

Interviewer: I'm Rick Burr I'm here today with R.Q. Old we're here at his house in Clarksville, Tennessee. Mr. Old go ahead and state your full name for me please.

Old: Yeh I'm officially Robert Q. Old born in Tulsa Oklahoma and my date of birth was May 14, 1925 that's out in Tulsa.

Interviewer: Excellent and basically we're here today doing an interview you're a WWII veteran, Korean veteran and Vietnam veteran.

Old: Excuse me Maggie would you sit down please (talking to his dog) we've got the baby here but she wants to get involved. I'm sorry start again on that question.

Interviewer: We're here talking about your experiences in WWI, Korea and Vietnam is that correct?

Old: Yes

Interviewer: Okay basically let's start you said you were born in Tulsa Oklahoma what did your parents do back during the great depression?

Old: My mother was a homemaker ladies didn't work hardly in those days and my father was a sports writer on the Tulsa daily world. He was born both of my parents were born in 1900 and he was a graduate of the University of Kansas and my mother was went to Kansas University for two years. And then seeking jobs and so forth he ended up in Tulsa so I was born in 25 the depression came in 29 and I've been asked this question a lot how did it affect me and personally I couldn't see any difference. There was always food on the table and I had a sister younger five years younger I don't recall ever having a new bicycle or skates or anything like that but I had a bicycle and I had skates. You know just bought used stuff that's the way it worked and we moved several times and in retrospect maybe that's because they ask you for the rent or something like that we never owned anything but I had a great childhood. And I loved grade school and high school and when I was 13 we moved an eventually ended up in California because of my fathers job he ended up on Hurts newspaper still a sports writer so that's how I got to L.A.

Interviewer: Excellent and what year did you enter the military? To begin with we are going to start at the beginning.

Old: I think I had some interesting experiences and I feel that most of us who were in WWII in some capacity had their whole lives affected as a result of that experience.

Interviewer: Absolutely

Old: It began for me on December 7, 1941 because as anchored as I was and as bad a student as I was I was in the 10th grade in Los Angeles High School.

Interviewer: Do you remember exactly where you were when that happened?

Old: Oh yes absolutely I remember where I was up in cabin Big Bear at some friends cabin with some half a dozen boys I can't remember who any of them were but never the less it came over the radio about 11 o'clock that Sunday that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And I didn't understand the ramifications I didn't even know where Pearl Harbor was but later on I found out what was happening. Then the whole Las Angeles seen began to change and it was very alarming for a 16 year old which I was at the time. Lots of changes for example black outs because we were convinced that we were going to be bombed so I became the neighborhoods were divided into zones and we had air raid wardens and messengers and I was a messenger on a bicycle. Totally exciting I'm in the middle of this thing and the whole city is blacked out even the automobiles had blue strips across their lights and just a tiny strip would show. And every once in a while some army Air Core aircraft flying out of Santa Anna Air Force Base would trigger the air defense people and you know barrages would go off and people were trigger happy and in hind sight there never was much of a threat what so ever. The most the Japanese were able to do was launch those balloons that basically affected the North West because of the jet stream we later came to know. So rationing

Interviewer: That was the beginning of it were you p to date on anything or know anything as to what was going on in Europe up till the bombing of Pearl Harbor?

Old: Nothing I paid no attention.

Interviewer: Really that's the general feeling.

Old: Maybe I knew something about it but it was a continent plus a whole ocean form Las Angeles to New York to London.

Interviewer: So it really hit home after that.

Old: A 16 year old it didn't phase but I did pay attention one day in Las Angeles high school 10th grade probably in early 42 maybe in late January or early February all of the Japanese American kids were gone. Zap they were just gone hardly any explanation it came kind of later they just didn't show up for school they just

Interviewer: And in California I'd say there was a pretty big population of Japanese Americans

Old: Oh a large population of Japanese Americans at any rate we found out later they were put in these what they call internment camps. It was one of very grouse violation of American rights and a violation of the constitution etcetera.

Interviewer: Absolutely

Old: But at the time anyone who didn't have round causation eyes we were suspicious. And I notice today there are incidents of anyone with Arabic decent got a dark beard dark eyes etcetera may be a terrorist. Something that we just have to be careful with but it's a concern but it's already shown people filing suits as a result of hey you shouldn't have kicked me off the airplane and so forth.

Interviewer: Yeh there's definitely not going to be any internment camps now a days.

Old: I'm sorry what.

Interviewer: There wouldn't be any internment camps now a days would there.

Old: No no it was a traumatic experience.

Interviewer: Absolutely

Old: Then one of the worst experiences I had before I went into the military as a 16, 17 year old it impacted severely on my social life because this is when a young man dad can I have the car. You can have a drivers license at 16 I had a drivers license then we were just on the low end of the totem pole so we had an A ration card that was four gallons a week that was all you got. If you had a B ration card you got more and if you had a C ration card you really got a lot of gas.

