Marc Reynolds

Air Force

Salt Lake City, Utah

"Escalation"

Interviewer

Give us your full name.

Marc Reynolds

Marc C. Reynolds.

Interviewer

And you were born where?

Marc Reynolds

Chamberlain, South Dakota.

Interviewer

You went to school there? How did you end up going into the Air Force?

Marc Reynolds

Of course, I graduated from high school in 1946. The war ended a few months prior to that, so I went to school for one year in South Dakota and then went to the University of Denver and finished at the University of Denver in '49. And stayed right there and worked in Denver. Then the Korean War came along, and within 24 hours after that started, I was in the Air Force.

Interviewer

Had you been in ROTC or anything like that?

Marc Reynolds

Nope, I just went downtown Denver and found a recruiting office and signed up for the aviation cadet program. I got a class call in January 15th, 1951. I graduated a year after that as a Second Lieutenant, and the rest is history.

Interviewer

Well, we need to know that history. What did you go into?

Marc Reynolds

Well, I went into pilot training, and like I say, that was a year. In February of 1952, I graduated. At that time the ADC, the American Defense Command, was building up because of the Russian threat. The Air Force was in the process of designing and ordering what we call Air Defense Fighters. They needed people at that time. They took our class and split it in two and I was in the half that went off to ADC. I went down to Moody Air Force Base in Georgia and checked out in jets--F80s and T33s. And then, down to Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida and checked out in one of

the Air Defense Fighters. It was an F-89. And from there to Hamilton Air Force Base in California, and flew that airplane for a while, and then moved up to Paine Field just north of Seattle for another six months. And then I went to Okinawa. I got to Okinawa just prior to the end of the Korean War. Came back after a year and spent the next eight or nine years in the Air Defense Command, various locations flying various Air Defense fighters. In 1959, I went into the Tactical Air Command. That's kinda jargon, but it was a worldwide command that really managed all the fighters in the Air Force. They also had reconnaissance. I ended up in a reconnaissance airplane, in the RB66, flying out of Bruntingthorpe, England. After about six months there, the squadron moved to Toul-Rosières in France. The wing headquarters was in the United Kingdom at Alconbury Air Base. So we had two squadrons of these RB66s at Toul-Rosières in France, and there were two squadron's in the UK. The mission was tactical reconnaissance, and it was day/night. The airplane had the capability of finding targets and taking the pictures at night.

Interviewer

This was around 1960 at this point?

Marc Reynolds

Yeah, this was pushing toward 1960, I think.

Interviewer

When did you start hearing about Vietnam?

Marc Reynolds

Well, not really until it happened. I was in Okinawa when the Vietnamese were very busy beating up on the French and defeated the French decisively at Dien Bien Phu, which is in now North Vietnam. More specifically, it's probably 100 miles north and west of Ha Noi. So then there was, as far as what the public would pick up, not much happened until the North Vietnamese got their act together and started building up the nation and buying arms. And sometime in there, the country split--North Vietnam and South Vietnam. When that happened, it was obviously not a friendly relationship, and the history is not very clear in my mind.

Interviewer

I want to get to that point where you get orders.

Marc Reynolds

So I finished with my reconnaissance tour in Europe and came back and went to school for a year; not aviation school, but it was the Air Force's commanding staff mid-level professional training. And from there, I got an assignment to Shaw Air Force Base, which was a reconnaissance base and checked out in the RF-4C. In the two years perhaps prior to that, we started our build up in South Vietnam. And all of it was not purposely quiet, it was just something that was happening. Obviously, our nation decided to support the South Vietnamese in the same premise that we supported the South Koreans. It was all part of--kind of my words--but kind of the evolution of what

President Truman had done right after World War II when he stopped the Russian move into Greece. That set a pattern, in my amateurish opinion, on how we looked at communism and what we felt as though we needed to do to not be victims but to withhold the growth of communism throughout the world. So we had to warn Korea; now we're faced with a very similar situation in Vietnam, probably politically not quite as clear as the situation in North Korea and South Korea was. In any event, we chose sides. Obviously, we stayed with the South. I went from my RF-4C checkout to Mountain Home, Idaho, and I was in Mountain Home, Idaho, for two months. There was a requirement for reconnaissance pilots in Vietnam so I raised my hand and went over with a group from Mountain Home that probably consisted of seven or eight RF-4C crews. So we're off to war. We stopped in the Philippines and went through survival school, and on the 7th of December 1966, I arrived in Ton Son Nhut Air Force Base in Saigon. Good day to go to war. That's when it started.

