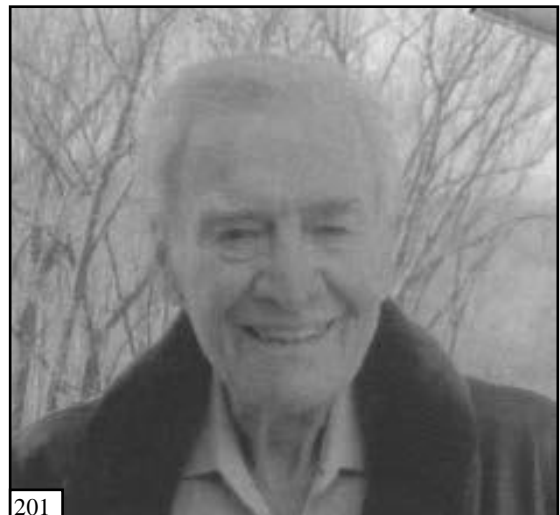


**Oral History**  
**Captain Edward F. Bronson, U.S. Navy (Retired)**  
**Conducted by**  
**David F. Winkler, Ph.D.**  
**Naval Historical Foundation**  
**2005**



**Obituary**

Captain Edward F. "Ted" Bronson, US Navy retired, passed away peacefully in his home on August 24, 2021. Son of the late Edward J. and Rita J. Bronson, Captain "Cash" Bronson served 29 years and in 1976 became the 25th naval aviator to achieve 1,000 carrier landings. He served seven Vietnam tours including flying the A4C for 236 missions over North Vietnam. After a later tour as EA to Navy Director Command and Control, Bronson formed the Naval Space Command, Dahlgren VA. He was awarded the Legion of Merit among other Navy honors. After his Naval service, Bronson was Scholarship Chairman for the DC AFCEA Chapter 1989-2011; from 2007-2017, he was aviation representative to the Navy's 'Cold War Gallery' at the Washington Navy Yard, initiated the awarding of Navy Astronaut Wings to Neil Armstrong in 2010, coordinated a 2014 "Flight to Freedom" ceremony celebrating the 1975 VNAF Bird Dog landing on USS Midway. From 2007-2018, he made known the holiness of Servant of God, Father Vincent Capodanno LT, CHC, USNR who died on the battlefield in 1967. Bronson completed fundraising in 2014 to rebuild a chapel next to the battlefield where Capodanno was killed.

Though he never made admiral, Captain Bronson never felt intimidated by them as he came up the ranks with many future flag officers and had forged close friendships with these individuals. Thus, he offers unique insights about naval aviation and the origins of Navy Space Command. It's worth noting that the Naval Historical Foundation also conducted interviews with three of the admirals Captain Bronson worked for: Former Chiefs of Legislative Affairs Gus Kinnear and Tom Kilcline, as well as the first commander of Navy Space Command Richard Truly. Special thanks to Captain Bronson's grandson Joseph Green who found and saved this transcript that Captain Bronson had always planned to get around to editing. Subsequently, the interviewer has reviewed and reorganized portions of the original transcript to have the narrative fall in chronological order. Otherwise, other edits were minor.



**EDWARD F. BRONSON, CAPT., USN (Ret.)**  
 “CASH”

Hometown: Wilmington, DE.

School and College Career:

Salesianum HS, 1950

La Salle College, BS, 1954

University of Chicago, MA, 1958

Date Commissioned/Source: 28 June 1957/AOC

Date of Designation: 16 November 1958

Dates of Active Duty: 10 March 1957 – 28 November 1985

Total Flight Hours: 5,400

Carrier/Ship Landings: 1,000/388 night

Approximate Flight Hours: 5,357

Jet 3,000 (2,000 A-4; 1,000 A-7); Prop (2,357 AD-6)

Combat Tours:

Vietnam: VNAF 514th, March-October 1963, Bien Hoa, South Vietnam, AD-6

VA-113, 1966, USS *Kitty Hawk*, A-4C

VA-113, 1967, USS *Enterprise*, A-4C

USS *Oriskany*, Flight Deck Officer/Handler, 1969/70/71, Yankee Station

USS *Kitty Hawk*, CTF 72 Air Ops, 1972, Gulf of Tonkin

Combat Missions: 236

Aviation Commands:

CO, VA-46, July 1976-October 1977

Awards:

Legion of Merit Bronze Star (CTF-77)

Bronze Star (CTF-77)

Single Action Air Medal (2)

19 Strike Flight Air Medals

Navy Commendation Medal w/2 Gold Stars

Navy Achievement Medal w/ Combat V

Presidential Unit Citation

Air Force Gallantry Cross

Unit Citation for Exchange Tour w/ VNAF 514th Air Force

Outstanding Unit Award for Exchange Tour w/ VNAF 514th Vietnam

Vietnam Service Medal w/ 4 Bronze Stars

Vietnam Cross of Gallantry

Vietnam Armed Forces Honor Medal w/ Star

**Duty Assignment Chronology**

06/57

Commissioned/ Active Duty

07/57-11/58	Flight training/Corpus Christi
11/58-02/59	VA-105 (AD-6) squadron pilot
02/59-05/59	VA-44 Replacement Pilot Training (AD-6) NAS Jacksonville
05/59-02/61	VA-15 USS <i>Roosevelt</i> and NAS Jacksonville
02/61-02/63	VA-135 (AD-6) squadron pilot
03/63-10/63	VNAF 514 Bien Hoa, Vietnam with South Vietnamese Air Force
11/63-07/65	VA-45 Instructor Pilot (AD-6) NAS Cecil Field
08/65-01/66	VA-125 Replacement Pilot (A-4C) NAS Lemoore
01/66-12/67	VA-113 (A-4C) joined squadron at sea in Tonkin Gulf, NAS Lemoore, USS <i>Kitty Hawk</i> and USS <i>Enterprise</i> , Admin officer, division leader
07/67-01/69	VA-44 (A-4C), Instructor Pilot, NAS Jacksonville
02/69-06/71	Ship's Company Flight Deck Officer/Handler, USS <i>Oriskany</i>
06/71-06/72	Naval War College, Student, Newport, RI
06/72-07/73	CTF77 Air Ops, USS <i>Kitty Hawk</i> and USS <i>Enterprise</i> , Gulf of Tonkin
08/73-02/74	VA-174 Replacement Pilot Training (A-7B), NAS Cecil Field
03/74-10/76	XO/CO VA-46 NAS Cecil Field USS <i>Kennedy</i>
11/76-08/79	Navy Office of Legislative Affairs, Washington, DC
08/79-07/80	National War College, Student, Washington, DC
07/80-06/83	Executive Assistant to Navy Director Command and Control, Washington, DC
06/83-10/84	Naval Space Command, Dahlgren, VA- stood up the command as Deputy Commander.
10/84-11/85	Joint Chiefs of Staff (C3S) - to Retirement

### Summary of Significant Career Events

1. First nugget ever assigned to a deployed AD-6 (SPAD)squadron VA-15.
2. Was part of the flights that completed a 12.1 hour sortiethrough Turkey and the Black Sea setting the fight endurance record at that time in 1959.
3. One of three pilots assigned as instructors for transitioning the Vietnam Air Force from T-28s to AD-6s. Operated from Bien Hoa with all flights flown over hostile areas often incurring heavy flack. The North Vietnamese set a bounty on the three USN instructor pilots.
4. Flew AD-6s with VA-135 from USS *Constellation* during Oct 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.
5. Flew 236 combat missions in A-4Cs from USS *Kitty Hawk* and USS *Enterprise* during the periods of time (Jan'66 through June '67) when the US lost the greatest number of aircraft during the Vietnam conflict. Served as one of the leading flight leaders in VA-113 and is credited with never losing a wingman despite flying as a division lead in someof the most dangerous alpha strikes in which the squadron participated.
6. As the Commanding Officer of the VA-46 Clansmen led all Atlantic Fleet A-7 squadrons in flight hours and carrier landings. Was told the squadron was the runner up for the McCluskey Award.
7. Became the 25th Naval Aviator to achieve 1000 carrierlandings.
8. As CTF77 staff AIR OPS coordinated two successful B-52 SAR's in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1972 during the final bombing campaign of Hanoi.
9. In a 1979 FITREP for his tour in the Navy Office of Legislative Affairs RADM Tom Kilcline stated: "Bronson more responsible than any other OPNAV person for theCongressional approval for production of the F/A-18".

10. Was chosen to lead and successfully stood up the NavalSpace Command in Dahlgren Va on Oct 1, 1983.

### **Post Military Work**

1. After retirement from the Navy became ADM Holloway's aviation rep at the Navy Yard "Cold War Gallery." Working for more than seven years Captain Bronson participated fully in the design of the museum, as well as leading the sponsorship effort (\$\$\$) that resulted in the award-winning production and display of 44 Navy and Marine Corps aircraft models used during the Cold War.
2. In 2007 he became involved in the effort to obtain Sainthood for Maryknoll Father Vincent R. Capodanno, a US Navy Chaplain who died September 4, 1967, ministering to US Marines. Father Capodanno was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in 1968. Captain Bronson traveled to Rome and Vietnam countless times in supporting this effort and there are already nine chapels around the world named for the Father.
3. Scholarship Chairman, Washington Chapter AFCEA 1989-2011.
4. Aviation Representative to Navy's "Cold War Gallery, Washington Navy Yard, 2007-2017.
5. Initiated the awarding of Navy Astronaut Wings to Neil Armstrong, 2010.
6. Coordinated a 2014 "Flight to Freedom" ceremony celebrating the April 1975 VNAF "Bird Dog" landing on USS *Midway*.
7. From 2007 to 2018, he made known the holiness of Servant of God, Fr. Vincent Capodanno, LT, CHC, USNR (Medal of Honor recipient) who died on the battlefield during 1967 USMC "Operation Swift". In 2014 completed fund-raising to rebuild a chapel next to the battlefield in Vietnam where Fr. Capodanno was killed.

### **Subjects Covered**

August 18, 2005

Youth – Catholic Education

LaSalle – Sportswriting --LaSalle Publicity Director – Joins Navy

NPQ Flight physical due to Hay fever – UnderSecNav Gates

Flight School – Sauflly – Whiting – Formation flying challenges

Bronson and Barin Fields --- Flying T-34s & T 28s

Learning to Fly the AD

Orders to VA-105 in Jax – 1958 – Round the World cruise in *Essex*

Assigned to VA-44 – Assigned to VA-15 – Cruises to Med on *FDR*

Berlin crisis – VA-135 – *Enterprise* – CAG George Watkins bags 1000 traps

Changing the landing mirrors – Med Swim Call – Elevator accident  
 Air Boss Ray Hawkins – Admiral Anderson Change of Command  
 Nuke Drill at Cannes – War Plans – NATO exercises – collateral duties  
 Astronaut program opportunity

Cuban Missile Crisis

Orders to South Vietnam  
 Instructor duty with the SVN Air Force – Getting Shot at  
 Combat missions – Rockets – Rice Warehouse Explosion  
 Returns to NAS Jax – Debriefs  
 Receiving the Air Medal  
 Follow-on Orders – Rick Renaldi VA-45 – BuPers trip – Lesson in leadership  
 Flash Forward to 1976

Transition to Jets – Jack Fellows – X-Country Flight  
 Practicing for Cuba Strikes  
 Gets married – reassigned to Lemoore  
*Kitty Hawk*, VA-113 – Deployment to Vietnam  
 Red McDaniel and Kelly Patterson  
 USO – Danny Kaye and Vikki Carr, the Four Aces  
 Red Carmody was the carrier CO – collateral duties  
 Christmas Eve at ready alert – Praise for enlisted

Leaves VA-113 – divorces – Returns to Jax  
 Runs Ground School, Legal Service Officer – Defense Counsel at Special Courts Martial

*Enterprise* tour – loss of Jim Graham  
*Oriskany* tour as Flight Deck Officer – repairing mahogany deck – wood for coffee  
 Moon Landing – Newspaper collection  
 Flight deck operations  
*Oriskany* Bingo – Aircraft handling officer  
 COs Jack Kenyon, Big John Gillerist, Frank Haak  
 Son Tay Raid – Hyland Change of Command.

Orders to Naval War College – Admiral Semmes

Letter to Dr. Brodsky  
Academic discussions on mining North Vietnam

Orders to CTF 77 –The CTF 77 Golden Trough  
VADM Damon “Hutch” Cooper – Briefings to VIPs  
Mission to Saigon – Linebacker II – B-52 Losses  
POW Release – Operation Tennis Racquet to resume bombing  
Sylvester Foley in *Midway* – carrier scheduling  
Final minefield seeding-- *Kitty Hawk* race riot

August 24, 2005

Orders to RAG with John McCain  
VA-174 with Ron Boyle as CO  
Transition to Corsair A-7B – XO of VA-46  
Change of Command to CO in Naples in *Kennedy*  
The *Belknap* collision  
Bicentennial celebrations  
Comparing A-4s to A-7s – Bear intercept – Cruise wrap-up  
Summer stand-down – NATO exercise to Norway  
Working with the French – Honoring Madame McDougal  
1,000<sup>th</sup> trap  
CFC Campaign – Welcome Home Billboard  
Scrapbooks -- Tooting your horn

Orders to DC – Office of Legislative Affairs  
Admirals Kinnear and Kilcline  
Relieving Dick Macke – Macke’s Later Firing as a 4 Star  
CH-53E and Senator Proxmire –C-12 fight  
The struggle to get the F-18

September 7, 2005

Joint service helo consolidation  
Saving Tomahawk acquisition  
John McCain, Jack Fetterman, Jim Jones

Failing to secure lead money for next CVN  
 Other service OLAs  
 Bob Old and witnessing first F-18 flight  
 Congressional Delegation trips – John Tower

Promotion to Captain with Patsy Schroeder  
 Orders to National War College  
 Middle East trip – meeting Begin, King Hussein, Sadat

Orders as aid to OP-094  
 Yogi Kaufman, Gordon Nagler profiled  
 Working with Nagler –ELF –EA-6B

Origins of Naval Space Command -- CNO Watkins  
 Drafting Press Release for the announcement  
 Setting up the command at Dahlgren – Dick Truly  
 Alan Shepherd and John Glenn – HQ Building  
 John Lehman signs off – designing the logo  
 Hiring staffers – Setting up a USNR unit  
 Establishment Ceremony – getting safes  
 Meeting with Challenger astronauts – Truly background  
 Recruiting Truly from NASA

JCS CinCSpace Assignment  
 Origins of Naval Space Command concept – USMC participation  
 Watkins and SDI -- John Schumacher  
 Truly as NASA Administrator

**CAPT EDWARD F. BRONSON**

August 18, August 24,

September 7, 2005

Interviewer: **David WINKLER,**

**WINKLER: ...Dave Winkler with the Naval Historical Foundation, with retired Captain Ted Bronson here in Arlington, Virginia. Today is the 18th of August 2005, and this is Tape 1, Side A, of an oral history that we intend to do on his career**



**in the United States Navy. Thank you for taking your time, Captain. What I'd like to do is just have you open up by talking a little bit about your youth, growing up, leading up to your college education, and then eventually how that led to coming into the Navy.**

**BRONSON:** All right, thanks Dave. I'm real surprised and honored to be asked to do this. And as I go through these little pieces I'm sure you'll fill in from the narrative I gave you already. I was born in Havre de Grace, Maryland, on the banks of the Susquehanna, and lived in Aberdeen for two years.

My father was a salesman for a grocery store. Then we moved to Scranton for a little bit, and then back to Wilmington, Delaware, where I basically grew up. I was an only child of my mother and father. He was a millwright. Actually, he was a shipfitter in the Second World War at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. And after the war he was a millwright, which is kind of like a metal carpenter. Hard to explain unless you're in the building and trades industry.

I went to Catholic grade school, Christ Our King, in Wilmington, Delaware. Then to Salesianum High School, another Catholic high school-or the only one in the state of Delaware. Just passed its hundredth-year anniversary. From that, from all my relatives I was the first one ever to go to college. I don't know how I really got there except with a lot of luck. I will absolutely sign up for the luck all the way through, remembering however, that Branch Rickey made the best definition of "luck" I remember in 1958, saying, "Luck is the residue of design." My fortune throughout my career, up until today, is also the other people helping me in this design. Telling me: "Oh, you ought to go this way, compared to going that way." I subscribe to the "luck" business that way very much.

Having said that, I had a choice of going to three colleges. In a way, maybe, Niagara, because I have relatives up there and my high school mentor was going up there as the principal. Or something like that. Or to St. Joe's, Villanova, or La Salle in Philly, only because they were close and I could live at home. Except, though, that my parents never had a car, and so it turned out you can't get to Villanova or St. Joe's from where I lived in 336 Washington St. in Wilmington, Delaware, without a car. So I naturally applied to La Salle, got accepted by La Salle, and commuted on the train. Never went to a campus visit. We didn't do that in those days. And so commuted on the train-trolley car from home down to the station, at the station got the commuter train up to BroadSt. in Philly, got off at Broad St., went across the street, got the trolley car to City Hall, and then got the subway from City Hall up to Olney Avenue, and then got the trolley car to get to the campus at 20th and Olney. The reason I go through that long list like that, that's all public transportation. That could be done in one hour in those days, in the early 1950s. Today you hardly can't even do it by public transportation, let alone the time's at least double. But that's how it was.

Somehow or another at La Salle I got picked up to do certain things, and all of a

sudden I was the cross- country manager in the fall, and writing for the newspaper. And all of a sudden they said, hey, you're good; they needed a collegian working on the campus, so I was the assistant, mostly, to the sports information director. After the first half a year I got a tuition scholarship which took care of the rest of my college tuition.

They didn't have dorms in those years, so I lived in somebody's home. Rented a room. My folks gave me twenty dollars a week and everything else I had to earn on my own, which I did by stringing. I was a big stringer for the *Evening Bulletin* in Philly, the *Daily News*, and also the *Inquirer*, all in sports. It was pretty big in those days. Naturally we traveled in coats and ties. Even when we hitchhiked sometimes from Philly to Kansas City for a basketball tournament, or to North Carolina in the wintertime, or Buffalo, we'd still hitchhike in coats and ties, if you can believe it.

I mentioned about the sports writing thing because sometimes the Bulletin, especially, could not cover all these basketball teams playing wherever they were, because Philadelphia was big in those days. We had Paul Harrison at Villanova, Ernie Beck at Penn, Tom Gola at La Salle, national championships and things. So they would give me my Western Union telegraph operator with the key, and I would be with my typewriter-and my nickname in college was Typewriter Ted-I had my typewriter and I typed out the basketball game as it went and gave it to him, and then it made the Sunday newspapers. And then when the game was over do the rewrap. Basically that's how I got my money to go to college.

**WINKLER: What did you study in college?**

**BRONSON:** In college I started out as an accounting major. I don't know exactly why. But after two years I said, wait a minute, this is too easy. I don't go to class and I get A-pluses on the exams. The professor didn't like me not going to class and still getting A-pluses, so I figured there's something wrong. So I changed to industrial relations. And with that I sort of stayed in the personnel game all the way through. Enjoyed it.

And then at the end of May of my senior year I didn't know what I was going to do. I'd been deferred by the Army all along, because the local draft board in Wilmington, Delaware was very understanding, sympathetic even, to guys going to college. Especially guys going to college from working families. And put deferments, deferments, and deferments. But I'd had deferments.

And then when I went to grad school in Chicago-because Brother Christopher pulled a note off the board and said, 'Ted, here. It's something for you to go up to Chicago in their second year of a mass communications program. A master's degree. Well, it's pretty tough to go from a bachelor of arts to a master of science, or the other way around, to go from a bachelor of science to a master of arts. But when you say that happened at Chicago, then people understand that's the way Chicago runs their world. But went out there and completed and came back.

My first real job was the publicity director of La Salle College, in those days, now University. During that time a lot of good things happened, both in sports and championships

and friendships that are still going today, such as like my housemate, Al Cantello, from La Salle days, a year behind me in school, has been at the Naval Academy for forty years almost as the track and cross-country coach. And a few things like that. Long-time friendships with a few people, which is the way my world turns.

At La Salle, as publicity director, in May, graduation of 1956, the Undersecretary of the Navy happened to be from Philadelphia, a banker named Thomas S. Gates-which as you know, he went up the line all the way and we have a cruiser named after him, or a heavy destroyer, whichever. While there at the luncheon celebrating his honorary degree and before making the convocation speech and things, he said, "Hey, Ted. What do you want to do?"

I said, "Well, I don't know. I've got this postponement from the Army." No longer deferments, but postponement. He said, "Well, if you ever want to go in the Navy, give me a call." I had no idea, being a twenty-one, twenty-two-year-old without any military affiliation ever-although the campus did start an ROTC Army while I was there, and I stayed away from that because I always had this Navy affiliation because of going to the Navy Yard and seeing some christenings like the *Valley Forge*, I remember, during the war.

So here I was later on, finishing my thesis out at Chicago, and the Army finally says: You have to come in Saturday and get on the train-this is the Saturday after Thanksgiving of 1956-and go down to Fort Jackson and join the Army. I didn't want to do it. So I called on the phone from Chicago and asked for the Undersecretary of the Navy on the phone, and put the coins in the machine and things like that. AU of a sudden this captain is on the phone. I had no idea what a captain is in the Navy. Of course, it was his executive assistant. Anyhow, he says, well, A, B, C. Go downtown and take this mental thing at Chicago recruiting. If you pass that, then we can do something about OCS. We can't do anything about aviation. Even to get in the Navy you're going to have to get your induction notice cancelled. Not postponed, but cancelled. Who does that? Well, I don't know.

So anyhow, to make a long story short, went downtown in Chicago, passed the mental by two points, or two questions, because we were partying all night long in the fraternity house. Anyhow, flew back home. Went to my barber shop, who had been the man working this barber shop, eight chairs, all by reservations, and had been watching my career as it was budding all the way through high school, because in high school I was a fairly big man on campus, and in the town of Wilmington. The sports editors of the papers always gave me ink. Followed my career in high school, followed my career in college, and afterwards and so on. And so when I said to him on that Friday after Thanksgiving, he said, "What are you going to do?"

I said, "Well, I don't know. I have to get it cancelled." And I'd been told only the state director of Selective Service can cancel it. Of course, I didn't know who the state director of Selective Service was. In the state?

He said, "Oh, that's General Van Skuyver. Let me call him on the phone and send you down there." So I went down there and saw the general and he says: You want me to do what? I explained to him what the situation was. I still had not had my aviation physical up at Willow Grove, which was scheduled for Saturday. So anyhow, to make a long story short, he cancelled

the induction, and swore me in on the telephone with Newport to go in the Navy OCS if I didn't pass the physical up at Willow Grove. So I thought I was fat, dumb, and happy.

Went up to Willow Grove on Saturday, passed the physical all the way through. I had never flown airplanes and didn't know anything about aeronautics. I was basically a basket weaver. And at the end of all the mental and physicals the lieutenant flight surgeon says, 'You were very good there except for one thing. You have hay fever, and that's automatic disqualification.'

I said, "Wait a minute. I had it de-sensitized in the clinics at the University of Chicago, and here's the paperwork and all."

"Oh, doesn't matter. You've had a history of hay fever, and that's an automatic disqualification. Because you may get it sometime flying, and crash." Well, I said, all right. "He said, 'Now, then. Do you know your congressman!'" No, I don't. He said, "Do you know your senator?" I said, no, I don't. He said, "Well, you've got to know somebody, because they can waive it with the Bureau of Med." I said, oh, okay.

He said, "Don't you know anybody?" I said, well, oh yeah, I know this man Gates. He said, "Who's he?" I said, he's the Undersecretary of the Navy. And this young lieutenant flight surgeon looked right at me straight in the eye with the biggest smile on his face and he said, "He'll do."

It was just like that when I mentioned about luck and the residue of design. Just like that. I went back to the barber shop and tell him on Monday. He said, oh. Picked up and called on the phone to Senator J. Allen Freer. Senator J. Allen Freer, at the time Republican Senator from Delaware, was the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee. That's something about money, I since learned when I came back later on in the Navy and worked in OLA (Office of Legislative Affairs) here. So that phone call worked, naturally. Also then I sent a telegram that night to the Honorable Thomas Gates, Undersecretary of the Navy, saying, hey, remember this, and all that follow-up and your guy...? Anyhow, X, Y, Z. And also the representative, the barber actually knew him too, so he called him. So all of a sudden the Navy was inundated with the Undersecretary, a senator, and a congressman from this little state of Delaware for this little guy who didn't know really what was going on, except that I was set for Pensacola. And there I was.

This was the end of November. These days there were a lot of people still waiting in line to get into Pensacola. And they told me something about, well, maybe next year sometime. What?? So by the time January came around I was ready. So here, guess what? Sit down at my typewriter and type up another telegram to the Honorable Gates saying, wait a minute, this is not going fast enough for me. Anyhow, very quickly it comes back and all of a sudden I'm down at Pensacola March 10, 1957. Go through the program and things are stacked up.

As a matter of fact, when we graduated from Pensacola-I graduated 6th out of 69 in my class and got screwed. I was selected as battalion commander, 4th Battalion. The top six get the leadership jobs for the parade, but the parade was cancelled because of high winds, so I never got to lead the battalion. I'm still crying in resentment about that. Not too big, but little things you do remember.

So out of Pensacola with a commission. Then to Saufley. At Saufley my grades were fair. I have the whole packet here in my aviation training sheets, because when they put out the word there a couple years ago I said, yeah, send me mine. And as I looked through the whole thing I was below average all the way.

Having said that, when I was getting ready to leave Saufley-and I wanted to go to Whiting, naturally, so I was going to fly jets, naturally-they said, oh, no, your grades aren't good enough. You've got to go to Corry, and you're going to be a patrol pilot. I said: No, no, wait a minute. I didn't come here to do that, and A, B, C, X, Y, Z. I gave them a short story and I said, well, to myself, here we go again. A night telegram-I'm an ensign now-a night telegram to the Undersecretary of the Navy about: I don't want to go to Corry. Anyway, I kind of talked my way to these guys at the table in this line so I guess they understood or checked it. Anyhow, they acquiesced and let me go to Whiting.

We got to Whiting. We were in a pool again for about six weeks or so. Halfway through the pool they said, okay, Louis Johnson<sup>1</sup>-he was Secretary of Defense-says there are too many people in the military. Everybody go home. Well, not exactly. But here we were. We had been commissioned on the 28th of June. We're sitting in the pool at Whiting. You could go home with your total obligation, military, completed, signed off, sealed, thank you very much, after four months. No Reserves, no commitments, go. Well, only six of our sixty-nine from our AOC class at Pensacola stayed. Everyone else went home. And sure enough, about six months later, you can guess, they sent letters out to some of them saying: If you'd really like to come back, you can. So a few of them did come back. But basically our class just went whoof, just out the door.

So there I was at Whiting and I was a very slow student. One of the reasons I'm slow, remember-I don't know how you say this without being too much of a wise guy. Master's degree from the University of Chicago. I'm twenty-four years old when I came in. So my instructor pilots were younger than I was. Had been NavCads (Naval Air Cadets) and things like that. I wanted to know why it went left, or why you went up. They weren't prepared for Tommy Why. It was just like, do it. You know? Shut up and fly wing. So I was a little slow going through the program.

One of the hardest things was learning formation. I was all over the map on formation flying. Weekends out there we used to go to Gulfport College and date the girls over there in the finishing school. They were in the last two years of high school and the first two years of college. Anyhow, I remember coming back home with two NavCads and we had two cars. They said, oh, we'll teach you how to do formation flying. And sure enough, one NavCad drove the other car and the other one got in my car and I drove. And all I did was, they would take me up and use hand signals with the other car. I line up the two axles of the car on the highway-well, that's familiar to you-and just come down the highway and just keep that one position. And you can barely see the little changes. Sometimes a little fast or a little slower on your foot, on your accelerator, and you would adjust for it. And then with the hand signals one of them went and said "Go faster" to the other car. And all of a sudden I got the picture. That was the big thing. You got the picture. And oh, Monday morning back there, go up on formation flight, do it, come back on the debrief, and the instructor says, wow, how'd that happen? I said, oh, don't really know. He said, well, you got the picture. I said, yeah; feels

like it.

So from there on I went to Bronson Field, which was no relation to me, but he was Aviator Number 15. Did gunnery and FCLP on paddles, but there was no carrier.

**WINKLER: What's FCLP?**

**BRONSON:** Field carrier landing practice. You practice on the field before you go to the carrier. Paddles is the old-fashioned Korean War-style, which we were still doing then, because the mirrors weren't out on the carriers. But there was no carrier on a transition thing, so we went to Pensacola without the CLQ.

Again, the grades were not high enough in....

**WINKLER: CLQ: carrier landing qualification?**

**BRONSON:** Yes. FCLP. Field carrier landing practice. And then quals, carrier quals, we didn't have. We didn't have carrier qualification because there was no carrier. Again the grades were below average, going from Bronson Field to Corpus Christi.

**WINKLER: Now, what are you flying at this time?**

**BRONSON:** Oh, I started out at Saufley Field in T-34A and B. And then T-28s at Whiting and T-28s at Bronson Field and Barin Field.

And then to Corpus Christi. The big selection thing that came up was, well, okay, you guys, who all wants jets raise your hands. Your grades are good enough, you got it; you got it. Oh, okay, there's four of you left, or five of you left. Your grades aren't quite good enough to go jets automatically. But I've got two slots here if anybody wants to extend for a year. Remember, we were only going to be in for three years after wings. So extend right then and there, you can get jets instead of going to ADs at Naval Air Station Corpus. Anyhow, I didn't know anything about extending, didn't know anything about the Navy, so I just didn't do it. So, along with some other below-average aviators went to Corpus Christi and flew in ADs.

In the long run the first we learned how to fly with an AD. Had great instructors, and great friendships were started there. Got wings in November of '58 and came back. Had orders to VA-105 at Jacksonville. They were just coming back from an around-the-world cruise on the Essex. That was an accidental around-the-world cruise.

But before I got there I had an invitation to spend overnight at the president's house at Florida State University. Florida State University had tapped Dean Strozier, the dean of students at the University of Chicago to be the first president making Florida State University coed in 1958. He had known my act, again, from campus work there at Chicago. Brought back a big football weekend, D. U. House and Stagg, and a few things like that, at least in memory. And got some of the championship teams from 1905 come back to campus for the weekend and they helped us.

So anyhow, so Strozier stayed in touch with me and said come by. So there I am, a brand new ensign, staying overnight at the president's house at Florida State University, just starting out to be coed. Remember, it always was female and now they're bringing in guys. He said, "How soon can you get out of the Navy? Because I want you to be assistant dean of students." Ah. Like, come on. I came in the Navy to fly airplanes off

a carrier, that's all.

Actually, I didn't do that. Went over to join the squadron, VA-105. Certainly one of the lieutenants in VA-105 who was one of my early section leaders was Jack Fetterman, who's been around for a while, both from his Navy days and still does a great service at Pensacola, the Naval Aviation Museum Foundation.

When I mentioned the *Essex* was on a made-up around-the-world cruise-the *Essex* was in the Med on a typical Med cruise when something came up in Lebanon in 1958. They sortied the carriers in the Med to go support the Marines in Lebanon, and the *Essex* happened to be in Athens and the *Saratoga* happened to be way down in Istanbul, and it took a long time to come through the Bosphorus and all that kind of stuff. And so the *Essex* guys came right on out, and the ADs having long legs, the ADs flew over the beach first and shot their guns, and things like that. But then at the same time here comes Quemoy and Matsu, and the *Saratoga* could not go through the Suez Canal, so they sent the *Essex* through the Suez Canal To make a long story short they went over there and did what the Navy does with its presence. And then coming back home they stopped in Capetown and Rio and got great beef, and had to dump it all in the ocean before coming back into Mayport. So that was the first fleet squadron that I joined. But then again, with everything else going on, they were decommissioned two months later.

At the same time the Navy had been losing all these people astern of the carrier at night, so they decided to make the RAG (Replacement Air Group) and dedicate it to training instead of individual squadron training. So they took the four of us who were new boys in VA-105 at that time and put us into the first RPs, replacement pilots, in the RAG. And they took the instructors from a couple of squadrons and made them the first IPs in the RAG, and there we were into VA-44 at Navy Jacksonville. VA-44 at the time had A-4s, and also Cougars for the instrument training portion, and they had ADs for the attack portion, and T-28s for the instrument portion there.

Stayed in VA-44 till they split. They took VA-44, the Cougars and the A-4s to Cecil Field because of the noise at Navy Jacksonville. They put them out there in the eastjes, or actually westjes at Cecil Field. They left the ADs and the T-28s at Navy Jacksonville, and I stayed there.

**WINKLER:** On your career sheet there's VA-15 and you had three cruises in the Med on the *Franklin Roosevelt*. You talked about, I guess, the *Essex*.

**BRONSON:** Fine. Okay, when myself and the other guys got our wings in those days you had your orders directly to a squadron. As I mentioned, the Navy was saying we're going to make RAGs. So VA-105 was decommissioned and went to VA-44. All the replacement pilots would go to the RAG training squadrons, whether it was Oceana or Jacksonville or Lemoore or Miramar on the West Coast. Then you had your orders from there to a squadron. In our case Ed Conran and myself were the first two East Coast AD replacement pilot graduates, and we went to a deployed squadron overseas, VA-15, on board the *Roosevelt*. Made cruises in '59, '60, and '61. That totaled out about 400 landings and 2,000 hours, as

how we ended up those three cruises. Great times flying, bombing, COs.

**WINKLER:** Uh-huh. And then you deployed on *Constellation*?

**BRONSON:** Yeah. We came back home and had orders. All of a sudden there was the Berlin Crisis. And with the Berlin Crisis they made a new air wing on the East Coast, Air Wing 13. Probably the most sophisticated, knowledgeable pilots in those squadrons of any air wing ever put together. Because, like VA-135, which was the AD squadron, they took two pilots from each of ten squadrons. So nobody was new. We were all either lieutenants or above. And we were a mixture of East Coast and West Coast. So they had an instant air wing. They did that for the A-4s and the F-8s.

Two things happened in that squadron in a short time, VA-135. We had the *Enterprise* just coming out and they wanted to make sure its shakedown cruise went perfectly, so they had a pre-shakedown cruise in the *Enterprise*. We went up there. Four of us stayed overnight and bagged a whole bunch of landings. Like we put three or four ADs in a pattern in deck run and turned downwind, and as soon as you come on around-you can get a lot of landings in 1.1 flight hours in three different hops. Like thirty, forty landings. It's called bagging. That's the way we did it, or got away with it.

Then, they were back and we never had a carrier. So they said, okay, you do have a carrier. You have the *Constellation*. Well, the *Constellation*'s going to go to WestPac. But the WestPac air wing wasn't available to do a shakedown cruise, so we did the shakedown cruise, Air Wing 13, on the *Constellation* down in the Caribbean.

Three significant things happened on that cruise, I remember. They fired the Terrier off of the aft starboard turret. Everybody just stood around on the flight deck and watched it go. There was no holding back or anything.

Also on that cruise CAG, George Watkins. brother of later-CNO Watkins, became the Navy's first aviator with a thousand landings. Didn't quite do it on the shakedown cruise, because he didn't finish it up right away. There's a little background there, I guess. The record books will show he got grounded by himself since he came in a little too high and a little too fast at night on an F-8 and crashed it on the deck, and ejected. So he didn't finish out the last few flying days to get his thousand landings. But he did come back and take one of our VA-135 ADs with another lieutenant and went out to one of the other carriers off of Norfolk and got a couple landings. And became, as I say, the first aviator to get a thousand landings. Which, in those days, absolutely God. You go back to *Langley* and all of a sudden.