Interviewer: Right

Old: So we used to drive around at night and stop at every gas station that was close and take the hose out and drain hoses to try and get a little extra petro we knew all the tricks that you could use. But it was food rationing butter, meat you could only get so much a week etcetera etcetera with all of this coupon stuff. I remember some guys giving me extra A stamps you could buy them for a buck or something like that you know. That would be one stamp would be four gallons so if you bought it for a dollar gasoline was I don't 17, 18 cents a gallon something like that of course it was a black market and hell we were all hot to get gas.

Interviewer: Yeh

Old: And so the war began to or the war kept going we thought maybe it would end I think I won't be involved I won't be involved. Then I began to recognize about Germany I started paying attention and actually I remember having kind of dreams about Hitler and the mustache you know and the signal and it was kind of scary. For a 16, 17 year old I thought. And I said well I guess I'm going to get involved in this.

Interviewer: Was the draft was the draft started at this time?

Old: Oh the draft was going strong.

Interviewer: Was it?

Old: The draft was going strong and that's a good point because if you became 18 you automatically became the property of the draft board you no longer had the option to enlist. So that's why I managed to enlist in the Army Air Core it was called in those days.

Interviewer: There was no Air Force yet right?

Old: There was no Air Force. Later it became the Army Air Force but at that time it was a Core. And they were excepting high school graduates for pilot training. That's how I got into later on becoming a pilot I went in and signed up the day before my 18th birthday and luckily they found the paper work which had been in the mail for three months. Went to basic training at Sheppard's Field Wichita Falls, Texas Sheppard Field on the I think I went in the 1st of July 2nd of July. I never knew it could be so hot out there and all we I remember two Sargents no I remember one Sargent, Tech Sargent Mitchell and Corporal Holby. We called one of them God and we called the other one the right hand man. Because you lived and would die as a result of Sargent Mitchell he was fair but boy was he stern.

Interviewer: How long was basic do you remember?

Old: It was six weeks every day every day every day no fans no air conditioning or anything like that. And the water was terrible it had halizone tap was in it etcetera etcetera and I think I had two weeks to go and we were allowed a weekend off or something like that. And my grandfather came down from he was living in Borders Texas he came down to Wichita Falls and took me to a hotel we had dinner and ice water you know and a nice bed and that was a tremendous break. From there I went to Manhattan Kansas for college training detachment for three months and I hate to admit it but I was not the greatest student in the world I could care less about it and you know basically a C student. But that's three months there we went into how to read a map, how to read a compass, how to measure wind speeds various astrological things starts and where the North Star was and how to navigate and torrid following and all sorts of things that were very functional. Then we got in the basics of engines of aircraft engines this was a very very intense three months course. And it only came about as a result of the pilot pipe line was beginning to stop up. So they had to figure out well we can't keep marching these kids let's send them somewhere and get their smart level up a little bit. And I was very fortunate there I think that's probably what got me through.

Interviewer: Really

Old: Because of that group in my squadron out of 29 there were only 6 of us that ever got all the way through pilot training. And so I ended up going to Santa Ana California to what they called preflight. The earlier cadets avoided CTD they went directly from basic to preflight and I went directly from basic to CTD to preflight and that was more drilling more military stuff stand guard duty and all this kind of stuff. But again a lot of ground school prepping you on engines flying aerodynamics this sort of thing. And then I finally got into flight school where I went to Maryland Flight Academy at Oxnard California where we flew Stearmans. And the I'm trying to think I think we got 80 hours there something like that. And that's where I first got to solo it was a civilian contract school and the food was good we didn't have to do KP and when you first started you had to ware your goggles around your neck. Then after you soloed you got to ware your goggles up here and they tied a blue and yellow ribbon on the back of your helmet. Now that was that was to us like I suppose getting the Medal of Honor or something that was a great experience. And I think I was just average I thought I'm a hot pilot man I can do this stuff I didn't think I would ever be able to keep that airplane straight going down the runway. But all of a sudden it clicked and bang I got it one day I said I can do this I know I can do this and Mr. Ahvil I still remember Mr. John Ahvil he had 1500 hours which is like good grief 1500 hours my goodness how could anyone have that

