

Interviewee: Quinn, Thomas
Interviewer: Jack Sigler
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Sigler: Good afternoon, Mr. Quinn. You understand that this interview is being recorded?

Quinn: Yes, sir.

Sigler: Thank you. Since we're going to talk about your experiences in Vietnam, why don't we start just before you either joined the army or just before you went there, and just tell your story as it comes to you.

Quinn: Okay. I graduated high school in June of '67, and played around for a year and a half. Went up to Seattle, WA and worked for Boeing in late '67, came back home about March or April of '68, then went to work for the Oregon Electric Railroad. Worked for them. Then in December '68, until I joined the army. I joined up to go into the Warrant Officer Candidate (WOC) program.

Sigler: The which program?

Quinn: The Warrant Officer Candidate (WOC) – flight program. But there was information in my police files that bumped me out. Well, when I got back home, of course, they weren't supposed to be there because I was acquitted for that charge.

Sigler: But it takes forever to get those things cleaned up.

Quinn: I couldn't find out – the deputy sheriff, that night he had arrested a couple of his nephews and along with all the rest of us and since I was the only one being charged, He then was reprimanded and stuck on desk, and guess what he got to file? [laughs] He never did file my acquittal which bumped me out of the WOC program.—

Sigler: The acquittal _____[??].

Quinn: I joined the army on a buddy program with three other guys. All of them were in high school and they dropped out to joined the army, I just happened to meet them there at the reception station and we said, "Hell, why don't we just all go together?" So we swore in on the Buddy Plan 27th of December, 1968. At that point, they asked us if we wanted to go to Fort Lewis and sit there for the next two weeks to three weeks waiting for the holidays to get over with, and then we'd be assigned to a company. Or we could go ahead and take leave without pay

and go home until about the 6th of January 1969. Get basically a free leave, just didn't get paid. We thought that was a good deal for us. Went home and spent New Years and had a grand old time. Started basic training on the 6th of January 1969, graduated on the 9th of March of 1969. Was an assistant Squad Leader for about 4 1/2 weeks and the other 5 1/2 weeks as Squad Leader, as he had broken his leg during pugil training (fighting with sticks with big pads on the end). Received a promotion to Private E-2.—

Sigler: At Fort Lewis?

Quinn: Yes, sir. It was located up in north Fort Lewis. From there, when I joined, since I didn't get the WOC program, I asked for helicopter mechanic, or at that time it was just strict aviation mechanic or airplane mechanic.

Sigler: Go back just a little bit. The WOC program, that's a Warrant Officer Candidate program —

Quinn: Warrant officer Flight training.

Sigler: Okay. So you didn't make that, but you put in for aviation mechanic.

Quinn: Right. Then on the 10th of March 1969, we were shipped out — three of us shipped out to Fort Eustis. And of course, the youngest of the guys, he wanted to become a medic, so he went to Fort Sam Houston. Two of us got put in the same class number in Fort Eustis and the other one got a different class, right behind us.

Sigler: Was it Fort Eustis where they trained all the aviation mechanics in those days?

Quinn: The majority, yes. But then they also had Fort Rucker doing some.

Sigler: Okay, because I've always seen Fort Eustis as the Transportation Corps headquarters.

Quinn: Well, it was, and it still is. And we were part of the Transportation Corps back then. In 1983, when aviation became its own branch, then the school house up there turned into USAALS – United States Army Aviation and Logistical School or something. Big long one – they needed a big long one for themselves – aviation logistics. Our first five weeks were spent being trained as general aircraft mechanics.

Sigler: Right. Primary fixed wing.

Quinn: Well, no, it was just general. It didn't matter at that point whether you're going fixed wing or rotary wing. It was just a general aviation mechanic. And that's where they got into the real basics of everything – pneumatics, hydraulics, electrical, engine repair, rotor

systems. Sheet metal didn't come too hard to me, because I'd already spent time, like I said, up at Boeing before I came in, and that's basically what I did up there, sheet metal work.

Sigler: Where did you enlist from? You made it seem so easy to be to Boeing, and you went to Fort Lewis. I originally assumed it was Texas, but it wasn't, obviously.

Quinn: No. I was born and raised in Albany, Oregon.

Sigler: So that makes much more sense why you went to Boeing right off the bat, too. Go on. I'm sorry.

Quinn: That's okay. I had that in my mind and I skipped over it, too.

Sigler: So after the five weeks of basic aviation mechanics —

Quinn: Then we went into aircraft specific, and that was the UH-1 – Huey – or Iroquois, as they call it. We spent the next five more weeks on that. Of course, we were going to school about 10 hours a day. We got the swing shift on classes, so we would get up basically about 10 o'clock in the morning, do our exercises, do whatever we also needed to do, maybe get some detail, and then at 3 o'clock we went to formation and then marched off and went to school.

Sigler: Oh, the school was so busy they were running two sections?

Quinn: Um-hum. The school ran day and night with classes going on all the time. There might be 4 to 6 cycles of basic mechanic classes, and maybe 1 fixed wing cycle with 3 to 4 classes. In the UH-1 there was 4 cycles going with at least two to three classes each. The they were training AH-1 Cobra, Ch-47 Schnook. Fort Rucker was training mostly UH-1 and OH-58 Kiowa.

Sigler: I see. What time did the first one start?

Quinn: The first one started about 7 in the morning, and then ours started at 4:30, and they'd bus us back out to the hangars for classes then back for lunch or what would be our lunch, and then we got bused back. Then we got out of class at 2 o'clock. And didn't have any place else to go. But I think what that did, in looking back at the training I went through and what these young kids went through or go through now, I could have had a bachelor's degree out of Emery Riddle.

Sigler: From what you had done there.

Quinn: Yeah.

Sigler: So you think that the training then was a lot more intense and advanced than what they're giving them now.

Quinn: Yeah, because when they hit the basic part, that was the general of everything. And once you had that, it didn't really matter what aircraft you ever went to, it was still basically the same. We graduated – I want to say the second or third of June 1969. What we did is, since they had Memorial Day, we had our graduation after that. Oh, I know what we did. We finished the classes around the middle of May 1969. We went through two weeks of jungle training.

Sigler: Where did they send you for that?

Quinn: Right there.

Sigler: Right there at Eustis?

Quinn: Yes. They had a mock-up village, you know. We did both some ground stuff and flying. We'd go out and overfly the Chesapeake Bay or a river, and we had blank ammunition on board. So we'd catch a fisherman out there and say "sampan." Seen a couple guys take a dive [laughter]. You know, it was to get you in the mood going to Vietnam. But we went through that. And like I said, we left around the fourth or fifth of June 1969, somewhere in there. We had two weeks leave.

Sigler: Yeah. Now we're into '69, right?

Quinn: Oh, we're in '69, yeah. I reported back up to Fort Lewis for transportation to Vietnam on the 26th of June, and we shipped out a day later, and we landed in Vietnam on the 28th of June 1969.

Sigler: Were your orders to the 173rd?

Quinn: No, I just came in country unassigned. We came in and we went to Cam Ranh Bay. From there, that's where we received our assignments. Of course, when they said, "You're going to the 173rd Airborne," I said, "Airborne? I don't jump out of aircraft. I fly with them and fix them." And the guy looked at me and he says, "Ah, don't worry about it." I asked, "Well, do they have aircraft there?" He says, "Yeah, when you jump." And there was nothing I could say for them to change my assignment. So I figured I'd just have to wait until I got there and see what they were going to do. Two days later — well, unbeknownst to me – I met a guy on the plane and we drank a couple beers in Cam Ranh Bay – and of course, we ended up going to the same unit. And he is my brother-in-law now.