And then as things progressed and you'll pick up later on in my narrative there, that my last flight on the carrier as CO of VA-46, was getting my thousandth landing. It was a big deal on the ship and a big deal for the people in the squadron. I thanked them all. They knew that. It was even a little bigger deal for me for this reason. I had no Pax River tours. I had no CAG ops tours. And my ship's company tour I did not fly any carrier landings. And so only with the normal standard JO squadron tour, department head squadron tour, and the XO/CO squadron tour, I was able to bag enough in between and what have you to get a thousand landings. Significantly, the way those numbers were in those days, because NavAir News was just starting to do a ladder of how many, it turned out I was the twenty-fifth in the Navy to get



a thousand landings. That was in October of 1976, the bicentennial year.

And today, as I've tracked along, there are about 250 guys with a thousand landings. So I don't know how it's going to go on and play out later, but at least it was something to get them. And that was it. It's a thrill. It really is. Of those thousand, I think 400 were at night. It's a lot of flying.

**WINKLER: Okay. Now, *Constellation* and *Enterprise* were brand new carriers, and *Roosevelt* was a little older. What were your impressions, landing on those new ships?**

**BRONSON:** In the cockpit, coming around in the daytime, 45, you know, seeing the mirror. Well, the first the '59 cruise, the mirror was still over on the starboard side on the *Roosevelt*. Of course whoever the engineers are saying, we're going to make it better for all you aviators; we're going to put it over on the left-hand side. We're saying, no, you can't do that. Well, couldn't do that because we're used to it being over on the starboard side. But it really was, engineering-wise and whatever, better on the port side, where it is today. And has been since, I guess, 1960, on all the carriers.

But again, in the cockpit coming around there in the daytime, at the 45, having the right attitude of the airplane, the right altitude, the right power setting, the right air speed, looking at the call the ball, the see the deck, it's the greatest thing in the world. Call the ball and your state, you know. It's like, there you are, right there.

I remember when I was XO and CO of the squadron I used to give some lectures to the JOs. Briefings, you might call it. I'd say, wait a minute, you can go home, you can complain and bitch, listen to your wife, listen to your family, friends, whatever, around this Navy. You go to sea too much, you don't get paid enough, whatever, whatever, whatever. If in a beautiful afternoon coming through the 45, on speed, calling the ball and your state, rolling the wings level, coming down and trapping with a three-wire, okay, pass-if that's not good enough for you, then get out. Because all these other things are just different issues. But you've got to make sure coming through the 45, calling meatball and state is that good to balance out all the other crap. If it is, fine, you can stay, and all the other crap will take care of itself.

So landing on the *Roosevelt*, landing on the *Enterprise*, landing on the *Constellation*, and then the comeback cruises on the *Kitty Hawk*, and then back on the *Enterprise*—I really don't see the difference in landing. Yeah, you know, there's a little more hook-to-ramp clearance on the bigger decks, and on the bigger decks the wire's a little further up, and things like that. But lined up is lined up. And the meatball in the center is meatball in the center. It's the same spot on each of the carriers, is the way I see it.

**WINKLER: As far as some of the individuals that you dealt with, as far as, like those early squadrons. What were some of your collateral duties, and what were some of the leadership individuals you encountered?**

**BRONSON:** The first squadron, absolutely, Willie Gray, the CO, was known throughout the community in those days. If you missed a radio check you were grounded for a day. And that's just like unbelievable, to hear that to tell somebody that today. Yep, you were grounded. Very strict. Very one-way. I remember getting a lecture from the ops officer

checking the board and saying, with Ed Conran again, after dinner that night in Livorno, Italy-we flew from Norfolk to Azores and then Morocco and stayed in Morocco a couple of nights before they said it was okay to come on to Naples. And from Naples somehow I got to Livorno. Got aboard the carrier. Having said that, after the first meal we had to get briefed, because we were going to fly the very next day. I was junior, so I was going to fly the first hop with the CO. Ed was senior to me; he was going to fly the very first hop with the XO. Then we switched, and then I flew the second hop with the XO and Ed flew his second hop with the CO. That's two hops. Two hours and the debrief and brief and things like that, when we came back in we were a little tired the very first day, after not doing anything for, maybe flying for a month with a couple weeks leave before getting, all this stuff.

Anyhow, having said that, we walk in and sit down. This was the days before NATOPS and things like that. They had our names up on the board to go night-flying. Yeah, felt a little bit tired but, damn, we weren't going to say anything. They even had box lunches for us to put right on our laps. It was a test. It was just a drill. Because they had no intention of doing that. But wasn't that something? We didn't know it. And all of a sudden-well, neither one of us said no. So there we were. So I guess we broke some code there, made the team.

The first air boss on the *Roosevelt*, Ray Hawkins, one of the great naval aviators of all time. Three DFCs before he was twenty-one. Later on, the CO of VA-46, the squadron I later was CO of. Sunny Jim Fitzsimmons was later on one of the COs of the CAG, one of the CAGs.

**BRONSON:** ...a couple cruise books here from the *Roosevelt* days, and things to remember. Swim call, jumping off the flight deck. It's a long way down, sixty feet or so, to the water in the Mediterranean. The Marines love it, though, because they've got a chance to get in their boats out there with their guns. They were going to shoot any sharks or anything else that moved in the water. Also had a squadron of A-3s on board.

**WINKLER:** Now, you're flying the ADs?

**BRONSON:** ADs. AD-6s. Able Dog, SPADs, all those good things. One of the things the carriers had in those days, 1959 crews, were bands. They had the ship's own band, and they used them every once in a while, for the smokers and things. They used them for coming alongside for replenishing. That was always fun to hear because it's...walk around.

I guess one of the worst things that ever happened on the *Roosevelt* was, a lieutenant friend in the stateroom next to me was assistant catapult officer. He said, you ought come up there and see how we do it. It was a Sunday afternoon and we were in some exercise. I guess it was '60 or '61. We had to launch one AD-5 with all the communication tapes, since we were in electronic silence on the carrier, into Naples, so they take the tapes at the communications station there while underway.

So we're up walking around the Elevator 1, which is in the center of the carrier deck up forward, and you can't-to step over they have things called stanchions, like wires and poles that go up that keep from Just there I am with him holding on to me just a little bit lightly and stepping around, I stepped over the stanchion of that before it came up, just as the

elevator's going down, and fell down Elevator I. On a Sunday afternoon. They only had one airplane to launch, on the flight deck a lot of people just wandering around. All of a sudden it's one of those things. You can never catch an elevator once it's going down.

Now, the blue shirt who was the elevator operators put his foot on the button and it stopped, halfway down. I was lying there, and I knew I was hurt. Because you had to be hurt. My eyes were closed. Anyhow, I wiggled my toes. Nothing. I wiggled my fingers. Nothing. Wiggled my shoulders. Nothing. Wiggled my hips. Nothing. Opened my eyes, and it was like being in a goldfish bowl. There must have been 400 people looking down.

Embarrassing it was. Well, I told the elevator operator, "All the way down." I got off on the hangar deck level and went someplace else. I didn't come back up on that flight deck and show my face. Idiot.

Oh, on the *Roosevelt* I think one of the very memorable things of our naval career is, they had the Sixth Fleet change of command. George Anderson was out there. I had met George because his son, George Junior, and I were in the ADs at...excuse me, not George. But George met his father when we were in Corpus Christi together. George came in from Beeville or Kingsville, wherever he was, and met with his father. His father had been a three- star at AirPac. Or excuse me, at CinCPac. He was chief of staff, CinCPac. Three-star Navy admiral. But he had never flown his flag at sea. And so he was giving up a star to come, in the beginning on the *Roosevelt* as a two-star. to fly his flag at sea.

While he was in Corpus there, in between that transition from three stars to two stars, he had lunch with Buster Cobb, a Marine lieutenant going to Furies, and George and myself and his father. So we just had a little talk, conversation, things like that. However, having said that, then George Anderson becomes not only two stars to three stars into Sixth Fleet. And while he's there he got pulled into being the CNO. So we had a change of command.

We had a change of command in the back side of Palma, in the Bay of Formentor. It was one of those things, a long, beautiful bay. The carrier was in all the way, and the sides, and just, we' re decked out in all of the things that you can think of. I mean, the bands and the Marines, and everybody in their dress whites.

Having said that, the U.S. ambassador to Spain is there-George Anderson gets up and gives his change of command speech. And the instant his final word was finished he turned right to the Spanish prince, or the Spanish defense minister, or whoever it was, and gave that exact speech in Spanish. That's all. Grabbing (phonetic). Just ooh-didn't know a word. And it was only done for that one person. But what an impressive performance of a Naval officer. And I'm sure that they were that way back in the days of John Paul Jones, etc.

Then, of course, we know the story of Admiral Anderson as CNO. And the ouija board during the thirteen days of the Cuban Missile crisis.

Back one day in April, 1961, on the *Roosevelt* in the Med cruise, Red Hessel was the CO of the carrier. In those days, in port we kept-of which we never admitted having nuclear weapons or not having nuclear weapons at sea; that has been since given away-

we kept two ADs loaded with Marine guards, carrying a Mark 7 weapon. It was great duty to be the duty pilot, because you got to, not that you'd have to do anything, but be in your flight suit instead of being all in white uniforms or blues, whatever it happens to be in the time of year, while you're in port. And you had free rein and what have you. Anyhow, so I always remember the captain one day said, "Launch the alert." What? And all I remember is I jumped in the airplane. I got up to the flight deck from the hangar deck, I got in and cranked it up, did all the checkouts. Helm Booth was the pilot.

The thing that made this so significant was, it was general visiting day in Cannes, France. The hangar deck and flight deck is loaded with all these springtime people coming out to visit the carrier. They loved it. And here it is cranked up. Takes him up to the catapult. And then says "Canceled." Of course, now, Booth is just white as a sheet. And we're all saying, what is this? A real launch? That was a real weapon, too. There's no if, ands, or buts about this. And it turns out the CO wanted to see just how alert we were. We were just absolutely shaking when that was all over. That's not the type of alert you practice, because it really did something to our psychs. But anyhow, it did work, I guess.

**WINKLER: Cannes, France-what would you fly?**

**BRONSON:** ADs could go twelve hours at low level. They figured 180, call it 200 miles in ten hours, that's 2000 miles. Basically you do it, you'd fly down. It was a target in the Soviet Union. You'd fly down the Mediterranean over the water, and then cut across Turkey or cut across Greece, and then across the Black Sea and into the Soviet Union. Now, you notice I said something about maybe ten hours, or 200 miles. You only had to save gas for twelve hours? Well, you're not coming back, all the way. So you may have to ditch in the Black Sea. But anyhow, we went. We planned it. We were going to go.

So that's the way, I guess, little things keep popping back and forth here on the *Roosevelt*. *Roosevelt* was a great cruise. A great way to learn the sea and the countries. It was just great.

**WINKLER: Well, first of all, some of your collateral duties. And then also, did you do some exercises with some of the other NATO countries?**

**BRONSON:** Two things. Let's do the exercises first. A couple of the exercises we did were NATO exercises which included low levels, practicing always the nuclear delivery options-again, options.

Two of the significant ones. One, I'll always remember this. There were altitude restrictions. In some places in these boxes in these hallways and in my closets I have the early pictures, little camera. I always remember flying into-we fly together from the carrier, three o'clock in the morning, hit the beach together, the coast-in point, then split and go on our way. I always remember my very first low-level in VA-15 off the *Roosevelt* in 1959, flying along, and the coast. And downtown Rome. In downtown Rome you could not fly at 100 feet like you could in the villages. You had to climb to 500 feet. And there, honest, I have the pictures. There's St. Peter's, going at 500 feet, at ten o'clock in the morning. I don't know what it's about, but that's the way they said to do it and that's the way I did it.

One of the other Italian exercises or NATO exercises with Italy, was interesting. Because sometimes you'd have flight plans which were more paper drills than anything else.

But they called: You're cancelled. No, we're not cancelled; we're in the clag (phonetic). No, you're cancelled. Well, anyhow, that was just a sidebar story, nighttime flying back to the low-levels.

One of the great low-levels of all time was myself and my wingman, Bobby Pfeiffer. flew our 12.1. AD pilots had this small fraternity of always trying to get the twelve-hour hop. It was hard to do, both in scheduling exercise-wise, and maybe only one or two would come up all cruise long. We worked it, we worked it, and it turned out we flew in the Med over through Turkey to the Black Sea and turned around, back in through our coast-in points and low-level points in Turkey, and back out to the carrier. And the only thing is that coming back home we still have, say, four hours to get to the carrier, and maybe there's two hours to go, and the call comes up: Hurry and get here. Why? Because you're the only two airplanes in the whole NATO exercise that are still flying, and the exercise cannot be over until you two land. Well, the problem is, you can't go much faster than 180, maybe 200 knots, so you're just not going to get there any faster. So there you are, the only two guys left around hanging out there.

Collateral duties. I came into the squadron, here you are a new boy in the squadron. So one of the jobs easy to have was, I'm the scheduling officer. Do the schedules. And that's easy to control because you have the ops officer looking over your shoulder, and the assistant ops officer helping you and making sure, guiding you and things like that.

One of the things, I said I bagged airplanes. Everybody counts in squadron landings so we made a deal somehow or another if you were the spare it wasn't going to count if a landing didn't get launched. We'd plan to launch four airplanes and you'd man a fifth airplane in case one of the four went down and didn't launch. So that, and being schedules officer I used to know who to schedule myself with as a spare, with good opportunity to launch at night. There are some subtleties involved in that statement. But the folks who knew me will know what it means.

And after that, that was a nice job but it wasn't working for the troops, so at the end of the cruise came back home and changed and became the aircraft division officer. That's the division officer that owns all the metalsmiths in the squadron, the ones who do the banging. And also became power plants division officer. I didn't want to do anything with electronics, so I wasn't the electronics division officer and things like that.

I kept those two for the next two cruises. Power plants division officer and airframes division officer, call it that way. Did that to the end of the cruise. We got the E and O one of those years. Came back. Left the squadron. Then was selected to go into the RAG, VA-44 at the time, which was good. I didn't want to go to the training command and be an instructor there. Didn't want to go to staff work or anything else like that. I wanted to fly airplanes. Which I did all my career until I went to the National War College.

Having said that, and again I don't know how much becomes history and how much becomes personal and everything else like that. I went from VA-15 back to the RAG, but to -135. It's that Berlin Airlift air wing it was built on. Anyhow, so I had my little VA-135 name tag on and I was asked by a couple of the chiefs in VA-15, who were having a squadron picnic up by the main gate, to stop by, and I did. Some little young sailor who had had, you

know, quite a bit to drink came up to me and started to say: What are you doing here, because you don't belong here. You're not the right color name tag, and A, B, C. I always remember, it was Chief Creswell, airframes division chief, just looked at this young sailor, pointed his finger, and said, "You touch him, I'll kill you." It is things like that that makes JOs love being division officers. It shows that you've done something right to gain and garner that type of respect, and also love.

That's pretty much the VA-15. Then again in VA-135, after about, I don't know, six, eight months, whatever it was, they decommissioned the air wing. So then we had to get rid of twelve airplanes. And the way it turned out-I was a lieutenant-and the maintenance officer getting rid of the twelve airplanes. Selling twelve airplanes is a pretty good deal. It all worked out fine.

Back to, one more thing because it comes up later on in the space business. When we were at the *Enterprise* shakedown cruise we were also supposed to go out and pick up John Glenn. But this is one of the times that John Glenn did not launch, before his first trip into space there. The NASA people were on board and, again, it was going to be a nice feather for the Navy and *Enterprise*, nuclear carrier at sea to pick up John Glenn, another naval aviator. Didn't work.

But once, "Would you go fly in space?" Sure. So sitting around the wardroom at dinner and the NASA flight surgeons were there and, again, I was the right size in those days. You look back on those guys. All those guys were five-eight, five-ten, 140, something like that. Because too much in those days, every pound to throw up in space. So they just gobbled me up. "Yeah, come on down." So they gave me a basic NASA introductory physical. Yeah, fine, let's do it the rest of the way.

Came back home and went to admin and said, hey, how do I go to NASA? So we got out the Navy instructions. It turns out in those early days, in the Navy, only graduates of TPS (Test Pilot School), Pax River, could apply to go to NASA. So, guess what? I couldn't go. Well, how do I get to Pax River. Pull out the instruction there. You've got to be an engineer. Well, I wasn't an engineer. So I'm just, it's a long, long way, but I couldn't go. I'd love to, but I couldn't go.

**WINKLER: Yeah, so that's Admiral Truly. Of course, he went to Georgia Tech. That's how he got-but he didn't go to Pax River.**

**BRONSON:** No, but he did the Air Force, so that was equivalent.

**WINKLER: What role did you play in the Cuban Missile Crisis?**

**BRONSON:** We played in VA-44 in the Cuban Missile Crisis in this way.

It was a Saturday morning, four o'clock A.M. We had all, naturally, been on happy hour all Friday night, hung over, sleeping in. At four o'clock in the morning a phone call comes to get in, right now. Oh. Walked in to the board. There's eight of us, four instructor pilots and four replacement pilots. The replacement pilots, though, had previous combat experience, or fleet experience. And there on the board it says "Top Secret." Well, none of us had top secret clearances. Two divisions are set up. Jack Mapes is the leader of one division. I forget who the leader of the other division was. I was

section leader in the first division. And we were going to be loaded with twelve HVARs on the twelve wing stations of the AD, to take off from Navy Jax and fly down to Cuba. Our targets were the SAM sites. We were doing the flak suppression on the SAM sites, because the A-4s at Navy Jax were going to come in right behind us and drop the bombs on the SAMs and the ADs, our rockets, 5-inch HVARs, were going to be for the triple-A sites. The A-4s coming behind us were going to take out the SAM sites themselves and the radar trailers.

Well, of course, nobody said anything, and we all sobered up in a hurry with- didn't have Gatorade in those days, but just water and coffee. We went out and cranked up the engines and what have you. Turned them off and everything's fine. We sat around and sat around and sat around. Finally about ten-thirty they said, okay, no-go today. That was a Saturday.

Remember, the President had come home Thursday from a political trip in Cleveland, I believe it was, because he "had a heavy cold."

**WINKLER: That's right.**

**BRONSON:** Yeah, that's right. That's right. But anyhow, so we didn't do anything. So we went home, and they said, stand by. So we went home and the next morning, Sunday morning, they called us back and come on back in again. So we briefed the same thing to do it all over again.

Now, this shows, what I tell you next, is a little bit of somebody's leadership. We had the three fleet squadrons there, at Navy Jax, in just the ADs. And by the way, over the weekend they had scattered everybody in the primary role and the airplanes around. But beginning Monday morning we went right back to training in the training squadron, the replacement air squadron, VA-45, and the fleet squadrons took over the mission, to go ahead and carry the rockets, go down and take out the flak sites.

Just like you might go back. Remember the stories you hear from the Second World War is, our pilots got so many missions, they came home, and became the trainers and the leaders in developing the new pilots, and the Japanese never did it. Because at the end of it all they had were kamikaze pilots. They'd never retrained their own. And here we are, right back Monday morning, training again, and passed on the high ordnance hops, which we'd love to have done, to do that.

**WINKLER: So at this point you get orders to Vietnam?**

**BRONSON:** All of a sudden here comes this set of orders to go to Vietnam. The way it turned out was three of us, two from the West Coast and myself from the East Coast, left in the first of April, 1963, to go to Vietnam. Served in the VAF, Vietnam Air Force 514 squadron at Bien Hoa, which was an Air Force base just outside of Saigon. Our mission there was to transition T-28 pilots into ADs. A little scary, a little spooky in a way, because all these guys didn't look as big and strong as we are, and the AD took a healthy right leg to use that rudder for takeoff, and also a few of the items in flight.

The three of us met up at the airport in Saigon coming into town. I always

remember the taxicab driver kept saying "Number ten, number ten, number ten." And then later on something would come by and someone would say, "Oh, that's number one." And about halfway back in here's this ancient guy, I am now, but always inquisitive: Wait a minute-you guys talk about number one, number ten. What's three, four, five, six, and seven, eight? Oh. (?). It's easier. You're number one or you're number ten.

Anyhow, we went in and met the Army... Nobody know why we were there. Interesting, the orders were by CNO, not BuPers. They were CNO orders to go over to their air force and do *this* job for six months. They were eventually extended for two more months, so we spent eight months there. Nobody know what we were supposed to do, except the Air Force brigadier general said: Hey, here's what you're supposed to do. We said, oh, okay. We went out. We had a house, the three of us, with a gal who cooked and a gal, a maid, and started to do the transition.

It was interesting to walk in there and just have the confidence. The guys did speak very decent English, because they had been trained at Corpus Christi. They had gone through the Navy program to get their wings. So that part was good. And they were naturally selected out of the T-28 squadrons, from Nha Trang, to come to the higher level in the AD squadrons. So they were decent pilots. So all in all it worked out well.

The only problem was, they wouldn't do any night transition flying. They wouldn't do any night transition flying, and made the excuse-I said excuse, because they're very stubborn people all the way through-of, they didn't have any landing lights on the AD. Well, ADs didn't have landing lights. Anyhow, somebody got the other (?), put landing lights on the wings. They dropped them down and retracted them. Didn't need them. So that little thing done we went out and did night transition, and that was a thrill.

It was the first time I remember being shot at. We were up there doing some night target work someplace around there and all of a sudden here comes the tracers coming back. It's like, oooh. Well, it's something like the first time you ever do the first thing of anything. And at night. It wasn't in daytime, it wasn't expected, it wasn't briefed. Who knows? But there we were.

Then, while this was all going on, the other two guys stayed around Bien Hoa and things. I was a little adventuresome. So I went up to Nha Trang, which is their T-28 place, and flew the combat missions on the weekends. I would hitchhike up somehow or another by airplane, and we'd go up there. They would give me a jeep and I'd stay in some hotel someplace and go, not do the T-28 transition from their L-19 pilots, but to combat flights in the T-28. And since all these were training flights and things, there was a Vietnamese in the back seat, and he was a plane captain. So that if we did crash we were going to have mixed blood. But again, it was T-28 combat flying. Normally we did rockets, the seven-shot rocket pods. It's always fun to fire rockets, because you can see them before they hit, or as they hit.

I guess the most thrilling flight of all was one of the times, it was a Sunday. I was



in Mass in my fatigues in Nha Trang with my jeep. I was halfway through Mass and this guy comes up and taps me on the shoulder and just says, with hand signals: Come. So go down to the flight line and we have a hot target, which turns out to be a rice factory. Rice is very important to the VC, and they had found a warehouse full and they wanted it destroyed. If you're thinking that's not very much to do, wait till I tell you the story.

So we go take off and go down there. The Vietnamese section leader rolls in first and misses with his rocket. I roll in second and miss with my first set of rockets. We only had two runs each. He rolls in for his second run-misses. This warehouse type, about the size of a small house, say, in Arlington, Virginia, is sitting right on the top of a mountain. And so if you're long you're over. If you're short, you're underneath it. Actually, the natural superiority of naval aviation has to shine through, so I am not going to miss my second shot of this run. And sure enough, came down there and pressed it, pressed it a little bit more, fired, and with that, vroom, vroom, you've never seen You can think in terms of Rice Krispies, you can think of Jiffypop. But this whole explosion of the building and everything inside, it is just wild. Takes the airplane and tosses us all around. Nothing dangerous to that craft or anything. Just really tosses the little T-28 around.

I'd forgotten about the Vietnamese plane captain in the back seat. So we go back into Nha Trang to a nice hot break on Sunday afternoon there, taxi on in, and he is out of that back seat as soon as that prop wasn't even stopped. He was over the wrong side, running into the hangar. And I don't know what he did, but all of a sudden. We took our time to go in and start to debrief. When I finished the debrief-it was nice to debrief there and have a beer in your debrief. I come back out to get in my jeep to go around, and about thirty of these mechanics and plane captains all go: Yea, yea. Evidently, he must have told them a heck of a story. But it was, again, real exciting to see what an explosion is up close and personal

**WINKLER: When was that time frame?**

**BRONSON:** That would be in the summer of 1963. Again, we continued this. Remind me, I do have some situation reports I wrote back home to the CO of the squadron, in VA-44. Oh, by the way, when the ADs stayed at Navy Jacksonville and the A-4s and Cougars went to Cecil, they recommissioned VA-45, which was a leftover Korean War squadron. VA-45 in those days were the four regulars and the twenty Reserves.

But anyhow, we stayed there and came home the end of October, the first of November. Two parts are significant on that. We complete our mission. We transitioned everybody they had. We had no reason to stay. We set up for another detachment to come in later on from one of the other squadrons on the West Coast, to do a complete maintenance training program for all the people. But the thing is, we were back home in the States before the assassination of President Diem and before the assassination of President Kennedy.

I remember when we first walked into Vietnam in April I, there, of 1963, the total

military U.S. population was like 16,000. Believe it or not, they had started a draw-down. When we left in November of 1963, they were down to 14,000. Two thousand may not seem like a lot, but in the context of sixteen drawing down, it was working to draw down. You can fill in the numbers later on, on what happened and why it happened. That's not for me this afternoon.

Then when I came back home I was asked to brief the flag at Navy Jax-I can't remember who the admiral was, but it was, you know, ComFAirJax, whoever he was at the time, and his staff. There was about twenty people over there briefing. They had big wall charts and *maps*. Whatever the numbers were is not as important as two of the questions.

One of the questions was: Now, where were you? As if: Where were you? It was unknown. After all, we only had sixteen people drawing down. And: Who sent you there? CNO orders. What do you mean? We don't have CNO orders. No, sir, yes we do. So it's all mixed up. I'm sure it was a tank decision to do this. That's why they kept it the CNO discretionary funds or the Air Force discretionary funds. In other words, they were doing it at the high-end level, of making these decisions to send people to do it like this.

Anyhow, I went on to brief. That was my first tour in Vietnam, and you've seen my write-up about, I subsequently had a half-dozen more. So I had seven tours in Vietnam, encompassing both a Vietnamese squadron and later on two tours in a Navy combat squadron, and then three cruises on the *Oriskany* as flight deck officer, one cruise as flight deck and two cruises as aircraft handling officer. Then back, pulled out of Newport after one year of junior War College to go back to CTF 77 and be the air ops for Hutch Cooper, CTF 77, and Linebacker I and Linebacker II.

**WINKLER: Okay. You covered your first tour in Vietnam. Now mention that you received...**

**BRONSON:** Okay, the Air Medal thing?

**WINKLER: Yeah.**

**BRONSON:** Okay. The first tour in Vietnam, flying those combat hops up in Nha Trang, because we were prohibited from flying combat hops in the AD at Bien Hoa because we did not have mixed training people, blood, incase of a crash. But up in Nha Trang, those combat hops did count. And after twenty-five in those days, it was counting missions unless you did something spectacular, would qualify for an Air Medal. So it worked out. I went up there enough times, enough weekends, flew enough missions to get twenty-six or twenty-seven combat missions at Nha Trang in the Vietnamese T-28s going against the VC in South Vietnam. Remember, we had never been up to the north in those days yet.

So came back home to V-45 and here comes the paperwork in for the Air Medal, but no Air Medal. And also at the same time, it turns out that Secretary of the Navy Nitze, was coming down to Navy Jacksonville for some reason, and they said, oh, that would be a good one to give Ted his Air Medal. And so that was all arranged with the Secretary. Except there was no medal, because it was just a citation. And so we're asking around, and believe it or

not, out of all the officers that we asked, nobody had any Air Medals. Because it had been left over from Korea. But we had a third-class out on the line in VA-45 who had both a DFC and an Air Medal. Remember, he's still a third- class in 1963. So figure it out. He had some fun in the Navy. He said, yeah, I've got them. So he went home and brought them in. It turned out they were pieced together, so we cut them in half and we used his Air Medal for Secretary Nitze, one of the world's most stalwart strategic thinkers, to give me my Air Medal. It was the second one for a naval aviator coming out of Vietnam.

The first one was done by Lieutenant Ken Ranville, then lieutenant. He was over in Bien Hoa, the 514, the year before we were. And you talk about trying to follow in somebody's footsteps. They loved him. He could have gone back and run for whatever he wanted. He would have been elected. They just flat loved him. Now they had the three of us to contend with, and we were certainly all a little bit different than Ken.

**WINKLER: All right. Okay. One of the things, it must have been interesting back then because the senior leadership in the squadrons on these early-they were World War II veterans. How does that experience come into play? Was one of the things that you had to endure all these sea stories about...?**

**BRONSON:** No. There weren't any that I remember. They were just after the war days. As I mentioned, that's why none of them had any Air Medals to borrow. They were just after that, and I guess somehow or another they didn't make it in Korea. Now, we went to Vietnam so much, everybody made it to Vietnam. Or pretty much everybody made it. I don't remember a thing about any of them. The closest one was, as I mentioned, Ray Hawkins. That's the air boss on the *Roosevelt* in '59, having the three Navy Crosses before he was-not DFCs but Navy Crosses that was back there, before he was twenty-one. And also, when I was on the *Enterprise* on the combat cruise in '67, the air boss was Tom Hudner, when Holloway was CO of *Enterprise*. And he was of the Korean "Bridges of Toko-Ri" fame. But in all this, I don't remember any of my COs, XOs, in VA-15, '59, '60, '61, or the combat cruises in *Kitty Hawk* in '66, *Enterprise* in '67, I don't remember any of them talking about war stories, flying stories, from the Second World War. Or even Korea.

**WINKLER: Okay. It's high turnover.**

**BRONSON:** Yeah.

**WINKLER: Okay. You talked about returning to Jacksonville in '63 and talked about the debrief. Where do we go from here?**

**BRONSON:** At Jacksonville were ADs and T-28s doing the replacement. Then all of a sudden, guess what? There's no more ADs in the fleet. So you do away with VA-45 and the AD training and the pipeline. Somebody in, again, Washington said: No, no, no, keep VA-45. VA-44 at Cecil was now too big with all the A-4s and all the Cougars for the instrument squadrons, because they did instruments for the F-8 squadrons at Cecil Field also. The Cougars in VA-44. Make the Cougars VA-45. And we did the same thing with the Cougar squadron at Oceana, Lemoore was - 127, and Miramar was -126. Again, the Navy, looking at those days in the mid-'60s, they were still losing too many people off the rear end of the carrier at night. And so they wanted to have more dedicated instrument flying. So go out

there and do all this.

The people didn't have orders to the squadrons like that. They had orders saying to VA-44. But in that syllabus they would come over and fly the ten hops or whatever, the ground school ten hops, in VA-45, as it turns out to be.

The significance of this all is, Rick Renaldi was the CO of VA-45. It comes time to make the transition to go over to Cecil and BuPers sends down the order, he can take two of his twenty instructors with him. He says: Ted, crank up, we're going to BuPers tomorrow. So I was kind of the designated wingman for CAG Watkins when he flew in VA-113. I kind of get designated, as you'll see later on, for a number of things for whatever reason I don't know. Yeah, I do know, but I shouldn't say it.

So Renaldi. we fly up there and he brings me along to sit there. I'll always remember. the commander in charge of the air combat desk at that time was Wes McDonald, who later on did his Navy career at the highest levels. And Renaldi was a star in the Navy. He sat there and he says to McDonald, "No, it's not going to be two. Uh- uh. You're taking them all or you're not taking me." And they went back and forth a little bit, and McDonald said: Okay, you got it. With that, then Renaldi turned to him and said: That includes the AI also.

No reason in the world to have an air intelligence officer in the instrument training squadron. But McDonald was a neat guy, and things like that, and that's the way command was in those days. Can you imagine a commander saying, I'm not just going to take two; I take them all or you don't take me? I was influenced by people like that all the way through. And, I'm saying, again, that's part of the luck. That's part of the residue of design.

Because to jump way ahead, an incident happened when I'm CO of the squadron. Dave Page was my XO. Again, the Navy made a great selection in he being my XO, and, again, my being XO for Ron Boyle. Anyhow- which the peoples who know us know why it was such a great fit. We're getting ready to come back from our Med cruise in 1975, I guess it was. And we made the arrangements for one officer from each squadron to go back home early to set up the squadron spaces and things like that, A, B, C, what have you. They're going to get off in Rota and fly home. And we had selected Lieutenant Cager Campbell, LDO maintenance-type officer, to go back and get it all set up. Something happened and all of a sudden there comes on the squawk box during a movie, before we got to Rota, "CAG ops called down and says there's been a change, and Lieutenant Campbell's not going." Whatever was said, and the way it was said- Butch Needham, I'm talking about it at Tailhook last year or the year before, Buzz Needham, Rattler, and he made flag. Whatever his reasoning was, Cage wasn't going.

And so I said, "Oop, stop the movie." I said, "I'm going up and change that." The duty officer on the squawk box started to talk back: No, no, no, no. I said, "I'm going up there. They can't do that." And I remember Dave Page saying to me, hey, you can't do that, Skipper. I said, yes I can. Because all he can do is take this, my command

star, that I wore right here over the heart, or excuse me, over the right breast, and take it and put it over here on the left. So I can do it. Again, accepting, preparing, for the consequences. But Cager wanted to go. Including, I would have given him basket leave and paid for the airplane. But the point is, whatever the reason was, anyhow I went up there and, dadida, dadida, and anyhow, Cager was on the list and Cager went. Came back in and walked up the aisle and sat in the seat and said, "Roll it." Of course, everybody's on pins and needles, what the hell? "Oh, Cager, you're still going. Don't worry about it." Yeah. And away we go.

We'll see one other time in here I had to write a letter when I was at junior course at Naval War College to the Assistant Secretary of Defense because I insulted him in an after-seminar speech. Anyhow, we'll bring that in a little bit later.

**WINKLER:** Okay, the transition to jets.

**BRONSON:** Transition to jets. That was going from ADs to jets. The existing Cougars at Cecil Field were in VA-44 until the day they were stood up as VA-45. We went over there and started to fly. It was something, just transitioning. It wasn't hard. The hardest part was, where are all the gages and where are all the buttons that we're used to? They weren't there, because they didn't need them. The jet just goes. Stick, and it goes. Whereas like in the AD you're trimming that big ball down there all the time, on the rudder. Because every time you changed the power, when you changed the thrust on the engine you changed the shape of the airplane. It wanted to go left or wanted to go right. So you're trimming all the time. In the Cougars, to transition, I was trimming all the time. Bill MacFarland, the instructor, said, "What are you trimming for? You don't trim a jet." Oh? I dunno? I thought you did. Anyhow, the transition went easily enough.

Interesting story. Since we're now going to be instructor pilots, we had to get more jet time, especially since all these students coming out of training had 200 hours in jets. So in the very beginning there, before the formal 15 February changeover of '64, we had all these: Hey, you guys; go to the West Coast and get some flight time. Go out and take a long weekend cross-country. Build up some flight time. So anyhow, one of the AD pilots coming down from Oceana was Jack Fellows. Jack and I are still close, bosom buddies today. So Jack and I take this cross-country out to Alameda, because my old flight surgeon from VA-15 is a civilian now in radiology and he could put us up and things like that, and we could have fun. So we go out there, we party for the weekend, we party for the weekend. In Monterey, things like that.

Anyhow, walk out to the airplane Sunday morning and Jack and I look at each other, (sigh), looked at the plane captain, and said, "Plane captain, do you want to buy this airplane?" Of course, the plane captain didn't know what the hell to say. I said, "Well, think about it. We'll be back tomorrow." And that's all Jack and I did with each other. Then we went back and played around another day, or two, or three. Four. We finally started home on Friday. We'd been gone a week. Sure enough, we had a little radio problem going into Albuquerque. Below minimums, and things like that. But yeah, we made it okay.