much time. Mr. Ahvil was in his early 40s so he was exempt flight instructor and he told us he had four of us he said fellows I'm here to get you through you just pay attention we'll get you through. I'm not here to wash you out I'm here to get you through because if you don't make it I feel that it's my problem. Then from there to Taff California basic training you flew a bigger engine enclosed cockpit called a PT13. And then I was shipped to Martha Texas which is right down next to the Rio Grande well 70 miles from the Rio Grande but where we flew a twin engine airplane which meant that I was headed for bombers. I had asked I wanted to fly fighters and I had a great friend by the name of Gus Parolly. Gus was he was on the high end of the age group I was on the low end of the age group see I'm still 18 and 19 and Gus is 24 or 25. Gus wanted to fly bombers and we had been together in basic or primary and then basic and now we had to make a decision so at the last minute I said well I'll take bombers and Gus said well I'll take fighters. So he ended up at Pagus Texas and I ended up at Martha we saw each other one time. But they didn't need anymore fighter pilots the way it worked out and he went to bombers and I went to bombers and my first assignment out of Martha Texas I graduated there December 23, 1944. The war was still going on but it was winding down and it looked like the end of the war would just be in several months in Europe etcetera etcetera so I wined up going to Cayman Arizona for B17 copilot training then I went to a crew training center in Lincoln Nebraska where there was no flying you just sit around and wait play cards all day long. And one of the B17 crew stations was right here at Tennessee at Halls Tennessee. They had a big B17 operation that's just south of Dyersburg Tennessee okay in fact in my own private airplane I flew over Halls one day just to have a look at it. I never was assigned there but they decided they didn't need anymore B17 pilots and so they sent me to the Air Transport Command.

Interviewer: Is this after you trained with the B17s?

Old: That was after the training of the B17.

Interviewer: Okay so you're going to get some more experience now.

Old: I'm sorry.

Interviewer: Your going to get some more experience now go learn how to fly something else.

Old: So now my job was as a copilot being crewed up with an aircraft commander and we would go one place I remember in particular was Bradley Field Connecticut. Where those bomber crews had who had completed their missions in Europe and were rotating back to the states. They would fly that airplane back and land at Bradley Field Connecticut we then as part of the air transport command would pick up that aircraft then and take it to various places to junk yards actually. And I took a number of airplanes not me personally but I was part of the crew to Walneris Arkansas. And it just lined up hundreds and hundreds and hundreds later I was transferred I was doing all of this out of Ronelus Michigan. I was transferred to Dallas Texas to the 5th Air Group and my last flight it was a great flight it was a terrific flight here I am like 19 and I've got this brand new P38 had 25 hours on it. And they sent me down to San Antonio Texas to pick it up to take it to Kingman Arizona and I thought isn't this ironic and oh this is my last flight and I'm going back to the base that was my first assignment after I graduated so I felt like I had completed a big circle. And that was a twin engine aircraft the pilot sat in kind of a boom in the

middle and it had two long booms beside each engine and counter rotating props tricycle here the thing would do 500 miles an hour. And great flight it took four hours to get out there landed at Luke Air Base and then on to Kingman Arizona and got it in there about five in the evening something like that. Got on a bus went to Las Angeles got on an airplane went back to Dallas and the next thing I knew they said your gone so I was out.

Interviewer: Out of the military?

Old: In February of 46.

Interviewer: Okay

Old: February 46 got on the GI bill ended up graduating from George Pepperdine University in 1950 in the interim between 46 and 50 I got tangled up with the reserve the 452nd Bomb Wing in Long Beach California. And just after I got out of college wondering what I was going to do the Korean War decided that I got recalled the whole unit got recalled and I went to Korea.

Interviewer: Let me stop you for just a minute there at the end of the war before you had got out and stuff tell me a little bit about the feeling in general with the dropping of the bomb in Hiroshima.

Old: I think I've said before that I really I can't tolerate those that want to rewrite history and from today's perspective indicate that what was done then was wrong. It wasn't wrong it was absolutely totally correct and I think 99 percent of Americans were probably standing up and applauding. There's no question that it ended the war even doing it twice and negotiating etcetera etcetera and I don't think it's an understatement to say it may have cost us 100,000 people 100,000 of our troops.

Interviewer: At least.

Old: To storm the shore at Japan just think of the fantastic logistic tale it would have taken to provide continuous support for an operation like that. Just think of the thousands and thousands of ship that it would have taken the whole increase in expenditure etcetera etcetera. These I have no, what do I want to say, I don't feel sorry for the Japanese what so ever as far as I'm concerned they started the war. Today's a different environment totally different we knocked them down and we build them back up. But it was the decision right I applaud President Roosevelt and then President Truman who had to give the order. Yes do we want that to happen again we hope not we try to control all of these sort of thing. We were lucky during the cold war with the Soviet Union that this did not occur but that's it and to try to rewrite that to say that it was wrong the people who want to do that weren't there don't know etcetera etcetera. And I think I would get the vote of probably 99 percent of we WWII veterans about that.

Interviewer: Absolutely now when you got out of the military after the end of WWII and stuff were you glad to be out and moving on with your life with the war behind you and stuff or being a pilot and stuff?

Old: I tried to stay in.

Interviewer: Did you?