Sigler: Did he also serve in the Casper Platoon?

Quinn: Yeah.

Sigler: Can you give me his name?

Quinn: David C. Miller. We just got on the plane in Cam Ranh, and we flew to Phu Cat Air Force Base and the people from the 173d Brigade Rear picked us up and took us to Sha Rang Valley. There at Sha Rang Valley was the brigade's rear area, but it was also where they had the Jungle School. So we spent up until the 5th of July in Sha Rang and then we were sent to our unit. And all the time I'm still trying to find out what kind of aircraft they got. And the other thing that got me was that my brother-in-law, he was an aviation mechanic, too. So I said, "Gosh, what do you think they're going to do with us? Put us on an OP somewhere?" And I ain't jumping out of no damn airplane! [laughs] So we got there, and we went to Headquarters Company Brigade, and we're met there by our platoon sergeant and our platoon leader. Then that's when we found out that the brigade had an aviation platoon that was the only separate you could call "aviation unit" in the army at the time. Everything came from the General, and we executed it. If there was questions about what we should do, it was taken to the Brigade Aviation Officer which was a Major, and he would say, "Well, General, you can, but I wouldn't do it." The Generals that we had – the General when I first got there was General Barnes. I can't think of his first name. But he was a Brigadier. Then we had General Cunningham, and then General Oaks.

Sigler: So you were there through all three of them?

Quinn: Yeah. I spent two years there. I got there on the tail end of Barnes's thing. I think he switched on the end of March or so – I mean the end of August. And ironically, though, I got there on the 5th, and of course the first thing anybody did with us was show us around the LZ. Then take us down to the "vil" Bong Song village to show us around and said, "These places are off limits, there places you can go to —"

Sigler: How big was the town, the vil?

Quinn: Not big; the village was probably about – well, the New Zealanders had a hospital there, so it was probably around 2,000 people up to 5,000 – in the area. And I say mostly around – they conglomerated around the LZ, because anything outside a five-mile radius is basically a no-man's land. So very few villages, and if they did, they kept a real low profile, if they lived outside. So we reported there. Since my brother-in-law had some experience – he'd been in the army a couple of years by then – they made him a crew chief. Myself, they kept me on the ground and I was an intermediate mechanic, pulling intermediates on the aircraft, which is a service that is due every 25 hours on the aircraft.

Sigler: So you were not assigned to a specific aircraft at that point.

Quinn: Right. Oh, by the way, before I get off it, at the end of July, 31st of July 1969, they made the vil and every place else off limits.

Sigler: The whole place.

Quinn: Yeah, everything the whole country. August 15, 1969 they had Military Pay Certificate (MPC) changed over —

Sigler: MPC?

Quinn: Military pay certificates. We weren't allowed any greenbacks or coins or anything. If you got caught with that, you would get court martial.

Sigler: Okay. So all your local currency in effect was these military pay certificates.

Quinn: Yeah. The military printed them up, and at different intervals they changed them out. Of course then a lot of the brothel mamas would kill themselves or something because they would lose a lot of money because they'd been stashing it away. Like one guy, he had done business with this one mama-san and I guess he got somewhere around \$200,000, and before they put some rules in about how much MPC you could have and that, he got that sent home. Of course, he never gave her cut, either, and she shot herself.

Sigler: [theoretical discussion of how those transactions worked not transcribed]

Quinn: Well, they'd give you — I don't know how much. I didn't do those kind of transactions. And then the next time when it came — the next MPC change, they had all different kinds of rules. You could not have or trade in more than XX amount of MPC — well, we already knew you couldn't have any greenbacks sent in to you. You could have a money order or a check or something, and you could cash that at the PX, but no cash.

Sigler: If you cashed it at the PX, they'd give you the military pay certificates.

Quinn: Yes. And then you couldn't have more than \$3,000 of MPC on you. So that kind of put the wilt in there. And the closer it got to the time that they were going to do military pay change again, then they would — they'd change to how much you could have. So on the day of the currency change was \$1,000. That's all you could trade in.

Sigler: If you were using that in dealing with the locals, how were they supposed to get their money back?

Quinn: They could use that money downtown anything place they wanted to. They wanted the MPC more than they wanted their piasters.

Sigler: They could give them for piasters but they couldn't get dollars for them.

Quinn: Yes. In the economy at the time, military pay certificates bought more than what the piasters would. So that's why they always had a conglomerate of that. So then basically the army – not the army but the Department of Defense just came out with these rules and stuff, because it was giving us a bad face that hookers were out there killing themselves —

Sigler: Because they money they had wasn't worth any more.

Quinn: — wasn't worth anything, and they couldn't exchange it, and the ones that did exchange it, the guys would cheat them and some wouldn't give their money back. So it was a civil affairs matter. Also it kept the greenback out of the VC and North Vietnamese Hands. You have to realize that our currency was use everywhere and worth more than either South or North Vietnams. In one tunnel complex that was captured the unit got a little over a million dollars worth of greenbacks. I know they brought it back to S-2 who did the serial number and count, then burned it. But it was said that it probably was what was initially came over in the first couple of years. (This was added on to explain more of why we used MPC, you may take it out.)

Sigler: Okay. So they put the village off limits finally. That must not have pleased a lot of guys.

Quinn: Yeah. Well, when it went off limits at the end of July 1969, it never came back off limits. What happened with us – now, this is just the brigade. As a brigade, we could not go down to any downtown area. We were off limits to any village or any town in South Vietnam. I went to Tan Son Nhut Airbase in Saigon one time end of June 1971 – I had a buddy up there. In fact, the buddy, one of them, that I came in the service with, he had came home, went to Fort Carson — Pat Proudly [??] was his name — he went to Fort Carson, and they had him driving APCs up and down the hills out there. He did not like that, so he volunteered to come back to Vietnam. And he got stuck in a GS unit down there that was a depot GS unit —

Sigler: GS – General Service?

Quinn: Yeah. They either repaired the aircraft at some depot level or general support, and then they would bring new aircraft in and put them together and do their entire thing and send them out. I stayed with my buddy for a couple of days. Well, one afternoon I decided to see what Saigon was going to look like. So I went walking through the gate and this AP stopped me and asked me where I was going. I said, "I'm going to go downtown." He said, "Come with me." So I followed him, and he pointed up at the wall. And on the wall there was this placard that had all the unit patches. And these units were – Saigon was off limits to these units. Well, ours, the 173rd, headed the list. Everything in country was off limits to us. So I looked at this guy and I said, "Okay, I understand." He says, "Guy, I'm really, really sorry." He stuck his hand out to shake my hand, so I went ahead and shook his hand. He put a pocket knife in my hand. So I walked around the little hootch, took my patches off, came back around, and as I gave him his knife back, I gave him two 173rd patches. But if you looked at my shirt, you could

tell there had been 173rd patches there. So I got to go down around town and see the sights they had, you know, a couple of their famous hotel there, especially the one where Delta Force, you know, hung out at, some of those guys and things like that. It was kind of neat going down there. I went from one end of To Do Street to the other and back, and didn't even drink a beer; just was looking, window shopping. Didn't do anything and went back to the base and got my patches back.

Sigler: Well, you got to see a lot more than a lot of the guys in the 173rd did.

Quinn: Yeah, in some ways. Actually, why I ended up down there – that was in June of 1971, and I went on R and R to Hong Kong. So when I came back from R and R, that's when I found out my buddy, was there and I stayed there for a couple days.