Came back home to Cecil Field. Landed. Everybody was gone for the day. During that time we sent one message. We said, basically: "We're delayed." We didn't say why. Probably arrive via Greyhound bus. Nobody understood that except the CO, who happens to be this guy, Commander Rick Renaldi. He knew exactly what the message meant, but he forgot. He thought it was his parents, who don't like to fly, who were coming in for a visit anyhow from California to Jacksonville. He thought the message was about them. So he didn't connect it with us.

Having said that, Monday morning Jack and I are all bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, sitting in the back of the ready room, VA-45 at Cecil. All the other IPs are standing around there who know very well. Of course, Jack had his own reputation, well deserved. Absolutely super, super hero in anybody's book. And they all know somehow or another something's going to happen. You just don't go for a week.

Renaldi walks in. He always had this habit of coming to the counter right inside the door, checking the message board, getting his cup of coffee, and walking out the door to the office. Checked the message board, got his cup of coffee. And as he started out the door he turned to the back of the room and said, "Hey, Jack." Yeah? "Hey, Ted." Yeah? "Did you have a good time?" Yes, sir. "Good." And walked out the door and right on back. Everybody goes: "You shit, you guys, how the hell do you get away with it?"

I had no answer how to get away with it. Yeah, somebody's going to say: Well, he's egotistical. No, it's not egotistical. If you're good, you're not egotistical. Anyhow, I just have to say it that way to shorten up the whole tape, or else we'd be here an hour and a half trying to wishy-wash around, how do you get away with something like that? Because you were good before that happened. And you're going to be good after that happened. And no consequences were involved. No newspaper stories, no money. Just like, well, it was something. So you can see why, later on when I got married, Rick Renaldi 's my best man.

**WINKLER:** Okay. So then from there you're going to go to VA-125, to Lemoore.

**BRONSON:** Okay, one more thing back in VA-45. The East Coast people played a lot stronger in practicing for an event against Cuba. The East Coast RAG used to start and practice-I'm trying to think what the code word we used to use for it. But basically it was going to be a sixteen-plane launch from Cecil Field to Cuba. F-8s, A-6s, and A-4s. A-4s and F-8s from Cecil, A-6s from Oceana. Sixteen-plane launch, section takeoffs down the 18 runway. Blue Streak. And before they went to do this at seven o'clock in the morning they had to plan not to fly the next day, because you're bringing in all the instructor pilot assets and things like that. Everybody had their targets and everybody had their routes and things. It was all live ammo, too. Live ammo. And so that's what made it a double- somebody could say go, but at the same time, all the live ammo was going to be dropped down at a southern target in Florida, at-Avon Park was a live-

ordnance drop for southern airplanes and also Pine Castle for some of the others. I forget what the F-8s do with their Sidewinders. Except one F-8 took off and as he(?) clear the Sidewinder went shoooweee, but everybody had made a left-hand turn already so there was nobody in front.

But having said that, they also launched two Cougars at three o'clock that morning all the way down, straight line to east of Havana, to the refueling area, to check the weather in the refueling area. And it was basically off of Fort Lauderdale or something like that, over the ocean. Because somehow or another myself and Peto were always designated weather pilots.

I bring this up because it's an interesting part of history that we planned all the time for, and actually did it, and did these events about every three months or so. But gains (phonetic) nice choice one night went out there. Oh- oh. It was zero-zero. So, hey, there's nothing to prohibit you taking off zero-zero. Especially not the instrument instructor pilots. Of course, you had to have a field to come back and land at. We had a field around there to come back and land at. It's all right. Took off in zero-zero. It was pretty-a lot of times night takeoffs on the carrier are zero-zero flying, but you're on the catapult, you're going down, boom, you're on your instruments. Everything all.... But you've got to roll, roll, roll, roll down the runway and you don't have that catapult keeping you straight. And of course there's nothing at the end of the catapult except water and the sky. You pull up and you fly. But rolling down the runway, rolling down the runway, you've got to keep from going even, well, it's a lot of fun. We did that twice.

Then coming back to land one time it was like-by this time it was seven o'clock in the morning. We'd take off maybe at five o'clock. A couple of the runways were fogged in. The other runways were clear. So we just tell the tower we're going to land. "No you can't. We can't see you." Well, we see the runway, so landed. Because we had to personally debrief the weather in the refueling area. Anyhow, these are the things we did. I don't know about the kids today, if they do that or not. I'm sure that there are other stories we could tell about they could not do in any way, manner, shape, or form. Because we want to keep doing this. But we had fun.

Then, by that time, I'm getting a very short engagement at Cecil Field for about a month. Get married, move to Lemoore, California. And start the West Coast training in August of '65. Went through the instrument RAG out there, -127. Then into the A-4 RAG, transitioned to -125. From -125 did the standard programs that we were familiar with in the AD days. And then did Yuma for weapons deployment. Did carrier quals. And I guess, you know. I can name a half-dozen guys who would tell stories of themselves and things like that. So I'm not embarrassed to be solo in this.

So carrier quals were finished. It's part of married life and things like that. Part of being a bagger. So you have your choice, because of seniority and things like that, finish in the daytime, out to get the carrier, doesn't matter. It was off San Francisco and we're going to fly back to Lemoore. And the first guys finished, as soon as they got eight of them they could put them in the COD and the COD would fly them back. Or, based on seniority and things, you could wait till the airplanes were finished and fly one of the airplanes back. I would wait

and fly the airplane back. And the next day, two days to get home, I'm going to have orders and leave on an airplane and go over and join VA-113 onboard the *Kitty Hawk* on their combat cruise. Yeah, I still wait to fly the airplane home.

Why? Just in case I took off in the airplane and had some kind of a problem and had to come back and land on the carrier, to bag another landing. Bagging is always grabbing one here, grabbing one here, grabbing one here, grabbing one here, so that eventually you get a thousand.

So anyway, I came home and Courtney, one of my friends, Courtney called. Well, he was already home, you know, having his afternoon libation with his wife. I get back home and I get crapped. How come I didn't come home when Courtney came home? Anyhow. So it's part of life in the fast lane.

**WINKLER:** So you wound up joining the *Kitty Hawk*.

**BRONSON:** Joined *Kitty Hawk*, VA-113. It's all how things work. I was destined to go to VA-192, the world-famous Golden Dragons, who did all the publicity in the world, because having the master's degree in mass communications from Chicago, and VA-15 got all the ink all over the world. And in those days VA-44 and VA-45. Because I was always PAO. Always PAO. As a matter of fact I ended up Navy-wise with that specialty. P-coded. Which helped me out with John Lehman one time. And Naval Space Command.

So -192, again, was the Navy's leading advocate of PAO for themselves. They wore the yellow socks to go with their nickname, the Golden Dragons. But unfortunately one of the guys in -113 hit the ramp and killed himself, and so my orders were changed within a week from -192 to VA-113, and I joined the Stingers, VA-113. Made the combat cruise on *Kitty Hawk*, which was a disastrous cruise, combat-wise. It was cruel.

The A-6 squadron lost every airplane. They just did. Ron Hayes, who I knew from when he was a lieutenant LSO on *Roosevelt* on the '61 cruise--he was out there for a couple of months--was a lieutenant commander, ops officer, in the A-6 squadron. And after, as they lost their CO and they lost their XO and lost others, he was the lieutenant commander CO. And we lost two in our squadron, the CO and a lieutenant.

**WINKLER:** It's still August 18, 2005. This is Tape 2 Side A, and we're looking at a cruise book of the *Kitty Hawk*. On the last tape we were talking about what a demanding cruise this was. Combat losses. Could you talk a little bit about your recollection of your first mission off the carrier?

**BRONSON:** The first thing is, you're walking into a squadron. You've flown aboard in the COD. You walk aboard. They don't know you. You don't know them. You go fly the first mission--I forget with whom. The CO, probably. Daylight. Nothing spectacular. Pretty much you don't remember anything that's specific about it. You went off with your bombs, you pre-flighted your bombs, you dropped your bombs, you got all the switches the right way. You went over the beach and massed your ammo and things like that. And went through all these new procedures that were foreign to you, for search and rescue, checking procedures of different controlling agencies. So nothing memorable at



all, except go and come back, and go again.

Later on, as the cruise progressed, different missions were just unbelievable. You know, like a thirty-two- airplane alpha strike, daytime. One of them one instantly coming to mind was actually on the next cruise, on the *Enterprise*. Lost two airplanes on that mission. One was Dick Rich, who was the XO of the F-4 squadron. Also with A-6 was Red McDaniel and Kelly Patterson. Kelly Patterson has been in the news. Red McDaniel stayed in the Navy, naturally, and did a lot of writing, running for Congress down in North Carolina. A sterling character. He always mourned the loss of Kelly, because he thought Red was more responsible. Red was not responsible for SAM that hit. Kelly Patterson has been in the news recently, as being one of the POWs in Russia. I don't know anything about that Who knows? But flights like that just really shock you.

It turns out that Walt Linhart and I, in -113, had Bullpups on that day to do flak suppression at the target. When we got to the target there were just two bombing planes left, for whatever reasons, two A-6s. And the flight leader, just as he started his nose over and Walt and I were rolling in, he said, "**Abort**, abort, abort. Target. Clouds." So we had gone all the way, and there are Walt and I with the two Bullpups and nothing to do. We came back on and found the Thanh Hoa bridge, which was kind of famous to be a dumping ground. We rolled in from the west on that flight and we were being shot at halfway down. Naturally, because everybody got shot at, at the Thanh Hoa bridge. The pups went on down, guided half way and then the rest of the way they were on their own because we had to break off without being silly and being killed, or hit, things like that. So break off and go on back to the carrier.

But so many of the combat missions were-it's difficult to say routine. But they were all such a high level of preparation, high level of anxiety, high level of execution. There are the studies around from combat days from the NAMI people at Pensacola who wired up the pilots and all the body functions, temperature, pulse, heartbeats and things, were all higher coming back and landing on the carrier at night than it was being shot at in downtown Hanoi and Haiphong. I don't know why that is, but it is. It could be that we just have to pay attention for the carrier landing, and also that the margins are so skinny. Whereas the margins are broad even putting your nose at the ground and getting ready to drop your bombs on a bridge or a warehouse or a factory or a moving convoy.

*Kitty Hawk* cruise was difficult, as I mentioned there at the end of the tape. I don't know if a page here has the number of fatalities. One-thirteen, we lost two or three on that cruise. And it just was that way all the way through.

*Kitty Hawk* cruise, I had two things I was sure to remember. The USO used to come out and do tours. Danny Kaye came out and had this young gal. She stood there and didn't move, shake around or anything. Just perfect, beautiful, clear-sounding voice. She stood in a sleeveless gingham dress, penny loafers without socks, hands at her side, hair cut pageboy like somebody had a bowl over it. You got the idea? Just plain, simple vanilla, and beautiful voice. That was on the cruise. Came back home on the turnaround and got ready to go back. Danny Kaye said, "You're going to know this gal. She's going

to be famous." And sure enough, when we got ready to back turnaround on the cruise, we spent the night up in San Francisco, the guys and their wives, and went to the Fairmont Hotel. And there in a white dress, starring, Vikki Carr. Nice to know these folks when they've been there.

It was also on the same cruise, I think-growing up in Wilmington, Delaware, thirty miles from Philly, also very popular in my college days, were the Four Aces. So later on they broke up for financial reasons, and too hard to make money. But anyhow Al Roberts is over in Cubi Point and Subic Bay, giving shows at night in the club, and saw us. Heyyyy.

I know the Old Mill. Of course, that's where they started, playing the Old Mill. So I brought him back to the carrier the next day and put him in the cockpit, took pictures, sent home, made the papers back there. But the neat thing is, he picks up the phone and calls my folks, and says, you know, your son is doing well, and so on. I thanked him. He did a nice job, and all this. It palpitates their heart. All the big peoples who do that, don't do that, some of them do. But those who do, it's really important to the folks at home. Just little tidbits that come along.

*Kitty Hawk*, as I say, Red Carmody was the carrier CO. We had a squadron reunion of just those two cruises, the *Kitty Hawk* and the *Enterprise* guys, two years ago at Tailhook, and Red Carmody came and joined us for breakfast, along with Bob Naughton and Hank Dibble and a couple of the others. Bob had spent his six years at Hanoi. Came back and had a successful Navy career as CO at an A-7 squadron at Cecil, CO of Navy Dallas, and then with NASA for another fifteen years as their director of operations for all their aircraft activities.

Didn't know him at the time, but Don Williams was in the squadron. He later on became a NASA astronaut pilot in command of the shuttle. Jake Garn was one of his famous passengers, playing with slinky toys up there in space. Bill Bowes was a jg in the squadron, later three stars, BuAir. All kinds of peoples you meet in combat squadrons you bond with them. It's not trite to say that, you just do. It's more than, would you give them blood?

Yes. Would you lend them money? Yes. It's more than that. It's just being side by side with them. Even today, having a cup of coffee. It's different than having a cup of coffee with you tomorrow than it is having a cup of coffee with them tomorrow. It's just, you've been there, you've done that. It's not trite. It's just true, true, true.

And it happens with your families, too. Your combat families. Especially if they went and spent time at Hanoi. Which is certainly no Club Gitmo. Hah!

**WINKLER:** Now, as far as your collateral duties in the squadron. You mentioned you were public affairs.

**BRONSON:** Well, again, jump back to -115, you heard. I forget about -135. I did something in ops. Then in the RAG I ran the ground school. In the instrument RAG I

ran the ground school, which was three days. Half a day for three days. That would be commanders, from commander to ensign, going through all the ATC procedures. And did well on that. A lieutenant, you get to do the writeups and they're signed by a commander, going to the XO of some squadron, so that's nice.

Then in the VA-113 I was in admin. It's difficult to get a good job in those squadrons, because those combat squadrons, we had seven or eight lieutenant commanders. Well, you only have three department heads. So da da da da da da. So the deal is, a good XO, a good CO, will sit down there and decide how they want to rotate so everybody can get the fitness report as a department head. Our squadron, we had just unbelievably super lieutenant commanders. Bob Brennock, Bear Taylor, George Wales, Tom Scott, myself, Tom Brown-not the Tom Brown, third admiral, but Tom Brown, another. So you know, what they did, they just decided to rotate, and when we came home from cruise you rotate around.

So the second cruise I was the admin officer. Tom Scott was the ops officer. And Bear Taylor, who later on made two-star admiral and very knowledgeable and famous in the Navy-some people say infamous (Bear and I shared the same problem) was the awards officer. But that was a big deal, because you wanted to write up those awards all the time as they were happening, and not come home after the cruise and say, well, what do we do now? Bear was a great, great awards officer. And ops officer the next year, next cruise, when I wasn't there.

Again, certain strikes get to be really big. Then you do enough of them back and forth and you just don't know. I guess one of the great non-launches in -113 was Christmas Eve or Christmas night. We were having a movie. We were having a closed-door ready room. Looking over some videos from the families back in Lemoore and enjoying ourselves. All of a sudden there was: Launch the alert 15s. We weren't prepared to launch any alert 15s that evening. Somebody started that it was patrol boats or something. Oh, it was like, aww. And the weather was just double dog doodoo. People around looked at each other. Who was going to volunteer? Anyhow, George Wales and myself, we said, okay, we'll go.

So we put our flight suits on. We got up there on the flight deck, and it was just black, black, black, ten o'clock. 2200 at night black. Rain, windy. Ship is rocking. We crawl in the airplane, don't even pre-flight it. The bombs are going to work because the ordies did that and did it perfectly. We go ahead and crank up. And just said, aw, I can't believe it. Can't believe we're going to go. And hardly, nobody even told us, we knew what channel to go to. But we knew where we were going and what we were going to do. Sure enough, they launch the E-2. Sure enough, they launch an F-4. Sure enough they launch an F-4. Oh. Just as they came up to break the chains down and take us forward, "Cancel." It was a real. Oh, God, good. I didn't want to go.

The E-2 eventually came back aboard. But the F-4s never came aboard. They went to Danang. Anyhow, George and I came back to the ready room, took off our flight gear and put it aside there where we went, went down to my stateroom and then

sat there for the next hour and a half and told each other how bad it was. And had some cream cheese, crackers, and that Jamaican hot sauce, pickled pepper. So that's how we did our Christmas Eve. All kinds of little things that make a cruise. Because they can't be serious all the time. You'd go nuts.

**WINKLER:** Yeah. you'd be out there also during Thanksgiving too.

**BRONSON:** Yeah. Thanksgiving was just-the only reason it was Thanksgiving was a big meal. And again, saying it's a big meal-it was a complete nuts-to-bolts meal. The food on the carrier is good. That's the one thing that the Navy is very smart about, and all the way to my last cruise, is: Don't let food be an issue. Because later on, on the one CTF 77 you had the mutiny on board *Kitty Hawk*. That was interesting ah, to say the least.

**WINKLER:** You mentioned the ordnance men and the other enlisted folks who were assigned to the air wing and the chiefs. Could you talk a little about that, on *Kitty Hawk*?

**BRONSON:** Yeah. In between these two cruises in Lemoore-great valley, great support for the Navy and aviation. Although the airfield in 1961 was actually built nowhere, between Sacramento and Bakersfield. But all those valley towns, Lemoore itself, Hanford, Porterville-without getting a map and going through them all-all very big supporters. The Lions Club, the Rotary Club, they always wanted somebody to come and speak, every monthly luncheon. And again, a little bit of background, I'm not afraid to speak, in the PAO business, I end up being tapped a lot of times by the base PAO to go out to different places. And, truthfully, once I worked at one place they say, oh, get-tell the other ones, get him, he's good. Anyhow.

But after the first one or so I said, wait a minute, I don't have to do this alone. So I would bring one of our enlisted chiefs with me every time. And apart from telling them how their tax dollars were being spent with their people who lived up the road in Lemoore and had their homes and bought the cars and refrigerators and clothes from local people. But also how we, going off the pointy end of the carrier in an airplane loaded with bombs and missiles, are dependent upon somebody like chief so-and-so, who personally inspects the fuse of every bomb before that airplane gets on the catapult. Or another electrical chief who does all the mechanics, goes through all the scenarios and the wiring that my warble, my SAM warning is going to work for me when I'm over the beach, when the SAM warbles are going off. He's the one that I bring him with me and can have them sit at the head table with me. These guys are just great, super. We can't live without them.

One enlisted story that I was very happy with, that goes with the *Oriskany* later on, it's about the flight deck and the handler, and getting ready for the third cruise. Chief evaluations. I had a flight deck chief that I wanted to make sure he made E-8. And there's only one way to do that. And it's not just let it be the handler lieutenant commander, even the air boss commander sign it. I wanted it to be board ready. I wanted

it done by the CO of the ship. So mainly, I could do the writeup, but the main thing one sentence I wanted the CO of the ship to sign was: "I will not leave port without this chief as Warrant 3," And, hey, he was happy to do it. It was big John Gillcrist, who is Paul Gillcrist's brother. He understood. All the chiefs of the boat were not rated among each other. But I had the special one of one for Chief Hudson, and sure enough he pops in there as E-8. Because he was one of those type guys, he'd go to sea forever, be on the flight deck forever. He didn't care, oh, oh, oh. Wait, wa, wa, wa. And that's what division officers, department heads, do for them. They can get it done like that and then they don't mind working extra for you.

So we finished -113 and get divorced and get ordered back to Jacksonville to VA-44. It turns out I had three tours in VA-44. Go back this time as instructor pilot. Again, collateral-duty-wise I end up running all the ground schools and Legal Service Officer

It happened over in VA-44 back at Navy Jax, guys in the squadron were still doing trial counsel and defense counsel, on court martials. I did two court martials over at Jacksonville when VA-44 was still everybody. And I did two court martials at VA-44 at Cecil Field. Always defense counsel.

Without going through all the different ones, I guess the cruelest one was, Mike Griffin, actually, the CO of -44, called me in and says: Ted, I want you to be defense counsel for this guy, because the folks know what you did for so and so a couple months ago. Which was another court martial that I was defense counsel for, and it came back not guilty.

He said, I want you to be defense counsel because I want this guy hung, and I don't want anybody to have an excuse that he didn't get a fair trial. That's a whole lot on a lieutenant, CO. I mean, I didn't say that to the CO.

So I got away with things. If he's going to treat me like that, then I am going to get away with things. I'm always going to be on time, never going to miss a flight I'll fly anywhere, anytime, anyplace, that's not the issue. Some people might think I have a wise-ass attitude. Well, too bad. So I said, okay. Well, this kid, I didn't know anything. I talked to him back and forth. Later on I'm working the issue. I've read everything, and deciding what to do. There was a pre-trial agreement that we had in those days. I made up a pre-trial agreement for this kid and took it in to the CO, Mike Griffin, who I think, believe, had a heart attack and died when he was CO of the *Saratoga*, on the bridge. But anyhow, super super man. He looked at me and he says, "I know what you're here for, and I won't sign it unless it includes a BCD." I handed it to him and the top line was a BCD. He signed it, didn't even look at the rest. The rest had, you know, thirty days restriction. Not even confinement. Thirty days restriction. And a one-month one-third forfeiture.

We go have the court-martial and we fight it all the way through, fight it all the way through. The board came back with all kinds of stuff, but no BCD. Which put the pre-trial agreement into play. Then, this is how it worked. The CO's pissed because I

agreed with him about the BCD. Now, a little story behind that. But now the board is pissed with me because they did all this work and they didn't know I had the BCD, and they came back, I think, you know, three months confinement and three-month forfeiture, or six and six, I don't know, it doesn't matter. But there was no kick. And why did I do that, as a lieutenant? Because I was friends with the flag staff and I had gone up there to ask them for guidance on how you defend.

It turns out the kid was on the second time he had been caught as an eighteen-year-old sailor out at Jax Beach with a false ID card so he could drink beer. I'm trying to get some plans and issues I can use before the board, and things along this line. And the flag legal officer says, Jesus, do anything you want. He's not going to get a BCD for eighteen years old and a second ID card. Oh, really? No. Won't stand. So knowing that is why I went in to the CO with a BCD, knowing it wouldn't get even if he got the BCD from the board it wouldn't stand up on appeal. So anyhow, everybody's upset. The CO's upset, the board's upset. And again, the word goes out in the squadron, hey, if you're going to get a court-martial you want Lieutenant Bronson. Don't know how he does it but....

And back over at Cecil Field we had another one. Jack Wynn was the CO. Saw him at the Lemoore reunion last year. We're down there in this briefing room. It was a long, tough court-martial. This guy had stolen money on the paper route. Oh, just all kinds of complications like that. So a fraud case. I don't know why the FBI was there, or Secret Service. Because of the Treasury Department I think. The Treasury Department, Secret Service, was there because of the money thing, federal money.

After, he said: Are you a lawyer? No. I'm a lieutenant commander now. No, I'm just following what the paper says, I mean, what the book says. He says, I don't know; you can defend me any time. But, you know, and again, you know, I got the guy off. I made him pay a little bit, but still. It's fun to get in there and have fun. And the troops just look at you as you walk someplace and, you know, if you're going to ask for anything you're going to get it. But again, Jack Wynn wasn't upset that it went the way it went. He just wanted, again, he wanted it fair and that was all. Little things mean a lot, I guess.

A lot of fun. It's part of having fun in the Navy. And I know that there were different reasons they went away with that system and I'm not going to get into that, yes or no. But it was fun being able to do this.

**WINKLER: Yeah, they brought in real lawyers.**

**BRONSON: Now we can't get anything done, probably.**

**WINKLER: Okay. Now, you were with VA-113 on**

**Kitty Hawk, and then-did we also cover the Enterprise?**

**BRONSON:** Yeah, that was *Kitty Hawk* and then the *Enterprise* cruise. *Enterprise* cruise we had Bob Naughton shot down. Jim Graham, my wingman, was shot and bagged, and pitchforked to death.

And I didn't mention before or anything, but here's, when you ask about combat flying and things you don't know. An F-4 got shot down, was on the flats there off of Danang, in the mud flats. And of course they didn't want the airplane taken to be able for the Russians to go and reverse-engineer the stuff that was on board. So the bombing hop went in there for us to blow it up. The first one in wasn't too successful, I guess, so they sent us in.

George Wales was the leader. I forget who the two-man was. I was three. And Jim Graham was four. We're there and we're dropping Mark 82s. Each of us have six, I guess. Yeah, each of us have six. So it was one in, two in, three in, four in. And somebody said, oh, look. And we're right there side by side. One in, two in, three in, four in. And Jim Graham was four in. Got blown out of the air. That's how close you come to combat death, and not even know it.

**WINKLER: What hit him?**

**BRONSON:** Triple-A. He was able to eject, but then, long story short here, including Red Cross and Geneva and his folks out just south of Philly, between Wilmington and Philly, just outside of Chester-he was pitchforked to death by the farmers there. So he never made it to Hanoi, like so many others did. But whether it's a cold cat shot or something like that, it's just, it's war.

So then, came back to -44. And the big issue started about-and there's some e-mails back there from my friend Mac Cline a year or so ago. Mac Cline was the placement officer up at the Bureau. I'm a lieutenant commander. I'm being sent to-oh, someplace up in here, New Zealand wanted an A-4 instructor come over for three years, and I fought all the way to get that job. I just, can't you see a bachelor in New Zealand? A few years ago? Anyhow, New Zealand said no, they wanted a married couple. So I didn't go. I fought all that and didn't get it.

Then at the same time I got orders to the *Oriskany*, July 1969, from my dear friend Mac Cline. And basically Mac told me on the phone: Bronson, we're sending you, I'm sending you out there because you're a prettyboy and we just don't think you can make it. But if you make it out there as flight deck, and you're going to fleet up to handler when you come back and report we'll take care of you. And that's verbally exactly what he said.

Now there are some e-mails. Something got started a year or so ago, we got back and forth on this. And Mac has since said that in all his detailing up there, that was one of the best ones they made. Because of the input they get back from-believe it or not, I didn't know at the time-the squadron COs and the air wing. You know, how do you get handled by the flight deck officer? Who was, you know, going to be around, going to be around, going to be around. And that kind of acknowledgement from your peers, even late, even ten, fifteen years later, is nice. To know that you were that good.

And, again, not knowing you were that good, and certainly never were in the boss's rank, like later on was EA to a three-star for three years. Never wearing in three stars. Getting the job done as a captain. Knowing what questions to ask, what buttons to push, but not wearing his three stars by saying, "The admiral wants this," "The admiral has to have this," when the admiral doesn't know a damn thing about what you're saying to somebody using his name or his stars

that way.

Then out there, flight deck. I'll tell you, I didn't know what the flight deck was, and started to get blown around out there, and put chains around my neck so I wouldn't blow off the flight deck.

The biggest thing that happened on the flight-deck cruise was, something screwed up on the number three elevator, which was the aft elevator on the starboard side. It had to be folded and couldn't be used any more for the rest of the cruise. For, about, that's like maybe four months.

So I always remember the CO, Jack Kenyon, was coming around with somebody, looking at why, and things like that. And there's a young airman, blue shirt, sitting on the side just da, da, laughing and smiling about it. The captain of the ship swings down and says, "What are you smiling about this accident?" The kid, not knowing any better, said: Oh, I just lost my cleaning station. I mean, it's just so logical you've got to laugh. At least you have to smile. I mean, he doesn't understand the importance of that elevator going up and down and how it contributes to the effort of the war. Yeah, wait a minute, he just knows it's his cleaning station. It's just nuts. Beautiful.

Came home. And this is something else. I can't believe it, and my friends at Tailhook in San Diego, getting ready to have it-someone has an issue. A paragraph, something about the *Oriskany* having a steel flight deck. *Oriskany* has a wooden flight deck. I've got to start and write back for that. Yeah, we used to go in port each time and get great mahogany from the local Filipinos for free to put into the flight deck, because you couldn't get mahogany back in the States. No. Pray tell, no. You can't cut that tree down and let it go aboard a carrier for the safety of the people. No, no. So we would swap twenty-pound cans of coffee. All the coffee aboard the ship, you know, comes in twenty-pound cans. Nice, square. We'd swap a couple of those and we'd get a ton of nice, fresh-cut mahogany ready to go down, and we'd lay it. Then, of course, we'd put the rubber over top of it. So we did things like that, always. It's cumshaw. Everybody knows what cumshaw is.

Came back and did the turnaround in port. Turnaround's a turnaround. Get back to sea and going down to the aircraft handling officer. I had heard the tales of the carriers going out between the Golden Gate, out of Alameda, and airplanes trying to re-spot and just slipping and sliding all around there. Sooooo, I told the squadrons, I said, guess what, we're going to re-spot at one o'clock in the morning. They're all saying: What??? I say, yeah, it's going to be a nice, easy, slow re-spot. We're going to get at things so every airplane is tied down where we want it when we get underway, and everybody can sit back and sleep in. They agreed with the approach. Because the ones who'd been through it before know how hairy it is. And I said, yeah, afterwards you can go back to sleep.

The other big thing on the *Oriskany* as the flight deck officer was the berthing compartment for V-1 was underneath the wires. *Oriskany* had a metal insert in that section of the ship for the landing area, and it leaked. And there's not a damn thing they could do about it unless you're going to put a new flight deck on. And everybody in the world complained. Everybody came around trying to help, including the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Installations and Logistics, a retired Marine general. He was the only one who understood. Because the sailors adjusted. They all got two or three, some of them, or some of them just one, shower curtains. And they were able to make little river valleys for the water leaking to come through their shower curtain their way, down into some place, and



live with it. There's no question about it, the sailors are the most adjustable people there are. You just want them adjusting on your side. But they got tired of everybody trying to come around and help them when they understood, they could see, there was no way they were going to fix it unless put a new flight deck on it, and they weren't going to do that. And then, of course, everybody coming around and bothering you, because, you know, we were sleeping on and off with different schedules.

Anyhow, I guess a couple of interesting things on the flight deck, or aircraft handling officer. I had a lot of nicknames on the *Oriskany*. A lot of nicknames. One of them was "Rich Kid." That came from running the pools. And I mean we ran them right out of flight deck control, the central part of the ship. Everybody's coming through. And it was all legitimate pools. There was nobody making money on the side, except during the Combined Federal Campaign. You're at Yankee Station, you've got no girls to spend money on, you've got no booze to spend money on. Couldn't even spend money on drugs because that was pretty well cleaned up. And so combat pay, and no taxes. and so taking a dollar chance on, ten numbers across the top, ten numbers down the side. We were doing three and four and five of those a day.

And then I really got my nickname of "Rich Kid" and some other things because, coming home is the most boring thing, from WestPac, that you can do, whether it's a carrier or destroyer. Day after day, figuring out-not only that but they're keeping you up another hour on the time change. Jeez. Believe it or not, set up bingo. For three thousand people on the *Oriskany*, set up bingo every night and played for two hours. The first thing is, how do you get the bingo cards? You don't. You tell them to make their own and give me a copy. It turns out I read some place, at this time, that the combinations for bingo cards, to have a duplicate-before you can have a duplicate takes over two million combinations. So, hey, you've got three thousand people. Maybe a thousand will play. So, guessing that nobody would match up a second card exactly the same. Then, if they do, you divide the prize.

Anyhow, we ran it down from a little ship's TV thing. Had the number Pennsylvania 6-5000, like the old Glenn Miller things. Stood there all fancied up and things. We were giving ten thousand dollars a night away. Ten thousand dollars a night. A combination of money we're taking in or racking on the court (phonetic), or just, all the money in, all the money was going out. The Combined Federal Campaign was getting their cut. Anyhow, everybody was playing, and we were just having fun. Everybody just couldn't understand how you could play bingo at sea without cards. Well, you can. Called it on the telephone. It all worked. Had a lot of fun.

**WINKLER: The *Oriskany*, now, this was after the fire?**

**BRONSON:** Yes, it was after the fire, a couple years. Didn't know anything about the fire. It was a couple years after the fire.

**WINKLER: Okay. And when you were on *Enterprise*, that was before that fire.**

**BRONSON:** That's right. And it was after the *Kitty Hawk* fire. I stayed away from all of them. Although later on, I was on the *Kennedy* for the collision with the *Belknap*. That was scary.

**WINKLER: We'll talk about that. Okay, could you talk a little bit about the *Oriskany*? Well, you were the flight deck officer.**

**BRONSON:** Flight deck officer for-I joined the *Oriskany* in July, 1969. It came home in November, and I became the aircraft handling officer in November. Until August of two years subsequent. Aircraft handling officer is in charge of the flight deck V-1 division; in charge of V-2, the catapult and arresting gear division; V-3, the hangar deck division; V-4, the fuels division; and a little bit of V-5, which is the administration division. It's a powerful lieutenant commander job on the ship. If the handler can make it work the ship can make it work. I got together with my friend George Lundy, who was the lieutenant commander assistant air ops officer down in the hole, and with Lieutenant Commander Dave Nichols, who was the CAG ops officer. And believe me, we can get people around there from those cruises, and we three lieutenant commanders ran that ship, to this point: Tell us what you want done, not how to do it. And it permeated through the commander in charge of the weapons department or the commander in charge of this or that, or even the air boss, or even the captain. Tell us what you want done and we'll do it. Don't tell us how. And it worked. Everybody got along

Like in the air wing, everybody got every spot they wanted every night. Also, there was one exception, every month. But basically everybody got every spot they wanted every night to work with the airplanes. Because the goal is to have every airplane up, which makes it easier for everybody. So we all got along, we really did.

Then, as I said, we came back home and another turnaround cruise and then went back out. These turnarounds, those are like five months turnarounds. You hear this stuff, not to get political too much-like you get up in the morning, it's political. About these people going back to Iraq for their second tour, my God. Wait a minute. We were going back every five months and nobody said anything, except "Go." Anyhow.

Great tour on the *Oriskany*. Great COs on the carrier. Jack Kenyon, only a little bit when I was flight deck. But then Big John Gillcrist when I was handler, and also Frank Haak, One little story about Gillcrist. I don't know what it was all about, but there was something I wanted to do as handler, and nobody agreed with me. Nobody. And I was really making a forceful point. And the air boss, who was Larry Chambers, well known for his Navy career, for not only making flag but the CO of the *Midway* when they had the evacuations out of Saigon and pushed the airplanes over to land more. He was the air boss. He even said no. But he said, okay, we've got to play with it. Go up and see the captain.

Well, this was during flight ops, and I go up and see Big John Gillcrist. He's on the bridge and I go: One, and he says no. I go: Two, and he says no. I go: Three, he says no. Huh. Okay. What am going to tell you now is how you get people to continue to work and drive. So, tail between my legs I turn around and stepped over the gunwale there to go out the exit. He says, "Hey, Ted." So I turn around: Yes, sir? "Don't be afraid to come back." That's all I needed. My day was made. I got my shot. It wasn't agreed to, but I got my shot. "Don't be afraid to come back." Hey, that's all you need. You don't need more money. Ye all, it's nice and things like that. But still, you need that type of leadership, for him to listen and then say, no, but don't be afraid to come back.

You walk out of there beaming. Hey, do you get...? No. Did you get anything? No. How come you're laughing? Hey, it's okay. So you pick up and go.

**WINKLER: That deployment, okay, that's July '69.**

**BRONSON:** One other significant thing about *Oriskany*, time-wise, it was the time of Armstrong getting ready to go to the moon. I have again, I've told you about the papers from Iran. I left Jacksonville, Florida, the morning of Armstrong going to the moon. I took the Jacksonville newspaper, the entire paper with me. Flew into Melbourne. Got that newspaper and Florida Today. Went to the Cape for Armstrong going to the moon. Back on the airplane. Fly into Las Vegas. Changing airplanes. By this time there was a special edition out from Melbourne-bought that. Changed airplanes in New Orleans; bought that paper. Then into Las Vegas for about three days. Bought the papers there every day. Then into Los Angeles for two days, Hawaii one day, Manila one day, then out to the carrier when they had splashed down, and Stars and Stripes.