Old: My rank was Flight Officer in the Army Air Core which by then was the Army Air Force when then was the equivalent of a Warrant Officer in the Army. They offered they said you can't stay as that because we're getting ride of that rank but your not old enough we're not going to give you a commission you've got to be 21. They said we can make you a Master Sargent if you want to stay in. Will I get to fly? Well no because we don't fly Master Sargents well I said what am I going to do and all this stuff so I said no I will get out but I did try. And later on going to school when the Berlin air lift happened in 48, I applied they said well you don't have enough flight time I said okay. So it was always there then when I got this opportunity to get into the reserves that was marvelous I mean I would go to school in the morning and go fly in the afternoons almost every day if I could building up my time.

Interviewer: Right

Old: And then like I say our unit was combat ready we just come off we had just come off two weeks active duty training so we were prime and off we went. We were flying great equipment man the Douglas B26 which previously had been called the A26 because there actually was another B26 a Martin which is a five man crew. This B26 was I think there's a picture here behind me if you can see that, that was a three person airplane a pilot, a navigator and a gunner and that aircraft right there had fourteen 50 caliber weapons firing.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Old: It had 4200 rounds of ammunition to supply those guns and it had 600 rounds in the gunners compartment where he two 50 calibers and carried four or five hundred pound bombs. It carried 8 high velocity air rockets it carried or four napalm bombs there was a whole combination it had six hours of range and endurance. So we could hang in the target we were we busted railroads we busted roads we provided general intervention which means cutting off supplies from the enemy to the front lines. We flew close air support it was a great airplane a fantastic airplane even had some missions later on in Vietnam.

Interviewer: Did you serve in Korea with the reserves or were you brought back to active duty after the beginning of the Korean War?

Old: It was active it was a reserve unit.

Interviewer: Right

Old: It was the only total reserve unit combat ready that was moved in mass and yeh we were all reservist.

Interviewer: What unit was this?

Old: The 452nd bomb wing.

Interviewer: Okay

Old: Yeh at that time I said boy if I ever get in I don't want to get out and I my degree helped me so I put in my papers for regular commission which I got in I think about 1952. So that meant that I was going to stay in I was going to stay in so I said that's it we'll make a career. And After Korea they sent me back to I was assigned sent to Vance Air Force Base where I was a B25 instructor AT6 instructor and I thought I was probably the world's greatest pilot when I left Korea.

Interviewer: Right how many hours did you fly over there? How many flight hours did you log over in Korea? Do you remember?

Old: I don't know probably 60 times 4 I flew 64 missions and say 60 times 4, 240, 300 I don't know whatever about right at 300 somewhere anyway 64 missions. I thought I was really a great pilot until they put me in the right seat and said okay now you're going to be an instructor. Before they did that they sent me to pilot's instructors' school which makes some sort of sense that was a six week very intensive course on how you instruct in an aircraft.

Interviewer: Right

Old: And I realized that there was one heck of a lot of stuff that I didn't know about flying an airplane. I thought I did but I didn't and in hind sight I said you're pretty damn lucky you didn't kill yourself in Korea.

Interviewer: Did you have any close calls over there that you remember any experiences?

Old: I had one close call I thought it was the closest call I mean I got hit a lot of times. And one time we landed we were flying out of Japan much of the time so it was a long haul and one time I flew 180 miles back just on one engine we had lost an engine all the way back to Japan. Another time we got hit on the bomb run and it blew out the right tire we didn't know it at the time we had a big hole in the flaps and all that kind of stuff. It put a whole bunch of shrap metal through the gunners compartment and the gunner got his pencil holder knocked off he had a piece of shrap metal come through and knock off his goggles but he didn't get hurt his name was Armando Delaunay. And so we made an emergency landing at Tagoo and as soon as I touched down on the right rear the wheel flat etcetera and we managed you know to straighten it out. But I guess the closest thing that I thought was when I was a forward controller with the 187th regiment combat team. An Air Force Officer on the ground with the troops as direct air strikes when the Air Force comes over depended upon what the ground commander says we need you know lets hit this bunker shoot this do this do this.

Interviewer: Right.

Old: This is a very simplified version because its entirely different these days but you know there's the airplane guys there's the target put a marker on it let's see no move it a hundred yards one way etcetera. I mean your watching what's going on I was with the 1st battalion an in those days a battalion was about 750 men. So off we went we had taken off at Tagoo by the way and we had all of these airplanes with 750 guys in them and I'm in the command airplane with a battalion commander and a battalion exec and a Chaplin and a forward artillery observer and my radio guy and a whole bunch of

people other people who as far as I could see didn't really shoot guns you know were just the brains behind this operation. And out we went

Interviewer: Parachuted down?