Okay, then back to August, 1969. Staff Sergeant Robert Page [??], was our platoon sergeant, came up to me one day and he said, "Look, I want you to start working with this crew chief." And I swear, it's like a Spanish name, but I cannot remember. But I know there was an article sometime in the first part of '69 in the *Soldier's Magazine*, and this guy was depicted – well, I mean, it was this guy. He was a Spec 5. And it kind of _____ [??] because I read that *Soldier's Magazine* when I was in basic pulling duty, pulling CQ runner [??].

Sigler: So now you're working with him.

Quinn: Yeah. So he started training me to be a crew chief, and about a week and a half later, one evening after I got done pulling the daily and getting everything put away and ready for the next mission_ [??] squared away and put the aircraft to bed, I went back up to my hootch and about 20 minutes later he came in, threw the log book at me. He says, "It's your aircraft. You're on standby tonight, so you can't drink." That night we had a mission a turned out to be a hot LZ, I got my cherry busted that night. (Another words we took heavy ground fire me for the first time) It was somewhere around the 15th of August. We flew into a very hot LZ, and of course my side was facing toward where all the green tracers were coming from. And I could see the red ones from our guys going back.

Sigler: The Vietnamese used green tracers?

Quinn: Um-hum. And I wasn't scared; it was a show like. I mean, it was like seeing the Fourth of July and you're there. "God, look at this stuff!" Because it's not just ammunition going off; there's grenades going off, RPGs, all kinds of stuff; mortars. I'm just sitting in it just watching, until my pilot got my attention real quick and told me if I didn't know how to pull that trigger real quick, it wouldn't matter any more. I come hot on my M-60D like he wouldn't believe.

Sigler: Had you ever had any formal gunnery training in the – what was it, an M-60 [??]?

Quinn: Only when we went through jungle training. When we were flying with the M-60D and blank ammunition [??] and basic duties of crew chief during that time. But in actual firing, no. I could fire a .30 caliber machine gun, water cooled. I could fire a .90 recoilless that was mounted on jeeps, and that's pre-dating my dad. My dad was a National Guard commander. So there was a lot of things we got to do. And in fact, then in the '50s, the Guard had weekly meetings.

Sigler: Okay, so anyway, you're getting your first real dose of combat there.

Quinn: Yeah. Then just started crewing it, but I had a great time. Switched gunners several times. First one I had, I got rid of because the guns weren't taken care of very well. In fact, the guns were bad, the breech was way out of tolerance. So when you would fire, you'd get maybe about a 10-round burst and it would lock up. And you'd clear it, you'd get another 10-round burst maybe, clear it, then you'd get a couple rounds, and then all you could do is just sit there pulling the charging handle [??] back and pushing it forward. And the day that I really decided that was it was the one where we got fired at, too, because we were dropping off an insertion team. And my pilots were peeved! I mean, they were not very happy campers. And I don't blame them. I'd already talked to the Platoon Sergeant or our Gunner Section Sergeant, to Sergeant Hanks, who was the armor and was the head of all the all the gunners. He just kept saying, "Ah, it's you. You need more practice." I said, "Well, then, take me out, let me practice." "Oh, no, no, we don't waste ammunition," they said. Well, after this happened, we came in, and we were done for the day, and I was mad! And so I went down and grabbed a hold of this other gunner and asked him if he'd get his gun. His name was Doug Walton – 'Short round', we called him and told him I needed to use his guns and that I talked Mr. Morrison our Maintenance Officer into going out over the South China Sea. I'd already saw Mr. Morrison before I went down to see Shortround, and he was getting ready to do a test flight anyway. So that just worked out great. So we put Doug's weapons on, and we went out over the out over the South China Sea – and as Mr. Morrison doing the test flight, I burnt up two M-60 machine gun barrels.

Sigler: That's a lot of shooting.

Quinn: Yeah. Only time that that gun stopped chattering is when I had to replace the barrel and reload. So when I come back, I threw both those barrels on the desk to Sergeant Hanks and said, "I want a new gunner." Nobody could ever say again that it was me.

Sigler: What was the trouble? The gunner just wasn't maintaining the guns or wasn't taking the time to replace the bad breeches?

Quinn: Well, the thing is that after so many rounds going through the gun – you have to take measurements of the breech, because it will start warping and spreading out of tolerance. But you just can't go in and squeeze the thing back together, because it's not really going to go back. It might look like it did. But from what I found out, he was sticking it in a vise and

cranking the vise down. They can be brought back into tolerance with armor and the right equipment, jigs et cetera.

Sigler: Yeah, the metal fatigue would instantly cut in when you started firing again.

Quinn: Yeah, soon as it got hot, it would go right back. I can say one thing is, he could pull that lever back faster than I could and shove it forward. But his gun did the same thing. Got a new gunner and a brand new set of guns. John Oribello was my Gunner then, and we flew together up until – oh, about the 20th of October. We had accident and the aircraft was damaged real bad in fact it got sent back to the states for depot repair. The aircraft number was 66-17023.. It was a '66 model converted from a D model to an H model. It still had its FM antennas on the front and other things. But it was a good strong aircraft , but what cause the accident was, we were at the refuel pad and a Chinook hovered over the top of us while we were hovering. The pilots were notified every inch of the way that aircraft cleaned from short final till they were over the top of us. The aircraft sustained a hard landing as well as the tailboom being rippled all along the way on the bottom, the tops of the blades were rippled form one end to the other. Just forward of the tailboom around the transmission oilcooler was all buckled up and the skid were spread so far that even I could not crawl underneath the aircraft. I mean, you could just see it, it was just like a wave going down it or a hill. So they sent it back to States_down here to Corpus Christi. And they rebuilt it. By then, we got a new aircraft on – I think it was around Mid November. I take that back, it was before Thanksgiving, because I get stuck out on LZ Uplift for Thanksgiving dinner. We were flying one of the colonels around out there. So we had to spend the night there because it being a holiday and everything. But John had DEROS'd by then.

Sigler: What does that actually stand for?

Quinn: Date of Return from Overseas Service—

Sigler: Service —

Quinn: Yeah.

Sigler: Yeah, that's right. Okay. So he had left.

Quinn: Um-hum. Got my new bird. We picked it up in Nha Trang – Mr. Morrison, I and a long with couple other people flew up there and picked the bird up and flew it back. Good bird – aircraft 291 [??].

Sigler: And that was an H model also.

Quinn: Yes, that was a pure H model. That was a – I want to say that was a UH-1H 68'-16291 [??]. I tell you what, don't quote me, but I know it's on the internet there with – where they've got all the aircraft. And got this gunner – just came over from the artillery.

Sigler: Did they make him a crew chief?

Quinn: Not a crew chief, he was a gunner.

Sigler: Okay. You've been using crew chief, and I think you meant gunner a couple times back there. Because you were the crew chief.

Quinn: I was the crew chief. John O'Brien was the gunner. He was actually the second gunner. The other one I don't really care to mention his name. Then the next gunner I got was John Wilkofsky [??].

Sigler: The next gunner you got.

Quinn: Yeah. And Wilkofsky only stayed with me for about a month. I don't know why Hanks ever pulled him off, but Hanks pulled him off sometime right after the — oh, before Christmas, because again, I spent Christmas Eve at LZ Uplift. We had to go out to pick up all the Company Commanders — we were flying Command and Control for the Colonel because he had to go out —

Sigler: The colonel — one of the battalion commanders?

Quinn: Battalion Commanders. And we'd pick up their company commanders, bring them back for Christmas Eve and New Years Eve get together. Then at 11 o'clock, we would take them back out and drop them at their LZs or OPs, whatever. Then we would come back the Battalions LZ Uplift. And the reason why we were left out there where we normally wouldn't was in case something did happen, we could get cranked up and all the colonel had to do is just get out there and we'd go find out to what was going on and where it was going on in case one of the companies come under attack or whatever. Well, we went through that Those.

