Vice Admiral
William D. Houser

Oral History
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William "Bill" Douglas Houser was born in Atlanta, Georgia, on November 11, 1921, son of Harry M. and Berenice (Horton) Houser. He attended Ponce De Leon High School, Coral Gables, Florida, where he was a member of the National Honor Society, and President of his

class for three years; and Marion Military Institute, Marion, Alabama, prior to entering the U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland, in June 1938, on appointment from the State of Florida. His stepfather had been the mayor of Miami. Graduated with the Class of 1942 and commissioned Ensign on December 19, 1941 (course of instruction reduced to three years and seven months due to the National Emergency), he subsequently advanced in rank, to that of Vice Admiral, to date from August 5, 1972.

After graduation from the Naval Academy in 1941, he was assigned to the *Nashville* (CL43). He served as Gunnery Officer, Officer of the Deck, and Combat Information Center Officer on board that light cruiser until January 1945. During that period, the *Nashville* participated in the capture and defense of Guadalcanal; consolidation of the Southern Solomon Islands; raids on Marcus and Wake Islands and operation at Hollandia, Western New Guinea Operation, Leyte and Luzon.

He entered flight training from February 1945 until September 1946, and, after being designated Naval Aviator, reported the next month as Maintenance Officer of Fighter Squadron ONE, based on the *Saipan* (CVL 48). He later became Executive Officer of that squadron, and in June 1948 became Deputy Chief of the Air Objectives Branch, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D.C.

In October 1951, he reported as Executive Officer of Fighter Squadron FORTY FOUR, and during the period February 1952 until October that year, that squadron, based on the *Coral Sea* (CVA 43), was deployed in the Mediterranean. He assumed command of Fighter Squadron FORTY FOUR in November 1952, and commanded that squadron, attached to the *Lake Champlain* and the *Boxer*, in action against the Communist forces in the Korean area of hostilities. He was awarded the Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", "for meritorious service as Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron FORTY FOUR while serving with Carrier Air Group FOUR on board the *Lake Champlain* and with Air Task Group ONE on board the *Boxer* during combat operation against enemy North Korean and Chinese Communist forces from June 13, 1953 to July 27, 1953…"

IThen Commander Houser received the Navy Commendation medal "for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight as pilot of a fighter plane and as Commanding Officer of Fighter Squadron FORTY FOUR on board the *Lake Champlain* on June 16, 1953." He was also awarded the Air Medal with Gold Star in lieu of a second similar award, for meritorious achievement in aerial combat in Korea from June 13, to July 8, and from July 10, to July 25, 1953.

Detached from Fighter Squadron FORTY FOUR in January 1954, he served until February 1956 in the Air Branch, Office of Naval Intelligence, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Following temporary training duty, March-May 1956, with Fleet All Weather Training Unit, he joined Air Development Squadron THREE As Development Officer, later Executive Officer of that squadron, he was concerned with Fleet evaluation of new naval jet fighters.

He attended the Senior Course at the Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, from August 1958 until June 1959, after which he commanded Fighter Squadron ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FOUR, a replacement jet fighter squadron for the Pacific Fleet. Following two

months' duty in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, he was assigned in October 1960 to the Atomic Energy and Guided Missile Branch, Joint Staff Office, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, D.C. He reported in February 1962 as military Assistant to the Deputy Secretary of Defense, where he remained until September 1963. While there he was the only naval officer in the immediate Office of the Secretary of Defense.

He was a student in the Advanced Management Program, Harvard University Graduate School of Business Administration, Cambridge, Massachusetts from September until December 1963. In February 1964, he assumed command of the *Mauna Loa* (AE8) and was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Navy Commendation Medal. The citation further states in part: "…Assigned to the project of investigating the capabilities and limitation of transferring missiles and conventional ammunition at sea by helicopter under operation conditions, (he) was responsible for implementing sound procedures, recommendations, training, and coordination to be employed by this new concept of replenishment…"

Assigned duty in January 1965 in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, he remained there until November that year and in January 1966 assumed command of the *Constellation* (CVA64). He was awarded the Legion of Merit for "exceptionally meritorious conduct as Commanding Officer of the *Constellation* and as Commander Task Group SEVENTY SEVEN POINT EIGHT in Southeast Asia from May 29 to November 24, 1966…" He is also entitled to the Ribbon for, and a facsimile of the Navy Unit Commendation awarded to the *Constellation*.

In January 1967 he reported as Chief of the Strategic Plans and Policy Division, J-5, the Joint Staff Office, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington D.C. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Second Legion of Merit for his "… significant contributions to improvement in United States military strategy and force posture…"

In November 1968 he became Director of the Aviation Plans and Requirements Davison, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. He was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Third Legion of Merit and cited in part as follow: "… (His) ability to communicate the fundamental needs of the Navy accurately, forthrightly and with conviction in the offices of the Secretary of Defense and to members of Congress was a major factor in the successful prosecution of many programs vital to the Navy and contributed significantly to the credibility of the Navy in important decision-making arenas…"

In July 1970 he assumed command of Carrier Division TWO and was awarded a Gold Star in lieu of the Fourth Legion of Merit "for exceptionally meritorious service from September 1970 to January 1971 while serving as Commander Carrier Division TWO and Commander Task Force SIXTY while deployed to the Mediterranean Area…" He was also awarded a Distinguished Service Medal "for exceptionally meritorious service... from January 1971 to May 1972…" The citation further states: "…(His) many accomplishments and contributions throughout this period include the planning and conduct of large-scale NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) naval exercises and the development of tactics and procedures for the integration of patrol aircraft and nuclear submarines in the antisubmarine warfare defense of naval forces…" Detached in June 1972, he reported in August of that year as Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air Warfare), Navy Department. That year he earned the "Tailhooker of the Year" award.

In addition to the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit with three Gold Stars, Bronze Star Medal with Combat "V", Air Medal with Gold Star and the Navy Commendation medal with Gold Star and Combat "V", and the Navy Unit Commendation Ribbon, Vice Admiral Houser has the American Defense Service Medal; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with one silver and four bronze stars (nine engagements): American Campaign Medal; World War II Victory Medal; Navy Occupation Service Medal; China Service Medal; National Defense Service Medal with bronze star; Korean Service Medal; Vietnam Service Medal; United Nations Service Medal; and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with two stars. He is also entitled to the Korean Presidential Unit Citation; the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal with Device; Republic of Vietnam National Order of Merit, Fifth Class; and the Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross with Palm.

After his naval service, Vice Admiral Houser pursued a successful technology career spanning 20 years. During that time he played a leading role to have the anniversary of the Battle of Midway, established as an official Navy commemoration.

On May 16, 1997, Vice Admiral Houser lost his wife of 51 years, the former Betty Lou Worrell who had served in World War II as a WAVE.

In 2003 he received the Naval Academy Distinguished Graduate Award. That year he also married Jan King Evans. Vice Admiral Houser passed away on February 5th, 2012. He is survived by his second wife, Jan A.K. Evans Houser, and his three daughters – Cynthia Riera, Gayle Fogleman, and Francie Washington; his six grandchildren; his great-granddaughter; his two step-daughters – Karla MacMahon and Louise Turner—and his five step-grandchildren.

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January 11, 2001

David Winkler
Interviewer

WINKLER: Today is January the 11th. I'm here with VADM William D. Houser. Dave Winkler with the Naval Historical Foundation. This is part of a series of interviews on the career of VADM Houser. [Unfortunately, the initial interview covering youth and the World War II years were not transcribed due to the loss of cassette tapes.] Today we would like to pick up with your tour of duty in the Pentagon at the conclusion of your tour with Fighter Squadron (VF) 44. First of all could you talk about getting orders to the Pentagon. You were Executive Officer (XO) of VF 44.

HOUSER: Commanding Officer of VF 44. I took over as Commanding Officer in November; I believe it was 1953. And then we deployed to Korea on the *Lake Champlain* shipped to the *Boxer*…I think we've covered all of that.

And so I got orders to Washington upon returning, or at least while we were returning. And needless to say that was a disappointment, I had come from Washington and when you get back from the Fleet, you always think the Fleet can't do without you and so forth. They order you to places like Washington; I really didn't want to go, but was ordered back to the Office of Naval Intelligence. I'd had one tour there before, and I thought that's all I'd have. But no, you get your pants caught in that and it's hard to get out. So I tried to get the orders changed but there was no way. And so, I came back and dutifully spent two years to the day in Washington of the two-year tour.

It was an interesting tour. The Navy was getting out of its post-World War II miasma, which occurred at the end of World War II. I think we talked about this. The Air Force had gotten all the credit for the peacetime activities, and certainly a lot of the money. And the Navy, finally as a result of the Korean War and other things, received funding and the airplanes and ships were coming along, many pulled out of mothballs. So therefore, the matter of intelligence, particularly speaking, intelligence which would be used for nuclear weapons became big, and that was pretty much what I did at that time.

I had worked with the Air Force before, and continued to work with them. And it was nice to see that the Navy was now getting its share of appropriations. The AJ Savage which was a hybrid airplane, was our first nuclear bomber. We had the B2V, which adapted to nuclear missions from a aircraft carrier. Took off from there but you didn't land back.

But it was a move in the direction of nuclear capability, and the one thing that they had to know is where to go, where to drop the bombs, and so forth and what value the target was. And that was in the Air Objectives Holder Program, which we did with the Air Force. And then we started our own intelligence, or Naval Targets. The Air Force was interested in city complexes and governmental centers, and the Navy activity was pretty much on naval targets. The Navy people were very glad to see that because some of these other targets they had we couldn't reach, or they simply weren't of naval interest. Our contribution in that time, I think, was quite well received because we hadn't had much to work with before that.

WINKLER: This is a period, which historians now refer to as "Eisenhower's New Look" There was a lot of focus on getting a lot of value out of… Nuclear weapons are expensive but the thought was that we were actually buying defense kind of cheap because we wouldn't have to focus that much on conventional forces. Is that the way you saw it?

HOUSER: Dave, not exactly, but you're right on in the sense that Eisenhower wanted to go toward atomic weapons. Not necessarily for cheapness, but for efficiency, as well. The Navy was coming along with nuclear capability, and they had to because pretty much it was decided that if we got into another war it would be a nuclear war, then called an atomic war. In connection with your suggestion that perhaps we could do away with some of the other weapons. It is sort of interesting, Eisenhower came out with one of his policy memorandums, I forget what they were called but they had different names, for the different Administrations.

Nonetheless, Eisenhower came out with a memorandum, direction to the Defense Department, went something to the effect "Almost sole reliance will be placed upon atomic weapons." The Air Force took this and swallowed it, and they put their hook all the way in, very deep. They went after nuclear weapons on everything they owned, including their fighter airplanes, and of course their bombers. They took their fighter bombers, and did such things as put bombs on them or they towed them on their bombers, under the larger ones, or they then got refueling. They were really right up to speed with nuclear capability. Their newest airplane at that time was the F-105, and it was built to carry a nuclear weapon.

The Navy, meanwhile, was adapting to nuclear weapons, but we kept our eye on the conventional ones. We also had a review of all of our weapons, in the Navy, and got a whole new class of weapons, the Wall-Eyes, and the Snake-Eyes, and all of the other eyes that we had. When it came time to fight in Vietnam, it was a Navy weapons fight, and also the Navy airplanes that were there. So, we had some reliance on atomic weapons, but it wasn't our main armament.

The Air Force went, I say, hook, line and sinker, and I can recall, I was at the Naval War College in 1958-59, and an Air Force Colonel, I believe it was, it may have been a General, came up there and gave us a lecture and in a question period somebody asked the Colonel the question about conventional weapons and nuclear weapons and he said something like this: "I don't know why you Navy guys keep talking about these conventional weapons," he said, "there'll never be another conventional weapons drop." Well we came out with Vietnam, and we dropped more conventional weapons in Vietnam then we did in World War II.

WINKLER: Yes!

HOUSER: So anyway, that may answer… but the Navy didn't go hard over on this. They kept their eye on the lesser nuclear capabilities which are needed.

WINKLER: Let's see, uh, are there any other aspects of that two-year tour?

HOUSER: No, unless you want personal antidotes.

WINKLER: Yes.

HOUSER: Oh, well I worked with a lot of fine people. I worked for Captain [Earl] Jughans. And he was a real toughie, I'm talkin' rough. He was just mean, and he knew it. One time he was heard to remark, "I'm so mean sometimes I hate myself." He also, when he was the Commanding Officer of one of the small carriers (CVs) in the Atlantic, he was pretty tough on his crew, as well. He said if they don't take off correct he was going to withhold their mail, and they said that was against the law he can't do that.

He told me one time that one of the best times of his naval career was when he was on a Midshipman's cruise, stoking the boilers with coal. He was just that type of guy, tough and hard, and gave no quarter. At one time, I got so upset; you know there will either be a murder or a suicide. I didn't know which one…maybe both.

WINKLER: Where exactly in the OPNAV organization, Intelligence was… O2, is it?

HOUSER: It was called ONI at the time, Office of Naval Intelligence. We reported to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations.

WINKLER: Okay. After, obviously, exactly two years to the date you were probably scratching for orders, and soon as you could get out of Washington, your family at the time, you brought them back here.

HOUSER: Yes

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WINKLER: So at least you got to go home at night.

HOUSER: Oh yes.

WINKLER: You go out to Fleet All Weather Training Unit for an All-Weather Fire Intercept Course.

HOUSER: That was for training and that was in Key West. I had gotten orders, to VX3, Air Development Squadron Training. And I'll tell you, buddy, that was quite an experience. We'll get to that a little bit later, once I start talking about it. But I went down there to take the jet course and also the Night Intercept Course. I spent about three months down there in Key West.

WINKLER: Okay. At the time, the Navy had a role in North American Air Defense where, I think there were some squadrons that were detached in NORAD. Did that command help prepare pilots to serve in those squadrons?

HOUSER: Yes, it really advanced the Navy in night and all weather activities, and we did have some night squadrons. This was in my case, I wanted a jet instrument rating, they had a jet instrument course down there, and night and all-weather intercept, but the Navy was building up. They had principally propeller airplanes at the time, the AD, the All Dependable, AD, was a night attack plane. We then got the F3D, which was the airplane I was flying at that time.

WINKLER: Okay, Then after that you went to Air Development Squadron Three, which was based out of where?

HOUSER: Atlantic City.

WINKLER: That's right, you mentioned you'd be heading back there…

HOUSER: I've had two tours of duty in Atlantic City. I had no idea about ever going to Atlantic City, now going to Norfolk, or San Diego, or Miramar but going to Atlantic City twice, but it was a good place to be. We had our own air space and could do what we wanted to. We worked with the squadrons of Norfolk on the Operations Development Course. That was a wonderful tour, in that sense.

I got there just about the time that the new airplanes that were authorized during the early part of the Korean War and so forth and money bags started opening up, we had it wonderful. It was just a smorgasbord up there in the flight lines with the F3H Demon, which was new, and at the time quite a bit of airplane. The engines subsequently gave us a lot of trouble, and therefore it didn't provide what we wanted. It never reached its full capability.

We had the F-8U Crusader, wonderful airplane which you probably know about, and the F-4D Skyray which was a fighter interceptor, and equipped with a radar. That was one of the reasons I got to Key West for night and fighter aircraft, fighter intercept, rather, with the F-4D. Then we had the F-11, Tiger, brand new. We had the FJ-1 Fury; we had the F-9 Cougar trainer. I may have forgotten some, but you just can't imagine these new airplanes just coming on, more and more and more. The situation now you get a new airplane about every ten years. Back then we got three or four in just a couple years.

WINKLER: That's right. Now it says here you served as Engineering, Operations, and XO. What were the specific duties of those in different billets?

HOUSER: Those are traditional billets in the squadron. We had an Engineering Officer who's responsible for the availability of the airplane and the safety and so forth. When I went in I was made an Engineering Officer, and then I soon went up to Operations Officer, which was scheduling everything. We had a lot of projects up there. It wasn't just an ordinary squadron we had a bunch of projects that were put on us by the Operations Development Course Commander. So I was responsible for those and then XO, of course, your number two commanding officer. You do everything to keep the squadron running, and he's the one who sort of sets the policy.

WINKLER: Being in the Air Development Squadron you just touched on your chain command was OPTEVFOR?

HOUSER: We were OPTEVFOR, it was called the Operations Development Course. We were subsequently, after that period, called the Operational Test and Evaluation Force. The OPTEVFOR was the successor to the OPTDEVFOR. Just one second please.

WINKLER: Sure. Okay, we were discussing the OPTDEVFOR.

HOUSER: We ran services for the fleet. We also evaluated the airplanes and developed tactics for the newer airplanes coming out. Whether all-weather or whether it was fighter tactics, as they were with the Crusader. We had some training since we had the airplanes first. They sent some of the fleet planes, flew the pilots up to us to become indoctrinated and make some of their initial flights with us.

There was always something going on, always something exciting. We were one of the first ones to fly a fleet pilot to test and fire the Sidewinder missile, which at the time was brand new, and I think I had either four or five kills in the Sidewinder usually in a controlled position. We had the KDU, which is a surface-to-surface missile [target drone version of the Regulus missile]. They were converted in a group out of Chincoteague. They could go up under radar control. You would know the parameters, how far

back, at what speed, whether you were opening, whether you were closing, how much off you were. That was really very interesting because the Sidewinder missile you know, is still being manufactured.

WINKLER: That's right.

HOUSER: And it was, it is a legend in its own time, and remains that because it was made very efficiently.

WINKLER: Yes. It was a China Lake product.

HOUSER: One of the great discoveries…

WINKLER: Right.

HOUSER: …in development. And, we had the motive there, and we used to go out and shoot down drones, pilotless airplanes. We had that type of thing. So, VX3 was a wonderful experience for me.

WINKLER: The Crusader, this aircraft, established a reputation during Vietnam of being a MiG master. That must have been a very impressive airframe when you first saw it, to take a look at that.

HOUSER: The Crusader was a very impressive airplane. The first airplane, I think the United States had that would go supersonic, in level flight. And as matter of fact…oh sorry, a thousand miles an hour.

WINKLER: Okay.

HOUSER: More like 1.5. It was supersonic we had others just as supersonic. But anyway, your first flight in a Crusader, your check out was to go up there around 35,000 feet and with the burner and to go to about Mach 1.5 - a thousand miles per hour. You come back down and you get pinned, thousand miles an hour clock.

WINKLER: Okay.

HOUSER: And it really was a wonderful airplane, carried lots of fuel. It didn't carry many weapons, and that was the thing that was against it. They came up with an A4D-1 Skyhawk. And they decided to put the Sidewinders on the fuselage instead of under the wing.

And then during the Vietnam War, they modified them again to carry bombs, because everybody had to carry a bomb. But it's a wonderful airplane and it has lasted a long time. The French just retired their last one I think last year or the year before.

WINKLER: I think so. As you mentioned the F-3H was not a, had problems with its engines. Was that the one with the twin tail?

HOUSER: No, single tail.

WINKLER: Single tail, ok, it was a Delta aircraft?

HOUSER: No, that was the F-4D. The F-3H was just a large, had a big fuselage, and really a very fine airplane. It was the first one I went supersonic in. Because, it was swept right through. It wouldn't go in level flight, if you dip your nose a little bit. And most airplanes had all sorts of shutters and so forth, but all this had was just a click on your mine-meter. But is was a very fine airplane.

It was supposed to get something called the J-40 engine the jet and the 40 engine from Westinghouse as was the F-4D. It didn't come through for either airplane. As a result, they put the J-71 in the *Demon*. It didn't work very well. It was ok, but they had trouble with it and they continued to trim it back and trim it back with the result that it had not enough power to do what was necessary.

And we also, in the F-4D, they put a J-57 engine which was more power then what it needed, but the airplane wasn't designed to be super-supersonic. So it was, it didn't live up to its billing. It established a lot speed records and so forth, eventually the F-4D did, but it was outclassed thoroughly by the *Crusader*.

WINKLER: Okay. But didn't the F-4D still serve in Vietnam as a…

HOUSER: I've never heard of an F-4D being over there. It could have been, but I think they were phased out by that time.

WINKLER: Okay, I think you're right.

HOUSER: The A-4D…

WINKLER: The A-4D, yes, that's right…

HOUSER: The A-4D was there for years.

WINKLER: But what are things used in the designation of the aircraft at these times, of course you have the last letterstands for the manufacturer. Then the whole thing changed in 1962. We took out use of the Air Force nomenclature.

HOUSER: They didn't have the manufacturer's name on them. And they just had a designator of the type by their tag, patrol, cardinal, which is really an air phrase.

WINKLER: That's right. Any other, who's the CO while you're…

HOUSER: In the VX3?

WINKLER: Yeah.

HOUSER: A very colorful guy, probably one of the Navy's best Fighter Pilots, a fellow named Bob Dose. Bob and I hit it off very well. And he had a good World War II record, he was also calm and people really enjoyed him. But he was one of these people who was a natural. A lot of people fly, but not many people are natural.

I mentioned the special projects we would get. For example, when TACGAM first came out, the U.S. Attack Game Project. When we started using the Heavy End Aviation Tool, we got that one, but the one I think was, the angled-deck was then called, the Cannondeck, I guess it's now called, the angled-deck. It was sent up there to VX3. Well it got up there and it worked fine, and Bob Dose called me in one day and he says "you know…," soon after we were trying it out, he says "you know this is really a wonderful thing." It was in a mirror, it's now a lens. You had a light that shone and the mirror reflected, it was called mirror-lens system.

He said: "Boy you know we can get rid of the LSOs (Landing Safety Officers) now. Do you know why? You can come on down there and see where the angle is, where the glide-slope is just watch your speed and so forth and go on and land." Well, not so, now they've got an LSO instead of just for the ship, you got one for each squadron, and even more than that. You go back now to the fantail of a CV landing

and the place is loaded with people who are LSOs. Of course, they've got different types of airplanes and so forth, but I've often thought about that. And here Bob Dose he was so talented, he could just get into anything and fly it. I think of that when I see all of these LSOs out there.

We also had another interesting experience since you asked about it. Aircraft have "Trim Tabs", you know what they are, they equalize the pressure on your control surfaces, set up for climb or for dive or for whatever you want. In the *Crusader* instead of a tab like that, they have a potentiometer, a wheel with grips on it and so forth, and you set that. It is very easy to overdue at this point. A lot of the pilots didn't like it; it was too sensitive and so forth. Dose thought it was great, ah leave it alone it's great. Well, it wrecked some airplanes in the fleet when they got down there they changed it to a tab at that time. That's just another indication how accomplished he was as an aviator. He could take any of these things and fly them, and he just liked the advances there. But he said no, we've got to go back, he didn't say it, the Navy said we got to go back because we are losing airplanes.

WINKLER: The introduction of angled-deck at the time must have been seen as a tremendous step forward because here you're not flying into a flight deck full of aircraft, but it also changed, I guess the approach of a landing aircraft. Now you could, when you hit that resting gear now you hit your engines in case you miss and then you can just bounce off. Were you involved in the any of the development of any of those landing tactics?

HOUSER: Yes, the squadron was yes. The Patuxent River crew had done the initial work out there and tested it. But we were the first fleet squadron to have it. The difference that it made on the landing was just enormous, because you only got one shot on the straight deck, and all my landings before that had been on the straight deck. Of course, most of them were in propeller airplanes, of course not all of them, but most were in propeller airplanes. And you retarded your throttle because you weren't going any farther, and if you did, you were going to go into the barricade, called the barrier.

In the angled-deck of course you came down and hit the deck. If you missed a wire you just went around and came back again. But in the jet airplane, particularly the early ones, they were not very powerful, certainly not like what you have nowadays, and also it took time for them to speed up. With a propeller you get almost instant thrust, in one of the areas they experimented with generally it didn't do that. It took time to develop thrust. So if you waited until you found out you missed the wire or something like this and then started gaining power the aircraft was still moving along at its approach speed, landing speed, and you'd go off the end. So the idea was as soon as you get down go full throttle when you feel a tug on your shoulder strap because you go against it if you are not arrested, and then you added full power.