Old: No I'm sorry I'm ahead of my story here because we were just about to get to the target and we lost an engine. And the pilot said hey we've got to turn around and go back and Colonel Harry Wilson Lieutenant Colonel was the Battalion Commander. And he said oh get up there in the cockpit and say you tell them that we're not turning back we're going on and I said sir that isn't going to work it just won't because he isn't holding altitude he's going to have to get back we're not that far out. He says okay you call and tell them to have an airplane running on the ground ready engines running and so forth we're going to transfer the pilot at that time said we may have to jump you guys into the training area drop zone I may be too heavy. And the Colonel says Colonel Wilson says get up there I said it's a Colonel flying the airplane it's a full Colonel and you're a Lieutenant Colonel and I'm only a First Lieutenant which I can show you where the cockpit it Colonel. Anyway so the guy I thought oh God here's a Colonel he's out getting his four hours of combat time or something like that and he's going to bust his ass getting this thing on the runway. He made a beautiful landing absolutely superb absolutely superb it couldn't have been better. Taxis around the other airplanes waiting everyone transfers and up we go and I thought well well well things ought to be pretty secure on the ground by the time we get there you know.

Interviewer: Right

Old: And here we come and we had the little ground model etcetera and I'm looking I'm the third one in the door and I could see stuff see the road and getting close and you know the green light comes on and down we go got on the ground. And I run for this green shoot that's got my radio in it and I thought this is pretty neat it's all quiet and everything nice calm day 50 degrees something like that. And I thought well where in the hell's everyone at there ought to be some other people around here there's only 21 of us where's the rest of the 750.

Interviewer: Right.

Old: It turns out they weren't there and everyone's twisting maps and saying well this is the right place we think it's the right place well maybe it isn't the right place. And all of a sudden we hear with ratt tatt tatt I thought that's good we've got the machine guns set up these guys are really good. Then I thought we didn't bring any machine guns there are no machine guns by this time the Colonel's yelling get down everybody get down you know and then there was some airplanes flying over the forward controller and I talked to them. And we identified where this target was and we got that all squared away and then Colonel Wilson said okay let's get to the high ground. So we were in a rice patty and everybody could shoot down off we go up the rice patty and we're talking to the guys and their dropping bombs on them and etcetera etcetera I thought this is working pretty good you know.

Interviewer: Have you realized where the other 750 guys are yet?

Old: No we don't know yet we don't know we finally got through the forward controller through me through Colonel Wilson they said and talked to other forward controllers up there and on the ground for us to realize that the deputy took over the flight when the lead broke out the deputy took over he missed his turn in he was going too fast at the drop zone he turned and went 10 miles north to where the 2nd and 3th battalions dropped he dropped the first battalion right across the rocks. The whole 90 degrees to the way they should have dropped it was just a big mess and people running up there saying where's Colonel Wilson well I just saw him I had to go you know in the heat of battle etcetera etcetera. We were supposed to jump in on a whole Chinese division and block them from going north fortunately they had gone north a little earlier otherwise it would have been a bad drill a bad drill. We didn't get out of there they sent a company down to get to us and we didn't get out of there until 6 o'clock that night something like that it was pretty exciting.

Interviewer: Was that your first combat experience on the ground?

Old: Yeh

Interviewer: I guess that would be pretty exciting.

Old: Anyway I thought you know the old saying in the Air Force is if you if you make it back you get to go to the club and you sleep between the sheets. The guys on the ground they've got a tough life no one ever sleeps. I mean if you do it's just kind of a little cat nap.

Interviewer: Yeh

Old: I mean I thought here it is its 10 o'clock it's time to go to bed and I'll take one of these parachutes wrap up in it and I'll sleep in silk sheets you know. They said what the hell are you doing you know get out of there we did have some mortar fire come in and I thought that was kind of spooky because there was nothing you could do about it except duck. Anyway we were up there for I think eight days or something like that and then they relieved us. It was pretty exciting so I was proud because at that time I was one of six blue suitors Air Force who had ever made a combat jump with an Army unit. So I am very proud of my jump wings with the Bronze Star. The Bronze Star signifies the combat jump.

Interviewer: That's awesome.

Old: And I feel like I've got some rapor the guys with the 187th. And by the way the 187th regimental combat time at that time was not part of the 101st that happened several years later.

Interviewer: So after Korea after Korea you're still active duty and where do you go from there after that wraps up?

Old: All the way to the training command three years there then transfer to Hill Air Force Base to a B57 unit which is basically a B27 with jet engines was called that twin engine bomber. Stayed there for about a year and then applied the USSF RAF exchange program United States Air Force Royal Air Force exchange program. So we ended up the family and I ended up in England the only America on a RAF station flying RAF aircraft flew for Canabaris for two years. Which is a great experience and fortunately I

had a couple of days overlap with the guy I was replacing and he said I bet you brought your all of your Air Force how to manuals and I said of course my instrument manual and this manual and that manual etcetera etcetera. And he said you put those in the waste basket these guys have been flying longer than we have they don't need any help if they want to know anything about how the USAF operates they'll ask you don't you tell them. Keep your mouth shut and learn their procedures he said it's different but there are a lot of ways to run a railroad and they do a good job and you'll get along fine but you're not over here to teach them USFA tactics. If they want to know they'll ask otherwise shut up. It worked very well had a great time had a great time. Came back from there and got back into the same outfit that I had left only by this time they had transferred to Bible Arkansas I got there on the tale end and shortly after I went to Langley Air Force Base.