Sigler: About how far apart were the companies spread at that point?

Quinn: Oh, those companies just like ran next to each other. They had so much of the berm — so many hootches and it was just like a circle.

Mr. O'Connor was the AC. Had a couple different _____ [??] pilots, but _____ [??] —

Here I think we had a miss communication — know looking at it I think Mr. Sigler is talking about how far apart were they in the field and not the LZ which is the answer I gave.

Each Company was spread out pretty good they were not in one location one was to the NNE about 20K. Another could have been N about 40K.

Sigler: AC is aircraft commander?

Quinn: Yes, Aircraft Commander. The one pilot who is in charge of the aircraft no matter what the rank is, because of the experience level of the Pilot And on the Christmas Eve of '69, we asked him what we needed to bring —

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Sigler: Okay, you were going up for your Christmas in '69 and they promised you a bed with sheets.

Quinn: Mr. O'Connor, he's the one that had made the deal for all that stuff. And when we got up there, we thought we were going to eat in the colonel's mess with him or with the pilots. Well, that got side lined real quick. So Mr. O'Connor gave each of us \$10 to go over to the club and eat, we gave him his money back. We weren't going to take it. Said, "Hell, I got two cases of rations" – one case of C rations and one case of Long Range Patrol Rations (LRPRS)_____ [??] under my seat. So we never went anywhere on an empty stomach.

Sigler: Again, and this is for the girls who have to type this – LRPRS [??] – long range patrol rations.

Quinn: Right. They were freeze-dried rations. Most of them came from my hometown. Mountain House was the brand, but I used to work for the place before I went up to Boeing. Out of high school, right out of high school, I went to work for a couple months and I went to work for this place, and then one night I got hurt and I was laid in a freezer that was -30 [degrees] for an hour. And I wasn't dressed for it. I had what was required just to go in there, because all I had to do is go in there, fill a tray up full of meat, push it out. Well, I pulled off this one block of meat and the whole thing came down on me. And I was pinned so I couldn't even move; I couldn't push these blocks that were 40-pound. But yeah, I used to make the chili and the chicken ala king and beef stew.

Sigler: Actually, Mountain House is one of my favorite backpack meals. Back to our Vietnam interview, however —

Quinn: Yeah. We went to the club to see what they had going on there and really, they didn't have too much going on. The colonel kind of had it shut down early because of Christmas eve. So we went over to the mess hall and we were able to get in the mess hall and eat. Then we just went back to the aircraft and pulled some maintenance, did some cleaning up and stuff like that. And then pretty soon here come walking down the hill was Mr. O'Connor, waving his hand to crank up. It was about 11 o'clock; we were going to take Company Commander out to their locations. And no sooner had we go back on the ground at LZ Uplift just before 12 o'clock, because they were going to have a "mad minute" at 12. That's where the whole berm – if you got any artillery or whatever, everything's stuck outside the berm and you can cut loose for a mad minute. We couldn't, because we sat on the air pad too far in. But we got back in, had the mad minute. Mr. O'Connor said we're going to go find out where we're going to sleep for the

night. So he went. So about an hour later he came back and he said – with two cots in his hand – he said, “Well, guys, I am very sorry, but they reneged on everything.” At least for us, I mean. They treated the officers like they should. But he brought the cots down and he said, “Here, you guys take the cots. Me and the other pilot can sleep on the floor of the aircraft.” I said, “No, sir, that’s my bed.” I was at least smart enough to bring a poncho and a field jacket. So nothing really went on that night, and in the morning we got up, took off, went back to the LZ English. Got cleaned up, then Doug and I had another mission to fly that day. So we took off on that after looking the aircraft over and making sure the aircraft was good to go. Used to fly with Mr. O’Connor quite a bit that first six months. I don’t know why. I mean, everybody else usually didn’t get the same pilots, but I used to get Mr. O’Connor – I could get him for a whole week at a time.

Sigler: So you weren’t assigned to the same pilots routinely.

Quinn: Actually we weren’t, no. The only people that were assigned aircraft was the crew chief and the gunner. Now in case of a bug out, pilots had a certain aircraft that they had to go to. And of course, every couple weeks they needed to fly on that aircraft anyway, just so – because if we had to bug out, there was no pulling any preflight. After Christmas, then on the 29th of December, Mr. O’Connor flew us again. And he said, “Oh, I’m going to alert you now, we’re going to go spend Christmas at Uplift. And he said, “This time, by God, we’ll get everything we asked for. He ain’t going to do it a second time.” This time we’ll get — he was pretty well – how would you say it? We got put on the cots anyway. I guess it was about — we went out and got all of our stuff done, you know, got them out, did that mad minute for New Years and everything and came back in and went to sleep. And I guess it was probably around 4 o’clock – I woke up and looked out in front of me and there was three people out there, walking across the flight line. They were about 25-30 meters. And we were the only aircraft there. And the more I looked, the more they just didn’t seem that they belonged there. So finally I got up, I grabbed my thumper – M-79 – and I got over to the side of the revetment. And they were Vietnamese.

Sigler: Wow! Inside the perimeter.

Quinn: Inside the perimeter. So I got Doug up and I said, “We got three guys out there. Look at them.” And Doug says, “We got to knock them off.” And I said, “Not with two thumpers we aren’t. Not with .38s.” I said, “You got your -16?”

Sigler: The M-79 – what does —?

Quinn: It was a grenade launcher. It’s what a 203 is now if it was just by itself. But we kept our eye on them all the way. And they did, they just walked right straight through the wire; no gate, no nothing, just walked through the wire and left. It was like, “Hey, we do this stuff all the time.” Like I told Doug, we don’t want to fire up, because then people are going to start shooting every which way. And of course, that way we’re going to be shooting is we’re going to

be shooting towards the village – well, the hootches. And then on the other side of the hootches is the berm or the concertina [??] wire – perimeter, that’s what. And so we just kind of followed them and just watched them walk out.

Sigler: Somebody out there in the perimeter wasn’t doing his job.

Quinn: I don’t think anybody on the perimeter was even awake. But I wasn’t going to complain and I wasn’t going to do nothing. If these guys would have made a move toward the aircraft, we would have took care of them. Or if they were going to do something — you know, you could see their AK-47s, but they didn’t have any satchels or anything like that, so they couldn’t be zappers.

 Then – well, we flew all kinds of missions. We flew sniffer [??] missions. That’s where they have the little machine that goes – it’s put up through the nose of the aircraft, and what it does, flying over the ground – and we would fly anywhere from 500 to 1,000 feet. But it would pick up anything that wasn’t supposed to be there. In other words, body odor or whatever. And it was a kind of neat contraption. But then we also, we flew Agent Orange missions – _____ [??] spray missions.

Sigler: What, they’d rig canisters to the —?

Quinn: They had a 200-gallon tank that was an auxiliary fuel tank for a Huey, and it sat right in front of the transmission. So we’d take the seats out and we’d put this in and then two Captains– Chemical Officers – would sit in _____ [??] seats, and one was facing the pilots and the other one was facing outward, because he had the controls when you turn it on and turn it off. And of course the other pilot was giving directions to the pilots. And med-evac – you name it, we flew it. And at nights, hot LZ nights, all kinds — it was great, though. I really loved doing my job over there. Just getting it over quick.

Sigler: You must have if you’d gone back for two additional —

Quinn: Yes. Do I know if I killed somebody? No. I hope I did take some of them out that were firing at us, but did I see eyeball to eyeball? No. That’s only up to the Lord to tell me when I get there.

