, "Bushes grow up in these rice paddies?" [laughter] He says, "No, why?" "We've got all these bushes down there," and then, when we fly by and go back, he says, "Well, the bushes are running." [laughter] So, again, that was one of these times, … when we came in, we were, you know, right on the ground. … That's a rather long letter. …

[Excerpt from a letter from Carl Burns to his wife, Ruth Ann: "We were on a routine reconnaissance mission, flying low over the rice paddies and hamlets. The paddies looked like colorful checks of brown on a lush green checkerboard. Suddenly, the blast of gunfire broke through, bushes were moving beneath us. The VC had camouflaged some men in the fields and now they opened fire on us with a calculated fury."

"We were flying so low, you could see their faces. Mixed in among the hardcore VC were the peasants who looked up at us with scared faces. I could hear the bullets hitting the metal of the helicopter. The guns mounted to the side of the helicopter swung almost automatically into my haw. I aimed it carefully and the enemy soldier looked back at me."

"It seemed like an eternity before the gun fired. All the time, I was thinking what if he has a wife like mine at home waiting for him? What if he has children? Thou shalt not kill. He was me and I was he. He had a Ruth Ann waiting for me. He was dead."]

SH: How long were you in-country before you were engaged in fire?

CB: How long before I was engaged in fire?

SI: When was your first mission?

CB: Well, it was this. … This one, I was down in the Delta, yes, so, you know, two to three weeks, maybe.

SI: Were you flying escort for slicks or were you providing firepower on your own? Did they just call you in for fire support?

CB: All of the above. Sometimes, we would just go out on our own mission. … To go back to my unit, we were an Air Cavalry squadron. Cavalry is a very important term, in terms of pride in the Army, because we go way back. You want to watch the old cowboy [and] Indian movies and what have you and we were an Air Cavalry squadron, so, we were a rather, Shaun, … unique unit. We were part of the 25th Division, Air Cavalry, obviously, because we're helicopters. So,

we had slicks and the gunships and the little bubble, the Bell helicopters. I flew them, also. I mostly flew the gunships, a little bit at the end, the slicks, and quite a few … with the Bells. Part of our squadron, not only did we have the helicopters, we had an infantry platoon, our own, attached to us, and then, we had a group of crazy young guys called the long range reconnaissance patrol and these were the kids we would drop in the jungle, three or four or five at a time, and, "We'll see you in three days," and that was usually tough, getting them out, because they usually got found, instead of just observing or what have you. So, that's when the slicks would come in and what have you. It's probably one of the other scariest moments of my life over there, was, after I got done flying gunships and they were bringing new people in and started rotating, then, I flew the observation helicopters for a while, and then, the last month, I guess, I was flying the slicks. … I'd rather be in a gunship than a slick pilot, because you're coming in, picking up these guys, Sandy, and you're sitting there, hovering, and you're sitting there, waiting for them to come out of the jungle line, to jump into the thing. I'd rather be in a gunship, shooting at people.

SH: What kind of firepower do you have in a slick?

CB: … Again, the terminology, we had the rocket pods, side-mounted, fixed, and then, we had, I forget what the caliber of the machine guns were that the co-pilot [controlled]. The rocket pods were fixed, so [that], at least in the unit I was with, the pilot would have to align the helicopter to correctly aim those. The skid-mounted machine guns, actually, were controlled by the co-pilot and you could, by sight, move them, and then, you had two door gunners, with their machine guns. Some of the helicopters had grenade launchers mounted on the front belly.

SH: Did the pilot control that as well?

CB: Yes, and then, I think we had one with a .50-caliber mounted in the back cabin, so-to-speak.

SH: On most of these helicopters, there were four men in the crew.

CB: Correct, right. It was enough. Sometimes, the rocket pods were napalm. I don't know what they were the other times. …

SH: You talked about going in, going in, and then, saying, "Why don't we go in from the side?" Were you often able to use your own initiative, rather than follow strict orders?

CB: Right. Well, again, it depended. … If you were out there with the infantry platoon, loaded in slicks and part of a larger operation, no, … pretty much, you did what you were told to do, but the fewer of you, that got down to, you know, there's just two gunships out there or what have you, you pretty much just say, … "Let's try this."

SI: From what I have read, there was a lot of emphasis on getting in and out fast. Can you talk about that a bit?

CB: Again, because of the uniqueness of the unit I was in, this Air Cavalry unit, we were in and out fast, except for these LRRPs, [pronounced "Lurp"] as we called them, this long range

reconnaissance patrol. So, our missions tended to be short-range, first-ones-in-first-ones-out type of thing, but we would be, again, at times, Shaun, supporting other units that would be involved for a longer period of time. Unlike World War II, we were not engaged in monthly engagements. … The enemy was not stationary and there were no battle lines, so-to-speak.

SH: You were attached to the Delta, but, then, you came back to Cu Chi.

CB: Yes, I was only down there two weeks.

SH: From Cu Chi, you would fly out to complete a mission and come back.

CB: Correct. Most nights, we were back. Again, we had … established a position on the Cambodian border, which was at the other end of Route 1. Sometimes, we would encamp there, if I can use that terminology.

SH: Would you encamp there because you needed ammunition and fuel to get back to Cu Chi or were you stationed there?

CB: No, just because there was a reason for a larger unit to be there. … There's one landmark in, I was going to say central Vietnam and I'm not so sure we're central. We were probably south-central, if you wanted to call it [that], Nui Ba Den, "Black Virgin," which is this black mountain that sits out by Tay Ninh, which is where some of this overnight stuff took place, and that was our best landmark. If you didn't know where you were, you turned to the Black Virgin, say, "Well, she's on my left, so, I'm here." "She's on my right." So, you get into storms or bad weather or things. … I guess it was a volcanic mountain; I can't be sure, but probably has to be. I mean, that was the only [mountain], in this part of the country that I was in. The rest of it was either rice paddies, jungles or rubber plantations. …

SI: How often were you operating in the daytime? How often were you operating at night?

CB: Mostly during the day, yes, mostly during the day.

SH: What was it like doing an operation at night?

CB: Well, Nui Ba Den didn't do us any good for a landmark … at night. [laughter] I don't know, … situations are a little more tense, because you're dealing with darkness or what have you. We would tend to fly, even as gunships, … in formation. So, nighttime was, you know, you got the rotor blades going around. … The other thing about nighttime is, you could see where you're being fired from, because of the tracers. Of course, they could see us, too.

SI: Was it harder to find your landing zone, if you were in a slick?

CB: Again, … we were not instrument flying, because there was nothing to give you any signals. … You know, you always had your landmarks. … You got to know the villages, both by daytime and nighttime, … the same thing as if you're flying an airplane. You look down. I can tell you, "Hey, here's Chicago. There's Lake Michigan," or whatever. I mean, you could

kind of tell where you were and you're very seldom alone, I mean, … except, back to the observation helicopters, and, very frequently, we went out alone.

SI: In the observation helicopter?