WINKLER: While you were on with that squadron, did you have any planes go down?

HOUSER: Yes, we did. We lost some pilots and so forth. The *Crusader* was one of the ones we lost more of. It was a new airplane. One of the most tragic-prone airplanes we possibly had was a *Crusader*. You perhaps know, it was the only plane I know of like this, its wing was hinged. You had an airplane like this with nose here and the wing here and they meet here and came down. We had one airplane that had red bearing lights. And Bob said, "don't worry about that it's just a false light." Well, a few flights later, Bob took off and began at flight speed and the wind came up and on him, and he was killed. Not the usual thing, but also not unheard of either.

We were flying around new airplanes, and testing and so forth, having fatal accidents isn't unknown. We try not to, and in this case, looking back upon that we say "Well we should have known better," but the point is with new airplane and if I look at that airplane and see, oh no the lock is proceeding and so forth, it's just a bad indicator, and it's not.

WINKLER: That's one of the, I guess in any experimental squadron, well there's a risk in Naval aviation period. But I imagine that is really tough especially having to notify next of kin and things like that.

HOUSER: One of the nice things about that squadron was, nearly all of the pilots there, we had a few nuggets (right out of flight school), most of them were experienced pilots. So you didn't have to worry too much or as much as you do when you have a whole bunch of brand new pilots right out of the training command having to watch almost their every step. But here again though experience is useful…

WINKLER: Continuing on about tempering, commonsense.

HOUSER: Commonsense and good judgment. We had one pilot, who was a good pilot and he liked to fly and so forth, he was experienced. And he was on a cross country someplace. We were in the ready room for a meeting in the hanger in Atlantic City and he was coming back in the next day. He almost made it. He was coming a long distance. He was someplace in the mid-West, maybe Olathe, Kansas or someplace like that, but he was right at extreme range, but there are all sorts of airfields where he could have landed on the way back. But he had it calibrated so that he would get home. And he almost made it. He landed about 200 yards short…

WINKLER: Oh my…

HOUSER: …of the runway. The airplane was wrecked of course, he came through. But this is something you can tell people and tell people and tell people, but they think they know better. Well, they don't know any better. Well, he clearly made a very, very bad impression on Captain Dose. It's one of these things that happens and the…

I can recall when I had the Crusader Squadron for the Pacific Fleet the replacement squadron, we had 40 *Crusaders* and 32 F-9F I think that was the largest squadron in the whole Navy, 72 airplanes and over 700 people. I would tell them, I said "you know there are a few things that I will not tolerate," I said, "you're flying airplanes, you've got to use your heads, and you've got to know what's going on, and some things you can't help, but most of the things you can. And there are two things that I will not tolerate; there is no excuse for it. One is landing wheels up; you've got to put your wheels down. You come back here, and people been landing with their gear up ever since we've had retractable landing gear, but nonetheless," I said, "I'll not take that. There is no reason for it, unless of course if you've had a mechanical failure and the gear won't come down. But don't come back here and say, something that the tracking gear and so forth, the fact of the matter is you've got to remember it.

The other is running out of fuel. Now in your automobile, you can always coast to the side of the road, and go off there and put some more fuel in. Airplanes are different, if you run out of fuel there you're going to crash!" And I said, "Don't play it too close." And those are the two things when we were talking I was thinking about that little policy that I had, when we were talking about Bill Frick, the fellow that was in this airplane that crashed, who almost made it. There is just no reason for it, particularly when you've got a lot of fields around where you can fuel and get back.

WINKLER: Obviously a wise policy. Any other thoughts about Air Development Squadron Three, before we move up the coast to Newport?

HOUSER: Well, a wonderful experience. Very fine pilots that were flying with interesting work. I mentioned the wonderful airplanes we had, they were new ones. We also had, always had challenges coming along with that. And we didn't have as many administrative duties as you have in a normal squadron, where you've got to worry about peoples' uniforms, you know and you've got to have one thing and another. We had military discipline there but it was a grown up squadron, so to speak. And you didn't have all these things. And we weren't a fleet squadron in a sense that we were going to be

deploying all the time. We would deploy for maybe a week at a time to carry out the work of the project, either evaluating the characteristics of the airplane, or weapons we were carrying or something else. So, I looked upon that as a real fighter pilot's highlight tour, to be up and be carefree.

WINKLER: Well it's on up to Newport. You talked to your detailer or your detailer or… Did your detailer suggest to you that it would be a good idea to go to War College, or was this your idea?

HOUSER: Neither. They have a board, and they have a certain number they send there. It's supposed to be an honor, or perhaps an honor's too strong. It was better to be selected then not be selected.

I went up there, and this was the first time I'd gone to any school, except for one day of firefighting school down in the South Pacific during World War II. And it was a very interesting year. You got to look at other things then just your own Navy duties and so forth and the only people you're working with. And I enjoyed it. We had nice homes right on the ocean, and it was very fine people. They had all been selected to go there, so there were not people who were selected for War College who were below par. They were all bright people.

I think it was a very good thing to do because, in aviation, but also in service, Navy and submarine you get to be clannish because you're working there. The people outside of your small circle really aren't as bright as you think, they're over there doing something, I don't know what they're doing, but nonetheless maybe they don't either. So, you have a tendency to sort of close ranks and pat each other on the back, figuratively speaking.

When you got to Newport or a service school like that you've got the people not only from the surface warfare, and the submarine warfare communities, and the supply corps and the other staff corps. But one of things that is very interesting for the people we had from the Air Force and the Army.

Now these gents were bright, and we started to say well he's only an Army Officer he only knows how to slog through the mud, wrong. He's very bright… and it was quite eye opening to see what they had to offer. Now in the case of the Army people in particular in going to school, they attend a lot of school.

WINKLER: That's right.

HOUSER: One of my roommates, at one of the sessions, I think we had a year – the academic year broken up into two sessions, first and second. My first session one of my roommates we had was an Army Colonel. He was about seven years senior to me, I was the class of '42 he was the class of '35. I think he'd been to about a half a dozen schools between the battalion and the regiment. I don't know all names of the schools, except he was always going to school.

In the Navy, you get your schooling aboard ships. You get out to sea. When he came up there, of course, he could do everything on the planning and so forth, and the working out a war plan and so forth. We knew nothing about it. It wasn't all that hard, but nonetheless he was accomplished in that way. I thought to myself, I think there's an imbalance here, I think they get too many schools. Among other things, the Navy is technically oriented and attracted, and also you are working with equipment with not only your airplanes, but with your ships, that have to be driven and the weapons you have.

In the Army, this is my own conclusion; they had people who would work with men. That was their first film, their big assignment and so they did this, they went to school, they worked with the troops and so forth and marched around the field, and they had maneuvers and so forth, but it was a very different way than the Navy. The Navy paid off in what you would do at sea under conditions that were there and operating with your crews and weapons and so forth and being able to handle the assignments that you were given.

WINKLER: I think that's a valid observation as far as differences between the services. Sometimes we in the Navy history community lament the fact that, you know, Army officers tend to have Master's and Ph.D. degrees, and they study European history and such and it's a rarity that you have that fact round in the Navy.

HOUSER: They also work with civilian authorities, with the mayors and the governors, and the National Guard and all sorts of things that we don't normally get mixed up in.

WINKLER: That's true, you see some of that when you're a base Commanding Officer but because they're a garrison force they're much more, especially when they're a garrison force overseas, you're right they have to be able to deal with the locals. Although, naval officers, commanders, when you pull into port, you know, we do some of those diplomatic things too.

HOUSER: Oh yeah, I made preferential courtesy calls and all that sort of stuff, but I'm talking about people who are living with it. You know, you have a big fort that has hundreds or maybe thousands of acres and so forth, that makes a big impression upon the civilians. We have a pier and we've got some shops and so forth and we have some headquarters, but nothing like the Army.

WINKLER: Yeah, that's a very valid observation. Now…

HOUSER: Oh, the other thing about the Naval War College I think in addition to the people, I think it was the first opportunity that most of us had had to think internationally and globally, and even into space. We had some wonderful speakers, who were brought to the Naval War College as they were to the other staff colleges. They gave us their views on international conditions and on the political alignments and so forth, not necessarily political parties, but principally internationally. They just gave you an entirely different view than what we'd been used to. I think at that stage of your life, your career, it's worthwhile to get that, because it's going to be useful later. If you don't know anything about it, you are really not able to do your job as well as people who have been exposed to it. So, the war colleges do have a good role to play for officers about that period.

One of the things I noticed up there and it didn't affect me because I think, I had assessed properly, a lot of people, particularly this happened with aviators, got up there and they sort of resented being there. I want to get back to the squadron; I want to get my command out of this. Well, everybody did but the point of it, you're not going to get out of there. Some of them sort of resented the fact that they were there. I can't say I'm so smart, all I can say is, I realized what the value of this was. This was an opportunity to think and discuss, and to sort of force yourself in a different frame of mind, and do things that would help you with your career, but not necessarily with flying an airplane or in navigating a ship. I said this is a wonderful thing to take advantage of at this stage rather than resenting it.

So I couldn't understand some of their viewpoints, but we had a great list of speakers who would come up. They were all from Washington and New York and from big prominent colleges and so forth up there. They were worth listening to, and to disregard them I thought was really not right. It wasn't productive, and also they were quite interesting in what they had to offer.

WINKLER: Well during this time period, we're talking about Sputnik and the Explorer going up and so I guess developments in space was I guess a topic that was current in the thinking up there.

HOUSER: Yes. Well, here again though nuclear weapons were the big thing, because the Russians were coming along, and then in 1957 when Sputnik came along it doesn't take much imagination to realize instead of having a monkey up there or just maybe a man, you're going to have a nuclear warhead on there. It puts whole different look at what problems you had, and what their capabilities are.

WINKLER: And that has tremendous implications on defense policy at the time. The fact that we're in the process of building this huge air defense network, which was almost overnight vulnerable to missiles that could come down on us. It turns out that we wound up having a missile gap basically in our favor. From there you're talking to your detailer and what's the good news from Washington?

HOUSER: I was asked to go out to the West Coast to VF 124, which is a Crusader replacement squadron for the Pacific Fleet, and being assigned California, isn't bad news. It was very pleasant living out there; it was in the Bay area, at Moffett Field. I was mayor of the hangar out there, it's now been designated as historical… It's about 250ft high, it's got clam shell doors on it, you may have seen it.

WINKLER: Was it one of the blimp hangars?

HOUSER: Yeah, Well not a blimp it was lighter than air. It was named for the acronym not for the maker. The acronym was here in Lakehurst, and this was out in Moffett Field. It was big.

I was also, as the only commander, I was the senior man of the fleet there. We had several carrier air groups there, and they were all junior to me. I was what's known as CFAD, Commander of Fleet Air Detachment, and I had the number one spot at the Officer's Club. Of course, now they closed it up. It was a very good tour and I enjoyed it. I had a lot people great come through there, Admiral Tom Hayward for example was the commanding officer (CO) for one of the commands there, and a bunch of others. The living was good, responsibilities were great, having that many pilots. Whereas I said in VX3 you didn't have to tell people a lot of things, out there you had to tell them everything.

WINKLER: OK. As your getting many of these, a lot of these right out of flight school, and your ramping them up on the F-8 *Crusader* to insert into duty with fleet squadron. So how long would they be attached to VF 124?

HOUSER: Oh, a couple of months. Depending upon the availability of the airplane and so forth. But it's sort of interesting, Dave, in that these are the people who fought the Vietnam War in the *Crusaders*, and did a fine job.

WINKLER: That's right because, well this is July '59 - August of '60, so you're right a lot of these folks would go on to senior squadron positions within their perspective squadrons.

HOUSER: They did indeed.

WINKLER: Again you probably had a couple of mishaps?

HOUSER: Yes, we didn't have many. I am trying to think now. I don't recall that we lost anybody during that period. I do know that shortly after I left one of the fairly senior officers, he was a, I guess, Lt. Commander, and he was taking off in a *Crusader* and had difficulty and tried to eject and he was killed. I had already gone. His widow is still out in San Diego and she's married to another one of the people who was in the squadron at the time. I remember him, Jerry.

We had others, and we'd end up going to a funeral periodically there in the base chapel. It's just one of those things that happens. One Squadron Commander, who wasn't flying my attachment of airplanes, but another one and he was based there at Moffett Field. He came down from the clouds, and instead of missing the mountain, he hit it dead on, and its mountainous territory around there, you've got to be sure you're on proper course coming in there. We had some like that. But no, we didn't have much, I don't recall any pilot we lost in the squadron in the 124.

WINKLER: Well by that time you had gotten a lot of the kinks out of the aircrafts and they were fairly reliable.

HOUSER: On the flights you generally had an instructor with you. You were going up there doing things, and you were doing, you may have been doing some tactical fighting and so forth, and instruction and so forth. So there was generally a couple along, and there was somebody to provide assistance.

WINKLER: So most of the aircraft were two seaters?

HOUSER: None of them were two-seaters, only the training F-9F. The F-9F two-seaters, the F-9, F-8 were two-seaters, but the *Crusaders* were all single seats.

WINKLER: OK. Going from there, you go to the Joint Staff, the Joint Chief of Staff Office, member of Atomic Energy and Guidance Missiles Branch. Whose idea was this? Was this a call from the detailer?

HOUSER: Well Dave, there's a little more to the story than that. I was out there and I had been selected early for Captain, the year before. I was really having a wonderful time getting this squadron into what I thought was quite good shape. I enjoyed it. I liked command and I liked the responsibilities and I got the call that I was going to come back to Washington. "Well you can't do this to me!" I said, I just got away from there, went to War College and came here and I won't have even been here a year. I just got here, just one year. He says "No, you're coming back," he said. We identified four people, I was one, to be candidates for the Naval Aide to the President, the next President. So, I said, "I would prefer to stay where I am."

He said, "We understand that, but you're coming back." So, we came back, got back and bought this house [2430 Fort Scott Dr. Arlington, VA], and that's how it was.

WINKLER: OK.

HOUSER: And then, I was assigned to OP60, the Strategic Planning Group of the Navy, sort of waiting for assignment. I was specifically in the Nuclear Weapons Group up there in the OP60, OP604. I liked that. Then they sent me down to the, I'm not sure about all the sequence, but they sent me down to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Oh, they said where would you like to go, to which I said, I would like to go to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Well most Navy people just back away from that. They don't want anything to do with the JCS. I said, I'd like to see what's going on. I'd like to see how this thing works. This thing being the Defense Department, and so forth.

So I was sent down there into the Atomic Weapon and Guided Missiles Branch. It had been a really hot section, office before I had gotten down there. So, we had a lot of things going on. We had the election, and elected the President Kennedy in a very close race. Well, he didn't call anybody up from the Navy. There was a senior Senator here in Washington, named Sparkman, from Alabama, and he had a son-in-law who was about my time. He was actually one Naval Academy class behind me, Tazwell Shephard, so he picked Tazwell and rest of us did other things. So I was not considered for that, we were never even interviewed or anything else.

They knew we were around, and talked a little bit about it, but none of the four were ever interviewed for that position. And I really enjoyed that tour in the JCS.

WINKLER: Now, some of the programs we're talking Guided Missiles' Branch and there's the Air Defense Program, the Army had the NIKE Program and they were working on the NIKE HERCULES Program with a nuclear warhead. The Air Force had the BOMARC Program going.

The Navy had a whole bunch of surface to air, the three T's. Were these the types of programs that you were involved in?

HOUSER: Only peripherally and very little in the missiles. It was principally all atomic weapons.

WINKLER: OK.

HOUSER: And it was a great competition for the nuclear mission, for all the services. And they went to great pains to get the missiles, I mean, the nuclear materials, they had plutonium in particular in all their weapons. The Navy had a bunch of, anti-submarine weapons. They also had the Talos cruiser, and the Tartars. We had bombs, they were not set with detonating charges. They were the same bombs the Air Force used, or at least planned to use. They weren't being used, they were war material.

The Army had their missiles, the Honest Johns, and they had the other missiles they had and also weapons. They had the Davy Crockett and another missile I can't think of now. It's just one that reinforces my statement that the Air Force went all out with atomic weapons.

WINKLER: Right, right

HOUSER: Even to the point…

WINKLER: It was an air to air weapon and I can't think of the name right now….

HOUSER: So anyway, it was principally that. And we got into some fairly complicated issues on that, but principally it was a question of the services making their plea on getting them weapons material and the JCS approving this weapon distribution. That depended on, how much petroleum you could get, how many you could build, whose requirements were greater than the others. We got right in the middle of it. A very interesting and very productive time down there.

At the time also the Single Integrated Operational Plan, the SIOP, came along. We were the, Washington node, the SIOP in Omaha, that's the operating one out there. It was our office working with the SIOP, and also one of the offices in J-3. We were J-5, we were the plans, and they were the operators there.

WINKLER: Who was the chairman at the time?

HOUSER: General Lyman Lemnitzer, and General Wheeler was the Director who later became Chairman. Wonderful man, and he was sort of a product of the Army's farm system. He knew everything that had to be known about the JCS, and all the Air Staff and Army Staff, and the Navy Staff.

We were called up to his office frequently. You never went as a single person. You took your Armies, and Navies, and Air Force section up there. You tied together, you went there together, to make sure that the presentation there went through the outlet base of the services.

WINKLER: One of the things which probably most people I talk to when they go to the JCS from the Navy perspective are usually impressed on how further along, I guess, the Army and the Air Force are as far as their officers handling staff work. I guess you were fairly impressed with the capabilities of your JCS counterparts?

HOUSER: Yes, but I tell my own, in fact I'll give you one better than that. I'll tell my own little anecdote. Anytime a policy was written there it started out with what was called a flimsy, I won't go through this too much. We had a flimsy and that was to be circulated to, it circulated to the services for their comments, and then you come down and after that all the callers.

Then they'd have the buff, which I think was the next issue of that. Then you'd sit around a table and we would be the one who'd adjudicate this, because the Joint Chief of Staff (JCS) was the one who took care… a single individual would be carrying this thing, but in my case it would be the Army and the Air Force that would take seats on my team and also help. We'd come down and sit in those offices and try to get those words exactly right.

Sometimes the words would get sort of heated, and I made a couple of decisions. I remember when the Air Force made a grab for almost all nuclear material. I was running this particular paper and we had gotten them enough material for weapons to carry on with the war plan. Of course, there was a very lavish sense of favoritism, so high on probabilities. We'd put three, and four, and five bombs on there. In consideration of the fact that some of them weren't going to get there, you wanted to make sure that some of them got there. We had several nuclear bombs over here on a small airfield you know; it's not very good planning.

Anyway, but then the Air Force came up with a new bomb, I think a SMART 57 bomb, nine megaton I believe. Instead of basing it on the war plan, and so forth, they went to a different system, and they said we want to load the force. Meaning, how many bombs could these airplanes carry and that's how many we need. I guess you could make some case for that if you've got the capability, of course in our ships we load our magazines because they're there, but you don't have refills. Anyway, they started that, and then they said oh well loading the force means we've got to have weapons for all our airplanes. You mean the ones in inventory?

It doesn't make sense, to make this many bombs and it's expensive to do it and means the plutonium isn't going to be going to the Army and the Navy for their weapons, if we give this all to you. Well, the Air Force got pretty upset with me. I was a Captain, of course they had General LeMay and so forth up in their office. And I said I don't approve. So, that was my position. The Army and the Navy agreed with me. When I say the Navy, meaning I wasn't representing the Navy I was representing my staff. They had a very sharp guy named, Keith Brendamine, up there. A great staff officer. He said, "OK, we're going to get Lupin after you", that's Colonel Lupin.

I said, "Bring him on." So, we had a shoot out in the administrative fashion, and confronted the JCS. Admiral Anderson, General LeMay, I forgot who was the Army Chief, maybe General Johnson, but anyway we got in there, and old Lupin had worked me over in our planning sessions, before we took the paper in. I was uncompelled by the Air Force. They didn't need all those damn bombs and so forth.

WINKLER: Hold on one second, and let me say, this is tape two. Today is still January the 11th, year 2001, Dave Winkler continuing along with Vice Admiral Houser. We're with the JCS.

HOUSER: Well anyway Dave, I enjoyed that part of the JCS. We had some exciting times there, and we met with defense officials and the officials of other departments and services and so forth. I really liked it.

Anyway, this was just one anecdote. Another anecdote was when the Berlin Wall was being built. We called up some reserves and so forth and they did one thing and then another, and pushing through of course we tried to make do. So anyway one of the things we wanted to do was beef up the forces in Europe.

The Army suggested that Davy Crockett be sent over. One of my teammates, at least on my three-man team, was a full Colonel named, Al Cowen. He was known as the Father of the Davy Crockett, and so he knew all about it. So, the idea was how to impress them about what the Davy Crockett was. The Davy Crockett was a man portable, 20-ton deal, that two people could carry it, and you could plant it, and the rest of it.

So, Al said "Have you ever seen one," and I said "No." He said "Well I'll take you up in the Army", and through all the security and so forth, and he showed me a mock up that he had from the Pentagon. Anyway, we talked to the Director and told him about this, said, we can bring this thing down to the Tank. So, we brought it down to the tank, and he and I carried it in.

Secretary McNamara was there and the Joint Chiefs were there, "What is this? This is the Davy Crockett", and explained it to him and so forth. "Is that all there is to it?" Cowen, of course was carrying the load here because he…, he said, "Yes Sir." He said, "Send him off." So, by that little demonstration there in the Tank, we got the Davy Crockett to be deployed, deployed under NATO. As soon as the Air Force heard this, we got to have, damn what's the name of that…?

WINKLER: Air to air…

HOUSER: Air to air missile, it had the same warhead as the Davy Crockett. We're going to get our air to air missiles over there, what was it, it seems it began with a "T" whatever it was. Anyway, therefore we had to go back to the drawing board and see how many of these that we should build and get going. We did, but it was sort of a need to thing. The Davy Crockett had some uses there, that the air to air missiles didn't have, but they were talking about putting barriers and barricades and so forth, and even across Turkey, where they might be coming from Eastern Europe, and we had some studies done on that.

The point of it is, these were the types of things that were happening there. I thought it was all very stimulating…and I was happy down there, and had a pretty good reputation. I still see some of the people from there, who were working with U.S. Staffs, it was a good relationship we had with them, they would just call our office directly and so forth and we would talk to them about what was needed. One of the things that impressed me there, was the Navy's capability. The Air Force had a lot of airplanes, and they even at one time had the foreign pilots and foreign aircraft, but then they put the locks on them and then they put the locks on their own airplanes.

But even more difficult for the U.S. Staffs over there was figuring out how to use the weapons in an emergency. They had to get all the member countries, except for the Navy. The Navy was not part of NATO. The Navy was under the U.S. Navy Command. Charlie Carpin, who became Lt. General, he was over there as a Colonel he said, "You know, Bill, the Navy's got the only weapons we can depend on." And Dave, sort of interesting, having been in the Navy for quite a while, the Navy has a different approach to things. They're sort of looked at as a hard-shell group that doesn't cooperate, and might do this and that. I know this for fact from Defense Department Chiefs, Secretary of Defense, and so forth cause I spent almost two years up there, in McNamara and Kilpatrick's office as the Military Assistant to Ross Kilpatrick. Anyway, this any day of the month, or time on staff wanted to emulate, well in the 50s when the NATOs was forming, the Army went over there and bedded down, as did the Air Force and so forth.