Interviewer: What rank are you know.

Old: Oh I'm a Major. No I'm still just a Captain I'm still just a Captain.

Interviewer: Are you?

Old: Not still just a Captain, lieutenants are saying gee that guy says he's just a Captain you know. It was a good pilot rank and I then went to squadron officer's school. I applied for that I was a little bit old to go but I still went and it was a three month course all ground school learning about the Air Force learning command and staff and all this paper work etcetera etcetera it was a good course. I learned how to write I didn't know how to write I really didn't and I lucked out and there were 650 in the class and I was the number one distinguished graduate out of the class.

Interviewer: What year was that?

Old: 1958 first they wanted me on the faculty and I said well that will work. So I went down there for three years and I ended up as a section commander where you have 13 or 14 students and you run them through this three month course. Later on they want me down to be a platform lecturer so I taught courses your talking to 650 people it was nice it was good experience you know. Then I applied for the masters program and my assignment out of there was back up to Washington D.C. and I went to George Washington the George Washington University for a one year BMA course Air Force Officers only in this class there was 30 of us something like that. And it came time to go over and talk to personnel in the Pentagon and the guys are saying well I want to get out of this place and I said I don't want to get out of this place I bought a house I didn't rent I bought a house because I'm going to stay here. And I went to the Pentagon and ran into I can't think of the Colonels name right now but he had been my boss with the USA RAF exchange program and that was part of the embassy by the way. And he said what are you doing over here and I said I don't know I'm just wandering off looking for a job because I'll get out of this MBA program here in a month and he said huh. And I said what do you do and he said well this is legislative liaison and I said what is that I had no idea I really looking back of my history there were a lot of time I was pretty dumb about knowing I guess I was the MBA course taught me the difference between the White House and the Capital you know that sort of thing. But the next thing I know I get papers and said you've been assigned to legislative liaison your physical place of duty will be in the Senate Russell Office Building.

Interviewer: Who you liaison in between or for?

Old: What you do is what that is all about is you are representing the Secretary of the Air Force in relations with the Congress and particularly constituent matters. My son Johnny is being discriminated against he's not being given a fair job.

Interviewer: Right

Old: Anyway you're not giving the right job and the Secretary has to write a letter back but he has people to do that etcetera etcetera etcetera. And you're the guy maybe a constituent will be in the office and here's the Senator and he says I want the legislative liaison officer up here right now. And by the way I wasn't the boss I was working for a full Colonel I was a Major at this time.

Interviewer: Vietnam hasn't started yet right?

Old: Vietnam hasn't started yet Vietnam hasn't started yet and this was in 1961,62,63.

Interviewer: Okay

Old: Or 64 something like that. So he'd just chew your butt you know the Air Force fed you better than this you understand that Major? Yes sir I sure do etcetera etcetera etcetera. So what I want you to do is tell the Secretary yes sir right away it will be done. It turns out I think it was all just a big act in front of the constituent. And when they said the politicians are ruthless and what they will do essentially they had no scruples. And then it is if they wanted a guy transferred they would say I demand that you transfer this man I said I will pass that right on to the Secretary but I'll tell you what the Secretary would say Mr. Senator or Senator whatever your name is if you do this we're going to have to tell all of the other Senators that you got special treatment. Then our whole systems gonna fall apart because he's not going to give you treatment that he won't give the others. Oh so you just had to be and I learned an awful lot I was responsible for 60 of the Senators verses by boss at the top Chairman and the top 40 routine. But it was an eye opened and from there I got selected to go to the National War College which is the highest defense college in the country. Each of the services send 33 each year plus there are a few from state and a couple from CIA and a couple from I don't know other civilian government agencies. A lot of comradely a lot of mixing and people that you know would be working with higher up etcetera etcetera and its just you know is a way to get a star for sure. So I was one of ten lieutenant colonels and we had twenty three full colonels so we were the lieutenant colonels are considered the fast burners. It sounds like I'm patting myself on the back but I mean that was the way it was and after that I graduated in 67 and then volunteered to go to Vietnam. And I talked to personnel guys and I said I would like to go fly 105s finally get in a damn fighter and go shoot something. And he said well I can send you to 105 school if you want but that's gonna take 6 months and then this and that etcetera etcetera I could send you to the Philippines to the 8th and the 13th bomb squanders flying B57s I'll run you through hill you'll get a quick 6 hours I'll send you to Washington to the survival school and we need pilots so you really don't have much choice that's what I'm going to do. It doesn't make much sense to run you through a whole new airplane your all qualified your instructor qualified or you were etcetera etcetera so that's what we're going to do with ya. And so we put six weeks in Nam and six weeks back in the Philippines

training and then six weeks and six weeks and so I was there for three years I guess and flew 211 missions.