CB: Yes, yes. I flew, again, back to Nui Ba Den and Tan Son Nhut, for part of my tour, I flew up Route 1 every morning, to look for the bombs and the potholes in the road and what have you and, sometimes, you went alone, sometimes, you went in pairs. Interesting story, I had a major called Rudy, and this was when I was flying observation helicopters, and we'd go out in pairs at this point and there was this one little village [from which] we'd get fired at every morning, from the same hootch, same hut, every morning. I say, "You know, someday, they're going to hit us." So, I go back to the Colonel. The Colonel's a good story, too. I said, "Why don't you send two gunships behind us and take care of this problem," and we go out and the ceiling was pretty low that day. So, we go out there and, boom, we get fired on again. I shouldn't call him Rudy, but he's in here now anyway. He says, "We're turning around, we're too low." I said, "Wait a minute, we just;" me and I think it was Leo Allred, who was a guy I flew with a lot who was in the other helicopter. I says, "Wait a minute, we just set ourselves up as targets to take care of this situation and you've got all the guns and you decide to go back." So, the short end of that story was, the first time we went back to the Colonel, Colonel Peterson, and they were going to transfer my buddy, Russ, out, one of my guys I went through flight school with and what have you, as we began rotations here, and I says, "Colonel, you've got to get rid of Rudy. Keep Russell around. He's been over here with the rest of us," and he said, "You're right." Colonel Peterson, I know, for a number of reasons, the administration command post for our unit was right across from our officers' hootch, so, we were the closest ones. … He was a thinker and we used to talk a lot about tactics and strategies and he used to come out of … the command post and say, "Burns, are you over there?" I said, "Yes." "Let's go for a walk." We used to walk thirty, forty yards, like that, and I would hardly say anything. He would just talk and I'd go, "Yes, sir. No, sir," … again, five, ten minutes, whatever the heck it was, and, most times, I would say nothing and he would finally say, "Thank you." So, I learned how to walk when I think and that's where I learned it from. [laughter] He'll say, "What are you doing?" "I'm thinking." …

SI: Were protocol and military discipline relaxed at the base?

CB: As compared to?

SI: Stateside. No saluting, stuff like that?

CB: Yes, that kind of went. No, we didn't do [that]. There was no, "Good morning, Sir," type of thing, maybe, again, because it was the type of unit we were in. As I said, you know, I didn't bring back a whole lot of names or what have you, but, particularly in the gunship, although we rotated pilots, essentially, your crew chief and your door gunner were yours, and you were theirs, type of thing. No, we were essentially more equals, if I can put it that way. Somebody, an enlisted man, was going to do something stupid … that would be dealt with, the same as it would be back here.

SH: The door gunners, traditionally, were enlisted men.

CB: Always, yes, and the crew chiefs, probably, most of them, well, they were, what did they call them back then? specialists, fours or fives or something, but they were enlisted men, too. The gunship I flew, we all had names and my crew chief was Mexican, so, … the helicopter was named *Pancho Villa* [laughter] and I don't remember his real name, but he was Pancho.

SH: Did you continue to fly different helicopters? You talked about flying different kinds, but, when you were flying, say, a gunship every day, was it the same one? Did you get to know the ground crew at all?

CB: Okay, mostly, the gunships, you flew the same aircraft and you had your same crew, unless the aircraft was in for maintenance or what have you and the crew chief was basically the daily maintenance man. He probably put in the longest hours of anybody. He'd be a door gunner and he'd come back and do the basic maintenance. We did have our own maintenance facility for, you know, [if] something went wrong with the helicopter or your hundred-hour inspection or what have you, so, we'd change. I think it was pretty much the same with the slicks and with the observation helicopter. You just took whatever one was assigned to you.

SH: You got to Vietnam in the summer of …

CB: April '66.

SH: In September, Ruth Ann made it over.

CB: Correct.

SH: Would you like to tell us that story for the tape?

CB: … Ruth Ann and I, again, as I said, we got married on Labor Day of '65, at her insistence, just in terms of the date, not in terms of the relationship, I mean. [laughter] She swore she was going to come to Vietnam for our first anniversary and I swore she wasn't … and she was going to bring the top of our wedding cake, which she did, with dry ice, and, as that article kind of explains, she got accredited as a correspondent, that *Parade* Magazine article, the *Star-Ledger*, what was then the *Daily Home News*, but, then, couldn't get any approval to go and she went up through Congressmen and all the way to President Lyndon Johnson. … Of course, her parents were not behind this at all and I wasn't. My colonel, Colonel Peterson, was very supportive, but, then, he comes to me the day before and says, "Your wife can't come. They won't give her any credentials," or what have you. I said, "Fine." She actually got a telegram from the White House saying she couldn't go and you know Ruth Ann, [she] hid it away some place and hopped on the airplane. … So, I found out … she was coming, and then, the Colonel is very good, he says, "I'll give you a helicopter. Russ and Dennis," again, my two friends from armor school and flight school, "they'll take you down to Saigon." Another fraternity brother, Larry (Fenton?), who … will not do an interview with you, because … he's still got a super top secret security [obligation] and he can't talk about anything, so, he was never in uniform there, but Larry got us a hotel, … the Majestic Hotel on Tu Do Street, [now Dong Khoi Street] I think is

the answer. So, she got there. We got together and rode some old, dirty bus from Tan Son Nhut to downtown Saigon and she brought some cameras, which she borrowed from a photographer in one of the papers, and we left the cameras on the bus. [laughter] This is before I was a photographer. This is the beginning of my photographic interest. We left the cameras and we got to our hotel and we're fine, and then, the next morning, we go down and the desk clerk says, "I have a note for you," and it says, "I have your cameras. Come see me at." I said, "Oh, God, my wife's first day in Vietnam. Am I being ambushed here? What the heck?" but, no, it was a very nice guy, found the cameras and, somehow, found, I don't know what [it] was, it must have been a tag or something on the bags that he found us [through]. So, she spent two weeks. As I said, everybody else, … all my buddies, got to go to Bangkok or Hong Kong and I got to spend two weeks in Saigon. [laughter]

SI: Did you go out with her as she worked on her stories?

CB: Yes, yes. I mean, that one picture is [proof] and we took her out, back to the base camp. …

SH: She got to go to Cu Chi.

CB: Yes, yes. That same pink dress I think you saw there, I got her standing in front of a bunker. … Of course, Russ and Dennis knew her and some of the guys from flight school days, but we'd go back to Saigon every night.

SI: You said before that the Vietnamese children were kind of fascinated by your wife.