My point is, I have a box of papers right here today that Pensacola really is dying for, because they can lay out in a glass case the spread of all the papers from Jacksonville, Florida, through the Cape, all the way to the splashdown, with the walk on the moon and everything, all across the world on the headlines. And they really want them, because all three guys were naval aviators. I have them in a box and I've never pulled them out of the box in I don't know how many years. And I don't know what I'm going to do with them So anybody has a good idea what to do with them-anyhow, there they are. They're kept because we have the prices of tea in China, you have the classified ads, you have the sports pages, you have the editorials, also, that go along with this. So it will be interesting to see what they all are. As I mentioned before I am a packrat.

**WINKLER: Oh, yeah. Those papers? For that, talk to Hill Goodspeed down in Pensacola, because they do have the lunar exhibit. Well, Apollo 11, I don't know, Armstrong as a naval aviator is kind of-I don't know if he sees himself as a naval aviator.**

**BRONSON:** That's right. But we claim him.

**WINKLER: Yes. Okay. So *Oriskany*, was *Oriskany* there for the recovery?**

**BRONSON:** No. No, no.

**WINKLER: Or was that *Hornet*?**

**BRONSON:** No, it was somebody else. Well, see, when I was doing *Oriskany* they were at Yankee Station.

**WINKLER: Okay.**

**BRONSON:** I was just en route.

**WINKLER: Yeah, that's right. July of '69 you were ordered to *Oriskany*. There you go.**

**BRONSON:** So anyway, we finished the *Oriskany* flight deck cruise, two cruises as handler, and then up to Newport. It was a great year, great fun.

**WINKLER:** Now, of course, on *Oriskany* at that time you're on the flight deck. You're not flying missions.

**BRONSON:** No.

**WINKLER:** But how had the war changed from your perspective? Now we're pulling out.

**BRONSON:** Well, we started, because we're going to get back into it in '72 in a big way, big way. Again, you know, the flight deck cruise, they had three A-4 squadrons; my two cruises as handler we had A-7 squadrons. Basically, all carried dumb bombs. We had F-8s as fighters. We put bombs on them one day and the next day some flag came out and said: "Get those off. It was not a platform for bombs," like the F-14 has turned out to be a platform for bombs. But not a whole lot.

We got great on clearing airplanes crashing on the flight deck with broken landing gears. We could get a clear deck in four minutes from a crash, or a barricade. One of the things is, on number one cat, the starboard cat-remember we only have two on 27C-we lost the launch valve timer. It's a great big piece of valve. You can't believe how big it is. Probably fit in this doorway. So we couldn't launch for four weeks at sea. We wouldn't dare go into port to get a new one, and you can't fly it out-it's too big. And we launched that number two cat for two, three weeks at Yankee Station for eleven hundred consecutive launches without ever missing one launch. So, again, one more thing about everybody working together. I mean, you're there, you're not going anywhere else. Didn't have any seeds of hate and discontent. Had cooperation between the flag on board and the ship's company, and the air wing.

**WINKLER:** Now, who was the CO again?

**BRONSON:** My two handling cruises, Big Jack Gillcrist and Frank Haak. Frank Haak's going to come into play here again real soon, because when I get--he's the CO of the *Oriskany*-he gets orders from there to be chief of staff to CTF 77.

One of the things *Oriskany* did there in November before coming home, we were there for Son Tay Raid. One of the things, we made the takeoff of our guys very easy. We spotted them all together. NATOPS says you have to have a thirty-second delay at night between launches. I went to the captain and said, hey, we want to launch these guys side by side with a fifteen-second delay. They said you have to have a thirty-second delay at night, NATOPS says, although the captain can waive it. What we want to do is put them all side by side on the cats, all the sections. Section 1, the leader will be on cat 1, the wing will be on cat 2. And just launch them. That way they'll be off, all the way through, the pairs of them. A-7s were just carrying flares, to scare everybody, and bullets, 20 mike-mike. The F-8s were carrying, again, guns to shoot, but also Sidewinders if they needed them. So that was the whole thing. And the A-7s were also carrying flares to make all

these things, diversions, make people look away.

So we went and had this great launch. Everybody loved it because you go off the cat and look around, and there's your wingman. You don't have to go out there and rendezvous twenty miles away and get in a circle and all this other stuff, and A, B, C, and A, B, C. People liked that. And how'd we get it? I don't know. Just made it up and said, hey, let's do it. The air wing's like, we can't. But Dave Nichols, how's that? Oh, yeah, looks good, let's do it. George Lundy, yeah. So three lieutenant commanders make this little plan of action, everybody agrees to it, and everybody goes. And they all like it.

Then we got delayed. As I mentioned earlier to you at the table, we got delayed at Yankee Station for the four carriers. There was only supposed to be two carriers there, but then we were delayed for that reason. Somebody else had to come out early from Cubi because of the weather. So we were late. We had to go through the Straits of Bonifacio in the Philippines there, which not many carriers have ever gone through. We went through at twelve knots, trying to get to Hawaii for Johnny Hyland's change of command. CinCPac, four stars. We made it in time. The hangar bay one was fixed up and spruced up perfectly. The ship looked trashy on the outside because we'd been at Yankee Station.

And then from Cubi Point to go back to Hawaii we didn't have enough time to go at standard speed. We cut some time off by slashing through the Straits of Bonifacio in the Philippines to save a day at least, something like that. We came at an SOA, excessive speed of advance, I think probably twenty-six, twenty-seven knots for the *Oriskany*. We just moved that boat. Almost ran out of fuel. Finally found the tanker coming over the horizon. Because the carriers can use the jet fuel but the engineers hate it if they ever have to do it, because it just blows all the seals and blows everything apart because it's so hot. But we made it in time.

You know the CNO's coming out for the change of command. The Secretary of Defense is coming out because it's a major CinC. And so you want the ship looking perfect. So we pull alongside Ford Island there in Hawaii, the first thing you do is get out the gray paint and start painting. Well Admiral Hyland sent down a handwritten note to the CO of the *Oriskany*: "Do not paint the ship." So all of a sudden the boys get the fire hoses out there and get that paint off. They want it to look like it was a fighting ship, and that's what it was. Because when we came home we were going to go in the yard and the yard's going to get everything so it's changed and done and sandblasted, what have you. So just don't do it for appearances.

**WINKLER:** So after *Oriskany* you go to Newport?

**BRONSON:** That finished one of the cruises. Then my final cruise on the *Oriskany* I left in August and came into Newport, Naval War College, ten days late. Also, the last year of the gentleman's course there. Admiral B. J. Semmes was the head and so one of the early sessions he had with us all-ten days late I didn't get any leave, I just went right to school- was: Gentlemen, you're all here because you're good, and you're all going back to sea when you leave here, so enjoy your year in Newport, Rhode Island And that's all I had to be told, to enjoy my year in Newport, Rhode Island. And you can fill the blanks in.

Two things happened at Newport. Great things happened at Newport. We got into our group. We stayed in our group. One of the folks in my home group there in August of 1971 was a black-shoe named, at that time, Lieutenant Commander Don Clark. To make a long story short, he and his family and I have become absolute brother-sister type since that day all the way through the death of their child. My parents, they have adopted him almost, a son. All kinds of things like that. Again, these things, you get close and you just stay close all the way through with the kids. I spend two weeks every year out there at different times and have them here too.

At Newport one of the lectures up there was by an assistant secretary of defense who happened to be in charge of all the moneys for schools in the military. There was something he said in the lecture. His particular lecture that day was about nuclear weapons and getting them off the carriers or something, I don't know exactly the point. But I was one of the ones chosen to be in the PLC, the post-lecture conference. After, he would have a lunch with a few people in the whatever the conference that was, and then you come back and have like two people from each of the groups, of the study groups, the study rooms, so you could take extra questions and extra notes back there.

Well, whatever happened was, I stood up there and said, you know, I disagree, you can't say that, we have a charge to win the world, whatever, I don't know. And as I'm saying it I'm saying, ooh, you've gone too far; you can't really say that, mainly because you can't walk out of this room because you want to hear what his answer is. Because I challenged, I said: You have to change. Well, it happened to be a Friday night and the buzz went all over. So at happy hour the seniors up at the big war college or wherever were all in a buzz about some guy who put it to him blah, blah, blah. And also about, yeah, he's been called in.

Robert Mohart was the head of the junior course up there and so I was called in and told I had to write a letter of apology to him. Well, that was a Friday and I had all weekend to work on the letter of apology. The main reason for the letter of apology was because he was the guy in charge of all money for DoD schools. And here it is:

Dear Dr. Brodsky,

When an educational idea is proposed we are entitled to ask in what manner it can be achieved. While the methods of the scientists reveal how we may overcome the faults in our thinking to question the decisions of our seniors, instincts of passive receptivity sometimes come into play. Please believe that the manner of my outward expression intended no rudeness, and that further I have been educated to greet change with an open mind.

Sincerely,  
E. F. BRONSON,  
Commander, U.S. Navy, Naval War College,  
Newport, Rhode Island. 12 March 1972.

You just heard what it said. People have looked at that even before I turned it in to Robert Mohart, and they looked at it and said: That ain't no apology at all. Anyhow, I wrote it. It was good enough for Naval War College to send down to this guy in Washington. And

if you asked me today, "The instincts of passive receptivity,"-what does that mean? I have no idea. But I do know where I got some of those words and phrases from, or thoughts from, from Book One of *The Great Books of the Western World*, a book which is done by Adler out of Chicago. And the first thin volume is by Adler writing about why they went and put the great books of the Western world together.

Anyhow.

**WINKLER:** I can see why you wound up getting assigned to OLA.

**BRONSON:** I'm in Newport, Rhode Island, and I'm the only one who has never gotten orders in the whole class up there, 220 guys. And I haven't asked anybody for orders, either. I haven't called BuPers saying, hey, what do you know? Something will happen. It's one of those things. It's not that I don't care. It's like, hey, I don't have a wife and kids and dogs, and as long as it's going to be good-and I don't know what good is, by definition either, somebody else has got to tell me what's good-I'll go.

Well, guess what? All of a sudden I get called into the commandant's office there, Robert Mohart, in the junior course. "What did you do?"

"What do you mean?"

"Look at this message. 'Send Bronson early out to CTF 77 as air ops.'" To be under Hutch Cooper. I said, "I don't know."

"Well, what's going on?"

I said, "I don't know."

"Well, how come it says come early? Did you ask?"

"I don't know."

They just can't believe it. It turns out Frank Haak, the CO of *Oriskany*, goes to chief of staff for Admiral Hutch Cooper, and says, hey, you're complaining about the air ops guy. He's due to leave. Go get Bronson. He knows how to do air ops for the TF because how he did as the handler, dab dah dah dah dah. Air wing loved him, bah bah bah. So all of a sudden, when a three-star calls BuPers and says send out some dumb brand-new commander, he's probably going to get his way. Especially if it's in combat. So the orders said leave early from Newport. So I didn't go to the legal thing, and something else I didn't do up there. Just left and walked out the door. I don't know. Again, it's this-luck is the residue of design. So I go fly out of Newport.

By the way they didn't do papers in those days. No, there's no extra master's degrees on the side or anything else like that. Although I remember on the 1st of April we did go, four of us, over to Brown University for an afternoon three-hour seminar. Brown University, its reputation of being liberal was built back in those days. And I remember we sat around there. It was a very pleasant discussion. The voices were modulated and intelligent. And they kept saying, well, why did you serve (phonetic)? Why don't you...Hey, hey. You want to do something? Go mine the harbor. This is before they did it. Go mine the harbor. Well, that won't be... Wait a minute, don't say that's going to cause A, B, C, and D. You say, what do you want to do to stop the war?

Go mine the harbor and you're going to stop supplies. Oh, gee.

Anyhow, so it was kind of accepted as, well, we don't like it but, we asked a question and you gave us an answer. The other answer I said was: Go bomb the railroads from Hanoi up to the China border. Oh, I can't do that. That's going to bring the Chinese into the war. Does anybody go back and check the thousand-year history that the Chinese hate the Vietnamese? They're not going to come in on their side. As they demonstrated, what, ten, fifteen years ago when the Chinese came in and invaded what we used to call North Vietnam? Well, again, there's certain things. I know, between DoD and the State Department there are people all over the world on the issue of what do you do about China. And the Vietnam War. And sure, half the people lost because China didn't do a thing, and half the people didn't lose. But anyhow.

Newport was just great. I could go back there and just live. About the only place I could really just go back to live. Okay. Four tours in Jacksonville. Newport go back to live.

**WINKLER: So you go back out to WestPac.**

**BRONSON:** Right out to Yankee Station.

**WINKLER: Yankee Station. Talk about reporting aboard.**

**BRONSON:** Report aboard. On the way out there, they had me stop for two days at CinCPacFlt, to get briefings from CinCPacFlt on what they wanted to do, verbally, that they didn't want to put in the message. Len Felt was the captain there at CinCPacFlt that I talked with about how to do certain things on the air ops schedule. About how to code certain things. Again, everything was a numbers game. It seems we're not doing a numbers game in this particular Iraq-Afghanistan war.

Went aboard. The beauty of it is to go and have your meals in the Golden Trough. The CTF 77 flag mess was nicknamed the Golden Trough. If you ever wanted to eat anyplace famous in the world you wanted an invitation to the Golden Trough. It was absolutely, the cuisine was just elegant. That's all you could say.

**WINKLER: Where was this?**

**BRONSON:** CTF 77, you see, is home ported in Cubi Point and flies his flag at one of the carriers at Yankee Station. And as the carriers rotate from CONUS back and forth he changes his flagship from one to the other, so he's always there. Which means, when you have the Filipino stewards, they always want to be home-ported in Cubi, so they always keep volunteering. And if they're good they get to be able to stay, and they ended up being the greatest cooks in the world.

Even before I got there they went and had this world-famous cookbook put out, strictly of the food in the CTF 77 Golden Trough. When you're the duty officer in CTF 77, even though people complain about having a flag on board the carrier. Oh, the flag takes up our spaces. Wait a minute. There's a couple things you're going to get when you have a flag on board. One, you're going to get the best movies in the territory.



**WINKLER:** That's true.

**BRONSON:** And they only show one a night. So the other twelve are available for something. And the other thing, you go to good ports. So, anyhow. And when the flag, when CTF 77 goes into port, at Cubi, of course, they all go home because their families are over there for two years. If you come unaccompanied you're only there for one year and you stay on board ship. But like I say, you go to the port of Hong Kong they move the admin ashore. Everything went ashore. The morning briefings were ashore and everything. So there you are, the duty officer of all this world They say, "What would you like for dinner tonight, sir?" So you get your whole choice of this whole book. And naturally, for dessert you always would say Baked Alaska. And they'd bring in your flaming Baked Alaska. Anyhow, there you go.

CTF 77 was historical, certainly, for a couple of the things that happened. Memorable because of the people. The three-star admiral, "Hutch" Cooper, Damon Cooper, nicknamed "Hutch," a superb individual. A leader all the way through. Smoked his cheroots, chewed them, mainly, in the afternoons. He would take a thirty-minute break and go up way high in one of the sponsons and read a cowboy dime novel to relax from the vicissitudes of war.

We had, naturally, all the visitors come out. SecNav. I remember when John Warner came out. We put him on twenty-three ships in two days. Helicopters. And Clarey, he was CinCPac, and he had to come with him. Anyhow, putting that ops schedule together was nifty, and all approved.

Cooper had a certain way he wanted the air wings and the things scheduled. And somehow or another I grasped what he wanted. Whether I understood it or not didn't matter. I grasped it. And after about two weeks I was there the two intermediary captains, both ops and the chief of staff, said: Don't even show it to me. The schedule. Just go to him. Because he was going to change it anyhow, no matter what they do. But somehow it clicked, it clicked, it clicked.

In briefings Cooper was very set in his ways, for briefings. The people from Washington always came out, and he would only have the briefer, himself, and whoever was from Washington. And one flag aide to be a messenger if they needed somebody to run back and forth. I always remember this one day where I'm briefing Zumwalt and Admiral Cooper, and I don't know what the question was. I know what the issue was. The issue was air-to-air shoot-downs. I remember the chart. We had eighteen, the Air Force had two. It was very good for our side. Or we had fourteen to two, whatever it was, but very good. Some question came up by Zumwalt to me in the middle of that brief, and Cooper just looked straight at me, pointed his finger directly, from three feet away, and said, "Don't you answer that question." And then turns to Zumwalt and says, "The answer to that question belongs to Washington."

In other words, Cooper divided the territory of who owns the problem. And Zumwalt understood that. "Okay. I understand what you mean." But he wouldn't let anybody fish.

Then we also had later on the *Kitty Hawk* mutiny. We'll save that for a minute.

One of the other big, big things was we were in Hong Kong at Christmastime and all of a sudden out in Kowloon I'm checking on a run for the chief of staff, Captain Haak, and the telephone rings. "Yeah? Yes? You what?" "Stay there where you are, Ted. We're sending a car to pick you up. Where's your passport?" I told him where, in my stateroom. "We're packing up your bag here. We'll tell you when you get here." Went to the hotel room and they said, "You're going with the admiral at three o'clock this afternoon on a commercial airplane from Hong Kong to Saigon." What for? "Don't know. We were just told to get you. And civilian clothes."

Out to the Hong Kong airport. Four of us were in the car. Admiral Cooper, his wife, Ted Fijak, the aide, and myself. I gave Ted Fijak and Mrs. Cooper my bets for the Hong Kong race track that afternoon, because we were going to go. In civilian clothes. They had "Hiram Bronson" for my airplane ticket, but in those days it didn't matter. Went through a full pat search. This would be December of 1972 going to the Hong Kong airport to go into Saigon. We're in civilian clothes.

Got on the airplane. Sit there. And as soon as we took off he pulled out from his tiny little briefcase this little folder, opened it up. It's red paper, which is TS. Handed it to me. And it was only four lines long. "Start and bomb downtown tomorrow." Ooh.

So we land in Saigon airport. It was to brief with General Bolt, who was the Seventh Air Force, and Cooper and myself. On the airplane we got off on the starboard door. All the other people got off on the port door. Because if the press saw Cooper there they'd know something was up. And so we got off the other side, jumped in the car, and ride in with Bolt and discussed how to do it with support from the Seventh Fleet. It was going to with support by the Navy at Yankee Station, going to be with Red Crown and all this stuff. And they had two F-4s sitting there to fly Cooper and myself right back to the carrier. Not to the *Kitty Hawk*, that we were on in Hong Kong, but to whoever, *Connie*, or whoever it was out there. And his airplane took off and went up and mine went down, so I didn't get to go. And you know all that razzmatazz. Anyhow worked my way up there in a day and a half out of Danang and the carrier. It all worked and we started bombing downtown.

Now, a couple problems with the bombings downtown. And this is documented around someplace. SAC were idiots. because they insisted every one of their airplanes come in from Laos to Hanoi and Haiphong, and then exit out to the sea, with a turn south. Well, two things. The SAMs were designed to shoot down airplanes at thirty thousand feet. That's the basic SAM design. The other thing is, when the B-52s come in, as soon as they turned ninety degrees to go south, all their ECM goes up into the sky that was pointing down as they came across the mountains. It goes into the sky. And that's where they were all shot down. In the turn. Or mostly all shot down.

They were doing one a night. And then one night they did two. I remember, again, air ops job, was sitting down there in air ops with Cooper in the flag chair and me standing by his side, running two simultaneous SARs in the Gulf at night on two B-52s shot down. And without going through the details of who the destroyers were, helos, whatever, blah blah blah, I just kept saying, "Straight, straight, straight." And Cooper would just nod. Just nod. He never said yes or no, he didn't add a thing, didn't subtract anything. But that's the way he was.

You know, you're running it, and he might have done it differently. Who knows? But he just didn't interrupt if it was going okay.

And we finally, with a lot of incendiary message traffic, got SAC to change, to come in through the Gulf. Which meant they had to come in through Yankee Station, which means they had to come in through Red Crown, which means they had to come in through Navy control, which they didn't want to give up and do. And then, you see, drop their bombs and head on straight out to Laos and then come home another way. Anyhow, it finally, finally took over and they didn't start to lose any more.

You've read the stories of the POWs in downtown. They loved it. They screamed and shouted and applauded when they started the bombing. Again, people said you can't bomb downtown because you're going to hit the POWs. Wait a minute. Or they're going to take them out and kill them. Some of them thought they might as well be killed anyhow, the way they were treated. So twelve days of bombing at Christmastime in '72 was worth it. It was really worth it.

And then, of course, we started to get the POWs home in '73. And everything went real well on the first and second, or maybe just the first one, and then there was a delay. Delay after the first one, they started to renege. Or after the second one they started to renege on flights three and four, I forget which.

There was a delay by Hanoi changing, and the big boys, I'm sure--by big boys, I mean Kissinger and Nixon--they agreed that, okay, JCS, go bomb them. We had already been through the twelve days of Christmas, but this was everybody out. In fact, the plan was everybody. It was every airplane off of every carrier was going into targets all over the place and just, go. And the plan was so secret.

Its code name was Tennis Racquet. Now, in those days a one-word code word was even classified itself. But a two-word code word such as Tennis Racquet, which was this name, was not classified. The operation to go back in and just bomb, bomb was code-named Tennis Racquet. And again, it was going to be so controlled that CTF 77 was not going to send out the tapes for the bombing targets. CTF 77 selected the bombing targets, cut the tapes on board, and put them in four envelopes for each of the four carriers there on the line. And they were hand-delivered to only the captain of the carrier, on the bridge, by a commander from CTF 77 staff who was flown by helo to helo to carrier to carrier. And I know who the commander was, because you're talking to him now. And that's again a nice definition of control. Cooper and the folks picked the targets, we cut the tapes, and all the authority for the message traffic to be able to run. So it did not have this big increase for the people who were able to watch the message traffic and the volume and the tick tick tick ticks, and, ooh, something's coming. Oh, oh, oh, oh, so get ready. It's all going to be done by hand and executed on a verbal signal.

**WINKLER: Yeah, well, because you've got the Russian AGIs off there and all that.**

**BRONSON: Yeah.**

**WINKLER: This is, I'm guessing, about March of '73?**

**BRONSON: It's in between the first and second POW flights coming out, or in between the**

second and third coming out. There was a pause, a hesitation, a change of thrust or whatever on the part of the North Vietnamese. And, hey, the people made a decision we're not going to let that stand. And evidently somebody then got back to them and said, hey, take a look at what we're going to do. So all of a sudden the flights resumed. I don't know when we really stopped bombing. Of course, especially in the flight days in the squadron and flying the combat missions, and again with the air wing, and again with CTF 77, these bombing pauses were just hideous. There could be strategic reasons for doing it, which I'm not going to question. But the tactical thing, everybody hated it because the day you went back to flying after ten days standdown-you give them a chance to agree or disagree-they're all reloaded and just shoot the hell out of you. And you couldn't count the SAMs on some of those flights. And so those bombing pauses were just disastrous for that reason. And again, too, you lose a little bit of your combat edge. I'm trying to think of one other thing before I get into *Kitty Hawk* here. Twelve days of Christmas....

**WINKLER:** Now, as far as air ops, your specific job.

**BRNISON:** Well, CTF 77 air ops was making the schedules, the daily schedules, for all the carriers. And it was eight carriers. Eight carriers-you get that number like this. You have four carriers on the line. You put the schedule out maybe a week ahead of time. Well, you have four carriers on the line. You have two carriers in port. Six. You have one carrier on the way home, and you have one carrier on the way over. So you might not be doing a lot with all eight, but certainly with six, because you're getting ready to do things like this.

Now, a couple of the carriers had their druthers. I always remember, we always had two carriers on at night, or maybe one carrier on the night schedule. People hated it. The only thing you really hated about the nightschedule was getting onto it and getting off of it.

It's like Sy Foley when he was captain of the *Midway*-later four stars-came, and when CTF 77 would have a turnover, we'd fly to the CarDiv on the carrier that's going into port. And I remember we got off the helo and old Sy Foley just comes right to me. He pulls me on the sleeve to the side and says, "Hey, Ted. Listen. If you're going to stick nights into us give it to us good. Don't give us four days. Give us ten days." Okay. So. So then we get ready to do a schedule like that you work them in for ten straight days, and honest, somebody else would call me up and say. "What'd the *Midway* do to piss you off?" They don't understand.

Anyhow, again, Cooper had very definite ways that he wanted the carriers coming in to be worked up off of Cubi, and coming out of the line he wanted the two days of day flights and dah dah dah, and this and that All these different combinations. And I'd say somehow or another I clicked putting together on this complicated fit, his way. And it finally all worked. And again, you know, how you get a carrier, how you help them to get off the line when they're going into port, to get an eight-hour start. So you don't finish them up here. You move them down here. You don't, dah dah, all these little things that just go on and go on and go on. Again, it's a lot of fun, because you know what you're doing.

Speaking of fun things, it's like all of a sudden there came a time period there in February, finally: Stop all bombing forever. We were in the middle of the movie that night. I want you to remember this. Jerry Stem was the ops officer, captain, and I'm the air ops

commander. We both jumped up. We know what we're going to do. We walked right on out and picked up the phone and said, first thing, called the three carriers out there, or four carriers, whatever it was. "Get all your mines up. We're going to launch you tomorrow morning." Because it's like one of these messages said: Cease all bombing by seven a.m. tomorrow. Hey, guys, we're going to launch you tonight and tomorrow morning at five o'clock, because-and mines. We went and re-mined.

Two things. One, we did it because the ordies, both the aviation ordies but really the ship ordies and the Cubi Point mine teams, hated to mess with those mines. They were just a pain, a bulky, non-cooperating pain. So Jerry Stem and I said, hey, we've got to stop all bombing by seven o'clock tomorrow, let's kick all these guys and drop them downtown. One drop and got them all off, everybody loved us.

"Well, what about the pattern? What pattern do you want?" Hey, random, make it up. Because earlier that summer, or the summer before, Phil Devoy was the head of the Navy ops evaluation group here, and we always had an OAG rep on board CTF 77. Well, the rep happened to be on leave in '72 there, one three-week period back there, I don't know when. So Phil was out there. He's the head of OAG. And we got talking about it. We knew about mine patterns and Charleston and mine warfare. He said, wait a minute. Put four airplanes there, put them in your fingertip formation, and from here to there you decide yourself when you want to pickle one off, pickle one off, pickle one off. And that field will be as random as you need. Just pick the four comers.

So we knew that and so when they were worried about it we said, nah, go. We gave them four comers. Put them in these four comers, any way you want That's all anybody had to hear. Any way you want. Hoo boohoo. Again, fun, believe it or not. I know war is tragic and things are difficult. But also there's got to be parts of it that are fun. Like back to Vikki Carr. There'll be a star, So CTF 77's pretty much finished off.

**WINKLER: Now, your coordination with the Air Force you mentioned?**

**BRONSON:** A little bit with the Air Force, Fifth Air Force, for exercises. One of the things that Cooper did-when the F-111s first came over to WestPac and they were starting to do bombing up north they had some tragic losses flying low level at night. Just crashing. And believe it or not Bolt and Cooper got along fine together. Air Force three-star and Navy three-star. And Cooper sent two A--6 crews from our carrier, I forget which one we were on then, over to Bangkok someplace to sit down and go over with these guys how they There were six people doing it, sitting side by side, flying a hundred feet at night and doing the bombings and things like that. It seemed to work for a little bit, and then they didn't fly any more. Because they had tough losses.

But not a lot of cooperation was needed that way, except for tanking, because we divided up the packages and things. You know, you go do this and you do this, and you stay out of my way, I stay out of your way. It's one way to run a war. Certainly not the way it's done now. You get all the coordination messages that go through and the bombing missions.

One thing on this war that's going on. I hope somebody is saving all these e-mails that are flying around. You know, the medics in the tents doing the operations. I hope somebody's

saving them, because, man, there's a history there.

**WINKLER:** Mm-hmm. Oh, yeah. Yeah. That's one of the problems, is, there's so much you're saving, but also, will you be able to read it? Digital systems are changing so much that, will software be able to read these messages ten, fifteen, twenty years from now? That's the challenge.

**I guess we have about five or ten minutes left here. I guess we can talk about *Kitty Hawk*?**

**BRONSON:** *Kitty Hawk*, okay. The XO of *Kitty Hawk* was Ben Cloud, black. He had been at Newport with me. When he was at the senior course I was at the junior course. I actually rented his bed from him, because he lived in the BOQ. And the CO of *Kitty Hawk* was-it will come to me in a minute.

The problem was, *Kitty Hawk* was not listening to the staff, and he kept trying to say to the guys: We're not being extended, we're going home early. Then later on when they were scheduled to go home on time, there was a delay. And it went back and forth, and a lot of discontent.

**WINKLER:** Doc Townsend was the CO?

**BRONSON:** Doc Townsend, Doc Townsend, Doc Townsend. Doc Townsend was, you know, a guy off the bridge all the time. All around the ship all the time, glad-handing, yack-yack, slapping on the back. Somehow or another there was a black-white issue also. It was the time of black-white issues.

Frank Haak ended up doing the JAG investigation. The JAG investigation that he did was four and a half inches thick. I mean, it's a total package. But it was fighting all over the ship, all over. I remember, I didn't know exactly what was going on, but I came down from the stateroom to the flag quarters in my skivvy shorts and a couple of big boys were passing me in the passageway, and we passed.

But the two major issues on the thing-actually really one major issue-was: Whatever the hate and discontent was about the black-white issue, the crew was just on edge about going home. Because Doc Townsend kept changing the date for going home without coordination with the staff, who owned the date to go home, thinking he'd be better in their spirits and in their thoughts and prayers by saying things like that, I guess. I've never heard his side of the story.

But when that riot was going on-and there's no lesser word that you can say than riot-neither the XO nor the CO were on the bridge. And they let the riot go on and go on and go on, until Frank Haak got to the bridge and saw what was not going on, and called to go to general quarters. They didn't know what to do with it but they did. Which is why a couple weeks later when the *Saratoga*, and Sandy Sanderson was the CO, got applauded for... One started in *Saratoga* and within two minutes they went to general quarters. Locked everything up. Smart move. I mean, you don't know what's going on, but you calm it all down. But in the *Kitty Hawk* fight it was all over the place. Two major things that you to remember about it, on the sidebar thing. On the 1MC comes-and again, the major fight was, in a way, Marines and blacks-on the 1MC: "All blacks to the mess deck All Marines to the forecandle." Where do you think the black Marines went?

**WINKLER: To the forecastle?**

**BRONSON:** You got it. But again, you know, it was Marines do what Marines do.

One other sidebar. The next day Ben Cloud, Newport, XO of *Kitty Hawk*, comes up in my little wren hole here in the staff quarters and sits down, just to have a place to sit with nobody picking on him. We start to tell stories, and he tells me this story, which is just a story. He goes in the sick bay, and there was this black in there with about a tennis-ball-sized bite out of his thigh. And it turns out for however it goes that the white guy who did it is right there. Or he's around the corner. Anyhow, they know who it is. So Ben is talking to the white sailor who took this tennis-ball-sized bite out of this guy's thigh. He says, "Why did you do anything like that?" He said: "Because I didn't want to have any problem identifying him later." I mean, it's one of those sailor things, that a sailor would understand. Society in Palm Springs might not understand it, but sailors understand it.

So anyhow, that pretty much picks up CTF 77. Just daily routine, a lot of action, a couple of shoot-downs that were big. We had B-52 tankers, KC tankers, all the way from Guam lined up one time, twelve deep, because of some things going on with the Air Force. They had to come through the Gulf to get there on a rescue. Anyhow, it all worked and things.

Orders out of 77 to Cecil Field to VA-174 to go through the RAG training with John McCain as XO of -174, and then in to be XO/CO of VA-46.

**WINKLER: This is Dave Winkler of the Naval Historical Foundation. Today is August 24, 2005. We are in Arlington with retired Captain Ted Bronson, and this is Tape 3. We're picking up where we left off. Last time we ended the Vietnam War, and he now has orders to VA-174 at Cecil Field for transition and training in the A-7 Corsair II.**

**Could you talk about the detailing at the time. How did you wind up with these orders?**

**BRONSON:** Got the orders to go to -174, the RAG, by virtue also it was time for me to either be—I had been selected as XO/CO program, since everybody wants to have a command at sea and wants to be a squadron CO and I had worked decent enough and was so selected.

The Navy, I think, made the greatest choice when they put me in behind Commander Ron Boyle to be Ron's XO, because without going through all the fitness reports and giving you some of the words that have been used, I've always been very forceful. Always been leading, you might even say crashing forward, not in airplane parlance but just stepping out. And Ron is not recalcitrant in any way, but he knew me. And the reason he knew me is because it turns out— I was going to be his XO after the four-month period of A-7 training in -174 with John McCain as XO there at the time, before he became CO of -174—it would be the fifth time that Ron Boyle and I were together in

the same squadron at the same time.

It all started in 1959 when I joined VA-15. He was eleven days senior to me as an ensign. And so it worked out fine all the way through. We had the VA-15 time together. Then later on we were both in VA-45 together. We both were in the first VA-44 on that transition. Then later on, after each of us had combat cruises, we were both in VA-44 again as RAG instructors in the A-4. And now here we come together and I'm going to be behind him as his XO. It was just a great, great, great time together. Also he was from Philadelphia and went to La Salle College. I was from Wilmington, Delaware, thirty miles away. I went to La Salle. Ron graduated from Monterey while I graduated from La Salle. So it was just knowing each other.

I guess one of the nifty examples of how well he knew me, or how well he accepted me. The day after the change of command, in June of 1974, he went on two weeks leave. That's not normal when you take over as CO, go on two weeks leave. But that's the way it went.

And then later on, through the eighteen months, fifteen months, whichever it was, of his squadron command tour and I'm the XO, it was interesting, because we could laugh about it, how the JOs would *try* and get one question answered by one of us without the other knowing what the question was or whatever it was. And they just shook their heads because we gave the same answers without knowing that we were being set up by the junior officers. Which is always great, when you can stay ahead of the JOs.

The RAG training in-174 was nothing spectacular. Went ahead, did well, and the change of command in VA-46, as I say, took over. The biggest thing was, they were changing, getting ready for the *Kennedy* to come out of a major overhaul and getting ready for its shakedown cruise. We did all that.

I have to put kind of the squadron tour as XO for Ron and then CO for myself, and again the Navy made a great selection, the selection process of putting Dave Page in behind me as my XO, for our contrast and what have you. Just the way I operated with him right? As Ron would say, hey, we all have our own act. I had a very outgoing act. I'll mention this more later on. But it was just super all the way through.

VA-46, we ended up making a lot of marks in the Navy. We did a lot of nifty things. And we used our JOs and we used our chiefs. We just went out there and, well, truthfully, led the pack. We had the number one combination flight hours day and night in the Atlantic Fleet A-7 community. We had the most day and night burner landings in the A-7 community. I mentioned this commendation of both Ron as CO and myself as XO without going into exact details, but they're around. We had the highest first-term reenlistment rate in the A-7 community. We had the highest career reenlistment rates at 100 percent. The first-termers we had 34 percent, 35 percent, which in 1975 was pretty great. Also, I remember later on when I was CO and we worked on our first class very hard to become chief. We had eighteen of nineteen first class that went up for chief made chief. The one who didn't was not recommended for chief.