 Then the 2nd of June in 1970, me and Doug, we were flying – we had Mr. John Ackelson on board. He was the AC. Also Captain Dave Hunter, who was the Co-pilot.

Sigler: The pilot?

Quinn: Well, Co-pilot. We were — I can’t tell you the valley – if you flew out to the bridge on the Bong Song river and that, and then looked up to the – looking south up through the pass, Bong Song pass, the ridge line to the right, you go over that and down – there was another valley. And we were flying 3rd Bn Commander, and when we went and picked him up that morning, that’s where we went. And there were Ruff Puff, Nationalist Police and ARVNs on the

ground, and two majors that were with MACV.

Sigler: What was the first term you used?

Quinn: Ruff Puffs [??]. Regional Police. I think we had the 41st ARVN division in our area, but they had provided some people — now they had some choke [??] points — oh, I'd say about a couple miles on each route in and out of the village, except up towards these mountains. And we got out there about 8 o'clock in the morning. They had loud speakers telling the civilians to — all the civilians to move out and go to these checkpoints.

Sigler: Out of the village.

Quinn: Out of the village. And they said, "NVA, you guys stay right where you're at — we're coming." And it was supposed to be — and it was — a NVA stronghold.

Sigler: NVA meaning North Vietnamese Army.

Quinn: North Vietnamese Army regulars. We were flying around the village because we'd put a loud speaker on board. And of course, we had civil affairs there to operate it, and you know, they were talking to them, telling them what they needed to do. And they'd see people walking here or there, and they'd tell them they needed to go that way or they were going to get shot.

Sigler: Were these civil affairs officers Americans or Vietnamese?

Quinn: Oh, no, they were Americans.

Sigler: Who spoke Vietnamese.

Quinn: Yes. I think one captain and one lieutenant. But oh, about 45 minutes into it, we had an OH-58 come on board with us. He was flying a free M-60 Machine Gun, free meaning hanging from a pongee cord. The Crewchief/Doorgunner was sitting in the back seat of an OH-58 his name was Robert MacDonald. He just returned from Iraq with National Guard.

Sigler: Okay, now the OH-58 was one of the observations helicopters?

Quinn: Yes. We got rid of the OH-6 just before this happened. And I don't know who was flying that aircraft, but they were about 90 degrees out from us. And we were just, you know, like a race track flying around and around this little vil. And all of a sudden, we saw people start running for everything. And I came up on the radio and told Mac that he one underneath him, and that he was going to get ready to get shot. And Mac looked out and shot him. And in the first 30 minutes, Mac got him about five kills. We stayed at 1500 feet, well out of anything we thought they could have down there. But if they'd had a .51 cal or a .51 one or

whatever, they'd have got us. But the colonel would not let us go down and help shoot them up; just that .58. And Mac was getting it from everywhere. Then they had to go back in and refuel, and we did, and we left it up to the guys on the ground. Mac made a couple more trips. We made two more, and on the last one there, it was getting towards the evening; I guess it was around 1600. We already had been doing some other things for the battalion commander, taking him to some of the other places and doing other things. He had a meeting with the general that afternoon, and so we dropped him there and then we picked him up, and he said, "Let's go home." So on the way – you know, of course we're going to go through the pass, Bong Song pass – he says, "Let's jump over and see how this thing is going." Because in all reality, he had people on standby to go in there because it was his AO – area of operation. But it was one of those political things that the Rough Puffs and ARVNs were going to work together and do this, all with only MACV advisors. Well, we come up – as I came down the side of the mountain there and we were about probably a klick and a half away from the village, and I spotted this guy run into a hedgerow. And all I got to see was his back. I couldn't see a weapon or anything. And then he was hiding in the hedgerow and I could see his feet, I could see his elbow; I couldn't see anything else. But when I first spotted him, I said, I have a gook at 9 o'clock, in the hedgerow, coming hot (firing machine gun). Didn't see a weapon. The colonel on board didn't want us to shoot him; wanted to take him prisoner. So we kind of like flew a hover around this guy, and they were trying to get a hold of the two MACV advisors, because that's the only guys could speak English over there. And the S3 Officer was on board —

Sigler: On your machine?

Quinn: Yeah. The Battalion EXO – or S-3.

Sigler: S3 – operations officer.

Quinn: Then just the other four of us. I was standing up, basically, on the gun mount, had my gun pointed down, and it was almost at a 90 degree angle down, but because of the skid it wouldn't go all the way 90 degrees. But I was keeping an eye on this guy. I could see him. Then I started getting cramps in my legs, and I knew I better sit down. And besides that, you're nuts just to stand out here in the door and nothing there. So I sat down and went to stick my head out, and this guy cut loose and raked the aircraft with what I got to say was a full magazine of M-16 tracer rounds. And I mean, front to back. Mr. Ackelson I'm pretty sure that was who it was, yeah – he got hit in the forearm and the bullet went in and lodged in the collective stick. And of course it chopped the throttle right there down to flight idle. Captain Hunter right away took the controls and we were going down. He said, "Everybody brace; we're going to hit – go down." Well, I was still firing and Doug was firing. I don't know what he's firing at [laughs]. But we were going down, and for some odd reason, Captain Hunter just reached up and hit the increase-decrease button, and he brought it up just a couple hundred RPM's. It was enough just to sustain flight. We were just chugging. I mean, it was just chug-chug-chug. And the way that is is that in the collective, it's all mechanical linkage. The increase-decrease button is back on the fuel control where these linkages lead to and that. So when that throttle got chopped, it got

chopped up there; didn't get chopped in the back. It shouldn't have moved, but thank God it did. And Colonel — well, like I said, Mr. Ackelson got hit, Captain Hunter got some shrapnel not much, but he got a Purple Heart. Doug and I came forward about the same time; just as soon as he told us we were going to stay in the air, we had flight. And Doug grabbed the colonel and we put him on the floor, flipped him on his side, on the side — because his throat was torn out and the artery was just, you know, spurting blood all over the place — I mean, windshield and everywhere. Doug reached in and pinched off his artery. Once I helped Doug get him settled, I went up to see what kind of help Mr. Ackelson needed. And he didn't want any. Well, I guess with a tracer round going through your arm, it's going to cauterize it anyway. So there wasn't any blood. But I can tell you, that's probably the most painful thing. The Major, S3 officer, he got hit by a lot of shrapnel that was on the side of his thighs and legs, and he never did say whether his family jewels were still there or not. At the same time, I had an OJT (On Job Training) Crewchief on board.

Sigler: On the job training.

Quinn: Yeah. And that was because Doug and I were going on R and R — or going on extension leave on the first of July. And can't think of his name. Doug can't even remember who it was. We flew into B-med — Bravo Company med — I don't know what hospital or whatever was its actual designation — we just called it B-med. I think it belonged to the support battalion. It was a medical —

Sigler: Medical unit —

Quinn: Yeah. Or a company. And you know, they practiced MASH.

Sigler: This was of your own unit, the 173rd.

Quinn: Yeah. And out they'd go. Either a med-evac would take him or we'd take him down to 67th Evac in Qui Nhon. We got to the airfield, or back to the airfield — and of course, B-med's on the airfield — because sometimes they'd load the guys up in C-130s. But we landed out in front on one of the med-evac pads. We got the colonel out and on a stretcher with those guys and got Mr. Ackelson [??] and Captain Hunter out of the aircraft, and Captain Hunter said, "I can't get this thing shut down. It won't shut down." Well, —

Sigler: Throttle linkage is blown open.