We had some Navy activity with the Sixth Fleet, at one point, and at one time I think the British expected that we were going to be the seagoing securer, the Navy and the Royal Navy would join to operate there. These tough American Admirals said, "No!" We'll turn it over when it's necessary and so forth, and we should have the ability to be independent. It was looked upon, I think at the time, as another one of these examples of the uncooperative Admirals. You know, the Admirals who the SECNAV would say, go down and get the Admirals straightened out. Something he never said this about the Generals. The Army was always very cooperative and so forth, and they were very used to this. The Air Force pretty much the same. But the Admirals, spoke their piece and so forth. I'm telling you this because of what happened in my experience there when they had some dust ups and they had some emergencies over there, the only one that the U.S. could depend on, for getting the weapons delivered by the U.S. Navy. The others required permission by the host country and also by the whole NATO structure to approve a mission.

WINKLER: That's a really important observation. During this time period there were two CNOs doing this tour. I guess you caught the end of Burke's tenure and then the beginning of Andersons?

HOUSER: Yes. Admiral Anderson was there from '60 to '62, I believe.

WINKLER: It began in '63 cause he was there for the Cuban Missile Crisis.

HOUSER: So I was then moved up to the Secretary of Defense's Office, on the basis of a paper that I wrote, on nuclear weapons. It got to the attention of the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Ross Kilpatrick. Kilpatrick who liked it and he thought Allen Penthall who was then the wizzyiest of them all.

WINKLER: The wiz kid of the wiz kids, yeah.

HOUSER: He was called the wizzyiest one of them all. Anyway, I got to know Allen. He came down to Joint Staff and he said, "Where did you get all this, where's your back up material?" I said, "It's up here." I was not a nuclear expert, but I picked up enough there, I put it all together in a paper. It wasn't going to them, I forget how it even got up there. I'd written this thing up as commentary work or something. The Navy suggested that some other people who ought to relieve the then Military Assistant, who was a Rear Admiral. They did not nominate me, but they saw the paper and said we want him. So, Kilpatrick picked me, and I went in there. There was sort of a little dust up there, because the Chairman, Charles Nimitzer wanted me working for him, as a Navy Staffer, I mean on his military staff. You know, the Secretary of Defense has priority. So, I went up there and worked there for about a year and a half.

WINKLER: This is a very interesting time for things, cause you're talking about Kennedy years…

HOUSER: TFX [Tactical Fighter Experimental, an aircraft that later became the F-111]

WINKLER: The TFX!

HOUSER: The TFX and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

WINKLER: Exactly. I met with SECNAV Fred Korth, a few years back before he passed away, and…

HOUSER: Fred Korth, was very well received. I used to get up when his big limousine would come in there and take him through the door about 6:30 and I would hear the click of the door. Click, click and I said well that's my time to get up. He really became a very good friend.

WINKLER: So, I got the Korth perspective on the TFX and basically, the viewpoint seemed to be that he was kind of hung up to dry by the Kennedy administration, because he thought a sincere choice was General Dynamics and I guess Boeing was the other contractor. What was your perspective of that whole dust up?

HOUSER: It was a mess. The idea was good. The Air Force wanted an airplane that was fairly sizable and expensive to build, and the Navy wanted an airplane to carry missiles around and protect the fleet. They would operate in the cellular fleet, but they'd have long-range missiles and would go there and it was called Eagle Missile Air. Here's an airplane with wings that sweep back. The Air Force could penetrate at high speed. They had an outrageous unnecessary requirement for it. They wanted it to go Mach 1.2, you wouldn't get any range out of the damn thing anyway, crash and so forth. It was one of these things well we'll keep pushing and pushing and pushing, but they didn't need it.

Nonetheless, then if you could build it for two it would be a lot better and cheaper for both of them. Well, the Navy version came along, and they got it to fly, but it continued to grow and grow and

grow. That's the history of airplanes no one is going to weigh this much, and go this far and so forth. It always continues to be great, it gets to be heavier and it gets to be larger and the Air Force is saying, "So what, make the hanger a little different", or maybe make the runway a little longer if they need to. This wonderful fellow, George Steinenburg was brought into this, and Ed Heinemann, who you may or may not remember. Ed Heinemann was called the Father of the A-4, the Heinemann Hotrod.

So anyway, and Ed said "You know, every airplane designer should be made to design a Navy airplane." He said, "You know, if your design comes out and you've got some problems in stability or you've got some problems in weight balance, you've got one thing or the other, or in speed. What you want to do is you want to get the finest ratio increase, all you do is make it a little longer." You can't do that with the Navy, because it's got to be this long, you can't do that.

He said also, "you don't have that vertical tail stability that you need, the directional stability, with this vertical sail line what you should do is increase the height on your vertical sail line." But you can't do that you've got a hanger deck down there and you've got to keep it within that length. So, the airplane just got out of control. It got heavier and larger and so forth, and the Navy said it won't do the job. There were also some line qualities, problems with it. Nonetheless, it was too big, still hadn't grown all the way, it had grown quite a bit. It wasn't a finished airplane for the fleet, when the Navy said we can't use it.

Well, this precipitated a great disagreement within the Defense Department, when the Navy said we can't use this. Well, here again since the Admirals were held in, I won't say low esteem as much as sort of in awe, what are these bastards doing to us now, the Admiral's club down there.

The people, George Steinenburg in particular, said, "Nope, not the airplane for you, it won't do the job for you." I have had so much respect for George Steinenburg and his experiences - even at that time he had had about thirty years with the Navy. This was in the early mid-sixties. He had been working with them since the mid-thirties. So, he had been there for thirty years.

WINKLER: Alright.

HOUSER: So anyway Dave, McNamara said, "I'm going to take charge of this, personally." He was the head of Saturday morning meetings, presided all by himself. He felt that, you know fly before buy. He felt that if you had a problem with an airplane, and perhaps he thought this about other things, if you study the problem long enough you're going to have a perfect airplane when you first fly it.

It doesn't work that way. There are things you can't figure out, now with computers we're better off than we were before them. Nonetheless, he felt that if you just study it, study it, study it, well it didn't improve. It continued to grow and got heavier and so forth. They finally made it, and backed out. Here again was an example of the Navy being too rigid, and so forth, and not cooperating, and not going with the stream. In my view, it was a good idea, but it simply didn't work out. People, like McNamara, were unwilling to believe it couldn't be done.

WINKLER: Eventually, the F-111 came out of this and the Air Force used…

HOUSER: ECM.

WINKLER: Right. They retired them early and found out in the 1990s that they had very limited capability.

HOUSER: Here again the Air Force, bless their hearts, were forward looking and so forth, and they gave us the Blackbirds, shouldn't have, now they've got four of them back or something. I don't know if that was ever proved at the time or not, but very, very sensitive thing with McNamara. In the F-111, we'll do it

all for you, well it didn't work out. So now, every time they went out, the Navy and the Marine 86Bs were just heal and toe, one after another, one after another, because they're the only ones left.

WINKLER: Exactly. Some of the other issues, military kinks, could you talk about your experience with Ross Kilpatrick?

HOUSER: Did you want to enter that phase?

WINKLER: Yeah let's go ahead.

HOUSER: Well, I was brought up there to be one of his two military assistants. There was an Army Colonel and myself. Somebody said, boy you've got it made now. I said, "Wrong, first time you screw up you're fired. The fact that you're up there doesn't mean you've got it made or not. It just means you're more vulnerable."

But I had a good tour up there, and I got to see things up close, in close range. McNamara and Kilpatrick were their own people, they needed help but they didn't really need a lot of advice. They got their advice from their own staff, from the wiz kids, from Hitch, Terry Hitch. He was the not Assistant Secretary of Defense, but a comptroller. They all spoke the same language. Most of them came from California colleges and so forth. They understood what they wanted to do, and they didn't need a lot of help.

One of the things that is sort of interesting, they could see what they could do with some of these papers from JCS, the types of things I used to work on. They would sit around in the JCS and work for hours on some papers. Should, should be changed to would, we'd try to get all these nuances in there. When I got up to the third floor, they didn't pay any attention to this, I won't say to the paper. But, some of the paper they disregarded but others they looked at. All of that fine tuning we did, in the Services Chiefs it was necessary, particularly to some of them. They wanted to have exactly the right word. When I used to think of the time that we would spend on just a few words or phrase, up there were just ignored.

I did see, and I saw their activities, when they were making judgments on the whole not on some piece. And I say this, maybe I can explain it a little better, but to take a look at the commonsense approach to something. Now, not only what somebody says and so forth, but: Is this really what we want to do? It was very interesting to see that. It was a bigger perspective than what you get in the Navy Staff, or even the JCS and so forth, because these people were reporting to the President. They were talking one or two syllable words instead of some of the long discourses as to why something is happening, but they would make the decision.

Unfortunately, that was, I say, interesting for me to observe. I thought they paid far more attention to their staff, Al Emento in particular, who were very bright people but they weren't established. They would pay attention to what he had to say. He had several options. Emento would say, I recommend option two, afterward McNamara, Kilpatrick would sign off on it. I think this came home to haunt the Defense Department when we got into war.

I thought that McNamara was very good. I'm in a small minority here, I thought he did a very good job, as the Secretary of Defense when he came in. The senators, I forget, maybe it was Senator Russell, said "He's not only the best Secretary of Defense we've had, he's the only Secretary of Defense." He's the first one to put his arms around the whole installation, the whole Department, rather than looking at some piece of it. Looking at things like the Navy and Air Force and that stuff. He paid a lot of attention to his regular advisors, but he didn't pay enough attention to the military, but particularly this is shown in the war.

I won't say argue, but I disagree with some of my friends in the services. I thought he did a good job, and he came in and sort of cleaned house, and started to put things in order. He did take too much authority on his own, and he didn't respect the views of the military, or people coming up, particularly so during the Vietnam War when I said he was perhaps the best Secretary of Defense we had during the early days. Of course, again, he was the worst Secretary of War.

When you get into war, it's an entirely different thing. When you're supporting it and you're building things like you're building belt buckles or you're building tanks or something else, you get these things built, to use these weapons you have a different approach in wartime, and I find arguments now or at least disagreements with some of the things going on right now particularly with some of things such as, this coup.

This Lt. General Kennedy, probably a Kennedy, who was a groupie, or crook rather, she had something called consideration of others. And she thinks you want to be considerate of your opponent, or even your ally there in the training and so forth. If this female can't get over the obstacle course, you should go over there and help her because, but always be nice and sweet and so forth. Like I told somebody the other day, talking, she should be at the UN, or the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, but military people should be tough to fight the guy they're going after. If he's your opponent you want to overwhelm him, might be necessary to kill him and so forth, but that's your objective, but it isn't to somehow see how much sweetness and lightness you can use.

She said, well this is not your father's army, maybe we won't ever have to fight like that. My feeling is this, there's a whole different psychology to wartime/peacetime. Wartime, wars are not peacetime with some ammunition being used, and peacetime is not war in the absence of the gun. I've been in three of them now and they're entirely different situations. You send people from peacetime into wartime but you have to screen yourself off, in a different direction. I guess I'm stumbling here a bit trying to describe it, what I'm saying is you have an entirely different outlook in wartime than in peacetime. And people who haven't been there don't understand it.

McNamara hadn't been there. Then he played this game, sort of a chess game, he felt if I move my horse over here and he takes his castle and I take my king, and they're going to do something else. They'll respond. I think these people in Vietnam were just, North Vietnam, were just laughing up their sleeves early. They knew exactly what they wanted to do, they were not going to be reasonable at all, and that's what I'm saying about war, you don't do this. It's not a reasonable thing, it's survival, because survival is at stake. That seems to be one of our greatest mistakes.

WINKLER: Getting back to some of the things that early McNamara, he put in the budgeting process, which actually continues today.

HOUSER: Planning, budgeting, yes, they'd had three or four different names, a five-year plan, not just a single year.

WINKLER: That's right. That's something which started, the other thing was, they established a lot of defense agencies during this time period, Communications, Intelligence, and there were a lot of initiatives to establish defense agencies. As a military assistant to Ross Kilpatrick what were your views on these activities?

HOUSER: I'll give you my views in a moment, but let me say, I think the motivations in that one is there's competition. As for, what is your view of this situation, for intelligence for example, you're getting one from the Army, one from the Navy, one from the Air Force and they all may have different views on this. Another error, I think, they said it's not efficient. We don't need all these people, and they got rid of some people.

The third one, views that we'll have this consolidated view and report to the Secretary of Defense rather then to him. I don't think it was all bad, the Defense Intelligence Agency and the Defense Logistics Agency and the others I thought worked good. But here again when you get something going like that it continues to grow and grow.

The Services themselves have a knowledge of what they need. They did leave small staffs, for example, in intelligence, for Navy Intelligence, and for Air Intelligence and for the others, but the big movement went to something like the Defense Intelligence Agency.

I found no problem working with them, particularly when you get into something like the Cuban Missile Crisis where I thought they were very valuable. The Navy and the Air Force in particular would give their views, and their contribution to it, but the outfit that really did the job was the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA). Here again, they took over the Navy's Code Interpretation Center, they were the ones who would go into work analyzing those telegrams.

The defense agencies put a lot more power into the Secretary of Defense's office. Whether there was a reason or not, I don't know but that happened, and it continued to be different assignments. They called it the Executive Agent and Executive Agency. In the Navy, in the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Navy was the Executive Agency. After that first night they had a meeting, I attended, sitting on the sidelines with the Chiefs, all the Chiefs and the Secretaries and Kilpatrick and McNamara, when this whole thing was laid out in the dining room just on the other side of the office, and I was invited in there.

The Secretary, Mr. McNamara, explained what was going on and so forth, and what each of the services would be doing and so forth. The Navy was going to take the lead in this whole thing. I have to say that, I thought there was almost a giddiness in the room. By Golly, this is our war, you know. The *Guns of August* had come out, not long before that. Here was our *Guns of August*, here we've got this war, and this war is all up to us, not war, but we've got this period of great danger, and of course, we've got nuclear weapons to consider.

And I thought the JCS ought to run this. So, I walked back to the CNO's office, Admiral Anderson, with him. I said, "Admiral why don't we turn this over to the Colonel? Why isn't this managed by the Joint Staff? You've got an operations staff down there and all the people reporting in terms of..." He said, "No," he said, "We'll handle this one. We'll show them how it ought to be done." They continued to be Executive Agent, but that was of course, I think we talked about that and Admiral Anderson's problem with McNamara.

WINKLER: While we're on the subject of the Cuban Missile Crisis, when did you first, where were you when you first heard about this problem we had in Cuba?

HOUSER: I was in the Secretary's Office, Mr. Kilpatrick's office. I went up there in February and this was now October. I was not cut in on that first indication. Because this was handled very, very close held stuff, and the messenger would be coming along, and some people come in with something under their arms, photographs of some type. They'd walk into Kilpatrick's office, they didn't stop by to see me, or Glen Roberts. Then it soon became apparent that something was going on.

It was handled quite well and quite speedily. I remember the Saturday morning, I think it was Saturday morning, when President Kennedy was supposed to go to Chicago to make a speech. He begged off, said he caught cold or something, Kilpatrick spent the rest of the day over there in the White House. He was a member of what they called the EX-COMM, and we stayed there all day, and I think we spent the night, there that night.

WINKLER: At the White House?

HOUSER: No, I'm sorry, we stayed in the Pentagon, we did not go over there. No, the Lincoln bedroom hadn't been used for guests, at least the.

WINKLER: OK.

HOUSER: So anyway, he went over there, and that began almost a continuous operation, and they both spent the night there at the White House. In this giddiness, myself I felt, hey kids you're dealing with something here pretty powerful, and don't screw it up! They weren't careless I didn't mean that, but I felt, they somehow thought that this was their great chance, a great experience of their life, and it was.

WINKLER: As far as command and control, there was the confrontation I guess between McNamara and Anderson. You weren't around for that, were you?

HOUSER: As a matter of fact, I was.

WINKLER: Oh, OK.

HOUSER: Every night, during these ten days, McNamara and Kilpatrick and I would come from Kilpatrick's office to the meetings like clockwork. We'd find out what was going on yesterday, how these ships had been turned around and so forth, how many flights had been made and that sort of stuff, since the Navy was Executive Leader.

So, we'd meet in there. Then one night came the time to intercept the Russian ship, and don't stop. So, McNamara and Anderson were talking and McNamara said we want to stop this ship on the border. I forget the exact words, but the idea was Anderson said, "Yes sir, we'll be able to do that!" He said, "Now describe what's going to happen." Anderson said, "I've got Admiral Corky Ward there, Commander of the Second Fleet, and he knows exactly what to do."

McNamara said, "No, because I don't want him to do it. I want you to do it. I want you to take charge."

Admiral Anderson said something like this, "Mr. Secretary, Admiral Ward knows what to do; he's been trained for this. He is there, and he will do the job that we need."

McNamara came back with something like this, "No, I want you to do it!" It was a direct order.

Anderson turned and said, "Alright, but this is the last time!" It was in direct disobedience of orders that Admiral Anderson did carry it out, but McNamara insisted that he wanted him to. And here again is something that military people had not been really used to, and that is having the civilians involved to that degree.

WINKLER: Right.

HOUSER: In World War II the Generals and Admirals were told what to do, let me know how it goes. I'm not trying to excuse McNamara I'm trying to explain, I'll try to explain why I think he was so sensitive to things like this. These gents were very, very fearful about nuclear weapons. They wanted to make sure that something didn't go wrong that could set off a nuclear war, which is a pretty good objective. He thought it had to be handled, very close by the guy who knew exactly what was going on, and what was said and what steps were taken and so forth, and not just say it's all over. They wanted to be there just to make sure that there weren't some mistakes in here, or somebody had said something or done something that would be interpreted in a way that might set off a nuclear war. That's a good objective, but I'm not sure it was necessary to do it to that extent, because he didn't have all this good judgment either.

McNamara wanted to make sure we didn't have a nuclear war and after all that is one of the best objectives that I can think of, the fact that we were worried about nuclear warfare all this time was very good.

WINKLER: Yes.

HOUSER: But the same thing inhibited them in Vietnam, and the rules of engagement and so forth, I think, were too stringent. They gave too much credit, rather, to the capability of the Soviets. The Soviets couldn't do everything that McNamara and the others thought they could do. The result of this is; we had restrictions that were not necessary and so forth. We did not confront the Soviets; I'm getting to Vietnam now, but I won't, I'll just make these last couple of points.

One is, when a photo reconnaissance located the very obvious tracks and patterns for the SA-2 missile sites, and McNamara would not let the military attack those until they got missiles there. He said, "We're afraid that you'll have Russians killed, and they will react." Like they're going to start sending missiles off. Well, that's a bunch of ...Far too careful as far as I'm concerned. I think, if we had gotten in there and hit them hard, every time one of them showed up, eventually they would get the idea that we didn't like them too much.

But, when we said go ahead and get them in there and wait, and after you get them operating we'll shoot um. That to me didn't make any sense. Things like that, Dave, he was so afraid and the same thing was true about China.

The Chinese would come down there in great force. Probably that was more hazardous than the Russians; that the Chinese would come down there. Among other reasons, the Vietnamese didn't want them down there; that's a good reason. It just, the nuclear equation, the nuclear factor in the equation wasn't there for the Chinese so we didn't have to deal with that. We had a couple of airplanes that got lost and over-flew China, while there, and nobody got that excited about that.

WINKLER: Yeah, I think the problem with China was that people just had this, the whole recollection of the Korean War with the Chinese involved. I think, Colonel Summers wrote the book on strategy where he discussed that the concern about the Chinese was overrated for various reasons.

HOUSER: I feel the same way.

WINKLER: Getting back to the Cuban Missile Crisis, some of the other observations. You mentioned you were there, I guess the Navy Plot is where the Navy Command Center still is today in the Pentagon?

HOUSER: On the Fourth Deck.

WINKLER: On the Fourth Deck and the D Ring. Of course the Russians back down, and then we have them pulling out. Then we have to monitor the withdrawal of the missiles. Any observations about that process?

HOUSER: No, I wasn't involved there. I was aware of what was going on.

WINKLER: It must have been a great sigh of relief though with the Mr. Kilpatrick and…

HOUSER: Yes sir, and they felt quite proud of their contributions they had made in this. There was some good judgments made there, perhaps not all of them were good. We may have taken steps that we didn't have to take, but here again they wanted to make sure there was nothing there that could be misinterpreted

and maybe touch off a nuclear incident. We just gave the Russians too much credit for what they had and their capabilities, and it really didn't turn out that way.

WINKLER: Although, recently I guess it's been revealed that the Russians, they did have tactical nuclear weapons there in Cuba. Had we landed troops they could have deployed them, and that was a capability they had on the ground that we weren't aware of.

HOUSER: That would have resulted in a lot of people being killed. But, not one of these things about the exchanged missiles, and that was what they were afraid of.

WINKLER: One thing, at that time we had an overwhelming superiority. I guess another question is; could the Russians move against Berlin or someplace like that?

HOUSER: Yes, and that was a concern too. I'll tell you, as a military man, had I been in the Russians position I'd have done exactly what they'd done - backed out. For this reason, SAC had that airborne alert, twenty four hours a day, airplanes loaded, tankers up there to get them on there. It's not going to be an even fight at all.

WINKLER: No, it would have been…

HOUSER: …a catastrophe for their country…

WINKLER: That's right.

HOUSER: And they knew that.

WINKLER: Other aspects of your tour with Mr. Kilpatrick? Obviously, you probably had opportunities; you spent quite a bit of time with McNamara…

HOUSER: No, not quite a bit of time, some time, at some meetings with him and so forth. He had his own military assistants. I was Kilpatrick's, one of his two.

WINKLER: Ever have a chance to sit in on a meeting with the President?

HOUSER: No.

WINKLER: OK.

HOUSER: Well we had that one meeting, when Kennedy came over and addressed all the officers at the Pentagon. Anyway, we had one in the auditorium. I met him, I was on, I forget which carrier it was, must have been the *Roosevelt* or something, when Kennedy went out to see the display of the Navy might, and watch the failure of anti-air missiles. That was a very bad day.

WINKLER: OK, you were attached to…

HOUSER: I was attached to Kilpatrick, he went out so I went out. No not my carrier.

WINKLER: I guess the problem was that the missiles were designed to break apart Soviet Bison, bombers, and the drums were actually smaller than the settings. So, it wasn't a good show.

HOUSER: No it wasn't, and even the air-to-air missiles and that type of thing, they didn't work either, veered off and so forth. It was one of those days you want to forget.

WINKLER: So, any other highlights in that tour, any at the Pentagon? We covered the JFX, we covered TFX, we covered the Cuban Missile Crisis, the Defense Agencies, imagine you spent a lot of time on the road?

HOUSER: Made trips with Arthur M. Schlesinger to Europe, to Japan and so forth. Saw that type of activity. When he went, it was nice, because you always traveled well, stayed in nice places and so forth. He was a very effective guy, very polished.

WINKLER: Again your Naval War College courses probably came in handy with this international, now that you're actually traveling to these places that you're talking about?

HOUSER: But also, Dave, as a naval officer, having a duty that is civic and having fought Korea, in the Korean War, and being in Japan and so forth, and I enjoyed China going to Hong Kong rather and so forth, and in Europe. I'd been in Europe with the Sixth Fleet, and Nepal there and so forth, so these were all not new places for me.

WINKLER: OK, you then go on to Advance Management Program Harvard Business School, so you're a Harvard Business School Graduate?

HOUSER: Of the Advanced Management Program, it was a ninety-day course up there, of course a very expensive thing. The best part was to send people there. This thing started in WWII. Started about 1922, or '23. They got a bunch of smart guys there, and Harvard had a ninety day course up there, and it was a very, very concentrated course. You came and not only did you have these problems, and hear these lectures and take the essence of what they had in their business courses, but when you started out you had a class and you had class officers, and you did a final yearbook when you graduated, you had the classes up to the last week and they sat in these classes and so forth. They packed an awful lot into these three months, thirteen weeks.