Interviewer

Tell us about your first mission.

Marc Reynolds

Most of our missions in South Vietnam for the RF-4 were at night. Most meaning maybe 55, 60 percent of our missions, and that's because we had sensors that operated at night. We had infrared sensors and we had radar sensors. We also had the capability of illuminating the sky to the point where our regular sensors operated. But the primary sensor that was used at night was the IR, and they used our RF-4s in that capability to fly at night primary in the south and look, in essence, for concentrations of North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese quickly learned when they heard an airplane overhead, put out the campfires 'cause those campfires just popped right out in the IR sensor. So we'd go out there, and our target would be maybe a 10 mile square, and we'd fly up and down lines in that 10 mile square and take our products home. We'd go over to the processing center and process, and every once in a while--as a matter of fact, it was very frequent early in the war--to find concentrations of camp fires. When they'd find a concentration, why those were obviously targeted then for the day fighters the next day.

Interviewer

How many missions would you fly over there?

Marc Reynolds

I was over there for ten months. Let me give you a little bit of background on that. When I got over there for the standard one-year tour--and that's what the tours were over there for us, was a year. For every 10 missions you had over North Vietnam, you got a month off your tour and that was because that was a nasty place to fly up there.

Interviewer

Tell us why?

Marc Reynolds

Because it was well defended.

Interviewer

People today have no idea what that means.

Marc Reynolds

That means that they had radar and they were well equipped with standard multiple guns, anti-aircraft guns. I mean it might be a set of six, and the sighting mechanisms were very good. But on top of that, they had the SAMs, the surface-to-air missiles, and we had equipment in our airplanes to know when the radar that directed those SAMs had focused on us. We'd get a little light in the cockpit, and that would cause us to look at another instrument, which had a direction capability on it. And if the SAM was fired at say you, you would then get a big, red, very significant red light, and you'd get an arrow pointing in some direction from the airplane so you could look for the SAM. Now if you were able to visually pick up the SAM, you could turn into it, and you could turn sharper than the SAM could turn. So if the SAM is coming up at you, you'd turn into it and cause the SAM and try and turn, and it would basically tumble. That was nice if all the electronics worked. It didn't always work, so we lost a lot of airplanes in the North due to SAMs. From a tactical point of view, it forced the Air Force to direct to the pilots that were flying over the North, hey, you gotta stay at about 4 or 5,000 feet. That gives you an opportunity to see the SAM, turn against it, and it also gets you above the guns. It worked, but nevertheless, it was easier for the wreckie guys to do that than it was the guys that were doing the bombing.

Interviewer

Why?

Marc Reynolds

Because they had to keep their eye on a target. They're out there lookin' for Bridge A or Bridge B, or they're out there lookin' for trucks. In the wreckie airplanes, it was easy for us to pay attention to what was going around because we weren't looking for specific targets like that, so we lost a lot of fighters--we being the US Forces. The Navy really took a beating.

Interviewer

But what about your squadron and your group?

Marc Reynolds

While I was over there, we probably lost six or seven airplanes and we lost all those crews. The reason was that we all developed our own techniques about what we wanted to do over the North ourselves rather than let somebody else tell us. And some of us came to the conclusion that we were better off a little bit lower. We still had good sensor capability, even down around 1,000 feet or less. What that amounts to is if you've run the airplane out to close to Mock One, maybe 450, 440 knots, somethin' like that, you don't give the person on the ground much time to see you. And some of us got a little bit lower; some of us stayed a little bit higher. But the primary mission was to get the target, so you had to pay the price.

Interviewer

I want to hear about a couple of personal things.