The same with the personnel side of it. One of the real great joys in this business was, the Navy had a program where E-8s and E-9s could apply for warrant status. To make a long story short, they could be either -1, -2, or -3. And we had our E-9 master chief, Donaldson, be selected to be a W-3. That was just fantastic for the squadron and for him. It was just the way it should be. He should have been a W-3, period. And we were able to do the paperwork based on his record and it all came through. So we were very helpful that way.

On the Med cruise we had a change of command in Naples, Italy. The interesting thing about that is, my XO came aboard the day of the change of command, as did our French exchange pilot, Robert Ferreois. And for change-of-command speaker we had Ron and I, our XO from the cruise on VA-15 from the *Roosevelt* days, Ken Knoizen, who was now a rear admiral flag officer in Naples. So he came out to the carrier to give the change of command speech. And of course when you get an admiral from Naples coming out you get the band from Naples. So it's a pretty nifty day.

And for the change of command—that was the year of the bicentennial, 1976. And so for the color guards, besides the American flag and the Navy flag, we had the Marine detachment color guard also carry the state flags of Delaware, where I'm from, and Pennsylvania, where Ron is from. It was a little extra color, but we like color.

On that Med cruise, coming into Naples on November 22, 1975. It's 2155, just the time of starting evening prayer when the first airplane, about a mile astern, an EA-6, comes by here, and the *Belknap* hits the *Kennedy* coming down the port side. We have explosions. We have fuel drips. We have fires. The *Kennedy* fire burned, actually, for almost twenty-four hours. We both went dead in the water. *Belknap* hung back there with exploding shells, I guess from 3-inch guns up there, for hours and hours. It was a black night. We didn't know really what had happened.

What I did is realize that this was a pretty serious thing, and who knows what is going to happen later. I got two of my JOs and sent them out to take notes on all our guys and what they were doing. Paul Jones was one of the JOs, and I think John Durrig was the other one. To go out and find our guys, what they were doing, fighting the fires, fighting the ships. And it turns out that we came back with a lot of great information. Some of our guys were really outstanding. So when it came time for the carriers to put people in for the awards we had documentation and put them in. Especially one of our second-class went through eight OBAs fighting the fire. He would not leave that passageway down there. Somebody just passed him up another canister, stuck a canister in there, and just kept doing it on and on. And we did get him the Navy lifesaving award medal, or whatever the proper title was for that.

**WINKLER: Where were you specifically when the ships hit?**

**BRONSON:** Sitting in CAG office. COs a lot of times would hang out for a little bit in evening time in CAG office. About two or three of us. And all of a sudden—the chaplain started the evening prayer at five of 2200, and all of a sudden, crunch. What was that? There was the flight deck cameras on it right away and everybody goes back to (?) and starts to...and then general quarters and find out where all your people are. The ship only lost one sailor.

We stood out there, stayed out the next day, delayed coming into Naples. Because we were getting ready to have a change of command on the carrier, with Bill Gureck leaving and J.R.C. Mitchell coming in, in November of '75. And so we just painted the ship up and came back into Naples, and everybody came out to look and see, you know, what the damage was, and they couldn't see any damage. That's the way to do it. And there wasn't really any significant damage on the *Kennedy*. Here's a little bit more on the *Belknap* collision, that's left over from someplace

#### FROM NOTES:

"On the night of 22 November 1975 the port side of the *Kennedy* was engulfed in flames as a result of a collision by USS *Belknap*. The impact caused jet fuel lines external to the angled deck overhang to rupture, spewing burning liquid over the side of the ship, igniting material in the working spaces and storerooms located on the port side. Eighteen compartments received some fire damage during the fierce blaze, on account (phonetic) some of the spaces were filled with dense, acrid smoke. Aircraft on the flight deck were threatened by the fires aboard *Kennedy*. Many personnel throughout the long night were treated for burns and smoke inhalation. One man on the *Kennedy* died from the heavy smoke which filled many of the compartments, trapping occupants inside. An estimated 1300 men fought the fires aboard *Kennedy*, fires which burned and re-flashed for eleven hours. These actions deserve to be brought to the public attention to demonstrate both the character and the professional capability of our Navy people."

I guess this is when-oh, there's our AM1 Welhoelter was the enlisted man that I mentioned earlier, about going through the eight canisters and the OBUs. Because we had the commodore, Marv Reynolds, at LantWing One, come and make the presentation there. This is looking at my notes, because I just see here squadron, Commodore Reynolds, blah blah blah. And that's where we stand.

Oh here was a note at the back of the plan of the day for the next day. My handwritten notes that I mentioned. Because we stayed out there and intentionally flew some periods the next day at sea just so everybody would know it didn't do anything to our operational condition. So we just did day flights all the way through, so we came back Monday, the 24th of November. It says, "In view of all contributions of all Clansmen and the immediate unselfless participation by a dozen or so VA-46 men was a direct contribution to control of last night's conflagration, you have to know the value of your efforts for the ship, shipmates, and yourself. What you did did you proud, and always know when the time was called you came forward, you came first and foremost. Well done. Personally and professionally." First and foremost is the English translation of the Latin words for first and foremost of the CAG I, Primus....

We finished off the cruise. We did Christmas, I remember, in Barcelona. Interesting. The families came over and we got hotels and places and sent admin ashore.

We had to go out for one day for some reason, and had the bachelors go out to sea and let the married folks stay in there. Cooked up a big turkey dinner in one of the hotel ovens. The wives came through in great style.

For the bicentennial we did a couple extra things in the squadron. We went back and got all the early Navy leaders and where we have the pilots' names on the side of the aircraft we went and put down all the early Navy leaders for our depiction on the airplanes. Such as, you know, for 300, the CAG airplane, we had Commodore John Barry. And for the 301, the CO's airplane, mine, we had John Paul Jones. And we filtered these all the way down through our twelve airplanes. And for 310, or whatever that was for Robert Ferreois, our French exchange pilot, we had Lafayette. So a little fun like that.

We also, because it was interesting for today, because back then for just the bicentennial year, the Navy had the ships to fly the Navy jack instead of the Union jack, for that year. So, to be a little different, we painted the Navy jack on the tails of our airplanes. So we flew around with the Navy jack. And now the Navy jacks are back at sea, and it's a permanent thing, at least until they decide or the war on terror is over. But we did it.

**WINKLER: Talk a little bit about transition. Well, you transitioned to the A-7. Talk about that aircraft versus the A-4.**

**BRONSON:** To me, it was just huge. Big, big, big. And we came back from the transition. Also what's significant-I had not flown for a number of years. When I left VA-44 in July of '69 to go out to the *Oriskany* for the flight deck officer and the two cruises as handler, then back to Newport, Rhode Island, for junior course, and then back out to CTF 77 for a year at sea at Yankee Station, I did no flying in all that time. I did not get checked out in the COD or anything else like that. I just said, eh, threw my shoulders up, and didn't fly.

Now, and then in coming back to start the RAG transition, the first four or five or six hops, whatever, is in VA-45 in the instrument squadron to get that proficiency. Well, that's two people in the airplane and you're in the back seat or the front. But then your first flight in the A-7, after going through the ground school and the simulator, is solo. There's one seat, one engine. All my flight time from beginning to the end, 5,700 hours, is single-engine single seat. From ADs to A-4s to A-7s.

So we took off out of Cecil and climbing out. I forget who the lead was. So I'm rendezvousing up there on my section leader. As I get up there close and we're in a little bit of a tum and I'm in a nice spot and I take my hands off the stick and kind of clap. He looks at me and: What's that for? I said, "My first flight in four years." It's all just as smooth as anything. Of course, I was paying attention to make sure I looked good, too. But it was just nifty, nifty, to have it that smooth.

But the rest of the transition, the cockpit was just extra-large. The A-4 was so nifty people would say that when you strapped into the A-4 you were strapping it on your back. When you turned left you kind of tilted down a little bit and the airplane

went port. The A-7 you had to do more flying.

We were in the A-7B. I had this sophisticated heads-up displays of the echoes. But we had a great time on cruise, such as when we left-the *Kennedy* was homeported in Norfolk-when we left on the Med cruise it was interesting. It was the first Med cruise for the Navy's F-14s on the East Coast. It was the first cruise for the A-6E on the East Coast for the Navy. It was the first cruise for the new E-2C. Everything was new, including the EA-6Bs, except dear old A-7Bs.

When we made the transit we were prepared for the Soviet Bear intercept and sure enough they came. When they came it turns out that we launched four A-7s to do the escort, and could fly one escort airplane between the Soviet Bear and the carrier, so when it takes his pictures we have it showing that we're there. Then we have the second airplane fly on the outside to take a picture of the Bear and say, the escort and the carrier, showing that we are covered. Having said that, it was the A-7s. So we went back and made patches up. Oh, by the way, it was because the F-14s didn't do it. They had a little engine borescope problem on the crossing and so they were all down for inspection and they couldn't fly. And if you ever want to see some upset fighter pilots just crunching that we're up there. We even came back and made patches: VFA-46, which is now the forerunner of the VFA F-18 squadrons.

But again on that particular flight we sent out two lieutenants. We didn't send the lieutenant commanders or the CO/XOs. Hey, and we kind of did that all the way through our business. Even later on the cruise when we did an exchange with the French carrier we sent two jg's over. It's just what we did. It's up to them to do it.

Finished the cruise. We came home, we had a great ten-plane fly-in off the carrier after the Med cruise. We launched in sections off the carrier. We joined en route. And with good help from the FAA there at Jacksonville we were able to get all ten of us together and came in with a nice bowling-alley ten-plane wedge right down the runway at 500 feet. All the families and friends were delighted. And we broke off and came around and had a welcome home.

On the cruise, though, as I say, everything went fine. It was a safe cruise. No accidents, no injuries for the people. Just looking through, I had two. There's a patch of the fly-off lineup and the formations and how we were going to break up when we come in with the ten planes at Cecil, and then slide into two divisions, 104 and then 203, and call signs.

I'm thumbing through a scrapbook here. I had two scrapbooks in the squadron. One done by the guys on the ship on the cruise, and the other done by the wives at home. One of the nifty things is we hosted two British squadrons off the *Ark Royal* for two weeks in Jacksonville. That was pretty nifty, to go out and fly with their Buccaneers, and with their F-4s, and the targets. And then they took us out to the *Ark Royal* and they let me have a touch and go one afternoon. And then they had us out for a tattoo on board, and that was pretty nifty.

Looking through a couple other things, we had a super, super flight surgeon,

Guillermo Vasquez, who came to us in the squadron as a lieutenant commander and left the squadron as a captain. Again, we insisted that we would write up the fitness reports on him, not the senior medical officer at the station at Cecil, or the senior medical officer aboard the carrier.

Bicentennial I mentioned. We had the early Navy leaders on the side of the airplane and by the cockpit with the names, we flew the Navy jack back on the rudder. And for that and a few other things we did, we were one of the four Navy squadrons designated by somebody, the Navy or the Congress, whatever, as an official Navy bicentennial command. Oh, here it is. I'm reading it now.

**WINKLER: By Warner?**

**BRONSON:** No. By the U.S. Navy Bicentennial Command by the American Revolutionary Bicentennial Commission. There were four of them. We were one of the four. I don't remember who the others were. But it was nice to get the telegram from then-Congressman Bennett from Jacksonville. Charlie had been there thirty or forty years on the Hill.

Also we went through the summer stand-down, typical back-home countdown. Then we went on NATO cruise in the fall. The NATO cruise was significant for a couple reasons. One, I almost got fired. So here we go. We're on NATO cruise, we're up north, and they were flying our low-level nuclear missions. We're going to break up and go through the fjords and what have you in Norway. Our target was over the international airport at Bode, with a target time and clearance to cross at 200 feet. Standard 360 knots. Well, coming in and out from the sea, making my coast-in point, my radar was really working. It was just-it's unusual in the A-7B. And I couldn't believe it, because the weather was kind of lousy. But I was able to fly in between the valleys and the mountains, and the radar was working fine. I was in just great shape, but forgot to do one thing. That is, I forgot to shift my frequency to talk with the people who were in charge of it. So they kept trying to call me and say, you know, the weather's lousy, you can't come. And I'm just pressing along in thrall that it's working so well in all these years of my low-level experience.

Well, to make a long story short, they had to hold all the international traffic out of the landing pattern or take-off pattern at Bode airport. I crossed it, though, at 200 feet on target on time. And then I looked and said, all these clouds up to 20,000 feet; how am I going to get back up? Well, there's only one way to go. You just decide, well, I guess out to sea is the best way, and just point the nose and climb.

Not too much happened on that. There was a little message traffic back and forth, but I was saved by anything significant happening because the air wing had a lieutenant commander liaison there in Bode for the exercise. It turns out it was Bill Ransom, lieutenant commander maintenance officer in VA-46, one of my officers. Bill took care of that very nicely.

The next day or so we were out doing some bombing runs, Mark 76s, on a target there in Norway after the fly-by. The forward air controller said, hey, can you give us a fly-by. And VA-46 for years and years had been famous for its diamond formation. So I gave the guys the signal for the diamond and we did a nice fly-by. A fly-by is not so

much how fast you go or how much-it's more like, can the people see the diamond? So the only way you see the diamond is to put about a fifteen-degree angle of bank in there as you come around so they can see the diamond. Otherwise it's just airplanes side by side going by.

We finished that just perfectly. And the forward air controller comes back up and says, hey, that was really nifty. The king would like to know if you'd do it again. Well, what look who we are. Asking us to do something like that? Well, sure. So this time we did a nice, a little tighter and a little more angle of bank, like, say, thirty degrees, so you could really see it.

Well, it turns out that they sent a message in to the ship saying thank you very much for the air show. Well, we didn't put on an air show. We did two 360 fly-bys in diamond formation. But anyhow, the flag onboard the *Kennedy* didn't like that. And the flag, if you check back on it is John Dixon, who also happened to be an F-8 pilot on my *Roosevelt* 1959 cruise. Not that we had any togetherness back in 1959, but at least you know, I knew who he was and he knew who I was. Well, that didn't sit too well.

Then the next day, as it turns out, beautiful weather and everything else, one of my friends that I had had dinner with in port the week before was Tom Brown, at that time a captain, the CO of the *Caloosahatchee*, the oiler. Tom subsequently made flag and he and I are just very close friends today. He was here, as a matter of fact, overnight last month.

But having said that, I had on my wing with me Lieutenant Commander Mike Meers, ops officer of CAG 1. Again, we had set this up with the CO of *Caloosahatchee* in port that we were on this frequency, and give the guys on the ship a little air show, carrying our Mark 76s. And the deal was to come in about a thirty-degree angle off of the bow and put the Mark 76s in front of the ship, close by, so the guys could see the shotgun charge going off. We did that, and everything was fine. There wasn't anything dangerous or anything else like that. And then all of a sudden it's like, oops, it's time to get back and land on the carrier.

There's the carrier right there, because the *Caloosahatchee* was getting in position to come alongside to do refueling at the completion of flight ops. This was going to be the last flight of the day. And I looked up and we had gotten- because I wasn't paying any attention to the carrier-we were underneath the bow-in pattern. It was like, oh, crap. You can't go hide. You've got to slide out and somehow you come back in and hit the break and come around and land.

Shut down the airplane, tie down, come down the ladder. The squadron duty officer is there, saying, "CAG wants to see you in the office now." Do not go to the ready room. Walked on down. Somebody else came out, "CAG wants to see you right now." Yeah, I got it.

Walked in the CAG office and there were two other COs in there. Gary Wheatley was one, he was the A-6 CO. And I think Rollie Rollins. I don't know who the other CO

was at the time. Maybe Art Frederickson from the F-14 squadron. Could be. Not significant.

CAG sees me. He says, "Come with me," as he spins out of the CAG office to the first little stateroom on the passageway. He opens the door to his stateroom, walks in, turns to me and says, "Is your XO qualified for command?" That's openers. I mean, that is like, oh-oh. Okay. Ted, now, knock it off. Don't be your typical self sometimes like this. Pay attention. This is critical. I said yes. He said, "Jesus, Ted, God, that's three in three days." I said, what? It turns out Admiral Dixon just did not like it. Okay. He said, "You're going to go up. You're going to work your way up to him. So go on up and see the captain." Well, the captain of the carrier then was That was Jack Preston, the CAG was Jack Preston. Fine, fine, fine man. He just didn't relieve me on the spot. But at least I said yes.

Went up to see the captain of the carrier, John, J.R.C., Mitchell. He just happened to think it was shit-hot. And again, VA-46 had always had the reputation, from before me, years before me, of the pattern around the ship, the daily, daily pattern around the ship of looking good. We had done it all cruise, everything else like that, our time around the ship, even though we had to spin like, couldn't break, we made a tight spin. We called down a couple of times and crews would say, hey, that was a really nifty spin. Anyhow, he thought it was shit-hot. He laughed and said, okay, I'll handle the admiral. So that was all that ever happened. But it was like scary to say the least.

On that NATO cruise we also went into Alain d'Visseault (phonetic), the French air base where my exchange pilot came from. He did very well. We were there for two or three days. As did our sister squadrons sent two airplanes in, we sent two airplanes in.

The great thing is the day after we had a welcome aboard party and a dinner that night, the next day we went out to do some stunts and low-levels, a very unique picture. Viewed some people by saying a bicentennial aviation picture. We had a fly-by of Mont-Saint-Michel, the French cathedral to St. Michael the archangel, built in the year 1010. The fly-by we did, with the photos going to the French Etendard squadron, was the CO of the French Etendard squadron leading. I was on his starboard wing. My French exchange pilot, Robert, was on his port wing. And in the slot was the British exchange pilot in the French squadron. Pretty great picture of flying by Mont-Saint- Michel.

Also on that NATO cruise, it was pretty special. VA-46 was originally founded in 1955. The first CO's name was McDougal. He was traced back to the McDougal clan in Oban, Scotland. That's still an active clan in the highlands of Scotland. And so we tracked down and invited out the chief of the clan. It turns out the chief of the clan is a Mrs. in those days, and that was Madame McDougal. And so we brought her out to the carrier what we were in Edinburgh. We did the whole thing the right way, with the captain's gig. Our officers were the side boys. And even the Queen's guard sent two guardsmen with the chief. Came on board and had a little light refreshments and tour of the ship and things. The highlight was presenting her a picture of the castle that was flown over (phonetic). The castle was not really in use any more, but the big remnants of

it were still there. And little things like that just kept us in tune of the bicentennial year.

**WINKLER: And that's what the squadron was known as, The Clansmen?**

**BRONSON:** That's exactly why the squadron is known as The Clansmen.

**WINKLER: Because they have Scotch.**

**BRONSON:** It has nothing to do with any other stuff.

**WINKLER: White hoods, or anything like that?**

**BRONSON:** No. That comes up every once in a while. It didn't come up while I was in the squadron. but it did come up another time, and there's a nice standard response that the Navy always had for that, where we had come from.

And I guess the other thing that happened on that NATO cruise was, the last day of the cruise I was coming in for my 999th carrier landing. And since I was just in the groove, they called up and just said, "301, you 're trap- cat-trap." That meant to come in and get my 999th landing, go right to the catapult, get shot off, and then come right around and get your 1000th landing. A thousand landings today or any day is a pretty significant thing. I think I mentioned before in VA-135 Commander George Watkins had the Navy's first 1000th landing. And from what I know from NavAir News, at the time I was the twenty-fifth naval aviator to get a thousand landings.

There could be some other things on the cruise. I'll give you some paperwork. Always I used to write things on the flight schedule every day by hand, sign it every night. Also get ready for different events, training at sea, different holidays. And then not so much pontifical, but just reminders to the folks that, you know, this is what we are and this is what we do. And to be careful, as you like. I guess one highlight of all time-Bob Brennock was the A-7 sister CO of VA-72 at the time when I was -46. Bob and I had been on combat cruise in -113 together, so we knew each other for a long time. Bob is a big brute, nicknamed Box, out of Boston. Yah, yah, you can tell that he's from Baahston, yah, yah. But having said that, we had a great cruise, as I mentioned. More flight time, more carrier landings than all the others. Good stuff for any squadron.

Even the Combined Federal Campaign time. And all that stuff goes on all the time. That fall, or whenever it was, in VA-46 when I was CO, I said, okay guys, we have this reputation around here that we're first. So let's do this thing and get it over with, and you're not picked on, I don't pick on you, it will all just go away. So let's take one day and do it. And the next day we sent in our pledges, our cards, and our allotments back to LantWing One at Cecil Field. \$4,646.46. And nobody believed it. Just like, maybe I'll find the telegrams later on around here and let you take them, about-Norfolk, CinCLant, AirPac, has to send out messages, hey, how did this happen? This is why, or who led,



blah blah blah blah? Well, Paul Jones led the campaign. We really did take a couple of days. We just said, hey, we're a Navy, we take care of our people aboard ship, we take care of people who can't be as fortunate as we are. This is an easy way to do it. No one's being administrator. We administer without overhead and it's called bludgeoning and things like that. So.

But that \$4,646.46 got people's attention. First of all it was a high number. And everybody could see, hey, -46 is at it again, trying to show off. Well, again, that's what I told the guys. We're supposed to be first, let's be first and get it over and done with and gone.

Having said that, coming home from the cruise you had to, our lieutenant, Cager Campbell, he's going to be the officer to go back home early and set up all the spaces. I mentioned his name before about that. But that was a different CAG. That was Dwight Timm. So I said, hey, let's go home and make a billboard along 103rd Street, which is the main drag coming into Cecil Field. And here's what I want you to say. "All A-7 squadrons are not created equal. Welcome home, VA-46." And sign it the commodore. The commodore has, you know, fourteen, fifteen squadrons under his command there at Cecil Field. And we didn't ask permission from the commodore to do this. I paid for the billboard. It didn't cost that much, two or three hundred dollars for two weeks.

First of all we put our VA-46 McDougal plaid on the background of the billboard. That's, you know, the red, the blue, and the green plaid. And there it is after our seven-month deployment. So the guys coming out to work the next day are saying, hey, "All A-7 squadrons are not created equal. Welcome home, VA-46. Signed the commodore." The reason I did that is because the commodore was CO of VA-46 three before me. There was Ron Boyle before me, Bear Taylor before him, Dale Lewey before him, and Marv Reynolds-actually, so it's about five COs removed. The point is, it was like, well, the writeup, this is from Navy Times, the picture I'm showing you. It made the front cover in Navy Times. It said, you know, I paid for the mess (phonetic), signed for the commodore, presumably representing Marv Reynolds, a former VA-46 CO, but also adding to the rivalry among Cecil-based A-7 squadrons.

So what happened is, Bob Brennock sees that and he goes in the next day and he goes livid. He goes big-ox livid with Marv Reynolds. And Reynolds says, I didn't know anything about it; go take it up with Ted. Well, I can't do that, because it's your name. He says, well So Marv, he thought it was a pretty smart trick. Well, here's the worst thing that happened. For some reason that billboard had nobody coming behind to rent it. It stayed there for three months. And Brennock was mad, every day he came to work ticked. And I told Bob, I said. Bob, go get your own. Money, pay to put something else up there. But we really had a lot of fun with that one.

Just looking to see if there's anything else here. Oh, one of the things, VA46 was, like most squadrons maybe, I don't know, but the XO's wife always had-all the wives had a monthly lunch, brunch. And when it came time for the XO's wife to do it, well naturally the

XO did it. Well, I was single. I had no wife at home to do the...So, guess what? I went ahead and did it, and did it in my apartment complex with the pool party. Got two of the squadron stewards to cater it. And we just. There's a picture of Pat Harrison who, went he was CAG ops flew in the water off of Sardinia. Or Sicily. I'm just looking for some of the wives' comments from the, ah Ah, don't see them here. But it was one of the best parties they had To have it catered by....

**WINKLER: Who put the scrapbook together?**

**BRNISON:** The wives. This big, fat scrapbook was done by the wives. Oh, here's the--Oh, that's right. Baby shower. 'This was the big baby shower at the complex there. So I was the only guy there, and had all the wives. And I also, believe it or not, for every gal in the squadron who was having a baby, I put \$2,000 into my Navy insurance policy, in the baby's name. There's a picture of five of them.

I guess I should go back and say one of them was Ron Boyle's wife, the CO. I won't exactly tell about when she got pregnant, how she got pregnant. It was child number five. But he was born while we were on the cruise there in early, say, I don't know, April or May of '75. And here comes the telegram, in those days from the Red Cross, saying, you know, congratulations, you're a dad And named, Tennessee Boyle was born. And everybody, whaa? Where'd you get Tennessee? Geez, I don't know. Fran doesn't drink, so she couldn't be that screwed up. It turns out it was just some kind of a mix up, because actually the baby's name was named Timothy, not Tennessee.

Okay. I was looking over some of the papers I happened to pull out of a packrat thing. We don't have to read them all. They're just pieces left over that I must have thought.

Getting all that flight time sometimes. We had ten airplanes on the carrier during the Med cruise, and the NATO cruise. Carrier surgeon and the air wing and the carrier itself likes to make sure that all the flight time is paid for, and different things. When other squadrons couldn't make all their launches we always launched the spares. And maybe once in a while-and it's a big day to have all ten of your airplanes on cruise flying at the same time. That's a combination, you know, some of them have just taken off and the others are coming back and landing. You have no airplanes on deck. There's no spares on deck, there's no hangar queens on deck. It's not the fly-off, because everybody always makes the fly-off. But it's just something. People do look at you and say. uh-huh.

I'm looking at Friday, December 19, 1975, on the cruise here. It says, "Okay. Today is our day in the sun for our own cause because we drop live Mark 82s. But every day is not our day in the sun because A-7s are the main battery in the fleet. When you go to sea if you want to work, fly and do it in the light attack way.

Yesterday, *Kennedy* record, 352 hours, A-7s 116. 144 sorties, A-7s 50. So eat you heart out, all others." For the records, we had hours, 61 hours. Eat your heart out.

Someplace else. And, again, it's an interesting little point here now. In VA-46, I mentioned earlier that I had been P-coded in PAO in the Navy. One of our JOs who came in and joined us was John Leenhouts, certainly known throughout the Navy today for many reasons, not the least of which was his superb presentation Saturday before the BRAC Commission up there in the Senate, on the business of

Jacksonville, Cecil Field, versus Oceana. And the BRAC Commission then voted seven to zero to realign Oceana down to Cecil. It's a long way between here and there and what have you, and I can't give you those details. But Lites was just a guy who's in front as a jg from day one. When I looked at him I said, you're PAO. "Yes, sir. What do I do?" I just kind of directed him and kept him within boundaries, you might say. Between him doing that and following through, and picking up and doing more and more, I guess the interesting thing....

Cecil Field had some different people down there as CO later on who were not in the light attack community. Doug Mow was one. Lee Kollmorgen was another one, A--6 type. They're fine people, and I'm not into the Navy selection thing. But I remember one time Lee Kollmorgen, who was then the CO of Naval Air Station Cecil Field came to me at one happy hour or some event. Sidled up to me and he said, "Hey, Ted. Do you think I could come to you and get a story in my own base newspaper?" Because, you see the scrapbook. It's -46. I mean, that's the base newspaper.

And again, if you do things and you toot your own horn, well, it's a good story and the press people say, well, it's a good story, let's use it. Like the Madame McDougal thing, which made all the headlines, or hosting the Brits for two weeks. Like even NavAir News, getting two pages in, you know, the Navy's aviation magazine. We just kind of did those things. I don't want to think about going through them all, but there are many of them.

Again, it was fun. You had to have fun doing it or else, don't do it. Because they can't pay you enough. A little recognition once in a while feels good. It helps.

**WINKLER: After that you have to go leave the aviation community and head back to D.C. How did that all transpire?**

**BRONSON:** I didn't have any real set of orders coming. Len Giuliani I'd known since lieutenant days when he was an instructor in -125, the Lemoore A-4 RAG when I went through there like in 1965. And he then subsequently came up in the Bureau, the commander for Washington placement. I was up doing something, I forget what it was, and saw him. I don't know how exactly I got the notion for OLA.

It was interesting because Gus Kinnear was the chief of legislative affairs at the time. And for his peoples there, at least in the LA-5 section, which is the hardware section, you do all this stuff with the Hill for the airplanes, the ships, the rockets. You don't do anything about personnel. You don't do anything about massaging the Senate. You're massaging the House people and constituent-type things. You know: Johnny hasn't written me in three weeks, you know; what's wrong? Or anything else. You don't have any of that problem. You do the issues. The competitions for programs and holding onto the money. And again, the competition between the things that the administration wants to do and the things that the Congress wants to do. And you get yourself in the middle.

Kinnear, I know, took a chance on me, because I remember him telling the story later on one time about saying, well, what the hell, let's take a chance on a PAO guy; it

might work. Compared to taking a chance on an engineer or somebody who had been through Pax River. But it was easy for him when he went to check around about-besides asking about what my reports looked like and how I get along. When he called one of my old XOs, who was Ken Knoizen, Gus Kinnear and Ken Knoizen, were in each other's wedding party. So that's how long they went back. And Ken Knoizen says, I guess, hey, Bronson's okay. No matter what you hear. No.

So anyhow I went up and came to OLA December of 1976. And relieved Dick Macke, who, we're still friends today. Over visiting here or Hawaii. I was invited to his daughter's wedding three months ago, I guess it was. I only say that because, you know, Dick Macke, Naval Academy, ops analysis, Pax River test pilot, ops analysis at Monterey, and I could speak on and on about the value of Dick Macke, the greatness of Dick Macke, and how he got the short stick. Let me just tell the story now and have it out. I've told anybody that wants to listen to it.

Dick Macke was one of those lieutenant commander kiddie cruisers selected by Zumwalt. Two on the East Coast in the A-7 community were Tony Less, who eventually made three stars, and Dick Macke. So Dick Macke is a CO lieutenant commander down in my second time when I'm CO of -46, and I'm a ranking commander. I didn't know too much about Dick then. He was very quiet in the background. So anyhow, I'm up here relieving him at OLA. We had a fairly long turnover, only because he hadn't finished his interviews with Rickover yet to enter the nuclear program, and he didn't have a slot in the class down in Orlando to go to. So we had like a four-month turnover. After a while he stayed out of my way, and things like that. The point being, right then and there I knew it's all in Dick Macke. Apart from being talented, apart from being professional, apart from being smart, and all those other adjectives you can throw in there, he was quick. It's like sometimes in professional sports, you know, the quickness is what makes you a winner. And he could jump ahead three, four issue ramifications down the road before you could even get out the sentence of what the problem was. And that kind of led to his subsequent problem at CinCPac, which I'll get back to in a second.

So anyhow, I relieved Dick Macke in OLA, LA-53. I did the airplanes and the missiles. Later on, when we get down through here, when I'm the executive assistant to Vice Admiral Gordon Nagler in Op-094, I'm looking for a relief. and at the same time Dick is finishing his CO tour of *Camden* out in the West Coast, I think Seattle. Yeah, Seattle home port. And I said, yeah, so Washington placement, yeah, send Macke in to relieve me. And Nagler-you know, there are stories about him later, of course, or anybody, Hank Mustin, Earl Fowler, whatever-just jumped out of his skin about how I said yes to his new EA. You don't do that to three-stars. And my comeback to Nagler right then and there was, hey, do you want your EA to make flag? Because I wasn't making flag, I knew. That wasn't an issue. That wasn't an issue then. It never bothered me. But the point is, do you want your EA to make flag? Well, mm, mm, yeah. Okay, fine; Macke's going to make flag.

Subsequent through, Macke goes from...comes in EA in here, goes out to the nuclear power program, goes to CO of *Eisenhower* and all the other things that come with it. And makes, you know, four stars eventually. We can go through how he made one, and where,

and two and three and four. But the reason he got fired is, as I mentioned, this word quickness. And I saved all the papers and everything else at the time.

Let's go back to the incident supposedly that got him fired, was when he mentioned here at a DoD reporters' breakfast of a CinC. When they come into town they like to have breakfast with the CinCs. Macke is the type that, not only does he write his own speeches, he does his own press conferences without any help of a specialist. What happened at the press conference-it could have been picked up and the specialist would have said, "Oh, what the admiral meant to say was..."

Anyhow, they were at the briefing that was a breakfast briefing, and they're asking about the incident in Okinawawith the three Marines who raped a twelve-year-old Japanese girl. And he said, hey, it sure would have been a lot easier, or some sort of words like that, if they had just gone downtown and rented a prostitute. Because they went out and spent a lot of money renting a van and all the other subsequent things that went with it. So the turmoil between Japan and the United States and what have you.

Well, with that, the headlines on Saturday-here it is. Boom boom boom, the *Washington Post* above the fold. It's the biggest story of all time. And he calls me and says, hey-he's supposed to do a luncheon for AFCEA, Washington chapter scholarship luncheon, on that Monday. And so he calls me Saturday morning and said, hey, I've got to go back to Hawaii. And I've got to go see Perry. Perry was Secretary of Defense right then and there. So he goes in to see Perry, then he calls me back again and says, well, things aren't going to be too bad. He wants me to gohome. But he said stay there until I get somebody there. And also I will send your nomination over to the Senate to retire as a four-star.

Well, two things. When Dick came into be CinCPac, because there was nobody there at the time-Larson had already left to go to the Naval Academy-and the Navy had screwed up by withdrawing Stan Arthur's nomination to be CinCPac, Macke's nomination was already over in the Senate to be four stars and Vice Chief of the Navy. So since the package was all there they just changed the title. Colin Powell loved Macke down there as the J3. I remember Dick was director of the Joint Staff for Shalikashvili, and I always remember Colin Powell saying, if I heard him say it, like Dick, I don't know what you're doing, but keep doing what you're doing, because nobody complains to me. All the CinCs don't complain to me about what you're doing. So you must be doing-just keep doing it.

Anyhow, remember I mentioned about this quickness on Macke's part. About being able to jump ahead. Well, when the thing broke in the *Washington Post* on that Saturday morning after the breakfast luncheon with reporters, the White House was quoted-this is pretty heavy, this is before Macke gets in to see Perry-the White House is quoted as saying, yes, and besides, he is arrogant I've saved all these clippings all this time.

Okay, let me just say I agree: Macke is arrogant. And he's arrogant because he's good, he's fast, and he's X times smarter than all the other folks around. Now, if you want to call that arrogant., fine, call it arrogant. If you're trying to get rid of him, fine, call him arrogant. The reason that White House word was used-and I used a friend of mine who's a former high level JAG officer, since retired and thin like that, to track it down, specifically to one person in the White House who said, ah, get him out of here, he's arrogant. And that is when Macke

is out at CinCPac and without....

Oh, when he's out there at CinCPac, at Camp Smith there's a guest house for real senior VIPs passing through. Well, when the President and the First Lady would be traveling across the Pacific Ocean to the places they would always spend one day at Camp Smith getting his body adjusted to be able to go out. My cousin's husband was with Merck for many years in Japan and when they went back and forth, New York to Japan, they would always spend two days in Honolulu on body adjustment, coming both ways.

So when the Clintons were there at Camp Smith with Macke-Macke's wife did not accompany him, Barbara did not go to Hawaii-Macke would have the dinner for them in his quarters. And it was always a small group. And he absolutely upset one person, between the President and the First Lady, at these dinners, with his arrogance. And sure enough, it came back and that was how she got him. And that's why. And all this other stuff, the IG report, it's been debunked. I have all kinds of paper on that in one of these boxes around here. And A, B, C and the flight into Las Vegas and everything else. It was like, hey, it just doesn't matter; he's gone.