CB: Her being blonde? Oh, yes. I forget what their term in the language would be, but, essentially, we figured it out. It was blonde lady or what have you, "Look at her, look at her." Hindsight, … I'll go back to her trying to get her in-country credentials. So, not only wasn't she allowed to leave the United States, they didn't want her in and wouldn't accept her professional credentials as a correspondent, because she was a dependent. So, [that was] spending a half a day through the military bureaucracy. … That discussion went, essentially, "She's got no rights as a dependent." We said, "Fine, she doesn't have any rights. She's a correspondent. What rights do they have?" "Well, they can go to the PX, they can ride in helicopters." … "So? She's not a dependent," and, I think as I told you, I finally said, "Who wrote this regulation?" "Major," whoever he says. He says, "You may be lucky. I think the guy who wrote this stuff is still in Saigon." That's when we hopped on a rickshaw or a taxicab or whatever the heck we did and we found this guy and he said, "Sure, there's the loophole. It's no problem." So, she got her credentials. I used to write regulations, too, at some point. So, I always know you put in [a loophole], just like a good lawyer. [laughter] They always put in a sentence that you can cop out if you want to.

SH: Did she have any trouble getting back out of the country?

CB: No, no. …

SH: Was she living on campus and going to school while you were in Vietnam?

CB: No, Ruth Ann was a commuter. So, when we got married, she delayed her formal education for a year, against her mother's very strong objections. I thought her father was going to beat me up, but he just sat there and said, "Fine," and her mother said, "You're not going out of school." [laughter] (Little Mary?), huh? … She worked for the *Home News* and did stringer or freelance work for the *Ledger* and what have you. So, she was living at home and that's where, now you've got me talking here, [as] I said, my dad and her became very close, when I was in Vietnam, because of the engagement process and what have you and I think she was working at Eagleton. No, that couldn't have been Eagleton. It doesn't matter, but, when she got to go to events in New York City and what have you, my dad became her date. My dad, sad moment in my life, the day I left, another fraternity brother, friend, Herb Johnson and I, he and his wife moved out of their apartment in Elizabeth and gave it to Ruth Ann and I, so [that] we could spend the night together and not at her parent's house. Then, we drove up to my dad's place, Mom and Dad's, in Summit and my dad drove us to the airport, the old Newark Airport Terminal, not the old, old one, but the next old one, not terminals A, B, or C, where you did have to walk out onto the tarmac. So, I had to turn around and look at Dad and Ruth Ann crying and off I went. So, what else we got here? Running out of tape? [laughter]

SI: No, we have got plenty of tape.

CB: You're going to take the whole day. What did I tell you? What else have we got?

SH: Would you like to tell us some of the stories that go with your notes on the survey?

CB: Oh, yes, you want to go down that? … As an officer in the military, you always get extra duties. It's part of the job, whether you know what the hell you're doing [or not]. … I told you about the training manuals, … how to change oil and what have you. I was also vector control officer. I didn't know what the heck that was, but that's rodents and mice. [laughter] …

SH: Really?

CB: Yes.

SH: Where was this at?

CB: That was Fort Hood, yes. Also at Fort Hood, I had to represent a young man at a court-martial and I forget what it was about, but he was in the brig and had to go before a court-martial board and, again, I said, "What the heck do I know?" and they said, "You're a college graduate, right?" I said, "Yes." So, I became an attorney. …

SH: Did you get him off?

CB: Yes. It was serious enough to put him in the brig, but, you know, it wasn't murder or anything like that, but interesting process. I mean, … they make you read a manual, this is how you defend somebody in a court-martial. [laughter]

SH: How often were court-martials held in Vietnam?

CB: In my unit, very infrequently. We tended to have, and, again, the unit was a little bit different than most units, because, well, the LRRP guys were pretty wild and young, but the rest of them were all pretty well trained, because they were helicopter mechanics and what have you and had been in the military. We were a lot closer, I think, officers to enlisted men, than most units. So, we were also fortunate enough to be there pre-drug Vietnam, I mean, a few instances of marijuana, but none of the other stuff … hit there yet. I was also awards and decorations officer. …

SH: What does that entail?

CB: I was the guy that sat down and wrote up all of the [recommendations]. Unlike Presidential candidate [John] Kerry, I wrote up everybody else's award recommendations. I would not write up my own and that's kind of my sarcastic comment here [on the survey], "More than I wanted, fewer than I deserved," because I wouldn't write them, but that was, again, my buddy, Russ, said, "Hey, Burns was the editor of his high school newspaper." So, it was okay. Everything was embellished, … somehow.

SH: Which awards did you receive?

CB: More than I wanted and fewer than I deserve. I did get a Purple Heart and I did not get a bullet through my body. I broke some bones and cracked up my back in a terrible helicopter crash, which we can talk about, and the rest of the stuff is, you know, I really don't care to talk about. Another reason why Colonel Peterson liked me, I was also, informal job, … beer and soda officer. [laughter] Since we're only twenty-five miles from Saigon, which was a major supply source, every time we got low on beer and soda, the Colonel would [tell me to] fly. I'd get a day in Saigon and my buddy, Larry Fenton, who got the hotel, Larry would arrange, I think it was Larry, … a five-ton or a ten-ton truck for me and the payment would be cases of beer and soda and I'd go around Saigon, scrounging up beer and soda, and then, call the unit back in Cu Chi and say, "I need one helicopter, two helicopters," depending upon how successful my day was. So, I was a very popular guy, [laughter] and then, I'd get to hang out at the Tan Son Nhut Airport and wait to see who I'd see, you know, guys from Rutgers would come.

SH: Really?

CB: Coming through. I'd say, "Don't I know you? Yes, I know you." That was also kind of a social experience, and then, I would go to the PX and make sure I bought back a couple of bottles of bourbon for Colonel Peterson [laughter] and bourbon, … liquor was a dollar a bottle and soda was something like two bucks a six pack or something like that. So, you know, you didn't dilute it too much. [laughter] Go ahead.

SI: Were conditions a little better at the base for officers, living conditions or liquor rations, for example?

CB: Yes, ostensibly, the enlisted men couldn't drink. The Colonel had his own private hootch and more senior majors had two in a hootch and us lieutenants, oh, what's a hootch? about as big

as the kitchen, this room and that room. … We essentially had two four-by-eight pieces of plywood, … so, what's that, eight-by-eight? That was our space and the enlisted men would have been packed in much heavier, but the same structure, … same size. There may have been twelve or fifteen or twenty of them in there. What's the other part of your question?

SI: Other things that officers may have had that the men did not.

CB: … Beer, or at least legal access to it.

SI: If the enlisted men were drinking, was that overlooked?

CB: Yes. You know, it's pretty much, Shaun, … when the siren went off or you were assigned to do something and you were ready, you were ready, yes, and, again, we were pre-drug, … at least in our unit, so, we didn't run into any of those problems. I never had, personally, … a situation where anybody I was flying with was incapable of performing their duty.

SH: Did you ever know of anyone who refused to get onboard or perform?

CB: Very early on, Sandra, we had some really young enlisted men who never should have gotten to Vietnam, let me put it that way. So, they were given clerical duties some place or what have you. No, nobody just said, "I'm not going," or what have you. In the beginning at least, you know, it's pretty frightening.

SH: The next thing on our list to talk about is crashes and there are several stories here.