Marc Reynolds

Well, let's go back to my very first mission. It was a night mission. That's how I got off on this night stuff. I had one of these ten-mile squares that was probably 80 or 90 miles south of Saigon, so it was deep down in the south. It's flat down there with no mountains, so they put the starter guys down there, where they won't run into a mountain. I had an experienced navigator, but it was my first mission. We went down there, and we found the target area. We started running up and down these preplanned lines, and I noticed on the third line what I'd call--well, I'd seen a little bit of flak in my life, but this was obviously a .50 caliber or 20 millimeter gun. I'd see these tracers go over my head. So I did or three of these lines, and of course, the back seater's got his head buried in the scope, and he's concentrating seriously on keeping the airplane in the right place in the target area. When I got the end of a line, I came around and I said,

"Hey, why don't you pull your head out of the scope a minute and take a look at what's going on up here."

And he used immediately, a long series of four letter words to describe how he felt about what was going on, but the last thing he said is like,

"Get outta here." I said,

"Well, he's been here longer than I have, so we went back to Saigon," and we talked about it. But that was my first mission.

Interviewer

What was so threatening?

Marc Reynolds

Well, these tracers. The way they shoot tracers is if you got a string of ammo, about every six or seventh round is a tracer. So in between tracers, there's a lot of lead. I understood that, but we were there to do a job. That was my first mission. The tough missions were really up in the North, and we learned over time where our gun concentrations were and where SAM sites were. Now I was up there usually to chase not a pinpoint target but to run a course up and down a river adjacent to a road. We were there to try and stop not the military interdiction of the South, but the source of war supplies getting into the South. Our job was to find out where they were, take pictures and get fighters there as fast as you could. We did a lot of night work up there; maybe in the North we flew more in the day than we did in the South. There were basic roads and canyons that all these supplies flowed through into the South, and so we'd concentrate on those areas. They knew that, so they concentrated their guns in there, which makes life kind of exciting. A typical mission as we went north of the DMZ: I'd turn out all the lights. Some guys flew with lights, some didn't. I didn't like the lights, so I'd turn out the lights so the airplane was dark. I probably flew a little bit lower than maybe the average person did, but when it came time to get over the target area, you wanted to do what was best to get the best pictures of the target and it was always a road structure. There was a pass up there between North and South Vietnam called Mu Gia Pass. Probably 60 or 70 percent of everything that went south went through that pass, and it almost all went through at night. I'd run up the road into the pass, make a pass down the pass, and then I'd come around and do that two or three times just to make sure I

had good sensor coverage of everything in there. Night after night, we'd always bring back pictures of a lot of truck traffic, and that was primarily it. Everything was hauled in trucks. When we'd go up there in daytime, we knew kinda where they parked their trucks at night. They parked the trucks during the day, but they travel at night. We knew where the trucks were from the standpoint of getting good photo coverage, and that's how we fought that war.

Interviewer

What was the hairiest or scariest mission you've had?

Marc Reynolds

The scariest part about, especially the night missions in the South were the mountains. We had electronic capability to paint with radar, the mountains. We had a system in the airplane to where you could set the altitude above the ground that you wanted to fly and you had an indication then if you--it's hard to describe the instrument--but anyhow, we had an instrument that allowed us then to set what altitude we wanted to be above the ground: 500, 1,000 feet, 1,500.

Interviewer

Automatic pilot in a sense.

Marc Reynolds

Well, but you flew it by hand, but the indication was there. You couldn't couple it. Nobody would do that. When you get that close to the ground at night, you want to be in control. That gave us the capability to fly in the mountains fairly low in full trust, of course, in the electronics that made this system work. We lost some airplanes due to the malfunction of that system. People would get in there, and they'd get an indication, and they hadn't figured out that it wasn't a good, valid indication. Hit a hill, and it's all over. Probably 50 percent of the airplanes we lost were in the South due to the terrain.

Interviewer

You said you lost some pilots. Were any taken captive that you were aware of?

Marc Reynolds

Oh, yeah. We lost I think three crews in the North and they all came home. We got 'em all back.

Interviewer

Were they all in the Hilton?

Marc Reynolds

They were all in the Hilton, and we are in the process right now, in a museum, of building a Vietnam display, which is along one of the walls in one of the galleries. There is POW, Jay Hess. He lives up in--

Interviewer

Yeah, we're gonna interview him.