WINKLER: How did you get picked for the program?

HOUSER: I wanted to go, and I let the detailers know. The reason I went, a friend of mine, Admiral Larry Geis, he was then a Captain, he recommended it. So, I asked for it, and I was picked to go.

WINKLER: Being, from what I can see here, you were probably screened and selected for a Deep Draft Command, so consequently, the typical thing which would happen is that you would go on more of a logistics ship, which you did, because you're an aviator and this is surface warfare.

HOUSER: Well not exactly, see I spent three years…

WINKLER: That's right back in World War II you got…

HOUSER: I think I told you I was the Officer of the Deck on MacArthur's Flagship on the *Nashville*. So, I knew which way to put the rudder and that sort of stuff.

WINKLER: But that's twenty years previous so I guess some refresher training…

HOUSER: An interesting thing, when I got aboard this ship and the first time I went to sea, I thought I knew as much or more than anybody else on that ship. They were not very well staffed on those ships, anyway then. The support force doesn't get the pick of the litter.

WINKLER: I was one…

HOUSER: I'm talking about the pick of the enlisted, of the Chiefs, of the officers. You get a lot of the young officers, and so forth, and they're bright, but they're inexperienced. I remember going on board there, and we got out in some very rough weather off in the Atlantic, and we had no ballast in us, we had no ammunition or so forth. We were riding around there and hitting bad waves, and being pushed over, and you know we were way out of the water. All I could think of was about the *Warrington* and some of those DDs in World War II that were not ballasted and they were running fuel and they all capsized. I wasn't ready to flood the hold, but I did think about it. I called my Chief Engineer and others up there, and they said, "Oh yes, sir we can do it, but please don't do it." It is big mess and so forth, and getting it cleaned up, and getting the salt out of there can be a real mess. I didn't do it. What we did was I just made sure we were very careful, and didn't get ourselves exposed to that. That's a whole new story, unless you wanted to go ahead with that now?

WINKLER: Well, let's see, I don't know this might be a good place to wrap it…

HOUSER: It's five o'clock now…

WINKLER: Five o'clock…

HOUSER: I've been here for two and a half hours.

WINKLER: Yeah, so let's call it a wrap and pick up with the *Mauna Loa* on the next tape and go from there.

Vice Admiral William D. Houser
Interviewer Comdr. David Winkler
January 31, 2001

WINKLER: Today is January 31st, 2001. This is Dave Winkler, Naval Historical Foundation with Vice Admiral William D. Houser in one of a continuing series of interviews about your career, sir. Today we'd like to pick it up 1964, February. You had been at Harvard, could you talk about picking up the job as the Commanding Officer of the *Mauna Loa.*

HOUSER: Yes, it was an assignment, sort of in due course on your way to a carrier. Obviously, I'd been selected for a carrier, and I went there and this is called a deep draft command, to let you play with something larger than a sailboat or a small boat, and get your sea legs under you so that you know the rules of the road and what to do at sea and so forth.

I also looked forward to it in route, I hoped, to a carrier. The ship was based in New York and it was at a small ship repair facility undergoing a modification and overhaul. Not really an overhaul, but just ship availability at the time.

This was a very, very rundown out-of-the-mainstream facility. The ship was 25 years old. I guess it was more on the order of twenty years old and it had worked hard. It really needed a lot of work. Diesel engines. And the crew in the service force were not necessarily the top ones. You speak of Rickover getting the cream of the crop. We got the bottom of the vat, or the bottle. But anyway they were good people and I really enjoyed my cruise there. I was pretty much acting on my own as the commodore was based at Norfolk and I was in New Jersey at Bayonne, and he liked that. He said he never had to worry about me.

For example, one of my engines went out and they didn't have spare parts for that and I located some spare parts down in the ship storage, down in Texas, near Beaumont, Texas. We'd gotten material from there, all on my own. I didn't have to go to somebody else. He said that's good, he liked that. So I enjoyed that.

Made a cruise down to Guantanamo and on the East Coast, did some servicing and had one deployment, and, being an aviator, having command of this thing, I felt that there were better things to do with the ship than the type of replenishment they were doing. Have we covered this before?

WINKLER: No.

HOUSER: I was near Lakehurst, New Jersey, so while we were in New York, I asked the type commander if I could get a pickup platform for the stern to transport ammunition that way. There was a new system coming out from the technicians in the Bureau of Ordinance and it was called FAST, something like Fleet Automated something Transfer. But it was a very sophisticated thing and this was not a very sophisticated ship, and it took a lot of rudder to keep these ships from going into each other because the tension on the line between the two ships while you're transferring heavy baggage, was quite high. Well, I started out with the helicopters by going down to Lakehurst and talking to them and the next thing you know they were qualifying on my ship. All without anybody's permission, but I went ahead and did it.

WINKLER: Did your ship have a helo deck?

HOUSER: It had nothing on there until I had one put on there. The Navy Yard in Brooklyn did it. It was approved. And so I would go down there, get on my radio and call them and say, "I'm out here, come on out." So they would zoom their helicopters out there and we would let them practice landings, which was good for them and they liked it.

So, that continued and actually when we got down to Norfolk, the Commander of the Service Force, Admiral Hales, came out and he wanted to see this. And so we rigged it up and he was just pleased as punch. CH-46 Sea Knight was an old helicopter now, but it was brand new then, big. This was just a pickup platform. Well, we had an LSO back there and he brought this CH-46 in and landed. I almost died. This is a pickup platform. Here I am on an ammunition ship where you don't want any fires or crashing and so forth.

Well they thought this was great. He deformed my platform, but it didn't break; it didn't go through. And Admiral Hales was so pleased with this whole thing that he gave me a commendation medal for it. You didn't normally get commendation medals when you went out there. So many, particularly aviators, went out there and got reprimands for running aground or running into something. So this is a departure.

But I really had a good time on that and the crew came in and they worked hard and they were just so diligent in their duties and so forth. They responded so well. People, I don't care whether they were very intelligent or whether they were not so, they respond to leadership. They want to succeed. They want the ship to look good, and they want to see the commanding officer look good. And so we had a nice cruise, then I left there and went directly to - no, then I went to office of the Secretary of Defense in Washington and spent a year there, and then went out to the USS *Constellation*.

WINKLER: OK, just one thing to wrap up the tour on the ammunition ship, during that time you didn't do any overseas deployment because of the yard period?

HOUSER: That's correct, no, we weren't needed overseas. We had come back from overseas before I took it, so they didn't have another one.

WINKLER: I don't know if you did any ammunition, I imagine probably loaded up at Navy Weapons Station Earle…

HOUSER: At Sandy Hook up there.

WINKLER: OK, I was stationed there. I know it well.

HOUSER: When were you there?

WINKLER: I was there in 1980. I was on the *Suribachi.*

HOUSER: Well, I was there in - this is in 1964, and that long pier. A long way out. But it was sort of an independent command. Nobody bothered me. We did enough ammunition handling that it was a fine experience for me and I like that type of command. I like being in command. I like to have things to do, particularly when the crew responds.

WINKLER: How was the quality of the junior officers and chiefs on board that ship at the time. I imagine you had quite a few officer candidate school (OCS) types? What were your recollections?

HOUSER: They were competent. I will say they were not whizzes, but they weren't bad people, no. They did well. I got to know all of them on a small ship like that. I got to know them and they knew me and, I think we had a good relationship between us. They certainly did themselves proud.

One of the things that I noted on that, Dave, was that there were a lot of young men and you, of course found this some years later, who had been called into the Navy and I thought at the time, here is certainly an endorsement for universal military training. I saw much in these young men, most of them clearly were not going to make the Navy their career, but I think without exception they all were the better for having served. They learned this matter of responsibility. They had responsibilities at that age that they never would have had before. They knew what is was to be loyal to someone and to serve their country. I think it was a very proud thing.

I go to reunions now and see people who are there and got out and nearly all of them bless the years that they spent in the Navy. I can't speak for the Army or the Air Force. I would imagine some are like that, but I think the Navy's unique in some respects. They did, they acquitted themselves well and I think they learned a lot and they certainly served their country.

WINKLER: Now, you wind up going back to Washington, I take it?

HOUSER: Yes.

WINKLER: Discuss the conversation with the detailer on this one. Obviously you have a one year tour on the ammunition ship and you know you're going to a carrier. How did this tour come into play?

HOUSER: I think it was my friend Admiral Geis, who was there on the Net Evaluation Subcommittee. He needed a relief to go take command of the USS *Forrestal*. He knew I was becoming available. He was a very close personal friend. The next thing you know I've got orders to Washington and he's left. I think that was really - he was there, he knew me. There was nothing necessarily would point me in the direction of the Net Evaluation Subcommittee, but they did need somebody there.

WINKLER: Describe the duties.

HOUSER: The duties were not very well defined. I think at one time when they were working for nuclear weapons and so-forth, the National Security Council, they probably had a lot to do. But what they did when we got there was to organize a study on China. What's China doing? What's the threat to us? What should we be doing about it and so forth? So we started that and made it, I think hadn't quite finished when I was there, but it did, I think, provide useful information at that time about a subject that really wasn't well known.

WINKLER: Net Evaluation Subcommittee, what is that - that's kind of a vague name for an organization.

HOUSER: No, of the National Security Council.

WINKLER: Of the National Security -

HOUSER: Yes, at one time I think they felt they needed some staff support from the military and they used Net Evaluation. Possibly, I don't know the history before, it may have been that they were giving them people - to weapon systems, or organizations or so forth - I don't know that. But that was the name when I went to it.

WINKLER: Was this a field executive building, or was this -?

HOUSER: No, we were in the Pentagon. We had a four-star general, General Leon Johnson, who was a Medal-of-Honor winner in World War II. All the others I think were 06s. They were colonels or captains.

WINKLER: Obviously you're supporting the National Security Council.

HOUSER: Plus several people from the State Department were over there to join us.

WINKLER: Did the topic of Vietnam come up during that time frame? We were starting to escalate at that time period.

HOUSER: Not in the context of Vietnam. We were all conscious of what was going on down there, but this was more about China, this great mass of people and land and so forth. What did we see ahead? What did we think they were going to be doing and so forth? Would it evoke a threat to us and that sort of stuff? But it wasn't the direct application to what they might do during the Vietnam War.

WINKLER: You knew you were going to go to a carrier. When did you find out it was the USS *Constellation*?

HOUSER: I think probably in late 1964. I think I was relieved in January in '66.

WINKLER: Right, so you're looking forward to this tour of duty while you're here in Washington.

HOUSER: I'm looking forward to my carrier.

WINKLER: Yes.

HOUSER: Yes, although that wasn't uppermost in my mind. I didn't say, "Oh, let me go! Let me go!" I was ready to go whenever they chose me and whenever they were ready to relieve me. But I think I told you before, the present assignment is the most important one.

WINKLER: That's right. Well, the *Constellation*, we just got an interview in from Vice Admiral Thomas Walker who was the first CO of the *Constellation* and he talked about, I guess, they had a horrible fire in the Brooklyn Navy Yard during construction and he talked about going out to San Diego. The ship was, I guess, based in San Diego?

HOUSER: Yes, I was there for the - Tom Walker is a close friend of mine and I was there at the commissioning of the *Constellation*. I think it was the 27th of October 1961, and Tom and Peggy are good friends of my wife and I've known him for a long time. He did a fine job.

At one time they thought they might even scrap the ship, it was so badly burned. A number of people lost their lives in that, but they cleaned it up and I'd say being a little immodest, it's the queen of the ship of seas, as far as I'm concerned. It's a wonderful ship and a lot of people coming back from the ship say that. But it's got wonderful reputation. I was glad to go there, the *USS Constellation*. The fact of the matter is I would take any of them and when I left it would be the finest ship in the Navy as far as I'm concerned.

WINKLER: Talk about the Change of Command Ceremony. Was it a full blown one or one of these underway changes of command?

HOUSER: We had the whole nine yards right there at San Diego. A lot of dignitaries were there, a lot of friends, a lot of professionals. There were some professionals there in the San Diego area, all went in there and it turned out very nice.

The person I was relieving, a classmate of mine, George Moeller who was getting out of the Navy. His unfortunate carrier tour was in the shipyard at Bremerton for a year, so he had almost no sea time at all. But while he was there, he made some political friends and decided that he would run for Congress. So he resigned, only he didn't win his seat in Congress, so he lost his Navy career and the seat.

But George is a good friend of mine. He did something, since this is - that I found a little strange. It's customary to have a reception after the change of command and George felt it wasn't necessary for him to participate, so I had to take this on my own shoulders. Although I had a very nice house that I rented over there and people remarked about how nice it was, but COC was all on me and not on him. I wouldn't have changed a thing. These things don't bother me. I think it's just sort of an unusual, strange thing to do, because normally this is hosted by both officers. The Commander who's being relieved and the one who's relieving.

WINKLER: Traditionally it's a fifty-fifty deal. I have a personal experience where I was an interim CO, as a lieutenant between two captains and so I had a reserve center for six weeks and there were two receptions and I got stuck paying for half of two.

HOUSER: Really?

WINKLER: Oh, yeah, for two of them.

HOUSER: Well, we both sort of got the same thing. I got all for one. Of course, this was a big carrier and people came from all over the country.

WINKLER: A lot of Swedish meatballs. Ok, you had this aircraft carrier just out of the yard, so obviously you're going through the training up cycle. Taking the air wing aboard. Discuss the relationship that you established between the air wing and the ship's crew and I imagine eventually you had an embarked staff?

HOUSER: Yes, not while we were on the West Coast. During that work-up period I was the senior officer on there. Didn't have any Flag rank.

A little later, talking about my commander Carrier Division Two tour, I flew my flag on five of the six carriers in the Atlantic Fleet when I went out there and I liked it that way. And we did a lot of carrier qualifications and exercises. It was a good period. Didn't see much of my home there, a lot of time at sea, but it was all worthwhile and the interesting part was and sort of the stimulating part is, you knew you were preparing to go to Vietnam. And people at Vietnam were getting killed. What you wanted to do was make sure your group was as trained and as ready for this as you could. It's not only the carrier operations around the ship, where you're taking off and you're landing and handling weapons and so forth, but it's what you do over the target.

One of the things, David, I did was participate with the air wing. I went to their briefings and their training activities. I got to know all the commanders and all of their crew, all of the pilots, and aircrews. And I was interested in what they did. If they hit the targets, how'd they do on range and fuel and so forth. And when I first got into Naval Aviation, before carriers, I was disappointed that commanding

officers of the ships were principally interested in landing intervals and how you looked around the ship. Whether you went off on time and got back on time. All of which are important, but I think this is more of the competitive nature of the pre-war where the person got all his airplanes off a little faster than the other in a competitive sense, so "I won."

Far as I'm concerned that's just an airfield out there and it's going to get these planes over there on time, fully trained and so forth, and I *will* know what they're doing. What they're armament is; what their weapons are; where they're going and so forth. Because of that, I spent a lot of time with them. Just a little aside, Admiral McDonald came aboard on a visit, he was the Chief of Naval Operations. I knew him and we were having the admiral flag briefing in the morning and I attended and I participated. I knew what was going on. And Admiral McDonald was down there and we started flight operations and he looked over at me and he said, "You're not on the bridge for this?"

I said, "No Sir, I have very well trained people up there and I think this is important for me to be here." Which I did. But as far as he was concerned and some of the others, the most important thing that you can do is be up there all the time. Well, I was up there most of the time, but when it came to the air wing, what they were doing, their debriefings at night and so forth - of course, night operations, I always was there, but I had people that I felt who were very capable and when I felt it was better for me to be elsewhere and that they were fine doing it, I'd let them.

WINKLER: The aircraft you had embarked at the time, I imagine you had probably a squadron of A4s?

HOUSER: Two squadrons of F-4s, two squadrons of A4s, one Squadron of A-6s, One squadron of RA-5C. I had one squadron of A-3Ds, A-3s they were called for tanking, and assorted other airplanes. I think we had, at one time, an A-1, which is an AD, and it had some electronic capabilities that we didn't have elsewhere. But it was a lot of different types of airplanes. You had wings, and you had wheel assemblies, you had wheel struts and engines and so forth for each type of airplane. And it's real complicated. I vowed, when I came back, one of the things I was going to do was try to simplify the air wing complement, because keeping all these airplanes ready and maintained was a very difficult thing for the supply system as well as the people who were doing it.

One of the advantages, of course, with a carrier wing like that a single ship has not only the firepower, and the attack capability to carry the weapons there, you've got the reconnaissance; you've got the fueling; you've got the electronic counter measures; you've got transport and so forth. It's just a mini-air force itself, and if the national commander of our nation should call and say I want to send a carrier to Africa to South America, to anywhere, it's got to be ready for combat. So you've got to have all these big billings, but you don't have all the different airplanes.

That's one of the things we're getting down to now, and I was very, very insistent on that when I was the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations with Air Warfare was try to get rid of some of these types. And it's paid off now, in fact it's paying off so well, and not only what I did, but others, we started building only one airplane.

That's for a lot of reasons, one is the cost of them, but the other thing is that we're building the capabilities. The F/A-18, for example. When that came up that was going to be fighter only and I didn't support it as a fighter. I said, "We don't need another fighter, we've got the F-14." Now the A-7 will be phasing out one of these days, and we'll have to replace that. And we can get something that will be a fighter as well as a tanker and that's what it is now. Actually, the capabilities have out run the single individual. Most of this is automated now, it's all computer driven, but it simplifies greatly, having one type of airplane instead of two or three.

WINKLER: Yes, that's definitely one of the lessons learned from that period. One of the airplanes to come on board at that time was the A-6 that you mentioned, and I think that was one of the initial deployments for an A-6 flight there?

HOUSER: Did I tell you that story yet? When I got out to the West Coast, I got called up to the office of F. Tom Connolly, who was the Commander of Naval Air Forces for the Pacific Fleet, and he was quite agitated. He asked me to bring my A-6 squadron commander along, Bill Small, later an Admiral. And I said, "I will."

He said, "Let me read you this letter." He'd gotten a letter from a fellow named, Bill Sarkowski, he was a Grumman employee, but he knew him for a long time and he sent this letter out that the systems analysts at the Pentagon were going to stop production of the A-6, unless they do something. He said, it's nothing but a big A-4 and the A-4 costs a lot less. It's only got one pilot, can do the same thing and so forth that they do in the A-6.

So Admiral Connolly said, "I'm the project officer of this and you've got to make it work. He said: "This is your system over here. You've got to use the airplane like it's designed to do and see what it can do. Otherwise we're going to lose it."

Well it's a wonderful - it turned out to be a wonderful airplane even though it was in the early flights and early deployments. So I saluted sharply and left. I went back to the ship and I called my air officer and some other people, operations officer. "Here's the assignment." And so, I remember Commander Ken Henning, very fine officer, splendid officer, he was air officer. I said, "We gotta make this airplane operate the way it was designed to operate, in bad weather, and in night, and in an electronic environment and so forth." I said, "We've got a big investment in it and we're going to lose it if we don't prove what it can do."

I told the air officer, I said, "We're going to fill elevator number one with A-6s. When they come back, you may notice, when the pilot hits the deck and so forth, if he holds his thumb up, it means it's in commission or they don't need anything on it, except of course, the fuel, or he turns his thumb down, meaning it's down, out of commission, shouldn't be flown until repaired." I said, "I don't care if it's in commission or not, because it goes to number one elevator, it goes down and it's treated as though it's going to be tested. Everything tweaked up before it goes up again."

He said, "Captain, it won't work."

I said, "Ken, you've got your orders." That's all I ever said. So we did it that way.

When we got out there, the A-6 squadron, turned out to be a wonderful outfit. As a matter of fact I've got an excerpt from Time Magazine - did I show it to you?

WINKLER: No.

HOUSER: I've got it downstairs in my den down there. I'll bring it up and show it to you. But anyway, it was going to be on the cover of *Time* magazine during that period because of what it had done, but some baseball star or someone came around and took the cover, but nonetheless we got a very nice article and it's all laminated down there.

But the point is that they got into the spirit of what it was going to be doing and they were very effective in what they did. And they loved flying at night. We had one week over there, we had a very bad weather system. Weather came in, typhoon, and just covered that whole peninsula. I had the only airplanes out there and during that time, that one-week period, the 12 A-6s on *Constellation* flew forty-nine percent of all Navy sorties - no eighty-five percent of all Navy sorties over the beach; forty-nine percent of all US sorties, counting all those from Thailand and some of them were just nipping into Route Pac One which is the closest thing to Thailand, but the reason was my guys just loved it over there. They felt great when they got over there in the goo and they were able to carry these things out. But it turned out to be good and that was, I think, quite a feat.

It was a good deployment and they were so proud of it, and they were so proud of using machinery to hoist those weapons. Some - we launched 12 million pounds of ammunition or something with this squadron. I forget the number now, it isn't important, but the point of it is they were so proud of what they had done.

WINKLER: As far as -

HOUSER: Ok, about *Constellation*?

WINKLER: Yes.

HOUSER: We had some losses. Of course, everybody goes over has some losses. We didn't have the most nor did we have the least, but I thought that we were very effective. We had two fine air wing commanders with us, McDonald, Wes McDonald. Not very long, he and Bill Small left in time, and the other was Jake Ward. Really a fine aviator. Wonderful guy.

I was invited down to the squadron ready room one night and they had a cake celebrating his 200th night landing. Well, that's certainly an achievement, but that's certainly not a record. This was 200th night landing. In those days that was something. This guy was a wonderful leader. Never got excited and so forth. Went over there and did what he was supposed to do. The air wing loved him. It was great.

Let me just tell you about, another thing you hadn't asked, but you ought to know about the *Constellation* (*Connie*). One of the things that used to impress me was the devotion and dedication of the pilots, well, everybody on the ship, the mechanics and the ammunition handlers and the fielders and so forth. But it was at that time, the Korean War, the Vietnam War wasn't despised, but it wasn't appreciated either. It was just sort of neutral. This was in 1966. And we would - we were flying a lot at night, which is a tough thing to do. And somebody said there's no difference between night flying and day flying, except at nighttime you can't see. And so, but these young people would come out there. We'd get replacements, we'd finally get some replacements in there. Nobody would complain. They got up there and they would come back and not only were they flying at night, in the daytime they were dodging SAMs and so forth and putting their all into it. And what did they get out of it. Precious little. A few medals and so forth, but they were challenged by it and by God they weren't going to let it stop them. And I'd be up there at 3:30 in the morning maybe, launching somebody and come back an hour and a half later or getting somebody who just left at 2:00 o'clock and it went off. And it's tough, it's tough, particularly on them. Come back and sometimes a thunderstorm would be there. The duty thunderstorm would be at the head. You'd have to change course to give them some cross-deck landing because you couldn't fly in a thunderstorm. Or somebody was having trouble getting aboard, or somebody had been shot and were losing fuel. The tanker wasn't available or something. You had all sorts of emergencies.

They didn't complain. And I remember that, thinking of it right now, such a selfless dedication to something. No request for reward. No marching around with a banner, "Hey, we're the best," and so the

agent was very good. And when I got back here, later. This is now twenty years later after the Tailhook episode, which got totally out of hand. The leadership on top was afraid of the politicos. The politicos were afraid, unless they supported everything that was alleged and gave total protection to all of the women that were there, they would not be re-elected as a result, they left these wonderful guys - not many of them had been to Korea, but some of them had, and also some of their younger brothers and so forth were there. And I just couldn't get over this. I could not stand it, so I went up to see Senator Warner, who I knew because he had been Secretary of the Navy. And I told him, "John," I said, "this is wrong and I'm going to do something about it."