CB: One's pretty; I may have to pause, went down a couple of times. One was just an engine failure.

SH: Were you in a combat situation at that point or were you returning?

CB: Not direct combat, but we were on a mission, but the second time is, let me see, the Captain's name's here, I don't know if I shouldn't put these on there. … We were on a mission, right outside of Cu Chi. Cu Chi is famous for its tunnels, the VC tunnels … under it and through us or what have you and we were out on this mission, … thinking we're going to find a whole big unit and we didn't and the infantry platoon was up there on the slicks, just waiting for us to find it. So, two of us are out there in gunships and we start getting fire and I'm convinced it was just one guy … in a hole, hiding when we came and got up, and then, firing at us, but, anyway, … I guess we made four or five passes … and my fuel warning light came on, probably on the third pass, which means, it's like a car, when you really don't know how much is in there, but it's on. They'd probably tell you you've got fifteen minutes, but who knows? So, I radio the team leader up front, I say, "Hey, the light's been on. It's been on for five minutes and, you know, I really should go back," and he says, "No, let's make one more pass," and, at this point, the infantry platoon in the four slicks was back refueling themselves. So, they're not sitting up there anymore. So, on the last pass, I had my tail rotor shot off. … I heard it; the tail rotor pedals, nothing happens. I said to the door gunner, "I got a tail rotor?" He goes, "No, we don't got one." Well, the theory is, which is the right theory, … you bring it in like a 747, a helicopter,

because you want to maintain, at least in a Huey, sixty-five miles an hour, because the air stream effect will keep you going forward. The reason for the tail rotor is to keep you straight, … when you're not going sixty-five miles an hour. …

----------END OF TAPE TWO, SIDE TWO----------

SI: This continues an interview with Mr. Carl Burns on October 8, 2004, in Manalapan, New Jersey. Please, continue.

CB: Okay, we're back to [where] the tail rotor's shot off and, again, the theory is, you land it like an airplane and you put the skids down on the ground. That would slow you and protect you. [I] didn't think I had enough fuel to get back and, besides the point, I would have to bring it back over a piece of jungle which was called the Iron Triangle. It was trees this tall and I said, "I don't want to land on top of those either, plus, that's where some more enemy is." So, I said to the crew, I said, "I'm going to just try to dump this in a rice paddy," you know, figuring … these things are three, four feet of water and rice things. … So, it was a good idea. The problem was, I hit the dike instead of the paddy and you don't have a lot of control, again, because you've got to come in very, very fast. So, we hit and went back up again in the air and started spinning and I saw Ruth Ann, in the clouds, I'll get over it, saying, "Damn it, don't die, Carl." The infantry platoon, who's back up; … at this point, the helicopter was in I don't know how many pieces. The main cabin is intact. They built these things good. The tail section's off, the rotor's over here, this and that. Luckily, it didn't have any fuel in it, because it would have gone up in flames, and my buddy's up in the [slick], John (Alto?), who was the lieutenant in charge of the infantry platoon. He's going, "Holy shit, they're dead." Lieutenant goes, "Wait a minute, here's one." We all get out. "There's two, there's three, there's four," and we look, there's hardly any helicopter. … They came down and got us and, apparently, it was only one guy, because nobody else came after us. As we secured our perimeter, I looked up and there were no clouds. To get back to the medal stories, I will tell you a little bit of something. … Next day, two days later maybe, the Colonel says to me, "I've got three things I can do. I can give you a medal, court-martial the Captain or do nothing." So, I says, "Well, you know what? The door gunner and my crew chief came to the field hospital, they snuck in to say thanks with a handshake and a six-pack of beer last night and that's enough," but you're only the third people to hear that Ruth Ann story.

SH: Powerful incentive.

SI: Would you like to pause for a moment?

CB: No, I'm fine. What else have we got here? Another thing you learned in the military is, an officer always carries a clipboard, because somebody thinks you're doing something important, [laughter] even when we'd go to the PX. …

SH: Did Cu Chi wind up with its own PX?

CB: No, but, you know, … at the end, I don't know what the end is, so, let me fast-forward this to '67, late '66, '67. They started building officers' clubs and, to a lot of us, that was just the

wrong signal, the mixed signal. You know, it was fine to have the beer at the hootch and the what have you and sit around and rap and joke and drink, whatever you were going to do. By that time, they also brought in nurses, so [that] there were women on base, very different than nowadays. So, that was kind of different, too. …

SH: Had there always been a hospital?

CB: … Sandra, I don't believe so, but, as we built up and became full strength. So, the last thing I wanted to do was go to an officers' club, run into some nurses or what have you. The other thing that nurses had that we had to take away was our piss tubes. We had latrines in the back, but we had artillery casings out there on the side of the road. So, when you get up in the morning, you would stand there and [relieve yourself]. "Oh, we got nurses. You can't use the piss tubes anymore." [laughter]

SH: The nurses were assigned to a specific building.

CB: Yes, yes, military terminology. [laughter]

SH: Always descriptive.

CB: One of the first things I learned, … here's another one, the fifty-fifty; when I first got to Fort Hood, as a brand-new second lieutenant, "What the heck am I going to do now?" Captain, whatever his name is, he says, "Damn it, Burns, make a decision. You've got a fifty-fifty chance of being right," [laughter] and he says, "If you've got any brains at all, it's probably a little bit better than fifty-fifty," … and some other of the military stuff is, you know, you make a decision, and then, if it doesn't go the right way, if you're smart, you figure out how to make it go right. Go ahead, you can go wherever you want here.

SH: I would like to go back to the crash. Where were you hospitalized when you came out?

CB: At the base.

SH: Infirmary?

CB: Hospital, yes, infirmary. It wasn't much of a [hospital], you know; as I said, some back problems and a few broken bones and we were lucky. We were lucky. …

SH: How soon were you back on duty?

CB: A week, which was probably too long, because one of the military theories is, particularly if you're a pilot, to get you back up there as soon as you can. …

SI: Were there superstitions that people had about flying, good luck charms or routines you always followed, for example?

CB: I don't think there was anything, troop wise or what have you?

SH: Others on your crew?

CB: Yes, … Pancho had some sort of religious medal, but, you know, that's not a superstition. I carried, most times, a copy of the New Testament, pocket-sized, in my pocket.

SH: Did you have a chaplain assigned to your …

CB: Particular unit? Well, not our squadron, but, yes, there were chaplains.

SH: At Cu Chi?

CB: Yes, and, actually, I think the only time I went was when Ruth Ann was there. …

SI: Were there regular services?

CB: Yes, yes. I've got some pictures of that, too, a bamboo cross or something outside the tent which was the chapel and, of course, in the military, it doesn't matter what religion you were; you got whatever chaplain was there.

SI: How integrated was your unit? Integrated may not be the right term. Was it a mix of black, white and Latino soldiers?