Marc Reynolds

You know Jay?

Interviewer

Yeah.

Marc Reynolds.

Okay, Jay came in and designed our prison cell that we have in that display and he stayed with it from the time we pounded the first nail. It duplicates the cell that he spent five and a half, six years in. I mean he was shot down summer of '67. Yeah, it'd be about five and a half years. It's not finished yet, but it's still a great display as it stands right now. The main feature is that cell that Jay designed. Wonderful guy, isn't he?

Interviewer

Did you have a family back then?

Marc Reynolds

Oh, sure. At that time I was married to a lady that grew up on Cape Cod. I married her when we were back there and had three children. She died in 1982, so that was a bad time in my life.

Interviewer

Well, you've got this family at home. The feelings you must have when you're flying.

Marc Reynolds

Well, we were allowed to take one leave while we were over there, in that one-year period, and most people went to Hawaii and met their wives. I met my wife in Australia.

Interviewer

Did you ever catch a Bob Hope show when you were there?

Marc Reynolds

So I arrived on the 7th of December 1966. And anybody that goes to Vietnam, especially Saigon, gets sick ten days or so after they're there and drinking the water, even though it's supposed to be pure water. So I was going through this period where I couldn't get too far away from bathrooms. And we had a Bob Hope show. It was in the heat of the winter. It was in December, obviously, a few weeks after I got there. I got myself out of bed and went out to the Bob Hope show 'cause I'd heard about these all during World War II, and there was nothing I wanted more in my life than to get to a Bob Hope show. It was fantastic. I got out there and wrapped myself around a power pole that had these steps driven into the side, and I grabbed a couple of steps. I couldn't stand up by myself; I was so weak. But I didn't miss a minute of that thing and it was great. He went on and did about six or seven more shows on that trip on up into the north part of South Vietnam. It was great. I'd heard about those Bob Hope shows all during the war, and he's just Mr. America.

Interviewer

The demonstrations are back home, and you start hearing all that and you're flying combat.

Marc Reynolds

You try and take it in context. I don't think it became a dominant feature. The schedules were so, so tough down there. I flew 230 missions in 10 months.

Interviewer

That's one a day.

Marc Reynolds

It's almost one a day. You'd get a little time off now and then; you'd get a day off, but on a day off, you had to go in and work anyhow. Just do flight planning and that type of thing. But that's what you're there for. Nobody complained. We got a lot of neat people in this country that step up when it's time to step up. That's just what it amounts to. I don't even ever remember having a discussion with anybody while I was down there about politics. I just don't ever recall that 'cause you just didn't let it come into your thought process. Now maybe it did with some, but I didn't know anybody that was bothered by that war and what it turned out to be.

Interviewer

I imagine you had some close buddies in this squadron. Tell us about some of those people.

Marc Reynolds

I had a navigator for a while; he was a Jewish lad from New York. I just loved the guy. He was really great, and he was funny. He was especially funny when he really wanted to be a Jew. It's guys like that or people like that, that sorta make life more tolerable when you're around 'em day in and day out because they just don't get worn down by the hard schedules. What a neat guy. He's still alive.

Interviewer

The Phantom is a two-seat aircraft?

Marc Reynolds

Yes. He was a navigator.

Interviewer

Tell us why that's so important to you as a pilot, that navigator behind you.

Marc Reynolds

It allows you, as the pilot in the front seat, to fully concentrate on what it takes to fly the airplane. The RF 101, of course, it was a single-seat reconnaissance airplane. So you're in there trying to fly this rather complicated airplane, read a map, find a pinpoint on that map, and then position the airplane to take a picture. It just takes a lot of skill. Well, skill is something you acquire. But having a navigator in the back, he helps you get to the target area 'cause he's got navigational radar available to him in the back. So you get into the kind of turn left, turn right when you're within 15 or 20 miles of a pinpoint target, and he plays a major part in getting the airplane over the target. So I'm

biased, but I think the two-seat F4 was a better airplane than the 101 for that reason. And of course it had a night capability so we were able to top right day and night; the 101 was day only.