And he suggested I get Carl Smith, who had been the Counsel for the Senate Armed Services Committee Minority, fellow named Louis Keiser who was a retired Navy captain. I started going around pounding the desk, literally, on senators, and I said, "You know, this is shameful. You ought to have more courage than this. You've got people here who've done things that nobody else has done certainly for this country, and by God you're not even giving them the rights that they deserve as an American citizen."

They weren't allowing them to defend themselves. They had through these, Polk, Barbara Polk, through her and some of the others, they took everybody who was in that hotel, whether they were at the ceremony, whether they were in the hall and so forth. They had them all on the list. They had an asterisk by their name. They couldn't get promoted. They couldn't get transferred, and so forth.

I work this into *Constellation* because I remember the dedication and just the unflinching response to what was really a tough assignment. Didn't ask for a thing and they get back here and they're treated like criminals. I just couldn't get over it. I think I lost my health that year, because I really got emotionally involved with this. Also made some good inroads. There's some people on the Senate Armed Services Committee staff that - had to go over there, I don't know last year, and I saw the Chief at the time and he said, "Well, last time you were here, you weren't very happy were you?"

I said, "You've got it right." And I wasn't. And I pulled no punches. I had no reason to try to do anything except get some recognition for these people and at least fair play, is all we were asking for and they were not getting it.

And that was, I think, the legacy of my tour on *Constellation*. It was a very rewarding thing. And when you're in war - this is the third one I've been around, World War II we lost a lot of people. Korea, didn't lose any by my squadron, but we did on the ship, and here we are again. And I felt that people who offer themselves up like this and doing the country's bidding, or answering their orders to do things, should at least be treated decently. The people from the Tailhook debacle were not.

WINKLER: Another controversial topic, going back to Vietnam, was targeting. During the time period, I guess, is this like during the Rolling Thunder period? Was there discussion about how the war was being prosecuted?

HOUSER: Oh yeah, all the time. And, I had a little advantage in this. I was a little more knowledgeable than some of the others. I'd been up in the Secretary of Defense's office and the people there are very bright. There are others that say they are not very bright. They're very bright people, but they were misguided. And I said McNamara was a fine Secretary of Defense, but a terrible Secretary of War. The point was he was trying to play this chess game. We do something. We'll try to keep this limited. We don't want to let it go unlimited. We don't want to let it get out of hand. I think I told you last time about the reaction to the SA-2 sight. And he didn't understand war. When you get started in a war, the thing to do is end it and get it over, and push the other guy off balance and push him away and do whatever you have to. And military men understand that, but he didn't and in his defense, I may be repeating myself,

but in his defense, he wanted to make sure that we didn't expand this and that we didn't get the Russians involved. The fact of the matter is they were in a more tenuous position than we were. We had Philippine bases over there. We had a Pacific Fleet. They didn't have anything like that. They had also political problems with China and even Vietnam.

But, yes, targeting and it got to the point, as I understand it, they even had system analysts and people in the know, close to the throne who were selecting targets. Why don't we do this? That isn't their business. Even in the White House, they were selecting targets, because the targets had to come from here and go back. And that's not the way to run a war.

I think when you've got Desert Storm, the President then was President Bush, and he understood this and he turned the matter over, of fighting the war - not of whether we go, but fighting the war - to the military and it was a very efficient war. Now that wasn't the only reason. We just overwhelmed the people with material, with airplanes and ships and soldiers and weapons and so forth. The fact of the matter is the military knew how to fight back and they did a very good job. That was not true in the case of Vietnam War from where I sat.

WINKLER: I guess it's like that Movie "Flight Of the Intruder" where you had folks wondering, "OK, we're dropping bombs on this target. Why are we doing this?"

HOUSER: But instead of trying to win, we were trying to sort of stem them and of course, people like that as dedicated as they are, are not going to, although they did. The Vietnamese did it later. That they were ready to throw in the towel, because they just couldn't carry it. And what did we do? We backed out.

WINKLER: Follow on, you go over, you come back and then, of course, I guess your deployment's about seven months?

HOUSER: Yes, we were over there about six months, or maybe seven.

WINKLER: Typical cruise of the time. Basically when you get back it's some R & R and then it's time to be relieved.

HOUSER: When I returned back to - yes. Oh, we came back and I was relieved right away, because I had orders. I think I told you that last time about coming, the return trip stories and so forth.

WINKLER: I don't know.

HOUSER: Yes, Anyway, this is sort of interesting. I had orders to leave the ship and fly back. I felt that was a bad thing to do. The commanding officer going out there, you know, and doing this and flying back and the rest of them taking two or three weeks to get back. Going to Japan and so forth. So I sent a message back requesting I be allowed to bring the ship home, and they granted it. And they went to see General Goodpaster who wanted me in the Joint Staff and he agreed it was the thing to do. And I was so glad I did. We got home. We had a terrible trip back. Bad weather. One day we made, I think, seventy miles in twenty-four hours because of the heavy seas. What you don't want to do is damage your ship. If you go fast, you're going to damage it. The thing to do is ride the waves. But we got through.

We got home and I was relieved in a couple of days after that. I'd been selected for Flag and I was at the ceremony, Change of Command, and I walked off as a perspective admiral.

And we had an experience which I will tell you about. We had an officer, a Lieutenant Commander of the Fighter Squadron, who'd been in the Blue Angels, Dan MacIntyre. Sort of a colorful

guy. He had a wonderful wife and she insisted that he get out of the Navy and fly for United Airlines or something like that. I can't understand people doing things like this, but he did.

But he was put in charge of the Change of Command. And we were at the Pier at North Island, and he had a flight I think of F-4s, A-4s and A-6s that made a little pass over the ship during the ceremony. Then, I'm getting goose bumps, already. Low on the horizon came a flight of F-4s. There were three of them, and you've seen the F-4s fly.

WINKLER: Right.

HOUSER: And they have a terrible squeal and the noise, and also belching black smoke. So you could see these, they came over very low, very slow. They had their gear down, landing gear down; their hooks down; their flaps down as though they were ready to land. There was a slot there missing. Everybody got the significance. These three airplanes are coming home to land and one of the guys didn't make it. These airplanes with the engines whining and the black smoke pouring out right over their heads. The hooks down and so forth. They went over the flight deck. There wasn't a dry eye there, everybody. They flew off and I thought that was one of the most emotional things I've ever seen. And it had significance because of the fact that we'd lost people in the war over there and they were not coming home. I guess that's the end of that anecdote, but it was very, very effective in bringing the message home, and it was understood by all. Then I left *Constellation*. We came home and I went back to the Pentagon.

WINKLER: Just out of curiosity when did you find out you were selected for Flag?

HOUSER: On the way from Vietnam. We were in Japan, at Yokosuka, and the list came out and I was on the list. That was a very nice surprise.

It also puts you in a little difficult, not difficult, but a little strange position. You know. You don't want to foul up in particular, I mean, if they had enough confidence in you to give you this assignment. I mean to select you while you're doing that, because normally you get this after you've had your command to see how you did. If you didn't do very well, you're not going to get selected. And so, but I mean it was just one of these things, you make darn sure you do as well as you can to show people they were justified in selecting you.

WINKLER: Don't want to run a carrier a ground.

HOUSER: Or have a collision, and so forth. I think I told you I was alongside the *Oriskany*. We were both operating together when they had their fire. And that was a tough one, certainly for them.

WINKLER: OK, so you're now heading back to Washington. Now this is one thing that is kind of unique about your career is that joint tours were kind of not common for naval officers, as far as career paths is concerned. You managed to do well in your career with several joint tours. Now, of course, it's mandatory that you get that ticket punched. But you're going back to Director of Strategic Planning Division, Joint staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff responsible for short range and long range war plans for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. So what sort of things did you do during that time period?

HOUSER: Well, we were responsible for assembling these war plans they called the JSCP, "The Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan." What can you do now if you go to war? Then they have one that was for about five years out. The next one's called "The Objectives Plan." That was not under me, that was in a separate office and that was a tug-of-war on what the services needed, and how much you can get in this

budget. But mine was on the capabilities and then we had a long-range one which we wrote. I think it was called JLRSE "Joint Long Range Strategic Estimate." It didn't amount to much. We did the best we could, but anybody who thinks they can look out twenty years and see what's going to happen is kidding themselves.

But, yes, that was what I was in and I had a tour in the Secretary of Defense's office as well as another in the Joint Staff. And I think I told you earlier that I asked for the first one. Most people look upon this - "I don't want to go there. Get me back in my cockpit, or get on the deck of a ship or get me someplace."

I thought it was important to know what the other person did, what they could do and I've never regretted it. And I got along quite well with the other services and I think it's important that we do so.

WINKLER: The short-range aspect, this is 1967, you had the Six-Day war in the Middle East. I imagine that you must have been looking at contingency plans for that region of the world?

HOUSER: Yes, we were, but this was so localized over there, but we didn't operate - we didn't direct anything. The Chiefs got a lot more directly involved. This was the services at the time and the departments that we want, and they would provide support. And the Chiefs of the services were doing things that we were doing. Things to support the whole package there, but not necessarily individual units.

WINKLER: Well, who was your boss over in this area?

HOUSER: In J5? When I came back? Nels Johnson. He was an Admiral, I guess a Rear Admiral at the time. A very fine service officer. I got along very well with him and I guess the people on the Joint Staff trusted me. Because I'd been there, I'd seen if from all sides and I was, I'd been there when the general who wanted me to come up to his office, and General Wheeler who was now the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff knew me. I didn't work for him at this time, but he knew where I was. I was down there, I would see him on occasion.

WINKLER: Any aspects of that tour that are what you would say, memorable?

HOUSER: Yes, here again I may be repeating myself. That was about the matter of the mining. I told you about that didn't I?

WINKLER: No.

HOUSER: Well, being out in the Tonkin Gulf, I just couldn't get over the fact that these Russian ships and other ships would be coming up, steaming right in front of us, or going a stern, Didn't make any difference, on the way to Hai Phong or I used to know the others, two ports ahead there.

WINKLER: Vinh.

HOUSER: What, Vinh, no, Hai Phong, I'll think of it. Anyway, they were going out there and unloading, but most of them drew Hai Phong. And they had trucks and they had weapons and things on their decks. Here we were out there powerless, Just steaming around the lake, the Tonkin Gulf, launching airplanes over there. You couldn't go here. Stay away from here. Don't go within blank miles of this and so forth. Yet you could send your airplanes over at night to be fired at by SA-2s to get that truck that had just been passing you a couple of days before, offloaded there and down there. Well, the thing to do is to stop them before they get in there. Of course, that wasn't our decision.

Well, I said, you know, mining is such an effective thing and particularly here. I know it's called an act of war, but you can't say that sending airplanes over there and bombing them, isn't an act of war.

So I came back and, as the head of this Strategic Planning Division, I put my naval officers, Marines, Army and Air Force people, together with all sorts of charts and all sorts of other things to develop a mining plan. And we were not experts in this, but I thought if we could get something started down there. So I went to see Colonel Robert N. Ginsburgh, the Chairman Staff Group, he was the Air Force representative and he had very good connections with the White House, and the Security, National Security Council people over there.

So we weren't going to get it through the Chiefs, because nobody's going to do anything. So I started working with him. And we were keeping him abreast of what we were trying to do.

I said, "Bob, how are you doing?"

He said, "Oh, we're making a little progress over there." What he was trying to do was soften it up over there and send something over that, if when we send something over they would be receptive to it. Well, about the time I got ready to leave, I went up to see him and he said, "Well, when you started it was about one chance in ten. It's now about one chance in three, they are getting receptive."

So I have claimed credit for improving the chances by 23 percent. But I really felt, and, of course, in 1972, later there were no questions asked they dropped those mines. I think it was probably the thing - that and bombing - ended it. And they could have done that earlier, but "Oh, we don't want to do that. We don't want to offend the Russians."

But, here again, we had a wonderful opportunity, now I'm a four striper, not a four-star guy. I'm a four-striper and I thought we had a wonderful opportunity to do something and maybe I should have written it up and suggested it. Of course, it would probably have been discouraged.

But on June 30th, 1966, we were authorized for the only time to hit the oil storage sites in Hai Phong and Hanoi. And we did. First time we'd gone there. Oh, Boy! They were totally surprised. They sent their - the North Vietnamese - sent their PT boats out and we were told about them. My ship, we launched airplanes when I was down there and we sunk their PT boats and we picked up some prisoners. Some sea going prisoners and brought them in and took them, we sent them back down to Saigon.

But anyway, the Russian ships, you may or may not remember this, stopped where they were. They didn't turn around. They just stopped and they stayed there for a week or two. And I thought to myself, "Yeah, this is what, as a military man, what you do." Marshall your forces and make a stand for it if you don't want to, like you're going to make landing down at Vinh or something and cut that damn, and cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail. You know, or do something. Put them on guard. They'd better be careful, and the Russians aren't going to do anything. If they did, we've got forces to take care of them.

So it seems to me it was a couple of weeks that the Russian ships just lolled around. Didn't do anything. They stayed in the Indian Ocean wherever they were and so forth. Didn't do anything, and finally, we just resumed the same old act, and we let that wonderful period past. When the other person doesn't know what you're doing and you surprise him the way we did them, you want to follow up on this. You want to take advantage of it. But, this is what I say, McNamara didn't understand things like this and it was a wonderful opportunity. I thought that we could possibly bring the war to an end at that time. All you had to do, what you had to do was to accelerate this. If these ships hadn't continued to bring stuff in, or blockade them. Say, 'You're not coming anymore."

"Oh, we can't do this. The Russians might come in," and so forth. Maybe they would have, but look what happened to us. And one thing I'll have to admit is we didn't get a nuclear war out of this. I think the chances were very slight, anyway. We've always had an enormous advantage in nuclear capabilities over the Russians. Certainly did at that time. But, we just didn't take advantage of those opportunities.

WINKLER: Any other aspects from that tour of duty or shall we move up to the E-Ring? To your next job where you get to - November '68 to June '70, you're the Director of Aviation Plans and Requirements Division for the Office of Chief of Naval Operations. That's a key job at a very important time.

HOUSER: It is, and Admiral Jerry Miller, a friend of mine who was going out and he says I'm the one to relieve him. Well I was on Joint Staff and so they said, OK, let me go and went up there and we, I really enjoyed that tour. Back with airplanes. Having come from active aviation activities on the ship just, almost two years before that, but I knew what they were flying. I knew what weapons they were using. We still had the Vietnam War going and you always felt there was a special reason for doing things, because what you were doing was helping the people out there. The people that were going out there with their airplanes or their weapons or their training or whatever else we felt would increase their effectiveness.

So I got there and we had some very good programs, which I participated in and then when I went to sea a couple of years later, it's so good to see something arrive in the fleet that you have a hand in. I had testified before Congress in support of all the Navy and Marine aviation programs. I got to know all the four committees, House Armed Services, Senate Armed Service Committee, the House Appropriation Committee, and the Senate Appropriation Committee. I used to really work hard, start about November with briefing sessions by the people from the Technical Bureau, the Naval Air Systems Command would send their people over there. Action officers and their program officers. I'd go through to make sure that they understood exactly what they were asking for, and why it was needed.

I really enjoyed the meetings over there. It was not a contest at all, but you had these people that wanted answers to questions and they were legitimate questions, sometimes. Sometimes it was sort of silly, but generally speaking they respected this, and I tried to give them good information.
Just a little aside, This is going - but the Senate Armed Services Committee had a TacAir Subcommittee, and it was pretty much the Senate Armed Service Committee. It was a great outfit and they had Goldwater, and Cannon, and Nunn and Symington, and who's the old one now, Strom Thurmond, and he was old then.

Anyway, really had good things going, particularly Cannon and Goldwater who were aviators. They would hear these stories about what was going on. God, they just got in there and they really, I really felt good about it, because here's somebody who understood. Not just the numbers and how much it cost, but what they were going to do.

One day, Goldwater, we told him about the A-6s, the new system it had in there and he said, "I'd sure like to fly in that airplane."

I said, "Well, Senator, can you be ready this afternoon?" I think he was. He'd just seen a film clip of the practice bombing on a bridge here in the United States and he wanted to see how the system worked.

But I really think briefing those committees is such a good thing and not just having a book for them to look at. Talk to the people and so forth. Ask the questions they want to ask. Not what somebody else wants to tell them. Tell them this, then answer their questions.

I went around to say goodbye to the people I'd known over there and I saw Senators Cannon and Goldwater in the hall over there. And they greeted me, "Hi, what are you doing over here?"
I told them, I said, "I just came by to say goodbye."

"Why? Where are you going?"

I said, "I'm going to retire."

"Retire?"

"Yes," I said, "I'll be retiring."

Both of them said, "Very sorry to see you go."

Goldwater said, "You're the only Navy representative over here who we can believe."

WINKLER: (laugh) OK, OK.

HOUSER: But I never BS them. They did get some BS before, but I tell it like it is, and they were just so appreciative of that.

WINKLER: You talk a little bit also, of going up to the hill as OP 05, also, I guess that's what you're -

HOUSER: That's when I -

WINKLER: But we're back in '68 and '70 where you're Director Aviation Plans.

HOUSER: Oh, yes. OK.

WINKLER: Would you -

HOUSER: Sorry, I jumped us a couple of tours. No, but there I was not testifying. I was sitting behind Admiral Connolly and passing notes to him and he was -

WINKLER: He was on the hot seat.

HOUSER: And he was quite good. He was a colorful fellow that I worked with. He was there and he was short and wiry. Feisty and people knew him by that. He did a good job.

WINKLER: During that time period, this is Director of Aviation Plans and Requirements, you, I get the F-14's in the pipeline?

HOUSER: No, it was, we were trying to get the thing approved and it hadn't been approved when I got there. Admiral Connolly sort of took this under his wing and he was our principal guy on it at that particular time. We had the S-3, and the EA-6 and the A-6 modified and other airplanes like that. But as

far as the F-14, yes, they put it in the budget, but he was the one who really steered that one through. I was the one, three or four years later, who saved it.

WINKLER: OK, we'll get to that.

HOUSER: Almost cost me my life, my health.

WINKLER: The other challenge you have at that time, is well you have a new President and you have drug apathy in Vietnam and you have challenges to the military budget, similar to what we have today in some respects.

HOUSER: Nixon came in in '69 and that's when I met John Warner and John Chaffee and got to know them pretty well. Nixon, he was a Republican. They were going to come in and make everything right. First thing he did, he had something called Six ninety-three. This is now, he was sworn in in January, and the budget went until June.

Anyway six ninety-three. What does six ninety-three mean. I'm coming in there. I want you to cut three billion dollars out of the budget. This is the Defense Department. We got our share. He's the guy that's going to help us, is he? Nixon? You know? Six ninety-three. Well, he's coming in new. What he's trying to do; he knows the system. He knows there's some things that can be sacrificed. So that's what he did six ninety-three. And we went through that and it was painful, because at that time of year, you can't get very much money. Most of it's gone. You can't cut a program out because their already started.

WINKLER: Right.

HOUSER: Yes, and that was tough. And the war was still going on at the time. I might just say, well, we thank God, we've gotten rid of that one. The next year, we had about the same numbers coming seven-o-three. And for the 70 budget, we took three billion dollars out, too. It became, at least for two years, an annual event.

WINKLER: You were scurrying around figuring out where the money was going to come from. Now for Director of Aviation Plans, you worked directly for OP 05. So you were Op five -

HOUSER: OP 50.

WINKLER: OP 50, yes.

HOUSER: That's the two jobs there. The OP 05, of course, is the head, OP 50 becomes, was the principal job there. They had OP 51, sort of nuts and bolt and some spare parts and some budgetary activity, but the real action came in the OP 50 and still does.

WINKLER: Yes, and AB.

HOUSER: Some - yeah, it's not nearly as nice and clean as 5, 5 zero, 508 and so forth.

WINKLER: Exactly. Now as far as staff, any working with you, anybody of note?

HOUSER: Rear Admiral Whitey Feightner, whom you may know. One of the aces from World War II. Great fighter pilot, but he's done everything in aviation. Not only in wars, but also outside of wars. He's done everything. He was also one of my deputies for a while. Captain John Lacouture a deputy of mine. What it amounted to, Dave, is that these were sort of sought after billets. You've got sort of the pick of the

crowd there who were going to be the program manager for some program or program coordinator. Program manager was in the NavAir. But the Program Coordinator in all the other ones.

And these were the guys who really felt they could make an impact and they did. So it's, to list a few of them, I'd probably have to list all of them.

WINKLER: Well, we, I interviewed John Lacouture back in October so he's now going through his transcript and working - got his take on that tour of duty. You then had the opportunity for your last sea command, CarDiv Two with the Atlantic Fleet. That's two years and you had two major European waters, during that time period you had the Jordanian Crisis.

HOUSER: That was a very exciting one.

WINKLER: Yeah, well first of all talk about being selected to Commander of Carrier Division Two.

HOUSER: Initially I was disappointed, somewhat. Going to - getting a CarDiv was a real plum and I was certainly very grateful for that. I wanted to go back to the Vietnam War. They said, "No, you've been out there. You get over here and learn something about the Atlantic." So that's what happened to it. I asked for the Pacific. Well, you do the best job you can with what you're doing, what you're after.

I think in hindsight it was probably a better thing, because I got to learn a lot more about the Russian Navy, which was nice, and the weapons they were using and the tactics. I developed some tactics over there for use against them. Vietnam was winding down somewhat. We'd just go to more of the same, but were trying to cut back and - when you got a war, you ought to participate in it.

WINKLER: Well, you almost got yourself in a war over there with the Jordanian crisis.

HOUSER: My flag ship then was *John F. Kennedy*. We were down in Puerto Rico.

WINKLER: Rosie Roads?

HOUSER: Rosie Roads. We were down there. We had missile shoots and we had some exercise and we went down there knowing we were coming back in a few weeks and we were going to pack up and go to the Mediterranean. Well, it didn't work out that way.

We were down there and they said, "Your orders are to go to East Med." Told us why and so forth. So we're steaming off the north part of Rosie Roads in Puerto Rico, and we had a bunch of civilian people on there - had to get rid of them. We had to get ammunition from the ammunition ship down there to get loaded up, which we would have done back in the states. Instead we did it down there. And got fuel and so forth.

Of course, we had this annoying intelligence AGI right behind us. So I didn't like that. We had this fairly long period of getting rid of the people and getting under the coil and getting a handle, so I steamed north to Rosie Roads and everybody's following along and AGI is following dutifully there. And then we turned around and, I don't know eight knots, something like that, and we finished up and we cast off the lines and I set sail for south, going south, and pushed the throttles all the way forward and left everybody back there including the AGI, because he's slow.

We got down there, returning headed right to Roosevelt Roads, we got over the horizon so we couldn't see anything and couldn't -and we shut down everything and made sure we were clear of him

and there was no indication that we weren't going down Rosie Roads. We then turned east and we stayed with radio silence the whole time.

Went up there. We flew one day off the coast of the Azores or maybe off the Canary Islands. Pilots were not particularly thrilled about this because they had no divert field and they didn't have any navigation. We didn't have our radars on, we didn't have our TACAN. We flew one or two days just to keep our hands in.

We continued on up there still zip lip, no transmission. Then when we got up there, I think about a day out or maybe two days, I split the course. We had two guided missile destroyers with us, (DLGs) and I sent them up northwest, northeast rather, sort of north so they would come in through the Straits of Gibraltar from the East. We were coming in from the south, from the southwest. They would come in heading east, but from the west as though they were coming from the Atlantic Fleet. Here were these two ships going in. We stayed down here and went up northeast, and we entered at night and Captain Fred Koch who just died about four months ago was the commanding officer.

I said, "Fred, Want you to re-rig your ship to look more like a merchant ship." He sweated a little bit, and I said, "Go ahead."