CB: The officer corps was all, mostly, Caucasian, if not all, and we had three distinct groups of enlisted men, which is interesting. You bring this up now, I'm going to have to think. Some of the Latinos, actually, we had a Puerto Rican pilot, too, but, again, I don't know where to categorize him and the enlisted men were three groups, Hispanics, Italians, Italians came out of Chicago, so, I guess there was an Italian recruiting officer in Chicago, [laughter] and most of the blacks were either from Alabama or Mississippi and, again, another thing the military teaches you very quickly is, you don't care what the color or the language is of the guy next to you that's got the gun. You want to make sure he knows how to use the gun and that becomes very, very clear, except when they get back into the hootches at night. Then, they would segregate themselves, but, in terms of any racial problems or anything, no. They were just all interested in, "How good is he?"

SI: How did weather affect your job?

CB: It was hot. [laughter] I mean, I forget what is rainy season and what is dry season over there, but it's always hot. When we first got there, we all just sweated. As I mentioned, the poor guys from Alaska were just [roasting]. In terms of flying, the heat and the humidity affect the lift capability of a helicopter very much. So, if you're fully loaded or what have you, sometimes, it was pretty tough getting it … off the ground. In terms of … the rainy season, boy, when it rained, it rained … and I remember, one day, coming back from Tay Ninh, all by myself, in the OH-13 observation helicopter, when this storm just came up and there had to be a dozen thunderstorms. … I didn't want to go down, because the bad guys were down there and I'm all alone. So, I'm flying in-between these thunderheads and hoping, when I come out from this

thing, I knew where I'd be, that happened and, during the rainy season, you were just always wet. I mean, you couldn't get anything dry. We had trenches dug all through our encampment with pallets, which was our sidewalks, and so, during the rainy season, they would, essentially, fill up, which brings me to another interesting story. Showers, showers, somewhere, I have a shower. Again, some of the guys were very handy, so, they built showers. They took empty fifty-five gallon, fifty-two dollars a gallon, oil drums [laughter] laying there and put them up top. You filled them with water during the daytime and the hundred degree temperature would give you a nice, hot shower. So, I'm coming back from the shower one night, walking on the pallets, with my towel wrapped around me and my little plastic thing holding the soap bar and I hear this [whistling sound], in coming, and, of course, if you hear it, you're okay, because that means you're by it, but I'm almost back to my hootch. Some of the guys in the hootch are hearing this, too, and they're looking at me and they said my eyes were like this. [laughter] … We had bunkers, uncovered, but sandbagged bunkers, I guess in-between every hootch or something like that, or every other hootch. So, we all go running in. Again, I'm in my towel, … everybody else is [there]. So, I go jumping in. I'm the next to the last guy jumping into this and, by this time, they're bracketing, I guess is the proper artillery term. So, they're really trying to get the helicopters, that's what they're trying to do. So, then, they were coming in. So, I jump in and I've got no clothes on at this point and this big major, he had to be the biggest guy we had, kind of like your football player, [Mark Segaloff], he jumps in on top of me. He says, "Sorry, Burns," and I said, "Major, you can just lay there as long as you want, [laughter] because you're on top." … In terms of fearful moments, that's more fearful than being in a gunship and being in a firefight, because you're … helpless and you're just laying there. It's kind of like Kneller in his foxhole [in the Battle of the Bulge], with the big tank coming to [get him]. You know, you kind of just [lay there], and then, we laughed. We went and had a couple of beers.

SI: How often did Cu Chi come under mortar attack?

CB: Well, probably, Cu Chi was, I'm trying to think, what can I give you, in terms of size? It was large enough to land C-130s or some pretty big … propeller-driven aircraft. So, given that, the runway had to be a couple thousand feet, because these aircraft were pretty short-landing capable; probably, once a month, at some part of Cu Chi. We just got it in our particular area a couple or three times. … They knew where the helicopters were. Right or wrong, mama'san would come in once a week and pick up our fatigues and take them to the laundry downtown and what have you. …

SI: Were you instructed not to say things in front of the Vietnamese women that would come in or to be careful around the Vietnamese workers?

CB: Again, we were probably naïve enough to think they didn't understand English, but they do, enough to clean and starch our uniforms and what have you. …

SH: Was there ever any fraternization between the locals and the men on the base?

CB: What kind of fraternization are you talking about?

SH: You can tell me.

CB: That kind? [laughter]

SI: Or any kind.

CB: … I was watching *Gunsmoke* the last couple of nights and Miss Kitty was running a cathouse, [laughter] so, if that's what you're talking about, and I'm surprised. It was like me watching the old Popeye cartoons, back in the '50s; there's some really, I don't want to say deep stuff in things like *Gunsmoke*. Yes, I'm not so sure it was around Cu Chi too much, but we all got at least one in-country R&R. Absolutely, it was there, not personally, no, not personally, a place called Vung Tau, where most of us went, which … used to be a French resort, which … had to be very beautiful back when it was a French resort, … and I don't know how often the enlisted men got out. I'm sure there was more between the nurses and the guys, once the nurses got there.

SI: When you first started seeing Vietnam and the customs of the people, was there any culture shock at just how different things were there? What did you notice?

CB: Poverty; culture shock, I don't know, be careful here, too. I served a lot of my military time in the Southern portion of the United States, so, I had already been culture shocked in some ways [laughter] and that's not denigrating anybody. I mean, it's just different environments. Again, Shaun, I think that the general living conditions that were there, I didn't see anybody starving. I've been to other places in the world since then where I've run into real poverty and saw people that didn't have enough to eat. … When you get down to Saigon, you see kids sleeping on the sidewalk. That's kind of an eye opener. The conditions in the villages were very Spartan. I mean, this is where you're talking about the thatched roof huts and what have you, a lot of kids. Really, you know, you saw it and you began to accept it. I'm sure, in different parts of the country, you know, you ask that same question of different people, you'll probably get a completely different answer. Most of the people were friendly, at least during the daytime. We never knew at night. I mentioned that the little kids were shining shoes at the helicopter and [we were] wondering where their older brother was. … Other than what I said, I really can't think anything that was a shock, again, because we were kind of prepared for it without being prepared for it. I guess I'm done with that one, unless you want to follow up on that. …

SH: You talked about looking over and seeing the Vietnamese generals hovering in the helicopter, out of harm's way. Did you ever have any interaction with the South Vietnamese military, other than at a distance?

CB: Person-to-person? no, no.

SI: Were there joint operations?

CB: Oh, yes, never face-to-face, like we're doing it here. At least in the area of the country I was in, Americans always took the brunt of the battle, always. Sometimes I think we had the, careful here, … wrong Vietnamese group fighting with us. If we had the Vietcong fighting with us, we probably would have gotten out of there. They were better trained, more committed and I

don't say that in a negative sense, … just the reality, personal observation, particularly when you get out into the villages and what have you, these Vietnamese people had no idea what democracy is, they had no idea what their government was, they knew nothing, other than their, I'll call it their village chief. … I don't think mayor is the right term, but you get an idea. So, there was no reason for them to be committed to anything besides their village, and then, the further out you got, the Vietcong would come back in at nighttime and run the place. So, you know, how much of a commitment are you going to give? …

SH: When you picked up the long range reconnaissance groups, did they ever bring back prisoners of war?