And so much so that when Perry did send the nomination over to the Senate as four-star retirement instead of the law has been changed now, since that incident. Where something like that comes up you don't have to go back to the Senate for confirmation to retire. It used to be just two three- and four-stars had to go back; the ones and twos could retire without going back to the Senate but threes and fours had to go back. That law has since changed and you don't have to go back.

Anyhow, having said that, when the nomination got to the White House to go back to the Senate, it was refused and returned to Secretary of Defense Perry, saying no. It ain't going to go. That's the way certain peoples run politics and Macke's a big boy. So he stayed in Hawaii afterwards and went with a company Week Communications. And also since a company called Warrior Technologies. But anyhow, so Dick and I are just absolutely close friends all the way. He's just a super guy. And it goes like that.

**WINKLER: So if I'm reading the tea leaves, you're attributing, was it Hillary?**

**BRONSON:** You got it. I wasn't trying to falsify it. I wasn't trying to lambaste it. I was trying to make it light. But that's exactly who it was tracked down to. And you can fill the blanks in. That's how it went.

**WINKLER: Okay.**

**BRONSON:** You probably didn't know you were going to get that part of the story. And then Macke didn't have a change of command in Hawaii leaving CinCPac because he had to go home. A big fight was on with the Air Force trying to take the job, so the Navy didn't have anybody there yet. And so that was A, B, C. So he went into CinCPac as a four-star without a change of command and he left without a change of command. But did a great job.

**WINKLER: Okay. Well, that was kind of an interesting tangent, because that's more of a current event. But getting at this legislative affairs, you get your, first time I guess, heavy dose of political reality in D.C.**

**BRONSON:** Absolutely.

**WINKLER: Talk about that education.**

**BRONSON:** I come to D.C. in December of '76. They just had the new change of command of the administration. Jimmy Carter had been elected in November. So they had a change on the Hill. Upgrading the stakes. Very heavy with Macke taking me around. One of the tests you have about whether you're qualified for relief or not is, can you get from that section of the Senate to the other section of the House underground, between all the combinations. Oh, there's catacombs and everything else down there.

We came in at an exciting time. A number of things were going on. The year after that was the 7T, when the fiscal year was changing from 1 July to 1 October. Basically the job in OLA is to get the program through, get your money through, airplanes and ships. Somebody's always trying to take the money away. And somebody's always trying to add money. Office of Legislative Affairs is not a lobbying group. It's to provide information to the Congress to support your position, or to hold on to your position.

But some of the issues that came up, apart time, is you're going to be tested. I remember I was relieved by Bob Hofford in LA-53, and Jim Ellis relieved Bob Hofford. Jim Ellis, again, light attack. A super, superguy.

**WINKLER: Bob Hofford, he's at the Naval Academy Alum Affairs?**

**BRONSON:** Yes, that Bob Hofford.

**WINKLER: Okay, because I worked with him with the USNA Stadium memorials.**

**BRONSON:** He was Naval attaché in Canada. And Pakistan, I think, too.

So you have issues. A lot of things are routine and then some people just are always going to be against you, always against that program. And you have to learn how to be fair and honest. Because somehow or another you're going to get tested. Somebody's going to tell you one thing and wait to see what you tell somebody else, or don't tell somebody else. Just some kind of combination. As I remember being told, then telling Jim Ellis, and he told me fifteen years later when he was a four-star and making a speech out at Tailhook about, hey, you're right, you do get tested but you don't know it at the time. But if you win that test, you win. You've made your real bona fides. Because you've got to work with people that you don't agree with.

You go in there to see my picture when I got promoted to captain, two Democrats pinning on my shoulder boards, and pinning the one is Pat Schroeder. And she says: It's nice to know somebody who has brass balls. And I guess one of my faint accomplishments was some issue in the House Armed Services Committee coming up was to get her to take a walk and not to vote. So she didn't have to vote against something that she... Well, anyhow, things like that, and how you do that. There's a big story. Naturally a couple of stories are going to come.

Some of the issues in this won't be in sequence, but in the beginning were, yeah, the very beginning, with Gus Kinnear still is the liaison, we had a big doodah with the

CH-53 Echo. Echo was kind of a new helicopter, but we falsed it off as an update. Well, Proxmire didn't like that. And I always remember they had this hearing over there. It wasn't anything about programmatic; it was about the whole issue. I remember Proxmire had a hearing there and he had an OSD or civilian there testifying because he did not support the decision. Eventually, the short answer I'm trying to get to is that here's the man who wrote the paper not saying yes to the CH-53E, and going ahead, and whoever it was, was trying to justify the decision to go ahead with these other heavy, heavy objections here. How did that happen? He said, well, his objections-and I remember this, to me I've used it a lot-his objections were overcome by the decision. I mean, whatever you want, object, but I mean when it's over your objections are overcome by the decision. It's just a nice, neat way to end an argument.

One of the issues we had going on then was what we called the CP:X, which came on, eventually it was the C-12. Between Beechcraft-we had to keep Beechcraft out of the mess because they wanted the contract-and these couple others, civilian peoples didn't want it. Somebody else didn't want the Navy to have its own little internal logistics system. And we now know how the C-12 has come along to be the King Air, and just a fabulous airplane, do we really want it. But having that airplane at the time, the Secretary of the Navy was sued by Senator Goldwater for going around the process the wrong way. I forget what airplane company was down there in Arizona.

**WINKLER: Probably Hughes?**

**BRONSON:** I don't know if it was Hughes or not. But again, you tell me where something is made and I'll tell you who's for the program or who's against it. I mean, it's that easy. It starts with jobs. But anyhow, so Goldwater actually sues the Secretary of the Navy. They have big hearings in federal court. And one of the things that I remember when we were answering the suit working with lawyers in NavAir, was what made this thing, C-12, different than some other off-the-shelf airplane? That was the issue. Maybe it was not a manufacturing issue where, but maybe it was not a pure off-the-shelf. We had these extra things which made the cost a "million dollars" an airplane! Gee whiz.

But one of the things we worked into the paper was the Secretary of the Navy's requirement that it be able to hold litters and caskets. And that meant this double-hinged door on the side and extra strengthening underneath. Whatever. But that thing is what the judge held his hat on. to let the Secretary of the Navy win so that Senator Goldwater would not prevail on the suit. All kinds of little things like this go on all the time with those 535 people and their 20,000-member staff looking for things.

The other thing is, I was in the first year of the F-18 money. Now, the R&D money for the F-18 had been, the \$2 billion, had been authorized and appropriated. But we were starting now the production money. And Gary Hart had his amendment every year on the Senate floor to zero out all the production funds for the FA-18. The first year's budget for the FA-18 was \$25.3 million-the program is now up to \$100 billion, I



guess-that was long-lead for the landing gear. But that was production money and not R&D. For those first two years-and then the second year I don't know how much the production money was, it could have been a billion dollars, it doesn't matter-Gary Hart again offered his amendment and we beat him back each time.

You might say it was easy to beat him back, but it was and it wasn't. Number one, the Navy did not like the F-18. The F-4/F-14 community could see it as a threat. The A-7 community could see it as a threat. Well, first of all that's what the piece of paper says, it's designed to replace those airplanes. Well, also the A-6s could see it as a threat too. When somebody really looked at the design of it and see what the capabilities are. So the A-6 community went. Also all the back-seaters or side-seaters, the RIOs and the BNs didn't like it because it was single-seat. Down in Op-05 there was no F-18-I know Jerry Gress said he was the F-18's sponsor in Op-05; he was as much against the F-18 as anybody but he had to do the title of the sponsor down there. There was no devotee for the F-18 down at Op-05 at the time. And I'm working back and forth as a commander in LA-53, blah blah blah. And here we go again with the amendment over on the floor.

Senator Cannon was leading the charge to keep the money in the budget for the- he was senator from Nevada, Democrat from Nevada. And Democrats were in control at the time, of the Senate. And his staffer was Charlie Cromwell. Charlie said, hey, you've got to get a letter over here that Cannon can use on the floor. So I had a day to get this letter, signed by the CNO, that Cannon could use on the floor. See, what the big argument the second year was, nobody in the Navy supports the F-18. And it was, hey, you could make a lot of paperwork on that too. I could get you a lot of signing-maybe not signed by the names but. and remember the contractors out there were all fighting against it too. Anyhow, so here comes this letter by Jerry Gress through Op-05 into Admiral Tom Hayward, CNO, to get signed and take it over to the Hill. Well, Kilcline gives it to me.

**WINKLER:** Okay, so this is '78?

**BRONSON:** Yeah. Kilcline gives it to me and says: Here's your letter. I read the letter-hah, that's not going to do nothing. That's vanilla. He said: What do you want? I said: The CNO's got to say make a P.S. "I support this airplane fully." That's all. So Kilcline walks it back to Hayward's EA, whoever it was. Hey, wait a minute. And they agreed-yeah, that's right. Remember, the request was, Ted, I need a letter from the CNO that supports the airplane. All this other vanilla bluh boiler plate Hayward hand wrote, hand wrote. Over there on the Hill everything's fine. Everything was fine.

But it's little things like that that I promise you go on all the time. And a lot of it you never know how it happened or how it didn't happen.

**WINKLER:** Now, who was driving the FA-18? Because you mentioned that it seemed like it may have crept in and nobody in the Navy had support for it.

**BRONSON:** I don't know, to answer that question. But I do remember now, to add to

the story. When I had my change of command departing VA-46, the CO of the *Kennedy*, John, J.R.C., Mitchell came down to do the change- of-command speech, at Cecil Field. We had it in the theater, since it was in November. And he told that A-7 community at Cecil Field is, hey, listen, guys. This new airplane is coming down the pike. And you better get to St. Louis and get on those committees and teams out there to get your oar in the water of what you want in that airplane. Because if not, it's going to be a fighter airplane and not an attack airplane. And that was the greatest charge that the A-7 community ever heard, because the A-7s were being, everybody loved the A-7, you know? Go out to Dallas and they give you a party, take you through the facility and things like that. That's the first time I ever heard about the F-18. I didn't know anything about the F-18.

And so people picked up on it and did exactly what he said. Got the oar into the water. Because one of the other things he said in his short remarks at the change of command was, "And if you don't get this airplane, look around. There ain't any other airplane you're going to get for the next twenty years except this, the F-18." And this is just after the fly-off between the -16 and the -17. Northrup lost the -16 and then the Navy did change it a little bit and Northrup changed it a little bit and made it the -18, and all these other things like that, out in California. And look around today. When J.R.C. Mitchell said that in November of 1976, he's right. We still have no new airplane. There's things supposedly coming down close by. Well, I'm not going to enumerate them here. But still, we've had no new airplane-he said in 1976 for the next twenty years-'86, '96, that's thirty years we don't have a new airplane. So that was, to me, my marching orders as far as, like hey, I'm on board for the -18 right now. Being able to grasp the simplicity of the program. Wait a minute, that's it or nothing. For you. Not going to improve the other airplanes that much.

And with the F-18, without going through-the thing that made it really get through is, the Navy built it to be, the utilities. Maintainability, the sustainability, and those numbers belong to somebody else, but it's all out there.

And one of the examples I could use personally on the Hill was, the F-18 back on the horizontal stabilizer. On the carrier you need one, or it gets crunched or whatever. You order it. Back with just the A-7 I know for sure, if you get crunched, they look the same but the order say a left stabilizer. It comes up in a box from seven decks down in the supply hole. It takes a day and a half to get it. You open up the box and, you ordered a left one? You got a right one. F-18 was designed, there is no difference between the left and the right. You order one, you get one. And a lot of other things.

Just one more quick easy example. You want to do an engine change on an F-14. You have to get eighteen feet behind the airplane, space to put the dolly to roll the engine back out. The F-18 it drops down, straight down. I mean, all these things were built into the R&D design of it. There's many, many, many. But then again, helpful on the amendments, to beat Gary Hart and a few of the other peoples, this was-I guess it has to be an accident, because nobody can be this conniving. The F-18 engines were built in Tip O'Neill's district. Which, when you go to the Senate floor on these

amendments you have Ted Kennedy, his staffer calling me on the phone saying: Can I have...give me three or four paragraphs that we can use on the floor. So you have him. He has to say something, because of all the people who work at Lynn, Massachusetts building the engines for GE.

The avionics suite was being built in Cleveland, Ohio. So we had dear Senator Metzenbaum. These people who just don't normally support the important DoD funds. And then you have the Midwest delegation, with the airplane being assembled together at McDonnell Douglas in St. Louis. So you've got Dick Gephardt, the Democrat House leader there. And all the other things that come in.

And then you have the other half of the airplane being built in California. So when you start to...Gary Hart from Colorado says I don't want the airplane, wait a minute. All of a sudden New England wants it, the Midwest wants it the West Coast wants it. So we win the amendment. Not that we couldn't have won it on its own, but it does help to have these other peoples who are on your side, at least not fighting against you.

Other nifty issues that came through, really, to say, besides the F-18--is helo consolidation, and 150 Tomahawks in the '77 supplemental. Helo consolidation was a tough, tough fight.

Oh, by the way, on the Hill, when people go to the Hill you have be escorted and things like that. So riding back in the sedan with Undersecretary of the Navy Woolsey early in the game-let's just say it's February, something like that-oh, hi, Commander. How long have you been here? I said, well, I came in December. Where did you come from? I came from my squadron, down at Cecil. As we were riding back he said, "Well, welcome to the NFL." And he's right. And I followed Woolsey all the way through and I just like him very, very much. But apart from that, it is different. I've never left D.C. I love it. I watch my C-Span stuff. I go to the Hill. I still write some point papers for people on issues, what have you.

Again, during the F-18 sequence on the Hill I remember one time John Tower giving me a hand-written note saying: Ted, I need a single-page, double-spaced, sixth-grade English on F-18. And there I am. I have to go back. And this is not going to go through NavAir. This is not going to go through Qp--05. This is--I have to go back and take that time I don't know, a \$40- or \$50-billion program, in effect, at least within in the FYDP, and translate it down to single-page, double-spaced, sixth-grade English. Because he could fill in all the other stuff around it, but he needs at least that much. And again, as I mentioned about the other CH-53 Echo but just as a sidebar, his objection was overcome by the decision.

And ever since that time, a lot of times you'll hear later on between the Hill and the Naval Space Command, you've got to have a single-page, double-spaced, sixth-grade English. Because these people at the top are busy, busy, busy, and they can't read Appendix 18 and Tab 2. What is the issue? Who owns the problem? And what do you want me to do? And thank you very much. If you can translate it that simply, you should win. Back to helo consolidation. Somebody was after helo consolidation, could do it cheaper. Probably--well, it was Goldwater. I don't know whether it was Goldwater or not. I

forget. No, it wasn't Goldwater. It was somebody else. But anyhow-oh, the administration. The Carter administration SecDef ...

**WINKLER: Brown?**

**BRONSON:** Brown. Helo consolidation. It was strictly a McNamara numbers game. I'll make a very long story short.

**WINKLER: Okay. Today is September 7. I'm here with Captain Ted Bronson. We're continuing on our overall history. This is our fourth tape, Side A. We're picking up. Last time we were talking about your duties at OLA. I think we may have talked about the helicopter...**

**BRONSON:** Consolidation.

**WINKLER: ...consolidation off line. So that might be a good place to pick up.**

**BRONSON:** Okay. And you have told me that I'll get a chance to improve on some of these remarks, because I'm doing everything basically without notes.

The helicopter consolidation was an issue between the Department of Defense, who says we're going to consolidate helos, Secretary Brown; and Secretary of the Navy Claytor, who said, okay, fine. The undersecretary was Jim Woolsey, with all the experience from the Hill from the Senate Appropriations Committee. And that was the position of the Navy. The people through Florida at Whiting Field and Mississippi, Meridian, were certainly concerned about it, for different reasons, which I'll get into a little bit. So the official Navy position was "Yes" for helo consolidation. The underlying OpNav and congressional thing, at least for the people down south, was "No." So that program was very-a lot of papers were thrown over the transom in support of certain questions coming from the Congress. Because to get it through the chop system it would never be approved. But yet the same thing, the questions got factual answers without a lot of emotion.

Did find out one thing in this town. If you're going to write something that is going to be "interesting" to say the least, make sure it's written in such a way that your worst enemy can read it and understand what you mean. So leave out a lot of the adjectives and adverbs if you can.

Having said that, Congressman Sikes from down in Pensacola was very instrumental in fighting helo consolidation, since the Navy did their basic helo training in Pensacola. The long pole was, I guess two things that happened. When they put the final full-court press on, UndersecNav Woolsey was going down to see John Tower as the ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee at that time, other than Stennis. He was going down in that airplane, and Bob Old, who was actually the Goldwater staffer on the Senate Armed Services Committee, called me at home and said, hey, we're going to Corpus Christi tonight. Huh? So anyhow-not Corpus Christi, but Dallas, Texas, to be there in the morning with Tower and the meeting with Woolsey.

So we get down there and Bob Old, with me, has to brief Tower on what the real issue is, and keep it simple, because the Undersecretary of the Navy's coming down to talk you into

not fighting them on this. Tower's being hit by all the peoples in Florida and Mississippi. Of course, when you say Mississippi that means Senator Stennis, who is both chairman of the Appropriations Committee and chairman of the Armed Services Committee, which doesn't happen anymore.

Tower sees me and says, what about him? Bob Old said, "He's okay. He can listen and he can stay, and he can ask questions." But I was not there for the meeting between Woolsey, Bob Old, and Tower. After that meeting, Tower went, Bob Old and I visited a congressional...

**WINKLER: Now, Bob-how do you spell his last name?**

**BRONSON:** O-L-D. Bob Old. A lot of people always liked to put an "s" on it, but it was not. Bob Old. Long-time Senate staffer for Senator Goldwater on the Senate Armed Services Committee. And always had a penchant for being known as a pure devotee of the Air Force, which he was an Air Force colonel also and still a flier, in the OLA days, of the B-2, or the B-1, and everything else like that.

But having said that, then it was still getting very close to the end there. Helo consolidation was probably going to go through, until The October 1 DoD authorization bill was being held up and the continuing resolution. It was going to expire again by, I think, say, on the first of December, something like that. And there was the annual DoD Christmas Senate party over there.

We were there outside the caucus room standing around and having our good talk and things like that. And I get in a conversation with Frank Sullivan, who was the staff director of the Senate Armed Services Committee. And we spent forty-five minutes there standing by the door and talking about helo consolidation. Many people were coming by and genuflecting in front of Frank, as they would if they were going to hold onto their programs or not have their programs cut or add right on, whatever. And basically explained to him the circumstances that you couldn't really put into a point paper, that if the Navy does helo consolidation you close Meridian. Because you're going to have excess capacity. And if you have excess capacity-this is long before the BRAC came along-you look around to say, well, why do I do one-half here, one-third here, and one-quarter over here? Well, the thing is, get rid of either the one-quarter or the one-third, which would have been Meridian, Mississippi, and not North and South Whiting Field or Saufley Field in Pensacola territory. Or the two B fields in Chase, because they were the jet fields, out in Texas.

So all of a sudden that was understood, and all of a sudden Stennis says, nope, we're not going to have helo consolidation. And that's the way it went away. And it never came up again. There was never any issue. There was never any fight. There was never any screaming. I don't know who else helped in the Navy or didn't help in the Navy. But I never heard one word boo about how it didn't go or how it did go. But it just died away.

**WINKLER: Now a question is, at this time the official Navy position was, hey, it's okay? Or was it kind of wavering?**

**BRONSON:** Well, the blue-suiters had their position of they didn't go for it. But again, raising your hand and properly saluting the civilian authorities, which we do, they had to support it. And for the reasons that were stated at that time, 1978 or something like that.

**WINKLER:** Okay. So when you were doing this discussion you were, I guess, touting the Navy line, but you were probably explaining what the implications were.

**BRONSON:** Not exactly. Because Frank Sullivan would ask me a question pointedly about, what does it mean to Mississippi? What does it mean to Senator Stennis? And I explained to him in terms that he asked me about what it would mean for Senator Stennis. And that was not the Navy position. Was not going to support Senator Stennis in keeping Meridian open. So although I was not espousing the Department of Defense line, I was answering a question in the best way to answer his question of, how does this affect Senator Stennis and Meridian? I'm saying, it affects it this way, because, A, B, C, therefore you close Meridian. Oh.

**WINKLER:** Now, where did the impetus for the consolidation come from?

**BRONSON:** I don't know whether to say it's kind of an advanced BRAC-type thing. Or wouldn't it be better to have purple-suiters? How come a helo's a helo and we have three separate helicopter training programs, Army, Navy, and Air Force? I remember at the time the Army was doing all warrant officers flying their helicopters, not college graduates and graduates with a set of naval aviator wings. So that was the difference within the Navy. I wasn't exactly sure of the Air Force position.

But the Navy always pushed the fact that flying our helicopters was different because the Navy is always different. Landing on the back of a destroyer in the black Mediterranean milk bowl night, whether the seas are calm or not, is different than landing in a battlefield even. It just is. And so we always thought they had to have more instrument training compared to the others. And on and on and on.

And, again, it was very interesting to have a fight like that. But again, after it was over it was over, and it never lingered around and never came back up again.

**WINKLER:** Yeah, I know. Now, what were some of the other...

**BRONSON:** That's not-remember today there's a lot of joint training. But that's not the issue back then. The issue then was: Cut.

**WINKLER:** Right. Right. And today all three services still run their own programs. So that hasn't-nobody has brought that up again.

**BRONSON:** Oh, and by the way, Doug Wallin was the lead staffer for Floyd Sikes over in the House Appropriations Subcommittee.

**WINKLER:** Well, Wallin-how do you spell his last name?

**BRONSON:** W-A-L-L-I-N. Doug Wallin.

**WINKLER:** Okay. What were some of the other issues that came across your desk?

**BRONSON:** We went through the F-18 thing before, which is a fun story. We kind of went through the CVV versus the CVA. I'll find that chart for you, because it's important to keep around in the system. I know I've sent it back a couple of times to flag officer friends of mine, active duty type in the Navy: Hey, keep this around in case it comes up. Having said

that, and I've told you the story of Woolsey coming back in the car saying, "Welcome to the NFL."

There's one major story I just have to tell you. And it's like, when you play this you're in the middle between the Hill and the Navy or the other services. Everybody is on one side or the other. Everything is a fight, everything is a discussion. Tell where something is made and I'll tell you who's for or against it. It goes like that.

But one of the things came in, a supplemental. I think it was the FY78 supplemental. It was small one, not too many items in it for the Navy, I think about four or five was all. But one of the items in there was 144 Tomahawks that CNO Hayward really wanted. Now, just remember, I just said: Tell me where it's made and I'll tell you who's for or against it. Well, it got down to the conference. In the beginning the Senate did not have it in their section of the authorization for the supplemental, the 144 Tomahawks. The House did. One of the reasons the House would have it in the Armed Services Committee is that the ranking minority member at the time was California Charlie Wilson, San Diego. Tomahawks were made in San Diego by...

**WINKLER: McDonnell Douglas?**

**BRONSON:** Raytheon, I think. But anyhow, the point is they were made in San Diego. So that's why, naturally, they were in the House coming back, and they were not in the Senate. Maybe because they could always figure it was a bargaining chip.

Well, in the conference, somehow or another they made it through the conference. But I got a phone call late in the afternoon very quietly from a Senate staffer who was just there for two one? years. Later on ended up working for Stockman in OMB doing the military stuff. Later on the deputy to Stockman. And he and Stockman, both bachelors, ended being a reputation that, yes, they both worked twenty-one hours a day. And this same, at that time, one-year Senate Armed Services Committee staffer out of White Oak, nuclear-powered trained also, ended up being deputy NSC for Richard Poindexter, and was brought in as deputy at the time of Iran-Contra. I'm setting this up just because it's the way little things work and how they last forever.

**WINKLER: Was it John Poindexter?**

**BRONSON:** John Poindexter. This was not the Senate Armed Services Committee. The staffer was Al Keel. Al Keel, who later on had a reputation with OMB as being one of the few people who could actually brief President Reagan and have him grasp the substance of the brief in a way for comprehension.

And I'll just mention it now, the reason I said so much about Keel is, later on when we was doing all the military stuff for Stockman and I'm down at Naval Space Command putting it together for the Navy, we had a technical director's slot, and I came up and had an appointment with him and sat in the office and had coffee and cookies, and went through the whole package of Naval Space Command and what we wanted to do, and how come I wanted him to come down to be the technical director. Now, here's somebody-I was pretty cool to even attempt that-but here's somebody that later on

ends up being deputy NSC, so it really shot high for the moon.

But having said that, so Al Keel calls me very quietly in the afternoon and says, hey, I don't know what you want to do about this, but they're out. And it turned out somebody in the Senate Armed Services Committee, probably George Foster, who was never very favorable to the Navy on different issues, very tough, tough, fighter, got them taken out. Somehow, but nobody knew about it. This was one of those times you hear about the power of the staff, doing things that the members never know about. Well, there it is. Keel says to me: "Don't know what you're going to do about it, but they're gone."

Okay. So the House Armed Services Committee, they're the big fighters for it because of California Charlie Wilson. So got to go see Charlie Wilson. Now, remember, at the same time we had Texas Charlie Wilson, who was a big, tall Texan guy who was always fighting for the Afghans and things. This was California Charlie Wilson. So you go to see him. Well, he's not in the country. He's on a trip. And his staffer says, how do you know this? I mean-I think his name's Bill Pierce, Bill Price or something. Anyhow, you've got to believe me. And this is one of those things, you build up your trust and confidence. You believe somehow or another that they believe you without a name involved.

He said, okay, come with me. So we go down to see the second-ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, Bill Dickinson, from Alabama. He's about six-three, about 245. That's being kind. And I tell the story that they're out. He says, no, they can't be; I saw the final product this morning. "They're gone. They're out." So he comes around the desk and gets me by the lapels and kind of lifts me up a little bit, but just to make sure that he was being straight: You've got to tell me who. I said, "No. They're out. And it's up to you to do something about it." The reason it was up to him to do something about it, because number one, he's the second-ranking member; they're made in the ranking member's district; Dickinson is the one who's going to sign the conference report as one of the four signers.

So anyhow, they go back in. So I come back to OLA, back to the Pentagon. By this time I finally go see Kilcline, Admiral Kilcline, who was the chief of legislative affairs, and tell him what's going on. And he says, "Hey, Ted," almost like I was just making my first report back, he said, "How come you lost the Tomahawks?" I said, what do you mean? He held me up a piece of paper which was the DoD OLA advanced directives of inside information of what was going to be in or not going to be in the conference reports. Yeah, here it is. They're out. I said, "well, I don't think so." He said, "What do you mean?" So I told the story about I got the phone call that they're out, I went to see Charlie Wilson and ended up with Dickinson. And Kilcline, the most gentle, honest, straightforward statue of a man that the Navy is hard to duplicate or match, comes around the desk and looks at me and says, "Tell me who." I said, no. He said, "You've got to." I said, no. He said, "I can't go to the CNO and tell him they're in when DoD says they're out, unless you tell me who. I said, no. And he just, "Okay." "That's all



he said, was "Okay."

The next morning, I went at nine o'clock to have just the formal signing of the conference report between the Senate and the House Armed Services Committees. And Dickinson knew right where to go look for-and they're out. He says, "I can't sign it." And of course everybody knows it was all agreed to. "Nope. The Tomahawks are not there. They were there yesterday. Who took them out?" And of course, dab, uh uh uh, you know. Anyhow, about an hour and a half later they were put back in, the conference report was signed, I got a phone call again from the Senate Armed Forces staffer saying (whispering): I don't know what you did, but you got them.

Again, I didn't tell him what I did. It's like you've got to protect those people somewhat. If they're going to trust you with something inside like that, then you have to, you know, not just get your name in the paper the next day by saying how great you were, that you did it all by yourself When you didn't. You just were fortunate enough to know who to go to, and fortunate enough that they picked up on, and fortunate enough that they did what they had to do. And you won.

Anyhow, the next day Kilcline looks at me and just kind of smiles and shakes his head, shrugs his shoulders, and, "Nice job. Who was it?" Can't tell you. And he laughed. He laughed. So you win a few like that and then you get a chance to go on and win some others.

OLA was just a terrific time. It's the people that work those issues for the Secretary of the Navy-because you work for the Secretary of the Navy, you do not work for the CNO. At that time just think who we had there. John McCain was a captain junior to me, running the Senate office. He relieved Jack Fetterman. Jack Fetterman went on to three stars. Marine Lieutenant Colonel Jim Jones was in Senate liaison office. Now a four-stars Marine, runs NATO. Jim McGovern was a lieutenant commander working for McCain in the Senate office. Subsequently the Secretary of the Air Force. I relieved Dick Macke, as I mentioned. You could go through a list of other, just, flag, flag, flag, flag. Or get out and be Secretary of the Air Force, and things like that. So it's all talent. It's all great. It's all just step up to the plate, and you just hope to win most of them.

**WINKLER: What were some of the ones you didn't win?**

**BRONSON:** I guess the biggest one I didn't win was when President Carter sent the \$81 million recission notice on long-lead for a carrier back to the Hill. The House got a chance to vote on it first, and agree with the President. I always remember sitting next to Dov Zakheim and I was told by Kilcline later, or Kinnear, Admiral Kinnear I guess was the chief of legislative affairs then, that somebody needed a home movie of the two of you. At the time Dov Zakheim was in the congressional budget office, and they liked that idea of getting the money back. And I didn't, naturally. I flew airplanes off a carrier all my life, and we need more carriers. So all the votes and the speeches down there-this was long before the CVV versus the CVA controversy, or comparison, not controversy, comparison-and the speeches went on and Dov kept shaking his head yes and I'd be

shaking no. Then something else came up, I'd be shaking yes and he'd be shaking his head no.

That was one, and it was almost like-I remember going to Kilcline and saying, or Kinnear, it doesn't matter, whoever it was at the time-why don't we have the CNO resign because of it? That's something you say as a new boy in the town when you don't realize or understand or grasp, hey, it ain't going to do a gosh-dam bit of good, except thank you, next in line for CNO. Because in the overall scheme of things it wasn't that big a deal. It wasn't anything like the Revolt of the Admirals. That was the entire carrier fleet's going to go away. And the entire naval aviation going to go away. No, this was just one item, \$81 million long-lead for a carrier. And we since have done better and better, great things with the carriers, later on buying four for the price of three, if you go back into the budget things. And the people who worked that with, like Charlie Nemfakos and John Lehman, showing that by buying two at a time it's an unbelievable the amount of money we save. Well, I digressed there a little bit.

That's kind of OLA. There's, you know, lots of things going on every day. The biggest thing in OLA is they bring the different type individuals, always bringing them in from the fleet, because you have that perspective. You also can say, yes, in the fleet it's this, in the fleet it's that.

And I guess looking ahead now, Mark Fox, who just finished being deputy military liaison officer at the White House and selected for flag, before he went to the White House he was in LA-5 working the Navy airplane and missile programs like Dick Macke before me and Jim Ellis after me, and things all the way through the system.

So that's the type. And you've got to put your best there, because everything is a contest every day. And as you work these issues, pretty much you see the issue in the paper the next day. And no matter what it says, you know who voted it or who made it happen, pretty much. The newspapers the next day, especially if you have a background in newspapers as I do, and I love them, and I really miss a newspaper when I don't have it, is, there you are. Yep, you were there when it was that way.

I think that's enough as a member of OLA.

**WINKLER: The only follow-up question was, you know, other service liaison assistants-was there kind of a competition, or collegiality?**

**BRONSON:** We were respectful for each other, as officers and gentlemen should be. That's a little bit veiled. Hey, they were after money too, and we were after money. We certainly wished them well in holding on to their programs. There are different times in OLA that items come up that are unique to one service and yet affect others. Like in the Navy when we went for what was called the CPX. We needed some little transport airplane we didn't have. And it turns out to be the King Air these days. But in the Navy proposal all the way through the Hill Senator Goldwater objected to it and sued the Secretary of the Navy in federal court, that he couldn't do it. And to make a long story short we prevailed in that case.

But there is a little funny sidebar when you mention the other services. Bob Old, as I mentioned before, very dedicated to the Air Force, would only travel with Air Force liaison officers. Now, all these staff visits and congressional delegations always have an OLA escort of some service. Just like John Tower would not go anyplace in the world without John McCain being the escort. Senator Cohen from Maine, later Secretary of Defense, would not go anyplace in the world without Lieutenant Colonel Jim Jones being his escort. And of course when Cohen becomes Secretary of Defense Jones become military aide. That's the way it works. If you can get along with somebody juggling all these programs and all these issues and all these schedules, you know, that's who you want working for you, or with you.

But anyhow, back to Bob Old. We had to go take a trip one time together, and somehow or another-as, I don't want to say as crusty as he was or anything else-he and I just hit it off. For however I left him alone or however, I did it, it doesn't matter. All of a sudden, eh, he would only travel with me. And upset the Air Force royally. Including when we went to Nellis. The Air Force couldn't understand how, after all these years of dedicated service, they could not escort him going to Nellis. It just bugged them so much that they even had their own OLA guy, rep, show up at the briefing at Nellis. And Bob and I had gone out to Hughes Radar there in the early F-18 program, just north of LA there at the field. And then we flew in some commercial airplane-it could have been a C-12, or whatever-to Nellis, because Bob is both a commercial and military pilot. So the Air Force briefer got there and he said, "What are you doing here? You're wasting taxpayer moneys," he said. "Leave." Ooh, you talk about a dagger. But anyhow, that's the way it was.

So then Bob and I-I'm glad you brought that up, because then Bob and I got in the airplane, and when we left Nellis we flew in a brand-new Lear 35 that he piloted into Arizona to do something there. And then the whole time is we're trying to be there for the first flight of the F-18 in St. Louis, and all of a sudden, boom, here it comes up. So the next day we flew in, and we were the only two congressional types-I mean he was the only congressional type-there for the first flight of the F-18. And even in OpNav. And Kinnear came down from OLA, and Corky Lennox was there from the program manager, and a couple of his folks. And Jerry Bress. But I can't even remember Op-05 himself being there. Of course, it was postponed for a day or two days, because they had little fuel adjustment problems and weight and balance and things like that. But it was something to see a first-time takeoff of an airplane. It was beautifully painted, white and blue-streaked, looked just like out of a showroom. And there it was, took off, and Bob and I got back in the airplane and flew back to Washington. Pretty interesting all the way through. But you do decide and you do pick up this confidence factor with peoples, working in the OLA business.

So I think that will be enough OLA.

**WINKLER:** The only thing that you mentioned, you did some traveling. What was the congressional delegations, the CoDels and everything?

**BRONSON:** The travel-this was interesting that you brought that up. We'd either travel

commercial or mil air. You'd like to go mil air because it's all your own airplane, it seems like. Or if you travel you go first class. Again, believe it or not, after the first couple years of President Carter and the austerity-type budgets, to travel first-class, which had been the background history of all the Hill staffers and the Hill members, your travel orders for first class had to be initialed and approved by the deputy of the department. So that meant that, for my travels, Deputy Secretary of Defense Duncan had to approve the orders. Can you imagine the amount of paperwork minutiae that gets to go from a commander going on a trip with one of the staffers or a member from the Hill, all the way up to the Deputy Secretary of Defense? And the other, Veterans Affairs or Commerce, had the same rules. But of course, they don't have as many people or issues involved. And I still have some travel orders there initialed and signed by Secretary Duncan.

The reason it eventually got changed a little bit is because the Hill just jumped all over them and said, hey, we're not going on the trip. And of course, if they don't go on the trip they don't find out more about the programs. which means they're just going to nickel and dime you, and pick on you. So they eventually got that taken care of.