So he re-rigged the ship, so we went through there with the false lights, and so forth and the other two ships, of course, they were dutifully intercepted by the Russians up there in the north. We slipped through, 25 knots, which with 80,000 tons of big machine. We went through there at night, I think it was about eight o'clock or something. We went in and nobody intercepted us. Nobody put a radar on us or anything. We were about 75 miles in from the Straits when they discovered us. Then they illuminated all their radar and so forth and they found us there. The Russians had not, they hadn't known where we were from the time we left Roosevelt Roads.

I was quite proud of that. We got in there and then we headed directly for the Mediterranean, and were there for a bit. Cyprus was not far away and had - the station had the name of a cartoon show on TV at the time. The Dixie station, had Yankee station over there and then you had - anyway we stayed over there and then when this thing -

Oh! President Nixon came over and Mel Laird, who was Secretary of Defense and Mr. Rogers who was Secretary of State and the others came through and I was designated the officer to receive them. So they sent me from the Kennedy over to the Saratoga where I was the host there. Of course, then the Commander of the Sixth Fleet came over and he became really the host, but I was there. And it was quite a fascinating experience to see them. But it was a good tour and I think the US Navy helped stabilize the situation over there, and provided visible force and whatever was needed they were able to do.

We had several other experiences out there. I was talking about tactics. I probably should have told others about these things and I didn't. I felt it wasn't necessary. I, on the USS *Independence*, I had orders to go to the Norwegian Sea with the task force. I split the force that way, too, and I split my destroyers over there and I went alone. They went northeast and we went sort of east, northeast and went over there, a single carrier. No lights on and the Russians reconnaissance airplanes came out there. We were getting reports that they were overhead. They were coming and they went down and we saw them. They turned around and came back and they didn't see us. We'll I said, "Well let's launch an E-2," our own search airplane. So we did, and we told him to listen and so forth and had him fly and also we were flying. And so he went up, and then we said, "Let's recover him." He's supposed to come back. We couldn't locate him and we knew when he was supposed to be back and he didn't come back. I was the guy that started this so I had to - So I said, "OK, let's open up the radio." We broadcasted his frequency.

No answer, and we said, "Oh, he'll answer up anytime." Then we told him to activate his own radar and locate us and come down and land. No answer.

This is when you start twitching a bit, because it gets a little binding. So finally I said, "OK, go just on the line, all the frequencies you have that you think he might be on." Didn't get him. And it was really tough then because he had a fuel problem and we finally got him. He came down. We brought him aboard and that was when I learned what the endurance of the E-2 was. It was six hours and twenty - maybe five hours and 20 minutes, because he landed with 5 hours and 15 minutes of flight and he had 5 minutes of fuel left.

And this is something you do, I took a chance on this. It worked, we avoided the Russians. They never found us. They never came down. They never overflew us and so forth. They didn't know where we were. But I was the guy who started this and had we have lost the E-2, my name would have been mud. Losing that little airplane and maybe some people. But these are the things, Dave, that you do when you're in command. You don't have to do them, but I think it's preferable to do some.

WINKLER: During the time period, responsibility of the carrier commander is basically, you deploy with, its more operational, or is it administrative?

HOUSER: Oh, no. It's operational totally. All the ships and the ship's captains report to you. They have their division command and so forth. We call it a task force. That was Task Force Sixty. They used to call it the Fast Carrier Task Force Atlantic. So that was -

WINKLER: Ok, continuing, talking about tactics and you're in the Eastern Mediterranean with the Russians.

HOUSER: Anyway, They were shouting this, shouting that and so forth and we had this Soviet AGI (Auxiliary General Intelligence) trawler there and it had fuel and so we were out a little to the west of where our normal place of operating had been and we had the *Leahy* DLG - I'm trying to think of the designation of the radar.

WINKLER: The 48?

HOUSER: No, the 32, We were going to go leave there anyway. And so we sort of eased out, opened up on this AGI and so we were heading sort of was the initials S-

WINKLER: SDS?

HOUSER: SDS, I don't think it was SDS, whatever it was, 32, and the *Kennedy* and this ship were the only two in the East then that had that.

I told the *Leahy* to shut down the 32 radar and we kept on going. On signal, I want you to illuminate and we're going to shut down. Now they have some different characteristics, but nonetheless these were the only two SOR 32s or whatever they were. So we on the *Leahy* were coming back from Athens and so forth heading in that direction. So it looked like we were going out there and then we were coming back. So the AGI went up and picked up on the *Leahy*.

We continued on; we were going all the way to Malta, we weren't going to, we went to Malta and they lost us for several days. They were really upset, and while we were going I don't know that this submarine knew what was going on. But we also had some Charlie submarines, missile launching submarines in our vicinity and I said, "Let's have some fun with them."

So on our way going West, the next day we cranked up, I think about 25 knots and that's pretty hard for the submarines to do. So, I said, "Prepare everybody to bring your engines to All Stop. Because while the noise is generating you can't find anybody, a submarine or anybody else in there because of the amount of noise. So we shut all the engines off, and here he was Kip-Picidae-Picidae a stern of us and we located him right away, went right over there and fly over where he was and let him know we were there.

But it was that type of thing and I often thought that one way to get was to scrape along, just go in shallow water, shallower water, because we could operate in water shallower than he could. Just get over there and he will not be - not be astern of you any longer.

Anyway, we were up at Malta. He picked us up after we came back. We came back from there after a couple of days and we went up into Athens. And the AGI picked us up. They didn't just shadow us in to the Aegean going up there, they followed us, against the rules of the sea, right into Theron Bay. They're not supposed to be there. We had clearance, but they didn't. They wanted to make sure - and the only exit from that, except going south to the Aegean Sea was to go up the Corinth Canal which is about a third the width of the carrier.

So then I thought well we dodged them that time coming in and they wanted to make sure we were there. They didn't move; they didn't leave until we dropped the hook. When we dropped the hook, they turned around.

So then we came out and I said, "OK, let's play another little game on them." So we came out and then we said, "Let's go over there along the coast of Turkey instead of just going down the traditional flight route down the Aegean Sea. So we did and I had Captain Koch there again and I had a destroyer. We went over there and I said, "OK, let's go over here and around the islands." We hadn't really done this before. I said, "We'll turn off all the lights and we…(end of tape)

WINKLER: January 31st 2001, Dave Winkler, again with Vice Admiral Houser. This is Side A of Tape II of today's conversation and we are in the Aegean Sea aboard which carrier was this?

HOUSER: The *Kennedy*.

WINKLER: The *Kennedy* discussing some of the tactics dealing with the Soviets. As you were saying, sir.

HOUSER: So they were waiting for us down at the Aegean Sea for us to come pick us up, this Russian surveillance ship, and we didn't go that way. We went around by Turkey. Well, it was at nighttime again and the destroyer commanding officer got a little queasy and he said, radioed us and said, "There's a ship coming in here. What should I do?" He said, "I don't feel comfortable," or something like that. I forget the message.

I said, "If you don't feel comfortable fall in the stern of us, we'll take the carrier in the lead." Which we did and went on down there. Well, we arrived at the, what do you call that station? Anyway, and -

WINKLER: Not Pogo, or something?

HOUSER: Something like that. Anyway, we got down there and the next day the Russian airplane came over there and they beat us up. Right down the flight deck about 50 feet over head you know and they

wanted us to know they knew who we were and they knew we'd escaped several times and they just came over there and blew right over. Of course, we were just down there loitering. We weren't doing anything. They came down and they were really upset, they came over us and as they buzzed us, very low altitude, right across the deck several times. To make sure they knew us- I guess they probably got our hull number and everything else right off the flight deck.

WINKLER: Well, they were based out of Egypt, at that time, right?

HOUSER: Yeah. But anyway CarDiv Two had a lot of activity and we had a very good cruise on the *Independence* the next year, and Jerry O'Rourke was the commanding officer there. He's now gone. Died, but he was a fine commanding officer, too. Jerry O'Rourke. And we did some exercises with the Royal Navy, after being up in the Norwegian Sea and the operations in the Norwegian Sea were sort of interesting. People said, "Why don't we build a lot of little ships instead of having these big expensive ones." Well that was one day that I think certainly is a wonderful example of what you can do.

The Norwegian Sea and that part of the world is where the weather starts. It's all born there and then it continues on. And I guess we had a front every now and again. The weather was not good, but we had a landing operation going on the beach and we were providing support from the carrier. We had under my command, the *Independence*, the *Wasp*, an Essex Class conversion, and the *Ark Royal*. And we started operating, I guess probably around noon or after noon, whatever it was and we were operating during the daytime and doing well. The weather came through and began to be pretty bad and the *Ark* called up and said, "We've got to cease flight operations because of the weather, the sea conditions."
"Understand."

And about two hours later, I think that was about seven o'clock at night. About nine o'clock *Wasp* called up and said, "The seas are too high for us to operate safely."

I said, "OK, cease operations."

And *Independence*, we flew scheduled flights right up 'til. I think it was around 11:00 O'clock at night. Our deck was certainly pitchy, it was not just a nice cup of tea, it was tough. But the size and the stability there allowed us to continue to operate. Had we had a bunch of *Ark Royals* at 19,000 tons we wouldn't have been able to operate in that sea. So, in addition to not only having the stability, but also the types of airplanes we needed. The reconnaissance airplanes, and the airborne early warning such as the E-2 and so forth that you have on the large ships. It's what makes the task force and it isn't just having a certain number of airplanes. It's the thing that almost, the reason the, not having this almost sank the Royal Navy down in the Falkland Islands. They didn't have these type of airplanes they needed. As a result they came very close to losing them.

WINKLER: The other lesson learned as you point out is the fact that, if you have all these types of aircraft, it doesn't do much good if you don't have a platform that's not capable of launching them in certain conditions.

HOUSER: Right, and the sea can be really rough.

WINKLER: You bring up dealing with the Royal Navy. In the Pacific it's bilateral operations when you're dealing with Japan, the Philippines and the countries along the rim of the Pacific. In the Atlantic, you're often dealing with NATO operations. Dealing with the Italians, the French, the Greeks, the Turks. Did that, how did you handle that?

HOUSER: We would occasionally have some exercises with them alongside. I think it was useful to do, but it didn't really amount to much, the exercises we had. Our ships were so much farther advanced than theirs and so forth, but I think just having the fact that they were there and they were allies and we had the services of their ships was a good thing. They were mostly at that time, this was in 1970, '70, '71, '72, and these were still World War II ships. We had modified ours, but they hadn't modified theirs, pretty much the standard - so, we would occasionally fly over Europe for targets into Germany and so forth and into Italy. Occasionally we did have some good exercises. The real benefit of that was working with them and having them understand that we were their friends and they were ours. Radio discipline and so forth, and frequencies and that sort of stuff. I think that was the principal benefit, it wasn't really tactics.

WINKLER: One thing, when I interviewed Admiral McKee, he would be the submarine commander over there with Group Eight, about '72 and he discussed the relationship, they worked with the surface forces, but I take it at that time, you didn't have much interaction with our submarine forces.

HOUSER: We tried to. I went over there, when we went over there in 1970, Lebanon Crisis, they assigned a submarine to us. They were there and it was good to know they were there and so forth, and they had to stay around us, but, we had no communications with them. Communicating with a submarine is very difficult, you know, we tried hammering on the hull and so forth. They might hear that, but we didn't have any good way of communication. I don't know that they even have one today. But they could stick up antennas and so forth, but they liked to be silent. Submarines can be very useful, but you got to have some way to communicate with them and tell them what you're doing. What the plan is, or what your course is going to be. What their assignment is. I hope it has improved.

Some scientist came aboard one day and he said he likes nice, direct requests for something to do. He said, all these big convoluted ones where you got thick books -
I said, "OK. Figure out a way for us to communicate with submarines. That's about as direct as I can make it."

WINKLER: The other question I had was, we're starting to really cut back the number of ships in our fleet from the Vietnam days, over a thousand ships in the Navy. How is that affecting planning for deployments?

HOUSER: This is in the early '70s?

WINKLER: Early '70s, yeah. You're the carrier commander and we're decommissioning, you know, all the Fletchers and Gearings, and World War II carriers and this is also - we're not quite, we still have the anti-submarine carrier (CVS) and the attack carrier (CVA) concept, but how, but you know, you have a large decommissioning program in place. Plus this is the time period of you're going to the all-volunteer Navy. Not quite yet, but -

HOUSER: Oh, that time. We had, you introduced, you said it. The decommissioning of the destroyers didn't bother us very much. Our carriers were there and those were our principle weapons and so forth, but we did have some very fine destroyers and we depended on them for air defense and so forth. Fortunately, we didn't have to use it, but nonetheless we depended on them and it was useful to have them there.

On the matter of - I said, you know, the attitude in Congress for example, changed dramatically after February of 1973. When our guys got out of prisoner of war camps and they came home and so forth and the Vietnam War was over. "Why do you need this? The war is over. What are you going to use this for?" You know. The whole idea was that the war is over so you're just, well, you're not needed like you

were before. We don't need all these weapons; we don't need all these people. So why don't we just cut down?

Then we had the people that were getting out of the Navy, particularly the aviators who resigned to go to work for the airlines and the sailors were not coming in. They were not re-enlisting, nor were they enlisting for the first time. And it was a very grim time.

Bud Zumwalt, who is a friend of mine, became the CNO, and it was a very difficult period. Bud was trying to accommodate to what he considered to be the new wave, you could call it for some reason. You know, long hair; let them do as they want to do. You've got to satisfy them. And I don't say that he ever approved of pot smoking, but I don't think it was far away, in that same type of life that he had. Bud's a very smart guy. I felt he was at a disadvantage as CNO and I told John Shakey one day. I said, "John, you know, Bud Zumwalt would have done a lot as the Chief of Naval Operations had he had a number of things and preferably one of the three commands in the Pacific or Atlantic." I don't think he really understood the Navy. He had never had a major command. What we would call a major command. Furthermore, he became enamored of the brown water Navy and he thought that long hair and shower sandals and cut-offs were what the Navy was coming to.

It may have been OK for the brown water Navy, but it wasn't. He brought a lot of those ideas back, and he brought some good ideas, but those were bad. The sailors were confused and some of our allies with the Mediterranean were just outraged. We dutifully obeyed CNOs directives, but we were sending people over with this "what they wanted to wear," you know. Civilian clothing for them and some of these people were not very sophisticated and they really disgraced the Navy. Because the Navy had gone over there, and I went over there for the first time in '52, and they, of course, this is not too long after World War II, and they were so grateful to us. Not anymore, people came over there looking like slobs, but in this business of trying to be fair to everybody and making sure that they are, I forget some of the terms that we used, but we had these Z-grams that came out. And it was a very difficult period at sea. And the morale went down. The people who wanted to do well, couldn't figure out why they should, and the others that didn't want to do well, took advantage of it.

A very difficult period for the Navy and Jim Holloway followed Bud Zumwalt as CNO and I knew Jim very well. We were together in the Vietnam War and good personal friends as well as professionally associated. Jim was not a very imaginative CNO for the reason that he had to spend most of his tour putting the Navy back on an even keel, literally. And he did, and he did a fine job, and Jim's a bright guy. I'm not trying to say that he didn't do things. All I'm saying is that attentions and his energies were used to sort of restoring the Navy to the Navy instead of some hooligan Navy, a half-assed outfit that may have been comfortable in their own self, but they weren't comfortable as disciplined and effective sailors. That's my view for what it is. I know what Bud was trying to do, but he was trying to do it too fast and I don't think he really understood.

I can remember when Bud put all the sailors in what amounts to a chefs garb and he gave them all bill caps and so forth. And I was living in the Navy Yard and this first class - he was a rated petty officer, and he came up, "Admiral," he said, "Can you help us?"

"What do you want?"

He said, "I don't like this uniform." He said, "My father was a Sailor and I'm a Sailor. I want to look like a Sailor when I go ashore. The people there see me as a Sailor. They know what I'm here for. A good time and so forth, but I want to be in the Navy, I don't want to be in something else."

I thought to myself, "What an expression." It's right. He wanted to be a Sailor. He wanted to be somebody that was recognized as a sailor and not be somebody who might be a - he said "a bus driver. I'm not a bus driver. I'm a Sailor." And Holloway restored the balance and did a fine job.

WINKLER: I remember those uniforms in the early '80s. Then they finally went back to bellbottoms, but there was no storage space on the ships for those things too, you know. So, where a cracker jack is beautiful. You just put it underneath your mattress and it presses itself.

HOUSER: I know.

WINKLER: So, I don't know, the - was there also a problem where the Chief Petty Officers and Senior leaders kind of felt -

HOUSER: Bypassed.

WINKLER: Bypassed.

HOUSER: Yes, and the chiefs always extracted discipline, but then anytime they tried to crack down, you know, they had a direct pipeline back to the chief and it was just a very sad period. They had a mutiny on the *Kitty Hawk*. And had a mutiny on the - almost, *Hassayampa*, I think it was. And pretty close to almost having one on the *Constellation*, too. And, Zumwalt wouldn't support the commanding officers. And this was direct disobedience to orders. They wouldn't do what they were told to do. And he said, "No," and that was a mistake on his part. But he was trying to - in the new Navy, you know, change - you were in the Navy and there's just certain things you've got to do. And if you're going to survive at sea and you're going to be effective, you got to do things the way you're told to do them. A lot of people had a lot of imagination, a lot of ideas, and they're allowed to do this. But not necessarily in disobeying the orders of the commanding officer.

WINKLER: Admiral Zumwalt, though, he's CNO. I imagine he had a hand in selecting you as Deputy CNO for -

HOUSER: He did.

WINKLER: OP 05, and you served for two years under him and then for two years under Admiral Holloway.

HOUSER: Yeah.

WINKLER: Talk about getting orders for OP 05.

HOUSER: Well, he's the one who selected me. I say, I know about him. We worked together when I was at Joint Staff. When I was in the office of the Deputy Secretary, he was working for John McNaughton who was one of the people working for us. So I got to know Bud pretty well. I respect him.

WINKLER: Then he had a tour, I guess he was EA for Secretary Nitze.

HOUSER: For Nitze.

WINKLER: Yes.

HOUSER: And he did some very good things. One of the things I'll say in the F-14 battles which were just legion, in the time I was there trying to save the F-14. We had so many people against it including the Congress. But we did get it. But Bud got up there and he fought. There were some other admirals who didn't do as well as he was that were wearing wings. He encouraged. That's the reason I say, I think he was misdirected and misguided, because the guy has guts and he's got conviction. And when he came in there, he would say it, particularly on these testimonies on the appearances over Congress, you could count on him. Some of the other people you couldn't. So, no, there are some people who are just terribly antagonistic toward Zumwalt and anything that he did or anything he stood for. I'm not that way. I just say that I think he could have made a lot better CNO than he was. If he really understood more about what the duty at sea in a war, and what the situation was. He felt that this business of, I guess it wasn't called affirmative action at the time, but whatever it was, it was a question of making sure that all of the minorities got -

WINKLER: Equal opportunity, yeah.

HOUSER: Yes, equal opportunity, more so than equal. That was his goal.

Vice Admiral William D. Houser
Interviewers David Winkler and John Grady
February 14, 2001

WINKLER: Happy Valentine's Day, everybody. Once again this is Dave Winkler and John Grady with Vice Admiral Houser on the 14th of February 2001, Naval Historical Foundation Oral History Program, and sir, could you talk a little bit about how you got the job in 19 - in August 1972 as OP 5, Deputy Chief of Operations for Aviation.

HOUSER: I was the Commander of Carrier Division Two in the Atlantic Fleet, which I enjoyed very much. Had two long deployments, one on the *Kennedy* and one on the *Independence*. And I knew that I would have it for only two years and guess what, at the end of two years I was rotated, I was ordered to Washington to be Deputy Chief of Naval Operations, Air Warfare, to relieve Admiral Weisner who was then going up to be the Vice Chief of Naval Operations under Admiral Zumwalt.

WINKLER: So now, I guess as far as selection, Admiral Zumwalt, you were his man as far as for the job.

HOUSER: Yes, I'm sure he's the one that - I used to work with Bud when I was in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and he was in one of the lesser offices up there. And I had known him and I think he appreciated what I had to offer in the aviation experience that I've had afloat and also here in Washington. Having been Director of the Aircraft Requirements Division, earlier, I was familiar with the office and routine. Bud ordered me back here to relieve Admiral Weisner.

WINKLER: What was the situation when you arrived at the office? How did the turnover go; what were the challenges that Admiral Weisner passed on to you as far as what your major concerns would be?

HOUSER: Well I knew the office. I knew the routine and I knew Admiral Weisner so there were no difficulties in that regard. At the time, of course, we were trying to get money and justify the budget and so forth for a lot of new programs and a lot of them were exciting ones. Most exciting, of course, was the F-14. That was a deep problem, in deep trouble. The problem stemmed from the usual. The lack of money, the high cost of the airplane, the fact that on the second flight the airplane crashed and a long rework had to be done - things were chattering and starting to leak. So it had sort of a bad name.

Congress had looked upon them, the Senate in particular had looked upon the F-14, and they had had the head of the Grumman Aircraft Company down here. And he was to testify before them, the Senate Armed Services Committee. He had a real difficult time in a sense that he was being accused of having a product that was too expensive; couldn't afford itself.

I guess they were suggesting, I was not here, this is what I perceived out of it, that the head of Grumman had actually sort of defied them. They said, "You've got to lower your price," you've got to do this or that, and he said something that made the hair standup on the back of the neck, and that was "I'll close my doors, before I do this." Well, this was almost a threat to the Senate and they were very upset about that. And that phrase was used a number of times. When I got there, it was not a very receptive audience. The F-14 was not the only, but it was the principle difficult problem that I had when I came.

I worked on that problem for, well, most of my four years that I was there. We had a lot of people against the F-14. The F-14, of course, was the plane the emerged after the TFX failed for the Navy, and I

don't think the Secretary of Defense, McNamara, ever believed that it failed because it couldn't do a job. I think he felt it was just the stubborn admirals who wanted their own airplanes.

Well, the fact of the matter is he was wrong. The TFX would not have done the job. It was too large, too heavy, didn't have the performance that was needed. Grumman came along, Grumman was the subcontractor for Aero Dynamics on the TFX, and as a result they had a lot of information about it. Some people felt it was not exactly right that the subcontractor could come in and put in an unsolicited proposal for an airplane similar to it. Well, it was small, it's not a small airplane, but smaller than the TFX. It also had the power to do what the TFX was asked to do and that is to carry six very long range missiles.

The assignment, the task for the F-14 was almost greater than anybody at the time had ever understood. The result was that it had a very difficult birth. We had the people at the time, and I'd been out there, at Vietnam, fighting in airplanes, fighter airplanes and they wanted a nice small, agile, effective fighter airplane to fight other fighters. And that's, of course, all we had in Korea and that's what we had in Vietnam.

The role of the F-14 was to defend the fleet with these long-range missiles, but also was able to fly as a fighter airplane. And it became very good at this. It was not in the Vietnam War. It wasn't ready by that time, but it requited itself very well. But people believe - when I was in the Air Force - I was in the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations Air Warfare, we had people within my office say, "Admiral, we ought to get this smaller, lighter, airplane. That's what we need. That's what we're always going to have. Got to have these fighter airplanes."

Well, the Navy doesn't have room to have two or three types of fighters on board. And also we had this big investment in the fleet, with carriers and other ships and so forth and we've got these hyper-sonic, certainly super-sonic airplanes, airplanes that the Soviets had at the time. With their missiles, their air-to-surface missiles and they had to be stopped, and you can't do that with a small single-engine fighter airplane, which we all like to fly, because they're fun to fly; lot of high performance, but you can't do anything with them against that threat. So the F-14 was supposed to do both of these jobs, and it did. That is the anti-bomber role and the anti-missile one as well as being able to handle itself in a melee or against those fighters.