CB: No, that was not their job. …

SH: Did you ever rescue any South Vietnamese military at all?

CB: Not personally.

SH: Did you render humanitarian aid in any way?

CB: Some of the slicks would bring back prisoners from certain battles, but, no, the long range guys, their job was to get in, to observe and get out of there.

SI: Were they like regular infantrymen or were they more like Green Berets?

CB: … They weren't Green Berets. They were probably someplace in-between, okay. They were, essentially, young kids that wanted to do something exciting and crazy.

SI: They came from within your division.

CB: Correct. No, they were not Green Berets.

SH: Did your unit or your group have a nickname? You talked about the helicopter being called *Pancho Villa*.

CB: Yes, we were Centaur, a flying horse?

SI: It is a horse with a man's head.

CB: Yes, we were Centaur. So, we'd be Centaur 1, 2, 3 or 4 or whatever.

SI: Did your unit have any kind of unique garb? Did you wear cavalry hats or anything like that?

CB: Yes, that's another area where things were pretty lose. I had a cavalry hat, you know, the hat with the one side up. That's where I first grew a mustache. [laughter]

SH: Which he still has today.

CB: Yes, another story, maybe I told you this. My daughter was, I don't know, five, six years old and I decided to shave it off one day and I walked out of the bathroom and she screamed. She didn't know … who the heck it was. [laughter] "Okay, it grows back." Actually, it was a handlebar back then. That was another thing we kind of did. We were pretty cocky, being cavalrymen, as they said.

SI: There was a lot of *esprit de corps*.

CB: Yes, absolutely. I think the first unit, when I was at Fort Hood, "the First of the First," this goes back to Kit Carson days and all that stuff.

SH: Your notes.

CB: Oh, that was just the one I forgot about, … my little [Veteran's Day] ceremony at the fraternity house last year, "Who would you bring in a foxhole with you?" "My mom, my wife and Frank Kneller." Ruth Ann doesn't like the fact that I'm bringing my mom in the same hole. [laughter] [Reading], "Battle worthy?" I don't know … what I was reaching at there, Sandy.

SH: You have a note here about C rations. I was going to ask you about the food and the supplies. How often did you get mail?

CB: When we first got to Cu Chi, we got about three weeks worth of mail, because they didn't deliver it to the ship or to Hawaii. Everything was fast-forwarded, so, that was kind of fun. Mail came pretty frequently. In fact, a side note, … the first member of the 25th Infantry Division to be killed in Vietnam was the division mail clerk, an incoming round, yes, so, he would never see. Mail came rather frequently. Food, military tradition is, number one, that enlisted men eat first and the officers eat last. Well, it didn't make any difference. They served us mashed potatoes and roast beef with gravy and it's a hundred degrees outside. … C rations, I loved it when they put me in a helicopter and say, "Go out to Tay Ninh," or something, "for a couple of days, take some boxes." I'd eat ten-year old scrambled eggs and ham in a can. [laughter] No, the food was good; the bread always had bugs in it. It was just the reality of being over there, but, no, we were never short of food. It was just what they tried to feed us. That was another advantage of me being the beer and soda officer, because I had a couple cans of beer or soda. I lost twenty-five pounds over there. I think most of us lost weight, just the heat. … You know, you didn't want to eat at noontime and, very often, you weren't around for breakfast. …

SH: If there was a major medical problem, where would you be sent?

CB: Saigon, yes. That would be the absolute nearest.

SH: When you left Vietnam, what did you think was going to happen? How was the war progressing in your mind? Based on what you had seen firsthand, what did you think was going to happen next?

CB: Somewhere after that terrible helicopter [crash], oh, it was even after that, if you read the rest of Ruth Ann's article, you see I was pretty bullish about the effort in the beginning, and then, it got to a point where many of us said to ourselves, you know, "What are we accomplishing?" It's not that we weren't protecting each other or doing what we were supposed to do, but they really came to the realization, I said, "All we're doing is killing each other," and, again, it's not like World War II, where you gain twelve miles one day and lost a mile the next day. … Philosophically, at least amongst most of the officers I knew, we were just started [saying], you know, "What's going on?" Killing people is not the right thing to do, number one. I think we all went with that attitude, but we went because it was our duty, but all you see was, you know, dead bodies, on your side, dead bodies, on the other side, and then, nothing happening and some filtering in of what's going on back home. You know, that's where I bring up things about [how] I guess I was more concerned about my family than me, the family back home.

SH: They were being persecuted …

CB: Well, not persecuted, but, you know, "What's going on?" "I've got my son or my husband over there," and, you know, what's the attitudes back home? So, that … became very much of a concern, rather than personal fear or what have you, but, again, beginning to question, you know, "What are we accomplishing here?" I had no problem with my leaders or the people I served with. It became, you know, "What the hell are the politicians back home [doing]? Why do they constrain us?" you know, beginning to figure out they're not letting us do what we should be doing here to win … this thing.

SH: When you say, "Do what you needed to do," what was lacking?

CB: … I don't have that answer, okay, because I was not back here pulling those strings. I think, in terms of tactics and things, at the level I was at …

SH: That is what I mean.

CB: I know how we adjusted. I just don't think we had the commitment. I know we didn't have the commitment from back here and manpower wasn't … the only answer. We probably made a mistake going in in the first place, but history will tell us that. The French were smart enough to leave. [laughter] …

SH: Where were you getting your information about what was going on at home, letters or the news? How were you getting your news?

CB: Some of it letters, some of it from other guys who were getting newspapers. … We weren't completely [shut out], no television or anything. I guess we had our equivalent of Tokyo Rose, when we had radios, Saigon Sally, whatever the hell her name was, giving us the propaganda for the other side, leaflets. I'm trying to think what my family sent me, you know, letters, newspaper clippings, and, again, the professor, you know who I mean, whose name I never want to remember [Eugene D. Genovese, then-Assistant Professor of History at Rutgers University]. My family would send me the sporting news once a week. So, I was always two weeks behind on baseball and what was going on, but at least I got it, I read it. I think it was mainly just

correspondence and things that we were getting from back home … and we'd sit around and talk. … As we're talking here, there's something about being in a combat situation in the military where you have some very intense moments, and then, you've got many moments of boredom, nothing to do or what have you and you would sit and would rap. We also got, and I forget the name of the military newspaper …

SH: *Stars and Stripes*.

CB: *Stars and Stripes*.

SH: Did you pick up Radio Saigon?

CB: Like *Good Morning, Vietnam*? [laughter] Yes, but, you know, I don't know if any of us had radios, so, I don't know how that … word would have filtered in.

SH: I know that music was really important on other installations that I am aware of.

CB: … You're testing my memory here, in terms of what non-military technology we had. … I don't think we had radios.