Or the other way we go to fly is mil air, and a couple times when you really want to know what it's all about you do mil air. Now, I did mention about John McCain always taking John Tower. Except one time I took Tower on a trip to Corpus Christi. He had just been remarried, and it was kind of like a forced honeymoon. Admiral Kinnear was the chief of legislative affairs; he went. I went, and Will Ball went, who was a Senate Armed Services Committee staffer. And John Tower. And we got down to Corpus, and this particular weekend the Navy swore in John Tower as a chief, to an E-7, and he was initiated at either Kingsville or Beeville, I forget which on that Saturday. We went down on Friday night. And he did some touring of the two fields and then was initiated into the chiefs, by the chiefs in their wardroom. And then on Saturday afternoon we had a Blue Angels show at Navy Corpus.

I'll always remember-John Tower's new wife was Lila, or very close to that-and she was sitting next to Senator Tower and I was sitting directly behind him so I could listen and take notes if I had to. And she leaned over one time during the Blue Angels' performance, and she said to Senator Tower, "John, why aren't they based here?" And I thought I'd die. Saying, oh don't start that issue, don't start that issue, trying to pull the Blue Angels out of Pensacola and change their home port to Corpus Christi. That's just a fight you don't want. Well, he just dropped it. He never mentioned it or anything else like that. But I couldn't wait to turn around and tell Kinnear: You know what I just heard?

Again, as I mentioned, you hear things like this and people say things, but that's as far as it went. It was a great trip. Came on back home.

**WINKLER: Okay. So discuss the order-writing with your detailer to move on from OLA.**

**BRONSON:** I was scheduled to leave. My relief was on board, Bob Hofford, coming out of the A-7 community, another Navy captain. He had had attaché duty in either Pakistan or Toronto. And I didn't have any orders. All of a sudden-I'd been selected for captain, and the Navy had to fill the last slot, I guess, over at National War College. I had gone to the junior course up in Newport years before, in 1971-72. And so there it was. Okay. This is, like, say, a Tuesday or Wednesday. Ted, you're going to National on Monday. Again, I was living here in Arlington, Virginia, so I didn't have a wife to pack up or kids in school or a house to move or anything else like that.

Kilcline set up a promotion ceremony for me, and my boards were pinned on by two of the members of the House, both Democrats, one fairly liberal and one way over there, like Congresslady Patsy Schroeder. But she and I got along fine. I remember taking her on a congressional trip down to Pensacola. Took Jim Lloyd, who was a California congressman some different trips also, to California and other places.

But anyhow, on the Patsy Schroeder trip with her husband, Jim, who was a Navy lieutenant before he got out to go do other lawyer things, and their two kids. Now, they flew down commercial. Her husband and two kids flew down commercial. And so did she, as a matter of fact. I picked them up at the Pensacola airport in a rental car. The two kids and her husband were in the back. She was riding in the front seat with me. And on the radio--she was mainly going down to get checked out in the T-34C. The Navy was coming out with that new version of the T-34. She had been a private pilot from her days as a teenager. Her father was an FBO operator someplace out in the Midwest.

Anyhow, on the radio we hear the nine o'clock announcement or whatever about: Well, this year the hurricanes are going to have two sets of names. There's going to be the standard gal name, and there's also going to be guy names. And her two children, Scott and Jamie, I believe, like I say, ten and twelve. And she says, "Oh, terrific. Now, besides hurricanes we can have hisicanes." And her son, Scott-I thought I would crash-leaned over from the backseat and says: "Come on, Mom, get off it." Well, for those who know the political persuasions of Pat Schroeder and things like that, to have Scott do it like that was just priceless. That's not a story I ever wrote up for Reader's Digest or anything else like that, but it's just one of those things that's very natural. And again, the competence of the people in the car and the family, it plays well at night when you go to sleep with your head on the pillow.

**WINKLER:** I imagine you, driving the car, nearly drove off the side. Trying to keep a straight face must have been pretty interesting.

**BRONSON:** That's right. And also like not running to tell somebody the story. So it goes like that.

I started at National War College, and it was a great year. The class was a super class. We called it the "illustrious class of 1980," which started August of '79, and got out of there. Had different speakers. I guess, sure, the highlight speaker was Henry Kissinger, just, when he was able to talk in a non-attribution-type class. And Elliot

Richardson, and a few things like that And I guess Paul Volcker was there. And it was very, very telling for Paul Volcker to say, you know, he really had his heartburn and heartfelt for the hostages that were picked up and ensconced in Iran. But, he said, "You know, that is the only thing that took me off the front page of the paper every day." Because back in those days, before that happened, those 444 days for the hostages in Iran, he and the inflation and the different numbers were on the front page every day, higher and higher and higher. He was an impressive man standing there at six-six or whatever it is, smoking his cigar. He said, "I know it's against regulations, but I've got all the money."

Classmates, you get to meet just terrific folks who are going to end up being the leaders of our military and civilian world. Because, you know, a quarter of the class are civilians, from the Hill and the different agencies in town. A couple of our classmates made four stars. Tom Moorman ended up vice-chief of the Air Force. Jack Sheehan ended up the first Marine as CinCLant, and for his four stars. And we had other threes and things. And all the way through.

I think, again, the highlight, one of the highlights, your class discussions all the way through become terrific. You get to learn insight on the other services. You still carry your proclivities with you, you can't get rid of it. But they divide the classes up. There's 225 people in it, and I think the number's still the same today. And about fifteen trips around the world for the folks.

Anyhow, I was on the trip that got the honors, no question about it, the highlight trip, to Israel, Jordan, and Egypt. The significance there is, we had an hour and a half with Menachem Begin in the cabinet room. Doors are closed. Questions are wide open. Any questions. No preconceived questions. The American ambassador was there.

Then over to Jordan and Hussein. Same program for two days. Then into Egypt. We were scheduled to meet up with Sadat, and it got cancelled. And then it got rescheduled for the next day. And then it was rescheduled for the next day. And then it was cancelled completely because we were leaving. But then all of a sudden it was back on. And come to this, get in the bus and get down to one of the small palaces along the Nile. And here he walks in. And there's no question. I've been in the Roosevelt Room in the White House with Truly when he got the announcement with the President and the Vice President, and one other time. There's no question that when Sadat walks up to you and looks at you, you're looking at a prestigious personage. I mean, he just is. So he shakes hands with each of us and has our pictures taken. We go in and we sit down. And again, the American ambassador was there. No pre-order of the questions or anything else.

Because one of the things they recognize, that in this group of twelve, or fifteen or whatever, they know there's going to be one-, two-, and three-, four-stars coming along later on, later on. And they want to, you know, make sure that their word gets out.

Anyhow, President Anwar Sadat says, "I apologize very much for jerking you around for the past two days on your schedule, but I just put the shah in the hospital."

Oh-oh. It's like: Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore. This was clear out of the blue. He had flown to Panama, picked up the shah in Panama, come back in, landed in Cairo, put the shah into the hospital there. And he said, "So I hope you'll accept my apology for jerking you around the past couple of days." Well, naturally, yes. But it's things like that that just become an indelible mark. It just doesn't go away. Besides being Sadat. I mean, the way he is. His stature, his demeanor, just impressive all the way through.

And the other interesting thing about--over at National War College that year we had an underground newspaper, our class. It came out about four times. It was a little bit irreverent. Not disrespectful, but a little bit irreverent. I'm just saying a lot of people got picked on. It was fun I still have copies around in one of these boxes here someplace.

**WINKLER: With your journalism background., were you one of the editors?**

**BRONSON:** No. No, no. As a matter of fact, I was not in that loop. That loop was actually three Air Force guys and one Marine. It was really clever. It was cleverly done. As I say, it was not disrespectful, but it did pick on you a little bit. Especially some of the people who said: "I won't read his bio, you have it in front of you." And then proceeded on an introduction to read the bio right straight through after they said they wouldn't do it. We decided to wait for everybody to do that and guess what? When they did they got written up.

And then one other faculty member-we kept a contest going about measuring how high up his trousers were, higher and higher. They ended up about four inches above the top of his heel, his shoes. Like terrible. Anything else, he kind of had long hair, so didn't carry too much weight.

**WINKLER: From there you go to....**

**BRONSON:** From there, again, I didn't have orders. Just like out of Newport I didn't have orders until the last week out of OLA, didn't orders till the last week. Got orders to Op-094 to be executive assistant to Vice Admiral Yogi Kaufman, famous submariner in the Navy for a couple of reasons. Let's do the submarine story first.

When he was CO-of the *Scorpion*, his XO was Carl Trost, later to be CNO. At the same time, if you saw "The Hunt for Red October," the knuckle maneuver in "The Hunt for Red October" was perfected by Yogi Kaufman. He decided that he thought he could do it. He went to his Navy superiors, Rickover, what have you, and said this is what I think I can do. Got permission at the highest levels of the government and the White House, to go ahead and let a Soviet submarine get on his tail out at sea, as a commander of this submarine, and then go ahead and do his knuckle maneuver to get back on the tail of the Soviet submarine.

Was successful. He made his report. And I was told also, as the submarine was entering back into home port at Norfolk, President Kennedy awarded Yogi Kaufman his first Legion of Merit. Although the citation was classified.

But that's Yogi Kaufman, a very physical-type individual. They used to say he

could do one-finger-you've heard people do one-arm pushups-he could do one-finger pushups, sort of. He was that strong and that much of a health, bona fide health guy. Anyhow, he had a certain way about him.

He also was-when I was in OLA I heard about him a little bit-he was the only Naval officer who had the automatic free ticket to go up on Capitol Hill to see anybody anytime.

Just somehow or other that's how he built his reputation and the way the program went. And it's for a couple reasons. One was for the, besides the nuclear subs and the nuclear weapons, it was for the communications system. The survivability and all the connectivity and the overlapping ways of being able to get the messages to the submarines. And always controversial, such as something called the-I don't know what the later—the ELF extremely low frequency program, the two facilities up in Michigan. He was instrumental in that. Beginning of our satellites, our fleet systems, and what have you.

Anyhow, he picked me to come and be his EA, knowing that from June he would be leaving in August and that Nagler, Vice Admiral, at that time Rear Admiral, Nagler, would be coming in to be the director of command and control, Op-094, who was previously deputy there before he went to sea as CruDesGru Two. The significance of Nagler is two things. One, he's the first black-shoe that our system let take a battle group, carrier battle group, to the Mediterranean as battle group commander. And that was a long time ago, and he was the first black-shoe that did it. He was a real warrior, real fighter. So Yogi knew he was coming.

He also knew that he had no Hill experience. Since Kaufman did everything on the Hill-so Yogi went and got me, or selected me or whatever, to be protection for Nagler coming to be director of Op-094. Because I, today, still don't know a bit involved and all that communications lingo and hookups and switches and what have you. I have no comprehension of it. I never tried to learn, either, because it turned out my job was to be a little bit different.

So three things with Nagler, very quickly. One is, some friends of mine who were black-shoe ship drivers, commanders and captains, said, well, those two ain't going to ever work together, Nagler and Bronson. Sure enough. they were pretty much right. Probably about the first, after the first month he had the deputy talk to me about how I have to change a little bit, and I can't keep saying "no" to the admiral. Well, somehow or another, when it's wrong it's wrong, so that's why I said you can't do that. It doesn't matter what the issue is. So the way I was told the story, subsequent, is that he called the Bureau and said, well, you've got to move Bronson. And the Bureau said, fine, give him an unsat fitness report. He said, oh, I can't do that; he's good.

So somehow or another, I don't know who changed. I know that he would swear he didn't change. I know-I'll sit here today, he died a few years ago-that I didn't change. But somehow or another we clicked. And for whatever reason we just steam-rolled through OpNav.



There's a couple stories involved. One, I never wore the stars, that you hear people talking about when they work for flag officers and things like that. I just barreled through on my own simple basket-weaving style. But there was one time late in the game, after two years or so, I don't know, two and a half years, he said, "Get in here." He says, "You've got to get another job." I said, yes sir, and walked out the door. "No, where are you going?"

I said, "Hey, you know I told you a long time ago I work twenty-four hours a day. And my duration, my contract is twenty-fours, that's all." No, he said, you've got to get... I said, "Why?" He said, "They're saying you're worse than I am." Because he had a reputation around those three-stars about being real tough. Now, he always got his way, too. But, "They're saying you're worse than I am." Well, I guess that was a compliment.

Anyhow, to jump ahead, way far ahead, when he retired from the Navy he went with Harris Corporation for ten years here in town. And near the end of his retirement time with Harris, or halfway through, whatever it is, they had a big program for their peoples that are their top executives. And so I get the phone call, "Would you be the alternate administrator of my estate?" Executor of my estate. So I guess that one first month was a little rough, but then somehow or another it all worked out together again.

And I'll say, so I don't forget it later, a couple years after Naval Space Command had been formed and I was out of the Navy and Nagler was out of the Navy, and Truly was maybe, I don't know, it doesn't matter, because we'll get into this, he said, "You know, I never thought you could put it together that summer," in '83. He said, "I stayed out of your way. I only did what you asked me to do." He said, "I never thought you could do it." And that's probably the biggest compliment I got in forming the Naval Space Command, as you'll see later on from some of the paperwork.

In 094 there's a couple of items. We got him ready, got him started to be a great witness on the Hill. We did it a couple of ways. I got one of my friends in OLA, McCleary, Commander McCleary, submariner, come down, and we murder-boarded him as if we were two members on the Hill. Vice Admiral Nagler had eight two-stars working for him directly. And they would come in the chairs behind us to be able to support questions. And McCleary and myself really, really laid into him, wire-brushed him. And that's what happens over on the Hill. Break out the book from last year. "Well, Admiral, last year you said, when I asked you, you said: "Now, why haven't you done that?"

And I remember a couple, it doesn't matter who it was, because half of his two-stars made three stars, and Bill Smith made four stars. Nyquist made three. Ramsay made three. "They can't ask you that." And Nagler was smart enough to say: "Yes they can; they can ask that question on the Hill that way." So it's not Commander McCleary picking on me like this, it's practicing. Anyhow he got to be a good witness, to be able to go through things on down the line. And when we went to the Hill I'm sitting behind him and keep handing him pieces of paper when he needs, on which direction to go. I remember one time Sam Stratton is saying, "Hey, Admiral, why don't you let him sit at the table with you?" I just shook my head no, and things like that.

We had a couple big issues come up. One was the ELF thing, that we finally got through and held onto to be able to have secure communications with the submarine to get

the emergency action message.

And also the E-6. That was contentious. Very contentious, within the Navy, first, because it's money that's not going to go to the tactical side of the program, or tactical side of ships. It's going to be replacing the EC-130. And again it turns out, you know, you have the tremendous fight between Lockheed and Boeing, and Boeing making a great deal by saying, hey, take the last twenty 707s coming off the line and we'll make you a fabulous price. Anyhow, anyhow, anyhow, they finally put the package together. It goes right up to Hayward to sign off on the package and take it down to the joint staff to approve or disapprove. Anyhow, it was signed. I hand-carried it down. And so that put it into the budget.

But since I indicated there was a little problem in the Navy, there was also a little problem in the Air Force. because this was going to be superior to their Looking Glass aircraft. And it was like, whoa, whoa, another threat to them. So you have the internal threat to the Navy, budget-wise, because, you know, EC-130s never bothered anybody, hardly. But the C-2s as E-6 is going to be. And the Air Force and a few things like that.

Then a big fight on the Hill came when, down there in the Georgia delegation, Lockheed, making -130 down in Georgia, at Marietta, says, hey, look what we can do on an improved version of the C-130. You don't need the E-6 with all that capability and all to drag the wire behind at ten thousand feet, X, Y, Z, and A, B, C. So then we had that fight.

It turns out, Nagler came up with the idea and got it approved by Op-05 and by NavAir, because of everything being so contentious and my previous background in OLA, that I would do the point papers and I would be the single point going over to the Hill back and forth until such time as, just open up and let it be wide open. Because of the fight, fight, fight. And we could not have anybody getting cross-threaded between one side and the other, had to know what was being said by whoever it was, because it was going to be wild all the way through.

To make a long story short, that worked out very well. However, a lot of people didn't like it. I mean, the people in OLA didn't care for it. The people in Op-05 sure didn't care about it, figuring, what was I doing over there? Because I wasn't, you know, on their side. And the people in NavAir over there in program management-Dick Seymour was NavAir then. Dick Seymour was just a super guy. And he was a lieutenant commander or commander on one of my combat cruises, so I've know him a long time. And he understood. He said yeah, fine. Sure, I came back and I made a little point paper just for the three of them when it was all over, every day. And after a while I turned my briefing book over, since there was only one page on each of the issues of the book, so that everybody got the same story.

To just ahead, there was a final final vote one time in the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee. I forget who the member was. But it was right down to, well, Ted, you say all this, but will the CNO sign off? I said, "Yes." And he said, well, how do you know that? And I pulled out just an index card with the CNO's name on it and a phone number, straight into the office. I said, "Call him." Because I had previously gone to Nagler and said, hey, you've got to walk around there knowing-you've got to have Watkins tell me that he really wants it. Because if I get in a box I'm going to use him. And that's exactly what happened. I gave it to him and the guy looked at me and said: I don't believe it. And he did call him the next morning. And Watkins: Yeah, I support it; I know the paperwork on that

and, yeah, I support it. And so from there on that was it. So we had those issues come along.

And then, of course, the big issue in Op-094 was Naval Space Command. I guess we can get started there. Anything else I'll fill in the blanks when I get it later.

**WINKLER: Okay, the reason why I'm supposed to interview you is the Naval Space Command-three interviews later.**

**BRONSON:** Well, it's one of those things. A few times in the past number of years people have said: You've got to be careful what you ask Ted, because it may take a long time for him to answer your question. But, you know, I've been there, I've played, I'm enthused about it and I like it and, you know, I just think that different people should know the whole story.

**WINKLER: Good.**

**BRONSON:** Naval Space Command. John Lehman and Admiral Watkins, CNO, went to the Hill for the posture hearings in March of 1983, and as they came back from the individual, one of the House Appropriations Committee Defense Subcommittee, John Lehman called Watkins and said, hey, let's make a Navy Space Command. Ah. That was all. Watkins says: "Fine." Watkins calls Admiral Nagler on the hot line and says, come on up to the office. Nagler went up to the office. He comes back three minutes later and tells me, sitting at a desk outside the door, "Get in here and close the door." Put his elbows on the table, put his head in there, and just banged away, banged away. "They're going to do it. They're going to..." I said, what? Mumble, mumble, mumble, whatever. Finally, he said, "They're going to make a Navy Space Command And nobody knows anything about it. And there's no briefing book, there's no POA&M, there's no nothing." I said, so?" Well, anyhow, that was the genesis of Naval Space Command. Lehman and Watkins saying: "Let's make one."

Later on, in March, there was briefing papers put together by Op-943, who worked for Vice Admiral Nagler. Bill Ramsay, at that time two stars, ran 943. And just had a very brief review. You know, why does the Navy need a Naval Space Command? And in the beginning we still called it "Navy Space Command," until we realized we wanted a Naval Space Command to have the Marines fully involved with it as part of the Secretary of the Navy is the Secretary of the Marine Corps also, X, Y, Z.

And so the Navy was scattered around on the different space items. They were the major player in the tactical use of space assets. Eighty-five percent went to the Navy. Sea control was dependent upon. It's no longer just a little, space, it's going to be a major player. And so if it's going to be a major player you make something that's all together. So after this little review came to conclusions that, yeah, we are a major player in tactical space assets, we're not perceived as a player in space, we need a clear statement of the Navy's role in space. And we don't have to do anything today, the way we're organized, unless the Navy intends to play a more active role.

So since the decision was already made to play a more active role, then what do you do for recommendations? Well, you make a Naval Space Command. What assets do you have? Well, you take away the TRANSIT system from SSPO, or the nuclear submariners, and that was a bear. And you take some of the environmental systems away from Op-095. So you take the TRANSIT system, the GEOSAT system, and they

just absolutely went buggy. And then you make a Navy Space Command to manage all these systems.

But one of the words we started to use in the very beginning is: Make it operations of existing and future systems, operational execution of the systems, operational, operational. No building. No designing of space assets. To be operating. And let somebody else even make the requirements, and let somebody else build them. But with this worldwide range, we need an operator to put it all together, to be able to deliver to that masthead of a ship at sea, or now today in the cockpits of the airplanes, what you have available to support them.

So in April we were all kind of mulling around and not knowing what we were doing. Truthfully, that's all you can say. Not knowing what we were doing. And trying to decide which way we're going to go. So we put another little paper together and said, well, okay, to get serious about this we've got to do something. So Admiral Nagler put out a memo, with the approval of the Vice Chief, that all the Op three-stars and two-stars had to provide one player to him to work for me. He was going to assign his executive assistant, Bronson, me, to head up the implementation team. And so I had no idea what that meant, had no idea.

Remember, it had already been decided that this would be an Echelon 2 command, reporting directly to the CNO without going through-it would seem like you'd want to do Qp-094 or something. No, no. Because you want it to be an operational command between the fleet and the CNO, we had it reporting directly to the CNO. And later on we have, again, from day one, Naval Space Command was authorized direct access to the CinCs, without going through the CNO. So it was some very major operational decisions were made. Again, we kept hemming and hawing and hanging our hat on that word "operational."

But, of interest, the year before, the Air Force just set up their Air Force Space Command. And there is a hundred-page booklet of how the Air Force went ahead, planned, to set up their-anyhow, I found it later on and said, well, I didn't even want to look inside the pages. Because we just went almost like the back of an envelope, and just, you know, just jump in and go.

So we started to get a little hit further into the Naval Space Command. I guess the next thing is, remember this is 1 June, the memo from Nagler out to everybody, approved by the Vice Chief, was 1 June, that said: Assign somebody to Bronson to start to put this thing together. Because remember, we had no idea where it was going to go. No money, no people. And when you say people, that includes billets and bodies. There's nothing. And there's nothing in writing. So started to do a few things. And some of the people who came and worked with me. And we also said we've got to get out of the Pentagon. So we got some space over in Rosslyn that Navy 09B owns for different teams and things like that. So we had actually office space for about fifty people, for two people.

So then all of a sudden, on Saturday, whatever the Saturday was, 15 June, I think, Secretary Lehman just happened to be the banquet speaker on Thursday night-not

Saturday-the banquet speaker on Tuesday night for the AFCEA annual convention in Washington, D.C. He was the principal speaker. So he put out the word on Friday afternoon, hey, let's announce the Naval Space Command for my speech.

Well, there's two things involved here. One, all the paperwork we had been doing so far on Naval Space Command was not classified. There was not one piece of classified paper. Also, there weren't very many pieces of paper. And so the next thing that happened is, well gee whiz, we've got to have a press release. And we've got to have some Q&As to go with the press release.

So I get called and they said, well, what do you have? And the first thing I said, oh-oh. Remember, there's still only a handful of people in the Navy that know there's going to be a Naval Space Command on 1 October. This is, you know, the fifteenth of June. So the first thing I said to myself is, well, not going to have Chinfo (Chief of Information) involved. So I came in, I always remember I get the call, I come in, and I sat down on that Saturday and I wrote out a series of Q&As for the Naval Space Command and gave them to Chinfo and said, here. And, yeah, they were chopped by Nagler and Ramsay on Monday, but basically gave them to Chinfo and said: Here, these are the ones; here's the start. I also wrote the press release, which I have here and I'll find in a minute. Anyhow, just because they had no idea where to start. So there's no sense taking the time to bring them up to speed when I could just do it as easy, as I was P-coded in PAO by the Navy. So I'm legitimate to that point.

Anyhow, we did the Q&As. I think there's an eight to a dozen of them. And the Q&As don't say very much about what we're going to do. "The relationship with the recently formed Air Force Space Command will be a functioning equivalent." And "The two will work closely together." And so we got started there.

Now the problem comes, Secretary Lehman-now wasn't going to do the speech. He's going down to Oceana and fly a week Reserve training in the A-6. So he gave the speech to Paisley. Well, Paisley was never a great speaker, point blank, apart from other things good, bad, or indifferent. And so Paisley is reading the speech. And there's, you know, 2300 people at the black-tie dinner over there at the hotel in Washington. And Paisley gets to the point of, "And we're announcing today the Naval Space Command." By that time it was the Naval Space Command. And everybody goes: Huh? They just gasped. Because it wasn't leaked. And the reason it wasn't leaked was there wasn't anything to leak. We were just putting it together, so there was no fight going on. There was no decision to be made, except put it together. And they all just went: What? I mean, it wasn't even in Aerospace Daily yet.

I guess the biggest thing was I decided-with a little bit of help from other peoples. I've got to be careful here when I say "I decided, I decided." It was always with help from other peoples, at least usually was. And, Ted, where are you going to put it? Gee whiz, I don't know. The first thing is, well, what about over in ONR? You've got a lot of smart space people across the river. Ah, they're not going to be in Washington, I can tell you that. Well, we have an outfit out in Denver. Hah! Ain't going there. It's too close to

Colorado Springs. You know, absorption. No way. Where are you going to go? I don't know.

Somebody said, well, do you know about Dahlgren? No, what's Dahlgren? So there's a little asking around. We found out that Dahlgren is, you know, thousands of acres down there on the other side of the river, with all kinds of background in space because of the Trident submarines. The sixteen-inch guns that shoot down the river. A beautiful campus, an old-fashioned green in the center.

So, the rumor starts to get out, and I'll always remember, the speech is going to be on Wednesday, and they called on Monday screaming and shouting about how come...Anyhow, so somebody said: Ted, you've got to get down there and brief them on Tuesday. So I went down and briefed them on Tuesday. And they were not happy campers. The biggest thing is, like, "How come you're coming here and you didn't get our permission?" They just didn't get the connection, when the Secretary of the Navy and the CNO say to put something together you don't work at the lowest levels up to get permission; you go where you need to go to get it done. Well, anyhow, "Are you going to bring in satellites?" No. A, B, C, X, Y, Z. Anyhow, it was good practice for later on out at Point Mugu and the SSPO facility out there.

Having said that, ah, they're coming in, things like that. So we took some space away from them in the beginning, from their museum, and converted that into our head shed. And some other little square footage. And then we eventually brought in trailers and things like that before we did the new building. And had a new building within a year and a half. But again, we did that design in-house. And of course, NavFac loved that because their engineers got a chance to design a building without going outside. And we got permission over on the Hill, even before we had 85 percent design completion, to go ahead and fund it. And A, B, C, X, Y, Z.

I don't know how much Dick Truly told you about that fight. We're up there with Admiral Ramsay, 943, the titular head of oversight of what we're doing in putting the program together. And the first time somebody had told him we were going to do a building of 14,000 square feet. The first time he gets briefed on it by me, with Dick Truly-this is later in the game, because Truly wasn't announced until August-the building's going to be 30,000 square feet. And Ramsay and I just went at it the whole time. And Dick Truly is sitting there just going, dah, like I can't believe the captain is talking to a two-star like that, saying back and forth. Anyhow. So the building came through with 30,000 feet.

By that time, guess who the first occupant of the building is down there, later on, Dick Macke, who I relieved in OLA. He relieved me in 094. He comes down then to be the first resident in the new building. And he comes up with the brilliant idea of calling the space operations center the Shepard-Glenn-both Alan Shepard and John Glenn came and sat on the platform the day they dedicated the building. Shepard was smart, making cracks, and Glenn didn't like it, and things like that. But that's the way they were from Mercury days, so what's new? Nothing's really new.

I guess the hardest thing in then putting together was getting the paperwork established for Naval Space Command. There's something in the Navy that's called a 5440. It's the basic piece of paper that authorizes the commands. Our 5440-what the piece of paper was, when you go to somebody, you would go and they would say, "Well, where's the paperwork?" There ain't none. "What do you mean?" No, there ain't none. "Well, you've got to have paperwork or else you can't do this." Well, you don't understand. Please. Anyhow, it went on, on and on and on.

But the 5440, signed by the Secretary, was interesting. We got the main version we had up to him in July, and didn't get the official signed copy back till 12 August. And to show you-this is a John Lehman thing that not a lot of people really grasped. Yes, a lot of the blue-suit admirals did not like him because of his hands-on policies and actions. But when this OpNav notice 5440, which establishes whatever you are, got to him, he added a few words into the very first paragraph of the purpose of the command. We said, originally, it was to establish the Naval Space Command at Dahlgren, assigned to the Chief of Naval Operations for command and support. That wasn't good enough for Secretary Lehman. He added in: To establish the Naval Space Command as a non-combatant command

What does that all mean? What difference? Anyhow, it turns out, as a non-combatant command assigned to the Chief of Naval Operations, JCS cannot come down and grab it, because it's not a war-fighting command. But that bit he put in there to keep it out of the JCS. And only he would know that all the way through the Navy system.

So anyhow, the establishment notice went out. And so at least from 12 August on, we had a piece of paper. Remember, we're still trying to put the flag up the flagpole on 1 October. And that means we've got to go get a forty-foot flagpole. And also it means we have to go get a flag made. So then it became, okay, let's go get a flag. Well, how do you get a flag made? Well, you ask somebody. Who? Well, there's an Army outfit down here in Cameron Station. Okay, I go down and see them. "Well, what do you want." I want a flag. "What do you want it to do?" I don't know. And so they came up with a couple ideas. I said, okay, well, here. And I told them.

I got exactly what I wanted. There are some other versions, too. But the version that ended up was, Naval Space Command is a banner wrapped around the globe. One side of the background was the light blue and the dark blue, representing day and night, twenty-four hours a day. We had the other lines on it representing the latitude and longitude line of the world. We had the lines tying it all together. And we had an anchor in the middle. The anchor was gold, and the ring, the anchor ring, was scarlet. You want to take a guess why?

**WINKLER: Marines?**

**BRONSON:** You got it. So we had the anchor gold, the anchor ring is scarlet, and of course the Naval Space Command was the black letters on a white blah blah blah. And this, again, was not-I almost want to say it was more luck. But it was luck. And it just was pretty terrific. Anyhow, we had a flag and we starting moving into Dahlgren. There were two CEBs, CNO Executive Board meetings, in that summer. I put them together and I did them both. The first one was-things were not going very well, and about the second of July I wrote a note to Nagler and said: What if they decided to have a Naval Space Command and

nobody came? From the first of June, now, to the first of July I was at a loss. First of all, I didn't know what I was doing. I was kind of at an impasse, knowing that whatever I didn't know what I was doing also wasn't getting done. I mean, not even getting done badly. It just wasn't getting done.

So, okay, we had a CEB, and it was pretty terrible. Because I had it written up before and things. But anyhow we survived pretty much and we got some help, I got some help from practicing profession people. And as we did that, we had a follow-up CEB. The significance there is unbelievably important to the organization of Naval Space Command.

In the 5 July briefing we got the words out for what kind of thing it's going to do. What it's going to do? Control. Where's it going to be established? At Dahlgren. The staffing plan, you know, from the tasking, the CNO brief on 16 May. The headquarters and who's going to be on board. How many by the first of October, first of December, first of April. Going to be a rear admiral flag, a captain for the deputy, other grades. A staffing plan of sixty to start with. And the whole breakout by-six divisions.

And when this plan started floating around at the end of June, the staffing plan, the management control division, called NI, was unique. I didn't know it was unique at the time, although I helped put it together, directed, whatever. We had both the person who owned the money in the command and the person who owned the people in the command as the head. And one of the most respected NCB budget analysts, budget programmer, in OpNav, Dottie Loveless, saw this plan, came to me, and said, "Who are you going to hire for that?" I don't know. "What's the job?" It's a fifteen. "Okay. I want it." I was smart enough to know that, when Dottie Loveless called to come see me, I asked somebody: Who's Dottie Loveless? They said, ooh, ooh, ooh. So I said: Fine.

Then people said: How'd you get her? I said, I don't know. And she commuted from Great Falls to Dahlgren every day for the first year or so. But she came because she saw that's the way to set up an organization, where the one person is in charge of both the people and the money. Because a lot of times it's a real division of labor, X, Y, Z. And then the others all filled in pretty much-intelligence, operations, facilities-and we even had our own master chief, a Seabee, to handle the facilities for the space-the plans division and the computer systems division.

But anyhow, it goes on and on. We talked about the compensation, where the people are going to come from. Going to put a SpinCom down there.

**WINKLER: What's a SpinCom?**

**BRONSON:** It's a special intelligence communications center. A shielded room. And, you know, again, we have permanent office space, a building for a schedule to design, and received authority, money. All those types of things.

But within this presentation, which later got written up and approved, was in FY83--remember, we were in FY83. We need, it turns out, \$354,000 for some salaries and rents and some communications and equipment, supplies. That becomes so important, because in the continuing resolution in September 1983-remember, we're planning on 1 October-ten days before, over in the House, the budget committee comes



out with the continuing resolution and says: And no new starts such as Naval Space Command Oh-oh. Wait a minute. Dah dah dah dah. So what are we going...? So everybody says, Ted, what are you going to do next week, ten days from now? Aaaaah.

Well. Remember, it said no funds in this continuing resolution, which is for FY84, may be used for new starts. Very quickly came up with the idea, wait a minute, we're not a new start. We spent FY83 money. And I remember Dick Macke, who was EA to Nagler at this time, called me on the phone and said: "What are you going to do? Raise your hand and swear you spent money?" Yep. They used that to go to the Hill to break the new start.

At the same time we used Dick Truly. After all, he's a Mississippi boy. His uncle went to law school with Senator Stennis. And so, let's go. So we divided up the peoples to go see, and make sure the blue-suiters to go see different peoples. And I went to see, I remember, Frank Gaffney, who was still with Jackson. And Truly to see Stennis. And we divided up a few others around, who to see and what to see. So, hey, to make sure. Then we had Herb Bateman, the congressman from the first district of Virginia down there, go into the record and have a little colloquy of: The purpose of the amendment is to allow the Chief of Naval Operations to construct a command and control center, A, B, C. Oh, that's '85. Anyhow, a little colloquy that this didn't really apply to Naval Space Command, so things set up like that. But little things like was the savior. Otherwise, you know, somebody who put that.

Again, one of the reasons, we found out later on, that that was put in the House continuing resolution, of no new starts especially the Naval Space Command, was, again, one more of those picks by people who didn't like John Lehman. And since they knew that Naval Space Command was a John Lehman item, anything new stick it to him. So that's the genesis of it. And, again, we were happy to go and overcome it. After all, it was my job to form the Naval Space Command, so we wanted to go.

During that summer there was another CEB. I guess this was one of the fun things of all time. But again, that CEB we had on the fourth of July, or 5 July, the memorandum came out after the thing said: O&M(N) funding for '83-\$361,000. That was the piece of paper magic that let us be into existence. And it had a few of the other decisions made by the CEB, Vice Chief and so on, signed by Ron Hayes, old friend. And identified the compensation, the civilian positions, Op-01, identified the military billets and the compensation. And of course, now we go around and had to scarf up sixty billets. I mean, come on. That's the most precious thing. You can have all the money in the world. You can build eighteen carriers if you want. But if you don't have the billets--anyhow.

So that was fun, going around the world and find out who had billets they hadn't filled in years and years and all of a sudden just scarfing them up. Nobody was told. Nobody was checked. Just take it away. That old magic-woop- gone. And there's different people in this town who have reputations of-how'd they do that? They just took it away from me. And it's like, nobody knows. Well, if somebody knows how to

read the paper they can go and find it and take it away from you. One of the things going on-you remember hearing the things about Admiral Watkins, the CNO, his cloud papers?

**WINKLER: No.**

**BRONSON:** Watkins had his briefing book, they had it by his telephone there at all time. They were called "cloud papers."