The Secretary of Defense sort of sided with the Congress, in the sense that they didn't - well they didn't really appreciate the F-14. They thought it was too expensive and so, and everything was always too expensive. They ought to get rid of it, because it's too expensive. We didn't need it in their view. We also had opposition in the Navy Department and that was very discouraging. For the civilians to oppose it was one thing, but a new commander of the Naval Air Systems Command, Kent Lee, came in. Kent felt that he didn't like the F-14, either. He thought there was too much work associated with it. He didn't like Grumman Aircraft and he didn't like Admiral Connolly. Frankly I think he had a personal bias against this as well as a professional one.

The position that I was in was a very difficult one. I was supporting this. I was trying to get for the Navy what I thought it needed. I had just come back from the fleet and I knew what challenges we had there and what the opposition was and something like the F-14 was needed. I insisted that we keep it on track and we did.

It's the only time in my knowledge, however, when the Commander of Naval Air Systems Command disagreed with the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations Air Warfare. Teamed there together, it'd been a very powerful one. And I've always resented Kent Lee and his approach to this. I just thought

there was too much personal animosity on his part for the people involved. He had, justified in his mind, a professional dislike for the airplane as well.

But it took a lot of work to save the F-14. A new airplane, we suggested perhaps a new airplane called Naval Air Tactical Fighter, and we were told we couldn't have it, because one of the Congressional Committees, the House Appropriations Committee and they had decided through a young staffer that was there, since the Air Force had designed and built two lighter, cheaper, faster airplanes, the F-16 and the F-17, that we would not have an opportunity to get an airplane unless we used a derivative of one of those two.

It sort of made sense, except to somebody in the airplane business. I think we talked earlier about the certain restrictions you have on building an airplane for operating on a carrier. It isn't only operating in a salt air environment, where you've got to make sure you combat corrosion, but you also have the need for a much higher fuel reserve than you have on land base. On land base, you can come down and find your air field, find your runway and come down and it's easy to do. On carriers in the middle of the ocean there are not many divert fields to go to and you've got to make sure you've got enough fuel in your airplane. A wonderful fellow, who just died, George Spangerbird, insisted that figure was 30-35%. Well the Air Force I think used something like 15 to 20%. Well, try to put more fuel into what was in the F-17, predesignated the F-18, which we're now building in a different configuration.

The airplane was finally approved by the Congress and then I left and I had supported it. I said I would only support it if it were able to do more than just a fighter airplane. You don't have the room on our decks to have two fighters, the F-14 and the F-18. So at that stage, the contractors came out with a very good idea. That is, that they would put on attack capabilities as well. Carrying bombs, carrying missiles and so forth for air-to-ground war, and support of the troops. This went along quite well, but then I understand John Lehman came in as Secretary of the Navy. He was going to cancel the F-18. He didn't but I think there was probably good justification for doing so. Although the F-18 was a good airplane, but still had this very limiting factor of not enough fuel. And it's always been the cry of the fleet, first time it got there, that he didn't have enough fuel. And they started packing fuel everyplace you could, off the tail fin, every pocket they put another tank in there, so they'd have enough fuel to operate as a naval aircraft. We've had now about four versions of it, the F-18, and now we've got what we call the Super Hornet F-18 E&F. It looks like an F-18, but it's much larger. It's a different airplane and they sort of rebuilt it, but it cost just about as much as a new airplane. But it's a good airplane and it's one for our future. But it was difficult for the Navy to accommodate the new airplane and short legs and so forth.

The F-14, meanwhile came into its own and was appreciated for what it was. But it was without any competition, the most difficult assignment that I had. That was to save the F14 from being canceled. I knew what was required, not only I, not only first person singular, but others who actually thought about it, realized that we needed something like this and there wasn't anything else around like it. It became the workhorse of the Navy and it's made quite a good team with the F/A-18, since the F-18 came aboard. So I say without any qualification, it was my most difficult assignment. At one time while I was staying there, working about 12 hours a day, a lot of it on the F-14, just saving it, particularly against its opposition, I was going to put on my tomb stone, the F-14 did it.

GRADY: The F-14, that was replacing the F-4 Phantom, essentially?

HOUSER: Yes.

GRADY: Didn't the F-4 Phantom also have a reconnaissance role that the F-14 later had to pick up as well?

HOUSER: That's correct. What we did, we had a very fine reconnaissance airplane in the RA-5C. The RA5C was too big for the aircraft carrier. It was going to be an atomic bomber, a nuclear bomber. In that role you could probably justify it, but just as a reconnaissance airplane, it was hard to justify. We had six of them on *Constellation*, on the Tonkin Gulf, operating against North Vietnam. They did some very good work, but really you didn't need that amount of detail, and so forth. Occasionally, they would come back with something that was really very striking and we would organize a special launch or maybe change the present launch to one to go after this. The F-4 took this over and then the F-14 took it and it was a pod that we put on the airplane, and Grumman did a very fine job and it is still our reconnaissance airplane in the fleet right now.

So it was a versatile airplane, long-range, big radar. I've forgotten the details now, but you could track six airplanes at one time and I think you could engage about a half a dozen or so and have missiles prepared to go after the six - It was, I won't say ahead of the time, but it certainly was a very sophisticated airplane and the other planes haven't had that.

Now the F-18 E&F is supposed to have a lot of very fine features and not the least of which is the fact that we are now asking one airplane, one pilot to do both jobs and the electronics that are in the airplane, enable the airplane to carry bombs and rockets and missiles and all sorts of things. But training a pilot to handle all these, there's no back seat man or no side seat man as there was in the A-6. It's very difficult, because you can be overwhelmed very soon. And I've talked to some people even fairly recently that just keeping a pilot trained in both a fighter and the attack roles, takes a lot of time. We hear about these pilots who are getting out of the Navy because they can't spend enough time at home. When they get home they have to train in both the fighter and the attack roles. So that's more time they don't have with their families, but they're going to go back out on their next deployment, as though they had had sort of a regular time ashore, but they don't.

But it is really a dramatic change from when I started flying, it's what you had to do to become a fighter pilot or an attack airplane. Fighter pilot, you try to get up there and cross over the opposition and so forth. And you would make high side runs and hot side and underside and so forth, and occasionally fire rockets at the ground and bombs and in the attack role and that was principally dropping bombs. But now, as I say, we've got all these sophisticated weapons and it's very, very difficult for a single pilot to do it all. However, as I think I told you earlier, the last time, I was dedicated to the proposition that we reduce the numbers of different types of airplanes, on a carrier. Trying to support them in spare parts and the unique features that they have were just backbreaking. We had about eight different types of aircraft when I had the *Constellation*, and now they are down to just a few. Simplification helps, but it's still a very difficult job. No job is easy in this regard. To keep this air station out at sea equipped to operate with all the airplanes that we do and have the spare parts ordered and all of the unique missions that they have incorporated.

WINKLER: The forward guns in the F-14, early on, I guess were in the engines.

HOUSER: Yes.

WINKLER: Talk about those challenges.

HOUSER: That was a major challenge then also. The F-14 was designed, too, as a new airplane. Everything was new and they didn't want to put a new engine in there at the same time. So they took the existing engine called the TF30. Turbo Fan 30. And it was a good reliable engine, but it wasn't powerful enough for the airplane, but the idea was to build, I think it was 67 of those and then we would shift to the F401. The F401 was an engine built by United Aircraft and the Air Force and the Navy were having joint engine development. The Air Force was building the F100 engine. The F-15, their F-14, so to speak, and

the Navy was building the F401, a different engine, more powerful engine, far different. The F-15 was also under some fire, so the Air Force made sure that they got their F100 engines. They didn't have a OTF30 standby like we had in the engine and we were not getting our share. We were paying our amount of investment into these developments, but we were not getting our share of the time and development.

I had the project officer from the Air Force in to explain this to me. He assured me that we were getting everything that we were supposed to be getting and so forth. Well, I investigated and found out we were not. I went to see his boss, a friend of mine. I don't recall his name right now, but I can see his face. Anyway, he said he'd look into it. He looked into it, and the project officer said, "Oh, no, their not getting it," and we had to stay with the TF30 far longer.

They also had some development problems on the F401 engine and it was coming along so slowly that General Electric came in with an engine that was better than the F401. Of course, there wasn't any money for it. We couldn't buy it, until the Reagan administration came in and pumped a lot more money into engine development and they came out with a new GE engine for the F-14 and made it a super airplane. As a matter of fact, it was almost too good for the airplane. It was so powerful. Had to hold it back, or they were going to use the airplane fatigue life up just flying around and doing some dog fighting and so forth, because it had so much power in this airplane. But they still have some of those. They are called the F-14D.

GRADY: Can you address the question of the high-low mix as it applied to error during the Zumwalt era and then also touch on, you intrigued me with that comment about reducing the number of airplanes. The Marine Corps is still saying the same things - the kind of airplanes. You had - took over air operations at the tail end of eight years of heavy use of aircraft carrying out a war in South East Asia.

HOUSER: When I said on the F-18, I wanted to make sure that it would have attack capabilities as well as fighter. Starting with the Vietnam War. We started that war using A-1s, the propeller drive airplane. Wonderful airplane, but nonetheless it was outmoded very soon and we had the A-4. After a while, I think a year or so, the A-1 was no longer allowed to go over the beach and fight and drop weapons and so forth. They could do off-shore and they could perhaps make some penetrations for a specific purpose, but for all intents and purposes the A-4 was the one that had to carry the load of bombs.

We then got the A-7, toward the tail end of the Vietnam war. It was long enough so you could have all this aircraft development. The A-7 got over there and started replacing the A-4. And the idea I had, in the case of the F18 was that it would probably replace the A-7, and that's what did happen.

But we had a lot of these airplanes. Let's see we had the F-4 on board and two different version of the A-4. Had two different engines in them and so forth. We had the RA-5, and the A-6 and the A-3 for tanker. We had helicopters. We had an A-1 for electronic counter measures and so forth. Just trying to keep these things up was just a nightmare. Fortunately, we were just a short flight from Subic Bay. Not always a short flight but somewhere nearby a supply base.
Does that answer your question?

GRADY: Now the high-low mix of aircraft as Zumwalt's view of the fleet.

HOUSER: It's not exactly what we're talking about here, but I knew Bud pretty well. He felt that there were places where we could use smaller carriers. We had that go-around - I may have talked about that last night, but anyway, the high-low mix with him was to have a fleet or some ships and airplanes that could operate in low threat areas and, I guess, perhaps in Africa or South American where they didn't have big defenses and so forth. He also was trying to get smaller decks and vertical take-off for short take

off and landings so we wouldn't need these big ships to carry all this stuff. That was his high-low strategy. We had the big carriers. We had the small carriers. We had the F-4, RA-5, this type of airplane and we were going to have some lighter, cheaper airplanes.

I'll tell you in a moment why it didn't succeed, but I think he was going back to World War II where we built the jeep carriers. We had the smaller carriers and we even got the Kaiser. We called them the Kaiser. The Kaiser cargo ships and put a deck on them and they performed well. But supporting that was this great big fleet of fast carriers that could do other things. So we were not exactly in that role, here during the cold war, where we considered the Soviets were our principle enemy, although we didn't fight them. We fought against the Koreans and the Vietnamese, and the type of work we did could have been handled by something else, but then you were introducing yet another airplane.

I think I mentioned this, but it may be worthwhile to talk again. I was the commander of a task force in the Norwegian Sea and we had - my flag ship at that time, I believe, the *Independence*, large carrier, the *Wasp*, which was a converted Essex Class, and the *Ark Royal*, which is a smaller airplane, I think it's about 18,000 or 20,000 tons. And we were operating in an exercise, supporting troops ashore and so forth and providing air support by these three carriers. I think we were supposed to go until eleven o'clock that night. Probably started around noon.

The operation was going fine, until around seven o'clock because of the bad weather. The *Ark Royal* called and said they've got to cease operations because of the roughness of the seas. They couldn't operate safely. And I say, up the Norwegian Sea, talk about the weather changing. Wait five minutes or so, you have weather fronts pass you, like on the map, there shown almost like fingers of your hand. Here comes a front, an hour later, or two hours later, here comes another one. That's what happens. So it had to stop, I think about seven o'clock at night. Then a couple of hours later the *Wasp*, which is a pretty good sized, you know, 35,000 to 40,000 tons, and it had to stop too, because of weather. The *Independence* continued its flight schedules right on up until eleven o'clock.

So safety is under consideration here. You've got a small carrier here. It might be able to work fine in the Gulf of Mexico, but when you get into these really turbulent seas, you can't. That doesn't mean you're always going to operate in the Norwegian Sea, but it does say that you're going, at some time, to get very bad seas in almost every place.

Another one is, and I think this is a good example, is the war the Brits had down at the Falkland Islands. The Brits had the small carriers. As a matter of fact, I think, they even decided to phase out their aircraft carriers totally and the ships were actually sold, I think, to Australia. Then they stopped that and sent them down there. But they didn't have any long - reconnaissance airplanes, so they couldn't call it and find out what they had to do with that. They had only the carriers down there. They didn't have any electronic counter measure airplanes, as a result they were almost beaten up by the Argentines. And had the United States Navy or the United States government released external fuel tanks for the A-4s, I think they would have defeated the Brits.

The Brits knew, of course, what the range was without external tanks and they stayed just outside of that. Once they went to Argentina, some of them extended that and had to land in the water, but they were going to put that bomb into their enemy's ship. They didn't have airborne early warning and that's a necessity. It takes a pretty good airplane to put one of those big antennas on. You can't put these things on a very small carrier. You don't have the deck room, for example, for the high performance and they were using a carrier which has a vertical landing capability or even short landing. And that's fine for that ship, but you're really not going to get these larger and more powerful and essential capabilities of larger and heavier airplanes, faster with the essential capabilities that you need in those small airplanes. So that's another reason for it.

I'm not giving you a speech on large carriers, I'm just saying what our experience has been in the high-low mix that Admiral Zumwalt was talking about. He's having the larger destroyers as well, but also he wanted the frigates. The frigates haven't turned out very well. I think we've gotten rid of most of them now, and now we're building billion dollar destroyers with Lee's missiles and so forth. So we've gotten away from that somewhat.

Now this new Zumwalt class destroyer is trying to go back to that a little, but it has some other features. We won't get into that, because that wasn't on my watch.

WINKLER: One thing which, during your tenure, we're having a wind down from Vietnam and some cuts in the defense budget. You had the CVS and you had the CVA. Whose idea was it to convert the two into a CV and dispense with the CVS, and combine both, instead of being an attack capability now to your big carriers.

HOUSER: It was a nice play by the Office of Secretary of Defense. I forget what year this was. We used to have about nine CVS's. One year in the planning cycle, they came along and eliminated all CVS's. All CVS's, are going to leave the Navy. Well, the Navy went back and were given four CVCs. This was looked upon as a victory. We had five CVS's, when we used to have nine. Well, then, so the CVS's were sort of fair game. We had the S-3 airplanes coming along and they were going - that's another story which I think I'll tell you about the S-3 a bit. This happened on my watch, too.

The anti-submarine warfare is always concerned with air-to-surface missiles, but also surface-to-surface missiles to submarines are equally hazardous and dangerous and then you also have the vulnerability to torpedoes that can be fired. So they've got anti-submarine as well as anti-airborne fear. The CVS's were going to be phased out and they were phased out. Of course, they were getting older, also. What were we going to do for sea to outboard anti-submarine warfare protection. Well I used to argue with some of the OSD system analysts and they would take a line and say, "Alright from Argentia in Canada and from Bermuda and from Iceland, and from Spain and so forth and you take this thousand mile readings of the Atlantic and you take it out here and you take it out here and look all these circles are almost tangent to each other, or certainly close. So can't you do it all with a short leash anti-submarine warfare.

"No, " I said, "It takes a long time for the shore-based Anti- submarine warfare to get out that thousand miles, but then when you get there all you are doing is scouting a fairly small circle out here. The fact that that line comes through there doesn't mean that all of this area is being surveyed, under surveillance. All it says is, they're going that far, and it might take them four hours to go down to - three or four hours - then they've got three or four hours back and they get on the station and they can stay two or three hours. So then you've got another airplane to go out there to relieve them and another one in the train to go out there, probably takes about three of them just to keep one of them on the station. And that's only in that one location."

Well, they finally understood that. I said, "Another problem there is you're depending on the availability of overseas bases. Now, clearly in the Atlantic, we've had some good relations certainly with Canada and with Iceland and with the UK, and with Spain. But I do recall that during the, I think it was in 1973 war when base rights for US aircraft for Israel were denied. I said, "We can't know that. We don't know that." But I said, "The important thing is that if you've got the anti-submarine airplane on board, you can put it, and it can sanitize or at least can survey the area in the vicinity where we think that submarines may be or can threaten us. We also have destroyers out there and they can give - they can detect, but also when the detection is made, they can go and pursue them as well."

So that was it, as an example of Les Aspin who became Secretary of Defense, who was on the House Armed Services Committee, and I was asked, I used to testify every year over there and I was asked a question about the S-3 Viking. Why does the Navy need the S-3. Les Aspin was a systems analyst type, you know, and so I got up on my feet and gave him a dissertation on why I think the S-3 is needed for the Navy. At the end of that session, he came down to the floor where I was and said, "Admiral, that's the first time that I've ever understood why you need an S-3."

So, we had to put S-3s on something if we were going to have our protection. Otherwise we'd sort of be limited to putting a squadron up in each of these bases just to support one group, wherever they are. Does that answer the question?

WINKLER: OK, As far as the final decision to eliminate the CVSs and make the CVs combined all on one ship, which was Admiral Zumwalt's?

HOUSER: I don't exactly remember who made that decision, but it was obvious it was coming. Where to cut it down from nine to four. And they were going to do something. We didn't have a very good airplane on the CVS anyway. We could have put S-3 on, but we had the S-2, and it wasn't a bad airplane it just wasn't adequate.

WINKLER: Then, of course, they were decommissioning a lot of, well all the Essex Class carrier. Bringing new carriers, big deck carriers on line, you described a little bit - Zumwalt had his idea of a sea controlled ship. Eventually, during your tenure, I guess the *Nimitz* is already under construction. How many additional big decks were you able to get authorized during your four-year tenure?

HOUSER: Jim Holloway led a study that resulted in appropriation, appropriation may not be the proper word, but it was a three carrier program and it was approved. The three carriers were the *Nimitz*, the *Eisenhower* and the -

GRADY: *Carl Vinson*?

HOUSER: The *Vinson*, yes. '68, '69, and '70. And then that was about it when I was there. Jim put that program through and it made sense to buy them. If you're going to buy one, you can buy three of them, because all of them were identical ships. The next ship was the *Theodore Roosevelt*, I believe.

WINKLER: That's right.

HOUSER: And I was not here then. I had retired. But it was during the Carter administration, he was - I'm telling you what I heard, not what I know, but I think it's important. The Carter administration continued to deny the Navy anymore carriers. I guess he was determined that we would have no more, but there were people like Admiral Tom Connolly and our newly formed Association of Naval Aviation and Captain Mark Hill just bulldogged on this thing. Went to work on them and the Congress put the *Roosevelt* in over the President's disapproval of it. It was therefore put into law and it was built.

When I attended the commissioning of the *Roosevelt*, I said, "This should be called the USS *Mark Hill* or the USS *Tom Moorer*," because they really worked hard on it. I don't know how the others came along. But I think they sort of got in the habit of this. The other carriers were being phased out, the Midway-class carriers and they stayed for a long time, but they had to go at some stage. So Congress got used to the idea of going and replacing these. We had a fleet of fifteen carriers and we've since been reduced to twelve and now I see Andy Marshall is now doing a very quick review of what is needed in the

future. I understand he is not a supporter of carriers and apparently never has been. At lunch today, a question came up like that, well, if you want an airfield nearby, it seems to be one of the absolutes in the need to quell almost anything, whether it's in Africa or whether it's Asia, I don't know where you're going to get your airfield and your airplanes to do it. Furthermore, you've got presence there. You've got strength and presence, and I don't know of any other way to do it than what we have.

Operating from the United States, or even surface-to-surface missiles, don't do the job. The thing about the carrier is it's there. It can have repetitive fights and each of the weapons doesn't cost a million or a couple of million dollars to get over there as surface-to-surface missiles. This is not to say they aren't useful. They are, but they're not the same thing as having close air support over there for your troops ashore or for making an impression on the population.

WINKLER: This brings up a good point, in that during your time period, Admiral Zumwalt is a black shoe and he has one of those things… the need is seen for a sea control ship carrying an advanced radar system and eventually evolves into the Aegis cruiser that we have today.

In the surface community, they see that program was under threat during that time period, because the argument was being made, "Well, there's this Tomcat fighter with this air-to-air missile, why do we need an Aegis cruiser and why do we need Harpoon to Tomahawk missiles when we can have aircraft carriers and airplanes can do the job." Did the air community see the initiative being made by the surface community to better Aegis systems?

HOUSER: There are, we changed a lot of things at that time. I think, at one phase there was an idea that sea control ship would be equipped with all the missiles and all the fire power that's needed and it would have some destroyers alongside and they could go into areas and protect themselves

I didn't believe it, I still don't and I've held this belief since the December, 10th of 1941, when the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse*, the finest British battleships were sunk by the Japanese off Malaysia two days after, two, three days after the war. I think if you've got enough concentrated air opposition against you, you're going to go down. I don't know if you build all this in to sea control a ship from the enemy. So I think that was dreaming.

However, the use of surface-to-surface and air-to-surface missiles, I think is very good. It should get your enemy as far away or at least attack him as far as you can, don't bring him up to fight you at close quarters. So the matter here always comes down, Dave, you know, how much money you spend. Who's going to pay for it, and if we're going to do this and this and this, we can't do the other one and the other one which we all need. So that's always a wrestling match but I don't think there was any just saying we're going to subvert their program because we can't afford it. What it amounted to is you make your own presentation, what you think you can do. It may be better and it may cost less and be more effective than what the other person does. And you put that in submarines, and surface ships and aircraft carriers.

GRADY: Because at that point too, were you not also getting from the LA class submarine, into the waters… and weren't we then replacing the Polaris?

WINKLER: Yes, that's another budget, competitor for budgetary dollars.

GRADY: It's all about that same time, as I remember.

HOUSER: That's right, the ranges of the list of missiles on submarines continue to grow and grow, and the number that they carry. Of course we from the Polaris to the Tridents, and this was just a giant step,

and they were able to reduce the number of Polaris. The entry of the *Los Angeles*, I don't think they posed much threat to the Polaris, did they?

GRADY: No, but it was ship building funds as a whole, they had four separate things all coming in. Large programs beginning. Actually I think Polaris was still continuing at that point. Certainly three of them were competing for dollars.

HOUSER: No, I agree with that, but as I say the *Los Angeles* got their suite of surface-to-surface missiles, cruise missiles and I think that was a really good step, but I don't think at that stage they were even talking about that, because there the case had been made that we needed so many of these attack airplanes because of the Soviet Fleet and also protecting our own, that they were justified on the basis of sort of pure anti-submarine warfare rather than attack.

WINKLER: One thing is Tomahawk missiles - that was a program, was that managed by your office?

HOUSER: No, that was managed by the missile office over there. No, but Tomahawk was a giant step ahead and I was out of the Navy by the time that really matured, or at least that was being developed.

WINKLER: OK, but I understand that during then, but actually the Russians wanted us to get that out of our development cycle and Admiral Holloway managed to stymy that initiative and keep it out of the SALT talks. I was just curious if you were involved in any of those discussions.

HOUSER: No, Admiral Holloway was CNO while I was there and he stayed on two more years. He retired two years after I did. But I don't recall that as being in question.. The idea of having Tomahawk missiles was a good one and I can understand why the Russians would like to have it included in the limitations, but I was not involved.