Quinn: Well, throttle link — it's not only that. We could have manually — I mean, electrically shut it down. But wire bundles after wire bundles were cut. So I took off the left side panel, rear panel, on the transmission wall, and I had to turn it off by the emergency cut off valve. And got it shut down. Well, we were just sitting there waiting for it to coast down, and I looked at this one kid, the OJT. I saw blood on his hand, then I looked up and I saw where on his shirt was a big tear. He'd got hit by shrapnel. So I sent him into B-med. And turn around

and looked at Doug – he'd walked in with the colonel – and he come back out – he had a bunch of peroxide so he could start cleaning the aircraft before the smell and everything —. But I said, "Stop." I started looking him all over. Same thing; he had a couple holes and shrapnel hits. And I said, "I'm the luckiest guy there is." My ass was puckered so much that I could hide behind that M-60. I did not get hit by any thing. I didn't catch nothing. Lucky or good Lord looking out after me or whatever. But I got to say, the two years over there and crewing and everything else, even the times the aircraft went down – at least I didn't. Except for the one time I went to pass a kidney stone; then I got sent down to the 67th Evac.

Ah, we had a good time. Talking about — come back and then December and then January and New Years eve with Mr. O'Connor — and like I said, I flew with him quite a bit over that first six months. What he taught me was we are a crew, yet I'm Mr. O'Connor, CW2. So is the other pilot, CW-what or Mr. and that. But I'm depending on you guys doing your job, keeping this aircraft shipshape, good to go, the guns, the maintenance being done right, because my ass is hanging out there. And he's go, "Wait a minute, Quinn, wait a minute, Chief." There again, when we get in the aircraft and we go to fly, then we're in charge. And now that responsibility becomes ours, and we have to take care of you. And that. So he's one that really brought up the crew integrity and to me what a crew should do.

Sigler: He sounds like a very good officer.

Quinn: Yeah. Even though we didn't have the same guys flying all the time. But that was really good. Then I think it was about four or five days after we got shot down — of course, they took the aircraft away, flew it out by Chinook CH-47. They had to go fix it – there were so many holes in it [laughs]. That's when I was passing a kidney stone and went in the hospital. That was about min-month or so, I guess. But then Doug and I got out on time for leave, and went home. Well, I had asked my dad – I'd wrote him and I'd also called him from the _____ MARS station HAM RADIO – I asked him to come to McCord AFB in uniform and maybe he could get me out of going over to the Fort Lewis. Because all they were going to do is give me a pair of greens, a shower, and a meal. And I could get that on the way going back home and having more time. So he did. My father at that time was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Oregon National Guard. So he showed up — and now I wasn't really embarrassed, but we came down off the plane, and of course, I got to sit between this command sergeant major and this 1st sergeant all the way from Vietnam back. I listened to their war stories. They had some good stuff. I mean, just listening to their war stories – they had some good problem solving techniques' how to take care of certain problems. Of course, then they had some that – ways of doing things that I would say probably is not too kosher. But we came down off the plane or off the stairs and I was walking slower and they turned around a said, "Quinn, get up here with us." I was still Spec 4 then. So we kind of walked past my dad and saluted him with a good Airborne salute. But then my dad goes, "Hey, there, soldier, don't you have something to say to your father?" "What?" Sergeant major looked at me and said, "Is that your father?" I said, "Yes, sir." Said, "Aren't you proud of him?" I said, "Yes, sir. I asked him to come here. But with you two guys standing here — ah, this little pansy wants to get over." 1st sergeant looked and he said, "Hell, if my father was like that, I'd have him here, too, and I'm a 1st sergeant."

[laughter] So it was pretty good. So we got into the terminal area, went to some briefings and told how we were going to come through, go through customs and all that stuff. And then they said everybody will fall out into this area, get their bags and then get them checked and carry them out to the bus. And there's a sergeant out there that will be directing you which bus to get on. So that's all fine and good, except my dad came and told me that I didn't have to get on the bus and that I could just go to the car. And well, that didn't work too well. That sergeant just was not going to let me go, even though I kept trying to explain to him. He said, "Look, soldier, I've heard it all. Just quit with the mouth and get in the bus." Well, pretty soon my dad walked up behind him and he heard him saying this stuff. "Are we having some problems here?" He says, "Oh, no sir, no sir, we just got this kid that thinks he can just get around this system and that." Then about that time my dad looks at me, he says, "Specialist, you're dismissed." And this guy went, "Well, wait a minute, I'm taking care of him, sir. I'll take care of him." My dad said, "No, you and I got to have a little talk." "Oh, yes sir, yes sir. What a fine outstanding young soldier you got there for a son." Probably cussing under his breath every which way. It was great. Then we got in the car — or we got to the car — well, my brother-in-law was on that same flight with us coming home, and he was going to Pennsylvania. So I told Doug and him we'd meet him out at SeaTac, because my dad had already got what time they'd take this bus and get him out there. So we went out to the SeaTac airport and saw my brother-in-law and Doug off and everything. Then we got in the car and headed for Oregon. Well, knowing my mother (God rest her soul), she wanted to know what happened every second of every minute of every hour, 24-7 of each day. And I said, "Mom, I had a good time. You can't have any better place to have fun." So she kept it up about for oh, I guess it was about — we were about 300 miles away, so it was about 100 miles. Finally my dad — he was driving — he looked over at me and he said, "Good damn it, will you just tell your mother that you got shot down three weeks ago and then you went in the hospital week after that." And I'm going, "You don't know what I do in Vietnam." He said, "Yes, I do." He could go any time to the he had a clearance, too — he was an Intelligence Officer, Communication Officer. Infantry and everything. But being on the Adjutants Generals Staff of Oregon and what he was doing.

Sigler: He had a lot of contacts.

Quinn: He did. And he could get on the phone in Salem and he would call Washington. But he would call over and talk to somebody in my brigade and see what I was up to. And he just did that on a monthly basis or so.

Sigler: But he didn't pass that on to your mother.

Quinn: No. And he didn't pass it on to me, either. I guess it was his little way of telling me he knows more than I do [laughs]. But it was nice; I mean, that was pretty cool.

Then we came back from Extension Leave at the end of July. I started crewing the DBC (Deputy Brigade Commander) and Captain Walsh, who was our platoon leader at that time; he didn't want me flying regular missions. And flying for the DBC, he had only three things he did in the aircraft: he climbed out up to 2300 feet, flew the destination, came down almost straight,

hit the ground and got out of the aircraft. Return trip the same way. He never flew— except on landing and takeoff, he never flew under 2300 feet. I tell you what, I loved low level. Low level over in the desert's a lot different and that, so I wouldn't be hitting him, but in treetops out here, not a problem and that. But we used to fly on the ground all the time, low level, because —

Sigler: You got a lot more lateral cover, though.

Quinn: Yeah. Although the other thing is, when things happen, they happen fast. So you may not have time except to try to bend over and say “Bye” [laughs]. And we'd be hitting 110 - 115 knots; red line was 120.

In the middle of September, Captain Walsh and Major Sinclair came to my hootch one evening. What it was Major Sinclair was the brigade aviation officer, and his NCO was leaving.

Sigler: Brigade Aviation Officer was up on the OPS staff?

Quinn: Yeah. Well, he was up in the BDE TOC (Tactical Operations Center). So he asked me if I'd come up and work for him. Of course, I was recommended for it anyway. I think Captain Walsh was more than happy that I go do that, but it was okay, too. I still went and crewed aircraft. I'd still go out flying. I mean, in reality I'm the one that directed the aircraft in the Bde. You know, the battalions would call me every morning —

Sigler: Yeah, for their assignments.