SH: Tell us about a typical day, the briefing, the debriefing, the body counts; how was that information disseminated?

CB: First of all, there was no typical day. Some days, again, because of the uniqueness of our unit, you would actually know that you were off. Sometimes, we were part of a larger operation, so that we would get more World War II types of briefings and debriefings and what have you. Most times, again, with our type of unit, we were in support of somebody and would come back or be on our own mission.

SH: How did you find out what your mission was?

CB: The larger the operation, probably the day before, and it would be, you know, formal, again, like the movies, where all the officers would be sitting in a room or something like that. The enlisted men would probably find out two minutes before we [took off], exaggeration perhaps, but, you know, a closer timeframe, tighter timeframe. For smaller stuff, if we're going out as a helicopter team or what have you or the observation [helicopter], we would know the day before, "Okay, Burns, you've got to get up at five-thirty in the morning and you're going to fly up Route 1 to Nui Ba Den and call back any problems," or what have you. … There was a major installation up there by Tay Ninh, which was by the Cambodian border, and there was a convoy every day that left Saigon that would go that fifty or so miles. So, that was critical, like the convoys in Iraq right now, and, sometimes, it was, you know, the siren went off and you just responded. "Hey, we're going to go … out here to this particular zone and let's see what's out there," or, "Guys are in trouble," or what have you. So, you know, it was all kinds of briefings or no briefings or you … kind of fly by your pants.

SH: When you returned, did you have to report?

CB: Oh, yes, body counts. Generally, the answer was, "How the hell do I know?" because, most times, other than that one incident I told you, when I was down in the Delta, where … the poor guy was out there in the rice paddies, there was no doubt, most times, the opposition was … at the edge of the jungle line. "So, I don't know, I expended twenty rockets and all of my machine gun ammunition and you want a number, sure." … Usually, we would be told that, I hate to say this, "Was it ten or twelve?" At this point, you know, you're tired, you almost lost your life and, "Sure," and, you know, that was part of the BS, too, that began to bother [us] a lot. … You know, we lost two and they lost five hundred? and that was political pressure, too. Again, maybe in other situations, they could be much better defined. …

SH: Did you ever attend any USO shows?

CB: My buddy, Bob Hope. Bob Hope came to Cu Chi. I was probably 150 yards away from the stage. … Half the division had to be there when he came. I admire him and he brought Joey Heatherton, who, back then, had the best pair of legs of the decade, [laughter] and some group called the Korean Kittens. They were three, a trio of young Korean ladies who sang or what have you, yes, a nice event. I think we were fortunate enough to have that somewhere around … the Christmas holidays, too. … We had a visit from, and I wish I'd saved the photograph, see how much of a baseball fan you are, Joe Torre came to Cu Chi. Someday, I'll write him a letter to see whether he's got a photo I don't. So, I got to shake his [hand]. He was with the St. Louis Cardinals. I'm sure there were some other people that came with him. … Speaking about kids, you pick me up, we had a Christmas party for, I don't know, a couple of dozen Cu Chi kids, who cried when they saw Santa Claus, because they didn't know who the heck Santa Claus was. [laughter] We fed them, we gave them presents, we sang songs, you know, but they didn't like Santa Claus. [laughter] I can't think of anything else, but the Bob Hope visit was big. …

SH: When we look at the newsreels from Vietnam, we see a large Catholic presence and, also, the Buddhists, such as in that famous scene where the Buddhist monk sets himself on fire in protest. Did you ever see any of the Buddhists or the temples?

CB: Ruth Ann and I did visit a Buddhist temple in Saigon, when she was there. We were also lucky, because I guess we saw some things in Saigon that [most do not]. We spent two weeks there. So, the photographer who took those pictures lived in Saigon and kind of took us around some places and pointed us to some places, but, no, as far as the countryside, no.

SH: Before we end the interview, I would like to reserve the right to come back for a follow up interview.

CB: … Again, you guys can keep on going. … I thought I would be more comfortable here, which proved to be right, the first time, but, you know, I'm at Rutgers enough, if you want to do fill-ins. I'm looking at my notes here. … Back stateside, we used to have nickel beer night at the officers' club; … I think beers were twenty-five cents back then, so, nickel beer night was big, from six to eight, and we used to play a game called Liar's Dice. … Have you ever played Liar's Poker or anything like that? … We do this with dollar bills nowadays, but you put six dice in a little thing and shake it up and you turn it over and you look and you say, "I've got

three sixes." So, another one says, "I challenge you." So, I either have them or I don't. So, if I have them, you lost, you buy the round. So, there'd generally be six or eight of us there. So, along about ten minutes of eight, we'd say to the nice waitress at the officers' club, "Bring eight more, because they're going up to a quarter in ten minutes." [laughter] I think it was Tuesday nights; it could have been two nights a week. …

SI: One question, I was doing a little research on the bubble observer helicopters yesterday. From what I read, it seems like it could be very complicated, between flying the helicopter, doing your observations, and then, sometimes, firing weapons, in addition.

CB: Okay, no, we were not armed.

SH: Even personally?

CB: Well, we had our .45s. No, the helicopter was not being used as a weapons platform, although, because, again, we were unique in having this infantry platoon and the LRRPs, if they were sitting around and didn't do anything for a week, we would put one in the left-hand seat or something and go out and [do] whatever we were doing. I compare it to driving a MG stick shift, as compared to the Huey, which is a Cadillac that's fully hydraulically controlled, much more manual. I happened to like the little Bell myself. I just felt more in control, if I can put it that way. It was fun. I don't think it was any more challenging than the Huey. It was just different, in terms of the mechanical ability of the machine.

SH: Did any of the technology change from the time you were trained and sent to Vietnam and when you came back? Had they made adjustments?

CB: More powerful helicopters. I explained that to you, that when I got there, they beefed up the horsepower, if I can use that terminology, in the Hueys, and then, … I left before the Cobras got there. So, that was a big change in technology and, I would guess, in tactics, too, because of the capability of the helicopter.

SI: Did they have any attack helicopters when you were there?

CB: Well, the Hueys were.

SI: None of the smaller ones.

CB: No, no, I don't know anybody that used them as a weapon's platform.

SH: Was Cu Chi host to any of the politicians that came from the States to visit Vietnam?

CB: I'm sure it was, but … I don't remember being there when it happened, but, yes, it would have been, because, a number of reasons, we had a whole division there. It was only twenty-five miles from Saigon, yes, but I can't remember when. I do remember Joe Torre, now the New York Yankees manager, visiting.

----------END OF TAPE THREE, SIDE ONE----------

CB: He never took a shower, either, [laughter] except when he was out in the rain. He was a mutt, Chopper. …

SH: Did you want to tell us any other stories about (Gifford?), who you said was a flight instructor?

CB: No, … that was just my own note, I had Fort Wolters written down here and flight instructors and I was talking to my friend, Russ, the other day and … we remembered his name. … He was a Korean War vet.

SH: You talked about the serious chopper crash. Were there others that we did not talk about?