WINKLER: You served under two CNOs. Contrast the styles.

HOUSER: Yes, I knew them both personally, and they were both in the class behind me at USNA. I had had duty with Jim Holloway on board the USS *Boxer* during the Korean War in 1953 and with Bud Zumwalt, on the Joint Staff, and other places I'd come across him. He was in the Navy staff. I knew them both. Entirely different people. Bud Zumwalt, very bright, very eager, and he was I think, quite ambitious and colorful. He loved doing things, and he liked being in the lime light, and when he was picked, I was quite surprised. I felt he had not had enough experience in the Navy to take this job and it turned out I was right, I think. Maybe others don't see it that way.

He came back from Vietnam all pumped up about his last duty station, perhaps I did too. But his last duty was in the brown-water Navy and he came back and that was the, almost the model in which he wanted the Navy to go to. Beards, smoke a little pot. I guess they call it now, "Laid back." Just take it easy. Well, that isn't the Navy. The Navy's rigid and very disciplined and so forth and you have to be. You get on these ships out there, you don't have time for a lot of discussion. You don't sit around, lie around and enjoy yourself. It's a lot of work. But it's also great discipline and Bud came along and he tried to cause - sort of relax, I don't know if relax is exactly the word, but just take it easy, you know, and wanted to introduce a lot of new things. He came out with the Z-gram and so forth and I thought these were a disaster. It was a way to get to people, but it sort of destroyed the discipline and the chain of command in the Navy. He'd say, "Well, we didn't need it."

The hell we didn't, people didn't know what to do. Whether they obeyed the law that was set out by the Z-gram or they obeyed the commanding officer. You ended up with some riots and also some mutinies as a result of this. Because he told them we're too structured and we've got to ease up on people. We've got to make sure we give everybody an opportunity regardless of color, or their grades, or their sex, and so forth, and introduced a lot of things that he thought was going to modernize the Navy. What they really did, I think, was almost destroy the Navy as it had been.

When you get out at sea, not in the brown-water Navy where he came from, but you get out there with a great responsibility and you've got a lot of big expensive equipment. You've got a lot of lives to be responsible for and you have to respond to missions and so forth, you should best be ready for it. You don't sit around and have, what do they call them now, sessions -

WINKLER: Focus group?

HOUSER: Focus groups, you can't have a focus group on there. You put the commanding officer there to be the focus. He's the one that gives the directives and I think it just got way out of hand under Zumwalt's reign.

He felt that he was doing the right thing, but I have said this and I told Senator Chaffee one day, when we rode in an airplane, I said, "You know, John," I knew John and also John Warner pretty well. They came - I was there when they came in, anyway, I said, "John, you know I think that Bud Zumwalt wasn't ready to become the CNO and he'd have made a lot better CNO had he gotten a major fleet command and found out what the real problems are and what the situations were for all of our ships and not just a small group they had in Vietnam." He said, "Well maybe, I guess I'm responsible, because I was the one that brought him in."

But the idea is always, "Oh, get somebody who's going to change everything around." The Navy may be able to change around, but it's not that type of organization. You've certainly got to be innovative, you've got to be able to listen. You've got to make changes and so forth.

In the case of Jim Holloway, he inherited this Navy from Zumwalt. I won't say it was all a shock to him, because he had been the Vice Chief of Naval Operations, right there, when this stuff was going on and Bud Zumwalt ran his own program and he had his own group up on the fifth floor to make sure that these Z-grams and the other things were followed. Well, it took Holloway four years to put the Navy back on track, in my opinion. And others, I think, shared that.

So you say what the difference is? Jim was more traditional. Very bright guy also. Also tried to be progressive in the sense that you've got to understand the Navy changing. We had the all-volunteer force and we also had women coming in and we had other social activities, so changes come in. He didn't disregard those, but he tried to do them on a systematic basis, rather than just open the door and say, "OK, anything goes." Does that answer your question?

GRADY: Was Warner the Secretary of Navy, during your stay in Op 05? What was he like as a Secretary?

HOUSER: He loved the Navy. He wasn't a hard man, a tough man. I was there when John Warner came in in 1969, Undersecretary. I got to meet him and also Chaffee at the time, so they knew me. I knew John as a personal friend as well as Undersecretary and later the Secretary of the Navy. He wasn't dogmatic. He wasn't somebody who tried to push people around and so forth. He was willing to listen and he liked all the others say they are - quote they're people. He seemed to love people and his job and so forth. But he didn't in my opinion, come in with great strategic views as to how the Navy and the Defense

Department should be operated. He wanted to make sure that the Navy Department ran well and that people performed their duties and you were taken care of and so forth. I don't recall that he ever came in with an agenda and it did, well, like the sea control ship, that one, nor should he. He could have, but then there are some people that do it, but what I'm saying is this what uninformed people will do, and he came in and kept things going.

John's a good man. I think he's certainly done well as Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee. I've been over to see him a couple of times. I might add that I'd seen him before when he was a member, and I saw him when he was the Chairman and I thought it was night and day. His whole attitude and the atmosphere around him changed when he became chairman. He's run a good show in my opinion as the Chairman.

GRADY: I'd like to ask a question on the Middle East War, the '73 war. Did the Navy learn anything in air operations based upon what the Israelis did during that war, or what did we, primarily in a land war, the Navy pick up from this?

HOUSER: Well, we learned this. We learned you need airplanes to fight the war and this is one of the times where the aircraft carrier came into its own on this particular activity. We couldn't get airplanes to Israel, who was calling for them. We flew them from Norfolk to a carrier off of the Azores to another carrier in the Mediterranean and on into Israel and Portugal. Our friends who'd been there for years. Our allies so forth, said, "No, you can't land on our bases." They wouldn't let the refuelers from the Air Force go in there. We couldn't operate on the bases we'd been operating on for years, because of this political sensitivity with the Middle East countries and also the ones in Eastern Europe.

So, we learned this, that having control of your own bases is a pretty good idea. This was probably the most extreme example, but we've had at other times when we've been denied base rights in places.

In the actual fighting in the War of '73, I say the first lesson was you needed airplanes to fight the war. We had airplanes that landed over there after they flew in from the carrier in the Mediterranean. And when they crawled out of the airplane, they were putting the refueling nozzle in the airplane to refuel them and Israeli pilots got in there and flew them off. They didn't even get cool. They were that desperate for having the planes.

GRADY: What kind of airplanes were they?

HOUSER: They were A-4s.

GRADY: A-4s, yeah.

HOUSER: I was part of that, here, I was in OP 05 but actually Admiral Michaelis down in Norfolk was the one that had the responsibility to get these over, but we didn't get them over there. We got them authorized and so forth and off to the Middle East. It goes back to Andy Marshall. What are you going to do with something like this? If you want an airfield there, how are you going to get it?

WINKLER: The Egyptians seized control of the air with massive use of surface-to-air missiles and really denied the Israelis, because the Israelis traditionally controlled the skies and that was the reason for their success in '67, was that they overwhelmed the Egyptian air force. They had control of the skies and that allowed success for Israeli ground forces, but the Egyptian's massive use of surface-to-air missile balance just bloodied the Israeli Air Force. Did that wake up people to the

need? Now, of course, we've been flying the same missiles over Vietnam for years, but for the need in the Navy in improvements in our electronic warfare, you know our EA-6 capabilities?

HOUSER: It reinforced it, I say. You made the point already that I was going to make and that is we've been fighting these missiles since about 1967. The first one went in I think it was in '67. They were getting better missiles all the time and more of them and so forth. It's a matter of equipment and tactics.

There are some tactics that were used in Vietnam to turn into the missile and so forth and get it to explode behind you and doing all sorts of things that were, as I say, tactical activities that could diffuse it. The Navy has always been devoted to electronic means where possible. We ended up, for example, with the only missile seeker or radar seeker and the weapon for it, the strike missile, in the Vietnam War. It was used by the Air Force as well as ourselves. We then had a redo of all - after the Vietnam War, of all of our weapons, and one of the missiles we had was the HARM, high speed anti-radiation missile.

In answer to your question, yes, we did take notice of that, but I say it wasn't like it was something new to us. It was just a lot more. What we had was to make sure we still had the HARM missile, we probably were the only ones, and I don't think the Air Force did. I think they're using them well. The issue here is, you've got tactics and you've got, of course, protection on your airplanes. EA-6Bs. They had nothing like that when the Vietnam War was going on and I authorized, I accelerated and enabled us to get some EA-6Bs over there, even before they were ready. They were there and they were used when the B-52s were bombing in Christmas of '73.

GRADY: In '73 that air protection allowed the Egyptian Army to move armed forces almost as fast as we moved in the Gulf War. Was there anything on the Marine Corp side coming back from Navy Air. Look at how fast these people were able to move once the Israelis lost control of the sky?

HOUSER: I don't recall any emphasis on this, it's clearly -

GRADY: They covered a couple of hundred miles there.

HOUSER: It was clearly an appreciation of what they had done and for the reason that you say. But as far as coming as a major surprise, I don't think so. Sort of like, goes back to the things with the *Prince of Wales*. If you're going to be over there and you're not going to have air cover or you're not going to have airplanes to deny these things, whether it's other tanks or whether its surface-to-air missiles and so forth, you're going to let them come through.

I don't recall any accelerated push on this. We had about all, about all the effort we could put into it. For example, the EA-6B is still being built. It's wonderful airplanes like the E-2 and the EA-6B are the two airplanes that are being demanded by others.

It is my understanding long after I left the Navy that the airplanes that went in, oh we're not talking about '73 now, we're talking about '91 and we're talking about '97. -'96. '97 - the one that could solve all and so forth. We have EA-6B on the station. The airplanes are over there. And so the EA-6Bs are almost, I won't say they're used up, but they certainly are weary, because the people over there have demanded they be there. So there is a keen appreciation. There continues to be for surface-to-air missiles and for defenses like this. Relating this to the '73 War, I think it's stretching my knowledge of it more than it should be.

WINKLER: Now, I guess a good general question is, there's this relationship between NavAir and then there's OP 05. Could you just give a description of what your responsibilities were at the

Assistance command, and then talk a little bit about the people who worked with you and what their responsibilities were.

HOUSER: In short, my job was Aviation Advisor for the Chief of Naval Operations and Secretary of the Navy, and so forth, which established policies and also established requirements. What is it we need? The Naval Air Systems Command builds the stuff for the Navy Department, and the requirements and so forth, the specifications and so forth and working with the contractors. Work with the contractors to make sure they get all the requirements.

WINKLER: Now, do you have much dealing with for example Aero Space Engineer CEOs, or -

HOUSER: Yes, they would come by and see me and the Boeings and the Lockheeds and the rest of them come to my office and they would have presentations and so forth with a new idea that they think they have and so forth. Leading to requirements, and also changes, major changes to the airplanes. I would have to defend these things in the budget conferences. A minimum of four and usually about six. For instance on the hill, I think last year I had thirteen because we were talking about FA-18.

WINKLER: The last statement you made kind of struck me, because it sounded to me like the aerospace engineer, aerospace guys come to you and say, "We've got this idea for an airplane." Whereas, I would think that you would be approaching the aerospace engineer saying, "We have a requirement for this, can you build it. Was that - What was it?

HOUSER: It would be both ways. Sometimes they would bring a new idea, but then they would hear that we were looking for something, then they would come in with their presentation and that was the way it generally was.

WINKLER: As far as some of the folks that work for you, what is the branch layout and who were some of the officers that work underneath you, that you have any fond recollections of -

HOUSER: Oh yes, I have fond recollections of most of them. Jerry O'Rourke was one. You may remember him. He was big in Night Fighters and so forth.

WINKLER: He was OP O -

HOUSER: He was 05 W, that was a sort of study group that they had. Bill Shawcross was there. He was in Op 506. 506 had a project coordinator, and the Naval Air Systems Command had project officers. The coordinator and he did the same thing relative to Naval Air Systems Command that I did with the Commander of the Naval Air Systems Command. That is establish requirements and so forth. It was a continuous exchange of information between them. They weren't static in one place until they understood what was going on. The people that really did the work at the counters and so forth, and the staffs over there, but not necessarily, Naval Air Systems Command.

WINKLER: OK, so the other -

HOUSER: Jack Christianson, Big Jack, he was my deputy at one time. Carl Siberling, fine man.

WINKLER: He's on our list to interview.

HOUSER: You'll get some really, colorful, well Jack Christianson is the colorful one. Carl has a very unusual, and very fine background. He alleges that he's the only unrestricted aviator that we have. Now, we have restricted officers and unrestricted. Carl flew propeller airplanes, he flew lighter than air,

helicopters and he flew jets. Having the lighter than air on there, there are not many people left who we know of who flew lighter than air. Of course, most of them were phased out when they phased out lighter than air ships. But you'll enjoy Carl.

WINKLER: Any other topics -

GRADY: Let me bring up the tail end of the war, Vietnam.

HOUSER: Vietnam, OK.

GRADY: You are in the Pentagon.

HOUSER: Correct

GRADY: Let's just walk through what it was like in April and May of '75 at the senior levels of the Navy. Saigon is falling, so is Cambodia.

WINKLER: I was thinking of going back to the years, because he came in and the Christmas bombing was in '72, and then, so what was - were there any requirements for support out of your office for Naval Operations, or was that out -

HOUSER: We didn't run the war; what we did was support them. What they needed in '72, this was when we got the EA-6Bs.

WINKLER: Right, OK.

HOUSER: We got them to operate. I was wrong by one year. And incidentally, that in itself is quite a story. You can get that from Admiral Tom Moorer. I've heard it several times. As you may recall in seventy - towards the end of '72, I think it was in October, Kissinger had a Peace Treaty of all the hands with the North Vietnamese. Then everything was supposed to stop on October 31st, I believe it was. We found out that the Vietnamese were not living up to their part. We were stopping deliveries as I remember, all sorts of things. We tied our hands and we found out that they weren't doing it and they weren't going to release our prisoners. So very little we could do. We could start the war up again. Admiral Moorer was the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff at the time. A very determined guy. Very nice man, but he was no softy. I do know one, General J.C. Meyer, John Meyer was Commander of Attack, Strategic Air Plan, and they were two principals in this operation to send the B-52s north.
Politically, I heard this and I believe it's true, the Secretary of Defense didn't want any part of that. He left town. The Secretary of State didn't want any part of it, he left town too. That's Kissinger, the other one was Laird. Kissinger and some other people said, "No, not us." But Moorer kept leaning on President Nixon and he continued this and I was here in town at the time. And it was very difficult to get any support for this. The newspapers were all, "This is the Christmas season. We should stop this. Here we are killing innocent people," and all the rest of it. And Moorer would not let up. Nixon made the decision, I'm not saying he didn't, but Moorer kept the pressure on him and kept going and the North Vietnamese kept on as they expected them to do.

I personally believe that had they not done something like that, the prisoners of war might still be over there. We had to do something to get them out of there. The Vietnamese weren't to be trusted. But it's a very difficult period at that time. As far as, the Navy airplanes continued with, let's face it, they'd gone to big bombs. They were the ones that really got their attention.

WINKLER: Then going three years later, you were at the Pentagon and it was probably a very gloomy atmosphere when the Saigon government falls.

HOUSER: Yes, I had a trip, I guess it was in April of - April or May, no in October, I guess it was in October of 1974, through the Pacific Fleet, with then Secretary of the Navy Middendorf and we went to visit ships and we went to Vietnam and we went to other places. On visiting ships, he considered himself one of the black gang, so we'd get aboard ship and the next thing he'd been down in the engine room or down in the boiler room. I don't know how many ships of the Pacific Fleet I saw from that aspect. That was his specialty. He'd go down and look.

But we also got to Saigon, and we went to make a call on the Ambassador. It was pitiful. I forget the name of this fellow. He was an older fellow. But he was a career guy. I thought he knew what he was talking about. At the time, there may be, anyway, he was telling us that the United States had set aside, or at least appropriated 1.4 million dollars for the South Vietnamese in October of - and that started at the beginning of the fiscal year. At the time I think was June, it may have been end of September, but I think it was in June. So they were spending at the rate of one-twelfth of that per month and the ambassador said they are very money conscious and they don't want to run out of money, because they were holding off the North Vietnamese. I think it was in October and the bill was going to be put through and I think Teddy Kennedy was one of the ring leaders here to cut off all funds to the South Vietnamese.

I think that they were spending at this rate, but now they had to take whatever was left and stretch it out through the rest of the year. There's not very much left.

The ambassador said, the South Vietnamese exactly what each bullet costs and they are fearful of shooting their rifles and sending off ammunition, because they won't get anymore. The idea was to husband this, to hold it all in. He said it was a very pitiful frame of mind for a military person to have. You're supposed to be defending your country and you're supposed to take advantage of opportunity and so forth, but they couldn't do it.

He said, "They're trading bodies for bullets." That's the expression he used. I think he spelled the name Martin, was there an Ambassador Martin?

WINKLER: Martin?

HOUSER: I think this was Ambassador Martin, but he painted a picture that then a few months later, not a surprise to me, they said the top Vietnamese caved when the North Vietnamese came in they didn't resist very much. I think that frame of mind, that atmosphere that was developed there, you don't have any money. You can't fire the bullets and so forth, but the North Vietnamese came after them. They just didn't. I often thought such a, such a bad decision for the Congress to make at that time. I know there were a lot of people who said, "We just got to get out of there," and so forth. But you get out honorably, and I thought that was a very dishonorable thing for us to do.

We have a lot of people, we have a lot of friends over there that we had promised things to, and the promises weren't kept. I thought that was, that's a poor thing to do. When you think about what they were facing. Here they put their trust in the United States and when the time came for us to provide what we'd already promised, we didn't do it.

I've always felt bad about that and the way the whole thing came apart. People starting getting in boats and leaving town and so forth. It was like nobody was going - and we ended up flying off the top of the embassy. That was an awful situation.

WINKLER: Think of any other points before we -

GRADY: I have a question and it concerns the transition. When President Nixon resigned what was it like during that time of the pre Watergate hearings, when you get to the situation? You have a crisis in the government. You have a vice president already resigned and you have the President resigning. What was the situation like in the higher levels of the Defense Department during this situation? There were the stories of don't honor any commands, send it through the Secretary of Defense and that kind of stuff...

HOUSER: The Navy, as I said earlier is a pretty disciplined outfit and so forth. If anybody had any idea that we were going to take over the government. Don't obey orders and so forth, No. I personally felt very badly for Nixon, because I felt that he was persecuted by the *Washington Post*. I was here during that period. Were you living here at that time?

WINKLER: No.

HOUSER: Well, everyday, everyday, everyday, there would be a story on the front page of the *Washington Post*. It might be insignificant, but it had a headline. It was always accusing him of something and ridiculing him. As well as accusations. You sort of felt sick to your stomach at what was going on there. They were getting this man and pushing him down to the bottom. But as far as any change in command structure or obeying orders and so forth, if that was going on it was way above my head. Because as far as that was concerned, I worked with the CNO and the CNO with the Secretary of the Navy, and the Secretary of the Navy worked for the President and we had a chain of command.

WINKLER: Well, when did the decision come as far as - you were four years is a long tenure, so it was kind of clear at the end of that tenure, it was time to retire?

HOUSER: Yes. I - it was indicated I was going to go to the Pacific Fleet as a commander and I had all the tickets to go there. I got caught up in a couple of things that were just one of the breaks of the game. They had an investigation, they had heard about duck hunting. It became big news that Tom Moorer was there and others. Norfolk had put some - had been having for several years over there, a duck hunting weekend. People went over there and shot ducks and so forth. They always got together. Well, after the Vietnam War everything's fair game. The Vietnam War ended, and so some reporter found out that people over there went duck hunting with contractors.

Well, I'm not a hunter and when I was here on a tour before, Admiral Sam Brown said, "Hey, you got to get over there and hunt!" One of the things - get over there and get some ducks and so forth, and geese. So when I got back here, a station chief who I knew, he was a friend, and he said, "Oh, Yeah, we've got duck. Come on over here some weekend." And I went over with another admiral, Ed Archer, from another OP. So we drove over there and went to the hotel, and to dinner, got our license and so forth and went out shooting the next day. I don't know if I shot anything or not. As I say, I'm not a - I don't even particularly like it, but I'd had such a strong recommendation from my friend Sam Brown, I wanted to go and I did. Well, this reporter got in this and he went over and took a look at all the people that had been issued licenses and so forth that weekend. There were several. I was only there one time. And said, my name was on there.

When I went down to pay my bill for the hotel room, I went down to pay my bill and they said, "It's already paid." And I said, well some other person, Jim Holcum a friend of mine, I'll go give Jim his money."

They said, "No, you can't do this, there's no one to take it." Well, anyway, so this is entertainment and so forth. So we got pretty big coverage. Oh, they made a big thing out of it. I was one of them.

Well, I didn't work with the contractors. That was the Naval Air Systems Command. I had nothing to do with contracts and that sort of stuff. I was the one that follows it. So I was one that got dirtied up by that. It was the only time I was over there. Some had been going over there. My predecessor had been going the year before, and – (tape change)

WINKLER: February 14, still Valentines Day, 2001. Dave Winkler with John Grady continuing with Vice Admiral Houser discussing the Duck Hunting -

HOUSER: Right

WINKLER: Story.

HOUSER: So anyway, it appeared that that was certainly not good and I was coming up for rotation. Had I stayed, see I'd done it almost four years. I think the need was there to keep somebody long enough to keep the F14 and the other planes that we had going in terms of continuity.

So anyway, this thing went on and it was in the newspapers and so forth. I felt - I was offered another job, parallel to as type commander at San Diego or any other and it would have been a very nice job. But I felt it would be nice to get out. I'd had a good career and didn't want to stay on under those conditions, so I left.

I was going to say I had a wonderful career and the Navy was, I think, a particularly good place to be from 1940 to 1973. As soon as the Vietnam War ended you could see the change in attitude, Congress, the newspapers, everything else. The War's over, they didn't say we don't need you anymore. "Admiral why do you need this now that we're not fighting," in Congressional hearings and so forth. So the whole attitude was different then when the Vietnam War was over.

I just liked to get out and felt it was time to go anyway. It was also - I was in Joint Staff when I was down there as the director. I had an Air Force Colonel down there, a very bright guy and he put in to retire. I've forgotten his name now, but I said, "Jim," or whatever it was, "Why are you getting out. You've got a lot to give the Air Force. You're a very bright guy and you've done a fine job here." He said, "Admiral," he said, "When it comes time for you to go, you recognize it." I've always remembered that, and I said, "It's probably time for me to go." I could have stayed on in another job and perhaps even gone up. Admiral Moorer when I went to see him, he'd been retired - not for advice, but I'd just been informed of this - and he said, "No, you shouldn't retire. Stay on there, you never know what's going to happen."

I think that could have happened if I'd stayed in and done something else. But I wasn't disappointed about getting in on that, other things to do and actions that I would like to take. So if I wasn't going to be going up, I wasn't going to just occupy somebody's seat.

Among other things, I've always felt this. The services, armed services are pretty much a younger man's game. I won't say you've got to be 35 years old. You can be sixty and so forth, but you don't want a lot of older people around, because change is difficult to accomplish. In the service you've got security and defensive capabilities of the United States are in your hand. You've got to be able to understand. I say this first hand in World War II, when, I think I told you this earlier, but the first year, very disappointing to me in terms of leadership in high levels. Most of the people that were there had been there too long. They didn't understand radar. They didn't understand the proximity cues for anti-aircraft shells. They didn't understand a lot of these other things that were going on. Because they hadn't been trained in this and they weren't willing and couldn't accommodate it, I said, I don't want to get into that kind of situation. When you've done your job, it's time to go. Get out and let somebody else come in who can really assimilate these changes that are coming. And gosh knows they've been coming now for the last twenty, thirty years, in just giant steps.