Quinn: Yes, and tell me how many aircraft they were requesting, what kind of missions they were running and everything and I'd take all that down. Then I'd get it into I-Corps, and then I didn't have anything else to do until about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. So that's when I went out. I could either go to my room and sleep a little bit or go to the PX or whatever had to be done. My brother-in-law got out come December of that year, 1970. My brother-in-law ETS, and Doug had already ETSed. He'd come back; he went to crewing – or gunning – again, but I don't think he gunned very long because they took him in and put him in the armory just because he was getting short.

Sigler: ETS – End tour —

End side B, tape 1

Quinn: So Doug left some time around the first of October – or, the middle of October, because he came to my birthday party on the 10th, and we had one big party. I had food from all the battalions, the mess sergeants from all the battalions, and I got the booze from everywhere. I had my dad send me some money, because most of my money accrued in a savings account. So I had him send me about \$500, and it went for booze and then what food I couldn't get out of the mess hall. But all in all it turned out pretty good. “You was pretty drunk last night; had to put you to bed.” I guess they did. I guess I passed out on top of my dresser that I had [laughs] and

they had to pull me off and put me to bed. But Dave left one beer in the cooler; he made sure one beer stayed there.

Then on December morning I was sitting in the office and aircraft would call in giving me their call sign when they're departure time or when they came in the area so I'd know who I had. And Dave got on the intercom and of course, he was just running his mouth a little bit. So then he got — since he was getting out of the army — and I told him, this time I said, "You know, in July I definitely will come see you when I get out of here." Because I hadn't — wasn't going to reenlist or anything like that, and I was going to get a six-month drop. And I was going home in January for extension leave again anyway. But as everything ends up, he goes, "You know something, Quinn, I never gave you the address to my sister. Anybody that I gave it to could never give you the address, but you read every letter that she ever wrote me, and most of the ones I wrote her." And I used some choice words for him, too, and that. But he goes, "You know, it'd be pretty funny if you came down to Florida next year and you married my sister." Okay, guy. So he went on his way and that Christmas eve, I was sitting with the re-enlistment — we were playing chess, and he had a fifth of whiskey and I had a fifth of whiskey, and we had enough beer, and we were just playing checkers — I mean, chess. And sometime during the night or that we were playing, he goes, "When are you going to reenlist?" And I know he's always been on me about this, about reenlisting and that, and I kept always telling him no. So I figure this time I'll get him. So I gave him an offer he couldn't refuse, which was okay, I'll reenlist if you have — if I get promoted to Spec 5 and you have a check for \$3,333 for one third of what my VRV and SRV was — it's \$10,000. And I said, "With a letter saying —"

Sigler: Those are the bonuses for re-enlistment.

Quinn: Right. Then with a letter approving some payment when I get back to country instead of waiting over the years, because I knew that them paying it over to me over a three-year period, then I'd start paying taxes on what I get paid after I got back to college [??]. Then I said, "I'll reenlist at 8 o'clock out here under the flagpole, not a minute early, not a minute late." We do this. Well, you know, I said, "I control the aircraft." So I didn't send an aircraft to our rear area that morning to pick up the early morning report stuff and bring it up until about 10 o'clock. So I was free and clear. At 7:45, here comes Arrowsmith, Sergeant Arrowsmith, and two guys with him. And I said, "No, you couldn't do that." He did.

Sigler: What was he, in the Headquarters Company?

Quinn: Yeah. Well, he was with the platoon. Arrowsmith was with the platoon, but then he — when he made staff sergeant, they took him over to Headquarters Company to be their re-enlistment NCO, because we had a slew of staff sergeants over there. So you know, my word's my bond, so reenlisted for six years. So they had all the paperwork with there, and I got Major Sinclair to reenlist me, be out there at 8 o'clock. So about five minutes till, the four of us walked out. The two re-enlistment guys and Sergeant Arrowsmith — and these guys had drove the highway 1 all the way up from the rear area before it was cleared. And usually it doesn't get

cleared until 9:30, 10 o'clock. The closer you get, the later.

Sigler: Cleared by the engineers for mines and —

Quinn: Yes, and also with guys pull bridge guard, we had send the E Trp 7/17th Cav, and they had APCs and tanks and stuff out there. So they, you know, M-48s Tanks. So you know, they would pull bridge detail if they were in the back instead of being out forward. So we were standing out there and General Oaks comes walking by. Of course, we all come to attention and salute him. And of course, these guys are his brigade re-enlistment people. They have to give him a report every month, you know. So you know, he decides he's going to stand and talk to me and he's going, you know, "What's going on?" and everything else. And they said, "Specialist 5 Quinn —" (because he brought me my orders, too, and that, backdated to the 16th of December) — and General Oaks said, "I'd be very glad to reenlist him."

Sigler: Now Oaks was brigade commander at that point?

Quinn: Right. He was the general, yeah, brigadier. And, "Oh, yes sir, yes sir" and that. So they had to go in the general's office and redo the paperwork this paperwork up again and then get General Oaks. Well, when Major Sinclair walked out, I told him, I said, "The general walked by here and got in a conversation with him and it ended up he's going to reenlist me." And of course Major Sinclair said, "Oh, that's just dandy. It's okay with me." But yeah, I got my check, I got my orders for my lump sum and I got my check. Couldn't renege on a promise — a drunken promise, now.

Sigler: But you got reenlisted by a major general.

Quinn: No, a brigadier. Yeah, because we were the only separate brigade in the army at the time. There was no other separate brigade at all.

Sigler: Now the brigade was made up of four battalions of the 503rd?

Quinn: Right. And then we had November Rangers, this company of 75th Ranger Regiment, but they were Rangers. We had a support battalion and then we had an artillery battalion, so there was —

Sigler: And the cavalry troop.

Quinn: Yeah. And let's see, there was something else. Let's see, the support battalion that had all the maintenance and everything else, higher maintenance level. Had an engineer company and an MP company. It was a pretty good time and that. So reenlisted, went home on the 4th of January, and I came back and they had major changed around in the office there while I was gone. Major Sinclair got sent up to — or got taken up to I-Corps, and a Major Ball came in to be the aviation officer, brigade aviation officer. But then he went down to the platoon and got

him a captain, and of course captains were like a dime a dozen for us along with two other enlisted guys. I mean, we had – at any one time, I think we had nine or ten captains. But this guy and I didn't hit it off too well, so —

Sigler: He brought him up as assistant aviation officer?

Quinn: Yeah. So I just asked to go back down to the Platoon since Welsch was gone you know, I went in a talked to LTC — he was the S3 – the brigade S3. But we got along real good, him and I. He'd come ask me questions before he'd go to Major Sinclair [laughs]. And that was all because when he first came to the brigade, I was new up in the TOC. In fact, that was my second day up there when he came, and he asked me, he said, "I need an aircraft." And so I looked at his name tag and everything and I said, "I'm sorry, sir, I don't have an aircraft for you." "You're supposed to have an aircraft for me!" God, he went off. And I just stood my ground and I said, "I'm sorry. You got to put in your request 24 hours in advance, sir, and then I'll see." I said, "What I can do, if you tell me what you want to do and I will see if I can grab one of the aircraft that's out there doing a mission, that in between they can come help you out." "No, God damn it! I want my aircraft." I said, "I'm sorry." See, he never told me that he was the S3 and that his aircraft was always on the pad. And that's true; his aircraft was brought up every morning at 6:30 by whoever the pilot was that was flying.

Sigler: Okay, and they just stood by.