Interviewer

Did you ever run into any MiGs or enemy aircraft?

Marc Reynolds

I made it a point to not do that. The only time we'd get that close to where the MiGs were, which was that name of the airfield up in Ha Noi, whatever the name of it was. The missions that we ran in the Ha Noi area with the RF-4C were side-looking radar missions. So we'd back off shore maybe 10 or 15 miles and get up at probably 15 or 20,000 feet, and that gives us a radar look in about 40 or 50 miles in. So when we'd get back and look at those products, you could count the MiGs on the ramp in that airfield just outside of Ha Noi and type of thing. You'd drive by Hai Phong which was the main port there, which we weren't allowed to bomb. That's where all of the war material flowed into Hai Phong. We couldn't get to all that stuff until they got it on our truck and sent it south. But it gave us the capability to know what was going on there because those radar sensors, side-looking radar, were good sensors.

Interviewer

Did it frustrate you that this stuff would be sitting there, and there were rules --

Marc Reynolds

You can't, no. You just do what you have to do what, and every once in a while, the thought crosses your mind, "This is a very interesting way to take this war on," but it wasn't my decision to make. So we couldn't bomb that airfield outside of Ha Noi. We'd bring side-looking radar pictures of MiGs sittin' down there. They're just sittin' there; you'd see 'em taxi out and take off. Then you'd lose sight of 'em. Hopefully, they were goin' someplace else, but it was interesting. Bombed the airfield, closed the harbor, and dried up the flow of war material. Gone up and bombed the bridge in North Vietnam that crossed the river into China; we couldn't bomb that bridge, either.

Interviewer

Why couldn't you bomb the bridge or the airfield?

Marc Reynolds

National Policy. No, those were the polices, and those were the orders. They were specific orders that came out of the Pentagon. Of course, I'm sure they were politically motivated. We weren't doing anything to stop the flow of material into North Korea. Once it got on the ground and on the move, then it was a target. But they only moved at night.

Interviewer

When you'd fly, would you see hundreds of trucks, dozens?

Marc Reynolds

Dozens, but it was the truck parks. In our day missions up there, we were looking for truck parks because they'd

pull in some place every day, sit there all day, and then drive at night. They'd drive without any lights. I've seen a lot of that stuff moving at night, but you just see it because you've got a good moon or whatever the case might be.

Interviewer

Did you have any grasp or interest in the culture there?

Marc Reynolds

I just didn't have the time, and I wished I'd had the time. We lived at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, which was the main civilian field for Saigon. So when we would have the time, we'd go downtown to eat, and that meant that we'd get on our little Hondas and go down. That was our only opportunity to mingle with the natives, and it wasn't a very good opportunity. We didn't have the opportunity day-to-day, day in and day out to work with South Vietnamese. There were a lot on the base, and a lot of people had that opportunity, but in our case we didn't. We didn't have any South Vietnamese in the part of the squadron where we did our flight planning and fixed our airplanes, and there was probably a purpose for that.

Interviewer

Take us back and give us a visual description of what you saw and how big this war was.

Marc Reynolds

Well, Tan Son Nhut Air Base was a major city airport. It's a big time airport, so there were a lot of facilities. Runway structure was great, well maintained. There was a lot of traffic in there, day in and day out that was civilian traffic or military big aircraft traffic, which means they were moving people or things through Tan Son Nhut into Saigon. Saigon was a very busy city. I've forgotten the precise population numbers, but I'll give you an example. If Saigon, prior to the war, was a million and a half, it was probably closer to three million while we were there, the people living every place. They'd come in from the rice paddies because as the North troops integrated into South Vietnam, that pushed the people out of the rice paddies and into cities for security reasons. It was my observation the government of South Vietnam did the best they could to accommodate that. Saigon was a mess. I simply can't describe it any other way. Fortunately, there were a lot more bicycles than motorized vehicles, so the population moved around that very, very crowded city on bicycles. Wherever we would go to interface, which would be in restaurants primarily--there wasn't anything to shop for--it was a good relationship. It was my observation that we were well respected.