**WINKLER: Okay.**

**BRONSON:** Visualize standard point papers. Issue, Congressional Requirements, missions. But Watkins wanted them no more than two pages. One page was on one side, but the other side had more detail of each of the items on the right-hand side. And then you went and color-coded the left-hand side as a cloud and bring it back to support the right-hand side of the paper. Anyhow, this is the cloud paper we made up on 29 June for Watkins to use wherever he went. That's Admiral Watkins, this is a sample of one of his cloud papers.

**WINKLER: Okay.**

**BRONSON:** If you've never seen Admiral Watkins' cloud papers, now you have.

A lot of little things going on with time. But the next significant thing was the CEB in September, and then it was formalizing the follow-up from the one on 5 July that said, basically, you know, what if you had a Naval Space Command and nobody came? Well now it's like, okay, how is this really going to work? Who's coming on the invitation list? How many people are going to be there? It turns out 1 October is a Saturday. And we got Watkins to see he has to come down. Admiral Watkins told Nagler. Because I just am not too shy, is a fair way to say it. When Watkins says to Nagler, says, "Tell Ted I want it classy and not ostentatious." A terrific description. With that I knew what to do.

And if you've ever been to Tingey House for a ceremony, retirement or promotion, or visiting chief of staff or something of another navy. Anyhow, went and got the saluting battery from the Naval Academy. Got the Marine Corps platoon, Navy platoon, and Navy Band and all that, and just basically laid out the change of command.

Bateman had to go to a family wedding, he couldn't be the speaker. So we got the chairman of the House Defense Appropriations Committee to be the speaker. And that comes up as a follow-up from Truly being selected. I'll save that for the minute. So anyhow, the follow-up CEB in September has all the details.

Here we are. I guess there are two four-stars there, Ron Hayes and NavMat. A dozen three-stars. I don't know, I'm just plain old Ted. Remember, I'd known Ron Hayes since he was a lieutenant commander. Couldn't make lieutenant commander because he didn't have the time at sea, and he was LSO in 1961 for a few months in CAG when I'm still flying ADs off the carrier. We were on a combat cruise together when he was in A-6s. So

anyhow, I've known Ron Hayes a long time.

And when I finished my briefing, which was a good briefing, a good tight briefing-I got some help, I had some decent murder boards. Had the piece of paper, no garbage on it, just bullets, good. Ask a question, explain it. Didn't embellish very much. And Ron Hayes said-remember, I told you 1 October was a Saturday, and the whole thing was run the flag up the flagpole-and Ron Hayes said the magic words: "Okay, Ted, what are you going to do the next day?" And without being smart-ass I just came out with, "Oh, go to church." And I thought half the room would think he should have just shot me. Just occurred me, right then and there. But I didn't mean it to be wise. It was just, anyhow.

And then he said, "That's okay, people. I've known Ted a long time. Anyhow, but it just flowed out. Because I'm all attuned, you know, Saturday, Saturday, Saturday, you know. Get the chairs in there. What are you going to do if it rains? We have a hurricane, Dean, coming in. Ted, are you going to do inside or outside? Blah, blah, blah. Getting Truly a place in the BOQ. I'm just thinking, you know, Saturday, Saturday, Saturday. What are you going to do on Sunday? Go to church. So that's why it came out that way. Anyhow, I survived another comment that some people might think was wise, but it really wasn't. So the morning of the change of command we were under a heavy mist down at Dahlgren. The chairs were set out...

Okay. I mentioned that we had the hiccup about forming Naval Space Command, with the continuing resolution about no funds. We had another hiccup early in August, around the tenth of August or so. Admiral Nyquist, at that time Op-03, was over on the Hill and Senator Stevens, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, says: "What is the Navy making their own space command for? What are they going to do, put battleships in the sky?" Oh-oh. So John Nyquist-who used to be 942, a two-star working for Nagler, now he's a three-star, Op-03-comes back and writes a little memo. Watkins just very quickly made a nice two-page letter with all the reasons why, and sent it right back to "Dear Mr. Chairman." And said: We intend to establish-no question about I need your support-we intend to establish on 1 October...with resources realigned from current allocations. And additional information if you desire.

So anyhow it's 1 October, it's a Saturday. It's going to be in the morning, going to take about an hour to do the ceremony, at 10:30. We had Hurricane Dean approaching. I'm working all the weather stations. Pax River had dedicated aerologist working the issue for me, because I walked the parade grounds at six in the morning trying to decide whether to stay outside or come inside to a hangar-ugh-and change everything. I said *a* special prayer. The guys said, what's your decision? I said: Stay. Woo woo woo woo. I told Truly and TruJy just went along with it.

It stopped misting. We had the chairs dried off. And as the ceremony at 10:30 the skies broke wide open with sun, sun, sun, and Admiral Watkins was able to mention in his remarks about, "Isn't that an omen?" that we liked very much.

The ceremony went just as it should have gone. It was interesting that getting

ready for it, putting on our service dress, I was the emcee and TruJy was going to take over, naturally. We were in this little office here with Watkins and Nagler, and Nagler's saying to Watkins, okay. Watkins says: What do I do now? Nagler says, okay, you go out and you turn left. I said: No, you go out and you turn right. And then Nagler, okay, then you go around the flagpole. I said: Nope; you go in front of the flagpole. And about the second one like that Watkins just said, "Okay, Ted. Now what do I do?"

But again, and I say this not to support myself so much as it is that I've found that the higher you are in the responsibility lane, like the CNO and like Admiral Nagler, you want to do it right and you want to do it correctly. And if one person says, just because they're a three-star, senior to the captain, is wrong, the four-star doesn't want to go left when everybody else is standing there on the right for the sideboys. I mean, it's little things like that.

So again, it went over fine. Went out and had a great ceremony. And terrific picture of Truly in the paper the next morning. And Watkins had a great speech. He finished it up by saying, "We cannot afford to have a space power of another nation ever rob us of our goal of sea power. We are a seafaring nation. We are a space-faring nation. And this nation will maintain leadership in space. And now I'll read the OpNav notice establishing the command." The significance of that is: Assigned to the CNO for command and support; direct coordination and liaison between Commander Naval Space Command and fleet commanders-in-chief is authorized. Not a lot of Echelon 2 commands had that direct to the CinCs without going through somebody else.

Again, we kept hanging our hat on operational. We wanted somebody to operate the space systems for the fleet. Teach the fleet how to operate what's out there. Or even go teach them what's out there.

So had the establishment ceremony. It all came out fine. Truly went back to NASA to finish his debrief from flying Columbia in August for the first night takeoff and night landing. I always remember, John Young was up in one of the shuttles during the time of the ceremony, and I wanted to hook up a relay from John Young and I forget who was—he was the commander of the shuttle who was flying in the overhead pattern-----down into the ceremony. And people said, Ted, leave it alone, just leave it alone. So I do back off sometimes. And it went like that.

But remember when we talked about how long has the Navy been in space? One of the things we came up with in putting a little Navy program together was: Sailors have been concerned about space as long as we've had sailors out of sight of land. So it doesn't take a satellite to say, okay, now we're in space. We've been in space ever since. Because they did the sextants up to the stars and sun, what have you. We had the Naval Observatory a long time. So we've been around for a long time in the space business, but we've never had anybody coordinate the operations of all the different systems and what was available.

For the first year I basically kept Truly out of trouble with Washington. Kept forming the new people. He was running the mechanics of responsibilities of the different divisions. That wasn't my forte in any manner, shape, or form. Although, you know, we needed money

when we had to get things done.

Here's an interesting one. Just, again, part luck maybe, whatever, design, I don't know. We were setting up the office spaces in the beginning. First thing you say, oh, okay, only two typewriters. One for the main building and one for the back building, and that's only for things that still have to be typed because of a form or a piece of cardboard, or whatever. Everybody else, you have a computer. If you don't know how to do it you learn it. I never had a computer, and I never had a typewriter either, and I wrote memos that people couldn't read or understand. But again, we start right then and there.

The other thing is, safes. There kind of was almost a moratorium on safes all the time. These nice, you know, Diebold or whoever they're called. You can't ever buy them. Well, we've got to have safes. So I was moaning to somebody when I was over visiting in the House, visiting old friends over in the House Armed Services Committee in the House, whatever. Oh, go see so-and-so. It turns out there's a manager of the House of Representatives who had a basement full of safes. And he had a problem. They were all broken. The locks were all broken. But he couldn't buy locks. So we made a deal. He's got twenty safes. I take ten, and buy twenty locks, and give him ten locks. Our guys in logistics go get a truck, go pick up the ten safes, we order the twenty combination...hey, we've got ten safes for free. No paperwork transaction, and he gets ten safes that work. I mean, it's just a super example of the way things get done.

We went and designed the new building. Truly drew almost every nook and corner. They're now in a second building down there. As the command came along, I always remember, when Truly got called in, and you know his-he's told you the story about how he got called by Lehman to come up to be NASA after the Challenger blew up, to be the Code M. So the Navy didn't have anybody to put in there. Not that they were going to put me in there, but I was gone. In fact, I was already retired, after one year at Naval Space Command as deputy to kind of tie the strings together in a mechanical way, not in the operational way. Again, finished that one year at JCS and retired, medically.

I'm trying to think of-well, it will flash back to me.

Okay, while Truly was there he was always interested in bringing back crews from shuttle flights to debrief the people on the base in the theater. I remember Rick Hauck coming back, and I remember also bringing Mike Smith back up to do administrative structuring of the command. Mike Smith, later on the pilot of Challenger. And Rick Hauck, again, being picked by Truly at Code M to be commander of the return-to-flight mission.

I always remember one of the times when he called down to Houston to talk to one of the crews that just came back-it happened to be Judy Resnik, the gal out of Philadelphia who later died on Challenger. And this might be an example of why all these astronauts just stand in line to go up into space. Gets her on the phone and says, "Hi. Judy, it's Rick. Hey, did you have a good time?" They'd just been up there eleven days or something like that. And trained for a year and a half or two years or whatever. Whatever, it doesn't matter. All that almost crap that goes with all the detail, detail, detail, frustration. And when it's all over, hey, he says, did

you have a good time? That's why these people go. When it's all over they can say, yeah, I had a good time. I mean, I was able to be productive and I was able to follow through what we were trying to accomplish and things like that. But I always remember, "Did you have a good time?" Jeez. Pretty cool, pretty cool.

**WINKLER: Talk about, now, what was the selection process, and when were you introduced to Truly?**

**BRONSON:** Nagler calls Trost, who was over there at BuPers, and says, hey, who do we have to look at to bring back from...? The decision was made to bring back somebody from NASA. Who do we have? So they look over and they say, okay, you've got two people, really. You've got Truly, and you've got T.K.-well, you've got John Young and Bob Crippen. They were on the very first shuttle flight. Also, Young had been to the moon. And you had Truly and Mattingly. You had four candidates, all captains. As much as I was a little bit of friends with Young and Crippen, they were both past an age that you would come back to the Navy, if you thought you wanted to have this person who would come back to the Navy be successful in the Navy and be promotable to one stars, two stars, three stars. So then it came down to either T.K. or Truly. And based on the fitness reports and things like that, Truly was just more rounded, more fittable, I guess you might say.

So Nagler and Trost decided on Truly. They go to Watkins to say we decided on Truly, and Watkins says okay. Picks up the phone and calls down to Houston. Gets Cody on the phone at home. Truly's over at work, because there's a time difference. Says, "This is Admiral Watkins. Is Captain Truly there?" Cody says: No, he's not; he'll be home in about an hour. Said, "Okay, I'll call him back." So Truly comes in the door from work and Cody says: Do you know an Admiral Watkins? Truly stopped, yeah, he's the CNO. She said, ooh, he just called. Truly said, what for? She says, I don't know; he said here's the number, call him back. So he did.

Now, before that happened-Jim Beggs was the administrator of NASA, and Watkins did call NASA and say, hey, this is what we want to do. So that was taken care of ahead of time. So they said, hey, you want to come back? This was before his night flight. You want to come back? And, of course, I don't know. I mean, how do you ask some guy to do something that doesn't exist. Think of that.

It turns out they had a delay in the launch, had a week's delay of the shuttle launch. And so he and Cody came up for a couple days, a weekend, I guess. I met them over in Rosslyn and sat down with my cardboard attaché case filled with different pieces of paper, which was the walk-around Naval Space Command. Better than the back of an envelope, but not much more. And went through it on a briefing, and answered the questions. Drove down to Dahlgren and drove them around the base, and drove back home. Answered questions. They said thank you very much. And that was it. I met him at the hotel and said Hi, and here we are.

You'd need Cody to tell you sort of, maybe she did. She was in disbelief. In fact, both he and she had eighteen questions, or eighty-one questions, it doesn't matter. And I answered every one of them. It had to be something missing. There had to be some

catch. Because nobody could answer all these questions, and the answer fits. But it just was, just was. Lucked out again there.

I had a note from her just two weeks ago. We've stayed in touch, especially went out to visit. I believe you've been to the house too.

**WINKLER: Um-hmm.**

**BRONSON:** But it's just a super, super family.

**WINKLER: Now, from your standpoint, here's a guy coming in who hadn't really been in the Navy for, at that time, nearly two decades. So as far as knowing the institution, was there a learning curve there?**

**BRONSON:** There had to be a learning curve, but it wasn't visible. I mean, Truly's a test pilot. You pick up on things real quick, you know. And you know which way you're going to go. He could read a point paper. He could read an issue paper. Did not step out too much in front, because, you know, it was unknown territory. He was well covered. I'm not trying to say that I had him well covered between OpNav and things like that. But there were some issues, big, contentious issues, especially with SSPO, taking away the TRANSIT system, and other things we did. He started the professor's chair up at the Naval Academy when Larson was still a rear admiral.

No, no. He moved slowly. I won't say cautiously, but he had to have knowledge, and then he would move forward. He didn't hesitate, hold back so much, but he just didn't run fast. Again, didn't have to. Remember, we were only doing as much as we could. Get up in the morning and that was going to be another day to excel forward, because everything was brand new.

Can you imagine, on the first day of going to work on a new Second Echelon command, and you're the new N-21 or N-32, whatever, and you open up the file drawer and there's not one piece of paper in the file drawer? Not one piece of paper. I mean, we had a chance not to screw it up. And he was a super, super manager in that regard, of keeping it in perspective, keeping it in the pattern, keeping the excess out. But think about that. The file drawer's empty. And his over there is and hers over there is, also.

But we set it up. We had a flag aide. We had a flag secretary. And even had a PAO officer that we disguised. We did not-the normal commands have a PAO officer out there, budget activity nine I think it is, I think, way out there. And have twenty people, thirty people, fifty people in the command, and one PAO type way over there. It just says: Take me away, scarf me up, you know, when you went up by a billet. They don't need a PAO. Well, found out from somebody-I had a lot of help from civilian personnel people down at Dahlgren.

Tremendous help from those two guys down there. I mean, I didn't know what a PD was. Not only how to write them, how to approve them and understand them and make them fit into the structure, and all this stuff. Hey, wait a minute, turns out a protocol officer is in VA-2 or whatever, something like that, like in a big hunk of

people. So guess what? We have a protocol officer. And Gary Wagner was in a PA office down at Dahlgren, and we hired him in from the base newspaper at Dahlgren. He is still there at Naval Space Command today.

**WINKLER: Yeah, I've dealt with him.**

**BRONSON:** Oh, okay. But, again, he's a protocol officer, he's not a PAO. But yet he's the editor of the magazine, a super magazine, gets awards and things like that. Anyhow.

I mean all those little things just seemed to fit, luck out. I don't care what you want to call it. And I promise you it was fun doing it, putting it together. There's a cartoon of that around here someplace. Putting Naval Space Command together.

So there we are, we're getting ready for the night flight of Truly down at the Cape. It turns out from my previous time at OLA, OLA let me go escort Congressman Young, now the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, pick him up in a C-12. I got the C-12 at Jacksonville. Flew to Clearwater, picked him up from there, over to the Air Force Base to go to a reception before the night launch, the first night launch we had. Remember, NASA doesn't do night launches just to do night launches. You know, tell me what you're going to put up and where you're going to put it, and this guy Kepler many years ago, Kepler's Laws tell you then what time you launch. So that's why. They're putting up a satellite for the government of India over the Indian Ocean, and it just dictated a night launch and a night landing.

We're down there and so at that reception there's-and the CNO came down, Nagler came down, Macke came down, everybody's in their whites, I'm in my whites. And I forget who the congressman, chairman of the science committee was at the time down there. It wasn't Sensenbrenner. But anyhow, I guess I do forget things after twenty-four years. Anyhow. Twenty-one. He's standing there talking to Watkins. And he says-now this is the chairman of the House Science...owns all the space stuff, that's why he's there for the night launch. You know, again, tell me who's at the launching and I'll tell you who the crowd's going to be. You know? Anyhow. And he says: You know, CNO, when are you guys going to bring somebody back from the astronaut corps to the Navy?

And Watkins says, "Oh, after this flight we're bringing back Dick Truly to head up the Naval Space Command." Now, Truly had not been announced. And so all of a sudden, I'm standing there, I say: Oop, now remember, what he just told you has not been announced yet. So you asked a question, you got the CNO to answer you, but you've got to hold it. You can't tell anybody. Because NASA hasn't made the announcement, and we don't want to screw up the flight, you know, sitting out there on the pad. They got hit by, you know, got hit by lightning that night and everything else. So just remember. He said, oh, okay, fine, oh, that's great. Listen, how can I help? What more can I do? Ooh ooh ooh, stand by, we'll be right over, you know. But again, that's how natural it was. Or even unnatural. How come the Navy hasn't brought anybody back?

And as I look back on resumes and things, you know, I know Truly would have had Mike Smith come back to the Navy. And others would have come back and been



stars, you know? You don't have guys like this who have been, say, while I'm thinking about it, Naval Academy, Pax River, ops analysis, all these things, and be able to lead your program. So. T. K. Mattingly did come back after Truly and made flag, and wrote a great paper about how the Navy should use astronauts back in the Navy. In more ways than just designing or building of the space program.

And again, T.K. was talking a lot about it, how a commander of a shuttle flight manages his team, both of the crew and also what they're going to do, for two years getting ready to go. I mean, he's a real hands-on manager of people, programs, money, schedules, what have you. So just change the vehicle, you know, and they would be great managers.

I'm trying to think. We did a POW Day recognition down there. Got one of my friends, Jack Fellows, who had spent five years five months in Hanoi, to come. And that plaque is still down there in front of the building by the Christmas tree we put in. Got those words set up. Got in with the community to start and do things with the schools, have some participation. It's really increased a whole lot from those days. I don't know. Did all those things. I had a lot of fun. A few years ago. Neither one had gray hair.

I'm trying to think what else might take care of Truly. Many other things I can tell you about Dick Truly after he left. What he had to do at Code M and also as administrator, personnel folks involved. But again, people loved working for Dick Truly. I mentioned how Dottie Loveless came to be N1 and commuted from Great Falls, eventually built a house down there on the river. And then when Challenger explodes and Truly goes up to Code M to lead the return to flight he gets Dottie to come up there to be his budgeteer, and to promote her from a 15 to an SES. I remember he called me, hey, you've got to write a recommendation. So I wrote up the recommendation. And basically my words are not that sophisticated in a way. I remember saying, if you're going to be in Washington and somebody has to work for you to count your money, I want Dottie Loveless counting my money. And so she made the SES for him.

One of the other long-term stars with Dick Truly was John Schumacher. John Schumacher, interesting story there. He was the aide to Admiral Nagler and ONI-4 working with me, gets out of the Navy and goes to Columbia Law School. Well, before he left the Navy, overlapping aides, you know. Get one of them out of the office. The new boy's staying, so do something with him. So we sent him down to Dahlgren. He was a bachelor. Could commute a little bit. Put him in the front office with Truly. Started doing Truly's testimony for the Hill. And working directly, hands on, in a couple paperworks and programs. John was just talented all the way through. So, that was their first affiliation.

Next, John's in Reserves up in New York going to Columbia. He calls and says, hey, I'm up here in this Army outfit. Why can't I come down to Dahlgren and do something. Oh, Naval Space Command, I forget to mention. Almost the second-biggest thing we did, besides forming it, on 1 October 1984 we stood up the Naval Reserves Space Command, which is still cranking along, all the Reserves, 400 of them or something like that, I don't know. All-around teams and things like that. And that presentation, or package, into the OpNav BuPers

board was just one of those brutal sessions. I stood there and just laid out the eight billets that we wanted to start with. And Dave Griggs, an astronaut down at Houston, Navy captain Reserve, was a big help by sending somebody else up to help do some of the paperwork back and forth. And Dave Griggs later on came back to be a commander before he unfortunately killed himself in an airplane Saturday afternoon flying an experimental airplane, whatever it was, before going off on a back-to-the-flight again.

But one of the things was, in the first eight billets of the Naval Reserve Space Command was an O-6 legal officer. And of course, that didn't go over at all up at BuPers. It's like: You may get this but you're not going to get him. Well, so it took me forty-five minutes of the presentation of why. Because we have to have this thing to get these international space agreements understood to operate the system within the law of the international body, which means, I mean we were just making up....

**WINKLER: We're talking about the Reserve unit and the justification for a legal billet.**

**BRONSON:** And so the justification, yeah, was because-I have some memos here, you know, international JAG lawyers and A, B, C, so you've got to stay out of trouble so you don't go to jail. Also, though, we had an O-6 guy who lived in Annapolis, Jim Fancine, that we had lined up to come to the billet. So, no patriotism, but somebody qualified and ready to fill the billet if we get the billet. We had the body and now we had to get the billet. So we got the billet. And, as I say, they're still going strong, and very happy to know that that worked out and stayed in concrete.

**WINKLER: What exactly do the Reserve guys do? Or what was the vision?**

**BRONSON:** Backup support the active command Put teams together. And they drill in different sections of the country. I'm not familiar with all the details anymore of what they do, but *in* the beginning we also had teams that would go out to the fleet and brief, and they would be an active participant in the members of those teams going out there. And I just can't really-I'm not up to speed on all the other things of what they do.

Aw, it just frustrates me I can't find the piece of paper that I'm really looking for. I had it in my hand earlier. So we got the Reserves thing taken care of. Then I left the 1st of October, or the 2nd of October in '84, and came up to JCS and finished out here in JCS. The significance there in JCS is there was no U.S. Space Command. So I got on the JCS team of putting the CinCSpace together, it turned out, Colorado.

That was interesting because I was like a force of one, since the whole team was Air Force except for me. But we eventually stood it up there in November of '84. Went out there for the big day.

And ask me something else.

**WINKLER: Yeah, you mentioned the....**

**BRONSON:** Oh, oh, one other thing. One other thing, yes, yes, yes. In JCS they had a hearing as they were trying to set up the CinC out there. And this hearing was on 20 March of 1985. And here's the write-up, before the Senate Armed Services Committee. And here are the briefers, including Commodore Dick Truly, announcing these different things. And

then General Brandt, responding to Senator Warner, said about the unified space command for I October '85, and Gary Hart wanted to know how many, calling this Glenn chastised the uncoordinated activity leading to CinCSpace, the Air Force trying to gobble up, the Navy trying to carve out. And one another tying into wartime and the carrier task forces and a couple others. But anyhow, at the end of the hearing, and this is the point, Senator Warner said CinCSpace would be rotational or they would write it into the law. Pass the word. And General Brandt, Air Force, responded: Aye aye. He was trying to be smart to Warner from Warner's Navy background. And also Warner elicited responses, or assurances, that the CinC would be on a par with others, not slip into a posture of a systems command, procurement, development.

But the point I'm really trying to get to is, there was a write-up here from the press. That was an open hearing. Anyhow the CinCSpace was going to be rotational. Now, over the period of years the Navy's had the deputy out there as a three-stars. A couple past commanders of Naval Space Command. Including the smartest one of all, Dave Frost. In fact, I forget which CinCSpace was moving out there and really recommended all he could for Dave Frost to be the CinC out there, and it just never happened, because Air Force was powerful enough within DoD not to let it happen.

But the Navy is CinCSpace out there now. Finally. Timbo. So at Tailhook this weekend Timbo is the banquet speaker. So I will give him-I just happened to think. I'll make a copy of this, say, hey, by the way, do you know it's taken since March of 1985 to have rotational CinCSpace? Small world. I wondered where that piece of paper was.

Oh, yeah. Again, the *Navy Times* writer comes out and says: Navy, Air Force to alternate. Well, it never happened until this year when Timbo came in.

This town is a great place if you don't mind working. And you don't mind conniving. Not skullduggery, but it sure helps to get things done if you know to go this way compared to going that way.

**WINKLER: I was just noticing, you kept referring to T.K. That's Thomas**

**K. Mattingly?**

**BRONSON:** Yes. Thomas K. Mattingly.

**WINKLER: Mattingly, okay.**

**BRONSON:** Mattingly was the commander of STS-4. Then later on the first DoD flight, which was two years delayed. He also was Apollo 13, got pulled off because his son had measles and so they didn't want contamination. And to hear the people on Apollo 13 they will tell you that T.K.'s the one that brought them back to this world, to the earth, rather. And then he went on Apollo 16, and then Apollo 17 was the last one that went to the moon. T.K. and I have been friends since jg days in ADs. Because we were not above-average pilots we couldn't have jets. It seems like we both survived.

**WINKLER: Now, you talked about the fact this was the Naval Space Command. That meant the Marines. Could you talk about bringing the Marines into the fold.**

**BRONSON:** Yes. There's a memo here someplace. I was very insistent that we had the Marines. To be honest about it, hey, the Marines have more clout on the Hill in this town than any other organization. I know that. And I also don't mind working with a smart Marine. It can be a challenge. At the same time, we have to do it up front. And the way to do it up front, we got a memo signed, a memo of understanding, MOU, between the CNO, Watkins, and P.X. Kelley, Commandant of the Marine Corps, that said that the Marines would provide an O-6 deputy commander to Naval Space Command on a permanent hereafter basis. And would be promotable. That went on for the first two Marine O-6 commanders that came there. Rick Phillips was the first one to be promoted, and the second one was Drax Williams. After that none have been promoted.

It's interesting that just last month sat in the waiting room at Bethesda dental periodontal section, and there's General Kelley. And I said, General, I'm sure you don't remember me from the summer of 1983 when you signed that memo with Watkins about the Marine back to deputy for Naval Space Command, promotable. Well, the first two happened, but none since. How would you explain that today? He says-it just floored me, his answer-"We both left." The Naval Space Command in the beginning was run from the top. It was run by Lehman, Watkins, Nagler, it was run from the top. And they had the agreements with Carl Trost, as Op-090, and it just worked, from the top down. And P. X. Kelley just explained it. It's very simple. "We both left." Not that the other people don't have an interest in space, and not that they don't go on and on and on. But they don't have that much interest in it.

We started, in a way, with this Naval Space Command, back in '81, when we decided to have a Naval space symposium out in Monterey. And again, the thing is, you have to decide, when somebody gives you the question, are you serious? You want to be serious? You want to be serious? Then you have to show that you're serious. How are you going to be serious? Get the CNO to come out to Monterey, do it on a classified secret level, have it co-sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences Naval Studies Board. Keep it all above board, keep it all smooth. You know, three days. And at the same time, announce it out there that you're going to start the subspecialty programs in space operations, space engineering, at Monterey. You're going to start the subspecialty codes.

(Interruption)

But again, we did the first Navy space symposium out at Monterey in October of 1981. Had the CNO come out and make some important announcements, about why space is inextricably linked to the naval forces. We're not seeking to carve out a competitive role. There's a valid Navy interest in space, et cetera. We're in space and we intend to stay in space in a big way. And we'll provide the necessary resources. There it is, the resources. And meet the test of affordability and exploitability. We must be the threat, not the Russians.

At the same time we announced, as I mentioned, the space engineering, space operations master's programs at Monterey, the Navy subspecialty programs, and a tracking program for promotions for people who come into these space billets. And,

again, identifying space billets around the Navy. We did one two years after that also in the winter of '83, again at the classified level.

Some of the other things I have saved here. Oh, by the way, when I mentioned about the chairman of the House Science and Technology Committee who came down to the shuttle launch with Dick Truly in August of 1983 was Don Fuqua. He was the chairman. He also made the speech at the establishment of the Naval Space Command because the local congressman, Dave Bateman, was out of town for a family wedding.

And just looking at a transcript. Again, March of '84 over in the HAC, the House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee, witnesses John Lehman and CNO. Question from Mr. Young-not then chairman because Joseph Addabbo from New York was still the chairman-Young, who I had picked up in Clearwater and taken to the shuttle launch with Dick Truly: "Admiral, how is the Naval Space Command coming along?" Watkins: "Doing extremely well, as you know. Then-Captain Truly, one of our astronauts, was selected for commodore. He has brought together the 2,500 disparate people that we had in a variety of places throughout the Navy, and we feel very comfortable that we have done the right thing. And if and when there is a decision to have some other organizational arrangement we are ready to plug into that. We feel good about the command and we think we'll bring a new focus on shuttle packaging and all things the Navy is in on a big way." We have no objection to a unified command, dah dah dah dah at the right time and if we can do it in the right organizational way, etc. etc.

Again, Congressman Young, now the chairman: Would it be your opinion everything that you are doing now in the Navy Space Command will actually be complementary to a unified space command if and when the time is right for that? Watkins: "It's complementary today. We have a close interface with the Air Force. Our space surveillance network feeds the Air Force system. We have been at it for twenty years. I don't see any interference problems at that time that would interfere with the execution of our national strategy with the equipment we have in hand today. I think as the President's new space defense initiative comes along we may see a need to move into something like a unified command, but I'm not sure what they really need at this point.

As I was reading that something came to me. Has anybody ever talked to you folks about Admiral Watkins and SDI and President Reagan?

**WINKLER: No.**

**BRONSON:** I don't know who besides me---excuse me, there are lots of people besides me that know there's a background sequence of: Admiral Watkins was the one who explained and convinced President Reagan to accept and support the strategic defense initiative.

**WINKLER: Yeah, I don't know if somebody else has captured that, but that's....**

**BRONSON:** A little data point for you to go get. I know I had someplace around here some old paperwork on it. But as I say, he's the one who was able to explain to the President to have it understandable and say, yep, let's do that.

**WINKLER:** Okay.

**BRONSON:** Watkins has some very, very interesting speeches, both on nuclear warfare and one I just saw pass through here is a title someplace-a moral man. That's not a discussion for today, but he does have it. And his Hobson's choice of a so-called accountability speech. Yeah, I used to save a lot of his, because they were so good.

Anyhow, as we're trying to finish up Truly. Oh, back to John Schumacher coming back to Naval Space Command. As I looked here I just saw a big package of Truly's presentations over on the Hill. This one Friday John Schumacher calls me and says: I'm tired of drilling up here in New York. He said, why don't I come down to Dahlgren and get all the Reserves there because, he says, I've got a week off right now? From school or whatever it is. I said, go on down. So I said, "John, raise your hand" This is on the phone, telephone, a Friday. "Raise your hand." I just made this up. I swore him in for ten days active duty, Naval Space Command, Dahlgren, Virginia, report to Admiral Truly. Certainly there's no manner, way, shape, form that that's valid It doesn't matter. If anything ever happened it could have been valid.

So then Saturday morning at eight o'clock I called down to the Pentagon, because the Reserves all worked then, and I tried to talk to somebody about getting him orders. I ended up talking with the two-star admiral. I forget who it was at the time. And I told him what I had done and why. He said, "You did what?" And then unabashedly I said, yes, and I need a set of orders. He says, "You want me to do what, now?" I said, yes, a set of orders for ten days. Well, to make a long story short, you know, since Truly wanted him down there, and John was on his way down in a car, he said, "Okay." And he went and did it. Now subsequent in all these years John has had three command tours in Reserves. So anyhow he gets down there.

It turns out for whatever reason, summertime school time, Truly calls me and says, "Hey, Can you get John another week down here?" So I called back down there and talked to this same admiral again Are you back? So anyhow, and this time I could laugh a little bit, and I said: 'Hey, Truly called and A, B, C, John has another week off; can he stay?' He said: 'Okay. but don't call back any more.'

Then-let's follow up here. So then later on John graduates from Columbia Law School, passes the bar, and goes to work for a very, very prestigious law firm in New York, called Rogers and Wells. Rogers, the former- William Rogers-Secretary of State. Well, anyhow, Truly is now administrator of NASA. After the Code M George Bush promoted him up to administrator. So one Saturday morning, "Ted, what are you doing?" I don't know. "Well, come on over. Stop over for a cup of coffee

for you and me, here." Okay. So about ten-thirty Saturday morning I go over there to their house. And he said, "How can I get ahold of Schumacher?" I pulled out an index card and there was John's home number and work number. Once an EA, always an EA. He said, "Who does he work for?" I said- because we had talked about it, he wanted to bring him into NASA. "Who does he work for?" I said, Rogers and Wells. He said, "Oh, shit. I just sat next to Rogers last night at the Gridiron Dinner." One day earlier, you know. But anyhow that still made it very easy for Truly to call Rogers the next morning, after calling John and saying, you know, I want to bring you back in. So brought John back to NASA as adviser to the administrator. Couldn't make him counselor to the administrator because he hadn't been in the law practice that long. So I made him adviser to the administrator, you know, at the desk right outside Truly's front office, without being the chief of staff of NASA.

And then subsequent to that John came back as SES-6 and was deputy assistant Code X of external relations for NASA. Then head of, associate administrator for external relations with NASA, which is, you know, Russia, France, China, Japan, anybody that's got external space programs. And, interesting, everybody knew that John was, quote, Truly's guy. So when Truly gets fired, Goldin comes in and John is very, you know, straightforward in the way he works for you, and got along fabulously well with Goldin.

Then Sean O'Keefe comes in. Gets a great start with Sean O'Kccfe. Maybe because Truly talked to Sean O'Keefe, I don't know. But John gets pulled up to be chief of staff And John was chief of staff until one hour after Mike Griffin was confirmed by the Senate. and Mike Griffin comes into the office as the new administrator mid one hour and a half after being confirmed by the Senate he moves everybody out of the front office. Tells them. you know. go down the hall and get an office and do whatever you want to do. Or we'll transfer you to Cleveland if you like Cleveland. So John's last day at NASA after sixteen years was the 2nd of September. But that's the thing. That's the way the world turns. They're big boys. If you don't like this kind of stuff don't come inside the beltway, because that's the way it works.

Where are we? You know that Truly-did he tell you about he got the Presidential citizen's medal?

**WINKLER: Not really.**

**BRONSON:** Okay, you see all that paperwork. Okay. And that was interesting. He said: Okay, Ted, I got the medal; how do I get a ribbon? Duh. So. make a long story short. I got into Op-09B and got another ribbon and cut it off just to use it.

**WINKLER: Another medal?**

**BRONSON:** Another medal cut off the ribbon. things like that.

And when I mention Truly and Sean O’Keefe and Schumacher. I don’t know if Richard told you this or not, but when the Navy sent him up to Harvard for that six-week course or eight-week course, whatever it is. guess who also was up there with him as a classmate? A future Secretary of the Navy called Sean O’Keefe. Later on, after OMB, future administrator of NASA. And Truly did not have his picture hung in the hallway at NASA, his portrait from being administrator, until Sean O’Keefe was the administrator. Had a nice affair for that. But it’s nice because they both went to school together.

**WINKLER:** Well, that might be a good place to wrap up for today.

**BRONSON:** Okay.

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<sup>i</sup> This is incorrect. Louis Johnson was SECDEF under Truman. This would have been either Charles Wilson (served until 9 Oct 1957) or Neil McCoy who succeeded him.