CB: No, you heard about the two most important ones. … You always had some sort of, not always, you've heard me talk before, mechanical failures with military equipment happened frequently, and so, the one was I got shot down, the other one was just a complete engine failure. I did go down a few other times, but those were the [big ones], and we had other guys that went down.

SH: Shot down?

CH: Yes, my buddy, Russ, … he got shot. He got hit by a .50-caliber, from the ground, which pretty much tore off his tail section, but we were lucky, as a unit, in terms of deaths, lucky or good, I don't know, a lot of wounds, but not too many deaths. … We lost more than a few; I guess the Hueys were eight hundred thousand dollar helicopters back then, probably five million nowadays, who knows?

SH: You talked about the two men who were part of your crew. Did they stay with you the whole year?

CB: Let me answer that in a broader [sense]. We went over as a division. So, we all pretty much went over in March and April and May of '66, so, we stayed until, I'm going to say January, February of '67, where they started rotating guys out, to bring new people in, because they don't want everybody to leave at the same time, whereas the units that had been there before, then, there was constant turnover, but, you know, when you send a whole division at one point, [everyone is green].

SH: Was there any thought that you would have to stay longer than a year?

CB: Fear or thought? [laughter] … When you know your assignment is a year, believe me, you start counting backwards. I don't care whether you're a PFC or a captain, "365 bottles of beer," … you just keep on counting backwards. No, I don't think there was. Coming back stateside, though, they were offering us guarantees, … particularly helicopter pilots, "Extend your duty and we guarantee not to send you back," right. So, I could have extended up to one month or six months or what have you. I say, "With my MOS?" Another story about leaving, however, it did

go commercial airliner, coming back, and, again, I don't know who it was, but we were lined up at a place called Bein Hoa, which was outside of Saigon, had thrown away our dirty fatigues and everything else and they said, "You've got to stay another day." Were we one ticked off group; at that point, "Another day, huh?" and then, we got to Tan Son Nhut, the airport at Saigon, and they got us lined up again and it may have been in uniforms, I mean, not even khaki, I mean, dress uniforms and, when the group came off the airplane that just came in from the States, boy, did we give them a hell of a cheer, [laughter] saying, "We're getting out of here and good luck."

SH: Did you start doing things any differently as you became a short timer?

CB: In Vietnam?

SH: Were you doing anything a little more cautiously?

CB: I don't remember that. I talked about the attitudinal change. Again, back to one of Shaun's, the bonding that you have with the people you're serving with, you take care of each other. Just like the times I was on the ground, whether it be engine failure or being shot down, I absolutely knew that whoever was up there was coming. …

SI: Would your commander not send you out as much as you got towards the end of your tour?

CB: That's probably fair, a fair assessment. Yes, I think so. It's not that we wouldn't. As I say, that's when I started flying the slicks and I'm not so sure that was … a favor or not. [laughter] … Yes, you tend to let the newer guys fly more hours, for a number of reasons. Let them get their experience, although we would fly somebody that's been there for a longer time with the guy that's new, again, just like [when] I went down to the Delta in the beginning.

SH: What was the best piece of advice that you received or gave while you were coming in or leaving?

CB: Well, that's one you may have to come back for. "Come back alive," how's that one, but I can't answer that, Sandy. … I'll really have to think about that, because, again, … "Come back alive." … Then, when you're in the heat of battle, you don't even think about that, I mean, you don't. You've got to do what you've got to do and you do it.

SI: Some of the combat veterans that we have interviewed spoke about going through different phases of attitude, going from, "I am invincible," to, "I might die at any time."

SH: Becoming very fatalistic.

CB: I was invincible. [laughter] I never became fatalistic. So, where did … I stop? … You're invincible because you don't know. Until the first time you're fired at and you fire back, you don't know and I think you could talk to World War I, Korean, World War II guys and they'll give you that same [idea], you just really don't know, and then, when you come back from that particular engagement, you kind of figure out, "Geez, maybe I'm not invincible, maybe I was lucky. … How am I going to survive the next one?" So, you learn, … but you get over that,

"I'm invincible," stuff really quick. I don't know anybody that I served with that became fatalistic. I was going to say, we probably may have become more cautious, but being cautious is also part of becoming more experienced, like, "Gee, that was really stupid. I'm not going to do that one again," [laughter] as I describe that one experience of coming in the side door, with the enemy in the foxholes. So, you learn. I don't think I ever had any experience, with either the officers I was living with or fighting with or any of the enlisted men where somebody was fatalistic or completely negative, if I can put it that way. I mean, there was, you know, a lot of, "I wish I wasn't here, [laughter] but we're here, 250 more to go." …

SH: How did you view the enemy? We have spoken with World War II veterans who really thought that the Japanese were subhuman or they respected the Germans because of their military demeanor.

CB: Well, you could probably ask a hundred people that question and get a hundred different answers. We had nasty nicknames for them. I'm sure they had [them for us]. Nasty's probably not the right word, not nice names. I'm sure they had the same types of names for us. We … didn't always know who our enemy was. That's another [thing], you know, the old black pajama story. They all wore black pajamas, … as we called them. "Are they our side or their side?" Even if they're carrying a rifle, I don't know who the heck they are. I think we were more disappointed in [the] effort that we were getting from the Vietnamese who were on our side. So, that's probably where a lot of our negative discussions oriented towards, "Why are we the guys being up front? Hey, it's their country," but, then, you learned that a lot of them didn't even think about their country, it was only their village or what have you, a lot of corruptness. I didn't see that firsthand, but, you know, a lot of conversation about that.

SH: The black market and things like that.

CB: Oh, yes, probably within the military, too, [on] their side, who served and who didn't serve. I guess that goes on in this country, too. [laughter]

SH: How did it impact the man you are today? Is that a question we should ask in a follow-up or are you prepared to answer that today?

CB: Probably all of the above. I think I'm basically the same person, with the values that I was raised with. I know I'm different; I'm not so sure I can tell you how I'm different. I think I certainly value individual life more, not that I didn't value it before. I'm probably more sensitive than I would have been. Different time and age, … I may have taken my kids to Canada. I wouldn't have done it, but, you know, something like that, certainly, a thought that would enter my mind, you know, "Is this worth it?" I feel for everyone in Iraq. I'm not so sure we should be there, either, but, the decision was made. … There's probably a lot deeper thoughts and another twenty minutes worth of conversation here or answers, but, you know, … that's basically it. I think I'm probably more committed to helping others. … I shouldn't say that, because I wanted to be a minister or history teacher, at one point, … and, again, very more sensitive when, … you know, you see the stuff on the television or what have you, be it Afghanistan or Iraq. … If I can use the term, you know, war sucks and there's worse words, but that's essentially the situation. …

SH: Thank you very, very much.

CB: Well, I thank you.

SI: Thank you.

CB: And there went our Friday. [laughter]

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

Reviewed by Shaun Illingworth 2/16/05
Reviewed by Carl Burns 4/28/05