Another example. When we would get on our bikes and go downtown, there was a lot of security around Saigon. So you'd see these bunkers along the main streets of town, people in the bunkers with weapons. Often, when we'd come back from dinner, when we'd do that, we'd drive by these things and it would've been very easy for somebody to pick us off. So it was my feeling that we did that often enough to where I became pretty comfortable, security-wise, in the city of Saigon, knowing that there were threats there. But never did I even hear of a case of somebody being fired at from one of these manned bunkers that you saw all over. Of course, that was the Vietnamese response to trying to maintain some sort of peace in the city.

Interviewer

Did your air base ever come under fire during that time?

Marc Reynolds

Yes, and that happened in that December when I arrived. It was just after Christmas, and the Viet Cong penetrated the base. They destroyed two of our airplanes in bunkers with hand grenades and small rocket firing weapons. All of our airplanes were in bunkers. There was no top on the bunker, just sides. Those sides were probably 20, 25 feet high; steel; about that far apart; filled with dirt. Each airplane had its own bunker. If you dropped mortar shells in there, you had to get right into one of those bunkers to destroy an airplane. On that event, we lost, like I said, I think it was two airplanes. We had our airmen down there--they were all armed, of course--in gunfights with the North Vietnamese who had penetrated the base. It just happened for a few hours. It happened one night, and it never happened again. I think our security was probably increased to cope with those kinds of attempted penetrations. When you're out on those little motorbikes that we had, we never had an incident, but you were always watching. There was just so many people out there. It's my opinion that there was a mixture of North Vietnamese in Saigon.

Interviewer

-- for you in '66 and '67 and for those who came after? And if so, how?

Marc Reynolds

It wasn't any different for my contemporaries, but I think the war got generally worse for the Army in the field. As time went on, their North Vietnamese efforts to get people and material into the South improved, as hard as we tried to stop that flow. That was evidenced by the fact that down south of Saigon, there was a lot more activity down there, as described to me by people that were still there after I left. I left in '67. Eventually we got into Cambodia and were actually in a shooting war in Cambodia; not with the Cambodians, but with the North Vietnamese that were integrating down through Laos, through Cambodia, into South Vietnam. If you look at a map you'll see that was the flow; was to come out of North Vietnam in the mountains in the eastern part of the country, and then infiltrate down through Laos, and eventually into Cambodia. That infiltration became a flow as time moved on as opposed to just periodic or small amounts of people.

Interviewer

Tell us what it's like to sit in that cockpit of an F4.

Marc Reynolds

It's noisy. You got a real tight helmet on, and you just get used to the sound 'cause it's a constant sound, unless you maneuver the engines all the way from idle to full power, those kinds of things, then the sound changes. But you get so used to it that it's part of your environment. It's not a hazard and it's not distracting at all.

Interviewer

What are the smells like?

Marc Reynolds

Well, you're on 100 percent oxygen, so I don't ever recall a smell. You just put your head in an oxygen mask and regardless of where you are and it all smells the same.

Interviewer

If you were to take a civilian up in your back seat, what would you warn them about?

Marc Reynolds

You have to talk to them for a while about how they're gonna get out of the airplane if the airplane fails. So you spend a lot of time briefing the ejection seat, and the more familiar they can be with that ejection seat, the more at ease they will be if it has to be used. And then in the case of the F4, we could eject the back seat from the front.

Interviewer

What I'm saying is the sensations that go on the human body in flying one of those.

Marc Reynolds

The only thing where you put any load on the body is when you pull G's, and you could pull eight and a half or nine G's in that airplane if you really wanted to work at it and the airplane would stay together. Once you got down to the mission altitudes on these missions--you got down there where you're doing a lot of turning--you kept probably two, three, four G's on the airplane, especially in the North to give the gunners something harder to shoot at than just a straight and level airplane. We all had G-suits. Where there's the most pressure is in the abdominal area. You've got pressure on the thighs and calves, and then there's a big bubble right here that if you put a G, G and a half in the airplane, you can feel the pressure. The pressure increases as you increase the G force. You get up about four, five, six G's, there's a lot of pressure there, but that's what keeping you conscious. So you really just get used to it. Now back to the person who hasn't had any rides before. Put a G-suit on them and pull some G's on, they'd want to know,

"Wow. This is different." And it is.