Interviewer: Oh wow.

Old: And basically night stuff as a matter of fact Chuck Ear was the 405th fighter wing commander that we were attached to. And it is an interesting story that everyone has the greatest respect for General Yeager. At that time he was a bird he was wing commander and he's going to come over and fly with us and I was a flight commander lieutenant colonel and we were all had too much rank but the Air Force was kind of going through this at this time.

Interviewer: Right

Old: So we had this big pow wow what are we going to do with Colonel Yeager? We didn't need to give him a check out what are we and we finally decided said general or colonel here's your airplane. If there's anything you care to know about bomb switches or anything like that we you know we've got one of our RPs here or your navigators all briefed on that etcetera etcetera. Said I think we'll be able to manage it off he went had a great mission came back said well I've got a better respect for this airplane now you know he's basically a fighter jock and all that kind of stuff but it was interesting.

Interviewer: The technologies changed quite a bit from when you first entered the military till now huh?

Old: Oh yeh, so I got promoted to full bird and they said you can't stay in Nam anymore we're sending you back I became the deputy chief of staff for plans and programs for 13th Air Force. And one of the one of the things about that was had a big relationship with Vietnam and on the draw down. And 13th Air Force was assigned by PACF headquarters Pacific Air Force headquarters to draw up the initial withdrawal plans for Vietnam. Okay I thought why would they give that to 13th Air Force when 7th Air Force in Saigon's got the operational control but the issue was had all of these airplanes Tyeland so you just take care of Tyiland. So I ended up being the number one guy to go to PACF headquarters and I worked there for a week put together a plan you think oh boy. Well I mean I don't know a hell of a lot about it I mean I'd flown B57s but I didn't know what the fighter guys were doing I'd been paying attention. And I knew they had these they put together these task force alphas that consisted of so many fighters so many wild weasels the flax suppressors electronic suppressors a wax aircraft big four engine jobbies that are doing radar coverage and providing radar assistance to our troops all the rescue helicopters. This whole big package was called an alpha package and when you went on a major raid that's what you wanted to send okay. And so I said well I guess I'll just put together as long as I have an alpha package with me, I think we had about ten of them, and drawn down the bases. I was scared to death I had to go up and brief a four star general Nizaro about this and of course I had briefed it to several generals before I got to Nizaro. And he sound he had an name and he looked like a mophia boss Show Nizaro he was a hell of a nice guy he really was and he didn't jump up and down one way or the other he said I think this is a good start. And that's all it was it was just a good start but I was king of pleased with that. And the vice commander of 7th Air Force I had briefed him on this he didn't think much about it I was sitting in my office in 13th headquarters Air Force a couple of weeks latter and Kenny Tallman who was a colonel who was in the National War College with me, a more senior colonel than I,

was running the colonel's assignment division and the director of personnel in the Pentagon. And he said well I've talked to General Dorati who later became the Commander of SAC and he said he thinks you'll fit in a slot in his plans office if you want to go there. And I said yeh absolutely that will be perfect come to the Pentagon and get into plans. He called me 10 days later and he said about that assignment he said Dixon called, that's the vice commander of 7th Air Force, Dickson calls and he's going to be the deputy chief of staff for personnel for the Air Force and he wants you to be his exec. I said well that's nice but I think I'll take plans and he said you don't have any choice it's just a courtesy I'm telling you so that's where I ended up you know sitting on the E ring and one of seven colonels I guess in the whole Air Force working for the deputy chiefs of staff of R&D, of Personnel, of Plans and Operations, of logistics etcetera etcetera so it was a pretty prestigious job. And then I had a physical and the guy said those ears are not working I said what do you mean and he said well I can't keep you on flight status and I said you know you guys suck. I just flew 211 missions in Nam and no one said a damn thing and I took a couple of physicals during this time etcetera etcetera.

Interviewer: Yeh

Old: And yeh I did have a helmet where I had volume control I said if you take me off of flying status that takes me out of the command element and going on up and I said I'm really disappointed. And I tried to talk to General Dickson and he said I can't beat the medic I can't beat them so I was gone I said well that's it I'm not going to stay he said well you'll still get your star. I said no that's

Interviewer: How many years was that of serving?

Old: Twenty three as an Officer. So that's when I ended up getting out and I've had second thoughts about that except for my ears and all of that sort of thing but that's the way it goes.

Interviewer: Yeh

Old: And because of my prior senator contacts I ended up getting a job with Senator Peter Dominic a republican from Colorado. And I had met Mr. Dominic through Barry Goldwater when I was Senate Liaison a Major.

Interviewer: You've got some pictures of him up here don't you?

Old: I have pictures of Dominic.

Interviewer: Why don't we go ahead and do that we'll take a look at some of them.