Quinn: Yeah, and then they just stood by. And I could just call up on the radio and get them and tell them to get ready. So it was about an hour later, Major Sinclair came in and Major Barnes came back, and he started raking — because he was promotable [He was waiting for his sequence number to come up to get promoted to LTC] and he just started raking Major Sinclair. And Major Sinclair said, "Look, Major, you don't talk to me that way. I know you're promotable [??], but you do not talk to me that way in front of other people. You just keep your cool and we'll get something done." And he turned around, he looked at me, and he said — because they had laterally appointed me as a Sergeant— "Sergeant Quinn, where's the S3's aircraft?" I said, "Up on the pad." And then it dawned on me. I said, "Sir, he didn't tell me he was the S3." I had no damn idea. And Barnes is just over there just going – you could see the steam rising off of him. But he can't say that he did, because everybody around was shaking their head, going yep. If he'd have come in and said, "Sergeant, I'm the S3 and I need my aircraft," he'd have been gone. So I wasted a whole morning for him.

Sigler: But you learned a lesson.

Quinn: Actually, to tell you the truth, he was a nice guy after that. I mean, any time anything or whatever, he'd come and say, "Hey Bulldog Where's my aircraft?" You know, the one that's supposed to be for the S3 now." "Okay, sir."

Sigler: Okay. So you left the staff job and where did you go?

Quinn: Went back down with the platoon. And like I said, you know, I still kept my hand in the crewing aircraft. If I heard an aircraft coming in to the POL [??] pad, I'd just call it up and say, "Hey, look, does the crew chief want to take a couple hours and I'll go fly." "Yeah." So I'd grab my helmet and go.

Sigler: So did you go back to being crew chief again?

Quinn: Yeah. Well, not the first two weeks I was back down there. Just like I said, I was an acting jack Sergeant. The platoon sergeant we had, he had me doing detail. I was in charge of all the details. But there was kind of a personality conflict and also leadership traits that I didn't get along with. And like I told you, I grew up around the army, and then with my father and everything. I would say the guys that weaned us was his 1st sergeant and then this master sergeant. He was the field 1st in his company. And I mean, those guys taught us how to drill n ceremony, fire weapons, do all that stuff. There were some things he was doing, he'd tell them one thing and then come tell me another thing. So I just told him or I asked him one day, "I want to go to crewing aircraft." So he took my stripe away and I went to crewing for the rest of the time. Then I went on R and R again in June, end of June —

Sigler: Acting jack is acting sergeant, right?

Quinn: Yes. I went on R and R in June to Hong Kong, and then on the 21st of July, Captain Thomas and the platoon sergeant there grabbed me and two other guys and said you're going to be the first. Report over to Headquarters Company; you guys are going back to the world. I had an extension leave in, and so — or not extension — I mean, I had an extension in to stay over in Vietnam, but I was asking to go to this other unit. It kept getting disapproved. Well, I got over the company, and Captain Brown was our company commander, Headquarters Company commander. Of course, by then Littlejohn had moved up to be a 1st Sergeant. So he came and the only thing I could do was just take some personal gear. And I'd been over there for such a long time, it was kind of like a thing in the platoon — the oldest guy that was there would inherit — or who ended up the oldest guy there inherited all the old guys stuff. So I had hot plates, I had a bunch of fans, I had a dresser, I had a refrigerator, I had a hot plate — I mean, I had all kinds of shit. And I just told everybody, I said, "It's yours." And the thing was, I was planning on selling it, but see, we weren't told we were going anywhere. When he came and told us we were going down to the company and then we went straight to Phu Cat. We spent about two hours at Phu Cat and then got on a plane and flew home, and that. Flew all the way in to Fort Campbell.

Sigler: Was Campbell still the home base for the 173rd?

Quinn: Well, it was the home base for the 101st. But that's just where we got sent.

Break in recording

Quinn: — supply room. Cpt Brown and 1SG Littlejohn walked over, and Captain Brown looked at me, said, “Quinn, I thought you took your citizenship out. Where are you going?” I looked over at him, I said, “You’re a sorry commander, sir.” I said, “I put in extensions from the day I came back off the my last one.” And I said, “I have submitted them ever two weeks, and they keep coming back disapproved.” And he goes, “No. Specialist Quinn, I have not seen anything coming up on you.” So Littlejohn said, “You know, I haven’t either.” So they went back and grabbed the clerk, morning report clerk, and asked him. “No.” So Captain Brown went in and called the Cpt Thomas, our last Platoon Leader and asked him if I had put in any extensions. And he told him, yeah, I did, but he kept throwing them in the trash can. Didn’t have the authorization to do that. Whatever I had —

Sigler: It still had to be approved higher, or disapproved.

Quinn: Yeah, it had to go to company commander and then even if he recommended disapproval, you know, it still had to go to him. Well, the guy wasn’t very nice about it. But he told him, he said, “No, Quinn’s too crazy. He needs to leave country.”

Sigler: But he had made that decision all by himself.

Quinn: Well, him and the Platoon Sergeant. Well, in the platoon, I’d been there the longest. And I kind of had a cocky attitude, you know, in a way. I did, I had a cocky attitude. What’s right is right, what’s wrong is wrong.

Sigler: And I’d been here longer than anybody else.

Quinn: Well, not really, because things change. I know, commanders change and everything like that. I can take a change with anybody. But when you start coming after me about doing something which I didn’t, well, you better have your ducks together because I’ve got mine already there. So it was just some personality in the end, and everything. But that’s okay. Everybody else was leaving too, and I’d only been able to stay over there probably another just that next six months and stuff. In ‘72 they brought everything back anyway. Well, got on the plane in Phu Cat, and that was the 21st of July, and then we flew from there to Taiwan and then from Taiwan into Midway, and then on into Hawaii and then on to Fort Campbell. Got at Fort Campbell, they gave a pair of dress uniform and sent me on leave for 45 days. And it was a free leave, too. I had leave already, because the ones that I was taking on from extending was free. But what they did is that we were – we had the installation over the top of us, although it was just because it was still a basic training unit or a basic training place.

Sigler: At Campbell, you mean.

Quinn: Yes. The guy that was jn Command there was a Brigadier General. And he had been told about eight months before we got home, or came back, that we were coming back. And he was told at the same time the 101st would be coming back, too, about six months after.

Because they came back, started trickling in – they started trickling in around the end of November of '71, and we changed over to 3rd Brigade, 101st, January 14th. But also we had a brigadier general, too. We had Brigadier General Ross he was our brigade commander. So he didn't take too much off the other guy. Of course, too, he was almost two feet taller than the other one. So we did that for a while and then —

Sigler: Well, by that time we were pretty much pulling out of Vietnam.

Quinn: Oh, yeah. And then my brother-in-law came back in the army in August, just before I got back from leave, and somehow got Vietnam, got sent back to the same unit and the same platoon. And after being out for seven months. And then his sister came up in November and of course, we got married in March.

Sigler: I wanted to finish that story out, because I think that's the best way to end this particular part of the interview.

Quinn: But yes, there were harrowing times. And then there are a lot of good times and that. A lot of it was – good times was because Captain Streicher — and the majority of all the old pilots. And what I mean about the old pilots, I'm talking about the pilots that were there before I got there and that, because it just seemed like the ones that came in after I came, got there — and I don't doubt these other guys didn't act the same way, but every one of them thought they were God's gift to aviation. But I liked that, because Mr. O'Connor taught me how to fly aircraft. And whenever one of those — you know, he'd get one of the newbie warrant officers, and then he had to train them for over there. And he usually had to fly with them for two weeks straight. And when they acted up or didn't do something and about the fourth time he hit them in the helmet, he'd put them back behind the machine gun [laughs]. And he'd let me or my gunner fly.

Sigler: An interesting approach. I think we can close this one down for now.

End