Interviewer

How different? Prepare me.

Marc Reynolds

Oh, just having all that pressure in your abdominal area primarily, and then on the lower. The whole effort is to stop the flow of blood from this part of the body down into this part. So you have pressure here, pressure here, pressure here, and that maintains the blood flow in the upper part of the anatomy and keeps you conscious.

Interviewer

Tell us about your last mission.

Marc Reynolds

I don't have any recall of it. I think you never know that you're gonna have a, quote, "last mission." I never had any thought about a mission being a last mission, although you do know maybe a week ahead of time that you're gonna

leave maybe in a week. You just go fly that thing; that's what happens. It takes your utmost concentration to fly those missions. Once you're strapped in and that canopy is closed, you are one focused human being. If you're not, you get in trouble.

Interviewer

Did you meet any Marines? What was their attitude about the Air Force? Did you guys hang out at all?

Marc Reynolds

Oh, we never had an opportunity to. The Naval Aviators, of course, they're all out on carriers doin' their thing, and we always had at least two carriers in the gulf, and they worked hard. Day in and day out, they were flying missions, and they didn't have to go as far on the missions as those of us in the South did when you were going against the North. I had nothing but the highest respect for anybody that straps on a uniform and is out there getting shot at. I have nothing but the highest respect, and I think it's mutual. When everybody's at peace and you got some Navy guys around, they wanna pick you and you can pick on them, but it's friendly. There's nothing but respect both ways throughout all the services, my observation in 36 years.

Interviewer

When you came back, what state did you return to?

Marc Reynolds

My whole career is in a little Bible that my aunt gave me when I went off to the Air Force, a little Bible about that big. I used that as a log. I have every move in there that I made, and you'd think by now I'd be able to produce my assignment out of Vietnam. I went to Japan. So I was in the 5th Air Force Headquarters from Vietnam in Tokyo, Japan. I was there for two years, and then the squadron that I had been in, in Vietnam moved to Misawa, Japan, a name you've probably heard in the last few weeks. It's just north of Sendai, where the earthquake is. So I ended up going up there and became the commander of that squadron, and we flew for a year up there. And then I moved the squadron to Shaw Air Force Base in South Carolina, and I was there for again about a year, and then I went off to the Naval War College and from there, came to Hill Air Force Base.

Interviewer

When you got home was there much discussion about the politics of Vietnam?

Marc Reynolds

It's a fair question. There was not dominant thought. Sure, people had spent a good portion of the last couple of years, most of us in Vietnam. Sure, there were discussions. I think you'd get the same answer from almost anybody else that day in and day out in the military you do not spend a lot of time talking about politics. Not to imply that people don't think a lot about that, but it is not an issue that is discussed a lot. Sometimes, there are comments, but like I say, we do what we're told. That's kinda the way it is.

Interviewer

Are you 83?

Marc Reynolds

Next month.

Interviewer

Is there anything we haven't covered that you want to talk about?

Marc Reynolds

That's a good question, too. I think I've kind of philosophized through this process. Yeah, I can put it this way. I never once have regretted the profession that I chose. The fact is if people have a lot of opportunities to leave the service, regardless of what their circumstance is, whether they came in as a draftee; whether they came in enlisted; whether they came out of ROTC or one of the academies, whatever. If they don't like it, they leave. But I've never encountered anybody that was noisy, that articulated the fact that they were not happy and that's why they were leaving. We just don't do that. I'm sure there are some people out there that do, but I've never encountered 'em.

Interviewer

Did you find, because you were older when you arrived in Vietnam and you'd served in Korea, that you were more respected?

Marc Reynolds

In Vietnam, I wasn't older. I was just one of the guys. I was a Captain. What's that? I was in my late 30s.

Interviewer

So what did you think of the 18 and 19 year olds? Did you run into those?

Marc Reynolds

Yes, and the people in that age bracket were our maintenance people. That's just another element of total dedication that I've noticed in the Air Force. The people that are making those airplanes work respect everybody that uses the airplane and respects everybody that's in the unit. They really feel like they're a part of what's going on. It's just one great place to spend a career.

Interviewer

Thank you.