Old: Alright so this is Peter Dominic and I got to know him because when I was the major and legislative liaison they had a capital hill reserve squadron. It was called the 99th 9999 Capital Hill Reserve Squadron and Barry Goldwater right down here at that time who was an Air Force Reserve Major General was in charge. And Peter Dominic at that time was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Reserve and had flown in WWII so that's how I knew him. And I stopped by to see his office and talked to his personal secretary and what's going on with you etcetera etcetera and it seems that one of his special assistants had a heart attack and died and Maxine was her name and said well Peter's looking for someone why don't you he's

interested in talking to you. And it came to pass that he hired me and from there he was on the armed services committee as well as John Tower, Republican from Texas, as well as Barry Goldwater, republican from Arizona. And so they sent me down to the Armed Services Committee to be the staff man for these three guys plus a couple other republicans including Strong Thurman. And it just kind of went from there I ended up on committees assisting members and had the privilege of asking witnesses questions and in some cases generals that I used to work for I had them on the hot seat and including Colonel Dickson as a matter of fact. But it was all friendly and all business etcetera etcetera so I lasted there for about 9 years and then decided that maybe I could make a little bit more money and open my own private consulting outfit called R.Q. Old Associates a political and defensive service and I represented several of the big hitters General Electric and Sperry, Hughes.

Interviewer: Where was that at still in Washington?

Old: In Washington D.C. yeh. They say ever congressional staffer that leaves gets the last lobbyist job available in Washington I was a registered lobbyist for awhile. And here's a picture of Perry Washington two star and my boss Pitts this is Millard Simpson of Wyoming who was a good friend the Armed Services and this is me as a Major etcetera etcetera. And then as a staffer I got to do a lot of flying I got to fly the F15 you know with an instructor in the backseat but I got to fly. I had to ride in the backseat in the F14.

Interviewer: Over your career just estimate I don't know if you can even give me a for sure number, how many different types of aircraft did you

Old: Oh yeh I keep track of that I'm up to 34 now.

Interviewer: Thirty four different types of aircraft.

Old: Yeh

Interviewer: That's amazing.

Old: I got to fly come over here, showing the interviewer more photos, as long as we're

Interviewer: I was looking at your John McCain picture over there.

Old: Oh yeh we'll go back and talk that's kind of a historical picture and one of a kind. This is at Miraloma Flight Academy at Oxnard, California April 22, 1944 and I think that's me right there you know we just all look the same. But that was how many guys and this is pre this was back at Santa Ana Army Air Field where we did basic and drilling and that sort of stuff. And I'm up in there someplace we all look alike. But you can see here if you get a shot here this was my badge I still look like I was 14. And after leaving the Senate the Joint Chiefs of Staff were kind enough to send me an autographed picture "Thanks for your support of the armed service." Which I think was pretty neat and here's a picture of the squadron that I was the operations officer of for the Royal Air Force and here are the two squadron insignias. And let's see if we just change places here, when I flew the B1 and this is Charlie Bock he was the chief test pilot of the B1 and at this time this airplane was the only one flying and we had 4 billion

dollars in it and so it was it was something. It was very controversial but I actually went on a seven hour mission and got a take off and landing in the aircraft. And here is the B1, showing the interviewer as model of an airplane, and all of the guys signed it. Pretty historic and somewhere I've got a picture where they put my name on the side of damn thing. I've flown in the presidential airplane right here "This certifies that Colonel Old has flown in a Presidential Jet as an invited Guest of the President of the United States of America given this 4th day of May 1966 a the White House." National War College diploma and a few of the gongs there, showing the interviewer a shadow box filled with medals. Let's go back over here.

Interviewer: There is no way you could have fit all of that on your uniform.

Old: Extremely interesting picture because this is John McCain. John McCain's first assignment after being released as a prison of war for something like eight years was to be head of the Navy Senate liaison. The three liaison officers and offices in the senate were adjoining by this time I was out and met McCain knew who he was etcetera and so we had been on several trips with John Tower. Now this is a special trip that we went to China the first official delegation after normalization of relations between the United States and the Republic of China. And there were four Senators, interesting who they were Sam Nunn at that time was the ranking democrat on Senate Armed Services Committee. John Glenn who everyone knows the astronaut Gary Hart the former Presidential Candidate who would chase you in efforts a democrat staffer and McCain then was the military escort. And so we were in this office and John says Bob come over, which I was called in those days, and I said John who is this and he said this is Mihuru Genda who planned who planned the Pearl Harbor attack for Admiral Yamamoto and if you watch Torah Torah Torah you will hear the name Genda come up several times.

Interviewer: Okay Mr. Old I sincerely want to thank you for having me over today and letting me do this interview. I think it was amazing you've had a lustrous career it's really amazing and I thank you.

Old: You're more than welcome and I think that I don't know how many of us or we WWII guys are left but you know we're hanging in and we're proud of what we did. And I appreciate you coming out.

Thank you sir, appreciate it.

Old: Alright.